



LESSON PLAN: Connecting the Threads of History, Poetry, Biography, and Music

INTRODUCTION

Students will recall events in Chen Yi's life, the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, and Li Bai's poem. Through a shared inquiry strategy, Carousel Brainstorming, they will apply their contextual knowledge to come to a deeper understanding of the song. Knowing and making sense of such contextual connections opens the door to deeper comprehension and a rich musical experiences with the musical work. The context for Chen Yi's *Thinking of My Home* is complex, interesting, and worth the time to takes to process with students.

LEARNING GOAL

Students will summarize and synthesize knowledge and insights about Chen Yi's life story, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and Li Bai's poem through a Carousel Strategy, a process for collaborative information gathering.

MATERIALS

- For review: Chen Yi biography and PowerPoint, reading on the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and the reading on Li Bai. Consider posting these on class web pages.
- Chart paper and markers in seven different colors

PROCESS

1. Ask students to recall or re-visit the Chen Yi's biography, the topic of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and what they know about Li Bai's beloved poem. Tell students that this background will be used for a collaborative process of collecting facts, opinions and insights related to the music. These resources can be posted on your class website, or made available in another format and assigned as homework prior to class.
2. Introduce students to the Carousel Brainstorming process. Tell them that they will engage in this activity in order to connect musical and historical threads to better know and perform *Thinking of My Home*.

Here is a summary of the Carousel process:

- Select questions you want to include. **Write and number** the selected questions, one per page, at the top of separate sheets of chart paper. Adjust the questions to fit your teaching goals. Spread out and post the charts on the classroom walls.
- Divide into as many groups as there are posted questions on the wall. Assign a number to each group that corresponds to one of the posted questions. This is chat at which the group will start their cycle of writing comments.
- Assign a color to each group and provide markers. Also choose a signal for moving on such as a bell or a piano chord.

- Send groups to the charts with their number and color. Their task is to read the prompt and take 2 to 3 minutes to discuss the question/topic/idea amongst the group members and then write down everything they know about it on the chart paper using their assigned color.

- Signal when it is time to move on. Groups go to the next chart and read the question/topic/idea AND the comments from the prior group(s). They discuss their thoughts and add new information. When they find a prior comment they agree with, they can add a check in their color. Reading the comments added by others is an important step as it provides new information, an idea about the level of agreement, and trends in the group's thinking. They can also write any questions they have about the posted question/topic on the chart as well as questions about prior comments.

- Continue the Carousel until groups are back to their home chart.

3. Complete the Carousel with a gallery walk to observe and read the expanded responses to all the questions. Or ask each group to do a summary presentation on the contents of their chart. Keep the charts posted as a resource for writing program notes.

Carousel Questions

#1 Generate a list of facts, events, and causes you recall about the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

#2 Chen Yi was 13 years old when the Chinese Cultural Revolution began. In what ways do you think the Revolution and the Red Guards affected her immediate life? The lives of her parents and siblings?

#3 Take a longer view and describe in detail how you think the Cultural Revolution and the actions of the Red Guard impacted her development as a musician and composer?

#4 What are some ways that Chen Yi kept her music alive during her years in the countryside? How did she maintain her technical skills?

#5 Chen Yi left China in 1986. Use your imagination to make some inferences about why she left her home country and list those reasons below.

#6 Who was Li Bai? What's his story? How is he connected to *Thinking of My Home*?

#7 When asked to write a musical work for young teenagers, Chen Yi could choose any subject and any lyrics she wanted. Why do you think she used the words written by Li Bai? Come up with a list of reasons for her choice?

ASSESSMENT

- Informally assess responses on the Carousel charts for evidence of student thinking and understanding of the main ideas related to the Cultural Revolution, Chen Yi's biography, and Li Bai's poem.
- For a more formal assessment, ask students to write a three to five sentence paragraph on the connections amongst the Cultural Revolution, Chen Yi's life as a musician and composer, and Li Bai, an ancient Chinese poet.

EXTENSIONS

- There are many ways to extend the learning through student writing projects. The student generated summary of the many aspects of *Thinking of My Home* and composer Chen Yi provides a rich resource for writing program notes, a summary essay, or a project created in collaboration with teachers who deliver your school's social studies curriculum.