



Think Like A Drummer: How Do Drummers Create Grooves?

created by:
education 
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MAKING MINDS SING



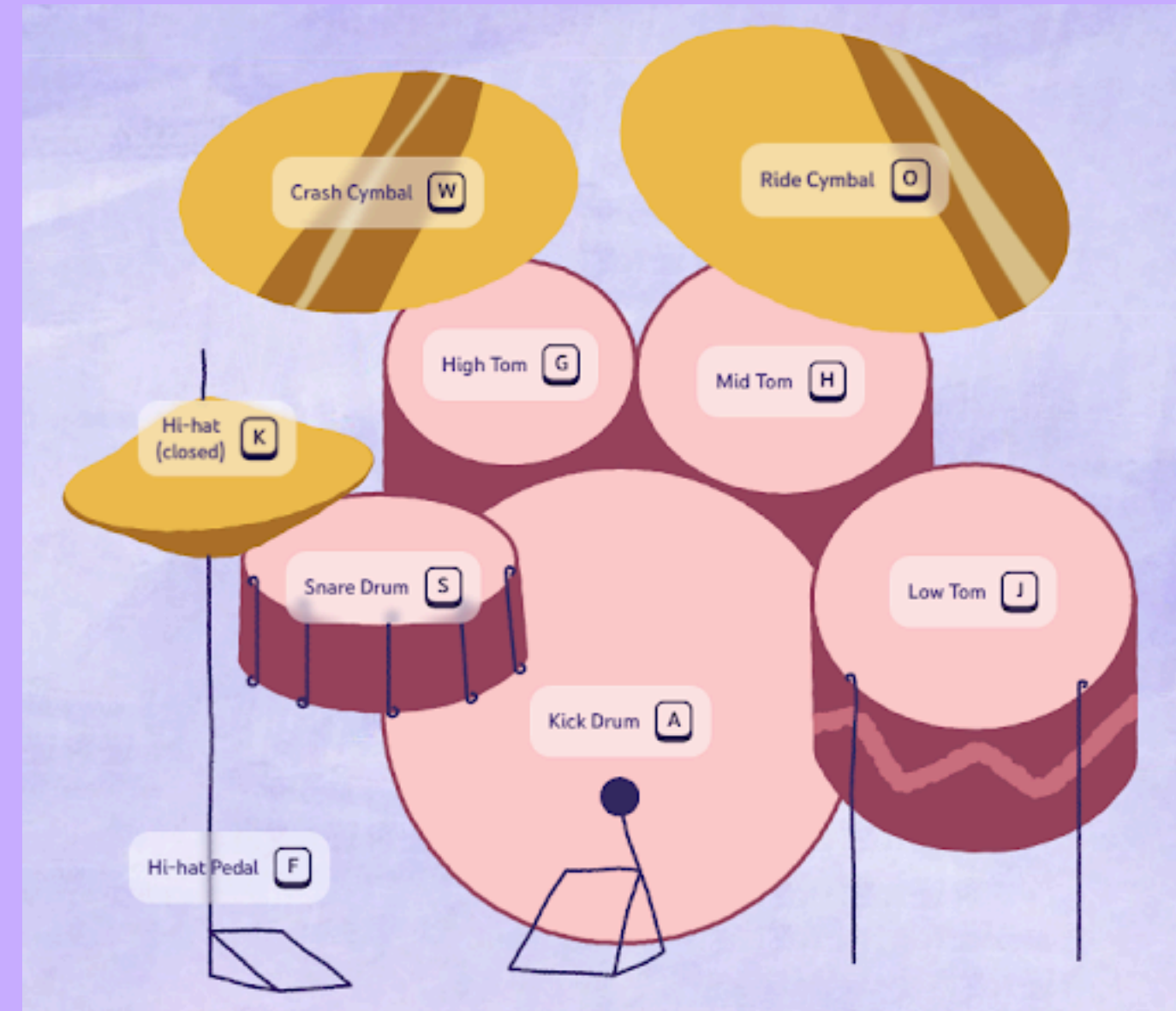
Lesson Objective

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](#).



Drum Set Parts & Function

- Which parts of the drum set can you identify, and what role does each play in a groove?
- When listening to a song, how can you tell which sound is the kick, snare, or hi-hat?
- How do these core parts work together to create the foundation of a rhythm?





