

*Inuit Games: Vocal compositions about the Canadian Arctic*  
A classroom application for TSO e-learning

In this lesson plan, Grades 4, 5, and 6 students and their classroom teachers will experience the unique sounds of Inuit throat singing with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and interact with the Orchestra through an online platform. Together, they will explore the landscape of the Canadian North through vocal soundscaping, then further their knowledge by creating short rhythmic compositions, again using only their voices, inspired by images connected to grade-specific topics.

Please note that the vocal techniques explored in this lesson plan are not traditional throat-singing techniques as heard in the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's performance of *Inuit Games*. Rather, this lesson plan features accessible vocal exercises and experiences for classroom teachers and their students. This lesson provides a way for students to connect with the *Inuit Games* composition through vocalization, the exploration of nature sounds, and linking it to the social studies curriculum using images and information.

For information on how to adapt this lesson plan for younger students or for teachers wishing to incorporate instruments (e.g., percussion, Orff, band), please see adaptation notes following the lesson plan.

For more digital symphony experiences and classroom lesson plans, please visit [TSO.CA/elearning](https://www.tso.ca/elearning).

Supplies needed: Digital projector and speakers and/or computers/iPads and headphones  
Internet access to TSO.CA/elearning  
Printed photographs of the Canadian Arctic (see grade-specific notes in lesson plan)  
Whiteboard or chart paper and markers  
Small squares of paper for feedback (enough for three per student) and pencils

**PART 1 : ORCHESTRAL EXPERIENCE**

**GUIDED LISTENING**

*Inuit Games* by T. Patrick Carrabré

Supplies

- Digital projector and speakers

Class formation

- Individuals/Partners with multiple computers or iPads and headphones
- Optional: Whole class with one computer

- Project the TSO.CA/elearning page for the whole class.
- Play the initial 3–4 minutes of the piece *Inuit Games* for the whole class. As they listen, ask students to reflect on what they notice or observe, and what they have questions about.
- Think-Pair-Share about what they noticed and questioned.

<p>or iPad and speakers</p> <p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listen in a focused way to <i>Inuit Games</i> as performed by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.</li> <li>- Learn about the sections of the Orchestra.</li> <li>- Experience Inuit throat singing as performed by Inukshuk Aksalnik and Pauline Pemik.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Individuals/Pairs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If the technology is available, invite students to listen on their own or in pairs using the melody tracker excerpt from the piece. Ask them to listen while watching the sections of the Orchestra light up. They can click on highlighted sections to change the camera angle and see the instruments that are playing the melody.</li> </ul> <p><b>Whole class</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If the technology is not available to divide the class, you can use the melody tracker as a full group. Project the excerpt as you listen. Model as a teacher first by clicking on the highlighted area to change the camera view. Afterwards, have student volunteers come to try it out.</li> </ul>
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**PART 2 : CLASSROOM APPLICATION**

<p><b><u>Music curriculum connections</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Grade 4</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form: verse and chorus; piece with an introduction and/or a coda; simple repeats</li> </ul> <p>C1.3 create musical compositions for specific purposes and audiences</p> <p>C3.2 demonstrate an awareness, through listening, of the characteristics of musical forms and traditions of diverse times, places, and communities</p> <p><b><u>Grade 5</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duration: 6/8 metre</li> <li>• Form: compositions in four or more sections</li> </ul> <p>C1.3 create musical compositions for specific purposes and audiences</p> <p>C3.1 identify and describe some of the key influences of music within contemporary culture</p> <p><b><u>Grade 6 Music</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duration: 9/8 metre</li> <li>• Form: theme and variations; repeats (e.g., first and second endings)</li> </ul> <p>C1.3 create musical compositions for specific purposes and audiences</p>
<p><b><u>Social Studies curriculum connections</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Grade 4</u></b></p>

