

Analyzing Handel's *Messiah*



Standards-Focused Classroom Series

The *Standards-Focused Classroom* series was created to provide educators with actual classroom examples of lessons that target 21st century learning standards.

About this Segment

In Mr. Jim Taylor's advanced choir class at McNary High School in Salem, Oregon, students analyze the imagery, the historical and religious context, and the compositional technique of three pieces of music from Handel's *Messiah*.

Pre-viewing Discussion Prompt

1. How do you build rigor in your fine arts classes?

Post-viewing Discussion Prompts

1. If you were the instructional coach observing this classroom, what 2-3 strengths in this lesson could you help the teacher identify?
2. What evidence of critical thinking and problem solving did the students demonstrate?
3. What constructive feedback could you give this teacher?

Lesson Evaluation

Rate the lesson's effectiveness (1 = not effective; 5 = very effective), and use your results to facilitate discussion and reflection.

1. Student learning targets were clearly communicated.
1 2 3 4 5
2. Instructional activities led students toward meeting the objectives.
1 2 3 4 5
3. Students were actively engaged.
1 2 3 4 5
4. Teacher differentiated instruction.
1 2 3 4 5
5. Assessments effectively monitored student progress.
1 2 3 4 5

Reflection Questions

After watching the video, participants can answer the following questions to reflect on new learning:

1. How does Mr. Taylor effectively incorporate principles of literacy and social studies in his lesson?
2. What role does collaboration play in a musical performance class? How can this role be applied to core-content classrooms?
3. What challenges and benefits to formative assessment are presented in a choir class?

Teacher Lesson Plan

Teacher: Jim Taylor		School Name: McNary High School		Location: Salem, Oregon	
Grade Level: HS		Content Area: Choir		Lesson Duration: 60 mins, part 1 of 1	
Lesson Date: December 5, 2013					
Summary/ Overview	In this lesson, students discuss the historical, cultural, and religious context and imagery of three pieces from Handel's <i>Messiah</i> : "And the Glory of the Lord," "Glory to God," and "And He Shall Purify." Students also discuss various techniques Handel employed in composing the pieces and work to incorporate important artistic and literary elements in their performance of the pieces.				
Skill-Based Objectives & Deliverables	<p>Students will investigate and analyze the text used for composing three pieces of music.</p> <p>Students will look for compositional technique that enhances the performance of the text and apply aural technique to bring it to life.</p> <p>Students will be able to discuss dialog cited within the song and from other studies, the intent of the composer, and use of compositional technique.</p>				
Standard(s) Addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in discussions on grades 11–12 topics and texts. • Demonstrate how compositional devices, structural aspects, context, and the creator's intent impact performance of a piece. 				
Materials & Resources	Document camera, projector, piano, sheet music of Handel's <i>Messiah</i> (if students don't have it memorized)				
Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocal warm-up with solfege. • Students chorally read objectives for the class. • Students do a read-through of the lyrics for "And the Glory of the Lord," and teacher leads discussion about Handel's use of motifs and their developments in composing this piece. • Students sing through the piece, pausing to discuss the motifs and themes throughout the piece. • Teacher chooses a student from each section to conduct the song for their section, helping students identify the parts where they are singing the motif and parts where they are singing a development. • Students move to "Glory to God" and discuss the influence of arches on the architecture and musical literature of the Baroque period. They point out where arch shapes are manifest in the piece. • Teacher guides students through a full run-through of the piece, focusing on creating shape with the music. • Class moves on to "And He Shall Purify." Teacher leads discussion on religious emphasis of purification and the Judeo-Christian symbols of baptism and water as purifying agents. They then discuss water imagery found in the music and text of the piece, and sing through the song with emphasis on bringing that imagery to life. 				
Assessment	Students demonstrate knowledge of music and text, as well as the historical, cultural, and compositional context, to enhance performance of the pieces, which teacher uses to inform future instruction.				

Resource from School Improvement Network

9th-12th Grade Music: Analyzing a musical work's elements and structure. Edivate.

<https://pd360.com/#resources/videos/7902>

Resource for Classroom Practice

American Choral Directors Association: ChoralNet. Retrieved January 19, 2015, from <http://www.choralnet.org/>

Fun Music Company: Free Music Lesson Plan on Baroque Music. Retrieved January 19, 2015, from

<http://funmusicco.com/music-lesson-plans/free-music-lesson-plan-on-baroque-music/>