

PIANO SAFARI® REPERTOIRE BOOK 1

TEACHER GUIDE: UNIT 1

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UNIT 1: PRE-STAFF BLACK KEYS WITH FINGERS 2 3 4

SIGHT READING & RHYTHM CARDS FOR BOOK 1

LEVEL A CARDS: PRE-STAFF BLACK KEYS WITH FINGERS 2 3 4

OBJECTIVES:

- Read finger numbers 2 3 4 on black keys
- Track from left to right on the page when reading
- Coordinate reading finger numbers with reading rhythmic notation
- Tap and count rhythmic notation
- Begin working on piano hand shape

Sample Level A Card

The image shows a sample Level A card with a pink background. It features two piano exercises. The top exercise is for the Right Hand (RH) and the bottom for the Left Hand (LH). Each exercise includes a keyboard diagram with finger numbers 2, 3, and 4 on the black keys. The RH exercise has a sequence of notes: C4 (finger 2), D4 (finger 3), E4 (finger 4), F4 (finger 4), G4 (finger 4), and A4 (finger 4). The LH exercise has a sequence of notes: C4 (finger 4), D4 (finger 3), E4 (finger 2), F4 (finger 3), G4 (finger 2), and A4 (finger 3). Below the exercises is a rhythmic notation line with a sequence of notes: C4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F5 (quarter), G5 (quarter), A5 (quarter), and B5 (quarter). A small box in the top right corner of the card reads "Level A.1".

During **Unit 1**, assign **Level A** of *Piano Safari® Sight Reading & Rhythm Cards for Book 1*.

See pianosafari.com for the Teacher Guide to *Sight Reading & Rhythm Cards for Book 1*.

During **Unit 1**, you can begin to prepare the student for **Unit 2: White Keys**, by doing the White Key Activities explained at the beginning of **Unit 2** in this Teacher Guide.

The activity presented below with the bouncy balls and rubber worms can be done at the very first lesson or group class. I usually combine it with the Decorating the Piano Activity found in this Teacher Guide in Unit 2, White Keys, where the student puts the balls, worms, and foam letters on the keyboard.

Step 1: Buy some bouncy balls and rubber worms. Have the student put the bouncy balls on the groups of two black keys and the worms across the groups of three black keys.

OBJECTIVE:

- Become secure in finding groups of two and three black keys



Step 2: Ask the student to play all the ball groups (two black keys) going up the piano and then all the worm groups (three black keys).

Step 3: Then remove the balls and worms and have the student play the groups of two black keys and then three black keys. (Even if the student can play the groups at the first lesson without help, the balls and worms activity is still fun to do.) Playing the black key groups with a flat hand is fine. The focus is not on technique, but on exploring the topography of the keyboard.

Step 4: Play Simon Says:
"Simon says play a group of two black keys."
"Simon says play a group of three black keys."
Say with a high voice, "Simon says play a group of two black keys up high."
Say with a low voice, "Simon says play a group of three black keys low."

Step 5: Follow the instructions on the page.

MARCH IMPROVISATION

KNERR

UNIT 1

IMPROVISATION PIECE

Be encouraging of whatever the student plays when he is improvising. If he has serious rhythm problems and plays with no sense of pulse, see **Step 3**. Do not be overly corrective. A rhythmic pulse will develop with time. The goal of improvisation is to explore sounds at the piano. Take a few minutes at each lesson to improvise, which will help the student gain confidence, freedom, rhythm, and creativity at the piano.

Step 1: Play the LH of the teacher accompaniment and improvise with RH Finger 2 on black keys in a steady rhythm to show the student what he might play. You can also have the student march around the room while you play.

Step 2: Play the teacher accompaniment and ask the student to play whatever black keys he wants, using Finger 2 in one or both hands. If he is timid, ask him to play louder.

Step 3: If the student does not have a steady beat and appears not to be listening at all to your rhythmic pulse, play a simple pattern on the black keys of 3 or 4 notes using Ta and Ta-ti and have the student imitate you. After several patterns, play the improvisation again. Gradually, the student will improve in matching your meter and rhythm in his improvisations. Having the student imitate patterns first while looking at the piano, and then by ear, is a useful ear training exercise that should be practiced at all levels, gradually increasing in difficulty as the student progresses.

