

## 'Mars' from 'The Planets' by Gustav Holst

*Written by Lucy Drever*

For:

- EYFS and Key Stage 1 in England and Wales
- Early years and P1-P4 in Scotland
- EYFS and Key Stage 1 in Northern Ireland

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## Introduction

This BBC Ten Pieces resource is for KS1 teachers and support staff; it is a collection of ideas for you to adapt, explore and have fun with. Not only will it tick many of the learning requirements and goals, but the resource will give you and your children a fun insight into the world of classical music.

Give yourself the permission to be creative, to be musical (regardless of what you've been told, you are musical, it's not just about singing in tune!) and to have fun; whatever response you get from the children is brilliant. And the more confident the children see you in your exploration of this BBC Ten Piece, chances are they'll be more confident too!

The plan will look vastly different depending on the group of children you are working with, as well as the learning environment. The plans are suitable for free flow, small groups or whole classes. If you are working with a whole class, I'd suggest being in a circle. The plans will also work well if you're working with non-verbal children; music is a really safe place for all children to be creative in.

Whilst writing this resource I decided to stay away from weekly lessons that are built upon, as many KS1 settings I work in don't work in this way. I've therefore written six sessions, that can be done in any order, and should be repeated again and again...and again.

The last session is a documenting one- collect all the musical things you've explored, revisit activities, and listen to the piece again. This can be done alongside the other sessions, or at the end of your learning.

Have fun exploring these amazing pieces, and remember, when creating, there are no wrong answers!

**Lucy Drever**

# Learning Outcomes

## Learners will:

- Listen to a new piece of music
- Explore spikey and smooth in the context of music
- Learn a new song and sing it in different styles
- Play simple patterns on the drum, and repeat simple patterns back
- Write new lyrics to a familiar tune about all the things you might find on your way to Mars!
- Make your own space map with lots of different sounds
- Play some classroom instruments

## In this plan there are activities that will help with:

- Listening
- Communication and language
- Personal, social and emotional development
- How and why questions
- Creating own stories and developing own narratives
- Singing

## About Mars

- Gustav Holst was a British composer
- His most famous work is *The Planets* which he wrote for the orchestra, and which includes the BBC Ten Piece, *Mars*
- In *The Planets*, Holst wrote about all the different characters of the Planets
- He became very famous after writing this work, but he didn't enjoy the fame. He much preferred to teach other composers!

# Adventure 1- Spikey and smooth

**Goal- To explore the difference in spikey and smooth in the context of music. The musical term for spikey is staccato and smooth is legato, but don't worry too much about using these terms!**

## Resources

- A drum – any type is great! If you don't have one use a tambourine or shaker. Or even a saucepan and wooden spoon!

## Warm-up

**Sing a song that you all love singing together** – this could be a nursery rhyme, a topic song, or something that you sing regularly in your setting.

## Activity 1

Explain to the children that you are going to **watch and listen to *Mars* by Gustav Holst**. Holst is a composer which is somebody who writes music. The composer is often telling a story in the music. This story is all about the planet, Mars.

Watch and listen to the music – it's very exciting!

Watch and listen to the piece for a second time, but this time, **encourage the children to tell you what they hear**. For example:

'I wonder if Mars is big or small?'

'Is the planet Mars tired or angry?'

'I wonder what is happening on Mars?'

## Activity 2

**Listen to 2.30-2.44**. Then, ask the children **to move around in the space to the music**. Encourage the children to really listen. Play the music a couple of times.

**Listen to 1.19-1.44**. Again, then ask the children to move around the space to the music. Do this a couple of times.

**Encourage the children to think about how the two extracts were different.** Explain that the first one had more smooth music in it and the second one had more spikey/ jumpy music in it.

Listen again and move around the space with the children, really exaggerate your movement.

### **Activity 3**

Using the drum, **play something in a really spikey/ jumpy way.** Encourage the children to move in this way.

**Then play the drum in a really smooth way.** Try drawing circles on the drum with your palm. Again, encourage the children to move in this way.

Then mix and match your spikey and smooth playing. Encourage the children to move to what they hear.

**Pick a child to lead the group!**

### **Warm-down**

Sing the same song at the beginning!

How smoooooothly can you sing it?

How spikey can you sing it?

