

Composer Study

SAMPLE





About the Course

In this course students are immersed into the 19th century via it's composers, instruments, and musical performances. Term 1 focuses on several influential instruments/instrument families, including valved brass, the saxophone, and the guitar, and the musicians that made them famous. In Term 2, students will grow to know and love the Norwegian Romantic composer, Edvard Grieg. Students conclude the year in Term 3 with the comic operas of Gilbert & Sullivan and their choice between two composers who turned what they saw or heard into music: Modest Mussorgsky and Thomas ("Blind Tom") Wiggins.

This topic is included in the following course(s): Music: Level 1, Music: Level 2, Music: Level 3, Music: Level 4, Music: Level 5

Composer Study

"Music is no isolated thing. Its forms, colors, and expressive qualities do not spring from nowhere; they come out of life itself. Often, of course, they are to be enjoyed for themselves alone, in the concert hall or in one's armchair. But music also reflects human experiences, hopes, and struggles. It may give an insight into the individual and society, into the lives of those far removed from our own in time and place—an insight no other art can provide in this exact way."
~Elie Siegmeister



Placement & Combining Tips

These Composer Study lessons are shared across grades 2-12 with extensions provided for older students. Students in Grades 2-3 with no classical music background may choose to take Intro to Music Appreciation first, but the composers in this rotation are particularly accessible for a wide range of ages.



Scheduling

GRADE	SCHEDULE INFO.	BOOKS
2-12	Composer Study 1 time/week 10 min 1 time/week 15 min	Playlist for the Year Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition Song in a Rainstorm: The Story of Musical Prodigy Thomas Blind Tom Wiggins

Sample Weekly View

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Music: Level 1				
Sol-fa: Level 1	Hymns & Spirituals Afternoon Listening		Folk Songs	Composer Study
Music: Level 2				
Sol-fa: Level 2	Hymns & Spirituals	Folk Songs	Composer Study Afternoon Listening	
Music: Level 3				
Sol-fa: Level 3 Afternoon Listening		Hymns & Spirituals	Folk Songs	Composer Study
Music: Level 4				
Sol-fa: Level 4 Afternoon Listening		Hymns & Spirituals	Folk Songs	Composer Study
Music: Level 5				



Planning & Prep

Permission to print for non-commercial use. See Alveary group use policy to use lessons in a group context.

LINKS: Click text or scan the QR code in the top corner of the lesson plan pages to view online resources associated with the lessons.

Responsibility for previewing all links rests with the teacher. All links were checked at the time of publication; however, websites change frequently and may contain objectionable content. Please report broken links by contacting us through our website.

Composer Study

- Charlotte Mason often included more music in the program than could be covered in the lesson time. While we choose segments that fit the length of the lesson, students will develop a relationship with the term's music insofar as it is a part of their daily atmosphere.
- The YouTube playlist contains nearly the whole year's music, though lessons will occasionally have extra links to historical or musical information. This playlist is mostly used in the lessons as videos are often chosen for visual and sometimes historical interest. You will also find a Spotify playlist of the term's music in Quick Links for easy afternoon listening.
- Use the year's playlist to listen to previous and current pieces in the afternoons, and explore the Extra Helpings as interested (ideas which relate directly to a lesson are usually included nearby, while more general resources and activities are listed on the Extra Helpings page). Grade 5+ extensions are also usually appropriate as Extra Helpings for interested younger students.












Books & Resources

For book rationales and purchase options, click the Book List link or scan the QR code below.

∞ [View Book List Details](#)

Composer Study

-  Our Work: Grades 1-2
-  Our Work: Grade 3
-  Our Work: Grades 4-6
-  Our Work: Grades 7-8
-  Our Work: Grades 9-12
-  Hymns, Spirituals, & Folk Songs PDF
-  Playlist for the Year
-  Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition
-  Song in a Rainstorm: The Story of Musical Prodigy Thomas Blind Tom Wiggins



Supplies

For supply list details and basic supplies helpful to have on hand, click the links or scan the QR code below.

∞ [View Basic Supplies](#)



Quick Links

Composer Study

- ∞ [Extra Helpings](#)
- ∞ [Extra Resource: Classics for Kids Musical Dictionary](#)
- ∞ [Composer Study Playlist \(YouTube\)](#)
- ∞ [Composer Study Playlist \(Spotify\)](#)
- ∞ [Appendix: Musical Vocabulary](#)
- ∞ [Century Chart](#)
- ∞ [Foundations \(See Section 12: Music\)](#)

Click THIS text or scan the QR code for links.



