



# LESSON PLAN

## COMPOSING A BUGLE CALL

*High School (9-12)*

### OVERVIEW:

Buglers sound the call “Taps” to close military funerals many times a day at Arlington National Cemetery, and nearby Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall uses bugle calls throughout the day to signal different events. Bugles can only play the notes C, E, and G, so composers must use rhythm and articulation to communicate a call’s meaning instead of mode and harmony. In this lesson, students will sight-sing and listen to bugle calls, analyze the calls’ use of rhythm and articulation to communicate meaning, and compose their own bugle call.

*Because bugle calls are musically simple, we recommend AP Music Theory teachers use this lesson during Units 1, 2, or 3.*

**Estimated time:** 45 minutes + homework

### STANDARDS:

#### National Association for Music Education Composition/Theory Standards

- MU:Cr1.1.C.IIA: Describe and demonstrate how sounds and musical ideas can be used to represent sonic events, memories, visual images, concepts, texts, or storylines.
- MU:Cr2.1.C.IA: Assemble and organize sounds or short musical ideas to create initial expressions of selected experiences, moods, images, or storylines.
- MU:Cr3.2.C.IIa: Share music through the use of notation, solo or group performance, or technology, and demonstrate and describe how the elements of music and compositional techniques have been employed to realize expressive intent.
- MU:Re8.1.C.Ia: Develop and explain interpretations of varied works, demonstrating an understanding of the composers’ intent by citing technical and expressive aspects as well as the style/genre of each work.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will sight-sing bugle calls.
- Students will identify compositional techniques used to communicate meaning in bugle calls.
- Students will compose a bugle call.



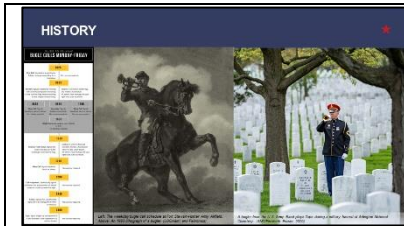
## RESOURCES NEEDED:

1. Composing a Bugle Call PowerPoint
2. Composing a Bugle Call student worksheet (1 per student)

## LESSON ACTIVITIES:

- Use the notes below to lead a discussion about bugle calls before introducing the composition activity.

Slide:	Notes for Presentation
<p>Slide 2: What Do You Notice?</p> 	<p>What do you notice about this piece of music?</p> <p><i>Students may comment on the meter, clef, rhythms, articulations, etc. Continue encouraging responses until someone points out that there are only three note names used.</i></p>
<p>Slide 3: Bugle Calls</p> 	<p>This piece of music is a bugle call. A bugle is an instrument that looks a lot like a trumpet, but it has no buttons. It can only play a few notes.</p> <p>Looking at this call, what are those notes?</p> <p>C, E, G</p> <p>What scale degrees are those?</p> <p>1, 3, 5 or Tonic, Mediant, Dominant</p> <p>What solfege syllables are those?</p> <p>Do, Mi, Sol</p> <p>What kind of triad do these notes create?</p> <p>Major triad</p> <p>Another interesting thing about the bugle is that it cannot play every C, E, or G. The slide shows the “bugle scale,” which does not include the E after middle C.</p>
<p>Slide 4: History</p>	<p>Hundreds of years ago, before we had phones and radios, or people had their own watches and clocks to see the time, it was hard to tell a whole bunch of people that it was time to do</p>

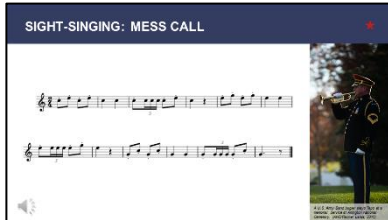


something. A bugle is loud and can be heard from far away, so armies started using bugle calls to tell soldiers when it was time to do certain things. Even though we now have clocks and phones, the U.S. Army still carries on the tradition of using bugle calls.

One call you may already be familiar with is “Taps.” In July 1862, during the Civil War, Brigadier General Daniel Butterfield composed the tune to replace the colorless "lights out" call that the Army then used. The tune’s popularity quickly spread to other Army brigades.

Taps soon took on a second meaning as well. There is a tradition at military funerals of firing three shots into the air. A Union commanding officer, afraid that the three shots could be misinterpreted as an attack, requested that the three shots be replaced by Taps at the funeral of one of his men. This tradition caught on, and now Taps is played at the end of the day, during flag ceremonies and at military funerals.

Slides 5-7: Sight-Singing

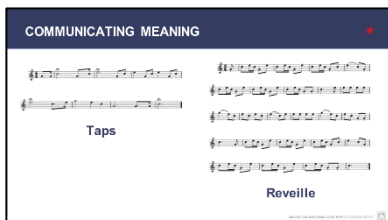


Let’s sight-sing some bugle calls:

- Mess Call – this call is used to tell people it is time to eat.
- Taps – this call is used to tell people it is time to turn out their lights and go to sleep. It is also played at the end of military funerals.
- Reveille – this call is used to wake people up in the morning

*Follow whatever sight-singing procedure you have already established. You may want to direct students to focus on practicing the rhythms, since the only notes used are do, mi, sol. After sight-singing, click the audio icon to play the call.*

Slide 8: Communicating Meaning



What are some differences you noticed between Taps and Reveille? Did those differences match the “meaning” of the call?

*Taps is slower, has longer note values, and smooth articulation. It sounds more peaceful and solemn, which is appropriate for people falling asleep or a somber occasion like a funeral.*

*Reveille is fast, has short note values, and a lot of staccatos. It sounds exciting and is appropriate for waking people up.*

Even though bugles can only play a couple of notes, the rhythms and articulations can communicate a lot of emotion and meaning.



