

It's All About Birds!

Grade 8 Art and Music

I. Introduction to Birds

With feathers that make them unique and wings that lift them into the air (or that once lifted them into the air), birds are everywhere! Birds come in a variety of colors, sizes, and shapes, are found on all continents, and live in nearly all habitats. Throughout history, birds have been an inspiration in art and music, no doubt due in part to the fact that birds are everywhere people are, as well as because of birds' beauty, and their varied appearances and sounds.

II. Birds in Art and Culture

Grade 8

Standard 2:1 – Recognize and describe the cultural and ethnic traditions which have influenced visual art including European, American, Native American, African American, Hispanic, and Asian traditions.

Birds have been used symbolically in many different cultures. In Western Civilization, the dove is representative of peace. In many regions, the stork has been a symbol of childbirth. In ancient Egypt, Horus was a god with the head of a falcon, and Thoth was portrayed as an ibis. In Japanese culture, the crane symbolizes good luck, long life and marriage.

This symbolism of a particular bird has influenced local artists and has led to the popularity of art pieces containing certain birds. In Japan, artwork containing cranes is commonplace because of the good fortune they symbolize.

For Native Americans, animal totems were an artistic and important part of each person's life. Many birds, as well as other animals, were used to represent particular character traits. A totem was a very personal spiritual item. The animals used in a totem were indicative of a close relationship, affinity, or common characteristics to the totem's owner.

Activity: Origami Crane

Objective: Students are introduced to an ancient Japanese art form and cultural symbolism.

Materials: *Origami Paper
[Origami Crane Instructions](#)

*A square piece of paper can be substituted; however construction paper is too thick to fold easily.

Procedure:

1) See [Origami Crane Instructions](#)

Activity: Native American Totems

Objective: Students are familiarized with Native American cultural symbolism of birds and other animals through the construction of personal totems.

Materials: [Symbolic Meanings of Animals](#) chart
*Art Supplies

*The versatility of this activity allows you to adapt it to fit into your curriculum. Totems can be sketched, painted, carved from wood, made of clay, etc.

Procedure:

- 1) Display or distribute Symbolic Meanings of Animals. Discuss with students how Native American tribes associated an animal with certain character traits.
- 2) Discuss the significance of personal totems in Native American culture and how they would impact their lives.
- 3) Encourage students to choose animals to which they relate or that they admire for their own totem. Allow personal meanings/interpretations of animals traits in addition to traits listed on the Symbolic Meanings of Animals chart.

III. Birds in Music

Grade 8

[Standard 1:1 – Notate \(written representation of music\) simple pitch and rhythm patterns presented aurally \(listening\).](#)

[Standard 1:2 – Experiment with variation in and demonstrate understanding of tempo \(speed\), tone quality \(sound quality\), dynamics \(degree of loudness\) and phrasing for expressive purpose in performing music.](#)

[Standard 1:3 – Identify basic notational symbols \(written representation of music\), including: treble and bass clef, time signatures \(2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 6/8\); note values \(whole note, half note, quarter note, eighth note, dotted half note, dotted quarter note, and the corresponding rests\).](#)

Birds use vocalizations, in combination with behaviors, to locate each other, attract mates, proclaim and defend territory, and to convey danger. Males tend to sing more often than females and the frequency increases during breeding season. Birds use a vocal organ, called a syrinx, in their throat to produce vocalizations. The syrinx has two halves, which can produce sounds simultaneously, allowing a bird to sing harmonies with himself. This is something that human voices can not duplicate.

Many composers and musicians have been inspired by bird songs and have incorporated them into their creations.

Activity: Bird Songs

Objective: Expose students to the use of birds in music throughout history. Students will then listen to bird songs in order create and compose their own musical interpretations.

Materials: Examples of Birds in Music

[Kircher handout](#)

Audio samples of songs

Procedure:

- 1) Expose students to various samples of music inspired by the songs of birds.

Examples of Birds in Music:

Musurgia Universalis (excerpts from) Athanasius Kircher

The Lark Ascending by Ralph Vaughan Williams

The Birds by Ottorino Respighi

The Hen by Rameau

The Goldfinch by Vivaldi

The Cuckoo and the Nightingale by Handel

Field Book of Wild Birds and Their Music by F. Schuyler Mathews

The Pastorale, Sixth Symphony, Second Movement by Beethoven

Cantus Arcticus, Concerto for Birds and Orchestra by Einojuhani Rautavaara

Various works by Oliver Messiaen

- 2) Have students listen to recordings of bird songs as well as live in nature. Instruct them to pay attention to characteristics such as rhythm, tone, pitch, and tempo of the bird songs.

