



Earth by Hans Zimmer BBC Ten Pieces Commission

CLASSROOM RESOURCE FOR KS2

For:

- Key Stage 2 in England and Wales
- Second Level, P5-P7 in Scotland
- Key Stage 1/Key Stage 2 in Northern Ireland

Written by Rachel Leach

Background

The composer:

Hans ZIMMER (b. 1957)

- German film composer
- Has composed more than 150 films scores and been nominated for ten Oscars
- Is self-taught
- Loves using technology, synthesizers, samplers and computers as well as the orchestra

The music:

Earth

- Written especially for BBC Ten Pieces
- Draws upon the soundworld he used for Blue Planet II and Planet Earth II – two of his most popular scores
- This isn't a film score (it wasn't written for a movie) but it does sound very 'filmic'

Trailblazer:

Film composer Hans Zimmer uses all sorts of different techniques to create music. He has helped shape the sound of today's film, tv and games music

Learning outcomes

Learners will:

- listen and reflect on a piece of orchestral music
- create their own piece of music using instruments and voice
- perform as an ensemble
- learn musical language appropriate to the task

Curriculum checklist:

- play and perform in ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments
- improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

Glossary of music terms used:

Crescendo	gradually getting louder (opposite: decrescendo or diminuendo)
Duration	the length of a note. Different durations make rhythms
Dynamics	the term used for louds and softs/volume
Motif	A very short musical 'idea' – often just a sound or a rhythm
Pianissimo	Very softly
Pitched percussion	percussion instruments that can play different pitches – xylophones, glockenspiels, chime bars, etc.
Unpitched percussion	percussion instruments that can only make a limited number of sounds – drums, shakers, woodblocks, tambourines, etc.

Glossary terms can be found underlined throughout.

Resources required:

- classroom percussion instruments
- art materials
- paper and pens

This scheme of work is plotted out over six lessons. Feel free to adapt it to suit your children and the resources you have available.

The six lessons at a glance

Lesson 1:

Activities: Watch the film
Create artwork inspired by the music

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians
Develop an understanding of the history of music

Lesson 2:

Activities: Learn to play a shimmer
Create vocal melodies

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 3:

Activities: Create three-note repeating patterns and play with different durations
Use musical terminology and notation

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 4:

Activities: Create musical motifs inspired by 'Earth'
Structure these into a piece

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 5:

Activities: Structure sections into a bigger shape

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

Lesson 6:

Activities: Learn about dynamics
Perform in a concert

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

LESSON 1

Watching and listening

1. Prepare your class

Explain to your class that you are going to begin a six-week music project focusing on a fantastic piece of music by a film composer called Hans Zimmer. Tell your class that they probably already know Zimmer's music; he wrote the scores for 'Madagascar', 'The Lion King', 'Kung Fu Panda' and many, many other movies and tv shows.

2. Watch the BBC Ten Pieces Trailblazers film and have a discussion about what you have just seen.

3. Listening task

Give out (large) paper and art materials to everyone and ask them to draw a big circle in the middle of their page, this is going to represent 'earth'.

Or, working in a large space such as the hall, cover the floor with paper and draw one huge circle in the centre. You could do this by joining strips of lining paper together or even using an old sheet. The whole class can then collaborate towards making one huge piece of art which could become the backdrop for your performance in lesson 6.

4. As you listen and watch the full orchestral performance encourage your class to draw what they think the music is describing. They might like to focus on the opening of Zimmer's piece and draw the atmosphere around Earth – space, stars and other planets floating outside of their circle. Or they may choose to focus on the middle of the music and draw the movement and action on our planet – i.e. people rushing around, vehicles, buildings, cities, etc.

5. Listen several times and encourage your children to focus on a different section of Zimmer's music each time and therefore add something different to their artwork each time.

It may help to show them images of Earth from Google Maps. Make sure the view is on 'satellite' and then type in the school's address. Zoom out over and over until you reach the view of Earth from space.

6. FINALLY, quickly fix the resulting artwork to the walls of your classroom and invite the children to wander around looking at all their pictures as you listen to Hans Zimmer's piece one last time

LESSON 2

Shimmering introduction

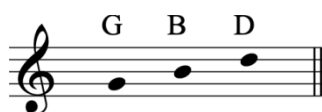
1. **Warm-up**

Begin with your class sitting cross-legged in a circle. Ask the children to close their eyes and listen. When you have absolute silence make a very soft shimmering sound by quickly tapping your fingers on your knees. Stop and ask everyone if they heard the shimmering sound. Perhaps those sat right across the circle from you won't have heard it so repeat the activity and this time, ask your children to join in with the sound when they hear the person next to them. Your shimmer will then gradually spread around the circle. Challenge your class to stop when the person next to them stops too (this is much harder!).

