

Teacher Guide: The Grand Finale

Year 6 · Unit 6

Introduction

This teacher guide identifies musical learning and presents **I can statements** to support assessment. The **I can statements** show what successful learning looks like for teachers and feels like for children. The guide provides an **overview** of the unit content, the resources needed to teach the unit and offers some **key teaching strategies** to support successful teaching and learning.

The online Charanga resources for the whole unit are in the **Teacher Guide Resources**. Using these resources and this **Teacher Guide**, teachers may confidently plan their own series of lessons. To support such a planning process, each **Teacher Guide** offers six week-by-week summaries of teaching and learning based on the resources listed.

Unit Lesson Plans

Creative Music Scheme units also include a thorough series of lesson plans in a single **Lesson Plans** document to support a flexible and engaging approach to teaching the unit. Lessons are presented in sets of 2 weeks, and each lesson plan suggests a range of activities to choose from to meet the learning objectives of the 2 weeks. Over a year, the activities collectively reflect an outstanding, creative and inclusive curriculum that teaches musical skills and musical knowledge in a way that children can understand.

Every school allocates its own timeframe for music teaching and learning; therefore, select the activities that best meet the children's learning needs and your teaching. A main activity does not have to be hurried; enjoy spending time creating a quality musical experience by working through fewer main activities thoroughly.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this unit, children will be able to:

1. Sing a repertoire of songs, including syncopated and partner songs, with appropriate style, phrasing, and expression.
2. Perform confidently as part of an ensemble, integrating solo lines, rounds, or instrumental accompaniments.

I Can Statements

- I can sing "**La Bamba**" and other selected songs accurately, keeping in time and in tune.
- I can sing rounds and partner songs with confidence and coordination.
- I can perform solo or small ensemble lines, blending effectively with others.
- I can contribute to a group performance with appropriate expression, dynamics, and style.
- I can create my own original lyrics or an instrumental part to contribute to a class performance.
- I can reflect on our musical performance, identifying strengths in areas like rhythm, style, and stage presence.

Unit Overview

The Grand Finale focuses on performance, ensemble singing, and cultural repertoire. Children will learn the Spanish song "**La Bamba**" in its original form, exploring syncopated rhythms, dynamics, and expressive singing techniques. Optional challenges include composing original lyrics or playing instrumental parts. Three additional bonus songs—"**Shake the Papaya Down**", "**Sing Together - In A Round**", and "**When the Saints/Coming Round the Mountain**"—offer opportunities for rounds, partner songs, and multi-part ensemble work. The unit encourages creativity, performance skills, and audience engagement, culminating in a celebratory Grand Finale performance. Cross-curricular links include Spanish culture, performance practise, and creative composition, with a focus on collaboration, stage presence, and ensemble awareness.

Resources Needed

- An optional recording device or camera to capture the final performance for assessment and reflection.
- Instrumental support: optional keyboards, percussion, or classroom instruments for melody or accompaniment.
- Space for performing, including a stage or classroom area.
- Costumes, props, or simple choreography materials if integrating movement or storytelling into the performance.

Weekly Suggestions

Week 1: Introduction to La Bamba and Song Familiarisation

Children listen to "**La Bamba**" in full, discussing its origins, Spanish lyrics, and the story of the Alabama-inspired themes. Children learn the chorus and final chorus, practising energy, style, and ensemble timing. They explore the lyrics and identify Spanish words, discussing translations for understanding. Bonus songs "**Shake the Papaya Down**", "**Sing Together - In A Round**", and "**When the Saints/Coming Round the Mountain**" are introduced, and children select one to work on. Homework includes researching translations of "**La Bamba**" or generating ideas for one's own lyrics. This lesson develops aural awareness, vocabulary recognition, and ensemble familiarity.

Week 2: Learning Verses and Developing Performance Roles

Children rehearse choruses and learn Verses 1 and 4 of "**La Bamba**", practising speaking the words before singing. Children explore instrumental options or create their own lyrics, with some playing melody while others focus on singing. Work may be individual, in pairs, or in small groups. Rehearsals focus on timing, dynamics, and accurate articulation. Children begin practising their chosen bonus song, developing ensemble listening and blending skills. Discussion encourages expressive singing, awareness of cultural context, and preparation for performance roles.

Week 3: Extending Repertoire and Expressive Singing

Children learn Verse 2 of **"La Bamba"** and continue rehearsing previously learned sections. Focus is on stylistic singing, phrasing, and expressive delivery. Children continue rehearsing bonus songs, practising how different parts interlock and support partner or round structures. Performance elements such as posture, projection, and confidence are emphasised. Children begin to consider performance logistics, including spacing, group rotation, and solo opportunities. Rehearsal strategies encourage independent learning, peer feedback, and ensemble cohesion.

Week 4: Consolidating Lyrics and Instrumental Integration

Children learn Verse 3 and finalise their version of any original lyrics. Instrumentalists rehearse chosen parts, exploring melody, harmony, and rhythmic interaction with singers. Ensemble awareness is reinforced by alternating between performers and listeners. Children compare their interpretation with backing tracks, considering factors such as timbre, style, and musical effect. Rehearsals integrate movement, dynamics, and group balance. This session develops critical listening, musical decision-making, and coordination, ensuring all parts work effectively together before final performance preparation.

Week 5: Rehearsal and Performance Preparation

Children rehearse **"La Bamba"** and bonus songs, combining choruses, verses, original lyrics, and instrumental parts into a cohesive programme. Focus is on confident ensemble performance, timing, expressive dynamics, and stage presence. Children experiment with choreography, positioning, and solo or group spotlights. Peer and teacher feedback are used to refine rhythm, articulation, and ensemble balance. Discussions guide decisions about order, pacing, and audience engagement. This lesson prepares children for the final performance, emphasising polished delivery and rehearsal strategies.

Week 6: Grand Finale Performance and Reflection

Children perform **"La Bamba"** and bonus songs to a live audience, their class peers, or via recorded video. Rehearsals focus on confident ensemble singing, integration of instrumental parts, choreography, and expressive musical interpretation. Children rotate roles, showcase solos, and perform in rounds. Post-performance reflection involves self- and peer-assessment, discussing aspects such as rhythm, style, clarity, dynamics, and stage presence. Optional recordings provide evidence of achievement. This celebratory session consolidates ensemble skills, performance confidence, creative decision-making, and musical understanding, providing children with the opportunity to showcase their skills.

Key Teaching Strategies for Success

- **Model** singing, phrasing, and stylistic elements to guide accurate performance.
- **Encourage ensemble awareness** through alternating solo, paired, and group roles.
- **Support students** in developing their own lyrics or instrumental arrangements, fostering creativity.
- **Utilise peer and teacher feedback** to refine dynamics, articulation, timing, and stage presence.
- **Reinforce cultural context:** musical vocabulary and expressive interpretation throughout rehearsals.
- **Practise performance logistics:** including posture, movement, and audience engagement.

Conclusion

By the end of this unit, children will have performed **“La Bamba”** and at least one bonus song, demonstrating confident ensemble singing, solo and partner work, and expressive musical interpretation. They will have experienced rounds, syncopated rhythms, and the integration of instrumental parts with vocal performance. Children will have applied compositional creativity, developed performance skills, and reflected on their own and peers’ musical achievements. The unit encourages cultural awareness, audience engagement, and confidence, culminating in a celebratory Grand Finale performance that showcases progression, musicality, collaboration, and creativity.