

*Song of the Volga Boatman*, The Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, conducted by David Baker

Big Band Textures - Intermediate level, grades 3-6

**Objectives:**

1. The student will identify changing textures in a big-band swing-style recording.
2. The student will compare musical texture to visual texture.
3. The student will create an arrangement of *Song of the Volga Boatmen* showing use of texture.

**Optional Objectives:**

1. Using a variety of media (different textures of paper, puff paint, etc.) students will create a listening map to *Song of the Volga Boatman* that is represented by visual/tactile media.
2. The student will compare the Tschudi painting and the recording.

**Time:** One class period.

**Materials:** Computer access to recordings on the Internet and speakers for playback to class. Internet access for students to look at visual textures or print out website at <http://www.mmwindowtoart.com/foundations/foundationstexture.html> “Listening to *Song of the Volga Boatmen*” worksheet. Optional: variety of media and different textures of papers.

**Procedure:**

**Activity 1** - “Today we are going to listen to a recording of a piece that was originally a Russian folk song and was arranged for the Glenn Miller Orchestra in the swing style. Before I play the recording, I would like someone to raise their hand and tell me what texture means. Think about visual textures or textures that you can feel with your fingers. What is texture?” Students might talk about smooth and rough paper. Have some examples to pass around. “If we were going to take the idea of visual texture or textures that we can feel, and think about what textures in music are, how would you describe texture in music?” Encourage students to describe and discuss texture in music. Write ideas on the board or overhead. “I would like you to think about texture in music as I play this recording. After we listen to it once, I am going to give you a worksheet and ask you to identify textures in the recording of *Song of the Volga Boatmen*.” After playing the recording one time, ask students to describe what they heard in the recording. Write ideas on the board or overhead.

**Activity 2** - “This time on the worksheet, I would like you to identify the instruments you hear and also the texture that is created by the instruments. Think about how the combinations of instruments create different textures. They might be thick or thin, rough or smooth, or some other words that you can think of to describe the texture. Write your ideas on the worksheet. I will hold up fingers to show which section we are listening to just in case you get lost.” After playing the recording at least twice, ask the students to describe the instruments and the texture they heard in the recording.

**Activity 3** - “Let’s look at visual textures.” Go to the website <http://www.mmwindowtoart.com/foundations/foundationstexture.html> to see examples of visual textures, or use this website as a guide to create examples that can be passed around for students to feel and see. “As we look at these different visual textures, let’s try to come up with words that describe how they would feel.” Write words on the board or overhead. “Now let’s think about how you could combine different instruments, vocal sounds, or body percussion sounds to create the textures in sound that we just described for the visual textures.”

**Activity 4** - Put students into pairs or small groups of three to four students, and give them the melody of *Song of the Volga Boatmen* (see attached file) and ask them to create an arrangement using at least two different textures. If students do not read music well enough to play the melody, teach it by rote. Allow one class period for this activity. Perform arrangements for the class, with each group explaining the different textures they used in their arrangement.

#### **Optional activities:**

**Activity 5** - You will need to use a space where students can create individual listening maps for the recording, *Song of the Volga Boatmen*. Students will need a variety of textures of paper and other media, scissors, puff paint, etc. to make their maps. They will refer to their “Listening to *Song of the Volga Boatmen*” worksheet to help them with remembering the different textures. You will also want to play the recording several times as they work to help them connect sound to visual/tactile texture. When everyone is finished, ask students to trade their maps with someone else and show them where to start and finish the song. Then play the recording and see if the students can follow someone else’s map. Ask students to share maps that they liked with the class and how the person made the texture that went with the recording. You can keep trading maps around as time permits.

**Activity 6** - To see a painting by Lill Tschudi called *Song of the Volga Boatmen*, go to the website, <http://www.scolarfineart.com/pages/single/10324.html>. Ask students, “Do you think this painting looks like the recording sounds? Why or why not?” The real Volga boatmen were men in Russia who worked very hard to haul barges loaded with goods along the Volga River. This was before engines were invented, which enabled boats to move along on their own power. It was very hard, backbreaking work, and the music and the painting were created to describe these strong men.

#### **Extension:**

Listen to the several different versions of *Song of the Volga Boatmen* and decide which one sounds the closest to what the students imagine the actual Volga Boatmen to be like when they were pulling the heavy barges.

#### **Indicators of Success:**

Students will represent texture musically, visually, and through tactile representations.

**Web site for visual textures:**

<http://www.mmwindowtoart.com/foundations/foundationstexture.html>

**Learn more about the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra:**

<http://www.si.edu/ajazzh/sjmo.htm>

[http://smithsonianjazz.org/sjmo/sjmo\\_start.asp](http://smithsonianjazz.org/sjmo/sjmo_start.asp)

**Lyrics to the *Song of the Volga Boatmen*:**

<http://richwalt.com/~glinka/music/volga2.html>

**Painting of *Song of the Volga Boatmen* by Lill Tschudi:**

<http://www.scolarfineart.com/pages/single/10324.html>

**Listen to a sample of *Song of the Volga Boatmen* by Slavyanka Russian Chorus (scroll down to the samples):**

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/B00004X0NP/wwwlink-software-21/202-2606184-8069437>

**Listen to an example of *Song of the Volga Boatmen* for organ:**

<http://www.bardon-enterprises.co.uk/music/music.php?id=BE00212>