

The Firebird – suite (1911) (Finale) by Igor Stravinsky

Activity ideas for young people with specific learning difficulties

The Firebird is a creature from Russian legend who represents good and whose feathers convey beauty and protection on the earth. The Firebird also helps the heroic Prince Ivan Tsarevich to rescue the Princess he loves.

Each Module is designed to cover several lessons where pupils always listen to the tracks and build on prior learning; recapping previous techniques and objectives.

Module 1 Music - Rhythm and themes

Outcome - Pupils are able to play or vocalise to the steady beat (main theme)

Outcome – Pupils are able to vocalise and play instruments for a 5-beat rhythm (secondary theme)

Simple Beat Building Block

1. Encourage pupils to play instruments in time to the regular beat. If using pitched instruments play the note 'B' for the regular, recurring pulse note.
2. Can they get quieter towards the end?
3. Can they play to the steady beat as a solo while listening to Simple Beat Building Block?
4. Can pupils follow the verbal instructions of the Simple Beat Building Block – tap, tap and clap?
5. When this is established can they accompany the Full Theme?

Secondary theme

1. Encourage pupils to vocalise the 5-beat rhythm (secondary theme) in unison or in two or more parts (split group in half or more and each take a turn at the 5-beat rhythm in time)
2. Using the Full Theme can pupils clap a steady beat at the start, and then clap for 5 beats?
3. Can the pupils play instruments in time to the regular beat?
4. Can they play instruments in time to the 5-beat motif?
5. Encourage a performance where pupils get quieter towards the end. Perhaps more players could join throughout to build up the texture and then reduce players towards the end?
6. Produce a final performance while listening to the Full Theme

Relaxing Theme

1. Pupils to listen to the Relaxing Theme. They talk about what they can hear and how it makes them feel.
2. Can they listen with their eyes shut?

3. Make the room dark. Maybe introduce some sensory lights. Pupils to use relaxing techniques and breathing exercises while listening to the Relaxing Theme.

Module 2 Art - Responding through different artistic styles

Outcome – Pupils are able to use finger painting in response to the 5 beat rhythmic motif

Outcome – Pupils are able to respond to the music using a splatter technique in the style of Jackson Pollock

1. Pupils listen to the secondary theme and practise clapping the 5-beat rhythm. They also practise tapping one finger into the palm of the other hand in time to the 5-beat rhythm.
2. Pupils look at some artwork examples of artwork by Jackson Pollock. Pupils decorate a sheet of paper by splattering paint onto it with paint brushes in time to the 5-beat motif while listening to the Full Theme.
3. Pupils look at some artwork examples of pointillist artists such as Seurat's *The Circus*. They create their own over an outline of the firebird using fingerprint painting. Pupils listen to the Secondary theme while they create their art work and try to paint with their fingers in time to the 5-beat rhythm.

Module 3 Language - Using language to name and describe

Outcome – Pupils are able to use language and descriptions to describe the Firebird

Outcome – Pupils are able to use fine motor skills to colour and collage a picture of the Firebird

1. Pupils listen to the main theme from the Firebird and describe what they think the Firebird looks like. What colour is it? What does it look like?
2. Pupils listen to the main theme from the Firebird as well as looking at images of the Firebird. They use fine motor skills to colour in a picture of the Firebird.
3. Pupils listen to the main theme from the Firebird as well as looking at images of the Firebird. They use fine motor skills to create a collage of the Firebird with brightly coloured materials and feathers.

Module 4 Maths - Counting and grouping beats

Outcome – Pupils are able to keep a steady beat on counts 2 and 4

Outcome – Pupils are able to count to 5 consistently and make 5 sounds with instruments or body parts (Secondary Theme)

Outcome – Pupils are able to play 5 beats consistently through the Secondary theme

1. Pupils are able to keep a steady beat. They listen to the main theme and practise counting to 4 and clapping on counts 2 and 4. They can transfer this to playing an instrument on beats 2 and 4.
2. Pupils listen to the secondary theme and practise counting to 5 and making 5 beats either through clapping or shaking / banging an instrument.
3. Pupils listen to the Secondary theme. The class is arranged into two groups. The first group plays the first 5-beat rhythm and the second group plays the next and then back to the first group and so on.

Module 5 Physical development - Moving and responding to stimuli

Outcome – Pupils are able to listen and respond to music through body movements

1. Pupils listen to main theme and wave coloured flags or ribbon sticks to the steady beat throughout.
2. Are they able to travel while keeping the steady beat, maybe with a rise and fall?
3. Are pupils able to listen to the Secondary theme and tap their feet up and down to the 5-beat rhythm? Are they able to make 5-beat scampers as they travel round the room and stop after each while waiting for the next one?

Extending Listening

Listen to the opening of Beethoven's 5th Symphony. Notice the 1, 2, 3, 4 (quick, quick, quick, slow) recurring rhythm. Can pupils clap / play?