

## Lesson 2 for Grades 2–4

# Experiencing Hearing Disability through Music

## Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the concept of disability to students by exploring the everyday experiences of people who have a hearing disability. Through hands-on exercises such as using sign language and appreciating music by means of sound vibration, students explore similarities and differences in the daily lives of people with and without a hearing disability. In addition, students are encouraged to challenge assumptions about the abilities of people with disabilities in general.

**[NOTE:** In advance of teaching this lesson, consider whether you have any students in your class who have a disability, whether it is a visible physical disability or a learning disability which is often invisible. Sometimes students feel relieved to discuss a topic so relevant to their lives while others might feel awkward or embarrassed. This does not mean you should not discuss the topic; however, be careful not to highlight their situations, put them on the spot or use them as an example of a person with a disability. Be aware that strong feelings could arise and plan in advance for how to handle it. Also, consider talking with the students or their parents in advance. In order to appropriately define language and guide student discussion on disability issues, it is recommended that teachers carefully read ADL's resource sheets on disability prior to facilitating lesson with students.]

See the following resources for further reference:

- [Evaluating Children's Books that Address Disability](#)
- [Disability Glossary](#)
- [Communication Guidelines Relating to Ability](#)
- [Suggested Language for People with Disabilities](#)

## Objectives

- Students will hear a piece of music and listen for different sounds and instruments.
- Students will learn the terms disability and hearing disability.
- Students will learn how people with a hearing disability can experience music through sound vibration.
- Students will learn some basic sign language.
- Students will learn how people with a hearing disability perform daily functions.

## Time

35 minutes for Part I, and 50 minutes for Part II

## Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- [American Sign Language](#) (one for each student)
- [Friends Who Care: Hearing Disabilities Worksheet](#) (one for each student)
- [Moses Goes to a Concert](#) by Isaac Millman (one for teacher use)

Other Material:

- balloons, basic art supplies, chart paper, construction paper, crayons, markers, pencils, stereo with speakers, writing paper

## Key Words

Assumption  
Composer  
Deaf  
Disability  
Hard of hearing  
Hearing disability  
Orchestra  
Percussionist  
Sign language  
Sound  
Vibration

## Advanced Preparation

- ➔ Reproduce handouts as directed above.

## Techniques and Skills

analyzing music, brainstorming, communicating ideas and opinions, cooperative group work, critical thinking, developing a basic understanding of sound and vibration, forming opinions, large group discussion, reading skills, using sign language, writing skills

## Procedures

### Part I

1. Play a song or piece of music (preferably a cultural piece that represents the ethnic or cultural background of one or more of the students). Ask students to listen to the sounds they are hearing, and to draw or write the sounds and instruments they recognize in the musical piece.
2. Tell students about the cultural significance of the song or musical piece. Ask students to share some of the sounds or instruments that they heard. Chart responses, and paste up student writings and drawings.
3. Write the words "HEARING DISABILITY" on a separate piece of chart paper (or chalk board), and ask students:
  - What is a disability? (Explain that a disability is a mental or physical condition that limits a person in being able to see, hear, speak, walk, or learn).
  - What is a hearing disability? (Explain that there are various levels and degrees of hearing impairment. People who are deaf may have either a total or partial inability to hear, but are not assisted by hearing aids; whereas people who are hard of hearing have a partial ability to hear and may be assisted by the use of devices like a hearing aid.)
  - Do you think a person with a hearing disability would be able to experience the song we just listened to? Why or why not?
4. Give each student an inflated balloon. Have each student hold the balloon in their lap, and replay the musical piece from earlier. (The volume of the music may have to be turned up moderate to loud in order for students to feel the vibrations of the music through their balloons. Students may need to hold their inflated balloon up to the speaker, or place their hands on the speakers, to ensure they can feel the vibration of the music.)
5. Engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
  - What was it like to feel the music through your balloon?
  - Did some of the sounds feel different to you? How did the sounds feel different from one another? (Explain to students that different sounds create different levels of vibrations which can be felt through a balloon, or through the playing of an instrument such as a piano or drum.)
  - What does this experience tell us about how people with a hearing disability can appreciate music differently?
  - How might a person who has a hearing disability be able to play an instrument?

### Part II

1. Invite students to join you in reading the book [\*Moses Goes to a Concert\*](#) by Isaac Millman.
 

**Book summary:** In *Moses Goes to a Concert*, Moses goes on a school trip to an orchestral performance. To the surprise of the children, the percussionist in the orchestra is deaf, just as they are. Moses and the other students not only experience sound and music through vibration and sign language, but discover that they too can achieve anything they put their mind to.
2. Ask students the following questions in response to the book:
  - How was the percussionist who is deaf able to play in the orchestra?
  - What types of things did you learn from this story about people with a hearing disability?

- Do you know any sign language?
  - If not, did you learn any sign language from this story?
3. Distribute the [American Sign Language](#) handout to each student, and demonstrate for students how to sign the words “Hello, I am...” Have students practice signing these words, and then divide students into pairs. Using the handout, have students work together to learn how to sign their name.
  4. Reconvene the whole class, and ask students to walk around the room introducing themselves using sign language, “Hello, I am [their name].” Explain to students that some people with a hearing disability do not use their voice when they sign, whereas others do, so it is optional for students to vocalize when they are signing.

