CREATIVE ARTS learning springboards

Music: Grass whistles, dandelion flutes, whistles and pipes

Making wind instruments and sounds with natural materials

Aim: Making sounds with commonly found plant resources is a suggested activity to compliment any work on music and musical instruments.

Activity 1: grass whistle

- Tear off the leaf of a wide bladed grass and trap the bottom end at the lowest part of your pressed-together thumbs. Trap the top of the grass between the top of your thumbs. You should see a slight gap in the middle, between your thumbs. Place your lips to the gap and blow through the it to create a screech call.
- Discuss how the sound is made, what vibrates to make the sound and experiment with different lengths and types of grass leaf to vary the pitch of the sounds they make.

Activity 2: dandelion flute

- Find a long dandelion stem – remove the flower. Make a small split at one end of the stem and place the other end between your lips. Blow into the stem; then gradually pull apart the dandelion stem from the split end, continuing to blow – this will change the pitch of the note made.
- It is helpful to view this technique before trying it, so search online for video clips.
- Pupils discuss why the length of the split affects the pitch of the note?

Dandelion flute

Activity 3: elder whistle

- Springtime is perfect for making elder whistles, which are simple to make and require few tools. Search online for instructions: Jonsbushcraft.com has great step-by-step instructions, and the Muddy Faces Elder Whistle activity sheet can be downloaded from the Pappus website resources page.

Elder whistle

Resources:

Activity 1: grass stems – try a whole range of grass types, narrow and wide.

Activity 2: dandelion stems.

Activity 3: lengths of elder stems; craft knives, tent pegs or skewers to remove the pith.

A Koncovka is a type of flute carved by Slovakian shepherds. Search online to hear the Koncovka being played.

Konkovka

Success criteria:

- ✓ I can explain how to use natural resources to create sound of varying pitch
- ✓ I understand and can explain how the sound is made and how pitch may vary for different techniques

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