



Lesson: Irregular Meter: Exploring, Analyzing & Creating Rhythmic Patterns

OVERVIEW

After reading background information about irregular meter from the handout, students will analyze rhythms and determine the groupings of the subdivision of beat. They will then create original irregular rhythms, both for given time signatures and also for time signatures of their choice. Some or all of the original rhythms maybe performed by the band.

LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- demonstrate the ability to recognize an irregular meter.
- analyze rhythms for groupings of subdivisions of beat.
- create original rhythms in an irregular meter.
- perform the original rhythmic patterns.

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- Student copies of: [Music Written in an Irregular Meter](#)
- Student copies of the [Irregular Meter Worksheet](#)
- Instruments to perform selected student rhythms
- Teacher Resource: examples of student work

PROCESS

Read the assignment sheet “Music Written in an Irregular Meter,” together with the students. Following the handout:

1. Divide the class in half and have the students in each group clap either the pulse or the eighth note subdivisions of beat in the first two examples.

2. A student should share the answer to the first example in 7/8 to see if all the students' answers agree.
3. Students analyze the examples of rhythms in irregular meters for the groupings of subdivisions of beat (e.g. 2+2+3.)
4. Working individually and using the [worksheet](#) provided, students create rhythms in irregular meters that represent groupings of subdivisions of beats that are prescribed.
5. A time signature and other specific criteria are provided for the first three examples. The students determine their own time signatures for the last two examples.
6. Regroup. Have the entire band perform original rhythms that are shared with the class. The rhythms may be written on the board by the students, compiled and printed out by the teacher, or projected on a screen or Smartboard if the classroom has that capability. The rhythms may be played on a concert pitch determined by the teacher.

ASSESSMENT

There are numerous examples of rubrics designed to measure the quality of student compositions available on the web and in print materials. Various rubrics focus on technical components of the piece, craftsmanship and musical affect, application of processes, and personal reflection of the student composer.

It is important that the teacher determine which considerations to include in the evaluation of student work. The choice of assessment criteria should take into account the composing experience of the students. If the students do not have a lot of formative experience in musical composition, the teacher's critique of their first efforts should focus on considerations that will ultimately encourage them to continue to create more musical work in the future by sharing critical feedback in ways that serve to move the students forward in self-confidence, motivation, and an enhanced knowledge base. The level of rigor in evaluating the technical and aesthetic components of the students' compositions should increase proportionately to the amount of the students' experience. It is best practice to provide the grading criteria or a rubric in advance.

For additional guidance in evaluating student creative work, the following resources are recommended:

Hickey, M. (1999). Assessment rubrics for music composition. *Music Educators Journal*, 84 (4), 26 -33.

Rinehart, Carroll A., Ed. (2002, Composing and Arranging: Standard 4 Benchmarks. MENC, the National Association for Music Education (U.S.), MENC Committee on Performance Standards.

Music Written in an Irregular Meter

When you perform music in a **meter** like $\frac{4}{4}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, or $\frac{2}{4}$, the beats or pulses are all the same length, and each beat may be divided into the same number of **subdivisions**. Take a look at the following example in $\frac{3}{4}$ time:



Notice that each beat or pulse is the same length (a quarter note) and all three beats can be evenly divided into two eighth notes (2+2+2.) If you were tapping your foot to the beat, your foot tap would remain steady. You can feel the regular pulse and see how each pulse or beat is divided into two equal and even eighth notes when the class claps this rhythm.

Now take a look at the next example:



Notice that there are still three beats or pulses, but they are now not all the same length. The third beat or pulse is a dotted quarter note and can be divided into three eighth notes, rather than two eighth notes like the first two beats (2+2+3). If you were tapping your foot, the beat you would tap would be irregular — not as steady. This is an example of an **irregular meter** — a time signature where all the beats are not of the same length and are not all divided into the same number of subdivisions. When you clap the pulse or the subdivisions of the pulse into eighth notes, you experience how the first two pulses are divided into two equal and even eighth notes, but the third longer pulse is divided into three.

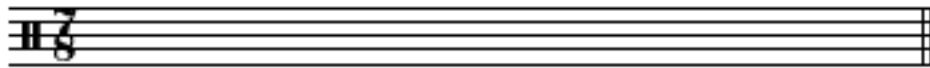


Now take a look at another example, also written in $\frac{7}{8}$ time:



Notice that the order of the groupings of eighth notes has changed. The longer dotted quarter note pulse has moved to the middle of the measure. Now the order of eighth note subdivisions can be described as 2+3+2.

There is one more way you could organize the pulses and subdivisions in $\frac{7}{8}$ meter. See if you can write it out in the staff provided below. Write notes representing the pulses with the stems going downwards and the subdivisions of eighth notes with the stems going upwards. Volunteers may share their answers with the class to compare and see if everyone agrees.



Each eighth note subdivision of the beat may be further divided into smaller subdivisions to create more complex and interesting rhythms. Take a look at the following two examples. The first example illustrates a possible grouping of eighth note subdivisions in 5/8 time. The second example further divides some eighth notes into sixteenth notes.

