

Global Rhythms and Melodies: A World Music Exploration

Learning objective: To understand the diversity of global musical traditions, identify common instruments from different cultures, and analyse how music reflects its environment and history.

Use your knowledge of global musical traditions to answer the following questions. Think carefully about how different cultures use sound, rhythm, and instruments to tell stories.

Music is a universal language. From the rhythmic heartbeat of West African drumming ensembles to the delicate, shimmering melodies of South Asian string instruments, every culture uses music to celebrate, mourn, and preserve its history. Many world music traditions rely on oral transmission, where songs are passed down from generation to generation rather than written in scores. By listening to the timbre of instruments and the complexity of the beat, we can travel the world through sound.

Word bank: Djembe · Sitar · Pentatonic · Percussion · Tradition · Ensemble · Cultural · Pitch · Tempo

1. Identify two different musical instruments from outside of Europe and describe the specific way each instrument is played to produce sound. (2 marks)

2. Max the monkey is studying the rhythm of a Djembe drum. Explain why percussion is often considered the 'heartbeat' of many traditional musical cultures. (2 marks)

3. Compare and contrast the sound of a string instrument, like a Sitar, with a percussion instrument. How do they contribute differently to the mood of a musical piece? (3 marks)

4. Justify why it is important for musicians to learn traditional music by ear (oral tradition) rather than just reading sheet music. What might be lost if we only used written notation? (3 marks)

5. If you were to compose a piece of music representing the sound of your local town or village, which instruments would you choose and why? (2 marks)

Draw: Imagine you are designing a brand new musical instrument that combines features from two different world cultures. Sketch your instrument and label the parts that make it unique, then describe what kind of sound it would make.



Extension challenge: Research a specific musical tradition from a country you have never visited. Write a short paragraph explaining the history behind the music and suggest a scenario where this music would be performed. If you could change one element of the music—such as the tempo or the instruments used—what might happen to the 'feel' of the piece?