



Lesson Plan: Create a Hambone Rhythm

OVERVIEW

They rhythms in *Hambone* are based on syncopated rhythms that are normally improvised while speaking sentences that rhyme. Asking students to create their own rhythms and rhymes will help them understand the hambone tradition and style. (Prepare for this lesson by working on the Skill Builder lesson “Musical Style Warm-Up” found in the Lessons for Rehearsal folder of this curriculum.)

LEARNING GOAL

Once the rhythms in the music have been mastered, students create their own hambone rhythms and teach them to partners. They may also add words to go along with their own hambone rhythms or the rhythms in *Hambone* by Libby Larsen.

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- Video: Bessie Jones sings the Hambone lyrics while her friend Gene Bluestein pats and slaps out the Hambone rhythm on his body: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YAKTzYADoo>
- [Rhythm Manuscript Paper](#) for each student (optional)
- *Hambone* sheet music (optional)

PROCESS

1. Remind students that when playing music, performers need to think about the characteristics of the musical style they are performing. Sometimes the way the notes are written does not accurately reflect how the musical style should be performed. The parts written for each instrument indicate that the rhythms need to swing. Eighth notes are not supposed to be played evenly and dotted rhythms should be played with a loose feel. Students should reflect this feel in their hambone rhythms.
2. Play Bessie Jones’ *Hambone* for students as an example of hambone rhythms and chant: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YAKTzYADoo> (Bessie Jones sings the Hambone lyrics while her friend Gene Bluestein pats and slaps out the Hambone rhythm on his body)

3. Pair students up. While keeping a steady beat, students alternate playing original hambone rhythms, each person playing for two measures and then listening to their partner's rhythms for two measures. Optional: students notate their rhythms using [Rhythm Manuscript Paper](#).
4. Direct students to listen to the recording of Bessie Jones yet again. They should notice how the words fit with the rhythms. Either individually, with a partner, or in a small group, they may write their own words to be performed with hambone rhythms in the sheet music, or to go along with their original hambone rhythms.

RHYTHM MANUSCRIPT PAPER

Name: _____ Instrument: _____

Use the lines below to notate your **hambone** rhythms. Use as many lines as you need.

See example below: (remember to add time signature and barlines)



