

La Gruta: The Bat Cave

Lauren Spavelko

Create Your Bat Theme
Composition Activity for Band



La Gruta: The Bat Cave

Composition Activity

MATERIALS

Each student will need a **Resource Packet** for their instrument and the **“Create Your Bat Theme” Guide**. The director also has a full score version of the Resource Packet.

Worksheets are built in **flex-band style** to allow any combination of players to work together to create their bat theme.

RESOURCE PACKET CONTENTS

The Colony – Introduces “The Colony” theme (melody & bass line) from *La Gruta: The Bat Cave*.

Let’s meet a few bats! – Provides 3 example melodies with 3 of 6 possible bass lines.

Scales – Introduces parallel major and minor scales.

Bass Lines – Provides 6 bass lines using major, minor, or a mix of both tonalities.

Rhythm Patterns – Provides 2 models for structuring a 4-bar phrase. Includes several pre-made 4-bar rhythms and a rhythm bank for students to create their own according to the formula.

Pitch Patterns & Shapes – Provides a bank of pitch patterns and contours than step, skip, leap, or a combination of all of these.

“CREATE YOUR BAT THEME” GUIDE CONTENTS

Step 1: Draw and/or describe your bat.

Step 2: Play the major & minor scales for *La Gruta*.

Step 3: Choose one of 6 bass lines.

Step 4: Create/select a 4-bar rhythm for your bat theme.

Step 5: Choose pitches to go with your rhythm pattern.

Step 6: Finishing Touches!

Suggestions for the Classroom

The following are ideas to organize the activity in your classroom and share students' work. Please reorder steps and/or include your own ideas if another flow works better for you.

Split the activity over multiple classes as needed/desired.

This activity can be done with the whole band and in small groups. If you plan to do small groups, it is still recommended to walk through all 6 steps on the Guide once as a whole band to model the process.

Whole Ensemble

1. GUIDE: Draw / describe your bat. Create a new bat friend as a class. Refer to your bat to help make musical choices that suit it best throughout the activity!

2. RESOURCE PACKET: Scales. Play the parallel major and minor scales to introduce students to the collections used in the activity.

3. RESOURCE PACKET: The Colony. Play or model the Colony material. This is a primary theme in *La Gruta: The Bat Cave*.

- All students have the melody and bass line material in their parts.
- Ask the whole band or select students to play the melody and bass lines separately, then in combinations of your choosing.
- **Share Lauren Spavelko's video "Writing 'The Colony' Theme."** (5 minutes) Available on the composer's site for *La Gruta: The Bat Cave*. www.LaurenSpavelko.com
 - In this short video, Lauren shares photos and video from the bat caves in Panama and illustrates how she developed the Colony theme.

This is an opportunity to hear from the composer and (if students will perform *La Gruta*) for everyone to become familiar with its primary material.

4. RESOURCE PACKET: Let's meet a few bats! Play or model the example bat themes.

- Refer to discussion questions in the packet.
- Ask students to point out any relevant / interesting musical features that support their interpretation.

5. GUIDE: Bass Lines. Play / model the 6 bass lines and choose a favorite.

6. RESOURCE PACKET: Rhythm Patterns.

Read, perform, and explain the 2 formulas for constructing the phrase. (1+1+2 or 2+2)

Then choose a Pre-made 4-bar rhythm pattern or use the Rhythm Bank to build your own according to the formula. Copy your rhythm in the **Guide** (or on the board, if modeling).

7. RESOURCE PACKET: Pitch Patterns & Shapes.

Read the explanation. Perform examples from each category of pitch patterns. Choose a favorite pattern, then write note names above your chosen rhythm in the **Guide** (or on the board).

Play the idea against the chosen **Bass Line**. You might ask a student or section to play the bass line while you model the new idea. Discuss how they sound together. Are they harmonious or dissonant? Does the music fit your bat? Why or why not? Make any desired tweaks until you are satisfied with how the two parts work together.

How might I handle transposing instruments at this step?

If you are comfortable doing simple note-entry in a notation program (like MuseScore, a fantastic free option) and can project this to the class, you could create a new file with 5 staves of 4 bars: Treble C, Bass C, B \flat , E \flat , and F. In class, anything you create in one staff, you can quickly copy-paste into another, and the transposition will automatically be done for you. This way, each student will immediately see the idea in their correct transposition.

If you are drawing a single rhythm line by hand, you might choose one section (ex: B \flat instruments) to be responsible for playing through the ideas and invite students in other sections to make suggestions for changes.

You might also use different colors to differentiate the note names for different instruments.

8. GUIDE: Finishing Touches. Write your new theme onto the staff. Add expressive markings, articulations, and a tempo.

Small Groups

First, model the complete process to create a 4-bar theme with the whole group.

