



I AM A COMPOSER

Text Synopsis

I Am a Composer is a book about a girl who loves music. She enjoys listening to, singing, and playing music, but primarily she loves to compose. She transforms the sounds she hears throughout the day — animals in the park, snacks in the kitchen, toys in the yard — into simple songs. Each song is based on two distinct sounds that are arranged in a pattern. The book encourages children to interpret the songs in their own way, and in doing so introduces them to the concepts of pitch (high/low), tempo (slow/fast), and dynamics (loud/soft). At the end of the text, the reader is invited to compose a song of his or her own.

LITERACY ELEMENTS

opposites: high/low,
fast/slow, loud/soft

onomatopoeic words:
croak, bark, pop, crunch,
bounce, whir, flap, toot

rhyming words:
park/bark, day/way

CONNECTIONS

VISUAL ARTS
exploring and manipulating
a range of materials

DRAMA/DANCE
interpreting meaning by
using some basic
drama techniques

WORDS TO DISCOVER

music
song
composer
snack
animal

ESL CONSIDERATIONS

By providing the children with opportunities to listen to and experience the difference between the music concepts of fast and slow, high and low, and loud and soft, you will augment their understanding of these concepts.

Overall Learning Opportunities

- ♪ Students will:
 - demonstrate an understanding of the basic elements of music specified for this grade
 - use correctly the vocabulary and musical terminology specified for this grade
 - create and/or present, collaboratively and independently, expressive products
- Ⓐ
Ⓑ
Ⓒ Students will:
 - understand the vocabulary and language structures appropriate for this grade level
 - read a variety of simple written materials (e.g., children's reference books) for different purposes (e.g., for information)
 - interpret, select, and combine information

ACTIVITY MENU

Exploration: Composing a Song, page 99

Guided Reading, pages 100–101

As a Group, pages 102–103

- ♪
 - *Elements of Music*: exploring pitch, tempo, and dynamics
 - *Patterns and Rhythm*: identifying rhythmic patterns and using them to accompany music
- Ⓐ
Ⓑ
Ⓒ
 - *Order...Please!*: putting sentences from the story in the right sequence
 - *Sing and Response*: imitating a musical phrase (a sentence being sung)

Independent Work, pages 104–106

- ♪
 - *BLM 37*: composing a simple song
- Ⓐ
Ⓑ
Ⓒ
 - *BLM 38*: demonstrating understanding by putting sentences in order
 - *BLM 39*: choosing words to create meaningful sentences



Composing a Song

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- identify specific sounds heard in their classroom environment
- identify ways in which music is a part of their daily life
- use music to describe personal experience

YOU WILL NEED

- chart paper and markers

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- identify sounds that are characteristic of a specific location?
- arrange sounds in a pattern?
- compose and perform a brief song with others?

TEACHING tip

You might wish to work through the activity called *Patterns and Rhythm* on page 102 before doing this Exploration.

Reading the Text

With the children, review the situations and sounds that inspired each of the “songs” in *I Am a Composer* (pages 4–7, 8–11, 12–15). Start by asking:

- How did the girl in the book get the ideas for her songs? How many different sounds do we hear in each of her songs?

With the children, examine how the snack song and toy song each contains two sounds. Explore how these two sounds are repeated in a pattern that has three parts (e.g., *pop pop crunch*).

Turn to page 16, and as a class compose a new “song” using the sound words “flap” and “toot.” Give the song a name.

Starting the Exploration

In this exploration, the children will visit different places, note some sounds they hear there, and compose songs that incorporate those sounds. Fred Penner’s song “Music is Everywhere” (see *Grade 1 Audio CD Track 4*) makes a good entry into the activity.

Tell the children that there is music everywhere, and that, like the girl in the book, they are going to be composers. Together, brainstorm a list of places in or around the school that could become the inspiration for new songs. Write the list on chart paper or the chalkboard.

Divide the children into groups. Each group will listen to the sounds in one of the locations you have identified. As you visit each location, have the assigned group identify two environmental sounds for a song (for example “our office song” or “our playground song”).

Working on the Song

Now it’s time for each group to compose its song. Group members will need to make the following decisions: Which two sounds will be in our song? How will we draw the objects that make these sounds? What pattern will we use? What will our song sound like? What title should we give our song?