2. **Explain that you have just made a 'shimmer'** – similar to the sound at the beginning of Zimmer's piece.

3. **Look at your instrument collection.** Ask the children to suggest some unpitched instruments to join in with the shimmer – these should be instruments capable of making a soft, continuous sound or capable of being played in such a way (i.e. a drum can be tapped lightly with the fingers instead of hit with a beater). Add some of these suggestions to your class shimmer.

4. **Now try adding some pitched instruments.** Use these notes:



Remind your class to keep the shimmer as quiet as possible. The technical term for this is 'pianissimo'.

Should they all shimmer at the same time or should they stagger the entries of the different types of shimmer?

5. **Now it's time to add some singing to your shimmer.** Zimmer makes a series of short melodies by selecting just three or four pitches from this scale:



Please feel free to adapt these notes to suit the instruments you have and the ability of your young musicians.

Teach these notes to your children – they can play them on their instruments and/or sing them. Ask a volunteer to invent a short fragment of melody by choosing just three or four pitches and putting them in an order. Write this on the board and encourage half of your circle to sing and play it slowly. Everyone else can continue with the shimmer.

Zimmer's opening melody is this for example:



6. **Choose another volunteer** to create a second short melody and ask the other half of the circle to perform it.
7. **FINALLY**, put all of your ideas together. The shimmer should be played all the way through while you alternate between the two melodies on top. You might want to appoint a conductor to help with this. Encourage your performers to keep lots of space and stillness between the melodies and not move too quickly, just like in Zimmer's piece. Write down what you have done at the end of the lesson, you will return to it later in the project. Call this your 'shimmering introduction'.

LESSON 3

Three-note patterns (people on earth)

1. Warm-up

Repeat the warm-up from last lesson and then talk and sing through your 'shimmering introduction'. Get the instruments out and play through it. Make sure that everyone has the same instrument as last week and is sat in the correct 'half' of the circle.

2. **Remind your class that Zimmer's piece gets a bit 'busier' during the middle.** Ask your children to think of what it might be describing on earth – maybe they will say 'people moving around' or 'cars'. Zimmer uses just three pitches during this section so ask your class to choose three notes from the following scale:

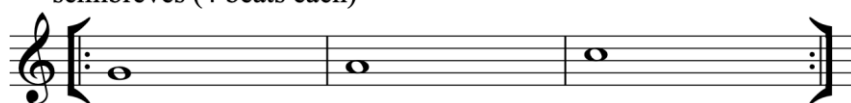


For example, your children may choose G, A, C – make sure that everyone with a pitched instrument can play the chosen pitches.


This is the same set of notes you used for the melodies in the last lesson.

3. **Practise** playing through your chosen notes encouraging everyone who has a pitched instrument to play each note as follows:


semibreves (4 beats each)




crotchets (1 beat each)



quavers (1/2 beat each)



semiquavers (1/4 beat each)



The image shows four musical staves, each with a treble clef and repeat signs at both ends. The first staff contains three semibreve notes (half-circle) on the G, A, and C lines. The second staff contains three crotchet notes (quarter notes) on the G, A, and C lines. The third staff contains six quaver notes (eighth notes) on the G, A, and C lines. The fourth staff contains twelve semiquaver notes (sixteenth notes) on the G, A, and C lines.

Children with unpitched instruments can help with counting or provide a gentle pulse to keep everyone together.

This is a great way to introduce some technical terms or to begin teaching notation. These patterns are all different lengths, just like in Zimmer's piece. This is so that every repeat creates a different collision of notes. The technical term for this is phasing.

4. **Explain**

Zimmer has all of these different note lengths (durations) layered up in his piece. Ask the class to suggest which instruments should play each different duration. For example, they should consider which instrument makes the best long notes (semibreves) – perhaps they will decide on violins for this – and which instrument makes the ‘neatest’ short notes (semiquavers) – this might be xylophones.

5. **Split into four groups based on these decisions** – so you will have a semibreve group, a crotchet group, a quaver group and a semiquaver group. The unpitched players will make up the fifth group. Each team must practise their pattern. The unpitched group must create a short, neat rumble with a crescendo (i.e. moving from soft to loud).

6. **Bring the class back together** and hear each group one by one giving some gentle feedback as you go through. Ask the class to come up with an order for the groups so that they create one big piece. The pitched groups must try to fit their rhythms together and to the same pulse (the crotchet group is the most important team as it provides the pulse). The unpitched group is different – they don’t have to fit in at all. Their job is to provide a bit of excitement on top of the texture so they can play the rumble whenever they like but perhaps not too often, it needs to come as a surprise.