OBJECTIVE:

- Improvise in a steady beat on black keys

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- Steady rhythm
- Strong tone

This is the first **Reading Piece** in the book. Students play Reading Pieces not by imitating the teacher, but by reading the notation. Because the student has already been reading finger numbers in the *Sight Reading & Rhythm Cards*, he will be prepared for this first Reading Piece. The teacher should point to each note on the page and say the finger numbers to help the student learn to track the notes on the page with his eyes.

In terms of technique, all pieces through **Unit 3** should be played *non legato* with an arm bounce on each note. We call this **Tall Giraffe Technique**, and it is formally introduced in **Unit 3**, where students refine the motion.

Playing *non legato* with an arm bounce on each note is the best way for beginners to play with a good sound and maintain their piano hand shape. Introducing *legato* too early can lead to tension or a breakdown in the piano hand shape. The fingertips should be firm, not collapsed, and non-playing fingers should be relaxed, not curled or sticking up.

The arm bounce allows the arm to align behind the playing finger. The fingers should absolutely *not* be glued in a position, with just the fingers moving. The arm bounces for each note. For more information, see **Mini Essay 5: Technique Basics for Beginners** under Pedagogical Resources at pianosafari.com.

The piano hand shape may not be perfect yet because of the difficulty of playing on the thinner black keys, but the student should be improving the piano hand shape in **Unit 1**.

Step 1: For very young students, first close the fallboard. Say "2 2 2" while playing on the fallboard. Student imitates. Continue with each measure of the first line of "Ocean Animals." Including this step allows young students to concentrate on coordinating fingers before reading the notes on the page.

Step 2: Play and sing the words of the piece, with some of the teacher accompaniment included. Then play again singing finger numbers while the student points to the notes on the page and sings the finger numbers with you.

OBJECTIVES:

- Read pre-staff notation with Fingers 2 3 4 on black keys
- Learn the repeat sign symbol

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- *Non legato* articulation
- Effort toward playing with strong fingertips rather than flat or collapsed knuckles
- Slightly bouncy arm, rather than a hand glued in position on the keys
- Steady rhythm

Step 3: Have the student circle the RH keyboard picture with red (RH = red) and find the hand position based on the picture.

Step 4: The student plays m. 1-4 while you use **Pointing, Playing,** and **Singing Insurance** at a slow tempo. Be sure the student is playing with a *non legato* articulation with an arm bounce on each note. The student repeats the line until he feels confident (two or three times).

Step 5: Although the student will likely play the correct rhythm because of the previous steps and because you are using **Insurance**, to emphasize that half notes are held two beats, you can draw green lines after each half note to show the longer notes.

2 2 2 | 3 3 3 | 4 2 | 3 3 3 |

Oc - to - pus, Oc - to - pus, Mad - am, Oc - to - pus,
Man - a - tee, Man - a - tee, Mis - ter, Man - a - tee,
Jel - ly - fish, Jel - ly - fish, Mis - sus, Jel - ly - fish.

Step 6: Repeat **Steps 4** and **5** with m. 5-8. Then have him play the whole piece. Ask him if he knows the piece well enough to practice it at home or if he wants to play it again. If he says, "Play it again," have him repeat it until he feels confident.

Step 7: Explain the repeat sign.

Step 8: The student practices the entire piece at home (perhaps 3-5 times per day).

Step 9: At the next lesson, say, "Let's play 'Ocean Animals,'" and use **Preemptive Insurance** by playing and singing the first few measures. This will remind him what piece he is playing and what it sounds like, which will help him focus and prepare to play the piece.

Step 10: As he plays, use **Pointing Insurance** to be sure he does not make unnecessary mistakes. If he plays it well, let him play it alone without **Insurance**. It is a privilege for the student to play his pieces alone without help. You can emphasize this by saying, "Wow. That was so great I think you can play it without me helping. Do you think you can?"

Step 11: When the student can play the piece well alone, add the teacher accompaniment.

TUNDRA ANIMALS

KNERR

UNIT 1

READING PIECE

Step 1: For very young students, first close the fallboard. Say "2 4 3 3 3" in the rhythm of the first phrase while playing on the fallboard. Student imitates. Repeat several times.

Step 2: Play and sing the finger numbers of the student part while the student points to the notes on the page and sings the finger numbers with you.

Step 3: Have the student circle the LH keyboard picture with blue (LH = blue) and find the hand position based on the picture.

