



The Little Fir Tree

While watching the programme

Where in programme	Activities	Areas of musical learning
<p>Opening section - Instruments The instruments being played are:</p> <p>1: The trumpet - a brass instrument. The trumpet is made from brass. It flares into a bell and can have three valves. It is blown.</p> <p>2: The horn - a brass instrument. The horn is made from brass tubing which is coiled, flaring into a bell. It has valves and is blown.</p> <p>3: The piano - a keyboard instrument. The piano is made from wood and the strings are made of steel or copper. Normally there are 88 keys which are wood with a plastic covering. The keys are pressed.</p> <p>4: The oboe - a woodwind instrument. The oboe is made from wood, plastic or resin with a double reed and metal keys. It is blown.</p>	<p>Can the children:</p> <p>Foundation activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat the names of the instruments? • Copy how the performers are holding and playing their instruments? <p>Extension activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how each instrument is making its sound (blown/plucked with fingers/tapped/etc)? • Describe the sounds the instruments make? • Say which instruments they most like the sound of and why? <p>Advanced activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and describe the materials the instruments are made from? • Say something about how each instrument sounds after it has been introduced - is it playing loudly/quietly, slowly/quickly, funny/thoughtful/sad/etc? 	<p>In this section of the programme the children will begin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovering instruments and how they are held and played. • Understanding how instruments make their sounds. • Discovering the materials from which instruments are made. • Thinking critically about what instruments sound like and which they prefer. • Recognising difference between the instruments' sound.
<p>Throughout the programme</p>	<p>Children on screen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage your child/children to join in with the actions/vocalising of the on screen children. • Encourage them also to think of their own responses. <p>Core musical activity There are opportunities to play along with instruments/soundmakers in this episode.</p>	<p>Throughout the programme the children will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with sound and movement. • Thinking creatively and having their own musical responses.

Throughout the programme (continued)

You may wish to gather resources that make 'chopping' sounds (eg woodblock, drum, pan and wooden spoon); 'shaky' sounds (eg maracas, shaky eggs, tambourine); 'bell' sounds (eg jingly bells, hand bell); 'angel' sounds (eg glockenspiel, chimes). Or junk modelling instruments could be made. The children could be split into groups of different soundmakers and play along with 'their' sound.

Little Fir Tree song

In this programme the song is gentle and reflective. After the children have heard the song, can they join in, singing peacefully along with the presenter?

Extension activity

On rewatching ask if anyone wants to 'perform' to the class, encouraging solo, duet and small group singing.

In this activity the main areas of musical learning are:

- Listening
- Using singing voices
- Pitch-matching (singing the same notes as the animals)
- Turn-taking

Immediately after watching the programme

Plenary and comprehension questions

- What did the Little Fir Tree wish she was at the beginning? (Older and stronger)
- What were the trees that were being chopped down going to be made into? (Houses and paper for books)
- Can you think of other things made from wood? (Discussion)
- How did the old man get the Little Fir Tree home? (Put her in a wheelbarrow)
- Can you think of any other festivals and ways they are celebrated? (Discussion - Christmas, Easter, Eid, Diwali, Hannukah, etc)
- What happened to the Little Fir Tree after Christmas? (Decorations were taken off and she was put outside in her pot until next year)

Music

- How do you think the Little Fir Tree feels when she sings her song? (Discussion)
- When do you think the music sounds happiest? (When she realises she is a Christmas tree)
- Which music/sounds/instruments do you like most in this story and why? (Discussion)

In this activity the children will:

- Demonstrate that they understand what they have seen and heard.
- Apply reasoning.
- Communicate their feelings about the story and the music.
- Think creatively.

Credits

These activities have been devised and written by Early Years music education specialists Sally-Anne Brown and Victoria Holmes of Note Weavers CIC, to support music learning for children from ages 3-7.



Instruments (left to right): horn, oboe, trumpet.

