

# Peter and the Wolf Curriculum Guide

*Music, Science, History, Geography, Art, Math & Language Arts*



## *Peter and the Wolf*

## HISTORY CURRICULUM GUIDE

- The Russian Revolution of 1917 had a significant effect on everyone including artists and musicians. Prokofiev was greatly concerned with the political unrest in Russia and the effect it would have on his career. He was also interested in seeking professional opportunities outside his native country, and in 1918, traveled to the United States. He remained abroad for 20 years, accepting commissions from ballet and opera companies (first in the US and then in Europe) and also performing concerts in several other countries.
- After the revolution, Joseph Stalin took control of Russia beginning in the late 1920's and remained in power until his death in 1953. During his rule, everything was controlled by the state including the creation of art and music. In the 1930s the Soviet government created a "Composers' Union" to keep foreign influences out of Soviet music. This union also kept a close watch over composers to make sure their work followed the government's demands-traditional Russian music with Russian themes and elements. No new or different music was allowed, and only composers who followed these rules would have their music endorsed by the government and performed.
- Prokofiev had become somewhat more traditional in his composing over the years. After weighing the decision to either compromise with Russian authorities by sticking with traditional ideas, or be true to some of his more nontraditional musical ideas, did he decide to conform (to some extent) to the Soviet influence. "Peter and the Wolf"

certainly fit with the more traditional style, and was written the year Prokofiev returned to his native land in 1936.

## LINKS

- Watch [this link](#) of pictures and advertisements from the time of the Russian Revolution. The song, a Russian patriotic march, is sung by the Russian Army Chorus and has an interesting history which you can find [here](#).
- Learn more about Prokofiev at [Kids Music Corner](#)

## QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

- What would it be like as an artist or composer to be forced to follow the government's rules in order to create? Would you follow their restrictions so that you could stay in your homeland, or move to a place that allowed you freedom to create what you wanted? Discuss.

- The Disney movie *Anastasia* tells the fictional tale of a girl who is the only surviving member of the Russian royal family after the revolution. (In actuality, no member of the royal family survived.) Rent the movie and watch it with your class or family.



## **SCIENCE CURRICULUM GUIDE**

- Sound is created by vibration. Pluck a stretched rubber band, tap lightly on a glass, blow across a bottle. Each of these makes a unique sound through vibrating materials or air, and the vibrations travel to your ear in waves.
- Pitch is determined by how fast an object vibrates- the faster the vibration, the higher the note. Did you ever wonder why adults have lower voices than children? Or why your dad and grandfather have lower voices than your mom and grandmother? Bigger things, or instruments, vibrate more slowly and have lower sounds than smaller ones. A piccolo sounds higher than a flute, a violin sounds higher

than a cello, etc. Peter's theme (on the strings) is higher than the grandfather's theme (on the bassoon) to show that Peter is younger and smaller than his grandfather. Wouldn't it be silly if their sounds were reversed?

## ACTIVITIES

- Stretch a small rubber band between your fingers and pluck it. Try the same thing with a longer, thicker rubber band. What do you notice?
- Play on a xylophone. Tap the lowest note and the highest note. Notice the difference in size.
- Sing a siren sound with an "oo" vowel. Lighten your voice and see how high you can go and then slide down to the lowest you can go. Now have your sibling or a friend try. Who can sing the highest in your family? The lowest?
- Watch [this video](#) to learn about how sound is produced and how it travels (choose the "Study of Sound" video).
- Choose an animal from the story (bird, duck, cat, or wolf) and find out more about it. What kind of animal is it? What are its characteristics? What does it eat and in what environment does it live? Draw a picture of it and read books about it.

## GEOGRAPHY CURRICULUM GUIDE

- Prokofiev was a 20th century Soviet composer- many say the best of his time. He was born in a part of Russia which is now an independent country - the Ukraine. He was a child prodigy, much like Mozart, though he was somewhat of a musical rebel and his music wasn't always accepted immediately! He traveled extensively both for musical reasons and political ones, but his homeland always held a special place in his heart.

