

# Think Like A Drummer



**Grade Level:** Grades 6-12

**Objective:** Students will be able to identify and analyze drum set parts and characteristic grooves from multiple genres, and collaboratively create and perform a percussion ensemble groove using found objects and the [Drums Explorer app](#).

**Vocabulary:** Groove, backbeat, four on the floor, one drop, clave, swing, syncopation, hi-hat, kick drum, snare drum, genre, tempo, subdivision, timbre

**Presentation Slides:**

[Think Like A Drummer:](#)  
[How Do Drummers Create Grooves?](#)

**Project Expectations:**

[Found Sound Groove Project Expectations](#)

**Assessments:**

[Found Sound Groove 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.



## Activities:

### 1. Introduction to Drum Set Parts & Function

- Identify kick, snare, hi-hat, toms, cymbals. Use the “Anatomy of a drum set” tool in the [Drums Explorer app](#) as a reference point.
- Discuss each part’s role in creating groove.
- Reflection Questions:
  - i. Which parts of the drum set can you identify (kick, snare, hi-hat, toms, cymbals), and what role does each play in a groove?
  - ii. When listening to a song, how can you tell which sound is the kick, snare, or hi-hat?
  - iii. How do these core parts (kick, snare, hi-hat) work together to create the foundation of a rhythm?

### 2. Genre Groove Listening & Analysis

- Listen to curated examples for Rock, Funk, Jazz, Reggae, Latin/Afro-Cuban, Pop/Dance.
- Identify kick, snare, and hi-hat patterns. (Modify the speed of the videos as needed using the functionality in YouTube).
- Discuss what makes each groove unique.
- Reflection Questions:
  - i. What makes this groove sound like its genre?
  - ii. How do the different instruments (kick, snare, hi-hat, percussion) interact to build the groove?
  - iii. How does the sound quality (timbre) or texture of each instrument affect the overall feel?

### 3. Percussion Ensemble Inspiration

- Watch selected clips from Stomp, Blue Man Group, and The Vegetable Orchestra.
- Identify how found objects create musical textures and grooves.
- Reflection Questions:
  - i. How do groups like Stomp, Blue Man Group, or the Vegetable Orchestra use unusual objects to create music?
  - ii. What new sounds or textures do found objects bring compared to traditional drums?
  - iii. How might using found objects inspire choices for your own group project?

### 4. Groove Mapping Practice

- Explore the “Groove Lab” Sequencer in the [Drums Explorer app](#).
- Practice creating simple 4-beat loops to reinforce kick/snare/hi-hat coordination.
- Use the genre grooves as a reference point.
- Reflection Questions:
  - i. How does using the sequencer help you understand the relationship between kick, snare, and hi-hat?
  - ii. What patterns did you try, and how do they compare to the grooves you listened to earlier?
  - iii. How could your app loop serve as a blueprint for your live group performance?

### 5. Project Introduction & Ensemble Creation

- Introduce and model the [Project Expectations](#).
- Present and explain the [rubric](#) criteria.
- Facilitate group formation and help students assign roles.
- Encourage students to use their [Drums Explorer app](#) “Groove Lab” loops as a reference point when rehearsing and arranging.
- Perform for peers and reflect: Have each group perform their groove for the class and use the [rubric](#) to guide self-assessment and peer feedback.



## Resources:

### Found Sound Ensemble Examples:

1. [Stomp](#)
2. [Blue Man Group](#)
3. [Vegetable Orchestra](#)

### Genres and Grooves Listening Examples:

#### Rock (Backbeat)

- **Description:** Steady 4/4 groove with kick on beats 1 & 3, snare on beats 2 & 4, and hi-hat playing eighth notes or quarter notes, providing a consistent pulse that drives the rhythm forward. This classic backbeat pattern forms the foundation of most rock music.
- **Prominent Drummers:** Ringo Starr, Dave Grohl, John Bonham, Chad Smith, Stewart Copeland
- **Musical Examples:**
  - The White Stripes - "[Seven Nation Army](#)" (Meg White)
  - Nirvana - "[Smells like Teen Spirit](#)" (Dave Grohl)
  - Imagine Dragons - "[Believer](#)" (Daniel Platzman)

