

Digital music: Self-expression through a computer?

In this lesson, the students will explore how the digital revolution has changed the way people make music. They will listen to songs of the last decades and discuss how music has evolved over time. The students will then create a song themselves using digital tools to help create the music and lyrics. They will discuss how using a computer affects the way people express themselves through music. Duration: 1 hour.

STRUCTURE

- Introduction: Do you like music? (5 min.)
- Next step: The evolution of pop music. (10 min.)
- In practice: Writing a song with the help of AI. (35 min.)
- Evaluation: Self-expression through a computer? (10 min.)

PREPARATION

You can prepare by:

- Reading this teacher's guide.
- Opening the presentation.
- Visiting the [Song Lyrics Generator](#) and familiarizing yourself with the tool.
- Visiting [Ecret Music](#) and familiarizing yourself with the tool.
- Making a playlist on YouTube or Spotify with one song for each decade from the '60s until now (see slide 2 for song suggestions). Alternatively, you can give this assignment to a student.

PERSONALIZED LEARNING

During the assignment, students will generate lyrics to a song with the help of AI. If you want to focus more on writing skills in this lesson, you can let the students

write the lyrics themselves. You can also give students both options and let them decide whether they prefer to write lyrics themselves or to make use of AI.

CITIZENSHIP

This lesson focuses on the pillar 'participation', with a focus on developing knowledge of 'Types of communication' (learning objective 27 curriculum framework SLO citizenship education and human rights education). Music is an important type of communication in our society. In this lesson, the students think about how the digital revolution has changed this type of communication. To what extent can music still be considered self-expression if a computer is doing most of the work?

The component Citizenship in the Digi-doener is based on the citizenship portal from SLO. SLO distinguishes three domains of citizenship education: democracy, participation and identity. From this perspective we are working on citizenship in the Digi-doeners, more information can be found [here](#).

ETHICS

Before computers, music was made by people playing real instruments. Nowadays, most music is made using computers. Some pieces of music are even written entirely by AI. Do you think it matters whether music is made by a person or by a computer? Do you think musicians of the past were more skilled than modern musicians? Does it still count as self-expression if a computer does most of the work?

LEARNING TARGETS

Domein curriculum 2021	Leerdoelen digitale vaardigheden	Kerdoelen	21st century skills
1 Data & informatie DG1.1 Van data naar informatie.	1 Computational thinking De leerling maakt gebruik van bronnen om op een effectieve en efficiënte manier tot een oplossing te komen.	1 Engels De leerling leert strategieën te gebruiken voor het uitbreiden van zijn Engelse woordenschat.	1 Samenwerken
2 De werking en het (creatieve) gebruik van digitale technologie DG3.1 Interactie en creatie met digitale technologie.	2 ICT-basisvaardigheden De leerling begrijpt hoe instructies worden opgeslagen en uitgevoerd op een computer.	2 Engels De leerling leert strategieën te gebruiken bij het verwerven van informatie uit gesproken en geschreven Engelstalige teksten.	2 Creatief denken

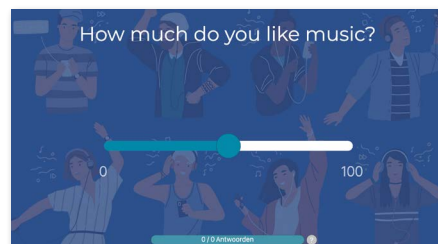
INTRODUCTION

Opening slide



Slide 1, Group discussion

Ask the students to fill out the poll. Ask: Do you listen to music? What kind of music do you listen to? When was the music that you listen to made? Do any of you listen to music that was made a long time ago, maybe even before you were born? (Let the students explain their preferences.)



NEXT STEP

Slide 2, Group discussion

Play the playlist you made on shuffle. Play each song for about thirty seconds, starting somewhere in the middle. For each song, ask the students in what decade it was made. Let them write down their answers on a piece of paper and discuss the correct answers afterwards. (You can give extra points to students who knows the artist and the name of the song.)

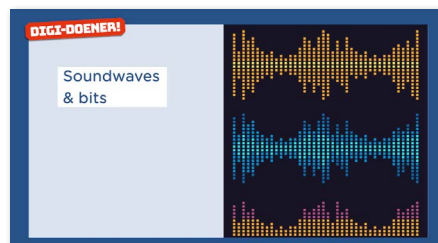


Suggestions for the playlist:

- The Beatles – Hey Jude ('60s)
- Led Zeppelin – Stairway to Heaven ('70s)
- Michael Jackson – Billie Jean ('80s)
- Spice Girls – Wannabe ('90s)
- Robbie Williams – Feel ('00s)
- Taylor Swift – Shake it Off ('10s)
- The Weeknd – Blinding Lights ('20s)

Slide 3, Group discussion

Ask the students what differences they heard between the older and the newer songs. Did they pick up on any general trends as the music got more recent? Explain: Traditionally, music was made by people playing instruments. The instrument creates a soundwave that we can hear directly or record using a microphone. When computers were invented, people started making music directly on a computer. This music is stored digitally. Nowadays, music producers are experimenting with music that is made directly by the computer itself.



Slide 4, Group discussion

Watch [the video](#) until the 3:33 mark. Ask the students to write down, in their own words, how AIVA has learned to compose music. Ask a few students to share and discuss their answers with the class. (Answer: AIVA analyzes a large amount of existing music (composed by humans) to learn how to compose and AIVA needs to be told what style the pieces of music are in to be able to compose in those styles.) Tell the students that they will use two AIs, like AIVA, to write a song themselves during today's lesson.



IN PRACTICE

Slide 5, Group work

Divide the students into couples. Each couple will need a computer, tablet or smartphone. Ask them to write a song using [this tool](#) to write the lyrics and [this tool](#) to write the music. The first tool, the Song Lyrics Generator, allows the students to choose a genre for their song. They will then answer a few questions to provide input for the lyrics. The second tool, Ecret Music, allows the students to choose a scene, mood and genre for the music. They can make adjustments to the length, speed and flow of the song. Both tools in the browser and do not require an account to be used. If students want to download and save the music they've created using Ecret Music, they do need to make an account.



As a personalized learning option, students who are into creative writing can write their own lyrics, or can make adjustments to the lyrics generated by Song Lyrics Generator. Alternatively, you may let all students write their own lyrics, for an increased focus on writing skills.


Slide 6, Group discussion

Ask the students if any of them dare to perform their song. Alternatively, you could ask a few couples to read their lyrics out loud with the music playing in the background.



EVALUATION

Slide 7, Group discussion

 Ask: Do you think it matters whether music is made by a person or by a computer? Do you think musicians of the past were more skilled than modern musicians? Does it still count as self-expression if a computer does most of the work? Let's talk about your experiences with today's assignment. Do you feel like the song you wrote represents who you are? Do you feel like the song is your own work? Why (not)?

