

**CALIFORNIA HISTORY IMPROVISATION - OCTOBER  
PREHISTORIC ANIMALS**

**ASSIGNMENT: Create a piece about animals that lived in California before any people did**

**It could be a:**

**DINOSAUR**

**WOOLY MAMMOTH**

**SABER TOOTHED TIGER**

**SEA COW**

**REPTILES THAT LIVED IN THE SEA (THALATTOSAURS, ICHTHYOSAURS, MOSASAURS,  
PLESIOSAURS, AND TURTLES)**

**BIRDS AND PTEROSAURS**

**or any other California prehistoric animal that you have learned about**

**OPTIONAL SUGGESTIONS:**

**You may use**

**Just the BLACK KEYS or just the WHITE KEYS on your piano or a COMBINATION of WHITE KEYS and BLACK KEYS**

**EIGHTH NOTES, QUARTER NOTES, HALF NOTES, WHOLE NOTES, DOTTED NOTES,  
SIXTEENTH NOTES and/or SYNCOPATION**

**REPEATED NOTES, SECONDS, THIRDS, FOURTHS, FIFTHS, SIXTHS, SEVENTHS and/or  
OCTAVES**

**SEQUENCE (move your motive or part to different notes of the scale)**

**IMITATION (move your motive or part to different octave[s] or registers [high -low])**

**DAMPER PEDAL**

**DYNAMICS pp p mp mf f ff**

**You may add rit. fermata crescendo decrescendo slurs**

**You may ACCOMPANY a melody you create with chords or blocked fifths**

File as p. 158a in the MTAC *Games and Activities for Improvisation*.

**CALIFORNIA HISTORY IMPROVISATION - NOVEMBER  
NATIVE PEOPLES**

**ASSIGNMENT: Create a piece about daily lives of California native people**

**POUNDING ACORNS FOR FLOUR**

**HUNTING SMALL GAME**

**PICKING NUTS AND BERRIES**

**BUILDING A WICKIUP (*A CONICAL HUT MADE OF STICKS AND BRUSH*)**

**PARTICIPATING IN CEREMONIAL DANCES**

**FISHING FOR SALMON**

**GATHERING SHELL FISH**

**GAMES SUCH AS: ARCHERY, HOOP AND STICK, RING AND PIN, SHINNY BALL**

**or any other activity from the lives of California Native People**

**OPTIONAL SUGGESTIONS: You might want to use**

a **minor five finger pattern**,

an **aeolian mode** (half steps between second and third and fifth and sixth degrees of the scale),

a **phrygian mode** (half steps between first and second and fifth and sixth degrees of the scale),

a **locrian mode** ( half steps between first and second and fourth and fifth degrees of the scale),

You might want to use the **sostenuto pedal** for a part of your piece.

You might want to use **half step seconds, tone clusters** or any **other sounds YOU can create**.

File as p. 158b in the MTAC *Games and Activities for Improvisation*.

**CALIFORNIA HISTORY IMPROVISATION - DECEMBER  
SPANISH IN CALIFORNIA**

**ASSIGNMENT: Create a piece about**

**CABRILLO, FERRELO, VIZCAINO EXPLORING AND MAPPING  
THE COAST OF CALIFORNIA IN A SPANISH GALLEON (a large ship)**

**MISSION BELLS**

**FARMING**

**CATTLE RANCHING**

**LOS POSADAS (CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS)**

**PINATAS**

**FOLK DANCING**

**or any other activity from the lives of the Spanish in California**

**OPTIONAL SUGGESTIONS:**

**You may use**

**TONES OF THE I IV V I CHORDS in any key you choose to make the melody  
for your piece.**

**You may use PASSING TONES between the chord tones**

**You may accompany your melody with the tonic (ROOT) TONES OF THE  
CHORDS, BROKEN FIFTHS or BROKEN CHORDS**

**You may use notes of VARIOUS RHYTHMIC VALUES**

**You may use MANY DIFFERENT INTERVALS or ARPEGGIOS**

**You may use: REPETITION, IMITATION (repeat your idea in different registers -  
high and low or SEQUENCE (move your motive or part to different notes of the  
scale)**

**You may use ACCENTS AND STACCATOS**

**You may use the DAMPER PEDAL**

**You may add DYNAMIC MARKINGS pp p mp mf f ff**

**You may add RITARDANDO FERMATA SLURS**

**CALIFORNIA HISTORY IMPROVISATION - JANUARY  
CHINESE IN CALIFORNIA**

**ASSIGNMENT: Create a piece about the Chinese people in California**

**Chinese crossing the Pacific Ocean in small crowded boats. The food was bad and the seas were rough. One immigrant carved these words on a wall in Angel Island “I ate wind and tasted waves for more than twenty days.”**

**Chinese in the Gold Mines using water wheels with buckets that took water from the streams helping to expose the bottom of the streams for digging out the gold.**

**Chinese workers, in order to gouge out a railroad bed, were lowered from high mountain cliffs in wicker baskets, to chip and drill holes for explosives, and then scramble up the lines while gunpowder exploded beneath them.**

