

# Weather

## Opportunities for the children to explore music and sound

### Activity 1: Listening

Learning to listen carefully to the sounds and words heard in music

### Activity 2: Sounds Alone

Introducing classical music and its representation of sound

### Activity 3: Drawing and Dramatising

Learning how to represent repeated musical patterns in picture and movement

## Resources

For this topic, you will need:

- a copy of Resource 9 for each child
- audio recordings of weather-related songs
- an audio recording of Vivaldi's Autumn from the Four Seasons – Violin Concerto No. 3 in F major Op. 8 (from 7:40 to 8:40 minutes approximately)

### Resource 7: Weather Symbols

### Resource 8: Whatever the Weather?

### Resource 9: Musical Score Template



### Activity 1: Listening

Show the children **Resource 7: Weather Symbols**. Ask them to explain what each one means. Emphasise that the picture must be simple, so that we can easily identify it at a glance.

Explain the importance of listening carefully in any learning area. Tell them that we are going to practise this skill in music, as they listen to a variety of songs. To ensure the best possible standard of listening for each of the songs, encourage the children to adopt their listening position. This is where they exclude most of their senses except for their listening sense – eyes and mouth closed and hands still.

All of the songs should be weather-related. You can easily find these online. Suggestions include:

Little April Showers (Disney, Bambi)

It's Raining Men (The Weather Girls)

Let it Snow! (Dean Martin)

Somewhere Over the Rainbow (Eva Cassidy)

What Colour is the Wind? (Phil Coulter)

I Wish it would Rain Down (Phil Collins)

Hurricane (The Vamps)

Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head (B. J. Thomas)

Some Sunny Day (Van Morrison)

Show and explain **Resource 8: Whatever the Weather?** Tell the children to listen for the type of weather that each song mentions. Then, encourage them to draw a symbol to represent each type in the appropriate box. If they can, ask them to write the name of the weather type that matches their symbol below.

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## Activity 2: Sounds Alone

Through this activity, the children should understand that they don't always need words to create a picture of weather or a season. Using the instruments and the techniques (timbre), alongside the overall tonality (mood) and structure of the music, a composer can very cleverly build up a vivid picture in our imagination.

For example, you could choose a piece of classical music such as Vivaldi's Autumn from the Four Seasons – Violin Concerto No. 3 in F major Op. 8, from 7:40 to 8:40 minutes approximately. You can find this online.

Play the extract to the children, but do not tell them that it is called Autumn. Ask them to draw a weather symbol that they feel suits the music. When they hear the sound of this piece, the children may find drawing any symbol difficult. Encourage them to use their imagination and think of a season rather than a single weather type.

Assure the children that there are no right or wrong answers. This is about what the music means to them. Discuss the symbols the children have drawn. Encourage them to give some reasons why they chose the symbols. Most children will find this difficult, but it is important to encourage them. This will develop their ability to describe different musical features and to comment on the characteristics of the sounds they hear and create.

Play the extract from Vivaldi's Autumn again. This time, tell the children its name and its link to autumn. Challenge them to remember the composer's name too. Discuss what symbols they might draw to represent this season. Suggest leaves falling off trees and blowing around on the ground or a mixture of wind and rain. Remind them that a piece of classical music may make different people think of different things.

Discuss the autumn scenes Vivaldi might have been imagining as he wrote this masterpiece. Explain that because Vivaldi is using sounds and not words, the key to unlocking the meaning of the piece is in listening carefully to the elements of music: pitch, timbre, structure and dynamics. Refer to the glossary of terms.

To help stimulate thoughts, encourage the children to make a list of some autumnal weather and other events in this season. You could include some of the ideas the children suggested earlier for an autumn symbol. Then, work with the children to narrow the list down to just two autumnal events that they feel best represent Vivaldi's music in this extract.



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## Extension Activity

Encourage the children to notice how the extract (explain term) of the concerto includes two phrases or sections that repeat alternately, in an ABAB format. Choose two autumnal events that relate to each other, for example the wind blowing the trees for the A section and the leaves falling off the trees for the B section. Prompt the children to appreciate how the leaves falling off trees are particularly important, as this relates exclusively to autumn.

Choose two simple actions the children could use to represent these repeating sections in the music. These actions could be moving hands around for wind (A section) and flicking fingers outwards to show leaves falling down (B section). Play the music a few times. Encourage the children to perform these actions at the appropriate times.



## Activity 3: Drawing and Dramatising

Some children will need to see the pattern of the music to understand what is happening. Show them **Resource 9: Musical Score Template**. Play the extract from Vivaldi's Autumn Concerto again (from 7:40 to 8:40 approximately). This time, encourage the children to point to each of the four boxes as the music plays. When the children hear changes in the music, encourage them to move their fingers from left to right across the boxes (A to B to A to B).

Recap the two autumnal activities you decided would match these repeating sections of music (wind blowing the trees and leaves falling off the trees). Give each child a copy of **Resource 9**. Encourage them to think of simple pictures or symbols they could design to represent each of these. Encourage the class to draw their designs in the appropriate boxes. Remind them that the symbols should be identical in Boxes 1 and 3 (wind blowing the trees) and 2 and 4 (leaves falling off the trees) as these are the sections of music that are repeating (teach the term).

Play the Vivaldi extract again. Encourage the children to follow along, pointing to each of their pictures as the music changes. Explain that the children have created their very first musical score (teach the term). Tell the children that a musical score is a key component a composer uses to organise his musical thoughts and ideas. Point out that we read a score from left to right, in the same way that we read a sentence.

Ask the children to think of physical movements to represent the two activities. Encourage them to think of the smaller actions they performed, such as moving their hands to represent the wind, in the last lesson as starting points. Help them to turn these into bigger actions that use their whole body.

Encourage the children to think about moving their bodies at different levels. For example, the wind blowing the leaves could involve arm and upper body movements. They could represent the leaves falling off the trees by gradually and gracefully moving from high to low.

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Ask the children to perform these movements to the first two sections of the music. Then play the entire extract. Ask the children who can best represent the changes in the music by adapting their movements accordingly.

Encourage the children to work in groups of five or six. This allows them to share the roles in the dance and encourages more creativity, as they take the roles of trees, wind and still or leaves.

Before the children begin to move, give them enough time to plan and discuss their story. Encourage them to think of a beginning, middle and end for their dance. Allocate roles to each member of the group and give them time to practice. By this stage, the children should be familiar with the four sections of the extract and know whose role will be most prominent in each section.

Finally, ask each group to perform their autumn dance to the rest of the class for peer-evaluation. Then, give each group time to work on any changes before they perform to the class a second time.

As a further challenge, you could ask the children to use percussion instruments to accompany their own dance, instead of following the official soundtrack. Discuss how the children might record the instruments or sounds they would like to include on another similar score for each section of the extract.

