

Froggie Went a Courtin'



Lesson Summary

- Learn the song “Froggie Went a-Courtin’” and its history.
- Make up new verses for the song.
- Discover sol-do music patterns in the song.

Lesson Plan and Procedure

Vocabulary

Courting, drake, jig, yonder, black-eyed pea, sol-do, opera, song-dots

American History Background

The song “[Froggie Went a Courtin’](#)” came with the pilgrims from Great Britain and with others who settled the first colonies. Originally it was probably referring to the marriage of a queen in England, and it first appeared in the 1500s in England and Scotland. For the colonists, who had no electronics, TV, or other entertainment, the song kept them busy singing and playing. Since the 1620s this song has entertained children and adults across the United States. Still today, children sing and make up verses.

Teaching Ideas

Teacher: *The song I'm going to sing was sung by children and adults back in the 1600s by the people from England who came to this country. They had sung it in England and continued to sing it here in the Americas to entertain themselves. They had no electronics, TV, etc.*

Teacher: *Someone is going courting in this song. (You may want to discuss that courting is another word for dating.) Listen and discover who it is.*

Sing the first verse of the song.

Teacher: *Who was going courting? (Frog.) Imagine the scene. What was he riding? What did he have by his side? Why? Was he a soldier? Listen again and discover who he is dating.*

Sing verse two.

Teacher: *Who was the frog courting? (Miss Mousie.)*

Invite students to listen to more of the story and see what they discover. Sing through verse seven. Discuss what the students heard.

Lesson Key Facts

- **Grade(s):** 3, 4, 5, 6
- **Subject(s):** English Language Arts, Music, Social Studies
- **Duration of lesson:** 30 minutes
- **Author(s):** Susan Kenney



Teacher: *But wait, the story is not over yet. Who came to the wedding?*

Sing verses 8–12.

Ask students to consider who else might come. Perhaps a flea, or a dog, or any other possible ideas the students can imagine. Make up new verses that rhyme.

Teacher: *Now, let's find out how the song ends. Sing verses 13–14 and discuss the ending.*

Teacher: *Would you like a different ending? How would you end the song? The last verse is not really about the story, but it was a way they ended many songs. This type of ending was used so that those listening could go away and sing their own versions of the song.*

Hum the tune on the sound “mm-hm.” Ask students to discover what words come on those notes as you sing the first verse again. Show them the *sol-do* hand signs to use each time that pattern occurs in the entire story-song. (Use one or both hands.) Discover other places that same pattern occurs. (For example, in the first verse: “Oh, Frog.”)

Invite students to sing “mm-hm” every time it occurs in the song-story, and then to sing the whole song with you. As they sing, invite them to notice which parts they don’t know yet. Sing once again while they focus on those parts.

Extensions

- Consider acting out the story. When a story is acted out and the characters sing, it is called an *opera*. Let students choose which character they will be in the opera. Students without parts will make up the official chorus. When each character sings a quote, encourage him or her to sing alone. (For example, Mr. Frog says, “Miss Mouse, are you within?” etc.) Share the opera with a class of younger students.
- Sing the entire story while keeping the meter (that is, invite students to clap/snap in a pattern of two while singing). Then bounce-conduct the song in two.
- Provide paper and crayons and invite students to draw pictures that represent different verses. Hang the pictures for all to see.
- After students know the song, they can song-dot the rhythm while they sing. Invite students to song-dot one verse of the song. After dotting the rhythm, they can practice “reading” their music; then correct as necessary. Song dots for the first phrase might look like this: •••••••••••••••• (See additional resources for more information about song-dotting.)
- Invite a student to play the chords on an autoharp, a ukulele, or a guitar.

Music Ideas Experienced

- Music may have a steady beat.
- Rhythm means patterns of short and long sounds.
- Beats may be organized into patterns of strong/weak, creating a meter of two.
- Sounds may repeat or go lower or higher.
- Sound patterns may be repeated.
- Different voices have different sounds.
- An opera is a play that is sung.

Related Curriculum

- U.S. history (colonial period)
- Patterns—math
- Story, vocabulary—literacy
- Drama, creative play
- Visual art, imagination

Learning Objectives

- Sing the folk song “Froggie Went a-Courtin’” in tune.
- Respond to sol-do melodic hand signs, and identify additional sol-do music patterns in a song.
- Create new lyrics for a song.
- Describe how music traveled with the people who immigrated to the Americas.
- Respond to questions by finding answers directly from a text.
- Explain how stanzas combine to create the overall structure of a ballad (song-story).

This lesson can be used to meet [standards](#) in many grades and subject areas. We will highlight one grade's standards to give an example of application.

Grade 5 Music

- **Standard 5.M.CR.4:** Select and demonstrate developed musical ideas for improvisations, arrangements, or compositions, and explain intent and connection to purpose and context.
- **Standard 5.M.P.4:** Sing folk, traditional, and rounds in tune, with good vocal tone and clear diction.
- **Standard 5.M.P.5:** Respond to visual representations of melodic patterns using pentatonic and diatonic scales.
- **Standard 5.M.R.2:** Listen for and identify form, meter, rhythm, timbre, mood, tempo, melody, texture, and harmony/tonality.
- **Standard 5.M.CO.2:** Draw upon interests, knowledge, and skills developed to inspire and inform the creating, performance, and appreciation of music.
- **Standard 5.M.CO.3:** Deepen understanding of another content area through music.
- **Standard 5.M.CO.4:** Experience and explore music which connects us to history, culture, heritage, and community.

Grade 5 Social Studies

- **Standard 5.1.3:** Evaluate the push and pull factors that led to exploration and colonization of North America (for example, fleeing persecution, enslavement, economic advancement, indentured servitude, religious freedom/isolationism).

Grade 5 English Language Arts

- **Standard 5.R.5:** Identify and refer to evidence from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. (RL & RI)
- **Standard 5.R.10:** Analyze how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a literary text. (RL)

Equipment and Materials Needed

- Slides 1-8 in PowerPoint: [Folk Songs from U.S. History](#)
- [Song sheet and chord chart](#)
- [Chart](#) of melody hand signs to show the repeated pattern
- Paper or white board and marker for each student to song-dot the song (optional)
- Paper and crayons to draw pictures of each verse (consider folding the paper into 16 boxes, making enough boxes for each verse, plus one box for song-dotting and/or making up a new verse) (optional)
- Puppets (purchase online) (optional)

Additional Resources

- More information on song-dotting can be found at <http://musicedventures.com/songworks/song-dotting.pdf>.
- There are many versions of picture books based on this song. Here are a few:
 - *Frog Went A-Courtin'* by John Langstaff and illustrated by Feodor Rojankovsky
 - *Froggie Went A-Courtin'* by Iza Trapani
 - *Froggy Went A-Courtin'* by Gillian Tyler

Image References

Image 1: Brenda Beyal.

Image 2: James Huston