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How To Teach



Recap

- Specific recap questions are often suggested in the day's plans; ask students what they remember from the last lesson. If nothing comes to mind at first, tell them to give themselves another minute or two and to keep thinking. Our brains are amazing and can usually recall the previous lesson with a minute of effort. Refrain from doing the work of remembering yourself if you are leading the lessons.
- For composer study, a recap might look like a brief discussion about the name or sound of the piece you listened to previously.
- For hymns and folk songs, this might be an effort to hum the melody or recite the words of the song you're currently learning.
- For sol-fa, it might be a quick explanation of the sol-fa syllable you learned or a tricky rhythm or interval you were working to master.
- If students have difficulty recalling, teachers might try showing them a picture or sharing something that the teacher remembers. This will often refresh their memory enough to allow them to recall.
- If students still cannot recall anything from the last reading, then teachers may consider continuing anyway or repeating the last lesson.



Introduce

- Prepare to listen to the day's musical selection by inviting students to consider an interesting musical or historical idea in the lesson. Perhaps it's a unique word, rhythm, instrument, or piece of historical background. You might introduce it by the way, or read a selection of a composer's bio or a brief article to students.



Listen & Sing

- Listen to the day's musical selection.
- Composer study lessons will usually have you listen to a piece of music for 3-8 minutes. If students have a difficult time listening for the duration of the lesson, stop the music at their limit.
- Some students might draw, color, or engage in a handicraft while listening to help extend their listening time. Students who have a difficult time sitting still or listening may benefit from: a fidget of their choice, such as a piece of putty or clay or an afghan; flexible positioning, such as a wobble seat or inverted sitting; or sensory modulation, such as a weighted vest or blanket or adjustment of light, temperature, or sound.
- Hymn, folk song, or sol-fa lessons will sometimes have you listen to a part of the song and then practice echoing back the melody and/or words.



Discuss

- Composer Study: Talk about the musical selection you heard. What stood out to you? What did you notice? What did it make you wonder? Did it remind you of anything? Discuss the tempo, the sound of the music, the instruments used, the volume, and the mood. Why do you think the composer wrote it the way he did?
- Hymns, Spirituals, & Folk Songs: What lines strike you particularly? Is there a rhyme scheme to the lyrics? Is there a progression to each stanza? If you were to add a verse to the song, what would you add? If you took a verse out, how do you think it would change the song? Do the

melody and words go together? Why or why not?

- Sol-fa: Take a minute to reflect on what you learned in the lesson. Write down any notes you want to remember and practice any particular exercises that were tricky.



Connect

- At the end of the lesson, think about how the day's musical selection connects to other books, subjects, characters in history, etc.
- You might copy down a stanza of a hymn in your Commonplace or Copywork book, read a bit more about the history behind a piece of music, jot down a noteworthy date in your Book of Centuries, or discuss a broader question raised in the lesson.

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Term 1

WEEK 1 15m Composer Study - Lesson 1

Music in the 19th Century

→ INTRO

- What (if anything) comes to mind when you think about the 1800s and particularly music in the 1800s? Jot down any notes in your notebook or share with a friend.

- In term 1, we'll explore some instruments that characterized this century and then get to know a few particular composers and musicians in later terms.

→ LISTEN & DISCUSS

One instrument that spans all cultures and times is the human voice, but each time and place features it in different ways. Opera became particularly popular in the 1800s, and some became huge productions that showcased the flexibility, beauty, and power of the voice in various ways. Today's piece is an aria from an opera called "La Donna del Lago" or "The Lady of the Lake" by Gioachino Rossini, which was based on a poem by Sir Walter Scott. Even though the words are in Italian, see if you can guess the emotion of the piece as you listen in this lesson and over the week on your own time.

∞ Video Link (YouTube): Tanti Affetti

Time Marker: 0:0-5:06 or whole piece if time allows

- What kind of feeling do you think this piece communicates? Why?
- How does this piece show off the beauty, power, or flexibility of the human voice?

→ (GRADE 5+) READ & NARRATE

∞ Article Link: 19th Century Classical Music

★ TEACHER TIP

Musical terms are defined throughout the lessons, but an appendix with all the terms and definitions for the year is also provided in Quick Links for your convenience. Reference as desired.

Instruments are ideal for Book of Century, History Chart, or music notebook sketches. Encourage students to add to their notebooks as desired. Dates for key people and events are also provided throughout the plans.

∞ PDF Link: Century Chart

• IMPORTANT DATES

La Donna del Lago first performed (Italy, 1819AD)

• EXTRA HELPING

∞ Video Link: How Vocal Chords Work

WEEK 2 15m Composer Study - Lesson 2

Different Types of Vocal Poetry

PREP: Notebooking sound can be a little tricky. Listen to John Muir Laws talk about capturing birdsong in his notebook to give students ideas on how to sketch some of what they hear in today's musical piece(s) and others throughout the year.

