



In this unit the children study English folk songs. They learn that folk songs are popular, traditional songs from a particular region or country. The children have previously studied folk songs in the curriculum, such as songs closely connected with the enslavement of African people in the southern states of America in the unit on *African-American Spirituals* (Y5, Summer A) and sea shanties in the unit on *Working Songs* (Y4, Autumn A). They listen to famous English folk songs such as *Hopping Down in Kent*, *Scarborough Fair* and *An Acre of Land* and also learn that this music is used to dance to, used for such forms of dance as Morris dancing, a form of English folk dancing. They listen to a wide variety of artists who have performed/been associated with these songs: the English folk singer Louie Fuller; Ewan MacColl who was an influential musician in the revival of British folk songs in the 20th century; the American folk/rock duo Simon and Garfunkel who came to prominence in the 1960s; Vaughan Williams, the English classical composer who collected many folk songs in the early 20th century and the modern singer/songwriter P.J. Harvey and film composer Harry Escott who have created a modern version of the traditional song *An Acre of Land*. They learn that often we do not know who wrote folk songs as they are typically passed down orally from generation to generation, rather than being formally written down or published.

They practise and learn to perform two folk songs, *Hopping Down in Kent* (which they also create a dance to and learn to sing in two part harmony) and *An Acre of Land* which they create an accompaniment to using chords built on triads (a set of three notes or pitches which misses a note out in between each of the three notes) played on tuned percussion.

Lesson Sequencing

In lesson 1 the children are introduced to English folk songs by learning about the song *Hopping Down in Kent*. *Hopping Down in Kent* is about picking hops in Kent. Hops are flowers that are picked and added to beer during the brewing process to give it its bitter flavour. Hops begin to flower in July and by September they are ready to be picked. Before mechanisation hopping was work for the families of South East London as well as gypsies, who dominated the workforce. Having spent the summer travelling the country picking fruit and vegetables – such as cherries, strawberries, beans and peas – the pickers would gather in September to collect hops. To communities of South East London, hop picking was considered a working holiday and whole families would travel to Kent, also known as the ‘garden of England’. At the end of the lesson the children learn to sing the song.

In lesson 2 the children recall what they learnt in lesson 1 about the folk song *Hopping Down in Kent* before watching Morris dancers dancing to the tune of the song. Morris dancing is a form of English folk dancing which is done in the street. It is based on rhythmical stepping moves by a group of dancers in costumes who wear bells on their shins/shoes. A band or a single musician (often playing a pipe or a fiddle (which is the folk name for a violin)) provides the music for them to dance to. The dancers may also use sticks with which to make sounds and may also add to their movements using handkerchiefs. Morris dancing first appeared in England in the 15th century.



You can still see Morris dancing in the Cotswold's, the North Western region of England and the borders (Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire). The children learn a version of a Morris dance which fits with the tune of *Hopping Down in Kent*.

In lesson 3 the children listen to two versions of the English folk ballad, *Scarborough Fair* sung by Ewan McColl and Simon and Garfunkel. The words of the song list a number of impossible tasks for the singer's 'love' to carry out at *Scarborough Fair*. The origins of the words have been traced back as far as the 17th century. Ewan MacColl was an influential person in the revival of British folk songs in the 20th century. He 'collected' traditional songs including the tune of *Scarborough Fair* from a retired lead miner from County Durham in 1947. Perhaps the most famous version of *Scarborough Fair* was sung by Simon and Garfunkel who were an American folk/rock duo and one of the bestselling music acts of the 1960s. Their version of *Scarborough Fair* includes another melody sung at counterpoint to the main melody which is from an anti-war song written by the duo. At the end of the lesson the children practise singing and dancing to *Hopping Down in Kent* which the children learnt in lesson 1 and 2. They then learn to sing a lower part to add to the tune of the chorus of the song which adds extra layer of harmonic texture to the music.

In lesson 4 the children listen to another English folk song, *An Acre of Land*. The song tells of the small amount of land that a father has left his son, so small that all the farming activities from sowing to harvesting can be achieved with very small tools. The song features an impossible task in each verse—doing a farming job with the wrong kind of tools. These types of impossible tasks are a common motif in English folk songs. For this reason, some people think that that the song is related to the song *Scarborough Fair* which also asks someone to complete impossible tasks. The song is in compound time, where the beat can be divided into three rather than two (as with simple time). The children learn to sing the song, in two groups using a call and response structure.

In lesson 5 the children listen to another version of the folk song *An Acre of Land* by the English composer Vaughan Williams. Vaughan Williams was strongly influenced by English folk songs. The children learnt about Vaughan Williams in Autumn A of year 5 when they listened to his piece *The Lark Ascending*. He was one of the musicians who participated in the revival of English folk songs and used many folk song tunes in his compositions. He collected over 800 songs, as well as some singing games and dance tunes. For 10 years he devoted up to 30 days a year to collecting folk songs from singers in 21 English counties, though Essex, Norfolk, Herefordshire and Sussex account for over two thirds of the songs in his collection. He recorded a small number of songs but the vast majority were written down by hand. The version *An Acre of Land* which the children listen to is accompanied by instruments. The children create their own accompaniment for their version of the song using chords based on triads (a set of three notes or pitches which misses a note out in between each of the three notes) which they play on tuned percussion instruments.

