

LA MER

DEBUSSY



INTRO

Today we are listening to '*La Mer, Trois Esquisses Symphoniques pour orchestre*' by Claude Debussy (in English, this means 'The Sea: Three symphonic sketches for orchestra').

ACTIVITY: LISTEN

Do you have a large seashell somewhere at home? If not, a glass jar will do as well. Put the shell or bowl against your ear. Can you hear the sea? What does it sound like?

Write down 5 words that describe what you hear

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CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Claude Debussy was born in 1862 in Saint-Germain-en-Laye. That is a small town in France. His parents were not themselves very musical. His father was a shopkeeper and loved opera. He wanted his son to become a sailor. Claude loved the sea, but a sailor... that was not really his thing.

Debussy's talent was discovered early. At the age of 11 he was admitted to the Paris Conservatory for piano lessons. He was a musical genius!

PAINTING

Debussy loved paintings and composed music as if he were painting. Although he himself did not agree, his work has often been counted as part of the Impressionist movement. That is a style of music or painting that gives a lot of importance to light and colour, movement and atmosphere.

Debussy used a piece of this woodcut for the front page of his score. Its title is “Under the wave off Kanagawa” and is by the Japanese artist Hokusai.



ACTIVITY: CREATE AN IMPRESSIONIST PAINTING

This painting is titled the Setting sun, sardine fishers by Paul Signac.

Can you see the very tiny points on the painting?

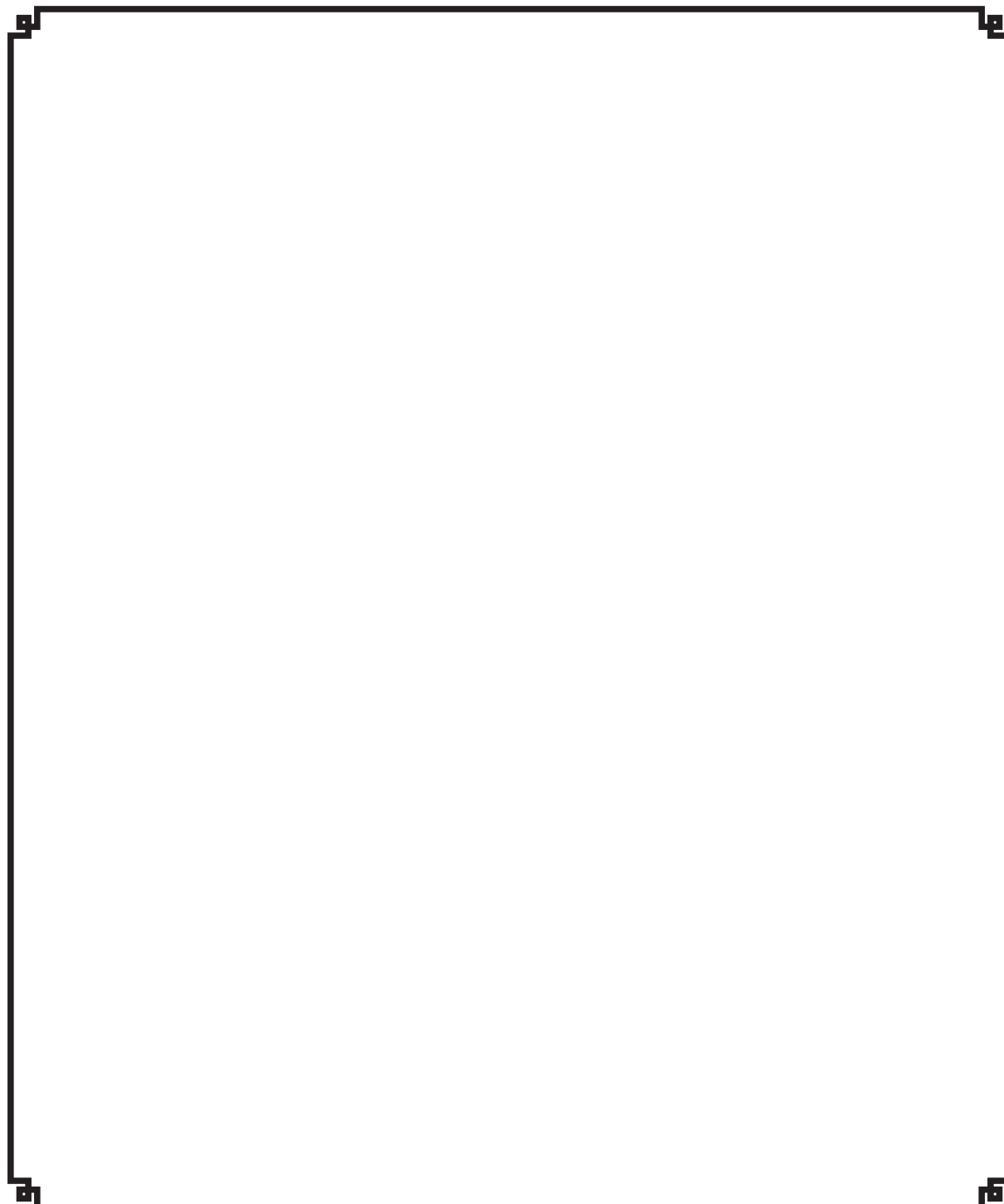
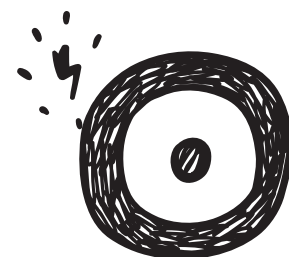


