

# CMP LESSON PLAN FOR Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star



Prepared by Cornelia Watkins

**Genre:** Children's song.

**Publisher:** a variety of publications, including Sumy-Birchard for the Suzuki Method

**Instrumentation:** Any instrument—this plan is designed for any bowed stringed instrument and piano accompaniment.

**Background:** Original Poem by Jane Taylor; set to existing French tune "Ah! vous dirai-je, Maman" by Jean Gilles, published together around 1765. W. A. Mozart wrote variations on the musical theme which became widely known, leading to a common misconception that Mozart was the composer of the tune. A wide variety of lyrics have been used to this tune (some fun examples below).

## French lyrics

Ah! vous dirai-je, Maman,  
Ce qui cause mon tourment.  
Papa veut que je raisonne,  
Comme une grande personne.  
Moi, je dis que les bonbons  
Valent mieux que la raison.

## English translation

Ah! I shall tell you, mum,  
what causes my torment.  
Papa wants me to reason  
Like an adult.  
I say that candy  
Is better than reason.

From Lewis Carroll's *Alice's  
Adventures in Wonderland*.

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!  
How I wonder what you're at!  
Up above the world you fly,  
Like a tea tray in the sky.  
Twinkle, twinkle...

"Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" shares its melody with the "Alphabet Song" and "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep", as well as three different Christmas carols (German, Hungarian and Dutch). Besides Mozart's variations, several other composers have used the tune in their compositions, such as Camille Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals* (12th movement *Fossiles*), Dohnányi's *Variations on a Nursery Tune*, and in *Album Leaf: "Ah! vous dirai-je, Maman"* by Franz Liszt, among others.

## **Analysis**

**Period:** Classical

**Form:** ABA (3 phrases of equal length—4 bars each)

**Rhythmic motif:** 4/4 time; 6 quarter notes followed by a half note throughout the piece

**Melody:** Leap of 5<sup>th</sup> followed by stepwise scale pattern with repeated notes; descending repeated note scales used in B section. The B section melody, unresolved on *Re*, needs the return of the A section for resolution.

**Harmony:** (Key varies) A sections—I IV I V<sup>(7)</sup> I B section—I V I V I IV I V

**Heart Statement:** The soul of this piece resides in the balance and unity of form and motive that make it simple, accessible and enduring, all the while allowing for seemingly endless ways to interpret and vary the melody, harmony and even the lyrics.

## **Skill Outcome: Student will learn first position left hand placement and measurements.**

### **Strategies:**

1. Discover placement of 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> finger using harmonics for testing notes—listen for ring.
2. Practice placement of 1<sup>st</sup> finger. Sing interval of a major 2<sup>nd</sup> (teacher sings, student sings, if necessary), then play. Did it sound right to student? Find the same note again without looking?
3. Create a left hand shape with measurements between fingers for good intonation (enlarging the feel of the whole step measurement; half step will be proportionately smaller); shake it out, place again, play again. How relaxed can student make measurements in hand feel, yet still keep appropriate spacing?
4. Practice Major scale pattern on all strings
5. Play D, G, and C major scales using groupings of repeated notes (ie, 4 D's, 4 E's 4 F#'s, 4 G's etc) then 3 of each, etc, gradually working toward single notes.
6. Practice placing all fingers in group, trusting the feel of hand position (ie, not looking). Student describes how big measurements feel in his/her hand when the notes are in tune.

### **Assessment:**

1. Student will be able to place hand in 1<sup>st</sup> position with necessary spacing between fingers without strain.
2. Student can play D major scale, making appropriate adjustments in pitch when necessary without looking at left hand.

## **Knowledge Outcome: Student understands the concept of ternary form (ABA)**

### **Strategies:**

1. Help student discover the repeated line of music in Twinkle. What does the student notice that makes the middle line different? Discuss.
2. What other things in life are in ABA form (Oreo cookie, Book, Peanut butter sandwich, simple stories, structures, etc)
3. Name the A and B sections, letting student come up with own labels, first, then tell them what “boring” adults call the contrasting sections.
4. Discuss the similarities—why does the 2<sup>nd</sup> line still sounds like it belongs in the music? (repeated scale notes, same rhythm)
5. Are all simple pieces ABA? Explore familiar pieces that have a different form (like Happy Birthday) and talk about why they are not ABA.
6. Play other pieces in ternary form. Ask student to find other examples to bring back to next lesson (Have parent help if student is young).

### **Assessment:**

1. Student can listen to examples played by teacher and recognize simple ABA.
2. Student composes a short ABA pattern that s/he can play using rhythm and/or note changes to create contrast between sections (open strings are ok!)

**Musical/Expressive Outcome: Student experiences how different stories behind a piece can influence the way the music is played.**

**Strategies:**

1. Does student know what other pieces that use the same tune? Sing Alphabet Song and Baa, Baa, Black Sheep. (Extra: see if student notices what is different about the rhythm—why?)
2. Share other unusual lyrics from history with student.
3. Experiment with dynamics, tempi, and articulations that express different lyrics best (no rights or wrongs)—teacher demonstrates possibilities if helpful. Student uses open strings to facilitate experimenting, add notes later.
4. Make up some about other possibilities. Have student write own lyrics to music.

**Assessment:**

1. Student performs piece with lyrics of choice in mind, using expressive sound and dynamic contrast.
2. Include student’s lyrics in program notes.

**Scales/Exercises/Etudes to enhance learning and development:**

- ★ Cello Coat hanger image: hang fingers heavily to depress string (strengthens fingers and teaches young cellist how to push strings down without squeezing thumb)
- ★ Finger alternations (slow “trill exercises” or “finger taps”)
- ★ Major scale
- ★ Count rhythms out loud
- ★ Détaché bow stroke (bow placed in middle, forearm moves freely from elbow)
- ★ If learning Suzuki variations, student can listen to teacher playing each and have the opportunity to characterize how rhythm changes affect the mood of each variation before teacher suggests traditional labeling.

**Specific Student needs these additional outcomes (if necessary):**

---

---

---