

Fisherman's Friends – Sea Shanties

A. Listen and Appraise

Background Information

The **Fisherman's Friends** are a shanty group based in North Cornwall. Their performances combine traditional songs of the sea with more contemporary folk music and a large dash of humour. They are all fishermen!

A shanty is a folk song traditionally sung by seafaring workers (fishermen, sailors) and is sung to rhythmically accompany the work they do. The rhythm reflects the repetitive nature of many of the tasks they have to perform, often in difficult conditions.

As you listen, pay careful attention to the rhythm and structure of the songs and imagine how they would help the fishermen carry out their tasks.

The songs are written using a “call and response” style (a line/verse is sung by an individual, which is then repeated by the group.)

You are going to listen to two shanties:

“Keep Haulin’” and “John Kanaka”

Listen to the songs:

(Listen to one song at a time and consider the elements of music then you can compare the two. If possible, follow it using the lyrics sheet – listen to it several times so that you become familiar with what it sounds like.)

“Keep Haulin’”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkNwhbyiA4Y>

“John Kanaka”:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWDuDosFZ_A

Some Background information to “John Kanaka”

The origins of this shanty can be traced to the South Sea island including Hawaii and Polynesia, between there and Australia and New Zealand (much further away than Cornwall!) “Kanaka” in some Polynesian tongues means “Man” and is how aboriginal peoples of the islands refer to themselves.

(These links are also on the Remote Learning Plan.)

Follow the discussion below, using the Elements of Music - which you should now be familiar with:

(You can go back and listen to the song or parts of it as often as you wish.)

“Do you like the song?”

There is no correct answer to this: either you do, or you don't! Try to justify your answers using the vocabulary you have been learning.

“What can you hear?”

- The vocals: How do the singers use their voices? What is the overall effect? Can you hear the call and response?
- The backing/accompaniment: how many instruments? Which ones?
- The texture: is it thick/thin or in between? Are there many layers of sound, or just one/two? Are there many voices singing/instruments playing or just one/two?
- The tempo: is it fast or slow or in between?
- The dynamics: is the music loud/quiet or in between? Is it the same throughout or does it vary?
- Unusual words in the text: words which are spoken in a dialect?

“What is the story told in this song?”

- Do you think the lyrics tell a story or have a message?
- Why do you think the lyrics were written in a call and response style?

“What is the mood of the song?”

Music can evoke many different moods:

- Gentle ● Flowing ● Reflective ● Menacing ● Spooky ● Scary ● Grim ● Light-hearted ● Stirring ● Loving ● Calm ● Cheeky ● Rough ● Passionate ● Sad ● Spiky ● Depressing ● Fun

There are many more. Can you think of some?

What is the mood of this song?

- Gentle ● Reflective ● Calm ● Flowing

Which song did you prefer and why?

How do you think the songs helped the friendship/camaraderie of the fishermen?

Did the style of music and singing make you want to join in?