	<p>B3. Understanding Context: identify Canada’s political and physical regions, and describe their main characteristics and some significant activities that take place in them</p> <p><b>Grade 5</b>  B2. Inquiry: use the social studies inquiry process to investigate Canadian social and/or environmental issues from various perspectives, including the perspective of the level (or levels) of government responsible for addressing the issues</p> <p><b>Grade 6</b>  A1. Application: assess contributions to Canadian identity made by various groups and by various features of Canadian communities and regions</p>
<p><b><u>LESSON PLAN BREAKDOWN</u></b>  <b><u>Supplies, formations &amp; objectives</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>LESSON PLAN: INSTRUCTIONAL STEPS</u></b></p>
<p><b>ACTIVATION</b>  <b>Partner counting</b></p> <p>Class formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partners</li> </ul> <p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Activate students by getting them up and moving.</li> <li>- Create a safe learning environment through a fun, accessible activity.</li> <li>- Introduce the format to be used in composition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Divide students into pairs.</li> <li>● Ask students to count to three repeatedly by alternating back and forth between them (e.g., Partner A “One,” Partner B “Two,” Partner A “Three,” Partner B “One,” etc.). Have them practise until they can do it smoothly.</li> <li>● Have Partner A choose a vocal sound effect to replace the number one with (e.g., Partner A “Swish,” Partner B “Two,” Partner A “Three,” Partner B “Swish,” etc.). Practise the sequence.</li> <li>● Have Partner B choose a new vocal sound effect to replace the number two with, and practise the new sequence with two sound effects and the number three.</li> <li>● Have both partners, together, find a new sound to replace the number three with, and have them practise the sequence until they can perform it smoothly.</li> <li>● Have each pair of students share their sequence with another pair of students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SKILL BUILDING</b>  <b>Scenic soundscape accompaniment</b></p> <p>Supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Photograph, drawing, or painting of an Arctic Canadian landscape (without humans or man-made structures)</li> <li>- Whiteboard/Chart paper</li> </ul> <p>Class formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Whole group</li> </ul> <p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Show students an image of the Arctic Canadian landscape. Ask them to consider the image using their sense of sound. What sounds are evident in the picture? What sounds can you imagine hearing? What seemingly silent parts of the picture have an emotional sound quality (e.g., what kind of sound could represent permafrost?)</li> <li>● Invite students to try to produce their sound vocally. Everyone can practise at the same time.</li> <li>● Have students volunteer to share their sound, and, as a whole class, practise the sound together. Decide how it could be written out as an onomatopoeia, and make a list of the sounds on the board. (Optional: Project the picture and write the sound words on top of the</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use images to provide information about Canadian Arctic landscapes.</li> <li>- Explore vocal timbres and sounds, inspired by the throat singing in <i>Inuit Games</i>.</li> <li>- Create the accompaniment for the final class composition.</li> </ul>	<p>aspect that inspired it.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Once the list is compiled, conduct the sounds by having the class make each sound as you point to them randomly. Divide the class into two, and have a volunteer conduct one half as you conduct the other half, pointing to different sounds at different times.</li> <li>● As a class, decide if there is a preferred order and/or way of layering the sounds. Practise the arranged soundscape. This will become the accompaniment or orchestral background of the final class composition.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>GAINING INFORMATION</u></b>  <b>Throat-singer interview</b>  Supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Digital projector</li> <li>- TSO.CA/elearning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Play the interview with Inukshuk Aksalnik for the students.</li> <li>● Refer back to the questions they had when they first listened to the performance. Did they learn the answers? Did more questions come up?</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>CREATIVE APPLICATION</u></b>  <b>Creating “melodies” through sequence compositions</b></p> <p>Supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Three to six photographs, drawings or paintings from Arctic Canada and Inuit culture that are connected to grade-appropriate topics. Cut pictures into four to six puzzle pieces, creating one puzzle piece per student. (Optional: On the back of the photograph, you may wish to include a short paragraph that further explains the socio-political context as related to the grade-specific curriculum.)</li> </ul> <p>Grade 4: pictures/text that feature significant regional activities  Grade 5: pictures/text that indicate environmental issues and/or government interventions  Grade 6: pictures/text that feature other Inuit cultural activities such as sports, celebrations, or arts and crafts</p> <p>Class formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Three to six groups of four to six students per group</li> </ul> <p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use images to explore issues related to the Canadian Arctic</li> </ul>	<p>Choosing and sequencing sounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pass out a picture puzzle piece to each student, and have them circulate to find the group members who have the complementary puzzle pieces.</li> <li>● Together in their new groups, have students look at their complete new picture and brainstorm about the sounds they see. (Optional: If you have provided informational text on the back of the pictures, students can also search in the text for particularly descriptive or juicy “sound” words.)</li> <li>● Have them choose three new sounds and sequence them like they did in the opening activity. Encourage them to choose the strongest sound to be the first one.</li> <li>● Within their groups, have a pair of students see how long they can repeat the pattern without mixing it up. Whoever mixes it up or laughs first is out, and the “winner” moves on to practise the pattern with another group member. Repeat the game a few times until everyone has had a chance to practise at least once. (Optional: Try this with a metronome. Have students consider if their sequence sounds best at a slow, medium, or fast tempo.)</li> </ul> <p>Creative arranging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Now have students explore creative options for dividing up the sounds. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Will they pair off and pass the pattern back and forth? Will they perform the sequence as a whole group, with everybody making all three sounds? Will they divide them up and pass the pattern around the group? Will two people make the first sound to add emphasis, and individuals make the next two sounds?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Choose one or more option from below to help</li> </ul>

