

## INSPIRING COMPOSER IN COLONIAL TIMES

GRADE LEVELS: 6-9, adaptable for gr. 5

CONTENT CATEGORY: General Music, Chorus, Band, Orchestra

DESCRIPTION: These four lessons are based on 50 minutes classes. They are designed to provide students a window into history in connection with the Virginia Chamber Orchestra educational programs and Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens educational outreach. The program is entitled *The Music of Washington's World*.

In the first two lessons, students will learn about composer William Billings and his music from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They will explore the role of his music in history. In the final two lessons, they will investigate a variety of performing ensembles and styles of music from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to:

- Participate in reading music in a group setting
- Participate in discussion and biographical written assignment(s)
- Identify voice classifications and a variety of performing ensemble types
- Identify orchestral instruments when seen and heard
- Demonstrate good citizenship by taking turns and sharing ideas

NATIONAL STANDARDS OF LEARNING:

- 1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
- 2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- 6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- 9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture

## VIRGINIA STATE STANDARDS OF LEARNING:

### Fifth Grade

- 5.1 The student will sing a repertoire of songs in tune with a clear tone quality.
  - 1) Demonstrate beginning choral behaviors and skills in group singing.
  - 2) Participate in group singing involving two-part or three-part harmony.
  - 3) Develop age-appropriate ability in singing skills.
- 5.9 The student will identify instruments from various music ensembles, using sight and sound.
- 5.11 Explore and perform a variety of music styles.
  - 1) Identify notable characteristics of the music of world cultures (Colonial America)
  - 2) Identify a composer and one musical composition from a period of music history
- 5.12 The student will exhibit respect for the contributions of self and others in a music setting.
  - 1) Contribute to a group effort of making music
  - 2) Contribute to a group effort of listening to music
  - 3) Participate in music activities that involve sharing, taking turns, and other ways of demonstrating good citizenship

### Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Grade

- MS.2 The student will sing and play music written in two or more parts.
- MS.5 The student will investigate musical sounds, forms, styles, and genres through listening, discussing, and performing
- MS.6 The student will investigate the role of music in society
  - 2) Identify the influence of daily music experience in one's personal life
- MS.7 The student will describe performances, live or recorded, using music terminology.
  - 2) Identify music of diverse cultures, including representative composers
  - 3) Identify instruments, voice classifications (soprano, alto, tenor, bass), and a variety of performing ensembles aurally and visually.

### Ninth Grade

- HS.1 The student will participate in a variety of music experiences.
  - 1) Develop skills in music individually and in groups.
- HS.4 The student will investigate characteristics of musical sounds.
  - 1) Employ elements of music, including melody, rhythm, harmony, form, and texture
- HS.5 Student will investigate the role of music in the human experience.
  - 1) Explore the development and function of music in diverse cultures throughout history through oral and written traditions
  - 2) Explore various opportunities to experience music in the community
  - 3) Identify the various uses of music
- HS.7 The student will explore music styles and genres through listening, performing, and discussing

## MATERIALS:

1. Free streaming video: *The Music of Washington's World*  
[www.virginiachamberorchestra.org](http://www.virginiachamberorchestra.org)
2. Computer and LCD screen for showing video
3. Student-access computers
4. Research materials
5. Headsets
6. White board/LCD screen/overhead projector/ or newsprint
7. Pencils/paper

## PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:

Basic knowledge of the Revolutionary War

Note-reading and understanding of musical terms

Familiarity with orchestral instruments and sounds

## PROCEDURES:

### Lesson One

- A. Show vocabulary: **primary sources-broadsides-protest songs-parody** and ask students what they know about their meanings. Ask them to pay particular attention to the use of those words as they listen to the streaming video lesson: *The Music of Washington's World*. (Section I: Intro – Chapter 5, 00:00-17:15, Pre-Revolutionary, Revolutionary, Yankee Doodle, Fife and Drum)
- B. Ask students to report on the vocabulary, giving details or examples.

**Primary sources:** first-hand testimony, direct evidence; letters, diaries, journals, an artifact, a recording are example of primary sources

**Broadsides:** posters advertising or announcing events; common format for printing music lyrics; common form of printed material between 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

**Protest Songs:** songs calling for action, political lyrics; associated with a movement for social change

**Parody:** in music, it is reworking an established composition; recycling musical ideas; often a known tune with new lyrics which have a comic effect or ridicule

- C. Share how news traveled in the 1770's. Did music change? Did lyrics change? Discuss.
- D. Select partner or individual assignment from choices given. Be prepared to share with the class.

### PARTNER ASSIGNMENTS

1. Double Word Puzzle Biography (computer, pencil, assignment sheet) 30 minutes
2. Billings Lyric Sheet (pencil, assignment sheet, headset for listening examples) 30 minutes

Listen to two versions of *Chester*:

**Youtube.com: The Boston Camerata-Cohen Chester** (excellent choral version)

**Youtube.com: Sacred Harp 479 Chester** (state singing convention – religious text to Billings music)

3. Billings Crossword Puzzle (pencil, puzzle) 15 minutes

#### INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS

4. Research the curious title, *Chester*. Write a paragraph about your discovery. (computer or pencil, paper) 15 minutes
5. Protest Songs! Research protest songs in American history. Use your own words to describe social change movements starting with the Revolutionary War. Write 1-2 pages. (computer, and/or pencil, paper) 45 minutes

