



national foundation for  
**youth music**

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## **how you can teach the song from the cd**

*'Can you hear? There's a whisper in the air'*

## 1. Listen to the full version of the song CD track 1 all the way through first.



Encourage your group to move to the music if they wish to. Make sure that they don't switch off – give them specific things to listen out for, like: *How many times do you hear the word 'drop'? Which words are repeated in the chorus? Is the song loud or quiet at the very end?*

## 2. Discuss some general points

Discuss the ideas behind the lyrics.

(See Drop in the Ocean and Citizenship Section)

For instance: *How does the music help to create the atmosphere? What musical references are there to the ocean? What musical styles have influenced this song?*

Then, before you listen to the song again, practice whispering *Drop, drop, drop in the ocean*.

## 3. Listen to the song again

Ask the group to join in with *Drop, drop, drop in the ocean*. See if they can identify which section is the chorus (letter C) and ask them to remember as many of the words as possible. After listening, reconstruct the words of the chorus with the group.

## 4. Start teaching the song with the chorus

When teaching new parts of the melody sing it yourself or play the recording of the solo voice singing the melody, you can choose between the boy soloist or the girl soloist (CD Track 4 or 5). It is then easier to learn the song with piano accompaniment first (CD Track 6) rather than with the backing track.

### Chorus 1 (letter C in score)

Work on each phrase at a time. Whisper it first to help clarity of diction and then learn the melody, ensuring that unified vowel sounds are formed:

- In phrases one and two make sure the 'drop' is staccato (light and detached) with clear rests after it - talk about 'phrases' as they are being learnt and mark them in the air with 'rainbows'
- Make sure that long notes are given their full value (e.g. 'tide' at the end of the third phrase) and that consonants are clearly enunciated.
- Practise any difficult intervals between notes (e.g. '... rain, I can...') until they are secure.
- Make sure that deep breaths are taken before legato (smooth) phrases (e.g. I can rise up like rain, I can fall down like thunder') so that the voice is supported.
- When the melody and the rhythms are secure, sing the whole chorus, making sure that your singers convey the mood. Use the backing track CD track 2 or piano accompaniment CD track 6 as some of the notes can be pitched much more accurately with the harmony. You'll find difficult bits suddenly become much easier!

## 5. Practice the first verse

Can you hear? letter A in the score?

As with the chorus, work on a phrase at a time. Whisper it first then learn the melody with emphasis on well-formed vowel sounds.

- The singers should communicate with their eyes the questions at the beginning of this section. Discuss suitable dynamics (volume) for the phrases as they are learnt.
- Draw the singers' attention to the interval between the second 'Can' and 'you' (bar 12) which is the same as that between 'I'm' and 'a' at the beginning of the chorus (letter C).
- Make sure that the notes at the ends of phrases are given their full value.
- The third line of each verse should be sung in one breath. So let the singers prepare for it with a deep breath and this will support their voices to the end of the phrase.
- Once the melody for this section is secure...

## Move on to learn the second verse

'Some may sail' Letter B

- Pay particular attention to phrases where the rhythm of the words is different. If any rhythms are found difficult (e.g. 'ends of the world') practise them separately, with physical movement on each syllable if necessary.
- Sing the song with the backing track or piano accompaniment as far as the end of the first chorus. You will probably find that the singers will automatically copy the 'Drop, drop, drop in the ocean' of the opening. Once all these sections are secure, the other parts of the song can be learnt...

## Move on to the rest of the song

- Together learn the other verse and choruses, paying attention to the change in key and lyrics in the third chorus.
  - Then learn the bridge or linking passage (letter G in the score).
  - Finally learn the coda (letter I in the score).
- When the whole song has been learnt, sing it through with the backing track or piano accompaniment.

## 7. Some Tips!

- Use an enlarged copy or overhead transparency of the lyrics. The text has been spaced to indicate the rhythm of the words. Position the copy where all the singers have a clear view of it. This will help them sing with good posture and without burying their heads in copies.
- Don't join in with the singing yourself every time. Stand back and listen so that you can identify the trouble spots. Don't be afraid to go back over sections that they have not quite grasped.
- Turn awkward phrases into fun exercises. Add movement, sing to silly words and pick small groups to sing it. Sing it quieter, faster, slower, louder. You may need to repeat a phrase over and over again – so use the image of a stuck record.
- Go back to any of the warm-up exercises if the singers need reminding about breathing, vowel formation or working on rhythms while they are learning the song.
- Encourage the singers to listen to each other as they sing. If anyone is having problems singing in tune, place them next to someone who has a good sense of pitch.
- Younger groups of singers may need to learn different sections of the song in different sessions. They should gradually build up to the whole song, rather than learn it all at once.
- Every opportunity should be taken to perform for an audience, no matter how small.

## 8. Remember!

- The singers should stand with a good, balanced posture, feet slightly apart and hands by their sides so they do not restrict expansion of the chest and abdomen.
- All breaths should be deep and the voice should feel supported.
- Work hard to form the vowels well.
- Communicate the meaning and feelings of the song when you sing it.

## What's in a song?

You can learn a lot about song writing by looking at the structure of Drop in the Ocean.