Genre Groove

Listening & Analysis



Rock (backbeat)

Description: Steady 4/4 groove with kicks on beats 1&3, snare on beats 2&4, and hi-hat playing eighth 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

The screenshot shows a digital drum interface with three tracks: Hi-hat (Right hand), Snare drum (Left hand), and Kick drum (Left foot). The Hi-hat track has a subdivision of 8 and shows a steady eighth-note pattern. The Snare drum track has a subdivision of 4 and shows a backbeat pattern with snare on beats 2 and 4. The Kick drum track has a subdivision of 8 and shows a pattern with kicks on beats 1 and 3. The tempo is set to 120 BPM, and there is a 'Play' button.

Musical Examples:

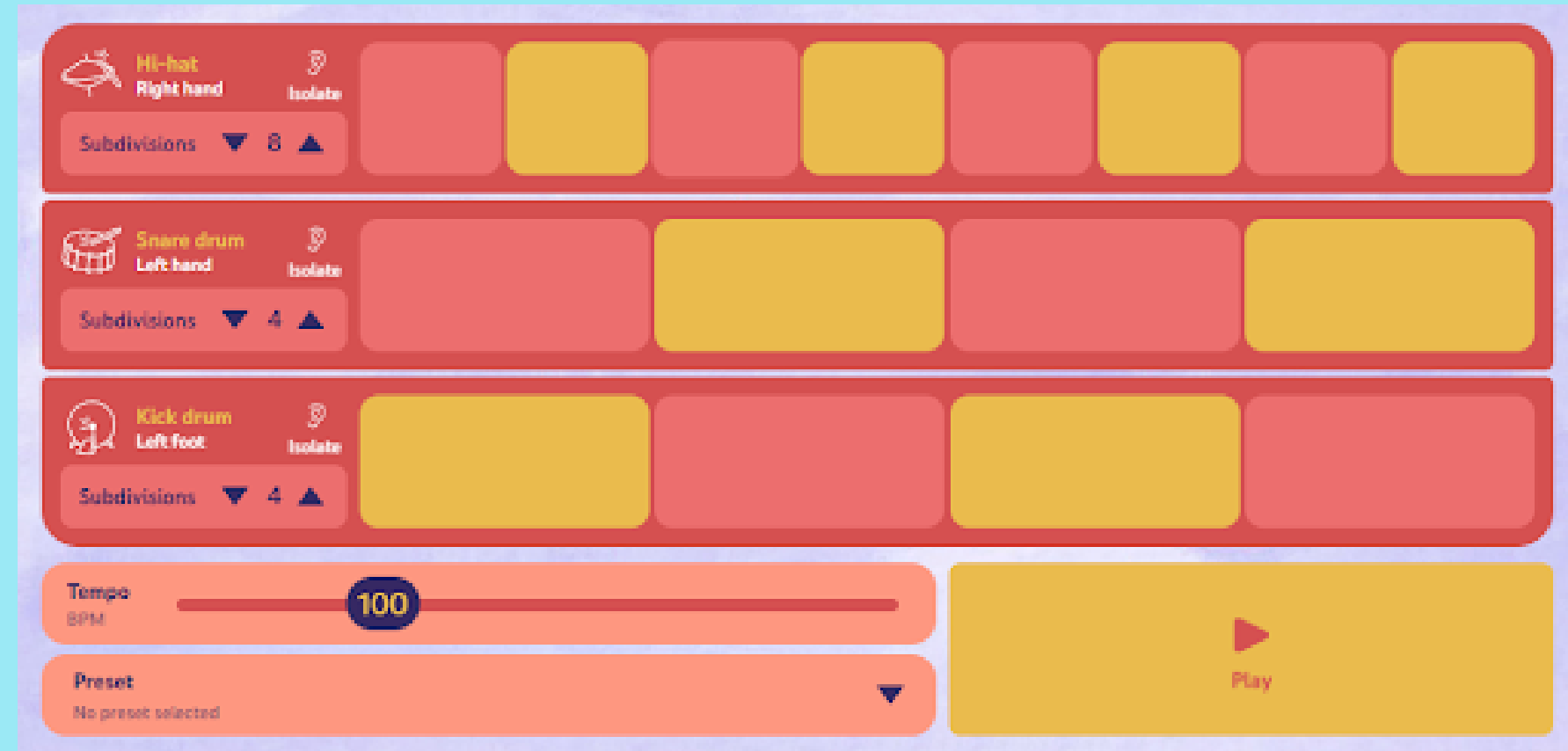
- The White Stripes - “Seven Nation Army” (Meg White)
- Nirvana - “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (Dave Grohl)
- Imagine Dragons - “Believer” (Daniel Platzman)



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 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

The screenshot shows a digital drum interface with three drum parts: Hi-hat (Right hand), Snare drum (Left hand), and Kick drum (Left foot). The Hi-hat part shows a steady eighth-note pattern. The Snare drum part shows a syncopated pattern with a snare hit on the 8th subdivision. The Kick drum part shows a single kick hit on the 1st subdivision. The tempo is set to 120 BPM, and there is a 'Play' button.

