

Global Rhythms and Melodies: A World Music Expedition

Learning objective: To identify and describe the musical characteristics of different cultures, understanding how instruments, rhythm, and tempo vary across the globe.

Join Zara the zebra on a musical safari! Zara has collected sounds from four different continents. Read the descriptions of these traditional musical styles and match them to the correct continent. Then, use your analytical skills to answer the deeper questions about how music connects cultures.

Word bank: Djembe drum · Pentatonic scale · Polyrhythm · Kora · Sitar · Didgeridoo · Syncopation

1. The Gamelan orchestra from Indonesia uses bronze gongs and metallophones. Explain why the use of specific metals might influence the timbre of the music compared to instruments made of wood or animal skin. (3 marks)

2. Compare and contrast the role of percussion in West African music with the role of string instruments in Indian Classical music. How does the 'feel' of the music change between these two traditions? (3 marks)

3. What might happen to the unique character of a traditional folk song if it were played using only modern electronic synthesizers? Justify your answer. (3 marks)

4. In many cultures, music is used to tell stories or record history. Why is it important to preserve these traditional sounds in a world that is becoming increasingly digitised? (3 marks)

5. Zara hears a piece of music with a fast, complex rhythm (polyrhythm). Based on your knowledge, which continent is this most likely from? Explain your reasoning. (2 marks)

6. If you were to compose a piece of music that represents a 'bridge' between two different cultures, which two instruments would you choose and why? Describe the texture of your piece. (4 marks)

Draw: Imagine you are designing a brand-new musical instrument that combines features from two different world cultures (e.g., a string instrument played with a percussive technique). Sketch your invention and label the parts that show its diverse origins.



Extension challenge: Research a specific traditional instrument from a country you have never visited. Write a brief 'Curator's Note' for a museum exhibit, explaining how the instrument is played, what materials it is made from, and the specific occasion it is used for in its home culture.