Audio tapes or CDs:

Petersons Field Guide on Audio

Thayer Birding CDs

National Geographic Society's Guide to Birds Sounds

Common Birds and Their Songs by Lang Elliot and Marie Read

Online resources:

www.learnbirdsongs.com/

www.math.sunysb.edu/~tony/birds/

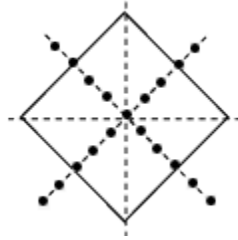
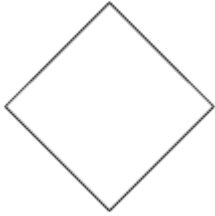
www.naturesongs.com/birds.html

- 3) Show and discuss a sample of [Athanasius Kircher's](#) interpretation of bird songs. Also, www.math.sunysb.edu/~tony/birds/music/intro.html has audio files and corresponding sheet music of bird songs and their transcriptions.
- 4) Have students choose one bird, and create their own interpretation of its song or call, incorporating observations they made of the bird's song or call characteristics. Each student should write sheet music and be able to sing or play their interpretation.

Note: Be sure to have them note the species of bird that inspired them, its appearance, its geographical range, and a sample of its song.

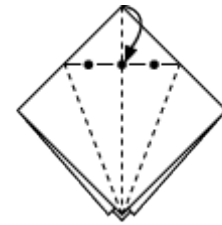
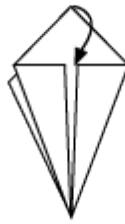
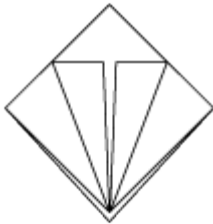
Make Your Very Own Flying Origami Crane

Follow these simple steps:



1&2. Using a square piece of paper fold away on the dashed line, and forwards on the dot-dashed line. If using a piece of paper colored on one side only, begin with colored side face down.

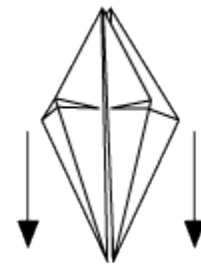
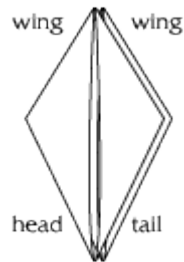
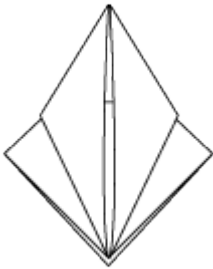
3. Now fold along all three creases at once.



4. Fold two edges in, to form a kite-shape on top.

5. Do the same thing on the other side.

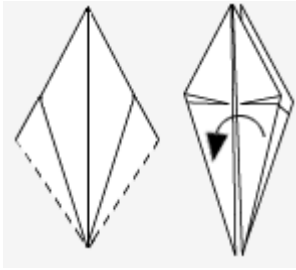
6. Fold the point down and crease above the other two folds. Undo the folds you made in steps 4 and 5.



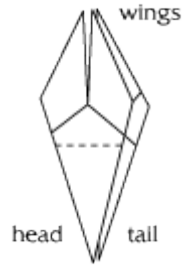
7. Pull the bottom corner (top layer only) up above the top corner. Fold along the creases you made in steps 4 and 5.

8. Do the same thing on the other side. The top flaps are the wings and the bottom flaps are the neck and tail.

9. Fold one edge on each side as in step 4. This makes the neck and tail thinner.



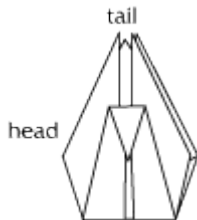
10. Do the same thing on the other side.



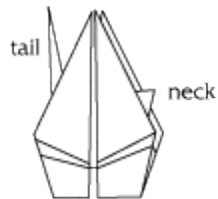
11. Fold the right top flap over along the centerline to lay on top of the left flap like turning the page of a book. Flip over and repeat on other side.



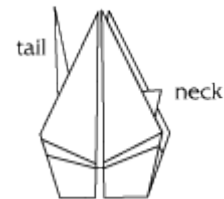
12. Fold up the neck and the tail as far as you can on each side.