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)

Description: Reggae grooves emphasize a relaxed, syncopated rhythm. The kick and snare often hit together on beat 3 (“one drop”) while hi-hat or rim clicks mark the offbeats, creating the genre’s signature swaying feel.

Prominent Drummers: Carlton Barnett, Sly Dunbar, Questlove, Will Calhoun, Zach Danziger

The screenshot shows a digital drum interface with three main drum parts: Hi-hat (Right hand), Snare drum (Left hand), and Kick drum (Left foot). Each part has a 'Subdivisions' dropdown menu and an 'Isolate' button. The Hi-hat part is set to 12 subdivisions, while the Snare and Kick parts are set to 4 subdivisions. A tempo slider is set to 132 BPM, and a 'Play' button is visible on the right.

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: Tito Puente, Giovanni Hidalgo, Poncho Sanchez, Tony Succar, Alex Acuña

The screenshot shows a digital drum interface with three tracks: Hi-hat (Right hand), Snare drum (Left hand), and Kick drum (Left foot). Each track has a 'Subdivisions' dropdown set to 16 and an 'Isolate' button. Below the tracks is a 'Tempo' slider set to 96 BPM and a 'Preset' dropdown set to 'No preset selected'. A large yellow 'Play' button is on the right.

Musical Examples:

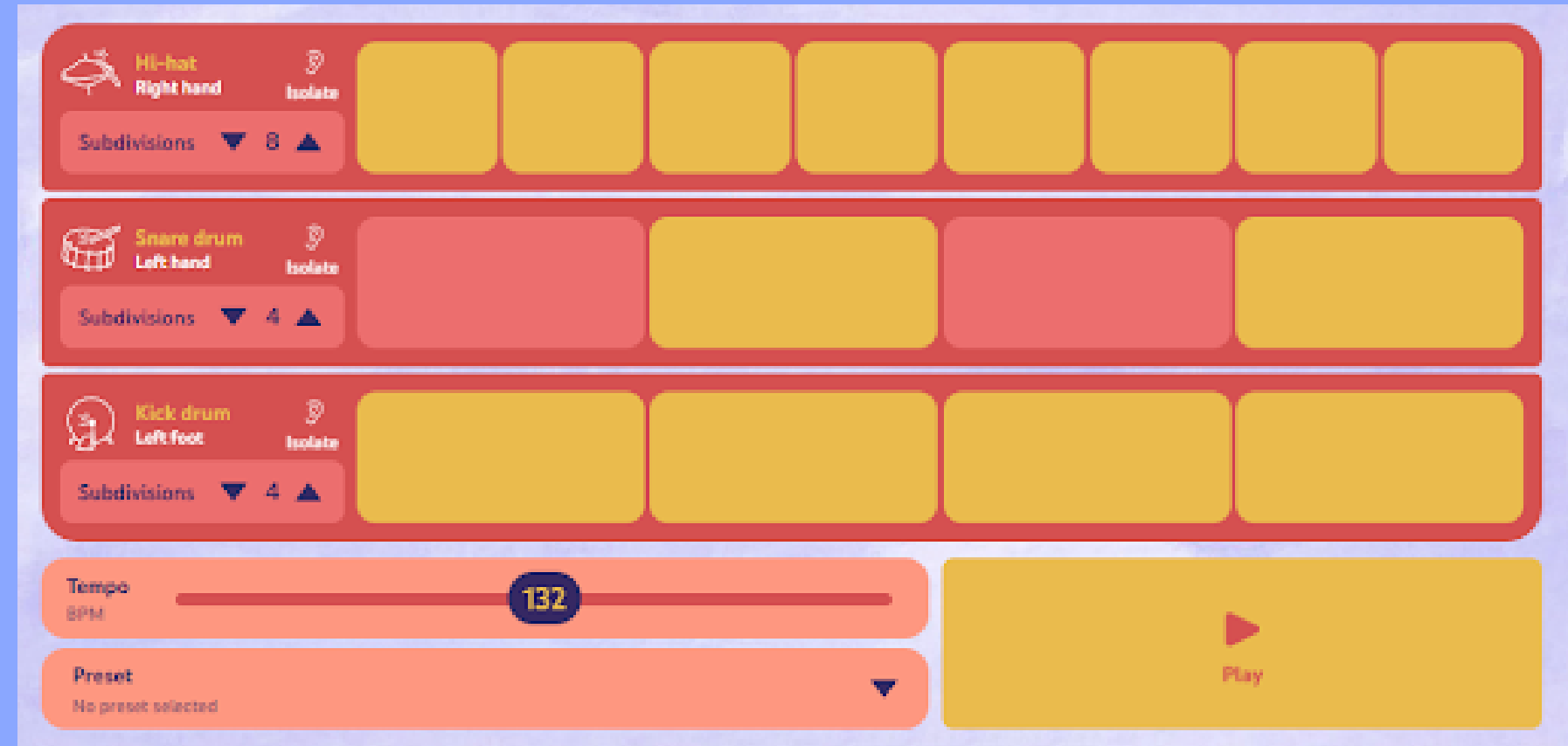
- Tito Puente - “Oye Como Va”
- Celia Cruz - “La Vida Es Un Carnaval”
- Tony Succar - “Mi Gente”