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**Extension:** Clarify for students that American Sign Language (ASL) is not a word-for-word translation of English, there are also phrases and expressions that are unique to ASL that students can learn. Distribute the [Friends Who Care: Hearing Disabilities Worksheet](#) to students. As a homework assignment, have students learn three or four ASL phrases and expressions included in the worksheet. Students may also choose to research and learn new expressions not included in the worksheet and teach them to the class. Also let students know that not every person who is deaf or hearing impaired uses ASL.

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5. Ask students how it felt to communicate differently. Explain to students that communication is one way that people with a hearing disability do things differently. Have students brainstorm other things that people with a hearing disability might do differently, and chart responses. Offer one or two examples from the list below, but allow students to generate as many ideas as possible.
  - Waking up to an alarm clock to go to school?
  - Watching TV?
  - Playing games?
  - Talking on the phone?
  - Dancing?
  - Going shopping?
6. Invite a local community member who has a hearing disability to visit the class (or take the class to visit them) so that students have a chance to meet a person with a hearing disability. Make sure this is someone who has experience talking with young children about her/his disability. In preparation of the visit, have students develop a list of questions that they would like to ask about living with a hearing disability.

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**NOTE:** If this is not possible, gather books about people with hearing disabilities so that students can learn more about what it means to live with a hearing disability (see suggested titles listed below). Refer to the ADL resource [Evaluating Children’s Books That Address Disability](#) for guidelines on choosing children’s literature on disability.

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Suggested books (see also, ADL’s [bibliography on Disabilities](#) for other books):

- [Can You Hear a Rainbow?: The Story of a Deaf Boy Named Chris](#) by Jamee Riggio Riggio Heelan
  - [Let’s Talk about Deafness](#) by Melanie A. Gordon
  - [El Deafo](#) by Cece Bell
  - [Let’s Hear it for Almgal](#) by Wendy Kupfer
7. After students have had an opportunity to learn more about living with a hearing disability, revisit the list that students brainstormed earlier about daily things that people with a hearing disability might do differently. Ask students if there is anything they want to add or change on the list. Add the following points if not mentioned by students.
    - People with a hearing disability can watch TV or movies using closed captioning technology (a system that “captures” words being spoken and displays it as text on the bottom of the screen).
    - People with a hearing disability can communicate over the phone using TTY (teletype writer) technology (a system of typing out words over the phone where the words are either read on a lighted screen display or printed on a paper printout.)
    - In addition to using sign language, people with a hearing disability can sometimes read lips, and can sometimes use their voice to communicate. It is always best to ask in what way a person with a hearing disability would prefer to

communicate. When speaking to a person who reads lips, always face the person when speaking, and communicate at a normal speed.

- People that use hearing aids can hear normal tones and voices, so it is important not to raise your voice or shout at a person with a hearing disability.

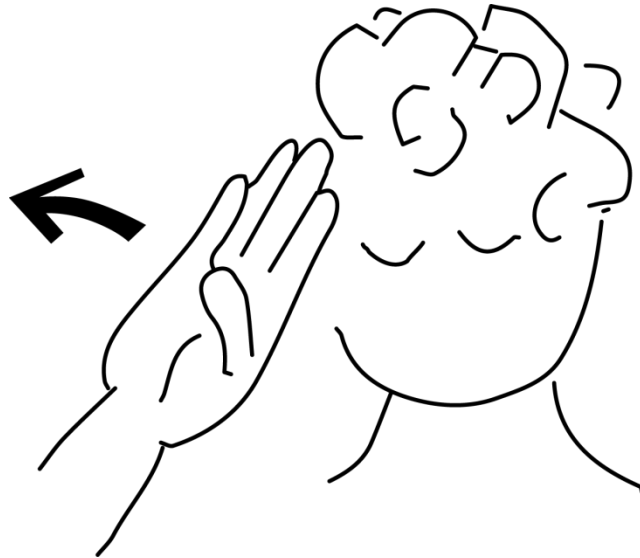
8. Close by asking students:

- What were some of the most surprising things that you learned about people with hearing disabilities?
- How have some of your assumptions or ideas about the abilities of people with hearing disabilities changed?
- What have you learned about making assumptions about the abilities of people with disabilities in general? (Make point to students that we often assume what people with disabilities can or can't do, rather than asking and learning how people with disabilities might do things differently.)

### Extension Activity

Have students write a pen pal letter to students at a local school for children who are deaf and/or hard of hearing. Have students express what they learned about people with hearing disabilities, and about using sign language. Have students request in their letter whether they can visit the school for students who are deaf and/or hard of hearing, so that they may learn more about how a school for children with hearing disabilities is both similar and different from their own school. Using the [Friends Who Care: Hearing Disabilities Worksheet](#), have students prepare some basic phrases in sign language to communicate with students who have a hearing disability. Also, if possible, have students attend an event together, like a musical performance, and have students share their experience of the event with one another.