Split students or invite them to split themselves according to instrument combination and/or what kind of bat they would like to create. **Consider if you want students to match with others in the same transposition.** If they are mixed, a student playing a B \flat instrument will need to know how to communicate pitch choices with a student on an F instrument, for example.

Ask students to follow the Step-by-Step Guide, consulting the Resource Packet as needed for the step.

After Steps 4 and 5, students should either:

1. **Check-in as a small group with the teacher for approval before proceeding to the next step.**
2. **Pause to share ideas as a whole ensemble before splitting again.**

This will allow opportunities for feedback.

Check in with small groups as they're working to facilitate choices and experimentation.

Sharing Your Bat Themes

These are some ideas of how students can share their Bat Themes. Feel free to be creative and add your own as well!

Perform live at a concert.

The whole band or small student groups can perform several Bat Themes at a concert (possibly before performing *La Gruta*) and talk briefly about the composition experience. Drawings of their bats may be included in the concert program or projected on a screen.

Create videos of the process and final product.

Students can use their phones to document their work-in-progress and record the final product. They can edit these into short videos to share digitally with the school community and their families.

Perform and share at a recruiting event.

If your students are playing for younger students, invite a small group to share a Bat Theme they made and say a few words about how cool it is to learn to write your own music!

La Gruta: The Bat Cave

Create Your Own Bat Theme - Resource Packet

THE COLONY

Shaded notes are from the minor scale.

Lauren Spavelko

♩ = 92

The musical score is arranged in a system of 12 staves, grouped into six pairs. Each pair represents a different instrument or instrument type. The first staff of each pair is labeled 'melody' and the second is labeled 'bass'. The instruments are: Treble C instrument, Treble C instrument, Bass C instrument, Bass C instrument, B♭ instrument, B♭ instrument, E♭ instrument, E♭ instrument, F instrument, F instrument, Keyboard Percussion, and Keyboard Percussion. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The score consists of three measures. In the first measure, the melody parts play a quarter note B-flat, followed by eighth notes A-flat, G, and F. The bass parts play a half note B-flat. In the second measure, the melody parts play a quarter note G, followed by eighth notes F, E-flat, and D. The bass parts play a half note B-flat. In the third measure, the melody parts play a quarter note D, followed by eighth notes C, B, and A. The bass parts play a half note B-flat. Shaded notes (B-flat, A-flat, E-flat, and D) indicate notes from the B-flat minor scale.

Tr. C inst.

Tr. C inst.

Bs. C inst.

Bs. C inst.

Bb inst.

Bb inst.

Eb inst.

Eb inst.

F inst.

F inst.

Keys

Keys

PERUSAL - www.LaurenSpavelko.com

Detailed description: This musical score page contains ten staves, each with a pair of staves (treble and bass clef). The instruments are: Tr. C inst. (Trumpet in C), Bs. C inst. (Baritone in C), Bb inst. (B-flat instrument), Eb inst. (E-flat instrument), F inst. (F instrument), and Keys (Keyboard). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The first staff (Tr. C inst.) has a melody in the treble clef. The second staff (Tr. C inst.) has a sustained note in the treble clef. The third staff (Bs. C inst.) has a melody in the bass clef. The fourth staff (Bs. C inst.) has a sustained note in the bass clef. The fifth staff (Bb inst.) has a melody in the treble clef. The sixth staff (Bb inst.) has a sustained note in the treble clef. The seventh staff (Eb inst.) has a melody in the treble clef. The eighth staff (Eb inst.) has a sustained note in the treble clef. The ninth staff (F inst.) has a melody in the treble clef. The tenth staff (F inst.) has a sustained note in the treble clef. The eleventh staff (Keys) has a melody in the treble clef. The twelfth staff (Keys) has a sustained note in the bass clef. The score is divided into three measures. A large watermark 'PERUSAL - www.LaurenSpavelko.com' is diagonally across the page.

Tr. C inst.

Tr. C inst.

Bs. C inst.

Bs. C inst.

Bb inst.

Bb inst.

Eb inst.

Eb inst.

F inst.

F inst.

Keys

Keys

The musical score for page 3 consists of 12 staves. The first six staves are grouped into three pairs, each representing a different instrument: Tr. C inst. (Trumpet in C), Bs. C inst. (Baritone in C), and Bb inst. (B-flat instrument). The next four staves are also in pairs, representing Eb inst. (E-flat instrument), F inst. (F instrument), and Keys (Keyboard). The final two staves are for Keys. The score is written in 2/4 time and features a variety of musical notations, including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A first ending bracket is present at the top right of the first staff. A large, diagonal watermark reading 'www.LaurensPavlenko.com' is visible across the center of the page.

Tr. C inst.

Tr. C inst.

Bs. C inst.

Bs. C inst.

Bb inst.

Bb inst.

Eb inst.

Eb inst.

F inst.

