Major Theme of this Unit:

-to understand the elements of American music through the music of American composer Aaron Copland
-to recognize the influence of jazz and “cowboy” music in several selections of Copland’s music
-to learn the background of Aaron Copland and to study his music through dance, arts, song, dance and poetry.

-Essential Question: What are the characteristics of American music? How did the early 1900’s influence the art and music of New York?

Specific Content:
Follow-up activities
Read stories of jazz, , sing American folk songs (O’Suzanna, Turkey in the Straw, Skip to My Lou, Polly Wolly Doodly, Great Grandad), listen to other compositions by Aaron Copland

- Copland’s life and style of ‘American” music
- quality of sound pieces, poems and dance
- “cowboy” music with song and dance for assembly

Specific Skills:
1. listen to and analyze the themes in “Circus Music” from “The Red Pony”, “Hoe Down” from “Rodeo”, and “Simple Gifts” from “Appalachian Springs”
2. read biography of Aaron Copland from Mike Venezia
3. analyze art works related to Aaron Copland’s music-Mondrian “Broadway Boogie Woogie” and Seurat’s “Circus”
4. create a sound piece based on their observations of art works
5. sing “Good Bye Old Paint”, “Simple Gifts” and “Git Along Little Dogies”
6. perform a partner dance for the Hoe-Down
7. Read “The Barn Dance” story
8. Write acrostic poetry about “Rodeo” using the name Aaron Copland
9. Visit an art museum to study the art related to these units
10. Attend a concert of Aaron Copland’s music

Standards;
- singing
- playing instruments
- composing and arranging music within specified guidelines
- improvising melodies
- listening to, analyzing and describing music
- understanding relationships between music, the other arts and disciplines outside the arts
- understanding music in relation to history and culture

Primary Materials;
Aaron Copland’s “Rodeo” and “Appalachian Spring”
Posters of Art: Mondrian’s “Broadway Boogie Woogie”, Seurat’s “Circus”
Text or song resources used in lesson
“Git Along Little Dogies”, “Night Herding Song”, “Simple Gifts”, “Goodbye Old Paint”
traditional cowboy songs and shaker melody-Making Music Your Own -Book 3
Books-Mike Venezia’s Aaron Copland
Books-Barn Dance By Bill Maring Jr. and John Archambault -Henry Holt and Co. NY
Books on Shaker background with photographs

Aaron Copland is sometimes called the “All American composer”. He was born in Brooklyn, New York at the same time that another distinguished composer George Gershwin was born, also from Brooklyn. Both composers wrote music influenced by the new age of jazz.

A lot of new art forms were developing at this time. The famous Mondrian “Broadway Boogie Woogie” shows the New York excitement of the time.
The ghetto section of Brooklyn where Aaron lived for 20 years was the least likely place to become musical. His family did not play any music. They were immigrants who escaped Lithuania to seek religious freedom and a better life. Although Aaron’s siblings studied instruments, Aaron was the only one who was serious about music and begged his parents for more music education. It took him six months to learn what took his brother eight years to learn.

“The idea of becoming a composer was entirely original with me. On one ever connected music with my family or with my street.” At 21 years old, he went to France to study in a new school of music just for Americans. There he met Nadia Boulanger, the most renowned teacher of musical composition, who took him on as her student. For three years he studied composition, orchestration and score reading with her. She encouraged him to compose in his own style.

Aaron returned to Pennsylvania in 1924. Nadia Boulanger commissioned him to write a symphony with organ accompaniment which she premiered with the New York Symphony Orchestra on January 11, 1925. He later performed the same symphony with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Serge Koussevitsky. Koussevitsky asked Aaron to compose another new work of modern concert music. *Music for the Theatre* and *Jazz Concerto* were two pieces that incorporated a lot of jazz idioms.

Copland’s music became very complex, and not so popular with audiences. He began to simplify his compositions and wrote *El Salon Mexico* in 1936, after a visit to Mexico. The catchy rhythms and popular Mexican tunes made this piece a smashing success.
A mosaic mural by the Mexican artist Diego Rivera

Aaron Copland wrote music for TV, radio, movies as well as his symphony concerts. His music for films include “Of mice and Men” and “Our Town”. His ballet music was the most famous. He wrote music for three ballets; Billy the Kid, Rodeo and Appalachian Spring. This last piece has themes of a Shaker melody called “Simple Gifts”.

Copland recognized the importance of writing music that everyone would recognize as American music. The American folk themes in his music became a distinctive part of his later compositions. Church hymns, jazz, folk songs and cowboy ballads, were all trademarks of his music-the whole crazy-quilt of American popular music. Other traits are his angular melodies, exciting jazz-like rhythms, and changing meters.

Unlike many composers who died very poor and unappreciated, Aaron Copland received many honors; an award from President Johnson, honorary degrees from 26 universities and a Pulitzer Prize for Appalachian Spring. He became an educator and directed the Berkshire Music Festival at Tanglewood, Massachusetts.