<p>region and its people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further explore vocal timbres and sounds, inspired by the throat singing in <i>Inuit Games</i>.</li> <li>- Explore dynamics, rhythm, form, time signatures, and tempo.</li> <li>- Create short sequence compositions that will act as melodies in a larger composition.</li> </ul>	<p>students explore the elements of music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Explore dynamics by practising sequences at different volumes. Experiment with crescendo/diminuendo.</li> <li>o Explore form by using parts of the scenic soundscape from the “Skill building” section to create an introduction and ending.</li> <li>o Explore form by assigning each group a letter. Write form variations on the board (e.g., ABCABC or ABACAD) Have groups come together to try the variations by choosing a set number of times to repeat their own sequence as part of the larger form.</li> <li>o Explore 6/8 and 9/8 time signatures by having two groups join to make a six-beat pattern, or three groups join to make a nine-beat pattern.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Sharing &amp; reflecting</u></b></p> <p>Supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Whiteboard or chart paper and markers</li> <li>- Small squares of paper (enough for three per student)</li> <li>- pens/pencils</li> <li>- Digital projector and speakers</li> <li>- Optional: Digital recorder</li> </ul> <p>Class formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Groups perform for whole class</li> <li>- Whole-class collaboration</li> </ul> <p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use images to explore issues related to the Canadian Arctic region and its people.</li> <li>- Explore dynamics, rhythm, form, time signatures, and tempo.</li> <li>- Create a full composition that is inspired by the form and instrumentation of the <i>Inuit Games</i> composition.</li> <li>- Reflect on what they have learned about music, the Canadian Arctic, and their emotional experience composing music together.</li> </ul>	<p>Sharing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have groups share the melodies they have created for the whole class. Choose whether the pictures that inspired the sounds are shown before or after the performance. (Optional: Project the pictures behind students.) If text was used, you may also want to read the text before, after, or during the composition. Have listening students Think-Pair-Share about what they heard and noticed.</li> <li>● Play the final 2–3 minutes of the TSO recording of <i>Inuit Games</i> one more time, and, this time, ask students to pay special attention to how the throat singers and the Orchestra interact with one another.</li> <li>● As a class, work together to create a full composition that mimics the format of <i>Inuit Games</i>. Use the scenic soundscape to act as the orchestral background while individual groups perform their sequence compositions over it as the melody.</li> <li>● Ask students to consider the following options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o In the accompanying soundscape, are there certain sounds that work better than others as background sounds? Are there distinctive sounds that would be better as part of an introduction or ending?</li> <li>o What order will the melodies be performed in? Is there a form that worked well? Is there a different order that makes musical sense?</li> <li>o How will dynamics affect the whole performance? Does the accompanying soundscape rise and fall in volume to accommodate the melody?</li> <li>o How will tempo affect the whole performance? Are there times when the accompaniment will interact rhythmically with the melody like in <i>Inuit Games</i>? (The soundscape sounds will start to be performed in a rhythmic way, matching</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>the rhythms or tempo of the melody.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Will there be any repetition? How many times will each melodic section repeat? How many times will the entire form repeat?</li> <li>○ Are there times when the accompaniment becomes the melody?</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chart the form of the piece on a whiteboard or chart paper.</li> <li>● Perform the entire composition.</li> <li>● Optional: Record it using a digital audio recorder.</li> </ul> <p>Reflecting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sitting in a circle, pass out a small square of paper to each student. Ask a reflective question relating to their learning about Arctic Canada (e.g., Name one new thing you learned about the Arctic. Name one environmental challenge that the Inuit face. What is one action that the government is taking to address the changing climate?).</li> <li>● When students have completed the answers, have each student crumple their paper up into a “snowball.” Say, “Three, two, one...Snowstorm!” and have each student throw their answer into the middle of the circle. Collect these answers to look at later or read them aloud. You can also have each student pick up a new piece of paper and, going around the circle, have them share their peers’ answers.</li> <li>● Repeat the Snowstorm activity with a second reflective question, this time about their musical learning (e.g., Which sound did you like the best and why? Name one new thing you learned about composing music. What adjective would you use to describe the feeling of our composition?).</li> <li>● Time permitting, repeat a third time with a forward-thinking question (e.g., If you were going to make another soundscape, what setting/scene would you choose? If you had the chance to meet one of the throat singers from the video, what question would you have for them? What action can you take in your life to affect climate change for the better? If we were to perform our compositions, who would you want to be in the audience and why?).</li> </ul>
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**NOTES FOR ADAPTATIONS & EXTENSIONS**  
**Grades 1–3**

