



'MAGIC' FROM *STORM* BY JUDITH WEIR

PRIMARY CLASSROOM LESSON PLAN by Fran Hart

[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: JUDITH WEIR

Pronounced: weer

- Best known for her music for opera and theatre – her music is performed all round the world.
- Master of the King's Music from 2014 to 2024 (an important job created back in 1626 by King Charles I!) – this means Weir works closely for royal events such as weddings, jubilees and coronations.
- Grew up in London, from a Scottish family – her music draws inspiration from Scottish folk tales as well as older stories from Medieval times.

The music: 'MAGIC' FROM *STORM*

- Uses text from William Shakespeare's famous play *The Tempest*, drawing on the ocean, wind, waves and the air rather than specific characters.
- Small ensemble of just 9 players, including female voices and a children's choir.
- The text for 'Magic' is written in Shakespeare's favourite style: iambic pentameter where a line of text is split into ten syllables (stressed and unstressed).

Learning outcomes

Learners will:

- Listen and reflect on the music heard
- Explore developing knowledge of musical components by [composing](#) music to create a specific mood
- Develop control of sounds to play/sing with more [expression](#)
- Use voices creatively
- Perform a [structured](#) composition in an ensemble

Resources required:

- [Tuned and untuned](#) classroom instruments
- Non-instruments, e.g. wood, stones, metal

Curriculum checklist

National Curriculum in ENGLAND (KS2)

- 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

SCOTLAND Curriculum for Excellence (Second Level)

- Recognises a range of music styles and identifies some of the main instruments used in, for example, classical music, jazz music, rock and pop music
- 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
- Uses voice, instruments and technology to create music, experimenting with timbre, for example, uses tuned/untuned percussion instruments to create simple melodies and rhythms

Curriculum for WALES: Expressive Arts (Progression Step 3)

- I can explore and describe how artists and creative work communicate mood, feelings and ideas and the impact they have on an audience
- I can apply knowledge and understanding of context, and make connections between my own creative work and creative work by other people and from other places and times
- I can identify and respond creatively to challenges with resilience and flexibility

NORTHERN IRELAND Primary Curriculum (KS2)

- Sing and perform with simple instruments from memory, by ear or from notation to develop vocal instrumental skills
- Work creatively with sound by creating musical stories, pictures, patterns, conversations, accompaniments and by investigating ways of preserving the music they have created

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.

[For guidance on notation, please see here.](#)

LESSON 1:

- Activities: Listen to the extract/watch the film, and relate magic to the music
Explore instruments to create a magical atmosphere, including vocals, tuned and untuned instruments and everyday objects. **Year 5 & 6** – [chords](#)
- Learning intention: Listen and reflect on the music heard
Explore developing knowledge of musical components by composing music to create a specific mood

LESSON 2:

- Activities: Explore expression in a known song
Apply these techniques to the magic composition to develop its expression, e.g. using [dynamics, tempo, texture, timbre](#) etc.
- Learning intention: Develop control of sounds to play/sing with more expression

LESSON 3:

- Activities: Listen to the extract/watch the film and identify the different ways the [lyrics](#) are sung
Explore these vocal techniques to create a mysterious expression using given lyrics
- Learning intention: Listen and reflect on the music they hear
Explore developing knowledge of musical components by composing music to create a specific mood
Use voices creatively

LESSON 4:

- Activities: Using composed magic music and vocal mysterious music, rehearse and perform a structured performance (**Year 3 & 4** – [rondo](#), **Year 5 & 6** – ABA)
- Learning intention: Develop control of sounds to play/sing with more expression
Perform a structured composition in an ensemble

LESSON 1

Learning intention

- Listen and reflect on the music heard
- Explore developing knowledge of musical components by composing music to create a specific mood

1. STARTER

Introduce the synopsis of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Prospero uses magic to create a storm. This impacts shipwrecked people on an island, including Prospero's brother. Judith Weir has composed 'Storm' in 5 [movements](#) that represent this story in music. The five movements are:

- 1) Storm/Shipwreck 2) Charm 3) Magic 4) Spirit 5) Mercy

[Watch](#) or [listen](#) to 'Magic'.

2. ACTIVITY

Discuss in pairs how the music creates a magical atmosphere. Share as a class.

Identify the use of everyday objects to create some of the sounds, e.g. stones are used at the very beginning, a referee's whistle, and a sheet of metal. This will be easier if students have [watched the film](#). Ask if anyone could make out any words.

Look at the words – the lyrics – taken from Shakespeare's play, and identify any references to magic:

William Shakespeare

The Tempest (Act V Scene 1)

Ye elves of hills, lakes, standing lakes and groves,
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune and do fly him
When he comes back; you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew.... I have bedimmed
The noontide sun.... graves at my command
Have waked their sleeper, opened, let them forth.

3. MAIN TASK

Prospero is about to cast a spell in *The Tempest*. Challenge – in groups, create a magical atmosphere using:

- Vocal sounds
- Untuned instruments
- Tuned instruments
- Everyday objects e.g. water bottles, pots, tubs etc. (**Year 5 & 6** – use [concorde](#) and [discords](#))

Key questions groups can use to help their compositions:

- 1) How will the composition start?
- 2) How will the music change?
- 3) How will it end?
- 4) What will each player do?
- 5) How will we know if we are successful?

