

CULTURE OF SOUND: TRADITIONAL KOREAN MUSIC

GRADES: 4-8

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SUBJECT: Social Studies, Geography

TIME REQUIRED: One class period

OBJECTIVES:

1. Explore Korean music by listening to the sounds of traditional Korean instruments.
2. Identify instruments as percussion, string, woodwind or brass.
3. Identify American instruments that sound similar to traditional Korean instruments.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Computer with internet access or CD of Korean musical instruments
- Handout 1: Comparing Musical Instruments (attached)
- Handout 2: Traditional Korean Instruments (attached)
- Writing materials, markers and chart paper

BACKGROUND:

Most cultures have a musical tradition. The instruments that create traditional music have many similarities and differences across cultures. What are some of the traditional instruments of Koreans? What do these instruments sound like? What do these instruments look like? How do these instruments compare to instruments that we find in America's musical tradition?

Korea has had a musical tradition since at least the fourth century CE. By the mid-seventeenth century, official musicians were a part of the royal court.

Compared to Western music, traditional Korean music has a slow and simple tempo. After Western music was introduced to Korea, Koreans' musical tastes changed to favor quick and complex sounds, and traditional music has fallen out of favor. Thus for a long time since the introduction of Western music, traditional music tended to be neglected, seldom appearing on radio, records, or theaters and concerts. Recently, however, traditional music has seen a resurgence as Koreans re-discover this aspect of their heritage.

PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce the lesson by asking students to brainstorm on chart paper the different types of musical instruments they are familiar with. Ask students to categorize these instruments as woodwinds, brass, strings or percussion.
2. Give students Handout 1, which compares Korean and American instruments.
3. Play the CD or internet samples of traditional Korean instruments in each of the categories. Have students write which American instrument they think it sounds like.
4. Discuss student's findings and develop patterns between the musical instruments of Korea and the United States. Ask students what similarities and differences they notice

- between the musical instruments. What does the music of a culture tell us about a people?
Are the sounds of a place important to understanding the human geography of that place?
5. Give students Handout 2. Allow time for observations and discussion in small groups.

EVALUATION:

In their small groups, have students share their comparison charts. What do they find to be the same about Korea and American musical instruments? What do they find to be different? What conclusions can they draw about the traditional music of Korea? Use markers and chart paper to summarize findings. Have each group present what they have learned to the class.

ENRICHMENT:

Teach students to sing the two traditional Korean songs listed at the Rice University Web site below. (These could be presented in a performance at a multicultural event.)

Arirang is a folk song so popular in Korea that it might be called the national folk anthem. But there is no real translation for the word “arirang” - it's a sort of "fa la la" type word. The other lyrics have to do with the longing and weary feeling of having been jilted by a lover, so this is a good one for children to sing in Korean, not in translation.

The *Toraji* of the second song is a beautiful wildflower. A singable translation is provided on the Web site listed below. You can sing it in Korean, English or both.

RESOURCES:

Two Songs to Teach Students:

<http://cnx.rice.edu/content/m11632/latest/>

Traditional Musical Instruments:

<http://park.org/Korea/Pavilions/PublicPavilions/KoreaImage/exit/efo1.html>

Music and Dance:

<http://park.org/Korea/Pavilions/PublicPavilions/KoreaImage/exit/efo22.html>

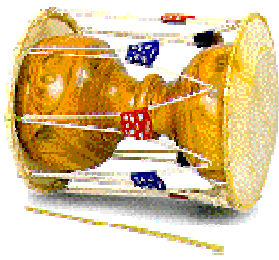
About Korea: <http://www.koreanculture.org/index.php>

The Korean Classical Meditation Music. CD. Myung Sang Records Co. Crown Records Co.

HANDOUT 1: COMPARING MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

<i>Korean Instrument</i>	<i>Category (type of instrument)</i>	<i>Similar American Instrument</i>
<i>Changgu</i>		
<i>Taegŭm and Haegŭm</i>		
<i>Pak</i>		
<i>Kwenggwari and Ching</i>		
<i>Puk</i>		
<i>Kayagŭm and Kŏmun'go</i>		
<i>Sogo</i>		

HANDOUT 2: TRADITIONAL KOREAN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS



Changgu

The *changgu* is a drum. It is the most important instrument in traditional Korean music. Originally named *puk*, the *changgu* was originally used to accompany specialized vocal styles, such as *p'ansori*. However, because of its flexible nature and its agility with complex rhythm, the *changgu* now accompanies almost all vocal performances.



Taegŭm

The *taegŭm* is a transverse bamboo flute. A major solo wind instrument, it has been played in almost all types of Korean music since the Silla kingdom (57 BCE–668 CE). This flute has a large mouthpiece covered by a very thin reed fiber. It is very flexible, but very difficult to play. It is different from either the Western flute, which has a small mouthpiece, and the transverse flutes of China and Japan. As the largest of the transverse wind instruments, the *taegŭm* produces a full, rich tone.

