



## Mini-Lesson: Prelude & March

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### OVERVIEW

Students will read, discuss, and write about the terms “prelude” and “march.”

### LEARNING GOAL

Students will understand the background and definitions of “prelude” and “march” in order to support their performance of A+: A “Precise” Prelude and An “Excellent” March.

### RESOURCES & MATERIALS

Student copies of:

- [Prelude & March](#) reading

### PROCESS

1. Divide students into small groups and direct them to read “[Prelude & March](#).” They can read silently or out loud, sharing the reader’s role within their group.
2. Direct them to discuss what they’ve read and write down their own definition for “prelude” and for “march.”
3. Reconvene as a large group. Ask the students to define “prelude” and “march”. Consider moving the discussion to the following questions: Have they ever played a prelude or march before? Heard one? Can they name one? How do they know these pieces are preludes or marches?

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## ANATOMY OF A PRELUDE...

Preludes start things off – that’s their job in the world of music. Preludes can be played by bands, orchestras, organs, and pianos – by almost any kind of instrument.

Preludes have a funny history. They started out as warm-up music. Over 400 years ago, **lute** players would tune their instruments before a performance by playing a short **improvisation**.

**Harpsichord** players did the same thing to test the tone and touch of their instruments. And organists would set the pitch and mode of the tunes they were playing for a congregation by playing a short, made up tune. These musical warm-ups developed into real compositions over time.

The form or design of a prelude is often unpredictable, perhaps because in the past it was improvised on the spot. For this reason, composers have a great degree of freedom when they write preludes. There are three kinds of preludes: Preludes attached to a single specific piece of music (like A+: A “*Precise*” Prelude and An “*Excellent*” March), preludes that introduce a group of pieces (like Bach’s *Six English Suites*), and independent preludes that stand-alone (like the preludes the composer Chopin wrote for the piano.)



## WHAT MAKES MUSIC MARCH?

Music marches when it has clear, strong, and even **beats** that make our feet want to move in time to the music. When the rhythm in a march goes...

1-2, 1-2,

our feet want to go...

left-right, left-right.

The first beat is stronger in each pair because it is accented. Almost every march you’ll hear has this one – two, one – two pattern.

Marches have some other things in common. The **melodies** are simple, memorable, and tuneful – something you can sing or whistle.

**Harmony** is built on basic **chords** and is not very complicated.

The **phrases** are balanced – all the same length.

Wind bands usually play marches at parades, military events, or special ceremonies such as the opening of the Olympics or the inauguration of a president. In a church, the organ often plays marches for weddings. The orchestra plays theater marches that are part of an **opera**, **ballet** or **musical**.