



## Lesson: Creating Motives for a Sun Fable

### OVERVIEW

In *The Golden Queen*, the poetry of two young girls, Madison Hokstad and Stella Peterson, piqued René Clausen's interest and inspired his music in *The Golden Queen*. Clausen often speaks about the importance of text and how the text leads to the melodies he writes. A simple fable will provide the impetus for students to create motives for two contrasting characters. Students will then develop and expand their motives to tell the story. This lesson may be split into multiple short sessions to be incorporated into the classroom schedule.

### LEARNING GOAL

Working in small groups, students will imagine and create motives for two characters using voice, percussion instruments or both, then use the motives to perform an original re-telling of the fable *The Wind and the Sun*.

### RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- Student Copies of:
  - *The Golden Queen* sheet music
  - [The North Wind and the Sun story](#)
  - [Creating Motives Process Organizer](#)
  - [Character Motives Worksheet](#)
  - [Creating Motives Project checklist](#)
- Blank paper and pencils for each group
- Classroom melody & percussion instruments
- Orff mallet percussion (optional)
- Recording device for documentation (optional)

### PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Prior knowledge and experience needed for this activity:

- Students have prior experience creating simple motives with voices and classroom percussion instruments.
- Students know that music can sometimes tell a story. They can identify the ideas in program music such as *Peter and the Wolf* (Prokofiev), movements from *Carnival of the Animals* (Saint Saens) etc.

A **motive** is the shortest musical idea. It can have as few as two notes, and is rarely longer than a few beats.

Here are two well-known motives.

Beethoven 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony





John Williams "Theme from Jaws"



### PROCESS

1. Decide how you will group students ahead of time. Think about whether you will do step one or both step one and two of the project.
2. Prepare for the activity by engaging chorus members in vocal improvisation during chorus warm-ups; vocal 'play' with short musical ideas.

3. Remind students that it was a text by two young students that inspired Clausen’s music for *The Golden Queen*. The text existed before the melodies and rhythms were created.
4. Review or present the idea that musical works are often constructed from very short melodic and/or rhythmic motives. Have students search the score and identify the key motive and variations that Clausen used as a building block for his melodies. Here is the motive and one variation:

	
Gol - den queen	sha- dow of the

5. Introduce the “Creating Motives” project to students as outlined in the Process Organizer.
  - **In step one** they will create two motives for two story characters, then develop them into phrases.
  - **In step two**, students will use their character motives plus additional improvisation to create a musical version of a short fable.
6. Distribute and read the goals and steps in the process, noting the materials with which the students will work. As students work, serve as their resource person through the process.
7. Decide on your plan for sharing and documenting their work. You can stay with step one – creating motives and developing them into phrases for the story, or continue into step two, and tell a complete story with composed motives plus improvised sounds. Provide opportunities for students to share their work.

### EXTENSION

Consider using this project with your choir at the end of the year after your last concert. Creating music for a story continues musical learning, but in a different way. Original compositions and improvisation on well-loved fables might also provide an opportunity a service learning project with the youngest students in your district or other learners in your area to which you may “take the show on the road.”

### ASSESSMENT

Use the checklist to track student work and assess each step. Students can use it for a self-assessment. Teachers can use it as a student assessment of their group process and learning.

### TIPS FOR TEACHERS CREATING MUSICAL STORIES

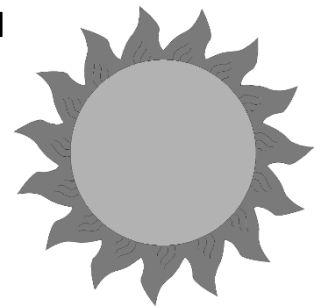
1. Arrange for audio/video recording equipment to document student work.
2. Though this lesson is focused on a specific single story, you might choose to provide a group of stories from which students can choose.
3. Decide the plan you will use for group work. For example, will all groups work at the same time, or will you set up a schedule in which one group leaves the full ensemble to work in an alternative space for a given period of time. With the second plan, the rest of the class continues their classroom activities.
4. If using the one group at a time approach, returning groups should submit a short written report on their work. (Today we worked on..., and ...)
5. Work period length depends on what you think students can manage. It may take them two or three sessions (a portion of your regular class time) to complete their pieces.
6. Prepare students for this project; scaffold the improvising tasks by engaging in short vocal improvisation activities during choir rehearsals. One lesson to aid in this process is available [here](#).
7. Before working independently, walk the class through the process. Ask students to generate some examples of vocal or rhythmic motives and use them to do a class improvisation to model the task.
8. Stress the decision-making aspects they will make as a group as they create their music.
9. Recall other familiar musical stories such as Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. In this story, each of the seven characters had a recognizable motive.

## THE NORTH WIND AND THE SUN

Originally told by Aesop



A dispute arose between the North Wind and the Sun, each claiming that he was stronger than the other. At last they agreed to try their powers upon a traveler, to see which could soonest strip him of his cloak. The North Wind had the first try; and, gathering up all his force for the attack, he came whirling furiously down upon the man, and caught up his cloak as though he would wrest it from him by one single effort: but the harder he blew, the more closely the man wrapped it round himself. Then came the turn of the Sun. At first he beamed gently upon the traveler, who soon unclasped his cloak and walked on with it hanging loosely about his shoulders: then he shone forth in his full strength, and the man, before he had gone many steps, was glad to throw his cloak right off and complete his journey more lightly clad.



The moral of the story is: Warmth and kindness work better than force.

Story from [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11339/11339-h/11339-h.htm#THE\\_NORTH\\_WIND\\_AND\\_THE\\_SUN](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11339/11339-h/11339-h.htm#THE_NORTH_WIND_AND_THE_SUN)



# PROCESS ORGANIZER FOR CREATING MOTIVES & A MUSICAL STORY

## STEP ONE: Create Motives

A **motive** is the shortest musical idea. It can have as few as two notes, and is rarely longer than a few beats.

