



**CMP Teaching Plan  
Elementary General**

- **Where Have All the Flowers Gone?**

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### **Analysis**

**Composer** Pete Seeger/Joe Hickerson

**Broad Description** a political protest song

**Type/Genre** popular song

**Background Information** The song, and the first three verses were written by Pete Seeger in 1955, during a low point in his career. At the time, he was being persecuted by the House Un-American Affairs Committee, and it was difficult for him to get work. The 1st 3 verses were based on a Cossack folk song “Koloda-Duda” that Seeger read in the *And Quiet Flows the Don* by Mikhail Sholokhov. This is where Seeger came across the lines about “flowers/girls/boys”. Seeger added the text “long time passing”, he had been waiting to use it a song for many years, and the refrain “when will they/we ever learn?” The melody is based on a version of “Drill Ye Tarriers, Drill”, which Seeger recycled. In 1960, Seeger gave the song to Joe Hickerson, a camp counselor, who added the last 2 verses and repeated the first verse, creating a circular form to the text. David Dunaway, in his book, *How Can I Keep From Singing: Pete Seeger*, (New York, NY, 1990, pp. 186-187) says this: “A dark period had again produced one of Seeger's universal songs. The musician who thrives on poverty and despair has become a cliché; yet in Seeger's case, when everything tipped against him, when his liberty, career, and safety were in jeopardy, a spark inside ignited a song.”

### **Elements of Music**

**Form** The song is in strophic form, each verse follows this pattern: A A A B. Each of the A sections are in a call/response format. Musically, the second call/response forms a cadence, mid-verse. The B section functions as a little refrain. Omitting the B section, or singing another A cadence would seem to say that change Seeger hoped to see might not be possible.

**Rhythm** The A sections of the melody are characterized by eighth notes serving as pickups to the third beat of the first measure, followed by syncopated rhythm patterns. Naturally, these follow normal speech patterns. Beginning with the last two measures of the third A, the patterns change and include more rhythms that occur on the beat. The effect of this change is to make the text in that section more declamatory: the A sections ask a question, the off-beat rhythms adding to the uncertainty expressed in the text, and the on-beat rhythms in the end of the verse help answer the question with a firm “this is the way it is!” The B section also contains measures of quarter notes, almost as if to shake one's head side to side in sad wonderment. The song is often sung with a loose sense of pulse, somewhat conversationally.

**Melody** The melody lives within the interval of a 10th (*l, t, d r m f s l t d' r'*). The A sections all begin with *s l s m m r d*. The first and third A's have responses using a variation of *d' r' t l s*. The second A, which forms an internal cadence, is made from a dominant pitch set, *f m d r*. The B section of the melody goes in a new direction harmonically, using two phrases, each beginning with a *l f* pattern (implying a IV<sup>6</sup> or ii harmony) which grabs the attention of the ear. These moments in the melody are significant because the big harmonic shift highlights the most important sentiment in the song (“Oh, when will we ever learn?”) The first phrase ends with an ascending tonic triad, the second implies V I harmony, *r d t, d*. The rhythms, text and tone patterns of the B section combine to create a feeling of resignation and reflection.

**Harmony** This song is based around a common chord pattern, I vii IV V, and perhaps it is its commonness that helps draw people together. There aren't unusual harmonic changes which make it difficult to sing, and the predictable harmonic patterns allow singers a level of comfort and underscoring a sense of shared experience. The ease people feel when singing melodies over this chord pattern allows them the freedom to create their own harmony, contributing their individuality to the communal whole. Although most of the song follows the I vi IV V chord pattern, the moment when the pattern is broken at the refrain heightens the sentiment of the text.

**Texture and Timbre** As a folk-like song, the texture will depend on whether it is sung alone, or with a crowd. Timbre is created by whatever group is performing, and a certain unselfconscious singing style is typical.

**Dynamics** What is the effect of singing the song loudly? Softly? What would it feel like to change the dynamic level at the B section? As a folk-like song, generally sung with large groups, dynamics aren't typically taken into consideration, but there are lots of opportunities to explore. Will it feel wistful and reflective, sad, resigned, determined? How do dynamics convey our thoughts about our never-ending taste for war, and its folly?

### **The Heart Statement**

The heart of the song is the unexpected subdominant chord at the beginning of the B section that seems to say "change is possible", and emphasizes the composer's sense of hopeful reflection.

