

# ***Hear Us Out! Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and Their Music:***

*A Smithsonian Folkways Learning Pathway for students in K–2nd grade.*



## ***Teacher's Guide***

### ***Lesson 1: "Little Bird": Birdcalls and the Gayageum***

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#### **Lesson Overview**

This lesson will introduce young students to the traditional 12-string Korean instrument, gayageum, and show students one strain of American folk music, which can be as diverse as the people who make up the United States. Students will also learn that you can find musical/creative inspiration in everyday surroundings, specifically in bird songs taken from nature.

#### **Objectives:**

- > Learn to create melodies using sounds from daily life (i.e., birdcalls).
- > Clap and step to the big beats in a 6/8 meter.
- > Be introduced to the traditional Korean instrument gayageum.
- > Identify the general region of East Asia/Korea and other places Americans may emigrate from on a world map.
- > Discuss musical characteristics and analyze similarities and differences between pieces.

The learning experiences included in this lesson are ultimately designed to help open up the canon of American folk music in the minds of students. This is done through showing one facet of the art form as an evolving, expansive, and inclusive genre that anyone could see themselves reflected in and claim as their own.

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## **Lesson Components and Student Objectives**



1. **The Gayageum** (15+ mins)
  - I can describe the Korean instrument gayageum.
  - I can explain where Korea is located.
  - I can explain what the term “Korean American” means.









2. **Experiencing Birdcalls** (15+ mins)
  - I can clap the big beats in 6/8 time.
  - I can discuss how melodies/songs use sounds from nature and daily life.
  - I can mimic the “ssuk-guk” (birdcall) in “Little Bird.”
  - I can vocally explore and create my own bird calls.



3. **Listening for “Little Birds”** (20+ mins)
  - I can identify how composers use musical elements and expressive qualities related to timbre, dynamics, tempo, melody, and mood.
  - I can discuss similarities and differences between “Little Bird” and the traditional Korean folksong, “Saetaryeong.”

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\*Note: The learning icons used above signify the type of learning used in each Component. Keep in mind that these Components are not intended to be sequential; rather, teachers or students may choose which Components they’d like to use from each Lesson.

While all learning types ( History and Culture,  Music Listening,  Music Making and Creation, and  Creative Connections) fulfill 2014 National Music Standards, non-music teachers will be able to use  History and Culture and  Creative Connections Components without specific musical knowledge.

## Teaching Plan

### 1. Component One: What Is the Gayageum?



#### **To prepare:**

- Read through this teacher’s guide.
- Preview Component 1 of the **Lesson 1 Slideshow** (slides 3–14).
  - Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page.
- Prepare a globe or world map.

#### **Slides One–Two:** Information For Teachers

##### Essential Questions:

- *Where is Korea?*
- *What is the traditional Korean instrument gayageum?*
- *Who are Korean Americans?*
- *How do melodies/songs use sounds from nature and daily life?*
- *Can I clap and step to the big beats in 6/8?*

#### **Slide Three:** Component 1 Title Slide

#### **Slide Four:** “Little Bird”

Watch an animated music video of a solo recording of the song “Little Bird.”

- Direct students to notice how the little bird moves (in relation) to the music.

#### **Slide Five:** Gayageum

A. Introduce the gayageum by watching Joyce’s video (pause at 1:46). Essential information:

- The gayageum is a long, stringed instrument.
- You sit down—crisscross applesauce—and put one end on your lap to play it.
- It has 12 strings (note for teacher: there are modern versions with more strings) arranged from low to high strings.
- The strings of the 12-string gayageum are made of silk and the body is made of wood with sound holes on the bottom.
- Discuss: *Does the gayageum remind you of any other instruments? Guitar? Violin? (Hint: That’s because it belongs to the string family and has strings, wood, and sound holes, like the guitar or violin.)*

B. Watch the rest of the video (1:46–2:21). Essential information:

- The gayageum is an instrument from Korea. It originated long ago (note for teacher: around the sixth century).

**Slide Six:** Remember to take stretch breaks as needed~

**Slide Seven:** Korea

Discuss: The gayageum is from Korea. *Where is Korea? From where we are, how would we get to Korea?* (Note: You will have a chance to look at maps on the next several slides.)

