

Chants

Developed by Wolf Trap Teaching Artists

Objective/Goal:

In these experiences, Wolf Trap Teaching Artists demonstrate chants that provide opportunities for listening, attending, and responding through the power of rhythm and rhyme of words. Chants reinforce concepts through repetition.

Educational Impact:

- ✓ Vocabulary
 - ✓ Comprehension
 - ✓ Directionality
 - ✓ Language usage
 - ✓ Phonological awareness
 - ✓ Listening skills
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Suggestions for use with the *Songs for Singing and Learning* CDs:

- ✓ "Color Chant"
 - ✓ "Funga"
 - ✓ "Kye Kye Kule"
 - ✓ "Hill an Gully"
 - ✓ "Samba Le Le" ("Samba Ye Ye")
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Procedure and Process:

Chanting is a dynamic teaching tool. A chant draws power from both the rhythm of the words and the rhyming of the phrases. That power is reinforced through repetition. In a well-written chant, the sense of the words is heightened by the rhythm of the words.

A chant can be spoken or sung, with or without motions. Most of the chants in this section have movements designed to fit the words. Feel free to make up your own movements.

There are several different kinds of chants, including warm-up chants and chants from around the world. Some chants are call and response, which are particularly engaging for children.

Color Chant

Developed by John Taylor

Before class, place colored objects or papers around the classroom, or make a flip chart of colors to exhibit in front of the classroom. Warm up the children with this chant:

*Colors, colors everywhere,
Some are here and some are there.
When you see red, put your hand on your head.
When you see blue, point to your shoe.
When you see brown, point to the ground.
When you see green, wipe your face real clean.
When you see black, put your hand on your back.
When you see pink, just think, think, think. [point to head]
When you see white, squeeze your finger so tight.
When you see gray, have a nice day.
When you see yellow, wave to a fellow. [wave hand]*

*Jump, jump, jump for red,
Turn around and hands on head.
Jump, jump, jump for red,
Turn back around and stoop down dead.
Hop, hop, hop for black,
Bend to the front and bend to the back.
Hop, hop, hop for black,
Now hop to the ground and freeze in the act.
Run, run, run for blue,
Stoop to the ground and touch your shoe.
Run, run, run for blue,
Now stop in your tracks and point to you.*

Percussion Chant

Developed by John Taylor

Arrange the children in a circle. Pass around a tambourine or hand drum. Say the chant and play the instrument.

*Play it soft and PLAY IT LOUD!
Hand it to the next one in the crowd.
One is a solo, two's a duet.
Three is a trio, four's a quartet!*

Call and Response Chants

The next few chants are “call and response.” You may explain it to the children by telling them:

Some chants are “call and response.” That means I say something, and when I pause, you will call back to me. I’ll tell you your part and then you listen for mine, so you will know when it’s your time to answer.

Call and response chants promote listening, attending, and cooperation skills.

| Kye kye Kule | [Chay Chay Koo-lay] | Translation |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Kye Kye Kule (2x)</i> | [Chay-Chay Koo-lay] | <i>Hey, look</i> |
| <i>Kye Kye Kofi Sa (2x)</i> | [Chay Chay Ko-fee-sa] | <i>Look at Kofi’s dance</i> |
| <i>Kofi Sa Langa (2x)</i> | [Ko-fee-sa Lahn-gah] | <i>Kofi dances like this</i> |
| <i>Kakakyi Langa (2x)</i> | [Ka-tah Chee Lahn-gah] | <i>Kofi dances like a royal</i> |
| <i>Kum, Adende (2x)</i> | [Koom, A-dehn-deh] | <i>Just like a pendulum</i> |

This chant is a cultural game/dance from Ghana, West Africa that evolved as a “head, shoulder, knees, and toes” sort of activity. There are some variations in Spanish as well.

Notice some key words that provide guidance as to how the dance may be done. It tells participants to imitate how Kofi dances “like a royal” and swings “like a pendulum.”

