

Antonin Dvorak, Ninth Symphony *From The New World*

Grade Level: Music, Grade 7

Written by: Claudia Horn, Frontier Charter Academy, Calhan, Colorado

Length of Unit: Five lessons, 45 minutes each

I. ABSTRACT

In this series of lessons students will become familiar with the composer Antonin Dvorak and his Ninth Symphony *From The New World*. Students will learn about the significance of Dvorak in America during the 1890s. Students will use creative skills to compose melodies based on familiar folk tunes, increasing understanding of nationalism in music.

II. OVERVIEW

A. Concept Objectives

1. Develop skills in improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments. (National Music Standards (NMS) Content Standard (CS) 3)
2. Understand music in relation to history and culture. (NMS CS 9)
3. Develop skills in composing and arranging music within specified guidelines. (NMS CS 4)

B. Content from the *Core Knowledge Sequence*

1. Music and National Identity (page 171)
2. Antonin Dvorak, *Symphony No. 9 ("From the New World")* (page 171)

C. Skill Objectives

1. Students will improvise short melodies, unaccompanied and over given rhythmic accompaniments, each in a consistent style, meter and tonality. (NMS CS 3)
2. Students will compose short pieces within specified guidelines. (NMS CS 4)
3. Students will describe distinguishing characteristics of representative music genres and styles from a variety of cultures. (NMS CS 9)
4. Students will classify music by genre and style, historical period, composer, and title. (NMS CS 9)
5. Students will perform on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music. (NMS CS 2)

III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

A. For Teachers

1. *A Coloring Book of Great Composers*. Santa Barbara: Bellerophon Books, 2000. 0-88388-046-6
2. Stanley Sadie. *The New Grove Late Romantic Masters*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc. 1980. 0-393-01697-8

B. For Students

1. Students should have experience playing and improvising simple melodies on xylophones.
2. Students should have experience playing recorders.

3. Students will have had experience from sixth grade in classifying Western music by periods, and understanding that certain qualities in music are characteristic of a musical period.

IV. RESOURCES

- A. Recording of The Ninth Symphony “From the New World” by Antonin Dvorak.
- B. *A Coloring Book of Great Composers*. Santa Barbara: Bellerophon Books, 2000. 0-88388-046-6
- C. *Source Readings In Music History*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1998. 0-393-03752-5
- D. Stanley Sadie. *The New Grove Late Romantic Masters*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1980. 0-393-01697-8
- E. Video: *Dvorak in America*, Travelfilm Company 2000

V. LESSONS

Lesson One: Dvorak’s Place in Music History

- A. *Daily Objectives*
 1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand music in relation to history and culture.
 2. Lesson Content
 - a. Music and National Identity
 3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. Students will describe distinguishing characteristics of representative music genres and styles from a variety of cultures.
 - b. Students will classify music by genre and style, historical period, composer, and title.
- B. *Materials*
 1. Appendix A-Background Information on Antonin Dvorak
 2. Appendix B-Outline for students, one copy for each student
 3. Timeline for history which includes composers and musical periods
 4. Map of Europe
- C. *Procedures/Activities*
 1. Introduce the composer by identifying his place in history on a timeline.
 2. Have students follow their outline as you discuss Dvorak and his place in musical history.
 3. What were the influences on Dvorak’s style?
 4. Who were the composers who influenced him the most?
 5. From what kind of family background was Dvorak, and how did this impact his music?
 6. What did Dvorak like about teaching?
 7. Locate Czechoslovakia and The Moldau on a map.
 8. Students should take notes on the outline (Appendix B) as you discuss these questions.
- D. *Assessment/Evaluation*
 1. Students will write a short essay titled *If I Were A Composer*. They should include something about their own background, what kinds of things they

like, who they admire, and how they might express these ideas if they wrote music.

Lesson Two: Dvorak in America

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand music in relation to history and culture.
 2. Lesson Content
 - a. Music and National Identity
 - b. Antonin Dvorak, Symphony No. 9 (“*From The New World*”)
 3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. Students will describe distinguishing characteristics of representative music genres and styles from a variety of cultures.
 - b. Students will classify music by genre and style, historical period, composer, and title.
- B. *Materials*
1. Video: *Dvorak and America*
 2. Copies of Appendix C, one for each student
- C. *Procedures/Activities*
1. Show the video *Dvorak and America*
 2. Students should watch and take notes on the outline form (Appendix C).
 3. There is information that will be repeated from the general background information students received in Lesson One. The main idea in this lesson is the influence of Native American music and Negro spirituals and the importance Dvorak placed on these genres. Part of Dvorak’s responsibility was to help identify a national style of music in America. He saw great significance in these styles, and felt that they were representative of a true American style.
 4. Ask students “What style of music grew out of the spirituals? (Jazz)
- D. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Evaluate students by questioning after the video to determine if they understand the main points. Some questions are as follows:
 - a. When did Dvorak come to work in America?
 - b. What were the main reasons Mrs. Thurber wanted to hire him?
 - c. What music did Dvorak feel was significant in America?
 - d. Who sang spirituals for Dvorak at the National Conservatory?
 - e. Where did Dvorak vacation while in America, and why?

