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Chapter 1: When Music Began

No one knows for sure when music began, but the historical record shows that it has been a part of mankind’s existence since at least 1,000 B.C. If the Bible is used as an historical document, then music has existed since at least 4,000 B.C. Since that time, music has been an integral part of cultures and societies throughout the world. Music has played an important role in religious ceremonies, important events, celebrations, and day-to-day life.

Two of the great philosophers of ancient Greece, Aristotle and Plato, spoke out on the need to include music in education and in the development of the whole person. Aristotle said, “Let the young practice even such music as we have prescribed, only until they are able to feel delight in noble melodies and rhythm, and not merely in that common part of music in which every slave or child or even some animals find pleasure.” The Greek mathematician Pythagoras is recognized for developing the idea of musical intervals, the tonal distance between two notes or pitches.

Three important instruments were part of ancient Greek culture and were the main instruments used to provide musical accompaniment to songs and Greek tragedies. These were the lyre and kithara, stringed instruments similar to our harp, and the aulos, a double-reed instrument that looked like a flute but sounded more like an oboe. For example, the Bible’s King David used a harp to accompany his psalms and other songs. Cymbals, drums, tambourines, and other instruments were used for ceremonies and celebrations.

Other cultures from as far back as ancient Greece and Biblical times also share histories in which music plays an important role.
Chapter 1: Class Activities

1. Create a simple accompaniment instrument, such as a drum or harp, from items that you have around your home or classroom. They may include rubber bands, yarn, string, bottles filled with water, empty containers such as oatmeal cartons, and so forth. Use your imagination as you create instruments that could be used to accompany simple melodies.

Word Search

Complete the word search using terms from the chapter. Circle the words in the puzzle as you find them.

Aristotle    Bible    celebrations    cymbals
drums    Greece    harp    intervals
kithara    lyre    mathematician    philosophers
Plato    psalms    Pythagoras    religious ceremonies
Questions

1. Using the Bible as an historical document, music has existed since _____________.

2. In what types of events has music played an important role? ________________

3. Who were two of the great philosophers of ancient Greece? ________________

4. Who is the Greek mathematician recognized for developing the idea of musical intervals? ________________

5. This is the tonal distance between two notes. ________________

6. What three instruments were an important part of Greek culture? ________________

7. How were these instruments used? ________________

8. Which instrument listed in question number six was a double-reed instrument? ________________

9. What instrument did King David play? ________________

10. What other types of instruments were used for ceremonies and celebrations? ________________
Chapter 2: All Types of “-phones”

Musical instruments in all cultures and societies are classified in a variety of ways: by their shapes, by the sounds they produce, and by their use in a particular culture. Another important way that instruments are classified is by how they produce their individual sounds. The suffix “-phone” comes from the Greek word phonos, meaning “sound.” Sound is created when vibrations or sound waves are generated. We can place the suffix “-phone” at the end of certain words to describe how sounds are produced on all of the instruments of the world.

There are four main categories of instruments using this method of description. They are idiophone, membranophone, chordophone, and aerophone. Let’s look at what each of these words means and the instruments found in each category.

Idiophone

Idiophones are instruments upon which vibrations are produced by striking something against something else, or by scraping, shaking, or rubbing the instrument. These instruments generally do not have a specific pitch or tone. Some examples of idiophones are the cymbals, the triangle, claves, wood blocks, and maracas. Modern percussion ensembles have expanded the realm of idiophones to include trash cans and plastic tubes. Many other cultures, such as the traditional island cultures, use hollowed-out logs that are beaten with sticks in their music.

Membranophone

On a membranophone, sound is produced by striking a stretched membrane of some sort with either a stick or the hand. The membrane may be either an animal skin or a manmade material such as plastic or rubber. The membrane is usually stretched over a hollow tube. Membranophones may be pitched or non-pitched.

Examples of pitched instruments of this kind are timpani or kettle drums. The tension or tightness of the membrane on these instruments is changed with foot pedals on each drum so that a specific note, or pitch, can be played. Examples of non-pitched instruments of this kind are snare drums, bass drums, congas, and bongo drums.