Further follow-up activities

Christmas Tree song

Age 3 - 7 years **Time - 30 minutes - repeated to embed** **Resources - claves (wooden sticks) / wood blocks / wooden spoons / G and D chime bars and access to the activity video online / Recycle symbol**

Group discussion time

Quick recap. What did the Little Fir Tree become? A Christmas tree. She was planted in a pot so that she could be put outside after Christmas and then brought in again next year. That's what this short and simple song is about. [Watch the song and a demonstration of the Foundation activity on the Note Weavers website.](#)

Note: where instruments are mentioned in the activities below clapping could easily be substituted if no resources are available. It may also be easier to clap *before* introducing the instruments.

Foundation activity

Watch the activity demonstration a couple of times then join with the singing. The song starts on the note G. You can use your G chime bar to help with pitching. When singing this without the demonstration clip the teacher could say 'Ready and' so that the children know when to come in. The teacher to model when not using the demonstration clip so that the children can follow.

Clap/claves: Li-ttle Fir Tree, Li-ttle Fir Tree
 Shi-ning, spar-klng, Look-ing fine
 Li-ttle Fir Tree, Li-ttle Fir Tree
 Back next Christ-mas Time

Extension activity

Once the singing and clapping/claves are well established can a G chime bar be played on the first and third beats of each bar? For an added challenge play the G chime bar on the first beat and the D chime bar on the third, as [demonstrated in the activity video.](#)

Chime bar: Li-ttle Fir Tree, Li-ttle Fir Tree
 Shi-ning, spar-klng, Look-ing fine
 Li-ttle Fir Tree, Li-ttle Fir Tree
 Back next Christ-mas Time

Advanced activity

When all the above are well established a group of children playing jingly bells could play on every syllable of 'Little Fir Tree', but not on the second and fourth lines. This could be clapped first before introducing the instruments.

Jingly Bells: **Li-ttle Fir Tree, Li-ttle Fir Tree**
 Shi-ning, spar-king, Look-ing fine
Li-ttle Fir Tree, Li-ttle Fir Tree
 Back next Christ-mas Time

This could be performed for another class, starting with singing, then adding each layer as outlined above. The children will then hear as it grows in texture, timbre and dynamic.

Discuss these words with the children and their meanings:

Texture - the different layers of sound.

Timbre - the different sounds of instruments - the sound your singing voice makes is different to jingly bells and a chime bar!

Dynamics - whether something is played quietly or loudly. In this song, by adding instruments there will be a *crescendo* which means that it will get gradually louder.

Note: This may take a several attempts to establish: if your class/group of children manage just the foundation activity that's fine!

Musical learning

Using singing voice / Keeping a beat / Playing untuned percussion instruments (or body percussion) / Playing an *ostinato* pattern (repeated pattern) / Playing in ensemble (together with others) / Listening / Understanding some musical terms

Musical Storyland around the world

This story has been adapted from *The Little Fir Tree* by the Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen. What can you find out about Denmark and/or Hans Christian Andersen either in books or online? **Teachers note:** some Hans Christian Andersen stories can have quite dark themes and therefore will need checking for appropriateness before sharing with the class.

Sustainability

Age 3 - 7 years Time - 30 minutes class discussion, then activities continued through the school year

Resources - *Little Fir Tree* recycle sign to be put on the bin

Group discussion time

Talk about the tree. What happened to her after Christmas? She was put outside in a pot and brought in the next year. So she was *reused* which means she wasn't thrown away after one use. Recycling and reusing things is good for our planet because it means there is less waste. If we want our planet to stay healthy and be a nice place to live, we need to do our best to look after it by making small changes to how we live. This is called *living sustainably*.

Foundation activity

What could you reuse and recycle in your classroom? Could your class change habits and think of something, however small, which could make a difference - eg putting waste paper in the recycling instead of throwing it away? You could stick the Little Fir Tree recycling sign on a bin and encourage all the children to put any waste paper in that recycling bin. Think about what that paper and cardboard might go on to become?