Give each child a copy of **BLM 37**, which they can use to record their group’s song. Suggest that the groups create a rough copy together before completing the BLMs individually. Encourage children to decorate their song page appropriately.



Page 104

Sharing

Invite each group to read its page and perform its song for the rest of the class. After each presentation, ask:

- What was the hardest part of composing your song?
- Does your song have a pattern in it? If so, what is the pattern?
- Were there sounds you heard that you didn’t include in your song? Why did you leave them out?

Extension

Put all the pages together into a class book, titled *We Are Composers*. As an accompaniment, you might also consider creating an audiotape of the songs being performed by the various groups.

This Exploration works well with *Stand-Alone Activity 14: “Music Survey”* on page 134 and *Stand-Alone Activity 26: “Marker Watercolours”* on page 146.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- use some basic conventions of formal texts to locate information
- use pictures and illustrations to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words
- express opinions and give simple explanations

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

During independent reading, does the student:

- move through the text using pictures and print together to get meaning?
- move through the text with minimal hesitation?
- finger- or voice-point only occasionally to monitor speed or to keep his or her place?

Setting the Scene

Invite the children to name their favourite songs. Some may even want to sing their songs for the group! Ask:

- Have any of you ever made up a song? What title did you give it?

Invite the children to sing their song for the others.

Tell the children that a person who writes a story or a book is called an author; a person who writes poetry is called a poet; a person who draws or paints is called an artist. Ask:

- Does anyone know what a person who makes up a song is called?

When someone suggests the word *composer*, or when you tell the children the word, print it on chart paper, spelling it as you do so. Have the children say the word and spell it chorally. Then ask:

- Who remembers what a composer is? That's right, a composer is a person who makes up songs.

Tell the children that this book is about a young girl who makes up songs. She's a composer, and the book is titled *I Am a Composer*.

Show the children the book cover and repeat the title while pointing to the words. Then say:

- Look at the photo on the cover. Where is the girl? What's she doing? What do you see in her bedroom that tells you she likes music?

As you point to the names, say:

- The authors of this book are Lalie Harcourt and Ricki Wortzman and the illustrators are Deborah and Allan Drew-Brook-Cormack.

Reading the Text

Say:

- Turn to page 2 and read to find out what the girl tells us she loves. That's right, she says she loves music.

- Look at the picture on page 3. Now read this page to find out where she makes up her songs.

Using your copy, turn to pages 4 and 5 to show children the two-page spread. Look at the picture, say:

- Read these pages to find out when she thought of her animal song.
- Where was she and what did she hear? That's right, she was in the park and she heard the dogs bark and the frogs croak.

Ask the children to turn to page 6. Say:

- She tells us that she can sing her animal song. She says, "I can sing my animal song for you. It sounds like this." Look at the picture. What are the words in her animal song? That's right, "bark" and "croak."

Say:

- Read page 7 to find out what she wants us to do.

Ask one or more volunteers to sing the song "bark high and croak low." Then ask:

- Who can sing it another way?

Encourage several children to try.

Say:

- Turn to pages 8 and 9. Look at the pictures. Now read these pages to find out when she thought of her snack song.

Turn to pages 10 and 11. Say:

- Look at her in the picture. She's singing her snack song. Listen carefully. Can you hear her?
- Which food says "pop" and which says "crunch"? That's right, the popcorn says "pop" and the carrots say "crunch."

TEACHING
tip

When several children have had a turn singing the snack song, you can give it a melody so that all the children can sing together. For example, you could sing "pop, pop, crunch" as "mi, re, doh" or as "doh, re, mi."

Say:

- Read these pages to find out how to sing her snack song. Yes, she says we should sing "pop" fast and "crunch" slow. Who would like to try that?

Invite volunteers to sing the snack song. Then say:

- Who would like to sing it another way?

Moving to pages 12 and 13, say:

- Look at the pictures on pages 12 and 13. Now read these pages to find out what she was doing when she thought of her toy song.

- What were the two sounds she heard? That's right — "whir" and "bounce."

- Turn the page to see her toy song "bounce whir whir, bounce whir whir." Who can sing "bounce" loud and "whir" soft? Who can sing the song another way?

Turn to page 16 and invite the children to look at the illustration. Ask:

- Where is she now? What do you think she's thinking about? Read this page to find out the question she asks.

Independent Reading

Have the children read the book on their own with as little assistance as possible.

