

## GUSTAV HOLST (1874 – 1934) 'Mars' from 'The Planets'

### Key Vocabulary

**Tempo:** the speed at which a piece of music is played

**Dynamics:** the volume of the sound or a note

**Ostinato:** a repeated pattern of musical notes



### Did you know?

'Mars, Bringer of War' is one movement from The Planets, written by Gustav Holst, between the years 1914-16, at the start of World War One.

There are seven movements in The Planets, and each of these is a character piece. Each musically shows the planet's mood, and that of its Roman god.

This music is written about the planet, Mars, but also about Mars, the Roman God of War.

The heavy use of brass and percussion instruments, commonly associated with the military, suggests an army marching to war. Use of these instruments gives the music a dark mood, in the same way that an author creates a certain mood in a story by using descriptions.

Listen for the relentless five-beat ostinato pattern, the thumping drums and the sound of the strings suggest evil and aggression.

Listen to the opening of 'Mars, Bringer of War'.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/14ZjT5yjnKQRdKVsqRLzk1x/mars-from-the-planets-by-gustav-holst>

Think of words to describe what you are hearing.

How does the music make you feel? Why?

Discuss the *tempo*– is it fast or slow? Does it change?

Identify the instruments being used in the opening bars. How are the string instruments being played?

**Interesting fact:** The strings are using a technique called *col legno* (col-len-yo), which literally means 'with the wood', and involves turning the bow over and hitting the strings with the wooden part of the bow. This creates a percussive effect.

### Choose from ONE of these challenges:

- Using an instrument, an instrument APP or home-made instrument create your own compositions entitled 'Mars' (try to include the five beat ostinato pattern). You could video yourself with the music in the background.
- Try to clap/ play using any type of percussion (pots, pans, wooden spoon) the five beat ostinato pattern:

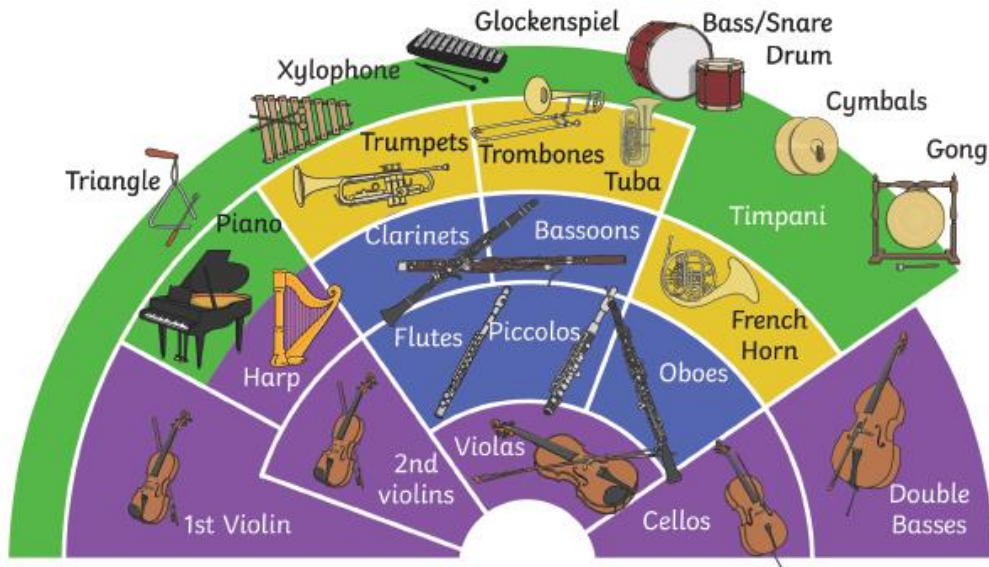


- Create an artistic response to the music
- Create a drama response to the music- dance, acting
- Pick out an instrument that you like the sound of, make a poster about it- name, instrument family, materials, what is it used for and so on (see below)

# Instruments of

# The Orchestra

This diagram shows the arrangement of instrument families in a typical, Western orchestra.



● string

● brass

● woodwind

● percussion