

UCF Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
National Cemetery Administration



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Lesson Title	The history and compositional makeup of <i>Taps</i>
Grade(s)	9-12 Music
Time (Minutes/ Days)	4 Days <i>Note: This timeline assumes that music classrooms only have a portion of daily class time to an assignment like this. The first 3 days can be compressed to 1-2 days if so desired. Day 4 is to be completed within whatever timeline is expected of students for composing. Our suggestion is 1 week.</i>

Lesson Overview

Since the Civil War, *Taps* has served the United States as its Veterans' musical honors during funerals and memorials. Made up of only 24 notes and a major arpeggio, the piece of music can strike some of the deepest emotions within the hearts of listeners. This is especially the case when played at funerals in our National Cemeteries.

Like many things in our country's history and society, *Taps* is not originally American. The piece of music is a revision of a French military bugle call. American military camps during the Civil War used the call. Major General Daniel Adams Butterfield believed it to be too formal and revised it into *Taps*.

This lesson allows students to duplicate this process by composing their own short melody using the same strategies and resources Major General Butterfield had when composing *Taps*.

Students will gain the perspective that melodies do not rely on being complicated to be successful. *Taps* is a very short solo built upon the very first chord any student learns in a music theory class. Butterfield uses space and melodic contour to develop a sense of longing within the listener. In addition, students will compose their melodies with the assistance of another student performer just as Butterfield used his unit's Brigade Bugler, Oliver Wilcox Norton.

Essential Questions

- What is *Taps*?
- Where did *Taps* come from?
- Why is *Taps* important to the military and its loved ones?

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- How does *Taps* succeed in bringing deep emotions out of its listeners?
- Do pieces of music need to be complex to be emotional?

Florida State Standards

Music Standards

- MU.912.C.1.1 - Apply listening strategies to promote appreciation and understanding of unfamiliar musical works.
- MU.912.C.1.2 - Compare, using correct music vocabulary, the aesthetic impact of two or more performances of a musical work to one's own hypothesis of the composer's intent.
- MU.912.C.2.1 - Evaluate and make appropriate adjustments to personal performance in solo and ensembles.
- MU.912.C.2.3 - Evaluate one's own or other's compositions and/or improvisations and generate improvements independently or cooperatively.
- MU.912.C.3.1 - Make critical evaluations, based on exemplary models, of the quality and effectiveness of performances and apply the criteria to personal development in music.
- MU.912.S.1.2 - Compose music for voices and/or acoustic, digital, or electronic instruments.
- MU.912.S.2.1 - Apply the ability to memorize and internalize musical structure, accurate and expressive details, and processing skills to the creation or performance of music literature.
- MU.912.S.2.2 - Transfer expressive elements and performance techniques from one piece of music to another.
- MU.912.O.1.1 - Evaluate the organizational principles and conventions in musical works and discuss their effect on structure.
- MU.912.O.3.1 - Analyze expressive elements in a musical work and describe how the choices and manipulations of the elements support, for the listener, the implied meaning of the composer/performer.
- MU.912.H.1.1 - Investigate and discuss how a culture's traditions are reflected through its music.
- MU.912.H.2.3 - Analyze the evolution of a music genre.

History Standards

- **SS.912.A.1.6** - Use case studies to explore social, political, legal, and economic relationships in history.
- **SS.912.A.1.7** - Describe various socio-cultural aspects of American life including arts, artifacts, literature, education, and publications.

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- SS.912.H.1.1 - Relate works in the arts (architecture, dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) of varying styles and genre according to the periods in which they were created.
- SS.912.H.1.2 - Describe how historical events, social context, and culture impact forms, techniques, and purposes of works in the arts, including the relationship between a government and its citizens.
- SS.912.H.1.3 - Relate works in the arts to various cultures.
- SS.912.H.2.1 - Identify specific characteristics of works within various art forms (architecture, dance, film, literature, music, theatre, and visual arts).
- SS.912.H.2.2 - Classify styles, forms, types, and genres within art forms.
- SS.912.H.2.3 - Apply various types of critical analysis (contextual, formal, and intuitive criticism) to works in the arts, including the types and use of symbolism within art forms and their philosophical implications.
- SS.912.H.2.4 - Examine the effects that works in the arts have on groups, individuals, and cultures.
- SS.912.2.5 - Describe how historical, social, cultural, and physical settings influence an audience's aesthetic response.

Required Materials

- Access to the internet
- [VA document on the history of *Taps*](#) (includes sheet music to *Taps*)
- [Audio recording for *Taps*](#)
- [Audio recording of *Extinguish Lights*](#)
- Music notation software ([musescore.org](#) is a great free resource often used in music classrooms)
- Instruments (each student will use their own primary instrument)

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Gain an understanding of the history and purpose of *Taps*
- Compose a melody inspired by another melody
- Collaborate with a performer for a composition
- Compose a piece of music that honors and reflects upon the memory of Veterans who served our country

Procedure

1. Introduce topic to students by playing an audio recording of *Taps*
2. Go over the history of *Taps* in the VA document