Step 4: To insure that the student will hold the half notes two beats, draw a line after each half note with green to emphasize that these notes last longer, "Ta-2."

OBJECTIVE:

- Read pre-staff notation with fingers 2 3 4 on black keys

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- *Non legato* articulation
- Effort toward playing with strong fingertips rather than flat or collapsed knuckles
- Slightly bouncy arm, rather than a hand glued in position on the keys
- Ta - 2 in half notes

Mad	-	am	Car	-	i	-	bou	finds	green	moss	to	chew.
Mis	-	sus	Arc	-	tic	Fox	lives	a	-	mong	the	rocks.
Mis	-	ter	Po	-	lar	Bear	rooms	through		frig	id	air.

Step 5: When the student is ready, he plays while you use **Pointing, Playing, and Singing Insurance** at a slow tempo. Be sure the student is playing with a *non legato* articulation with an arm bounce on each note. The student repeats the piece until he feels confident (two or three times).

Step 6: When the student can play the piece well alone after practice, add the teacher accompaniment.

I LOVE COFFEE

TRADITIONAL, ARR. SHAAK

UNIT 1

ROTE PIECE



We requested permission to use this piece from Carolyn Shaak and are grateful that she allowed us to include it. I originally learned about this piece when I observed Mrs. Shaak for my dissertation research. This piece can be found in Book 1 of the Shaak method, *Piano Partners*, which is available at shaakpianomusic.com.

These six traditional tunes are designed to be taught one part at a time and combined into one long piece. The student plays the piece with Finger 2 throughout. This piece helps the student lengthen his concentration skills and provides a sense of accomplishment from learning such a long piece.

I usually teach one or two parts per lesson.

Tell the parent that there is a Reminder Video at pianosafari.com for reference at home.

Step 1: Have the student listen to this piece on his Listening CD several times before introducing it.

Step 2: Play and sing **Part 1** for the student.

Step 3: Play m. 1-2. Student imitates. Sing the lyrics.

Step 4: Play m. 3-4. Student imitates.

Step 5: Play m. 5-6. Student imitates.

Step 6: Play m. 7-8. Put a penny on the E to show the student that E is skipped. Student imitates.

Step 7: Play each phrase again and have the student imitate. Sing the lyrics.

Step 8: Student plays **Part 1** alone. Use the **Point to the Keys** strategy to remind him of the beginning key for each phrase if he needs help. Add the teacher accompaniment when the student is secure. Have him color the coffee cup for **Part 1**. He colors each cup as each part of the piece is mastered.

OBJECTIVES:

- Play a piece by rote
- Gain control over the forearm motion
- Lengthen concentration through playing a long piece

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- Free forearm motion
- Good tone
- Rhythmic playing
- Ability to play all parts without stopping

- Step 9:** Teach the other parts of this piece in a similar manner, with you playing a phrase and the student imitating. For **Part 2**, the student rolls a closed fist upward along the grace notes in m. 1 and downward for the grace notes in m. 3. If this is too difficult, the student can just play the three notes with the fist simultaneously. The C#'s in m. 1 should be played with the right side of the fist. Similarly, in m. 3, the D#'s are played with the left side of the fist.
- Step 10:** For **Part 3**, I like to sing, "I love coffee, I love coffee, I love coffee, I love coffee, I love coffee, I love tea" to make the rhythm more understandable.
- Step 11:** For **Part 4**, you can make up lyrics to help the student with the syncopated rhythm. I use, "I really love my tea..."
- Step 12:** For **Part 5**, sing, "I love coffee. I love tea."
- Step 13:** For **Part 6**, sing, "I love coffee. I love tea," or, "1 2 3 4 5 6 7." When you add the teacher accompaniment for this section, be sure to sing to keep the student from rushing.
- Step 14:** Teach the **Ending** part by imitation.
- Step 15:** Put all the parts together in one long piece, and add the teacher accompaniment.
- Step 16:** This piece is effective as an ensemble in recitals. Assign each of six children a part of the piece. They stand in a line and play their assigned parts in order. I add an extra two measures of accompaniment (m. 7-8) to give the students time to move up in line and find their position at the piano. This ensemble is always a crowd pleaser!

