

**Lesson Title:** Exploring Major and Minor Tonality

**Grade Level:** 3rd - 5th Grade

**Intro:**

The school I teach at in Santa Rosa Beach is on Highway 30A, a scenic stretch of road traversing the Emerald Coast of Northwest Florida. A few years ago, a student brought me a copy of Grace Hammond Skertich's book, *Goodnight 30A*. The text connects with our students as they know the locations mentioned in the text and our small coastal towns' dreamy, laid-back atmosphere. I've used the book as a catalyst for teaching major and minor tonality. However, any text will do, especially if your students create their own!

This lesson is best taught over several class periods, allowing students to explore tonality, collaborate, and create their works in small groups or a large ensemble.

**Objectives:**

- Students will understand the difference between major and minor tonalities.
- Students can play major and minor arpeggios on Orff instruments.
- Students will create and perform ostinatos that complement major and minor tonalities.

- Students will collaborate to create a lullaby that represents water, the sounds of nature, and the peaceful atmosphere of a sunset over the ocean.

### **Materials Needed:**

- Orff Instruments: Soprano, Alto, and Bass Xylophones; Contra Bass Bars; Alto and Bass Metallophones; Soprano and Alto Glockenspiels
- Additional Percussion: Several different-sized frog rasps, an ocean drum, wind chimes, two large rainsticks, and an optional thunder tube
- Scarves or other props for movement activities

### **Lesson Outline:**

#### **1. Introduction (5-10 minutes)**

- Begin by discussing water/ocean and its moods or feelings, such as calm, stormy, or flowing.
- Ask students: “How could we represent water or the ocean using music? What would peaceful water sound like? What about a stormy sea?”

#### **Optional Movement Activity:**

- Invite students to use non-locomotor movements to express the movement of water or weather. For example, they could sway their arms to mimic gentle waves or make circular motions representing swirling currents. Expand the movement

to include locomotor, moving between other students and using the classroom space.

- Provide scarves or other props and encourage students to use them to illustrate the ebb and flow of water or gentle breezes and the more intense movements of a storm.
- Connect this movement exercise to the mood of a lullaby by focusing on slow, flowing gestures.

## **2. Tonal Exploration (10 minutes)**

- Demonstrate a major arpeggio (C-E-G) and ask students how it sounds. Discuss how major sounds often feel “happy” or “bright.”
- Play a minor arpeggio (A-C-E) and ask students to describe how it feels. Guide them to terms like “sad” or “mysterious.”
- Ask students to describe the sounds of major and minor arpeggios in their own words, encouraging them to use descriptive language.
- Allow students to experiment by playing both arpeggios on their pitched Orff instruments. Give them time to get comfortable switching between major and minor.

## **3. Creating Ostinatos (10 minutes)**

- Introduce the concept of an ostinato as a repeated pattern in music.

- Have students work in pairs or small groups to create simple ostinatos using major and minor tonalities. For example:
- Major ostinato: C-E-G
- Minor ostinato: A-C-E
- Challenge them to create patterns that could reflect calm water or waves. Begin to include non-pitched percussion instruments with each group.

#### **4. Composition and Improvisation (15 minutes)**

- Combine groups and have them layer their ostinatos over a steady beat.
- Introduce a simple melody from the score for Goodnight 30A, or allow students to improvise melodies that fit the major or minor tonality.
- Encourage students to play with dynamics and tempo to reflect different “water” scenes, such as a gentle stream, rain, or a powerful wave.
- Guide students to shape their compositions to evoke the calm and gentle mood of a lullaby inspired by the book *Goodnight 30A* by Grace Hammond Skertich or any text representing the sunset on the ocean with sounds of nature.

## 5. Learning the Goodnight 30A Accompaniment (10 minutes)

- Introduce the accompaniment for *Goodnight 30A*, focusing on each part for pitched percussion and non-pitched instruments:

### **Pitched Percussion Options:**

- Option 1: Have the pitched percussion instruments (xylophones, metallophones, glockenspiels) enter in layers from the lower to higher voices. This will create a gradual, flowing effect that mirrors the calm ebb and flow of water.
- Option 2: When performing this section with the book *Goodnight 30A* or other text, have the pitched percussion enter together over the non-pitched percussion parts. In this option, the pitched percussion would play their ostinato parts twice before ending on a C to create a final, peaceful resolution. The non-pitched percussion instruments would continue playing quietly as the next part of the text is read.
- Frog rasps, ocean drum, and rainstick: Play improvised sounds without a steady beat to represent the natural ambiance of a sunset. Optionally, add a thunder tube for a soft rumble in the distance.
- Wind chimes: Played slowly and gently to represent a calming breeze.
- Log or tongue drums: Provide a simple ostinato rhythm to set a soft, steady pulse.

