

The twelve days of Christmas

Traditional arr. Owain Gethin Davies and Osian Rowlands



Grading

Intermediate

About this song

This is an English Christmas carol that enumerates a series of increasingly grand gifts given on each of the twelve days of Christmas.

Vocal range

An 11th



Vocal format

Unison/independent parts

Themes/subjects

Christian/Christmas/carol/
numeracy

Musical elements

Texture and structure

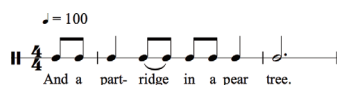
Musical characteristics

Unison and three-part
harmony, cumulative
song structure.

Exercises

- Ask learners to breathe deeply and hiss or blow out slowly; count how long they take to blow out. Repeat this exercise and encourage all learners to improve on the previous time.
- Then ask learners to balance on one leg and rotate the other leg in a circular motion, starting with the ankles, then the knees, and finally the hips. They should do this clockwise and then anti-clockwise, before repeating with the other leg.
- Ask all to 'hum' as a siren, moving up and down in pitch, following your hand signal from high up in the air to very low by your knees.

- Demonstrate the characteristic rhythm of the song:



Recommended CânSing exercises

- Vocal exercise 9 (Sneeze)
- Diction exercise 1 (Tongue twister)
- Vocal exercise 2 (Fiddle diddle de)
- Body exercise 4 (Relax and stretch)

Teaching and learning

- Play a recording of the first verse a few times. Learners should focus on listening to step and leap movement in the melody and clap the rhythm or chant the words.
- When learners are familiar with the words, rehearse the melody of part 1 in unison. Sing or play the first phrase a number of times, preferably unaccompanied or using the CânSing backing track. Attempt to work through the verse, making sure learners follow the part accurately.
- Perform the first verse in unison with the recording, reminding learners to sing through all the phrases and to sustain the long note at the end of each phrase.
- Introduce Part 2 of the first verse, the first three notes are the same notes sung in part 1 (C) then the part is mainly in harmony. Make sure that the quality of the sound doesn't deteriorate when singing repeated notes.
- When all learners are confident with part 2 of the first verse, divide them into two equal groups. Give the Red group the melody (Part 1) and the Purple group the harmony (Part 2). If learners struggle with a specific phrase, ask them to listen to you or the track and then join in.
- Try to perform in two parts with or without the recording. Change the parts round so that everyone has an opportunity to sing both parts.
- You may find that learning the first verse in two part harmony is enough for one session and decide to tackle the third part in the first verse in the following session.
- Introduce part 3 (harmony) of the first verse. The first two notes are the same notes sung in part 1 (C) then the part is mainly in harmony. Attempt to work through the verse, making sure learners follow the part accurately and concentrate on the up beat entry point.
- When all the learners are confident with this part divided the group into three equal groups. Give one group the melody (part 1) and the other two group the harmony parts (part 2 and 3).
- After rehearsing the first verse thoroughly, try to perform with the recording.

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Next steps

- ♪ This song has twelve verses in three parts, all verses start exactly the same but a new phrase is added in every verse. Read through the lyrics of verse two and rehearse all parts before attempting to sing together. When you are happy with the second verse perform the song from the start before proceeding on to the third verse.
- ♪ This is a lengthy song which requires a lot of breath control and concentration to sing well. Learners should concentrate on their accuracy of rhythm and intonation when rehearsing.
- ♪ Try to perform the whole song in three parts without any accompaniment so that learners listen very carefully to the sound of the harmony. The words need to be very clear, with strong consonants and focused vowels.

Performing, composing and appraising

- ♪ In small groups, learners could use the lyrics and rhythm of the first verse to compose a new melody that include one leap and the rest of the melodic movements in step on the pentatonic scale in F (CDFGA).
- ♪ Listen to a recording of the song and ask learners to comment on its texture, pace and dynamics and discuss the qualities of a Christmas carol.
- ♪ Learners could arrange the song for instruments or voices, and prepare for a performance in assembly.
- ♪ Teach another contrasting Christmas carol, for instance, 'Silent Night'. When learners are familiar with this, they could compare both Christmas carols and comment on the structure, pace and rhythm.

Assessment for learning and developing thinking

Questioning

Tool: Big Question

- ♪ Was this song easy or hard to learn in your opinion? What are your reasons?
Is there a different point of view within the group?
How would we improve or overcome this in the future?

Feedback

Tool: Instant feedback

Give learners instant feedback during the teaching and learning process; the feedback could be on their ability to maintain their part when singing in parts. Following the learning process, give feedback on their ability to respond to your hand directions when changing the dynamic levels.

Self- and peer assessment

Tool: Talk partners

- ♪ Learners share with a partner three new things they have learned, what they found easy or difficult, what they need to improve, something they would like to learn next.