<p>ACTIVATION: Adaptation for Grades 1–3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do this game together as a class. As the teacher, act as the partner to the whole group, and conduct them through (point to yourself as you say, “One;” point to the class as they say, “Two;” etc.).</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students suggest sounds to substitute, and, again, have the whole class try to work together to insert the sounds.</li> <li>• As they progress, divide the class in two, and see if they work together in two teams to perform the pattern.</li> </ul>
SKILL BUILDING: Adaptation for Grades 1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This part of the lesson plan will be equally as successful with younger students. However, if they have not yet encountered the Canadian North in their curricular studies, you may wish to help them build their knowledge first by reading a book or researching together about grade-appropriate topics, such as the environment, animals, or celebrations.</li> </ul>
CREATIVE APPLICATION: Adaptation for Grades 1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider doing this part of the lesson together as a full class. You may wish to create new sounds together, inspired by a new picture or additional piece of information, but you can also reuse the sounds created in the soundscape. Work together as a group to make a three-sound sequence. Practise as in the activation.</li> </ul>
SHARING & REFLECTING: Adaptation for Grades 1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a class, see if you can make a longer sequence out of more than three sounds. Or make a sequence out of two or three separate patterns.</li> <li>• Have half the class perform parts of the soundscape while the other half performs one of the rhythmic patterns over top.</li> <li>• While your students will enjoy the Snowstorm activity, they may struggle with writing their own answers. Use this as a time to build vocabulary and practise spelling by writing some keywords on the board (e.g., plant/animal names learned, new words specific to the region, etc.). Have students choose the item/word they like best and write it on a piece of paper.</li> <li>• You may wish to tally the number of responses each item/word received.</li> </ul>

**Grades 4 & up with instruments (Orff, percussion, or band)**

ACTIVATION: Adaptation for instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin with this game as described in the main lesson plan.</li> </ul>
SKILL BUILDING: Adaptation for instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students listen to the full TSO recording of <i>Inuit Games</i>, using the camera-angle toggler to focus on different</li> </ul>

	<p>instruments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a list of the instrument names and the descriptive qualities of their timbres (you may wish to include music-specific vocabulary about instrument groups, articulation, etc.).</li> <li>• First explore the image using vocal sounds, and then invite students to think about which instruments would be best matched to the vocal timbre they first created.</li> <li>• If there are enough instruments for the whole class, then perform as a whole class with a small group playing the sound associated with each word.</li> <li>• If there is only enough for one instrument per word, then practise a few times, switching around until everyone has had a turn to play.</li> </ul>
<p>CREATIVE APPLICATION: Adaptation for instruments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This part of the lesson plan should still be explored with voices, connecting to the melodies performed by the throat singers in <i>Inuit Games</i>.</li> </ul>
<p>SHARING &amp; REFLECTING: Adaptation for instruments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share the vocal compositions as described in the main lesson plan.</li> <li>• Divide the instruments from the soundscape, and work together as a class to layer the instrumental soundscape underneath the vocal melodies.</li> <li>• In the reflective Snowstorm activity, ask a question related to the students' experience composing with instruments (e.g., How did it feel to play your instrument in a soundscape context? What other sound do you think your instrument would be good at imitating?).</li> </ul>

Lesson plans created by Carlie Howell for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. For more digital symphony experiences and classroom lesson plans, please visit [TSO.CA/elearning](https://www.tso.ca/elearning).

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