Groups explore sounds and how to play them to create a magical atmosphere. Encourage them to be creative with their instruments / voices and to use dynamics, tempo, texture, timbre etc., although this is the focus of Lesson 2. Record the compositions so that students can remember them.

4. PLENARY

Groups share their compositions so far. Discuss how successful the group has been in creating a magical atmosphere, with suggestions and comments from other pupils. Has the group used all of the required sounds?

5. OPTIONAL QUIZ

What do we call the words in a song?	Lyrics
What is composing?	Creating or writing original music
Name a tuned classroom instrument	Glockenspiel, xylophone
Name a vocal sound	Whispering, tongue clicks, rapping
What is tempo?	The speed of the music
What are dynamics?	How loud or quiet the music is

LESSON 2

Learning intention

- Develop control of sounds to play/sing with more expression

1. STARTER

Sing a well-known song, e.g. Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, Boom Chikka Boom, Drunken Sailor etc. We will revisit this later in the lesson.

2. ACTIVITY

[Watch](#) or [listen](#) to 'Magic' by Judith Weir again. Discuss how the music changes and develops. Example questions:

- Use dynamics, tempo, texture, timbre etc. to describe the opening
 - e.g. *[quiet – piano](#) / short sounds – pizzicato pulsing/ quite thin textured / [andante – walking pace](#)*
- How does the piece end?
 - *A descending flute pattern – scale, a metal sheet or thunder sheet and strings playing on the bridge for a rough scratchy effect*
- Is the music always the same dynamic?
 - *No – it starts quietly, has louder and quieter sections before a loud climax two thirds in where the referee's whistle is used. It reduces in dynamic, but is very loud just before the very end*
- Does the tempo change?
 - *No – there are changes of rhythm/duration, particularly in the flutes, but the pulse remains the same*

3. LEARNING

Sing the well-known song (chosen at the start of this lesson, e.g. Drunken Sailor or Boom Chikka Boom), but make changes to it e.g. singing it at different tempo (speed), dynamics (how loud or quiet), with different length sounds (duration) and using different 'voices', e.g. whispering, in an opera style, with an accent (timbre). Can any layers be added to make a thicker texture?

Discuss the impact of these changes on the mood of the song. This is **expression – the mood, feeling, emotions or atmosphere** of a piece of music. Highlight how a singer might show expression as they sing (e.g. this can be done through diction and dynamics).

4. MAIN TASK

Apply this understanding of expression to the magic music creation in Lesson 1. Revise the task that was set to create a magical atmosphere using:

- Untuned instruments
- Tuned instruments
- Everyday objects (**Year 5 & 6** – use *concords and discords*)

Groups need to develop their use of dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture and duration to make their compositions more expressive and magical.

5. PLENARY

Share the magic compositions again. Each group should explain the changes they have made to make their composition more expressive. The other class members should give feedback to the group to say how successful they have been in creating expressive magic music.

6. OPTIONAL QUIZ

Name an Italian term to describe the dynamics	Forte or piano
What is <i>andante</i>?	Walking pace
What is expression in music?	Mood, feelings, emotion, atmosphere
How can you change expression?	Change dynamics, tempo, texture, timbre etc.
What is pizzicato?	Plucked strings
Name an untuned instrument	Triangle, drum, maraca, wood block

LESSON 3

Learning intention

- Listen and reflect on the music they hear
- Explore developing knowledge of musical components by composing music to create a specific mood
- Use voices creatively

1. STARTER

[Listen](#) or [watch](#) 'Magic' by Judith Weir again, focussing on the lyrics and how they are combined with the instrument sounds.

Listen again to the opening few bars and identify how the sounds are short ([staccato](#)) as the cellos play pizzicato.

Score for Soprano, Alto, Cello I, Cello II, and Cello III. The tempo is 2/4. The cellos play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, marked *pizz. mp*.

This is also heard with the voices in bars 15-17 ([0'25](#)), 32-35 ([0'55](#)) and 39-43 ([1'07](#)).

Here are bars 15-17:

Score for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Violoncello I (Vc. I), Violoncello II (Vc. II), and Violoncello III (Vc. III). The tempo is 2/4. The vocal parts have lyrics: "and do fly him when he comes". The cellos play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, marked *pizz. mp*.

2. ACTIVITY

[Listen again](#) and ask the pupils to identify when the music changes mood and is no longer short and staccato. This is in bar 46 ([1'19](#)) where the music is marked as *legato misterioso*. Ask the class – what do you think *legato misterioso* means? Answer: smooth and mysteriously.

3. LEARNING

Read together:

*The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war—to th' dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak*

This is still part of Prospero's speech before his spell is cast. These Shakespearean words are in iambic pentameter. This means there are usually 10 syllables in a line where they are in pairs of an unstressed syllable, followed by an stressed one.

Read the words again, stressing the alternating syllables.

Explore the words, copying the staccato opening of *Storm* and then repeating with [legato](#) sounds.