Pop/Dance (Four on the Floor)

Description: Steady Kick on every beat with hi-hats or claps adding texture, creating a danceable, driving rhythm.

Prominent Drummers: Calvin Harris, Shellback, Max Martin, Mark Ronson, Greg Kurstin



Musical Examples:

- Lady Gaga - “Poker Face”
- Avicii - “Wake Me Up”
- Calvin Harris - “Summer”



Genre Groove Reflection Questions:

- What makes this groove sound like its genre?
- How do the different instruments interact to build the groove?
- How does the sound quality (timbre) or texture of each instrument affect the overall feel?



Percussion Ensemble Inspiration

- How do groups like Stomp, Blue Man Group, or The Vegetable Orchestra use unusual objects to create music?
- What new sounds or textures do found objects bring compared to traditional drums?
- How might using found objects inspire choices for your own group project?

Found Sound Ensemble Examples

Stomp

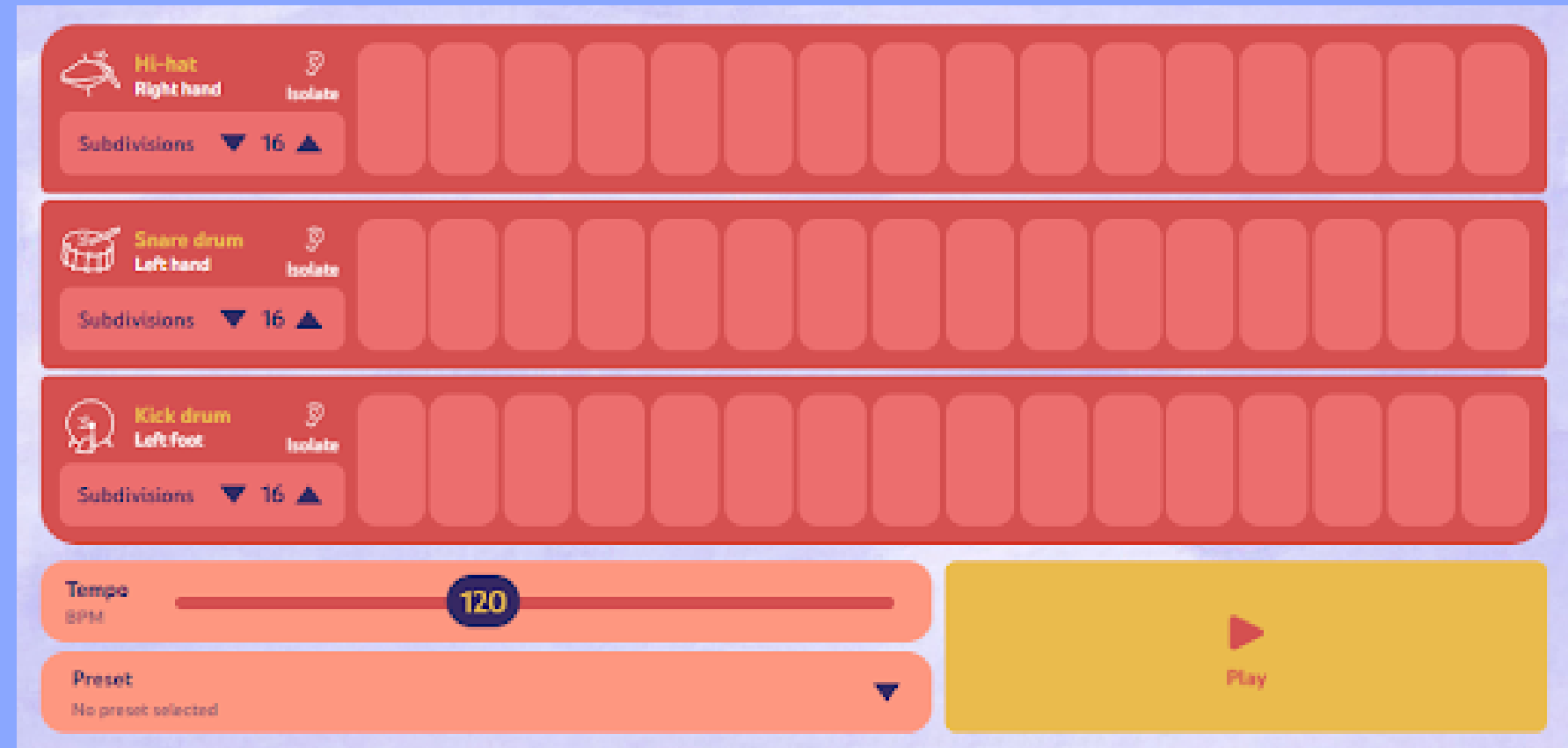
Blue Man Group

The Vegetable Orchestra



Groove Mapping Practice

- How does using the sequencer help you understand the relationship between kick, snare, and hi-hat?
- What patterns did you try, and how do they compare to the grooves you listened to earlier?
- How could your app loop serve as a blueprint for your live group performance?



Think Like A Drummer: Found Sound Groove Project Expectations



Part 1: Find Your Sounds

1. Explore the classroom or home for objects that make interesting sounds.
2. Choose 3 objects that will represent the hi-hat, kick, and snare in your groove.
3. Experiment with how each object sounds when struck in different ways.

Part 2: Explore and Analyze

1. Listen to the playlist of grooves we've studied.
2. Choose one groove as inspiration for your group project
3. Discuss:
 - a. What makes this groove unique?
 - b. What is the rhythm for each part (hi-hat, snare, kick)?
 - c. How do the parts interact to create the overall feel?

Part 3: Compose & Arrange

1. Use the "Groove Lab" sequencer in the [Drums Explorer app](#) to create a looped groove with your 3 parts: hi-hat, kick, and snare
2. Decide how your group will play it together:
3. Which person plays each part?
4. How will the groove flow as an ensemble?
5. Will you add any extra accents or dynamics to make it interesting?

Part 4: Practice

1. Practice performing your groove with your found objects.