- Have fun with this! If a student mentions you have to cross water, ask: *Could we swim the whole way? Would it be possible?*
- Get students thinking and problem-solving. *Have any of you ever been on a long flight across the ocean?*

**Slide Eight:** The World

Look at a map of the world. Discuss: *Where are we? Is anyone from or does anyone have family members from another country?*

- If students' relatives or themselves have emigrated from another country, point out their motherlands on a globe/map.
- Remind students: The vast majority of Americans—everyone except for Native Americans—originate from elsewhere.
- *What are other countries people have moved (emigrated) from? Can we find them on the globe/map?*

**Slide Nine:** Asia

Prompt students to zoom in closer to look at where Korea is on the map. Korea is in Asia—East Asia. *Does anybody know anyone from Asia?*

**Slide Ten:** Korea

Tell students (and show them) that Korea is near China and Japan. (Korea is highlighted in yellow and circled on the embedded map.)

**Slide Eleven:** Korea to the US

Share that singer/gayageum player Joyce was born in Korea and moved to the US when she was a child. She is Korean American. She speaks both English and Korean with her family.

### Slide Twelve: Let's Chat

Some possibilities for further discussion:

- *What language(s) do you speak at home with your family? What languages are spoken in the US?*
- *What languages are spoken in Korea? (Hint: Korean is the official language in Korea. But as the historically homogenous country becomes relatively more multicultural, there's an increasing number of other languages spoken.)*
- *Do you listen to music in English? In Korean? (It's quite possible some may have listened to K-pop groups like BTS if they have older siblings.) In Spanish?*
- *What kind of music do your families and friends listen to and/or make?*

### Slide Thirteen: Learning Checkpoint

- *Where is Korea?*
  - **Korea is in Asia—East Asia. China is to the northwest and Japan is to the southeast.**
- *Who are Korean Americans?*
  - **The vast majority of Americans—everyone except for Native Americans—originate from elsewhere. Korean Americans have emigrated from (or have family members who have emigrated from) Korea. Joyce moved to the United States as a child and identifies as Korean American.**
- *What is a gayageum?*
  - **The gayageum is an instrument that originated in Korea long ago. It is a plucked chordophone (string instrument) with twelve strings. The strings are made from silk and the body from wood. You sit crisscross applesauce to play it.**

### Slide Fourteen: Lesson Navigation Slide

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## **2. Component Two: Experiencing Birdcalls**



### **To prepare:**

- Read through this teacher’s guide.
- Preview Component 2 of the **Lesson 1 Slideshow** (slides 15–22).
  - Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page.

### **Slide Fifteen:** Component 2 Title Slide

### **Slide Sixteen:** What Sounds Do Birds Make?

Create and identify melodies inherent in birdcalls:

- *What are some sounds that birds make? I’ll call on some quietly raised hands.*
  - Young students will likely give a pitched answer but if they give a spoken answer, have them sing the proposed bird sound (e.g., sing “cuckoo” instead of saying it).
- *Let’s copy the bird sound* (while you gesture to indicate high vs. low pitch, e.g., “cuckoo” → *cuck— oo— high— lovv—*).
- Repeat the bird song volunteered by each student and have the class join in.

### **Slide Seventeen:** Engaged Listening: Birdcalls

Listen to and mimic the embedded field recording samples of birds. (You could gesture to indicate high and low as you listen and sing back the birdcalls.)

- *We’re going to listen to some clips of real, live birds from forests. Let’s listen then copy them!*
  - The bird sounds embedded in this slide include the following. (Note: Check that you’ve pressed pause on one bird before moving onto the next and pressing play.)
    - Biray bird (magpie, robin)
    - Terane’ bird (checker-throated woodpecker)
    - Flock of parrots
    - Swainson toucan
    - Toucan barbets
    - Mourning dove (and crickets)
    - Crested guans (in a thunderstorm)

**Slide Eighteen:** Let's Move Together!

Encourage students to get into a 6/8 groove by counting aloud "ONE 2 3 TWO 2 3" with even spacing between each number. Step to the big beats (ONE & TWO).

- You could further engage students in the activity by singing "cu-ckoo" in rhythm on the small beats (2 & 3), in addition to stepping on the big beats (ONE & TWO). *Everybody, let's stand up and move together to the beat!*

**Slide Nineteen:** Engaged Listening: "Little Bird"

Watch Joyce's interactive demonstration of "Little Bird" (through 3:45 of the embedded video):

- Sing the "ssuk-guk" bird chorus of "Little Bird."
- Sing "ssuk-guk" while clapping the big beats in 6/8.
- Optional: Learn to sing the rest of the song—find the lyrics in the teacher's guide.
- Optional: Map out the pitches by using the printable bird template (provided at the end of this guide).

**Slide Twenty:** Create

Create and sing your own bird song!

