



## Lesson: Creating an Instrumental Prelude

---

### OVERVIEW

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines a prelude as “...a **musical** composition, usually brief, that is generally played as an introduction to another, larger **musical** piece.” Chen Yi’s *Thinking of My Home* conveys a reflective and peaceful mood, perhaps with a touch of sadness. This clear sense of feeling atmosphere can inspire choral students to create **short** original preludes using simple percussion and voice. They will generate their ideas from the skills learned rehearsing the piece and when using the “Creating an Ostinato” lesson plan. They will also listen to selections of authentic Chinese music to tune their ears to Chen Yi’s musical roots.

### LEARNING GOAL

Students will create a prelude in response to Chen Yi’s *Thinking of My Home*. They will plan, develop and perform their work, making decisions about the voices and instruments to include, and the music’s rhythmic, melodic, and expressive elements.

### PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Students have rehearsed *Thinking of My Home* to the level where they can execute an authentic performance of the piece.

### RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- Recordings of Chinese music using authentic instruments, see box on right-hand side
- Percussion instruments that are similar in tone quality to those found in Chinese music: cymbals, small and large gongs, large drum, wind chimes, etc.
- Melodic instruments: Orff xylophones tuned to the “Zhi” pentatonic scale, flute, recorder (see [Vocal Warm-Ups](#) for pentatonic scale)
- Recording of *Thinking of My Home*
- Vocal score of *Thinking of My Home*
- “Creating an Instrumental Prelude” instruction sheet
- Student checklist
- Student score worksheet

Suggested recordings of Chinese music:

- [Seven Chinese Instruments You Should Know](#)
- [A Compilation of Chinese Instruments from Chinese Orchestra](#)
- [Percussion Ensemble - Nanyang Polytechnic Chinese Orchestra](#)
- [Beautiful Chinese Music – Bamboo Flute](#)
- [Silent Winds](#) – Thoughts of Home. Seems to be a reference to Li Bai’s poem “Thinking on a Quiet Night”
- [Poetry reading with music](#)

## PROCESS

1. Ask students to define the musical term *prelude*. Web-based or hard copy dictionaries can be consulted. Focus on the idea that a prelude is an independent piece that can introduce a longer work.
2. Read through the steps of the “Organizer for Creating a Prelude in Response to *Thinking of My Home*” to clarify the process and answer questions. Make sure students are clear that they will create a short (four measure) piece that reflects or connects to the song they’ve been singing for several weeks. They can think about the mood of the music, what it conveys, and how it connects to Chen Yi and Li Bai’s history.
  - Divide the class into work groups of four or more. In their groups, students will listen to the recording of *Thinking of My Home*, recite the text to the music and circle key words that describe the mood and sound qualities the music captures. They will brainstorm instruments and vocal sounds that would echo this mood, and select up to four melodic and rhythmic instruments and one or more vocal parts.
3. Using the steps in the “Organizer” student groups will compose a four-measure prelude. To connect their prelude to Chen Yi’s piece they can:
  - Use the original 4/4 time signature and the same approximate tempo
  - Use the “Zhi” pentatonic scale in the same key as the song
  - Use authentic Chinese percussion instruments if possible or instruments with similar timbres
4. Students should make sure they practice their prelude until they can perform with confidence.
5. When students perform the new preludes for the class, try placing them as an introduction to Chen Yi’s piece. For example: perform one of the preludes, then have the choir sing the opening 16 or so measures of *Thinking of My Home*.
6. Ask students to listen closely. After each group performs, ask class member what they noticed and how each performance reflected or connected with *Thinking of My Home*.

A prelude is “...a **musical** composition, usually brief, that is generally played as an introduction to another, larger **musical** piece.”

## ASSESSMENT

After students create and perform an expressive prelude to *Thinking of My Home* their work can be assessed using existing rubrics for creating musical compositions.

## EXTENSIONS

- Students select one or more of the compositions to perform at a concert featuring *Thinking of My Home*.
- Students expand their composition to an 8 or 16-measure piece to perform before the concert.
- Create an exhibition of the notated preludes to display at the concert featuring Chen Yi’s piece. Include an explanation of the project and student comments with their work.

## ORGANIZER FOR CREATING A PRELUDE IN RESPONSE TO *THINKING OF MY HOME*

You have learned to sing *Thinking of My Home* and know about the music, its history, and something about the meaning and memories of Chen Yi. You also know about the poet, Li Bai. This project asks you to think about what both Chen Yi and Li Bai were expressing in the music and poetry, then respond by creating a short reflective musical prelude.

As you create a **four-measure prelude** with instruments and voices, think about how your ideas and sounds reflect what you think or feel about the song. Experiment with a variety of vocal and instrumental timbres, dynamic levels, and patterns.