2. Adjust your timing, dynamics, and interaction to make the groove tight and musical.
3. Use the playback in the [Drums Explorer app](#) as a guide to stay consistent and aligned as a group.

Part 5: Perform & Present

1. Perform your groove for the class.
2. Present your composition:
 - a. Explain your choices for sounds and instruments
 - b. Describe how your groove was inspired by the example you studied.
 - c. Reflect on what worked well and what you might improve next time.

Think Like A Drummer: Found Sound Groove Project Rubric



| Criteria | 3 – Proficient | 2 – Developing | 1 – Emerging |
|--|--|---|---|
| Creativity & Sound Choices | Sounds are clear, distinct, and appropriate for the roles of hi-hat, snare, and kick; each sound adds to the overall groove and shows careful selection. | Sounds are generally clear and appropriate for hi-hat, snare, and kick; most sounds fit the groove and show attention to selection. | Sounds are unclear or not appropriate for hi-hat, snare, or kick; sound choices do not support the groove effectively. |
| Rhythm & Accuracy | Groove is steady and consistent; hi-hat, snare, and kick are clearly performing their specific rhythmic roles throughout the groove; demonstrates strong timing and understanding of genre-specific patterns. | Groove is mostly steady; hi-hat, snare, and kick perform their specific rhythmic roles for the majority of the groove; demonstrates understanding of timing and genre-specific patterns. | Groove is uneven or inconsistent; hi-hat, snare, and kick do not consistently perform their specific rhythmic roles; shows limited control of timing and patterns. |
| Collaboration & Performance | Group plays together with precise coordination; each member performs their part accurately and confidently; performance demonstrates attention to dynamics, tempo, and groove; explanation of the creative process is thorough and clearly communicated. | Group plays together with generally good coordination; most members perform their parts accurately; performance demonstrates basic attention to tempo and groove; explanation of the creative process is clear but brief. | Group coordination is poor; members do not perform parts accurately or confidently; performance lacks attention to tempo, rhythm, or groove; explanation of the creative process is missing or unclear. |