Slide 9: Mystery Calls

Let's listen to two more mystery calls and see if you can guess what they are supposed to mean. One call is used to tell people it is time to gather and get ready for a formation, the other is used to tell people it is time to go to their rooms for the night.

*Play each call and then ask which was which. Prompt students to describe how the music communicated its meaning.*

Slide 10: Mystery Calls

- Call 1: Call to Quarters – *this call is used to tell people to go to their rooms for the night. Notice the long note values, including fermatas.*
- Call 2: First Call – *this call is used to tell people to gather for a formation. Notice the short note values and staccato articulation.*

- Pass out worksheets, display Slide 11 and explain instructions for the homework assignment of composing a bugle call:
  1. Before you begin composing, decide what the purpose of your bugle call is and write it on your worksheet. It could be something we talked about today – like waking people up or telling them it is time for bed – or you can make up your own purpose like telling people to turn in their homework or announcing soccer practice is over. Think about this purpose when writing your call – what note values and articulations will you use?
  2. Your piece must be in 4/4 time and must be either 12 or 16 measures long
  3. You will write in the treble clef and only use the notes in the bugle scale. Those are the only notes the bugle can play, so those are the only notes you can use in your composition. You may choose to start and end on any of the three notes but be prepared to explain your choice and why it fits with the purpose of your call. A melody that ends on the dominant or mediant will feel unfinished and should only be done with purpose.
  4. You must include at least one of these rhythms:



- After students compose their bugle calls, make copies or project each call for the class to sight-sing together. Ask each student to introduce their call's purpose and describe the compositional choices they made.



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- If you use this lesson after having taught motives and melodic devices (AP Music Theory Unit 6), ask students to identify examples of motives and motivic transformation in the Army bugle call examples. Encourage students to use these techniques in their compositions.
- Listen to additional bugle calls on the U.S. Army Band website:  
<https://www.bands.army.mil/music/buglecalls/>

## PLANNING A VISIT TO ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY?

While at the cemetery, you can use the Arts at ANC walking tour to learn more about musicians and artists buried in the cemetery. You may hear Taps being played at military funerals during your visit; please show respect by not approaching the funeral service.

## SOURCES

“Bugle Calls.” Fort Stewart-Hunter Army Airfield. Accessed February 22, 2022.

<https://home.army.mil/stewart/index.php/my-fort/soldiers/bugle-calls#:~:text=REVEILLE%20%2D%20Signals%20the%20Soldiers%20to,assemble%20at%20a%20designated%20place.>

“Bugle Calls.” U.S. Army Band. Accessed February 22, 2022.

<https://www.bands.army.mil/music/buglecalls/>

“Call to Quarters.” U.S. Army Band. Accessed February 22, 2022.

<https://www.bands.army.mil/music/buglecalls/calltoquarters.asp>

“First Call.” U.S. Army Band. Accessed February 22, 2022.

<https://www.bands.army.mil/music/buglecalls/firstcall.asp>

“Mess Call.” U.S. Army Band. Accessed February 22, 2022.

<https://www.bands.army.mil/music/buglecalls/messcall.asp>

“Reveille.” U.S. Army Band. Accessed February 22, 2022.

<https://www.bands.army.mil/music/buglecalls/reveille.asp>

“Taps.” U.S. Army Band. Accessed February 22, 2022.

<https://www.bands.army.mil/music/buglecalls/taps.asp>



## IMAGES

**Slide 1:** Elizabeth Fraser, National Veterans Day Observance 2019, November 11, 2019, Arlington National Cemetery, <https://flic.kr/p/2hJtWtQ>

**Slide 3:** Bugle in C, Metropolitan Museum of Art, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/504065>

**Slide 3:** Rachel Larue, All-female veteran honor flight visits Arlington National Cemetery and Women in Military Service for America Memorial, September 22, 2015, Arlington National Cemetery, <https://flic.kr/p/yYw836>

**Slide 4:** William Morris Hunt and Dominique C. Fabronius, Bugle call / painted by Wm. M. Hunt ; lith by D.C. Fabronius., 1863, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/pga.03708/>

**Slide 4:** Elizabeth Fraser, Modified Military Funeral Honors are Conducted for U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Belch, April 14, 2020, Arlington National Cemetery, <https://flic.kr/p/2iQC5Nv>

**Slide 5:** Rachel Larue, The Military Order of the World Wars holds a memorial service for General of the Armies John J. Pershing in Arlington National Cemetery, November 11, 2015, Arlington National Cemetery, <https://flic.kr/p/AYzZaH>

**Slide 6:** Elizabeth Fraser, Military Funeral Honors with Funeral Escort are Conducted for U.S. Army Gen. Montgomery Meigs in Section 1, January 25, 2022, Arlington National Cemetery, <https://flic.kr/p/2mZcMF3>

**Slide 7:** Elizabeth Fraser, Tomb of Remembrance Dedication, December 13, 2017, Arlington National Cemetery, <https://flic.kr/p/CPQ4uX>

**Slide 9:** Elizabeth Fraser, 68th National Veterans Day Observance at Arlington National Cemetery, November 11, 2021, Arlington National Cemetery, <https://flic.kr/p/2mJc91a>

**Slide 11:** Elizabeth Fraser, 243rd U.S. Army Chaplain Corps Anniversary at Chaplains Hill, July 27, 2018, Arlington National Cemetery, <https://flic.kr/p/28s9Utu>