## Adventure 2- Let's go to space!

**Goal- To learn a new song and sing it in different styles**

### Warm-up

Play musical statues to *Mars*. When the children freeze ask them to be an alien!

### Activity 1

**Listen to a short section of Mars.** Any section is great!

Explain to the children that today you're all going to space to visit Mars. Ask them how you might get there. Somebody may suggest a rocket, so here's a rocket song below for you to learn. If nobody suggests a rocket, swap the word rocket for however they do decide you are going to travel to space! Also, if you'd prefer, write your own rocket song!

(Actions are in italics, feel free to come up with your own)

Jump into your rocket, (*Jump on the word jump*)

Jump into your rocket, (*Jump on the word jump*)

Get ready for blast off, (*Crouch down*)

Get ready for blast off,

In 3, 2, 1 WOOOOOSH! (*Jump up!*)

You can download this on the Mars page on the Ten Pieces website (*Rocket*)

**Repeat two or three times.**

## Activity 2

**Now try singing the song in different styles;** remember, the WOOOOSH has to be done in the style too!

Why not try one or two of the following? Then ask your children how they would like to sing it.

*Quiet*

*Loud*

*Smooth*

*Spikey*

*Fast*

*Slow*

*Like a robot*

*Like a giant*

*Like an alien*

## Activity 3

**Encourage each child to draw a rocket, or colour one in, or make one with your recycling!**

Once the rocket has been made ask the child how their rocket would fly – get them to show you how they would fly to Mars with *Mars* as the soundtrack!

This art task is an individual one, but once they are all made, you can fly them altogether!

Or if you're wanting a whole class activity; why not try building a huge class rocket?

## Warm-down

You might want to do this before you make your own rocket in Activity 3 as this will take a little time.

Play musical statues to Mars, but this time freeze as rockets!

# Adventure 3- Marching on Mars

**Goal- To come up with simple patterns using drums**

## Resources

- Some drums – the more the merrier. If you don't have drums, what about plastic buckets? Or saucepans, or some of your storage boxes?

## Warm-up

Sing a song you all love singing together.

Why not try singing it in a grumpy voice? What about an excited voice?

## Activity 1

**Listen to Mars and encourage the children to move around the room as they listen to it.** How does it make them move?

Remind them that a composer is someone who writes music, and this music often tells a story. Encourage the children to think what the story might be as they move around the space.

## Activity 2

**Explain that lots of percussion is used in Mars.** Percussion instruments are things that are struck or shaken to make a sound. Watch Mars again; can anybody see a percussion instrument? And what could be happening in the story now?

## Activity 3

**Pass a drum around the circle** and give everyone the chance to make a sound!



## **Activity 4**

**Lay out the drums in the space-** three or four different types of drums is ideal. For example maybe a djembe, a handheld one, and an ocean drum. But it could be a plastic bucket, a saucepan, a storage box and a wooden spoon!

**Pick one child to come and copy your 'Mars pattern'. Play something simple. For example, hit each drum once or hit each drum twice etc. Encourage the child to copy your pattern.**

Pick another child and play another 'Mars pattern'. This time maybe you hit two drums once, then the last one two times. Encourage the child to copy your pattern.

Then pick a child to play their 'Mars pattern'. Pick another child to copy it back.

Repeat, and listen to lots of new 'Mars patterns'!

If you're doing this in a large group, leave the instruments out so that everyone can explore making their own patterns in their own time!

## **Warm-down**

Sing the song that you sang at the beginning. How would you sing it if you were marching about Mars?

## Adventure 4- Who and what can we find on Mars?

**Goal-** *To create sounds for things you find in space, and make up new lyrics to a song!*

### Warm-up

**Listen to Mars and get the children moving around the space.** Ask them what could they be? Aliens? Stars? Another creature we might find on Mars?

Keep note of anything they say as this will help for Activity 2!

### Activity 1

**Explain to the children that today you are going on a space adventure to Mars!** How are you going to get there? Sing the rocket song! If you haven't learnt it yet, here it is. Remember, change the word rocket depending on how your children suggest you travel to Mars!

### Activity 2

Sing a song about what you see on Mars!

Rewrite the words to a tune you know well, or use the example below. It's to the tune of Old MacDonald had a farm.

