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Ur[ban]sonate: Echoes of twentieth-century sound art in the urban elementary classroom

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The sonic arts provide a variety of cross-disciplinary entry points into the traditional lower-elementary curriculum. The exploration of sound poetry provides students with a workspace to deconstruct the connection between written and spoken language; phonemes; phonics; voiced, unvoiced, stressed and unstressed letter sounds and blends. Kurt Schwitters's "Ursonate," the music and scores of John Cage, various other sound art works and Deep Listening (TM) techniques provide a bridge to the study of acoustic sound and serve to validate/contextualize students' desires to creatively explore physical phonemes such as the relationship of pitch to frequency of vibration. After creating symbolic representations of sounds, writing sound poems and creating musical instruments, students synthesize learned material by scoring and directing the performance of original sound art pieces.