

Cantique de Noël / O holy night Adolphe Adam/Placide Cappeau

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Grading

Intermediate

About this song

'O holy night' ('Cantique de Noël') is a well-known Christmas carol, composed by Adolphe Adam in 1847. The French words were written by Placide Cappeau.

Vocal range

A 10th



Vocal format

Unison/independent parts

Themes/subjects

Carol/Christmas/Christianity

Musical elements

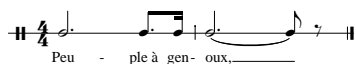
Texture and structure

Musical characteristics

Unison and two-part harmony, simple verse and chorus structure

Exercises

- Ask learners to breathe deeply and hiss or blow out slowly; count how long learners take to blow out. Repeat this exercise, encouraging learners to improve on the previous time.
- Ask learners to balance on one leg and rotate the other leg in a circular motion, starting with the ankles, then the knees, and finally the hips. Learners should try this clockwise, then anti-clockwise, before repeating with the other leg.
- Ask learners to move their stomach muscles in and out without breathing. (This makes them very aware of the movement required when they breathe.) Ask learners to breathe in for four beats, feeling the ribs expanding outwards, and out for four beats, keeping the ribs engaged for as long as possible.
- Demonstrate the characteristic rhythm of the song:



Recommended CànSing exercises

- Vocal exercise 9 (Sneeze)
- Diction exercise 1 (Tongue twister)
- Vocal exercise 2 (Fiddle diddle de)
- Body exercise 4 (Relax and stretch)

Teaching and learning

- Listen to a recording of the song and ask learners to focus on the pronunciation of the following letters or syllables:
silent 's' – chantons, fiers, fronts
'oi' – voici, étoile, foi, Roi
'oux' – genoux, courroux
'ui' – nuit, lui
'ance' – espérance, délivrance.
 - Using the backing track and the guidelines above, focus on the rules governing pronunciation of the letters, and encourage learners to practise imitating the correct sounds. Learners can then create banks of words, both new and familiar, that follow the same rules of pronunciation.
 - Divide learners into groups of four to five and look at the lyrics. Ask them what words they recognise or can guess the meaning of. Share paper copies of the lines of the song with the groups, listen to the song and ask learners to wave the lines they have in the air if they hear them. Learners listen to the song again and work with their group to put the song lyrics in order.
 - Give learners copies of the lyrics with blank spaces. Ask them to listen to the audio track without lyrics and complete the missing words.
 - Go through the song, explaining the meaning of the lyrics. Ask learners to recreate the meaning of the song in a different format. This could take the form of a storyboard, a video clip, a mind map, a short animated film, or a slideshow presentation.
- The above tips are for teachers using the song in a MFL context. If you would like advice on developing your pupils' musical skills, there are support sheets for this song in Welsh and English on the CànSing website at www.cansing.org.uk.

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Next steps

The suggestions below can form a useful starting point for your work with songs in a range of languages. They have been devised to allow learners to develop their skills in oracy, reading and writing through a range of activities and experiences.

- When learners are confident performing the song, this can be developed into an inter-group competition, where learners are given the opportunity to perform their song in assembly or registration time to other groups. Voting can take place to see which version is judged to be the best. Judging can take place in several categories to enable the greatest number of learners to achieve recognition for their song. For more inspiration please refer to the 'Useful support materials' section.
- Collect a range of Christmas songs in French to sing with learners. Learners could compare these songs with Welsh and English Christmas songs, considering elements such as themes, structure and rhythms. Learners can then choose their favourite song to perform to others. Learners could incorporate this activity into a broader topic, where they compare their own culture with that of French-speaking countries.
- Consider incorporating songs at regular intervals into a scheme of work, either for language teaching or to enhance learners' intercultural understanding across the curriculum. For vocabulary acquisition in the early stages of language learning, a collection of songs on particular topic areas, such as animals, body parts, household tasks, colours and numbers, could be used to increase motivation and improve on accuracy. As learners progress, songs can provide support and reinforcement for language structures and grammar points.
- Learners could be involved in a transition project using French songs from Key Stage 2 into Key Stage 3. A song can be selected by teachers from the secondary school languages department and their feeder primary schools together. Learners from Years 6 and 7 can then be involved in preparing the songs for a joint performance, which could take place on a taster day in the secondary school.

Useful support materials

For further ideas and links to support material, visit the CântSing pages on the CILT Cymru website: www.ciltcymru.org.uk. Here you will find pronunciation guidelines, links to more songs and resources in many languages, and helpful ideas for how to develop your MFL and singing projects further.

Assessment for learning and developing thinking

Questioning

Tool: Think-pair-share

Find examples of a particular sound in the song.

- How can we improve our pronunciation?
- Do we know any other words/phrases that we can put into the song?

Feedback and self- and peer assessment

Choose which suggestions for giving feedback are most suitable for your learners:

- Feedback on pronunciation: divide the class into groups, and tailor feedback to each group of learners.
- Feedback on substituting words and phrases: use a checklist of sound-spelling patterns to effectively self- and peer assess the performance of each group.

Developing thinking

Take words out of the song and divide them into parts of speech, including nouns, verbs and adjectives. Mix them up to create new phrases or verses. Add words in each category using dictionaries or glossaries, and continue to create new lines for the song.