



Smithsonian Folkways

Joy to the World, a Christmas lesson plan has come!

A Smithsonian Folkways Lesson

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Summary: A lesson plan for the Christmas holiday season. In the first segment, students will become familiar with the historical context of Christmas, including different traditions and music from several countries. In the second segment, they will learn to sing a traditional American Christmas song and play an accompanying game. In the third segment, students will create their own holiday song.

Suggested Grade Levels: Pre-K, K-2

Country: U.S.; Mexico; Philippines; Poland; Portugal; French; Germany; Spain; Canada; Czechoslovakia

Culture Group: Christians

Genre: Holiday music

Instruments: Voice

Language: English

Co-Curricular Areas: History, Social Studies

National Standards: 1, 4, 6, 9

Prerequisites: None

Objectives

- Listen, analyze and describe Christmas songs from different cultures (Standard 1)
- Sing an American Christmas song (Standard 1)
- Compose Christmas song lyrics as a class (Standard 4)
- Become familiar with diverse Christmas music and traditions (Standard 9)

Materials:

- World map or globe
- Various Artists, [*Cantos de Las Posadas and Other Christmas Songs*](#) (1963), FW07745 / SC 7745 / FC 7745.
- Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company, [*Christmas in the Philippines*](#) (unknown date), MON00427.
- Polish State Folk Ballet-Śląsk, [*Christmas in Poland*](#) (unknown date), MON00336.
- Various Artists, [*Christmas in Portugal*](#) (1955), FW06845 / FP 6845 / FW 6845.
- Hélène Baillargeon, [*French Christmas songs*](#) (1956), FW07229 / SC 7229.
- Ernst Wolff, [*German Christmas songs*](#) (1956), FW06947 / FW 16947.

- The Choir of the Bella Vista Children's Home, [Villancicos: Spanish Christmas Songs for Children](#) (1967), FW07714 / FC 7714.
- Alan Mills, [Christmas Songs from Many Lands](#) (1957), FW07750 / FC 7750.
- Elizabeth Mitchell, [The Sounding Joy](#) (2013), SFW45074.

Lesson Segments:

1. **Christmas music from around the world** (National Standard 6, 9)
2. **Christmas game!** (National Standard 1)
3. **Make your own song** (National Standard 4)

1. Christmas music from around the world

- a. Narrate the Christmas story (Mary and Joseph, birth of their child).
 - i. Ask students for examples of how people celebrate Christmas (e.g. trees, presents, church, family).
 - ii. Explain that students are going to hear Christmas songs from around the world and how different people celebrate Christmas.
- b. Begin with Elizabeth Mitchell “Children Go Where I Send Thee” and talk about American Christmas traditions.
- c. Play Music examples
 - i. Before each example, talk about where the song comes from (i.e. what country), point to it on a world map, and explain a little about their traditional Christmas celebrations (a brief description of Christmas traditions worldwide can be found on sites like [Wikipedia](#) and in the liner notes of Smithsonian Folkways albums).
 - ii. Play examples and encourage students to keep the beat with body percussion (This can be whatever the class normally does to keep the beat; e.g. pat on thighs, clapping, etc.)
- d. After each example, ask students the following questions:
 - i. What instruments did you hear (e.g. voices? If so, how many and what are the presumed identities of the singers?--Male, female, children)?
 - ii. How would you describe the song? Was the music loud or soft? Was the music slow or fast? Tell students that the speed of the music’s beat is called its tempo. How would you move or dance to this music?
 - iii. Play song again and have students move to specific parts of the song. For example, march to the drum, wave arms with the voice.

Assessment: Ask students questions about the different traditions they heard. Were there any traditions they had heard of before? Which traditions sounded fun to them? Were there any songs they recognized as having heard before?

2. Christmas game!

- a. Explain that students are going to learn an American Christmas song “[Children Go Where I Send Thee](#),” with help from the Elizabeth Mitchell album [The Sounding Joy](#).
 - i. Remind them of the Christmas story from the previous lesson.
 - ii. Explain that the song tells different parts of the Christmas story and the class will turn it into a game.
- b. Play the song with no singing or movement.
 - i. Read the lyrics out loud (below).
 - ii. Teach students the song by rote. Decide on movements for each line of the song with the class. For example, during the line “four for the four come knocking at the door,” you can mime knocking on a door.

Lyrics:

Children, go where I send thee

How shall I send thee?

I'm gonna send thee one-by-one

One for the little bitty baby wrapped in swaddling clothing

Lying in the manger

He was Born, born, born in Bethlehem.

- Two-by-two: Two for Paul and Silas...
- Three-by-three: Three for the Hebrew children...
- Four-by-four: Four for the four come knockin' at the door....
- Five-by-five: Five for the gospel preacher....
- Six-by-six: Six for the six that couldn't get fixed....
- Seven-by-seven: Seven for the seven that went up to Heaven
- Eight-by-eight: Eight for the eight that stood at the gate....
- Nine-by-nine: Nine for the nine who dressed so fine....
- Ten-by-ten: Ten for the Ten Commandments....
- Eleven-by-eleven: Eleven for the eleven that couldn't get to heaven....
- Twelve-by-twelve: Twelve for the Twelve that couldn't get help...

c. Game:

- i.** The game begins with everyone sitting in a circle, the whole class sings the line “children go where I send thee, how shall I send thee” at the beginning of every verse.
- ii.** The teacher stands and sings the rest of the first verse, miming the designated movement.
- iii.** When the teacher sings “I’m gonna send thee two by two,” the student to the teacher’s left stands and mimes the movement for the verse, joining the teacher for the rest of that line “two for Paul and Silas.”
- iv.** Once standing, the students remain standing while they mime and sing every time it gets to their line.
- v.** The game can be adjusted for class size by grouping students together to share lines/mimes or singing the song multiple times.

Assessment: Observe students as they play the game. Assess students on accuracy of lyrics and melody.

3. Make your own song

- a.** The class will make up their own Christmas/holiday/winter song based on the form of “Children go where I send thee” (e.g. “I’m gonna send thee two-by-two, two for snow and hot chocolate.”)
 - i.** Teacher comes up with the first verse (e.g. “One for the little bitty baby, wrapped in comfy clothing, lying in a bunk bed, he was asleep, asleep, asleep on Christmas day”), get suggestions and put together the other verses one at a time as a group activity.
 - ii.** Write lyrics down on blackboard or large paper.
- b.** Class sings the entire song that they have created.

Extension (Optional):

- a.** Create movements to go along with the newly-created lyrics. Follow the same procedures as when creating movements for the original song.
- b.** Art activity: Draw/collage/paint pictures as a class to go along with newly-created lyrics (e.g. pictures of snowflakes and hot chocolate) and post them on a board in the correct order to help kids to remember what lyrics come next.

Assessment: Did everyone contribute a lyric or movement?