



SUN SUNDAR SARGAM BY REENA ESMAIL

PRIMARY CLASSROOM LESSON PLAN by Harpal Manku

[WATCH THE FILM](#) | [LISTEN TO THE AUDIO](#)

For:

- National Curriculum in **ENGLAND** (KS2)
- **SCOTLAND** Curriculum for Excellence (Second Level)
- Curriculum for **WALES**: Expressive Arts (Progression Step 3)
- **NORTHERN IRELAND** Primary Curriculum (KS2)

Background

The composer: REENA ESMAIL

- Reena Esmail first realised she wanted to be a composer around the age of 17.
- Her talents blossomed when she carried on studying composition at The Julliard School in New York.
- Reena Esmail has also studied Hindustani music in India.
- Her music often celebrates how different musical styles can be mixed; Hindustani and Western classical music is a popular combination for Reena Esmail.
- Reena Esmail is passionate about using music to bring communities together in a collaborative space and being a mentor to young composers.

The music: SUN SUNDAR SARGAM

- Reena Esmail's piece is for voices and [sitar](#), a popular stringed instrument in Northern India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The sitar player sits down to perform and balances the sitar between their left foot and right knee.
- Like Reena Esmail, other musicians have mixed the Hindustani sounds of the sitar with different music. Bands such as The Beatles and The Rolling Stones included the sitar in their music.
- The piece uses the words *sun sundar sargam* which translates to 'listen to the beautiful musical notes'.
- Reena Esmail has based her piece on Raag Yaman, a popular raga in Hindustani music. A [raga](#) is a group of notes that act as 'ingredients' for improvisation.

Learning outcomes

Learners will:

- Listen to and reflect on the piece Sun Sundar Sargam
- Create their own piece of music using instruments and voice
- Perform as an ensemble
- Learn musical language appropriate to the task

Resources required:

- Classroom percussion instruments (e.g. glockenspiels), keyboards or iPads with GarageBand
- Classroom or school hall
- Supporting resources ([Resources](#), [Sun Sundar Sargam Words](#))
- African drums e.g. djembes or bongos

Curriculum checklist

National Curriculum in ENGLAND (KS2)

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

SCOTLAND Curriculum for Excellence (Second Level)

- Performs on instruments, individually or as part of a group, to communicate the mood and character of a piece of music through, for example, the use of appropriate dynamics and expression
- Explains, with supporting reasons, what works well and what could be improved in their own and others' work, using appropriate musical vocabulary

Curriculum for WALES: Expressive Arts (Progression Step 3)

- I can explore how creative work can represent, document, share and celebrate personal, social and cultural identities
- I can identify and respond creatively to challenges with resilience and flexibility
- I can apply knowledge and understanding of context, and make connections between my own creative work and creative work by other people from different places and times

NORTHERN IRELAND Primary Curriculum (KS2)

- Listen and respond to their own and others' music-making, thinking about, talking about and discussing a variety of characteristics within music that they create, perform or listen
- Sing and perform with simple instruments from memory, by ear or from notation to develop vocal and instrumental skills.

The lessons at a glance

This scheme of work is plotted out over four lessons. You may wish to adapt it to suit your children and the time/resources you have available.

LESSON 1:

- Activities:
- Listen to Sun Sundar Sargam, which is inspired by Raga Yaman (pronounced: raag-Yah-mun)
 - Students articulate how the music makes them feel and the mood using colour or drawings
 - Listen to the vocals and instruments played
- Learning intention:
- Appreciate and understand music from India
 - Represent the features of a piece of music using graphic notation and colours justifying their choices with reference to musical vocabulary

LESSON 2:

- Activities:
- Listen to Sun Sundar Sargam, which is inspired by Raga Yaman
 - Students learn the raga scales and the effects of the drone on the piece
 - Students learn the notational scales of the Raga Yaman
- Learning intention:
- Appreciate and understand what Raga Yaman is
 - Be able to improvise using given notes
 - Perform melodies using musical instruments and follow notes for the raga

LESSON 3:

