



Building Blocks of Music

Timbre

Q&A Discussion Guide

QUESTIONS

1. What is timbre?
2. Name an instrument that can have a high, bright sound.
3. How can the material an instrument is made from, such as wood or metal, affect its timbre?
4. True or False: Each human voice has its own recognizable timbre, almost like a sound fingerprint.
5. Name an instrument with a low sound.
6. How would you describe the sound of cymbals crashing together?
7. How would you describe the sound of a tuba?
8. How can you recognize someone's voice without seeing who is speaking?

ANSWERS & TEACHER GUIDE

1. Timbre is the unique sound quality or "color" that helps us tell one sound from another.
2. Flute, piccolo, trumpet, glockenspiel, and others. Answers may vary.
3. Different materials vibrate differently and can help give instruments different sound qualities.
4. True.
5. Tuba, double bass, bassoon, bass guitar, and others. Answers may vary.
6. Bright, loud, metallic, crashing, ringing, sharp, and more. Answers may vary.
7. Deep, low, rich, warm, booming, powerful, and more. Answers may vary.
8. We can recognize the unique timbre or sound quality of that person's voice.

GROUP EXERCISE: WHOSE VOICE IS IT?

Have one student turn their back to the class. "Choose another student to speak to them using a simple phrase, such as 'Hello, [student's name].'" The listening student has to identify who spoke using only the sound of the person's voice. Repeat with different students.

TEACHER NOTE

The activity demonstrates how timbre helps us recognize different voices even when everyone says the same words. For an extra challenge, have several students say the exact same phrase (like, "I love music") and see if the listener can identify each voice.

