

Share: From Feelings to Lyrics

For Group Piano Classes

- Students transform Cornelius Gurlitt's *Song Without Words*, Op. 101 No. 10, into a new version with lyrics that express the emotion and story they hear in the melody.
- Play the piece once. Label the sections "A" and "B." Ask: "How do these parts sound the same or different? How do they make you feel?"
- Students write one feeling word for each section (for example, peaceful, curious, hopeful, lonely).
- Find More Feeling Words: Students brainstorm five or more related words for each feeling. Example: hopeful → bright, rising, dream, morning, wish.
- Match Feelings to Images: Ask: "What pictures or moments come to mind when you hear this music?" Students list short ideas (for example, a walk after the rain, first day of summer, saying goodbye at the train station).
- Write the Lyrics: Students choose their favorite image or idea.
 - Write short phrases that fit the rhythm and phrasing of the melody—2–5 words per musical idea.
- Test and Revise: Have students sing or speak their lyrics while the melody plays. Adjust wording so the syllables fit naturally with the notes.
- Perform and Reflect
 - Groups perform their *Song With Words* for the class and rename it with a creative title (for example, "Raindrop Journey" or "My Secret Tune")
 - After sharing, discuss:
 - "How did your lyrics change the way the music felt?"
 - "What makes lyrics and music work together as a team?"

For Private Lessons

Silent Film Soundtrack

- **Watch and Listen:** Find a short film clip (about 30–60 seconds, either from a silent film or a clip with the sound muted) for the student.
- **Choose the Music:** Have the student pick a *Song Without Words* piano piece or an excerpt they know.
- **Experiment:** Play the piece over the video, trying different tempos or dynamics to see how the mood changes.
- **Discuss:**
Ask:
 - "Did the music make the story feel different?"
 - "Could the same melody fit more than one emotion?"
 - "What part of the music matched the story best?"

For more ideas to connect musical storytelling, emotional expression, and creativity through instrumental music, see George Litterst, Penny Lazarus, and Donald Sosin's article, "[Silent Movie Accompanying for Students and Professionals](#)," in *Piano Magazine* (November 2012, Vol. 4, No. 6).