Step 1: Ask the student to put his RH on yours while you play the piece so his hand can **Go for a Ride**. Play the piece with the student's hand on yours. This allows him to feel the bouncy arm with *non legato* articulation and see how your hand moves up an octave for each group of notes in rhythm.

Step 2: Have him circle the RH keyboard picture with red to remember that the piece is played with the RH.

Step 3: Ask the student how many groups of notes there are in this piece (1 group = 1 phrase). Help him count the groups until he arrives at the answer "4." Have the student circle the groups that are the same (groups 1, 2, 4) with red and draw a worm by the group that is different (group 3).

Step 4: Place the student's hand on the group of black keys above Middle C.

Step 5: Ask him to use **Practice in His Brain** for the first group and play it when ready. Use **Pointing** and **Singing Insurance** to help him.

Step 6: Have the student move to the next position, preview, and play. Repeat with the other two groups.

Step 7: The student plays the entire piece several times until he is confident to practice at home. If he is slow to move from octave to octave, use **Playing Insurance**, urge him to move faster, or repeat **Go for a Ride**.

Step 8: When the student can play the piece well alone, add the teacher accompaniment, which will also help him move in rhythm to the next octave.

Step 9: When the piece is mastered, talk about the term *Allegro* and ask him to play a bit faster.

OBJECTIVES:

- Read pre-staff notation with fingers 2 3 4 on black keys
- Learn to move up by octave in rhythm
- Learn the *Allegro* tempo marking
- Recognize patterns of same and differing phrases.

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- *Non legato* articulation
- Effort toward playing with strong fingertips
- Slightly bouncy arm
- Rhythmic move up each octave

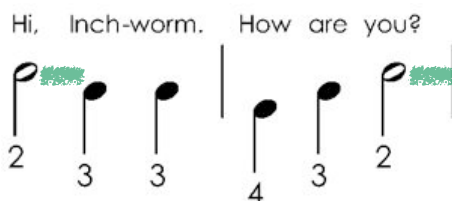
Step 1: Ask the student to put his RH on yours while you play the piece so his hand can **Go for a Ride**. Play the piece with the student's hand on yours.

Step 2: Have him circle the LH keyboard picture with blue to remember that the piece is played with the LH.

Step 3: Ask the student how many groups of notes there are in this piece (1 group = 1 phrase). Help him count the groups until he arrives at the answer "4." Have the student circle the groups that are the same (groups 1, 2) with blue.

Step 4: Talk about the term *Moderato*. Note that this is slower than "Inchworm" because Sam is so full from eating dinner.

Step 5: If desired, have the student mark the Ta - 2's (half notes) to show that they last longer.



OBJECTIVES:

- Read pre-staff notation with fingers 2 3 4 on black keys
- Learn to move down by octave in rhythm
- Learn the *Moderato* tempo marking

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- *Non legato* articulation
- Effort toward playing with strong fingertips
- Slightly bouncy arm
- Rhythmic move down each octave
- Half notes held "Ta - 2"

Step 6: Place the student's hand on the group of black keys above Middle C. Ask him to use the **Practice in His Brain** strategy for the first group and then to play it when ready. Point and count as he plays to keep him in rhythm within each group. Repeat for each group.

Step 7: After he has played each group and practiced, work on having him move in rhythm down to the next octave. You can do this by saying, "Move fast!" and by playing his part with him.

Step 8: When the student can play the piece well alone, add the teacher accompaniment.

OLD MACDONALD

AMERICAN FOLK SONG, ARR. KNERR

UNIT 1

READING PIECE

Step 1: Play and sing the piece for the student.

Step 2: On the keyboard picture, color the RH keys red and the LH keys blue.

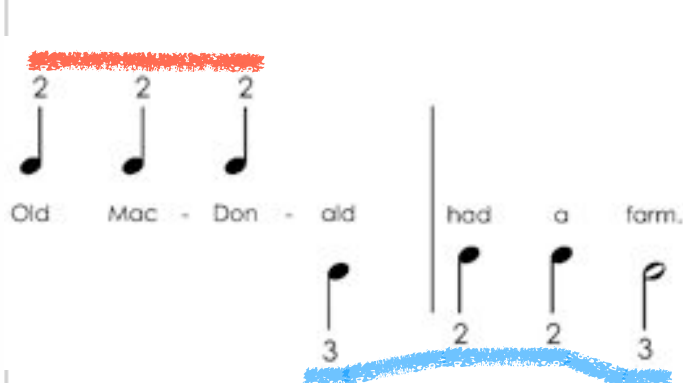
Step 3: Throughout the piece, draw a line for the RH finger numbers red and the LH finger numbers blue, as shown below. Do not make a big deal about stem direction, although in this piece, **Stems up = RH and Stems down = LH**. Since this is not a rule that continues through all piano music, we prefer to have students rely on color coding at this point rather than stem direction for pre-staff pieces.