### ACTIVITIES

- Print out a map and trace Prokofiev's travel route over his 20 years abroad. Use a small sticker or a stamp to mark each location and then number them and connect them with a ruler: Petrograd (St. Petersburg), Siberia, Tokyo, New

York, Chicago, Paris, London, Berlin, Brussels, Moscow. (Prokofiev certainly performed in more cities than listed, and visited many of them more than once. This is just an overview of some of his significant career travels.)

- Visit [this site](#) to find traditional Ukrainian games, holiday information and a recipe for traditional potato pancakes.
- Make your own lapbook of Russia using the resources on [this website](#). Links include counting in Russian, songs and poems of Russia, children's folk games, animals and plants of Russia, and more.
- More Russian resources at "[The Homeschool Mom](#)".
- Links to a [Russian recipe](#) and [Ukrainian songs](#).

## LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM GUIDE

- Choose one of the characters in Peter and the Wolf to portray. Write a [monologue](#) for you to present as your character explaining the story from your perspective. Describe what you see, hear, feel and think. Tell what you think about each of the other characters. Practice your monologue and dramatically read it to your family and friends.
- What if Peter hadn't caught the wolf? Write a different ending for the story. Use your imagination and make it your own. Explain how you would change the mood of the music to reflect the new ending. Would you change any instruments in any of the themes? Play them slower or faster, softer or louder? Think creatively, like a composer, to add to the drama of the ending you choose.

### RUSSIAN & UKRAINIAN FOLK STORIES

- ["The Wolf and the Kids"](#) (Ukrainian folk tale)
- Links to many [Russian folk tales](#)
- Russian nesting dolls (Matryoshka) had their origin with [this story](#).

### ACTIVITIES

- Choose a favorite story of your own- pick an instrument for each character. Perhaps make instruments using materials from around your house. Explain why you think the instruments would match each character. Put on a musical play for family and friends. Use these suggestions or links below for ideas:

- Make instruments of your own: [Instrument-making activities](#) for preschoolers; dozens of instrument-making ideas can be found here including guitars, percussion instruments, flutes and more.
- Ideas for stories to use (many can be found in your local library)
  - Beatrix Potter "Squirrel Nutkin"
  - Beatrix Potter "The Tale of Peter Rabbit"
  - "The Story About Ping" by Marjorie Flack and Kurt Wiese
  - "Ferdinand" by Munro Leaf and Robert Lawson
  - "Knufflebunny" by Mo Willems
  - "Going on a Bear Hunt" ([traditional story](#))
  - "The Little Red Hen" ([traditional story](#))
- The Russian language uses the Cyrillic alphabet. You can see the Cyrillic alphabet on this [webpage](#) along with the equivalent sounds (or approximate sounds, in some cases) in English. If you want a challenge, see this [puzzle page](#). Begin at the top left corner, read each word with its "clue". If you follow in order you will make it through the whole Cyrillic alphabet by the end of the page! (Answers are at the end of this unit study.)





## ART CURRICULUM GUIDE

[Wassily Kandinsky](#) (1866-1944) was a Russian painter, a contemporary of Prokofiev. He was fascinated with the power that music had over its listeners and thought music was a superior form of art to visual art. He felt that music, since it disappeared once played and you couldn't "see" it, tapped into the inner emotions and imagination more fully than painting, drawing or sculpture. Kandinsky moved from representational art (that has a definite image or subject that you can recognize, like [this painting](#)) to abstract art (with fewer to no recognizable images, like [this painting](#)) as his art progressed.

### ACTIVITIES

- Get a book of Kandinsky's art out of the library and copy a painting that you find most interesting. Or look at [this website](#) for a catalogue of his paintings.
- Make a [color wheel](#) and learn about primary, secondary, and complementary colors. (There are some activities and information about color wheels and color mixing [here](#) and [here](#), and a lesson about complementary colors on the [Crayola website](#).) Draw or paint something using what you learned about colors.

- Make your own [Egg Matryoshka Dolls](#).