This chant promotes:

- Spatial awareness
- Gross motor coordination
- Sheer joy of aerobics

This experience revolves around the steady beat, which means you as the leader must set the tempo. You must also establish the movement for the participants to follow. The name “Kofi” can be substituted with your children’s names. It can be done as a locomotor or non-locomotor experience.

Initiate the movement at the same time that you call out the words. The children repeat your words and action. It could start slow, and then increase to fast.

Hill an Gully

Jamaican chant

Repeat each line twice, once as a call and once as the children's response.

*Hill an gully ride-a, hill an gully.
An a been down low dung, hill an gully.
An a low down bessey dung, hill an gully.
An yuh better min yuh tumble down, hill an gully.
Hill an gully ride-a, hill an gully.*

This song is in a Jamaican dialect. It is translated:

*Hill and gully, ride a hill and gully.
And I been down, low down, hill and gully.
And a low-down Bessy done hill and gully,
And you'd better mind or you'll tumble down hill and gully.*

In the chant, Bessy represents a horse, burro, or any animal you may wish to include.

To accompany the words, choose hand or whole-body motions that move upward. For example, climb up a hill and then down into a gully.



Omo Beyi

African celebration chant

Call: *Omo beye [bay-ay] omo beye re [ray] re.*

Response: *Kere [keh-dah] kere n ya.*

Call: *Alaqua [a-la-gwa] na alaqua na re re.*

Response: *Kere kere n ya.*

Call: *Omo beye aina [i-ee-na] beye re re.*

Response: *Kere kere n ya.*

Call: *Alaqua na alaqua na re re.*

Response: *Kere kere n ya.*

Repeat from beginning.

This chant is sung to celebrate the rare and special phenomenon of twins. The song is about the opposing characteristics — fast and slow, big and small — often found in twins.

Joli Mama

A Creole chant

Call: *Mahmbah mahmbah joli [jolly] mahmbah*

Response: *Ai yea mahmbah*

Call: *Mahmbah mahmbah joli mahmbah*

Response: *Ai yea mama*

Call: *Mahmbah aye, mahmbah yo, mahmbah aye*

Response: *Joli mahmbah, joli mahmbah*

The title of this chant translates as “Pretty Mother.” Creole is a language spoken in Louisiana by descendants of French and Spanish settlers.

Remove the responses if the children cannot remember them, and simply chant the calls.

Samba Ye Ye

A Brazilian celebration chant

Samba ye ye [sam-ba yay yay]

Repeat.

Children love to dance the samba as they sing this chant. To dance the samba, first twist your upper body to the left and then to the right. When the children have learned the twist, have them samba across the room and back.

Tie large squares of fabric around the waists of the girls. These are called *lapas*. The boys may wear sashes tied around their waists to hang close to their knees.

Any kind of drum will work with this chant. Try using a *che xi xi* [ka she she] which is a traditional African shaker instrument. You can make one by filling a container with uncooked rice or beans. The name of the instrument comes from the sound it makes.

Funga-Alafia [Fun-ga A-la-fee-ya]

A West African chant from Nigeria

Call: *Funga-Alafia.*
Response: *Ashe-e, Ashe-e!*

Call: *Funga-a, Alafia-a.*
Response: *Ashe-e, Ashe-e!*

Call: *Ashe-e, Ashe-e!*
Response: *Ashe-e, Ashe-e!*

Repeat as long as you wish.

The word *Alafia* means "peace greetings" in the Hausa language, and the word *Funga* translates to "I bring." So *Funga Alafia* will mean, "I bring you peace" or "I have brought you greetings of peace."

The response, *ashe* [ah-shay] translates: "Amen, or let it be."



This experience revolves around the steady beat, which means you as the leader must set the tempo. You must also establish the movement for the participants to follow.

Initiate the movement at the same time that you call out the word describing the tempo. The children mirror your movement. It could start slow, and then increase to fast.

Establish a steady beat/clap to the beat as you sing *Funga, Alafia* (extend both arms outward in a swimming motion and then back again, as if grabbing from the heart and spreading them around).

For the response, have the children mirror your movement as they chant *Ashe, ashe!*

New Vocabulary Words:

- Chants
- Rhythm
- Body language
- Call and response
- New words related to individual chants