OBJECTIVES:

- Read pre-staff notation with fingers 2 3 4 on black keys in both hands
- Learn the whole note rhythm

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- *Non legato* articulation
- Effort toward playing with strong fingertips
- Slightly bouncy arm
- Coordination in moving from hand to hand



Step 4: For m. 1-8, have the student play LH while you play RH. Use **Pointing Insurance** and **Singing Insurance** (finger numbers). Explain the whole note.

Step 5: For m. 1-8, the student plays RH while you play LH. Then the student plays both hands.

Step 6: Ask the student to find the lines that are the same as the first line (1, 2, 4).

Step 7: If you have been working with the student on rhythm cards with the animal rhythm patterns (See **Mini Essay 8: Philosophy of Rhythm** at www.pianosafari.com under Pedagogical Resources), he will be familiar with them:

- **Zechariah Zebra**  Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta Ta

- **Kangaroo**  Ta-ti Ta

- **Tall Giraffe**  Ta Ta Ta-2 (essentially just a slow **Kangaroo** rhythm)

Discuss with the student how m. 9-10 has two Tall Giraffe Rhythms. Draw giraffes next to these rhythms. Next, note that m. 11 has two Kangaroo Rhythms. Draw kangaroos next to these rhythms. Then discover that m. 12 is a Zechariah Zebra Rhythm. Draw a zebra next to this rhythm. Talk about how funny it is that these three safari animals went to the farm to visit the cow and Farmer MacDonald.

Step 8: Have the student to play m. 9-12 and say the animal names: "Tall Giraffe. Tall Giraffe. Kangaroo. Kangaroo. Zechariah Zebra."

Step 9: When the student can play the piece well alone, add the teacher accompaniment.

FRED THE FISH

KNERR

UNIT 1

READING PIECE

Step 1: Play and sing the piece for the student.

Step 2: On the keyboard picture at the top of the page, color the RH keys red and the LH keys blue.

Step 3: Throughout the piece, mark the RH finger numbers red and the LH finger numbers blue. **Stems up = RH and Stems down = LH.**

Step 4: Note that all the notes in each line are the same, except for the ending.

OBJECTIVES:

- Read pre-staff notation with fingers 2 3 4 on black keys in both hands
- Improvise music to match the lyrics
- Learn terms and symbols for *glissando* and *piano*.

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- *Non legato* articulation
- Slightly bouncy arm
- Coordination in moving from hand to hand
- Rhythmic playing

The image shows musical notation for the piece 'Fred the Fish'. It consists of four measures of music. The first measure has the lyrics 'Once there was a' and the second measure has 'fish named Fred.' The third measure has 'Fred the fish was' and the fourth measure has 'ver - y red.' The notation uses black keys on a piano keyboard. Finger numbers are written above and below the notes. Red numbers (2, 3, 4) are used for the right hand (stems up), and blue numbers (3, 2, 3) are used for the left hand (stems down). A red brushstroke is drawn over the top of the first four measures, and a blue brushstroke is drawn under the bottom of the first four measures. To the right of the notation, there is a box that says 'Improvise Fish Music on Black Keys 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8'.

Step 5: Student plays m. 1-4 LH while you play RH.

Step 6: Student plays m. 1-4 RH while you play LH.

Step 7: Student plays both hands for m. 1-4.

Step 8: Student plays the notated parts of the piece while you play the teacher accompaniment. After line 1, the student plays fish music on black keys while you play the teacher accompaniment and count to 8 (in cut time, four measures worth). Tell him that his hands need to be back in position by the time you say "8." At the end of line 2, the student plays high bird sounds (trills work well) on the black keys while you play the teacher accompaniment and count to 8. He has his hands back in position ready to go on by the time you say "8." After line 3, the student plays the *glissando* and then puts his hands back in position (no counting this time). Have him listen for the teacher accompaniment "bump" (staccato octave in accompaniment m. 10 of first ending) to know when to start the last verse.