∞ Video Link: Birdsong in your nature journal

→ RECAP

Describe the piece we started listening to last lesson.

→ INTRO

Musical performances in the 19th century became both larger and smaller. Operas and other theatrical performances became more accessible to the middle class and not just the wealthy, but so did the private musical performances in homes or smaller venues. Arias like Tanti Affetti showcased the voice on the large stages, while intimate songs, setting a poem to music with just a piano and voice, explored the power of the human voice to express emotion in these smaller settings. In Germany, several composers wrote so many of this second type of song that they created their own genre of song (called "lieder") and became the standard that others followed.

→ LISTEN & DISCUSS

Notice any musical features common in bel canto operas, such as trills, melismas, coloratura passages, and even appoggiaturas as you listen to the vocal fireworks that end this aria. You may want to pause the video periodically to jot down what you notice/hear in your notebook. Don't feel

• TERMINOLOGY

Bel canto opera: literally "beautiful singing" and a style of opera featuring the voice, which focuses on conveying the emotion of a piece through the singing rather than simply moving the plot forward.

Coloratura: literally "colorful" singing with fast-moving passages, trills, and vocal leaps.

Trills: moving between two notes very fast.

Melisma: multiple notes sung on one syllable.

Advanced Listening:

Appoggiatura, Chromatic scales
∞ Video Link: What is appoggiatura?

Lieder: German art songs usually featuring piano and voice, where the pianist and singer are equal partners working to interpret and

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[Click THIS text or scan the QR code for links.](#)



Term 1

like you need to capture the whole aria - just a few key moments that strike you as great!

∞ Video Link (YouTube): Tanti Affetti
Time Marker: 5:06-end

- What did you notice?

→ LISTEN & DISCUSS

∞ Video Link (YouTube): Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh
Time Marker: 0:00-1:52

- (Grades 5+) Discuss or sketch the differences in mood, sound quality, and anything else you notice about these two pieces.

showcase the emotion of the poetry.

WEEK 3 15m Composer Study - Lesson 3

Vocal Poetry cont.

→ RECAP

Recall any new musical terms you learned last lesson.

→ READ & NARRATE

Let's learn a bit more about the person who composed the song we started learning last lesson.

∞ Article Link: All About Fanny Mendelssohn

→ LISTEN & DISCUSS

"Goethe's Wandrers Nachtlied II (Über allen Gipfeln) is considered by many to be the most perfect lyric in the German language. The poet is supposed to have written the poem on the evening of 6 September 1780 onto the wall of a lodge on top of the Kickelhahn Mountain near Ilmenau, where he supposedly spent the night" (Interlude article)

English Translation:

"Over all summits
Is peace,
In all treetops
You feel
Hardly a breath:
The birds are silent in the woods.
Only wait, soon
You too shall rest"

Think of these lyrics as you listen again to Fanny's lied (pronounced "leed").

∞ Video Link (YouTube): Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh
∞ Reference Link: About Goethe's poem (explore the other lieder based on this poem as desired).

- How do you hear the music trying to paint a sound picture of the poetry? Think about the dynamics (loud/soft, smooth/rough), melody, and rhythm.

→ LISTEN & DISCUSS (OPTIONAL GRADES 1-4)

- Across the world from Germany, musicians were setting poetry to song in India as well. These songs were called "kriti" and are renowned for the same things as lieder: the balance of melody, rhythm, and poetry in their use of the human voice as an instrument.
- Begin listening to this famous kriti from the early 19th century, saving a minute or two for discussion.
- Optional: As you listen, sketch a veena in your music notebook. In the same way the piano accompanies the voice in German lieder, the veena is

★ TEACHER NOTE

If your students are having a hard time connecting with Über allen Gipfeln, feel free to spend the whole lessons with Soundararajam, the second piece.

• AFTERNOON LISTENING

Assigned selections fit in the lesson, but students will develop a relationship with the term's music insofar as it is a part of their daily atmosphere. Use the year's playlist YouTube and/or Spotify playlists to listen to previous and current pieces in the afternoons.

• EXTRA HELPING

Explore more lieder and more about Carnatic music and Muttuswami Dikshitar in extra helpings.

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the main instrument accompanying the voice in Carnatic music.

∞ Image Link: Veena

∞ Video Link (YouTube): Soundararajam by Dikshitar

- What similarities and differences do you hear in the way the voice is featured?

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