

Lesson plan 1: Teaching a call and response song

Learning objective:

- To listen to and imitate song phrases
 - To pitch-match the class
 - To sing as a class
 - To sing a call and response song
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Introduction to the song

This call and response song is a sea shanty about the Essequibo River in Guyana, South America, which flows between the Orinoco and the Amazon.

Sea shanties were work songs used to accompany rhythmical labour aboard a ship. These songs were used to coordinate workers' actions in either a pulling or pushing action to pull up an anchor or haul up a sail. Since the move to steam power, these shanties were no longer needed, however due to their incredibly 'catchy' nature, they have endured and are still very popular today!

Teach the song

- Sing the whole song to the class
- Explain that the song is a 'call and response' song where a leader sings the first phrase (the call) and a group sings the response
- Teach the class the first response by singing the phrase and gesturing to yourself: 'Somebody, oh Jonny, somebody oh!'
- Immediately gesture to the class to encourage them to sing this phrase back to you

- Repeat two or three times until the 'response' is confident
- You sing the 'call' – 'Essequibo River is the king of rivers all!' then gesture to the class to encourage them to sing their 'response'
- Repeat – as in the song

Essequibo River is the king of rivers all!

Somebody, oh Jonny, somebody oh!

Essequibo River is the king of rivers all!

Somebody, oh Jonny, somebody oh!

- When the 'call' changes to the higher phrase draw the class's attention to how the response also changes:

Somebody, oh Jonny, somebody oh!

Buddy tanana, we are somebody oh!

- These words may need a little practice and can be fun when they get mixed up (we all get mixed up!)
- Sing through the whole song with your class using gesture to yourself when it is your turn and gesture to the class when it is their turn

Play with the song

Playing with the song is incredibly important. It is in these games where children discover their innate musicianship. It also acts as a distraction for your more anxious singers. They begin to sing without realising as they are so engrossed with the action, or game.

You can play with this song in several ways. The video shows only two of the ways you can play with this song.

1. Actions

- Essequibo River (wavy river gesture with arm)
- King of rivers all (hands either side of head with fingers pointing like a crown)
- Somebody, oh Jonny, somebody oh! (thumb pointing over shoulder on 'oh' each time)
- Buddy tanana (gesture to turn around)

2. Thinking voice

Catch your children out by putting different phrases in the 'thinking voice' (singing the phrase in their head – not out loud). Explain to the children that they will begin by singing the song, but at some point, you will put both of your hands on your head, indicating for the children to sing that phrase in their thinking voice. Swap and change which phrases to sing out loud, or in their thinking voice.

3. Lycra

Watch the video to see how we used a large piece of lycra (4 Way stretch lycra) to reinforce the pulse. This is a very popular activity and your class will thank you every time you use it!

4. Dance

Watch the video to see how to teach the dance. Your class will be unconsciously learning so many different elements when taking part in this dance – and not just music!