#### Funk (Syncopated Groove/Backbeat)

- **Description:** Funk grooves emphasize a tight, danceable pocket, with kick and snare interlocking and hi-hat maintaining a steady pulse. The drummer drives the rhythm and feel of the music.
- **Prominent Drummers:** Clyde Stubblefield, Jabo Starks, Chris Dave, Questlove (Ahmir Thompson), Zach Danziger
- **Musical Examples:**
  - James Brown - "[Get Up Offa That Thing](#)" (Clyde Stubblefield & Jabo Starks)
  - Mark Ronson, Bruno Mars - "[Uptown Funk](#)" (drums by Jamareo Artis)
  - Stevie Wonder - "[Superstition](#)" (Stevie Wonder on drums)

#### Jazz (Swing/Ride Pattern)

- **Description:** Jazz swing grooves feature a flowing, "swinging" rhythm. The ride cymbal keeps time while snare and bass drum add syncopated accents. Drummers shape the groove and interact with soloists.
- **Prominent Drummers:** Buddy Rich, Max Roach, Art Blakey, Brian Blade, Kendrick Scott
- **Musical Examples:**
  - Miles Davis - "[Freddie Freeloader](#)" (Jimmy Cobb)
  - Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers - "[Moanin](#)" - (Art Blakey)
  - Christian McBride Big Band - "[Gettin' to It](#)" (Brian Blade)

#### Reggae (One Drop Groove/Offbeat Emphasis)

- **Description:** Reggae grooves emphasize a relaxed, syncopated rhythm. The kick and snare often hit together on beat 3 ("one drop"), while hi-hats or rim clicks mark the offbeats, creating the genre's signature swaying feel.
- **Prominent Drummers:** Calton Barnett, Sly Dunbar, Questlove, Will Calhoun, Zach Danziger
- **Musical Examples:**
  - Bob Marley & The Wailers - "[Three Little Birds](#)" (Carlton Barnett)
  - Toots and the Maytals - "[54-46 Was My Number](#)" (Sly Dunbar)
  - Ziggy Marley - "[Love is My Religion](#)" (Dion Hopkins)



## Latin/Afro-Cuban (Clave-Based Groove)

- **Description:** Latin and Afro-Cuban grooves use the clave as the foundation, with layered kick, snare/timbales, and hi-hat/cowbell creating a syncopated, danceable rhythm.
- **Prominent Drummers/Percussionists:** Tito Puente, Giovanni Hidalgo, Poncho Sanchez, Tony Succar, Alex Acuña
- **Musical Examples:**
  - Tito Puente - “Oye Como Va”
  - Celia Cruz - “La Vida Es Un Carnaval”
  - Tony Succar - “Mi Gente”

## Pop/Dance (Four on the Floor Groove)

- **Description:** Steady kick on every beat with hi-hats or claps adding texture, creating a danceable, driving rhythm.
- **Prominent Producers:** Calvin Harris, Shellback, Max Martin, Mark Ronson, Greg Kurstin
- **Musical Examples:**
  - Lady Gaga - “Poker Face”
  - Avicii - “Wake Me Up”
  - Calvin Harris - “Summer”

## Extensions:

1. **Notation Extension:** Transcribe your [Drums Explorer app](#) “Groove Lab” sequencer pattern into standard drum set notation to connect technology with traditional music literacy.
2. **Sound Design Extension:** Record or sample found objects and use them to create a custom drum kit in a sequencer or DAW.
3. **Composition Extension:** Expand your group’s groove into a full song by arranging sections (verse, chorus, etc.) and performing or recording it.
4. **Improvisation Extension:** Add fills, solos, or call-and-response sections to your ensemble groove to showcase individual creativity.
5. **Cross-Discipline Extension:** Pair your groove with dance, spoken word, or visuals to create a multi-arts performance piece
6. **Cultural Extension:** Explore the origins of one genre groove and present short research findings to the class.
7. **Performance Extension:** Students perform their grooves for a school assembly, recording showcase, or community audience.