## MUSIC CURRICULUM GUIDE

- Many composers in Russia around the time of Prokofiev wanted to create music that sounded very “Russian”. They were very proud of and inspired by their country. They used folk tunes, unusual scales, and techniques of their native land to create compositions that reminded their fellow Russians of the uniqueness of their country. One specific group of these “nationalistic” composers was called the Moguchaya Kuchka- “Mighty Handful”, or “Russian Five”. Their names were Mily Balakirev, Cesar Cui (pronounced kyew-ee), Modest Mussorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and Alexander Borodin. They were, in some instances, privately taught and most had other careers prior to, or concurrent with, their musical ones.
- The men in Trio Voronezh on the CD use three Russian folk instruments: the domra, balalaika and the bayan. The [domra](#) is a stringed instrument in the lute family. The most common one has three strings and it is often used to play the lead melody in folk ensembles. The [bayan](#) is a type of accordion with buttons instead of a keyboard. See a virtuoso bayan player on this [video](#). The [balalaika](#) is a triangular shaped string instrument also with three strings. There are many sizes of balalaika, from a tiny, seldom-used piccolo instrument to the large bass instrument with an endpin like a cello which is played by a member of the Trio Voronezh. Watch this [video](#) to see another balalaika player.

## ACTIVITIES

- Listen to music of any of these composers. Get CDs from the library or purchase them as MP3s from iTunes or another store. Here are some good suggestions with which to begin: Mussorgsky's "[Pictures at an Exhibition](#)" - This set of pieces is programmatic music, meaning it was composed to represent actual objects. In this case, paintings Mussorgsky saw. Draw a picture while you listen to some of these pieces. Rimsky-Korsakov's "[Russian Easter Overture](#)" See if you can identify the instruments as you listen. Borodin, selection from the opera "[Prince Igor](#)".
- Here's a [website](#) with many instruments to make on your own. (K+)
- Russian folk songs/dance videos- [Kalinka](#) & [Kalinka by the Russian Army Choir](#)
- Links to other songs/works by Prokofiev- [Sarcasms for piano](#) (quite different from Peter and the Wolf, isn't it?), [March from "Love for Three Oranges"](#), [Symphony #1 "Classical"](#).

## PROGRAM MUSIC & ABSOLUTE MUSIC

- Program music is music that tells a story or is associated specifically with something outside the music (a painting, character or event). Peter and the Wolf is obviously wonderfully-composed program music. Absolute music, in contrast, is music that was simply written for its own sake, without trying to express anything but the music itself. In visual art, paintings, drawings or sculpture that do not try to represent something specific are called "abstract". Wassily Kandinsky (mentioned above) thought that art should be able to exist for its own sake - simply for color, line and

shape- just like music can. Listen to these examples of program music and absolute music:

### Examples of Program Music

- \* Symphonie Fantastique "[March to the Scaffold](#)" \*
- Vivaldi "[4 Seasons](#)"- Winter
- \* Holst "[The Planets](#)"- Mars, the Bringer of War
- \* Eric Whitacre "[Cloudburst](#)" Listen to the storm toward the middle and end of this piece.
- \* Beethoven Symphony #6, mvt. 4 "[Storm](#)"

### Examples of Absolute Music

- \* [Chopin etude](#)
- \* Rachmaninoff "[Vocalise](#)" (by a fellow Russian)
- \* Mozart [Symphony 40](#)
- \* Brahms [Symphony 1](#)

• Each instrument in the symphony orchestra has a unique sound. You hear many of these as "characters" in Peter and the Wolf- Peter's theme is played by the strings, the cat's by the clarinet, the duck's by the oboe, the bird's by the flute, the grandfather's by the bassoon, the wolf's by the french horns, and the hunters' by the timpani. To study the instruments in the orchestra further, visit these links:

- \* [Arts Alive Instrument Lab](#) - explore the instruments in the orchestra
- \* [New York Phil](#) - interactive site to hear and study instruments and their sounds
- \* A [quiz](#) on the sounds of the orchestral instruments
- \* Curreclick [musical instrument families cards](#) (free)
- \* Montessori materials - [instrument and composer cards](#) (fee)
- \* [Peter and the Wolf](#) with themes (scroll down to play each

character's theme)

## MATH CURRICULUM GUIDE

- Prokofiev wasn't just passionate about music; he was also crazy about chess. He followed the world of chess and chess champions very closely, and was even famous for once beating a friend of his, famous chess champion Jose Raul Capablanca. Do you know how to play chess? If you don't, now's a perfect time to learn!
- [Chess for Kids](#) This link includes rules of play and printable, make-your-own chessboard and pieces.
- Read more about Prokofiev and his passion for chess on [this website](#).

