FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / 3–5 / 03

Sounds You Can See

TEACHER GUIDE • lesson design & facilitation

Grade band: 3–5 | 4–5 studio sessions of 45–55 min	Media: Oil pastel, marker, tempera, collage, optional digital drawing

The artistic problem

Make an original abstract composition translating a locally meaningful sound into visual marks. Use line, repeated forms, contrast and color to communicate tempo, mood and change.

Essential question: What does a neighborhood sound look like when we translate it into line, color and rhythm?

Place-based cultural lens: New Orleans public culture includes brass bands, second lines, street musicians, church choirs, bounce music, and quiet sounds from daily life. Each has distinct origins and social contexts; no single sound stands for the whole city.

Learning targets

- Translate two sound qualities into consistent visual choices.
- Create a composition with rhythm and a focal moment.
- Explain a relationship between music context and visual interpretation.

Student-visible success criteria

- At least two distinct sound-to-mark translations.
- Intentional repeated shapes or lines.
- A clear contrast or focal shift.
- A documented revision after peer interpretation.

Standards & studio habits

Louisiana Grade 3–4: VA-CE-E3, VA-CE-E6, VA-HP-E3; Grade 5 (5–8 cluster): VA-CE-M3, VA-CE-M6

Studio Habits of Mind: Observe, Express, Develop Craft, Reflect. These habits are developed interactively, not in a fixed rank or sequence.

Instructional alignment: Louisiana benchmark codes are official broad grade-cluster benchmarks; specific expectations are developed locally. The ten instructional stages come from the supplied Artistic Investigations framework.

Preparation & materials

- Paper and broad markers
- Oil pastels and tempera or collage
- Teacher-selected audio or student-described sound

- Sound-word bank; headphones if available
- Optional projector for waveform example

10-stage teaching sequence

01 / Engage Make quick lines to three unlike sounds or described sensations; compare distinct interpretations without ranking them.

02 / Investigate Listen to or describe contrasting local sound environments; identify context, performer or source when known.

03 / Skill Studio Model line weight, rhythm, scale, layered color, and change in marks over time. Show multiple sample translations, not finished templates.

04 / Generate Generate three different sketches using one sound; each changes pattern, focal point or palette.

05 / Plan Choose the strongest sketch and label how two art elements relate to the chosen sound.

06 / Produce Create large composition, controlling repeated shapes and dramatic variation.

07 / Critique Partners interpret the pictured rhythm without being told the source; cite visual evidence.

08 / Revise Make one change so the intended rhythm or mood reads more clearly.

09 / Present Display with a title and a contextual note crediting the source of the sound.

10 / Reflect Explain one successful translation and one element to refine in a future composition.

Studio sessions & evidence checkpoints

Session	Teaching move	Capture evidence
Day 1	**Sound observation** Hear or imagine sound settings; compare contexts and artist credits.	Quick diagnostic sound-mark sketches.
Day 2	**Visual rhythm studio** Teacher models repetition, variation, and focal contrast.	Three compositions annotated with intention.
Day 3–4	**Produce + conference** Complete abstract piece; teacher checks chosen sound-to-art mapping.	Process photos and teacher observation.
Day 5	**Interpret + revise** Peer interpretation; one documented revision; share contextual credit.	Final artwork, evidence-based reflection.

Key technique to model

Repetition, variation, mark-making, scale, contrast, visual rhythm.

Access without lowering the artistic goal

Offer visual waveform cards, captioned sound descriptions, quiet room option, tactile rhythm tapping, and alternative sound choices; assess design thinking, not hearing ability.

Teacher coaching questions

- What is the visual problem you are solving?
- Which decision communicates your intended meaning most clearly?
- What does your reference prove, and what are you still imagining?
- What could a viewer misunderstand?

- What visible revision will strengthen your next version?

Cultural care

Do not treat second lines as generic party music. Attribute specific artists and contexts. Respect audio rights and let students choose nonpublic or personally meaningful sounds.

Stretch & explore

Create a diptych showing how one sound could be experienced from two different viewpoints or locations.

Design provenance: Original grade 3–5 investigation applying the source document's skill studio, multiple ideas, critique and revision model.