

Geo-music - music inspired by all things 'geo' Create your own geo-music

Nell Shaw Cohen writes “. . . creating Landscape Music (is) a compelling approach to improving and deepening our connection to nature, a goal which is more important now than ever”.

Natural landscapes, from rocks, rivers, volcanic eruptions to spectacular scenery, continue to inspire composers of music as they have throughout the ages. Film and television music usually reflects the images on the screen with different types of music depicting different types of scenery.

Ask the pupils to:-

(1) Investigate a variety of 'landscape music'. Playlists of modern music by the Landscape Music Composers Network can be found on YouTube, Soundcloud or Spotify,

A range of other examples is listed below:-

- Ludwig van Beethoven - Symphony No. 6 'The Pastoral' was composed in the countryside around Vienna. The first movement depicts a lively stream, the fourth features a gradually-building thunderstorm, with driving rain and lightning.
- Felix Mendelssohn - overture The Hebrides (also known as Fingal's Cave). This was composed after a visit to the island of Staffa on Scotland's west coast, (*photo*).
- Richard Wagner - "Entry of Gods into Valhalla" in Das Rheingold was inspired by the Swiss Alps.
- Wolfgang Loos and Frank Scherbaum - "Inner Earth", Orchestra of Earth, is a symphony created by transforming seismic data from earthquakes and volcanoes.

(2) Look at the geological postcards of granite and chalk landscapes on page 3 and create or choose, a short piece of music for a film set in each of those landscapes.



Fingal's Cave, Staffa

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The back up:

Title: Geo-music: music inspired by all things 'geo'.

Subtitle: Create your own geo-music

Topic: Much of our great music was and is inspired by the natural world. This activity encourages pupils to listen to such music and to compose their own. The activity creates a cross-curricular link between the sciences and arts.

Age range of pupils: 5 years upwards

Time needed to complete activity: 20 minutes in class but much longer to create the music.

Pupil learning outcomes: Pupils can:

- appreciate that much music is inspired by the natural world;
- describe some pieces of this type of music;
- realise that everyone knows something about different landscapes;

- appreciate that everyone can create music
- gain an insight into how much time and effort is expended on producing great music.

Context:

*"Art and science are branches of the same tree."
(Albert Einstein)*

This activity fits in well at the end of a topic where pupils can explore other aspects of the subject of study. It encourages creative thought and breaks down any barrier pupils may make between scientific, factual subjects and the arts.

Following up the activity:

Pupils can use search engines to explore the topics 'Music influenced by landscapes' They could also try the other cross-curricular Earthlearningideas in this series, (listed in a table at the end).

Underlying principles:

- Much of our music has been inspired by the natural world.
- Music and rocks and landforms have played important rôles in our lives since ancient humans lived in caves.
- Rocks, fossils, minerals, landscape and natural events such as eruptions, earthquakes and floods, can provide subject matter and inspiration for composers.

Thinking skill development:

Trying to compose music which reflects a landscape or geological event shows construction. Discussion about the music involves metacognition. Turning a scientific topic into music is a bridging skill and is the aim of the activity.

Resource list:

- a good imagination
- access to the internet (optional)

Useful links:

- <https://landscapemusic.org>
- <https://www.wqxr.org/story/earth-day-how-nature-inspired-major-composers/>
- <https://www.seismo.ethz.ch/en/knowledge/snapshots/earthquakes-in-art/>
- <https://www.nellshawcohen.com/>
- https://www.earthlearningidea.com/PDF/97_Postcard_s_1.pdf

'Music in the Landscape: How the British Countryside Inspired Our Greatest Composers' by Em Marshall

Source: Elizabeth Devon of The Earthlearningidea Team

Cross-curricular Earthlearningideas
Geo-art: paintings and sculptures inspired by all things 'geo'
Earthquakes and art: historic paintings of earthquakes
Geo-literature: poems and stories inspired by all things 'geo'
Geo-music: music inspired by all things 'geo'
Rocks music: create your own geo-instrument
Back in time: "Alligators spotted in London"

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Granite landscape



Chalk landscape



from: https://www.earthlearningidea.com/PDF/97_Postcards_1.pdf