

Musical words

Introduction

In this activity, students learn about word stress and learn a creative technique for recording and remembering which syllables in a word are stressed. The technique uses a musical stave and encourages students to explore the connection between language and music.



This activity draws on materials and ideas presented by Clark von Heller in his presentation ‘Composing music to enhance pronunciation.’

Webinar time reference: 26:50 – 33:25

Level: B1+ Secondary

Time: 30 – 40 minutes

Aim: To make identifying stressed syllables in words more fun and easier to remember.

Preparation:

- Choose some words that students know and write them below the music stave in the materials section.

Procedure

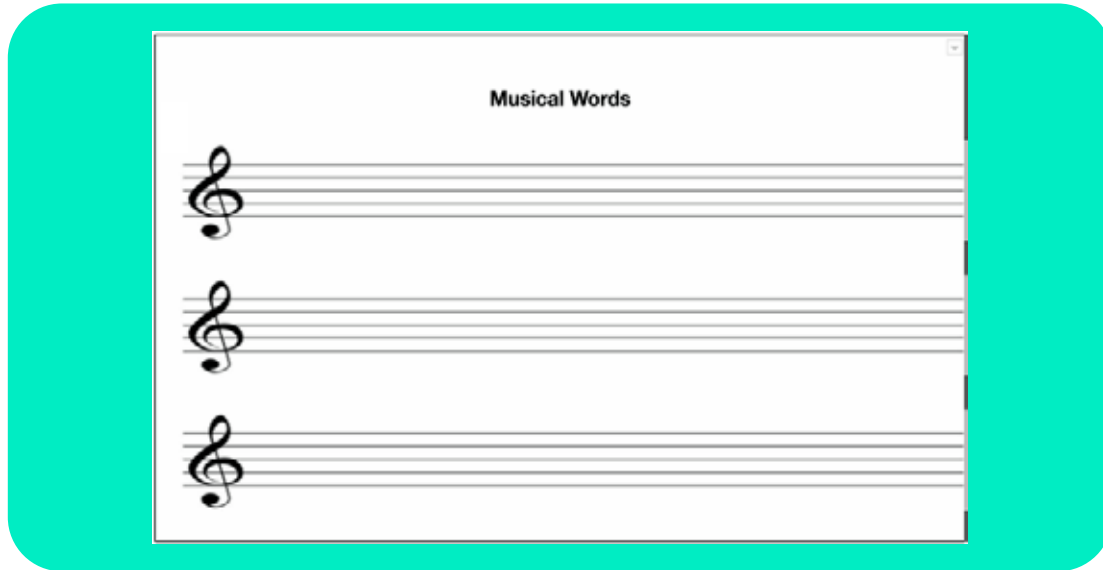
- Tell the students that music is a form of language and has many similarities with language.
- Ask the students if they know how music is written.
- Show the students the musical stave and ask them if they know what it is.

- Now show the students the example with the words written below the staff and the notes above the words.
- Ask the students what they think each of the notes represents. They should tell you they are syllables.
- Tell the students that you have written the syllable on the staff, with the first syllable starting on the middle line.
- Then the higher syllables are the ones that go louder.
- Say the words and point to the notes as you sound out the syllables.
- Next, give out your musical staff with the words you have chosen on it.
- Ask the students to try to mark the syllables on the staff above these words.
- Give the students time to work together in groups.
- Get some feedback and then show them your answer.
- The main thing for students to recognize is that the stressed syllables are higher ones.
- Get some feedback from students and ask them if they think this will help them remember the words stress.
- If they like the activity, try it with some other words.
- You could also follow this up by doing the same thing with sentences.

Materials:

Musical Words Example

The diagram shows three musical staves, each with a treble clef. Above each staff are three words, and above each word are several black dots representing notes on the staff lines. The first staff shows 'obsession' (notes on lines 2, 3, 4), 'projection' (notes on lines 2, 3, 4), and 'collection' (notes on lines 2, 3, 4). The second staff shows 'Astrology' (notes on lines 2, 3, 4), 'Biology' (notes on lines 2, 3, 4), and 'Criminology' (notes on lines 2, 3, 4). The third staff shows 'romantic' (notes on lines 2, 3, 4), 'domestic' (notes on lines 2, 3, 4), and 'magnetic' (notes on lines 2, 3, 4). The notes are placed on the middle line (line 3) for the first syllable and on higher lines for subsequent syllables to indicate stress.



Additional resources

Word stress

- In this article, Emma Pathare gives an overview of word stress in the English language and how it can be taught in the classroom. She also gives some examples of word stress rules.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/word-stress>

Teaching speaking - Unit 4: stress and intonation

- In the video you will see teachers in their classrooms and the trainer, John Kay, talking about how to help students be more aware of the stress, rhythm and intonation of English.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/teaching-speaking-unit-4-stress-and-intonation>

Global English and the teaching of pronunciation

- The emergence of so many different kinds (or 'varieties') of international English has caused a number of linguists to question the use of native speaker pronunciation models in the teaching of English. This article presents my research into the pronunciation of global English and gives some teaching implications.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/global-english-and-teaching-pronunciation>

Integrating pronunciation into classroom activities

- In this article, Barney Griffiths looks at a range of practical ways you can start teaching pronunciation in your classroom.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/integrating-pronunciation-classroom-activities>