



Lesson Plan: Speculate, Listen, Confirm

INTRODUCTION

BEFORE students hear or rehearse *Pop!* for the first time, they can speculate about the music and make predictions about how they think it will sound. The basis for their predictions comes from information about the composer's intentions and what inspired the music. Students can discuss how they think the music will sound, then make predictions about *Pop!* based on their insights and discussions. Next they will listen to and describe the music. Finally, they will confirm how close or distant their predictions are from the actual music of *Pop!*.

LEARNING GOAL

After reading notes about what inspired Tawnie Olson to write *Pop!*, students will speculate about what they might hear in the music.

CONNECTING TO THE CORE STANDARDS

Responding: Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning.

Anchor Standard #7. Perceive and analyze artistic works.

Speculate (verb)

To consider or think about what might happen; to make an educated guess based on evidence.

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- Recording of *Pop!*
- Copies of the student reading, "Program Notes & Musical Inspirations"

PROCESS

Prepare Students:

- Inform them that they will learn a new piece by Canadian composer, Tawnie Olson.
- Define, with their input, the process of *speculating about something before it happens*.
- If you wish, connect the term program music to *Pop!*

Students Will:

1. Read the "*Pop!* Notes" article, an introduction to the piece with information about its creation and inspirations.
2. Discuss the reading with a partner or small group, sharing ideas and clues they noticed about the music. Based on their discussion, pairs or groups will finally speculate about how the piece will sound when the band plays it. create as many details as you can. At least one person should be taking notes for the group.

3. Summarize, in writing, the group's predictions about how the music might sound.
4. Regroup and share predictions. Discuss similarities, differences, and interesting twists of each group's thoughts.
5. Finally, listen to a recording of *Pop!* and jot down musical details you notice in the piece. Discuss *Pop!* as a class, focusing on what they heard and how it does or does not align with their predictions. Congratulate them on their ability to think about sound and translate words and images into sound.

ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS

The musical terms and related vocabulary that students use in their predictions provides an opportunity to informally assess knowledge, use, and understanding of terms and concepts. The comparison of predictions to the actual music provides evidence of musical thinking.

EXTENSIONS

- Save the language used to make predictions and the ideas generated by the class as material to use when students write program notes for *Pop!*.
- Make predictions about other new pieces for which you have information about the context, intentions, and inspirations of the composer.

Program Notes & Musical Inspirations

"I like popcorn," says composer Tawnie Olson.

Tawnie Olson's father taught her how to make popcorn when she was just a girl. "It's a food for fun times and happy feelings."



When you make popcorn on the stove, it takes a while to really get going. After a test kernel or two pops, you pour in the rest of the corn, put a lid over them, and shake the pan a little. Fairly quickly, the number of pops increases. After a few minutes of wild popping (and more shaking of the pan), the pops occur at wider intervals. This is a sign that almost all the kernels have popped, and the pot needs to be taken off the burner. An experienced popcorn maker will leave the lid on for a minute or two after taking the pot off the heat, because often one or two more kernels will pop quite a while after the rest have finished. If the lid is off, those kernels will burst right out of the pan, taking others with them and causing the cook to jump with (dignified?) surprise.



This piece was inspired by popcorn.

The opening of the piece, in which little fragments of a tune are introduced, is meant to suggest the popping of those very first kernels. As more kernels pop, we hear the tune in full. It turns out to be the main theme, which is made of up short staccato notes, some of which have accents that make them pop out of the texture a little. The piece builds from there (just like a pot of popcorn when it gets going), right up to a special section just before the end of the piece. In this passage, the whole band improvises sounds that suggest a pot of popcorn in the making. As well as being fun to play, this section gives students a chance to co-compose part of the piece, and asks them to play independently and to listen across the whole band.

Pop! is a type of Rondo sometimes called arch form: ABACABA.

Within that form, each section grows and develops every time it is repeated. This is done through imitation and canon, through additive processes, and by changing the theme's color and character.