# American Sign Language



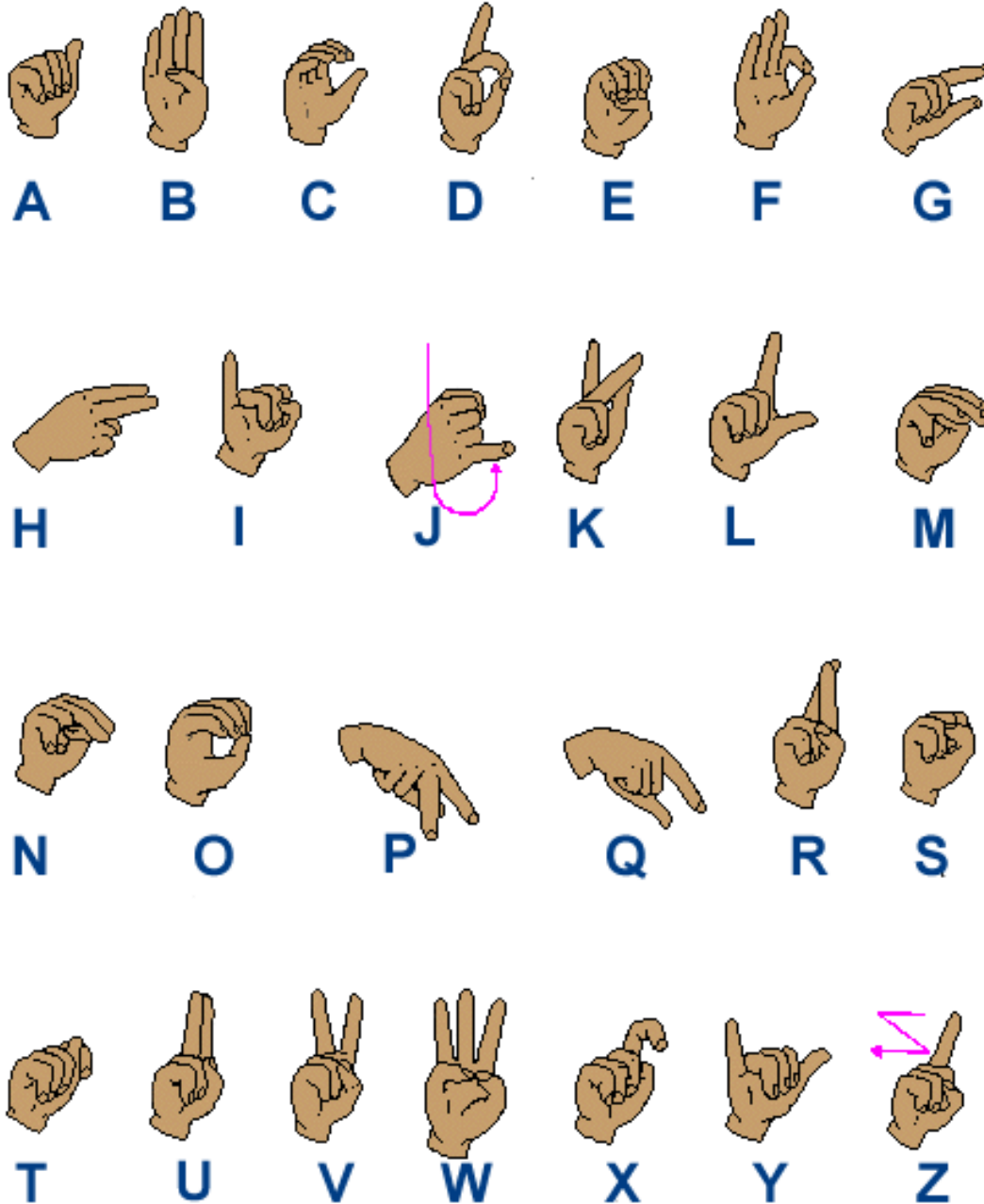
**Hello**



**I am**

Source: Lesson Tutor, [www.lessonstutor.com](http://www.lessonstutor.com).








Now use the American Sign Language alphabet to spell your name...
















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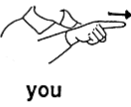
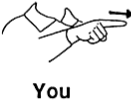




# Hearing Disabilities Worksheet





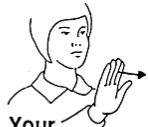

 Hello!
  Good-bye!
  Please
  Thank you
  My
  name
  is

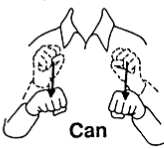
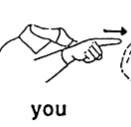


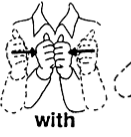


 How
  are
  you
  ?
  I
  am
  fine!



 Do
  you
  understand
  ?
  Please
  write.

 Come
  with
  me.
  I
  do
  not
  understand

 I
  like
  you
  You
  are
  my
  good
  friend

 let's
  play
  My
  turn
  Your
  turn

 Can
  you
  eat
  lunch
  with
  us
  ?

 Yes
  No

Examples of Signed Exact English.



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