

Zodiac Animalia

Teacher Resources

Activities in this pack:



Information



Activity 3 Listen



Activity 1 **Learn**



Activity 4 **Move**



Activity 2 **Create**

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Introduction

Zodiac Animalia was written in 2017 by Australian composer Jessica Wells. It has twelve short sections which represent the 12 animals of the Chinese Zodiac.

Each movement is intended to capture in music the personality, or character, we attribute to each animal. In order, the 12 animals of the Chinese Zodiac are: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat (Sheep), Monkey, Rooster, Dog, Pig. The animals are either related to ancient Chinese people’s daily lives (ox, horse, goat, rooster, pig, dog) or have lucky meanings (rat, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, monkey).

The ancient Chinese gave each animal a symbolic meaning, which come in six contrasting pairs Yin-Yang. These are defined by the odd or even number of their claws (toes, hoofs). Yang is dominant.

Order	Animal	Toes per limb	Odd/even	Yin/Yang	Attribute	Saying
1	Rat	4/5	Both	Yang	Wisdom	Wisdom without industriousness leads to triviality.
2	Ox	4	Even	Yin	Industriousness	Industriousness without wisdom leads to futility.
3	Tiger	5	Odd	Yang	Valour	Valour without caution leads to recklessness.
4	Rabbit	4	Even	Yin	Caution	Caution without valour leads to cowardice.
5	Dragon	5	Odd	Yang	Strength	Strength without flexibility leads to fracture.
6	Snake	0	Even	Yin	Flexibility	Flexibility without strength leads to compromise.
7	Horse	1	Odd	Yang	Forging ahead	Forging ahead without unity leads to abandonment.
8	Goat (or sheep)	4	Even	Yin	Unity	Unity without forging ahead leads to stagnation.
9	Monkey	5	Odd	Yang	Changeability	Changeability without being constant leads to foolishness.
10	Rooster	4	Even	Yin	Being constant	Being constant without changeability leads to woodenness.
11	Dog	5	Odd	Yang	Fidelity	Fidelity without amiability leads to rejection.
12	Pig	4	Even	Yin	Amiability	Amiability without fidelity leads to immorality.





Opposites

1. Discuss the elements of music and make a table showing their extremes. It will look something like this:

Pitch	Low	High
Duration	Long	Short
Tempo	Slow	Fast
Texture	Thick (multiple)	Thin (single)
Dynamics	Soft	Loud
Timbre	Dark	Bright

2. Consider which of your available sound sources are capable of a wide range and which are more limited (e.g. some percussion can't change pitch; some instruments sustain sounds; some resonate very well but don't make short sounds; anything breath-controlled sounds rely upon lung capacity).
3. In pairs of different instruments, have students explore their instrument and demonstrate its "opposite" capabilities. Encourage them to combine elements from the table above.
4. Teacher chooses a combination of elements (eg. a low-pitched, short, soft sound) and students respond if their instrument can produce the specified sound.
5. Teacher chooses a combination of elements, and students respond if their instrument can produce the OPPOSITE of every element specified. Try both of these with student leaders.
6. Using voices only, extend the exercise to phrases rather than single sounds:
 - Gradations in pitch, dynamics, tempo;
 - Melodic contour; Articulation

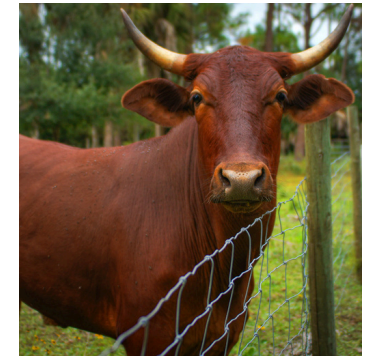




Create the sounds of the Zodiac animals

1. Choose an animal from the Chinese Zodiac. Discuss how to “paint” an animal, bird or insect using only musical sounds. Consider:
 - The sounds the animal makes (e.g. call, feet on different surfaces, flapping wings);
 - How the animal moves;
 - Its size;
 - The way people think about it (e.g. beloved pet, irritation, frightening)
2. Allocate each group one of the bullet points above (sound, movement, size etc.)
3. Decide what sound sources to be used and how it will sound.
4. Each group in turn improvises their response.
5. Combine the groups and record the result, if you can. Play it back for comment.

Extension: repeat the exercise as a composition rather than an improvisation. It is important to differentiate between **SOUND EFFECTS** (imitation of actual sounds) and **SOUNDS** which **CONVEY AN IMPRESSION**.





Listen to the Animals

1. Choose one of the Episodes from Zodiac Animalia. Play it to the class without comment.

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO ZODIAC ANIMALIA](#)

2. Tell the students that it's about an animal and ask them which animal it might be. It's up to you whether or not to provide a list of possibilities (and if so, how many).

3. Once they know the animal, revisit the checklist from Activity 2. Listen again and ask students to notice how many points on their list could be heard in Jessica Wells' piece.

4. Reveal the information at the beginning of this resource about the attributes and sayings of each animal in the Chinese Zodiac that relate to how people think about the animal.

5. Discuss the elements of music that are of most significance in creating the mind pictures in the work: tempo, rhythm, meter (particularly changing meter), instrumentation, texture, pitch range, dynamics (including the use of silence).

6. Listen to the chosen example again; ask students to notice how each of the elements you have discussed is used and why that choice might have been made. You could compile a table of this for future reference.





Move as the Animals

This piece lends itself readily to movement activities. Each Episode is very short, so using a Yin/Yang pairing would work well. It would be useful to link this activity to Activity 1 (OPPOSITES) if you choose to use them both.

Play the Episodes of your choice and try any or all of the suggested movement activities:

1. Establish the rules—careful movement, no contact, within a restricted area, no sound, movements must reflect what's happening in the music—whatever you need to make the activity work in the space you have with each different class.
2. Try some free movement responding to the musical sounds.
3. Have two groups perform for each other (one is Yin, the other Yang).
4. Try a pair activity, where one leads with the other closely following (or mirroring), and they swap roles for the second piece. Video the activity if possible.
5. Class discusses the task. If you can, video the work to inform class discussion.

