



## 'STORM' FROM PETER GRIMES (BENJAMIN BRITTEN)

# Create a graphic score

*Creative response lesson plan designed by Andrew Smith*

### Introduction

'Peter Grimes' is an opera that tells the tragic tale of a fisherman who, having already lost one apprentice while at sea, ignores warnings not to take on another and subsequently loses him in an accident. Local villagers don't believe Peter's version of events or his innocence, leaving the lonely fisherman questioning whether or not to take his own life. 'Storm' is a musical interlude between acts I and II where, despite warnings of the approaching storm, Peter insists on taking his new apprentice to work at sea.

### Musical lines

Musicians read music in many different ways: conventional western notation, *lead sheets* with chords, *graphic scores*, collections of pictures and other symbols are some examples. Discuss with your class whether lines can have emotion and if so, what are they? Ask pupils to experiment by playing these lines on musical instruments or with their voices: (large version for print on pg. 3 of this doc)

Discuss with pupils how they can convert the lines into musical sounds. For example, ask pupils how the shape of a particular line determines the *dynamics*, pitch, rhythm and *texture* of the sound (a thin straight line could be a quiet single note; a thick line going up could be a loud sounds with notes rising and so on).

### Compose

Ask pupils to create their own graphic score to represent a storm. Help pupils find an image of a storm at sea or ask them to work together in groups to draw their own stormy picture.

Ask pupils to pay close attention to the number of different lines they can see in their picture and try tracing them on paper. Ask them to think about:

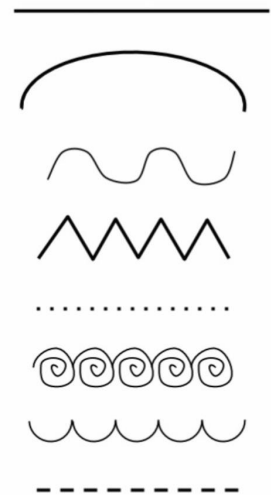
- the shape of the waves
- the pattern of lightning
- the texture of the water
- the shape of clouds

Set a pulse for the class and allow them to convert one of their lines into a short rhythmic or melodic motif. The *tempo* of the pulse is up to you, but remember it is supposed to represent a storm!

Once pupils have composed music for each line in their picture, they can structure them to tell the story, or form of their storm. Does the storm gradually build up and quietly die down or is it very rough from the start and end with a shuddering BANG? The shapes the pupils have drawn will dictate the musical shape of their storm.

### Perform the graphic scores

Give pupils the opportunity to perform their compositions to each other. If all groups of pupils have used the same picture as the basis for their musical storms, it will be interesting to compare how the different groups have translated the shapes into sounds.



## Vocabulary

Term	Meaning
<i>lead sheet</i>	a form of notation that shows only the melody
<i>graphic score</i>	a representation of music through symbols, shapes and marks (as opposed to conventional notation)
<i>dynamics</i>	volume
<i>texture</i>	the way instruments or sounds are combined to create the overall quality of the sound
<i>tempo</i>	speed

Can you play or sing these lines?