A short animation on not dropping litter and recycling can be found here: [How do I care for the environment?](#) (EYFS / Reception - BBC Bitesize)

Extension activity

What other things round the classroom could make a positive difference to the planet? Some ideas:

- Encourage children to use both sides of a piece of paper - so that's two extra special drawings on one sheet!
- Switch lights off when not needed (there could there be a quiet time at some point each day when the lights are switched off - not just when using the whiteboard or screen).
- Use things that might have been thrown away for crafting activities.
- Plenty of ideas for crafting projects using things we would throw away can be found here: [Junk Rescue](#) (CBeebies - BBC)

Advanced activity

After the Foundation and Extension activities slightly older children could consider a 'No Energy Afternoon' when the teacher and children use no electrical gadgets, lights, or anything else with a power source! Can the children plan what they could do in advance during this time to think about the planet? Some ideas:

- Could they go on a nature walk around the school grounds? What signs of nature can they see in the setting? How could that be increased (plants in tubs, bird feeder - if allowed - a mini-pond with pond plants, etc)
- Could they use this time to read about the planet and share facts?
- Could they talk about things they've heard of that are good for the planet - using less plastic, recycling, going to charity shops, etc.
- Could they make posters to go round the school about looking after the planet? Could they make signs to encourage people to switch off lights and put them by switches?

Take it further

- Give an assembly presentation to the rest of the school on things they have done so far and encourage other classes to think of how they could be more environmentally friendly. Perhaps there could be 'Sustainability Heroes' in all classes who ensure that paper recycling, no energy times, etc are kept up.
- Contact local environmental organisations to see if they could come in and speak to the class about their activities and why looking after the planet is important.

And further!

Christmas Trees. Research how long it takes a Christmas tree to grow. If you get a real one is it in a pot or has it been chopped down? How do you recycle it? If the school has a Christmas Tree could you consider getting one in a pot which could be moved in and out each year? There are links below to sustainability content from CBeebies and CBBC and also links on how to apply for Blue Peter Green Badge:

[Ranger Hamza's Eco Quest](#)

[Environmental quizzes and games from Blue Peter](#)

[Go Green with Blue Peter](#)

