

Baba Yaga from *Pictures at an Exhibition* – Creative Thinking

National Music Standards (rev. 2014)

Performing – Interpret: Develop personal interpretations that consider creators' intent.

Learning Target

The student can interpret the mood or character of music through writing or drawing.

Lesson Plan

Materials:

Audio recording of Baba Yaga from *Pictures at an Exhibition*
Half sheets of paper, pencils and clipboards for each student
Magnets or tape to use in displaying student work
Active listening prompts

30-minute plan

Warmup:

You will hear a piece of music by Modest Mussorgsky. He wrote it after visiting an exhibition of his friend's art works in Russia. As you listen to the music, think about the pictures and ideas it creates in your imagination. What would a picture of this music look like? What story is it telling? How would you describe this music in words? How would you represent this music in a drawing?

Direct Instruction:

Have students find a place in the classroom where they can sit comfortably. Have them close their eyes so they can focus exclusively on listening to the music. "This music will last for 3 minutes. Relax and soak in the music, let it wash over you and take over your imagination."

Active listening prompts (to which you may add vocal sound effects and actions):
Engage ears!
Mute voice!
Power up brain!
Body still!

Guided Practice:

Play the entire selection. After one minute, ask volunteers to share their ideas and words with the class by writing them on the whiteboard (limit these responses to only one word or phrase). Read through the responses.

Tell the students they will have the chance to record on paper the thoughts, words, ideas and pictures that filled their mind while the music was playing. Also let them know that they will display their work for their classmates to see when they are finished.

Independent Practice:

Distribute the half sheets, pencils and clipboards. Tell the students they may write or draw whatever the music creates in their imagination. Play the music again while the students work. Play it at again so they are able to become more familiar with it.

Once they are finished, help the students post their work on the wall or white board. While playing "Promenade" from *Pictures at an Exhibition*, have students do a gallery walk where they have a chance to look at the work of the other students.

Introduce the title of the music

(excerpt from <http://www.oldrussia.net/baba.html>)

In Russian folkore there are many stories of Baba Yaga, the fearsome witch with iron teeth. She is also known as Baba Yaga Bony Legs because, in spite of a ferocious appetite, she is as thin as a skeleton.

Not being a boringly conventional witch, she does not wear a hat, and has never been seen on a broomstick. She travels perched in a large mortar with her knees almost touching her chin, and pushes herself across the forest floor with a pestle.

Whenever she appears on the scene, a wild wind begins to blow, the trees around creak and groan and leaves whirl through the air. Shrieking and wailing, a host of spirits often accompany her on her way. She sweeps away all traces of herself with a broom made of silver birch.

Assessment

Informal – observe student responses in their drawing and writing.

Resources

Baba Yaga pictures and folktale information

<http://www.oldrussia.net/baba.html>

Baba Yaga: The Wild Witch of the East in Russian Fairy Tales

Sibelan Forrester (Translator), Helena Goscilo (Contributor), Martin Skoro (Contributor)

A detailed history of the Baba Yaga folklore with many illustrations

Baba Yaga's Assistant

Marika McCoola and Emily Carroll

Graphic novel about a modern-day witch who mentors a teen.

Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Brave

Marianna Mayer

Picture book about the adventures of a girl who outsmarts the witch.

Vasilisa the Beautiful and Baba Yaga

Alexander Afanasyev and Marie-Michelle Joy

Picture book about a girl who outwits the witch. Illustrations from 1899.