7. **FINALLY**, fix this structure and practise it. Again, write down carefully what you have done and give it a name such as ‘people on earth’.

LESSON 4

Life on Earth

- 1. Warm-up**

Begin this lesson by leading a quick brainstorming activity. Ask your children to think of things associated with Earth and make a big list on the board. These can be descriptions of landscape, or life on the planet, or even scientific facts.
- 2. Split the class into smaller working groups.** Ask each group to choose three things from the list on the board making sure that, if possible, each group chooses something different from the others.
- 3. Ask each group to make a musical motif** for each of the things on their list. Motif is the term for a short musical idea. It can be a rhythm, a collection of notes or even a sound effect. Encourage your students to keep their motifs short and simple and to use the same instruments they have been using so far on the project. If they want to change instrument, they may swap with someone in their group but they must avoid swapping with someone from another group or choosing something completely new.
- 4. Challenge each group to make a short piece from these motifs.** They could use the following questions to guide them:
 - What goes first?
 - What goes last?
 - Do any of the motifs fit together?
 - Do the motifs overlap, transform or repeat?
- 5. Hear each group one by one** and ask the class to join their ideas together to make one big section. Again, the questions above may help with this.
- 6. FINALLY**, when your structure is decided on, perhaps you have tried out several options before deciding, write it on the board and practise until everyone knows what they are doing. Write down what you have done and give the piece a name such as 'life on earth'.

LESSON 5

Structure

1. Warm-up

Begin in a large circle with a quick focusing activity and talk through all the elements you have made so far. Here's a list:

- **Shimmering introduction** – quiet shimmer and two alternating melodies (lesson 2)
- **Three-note patterns** – with four different durations and random rumbles (lesson 3)
- **Life on Earth** – short motifs put together to make a piece (lesson 4)

2. Get the instruments out

and put these sections back together. Your children should be using just one instrument all the way through but they may be in several different groups so perhaps keep everyone together as you remember everything and work slowly and carefully.

3. Challenge your class

to join the sections together to make one big piece. They must think about this musically but also logistically – can they make the music work without having to move around too much? As usual you may have to try out several different versions until you land upon the best solution. Write this one down.

Hans Zimmer uses this shape:

- Shimmering introduction
- Three note patterns
- 'life on earth' section
- Shimmering returns
- Three note patterns, huge crescendo

...but you don't have to!

4. FINALLY

– practise your full piece until it is neat and ready for performance.

LESSON 6

Performance time!

1. **Get the instruments out** and put the piece back together.

2. **Explain**

You are going to perform your new work to another class. Spend some time arranging your musicians so that everyone can be seen and there is a clear area for the audience. The best shape to perform in is often a large semicircle (like the orchestra layout) but you must make sure that everyone can see everyone else and any conductors or signallers are at the front.

You might like to place some of your artwork from lesson 1 as a backdrop to your 'band'.

3. **Before your audience arrives**, have a discussion about dynamics, i.e. louds and softs. You should already have crescendos in the piece (in the rumbles from lesson 2). Can you put in any other moments where the volume changes? This will make the piece sound a lot more polished. If you have a list of events on the board, write your dynamics on it. Here's a list of the symbols musicians use for this:

<i>Pp</i>	pianissimo (very soft)
<i>P</i>	piano (soft)
<i>F</i>	forte (loud)
<i>Ff</i>	fortissimo (very loud)
<i>cresc.</i>	gradually getting louder
<i>dim.</i>	gradually getting softer

4. **Also give some extra thought to the ending.** Zimmer ends his piece with a huge crescendo, should your piece end like that or can you think of another way?
5. **FINALLY**, – put on a concert for your audience. Select volunteers to introduce the music and talk a little about Hans Zimmer (you could even watch his piece) and then perform your new piece.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Cross-curricular activities

- **MUSIC:** Explore the other planets with Holst's *Planet Suite*. [Mars](#) features on BBC Ten Pieces.
- **MUSIC:** Zimmer has a lot in common with another BBC Ten Pieces composer, Delia Derbyshire. She made the theme to *Dr Who*. Zimmer has made many tv themes and, like Delia, he is a huge fan of electronic music.
- **FILM:** Watch some of Hans Zimmer's greatest film music moments and have a go at creating your own film music by muting the sound and playing your new compositions on top. 'Blue Planet' and 'Planet Earth' are good places to start.
- **UPLOAD:** Show us what you've created! Submit your creative responses using our [Uploader](#) for a chance to be featured on the Ten Pieces website.