Experiment with changing duration, tempo, dynamics, pitch and timbre of the words as they are spoken.

Discuss how changing dynamics, tempo, texture, timbre etc. creates different moods from the words.

4. MAIN TASK

Year 3 & 4 – as a class

Year 5 & 6 – in the same groups as Lesson 1 and 2

Either prepare a performance of Prospero's words (2 or 4 lines), creating a mysterious atmosphere that matches the words or write 2 lines of a spell in iambic pentameter. These lyrics will then need to be performed in a mysterious way, using some of the techniques explored, e.g. whispered, short, quiet sounds, followed by legato, loud sounds. They can also be sung rather than spoken.

5. PLENARY

Share the lyrics rehearsed so far. What techniques have been used to create a mysterious atmosphere? Do they sound like a spell? Are there suggestions on how improvements can be made?

6. OPTIONAL QUIZ

Does staccato mean short or long?	Short
What are lyrics?	Words in a song
What is the Italian term for plucked?	Pizzicato
What does legato mean?	Long, smooth
What is duration?	How long sounds are – rhythm
What does 'forte' mean?	Loud

LESSON 4

Learning intention

- Develop control of sounds to play/sing with more expression
- Perform a structured composition in an ensemble

1. **STARTER**

Sing a well-known song and identify how it is structured. For example, an intro, verse, chorus, verse, chorus, outro.

What is structure? It is the way the music is mapped or planned out.

2. **MAIN TASK**

Year 3 & 4 – whole class should rehearse the lyrics, revising how these will be performed to create a mysterious atmosphere for casting a spell. Groups should also rehearse their magic music. The class will need to rehearse the whole composition, ordering their music as a rondo:

Section A – whole class lyrics
B – group magic music
A
C – another group's magic music
A
D etc.

Questions to ask:

- Are all the players clear when they play?
- Is a conductor or leader needed to point to groups or something displayed to help?
- Are there any improvements needed before the final performance?
- Is everyone remembering how to control the sounds to make the music expressive?

Year 5 & 6: Introduce [ternary](#) form. This is music in 3 sections where the third section is a repeat of the first, i.e., ABA, where A and B are contrasting/different.

A section– magic music
B section – mysterious spell lyrics

The groups will need to rehearse their separate magic music and spell lyrics before rehearsing them in the ABA structure.

Groups need to ask themselves:

- Are the 2 sections different?
- Does the music flow from A into B, then back to A?
- Are all the musicians clear on what they do in each section?
- Is a conductor or leader needed to help the group?
- Are any improvements needed before the final performance?
- Is everyone remembering how to control the sounds to make the music expressive?

3. PLENARY

Perform and record the compositions.

4. EVALUATE

- How expressive was the music?
- How successfully was a magical atmosphere created?
- What could be improved further?
- What have we learnt?

5. OPTIONAL QUIZ

What is a performance?	Sharing work to an audience
What is expression?	Atmosphere, mood, emotions
What is structure?	The way the music is mapped out
What is a conductor?	Someone who controls the music
How do you change expression?	Change dynamics, tempo, texture, timbre etc.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Cross-curricular activities

- **MUSIC:** Listen to other music that conjures up a magical atmosphere, e.g. [*Mussorgsky's Night on a Bare Mountain*](#). Compare the music to *Magic*.
- **ENGLISH:** Explore further iambic pentameter. Develop this in writing poetry or a play to perform as a class in an assembly (this could be linked to the composition from this unit).
- **RESEARCH:** Find out more about Shakespeare – his plays and his life. How and why has he become such an influence on writing and the stage? Include information about the globe theatre and life in Shakespearian times.

GLOSSARY OF MUSICAL TERMS USED

TERM	DEFINITION
Andante	Musical direction meaning moderately slow speed
Chords	Two or more notes played at the same time
Concords	Comfortable-sounding chords (can be major or minor)
Compose	Create original music
Discords	Uncomfortable-sounding chords, clashes
Dynamics	How loudly or quietly a piece of music should be played
Expression	The mood, feeling, emotion or atmosphere created by the music
Forte	Played at a loud dynamic
Legato	Smooth sounds
Lyrics	The words in a song
Piano	Played at a quiet dynamic
Tuned instrument	Instruments that have different pitches and can be used to play a melody or tune, e.g. glockenspiel
Movement	A structure used to divide up a longer musical composition e.g. a symphony may be made up of three or four movements
Rondo	Section A is the first part, followed by Section B, a new section. A is then repeated before a new Section C is played. This can expand, e.g. ABACADAEA
Staccato	Short, detached sounds
Structure	The order of the different sections that make up a piece of music, e.g. intro, verse, chorus, outro
Tempo	Speed of the music
Ternary	A three-part structure, ABA, where A and B are contrasting sections
Texture	How we combine, mix and layer sounds (how 'thick' or 'thin' the music is, e.g. how many instruments are playing, how they are being played etc.)
Timbre	The particular sound quality of a musical instrument (e.g. your voice will have a different timbre to a flute)
Untuned instrument	Instruments that do not have different pitched sounds and cannot be used to play a melody, e.g. triangle