

Celebrating WNY

Lesson – *Form & History of March Music*

Companion Video – “Invincible Eagle”

Suggested Grade Level

Grades 1-4
Grades 5-8

Objective

Students will understand the form of American march music and explore the history behind one of John Philip Sousa’s famous marches. Students will demonstrate understanding of march form by identifying each section in “Invincible Eagle.”

Suggested Materials

- BPO video of “Invincible Eagle”
- March Form guide (provided)
- Historical Facts sheet (provided)

New York State Arts Standards

MU:Re7.1.5a-8a MU:Pr4.3.1a-4a
MU:Re7.2.5a-8a MU:Re8.1.1a-4a
MU:Cn10.1.1c-4c DA:Pr5.1.1b-4b

New York State English Language Arts & Literacy Standards

Reading, Standard 1
Speaking & Listening, Standard 1, 2, & 4
Language, Standard 1 & 2

New York State Social Studies Standards

Standard 1: History of the United States and New York

New York State Physical Education Standards

Standard 1

Procedure

Buffalo on the world stage! March King, John Philip Sousa wrote “Invincible Eagle” on a train ride from Buffalo to New York City. The piece was composed for the Pan-American Exposition, a world fair hosted in Buffalo in 1901. During this time, Buffalo was the 8th largest city in the United States and had extensive railroad connections to cities all over the nation. Visitors topped eight million by the end of the Exposition, the largest number of

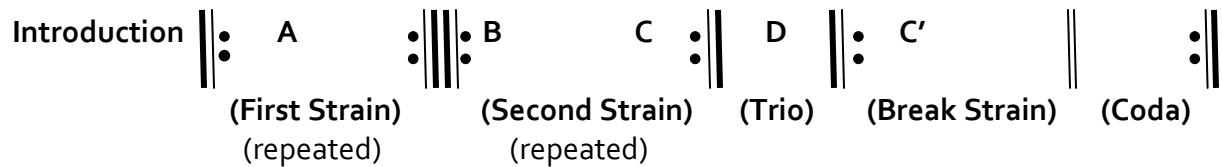


people to ever visit the city of Buffalo for one purpose. Sousa's band had been brought specifically to the exposition to perform for then president, William McKinley. Sousa had originally thought "The Invincible Eagle" would be more popular as a patriotic march than "The Stars and Stripes Forever," though he nearly entitled it "Spirit of Niagara."

- 1) March music originated in purpose to regulate the functioning of armies in the field by communicating orders, and keeping time during marching and maneuvers, as well to boost morale among ranks. Over time, march music evolved to being performed during ceremonies and as a source of entertainment, even being used to decorate circus acts.
- 2) **Grades 1-4:**
 - a) Discuss with students where they may hear march music being performed. What types of celebrations involve marches? Where else may you have heard music similar to march music? How does the music typically make you feel?
 - b) Explain that marches contain several different melodies and that the music may sound different throughout the piece. The music may sound loud and crazy at times, but then softer and calmer later on. A march is broken up into sections in which you hear different sounds or musical elements.
 - c) Have students watch the BPO video of "Invincible Eagle." After they listen, discuss the musical sounds they heard and how the music made them feel. What did the music sound like? How do the musical sounds compare and contrast in the beginning, middle, and end of the piece? Upon the second listening, have students move to how the music makes them feel. For example, they may want to stomp their feet in the beginning, but then glide across the room during the softer sections of the piece. Encourage them to change their movements to represent the changes in musical sounds during each section.
- 3) **Grades 5-8:**
 - a) Marches are typically made up of three common elements: contrasting sections, called **strains**; several different melodies; and a trio section that repeats variations of the previous strains.
 - b) Introduce students to the form of a march using the guide below. Explain that each letter represents a different section in the piece. Discuss the musical elements that define each unique section of the march. What are some musical characteristics that differentiate the sections? What are common elements that can be found in each section?
 - c) Have students watch the BPO video of "Invincible Eagle." Upon the second listening, have students notate the time stamp in which they hear each new section begin. Have them support their claim by providing examples of musical elements they heard that aided them in their conclusion. How did the dynamics change in the Trio section? What instruments played the melody in the second strain? How does the melody contrast with the previous strain?



MARCH FORM



Introduction: typically 4, 8 or 16 measures long and sets the mood of the music

First Strain: first melody of the march; typically 8 or 16 measures long; repeated with added counter-melodies, often with dynamic contrast

Second Strain: introduction of a second melody; typically 16 measures long; repeated; often played softer for contrast or in different instruments than the first strain

Trio: featured section of the march; third, main melody emerges; immediate change in the dynamic level from loud to soft; tonal center, or key signature, changes; typically 32 measures long; most contrasting of all the sections

Break Strain: the louder, more intense part of a march, serves as a break between the softer trio sections; fourth melody emerges

Coda: a final return to the Trio theme played much more loudly is the most exciting section of the march

Stinger: the last measure of the march contains a chord played in unison by the entire ensemble; can be compared to an exclamation mark at the end of a sentence



Historical Fact Sheet

The Composer

- American composer of march music
- Known fondly as “The March King”
- Born in Washington, D.C.
- Studied violin, music theory & composition
- Served as conductor of the United States Marine Band for 12 years
- Aided in the development of the *sousaphone*
- Organized The Sousa Band which toured in America and around the world
- Wrote over 130 marches
- “The Stars & Stripes Forever” march was adopted in 1987 as the national march of the United States
- Died in Reading, Pennsylvania at the age of 77



The Piece

- Written for the Pan American Exposition world fair in Buffalo, NY
- Written by John Philip Sousa on a train between Buffalo and New York City
- Premiered in Philadelphia on May 30, 1901
- Sousa believed this march would become his greatest hit
- Sousa designated this march as one of his “sunshine” marches, as it conveys the military spirit at its lightest and brightest