- Activities:
- Learn, create and play the tala cycles in 6 beats and 16 beats
- Learning intention:
- Learn and understand strong and weak beats in Indian talas
 - Create a piece of music using a drone, raga and tala
 - Perform Tintal tala (16 beat time cycle) with increasing aural memory

LESSON 4:

- Activities:
- Perform in a concert
 - Structure the ideas into a piece using the three elements of Indian music using the Raga Yaman and the phrases Sun Sundar Sargam
- Learning intention:
- Use the elements of drone, raga and tala
 - Adjust dynamics and pitch according to the raga scale
 - Work as a group to perform a piece of music
 - Keep in time, communicate with and know my role in the group

LESSON 1

Listen in colour

Learning intention

- Appreciate and understand music from India
- Represent the features of a piece of music using graphic notation and colours, justifying choices with reference to musical vocabulary

Have ready

- [Sun Sundar Sargam audio \(ready to play\)](#)
- Colouring pencils, felt tips, paints
- A4 and A3 paper

1. WARM UP

Students are first going to create non-representational artwork based on the emotions they interpret in Sun Sundar Sargam.

Give each child a set of colours and plain A4 paper. Explain how students will be listening to Sun Sundar Sargam without knowing anything about it. Encourage them to think creatively about what they are hearing and to use musical terminology to support their colour choices, for example 'the dynamic is loud and the key is minor, so I have used a strong, dark colour like black'.

Play the [audio for Sun Sundar Sargam](#), listening to the whole track. Give the students five minutes to start to draw any shapes using the colours.

Questions to consider:

- Is there a consensus or is everyone picking different colours?
- If the colours chosen are different, how different are they and why do you think that is?
- What is the mood of the music?
- What emotions do you feel when listening?

2. ACTIVITY

Teacher to read the words of Sun Sundar Sargam both in Hindi and English meaning of the words ([words can be downloaded here](#)).

Before listening to the audio for the second time, ask children to consider the following:

Key questions

- What instruments can you hear? Answer (SITAR)
- What is happening with the speed?
- Where do you think this music is from?
- What makes you think that?

[Play the audio](#) for Sun Sundar Sargam again to the whole class.

Ask the children to think about which country the music comes from and why they think that. Ask what instruments the children think they heard and to describe the [tempo](#) (speed) and [dynamics](#) (volume).

The children will be learning some of the traditional aspects of Indian music, including the instruments, the main components to listen out for and expression.

The children will learn the words of Sun Sundar Sargam. [Find Reena Esmail's audio guides to her composition, including pronunciations.](#)

Explain to the children that the main Indian instrument being played is the sitar and that the notes played by the sitar and sung by the singers are from [Raga Yaman](#).

Sitar – a string instrument played upright like a guitar.

Raga – a specific set of notes played in a specific order, like a scale, often on a sitar. Ragas relate to specific moods or times of the day and we will be learning more about this in the next lesson. Hear the Sitar Raga from 5'53 of Sun Sundar Sargam [here](#).

Raga Yaman – a type of raga which includes all seven notes in an octave. It is an early evening raga played between 7pm-10pm which is romantic in nature and signifies happiness, serenity, calmness and devotion.

RAGA YAMAN NOTES

Ni	Re	Ga	Ma	Da	Ni	Sa*	Sa*	Ni	Da	Pa	Ma	Ga	Re	Sa
B	D	E	Gb	A	B	C	C	B	A	G	Gb	E	D	C

Going up the scale
Aaroh Ascending

Coming down the scale
Avroh Descending

With the class, discuss the Raga Yaman and what feeling or emotion students think it may be conveying.