F inst.

Keys

Keys

2.

www.LaurelSpaulko.com

PERUSAL

Detailed description: This is a musical score for page 4 of a piece. It features ten staves of music. The first six staves are for woodwinds: two Treble Clarinets (Tr. C inst.), two Bass Clarinets (Bs. C inst.), two B-flat Instruments (Bb inst.), and two E-flat Instruments (Eb inst.). The next two staves are for Flutes (F inst.). The final two staves are for a Keyboard (Keys), with a treble and bass clef. The music is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score is divided into two measures by a double bar line. The first measure contains a melodic line in the first staff, with other parts providing harmonic support. The second measure, marked with a '2.' (second ending), continues the melodic line and includes a repeat sign. A large, diagonal watermark 'www.LaurelSpaulko.com' is overlaid across the center of the page, and the word 'PERUSAL' is written vertically on the left side.

Let's meet a few bats!

Play each bat's melody with its matching bass line.

- How is the bat feeling? How does it move?
- Describe the bat's personality and physical characteristics.
- What is the bat's relationship to other bats in the colony?

Bat #1 ♩ = 100
2-bar Pattern

Same or similar pattern

Tr. C inst. *mf*
Bass Line 5

Tr. C inst.

Bs. C inst. *mf*

Bs. C inst.

Bb inst. *mf*

Bb inst.

Eb inst. *mf*

Eb inst.

F inst. *mf*

F inst.

Keys *mf*

Keys

Bat #2

2-bar Pattern

Same or similar pattern

Tr. C inst.

f *mp* *f*

Bass Line 6

Tr. C inst.

Bs. C inst.

f *mp* *f*

Bs. C inst.

Bb inst.

f *mp* *f*

Bb inst.

Eb inst.

f *mp* *f*

Eb inst.

F inst.

f *mp* *f*

F inst.

Keys

f *mp* *f*

Keys

Bat #3 $\text{♩} = 92$

1-bar Pattern Similar pattern Longer idea

Tr. C inst. *ff*
Bass Line 2

Tr. C inst.

Bs. C inst. *p*

Bs. C inst.

B♭ inst. *p*

B♭ inst.

E♭ inst. *p*

E♭ inst.

F inst. *p*

F inst.

Keys *p*

Keys

"La Gruta" uses notes from the major and minor scales. **Play each scale.**

The minor scale lowers the 3rd, 6th, and 7th notes from the major scale.

- The 3rd note is ALWAYS lowered.
- In a melody, the 6th and 7th notes could be lowered or not! Minor can change.

SCALES

	Major scale	Minor scale
Tr. C inst.		
Bs. C inst.		
Bb inst.		
Eb inst.		
F inst.		
Keys		

BASS LINES

These bass lines are made with notes from the major scale, minor scale, or both.

Some bass lines work best with one scale while others may work with both.

The most harmonious scale(s) for each are suggested.

(If you want a sound that clashes, you might make a melody with a scale that DOESN'T match.)

Shaded notes are from the minor scale.

	Bass Line 1 (major)	Bass Line 2 (minor)
Tr. C inst.		
Bs. C inst.		
Bb inst.		
Eb inst.		
F inst.		
Keys		

Bass Line 3 (minor)**Bass Line 4 (mix of major and minor)**

Musical score for Bass Line 3 (minor) and Bass Line 4 (mix of major and minor). The score is written for six instruments: Tr. C inst., Bs. C inst., Bb inst., Eb inst., F inst., and Keys. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The score is divided into two systems, each containing six staves. The first system covers measures 1 through 4, and the second system covers measures 5 through 8. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

Bass Line 5 (major, minor, or mixed)**Bass Line 6 (major, minor, or mixed)**

Musical score for Bass Line 5 (major, minor, or mixed) and Bass Line 6 (major, minor, or mixed). The score is written for six instruments: Tr. C inst., Bs. C inst., Bb inst., Eb inst., F inst., and Keys. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The score is divided into two systems, each containing six staves. The first system covers measures 1 through 4, and the second system covers measures 5 through 8. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

RHYTHM PATTERNS

Patterns help our ears to organize ideas. Look how rhythm patterns are used in two of the example melodies from before. The formulas that work best are:

- 1 + 1 + 2 or short idea + same/similar short idea + longer idea
- 2 + 2 or medium idea + same/similar medium idea

The Colony (rhythm)

Tr. C inst.

Bat #2 (rhythm)

Tr. C inst.

Pre-made 4-bar Rhythm Patterns

Choose one of these rhythms, then select pitch patterns to go with it.

Do you notice the formulas above?

Rhythm #1

Tr. C inst.

Rhythm #2

Tr. C inst.

Rhythm #3

Tr. C inst.

Rhythm #4

Tr. C inst.

