KS2
B

LESSON PLAN

FUTURE YARD SCHOOLS
NEW NOISE

TERM 1 LESSON 5

INTROS, DROPS + BREAKDOWNS

FOCUS + GOALS

- Understand how contrast between musical sections creates tension, excitement and release.
- Identify and distinguish between an intro, a drop and a breakdown by ear, giving a musical reason for each answer.
- Explore how changing instruments, dynamics, rhythm or texture can create a strong musical contrast.
- Make and justify a production decision about how to arrange a musical idea for maximum effect.
- Create a short arrangement that includes an intro, a main section, and either a drop or a breakdown.

MATERIALS

- Audio excerpts from the Future Yard music bank featuring clear intros, builds/drops and breakdowns.
- A short musical idea pupils can already perform confidently (a rhythm, melody, song or combination).
- Instruments, voices and/or body percussion for building arrangements in small groups.

ACTIVITIES

1. Introduction 5 minutes

Recap: "You already know that songs are built from different sections."

Explain: "Verses, choruses, bridges, intros and outros all help give a song its shape."

Introduce: "Today, we're going to take that idea further and think about contrast.

Ask:

- Why might a song begin with just one sound before the whole band joins?
- Why might the music build and build before suddenly bursting into a huge section?
- Why might nearly everything disappear, leaving just one or two parts behind?

Explain: "These are choices musicians and producers make to create tension, excitement and release. Today we're going to explore three of them: Intros. Drops. Breakdowns."

2. What Happens Next? 10 minutes

Say: "Let's start by listening. You're going to hear part of a track, but we're going to stop it just before something changes."

Play an excerpt and stop just before the change.

Ask:

- What do you think is coming?
- Will the music get bigger?
- Will it strip back or will it stay roughly the same?
- What did you hear that helped you make that prediction?

Play the excerpt continuing through the change.

Ask:

- Were you right?
- More importantly, what actually changed?
- Did more instruments join or did some disappear?
- Did the dynamics change? What happened to the rhythm or texture?

Explain: "Those changes can completely alter the way we experience a piece of music. So let's see how good you are at spotting them."

©FUTURE YARD CIC 2026

ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

3. Producer Challenge: Spot the Move 15 minutes

Explain the activity:

- You're now the producers.
- You're going to hear three short clips.
- Each one contains a different arranging move.

Your challenge has two parts:

- First: spot the move - is it an **Intro, Drop or Breakdown**?
- Then: give us your reason! What did you actually hear that gave you the answer?"

Play each excerpt and ask:

- Was it an Intro, Drop or Breakdown?
- What did you hear?
- What changed as the music developed?
- What disappeared and what stayed?
- What happened to the texture?

Explain for 'Intro': "This one was an intro. An intro is the opening of a piece of music, but arrangers have lots of choices about what happens there. It might begin with just one or two sounds, or gradually introduce more of the music that's coming."

Explain for 'Drop: "This one was drop. The important part isn't just the big moment. Listen to what happens before it. The musicians might add layers, change the dynamics, repeat an idea or create space. That builds tension and makes us expect something. Then comes the release."

Explain for 'Breakdown': "This one was a breakdown. Some of the musical layers have been removed, creating a thinner texture. That can create space, draw our attention towards one particular sound, or make whatever happens next feel even bigger. So now you know all of these possible moves. Let's see what happens when you control them."

4. You're The Producer 5 minutes

Say: "Here's your first production decision:

- Imagine your song has been playing with the whole band together. You're approaching the final chorus and you want it to feel like the biggest moment in the song.

Ask: What would you do just before it? Would you:

- A - strip everything back
- B - gradually build more layers
- C - create a sudden silence
- D - come up with your own idea?

Explain: Choose your move, then turn to someone next to you.

Ask:

- Can you convince them that your choice would work?

Ask students to explain what you would change musically and what you want the listener to experience.

- What effect would it have?

Key Teaching Point: "There isn't one correct answer. You could even combine some of those ideas. What matters is whether your musical choice has a reason behind it."

