

Rationale: Several of the selections on this year’s Music in the Schools (MIS) program are in the form of Theme & Variations. In this form, the composer plays with a melody (the theme) by writing several different ways for the melody to be accompanied and performed (the variations). Students can connect to the composer’s variations on a theme by naming variations on a theme such as “cars” and creating variations on a known song or poem.

Objectives:

SWBAT describe characteristics of a variety of objects that share a single name.

SWBAT describe specific variations they hear on a melody in a musical performance.

SWBAT create variations on a theme.

STANDARDS (MUSIC):

3.A.1.1 Music	ALL	1. Foundations	1. Use foundational knowledge and skills while responding to, creating, and presenting artistic work.
3.1.2.4.1 Music	Create	4. Revise and complete original artistic work.	1. Change selected <i>musical ideas</i> using teacher feedback.
3.3.3.6.1 Music	Perform	6. Make artistic choices in order to convey meaning through performance.	1. <i>Perform</i> music for a specific <i>purpose</i> , using technical accuracy , expression, and <i>interpretation</i> .

MATERIALS:

See the curated list of recordings for the MIS 2020-21 repertoire. These selections are in Theme & Variations form:

Copland – Simple Gifts from Appalachian Spring

Mozart – Ah Vous Dirai-Je Maman (Variations on Twinkle Little Star)

PROCEDURE:

Whole Class:

Describe Theme & Variations: <https://study.com/academy/lesson/theme-variation-in-music-definition-form-examples.html>

“**Theme and variation** is a specific kind of form in music. The **form** of a piece of music tells you how the music is organized. With a theme and variation, the piece begins with a **theme** that is the main melody. That is followed by one or more variations of that melody. A **variation** is music that is similar to the theme but is also different enough that it does not repeat the melody exactly.”

1. Students and teacher generate a list of variations on a “theme”. Begin with “CHAIRS” – make a list on the board of different kinds of chairs. (armchair, folding chair, swivel chair, recliner, etc). Or CARS: minivan, station wagon, sedan, sports car, truck, etc; SHIRTS: long-sleeved, short-sleeved, sleeveless, polo, T-shirt, hoodie,
2. Students and teacher brainstorm ways that a composer could vary or change a melody, while keeping the melody recognizable:
 - a. Share [Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Variation_\(music\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Variation_(music)) which analyzes 3 of Mozart’s Twinkle variations WITH small sound clips for each variation.
 - b. Students and teacher generate a list of other ways a composer could change the melody:
 - i. Change the instrument that performs it – or the “register” – for example left hand on piano to have melody rather than higher pitched right hand
 - ii. Change the tempo of performance

- iii. Change the dynamics
3. Define these musical terms: tempo (speed of the beat), dynamics (loudness or softness of the music), tone color (which instruments are playing / quality of the sounds heard). Model the assignment:
 - Read “Twinkle” text (use the challenging text if needed)
 - Sing “Twinkle”
 - Say it fast and sing it fast
 - Use silly voice to say and sing
 - Whisper the text.
 4. GROUP WORK FOR OLDER STUDENTS (YOUNGER STUDENTS CAN PERFORM A FEW VARIATIONS AS CLASS UNDER DIRECTION OF TEACHER):
 - a. Students will work in groups to generate a variation of a sung or spoken version of “Twinkle Little Star”. See attached worksheet for groups.
 - b. Create two variations of “Twinkle” to perform
 - c. Discuss directions on chart. Each group must do their highlighted word and then choose one “secret” word to perform.
 - d. 5 – 7 minutes to create speech or sung piece.
 - e. Each group comes to front of class
 - i. Tells what their highlighted variant is and performs it
 - ii. Perform their ‘secret’ selection (must be on list) and they can choose three students to guess.
 - f. Discuss what we (the group) heard that allowed us to know which secret word was being performed (musical characteristics)—if time permits, can also do this with the highlighted version performed. Teacher calls on students to respond to this one, can call on students randomly so all know they must be prepared to think about this question and respond at some point.

Student goal is to perform the variation with clarity so that the audience can identify which variation is being performed.

5. Teacher describes the group task, forms groups, passes out the worksheet. During group-work, monitor each group to support completion within a short time frame: 5 – 10 minutes.
 6. Student groups perform their variation. Audience identifies which variation was performed.
7. LISTEN to the music. (Copland or Mozart)

Students identify and describe the different variations. Students may describe variations using words or drawing a picture for each new variation. It can be helpful for the teacher to stop the recording between variations and give students time to write or draw before continuing. For Mozart, there is a video where the music is made visible; this can really illuminate the variations for students:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zUmlUW_gGw (Video by Stephen Malinowski (smalin YouTube channel))

8. Listen again, without stopping the recording, to the music in its entirety.

9. A variety of performances of each selection is on the curated list. Consider listening to more than one performance and compare and contrast performances.

Discussion of the music: Questions to ask:

- What do you hear going on in this music?
- What elements did the composer vary to create a variation?
- How many times did you hear the melody ?

Learn to sing “Twinkle Little Star” in Ojibwe:

<https://ojibwe.net/songs/childrens-songs/twinkle-twinkle-little-star/>

Epaaskaakonesed epaaskaakonesed agaashiin anangens

(twinkle twinkle small star)

Apijigo n'minwenendam "wenesh aayaawyan"

(very much I wonder what are you)

Epiichi ishpeming akiing aayaayan

(while up above the earth you are)

Dibishkoo chitwaapasiin ishpeming, ishpeming,

(like a fancy rock in the sky, in the sky)

EXTENSIONS:**Movement to Theme & Variations:**

- Discuss different ways to move from point A to point B
- Walk, skip, run, backwards, twirl, crabwalk, bowlegged, knockneed, tiptoe, etc
- Have students walk on the theme when first stated. Pause music briefly & students freeze,
- On each variation, students move in a different manner, trying to match something of their movement to an element they hear in the music
- Discuss interesting walks students saw or did. Ask the student who performed the interesting walk how that student felt it related to a musical element they heard in the variation.

LISTENING and VIEWING:

Copland: View the [Martha Graham Dance Company's choreography](#) for Simple Gifts. The music was originally written by Copland for Martha Graham's dance company. How do the dancers respond to the variations in the music?

Mozart: A list of a variety of YouTube performances of Twinkle Little Star is attached. View and enjoy several of them and discuss how the song is varied.

Challenge lyrics for Twinkle Little Star:

Scintillate, scintillate globule aurific
Fain would I fathom thy nature specific
Loftily perched in the ether capacious
Strongly resembling a gem carbonaceous
Scintillate, scintillate globule aurific
Fain would I fathom thy nature specific

VARIATIONS ON TWINKLE LITTLE STAR – a brief list

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star – upbeat/rock animated characters:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rJsA1RD_QA

Chu Chu TV Rock and Roll Twinkle Little Star – Karaoke

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiNMZBCzfxk&list=PL82D915DAE41329F0>

Brilla Brilla Estrelita

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_CMpQmNbD8

Twinkle Little Star Led Zeppelin Guitar Mash-up Version

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQVKR6J4Nmw>

Hip Hop beat - Twinkle Little Star

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txgfIDzfkL0>

Mozart Synesthesia (music made visual) – note the melody is VERTICAL rather than horizontal

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKCsujeeu8o>

Music made visible: Video by Stephen Malinowski (smalin YouTube channel)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zUmLUW_gGw

Natalie Schwamova (age 11): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ezvj-De6bxY>

Orchestral version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNU51CYIZSg>