

ACTIVITY TWO: COMPOSING INCIDENTAL MUSIC FOR A RADIO PLAY.**LINK TO ENGLISH ACTIVITY 4**

Please note that this activity will take longer than one lesson – dependent on the length of composition required, this can take up to three lessons including the performance element.

Learning Objectives

- To learn about the role of incidental music;
- To discover how music can enhance text to convey meaning;
- To create a composition that can be combined with the Radio Play script for performance to the rest of the class.

Resources

- Internet Access
- Selection of instruments (untuned or tuned percussion, any instruments)
- Paper and pencils

Introduction

Incidental music is music performed during a performance of a spoken drama (either on stage, screen or radio). For music to be termed “Incidental Music” it must be of secondary importance to the spoken word. It is, however, often used to move the drama forward or to describe what is going on.

MAIN TASKS**Research**

1. In pairs, think about any films, television programmes or plays that you have watched recently. What role does the music play? What genre of music is played? Can it be more than one type of music?
2. Watch scenes from a few different movies which show different writing techniques for example:
 - a. The letter scene from [Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s stone \(mood setting\)](#)
 - b. The Truck Scene from [Indiana Jones](#) (Action)
 - c. The Attack on the Death Star from [Star Wars](#) (Action)
 - d. The [Merry-go-round broke down](#) (Comedy)
3. How does the music affect the dialogue and the story? Was it as you expected? What techniques surprised you?
 - a. Introduce techniques here. e.g:
 - i. Leitmotif (Hedwig’s theme) (a leitmotif is a theme which is used to represent a person, object, place or idea even when that subject is not on stage).
 - ii. Musical Accents (Crash, Bang, Wallop)
 - iii. Shimmering strings for tension
 - iv. Use of very low or very high notes

- v. Tempo
- vi. Genre (is the score popular music, classical, rock or jazz?)

Composition

4. In a small group choose one of your radio plays. Discuss what techniques you wish to use. Some questions that the groups should discuss are:
 - a. Does the play contain action? If not, would it enhance the play to have some musical action going on behind it?
 - b. Does the play need an overture (an introductory piece) or will you go straight into the drama?
 - c. Is there a central character or characters? Would it be good to create a theme for them? How would you use it? Just when they are visible, or to remind people about them when they aren't there?
5. Create a score in groups. This can be done simply using text rather than notation. For example, you can create a map of your piece through writing notes above (or to the side) of the radio play, showing what you intend to do at which point.
6. Work through the score in your groups with your chosen instruments and voices. Memorise each section. Remember that you will need to allocate people to read the play as well! It doesn't have to be the same people all the way through!

Performing:

7. Perform the play (with Music) to the other groups.
8. Evaluate the different performances – what worked well? What could be improved?