RHYTHM BANK

11

Use these 1-bar rhythm ideas (or your own) to make a new 4-bar phrase.

[illegible]

PITCH PATTERNS & SHAPES

Pitch patterns organize sound too, especially when combined with rhythm patterns. We can easily hear groups of 2-6 notes that repeat in a pattern, or shapes that repeat starting on different pitches.

Try some of these pitch ideas on your rhythms or make your own pitch patterns of 3-6 notes. Remember that you can also repeat pitches before moving to the next one in the pattern.

Stepping Patterns

Look how the bracketed groups are similar patterns of notes moved higher or lower.

Stepping Patterns

Tr. C inst.

Bs. C inst.

Bb inst.

Eb inst.

F inst.

Keys

Skipping & Leaping Patterns

Musical score for "Skipping & Leaping Patterns" featuring six staves: Tr. C inst., Bs. C inst., Bb inst., Eb inst., F inst., and Keys. The score is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. The first staff (Tr. C inst.) includes bracketed groupings over the first four measures. The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests.

Steps, Skips, & Leaps

Musical score for "Steps, Skips, & Leaps" featuring six staves: Tr. C inst., Bs. C inst., Bb inst., Eb inst., F inst., and Keys. The score is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. The first staff (Tr. C inst.) includes bracketed groupings over the first four measures. The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests.

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Your name: _____

Your Instrument: _____

Step 1. Draw and/or describe your bat here.

Bat's Name: _____



- List words / write a sentence about your bat's personality and physical characteristics.
- How is your bat feeling today? (Excited, nervous, grumpy, sleepy, something else?)
- How does your bat move? (ex: fast/slow, heavy/light, gracefully, jerky, etc.)
- What is your bat's relationship to other bats in the colony?

Step 2. Play the major & minor scales for *La Gruta*.

Step 3. Choose one of the 6 bass lines from the packet. Bass line: # _____

- You will play this bass line with your bat theme. Which one best matches your bat?
- You can play the bass line rhythm exactly as written or tweak it as you like.

Step 4. Create a 4-bar rhythm for your bat theme. You can:

1. Choose one of the pre-made Rhythm Patterns.
2. Steal the rhythm pattern from "The Colony" or the "Example Bats" melodies.
3. Create your own 4-bar pattern using the Rhythm Bank.

Consider your bat's feelings, personality, and movement. Would they use long tones, short and quick tones, some of each? Is there any stillness or silence (rests)?

If you make your own 4-bar rhythm, use 1-bar ideas from the Rhythm Bank (or add your own) and follow one of these formulas:

- **1 bar pattern + 1 bar pattern + 2 bar pattern** (short idea + same/similar short idea + longer idea)
- **2 bar pattern + 2 bar pattern** (medium idea + same/similar medium idea)

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Step 5. Choose pitches to go with your rhythm pattern.

- Your bass line is made of notes from the major scale, minor scale, or both. The most harmonious scale(s) for each bass line are suggested.
 - If you want a pleasing, harmonious sound, choose notes from the matching scale.
 - If you want a disagreeable, clash-y sound, try a scale that DOESN'T match.
 - You can also listen to which scale notes sound harmonious or dissonant against the bass line. With your group, experiment by playing your pitch ideas over the bass line.
- Look at the **Pitch Patterns** section for ideas about stepping, skipping, and leaping. You can choose from these or create your own patterns of 3-6 pitches.
 - This is another opportunity to think about your bat's qualities. Ex: If your bat is nervous, maybe it prefers to stay close to home and use only a few stepping notes. If your bat is adventurous, maybe it leaps from place to place!
- Pencil in your note name choices over your rhythm. (Remember that notes could repeat before moving to the next note in your pattern.) When you've finished choosing your notes, write your bat theme with notes and rhythm on the staff.

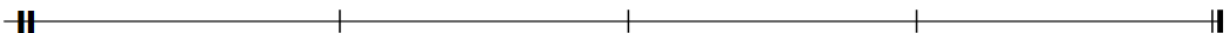
Step 6. Finishing Touches!

Finish your Bat Theme with other expressive elements.

- **Dynamics:** *pp p mp mf f ff* Crescendo (<) and Diminuendo (>)
- **Articulation:** slur, staccato, accent
- **Tempo:** Use a tempo word (adagio, andante, allegro) or expressive word (Energetic, Nervous, Excited, Sleepy) and a metronome marking (♩ = 100)

IDEA SPACE

Write your Bat Theme Rhythm here. Write the same rhythm on each line with different pitch choices or write several different rhythm patterns to explore. Pencil in your note names above the rhythm. Circle or star your favorite.



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Write your Bat Theme Melody here. Using the rhythm and note names you chose, write your favorite melody on the staff. Remember to include a clef and key signature.

Write your Bat Theme Bass Line here. Remember to include a clef and key signature.

Extra workspace