### **Introducing the Pieces (a strategy)**

**Tell the story of an unsettled time:** Watching a recent PBS program about events surrounding the school integration in the 1950's, I was struck by how far some communities would go to keep even one black student from attending an all-white school; local politicians and school boards actually closed down entire schools (for a year!) rather than permit a black child from attending. And in the end, the President had to use Federal military units to enforce the law, and allow all students to go to the same school. At the same time, other social issues were dividing our country, especially the war in Viet Nam. Some thought that the war was needed to stop the spread of Communism, while others felt it was unnecessary. Additionally, the draft, used to supply the armed forces with soldiers, was seen as largely unjust. There were 2 main ways to avoid being drafted, by medical deferment, or by attending college. Poor people, mainly Latino- and African-Americans had less access to medical care and educational opportunities than middle- and upper-class whites, and were disproportionately represented on the front lines of the war as a result. Pete Seeger composed the song we are going to study. It was often performed during the 1960's, and is associated with the racial-equality and anti-war movements. Seeger, and many others, wondered: What does it mean to be a citizen? Does it mean that you are obliged to possibly sacrifice your life for your country, even though you might not agree with the reason for a war? Or does personal liberty allow you to choose how you express your citizenship?

**Skill Outcome** (Du tuh tuh/syncopa) Students will decode unequal rhythms (short-long-short) occurring over even pulses. Students will move from the Readiness stage to the Reading - Decode Unfamiliar (sight-reading) stage, as time and the class' ability allow.

### **Strategies Strategies (a quick overview of John Feierabend's 12-step literacy process)**

1. *Readiness - Rote: Sing what I sing:* while keeping a steady beat pattern (pat pat clap clap cross arm and touch shoulders 2x clap clap) students echo teacher singing phrases of the song. This is where the song is learned by the class and class becomes familiar with rhythm and/or tonal patterns.
2. *Conversational Solfege - Rote: Say what I say:* students echo rhythm syllables. This is where syllables are bonded with aural labels. **Bobbing Heads:** class sits in a circle, teacher speaks a 4-beat pattern to a student on one side. The student in turn speaks the pattern to the next student in the circle and then turns back to the teacher to receive a new pattern. Everyone receives from the person on one side and transmits to the person on the other side.
3. *Conversational Solfege - Decode Familiar:* Teacher sings phrases from the song, students decode the rhythm.
4. *Conversational Solfege - Decode Unfamiliar:* Teacher sings phrases from an unfamiliar song ("Weevily Wheat" or "Alabama Gal"), students decode with inner hearing then out loud. **Speak, think, speak, decode.**
5. *Conversational Solfege - Create: Walk the Plank,* students form a longways set, teacher walks each student, one at a time across the "water (the space between the rows). Each student takes 4 steps (1 per beat), and says a 4-beat pattern of their own using the eighth-quarter-eighth pattern.
6. *Reading - Rote:* Teacher reads notation while looking at symbols, students echo patterns back to teacher.
7. *Reading - Decode Familiar:* Using notation for "Alabama Gal" and/or "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?", teacher asks students to think through familiar phrases, then speak them aloud.
8. *Reading - Decode Unfamiliar:* (sight-reading) using rhythm syllables from "Walk All Around Boys", students first think through a phrase while decoding the rhythms from notation, then speak the phrase decoded. (may not get to in demo)
9. *Writing - Rote:* (skip in demo lesson)

10. *Writing* - Decode Familiar (skip in demo lesson)
11. *Writing* - Decode Unfamiliar: (dictation) (skip in demo lesson)
12. *Writing* - Create (skip in demo lesson)

### **Assessment Strategy**

1. **Walk the Plank** (see above) or
2. **Create the Rhythm** Create a simple rhythm pattern using simple duple and syncopated rhythms. Standing in a circle, teacher bounces a ball, passing on beat 3, teacher speaks a 4 beat pattern, student creates a new pattern in response while bouncing the ball. Go around the circle.

**Knowledge Outcome** Students will understand the structure of chords, their use in harmonic writing, and how they support a melody.

### **Strategies**

1. **A Working Idea** If all of the voices that are used to make the harmony for the song are played all at the same time, would that work to support the melody? Try it (everybody plays any note of the C major scale on a steady beat while we sing the song, or part of the song). There is a way to organize each of those tones around the main idea (phrases of the melody) in order for them to work effectively, individual voices need to be heard and organized. Here's where we start...
2. Teach the bassline to "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" with solfege tones by rote (I vi IV V 3x / IV I IV V I).
3. Play **Human Piano**, divide class into 4 groups, each with one tone to sing (right to left [teacher's left to right] do la fa so) each group sings when they are pointed to. Sing a verse of "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" while "playing the piano", which is basically pointing to each group at the right moment.
4. "Now that we've learned the bass line to the song, let's explore how we can create fuller a fuller sound by **stacking 3rds** over it. Use the pitch ladder page in Notebook for this.
5. Teacher sing the chord tones in solfege, class echoes.
6. Play **Dueling Lightsabers**: divide the class in half, a leader from each group points to chord tones on the smartboard, while the class sings the tones their leader points to.
7. Sing the chord tones, switching between solfege and **pitch names**.
8. **Create a Voice in Harmony** (skip in demo lesson) Working in small groups, students will create their own harmonic voices based on chord tones built from a given bass line. Pitch names are dragged around in a Notebook file, and the result played by the class on xylophones. The goal is to use the correct tones over each bass notes, and to create voices that move stepwise as much as possible (and occasional 3rd will be necessary) in order to make playing the accompaniment easier.
9. Play accompaniment to the songs, using examples Create a Voice in Harmony from the assessment strategy.
10. **Arrange the Chords**: Using iPads and working in small teams, fill the blanks in a Garageband file to make the sound of the chords and the melody of "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" agree. There is one standard correct answer, but feel free to explore other solutions.