2 + 3



2 + 3



Sometimes music is written in a regular meter, but the pulses and subdivisions of beat are organized in a way that sounds like an irregular meter. Look at the following two examples written in 4/4 time. The first example has four regular pulses, each divided into two equal and even eighth notes. The class can clap the pulse and the subdivisions to hear and feel their relationship. After, if you clap the pulse and subdivisions in the second example, it will sound and feel like an irregular meter, even though the number of eighth notes in the measure does not change. The third example shows an additional way a rhythm in 4/4 time can be organized to sound like an irregular meter.

2 + 2 + 2 + 2



2 + 3 + 3



3 + 2 + 3



In this assignment, you will analyze rhythms written in an irregular meter, create rhythms in an irregular meter that match a given pattern of subdivisions, and create original rhythms with groupings of subdivisions of pulse that you decide.



Name: _____

Instrument: _____

Analyze the following rhythms for how the subdivisions of pulse are grouped (e.g. 2 + 3 + 3 + 2):

1. _____



2. _____



3. _____

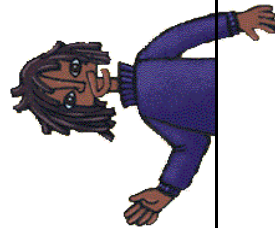


Write rhythms in the following measures based upon the groupings that are given:

4. 2 + 2 + 3 + 2 using only 8th notes



5. 3 + 2 using 8th notes and 16 notes



6. 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 using 8th and 16th notes



Create 2 rhythms in irregular meters of your choice. Include 16th notes in at least one of your rhythms. **Be sure to include a time signature.** Be ready to share one of your rhythms for the band to play on a concert Bb pitch.

- 7.



- 8.



TEACHER RESOURCE: EXAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK


Instrument: Flute

Analyze the following rhythms for how the subdivisions of pulse are grouped
(e.g. 2 + 3 + 3 + 2):

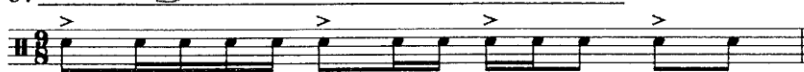
1. 3 + 3 + 2 + 3



2. 3 + 2 + 2

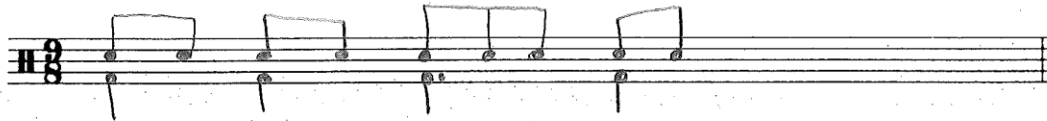


3. 3 + 2 + 2 + 2

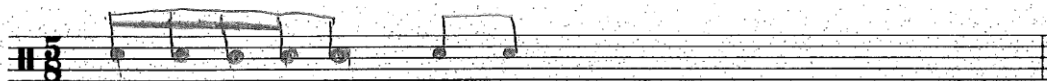


Write rhythms in the following measures based upon the groupings that are given:

4. 2 + 2 + 3 + 2 using only 8th notes



5. 3 + 2 using 8th notes and 16th notes



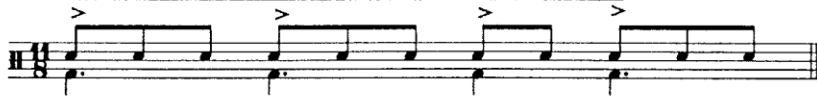
6. 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 using 8th and 16th notes



Instrument: Bari Sax

Analyze the following rhythms for how the subdivisions of pulse are grouped
(e.g. 2 + 3 + 3 + 2):

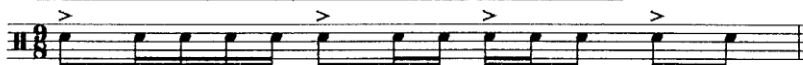
1. 3 + 3 + 2 + 3



2. 3 + 2 + 2

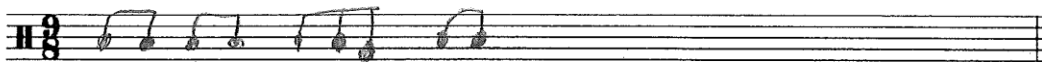


3. 3 + 2 + 2 + 2

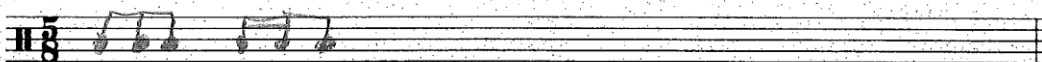


Write rhythms in the following measures based upon the groupings that are given:

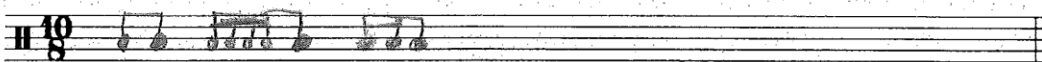
4. 2 + 2 + 3 + 2 using only 8th notes



5. 3 + 2 using 8th notes and 16th notes



6. 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 using 8th and 16th notes



Create 2 rhythms in irregular meters of your choice. Include 16th notes in at least one of your rhythms. **Be sure to include a time signature**. Be ready to share one of your rhythms for the band to play on a concert Bb pitch.

7.



8.