Here are two well-known motives.

### Beethoven 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony



### John Williams "Theme from Jaws"



You will **create musical motives for at least two** of the characters in the story "The North Wind and the Sun." Follow these steps.

1. Select a note taker for the group – someone who is organized and can write out musical ideas in words, diagrams, musical notation, or by combining all. They will document your work on the "Creating the Character Motives" worksheet.
2. Read the story out loud to each other and identify the main characters.
3. Start experimenting with sound ideas for short motives for a character. Play around with sound; try out your ideas on each other. It is 'play' because there is no one process for creating a cool short musical ideas. Use your voices, body percussion, or classroom instruments. Everyone can write or sketch ideas while you all noodle around, but make sure your note taker writes the 'keepers' on the work sheet.
4. Big NEXT STEP: Expand a motive into a longer musical phrase. Use some of these ideas.
  - Alter the melody
    - repeat the motive two or more times without a pause
    - repeat it, but sing it at higher and higher pitches (or lower and lower)
    - sing it backwards; keep the shape, but change the intervals
    - sing it upside down so the high notes are low and low notes are high
    - repeat it several time as an ascending or descending sequence
    - combine two or more of these ideas
    - imitate it as a call & response phrase or turn it into a canon
    - alter a few notes for a slightly different melody
  - Alter the rhythm – make some notes longer or shorter; repeat notes; sing the same pitches with a different rhythm pattern; change the meter or the tempo
  - Alter articulation – change an ordinary melody by making it flowing & legato or detached & staccato
  - Alter the dynamics – louder/softer; add an accent; repeat the motive a few times with a crescendo or decrescendo; use a sudden ***sfz***
  - Change the timbre by using different voices or instruments

**René Clausen**  
says, "***Just***  
***make it up!***"  
&  
***"Do what***  
***your mind***  
***tells you to."***

Work on a second motive in the same way.

Keep the characters in mind and match the dynamics, articulation etc. to their personalities.

**Write down your ideas and keep singing or playing the phrases you are building.**

5. Practice your phrases until they are memorized. Decide if you will sing them or play them on a keyboard or mallet percussion instrument.
6. Now have a person in your group narrate the story while the rest of the group performs the musical phrases when one of the characters is speaking or acting.

**Ta-Da! You have a musical story.**



## **STEP TWO: Expand the story by improvising music for actions and events.**

After you've composed motives and phrases for the characters you can expand your work.

1. Underline or make a list of the other things happening in the story – the events, additional characters, setting, and implied sounds. (For example, the footsteps of a traveler or bird sounds when the sun shines.)
2. Improvise interesting sounds or music for these story elements using instruments or voices. KEEP THE SECTIONS SHORT! Write down your group's best ideas!
3. Put these new sounds together with the musical phrases created for the main characters.
  - Decide how you will start the story piece.
  - Practice it more than once to refine the timing and the connections between the key phrases for the main characters, the improvised music for events, and the narrator's words.

**Always MAKE SURE THAT AT LEAST ONE PERSON IS TAKING NOTES.**

4. Perform the finished work.

# CHARACTER MOTIVES WORKSHEET



## STEP #1: Creating the Character Motives



**FIRST:** Create musical motives for at least two of the characters in the story *The North Wind and the Sun*.

As you work on your motives, write them below. Use musical notation, or descriptive words, or visual sketches, or all 3! The goal is to **REMEMBER** your motives!

Who are your characters?

1.

2.

Motive for 1 <sup>st</sup> character	Motive for 2 <sup>nd</sup> character
Notation (remember to add the clef!)	notation
	
or words, sketches, or graphic notation	words, sketches, graphic notation

**NEXT:** Expand the motives into longer phrases. Try out the ideas on your Process Organizer.

What will you do to expand your motives into musical phrases for the story?

**THEN:** Try them out while telling the story.

Group Names \_\_\_\_\_



## STEP #2: Improvising Additional Sound Ideas for *the North Wind & the Sun*

Will you add an introduction? What will it sound like?

story action				
A dispute arose between the North Wind and the Sun, each claiming that he was stronger than the other.	At last they agreed to try their powers upon a traveler, to see which could soonest strip him of his cloak.	The North Wind had the first try; and, gathering up all his force for the attack, he came whirling furiously down upon the man, and caught up his cloak as though he would wrest it from him by one single effort: but the harder he blew, the more closely the man wrapped it round himself. Finally the wind gave up in despair.	Then came the turn of the Sun. At first he beamed gently upon the traveler, who soon unclasped his cloak and walked on with it hanging loosely about his shoulders: then he shone forth in his full strength, and the man, before he had gone many steps, was glad to throw his cloak right off and complete his journey more lightly clad.	The Moral? Warmth and kindness work better than blustery force!
sound improvisation				

Group Names: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

How about a CODA to end to the story?



## CHECKLIST FOR CREATING MOTIVES

<b>Getting Started</b>	
	Group selected a note taker
	Story read out loud in the group
	Main characters identified
<b>Creating Motive #1</b>	
	Experimented with & improvised sound ideas for characters
	Note taker took notes on ideas to keep
	Group selected best ideas and made up motive #1
<b>Creating Motive #2</b>	
	Experimented with & improvised sound ideas for characters
	Note taker took notes on ideas to keep
	Group selected ideas and made up motive #2
<b>Making motives into a phrases</b>	
	Group tried multiple ideas for expanding their motives
	Group used their voices or instruments as they worked
	Ideas were documented
	Phrases were memorized
<b>Final Product – Telling the Story</b>	
	Story was told by a narrator
	Group member performed phrases within the story

Names of Group Members:



Date: \_\_\_\_\_