



Lesson Plan: Scat Singing

INTRODUCTION

When composer Rosephanye Powell created *When I Sing*, she wove several interesting musical ideas and traditions into the piece. Circle Singing and Text Painting are addressed in separate lessons. Scat singing is also related to the music near the end of the piece when students swing with scat syllables.

NATIONAL CORE STANDARDS

#9 Responding: *Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response*

#11 Connecting: *Relate musical ideas and works with varied context to deepen understanding*

LEARNING GOAL

Students will echo teacher scat phrases, create their own, then apply the additional experience of scat singing to *When I Sing* with confidence.

MATERIALS

- Poster or electronic image of scat syllables
- Audio examples of scat singing – select from the Resources list
- [Skill Builder Lesson](#)

Scat singing is a feature of vocal jazz where rhythmic syllables, phrases, and mouth sounds are improvised by imitating the sound of instruments with the voice.

PROCESS

Display the words SCAT SINGING on the board.

Students Will:

1. Respond to this question “What do you know about ‘scat singing’?”
 - Take student responses and/or provide a short definition.
 - Listen to a short audio example of scat singing from the Resources List, and briefly discuss what they hear.
2. Hear some of the background about scat’s origins.
 - Grew out of West African music.
 - Louis Armstrong was the first American jazz musician to make it popular. Biographies of Armstrong report that he sang scat as a kid.
 - Another story says he broke out in improvised scat at a recording session when the song lyrics for “Heebie Jeebies” fell off his music stand.
 - Some rappers and hip-hop artists use scat syllables to develop the rhythms of the rap.
 - For more facts go to: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scat_singing.
 - Listen to other examples from the resource list.

3. Stand and echo sing scat phrases.

- Sing phrases of scat for students to echo. Get feet moving in duple time and do them again.
- Look at a list with some scat syllables. Challenge students to put a few together and sing them to the class.
- Pair up students to echo scat with a partner, taking turns to lead.
- Select a few student volunteers to sing out a scat phrase for the ensemble to echo.
- Work on the scat phrases beginning at m.72 of *When I Sing*.

Scat Syllables

Here are a few scat syllables to prime the pump. Challenge students to invent their own.

For Higher Notes	For Lower Notes	
Shwee	Du	Ooh
Dwee	Bu	Dah
Bee	Wha	Bah
Vee	Bop	Dop
Zee	Dot	Dit
Wee	Doot	Zoot
De	Doot-n	Doodle

RESOURCES

- Ella Fitzgerald took scat singing to amazing heights. Listen to her famous version of "[How High the Moon](#)". The scat singing follows some vocal improv and starts at 1:34.
- [Web resources from the Smithsonian Museum of American History](#)
Listen to the audio track featuring "EVERYBODY'S BOPPIN' BY LAMBERT," Hendricks and Ross for scatting sections. They start around 0:30.
- Bobby McFerrin can sound like a whole orchestra when he uses his voice to scat/improvise and his body to add percussion. Listen to his piece, "[THERE YA GO](#)".
- Wikipedia has a useful article on scat's history at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scat_singing
- Wiki **How to Do Anything** topic, "[How to Scat](#)".
- A picture book filled with scat syllables and sweet illustrations might help the ideas flow. Look for *Louis Armstrong Taught Me Scat* (2008) by Muriel Harris Weinstein.

ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS

Students show understanding of scat singing by successfully performing music motives using scat syllables.