Assessing student progress and understanding

Students with secure understanding indicated by: their ability to create a graphic drawing using colours and describe how this matches the general structure and mood of the music

Students working at greater depth indicated by: their ability to create a detailed graphic score showing several musical features, and justify their colour choices using musical terminology

Differentiation

Students needing extra support: might need the opportunity to view other groups' graphic drawings during the activity and will be working in mixed ability groupings

Students working at greater depth: should use musical terminology throughout to describe the music they are listening to

Optional Quiz

What is the speed of the music called?	Tempo
What are 'dynamics' in music?	How loudly or quietly a piece of music should be played
What is the name of the stringed instrument played upright like a guitar?	Sitar
What is a group of notes arranged by ascending or descending order of pitch?	A scale
What is a series of 8 notes of a musical scale where the first and last notes of the scale are 8 notes apart?	An octave
What is a specific set of notes played in a specific order, often on a sitar, called?	A raga

LESSON 2

Raga Yaman

Learning intention

- Appreciate and understand what Raga Yaman is
- Improvise using given notes
- Perform melodies using musical instruments and follow notes for the raga

Before the lesson

- Teacher listens and plays the scale of Raga Yaman
- Prepare the classroom with instruments, keyboards, Glockenspiels or iPads with GarageBand
- Have ready [Sun Sundar Sargam audio](#)
- Print out the relevant supporting resources ([Sun Sundar Sargam Words](#), [Resources](#))

1. SET UP

Children are going to be learning the basics of what Raga Yaman is and how they can use it.

Ask if they can remember what a raga is from last lesson (a raga is a series of notes which Indian music uses to create the tune).

They are going to be using keyboards or glockenspiels in pairs, using the following notes for the raga:

Ni	Re	Ga	Ma	Da	Ni	Sa*	Sa*	Ni	Da	Pa	Ma	Ga	Re	Sa
B	D	E	Gb	A	B	C	C	B	A	G	Gb	E	D	C

The idea is that the students will only use these notes within their composition.

2. ACTIVITY

First, get them to practise playing the notes of the raga in the right order. Hand out the [resources worksheet](#) (see raga section) and get them to try going up and down until they can play it fluently.

Next, allow one of the students to have a go at playing the same given notes in a different order. They can take it in turns improvising, as this is commonly found in traditional Indian music.

Explain to students what a [drone](#) is. A drone is a long sustained sound without variation which is used for an atmospheric or ambient effect. It is a note played over and over in the background, which can sound a bit like someone humming a long-held note.

3. MAIN TASK

Put the children into pairs.

The children choose **Pa** or **Sa** (G or C – see *Resources* worksheet) for their drone which should be played on the keyboard or glockenspiels. Once they have decided which note to use, give them a few minutes to practise playing it again and again. They should play slowly, allowing the note to naturally die out before playing it again.

Once they are happy with the way it sounds, one person from each pair should continue to play the drone, while the other plays the raga alongside it. The person playing the raga should start in the given order, but when confident, can start to improvise (whilst still ensuring that they stick to the given notes).

Make sure both students in each pair get the opportunity to play the raga and the drone, even changing to the other drone note if desired.

Explain to the children that in Indian music the instrument used to create the drone effect is called the [Tanpura](#). As sustained effect is obtained when the string is plucked.

In Sun Sundaar Sargam, Reena Esmail often uses the voices as the drone. For example, in the [opening of the piece](#), the voices are playing the drone.

4. PLENARY

Ask the children to [listen to Sun Sundaar Sargam again](#), listening out for how the drone effect is created in the music (using the voices).

Students to show their work in progress to another group and get some peer feedback. Ask students to consider the following questions when giving feedback:

- Have they used the note Pa or Sa?
- How smoothly is it played?
- Can they hum or sing Pa or Sa notes?
- Does the raga play in time with the drone?

Assessing students progress and understanding

Students with secure understanding indicated by: Using the correct notes of the raga, playing alongside a drone.

Students working at greater depth indicated by: Showing more originality with their experimenting of the raga and playing in time with the drone.

Differentiation

Students needing extra support: Might need to use stickers on the notes that they need for the Raga Yaman.