DID YOU KNOW?

‘Point’ comes from the French”.
This type of painting is known as Point-illisme (= loosely translated, this means painting with points)

Take some paper and something to draw with. Draw the sea, the beach, a boat, the sun or the moon, a distant island, etc. Take your inspiration from the theme of 'the sea'.

Use a few points or small dots or stripes in different colours.
Can you also give your work a title?



TITLE

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LA MER

La Mer has three movements.

Read the explanations for each movement, play the music and give your creativity free rein. Have fun!



FIRST MOVEMENT: FROM MORNING TO NOON AT SEA

How is it played? “*Très lent*” = very slowly.

At the beginning, all is quiet and still. As the sun rises, the rays grow brighter and brighter, and you can hear that in the sound of the orchestra. The instruments play from low to high, just as the sun does when it rises in the sky. The strings and flutes play the movement of the waves. As the sea turns wilder, you can hear the timpani thundering!

ACTIVITY LISTEN AND FILL IN



Listen to the first movement while you fill in the table. Whenever you recognize something, colour in one of the circles and write the name of the instrument next to it. You can also write ‘orchestra’ if what you hear is the sound of many instruments together.



Rising sun	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Bright rays	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Rippling waves	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Waves crashing against the rocks or shatter on the beach	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Ebb and flow	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Flying fish	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Large sea bird	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Glimmer on the water	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

SECOND MOVEMENT: ROLLING OF THE WAVES

How is it played? "*Allegro*" = fast speed or lively.

The waves roll and twist back and forth. The water flows in one direction and then in another: left, right, up, down! The sunlight shines on the waves, creating a festival of colours: Blue, green, yellow, purple, red! Sometimes in the depths, you can see the dark sea bottom. It's a bit mysterious. Could there be a shark lurking beneath the water?

Music



ACTIVITY LISTEN AND DRAW AN UNDERSEA WORLD.

