

# The Language of Music for Children

40 Weekly Lessons for Teaching the Elements of Music Reading to Children

by Nan Grantham

"One does not expect the small child to understand language or to build a vocabulary without having heard words spoken or explained to him." (Richard Ham)

"Musical growth turns upon a progressive and continuously developing realization of what music actually is. Therefore at least a dawning realization should come from the earliest years." (Mabel Sample)

As a guide to the introduction of music on the printed page, and to assist in teaching the signs and symbols to children, the following plans are presented.

## WEEK 1

People live in houses. Birds have nests. Lions and bears have caves. Most everything has a special place where it stays or calls home. Music symbols (we may call them music friends) are usually found on or near a special symbol called a STAFF. (Distribute copies of the staff form on page 5.) Here is an exercise for you to do. As you do it, sing this song:

You draw five lines, tall like a gi- raffe.  
C F G7

Lay them on their side, now they are a staff.  
F G7 G7 C

For the teacher:

Additional exercises:

1. Count the lines and spaces with the children (always counting from bottom to top).
2. Have the children draw their own staff on a blank piece of paper (drawing dots for them to follow if help is needed).
3. Let the children help you make a staff on a tabletop or on a tile floor with masking tape.
4. Show the children a music book and let them find several staves (or staves). You might even mention that a lot of different music symbols or friends are found on these staves (staves).

## WEEK 2

One of the first things that we want to put on our staff is a note. A note is round like an Oreo cookie. Sometimes notes sit on lines and sometimes they are right in the middle of a space. Today we will play a game and see if you can guess if the note is a "line note"



line

or a "space note."



space

(Sing last week's tune with the following words: "Which kind am I? Am I on a line? Am I on a space? Can you name my place?") Using a masking tape staff on a tabletop, place play-doh notes on lines or spaces and let the children identify at the end of each stanza. (And, if you are really into the joy of teaching, have some Oreo cookies available for all or the last part of the game, making certain that every child gets one.)

For the teacher:

Additional exercises:

1. Make the masking tape staff on the floor and let children jump on lines or spaces when you call out "line notes" or "space notes."
2. Play "Simon Says . . ." as a leader calls out line notes or space notes and children respond ONLY if Simon Says. You may later change this to the name of a famous musician, such as "Bach Says . . ." or "Mozart Says . . ."

## WEEK 3

Just as people are different . . . music friends are different, too. (Show symbol pictures found on page 6.) Today I am going to show you some music friends and then we will go on a Music Friend Treasure Hunt. I want to see if you can find any Music Friends that look like the ones I hold in my hands. (Have index cards with the music symbols below pasted on them hidden conspicuously about the room. The children will find them and bring them to place beside the matching symbol.)

For the teacher:

"Name-dropping" is done casually ("I see you found a walking note," or "I see you found Mrs. Treble Clef"), but never called for. More emphasis should be on the factors that make the symbols alike (no stem, five lines, etc.).

Additional exercises:

1. Take the same symbols, make several copies, and give more specific instructions for another treasure hunt, saying "How many music friends can you find that look like THIS?" (Holding up one specific symbol as children hunt about the room, bringing only that symbol to the front each time.)
2. Again, with copies of the same symbol pasted on the tagboard, cut them into 4-5 puzzle pieces and let children work the puzzles. (Edging each puzzle with a different color marker will help to keep them sorted . . . each in a zip-loc bag.)

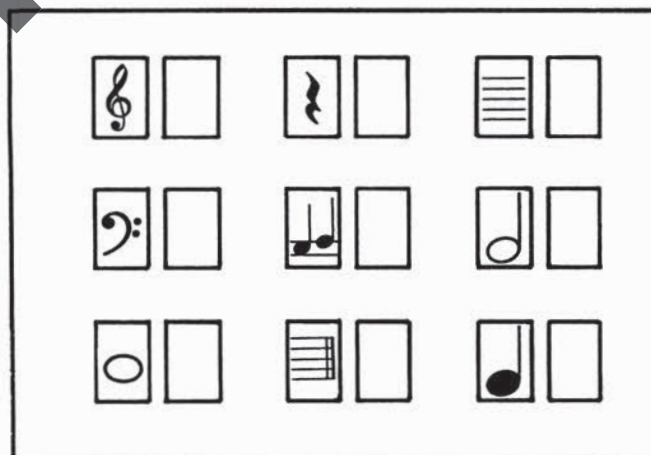
## WEEK 4

Make a poster like the one below, pasting each symbol in place on the left and leaving a blank square on the right. Outline the symbols on the poster in blue and outline an extra set of symbols in red. You will use this in several different ways. Today, let the children toss a beanbag on a blue symbol and then find the matching red symbol to place beside it on the poster (placed on floor).