### Lesson Two

- A. Complete assignments from Lesson One (10 min)
- B. Share and Discuss assignments (20-30 minutes)
- C. *Chester* score (one for each student or group of students, or show on computer/LCD screen)

Specify the type of musical composition: **hymn-tune**

#### **Characteristics of a hymn-tune:**

- 1) 4 vocal parts, each singing in own range, label parts –treble/counter/tenor/bass; what are modern labels? Soprano/alto/tenor/bass
  - 2) Harmony: vertical harmonies-discuss
  - 3) Melody: Where is the melody? (tenor voice) Where would one usually find the melody of a tune? (soprano voice) Discuss.
  - 4) Religious text; we find an interesting change of text content in Billings' hymn-tune
- D. Pass out Billings' *Chester* choral score, if desired (attached) or instrumental score
    - 1) Play or sing "tenor" part on the syllable "nah"(melody); remind students to read notes in the treble staff
    - 2) Play or sing again with extra energy given to quarter and eighth notes; bounce; sing or play as a Patriot might
    - 3) Sing tenor part with text

- 4) Add bass part to the tenor line
- 5) Assign groups to add treble and counter, if within ability-level; maintain the energy and bounce; sing/play with conviction

### **Lesson Three**

- A. Review "Chester" with singers/instrumentalists (15 min.)
- B. Continue the streaming video: *The Music of Washington's World* (Section II: Chap. 6-8, 17:16-31:50, Music in the Home, Slave Music, and Worship Music)

Ask students to look for the variety of musical ensembles and musical styles represented during this time period. Be ready to discuss and give examples.

- C. Discuss examples of musical ensembles heard in this segment. (10 min.) Write on newsprint.

SOLO MUSIC for entertainment (harpsichord, violin, singer (not mentioned))

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA (ex. given- Handel's *Water Music*)

SLAVE SONGS (Call and Response; work songs; small percussion added)

PSALM SINGING (lining out) ask students to explain (lead singer, chorus)

- D. Quick Review (10 min.)

Ask students to recall the Revolutionary and Pre-Revolutionary War musical ensembles and styles. Add information to newsprint list.

FIFE AND DRUMS- ask students the importance of these ensembles

PROTEST SONGS (ex. given -song about taxation, song about liberty, calling for action)

MUSICAL PARODIES (English tunes with new words, sometimes insulting texts)

### **Lesson Four**

- A. Continue the streaming video: *The Music of Washington's World* (Section III: Chap. 9-12, 31:52-45:01, Music as Entertainment, Music and Dance, Music as a Hero Maker, Close and Credits)
- B. To continue our list of 18<sup>th</sup> century entertainments and performing groups, what are some that were mentioned during Washington's presidency?

DANCES (specifically the MINUET) Fiddle and recorder ensemble played music for the dance in the video

BALLAD OPERAS (simple music, based on folk songs, in English, quite different from European operas)

## THEATER

SYMPHONY (specifically, Haydn Symphony #85 played by the Virginia Chamber Orchestra)

- C. In pairs, create a list of **performing ensembles** that you might hear during your 6<sup>th</sup> grade educational year, or 7<sup>th</sup> grade, etc. (15 min.) Discuss. Are your lists similar to those of 18<sup>th</sup> century America? Why and why not? How much time do we spend in musical entertainment? Can you estimate how much time was spent on musical activity in the 18<sup>th</sup> century? Explain.
- D. Go to “Musical Performances” following Closing Credits in Section III. The VCO homepage streaming video *Washington’s World*, contains the section called “Musical Performances.” The DVD Main Menu also contains a section entitled “Musical Performances.”

Listen to the Virginia Chamber Orchestra play Handel’s *Water Music Suite*. (15 min., 45:03 on video)

1. What is a Chamber Orchestra? (small ensemble, 25-40 players; mostly strings and winds, occasional trumpet and horn, timpani)

This ensemble would be typical of the 18<sup>th</sup> century only in a city, where one could find qualified orchestral musicians. The *Water Music* was found in Martha Washington’s collection as a keyboard arrangement. We know that their granddaughter, Nellie, also played the *Water Music* on the harpsichord.

2. Can we tell how many movements are in the *Water Music Suite*? What are the tempos for each? Have a student check this information on the computer and report back.

## EXTENSIONS:

- A. How did Billings’ music spread westward and into the South? Research/Discuss
- B. Discover the **Sacred Harp** tradition of singing. Use written resources. (See youtube.com sacredharp 479 Chester) Discuss the use of the TENOR voice singing the melody and how it is different from today. Include: Why are the parts marked TREBLE, COUNTER, TENOR, BASS?
- C. Discuss the curious title CHESTER. Research.
- D. Research the connection between George Washington and the song, *Hail Columbia*. Write a short paragraph.

## LESSON PLAN RESOURCES:

- [virginiachamberorchestra.org](http://virginiachamberorchestra.org), *The Music of Washington’s World* streaming video
- JW Pepper – selected sampling of published versions of Billings’ *Chester*

- PuzzleMaker@DiscoveryEducation.com



- William Billings.zip

LESSON MEDIA:

Free streaming video: *The Music of Washington's World* [www.virginiachamberorchestra.org](http://www.virginiachamberorchestra.org)

AUTHOR INFORMATION:

Cynthia Carlton

Fairfax County Public Schools Music Educator, 1990-2010

[ccarlton@cox.net](mailto:ccarlton@cox.net)