In lesson 6 the children listen to another version of *An Acre of Land* by the modern singer/songwriter P.J. Harvey and film composer Harry Escott. They then perform and record the songs which they have practised throughout the course of the unit and then evaluate their performance.

Musical Focus

Structure and Form

- Song forms—verse/chorus
- Call and response

Texture

- Singing a cappella
- Singing in unison and in parts
- Harmony built on triads

Rhythm and Metre

- Simple and compound metre

Links to Prior/Following Units

Year 4

Autumn A—*Working Songs* (Structure and Form—songs with call and response; Texture—Solo/Chorus; Metre —identifying pulse and metre in common time)

Autumn B—*Take the 'A' Train* (Structure and form —song form AABA; Texture-Melody and accompaniment, solo/duets (improvisation/scat singing)

Spring B—*Solo* (Texture and harmony—Chords and arpeggios)

Summer B—*Announcing an Entrance* (Texture/Structure and Form— Using triads to create a melody; building layers of texture by rhythmic imitation; Rhythm and Metre—Crotchets; 4/4 (common time)

Year 5

Autumn A—*The Lark Ascending* (Vaughan Williams)

Spring B—*Beethoven's Eroica* (Pitch , Melody, Harmony —Main theme based on a triad, using triads built on I, IV and V to create a melody)

Summer A—*African-American Spirituals* (Texture—singing in parts, harmony; Structure and Form—Verse and chorus, call and response;

Instrumentation—singing a cappella)



Year 6

Spring A—*Blues and the Groove* (Harmony, Rhythm and Form—chord progression for the 12 bar blues over 12 bars of 4/4 time, AAB lyrical form of the 12 bar blues)

Summer A—*Rock, Pop and the Influence of the Blues* (Harmony and form—Chord progressions for the 12 bar blues (chord I, IV, and V over 12 bars of 4/4 time, improvised solos, verse/chorus/intro/outro)

Summer B—*Protest Songs* (Structure and form—Different forms of song)

Outcomes

Practise and perform folk songs in simple two part harmony accompanied by chords built on triads on tuned percussion.

Key Learning Points

- A folk song is a popular, traditional song from a particular region or country.
- We often do not know who has written a folk song.
- Folk songs are often used to dance to. Morris dancing is a type of traditional English folk dancing.
- Hopping Down in Kent* is an English folk song about picking hops to make beer with in Kent, S.E. England.
- Scarborough Fair* is a famous folk ballad (a story set to music).
- Ewan MacColl was an influential musician in the revival of British folk songs in the 20th century who collected and recorded *Scarborough Fair*.
- Simon and Garfunkel were an American folk/rock duo who also recorded *Scarborough Fair*.
- Vaughan Williams collected many folk songs in the early 20th century. He set the folk song, *An Acre of Land* for women's voices and orchestra as part of his piece *Folk Songs of the Four Seasons*.
- Folk songs are sometimes adapted by modern musicians.
- Music can be in simple or compound metre. Simple time is where each beat can be divided into two. Compound time is where the beat can be divided into three.
- We can accompany a folk song with chords built on triads.

Progression: Technical, Constructive, Expressive

Singing

Children learn and sing call and response and action songs, to warm up at the beginning of each lesson which include simple English folk songs such as *Heads Shoulders Knees and Toes* and *Oliver Cromwell* as well as folk songs from other cultures such as *Frère Jacques* and *Che Che Kule*. The children use the song *Oliver Cromwell* to develop their skills in singing in two-parts as well as identifying compound time, where the beat is subdivided into three. They also learn to sing the folk songs *Hopping Down in Kent* and *An Acre of Land* which they listen to during the course of the unit. This develops their technical singing skills which include posture, breath control, singing with a pulse, imitating rhythms, varying speed, holding a particular pitch and singing together in an ensemble. Practising songs over the course of six lessons ensures familiarity and increasing sophistication of musical expression.

Listening

Children practise 'active' listening, listening carefully to the words, identifying different structures the songs use such as verse/chorus and call/response and comparing different versions of the same songs which use contrasting accompaniments and create different moods. By listening to the songs they begin to have conscious understanding of how music is constructed, focussing on the dimensions of structure/form, texture, rhythm and metre. By studying songs sung by a wide variety of artists, they begin to develop an increasing understanding of the expressive qualities of music from different genres.

Practising

Practising singing folk songs which makes use of two-part harmony and tuned percussion instruments used to accompany the singing develops technical motor skills and an internal sense of pitch, melody, harmony, pulse, rhythm and metre. Learning these songs develops knowledge of handling pitch, harmony pulse, rhythm, metre, texture and structure/form as component dimensions of making music. Practising the skills required for learning the songs gradually over the course of the unit, ensures increasing confidence and sophistication in the expressive quality of musical outcomes.

Performing

Working towards performance of songs over the course of six lessons ensures increased technical accuracy, confidence, fluency, expression and the ability to sing/play securely in an ensemble, following a leader.