



Lesson: *Sweet (or Sour?) like that* A Variations Composition Project

OVERVIEW

In *Sweet like that*, the combination of active rhythm and scale patterns juxtaposed against a lyrical, slower moving chorale, creates a sound that radiates joy, celebration, exuberance, exhilaration and contemplation. Although the form of *Sweet like that* is not a theme and variations, listening to music that includes different versions of a tune can illustrate how the character can be changed by altering rhythms, harmonies, melodies, and counter-melodies.

In this lesson, students will learn to identify and understand how the mood or character of a piece of music is affected by manipulation of the elements of music. Students will create an original variation on a theme to demonstrate how the elements of music evoke different moods, emotions, styles, or characters.

LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Consider how the elements of music convey musical affect.
- Compose a variation of a familiar theme using traditional musical notation.

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

Student copies of:

- [Composing a Variation](#) reading
- [Theme and Variations Worksheet](#)
- Excerpts from [Mozart Variations](#)

Audio examples:

- [Recording of *Sweet like that*](#) (click link for download or email bandquest@composersforum.org for a free Catalog CD)
- Recording of *12 Variations on Twinkle, Twinkle (Ah, vous dirai-je, maman)* in C Major K 265 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- *Variations on America* by Charles Ives

PROCESS

1. Listen to a recording of *Sweet like that* as a group and have the students describe the mood or character of the piece. Write the list on the board.
2. Ask students to identify what they hear in the music that contributes to the musical affect of the piece. They may refer to the specific parts for their instruments, as well.

3. Hand out the Composing a Variation reading and read it together with the students.
4. Hand out the Mozart Variations sheet music. Listen to a recording of *12 Variations on Twinkle, Twinkle (Ah, vous dirai-je, maman)* in C Major K 265 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart—numerous examples are available as both audio files and YouTube videos on the internet. The notation for the first four measures of the theme and four of the variations is provided on the Mozart Variations sheet so the students can compare what they hear with the notation for some of the variations.
5. Have the students describe and analyze what they hear in the same way that they did for *Sweet like that*.
6. Listen to and analyze a recording of *Variations on America* by Charles Ives.
7. Compose: Either have the students select a well-known melody or use the same melody (that you assign) and write it in the space provided on the worksheet. Then ask students to write a variation of the familiar theme. (The Composing a Variation reading outlines some ways to go about composing a variation.)
8. Have the students perform their variations and see if the listeners can identify the song or tune that is the basis for each variation.

Composing a Variation

What makes your favorite music something that you like to listen to over and over? There is probably something about the music that makes you feel certain emotions, think of stories or pictures, or recall some kinds of life experiences. Composers have a gift for putting together musical sounds that affect the listeners in emotional ways.



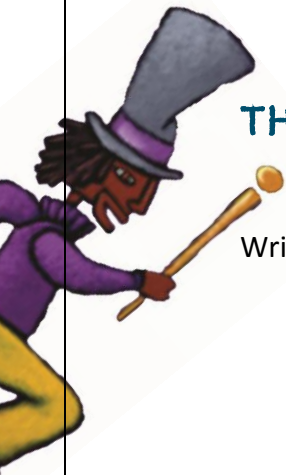
This project will give you an opportunity to experiment with using rhythm, **harmony**, or melody to change the mood or feeling of a piece of music.

There is a form known as theme and variations, which is a technique where a tune is introduced and then repeated with a change in harmony, melody, rhythm, instrumentation, or any combination of these. The changes affect the mood or emotion of the piece, but you can still recognize the original tune.

After listening to examples of different versions of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* and *America*, pick a short familiar tune or use the tune assigned by your teacher and compose a variation that changes the tune in some way, but still allows the listener to recognize the original tune.

To write your variation of the tune you have selected, you may want to begin by playing it in its original form and then improvise changes. Try changing the rhythm, the mode (e.g. from major to minor), or the feel (e.g. change a tune in **duple meter** to sound like a waltz in **triple meter**). A sad tune can be changed to have a more jazzy or up-beat mood, or a more up-beat piece may be changed to sound more somber or serious. Try several different changes and then write down the one you like the best. Can you still recognize the tune that is the basis for your variation?

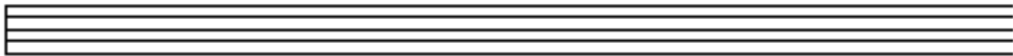
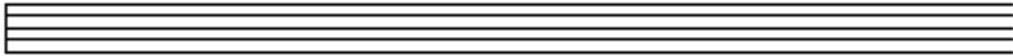
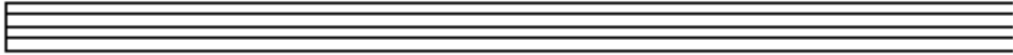
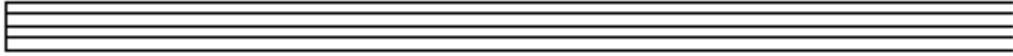




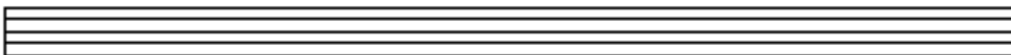
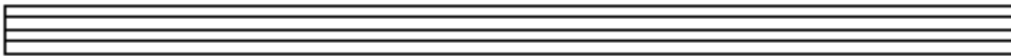
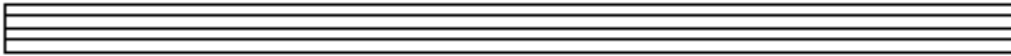
Name _____

THEME AND VARIATIONS WORKSHEET

Write the familiar tune out here:



Write your variation here:



Don't forget to include a clef and a key signature.

Draw in barlines to divide each staff into measures.

Mozart Variations

Main Theme

Piano *mf*



Variation 1

legato



Variation 5

p



Variation 8
Minore

p



Variation 12
Allegro

f