## **Optional Idea:**

Please encourage students to incorporate parts they previously created, such as ostinatos from earlier in the lesson, layering these with the accompaniment to enhance the overall sound.

## **6. Group Performance and Reflection (10 minutes)**

- Have the students perform their ocean-inspired lullaby compositions for the class, including the *Goodnight 30A* accompaniment.
- After each group performs, ask them to describe how they used tonality, ostinatos, and dynamics to represent water and nature.
- Conclude by discussing how music can capture different emotions and scenes and have students share how the activity helped them understand major and minor sounds.

# Goodnight 30A

Dan Browne

This section of the score contains six staves, each representing a different xylophone or metallophone instrument. All staves are in 4/4 time and use a treble clef. The notation is minimalist, consisting of a single horizontal line with a small black rectangle (a 'chord') placed on the line in the middle of each measure. This indicates that all instruments play a single, sustained note throughout the piece. The instruments listed are Glockenspiel, Soprano Xylophone, Alto Xylophone, Alto Metallophone, Bass Metallophone, and Bass Xylophone.

This section of the score contains five staves for percussion instruments, all in 4/4 time. The Frogs staff uses a double bar line and slash notation to represent a rhythmic pattern of four eighth notes per measure. The African Log Drum staff uses a double bar line and quarter note notation to represent a rhythmic pattern of four quarter notes per measure. The Ocean Drum staff uses a double bar line and slash notation to represent a rhythmic pattern of four eighth notes per measure. The Wind Chimes staff uses a double bar line and a wavy line to represent a sustained sound that gradually fades out. The Rain Stick staff uses a double bar line and a single note to represent a sustained sound. The instruments listed are Frogs, African Log Drum, Ocean Drum, Wind Chimes, and Rain Stick.

Goodnight 30A

2

System 1: GK. (Glockenspiel) with a treble clef, playing a series of chords with a wavy line above each chord. System 2: SX (Saxophone) with a treble clef, playing a melodic line. System 3: AX (Alto Saxophone) with a treble clef, playing a melodic line. System 4: AM (Alto Clarinet) with a treble clef, playing a melodic line. System 5: BM (Bassoon) with a treble clef, playing a melodic line. System 6: BX (Bass Clarinet) with a treble clef, playing a melodic line. The first system is marked with a '2' and a brace. The second system is marked with a '5' and a brace. The score is divided into four measures by vertical bar lines, with repeat signs at the beginning and end of each measure.

5

System 7: Fg. (Fagotto) with a bass clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of slanted lines. System 8: L.D. (Lied) with a bass clef, playing a melodic line. System 9: O.D. (Oboe) with a bass clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of slanted lines. System 10: W. Ch. (Woodwind) with a bass clef, playing a melodic line. System 11: R.S. (Ritornello) with a bass clef, playing a melodic line. The score is divided into four measures by vertical bar lines, with repeat signs at the beginning and end of each measure.

Goodnight 30A

9

3

This block contains the musical notation for six woodwind instruments: Flute (Flk.), Saxophone (SX), Alto Saxophone (AX), Alto Clarinet (AM), Bassoon (BM), and Bass Clarinet (BX). Each instrument part is written on a five-line staff with a treble clef. The notation includes a whole note chord at the beginning of the measure, followed by a fermata over the note, and a final chord at the end of the measure. The instruments are grouped together with a brace on the left side.

9

This block contains the musical notation for five percussion instruments: Fg. (Fagot), L.D. (L. Drum), O.D. (O. Drum), W.Ch. (W. Ch.), and R.S. (R. S.). Each instrument part is written on a single-line staff. The notation consists of a double bar line at the beginning of the measure, followed by a fermata, and a final double bar line at the end of the measure. The instruments are grouped together with a brace on the left side.