

# MEETING THE SUN

## Movement 1: 'I Wish I Was Young'

### Listening Guide

**Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin** was asked to write *Meeting The Sun* to commemorate the centenary of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, or 'Anzac', landings at Gallipoli in 1915. It is a piece of music that has been composed for children's choir and concert band, which is a large group of woodwind, brass and percussion instruments. *Meeting The Sun* is in five sections (or movements) and lasts for about 18 minutes in total.

The first movement of *Meeting The Sun* by Elena Kats-Chernin is called 'I Wish I Was Young'. It is a musical setting of a poem written by Carl Baker. Baker served in the Australian Army in both world wars.



*Image caption: Darge Photographic Company, studio portrait of two soldiers one of whom is listed as Baker, C. W., Melbourne, September 1915, (photograph), courtesy Australian War Memorial*

'I Wish I Was Young' was written during the Second World War, and seems to reflect on the time he spent as a young man in the First World War. Here is the poem:

# I WISH I WAS YOUNG

I wish I was young  
watch the golden moon  
climb up silver clouds  
out of sight.

Wake and find the sunlight,  
Sing some happy tune  
And I'll not remember  
hate and fight.

But I'm old and  
have no dreams to dream,  
I've walked alone,  
yet death was always there.

Red hot weapons  
Seem a part of me.  
Now I think of you and  
wish that I was young,  
Too young to care.

Wish that I was young,  
Too young to care,  
Alas tomorrow I'll be twenty-two,  
Twenty-two, twenty-two.

The movement starts with long chords in the brass instruments, over which the woodwind and percussion repeatedly play a five-note ostinato. An ostinato is a short musical pattern that is repeated over and over. The choir then start to sing a simple melody in unison; they add harmony in the second line of the poem. The music begins to move more and becomes louder on the words, "But I'm old". There is then a short instrumental section before the choir sings the words 'twenty-two' in long, sustained notes. There is a quiet instrumental coda before the movement ends.

# Activity 1: Research

Read the information on the following website carefully:

<http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/bgrnd.html>

Answer these questions:

1. On which date did the Anzac landings start?
2. At what time were the first men supposed to land at Anzac Cove?
3. How long did it take to load the landing boats?
4. Why was this done as quietly as possible?
5. Why did the men roll their sleeves up?
6. Why was it difficult for the Anzacs to get out of the boats?
7. Which two soldiers claimed to be the first ones ashore?

## Extension Questions

8. Give an account of the events that happened in the few days following the first landings.
9. Other ideas to explore in relation to Gallipoli:  
The Royal Australian Navy and the AEII submarine  
Australian pilots  
Women  
Indigenous soldiers.

## Activity 2: Listening

First, listen to the whole of 'I Wish I Was Young'.



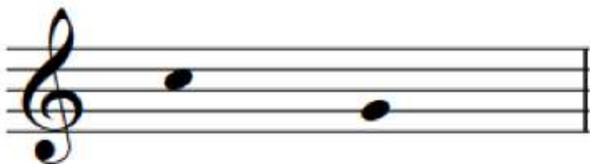
NOTE – an ostinato is a short musical pattern that is repeated over and over.

**Now, listen to the opening four bars 6 times.** There will be a short pause between each playing

Answer the questions while you are listening.



1. How many times do you hear the ostinato in this short excerpt?
2. Name two instruments that play the ostinato?
3. Complete the musical notation of the ostinato. Be careful with the rhythm!  
Use the notes C and G only.



# Activity 3: Performance

Play the classroom arrangement of the start of 'I Wish I was Young'.

Musical score for the first system of 'I Wish I was Young'. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of the following parts:

- Part 1 C:** Treble clef, whole notes, chord C.
- Part 2 C:** Treble clef, whole notes, chord C.
- Part 2 Bb:** Treble clef, quarter notes, chord D.
- Bass instruments:** Bass clef, whole notes, chord E.
- Pitched percussion or keyboard or guitar:** Treble clef, quarter notes, chords C G and CGC.
- Piano:** Treble and bass clefs, quarter notes, chords C G and CGC.

Musical score for the second system of 'I Wish I was Young', starting at measure 10. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of the following parts:

- Part 1 C:** Treble clef, whole notes, chords C, Bb, Bb, A, A, C.
- Part 2 C:** Treble clef, whole notes, chord C.
- Part 2 Bb:** Treble clef, quarter notes, chord D.
- Bass instruments:** Bass clef, whole notes, chords D, F, F, E.
- Pitched percussion or keyboard or guitar:** Treble clef, quarter notes, chords CGC, C G, CGC, C G, CGC, C G, CGC, C G, CGC.
- Piano:** Treble and bass clefs, quarter notes, chords C G and CGC.

Part 1 C

C C C C C C C C C

10 C C C Bb Bb A G C

Part 2 C

C C C C C C C C C

10 C C C C C C C C

Part 2 Bb

D D D D D D D D D

10 D D D D D D D D

Bass instruments

E E E E Eb Eb Eb Eb D

10 D D D D D F F E



## Activity 4: Composition

**You are to create an ostinato pattern using two pitches.** Remember, an ostinato is a short musical pattern that is repeated over and over.

First chose two pitches (notes). It is usually best if they are closer than an octave to one another.

If you are using a keyboard, place a finger from each hand on the two notes you have chosen to use.

If you are using a guitar, use two notes on two different strings and hold down those notes with your left hand.

If you are using a tuned percussion instrument like a xylophone, remove some of the keys (if possible) so the two notes you are using are easier to play.

Once you have chosen your two notes, create a short pattern using those two pitches or notes. Try and make it last for 4, 6 or 8 beats. Use interesting rhythms and consider using dynamics (louds and softs) in your ostinato.

Practise playing your ostinato over and over.

Hold a short concert in your class in which everyone presents their own ostinato.



## Activity 5: Creative Writing

**Imagine you are a soldier in the trenches during the First World War.** Imagine you are on duty in the battle frontline during a fairly quiet period. Imagine tomorrow is your 22nd birthday. Write a diary that records your activities, thoughts and feelings over a three-day period. For example, you might feel fear, homesickness, tiredness, courage, hunger and a sense of mateship or friendship. You might be feeling overcome by the death, disease, lack of hygiene and the swarms of flies in and around the trenches.



*Soldier, 2nd Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, Flesselles, France, 1916, (photograph), courtesy Australian War Memorial*

# Acknowledgements

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