Aaron Copland-Biography and Dance

Lesson Plan # ___1_ of ___5_ plans.

Objectives of this Lesson Plan:
-to introduce students to Aaron Copland and learn about his biography
-to listen to Rodeo and identify the “American” sounds-jazz and cowboy melodies
-to learn a partner dance for the “Hoe-Down”

Materials used:
Procedures:

1. Tell the class that they will hear music by an American composer, and that they have to listen for what makes this music sound “American” to them

2. Discuss the elements of syncopation in jazz and have the class clap a syncopated rhythm as they listen again to the music

3. Listen for sounds of cowboy rhythms in the music of the hoedown—the galloping off-beats

4. Read the story of Aaron Copland in the Venezia book

5. Discuss the story of Rodeo, and the purpose of the “Hoe-Down” barn dance. This music is considered the “ballet of the West” with cowboy themes of an old-fashioned rodeo. Throughout the American Southwest, the Saturday afternoon rodeo is a tradition. The cowboy ‘hands’ get together to show off their skills in roping, riding, branding and throwing. This show is often followed by a night of dance at the ranch house.

6. Listen for the girl showing off her riding skills, her falling off the horse, the slowing down of the music, and speeding up as she gets back on her horse for the competition.

7. Have the children find a partner to perform the dance. Children can dress up in hats, boots, bandanas, wide skirts, plaid tops etc.

Choreography: these steps can be stretched out to fit the music filling in with bounces and snaps, but when the music slows down, make sure the partners are falling.

Two rows of partners facing each other

Introduction:
- bounce in place and snap fingers to the beat

Theme 1
- walk towards each other 4 steps, clap hands, and then walk back four
- walk forward and do-si-do
- walk forward and link right elbows to skip around in place
- repeat and link left elbows
Theme 2
form a circle from the two rows by joining hands.
skip to the right 16 beats
have one student start a snake formation that circles inward then outward

Theme 3
go back to standing in two rows of partners facing
head couple saches up and down the aisle, then walks their row around to the end of the line
forming a bridge for all the partners to walk through

Interlude
the music slows down and one row acts like they are falling down slow
motion while the other row shouts out “hi-yah” and pretends to “lasso”
the row that was shouting slowly picks up their partner, and finds a spot
on the stage where he will not bump into another partner

Theme 1
As the music picks up again, the partners do a polka for a few measures, then
one partner kneels down while the other one skips around him.

Coda
the partners face front and stay with one kneeling down, one up next to him and hold up their
hands as a finale.

7. After the children perform the dance, let them relax as they listen to the story of “The Barn Dance”

Indicators of success:
-the ability to perform the dance after several rehearsals.
-the ability to answer questions about the elements of American music in Rodeo

Lesson Plan Title: Poetry-“Rodeo”

Lesson Plan # 2 of 5 plans.

Objectives of this Lesson Plan:
To create a poem based on the story and music of “Hoe-Down” from Rodeo

Materials used:
Recording of “Hoe-Down” from Rodeo by Aaron Copland
Paper and pens

Procedures:

1. Listen to the “Hoe-Down” section of the music and write down some suggestive words describing the music and the action

2. Review the story of the ballet and review the dance steps
3. Discuss the poetic form of an Acrostic

4. Draw the letters of AARON COPLAND on the chalkboard and have the class fill in a few lines together

5. Let each child write his own acrostic poem and share with the class.

Examples of grade five students:

Come-look at the show
Of all the horses
Please take time to enter the doors. You’ll absolutely
Love it.
A rodeo is happy
Not dull.
Dance with the lively music

Carried on a horse
Oops-she falls
Patiently, she tries again even though she fell before
Luckily, the horse was not wild
And she is happy
Nothing can stop her
Dancing on the horse.

Clicking percussion
Or are they horses’ hooves?
Prancing in the ring
Lassos, calves, bleating, whining  
And clumsily falling, but-do  
Not give up-get right up and show them  
Do my girl-be strong.

Lesson Plan Title: “Billy the Kid”-cowboy songs

Lesson Plan # 3 of 5 plans.

Objectives of this Lesson Plan:
-to identify cowboy songs in “Billy the Kid”
-to sing several cowboy songs with rhythmic accompaniment

Materials used:
-recording of “Billy the Kid”
-song sheets of “Old Chisolm Trail”,
-claves and coconut shells

Procedures:

1. Discuss Aaron Copland’s music for the ballet-describe “Billy the Kid” and show pictures from the ballet.

2. Sing “The Old Chisolm Trail”, “Goodbye Old Paint” and “The Night Herdin; Song”
Night Herding Song

Refrain

Good-bye, ol’ Paint, I’m a-leavin’ Cheyenne, Good-bye, ol’ Paint, I’m a-leavin’ Cheyenne.

