

LESSON PLAN: 1 Chord Song Arrangements

Objective:

Students will be able to play songs using only one chord and a good awareness of musical contrast.

Resources:

Lyrics and recordings from any 1 chord song; “Lowrider” by War, “Land of 1,000 Dances” by Wilson Pickett, “We Will Rock You” by Queen, “Mannish Boy” by Muddy Waters, “Tomorrow Never Knows” by The Beatles, “Who Do You Love” by Bo Diddley (covered by George Thorogood), etc.

Procedures:

- 1 Pick a couple of 1 chord songs to listen to as a group in class. Tell students that while listening you would like them to pay attention to contrast, and how using only one chord a song can sound like it has different parts. Encourage them to listen for contrasting sections like a verse or chorus, contrasting rhythms between sections, instrumental vs. vocal sections, contrasting bass lines, etc.
- 2 Choose a song to play as a group. Listen together for the contrasts that make the song work using only one chord and come up with strategies for playing it while copying some of these ideas in your arrangement. If contrast is maintained using percussion sounds, bass lines, etc. you may need to assign a separate group of students to those parts.
- 3 Use this kind of exercise to learn new chords as your students become ready for more. This process encourages us to pay attention to arranging songs in ways that make them more fun to play, while making new information more interesting to learn! If you’re using the 1 finger chords, this is a great exercise to do for introducing the D chord.

National Core Arts Standards (Music):

Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze, and interpret work for presentation.

Example: General Music MU:Pr4.2.4 a. Demonstrate understanding of the structure and the elements of music (such as rhythm, pitch, and form) in music selected for performance.

