

## Repertoire Suggestions: Top 10 General Music Songs

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1. Simple Gifts – Traditional Shaker Hymn by Elder Joseph Brackett  
This is a classic American folk song and has historic significance. This beautiful melody is great for teaching melodic contour and expression. The rhythms and the form are all rich areas to be studied. The song can also be connected to a listening lesson on “Variations on Simple Gifts” by Aaron Copeland.
2. Shoo Fly – Cameron McGraw (arranger or editor)  
Shoo Fly is a children’s folk song and an American game song. Shoo Fly stands the test of time. Children love this song no matter what generation they are from. It is an excellent example to introduce syncopation and analyze form. It spans an octave which broadens children’s singing range. Children can also explore singing with varied expression.
3. Lift Every Voice and Sing – by James Weldon Johnson & J. Rosamond Johnson  
This song is featured in many textbooks and is an excellent example of triple meter. It was written in 1900 and still is sung today. Its smooth melody is very useful for teaching phrasing, dynamics and melodic contour. It has a history that is extremely interesting and there are a wide variety of recordings available.
4. This Land Is Your Land – by Woody Guthrie  
This is a favorite of many elementary school children. The verse and refrain structure is commonly used in folk songs. It has some easy harmony parts that can be explored and historical significance. It expresses the joy of celebrating our country in rhythms and in the text. There are many opportunities to add percussion instruments and simple accompaniments.
5. Sakura - traditional Japanese folk song  
Sakura has a delightful haunting melody that gives a student a glimpse at a Far Eastern culture and style of music. This song can begin a study of the pentatonic scale and melodic contours. The expressiveness of the song leads to a great opportunity to teach about dynamics and expression. Exploring non- Western music and instruments could also be a part of this unit.
6. When Johnny Comes Marching Home – by Patrick Gilmore  
This minor melody and driving march rhythms make this piece an interesting song to explore. It has the ability to combine the bittersweet joy of soldiers marching home at the end of a war. It has a rich historical value so there are many recordings available. There are rhythmic patterns, minor tonalities, and triple meter to study. Accompaniment instruments can also be used with this song.
7. Sumer Is Icumen In - Medieval Canon  
The lush texture of this piece and the canon form makes this piece a wonderful song to study in upper elementary. The historical era of medieval music can easily be researched by students. Using this song to study harmony, phrasing, scales, form and texture gives a teacher an extraordinary amount of material to teach.

8. Minka, Minka - Russian/Ukrainian Folk Song  
The energy and excitement created by the huge accelerando in this song makes it a favorite of students. It contains lots of teaching material including dynamics, expression, minor mode, and tempo changes. This piece exposes children to another culture through learning the “Troika” dance. It can be connected through listening lessons to the study of other Russian composers.
  
9. Che Che Koolay – chant from Ghana  
Teaching this children’s chant has great potential. The structure of the chant lends itself to the movement in the traditional children’s dance and the use of harmony. The rhythms feature steady beat and syncopated parts. The limited range makes it easily accessible and great for teaching harmony, texture and good singing skills.
  
10. Shenandoah – American folk song  
The melody of this great American classic has stood the test of time. The smooth beautiful melody gives the teacher the ability to teach a great deal about expression, dynamics and phrasing. Even the rhythms seem to add feeling to the melody. Exploring the historic background and the analyzing the construction of this song would be a great unit for upper elementary students.