

# MUSICAL LINKS

HANNAH BRAKE AND ZAC JARVIS

## Having created a cross-curricular resource, Hannah and Zac discuss its potential for bringing world music to the primary geography pupils classroom.

During our final year as undergraduate students at the University of Chester, we collaborated on the production of an interactive presentation (using the free online software Prezi). 'Music around the world' (see web panel) is designed to support the teaching of music and geography through a cross-curricular approach.

### Music in geography

According to Aristotle, 'Music has a power of forming the character and should therefore be introduced into the education of the young' (quoted in DfE, 2011). The National Plan for Music Education (DfE, 2011), argues that music can have a positive impact on children's social and personal development. Our resource, 'Music from around the world', links directly to the listening section of the music National Curriculum, which states that children should have the opportunity to 'listen to, review and evaluate music across a range of historical periods, genres, styles and traditions' (DfE, 2013).

In our experience pupils can explore the culture and traditions of people around the world through the medium of music. This creates a natural desire for pupils to enquire into the world they live in. Hayes (2009) explains that musical learning takes place when pupils are exposed to (i.e. are able to listen to live and recorded) music, can take part in enquiry-based activities that lead to discussion and are able to employ practical skills. The fact is that listening to music is central to learning within musical education, and, as a cultural artefact, it allows pupils to learn about other places and cultures. Jones and Robson (2008) explain that listening to music not only provides cross-curricular opportunities between music and geography, it also helps promote awareness of cultural diversity. In addition, we have found that it is also useful for inspiring other curricular links – to dance, art and creative writing, for example.

As teachers, we can create resources that allow pupils to play recorded music (thus appealing to their aural senses) while

also appealing to their visual sense, and encouraging discussion on the topic (Hayes, 2009). As Jones and Robson (2008) explain, using interactive whiteboards and presentations can provide an effective stimulus for learning, which promotes dialogue and discussion between pupils. The inclusion of weblinks enables pupils to use such presentations as a starting point for their own research and geographical enquiries. Teachers can ensure e-safety online by only including child-friendly weblinks and restricting the range of websites used.

### Music from around the world

'Music from around the world' has a world map at its heart. This allows pupils to be aware of the continents of the world while exploring the musical culture and traditions of that continent through videos, pictures and factual information. The presentation can be adapted to specific aspects of your school's curriculum, because the free online software (Prezi) can be accessed by anyone. 'Music from around the world' can be used for whole-class teaching as well as by individual or groups of pupils. The geography National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) emphasises the exploration of the continents of North and South America and 'Music from around the world' explores these areas. In North America the resource displays the contrasting genres of music produced by native artists in recent history, for instance, country, jazz and 'pop' music. While the focus on North America is on current and recent musical culture, we chose to focus on the traditions and origins of Latin American music that is associated with South America – i.e. Latin American dance music – and, here, teachers can help pupils compose their own percussion rhythms (which form the basis of much of this type of music), then use the results to choreograph and perform dances.

'Music from around the world' exposes pupils to a range of music from contrasting historical periods, genres, styles and traditions from across the globe. As listening to music is central to music education, pupils can use the resource to develop critical thinking and discussion skills and then to create their own ideas and respond to the work of others (Beach *et al.*, 2011). Listening and responding to the music of the Americas, for instance, brings these faraway places alive in an engaging way.

We have used 'Music from around the world' in two different ways – both of which had positive outcomes.

### A pupil-initiated approach

Zac employed a pupil-initiated approach. He allowed a year 6 class to explore the resource at their own pace during a music lesson.

Zac made sure to take feedback from the pupils and he observed the ways in which they were using the resource. A variety of differing opinions arose: while most of the pupils felt that it was an interesting learning resource with a good balance of written information and videos, some focused on the videos and were, thus, unlikely to have read the accompanying information. Although utilising the resource in this way enabled the pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, Zac felt it would be more effective to pair this approach with whole-class teaching designed to guide the pupils, especially when focusing on a particular area of the world. Most of Zac's pupils said that the resource had given them the opportunity to listen to and appreciate music they had not previously heard and, therefore, it made them more aware of the variety of music across the world.

### Writing about the music of China

During a whole-school writing project with a focus on different cultures, traditions and countries, Hannah used 'Music from around the world' to enhance a school writing project based upon China. This was designed to give a perspective on the culture and traditions of that country.

First Hannah used the resource to show the pupils the types of music that were typical to China. The pupils subsumed this into information booklets they were writing about China. She showed the pupils where China is on the world map and then discussed the variety of music and the instruments used in China, which the pupils contrasted with those instruments they were already familiar with. Finally, we discussed the contrast between China and the UK.

### Teachers' opinions

During this experimental use of 'Music from around the world' in two different schools, we were able to gather the opinions of other teachers on the resource.



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They felt that it could be tweaked and adapted to suit the pupils within their classes. In addition, the opportunity to use the resource in more than one area of the key stage 2 curriculum meant that it would be valuable for both geography and music.

As we have shown, using a cross-curricular approach to teach music and geography jointly can be enhanced by the use of new technologies. Allowing pupils to explore the world through the use of music while providing them with opportunities to learn about other cultures and traditions enhances the learning within the primary classroom. 'Music from around the world' provides a starting point for teachers in both geography and music to help pupils learn about the world and its music.

## References

- Beach, N., Evans, J. and Spruce, G. (2011) *Making Music in the Primary School: Whole class instrumental and vocal teaching*. London: Routledge.
- DfE (2011) *The Importance of Music: A national plan for music education*. Available at: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/180973/DFE-00086-2011.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180973/DFE-00086-2011.pdf) (last accessed 05/11/2015).
- DfE (2013) *The National Curriculum in England: Framework document*. Available at: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/210969/NC\\_framework\\_document\\_-\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/210969/NC_framework_document_-_FINAL.pdf) (last accessed 05/11/2015).

- Hayes, D. (2009) *Learning and Teaching in Primary Schools*. Exeter: Learning Matters.
- Jones, P. and Robson, C. (2008) *Teaching Music in Primary Schools*. Exeter: Learning Matters.



## WEB RESOURCES

'Music from around the world':  
<https://prezi.com/tk9bkkfrp7n6/music-from-around-the-world/>

**Hannah Brake teaches at Weaverham Forest Primary School, Cheshire.**  
**Zac Jarvis teaches at Pebble Brook Primary School, Cheshire.**