Name: _____ Date: _____

The Hurdy-Gurdy: A Violin Played with a Crank

Circle group

Most string instruments need a bow or a pluck. The hurdy-gurdy uses a crank. People in Europe have played it for many centuries. Some still play it at folk festivals.

Inside the wooden body is a wheel. The wheel is rubbed with sticky rosin. The player turns the crank with the right hand. The wheel spins and rubs the strings. It is like a bow that never has to stop. The sound can go on and on.

The left hand plays wooden keys. Each key pushes a small wedge on a melody string. That makes the string shorter, so the note goes up. Other strings are called drone strings. No key presses them. They sing one steady note under the tune. It is like the hum of a bagpipe.

Some players jerk the crank fast. This makes a buzzing beat. One instrument gives a tune, a drone, and a beat. One player can sound like a small band.

Questions

1. What does the player turn to make sound?

_____

_____

2. What is rubbed on the wheel?

_____

_____

3. What does a key do when it is pressed?

_____

_____

4. What are drone strings?

_____

_____

5. Why can the sound go on without a break?

_____

_____

6. Why can one player sound like a small band?

_____

_____

Words to know

crank: a handle that you turn around to make something move
rosin: a sticky substance rubbed on strings or bows to help them grip
melody: the main tune of a piece of music
drone: a steady note that keeps sounding under a tune
folk: music passed down among ordinary people of a place

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Hurdy-Gurdy: A Violin Played with a Crank

Triangle group

Most stringed instruments need a bow or a pluck to make a sound. The hurdy-gurdy does it with a crank. This old instrument has been played in Europe for many centuries, and some musicians still play it at folk festivals today.

Inside the wooden body is a wheel, rubbed with a sticky substance called rosin. When the player turns the crank with the right hand, the wheel spins and rubs against the strings. It works a little like a bow that never runs out of room to move. The sound can go on and on without a break, which is hard to do with a bow.

The left hand plays a row of wooden keys. Each key pushes a small wedge against a melody string, which makes that string shorter and raises its note, just as a finger does on a violin. Other strings, called drone strings, are not pressed by any key. They sing one steady note underneath the tune, a bit like the constant hum of a bagpipe.

Some players give the crank a quick jerk to make a buzzing beat. This adds a rhythm that gets feet tapping. With a melody, a drone, and a beat all coming from one instrument, a single player can sound like a small band.

Questions

1. What does a hurdy-gurdy player turn to make sound?

_____

_____

2. What is rubbed on the wheel?

_____

_____

3. What do the keys do when the left hand plays them?

_____

_____

4. What are drone strings?

_____

_____

5. Why can the hurdy-gurdy sound go on without a break?

_____

_____

6. Why might one hurdy-gurdy player sound like a small band?

_____

_____

Words to know

crank: a handle that you turn around to make something move
rosin: a sticky substance rubbed on strings or bows to help them grip
melody: the main tune of a piece of music
drone: a steady note that keeps sounding under a tune
folk: music passed down among ordinary people of a place

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Hurdy-Gurdy: A Violin Played with a Crank

Square group

Most stringed instruments depend on a bow or a pluck to produce a sound, but the hurdy-gurdy relies on a crank instead. This remarkable instrument has been played in Europe for many centuries, and a number of musicians continue to perform on it at folk festivals today.

Concealed inside the wooden body is a wheel that has been coated with a sticky substance called rosin. When the player turns the crank with the right hand, the wheel spins and rubs steadily against the strings. It behaves rather like a bow that never runs out of room to travel. As a result, the sound can continue without interruption, which is difficult to achieve with an ordinary bow.

Meanwhile, the left hand plays a row of wooden keys. Each key pushes a small wedge against a melody string, which shortens that string and raises its note, exactly as a finger does on a violin. Other strings, known as drone strings, are not pressed by any key. They sing one steady note beneath the tune, somewhat like the constant hum of a bagpipe.

Some players also give the crank a quick jerk to create a buzzing beat. This adds a rhythm that sets listeners tapping their feet. Because a melody, a drone, and a beat all arise from a single instrument, one performer can sound like a small band.

Questions

1. What does a hurdy-gurdy player turn in order to make a sound?

_____

_____

2. What substance coats the wheel?

_____

_____

3. What happens when the left hand plays a key?

_____

_____

4. What role do the drone strings play?

_____

_____

5. Why can a hurdy-gurdy hold a note without a break, unlike a bow?

_____

_____

6. Why might a single player sound like a small band?

_____

_____

Words to know

crank: a handle that you turn around to make something move
rosin: a sticky substance rubbed on strings or bows to help them grip
melody: the main tune of a piece of music
drone: a steady note that keeps sounding under a tune
folk: music passed down among ordinary people of a place

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: The Hurdy-Gurdy: A Violin Played with a Crank

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: The Hurdy-Gurdy: A Violin Played with a Crank

Easier · 159 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 1.5

1. A crank that spins a wheel.
2. Sticky rosin.
3. It pushes a wedge on a melody string and makes the note higher.
4. Strings that no key presses, which sing one steady note.
5. The wheel keeps rubbing and never has to stop like a bow.
6. The instrument gives a tune, a drone and a beat together.

Triangle: The Hurdy-Gurdy: A Violin Played with a Crank

This passage · 214 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 4.9

1. A crank that spins a wheel.
2. A sticky substance called rosin.
3. They push wedges against the melody strings to shorten them and raise the note.
4. Strings that are not pressed by keys and sing one steady note under the tune.
5. The wheel keeps rubbing the strings and never has to stop and change direction like a bow.
6. The instrument gives a melody, a drone and a beat all at once.

Square: The Hurdy-Gurdy: A Violin Played with a Crank

Harder · 227 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.8

1. A crank that spins a wheel inside the instrument.
2. A sticky substance called rosin.
3. A wedge pushes against a melody string, shortening it and raising its note.
4. They are not pressed by keys and sing one steady note beneath the tune.
5. The spinning wheel keeps rubbing the strings and never has to reverse direction.
6. The one instrument provides a melody, a drone and a beat at the same time.