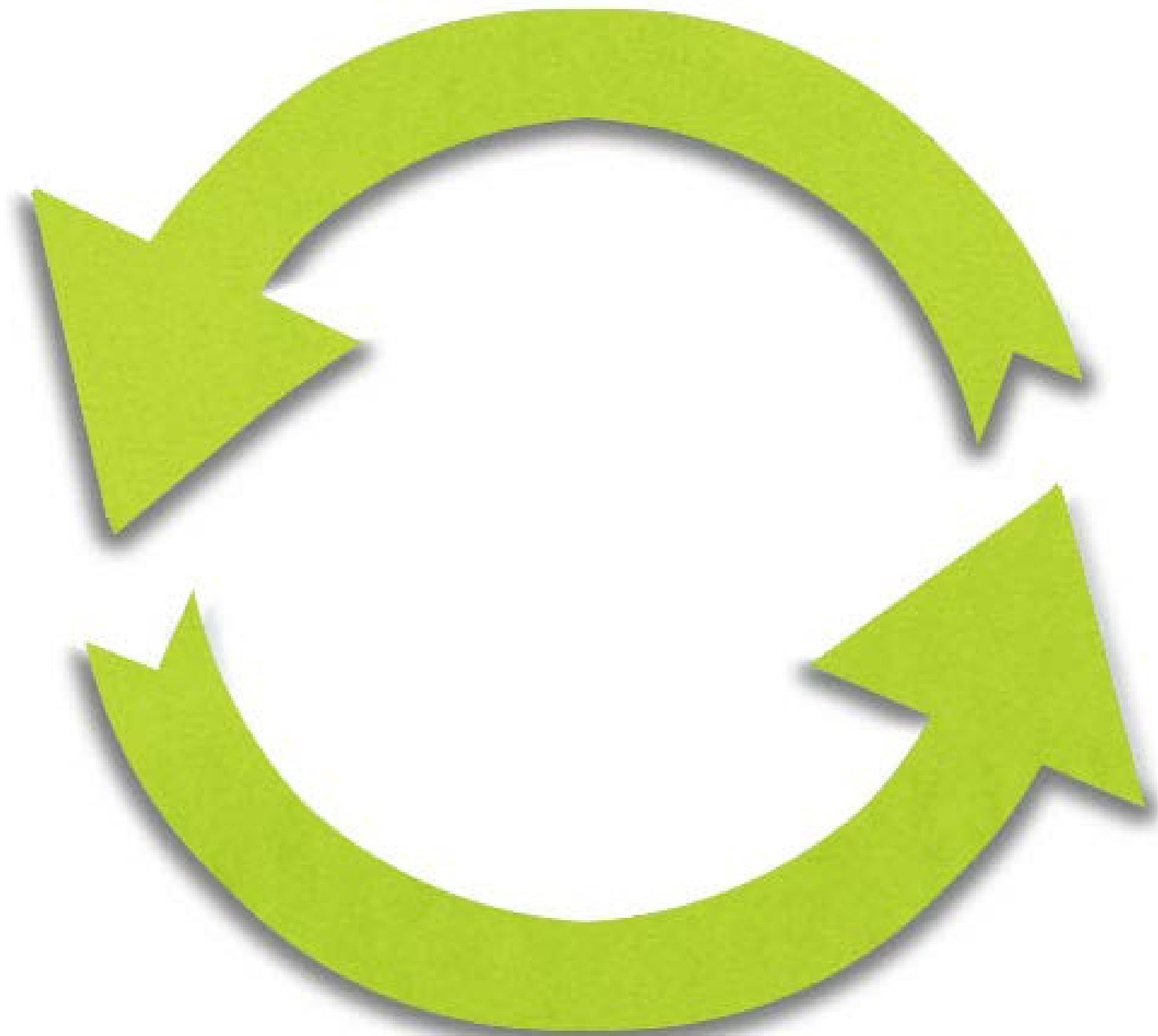
[How to get a Blue Peter Green Badge](#)

