

Lesson Idea 2: Inspired Melodies

*Where does a melody come from?
How is it made?*

There are as many answers for this as there are composers in the world. When students compose, they often overlook an essential aspect: inspiration.

The following protocol outlines one method for crafting a melody which you can assign as one whole assignment, or step by step with follow-ups for you to guide each part of the composition process:

1 WHAT IS THE MOOD?

Can you **describe it in words**?

What other descriptive words might you use to describe **how the characters feel** in the scene?

What **emotions would you feel** if you were in this scene?

2 WHAT IS THE TEMPO?

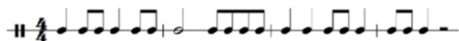
What tempo **best matches the mood and feeling** of your scene?

Try using a metronome to help you decide.

Three examples of tempo choices:
spirited, celebratory medium or *Moderato*
somber, reflective slow or *Adagio*
bustling fast or *Allegro vivace*

3 WHAT IS THE RHYTHM?

Before even deciding on the pitches, imagine what the rhythm of the melody would be. You can tap it out on a table or on one note on a keyboard. For example:



You can also sketch out the rhythm using lines and dots.

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4 WHAT ARE THE PITCHES?

Now that you have the foundation of the tempo and the rhythm of your melody, begin to experiment on a pitched instrument.

Should the notes...

- be high, middle, or low in **range**?
- be **close together**, featuring steps? half steps? repeated pitches?
- be far apart, using **skips and leaps**?
- follow a particular shape or **contour**?

5 REVISING

Remember that your first draft is just the first step on the path to your final melody!

Try out several options for all the above steps.

Experimentation, inquiry, and improvisation are all important parts of the process.

For a PDF version, please use the downloadable links in [Telling a Story through Melodic Themes](#).