5. Build and Break 10 minutes

Say: "Now you're going to test some of these ideas with your class. Choose one simple musical idea that you can already perform confidently. It could be:

- A rhythm
- A melody
- A song you can sing
- A combination of them

©FUTURE YARD CIC 2026

SAMPLE

ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

- If you're struggling to decide, work together to try and think about what you might have played in the past.
- Use any of those ideas, or even create something new on the spot!"

Explain: Next, experiment with arranging it in different ways:

Ask:

- Could you start with just one person or one musical layer and gradually bring everybody else in?
- Could you build tension before everybody plays together?
- Could you start with the full group and suddenly strip the music back?

Key Teaching Point: "Try different ideas and listen to what happens. The aim isn't to get it perfect. It's to find out which musical choices create the strongest contrast."

6. The Arrangement Challenge 10 minutes

Say: "Now you're ready to create your own short arrangement:

Activity:

- In small groups, start with a musical idea the pupils can perform confidently.
- Their arrangement needs: an intro, a main section, and either a drop **or** a breakdown.
- How those sections work is up to them.

Ask them to think about what you want the listener to experience:

- What will they hear first?
- Where will the biggest contrast happen?
- What will you add or remove?
- Could changing the dynamics, rhythm, texture or instruments make that moment stronger?

Explain: "Everybody doesn't have to play all the time. Sometimes taking something away is the most effective choice you can make."

Activity (cont.):

"Once they've done this:

- Share their ideas with the class so that everyone can hear what they've created.
- Each group can perform their arrangement, but **don't tell everybody where their drop or breakdown is.**
- See if listeners can spot what the present group have done with their arrangement.

Ask them to think whilst they listen each other:

- Where did the biggest contrast happen?
- What changed musically?
- What effect did that change have?

REFLECTION 5 minutes

Today we...

- Predicted what would happen next in a piece of music, based on musical clues.
- Identified intros, drops and breakdowns by ear, giving musical reasons for our answers.
- Made and justified a production decision about how to arrange a musical idea.
- Experimented with building and stripping back a musical idea to create contrast.
- Created, performed and reflected on our own short arrangement.

Reflection questions:

- Thinking about the arrangement your group created, choose the moment where you created the strongest contrast.
- What did you change, and what effect did you want it to have on the listener?
- Did your musical choice have the effect you intended when you performed it? How do you know? What musical elements did you use to create contrast?
- If you performed it again, what one change would you make to make that moment even more effective?

©FUTURE YARD CIC 2026

SAMPLE

WRAP UP

“Today, you’ve gone beyond simply recognising different sections of a song. You’ve started using structure to control what happens to the listener. An intro can draw us in. A build and drop can create tension and release. A breakdown can create space and contrast. And you can create all of those effects using musical tools you already know: rhythm, dynamics, texture and instrumentation.

That’s what arrangers do. They don’t just decide what gets played. They decide when we hear it, what changes and why.

Next time, you’re going to take everything we’ve explored so far and use it to take an existing piece of music apart and rebuild it in a completely new way.”

DIFFERENTIATION

Support by:

- Allow pupils to listen to each clip more than once before deciding on their answer.
- Simplify the Arrangement Challenge by providing a template structure (intro - main section - drop or breakdown) for groups to fill in.
- Give sentence starters for reasoning (e.g. "I think this is a drop because…") to support pupils’ explanations.

Challenge by:

- Challenge pupils to identify specific musical elements (dynamics, rhythm, texture, instrumentation) that create each type of contrast.
- Encourage pupils to combine more than one production idea within their ‘You’re the Producer’ discussion and explain their combined reasoning.
- Ask pupils to identify the strongest moment of contrast in another group’s arrangement and explain what created it.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM

- Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
- Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music
- Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
- Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians

CROSS CURRICULAR IDEAS:

English

- Draw a parallel between musical tension/release and narrative tension/climax in a story.

Computing

- Explore how music production software allows producers to add and remove layers to create drops and breakdowns.

PSHE

- Practise explaining and justifying a personal choice to a partner, and listening respectfully to a different point of view.

©FUTURE YARD CIC 2026