After Reading

Invite the children to answer the question the girl poses on page 16 ("What will my next song be?") by asking:

- What words will be in the song?
- How do you know?
- Who can compose a song with the words "toot" and "flap" in it?

Encourage several children to compose a song in the following way: have them first say the words rhythmically, and then add a melody to the rhythm. To support the children's attempts, you could:

- Hand clap and finger snap some simple rhythms, into which the children could insert the words and melodies. One example is *clap, clap, snap-snap, clap*. Another is *snap-snap, snap-snap, clap, clap*.
- Hum a familiar nursery rhyme, e.g., the first line of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" or "Mary Had a Little Lamb," and have the children insert the words "toot" and "flap" as they sing back the line.

Revisit the Text

Invite the children to think about the text by using open-ended prompts such as:

- What do you like best about the girl's songs?
- What are some other sounds she could use to make a different song?

Have the children focus on recalling specific information from the text by asking questions such as:

- Where did the girl get her ideas for her songs?
- She told us to sing her songs in different ways. Do you remember how? Yes, that's right — high and low, fast and slow, loud and soft.
- In which three places in this book can you find the word that means "a person who makes up songs"? Yes, on the cover, and on pages 3 and 16.
- And what is the word? Yes, that's right. The word is *composer*.

Reinforce the Text

Have one-third of the group practise the animal song, one-third practise the snack song, and one-third practise the toy song. Then, arrange the children in groups of three so they may each sing their song to the other two children in their group.



As a Group

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- explore and use dynamics and pitch
- identify different tempi

YOU WILL NEED

- flash cards and markers
- music for listening

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- demonstrate an understanding of pitch, tempo, and dynamics?

Activity: Elements of Music

I Am a Composer offers a good starting point for teaching the elements of music. This activity focuses on pitch, tempo, and dynamics.

Turn to pages 6–7 to focus on pitch (see Grade 1 Audio CD Track 33). Look at the music terms (high/low) associated with the song, and make sure the children understand what they mean. Practise singing the song as the text suggests. Play some music and work with the children to distinguish high and low sounds.

Follow a similar procedure with tempo (fast/slow, pages 10–11, Grade 1 Audio CD Track 34) and dynamics (soft/loud, pages 14–15, Grade 1 Audio CD Track 32).

Next, with the help of some volunteers, create a set of six flash cards, each with a music term (high, low, fast, slow, loud, soft). Divide the class into six groups. Each group should draw one card at random. The group's task is to perform a brief part of a familiar song in a way that demonstrates their music term. They should also create a second performance that demonstrates the opposite term.

Extension

Ask each group to draw two cards at random. Can they perform part of a song in a way that demonstrates both terms at the same time?

This Extension works well with Stand-Alone Activity 12: "Tempo, Pitch, and Dynamics" on page 132.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- demonstrate an awareness of rhythmic/melodic concepts, patterns
- create rhythmic patterns using a variety of sounds

YOU WILL NEED

- chart paper
- a variety of music with different rhythms

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- recognize and reproduce a particular rhythmic pattern?
- produce a steady rhythm to accompany a song?

Activity: Patterns and Rhythm

Explore the patterns in the "songs" featured in *I Am a Composer*. Start with the animal song on pages 6–7. Write the song on chart paper or the chalkboard as the children read it aloud. Put an equal space between each word. Ask:

- Do you know what a pattern is? Can you show us a pattern in the animal song?

As the children answer, add vertical lines to highlight the pattern, i.e.:

bark croak | bark croak | bark croak

Say:

- This is called an AB pattern. Here's why.

| | | | | |
|------|-------|--|------|-------|
| A | B | | A | B |
| bark | croak | | bark | croak |

Play a song such as "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" that has a strong AB rhythm.

(See Grade 1 Audio CD Tracks 10, 13, and 23). As the song plays, use a "stomp clap" rhythm as an accompaniment. Ask the children to join in.

Turn to pages 14–15. Say:

- The toy song doesn't have an AB pattern. What pattern does it have? (ABB)

Use a piece of music in 3/4 time (e.g., a waltz) to highlight this second pattern. (See Grade 1 Audio CD Tracks 9, 11, and 16). This time, use a "clap tap tap" rhythm as an accompaniment.

Extension

Play a variety of music and challenge the children to identify the rhythms that they hear.

