

For my first microteach, I chose to use the protest song, “Step By Step,” first arranged by Waldemar Hills and Pete Seeger in 1984 from the traditional Irish song “The Praties They Grow Small” (“The Irish Famine Song”). The song was later arranged by Sweet Honey in the Rock as well as various other folk singers during the Civil Rights Movement. This song has special significance for me as I grew up listening to it on an old record full of protest songs. When I was 13 years old, I sang this song with my older sister at the funeral for my father, who was a civil rights activist and union leader. The song makes an excellent round, and sounds beautiful in two- or three-part harmony.

In my microteach video, I think I successfully captured the purpose of the song with minimal words. By continuously marching through the piece and encouraging students to march along even before singing, it captured the manner in which such a song will often be taught to a large group in the context of a protest. It also had the secondary advantage of maintaining steady tempo and kept a fluid pace for the lesson. Listening back, the surface I was marching on was an uneven, creaking floor board, and at times either my marching or the floor board popping back into place obscured or sped up the steady beat. However, overall I felt this an authentic representation of an organic learning experience.

I chose to start the video by singing the entire piece while asking the students to march along, so that they could listen while also keeping the beat with their bodies. Then, I called upon the singers to listen one more time while mirroring my hand movements. The listener would have the chance to hear the entire song again while developing an initial kinesthetic connection to the lyrics with the simple hand motions I created. I chose repetitive movements, easy enough to mirror, and which illustrated the text. These movements along with the repetitiveness of the melody could make the melody alone (without the added round or harmonies) a piece that any age group could learn. I had a kindergarten student try following along with the video and she was able to follow along relatively well. She certainly needed more repetitions of each phrase, and clearly interacted differently to a screen than to a live version of myself who is able to react and respond to the areas she found challenging. However, she followed along well with the movements and started to grasp the lyrics, despite some of the new vocabulary.

Next, I began breaking the piece up into parts. The four phrases for this song are relatively simple, but I chose to adapt the various versions of the song I have heard so that the first phrase ends in *do te do* (*la sol la* in *la*-based minor), but the second and fourth phrases end in *te re do* (*sol ti la* in *la*-based minor). I anticipate that this choice could become an area of difficulty for learning a new song as the difference between this A section and the A' sections is subtle and I found myself needing to make the intentional choice about which phrases would have which endings because even I would change them at random. To further complicate my own experience singing the piece, the original folk song from which this song was adapted alternates between *do re do* (*la ti la*) and *me re do* (*do ti la*). While it could be fun to learn about subtle differences in A and A prime sections in musical form, for a first-day song, I could almost certainly anticipate singers confusing the two endings.

Each of the four phrases started on the tonic, so I chose to lead students in with the words, “Now your turn. Here you go,” on *do do do*, *do te do* (*la la la*, *la sol la* in *la*-based

minor). On one or two entrances I did not sing the same exact words. For example on one entrance, I sang, “Now your turn on the first half,” but again on the same notes. I wonder whether this change in the lead-in words could get confusing for a singer. Another inconsistency I noticed after the fact was the way I sometimes sang the rhythm on the words “And in union what we will.” This rhythmic difference is definitely subtle, but would probably be noticeable if listening to a group of singers trying to sing the rhythm together, if some are singing the rhythm evenly while others sing it with the syncopation on “what we will.”

Overall, I would definitely be interested in using this song in a continuing musical exploration of protest songs and their evolution from folk music and spirituals. With 7th – 9th grade, I would extend the learning with added harmonies and/or singing the song in a round. We could listen to different arrangements of the piece, such as the arrangements by Sweet Honey in the Rock and the original Pete Seeger recording. I would dig up the old vinyl record called *Swords Into Plowshares* from my childhood as well, which features folk singers Laura Burns and Robert Rosen. We would be able to listen to some recordings of the old folk song from which the song was adapted, specifically the recording entitled “Famine Song,” from the album *The Full Circle* by Forest and “The Praties They Grow Small,” from *This Life I’m Living* by Carolyn Hester.