Lesson Three: The Ninth Symphony

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand music in relation to history and culture.
 2. Lesson Content
 - a. Antonin Dvorak, *Symphony No. 9* (“*From the New World*”)

3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. Students will perform on at least one instrument accurately and independently, alone and in small and large ensembles.
- B. *Materials*
 1. Recording of Dvorak's *Symphony No. 9* ("From the New World")
 2. Recorders, one for each student
 3. One copy of the main theme from *Symphony No. 9*
- C. *Procedures/Activities*
 1. Listen to the first movement of *Symphony No. 9*
 2. Listen and hum the melody when it occurs.
 3. Teach the melody one phrase at a time on recorders. Students will learn the melody by rote.
 4. Play the melody on other instruments if you have them available, such as xylophone, bells, or band and orchestra instruments students may have.
 5. Spend some time playing in small groups or individually. Improvise on various elements of music, such as rhythm and melody. It is good practice to isolate rhythm or melody and work on small increments of improvisation.
 6. Create a theme and variations by having the class play the melody, and individuals take turns playing their variations.
- D. *Assessment/Evaluation*
 1. The teacher will listen as students play individually, the melody and improvisations to determine if they are successful.

Lesson Four: Nationalism in Music

- A. *Daily Objectives*
 1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand music in relation to history and culture.
 2. Lesson Content
 - a. Music and National Identity
 3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. Students will classify music by genre and style, historical period, composer, and title.
- B. *Materials*
 1. Recording of *Appalachian Spring* by Aaron Copland
 2. Recording of *1812 Overture* by Tchaikovsky
 3. Recording of *Peer Gynt Suite* by Grieg
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
 1. Nationalist composer - a composer whose work is strongly identified with the culture, folk music, and tradition of a particular nation
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
 1. Discuss the term "nationalist" in relation to music and composers.
 2. When Dvorak came to New York to be the Director of the National Conservatory, Mrs. Thurber hoped he would identify and help develop a national musical identity in America.

3. Listen to *Appalachian Spring* by Aaron Copland. Listen for folk melodies within the music. Copland used folk music as the basis for much of his work.
 4. Listen to the *1812 Overture* by Tchaikovsky. Tchaikovsky combined native Russian folk music with western European influences.
 5. Listen to *Peer Gynt* by Edward Grieg. Grieg is considered a national musical hero of Norway. His music reflects the folk tradition of Norway.
 6. Assign students to research and write about a particular composer who is considered a Nationalist. Some suggestions are Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Liszt, Chopin, Smetana.
 7. Students should include biographical information about the composer, and pertinent information regarding style and historical influences.
 8. Students should give an oral presentation to the class, including musical excerpts of the composers work.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Evaluate students' written and oral presentations for accuracy of information, presentation, and use of language skills.

Lesson Five: Be A Nationalist Composer

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objective(s)
 - a. Understand music in relation to history and culture.
 - b. Develop skills in composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
 2. Lesson Content
 - a. Music and national identity
 3. Skill Objective(s)
 - a. Students will compose short pieces within specified guidelines.
 - b. Students will describe distinguishing characteristics of representative music genres and styles from a variety of cultures.
- B. *Materials*
1. Appendix E – Melody Fragments
 2. Melody instruments: recorders, xylophones, or bells
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. Ostinato - repeated pattern used as an harmonic device
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. Play short folk melodies from Appendix E on instruments.
 2. Play variations on the melodies.
 3. To vary the melodies, change one element at a time, such as rhythm, meter, or melody.
 4. Create a theme and variations by playing the melody, and taking turns playing variations on the melody.
 5. Try combining a melody with an improvisation above it in the same key. A short melody fragment can be used as an ostinato pattern. This can best be accomplished in small groups of two or three students.

6. Discuss how folk songs are used by some composers in combination with classical forms to create a national style that reflects the music of the people of a given nation.
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Observe students playing and creating theme and variations, ostinati, and improvised melodies. Students should be improving their skills, and developing musical ideas as they participate in this lesson.
 2. This lesson can be extended and developed as students improve their skills. This activity becomes more enjoyable as skills increase, and should be continued as time allows.

VI. CULMINATING ACTIVITY (Optional)

- A. Attend a local performance by a symphony orchestra. Some other composers recommended are Smetana, Grieg, and Tchaikovsky.

