



Growing Up With Clickety Clack

By Cathy Vonk (Oregon)

Clickety Clack what a neat little song game!

I have used this song game with my primary students for the last 16 years, and enthusiasm for the song and the game never seems to diminish. There are so many ways to study and things to learn using this song. Enclosed within this article are but a few.

Clickety Clack

melody from Brazil
words by Mary Helen Richards

Click-e-ty click-e-ty clack. Click- e - ty click- e - ty clack.

Click-e-ty click-e-ty click-e-ty click-e-ty clicke-ty clicke-ty clack.

Game I: Introduction:

With the children sitting in circle formation, the teacher models the activity by becoming the first engineer of the train. "I'm going to sing and move around the circle. See if you can guess what I am." The teacher sings the song slowly and moves around the circle using the foot action described below. The children are given the opportunity to give answers and discuss what the teacher might be.

Procedure:

- One person becomes the engineer of the train, and as the song is sung slowly, moves forward inside the circle taking tiny steps, one for each syllable of the first phrase.
- Using the same rhythmic foot action, the engineer backs up during the next phrase of the song and then moves forward for the remainder of the song.
- At the end of the song, the train stops and the engineer invites the nearest person in the circle to join the train. The invited person joins the train and places his or her hands on the engineer's waist or shoulders. The song is sung again, and two people move around the circle using the foot action as previously described.
- When the train stops, the last person on the train invites the nearest person in the circle to join the train.
- The train continues moving around the inside of the circle, stopping to invite and accumulate persons until all are on the train. Adding all the children in a class can be a long process, too long for little children. To speed up the building of the train, the engineer as well as the last person on the train may invite the nearest person to join the train.

A few months ago, I started thinking about the song arrangements in Two-Part Songs written by Douglas Bartholomew. I decided to reintroduce Clickety Clack to my intermediate students and to work toward studying and reading Doug's two-part arrangement of Clickety Clack. I chose to reintroduce the song using a game developed by Carol Nelson with her student in Corvallis, Oregon.

Game II:

The song and the foot action are the same as in Game I. The class divides itself into many trains of four to five people. Each train chooses an engineer and the children are instructed to sing the song and move around the room without touching another train. Discussion takes place about the difficulties of performing this activity and the children practice once again. Then an additional challenge is given. Students are instructed to close their eyes and without touching another train, move throughout the room.

Needless to say, as the children played this version of the songgame, singing and listening took on great importance in an attempt not to run into each other. An added challenge arose when I became a 'singing fence' on the side of the room where I did not want the trains to go. It was really amazing to watch as students make 'hair-raising' turns to avoid a collision, but they did it beautifully! We had very few catastrophes and many, many exciting successes. The kids kept asking me to reduce the area in which they were to move. They really enjoyed challenging themselves to even greater success in singing and listening.

After we had reviewed and internalized the song, I displayed large study charts of Clickety Clack, the original version and two variations. (See below)



[Click for larger image](#)

Study Versions of Clickety Clack

I explained that one of the study versions matched how we had been singing the song and two of the versions offered slight variations. I also explained that nothing was left out of any of the songs and that there was only one place in each of the two variants where some notes might be in a different place than in the original version. (I have found that students are much more successful and not so overwhelmed if I am very specific in my expectations for what they are to be investigating.) After the students briefly studied the three versions on their own, I had them sing the song the original way while following the score of each version.

Then students studied each score with their study buddies and discussed what they noticed. As the students shared their discoveries with the class, I accepted all ideas and did not express what was correct or incorrect until all ideas had been shared and tried. When students suggested which version was the original and which was not, I asked them to explain their reasoning. After sharing all ideas, we sang each version together, this time making sure to sing the pitches the way I wrote them on the chart. This did wonderful things for the students' reading and understanding of melodic contour. Singing the new versions was a real challenge because the kids wanted to sing it the original way. (Old habits are difficult to break but it is definitely worth trying!)

My students really enjoyed these challenges as well as all the sharing that occurred. I realized how important it was to allow plenty of time for discussion and exploration of ideas and to remember that every child's contribution helps to bring understanding to the whole class.

Once this process was completed, I introduced Doug's two part arrangement of Clickety Clack.



[Click for larger image](#)

Reading the Two-part Score

I had my students read only Part I, one line at a time. I asked them what they noticed and that opened the way for lots of discussion. First we looked at and spoke the rhythm patterns, and then explored the melody by comparing Doug's score with the original, discussing what looked the same and what looked different. I did not do it for them; we tried everyone's ideas even if they were wrong. Trying all ideas led the children to many discoveries and correct answers. Once the students could sing Part I with confidence, I had them sing that part while I sang Part II. Then we went back and repeated the discovery process for Part II. By the time we finished, I could divide the class in two; one half sang one part while the other half sang the other part. The student had a tremendous feeling of accomplishment when they had finished and learned that they truly could read music!

In closing, remember when beginning a project such as this,

- do not assume that your students can 'whip it out' in no time. Gaining a real understanding of any idea or concept takes time. I have been surprised by children's level of understanding many times.
- use clear, precise instruction. If students are confused about what you want them to do, their learning will be minimized.
- move slowly from point to point, taking small steps, one at a time.
- for maximum learning and success let each student explore and draw his or her own understanding through activities that you have instigated.

I found this to be most successful with my fifth and sixth graders. I hope this is an idea you might be able to use and modify for your own situation.

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Fig. 1. STUDY VERSIONS OF CLICKETY CLACK

Study Version 1

Click-e - ty click-e - ty clack. Click - e - ty click - e - ty clack.

Click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty clack!

Detailed description: This section contains two staves of music. The first staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). It features two measures of music. The first measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G, A) followed by a quarter note (B). The second measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (B, C, D) followed by a quarter note (E). Below the staff are two lines of lyrics: "Click-e - ty click-e - ty clack." and "Click - e - ty click - e - ty clack." The second staff is similar but more complex, with a first measure containing four triplets of eighth notes (F#, G, A) and a quarter note (B), and a second measure containing two triplets of eighth notes (B, C, D) and a quarter note (E). Below it are two lines of lyrics: "Click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty" and "click-e - ty click-e - ty clack!"

Study Version 2

Click - e - ty click-e - ty clack. Click - e - ty click - e - ty clack.

Click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty clack.

Detailed description: This section contains two staves of music. The first staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). It features two measures of music. The first measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G, A) followed by a quarter note (B). The second measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (B, C, D) followed by a quarter note (E). Below the staff are two lines of lyrics: "Click - e - ty click-e - ty clack." and "Click - e - ty click - e - ty clack." The second staff is similar but more complex, with a first measure containing four triplets of eighth notes (F#, G, A) and a quarter note (B), and a second measure containing two triplets of eighth notes (B, C, D) and a quarter note (E). Below it are two lines of lyrics: "Click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty" and "click-e - ty click-e - ty clack."

Study Version 3

Click - e - ty click-e - ty clack. Click - e - ty click - e - ty clack.

Click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty clack.

Detailed description: This section contains two staves of music. The first staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). It features two measures of music. The first measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G, A) followed by a quarter note (B). The second measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (B, C, D) followed by a quarter note (E). Below the staff are two lines of lyrics: "Click - e - ty click-e - ty clack." and "Click - e - ty click - e - ty clack." The second staff is similar but more complex, with a first measure containing four triplets of eighth notes (F#, G, A) and a quarter note (B), and a second measure containing two triplets of eighth notes (B, C, D) and a quarter note (E). Below it are two lines of lyrics: "Click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty click-e - ty" and "click-e - ty click-e - ty clack."