

Global Music Lesson Plans

Lesson 1: Patterns – Islamic Art

Age group: 7–11

Time required: Two 50 minute lessons

Activity:

Composing music using Islamic patterns as starting points.

Aims:

- To explore how music, like pictures, can describe images /moods.
- To explore how sounds can be combined to make textures.

Pupils will learn:

- How to create, combine and extend musical patterns into larger structures.
- To cooperate and value the contributions of others.
- About the purpose of art within Islamic culture and society.

Web links you will need:

- Two images of Islamic patterns, such as [this geometric image](#).
- Clips from, or the CD of, Mike Oldfield's '[Tubular Bells](#)' (choose the first sound clip called 'Part One').

Other resources you will need:

- A class set of graphic shapes copied and cut up from the **Shapes Worksheet** (below) i.e. one shape per group of five pupils.
- A wide variety of pitched and un-pitched classroom instruments.

Useful Information

This activity uses Islamic art as a stimulus for composition work. Most Islamic art is decorative – that is, it is used to decorate things, which have a function or use. It is quite unusual to see a painting, for instance, which was just created to be looked at. The ideal in Islamic art would be for an object to be both very useful and very beautiful. Geometric patterns are an important aspect of Islamic artwork and are very often used. People sometimes say that the patterns, which flow on and on, and seem to have no beginning and no end, represent the unending perfection and unity of the universe God created. This cultural and social context is important for pupils to understand, as it is fundamentally different to art in Western culture. This activity links music to Islamic art. Music is often said to be mathematical and its links with patterning require no explanation. In this respect, a meaningful link with another culture is made.

When looking carefully at a piece of true Islamic art, one can usually find one small element of the design which is not perfectly symmetrical... this reflects a respect for the fact that only God can create perfection. When creating their music in the activity below, more able pupils might be asked to find a way of expressing such an element in a way that remains pleasing to the ear.

Lesson Plan	Patterns – Islamic art
Starter	<p>Divide the class into groups of five or six. Distribute one graphic shape from the six provided on the Shapes Worksheet (below) to each group. Tell pupils that they must not show other groups which shape they have been given. Set the class a three minute commission to compose vocal sounds to match the shape allocated. After three minutes, ask some of the groups to perform their vocal sounds. Display the six graphic shapes to the class and ask the others to match the sound to the graphic shape. Ask individuals questions like: “What helped you to come to your answer?”, “How could the group have improved their sounds?”, “What did you find confusing about the sounds?”</p> <p>Point out that an important part of the lesson will be interpreting shapes and patterns in sound.</p>
Main	<p>Show pupils the image of an Islamic pattern. How many recognisable shapes can they pick out? What do they notice about the lines? Point out a) the way in which pairs of lines are mirror images of each other, b) that there are four ‘resultant’ shapes which recur and c) that the lines create symmetrical interlinked patterns within patterns. Point out that these are essential characteristics of Islamic art.</p> <p>Explain that in Islamic culture, art is essentially decorative and is used to embellish items that have a function or use. How does this compare with Western art?</p> <p>Ask pupils to compose a piece to accompany the image in an exhibition of Islamic art. Point out that, when taken out of context, the pattern consists of horizontal, vertical and diagonal pairs of lines, each mirroring each other in shape. Their melody should be their own interpretation of the picture but should, where possible, contain the same characteristics. Ask the class for their ideas on how to go about this. What sort of musical ideas could they use? What sort of instruments would they use? How could they start their piece? How might it end? What mood will their piece have? What sounds could they use to represent the shapes featured?</p> <p>Listen to each group composition. For each piece, ask a different group to identify specific features that they thought worked particularly well and one aspect that they feel could be improved.</p> <p>Allow each group more time to work on the aspects that were identified as needing more attention and then listen to the final performances.</p> <p>Assess how well each group portrayed the pattern in their music.</p>
Plenary	<p>Listen to Mike Oldfield’s Tubular Bells. Ask pupils to adopt the role of an Islamic pattern artist and quickly sketch a pattern that describes the music. Select three sketches and ask the individual pupils to explain how their sketches match the music.</p> <p>Can the class think of any music from their own culture that has a specific</p>

	purpose in the same way as Islamic art? (e.g. fanfares, music for films or adverts, wedding music, music for marching etc.)
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