VII. HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS

- A. Appendix A: Background Information on Antonin Dvorak
 B. Appendix B: Outline for Students
 C. Appendix C: Dvorak and America
 D. Appendix D:

VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A. *A Coloring Book of Great Composers*. Santa Barbara: Bellerophon Books, 2000. 0-88388-046-6
 B. Stanley Sadie. *The New Grove Late Romantic Masters*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc. 1980. 0-393-01697-8
 C. *Source Readings in Music History*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1998. 0-393-03752-5
 D. *Dvorak and America (video)*. Travefilm Company, 2000
 E. Suermondt, R.P. *Smetana and Dvorak*. Stockholm: The Continental Book Company.

Appendix A, page 1-Antonin Dvorak
Background Information
Antonin Dvorak

Antonin Dvorak was born September 8, 1841 in Nelahozeves, a village on the Vltava River about twenty miles north of Prague. His father was a butcher and innkeeper. Antonin's father played the violin and sang, so Antonin was exposed to music early in his life. Antonin was apprenticed to a butcher to learn the trade, but at age sixteen, his parents allowed him to study music at the organ school in Prague. He graduated in 1859 and spent fourteen years in Prague, playing viola in a small orchestra, composing music, and studying. He was not very successful as a composer until Bedrich Smetana, a great Czech composer began performing his pieces.

In 1874, Dvorak received a grant from the Austrian State Musical Commission. One of the judges for this award was Johannes Brahms. Dvorak and Brahms became friends, and remained so until Brahms' death.

Dvorak began teaching at the Prague Conservatory in 1891. He was a friendly man, and on good terms with his contemporaries. His students were generally fond of him.

Antonin Dvorak came from a peasant background. He enjoyed the simple things in life. He loved to watch and listen to people, and he felt that great music came out of the everyday songs and sounds of people.

“Nothing must be too low or insignificant for the musician. When he walks he should listen to every whistling boy, every street singer or blind organ grinder. I myself am often so fascinated by these people that I can scarcely tear myself away, for every now and then I catch a strain or hear the fragments of a recurring melodic theme that sound like the voice of the people. These things are worth preserving, and no one should be above making a lavish use of all such suggestions.” (*Source Readings In Music History*, W.W. Norton and Co. New York 1998)

In June of 1891, Mrs. Jeanette Thurber invited Dvorak to New York to take the Directorship of the National Conservatory. She wanted him to be a figurehead, rather than an administrator, and she wanted him to help found a national style of music in America.

At this time, the United States was searching for a musical identity of its own. As a nation of immigrants, musical traditions came from all over the world, but the U.S. still lacked its own musical identity. When Dvorak came to New York, he became very interested in the music of Native American, and black musicians. The National Conservatory was very progressive, and many musicians of all backgrounds studied there. A student by the name of Harry T. Burleigh sang Negro spirituals for Dvorak. He was fascinated by this style, and felt that it would be a major influence in the future of American musical style.

“Such national music, I repeat, is not created out of nothing. It is discovered and clothed in new beauty just as the myths and the legends of a people are brought to light and crystallized

Appendix A, page 2-Antonin Dvorak

in undying verse by the master poets.” (*Source Readings in Music History*, W.W. Norton and Co. New York. 1998)

While in the United States, Dvorak spent vacation time in Spillville, Iowa, a community of mostly Czech immigrants. The area reminded him of home. He was homesick for his native land, and returned to Czechoslovakia in 1895.

The Ninth Symphony was written while Dvorak was in America. It is titled *From The New World*. There are suggestions of American folk music in the Ninth Symphony, but it is heavily Czech-influenced. Dvorak said, "The title simply signified 'Impressions and greetings from the New World'." Although some American influences are obvious, it is fundamentally Czech.

Dvorak turned down an offer of a professorship in Vienna, preferring to stay in his native land after returning from New York in 1895. He lived in Prague until his death in 1904.

**Appendix B-Antonin Dvorak
Outline for Students**

- I. Life and times**
 - A. Where was Dvorak born?**

 - B. When was Dvorak Born?**

 - C. When and where did he die?**

- II. Composers who influenced Dvorak**
 - A.**

 - B.**

- III. Family Background**
 - A. What did Antonin's parents do for a living?**

 - B. How did he become interested in music?**

- IV. Influences on Dvorak's composition style**
 - A.**

 - B.**

**Appendix C-Antonin Dvorak
Dvorak and America**

I. When did Dvorak come to America?

II. Who asked him? What was the name of the conservatory?

III. What were the two purposes of his coming to America?

A.

B.