**Chinese tunnel diggers also started the attack on the last barrier to the Railroad going to Los Angeles, by boring through the soft wet soil of a mountain to create the 6,975 foot-long San Fernando Tunnel.**

**Chinese helped develop new farming techniques as well as harvesting of these crops.**

**Chinese involved in commercial fishing along the West Coast. In 1888, there were more than 2,000 Chinese in thirty camps, mostly along the San Francisco Bay and in the Monterey and San Diego areas.**

**Running a Chinese Laundry.**

**OPTIONAL SUGGESTIONS: You may use**

**PENTATONIC SCALE (five tones, i.e. all black keys- avoid half steps)**

**PELOG SCALE (i.e. C, Db, Eb, G, Ab, C)**

**MOSTLY INTERVALS OF FOURTHS AND FIFTHS**

**TONE CLUSTERS AND SFORZANDOS FOR “SPECIAL EFFECTS”**

File as p. 158d in the MTAC *Games and Activities for Improvisation*.

**CALIFORNIA HISTORY IMPROVISATION - FEBRUARY  
GOLD RUSH**

**ASSIGNMENT: Create a piece about the Gold Rush**

**James Marshall finding a pea sized gold nugget while building Sutter's Sawmill on the American River. This began the Gold Rush.**

**Panning for gold ( swirling dirt and water together in a shallow pan until the gold lays at the bottom).**

**Immigrants came to California across the deserts and mountains of the West in wagons**

**Others came by ship around the tip of South America.**

**The music the miners might have heard at a saloon or made around a camp fire.**

**The different kinds of music that would have been heard in the camps:  
Irish, South American, African, Russian, Scottish, Canadian, French, Chinese,  
Spanish, Hawaiian, American, German**

**A boom town that became a ghost town.**

**OPTIONAL SUGGESTIONS:**

**You can use STACCATO and LEGATO**

**You can use ARPEGGIOS**

**You can use many REGISTERS (octaves of the piano)**

**You can use REPETITION and IMITATION and SEQUENCE**

**You can use DYNAMICS of pp p mp mf f ff**

**You can use CRESCENDO and DECRESCENDO**

**You can use DAMPER PEDAL**

**You can use RITARDANDO and A TEMPO**

File as p. 158e in the MTAC *Games and Activities for Improvisation*.

## **CALIFORNIA HISTORY IMPROVISATION - MARCH PIONEERS**

**ASSIGNMENT: Create a piece about California Pioneers**

**Pioneer farmers traveling in their conestoga wagons (covered wagons, so called because they looked like ships sailing across a sea of grass) looking for inexpensive, or possibly free, rich fertile land for their crops. The wagons looked like a slow-moving train.**

**Pioneers with oxen pulling their wagons.. The father driving the oxen by walking beside the wagon. The children walking behind of the wagon much of the time.**

**Noisy pots and pans hanging off the wagons, clanging against each other.**

**A Pioneer fixing a broken wagon wheel.**

**Pioneers clearing rocks and tree stumps so they could build houses and plant crops.**

**Pioneers building a lean-to: a shelter used by the pioneers to live in when they first arrived at their land. It was like to a wooden shed with an open side that faced the fire.**

**The wagon master at night making the wagons form a big circle for protection from hostile Indians, marauders and other dangers. The children playing inside this wagon circle after dinner.**

**Pioneer women and children making quilts for the beds.**

### **OPTIONAL SUGGESTIONS:**

**You can use STACCATO and LEGATO**

**You can use many REGISTERS (octaves of the piano)**

**You can use REPETITION and IMITATION and SEQUENCE**

**You can use DYNAMICS of pp p mp mf f ff**

**You can use CRESCENDO and DECRESCENDO**

**You can use DAMPER PEDAL**

**You may add rit. fermata crescendo decrescendo slurs**

**You may ACCOMPANY a melody you create with chords or blocked fifths**

**You can use anything else you desire to create a piece about pioneer life**

File as p. 158f in the MTAC *Games and Activities for Improvisation*.

**CALIFORNIA HISTORY IMPROVISATION - APRIL  
CITIES**

**ASSIGNMENT:** Create a piece about your own city, one listed below, or any California city:

**SAN FRANCISCO**

**Earthquake**

**Golden Gate Bridge**

**SAN JOSE**

**Orchards - Valley of The Heart's Delight**

**Computer Industry**

**LOS ANGELES**

**Movies**

**Freeways**

**SACRAMENTO**

**The Capital of the state of California. During the gold rush, the last stop for wagon trains, stagecoaches, riverboats, the Pony Express and the First Transcontinental Railroad**

**OPTIONAL SUGGESTIONS:**

**You can use Major and minor keys**

**You can use STACCATO and LEGATO**

**You can use many REGISTERS (octaves of the piano)**

**You can use REPETITION and IMITATION and SEQUENCE**

**You can use DYNAMICS of pp p mp mf f ff**

**You can use CRESCENDO and DECRESCENDO and SFORZANDO**

**You can use DAMPER PEDAL**

**You can use anything else you desire to make a piece about a California City**

File as p. 158g in the MTAC *Games and Activities for Improvisation*.