### **Assessment Strategy**


1. **Create a Voice in Harmony** (see above)
2. **Arrange the Chords** (see above)

**Affective Outcome** Students will explore how singing music together is a way for disparate groups to unite in expressing a common goal as has occurred throughout history, and that music of the past may be as relevant today as it was then.

### **Strategies**

1. **Group Discussion**: Aren't there always flowers? Always young women and men? Always wars and cemeteries? What must Pete Seeger have been thinking about when he wrote the song? Can these things be symbols for something else? Talk this over with a partner and write down an idea or 2 on your whiteboard. Be

ready to share an idea with the group. Don't be afraid to share one where you disagree, just present each other's point of view! (Maybe he was thinking about cycles. Not just the patterns of new life, love, strife, and death within one lifetime, but on a larger, historical/ generational scale).

2. **Read the Quote:** A segue into the next strategy - "A dark period had again produced one of Seeger's universal songs. The musician who thrives on poverty and despair has become a cliché; yet in Seeger's case, when everything tipped against him, when his liberty, career, and safety were in jeopardy, a spark inside ignited a song." (David Dunaway, *How Can I Keep From Singing: Pete Seeger*, New York, NY, 1990, pp. 186-187.)
3. **Bring It Home:** Even though this song was written long before you were born, aren't we still facing many of the same struggles that Pete Seeger wrote about in this song? Is he really singing about flowers, girls and boys, etc. or is it possible that these things stand for something else, that they are symbols for the human condition. And what do you make of the phrases "long time passing" and "when will they ever learn"? *What* takes a long time to pass, and *what* are they/we supposed to learn? Choose one of the options below:
  - a. Ask a parent/grandparent/adult about cycles they have noticed in during their lifetime? Are there issues that bothered them when they were younger that still cause them concern? Do a short interview and bring it back to class to share.
  - b. What in your life would you like to see changed? Have you noticed an issue that friends/classmates/grownups seem to miss the point of? Find/create/decide on a symbol or metaphor for your idea and make a Protest Poster with it.
4. **Tell a Friend:** Can you think of a time when you didn't agree with your friends/group? What was more important to you at the time: going along with the group, or voicing your opinion about what the group was doing? 2nd graders, have you ever been in a group, maybe a class or sports team, and felt "oh no, not this again" because someone was acting out or behaving in a way that bothered you? How did you react? Have you ever had the feeling "oh when will they ever learn?" Pair up with a partner and describe this moment to them. What happened that caused you to feel frustrated? Did the problem happen only once, maybe unexpectedly, or did it happen so many times that it became predictable?
5. **Arioso:** change the text of the first part of the A section of the song using the ideas you generated as a starting point, replace the lyrics "where have all the flowers gone" with your own words, which are followed by "long time passing" and "long time ago". Create a phrase that takes no more than 8 beats, and there are bonus points for using the rhythm pattern 
6. **Create a Song Lyric:** As a class, can we work your *Arioso* ideas into 2 or 3 verses and sing our own version of the song?
7. **Closing:** Sing "Where Have All the Flowers Gone", and just for fun, fill in harmony as see fit.

### Assessment Strategy

1. **Arioso** (see above)
2. **Bring It Home** (see above)

### Unit Description/Music Selection

This song was part of a much larger, year long unit about American culture viewed through the lens of racial relations in our country, and highlighting the contributions of African-Americans to world of art and music. Second and third graders in a WIN group met every day for a half hour, spending 2 - 3 days in Art class and 2- 3 days in Music and studied traditional music and art from Africa, African-American music of the 19th century, music and art from the time of the Harlem Renaissance, and finally, music and art used to protest racial inequality during the 1960's. The overall aim of the unit was to convey that racial relationships have been a dominant theme in the development of our country, and that Art created within that context is central to our cultural identity and legacy.

*"Actually, what keeps me going is when I can hear a gang of people joining in on a song, so any song I sing tonight, if you wanna hum along, it won't hurt my feelings for you to do so, add a little harmony too!"* Pete Seeger