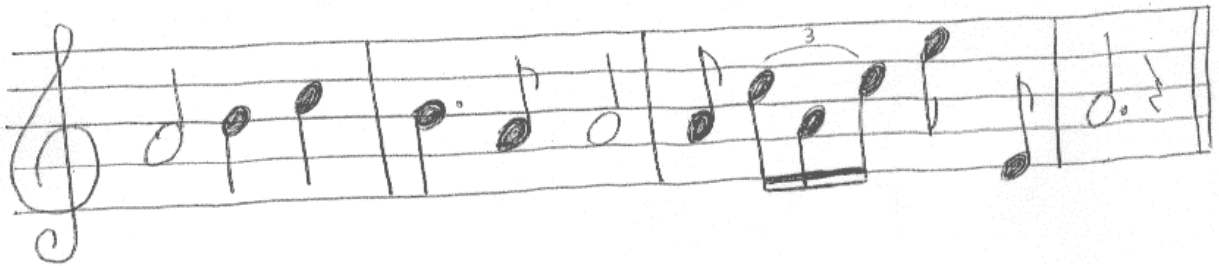
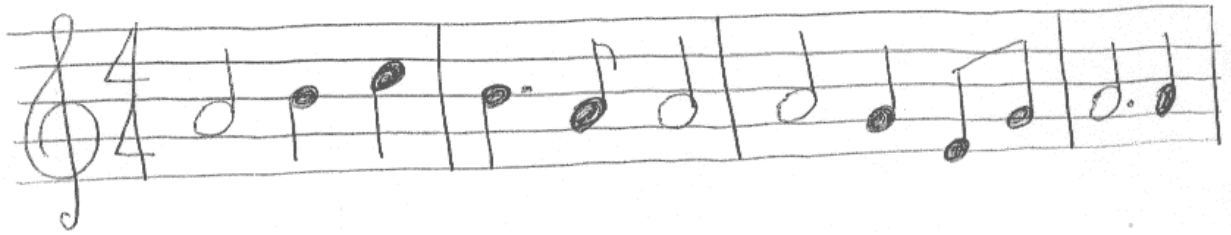
IV. What styles of music did Dvorak think were particularly interesting and Unique to America?

A.

B.

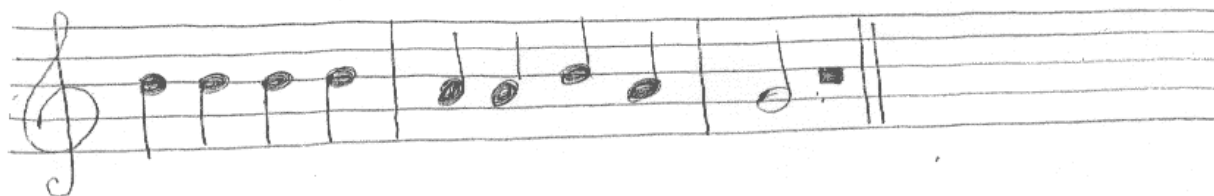
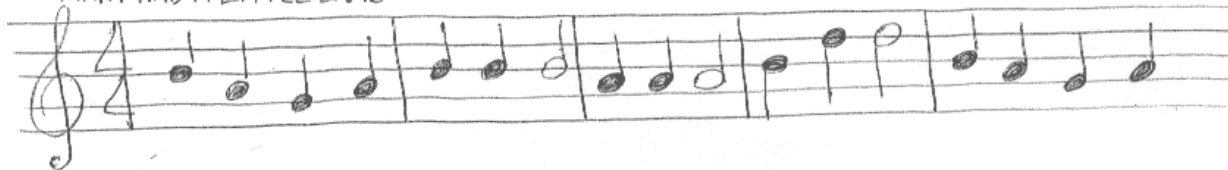
V. Where did Dvorak visit in America while on vacation from the conservatory?

Appendix D-Antonin Dvorak

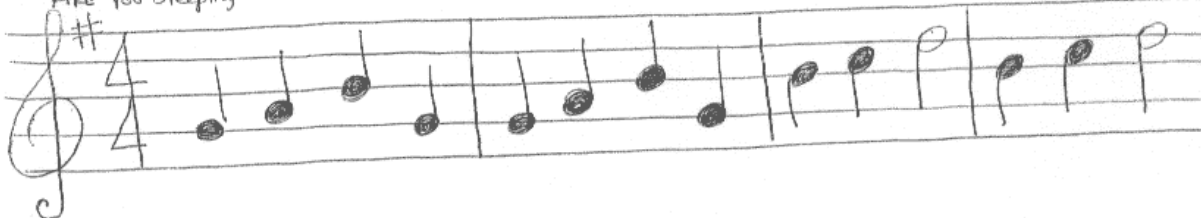


Appendix E-Antonin Dvorak

MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB



Are You Sleeping?



YANKEE Doodle

