

ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

MUSIC: MUSICAL DIFFUSION



Balalaika

Wood, Varnish, Metal, Plastic
Anchorage Museum collection
1970.106.001

ANCHORAGE
MUSEUM

UNIT AT A GLANCE

Students will explore the history of music in Alaska, examining the means and methods of cultural diffusion and its impacts on the contemporary musical styles across the state by close-looking at three objects from the Anchorage Museum collection and by creating and exchanging made music.

STANDARDS

Alaska Arts Standards

- MU:RE7a-4 Explain how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences or purposes
- MU:RE7b-4 Demonstrate and explain how responses to music are informed by the structure, use of the elements of music, context (personal, cultural, social)
- MU:PR4-a Demonstrate and explain how the selection of music to perform is influenced by personal interest, cultural background, knowledge, context, and technical skill
- MU:PR4-b Explain how context (social and cultural) informs a performance
- MU:CR1-4a . Impvise rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic ideas, and explain connection to specific purpose and context (personal and social/cultural)
- MU:CR1-4b b. Generate musical ideas (rhythms, melodies, and simple accompaniment patterns) within related tonalities (major and minor) and meters
- MU:CR2-4a Demonstrate selected and organized musical ideas for improvisation, arrangement, or composition to express intent and explain connection to purpose/context.
- MU:CR2-4b Use standard or iconic notation and/or recording technology to document personal rhythmic, melodic, and simple harmonic musical ideas

MATERIALS

Close-Looking

Harmonica, Anchorage Museum; 1970.061.018
Balalaika, Anchorage Museum; 1970.106.001
Iñupiaq Instrument, Anchorage Museum; 1982.065.001

Music

Orff musical instruments such as xylophones, glockenspiels, or recorders
Writing utensils
Paper

KEY TERMS

<i>genre</i>	a category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter
<i>style</i>	a distinctive quality, form, or type within music
<i>cultural diffusion</i>	the spreading out and merging of material, ideological, or ethnographic aspects from different cultures
<i>nuqaqtiligauraq</i>	North Slope Iñupiaq term for violin
<i>kegglaq</i>	Central Alaskan Yup'ik term for violin

CLOSE-LOOKING

TIME FRAME

Approximately 40 minutes

MATERIALS

Harmonica, Anchorage Museum; 1970.061.018
Balalaika, Anchorage Museum; 1970.106.001
Iñupiaq Instrument, Anchorage Museum; 1982.065.001

DIRECTIONS

1. Begin by looking closely at provided photographs. Use the questions below to guide discussion.

[30 min.]

CLOSE-LOOKING: Look closely, quietly at the objects for a few minutes.

OBSERVE: Share your observations about each photograph.

Harmonica, Anchorage Museum; 1970.061.018



ASK: What do you notice about this image?
What colors do you see in this object?
How might this object be used?
Where might you see this object?
How would this object feel if you held it?
What does this remind you of?
What more can you find?

Balalaika, Anchorage Museum; 1970.106.001



ASK: What do you notice about this image?
Describe how this object might sound like.
How is this object similar to other objects you know about?
Why do you think this object is the shape it is?
What does this remind you of?
What more can you find?

Iñupiaq Instrument, Anchorage Museum; 1982.065.001



ASK: What do you notice about this image?
What do you think this object sounds like?
How do you think this object is made?
What colors do you notice
What materials might this object be made up of?
What does this remind you of?
What more can you find?

DISCUSS: Use the [20 Questions Deck](#) for more group discussion questions about the photographs.

2. As a class, discuss the following: these instruments are all portable. These are also all instruments found in Alaska, but originate from different cultures. The harmonica is Euro-American, the balalaika is Russian, and the stringed instrument is Iñupiaq. They demonstrate the wide array of sounds and qualities of instruments that can be found in Alaska throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Think about the areas and groups of people using these instruments. Why might smaller portable instruments be more useful than larger ones?

[10 min.]

MUSICAL DIFFUSION

TIME FRAME	Approximately 1-2 class sessions
MATERIALS	Orff musical instruments such as xylophones, glockenspiels, or recorders Writing utensils Paper
DIRECTIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Divide students into an even number of small groups, providing each with different instruments. If you do not have enough instruments, students can clap, stomp, or snap as their primary form of making music. [2 min.]2. Invite each group to make a four-measure song, consisting of simple beats such as quarter, eighth, and syncopated notes. Give each group a few minutes to practice their song, with one student from each group writing down a copy of the song at the top of a piece of paper. [5 min.]3. Afterwards, invite the small groups to meet one another. Allow each small group to perform their song to a second group. After sharing their songs, invite students to trade a measure of their music, swapping one of their measures with their partner group. Record the transaction on a piece of paper and allow each group to practice their new song. Have students write down the new song beneath their original on their piece of paper, and record which group they met with. [7 min.]4. Have the small groups meet with a new group and share their new songs with one another. This time, have one of the students trade instruments with the partner group. This should result in one new instrument being added to each group. Have students record on their papers what instruments were added to their growing ensemble. [5 min.]5. Repeat Steps 3 and 4 as necessary to allow the songs and instruments evolve and change fluidly between groups. [20+ min.]6. After students have met and exchanged musical phrases and instruments several times, invite them to practice their song before sharing it with the class. Give them the opportunity to make small changes to their final song if they would like but encourage them to embrace the changes this activity has created. For each group, discuss the journey that they took before arriving at their finished song. Encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings about changing instruments and patterns with other groups as they reflect on the changes to their songs. [15 min.]

ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed based on participation in class discussion and completion of the activity.

LEARN MORE

Musical Diffusion in Alaskan Music :

Genres in music generally influence one another, drawing from their respective traditions. Alaskan musicians and artists frequently embrace additional sources to produce new works. Influences from musical genres such as hip-hop, pop, blues, and jazz continue to inform and direct Alaskan music. The direction of Alaskan music diffusion was initially internal, with neighboring Alaska Native groups sharing and creating songs. This changed with the influx of Euro-Americans and the instruments they brought with them. This diffusion of Euro-American instruments and musical styles added to the already large range of musical genres available to Alaska Natives. Today, collaborative fusions of western and Indigenous music are present not only in Alaska, but throughout the world.

WATCH:

Indie Alaska - [Meet Pamyua, Alaska's most famous Inuit band | INDIE ALASKA](#)

Indie Alaska - [A Day in the Life of a Pianist in Alaska's Russian Community | INDIE ALASKA](#)

Khu.éex' - [Canoe Song - Khu.eex at Seattle's Town Hall](#)

READ:

Alaska's Digital Newspaper Project - [Alaska Folk Festival: Researching its Origins and History](#)

KTOO - [Pamyua co-founder's new album features some of Alaska's best-known Indigenous pop artists](#)