Step 9: After he understands how the piece is constructed, play the whole piece with teacher accompaniment.

OUTER SPACE KNERR

UNIT 1 ROTE PIECE



I usually teach the whole piece in one lesson.

Tell the parent that there is a Reminder Video at pianosafari.com for reference at home.

Stems up = RH. Stems down = LH

Step 1: Have the student listen to this piece on his Listening CD several times before introducing it.

Step 2: Play m. 1-8 for the student, the "Space Music."

Step 3: Play m. 1-2 for the student, singing "Going to outer space." Student imitates, playing *non legato* with an arm bounce on each note. The pedal will make it sound *legato*, while playing *non legato* will preserve the piano hand shape. Saying, "outer space" on the dotted half note will help the student hold it for three beats.

Step 4: Have the student repeat the same pattern up an octave (m. 3-4).

Step 5: Demonstrate m. 5-8, singing, "4 3 2 right right left 1 2 3 4." Student imitates.

Step 6: Have the student start *piano* and gradually *crescendo* to shape the dynamics.

Step 7: Ask the student to think of two objects in outer space and draw pictures of those objects in the space below the first and second endings. My students have answered, "UFO's, moon, stars, earth, planets, space ships, black holes, supernovas..."

Step 8: For each space object, ask the student to think of music to match. If he is timid, give him an idea and demonstrate, such as playing random high black keys for stars, playing black and white hand clusters for earth, or playing fast and loud black keys for UFO's. Create short musical sounds for each of the space things he drew. It works best if there are some black keys involved rather than anything diatonic on the white keys, but I do not censor the children if they start playing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" on white keys for their star music. Anything is acceptable. Use pedal throughout to make it sound more space like.

Step 9: Write the form of the piece (shown below), drawing pictures as necessary. Then have the student play the whole piece, coaching him through the form of the piece:

OBJECTIVES:

- Learn a piece by rote
- Improvise space music

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- Bouncy arm
- Firm fingertips
- Correct rhythm

**Space
Music
(m. 1-8)**

**Space
Object 1**

**Space
Music
(m. 1-8)**

**Space
Object 2**

**Space
Music
(m. 1-8)**

**Shooting
Star**

With one of my students who likes Buzz Lightyear from the movie *Toy Story*, we drew:

- Three pictures of Buzz (for the three Space Music Sections, m. 1-8)
- A Picture of Space Thing 1 (Zurg)
- A Picture of Space Thing 2 (Woody Flies to Earth)
- A Picture of a Rocket Ship (He preferred a rocket to the Shooting Star for the end.)

We cut out the pictures out strung them on string in order to make a visible representation of the form of the piece. He loved this!

The improvisation section music will change slightly each time, which is fine. However, I have found that the children usually do not change their sounds drastically. Once they find a sound they like that goes with their object, they remember it and keep using it.

COWBOY IMPROVISATION

KNERR

UNIT 1

IMPROVISATION PIECE

Step 1: Play the LH of the teacher accompaniment (be sure to swing the eighth notes) and improvise with RH Finger 2 on black keys to demonstrate the style of the piece.

Step 2: Play the teacher accompaniment, and ask the student to play any black keys he wants, using Finger 2 in one or both hands. If he is timid, ask him to play louder.

Step 3: Make up a story with the student about the cowboy's day, and narrate the parts while improvising with the student. Change the tempo to match the parts of the cowboy's day. For example:

- "Cowboy Bob went out in the morning to check on his cows. He was happy because he really liked his cows."
- Fast tempo for happy cow music
- "Cowboy Bob found that one of his cows, Betty, was sick and needed to go to the veterinarian."
- Slow tempo for sad, sick cow
- "On the way home from taking Betty to the vet, Cowboy Bob stopped at a coffee shop to get a caramel macchiato."
- Very fast tempo for caffeinated cowboy
- "He got home, put the cow in the barn, and sat down next to her to read a book. Soon he and his cow fell asleep."
- Slow tempo for sleepy cowboy and cow

This activity works well in a group class also, with each student improvising for eight bars between the parts of the story. I have even done this with a class of first grade children who do not play the piano.

OBJECTIVE:

- Improvise music on the black keys to match a swing accompaniment

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- Rhythmic playing
- Strong tone