

# Germ, Germ, Germ Everywhere

by Kaitlin Beck

I wrote this lesson last summer while brainstorming new and creative ways to implement more abstract movement experiences in my classroom. My kiddos at school loved the rhyming text and opportunity to create germ sculptures in small and large groups. Because this lesson was used with 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, our focus was on **multiple ostinati** and **abstract movement**, but there are so many things you can do to simplify, extend, or add parts of this to something you are already doing. Enjoy!

## Sick

Arranged by Kaitlin Beck  
Poem by Shel Silverstein  
\*excerpt used\*

The musical score is arranged in two systems. Each system has three staves: Percussion, Guiro, and Congas. The time signature is 6/8. The lyrics are written below the staves, with some words aligned with specific notes or rests. The first system covers the first four lines of the poem, and the second system covers the next four lines, starting with a measure rest of 5 measures.

**System 1:**

- Percussion:** "I can - not go to school to - day," said litt - le Pegg - y Mc - Kay. "I
- Guiro:** Please call the doc. Please call the
- Congas:** I'm so sick! I'm so sick!

**System 2:**

- Percussion:** have the meas - les and themumps, a gash, a rash, and pur - ple bumps."
- Guiro:** doc. Please call the doc. the doc.
- Congas:** I'm so sick! I'm so sick!

\*Please note: I have altered the text to fit rhythmically; Shel's original uses "Peggy Ann McKay"\*

### Lesson 1

- Students keep the beat on their laps while the poem is introduced; on second hearing, have students listen for rhyming words; on third hearing, have students keep the beat with a pat and clap; on fourth hearing, invite students to join in on text if comfortable
- Isolate the text until students are comfortable; I wrote 'measles, mumps, gash, rash, purple bumps' on the board and on each iteration, I erased one, which turned into a game
- Once stable on text, students perform alone while teacher does the conga part (I have hand drums in my classroom, so I showed this on my inner forearm with low above my elbow pit and high on my hand); introduce conga part and have students play it while teacher does text; divide class in half and perform again, switching so that everyone does everything
- Using two groups, have students perform again while teacher does the guiros part; introduce guiros part (I used my pointer finger to scrape my other pointer finger to prep this); divide students into three groups and cycle through so that everyone plays everything

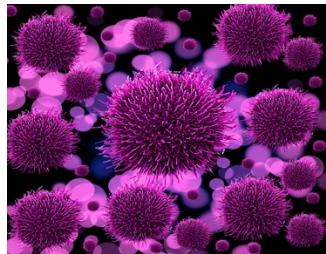
## Lesson 2

- Review text with students, having them fill in the ends of each phrase from memory; add parts in and briefly practice until students are stable
- Introduce instruments and have students practice playing everything; cycle through so everyone does everything; divide students out into preferred parts and perform once more
- Have students decide on a form for a final 'class performance', practice, and perform
- If time remains, have a discussion with students on what germs look like, writing ideas on the board if needed; in the same three groups as the performance, have students experiment with making a germ statue together (I provided several pictures if students needed help)

## Lesson 3

- As students come in, invite them to stand in scattered formation; put on some music and stretch, focusing on contracting/expanding; invite students to play with speed and levels
- Display pictures of various germs and discuss with students how we can use these pictures to inspire movement; divide students into pairs to experiment with forming a germ; throughout this process, I asked these questions to give students more to work with:

- Is the germ big or small? Tall or short? Fat or skinny?
- Is the germ connected or apart? Growing? Decreasing in size?
- Is the germ one shape or many?
- Is the germ stagnant or moving? Fast or slow?



- Have students combine to make groups of 4 or 6 and distribute pictures of germs; each group will have time to study their germ and decide how they will create it through movement; during this period, I walked around and gave feedback
- Have half watch and half perform, switch; share out using "I wondered, I noticed, I valued"

## Lesson 4

- Review the poem text from Lesson 2 as students come in and get situated; before students go back to their movement groups, tell them about the final performance rondo format:
  - A section – poem (with or without all the other parts; we did without to not complicate)
  - B section – group 1 germ movement with recording
  - A section – poem (so and so forth)
- Students get about 12-15 more minutes to practice, then do final performance and reflect

## Recordings

I have used various recordings for this lesson, below are some of my favorites:

- Circle song #5 by Bobby McFerrin; Field Variation by Peter Jones; and Rhythm Song by Evelyn Glennie