Students working at greater depth: Should consider how to play in time with the drone. Should experiment with a louder or quieter drone

Optional Quiz

What is a Raga?	A specific set of notes played in a specific order, like a scale, often on a sitar.
What is the type of Raga which includes all seven notes in an octave called?	Raga Yaman
What is a long sustained sound without variation called? It is often used for an atmospheric or ambient effect	A drone
What is a Tanpura?	A traditional long-necked plucked string instrument, visually similar to the sitar

LESSON 3

Tala

Learning intention

- Learn and understand strong and weak beats in Indian talas
- Create a piece of music using a drone, raga and tala
- Perform Tintal tala (16 beat time cycle) with increasing aural memory

Before the lesson

- Teacher listens and plays the scale of Raga Yaman
- Prepare the classroom with instruments including hand-played drums such as bongos or djembes, keyboards, Glockenspiels or iPads with GarageBand
- Have ready [Sun Sundar Sargam audio](#)
- Print out the relevant supporting resources ([Sun Sundar Sargam Words](#), [Resources](#))

1. SET UP

In the last lesson, the children should have mastered their ragas and understood the simplicity of the drone. Today, they are going to learn about the third element of Indian music: the tala, which simply plays a repeated [rhythm](#) that measures musical time.

The rhythm they will use has four different sounds. Each word represents a different sound played on the table/drum (Dha, Dhin, Ta and Tin).

TALA

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha	Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha	Dha	Tin	Tin	Ta	Ta	Dhin	Dhin	Dha

2. ACTIVITY

Split the students into pairs.

Hopefully you'll have access to some hand-played drums such as bongos or djembes (African drums). Give each pair one between two and get them to come up with four different sounds using only that drum. They can make four different sounds by playing with different parts of their hands and on different parts of the head of the drum (the top).

Once they have created four different sounds, they need to give each sound one of the names (Dha, Dhin, Ta or Tin) so that they can play the rhythm.

Once they've assigned each sound a name, they can have a go at playing the rhythm on their drums.

Explain that we are going to learn a common type of tala called [Tintal](#). It has sixteen beats and the strong and weak beats are marked with actions.

Look at the Tala grid below and practise this section of the Tintal tala together. The first strong beat has been marked with a clap. Repeat it several times.

First, say the numbers aloud:

CLAP	2	3	4	CLAP	2	3	4	CLAP	2	3	4	CLAP	2	3	4
------	---	---	---	------	---	---	---	------	---	---	---	------	---	---	---

Next, say the numbers in thinking voices only:

CLAP	--	--	--	CLAP	--	--	--	CLAP	--	--	--	CLAP	--	--	--
------	----	----	----	------	----	----	----	------	----	----	----	------	----	----	----

3. MAIN TASK

Take a look at the below table of the Tala grid (16 box grid – [also available on page 2 of the resources worksheet](#)) and practise this together. Split the class into two – half the class should follow the hand gestures with the counting, and the other half can play the drum patterns (for Dha, Dhin, Ta and Tin). You can then swap over.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha	Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha	Dha	Tin	Tin	Ta	Ta	Dhin	Dhin	Dha
CLAP	2	3	4	CLAP	6	7	8	WAVE	10	11	12	CLAP	14	15	16

A wave has now been added to the weak beat 9 (rather than a wave like waving goodbye, this wave is an outward sweeping motion with the handheld palm upwards). [Watch the film](#) to see this in action, or here is Ten Pieces sitar player Debipriya demonstrating this:



Try to perform the entire tala together, first saying the numbers aloud with the actions, then saying the numbers only in thinking voices. Once you reach 16, go straight back to 1.

Once you have performed the complete Tintal tala a few times, explain that children are going to construct their own piece. [You can also use the blank grid here.](#)

As the first beat of an Indian tala is the most important, children should always put a clap on this. Each pair should now have: a drone, a raga and a tala, and now they are going to put all of these elements together. They should both have a go at each part.

Assessing student progress and understanding

Students with secure understanding indicated by: using the correct notes of the tala tintal, can develop an understanding of strong and weak beats, can count using the thinking voice and maintain a steady [pulse](#)

Students working at greater depth indicated by: showing the strong accents on beats 1, 5 and 13 and showing the weak accent on beat 9

Differentiation

Students needing extra support: might need to use stickers on the notes that indicate the strong and weak points in the tintal cycle, support with maintaining a steady pulse

Students working at greater depth: should perform with increasing accuracy and aural memory

Optional Quiz

What is the pattern and different length of sounds called?	The rhythm
What is the beat?	A steady pulse that is present throughout a piece of music, like our heartbeat. It can get faster or slower. There are strong beats and weak beats.
How many beats does the Tintal Tala have?	16 (4 + 4 + 4 + 4)

LESSON 4

Performance

Learning intention

- Use the elements of drone, raga and tala
- Adjust dynamics and pitch according to the raga scale
- Work as a group to perform a piece of music
- Keep in time, communicate with and know my role in the group

Before the lesson

- Check children have the performance piece to hand
- Access to all the instruments you need, including student's own instruments (if using them)
- Device to record the performances for evidence

1. SET UP

Ask the children to get back into their groups from Lesson 3 and to rehearse their pieces of music.