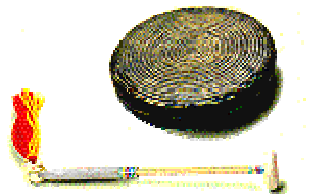
Pak (Clappers)

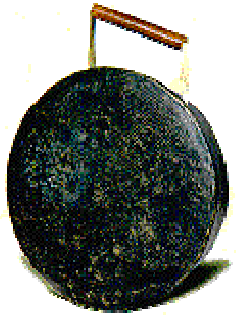


The *pak* is a set of six wooden slabs shaped like a folding fan, loosely tied together at one end by a thong made of deerskin. The loose ends are thicker than the bound ends. This instrument has been in use since the days of the Unified Silla period. Upon a signal from the conductor of the court orchestra, one clap of the *pak* starts the music: three claps bring it to a close. In the court dance, it is also employed to signal a change both in dance movement and musical accompaniment.

Kkoaengkwari (Small Gong)

In the farmers' festival music, the lead player (*sang-soe*) of this small gong produces tones that are both loud and high in register. The mallet used for the *kkoaengkwari* is thin and long, usually made of bamboo or other wood and lacks the cloth or deerskin wrapping of other gong mallets, which leads it to create a comparatively shrill sound.





Ching (Large Gong)

The *ching* is struck with a mallet, the tip of which is wrapped in cloth or deerskin. It is held in the left hand by a gandle and struck with the right hand.

Puk

In the past, the *puk*, the oldest folk instrument in Korea's musical tradition, was used to accompany all genres of Korean music. Because of its dynamic resonance, the *puk*'s sound has been compared to the pounding of the earth. The *puk* is usually placed on the ground when performed. However, in some cases, the *puk* is placed on the knee .



Kayagŭm

The *kayagŭm* is a 12-stringed plucked zither with movable bridges. There are two types of *kayagŭm*, which differ in size, construction and use. The larger version is associated with court and classical ensembles and such musical styles as *popkŭm* and *pungyu kayagŭm*. The body of the instrument is made from a single piece of paulownia wood with a slightly convex front: a large rectangular opening allows the sound box to be hollowed out from behind. Stylized ram's horns made from a harder wood, such as red sandalwood, decorate the lower end of the instrument. The 12 strings, which are made of wound raw silk, run from pegs beneath the top of the instrument over low fixed bridge curved to match the body, across individual movable bridges made from hard wood, to looped cords. The smaller instrument is believed to have evolved in the nineteenth century to accommodate rapid flurries of notes in folk music genres such as *sanjo*, hence it is often called *sanjo kayagŭm*.



***Kǒmun'go* (Six-stringed Instrument)**



In use since 371 BCE, the *kǒmun'go* is an instrument made from six twisted-silk strings stretched over a soundboard made of paulownia wood. The backboard is constructed of hard chestnut wood. The second, third and fourth strings rest on 16 graduated frets, the first of which also acts as a bridge, while the first, fifth and sixth strings are supported by movable bridges shaped like crane's feet. The fine tuning of the strings is executed by round wooden pegs at the base of the instrument, just below the string holder. The first, fifth and sixth strings may additionally be tuned by shifting the movable bridges to the left or right. The player sits cross-legged and supports the instrument with his right knee from below and left knee from behind. The body of the instrument stretches away to the player's left. The strings are struck in both a forward and backward motion with a small bamboo rod at the upper right end of instrument. The soundboard of the *kǒmun'go* is noble and profound. Compared with that of the *kayagŭm*, which is somewhat feminine in timbre, the tone of the Kǒmun'go has been described as masculine.

***Sogo* (Handle Drum)**



A small drum with a handle, the *sogo* is played with a small stick. It is frequently used in the farmers' dances and sometimes in the accompaniment of folk songs. In farmer's music, the *sogo* is struck on the first beat of each rhythmic cycle, known as the fundamental beat. When a number of folk singers are grouped into lead singer and chorus, the leader strikes the *sogo* on the fundamental beat; the chorus then follows with the basic rhythmic pattern.



***Saenap* (Taepyungso)**

The *taepyungso* stands apart from the rest of the wind instruments because of its metal body. It has eight holes, two of which are on the back of the instrument. It produces a sound with a small double reed piece. Its large, high pitched sound is often utilized in loud, military music..



Haegŭm

The *haegŭm* is a percussive bow-string instrument which is very popular in Korea today. The *haegŭm* is made up of two strings and played by a bow, with the instrument placed on the player's knee. The bow has a string of horse hair and is held by the right hand. The drum of the *haegŭm* emits a peculiar, resonant hum that resembles a nasal voice. For this reason it has the Korean nickname *kang kang*.