

Subject: Music – SPRING 1

Year: 6

Unit Title: *Theme and Variations* unit (Theme: Pop Art)

Based on: Kapow Primary – Year 6 *Theme and Variations* unit (Theme: Pop Art)

Focus: Developing musical understanding through theme and variations, composition, performance, improvisation and appraisal

Overview

This Year 6 unit introduces pupils to **theme and variations**, using Pop Art-inspired music as a stimulus. Pupils explore how a musical theme can be developed through variation techniques including rhythm, pitch, tempo, dynamics, timbre, and texture. They apply these ideas to their own compositions and performances, consolidating and extending Year 5 musical skills.

Key Skills Developed in Year 6:

- Recognise and analyse musical features of a theme and its variations
- Improvise and compose variations on a given theme
- Perform individually and as part of an ensemble with expression and accuracy
- Use musical vocabulary to appraise and evaluate compositions

NC/PoS: Singing, Listening, Composing and Performing

Pupils will:

- Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts with increasing confidence
- Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes
- Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds
- Use and understand staff and other musical notations
- Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music

Expected Prior Learning

Pupils already know and can:

- Perform and compose using simple structures, motifs, and scales
- Identify musical features (pulse, rhythm, melody, dynamics, texture)
- Improvise short melodic or rhythmic phrases
- Use musical vocabulary to describe music
- Work collaboratively in ensembles and perform to an audience

End Points – What Pupils Must Know and Remember

SINGING

Know that:

- A theme can be developed into multiple variations
- Singing can be expressive, using dynamics, pitch and timbre to convey character

Know how to:

- Sing with control, expression and accurate pitch
- Adapt vocal delivery for variations in melody or style

LISTENING

Know that:

- Pop Art music often includes short motifs, repetition, and distinctive textures
- Musical variations can involve changes in rhythm, pitch, dynamics, tempo, timbre, and texture

Know how to:

- Identify how a theme is altered in each variation
- Use musical vocabulary to describe what they hear

COMPOSING

Know that:

- A composition can be structured around a theme and variations
- Variation techniques include rhythm, pitch, tempo, dynamics, timbre, articulation, and texture

Know how to:

- Compose a theme and create at least one variation using musical techniques
- Notate ideas clearly using staff or graphic notation

PERFORMING

Know that:

- A performance can communicate the character of the theme and its variations
- Ensemble and solo parts can be combined to enhance texture and interest

Know how to:

- Perform theme and variations with awareness of expression, dynamics, and pulse
- Collaborate with others to deliver a polished performance

Session 1 – Introduction and Analysis of Theme

Learning focus: Understanding theme and variations

- Listen to Pop Art music and identify themes and motifs
- Discuss rhythm, melody, texture, dynamics, timbre and articulation
- Suggest ways a theme could be varied

Kapow coverage: Lesson 1

Key vocabulary: Theme, motif, variation, pulse, rhythm, melody, texture, dynamics, timbre, articulation

Outcome: Pupils can identify a musical theme, describe its features and suggest possible variations

Session 2 – Creating Rhythmic and Melodic Variations

Learning focus: Improvisation and variation techniques

- Improvise rhythmic and melodic variations on a given theme
- Explore chord changes, ostinato and accompaniment patterns
- Develop and refine ideas collaboratively

Kapow coverage: Lessons 2 & 3 (combined)

Key vocabulary: Rhythm, syncopation, beat, ostinato, melody, pitch, harmony, chord, interval, sequence

Outcome: Pupils can perform rhythmic and melodic variations on a theme

Session 3 – Composing and Refining Variations

Learning focus: Composition and structure

- Combine rhythmic, melodic, harmonic and dynamic changes
- Compose at least one clear variation on a theme
- Notate ideas using staff or graphic notation

Kapow coverage: Lesson 4

Key vocabulary: Compose, variation, dynamics, tempo, texture, ensemble, notation, articulation

Outcome: Pupils have composed a theme and at least one variation ready for performance

Session 4 – Performance and Evaluation

Learning focus: Performing and appraising compositions

- Rehearse and perform theme and variations
- Evaluate own and others' work using musical vocabulary
- Reflect on effectiveness of variation techniques

Kapow coverage: Lesson 5

Key vocabulary: Performance, evaluate, audience, expression, dynamics, collaboration

Outcome: Polished performance with thoughtful evaluation

Future Learning This Content Supports

This unit prepares pupils for further musical learning by:

- Developing confidence in **structural composition techniques** transferable to other genres
- Strengthening **improvisation and variation skills** for KS3 music
- Enhancing **ensemble and solo performance skills** with expression and technical control
- Consolidating use of **musical vocabulary** for appraisal and evaluation

Assessment Opportunities

- Teacher observation of performance and composition in each session

- Peer and self-assessment during improvisation and group work
- Written or verbal reflections on listening and analysis tasks
- End-of-unit performance evaluation against End Points

Resources

- Kapow Primary: Year 6 Theme and Variations unit
- Musical instruments (tuned and untuned percussion, keyboards, classroom instruments)
- Backing tracks or Pop Art-inspired audio examples
- Staff and graphic notation templates
- Listening examples of Pop Art music and other theme and variation pieces

Cross-Curricular Links

- **Art:** Explore Pop Art visual concepts to inspire musical creativity
- **English:** Storytelling and lyrical composition in variations
- **Maths:** Patterns, rhythm, and timing in musical sequences
- **PSHE:** Expressing emotion and identity through music

Next steps in KS3 may include:

- Composing more complex pieces using theme and variation forms
- Exploring variations in a wider range of genres (classical, jazz, pop)
- Using notation with increasing complexity and accuracy
- Performing with greater independence and expressive control