### Steps of the process:

1. Select a scribe to document both brainstorming ideas and selected melodies and rhythms.
2. As a group, listen to a recording of *Thinking of My Home* and follow the score. As you listen more than once, brainstorm and select melodic and rhythmic ideas you like. Talk about what you'd like your piece to sound like.
  - Feel free to use fragments from the choral parts or piano accompaniment that appear in Chen Yi's score, but also make up new material. The scribe will write your group's ideas.
  - Read the text of the music and discuss some words that might convey the mood of the music. Select key words for a vocal part from the score, or create your own.
  - Select up to four rhythm and/or melody instruments whose sound you may want to use. Scribe will list these on your score planner.
  - Think about how you might use one or more voices.
3. Create the melody or rhythm for your first instrument or voice. Critique it together. Scribe will list ideas. As a group, select the best ideas and notate the music for line one.
4. Continue this process for second instrument/voice. Combine the first and second lines and adjust as needed. If add more voices/instruments, continue the process. Connect them together as you experiment finding the sounds you want. Use an additional score sheet if needed.
5. When all parts are written, perform all lines together. Edit and make changes where necessary.
6. Don't forget to think about and write in any dynamics, tempo, and articulations you want. They are the expressive elements that can make your Prelude more musical.

**Practice your Prelude until it feels musical.**

**Perform for the class.**

## CHECKLIST

### Creating a Prelude in Response to *Thinking of My Home*

	YES	NO
<b>Preparation</b>		
Group selects a scribe		
Recording listened to and discussed. Scribe writes main ideas.		
Text to song read by group & key words and/or melody phrases selected		
<b>Create part 1</b>		
Experiment with sound and rhythm ideas. Scribe writes ideas to keep.		
Group selects best ideas and notates 1 <sup>st</sup> 4-measure line on score worksheet		
<b>Create part 2</b>		
Group experiments with sound ideas for 2 <sup>nd</sup> part. Scribe writes ideas to keep.		
Group selects best ideas and notates 2 <sup>nd</sup> 4-measure line on score worksheet		
<b>Create part 3</b>		
Group experiments with sound ideas for 3 <sup>rd</sup> part. Scribe writes ideas to keep.		
Group selects best ideas and notates 3 <sup>rd</sup> 4-measure line on score worksheet		
<b>Create part 4</b>		
Group experiments with sound ideas for 4 <sup>th</sup> part. Scribe writes ideas to keep.		
Group selects best ideas and notates 4 <sup>th</sup> 4-measure line on score worksheet		
<b>Final Score</b>		
Group makes adjustments and adds expressive markings (dynamics, tempo, and articulation)		
Group practices the Prelude		
Group performs for the class		

**Group Names:**

---

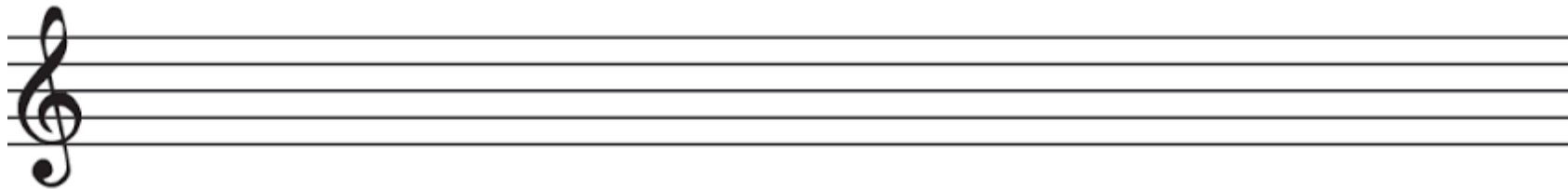


---

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

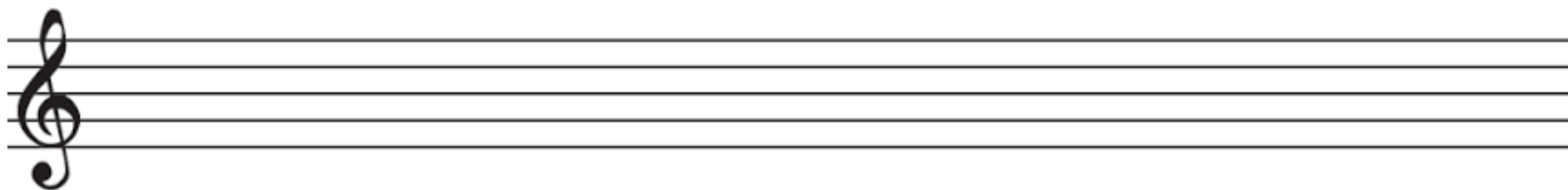


## Score Worksheet for Prelude



4 \_\_\_\_\_  
4

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
4



4 \_\_\_\_\_  
4

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
4