

Think Like A Vocalist

Grade Level: Grades 6-12

Objective: Students will analyze, compare, and reinterpret melodies by exploring covers of popular songs across multiple genres and artists.

Vocabulary: Melodic contour, tempo, autotune, form, instrumentation, genre, pop, r&b, country, musical theater, folk, rock, chorus, riff, melisma

Presentation Slides:
[Think Like A Vocalist](#)

Project Expectations:
[Mapping and Embellishing the Chorus](#)
[Project Expectations](#)

Assessments:
[Mapping and Embellishing the Chorus](#)
[Project Rubric](#)

National Core Arts Standards:

Creating

1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
3. Refine and complete artistic work.

Performing / Presenting / Producing

4. Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

Responding

7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.
8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

Connecting

10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context.



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Activities:

PART ONE: Exploring Melodic Contour

1. Review the following musical terms: **melodic contour, tempo, autotune**
2. Open the [Riff Runner App](#) and select 'Draw a Riff.'
3. Draw a pyramid shape in the app. Then:
 - Play what this sounds like -> enable autotune -> set the root note to 'C' and the scale type to 'major' -> play again
4. Draw an ascending staircase in the app. Then:
 - Play what this sounds like -> enable autotune -> set the root note to 'C' and the scale type to 'major' -> adjust the tempo either faster or slower -> play again
5. Draw a wave shape in the app. Then:
 - Play what this sounds like -> enable autotune -> change the scale to a different type that is not major -> play again

Reflection Questions:

- How would you describe the sound of each shape you drew?
- Which scale did you prefer the sound of and why?
- Did you prefer the autotuned or original versions and why?
- Which tempo did you prefer and why?

PART TWO- Debate + Project

Comparing Covers: Activity 1 (Debate)

1. Review the following musical terms: **form, instrumentation, genre (+ 2 of the following genre examples based on song selection: pop, r&b, country, musical theater, folk, rock)**
2. Listen to 2 covers of the same song.
3. Debate which version of the song was better, focusing your argument on the musical elements referenced above.

Reflection Questions:

- What did you learn from engaging in a debate about musical covers?
- Did your opinion change from this debate?
- Which side do you feel 'won' the debate, and why?

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Activities:

Map the Chorus: Activity 2 (Project)

1. Introduce and model the [project expectations](#).
2. Present and explain the [rubric criteria](#).
3. Review the following musical term: **chorus**.
4. Open the [Songmaker](#) on Chrome Music Lab and adjust the settings accordingly.
5. Practice Round: Map out “Happy Birthday” on [Songmaker](#).
6. Map out the chorus from the Activity 1 song on [Songmaker](#) (sheet music attached below).
7. Save this link and submit.

Reflection Questions:

- What patterns or shapes did you notice in the melody when you mapped out the chorus on Songmaker?
- How did slowing down the song to .75 speed help you identify the pitches and rhythms more accurately?
- What did you learn about the structure of the chorus by visualizing it in Songmaker?

Embellish the Chorus: Activity 3 (Project)

1. Review the following musical terms: **riff, melisma**
2. Open the [Songmaker](#) link from your Activity 2 assignment and adjust the settings accordingly.
3. Embellish this chorus by adding (mapping out) 1 riff and 1 melisma.
4. Save this link and submit.

Reflection Questions:

- How did your riffs and melismas enhance this chorus?
- Did your riffs and melismas impact the mood of the chorus?
- Which version of the chorus do you prefer? The original or your embellished version, and why?
- How do your embellishments make the chorus feel more authentic to you?

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Resources:

Listening Examples

1. "Defying Gravity"
 - [Idina Menzel's version](#) (Musical Theater)
 - [Cynthia Erivo's version](#) (Musical Theater)
2. "Jolene"
 - [Dolly Parton's version](#) (Country)
 - [Beyonce's version](#) (Pop)
3. "I Will Always Love You"
 - [Dolly Parton's version](#) (Country)
 - [Whitney Houston's version](#) (Pop/R&B)
4. "Hallelujah"
 - [Jeff Buckley's version](#) (Folk)
 - [Pentatonix version](#) (Pop)
5. "Walk This Way"
 - [Aerosmith's version](#) (Rock)
 - [Run DMC's version](#) (R&B)

Music Scores

1. [Happy Birthday](#)
2. [Defying Gravity](#)
3. [Jolene](#)
4. [I Will Always Love You](#)
5. [Hallelujah](#)
6. [Walk This Way](#)

Extensions:

Exploring Melodic Contour: Choose one contour that you've created and play it in three different scales (major, minor, and one other available option) with autotune. Describe how each version changes the overall sound or emotional character.

Comparing Covers: Use Soundtrap to create a remix of the chorus of your preferred version of this song. Adjust the tempo and add in 2-3 loops to change the instrumentation.

Map the Chorus: Export your [Songmaker](#) chorus map as an mp3 and import to Soundtrap. Remix this chorus by adjusting the tempo and adding in 2-3 loops to change the instrumentation.

Embellish the Chorus:

1. Perform your embellished version of the chorus live, by singing this for the class.
2. Add a 1-line harmony into your embellished version of the chorus on [Songmaker](#).



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Vocabulary (defined):

1. **Melodic contour:** The shape or direction of a melody as it moves up and down in pitch.
2. **Tempo:** The speed of music.
3. **Autotune:** A tool that automatically corrects or adjusts the pitch of a note so that it matches the chosen key and scale.
4. **Form:** The structure or organization of a piece of music. How different sections (such as verse, chorus and bridge) are arranged and repeated.
5. **Instrumentation:** The specific instruments and voices used in a piece of music and how they combine to create the overall sound.
6. **Genre:** A category of music that shares similar styles, sounds, and traditions.
 - **Pop:** A style with catchy melodies, simple structures, and lyrics that appeal to a wide audience.
 - **R&B:** Rhythm and Blues; features strong grooves, soulful vocals, and expressive phrasing.
 - **Country:** Often uses guitars, storytelling lyrics, and steady rhythms inspired by folk and blues traditions.
 - **Musical Theater:** Combines songs, dialogue, and movement to tell a story, often performed on stage.
 - **Folk:** Rooted in cultural traditions, featuring acoustic instruments and lyrics that tell everyday stories.
 - **Rock:** Built around electric guitars, bass, and drums, with strong rhythms and energetic performances.
7. **Chorus:** The main, repeated section of a song that usually contains the hook or most memorable lyrics. It often has the same melody and words each time it appears and expresses the central message or feeling of the song.
8. **Riff:** A short, repeated musical pattern or phrase that gives a song its recognizable hook or groove.
9. **Melisma:** A group of notes sung on a single syllable of a word that creates a smooth, expressive sound, often used to add emotion or style to a melody.

