



## FEATURE

# EARWORMS: WHAT MAKES MUSIC STICK IN YOUR HEAD?

*Meets National Core Arts Anchor Standards 7-9, 11*

### OBJECTIVES

Perceive and analyze artistic work. (*Re7*)  
Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (*Re8*)  
Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (*Re9*)  
Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding. (*Cn11*)

### MATERIALS

*Music Alive!* magazines (Vol.39 No.3)  
Computer or mobile device with Internet access

### START

Ask your students to read “Earworms: What Makes Music Stick In Your Head?” on pages 10-13. Then, go over the following highlighted words. **[This reinforces comprehension and vocabulary.]**

**PHENOMENON**—a remarkable event

**INVOLUNTARY**—done without will or conscious control

**PERCEPTION**—the state of being aware of something through the senses

**COGNITION**—the mental action of acquiring knowledge

**CORTEX**—an outer layer of the brain

**IMAGINATIVELY**—in a way that shows creativity

**FUNDAMENTALLY**—in central or primary respects

**COMMONALITY**—a shared feature or attribute

**INCONGRUITY**—standing out

**ASSOCIATE**—connect with something else

**JINGLE**—a short slogan, verse or tune designed to be easily remembered

**STAPLE**—a main element of a diet

**LICENSE**—a permit from authority to use something

**NAGGING**—persistently painful or worrying

**NEUROTIC**—suffering from excessive stress or anxiety

**IDLE**—not active

**MIFFED**—somewhat annoyed

**SUPPRESS**—prevent or inhibit

### DEVELOP

Review concepts from the article by asking the following questions:

**What is an “earworm” and where did the word come from?**

**Why are earworms so difficult to study?**

**Which unexpected region of the brain is active when we listen to music?**

**What are the common characteristics of songs that most often get stuck in our heads?**

**Why do many businesses use jingles or pop songs in their commercials?**

**What are some techniques you can try to get rid of an earworm?**

2. Ask students if anyone can recall an earworm they've had recently and to share the song with the class. Have students listen to the song and point out what they think makes it a memorable, catchy song. If nobody can think of one, use “Friday” by Rebecca Black and/or “Call Me Maybe” by Carly Rae Jepsen.

### CLOSE

Have students write their own jingles by pairing or grouping up. Once the class is in groups, have them follow the instructions:

Select any item you can find in the classroom

Come up with a short melody with lyrics that could be used in a commercial for the item you chose

Share your jingle with the class

Class vote on who's is the “catchiest”

Give extra credit to any group who creates a video commercial for the item using their jingle

### ASSESS

**Did the students read the article?**

**Did they review the vocabulary words?**

**Did they answer the supplemental questions?**

**Did they participate in writing a jingle and/or making a video?**