For the teacher:

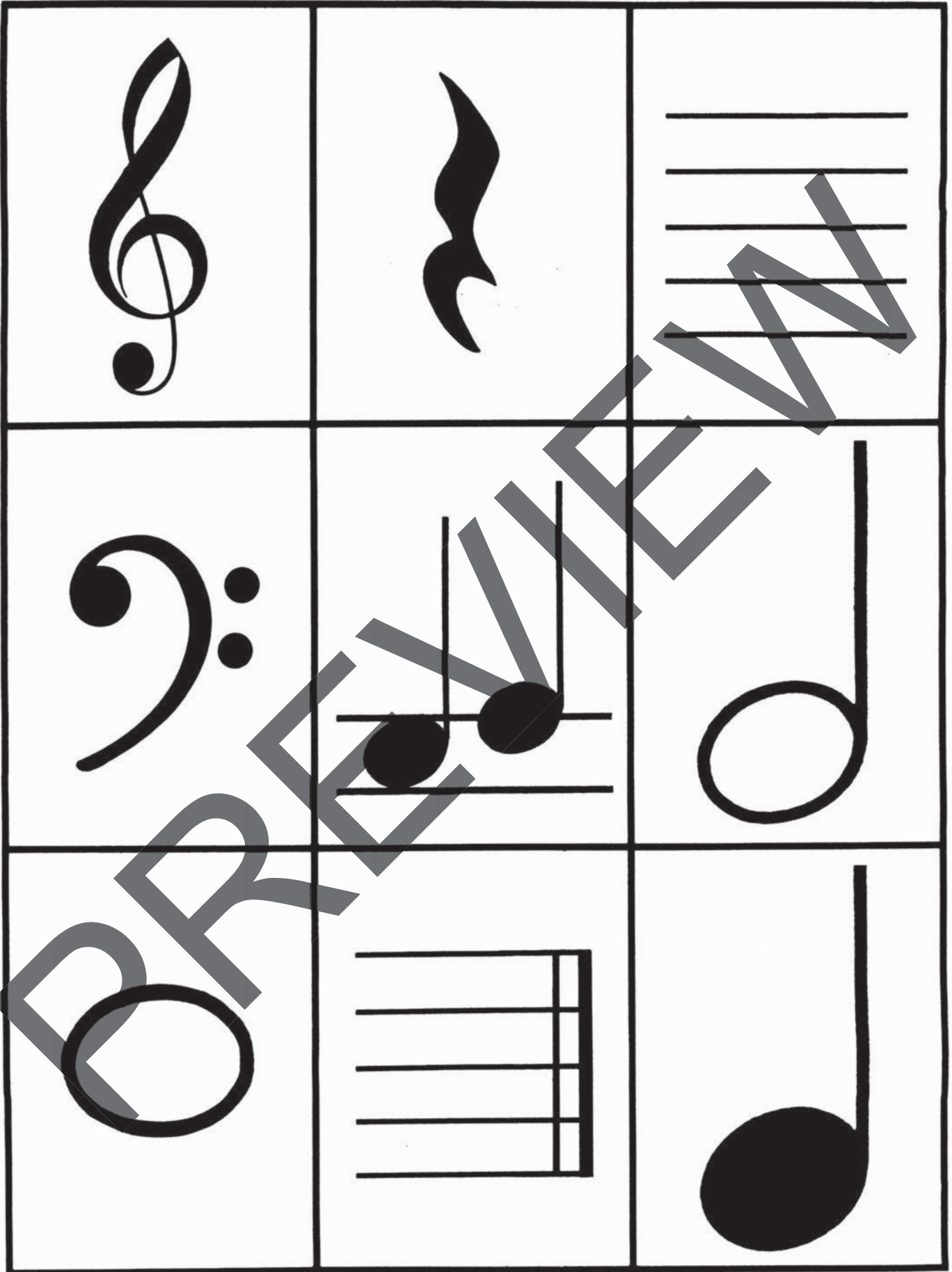
Additional activity:

1. Children could also "tag" a symbol blindfolded, and find the matching symbol on the poster. For this activity, tack the poster to a bulletin board.



Using a pencil and ruler, connect the dots and make a staff.





*Choristers Guild gives permission to reproduce this page in whatever quantity is necessary to meet the needs of your choirs or classes.*