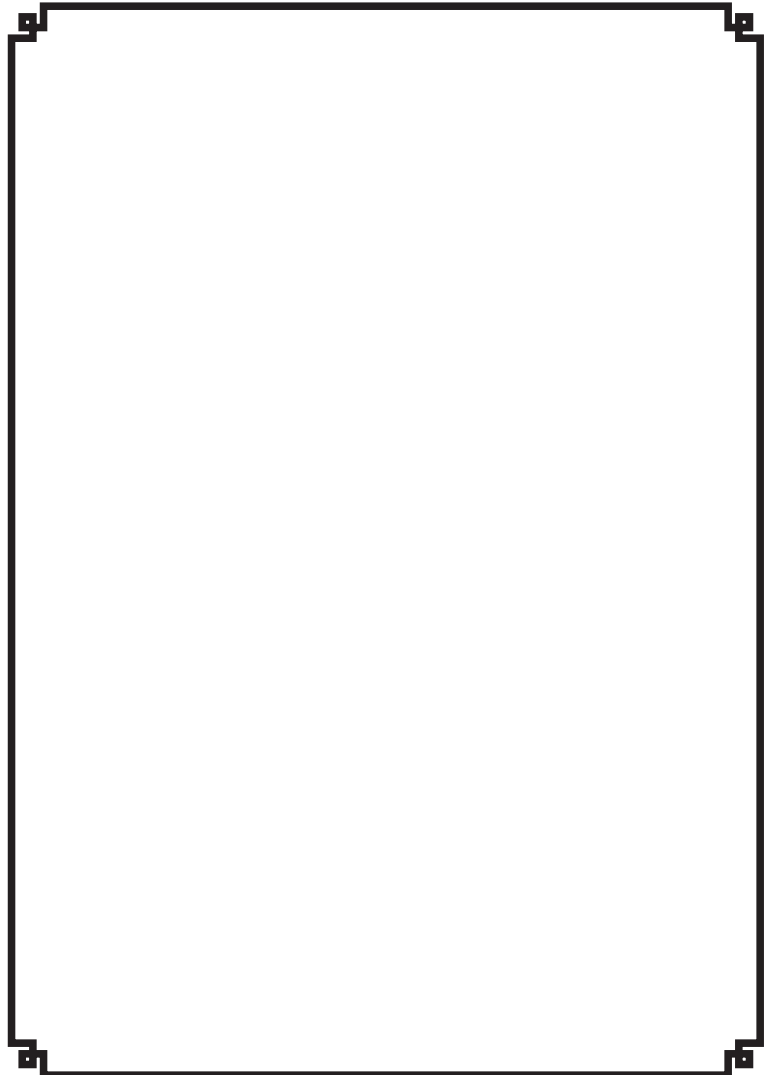
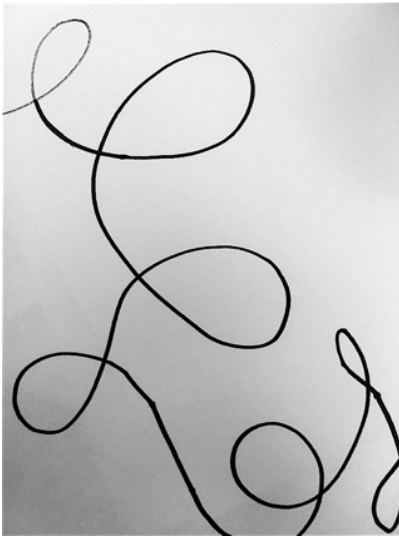
Get some paper and something to draw with.

Draw a long line on your sheet without lifting your pencil from the page.

Can you see the fish? Draw them!

Use a lot of colour, both light and dark, without leaving any white spaces.

You can also use aluminium foil to make the scales or eyes shine.



THIRD MOVEMENT: DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE WIND AND THE SEA



ACTIVITY: MOVE!

For the next activity, you need at least 2 people. You also need a large sheet or tablecloth. That is the sea. Each of you take one side of the sheet and move it in time to the music: up and down, left and right, fast and slow, high and low, and so on.

When the music quietens down, you can sit down together on the sheet and row a boat or swim or... How is it played? "*Animé et tumultueux*" = animated and tumultuous (turbulent or restless)

In the distance, clouds drift in that cover the sky completely. The light turns grey and dark. The waves grow larger and rise higher. The instruments play notes that seem to be shouting: be careful, danger! The orchestra plays rising and falling melodies that go with the waves of the sea.

Suddenly, calm is restored. The instruments seem to be playing a lullaby. But that is just the calm before the storm.

CRASH! BANG! Pop, boing, pop, rrrrruff!

Be careful! Tsunami coming!!

Agree on what you will do during the threatening final movement of the music: run away from a shark? Surf the mega flood wave?

We hope you make it ;-)



A bunch of fun things for reading, drawing, movement and listening!