

LAND OF THE SILVER BIRCH

Traditional



ABOUT THIS SONG

This is a traditional Canadian First Nation (Indigenous) people canoeing song. It is pentatonic and can be performed as a round. It can also be sung as a partner song to 'Canoe Song' or linked with this song by using the same ostinato.

THEMES/SUBJECTS

Working song/partner song/geography

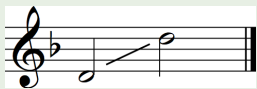
CURRICULUM KEY LINKS

Languages, Literacy & Communication
Humanities
Science & Technology

DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

Vocal range

An 8th



Vocal format

Round

Musical elements

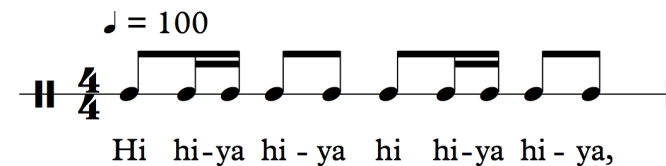
Duration and pitch

Musical characteristics

Simple rhythm pattern, syncopated rhythms, leaps in melody

Warm-up Exercises

- Ask learners to find a partner and decide who is A and who is B. A should make facial and body movements and B should imitate. Start with 'over-the top' movements, and then change to very small subtle movements.
- Ask learners to stand with their back straight and their feet slightly apart, facing 'five minutes to one'. Learners should: exhale for four beats; breathe in for four beats, feeling the ribs expand; hold and, as they exhale, make a 'hiss' sound like a tyre being emptied.
- Repeat the two main sounds of the last sentence in each verse ('Hi' and 'Hi-ya') to the first note of the song (D); concentrate on creating a consistent sound.
- Demonstrate the characteristic rhythm of the song:



Suggested key links with other Areas, cross-cutting themes &/or local, national and international contexts

- Geography link - exploring Canada and its topography and rivers. Compare with local and national topography and rivers.
- The song mentions creatures and trees native to Canada. Compare these with native trees, creatures and birds of Wales. Are there similarities and differences?
- The song mentions a wigwam - home of the indigenous people of Canada. Compare ways of living with the people of Wales.

GRADING: EASY

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Teaching and learning

- 1 Play a recording or sing the round, asking learners to clap the beat/pulse as they listen. Point out that the first line of the melody uses only the home note (D) and a leap to the fifth note (A).
- 2 Start by teaching the melody in unison and ask learners to sing the first line a couple of times.
- 3 Move to the second line and elicit that the first note is an octave higher than the first note of the song (top D). Point out the syncopated rhythm that moves by step at the end of the phrase. Return to the beginning and go over the first two lines a few times.
- 4 The third phrase is the same in pitch and rhythm as the second phrase, except for two extra notes at the end. Take plenty of time to go over the words.
- 5 Move to the fourth phrase, which uses the same lyrics in every verse. Point out that the melody uses only the home note (D) and a leap to the third note (F), and encourage learners to hold the last note for two full beats.
- 6 After learners are familiar with all phrases, perform the melody. If learners are confident, they can try to sing the melody unaccompanied.
- 7 Divide the class into two equal groups – Red and Purple.
- 8 Explain that the Red group will start singing first, and that the Purple group will join in after the second line – ‘Where still the mighty moose wanders at will’. Listen to a recording of the round performed in two parts.
- 9 Try to perform in two parts, with or without the recording. Repeat with the Purple group leading, and support either group by singing its part.

Integral Skills

- Divide learners into smaller groups. After giving them time to practise, ask them to perform the round for the rest of the class to listen to.
- Use this round as a starting point when teaching another round. Ask: What are the main differences between both rounds?
- Ask learners where they should breathe. Encourage learners to breathe two phrases at a time and to concentrate on singing through the long vowel sounds.
- Sing ‘Land of the silver birch’ as a partner song with ‘Canoe song’, using the ostinato in ‘Canoe song’ as a link. Compare the similarities and differences between both songs.

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Statements of what matters:

- *Exploring the expressive arts is essential to developing artistic skills and knowledge and it enables learners to become curious and creative individual*
 - *Creating combines skills and knowledge, drawing on the senses, inspiration and imagination*
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- Encourage learners to improvise their own melodies using their voices or instruments. Start with three notes of the Dorian scale (D, E, F) and increase the notes as learners build in confidence. The full Dorian scale (DEFGABCD1) could be used as an extended activity.
- Perform the round on tuned classroom instruments. Give learners a copy of the score and, if required, write the letter names under the notes. Give learners time to practise, then perform in unison, two parts and four parts.
- Perform 'Land of the silver birch' with half the class singing and the other half playing, then vice versa.

Assessment for Learning:

- *Responding and reflecting, both as artist and audience, is a fundamental part of learning in the expressive arts*
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Questioning

Tool: No hands-up approach

- Try to demonstrate the first phrase of the song.
 - What are the similarities and differences between all of the phrases?
 - How would you describe the group's performance of this round?
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Feedback

Tool: Comments only

Give learners temporary comments on areas they need to develop. To improve their accuracy of pitch, learners may need to practise certain phrases and listen to a recording. Give learners the opportunity to act upon these comments during the session, and give comments again to see if they have been successful.

Self- and peer assessment

Tool: Talking partners

- Ask learners to share with a partner three new things they have learnt:
- What did you find difficult about this song?
 - What would you do to improve the performance?
 - What style of song would you like to learn next?
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