- Listen for birds through the window or outside.
  - *Let's be quiet so that we can better hear the birds outside.*
- Copy the song of birds that you hear. Make up your own bird song.
  - *Now let's copy their song!*
  - *Does anyone want to make up their own song?*
- If you want to provide bird whistles for each student, you could fill them up with water and experiment with sounds outside.

**Slide Twenty-one:** Learning Checkpoint

- *Can I clap the big beats in 6/8?*
- *Can I copy and create bird sounds?*
- *Can I sing the birdcall "ssuk-guk" in the song "Little Bird"?*

**Slide Twenty-three:** Lesson Navigation Slide

### **3. Component Three: Listening for “Little Birds”**



#### **To prepare:**

- Read through this teacher’s guide.
- Preview Component 3 of the **Lesson 1 Slideshow** (slides 23–37).
  - Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page.

#### **Slide Twenty-three:** Component 3 Title Slide

#### **Slide Twenty-four:** 5 Little Birds (Optional Activities)

To open this Component, consider exploring the bird-related activities that accompany Andrew Gunsberg’s song “Five Little Birds”. The instructions can be found at the end of this guide and also in the liner notes: <https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/FW07517.pdf>.

- These activities will prompt students to act out the story of the song they will listen to on the next slide (“Five Little Birds”).

#### **Slide Twenty-five:** Attentive and Engaged Listening: 5 Little Birds

Listen to songs with a “bird” theme:

- “Five Little Birds” - Andrew Gunsberg (Listen from 0:00 to 0:56 unless doing the preceding optional activities, in which case you’ll want to listen to the entire song so the students can hear the story.)
  - *Friends, let’s count little birds starting with 5! Here’s a song called “Five Little Birds.”*
  - First time: *Listen for the big and little beats.*
  - Second and third times: Encourage students to move around the room—stepping to the big beats (beat 1) and/or clapping along gently with the small beats (2, 3).

#### **Slide Twenty-six:** 4 Little Birds

Count down from 5 little birds to 4 little birds.

- *If there are 5 little birds and one flies away, then how many birds are left? 4 little birds!*



**Slide Twenty-seven:** Engaged Listening: 3 Little Birds

- A. Count down from 5 little birds to 4 little birds.
- *If there are 4 little birds and one flies away, then how many birds are left? 3 little birds!*
- B. Listen to an excerpt from Bob Marley’s original Three Little Birds (0:38–1:30). Find the lyrics in the slideshow and at the end of this guide.
- *Let’s listen to a song about “Three Little Birds.”*
    - While listening, you can have students stand and mirror your movement (e.g., sway side to side while singing the chorus).

**Slide Twenty-eight:** Engaged Listening: 3 Pajaritos

Next, listen to an excerpt from Elizabeth Mitchell and Suni Paz’s version of “Tres Pajaritos” (0:47–1:30). Find the lyrics in the slideshow and at the end of this guide.

- *Does anybody speak any Spanish? How would you say “Three Little Birds” in Spanish? ... Tres Pajaritos!*
- *Let’s listen to a song called “Tres Pajaritos.”*
  - Again, consider leading an engaged listening activity (e.g., moving through space, singing along, swaying.)

**Slide Twenty-nine:** Attentive Listening: Same & Different

Ask students:

- *What are some things that are the same in both “Three Little Birds” and “Tres Pajaritos”? **(Both are called three little birds. The melody is the same.)***
- *What are some things that are different? **(“Three Little Birds” is in English and “Tres Pajaritos” is in Spanish. “Three Little Birds” is sung by a man and “Tres Pajaritos,” by two women.)***
  - Note: The videos are embedded in case you would like to watch/listen again.

**Slide Thirty:** 2 Little Birds

Continue the countdown to 2 little birds.

- *So, we’ve now got 3 little birds. If one flies away, then how many are left? 2 little birds!*

**Slide Thirty-one:** Remember to take stretch breaks as needed~**Slide Thirty-two:** Attentive Listening: 1 Little Bird

- A. Count down from 3 little birds to 2 little birds.

- *If we have two little birds and one flies away, how many are left? 1 little bird!*
- B. Watch/listen to “Little Bird” (full band version) - Joyce Kwon (0:09–2:26)
- *Let’s watch a song about a “Little Bird.”*
- C. Discuss:
- *Did you notice the birdcall “ssuk-guk” being sung?*
  - *How does the music make you feel? How does the performer sound like she’s feeling? (Discuss mood.)*
  - *Is the song soft or loud? (Discuss dynamics.)*
  - *Is the song rushed or relaxed, fast or slow? (Discuss tempo.)*