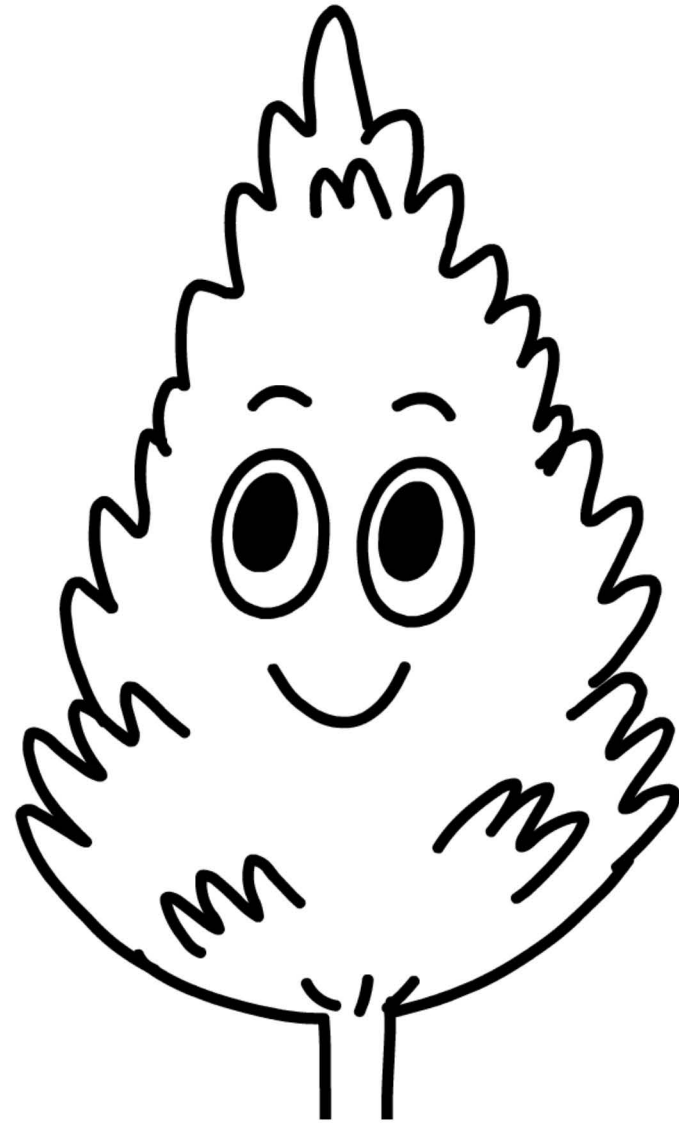
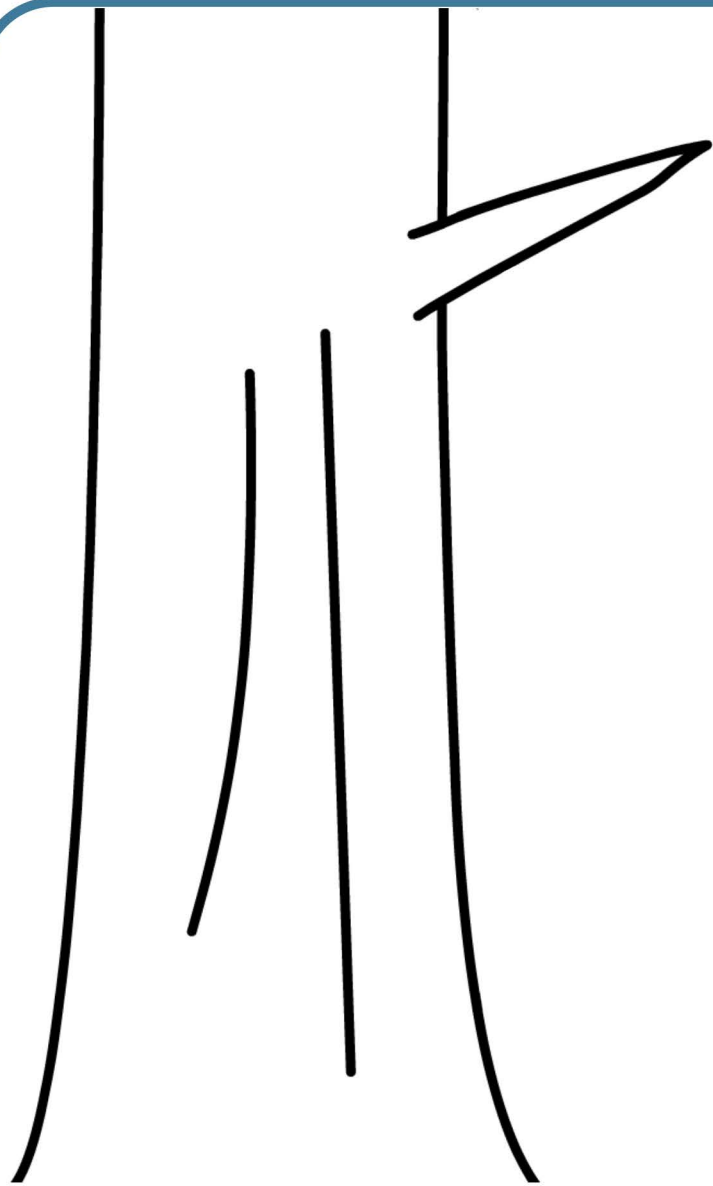
[Earth Day - Green Planet](#)

Learning

Sustainability / Reusing and recycling / Thinking about the planet and our impact on it / Whole school community activity









**musical
storyland**