*In a rocket flying high, zooming through the sky.  
Over there I see a \_\_\_\_\_, zooming through the sky.*

**You can download this on the Mars page on the Ten Pieces website (Twinkle Rocket)**

Encourage the children to think of something they may see, e.g a star. Ask them to tell you what a star sounds like.

*In a rocket flying high, zooming through the sky.  
Over there I see a star, zooming through the sky.  
With a twinkle twinkle here,  
And a twinkle twinkle there,  
Here a twinkle, there a twinkle  
Everywhere a twinkle twinkle,  
In a rocket flying high, zooming through the sky!*

Or an alien!

*In a rocket flying high, zooming through the sky.  
Over there I see an alien, zooming through the sky.  
With a zzz zzz here,  
And a zzz zzz there,  
Here a zzz, there a zzz  
Everywhere a zzz zzz,  
In a rocket flying high, zooming through the sky!*

[You can download this on the Mars page on the Ten Pieces website \(Zoom Alien\)](#)

### **Activity 3**

**Draw all the things that you write new lyrics for!** Can you remember what sound you made for each one?

### **Warm down**

Play musical statues, can you freeze like one of the things you found whilst flying through space?

# Adventure 5- Make your own space map!

**Goal- To create a space map, with sounds that go with each destination or character!**

## Resources

- A selection of instruments.
- Some space shapes. You can either precut some space shapes e.g. Mars, other planets, a rocket, a star, an alien etc., or encourage your class to make them before you start this session. You could also use the drawings you did from 4- Who and What Can We Find On Mars, activity 3. You can also draw them during activity 1, as this will allow more flexibility for what the children suggest!

## Warm-up

Sing the rocket song! What different ways can you sing it?

How might it sound if you were a grumpy alien?

## Activity 1

**Listen to Mars, encourage your children to think what we might see if we were there.** Is there water?  
Is there a grumpy alien?

Have all your different space shapes, pick three as well as a mode of transport. For example, a grumpy alien, a star, Mars and a rocket.

With your group of children, come up with a sound for each. For example:

Grumpy Alien- (low and loud) zzzzzz

Star- twinkle twinkle

Mars- stamping feet

Rocket- zooooom

Then ask one of your children to arrange the grumpy alien, star, Mars and rocket into an order on the board – this is your space map!

Can your class do this order of sounds? For example, if the shapes were in this order:

Grumpy Alien	Mars	Star	Rocket
Zzzzzz	stamping feet	twinkle twinkle	zoooooom

Mix up the order a couple of times! Maybe the rocket flies from each space shape...

## Activity 2

Next, explain to the children that you are not going to use your voices or bodies to make the sound, but instead **you are going to use instruments.**

Bring a selection of instruments to your set up.

Ask the children what instrument the grumpy alien would sound like? Maybe it's a wooden block!

Now ask a child to come and arrange the shapes. Pick four children to play the instruments.

So it could now sound something like this...

Grumpy Alien	Mars	Star	Rocket
Wooden Block	Drum	Chime or bell	Shaker

**Mix up the order a couple of times! And give everyone a go.**

Why not record the patterns on your tablet and show the children? They are making their own music!

If you're doing this session in a big group, leave out the instruments and shapes so everyone can have a go at creating their own space map.

## Warm down

Sing your rocket song a few times. How fast can your rocket fly?

### ***Extension activity***

- *Encourage the children to pick different instruments for each shape and then to play you their space map. Can you copy their pattern back to them?*
  - *Put out some chime bars and ask the child to play you a star song!*
  - *Add new characters and destinations to your space map*

## Adventure 6- Make your own Mars!

This session is about documenting everything you've learned during your exploration of this BBC Ten Piece. Fill up a display board, hang planets from the ceiling or make a giant Mars!

Here are some ideas for whichever way you decide to document this learning experience:

- Make some Mars planets and hang them up
- Stick on the pictures of all the things you found in space
- Draw the instruments that you have all played
- Get a child to tell you the difference between spikey and smooth, can you write it down. Or could they draw spikey? And draw smooth?
- Record your class singing their version of *Flying High Up In The Sky* or the *Rocket Song*
- Write what a percussion instrument is – draw some!
- Print out a picture of Gustav Holst, and write what a composer is
- Write a class story about what is happening on Mars
- Listen to more pieces from The Planets and draw some other planets depending on what you hear!