



THE LEARNING MAESTROS
Curriculum Guide for Teachers

TOUGH TURKEY IN THE BIG CITY

The story is told both with words (narration) and music. Each of the characters is portrayed by a theme and is associated with an instrument. Here is a complete list of all the characters and the instruments that play their themes:

Main Character: Tom Turkey – Bass Trombone

Other Characters:

On the Farm

Farmer and Ms. Brown – Violin (in a country fiddle style)

Dudley Duck – Trumpet (with a wa-wa mute)

Rudy Rooster – Violin

Gilda Gosling – Clarinet

In the Big City

Midge Pigeon – Violin

Hawk – Trumpet (straight mute)

A musical concept that is used extensively in the story is **counterpoint**.

Counterpoint means *two or more lines of music (melodies) played at the same time*.

In *Tough Turkey in the Big City*, the barnyard animal's themes all fit together in counterpoint.

After we meet each of the characters on the farm, their themes are combined in counterpoint, as follows:

When the narrator says, “they were the best of friends”, we hear Gilda Gosling (clarinet), Dudley Duck (trumpet), and Rudy Rooster (violin) in a trio (three instruments playing together.)

When the narrator says, “But Tom was different. He dreamed about what lay beyond the garden gates. He didn't want to stay on the farm forever”, we hear Gilda Gosling (clarinet), Dudley Duck (trumpet), Rudy Rooster (violin), and Tom Turkey (bass trombone) in a quartet (four instruments playing together.)

When the narrator says, “But Farmer and Ms. Brown liked Tom, and they would never have eaten him”, the theme of Farmer and Ms. Brown (violin in a country fiddle style) combines *contrapuntally* (in counterpoint) with Tom Turkey's theme (bass trombone.)

Tom then decides to pay a visit to each of the barnyard birds individually to see if they want to come with him to the big city and “see what’s what and who’s who.” As he goes to see each of his feathered friends, his theme (bass trombone) is combined *contrapuntally* with that bird’s theme. The order is as follows:

1. Dudely Duck (trumpet)
2. Rudy Rooster (violin)
3. Gild Gosling (clarinet)

Finally, Tom decides to go to the big city by himself. The narrator says, “Tom Turkey set out for the big city on a Monday morning. Dudley, Rudy, and Gilda walked with him to the gate.” At that point, all four themes combine in a longer contrapuntal episode.

In the big city, there is another example of counterpoint. When Tom first sees Midge Pigeon he “follows her into the public library.” The music depicts this action by giving Midge’s theme to both the violin and bass trombone, with the bass trombone following the violin in “imitative counterpoint”. (Two or more lines sharing the same melody, one following the other in imitation.)

COUNTERPOINT IN EVERY DAY LIFE

In counterpoint, the themes fit together, but they also retain their individuality. Counterpoint happens not only in music, but also in many things we experience every day. For example, we can find counterpoint in food, conversation, and clothing.

Let’s look at counterpoint in a peanut butter and jelly sandwich: you taste the bread, the peanut butter, and the jelly, but you also have a combined taste that is the best of all.

All sandwiches are contrapuntal! When you add mustard to a turkey sandwich, you are adding another independent flavor that is meant to combine with the taste of turkey, bread, and whatever else is in the sandwich.

When members of a family talk at the same time during dinner, you can hear the individual people if you try, but there is also the total contrapuntal effect.

Counterpoint in clothing is very common. We often find colors combined to make contrapuntal patterns, such as green and blue stripes, red polka dots on a yellow background, or a rich colorful counterpoint, like plaid.

Exercises:

1. Make a list of foods that are contrapuntal (where the tastes are combined yet retain their individuality in layers.)
2. Create a contrapuntal talking piece: two or more people talk at the same time, each telling a part of the same story *or* telling the same story in different ways.
3. Design clothing that has a contrapuntal pattern.

RHYTHM IN THE BIG CITY

Throughout the barnyard scene (track one), there is *no* percussion. When Tom finally gets to the big city, there is a sudden outburst of drums and cymbals. The introduction of percussion in the big city gives the feeling of energy and noise that, among other things, distinguishes the big city from the farm. The rhythms of the city are more complex!

Another way in which rhythm helps tell the story can be heard in the Thanksgiving Day Parade music. Tom's theme has been played many times up to this point, and always in a simple rhythm in four/four time.

But when Tom joins in the parade, he is very excited because he is beginning to realize that maybe *he* is "what's what and who's who". His theme is transformed by a jazzier, quirkier rhythm in 7/8 time. When Tom returns to the farm, he can have his tune *both* ways.

Characterization:

In *Tough Turkey in the Big City*, the **bass trombone** represents Tom Turkey throughout the story. Some instruments play *several* characters or represents different kinds of musical settings.

The **clarinet** plays Gilda Gosling as a honking goose but it also plays smooth jazz when the story moves to the city, and marching band music during the Thanksgiving Day Parade.

The **trumpet** plays Dudley Duck with a wa-wa mute, giving a quacky sound, but it also plays the mean Hawk in the Turkey Club using a straight mute, and plays in the marching band, too.

The violin plays Rudy Rooster in a cockadoodle kind of way, but it also plays the sweet melody of Midge the Pigeon, and the country fiddle sound of Farmer and Ms. Brown.

The narrator also changes his voice to portray the different characters. Try imitating the voices on the recording.

For an actor, the voice is like a musical instrument. Voice quality is a very important part of acting.

An actor thinks of *voice quality* in musical terms, including:

Range – high, medium, low;

Articulation – strong or soft consonants; *staccato* (detached) or *legato* (smooth and connected) pronunciation

Dynamics – soft and loud

Timbre – husky, bright, raspy, hollow, thick, etc.

Tempo – fast talker? Slow talker?

Pick characters from the list below, and use a voice that you think fits the character.

Cowboy/girl	Waiter or Waitress
Doctor	Ringmaster of a circus
Police officer	TV news announcer
Talking frog	Talking cat or dog
Politician	Robot
Monster	Fairy

THE STORY ITSELF

Things to think about and discuss concerning the story of *Tough Turkey in the Big City*:

1. Sometimes you have to leave home, and go out in the world to find out “what’s what and who’s who”. Where would you like to go? Why? What would you like to discover?
2. YOU may be “what’s what and who’s who”, even though you did not think so. Do you think you have hidden (secret) talents? What are they?
3. Life is full of unexpected events, some disappointments and some happy surprises. What are the happy and sad things that happen to Tom Turkey? What surprises have happened in your life?
4. Becoming famous can happen to someone by accident, as it did to Tom Turkey. But being famous is not the end of the story for Tom Turkey. Do you think it would be fun to be famous? What are some of the reasons? What might not be fun about being famous? What are good reasons for becoming famous? What are bad reasons?
5. People do not always believe the truth, and sometimes they believe nonsense, too. Tom Turkey did not trust news and TV, “for the most part, anyway”. How can you tell what is true and not true? Tell a story about your life that is not completely true, and the other students will guess which parts are true and which are not.

Exercise: Make up a story in which a character travels away from home and then returns after an adventure. Consider the following:

What is home like?

Why does the character wish to go somewhere else?

What is that other place like?

Make up two situations that happen to the character in the new place.

Why does the character go home?

What has changed for the character?
