

ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

MUSIC: PERCUSSIVE QUALITIES



Nellie Robert
Drum with Drum Beater

Moose hide, pigment, wood, ink, feather
1971.096.005ab

UNIT AT A GLANCE

Activity Summary: Students will explore advanced rhythm and sound as a class using simple percussion instruments such as drums and rattles. Students are also invited to experiment with different materials to determine the ways in which sounds are produced and changed.

STANDARDS

Alaska Arts Standards

MU:Cr1a-2 With some guidance, create musical ideas (e.g. question and answer) for specific purpose

MU:Cr1b-2 Generate musical patterns and ideas within a given tonality (major and minor) and meter (duple and triple)

MU:Cr2a-2 Demonstrate and explain personal reasons for selecting patterns and ideas for music representing expressive intent

MU:Pr4.2c-2 Demonstrate understanding of expressive qualities (dynamics, tempo) and how creators use them to convey expressive intent

MATERIALS

Close-Looking

Iñupiaq Drum, Anchorage Museum; 1971.013.003

Drum with Drum Beater, Nellie Robert, Anchorage Museum; 1971.096.005ab

Tlingit Rattle, Anchorage Museum, 1983.073.001

Music

Various durable Orff instruments

Any household or classroom materials used for sound-making

KEY TERMS

<i>drum</i>	a hollow instrument that creates sounds by being struck with sticks or the hands, typically cylindrical, barrel-shaped, or bowl-shaped, with a taut membrane over one or both ends
<i>rattle</i>	an instrument with a container filled with small pellets that makes noise when shaken
<i>percussion</i>	musical instruments played by striking with the hand or with a handheld or pedal-operated stick or beater, or by shaking, including drums, cymbals, xylophones, gongs, bells, and rattles
<i>rhythm</i>	a repeated pattern of sound
<i>sound</i>	vibrations that travel through the air or another medium and can be heard when they reach a person's or animal's ear
<i>timbre</i>	the unique acoustic quality of an instrument or sound

CLOSE-LOOKING

TIME FRAME Approximately 40 minutes

MATERIALS *Iñupiaq Drum*, Anchorage Museum; 1971.013.003
Drum with Drum Beater, Nellie Robert, Anchorage Museum; 1971.096.995ab
Tlingit Rattle, Anchorage Museum, 1983.073.001

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 instrument.



Iñupiaq Drum, Anchorage Museum; 1979.013.003

ASK: *What words would you use to describe this object?*

What questions do you have for the maker?

How might this object be used?

What does this object sound like?

What materials can be found in this object?



Drum with Drum Beater, Nellie Robert, Anchorage Museum; 1971.096.005ab

ASK: *What might the object feel like if you could touch it?*

What shapes and forms do you see?

What do you notice first?

When was the object made?

What questions do you have for the maker?



Tlingit Rattle, Anchorage Museum; 1983.073.001

ASK: *What materials might this object be made out of?*

How might this object be used?

How might this object sound like?

How does looking and thinking about this object make you feel?

Why do you think this object is in the Anchorage Museum?

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

2. As a class, discuss how music and rhythm influence the atmosphere of a performance. Invite students to share their favorite musical parts of a song, movie, or play and what components come into play that make the moments memorable.

[10 min.]

DESCRIBING SOUND

TIME FRAME

Approximately 30 minutes

MATERIALS

Various durable Orff instruments

Any household or classroom materials used for sound-making

DIRECTIONS

1. Gather household or classroom materials or instruments and pass them out to students. Ensure that there are more objects than students. Place students into small groups.

[5 min.]

2. Using one or two fingers, gently tap each material. Listen carefully to the sound it creates. Ask students: *how would you describe this sound?*

[2 min.]

3. Invite students to compare the sounds made by different materials. Ask: *why do some materials sound different than others? What would you want a drum to be made of a certain material?*

[5 min.]

4. Invite students to consider tapping these materials with something other than their fingers, such as a pencil, popsicle stick, or paintbrush. Ask: *does the material of the drumstick make a difference in the kinds of sounds that you hear?*

[5 min.]

5. As a class, ask student groups to experiment with rhythms and objects that reflect emotions, such as a “happy” rhythm, a “sad” rhythm, and so forth.

[5 min.]

6. As a class, discuss: *why might you want to use different techniques or instruments to make music?*

[5 min.]

ASSESSMENT

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

LEARN MORE

Percussion

Percussion is a broad term encompassing many instrument types including xylophones, membraned drums, rattles, and even pianos. This term is a descriptive one, with musicologists, organologists, and acousticians using different classification systems to denote percussion instruments and their acoustic properties.

More commonly, percussion refers to musical instruments that one strikes, shakes, or rubs to produce a sound. These qualities make up the defining aspects of percussion instruments. The term percussion comes from the Latin verb *percutere* from *per*, meaning through, and *cutere*, meaning to shake or strike. By making sound through shaking or striking a percussion instrument, one creates notes. Though percussion instruments bear some association with pitch and tone, such as marimbas and xylophones, most do not and correlate with rhythmic aspects of musical compositions.

Body Percussion

Body percussion is using the human form as a complete instrument. It is a language, a form of wordless communication and storytelling. Humans use body percussion as a form of music accompaniment as well as for rhythm and song making. Body percussion is versatile varies across cultures. Since human bodies are uniquely designed, everyone has a different timbre when they clap, stomp, snap, or pat a different part of their body.

WATCH:

Body Avlaia Group - [In the Hall of the Body Percussion King](#)

Anchorage Daily News - [Yup'ik drumming and dancing at AFN 2009](#)

READ:

Britannica - [Percussion Instrument](#)

Anchorage Museum- [Drums of Alaska](#)