This Extension works well with Stand-Alone Activity 18: "Beat and Rhythm" on page 138.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- reread all or parts of a written piece to clarify their understanding of its meaning
- expand their understanding of concepts of print

YOU WILL NEED

- chart paper and marker

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Can the student:

- re-order text to match the story sequence?
- read the story fluently, with comprehension of the punctuation?

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- notice and respond to unusual features of language
- demonstrate a growing awareness of social conventions such as turn-taking

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- echo your sentence accurately?
- appear eager to participate and take a turn?
- listen carefully to the attempts of other students?

Activity: Order...Please!

Starting with the title, print each page of text from this book onto chart paper.

Cut the chart paper into sixteen strips.

Mix up the strips and place them on the floor for the children to read. Ask them to think about which strip comes first, second, third, and so on.

Invite one child to find the title and to place it on the floor in the first position. Then have another child find the text that starts off the book (“I love music.”) and place it on the floor beside or below the title. Next, another volunteer can find the next text strip (“I make up songs wherever I am. I am a composer.”) and place it next. Explain that, once all the strips have been selected and placed correctly, the book can be read in sequence.

Have the children join together to read the book strips chorally. Encourage them to pause at the commas and stop at the periods. At the end of the last sentence of the book, invite children to raise the pitch of their voices to indicate a question.

Extension

Invite individual volunteers to read the book in sequence. To give the children another opportunity to understand the importance of sequence in a narrative, have them complete **BLM 38**.



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Activity: Sing and Response

Choose some of the more simple sentences from the story to sing and have the children imitate in a “sing and response” arrangement.

For example, you sing “I love music” in your melody (e.g., doh, mi, soh, mi) using a rhythm of your choice (e.g., one beat for each note). Invite one of the children to echo the sentence back.

Other sentences to sing:

- I am a composer. (e.g., I am a [doh, doh, doh] com- [re] pos- [me] er [doh]).
- I heard the dogs bark.
- I heard the frogs croak.
- I heard the popcorn pop.
- I heard the carrot crunch.
- I heard the ball bounce.
- I heard the yo-yo whirl.
- I am a composer.

Each of these sentences offers a wonderful opportunity for you to change not only the melody, but also the beat, the rhythm, the pitch, and the volume.

Extension

Invite volunteers to mime the different actions while the other children sing the sentences. Use **BLM 39** to assess the children’s ability to create meaningful sentences and to recall specific details from the story.



Page 106

My name is _____ .

**Add your own words and pictures
to make a new song.**

One day I _____ .

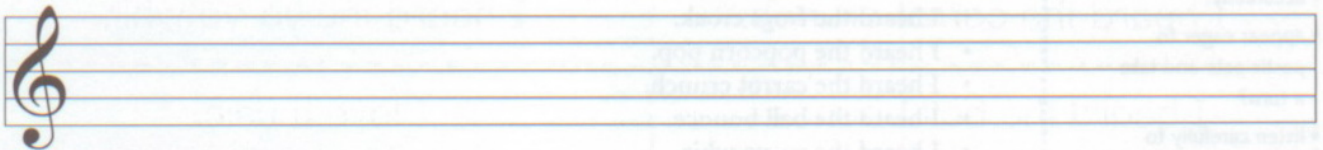
I heard _____ .

I heard the _____ .

That's when I thought of my _____ song.

I can show you my _____ song.

It looks like this.



I Am a Composer

BLM 38

My name is _____.

Cut and glue in order.

| | |
|-----|-----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |
| 7. | 8. |
| 9. | 10. |
| 11. | 12. |



| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| I was making a snack. | I heard the dogs bark. |
| I heard the popcorn pop. | I was walking in the park. |
| I heard the frogs croak. | I was playing with my brother. |
| I heard the carrot crunch. | I heard the yo-yo whir. |
| I heard the ball bounce. | I love music. |
| I make up songs wherever I am. | I am a composer. |

My name is _____.

Choose the right word to fill in each blank.

1. She heard the popcorn _____ .
walk croak pop

2. One day she went walking through
the _____ .
park frogs brother

3. I thought of my snack song when
I heard the _____ .
whir dogs crunch

4. She makes up songs, so she is a _____ .
ball composer yo-yo

5. In the park, she heard the _____
of the _____ and the _____
of the _____ .
barks popcorn carrot frogs pop
croaks crunch dogs animal ball