

Erie Canal

American Folk Song



1. I had a mule her name was Sal, Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal! She's a
2. Git up there, Sal, we passed that lock, And



good old worker and a good old pal, Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal! We've
we'll make Rome fore six o'clock, Just



hailed some barges in our day, Filled with lumber, coal and hay, And
one more trip and back we'll go Through the rain and sleet and snow, 'Cause



we know ev'ry inch of the way From Albany down to Buffalo.
we know ev'ry inch of the way



Low bridge, ev'ry-bod-y down, Low bridge, 'cause we're go-in' through a town;



And you'll always know your neighbor, You'll always know your pal,



If you ever navigat-in' on the Erie Canal.

SINGING

Since this is a work song engage the students in a discussion of a time before modern technology changed the environment in the work place, when workers would often sing unaccompanied songs together to mark the cadence and keep the work activity synchronized. These were tough men at work and the song should be sung with a robust good natured quality. Beginning with the refrain, have the students listen and then sing for rhythmic accuracy and pitch sequence. As they develop a sense of the quality of the song, have them add the verses until the whole song is learned and a comfortable singing style (within the children's range) has been accomplished.

PLAYING

Divide the class into several small groups. Have each group create a simple 8 beat rhythmic phrase to which they will add a body percussion sequence (of the groups creation) indicative of work sounds and actions. Practice the patterns until the students can sing and play their body percussion patterns at the same time. When their playing is secure, have the students select rhythm instruments that to them appropriately represent the work activity they had in mind. Practice playing the rhythmic phrases on the percussion instruments then play with the song.

CREATING

Using the patterns created above, have the a few students create a linear sequence of several patterns sequenced together. Have the students think in terms of texture, dynamics, and repeated patterns where one group might play alone for a phrase and two or three groups might play together during other parts of the song. Have the students feel comfortable with trying and discarding a pattern or sequence that doesn't seem to be working until they arrive at an arrangement that is meaningful and represents their interpretation of the song.

LISTENING

Have the students experiment with different vocal and instrumental groupings as they create their accompaniment patterns. Have them listen and give meaningful feedback as to why they prefer one grouping (the boys singing and the girls playing) over another. Have them focus on what they heard that brought them to their conclusion. Encourage them to apply aural discrimination (listening) throughout the arrangement process to make sure they have arrived at the very best arrangement possible for their musical taste.

INTEGRATION (Social Studies)

Using a map of the United States, have the students locate Albany and Buffalo (cities named in the song) and hypothetically trace the route that the Erie Canal most likely took between these two cities. Discuss the fact that the canal was an important asset to northeastern commerce at then time. Research other transportation methods and routes of the time. Discover what caused the demise of the Erie Canal.

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