



Mini-Lesson: What are Taiko Drums?

OVERVIEW

Letter from Sado calls for the percussionists to create and use Taiko-style drums out of tires. This short lesson explains what Taiko drums are and why people make tire drums.

LEARNING GOAL

Students will learn a bit about Taiko drums to aid their performance of *Letter from Sado*.

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- Student Copies of the [What are Taiko Drums](#) reading
- Video: <http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/taiko-drummers-of-japan> - 5 minutes on Taiko drummers on Sado Isle

PROCESS

1. Hand out copies of the student reading.
2. Have students read aloud from the reading.
3. (Optional) Show the clip of Taiko drumming on Sado Isle.
4. Ask students why they think Jodie Blackshaw decided to include Taiko tire drums in *Letter from Sado*.

WHAT ARE TAIKO DRUMS?



Taiko drums are Japanese barrel shaped drums with lashed or tacked heads, usually played with sticks. They date back more than 3,000 years. People believe that similar drums were brought to Japan by Buddhist monks traveling through the country. Once in Japan, people there modified the drums to make them their own, using traditional styling and craftsmanship. They were incorporated into mainstream Japanese culture and became the drums we know today.

Taiko drums are usually very large. They range in size from similar to a snare drum to as large as a car (the “o-daiko”)! The most common Taiko drum is the “chu-daiko”, which is about the size of a barrel.

WHY DO PEOPLE USE TIRES TO MAKE TAIKO-STLYE DRUMS?

The single biggest issue for any band wanting to use Taiko drums is that the drums are very expensive and not very common in schools. Even in some Taiko drumming groups, they don't have enough real Taiko drums for everyone to play together. What do they do if they don't have enough real Taiko drums? Tire drums!

Tire drums are a great alternative option. Wrap up a tire in tape and you'll have a perfect surface to practice on. When wrapped tightly, tape provides great rebound and sound. When made correctly, they're strong so you won't have to worry about tearing when you hit them with sticks. And just like real Taiko drums, you can prop tire drums on stands to mimic the various playing styles of real Taiko drums.



Band students with tire drums

Why do you think Jodie Blackshaw calls for Taiko tire drums in the score of *Letter from Sado*?