1. My foot in the stirrup, my pony won’t stan’, I’m a-
2. I’m rid’in’ ol’ Paint and I’m lead’in’ ol’ Dan, Good-
3. My foot in the stirrup the bridle in han’, I’m a-

leavin’ Cheyenne an’ I’m off for Montan’.

by, little Annie, I’m off for Montan’.

leavin’ Cheyenne an’ I’m off for Montan’.
Slowly

1. Oh say, little dogies, quit roving around, You've wandered and trampled all
2. Oh, lay down, my dogies, quit shifting around, Just stretch away out on the

over the ground. Oh, graze along, dogies, and big, open ground. My horse is legweary and

move kinda slow, And don't be forever so I'm awful tired, If you get away, then I'll

much on the go, Move slow, little dogies, move surely be fired. Oh, lay down, my dogies, lay

slow. Hi-o, hi-o, hi-o.
down. Hi-o, hi-o, hi-o.
3. Identify these melodies in “Billy the Kid”

4. Sing other cowboy songs such as “Great Grandad” using rhythm sticks and coconut shells to keep the loping rhythm.

5. Use these songs and the dance from “Rodeo” for a performance

Indicators of success:
-the ability to sing these songs fluently and sustain an accompanying rhythm

Lesson Plan Title: “Appalachian Spring”-The Shakers-song and analysis

Lesson Plan # __4_ of __5__ plans.

Objectives of this Lesson Plan:
-to learn the melodic theme of “Simple Gifts” from“Appalachian Spring” Materials used:
-to identify the four variations of this theme in the music
-to identify the instruments used in each variation
-to play an accompanying xylophone bourdon pattern
-to sing the song of “Simple Gifts”

Procedures:

1. Discuss the Copland’s ballet music “Appalachian Spring” and the song “Simple Gifts”. The story tells of frontier life of a 19th century American pioneer couple from a religious sect known as Shakers. The Shakers, called that because of their dancing and shaking during prayer, lived a simple, sacred and gentle life. “A place for everything and everything in its place” was their motto.
Their designs for buildings and tools were always for a practical purpose. The famous round barn at Hancock, Mass. was so efficiently planned that a single brother could take care of an entire herd of cattle.

2. Show the music with words for “Simple Gifts” and sing the song

‘Tis the gift to be simple, ‘tis the gift to be free, ‘tis the gift to come down where you ought to be, and when we find ourselves in the place just right, ‘twill be in the valley of love and delight. When true simplicity is gained, to bow and to bend we shan’t be ashamed. To turn, turn will be our delight, Till by turning, turning we come round right.
3. Sing the song and play an accompanying F and C bourdon on the xylophones.

4. Listen to the section of the music with the “Simple Gifts” melody and ask how many times the melody is played.

5. Describe each variation and write down which instruments play in each section.
   -discuss dynamics, tempo and timbre.

6. Display pictures of the woodwinds, brass and strings.

   Indicators of success:
   -children raise their hand each time they hear the melody of “Simple Gifts” repeat
   -students can sing the song alone and with the recording

   Comments and Additional Material
   Read books on Shaker life style and furniture such as “The Story of the Shakers” by Morse Flo, Countryman Press 1986.
Lesson Plan Title: Instrumental Improvisation: “Circus Music” from the “Red Pony”

Lesson Plan # 5 of 5 plans.

Objectives of this Lesson Plan:
-to study art work with the theme of circus from Copland’s ballet “The Red Pony”
-to recreate an instrumental composition describing the art scene.

Materials used:
-poster of Seurat’s “Circus” and other circus pictures
-variety of percussion instruments
-music of “Circus Music” from “The Red Pony”

Procedures:

1. Display the poster of art and ask the children to describe what they see, how they feel and any other details of the scenes
2. Discuss the story of “The Red Pony” Aaron Copland wrote music for the movie called \textit{The Red Pony}, a novel by John Steinbeck that was later put into a suite of pieces for children. The story is about a 10-year-old boy, Jody, and his friendship with a pony. Jody lives in California on a ranch with his grandfather, his mother and father, and a cowhand, Billy Buck, who knows everything about horses. One day, Jody’s father surprises him with a gift of a red pony. Jody is so happy. He names the horse “Gabilan” meaning hawk. Billy Buck gives him a red saddle and shows him how to care for the horse. At night, Jody dreams about the wonderful things he will do with his horse. In the movie, Jody has a dream about performing in a circus with his pony. He cracks his whip as the pony does his tricks in the center ring.

3. Act out the music with juggling, tight-rope walkers, bows and other clown mimes.
- guide the class to the ABA sections of the music

4. Discuss a circus and the acts as seen in the poster

5. Divide the class into small groups

6. Have the children choose instruments to “paint” a picture of the art work

7. Make sure the composition has a beginning, middle and an end.

8. Create an ostinato pattern with the xylophones
9. Be expressive, make sounds for clapping, horse gallops etc

10. The composition can be written down with creative notation

11. Choose a conductor and perform the composition for the class

12. Tape record the performance and play it back for the students to enjoy and critique

Indicators of success:
-evaluation of performance of each group.