### Slide Thirty-three: Attentive Listening: Korean Bird Song

- A. Watch/listen to “Saetaryeong”—a traditional folk song that translates to “bird song.” (3:44 is where the most obvious “ssuk-guk” birdcalls are. For a longer version, play from 2:39–4:16.)
- *Let’s watch another song about birds called “Saetaryeong”—that means “bird song” in Korean. See if you can tell when the “ssuk-guk” birdcalls come in.*
- B. Discuss:
- *Did you notice the birdcall “ssuk-guk” being sung?*
  - *How does the music make you feel? How do the performers sound like they are feeling? (Discuss mood.)*
  - *Is the song soft or loud? (Discuss dynamics.)*
  - *Is the song rushed or relaxed, fast or slow? (Discuss tempo.)*

### Slide Thirty-four: Same

#### Discuss:

- *What are some things that are the same in both “Little Bird” and “Saetaryeong”? (Both songs have the birdcall motif “ssuk-guk” [and are about birds]. Both songs feature singing and the gayageum.)*

### Slide Thirty-five: Different

#### Discuss:

- *What are some things that are different between “Little Bird” and “Saetaryeong”? (Instrumentation: Man in the hat playing the Korean hourglass drum, janggu. Lots of gayageum players instead of just one.)*

**Wardrobe: Joyce is wearing modern clothes in “Little Bird”—including a modernized version of the Korean hanbok—whereas the musicians in “Saetaryeong” are wearing traditional hanbok. Language: “Little Bird” is in English and “Saetaryeong” is in Korean. Geography: “Little Bird” is a song from the US and “Saetaryeong” is from Korea.)**

**Slide Thirty-six: Learning Checkpoint**

- *What are some musical characteristics in “Little Bird” and “Saetaryeong” (especially regarding mood, instruments, dynamics, tempo)?*
- *What are some things that are the same and different between “Little Bird” and “Saetaryeong”?*
  - **Both songs have the birdcall motif “ssuk-guk” (and are about birds). Both songs feature singing and the gayageum. Instrumentation: Man in the hat playing the Korean hourglass drum, janggu. Lots of gayageum players instead of just one. Wardrobe: Joyce is wearing modern clothes in “Little Bird”—including a modernized version of the Korean hanbok—whereas the musicians in “Saetaryeong” are wearing traditional hanbok. Language: “Little Bird” is in English and “Saetaryeong” is in Korean. Geography: “Little Bird” is a song from the US and “Saetaryeong” is from Korea.**

**Slide Thirty-seven: Lesson Navigation Slide**

## **Additional Reading and Resources**

Cornell Lab of Ornithology. “Bird Song Hero: The Song Learning Game for Everyone.” YouTube video, May 27, 2014, 07:09. This video is like a listening map for birdcalls. <https://youtu.be/8xH2GjHKYjo?t=44>.

Hae-sook, Kim. 2018. “Gayageum.” In *Traditional Korean Instruments: A Practical Guide for Composer*, translated by Kim Yu-seok, edited by Kim Hee-sun, Lim Jae-won, Kim Myung-suk, Seo Jeong-ho, and Anthony Rauche, 24–81. Seoul, Rep. of Korea: National Gugak Center.  
<https://www.gugak.go.kr/site/program/board/basicboard/list?boardtypeid=116&menuid=001003003006002&lang=en>.

Kwon, Joyce. December 7, 2019. “Process and Thoughts Behind ‘Little Bird.’” *Joyce Kwon* (blog). <https://www.joycekwon.com/little-bird/>.

National Gugak Center. 2015. “Korea Traditional Musical Instruments.” Google Arts & Culture. Accessed October 25, 2022.  
<https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/korea-traditional-musical-instruments-national-gugak-center-gugakwon/TQLCWFVCGDVvKQ?hl=en>.

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## **2014 National Music Standards Connections**

**MU:Cr1.1.Ka With guidance, explore and experience music concepts (such as beat and melodic contour).**

- I can follow and gesticulate the musical contour of a birdcall motif.
- I can clap the big beats in 6/8.

**MU:Cr1.1.Kb With guidance, generate musical ideas (such as movements or melodic motives).**

- I can create my own melodic idea based on a birdcall to sing about birds.

**MU:Pr4.3.Ka With guidance, demonstrate awareness of expressive qualities (such as voice quality, dynamics, and tempo) that support the creators' expressive intent.**

- I can give feedback on musical characteristics of songs such as “Three Little Birds,” “Tres Pajaritos,” “Little Bird,” and “Saetaryeong.”
- I can sing along with a recording of “Little Bird” (with particular focus on the “ssuk guk”).

