

10 Steps to Improvising and Creating on Recorder Using Nursery Rhymes

I use this sequence at the end of 3rd grade, but if you start recorders in 4th grade, then you could use this sequence then! My goal for beginning recorder players is to give them as much experience playing B, A, and G as possible without staff notation. After a solid B, A, G foundation is laid, and students are able to improvise with these notes comfortably, it will be so much easier to introduce absolute pitch names on the staff! Once students have the fingerings for B, A, and G down and can echo various B, A, G patterns, I display the lyrics to nursery rhymes and use them as a starting point for improvising and creating. In order to do this, I take my students through the following steps:

1. Play the word rhythm of the nursery rhyme on B. (Each syllable should get a new tonging).
 2. Play the word rhythm of the nursery rhyme on A.
 3. Play the word rhythm of the nursery rhyme on G.
 4. Begin assigning each line of the nursery rhyme to B, A, or G. Write that letter at the beginning of each line with a dry erase marker. I usually tell them that the last line should end on “do” (G) so the song sounds finished. Then play it!
 5. Erase, and have students take turns coming up to the board to write a letter name at the beginning of each line of lyrics, and play each new created melody as a class.
 6. Next, have the students improvise their own order of B, A, and G! Play improvisations together as a large group first, and then ask for volunteers to play alone!
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7. Once the previous steps are comfortable, and on another day/week, begin placing letter names underneath words or sections of words to create a more intricate melody. Again, have students come up to the board to draw them in. Again, remember to end the song on “do!”
 8. Model an improvisation for them where you do not write down any letters first but come up with a B, A, and G on the spot.
 9. Students are again able to come up with their own improvisations. Play improvisations as a group first, and once comfortable, ask for volunteers to play alone! (Some students may need to start with only 2 of the 3 notes. Add the third when ready).
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10. Once the last steps are comfortable, give partner groups a laminated nursery rhyme sheet. Students can use a wet erase marker and should work with their partner in writing their own B, A, G melodies. Simply write in letter names underneath the words. For groups that need a simpler melody, have them assign one letter per line of lyrics. For those that could use an extra challenge, have them write different letters under specific words or sections of words. Let each group play theirs for the class!