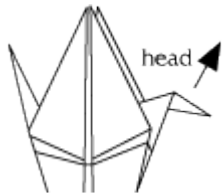
13. Fold the head down.



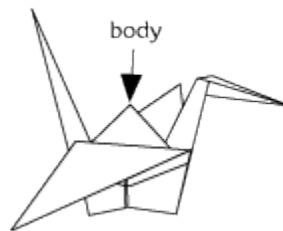
14. Repeat step 11.



15. Pull the neck and tail out and down a so they are not vertical.



16. Pull the head out and up so it's not parallel to the neck.



17. Pull the wings straight out from the body so that the body inflates or you can blow through a hole in the underside.



Finished!

Symbolic Meanings of Animals

(from various Native American cultures)



Birds	Mammals	Weasel – Stealth, Information Gatherer
Bird (general) – Unity, Freedom, Community	Armadillo – Self Protection	Whale – Record Keeper, Traveler, Guardian
Crow – Illusion, Gateway to Supernatural	Badger – Aggressiveness, Passion	Wolf – Teacher, Wisdom, Loyalty, Independence
Crane – Independence	Bat – Death and Rebirth on Personal, Spiritual Level	Insects
Dove – Love, Gentleness, Kindness	Bear – Gentleness, Strength	Ant – Patience, Teamwork
Eagle – Spirit, Courage	Beaver – Accomplishment, Building	Bee – Unity, Community
Falcon – Adventurous, Passion, Leadership	Buffalo – Good Fortune, Healing	Bumblebee – Honesty, Driven, Willingness
Goose – Safe Return, Love of Home	Cougar – Swiftiness, Power, Wisdom	Butterfly – Grace, Balance, Transformation
Gull – Carefree, Versatility, Freedom	Coyote – Humor, Trickster, Charm	Cricket – Spring, Singing, Fertility
Hawk (general) – Strength, Foresight, Truth	Deer – Gentleness, Compassion, Kindness	Dragonfly – Dreamer, Illusions, Carefree
Heron – Patience, Grace	Dog – Protection, Loyalty	Firefly – Communication, Illumination
Hummingbird – Love, Joy, Devotion	Dolphin – Joy, Playfulness, Intelligence	Ladybug – Delight, Trust
Loon – Peace, Tranquility, Generosity	Elk – Stamina, Pride, Power, Majesty	Other Animals
Owl (general) – Clairvoyance, Insight, Deception	Fox – Adaptability, Cunning	Alligator – Stealth, Survival
Parrot – Communicator, Beauty, Mocker	Horse – Physical and Spiritual Power, Bearer of Burdens	Cobra – Swift, Decisive
Peacock – Pride, Self Assurance	Lion – Pride, Nobility, Cunning, Courage	Fish (general) – Graceful, Sly, Open-minded
Pelican – Abundance, Plenty	Moose – Assertiveness, Self Confidence	Frog – Cleansing, Renewal
Pheasant – Warning, Concealment	Mouse – Scrutiny, Attention to Detail	Lizard (general) – Dreaming, Foresight
Quail – Protectiveness, Group Harmony	Opossum – Strategy, Diversion	Salmon – Dependability, Persistence
Raven – Magic, Creation, Knowledge	Otter – Curiosity, Grace, Empathy	Scorpion – Defense, Self Protection, Truth
Roadrunner – Speed, Agility	Porcupine – Innocence, Trust	Seahorse – Confidence, Grace
Rooster – Vanity, Perfectionist	Raccoon – Curiosity, Inquisitiveness	Shark – Survival, Adaptability
Sandpiper – Foraging, Scavenging, Quickness	Ram – Strength, Determination	Snail – Perseverance, Determination
Swan – Grace, Innocence	Seal – Inquisitiveness, Organization, Contentment	Snake (general) – Transformation, Life
Turkey – Sacrifice	Skunk – Reputation, Respect, Caution	Spider – Creative
Woodpecker – Change, Persistence	Squirrel – Gathering, Preparation, Thrift	Turtle (general) – Shy, Protection, Nurturing



Musurgia Universalis

Athanasius Kircher

The nightingale's song is given first, followed by those of the cock, the hen laying eggs and calling her chicks, the cuckoo, quail and parrot; the latter says "Hello" in Greek. The cockerel's music has the familiar portamento at the end of each phrase; as usual the cuckoo's call is notated as a falling minor third.

