



# The United States Army Field Band

## *The Joy of Singing*

### Companion Lesson Plans

#### **THE JOY OF SINGING: CARE AND FEEDING OF THE VOICE**

*This lesson is suitable for inclusion in a middle or high school choral environment.*

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Students will understand misuse of the voice and resultant disorders.
- Students will work with others to determine five rules to protect and aid the voice.

#### **MATERIALS:**

- Model of a larynx, available through many medical bookstores or online
- Bottle or can of a caffeinated beverage
- Packaging of an over-the-counter cold medication and/or other products which can be detrimental to the voice, depending on what your school may allow you to bring in
- Photos or illustrations of dysfunctional vocal cords
- A measuring cup (8-oz. only), a plastic half-gallon jug, and a plastic gallon jug

#### **PROCEDURES:**

1. Divide the class into groups. Have each group create five rules for behaviors that they feel would create and maintain a healthy voice, based upon their knowledge up to this point, and justify each rule.
2. Discuss as a class: how do we feel vocally after attending a football game or other sporting event? How about after a rock concert? How do our voices feel when we are sick? Using your larynx model, remind them of the location and appearance of healthy vocal cords.
3. As a class, create a list of what they consider to be misuses of the voice. How informed are they? If the following have not been suggested, steer the discussion so they can see that these ideas are also included—moving beyond one's acceptable vocal range, dehydration, vocal use during upper respiratory infections, abrasive laughing, and throat clearing. Certain substances (alcohol, tobacco, antihistamines, antibiotics, Prozac, caffeine, sprays and inhalers, etc.) can also have detrimental effects.
4. Building upon the earlier discussion, what are characteristics of the misused voice? How does this affect singing? Discuss possible outcomes of misuse, including nodes, polyps, laryngitis, scarring, and cancer. Show pictures (color, if possible) of what the vocal cords look like under these conditions. Don't try to scare them, but do let them know of the seriousness of vocal mistreatment to someone who wishes to become a professional voice user (singer, actor, TV or radio announcer, telemarketer, etc.).
5. Point out the importance of proper hydration. Encourage students to become members of the "Half-Gallon Club," demonstrating exactly how much water that is. Adding a splash of lemon or another citrus juice can provide a slight flavor and cut mucus production, if students raise these concerns.
6. Following this discussion, what would each group add or change within their lists of rules? Allow a few minutes of discussion, then have groups compare notes and create a master list. Later, make copies for each student.

**EXPLORATION:**

1. Contact an otolaryngologist or a speech therapist and arrange for students to hear recordings of various “misused voices,” with discussion of the problems that create those sounds.
2. Aural health is just as important. On a smaller scale and avoiding redundancy, examine issues in maintaining lifelong, healthy hearing habits.
3. Provide the students with sketches of the larynx and modeling clay. Allow them to work in groups to build their own models, using this process as a springboard to discuss changing laryngeal sizes, changing voices, and differences in vocal range.
4. Focus on treble voices: bring in an adult soprano and an adult mezzo to compare and contrast these sounds with those of adolescent girls and unchanged boys.

**ASSESSMENT:**

- Did students describe misuse of the voice?
- Did students describe vocal disorders?
- Did students create rules for creating and maintaining a healthy voice?

**NATIONAL STANDARDS\*:**

- 7b. Students evaluate the quality and effectiveness of their own performances...offering constructive suggestions for improvement.
- 8b. Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with those of music.

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