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3. Compare and contrast *Extinguish Lights* to *Taps* and discuss the compositional development from the former to the latter
4. Provide guidance on how to revise a piece of music while keeping similarities to the original and producing results that make a unique composition
5. Discuss how *Taps* utilizes musical contour and space to bring about feelings of longing
6. Go over the importance of *Taps* for military families
7. Discuss how the relationship between a composer and a performer in the composing process (referencing Major General Butterfield and his Brigade Bugler)
8. Assign students in pairs for the assignment
9. Have students find a military bugle call from American history on the internet and revise it into a piece of music that honors and reflects US Veterans
10. Have students present their compositions through their performer partner to the class, and discuss the thought process behind their work

Day 1 - Introduction and History

1. Teacher plays a recording of *Taps* and asks students if they recognize the piece. Teacher follows up by explaining what the piece is and how it is used in American society (if not initially answered by a student).
 - a. Emphasize that it is used in military funerals and honors.
2. Teacher and students go over the history of *Taps* as outlined in the VA document.
 - a. It is important that students recognize the relationship between *Extinguish Lights* and *Taps*, as well as the simplicity used in *Taps*: Major chord, arpeggio, 24 notes, ascending and repeating figures, and the fact that it is performed on one instrument.
 - b. Optional: use the graphic organizer (see below) to have students organize their thoughts about the article.

Day 2 - Compositional Analysis and Comparison

1. Teacher plays *Extinguish Lights*.
2. Teacher guides students through an analysis of *Extinguish Lights* and *Taps*, and has students create a list of similarities and differences as a class through guided questioning. Important aspects are:
 - a. Similarities: Rhythmic figures (pickups into heavy beats), major harmony, only using notes within a major chord (omission of non-chord and neighboring tones).

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- c. Differences: Significant tempo difference, fermata usage, dynamics, musical contour, difference in length, emotional difference as a result of the technical differences (and how the typical contour of the phrases ascends until the climax, in which it never reaches the tonic of the octave above and descends back to its original phrase, similar to the longing for seeing a loved one again).
- d. Use the following graphic organizer once the discussion and student deductions are complete. It is inadvisable to show this to students until after completing discussion and student thought processes. Have students compare their own list to the one below.
 - i.

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Rhythmic figures (pickups into heavy beats)- Harmony- Only using notes within a major chord (omission of non-chord and neighboring tones)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Significant tempo difference- Fermata usage- Dynamics- Musical contour- Difference in length- Emotional difference as a result of the technical differences (and how the typical contour of the phrases ascends until the climax, in which it never reaches the tonic of the octave above and descends back to its original phrase, similar to the longing for seeing a loved one again)

3. Teacher and students discuss the importance of *Taps* and its effect on listeners through guided questioning. Here are some sample probing questions:
 - a. "How do you think *Taps* affects its military listeners? What do you think a service member would think about when listening to *Taps*?"
 - b. "How do you think *Taps* affects its military family and friends listeners? What do you think a friend or family member would think about when listening to *Taps*?"

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- c. "Knowing what listeners might be thinking about, why is it important to play *Taps*?"
- d. "Are there songs or practices utilized by you or someone you know in a time of grief or remembrance?"

Day 3 - Composing Process and Assignment

1. Teacher and students discuss the relationship between composer and performer during the composition process. Reference the relationship between Major General Butterfield and Brigade Bugler Norton. Go over:
 - a. Composers rely on performers to realize the limits and comforts of performing on their specific instrument.
 - b. Performers can give any kind of suggestion to the composer on the piece, but the composer has the final word on their piece of music.
2. Teacher assigns students in pairs. Each student will be a performer and a composer for one another.

Day 4 - Presentations

1. Students present their final products to the class. Rubric is as follows:
 - a. **Excellent:** Composer backs up their compositional choices by connecting their piece to their original selection with 3 supporting qualities and explains how their piece emotionally connects to their listeners.
 - b. **Good:** Composer backs up their compositional choices by connecting their piece to their original selection with 2 supporting qualities and explains how their piece emotionally connects to their listeners.
 - c. **Satisfactory:** Composer backs up their compositional choices by connecting their piece to their original selection with 1 supporting quality.
 - d. **Developing:** Composer does not back up their compositional choices by connecting their piece to their original selection nor do they explain how their piece emotionally connects to their audience.

Bibliography for Further Reading (Teacher and Student Use)

Taps Bugler. "To Extinguish Lights (L'Extinction des Feux) and Drum Taps." YouTube.com. Accessed July 11, 2024.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1msNphlelyU>

United States Navy Band. "*Taps*." YouTube.com. Accessed July 11, 2024.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WChTqYlDjtI>

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Villanueva, Jari. "24 Emotions that Tap Deep Emotions - The Story of *Taps*." U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington DC. Accessed July 11, 2024.
<https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/celebrate/taps.pdf>

“24 Notes that Tap Deep Emotions: The Story of Taps”

<p>At which three events are <i>Taps</i> used?</p>	
<p>What was <i>Taps</i> originally a signal for?</p>	
<p>What is the earlier Bugle call that Butterfield revised? What changes did he make?</p>	
<p>Summarize Oliver Willcox Norton's experience with <i>Taps</i>.</p>	
<p>When was the first time <i>Taps</i> was played at a military funeral?</p>	
<p>What do you think are the most important components of <i>Taps</i>? List three.</p>	



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Extinguish Lights Versus Taps

Listen to both songs and list their similarities and differences below.

Similarities	Differences



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