Remind the children that they will be performing these pieces in ten minutes time, so they need to use their time wisely to make any changes or improvements to their piece.

Ask the key questions and discuss the success criteria to ensure that everyone knows what they are working towards.

2. MAIN TASK

The children will now perform as a class. Video or audio record this as an assessment record.

Gradually invite each group to perform their piece of music.

Play the video or audio recording back to the students and ask the following questions, trying to get the children to comment on both the piece of music itself and on the way it was performed:

- What was the best part of the music?
- What was the best thing about the performance?
- What could they improve?

Ask the children to fix any issues that might arise until everyone knows what they are doing and you are ready for the performance.

3. PLENARY

Ask the children to tell you everything they have learned during lessons. Focus on the musical skills they have developed and encourage them to use musical terminology where appropriate in their answers.

Finally, get the class on stage in front of another class/the whole school to hear your music and tell them all about your musical journey with Raga Yaman.

Assessing students progress and understanding

Students with secure understanding indicated by: the ability to work as a group to perform a piece of music

Students working at greater depth indicated by: the ability to take a lead role in a group to perform a piece of music

Differentiation

Students needing extra support: could be grouped together with you supporting them

Students working at greater depth: should help support the class in the music making process

Optional Quiz

What do the dynamics of music mean?	How loudly or quietly a piece of music should be played
What is a long sustained sound without variation called? It is often used for an atmospheric or ambient effect	A drone
What is a Raga?	A specific set of notes played in a specific order, like a scale, often on a sitar.
What is the type of Raga which includes all seven notes in an octave called?	Raga Yaman
What is the name of a rhythmical pattern or phrase set to a cycle of time?	Tala
What is the name of the Tala made up of 16 beats?	Tintal tala

TAKING IT FURTHER

Cross-curricular activities

- **GEOGRAPHY/RESEARCH:** The sitar is a traditional Indian instrument. Choose 3 different countries from anywhere around the world and research their traditional musical instruments, what they look like and what they sound like.
- **ARTWORK:** Come up with a brand new musical instrument! Draw your instrument on a piece of paper and label the picture thinking about what it looks like, what it sounds like and why it looks this way.

GLOSSARY OF MUSICAL TERMS USED

TERM	DEFINITION
Drone	Long sustained sounds without variation used for an atmospheric or ambient effect
Dynamics	How loudly or quietly a piece of music should be played
Tuned instruments	Instruments that have different pitches and can be used to play a melody or tune, e.g. glockenspiel
Pulse	Steady beat that runs through the music
Raga	A specific set of notes played in a specific order, like a scale, often on a sitar.
Raga Yaman	A type of raga which includes all seven notes in an octave. It is a early evening raga played between 7pm-10pm which is romantic in nature and signifies happiness, serenity, calmness and devotion
Rhythm	A pattern of sounds of different lengths
Sitar	A string instrument that comes from Northern India which is played sat down and looks similar to a guitar (although a sitar can have up to 21 strings, whereas a guitar has six strings)
Tabla	Traditional Indian drum
Tala	A rhythmical pattern or phrase set to a cycle of time
Tanpura	A traditional long-necked plucked string instrument, visually similar to the sitar
Tempo	Speed of the music
Tintal	Most common tala, made up of 16 beats (4 + 4 + 4 + 4)
Tone	Refers to the sound qualities of a particular sound e.g. a loud tone, deep tone, pleasing tone etc.
Untuned instruments	Instruments that do not have different pitched sounds and cannot be used to play a melody, e.g. triangle