**MU:Re7.2.Ka With guidance, demonstrate how a specific music concept (such as beat or melodic direction) is used in music.**

- I understand how sounds from birds can dictate the notes and contour of a melody to further the concept of a song about birds.

**MU:Cn11.0.Ka Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.**

- I see how musicians draw inspiration from daily life—in this case, how they come up with songs by copying bird sounds.
- I can identify Korea on a map and identify a musical instrument that originated there (gayageum).

## Worksheets

### **Little Bird (Joyce Kwon) lyrics**

Little bird, little bird  
 What have you come home to find?  
 Sweet memories lingering in the breeze  
 In fields of foxtail, tall and lithe

Little bird, little bird  
 Flying 'cross an endless sky  
 In reverie, you forget the things  
 That made you leave in search of life

(Korean bird calls quoted from the folk song Saetaryeong)

쭉쭉 쭉쭉 쭉쭉쭉 쭉쭉  
 쭉쭉 쭉쭉 쭉쭉쭉 쭉쭉

Oh, I hear your song  
 Longing for a time gone by  
 Clear melodies, above the trees  
 As you sing of hope and fly

*“Little Bird” lyric translations in 한글, Tiếng Việt, 日本語, 中文, Yoruba, עברית, Hrvatski, русский язык, Français, Português, and Español [available in the captions for the music video](#).*

**Three Little Birds (Bob Marley) lyrics (excerpts)**Original English lyrics by Bob Marley:

Rise up this morning, smiled with the rising sun  
Three little birds pitch by my doorstep  
Singing sweet songs of melodies pure and true  
Saying, "This is my message to you-ou-ou"

"Don't worry about a thing  
'Cause every little thing is gonna be alright" (2x)

Spanish lyrics from Elizabeth Mitchell & Suni Paz:

Me desperté y le sonreí al sol.  
Tres pajaritos vi a mi puerta,  
Cantando alegres una melodía que dice: "Este es mi mensaje para ti.

"No te preocupes, por nada  
Porque tus problemas, seguro que se van." (2x)

**Little Bird cutout**

(if desired, print and stick birds up on the board to notate the high-low pitches of the birdcall)







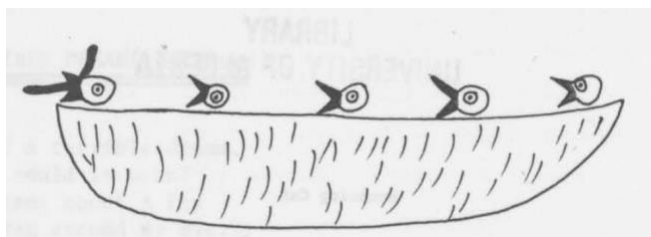
**Optional accompanying activities** for [Five Little Birds](#) from Andrew Gunsberg's [liner notes](#):

**Objectives:** The children will correctly state how many birds still need to be fed when asked to do so + The children will enact the story told in the song

**Skill areas:** Counting, receptive & expressive language, listening skills, sociodramatic play

**Materials:** Chalkboard, bits of yarn cut in lengths to resemble worms, chairs

**Procedure:** Introduce this activity by saying, "This morning I went out walking and I looked up in a tree. What do you think I saw?" Let the children guess. After they guess, continue. "I saw a bird's nest that looked like this." Draw a bird's nest. "In the nest I saw some little birds. Let's count how many I saw." Draw one, two, three, four, five little birds and let the children count along as you draw them. "That's right. There were five little birds in that nest, and they were all hungry, they chirped and called for their mother. Do you know what birds eat?" Have the children tell you the things that birds eat. "Well finally the mother came and brought the final bird a worm." Draw a worm in the beak of the first little bird as illustrated below.



"One bird has a worm but the others are still hungry. Let's count the little birds that don't have a worm and are still hungry. How many still need to be fed?" Count the remaining birds. "Four that's right. Four birds still need worms, well the mother

came back again and brought another worm." Draw a worm on the second bird's beak and follow the same procedure of counting the remaining hungry birds. Do this until all the little birds are fed. Conclude the story with "and the mother bird was so tired she sat down on the edge of the nest and told her babies to stop crying and let her rest!"

Tell the children you have a song about the five little birds and prompt them to listen closely to the story. Put on the song and play it through. When the children are familiar with the story, introduce a sociodramatic play activity. Make a nest area and have five children pretend to be the five little birds calling for their supper of worms. Have another child be the mother bird and scatter the lengths of yarn "worms" on the floor across the room. Have the mother bird fly off and bring back one worm at a time, feeding each of her "babies" in turn, as called for in the song. Once the children are familiar with this version of the game, put on the song during free play and let them invent their own ways of playing to the music.