



**California
Festival**
A Celebration
of New Music

Soundscape for a Landscape

Soundscape for a Landscape

From a drive up the coast on Highway 1 to winding roads around river bends and giant redwoods or open-road adventures through Palm Desert, California is home to some of the most beautiful landscapes and geographical landmarks in the world.

Explore the rich and complex landscapes of California and create a soundscape that reflects your journey.

Learning Exploration

How can music celebrate and represent communities and landscapes across the state of California?

Key Objectives: Students will...

- Explore the sights and sounds of communities and landscapes from across California.
- Consider how a variety of musical elements and artistic representations can bring a personal story or community to life.
- Create and share original music with a collaborative community of musicians.
- Develop their own imaginations and discover personal connections to music.

Let your musical imagination soar!

The activities in this guide are meant to spark ideas and offer a framework for creating original compositions. All activities can be adapted for different ages, skill levels, and types of learners. For those that need a little more guidance, suggested composition strategies and supporting worksheets have been included.



Composition Activities

Step 1

REFLECT

Step 2

EXPLORE

Step 3

CREATE

Step 4

SHARE

RESOURCES

Additional Resources

Access student worksheets, listening samples, and other accompanying resources.



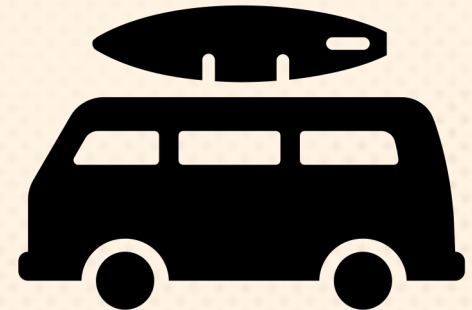
1

REFLECT



Reflect on a road trip that you have taken or a particular landscape in California that inspires you.

- *Where did you go? What did you see?*
- *What other images (both real or imagined) come to mind when you think about this road trip or the landscapes you saw along the way?*
- *How did you travel? By car? By train? By bike? On the highway or small backroads?*
- *What sounds did you hear? What smells did you smell?*
- Draw a picture or collect some photographs of your inspiration.



2

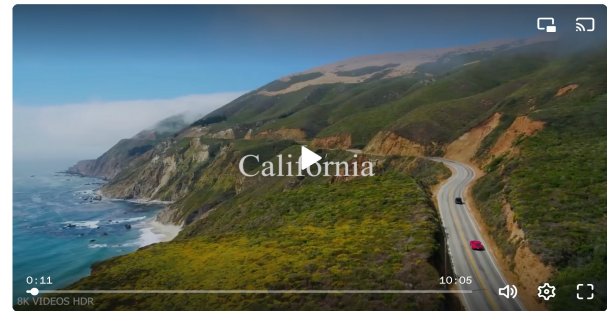
EXPLORE



Explore these videos and photos of CA for further inspiration.



[Discover California](#) [video]



[California Beaches and Landscapes](#) [video]



[California Landscapes](#) [photos]



3

CREATE



Create a new composition that reflects your favorite California landscape, natural wonder, or road trip destination.

- **Take note of all the different elements in your scene.** *What do you see? What do you hear? What colors are present? What textures do you see or feel? Are you by the water? Mountains? Desert?*
- **Consider musical choices to reflect your scene.** *What musical elements will you choose to represent the different elements from your landscape? Think about instrumentation, tempo, dynamics, articulation, melodic contour.*
- **Create a short musical theme to represent your scene.** Then explore ways to create variations on this theme. *For example: singing or playing it slower or faster, repeating it, singing the notes in a different order, playing it on different instruments, etc.*



3

CREATE *continued*



- **Experiment with different ways to change the mood of the theme or create a contrasting section** by using tempo, dynamics, and different sounds or instruments.

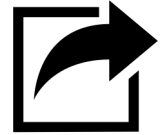


- **Experiment with adding accompanying rhythms** by clapping, tapping, or playing a percussion instrument. Are these rhythms inspired by something you notice in your scene? *For example: the steady rhythm of the waves or the short, fast sounds of birds flying by.*
- **Consider if you will add lyrics to your composition**, either through writing original lyrics or by incorporating a known poem or story.



4

SHARE



Share your new composition by creating a written or drawn score and/or by recording a performance with audio or video. You may even choose to accompany your new music with an original or existing video that documents a portion of your road trip.

- ❖ Email visual score(s), audio and video links, and small supporting files to Composers@LAPhil.org.
- ❖ For larger files, please upload to the California Festival Dropbox.

[Click Here to Upload](#)





Listening for Inspiration

Explore some of these musical works that were inspired by different California landscapes.

- [Mourning Fog](#) by Rand Steiger is a reflection on the morning fog that blankets the San Diego coast near his home, as well as feelings of melancholy that gradually lifted after experiencing a personal loss.
- [Dharma at Big Sur](#) John Adams is a piece for solo electric violin and orchestra composed for the opening of the Walt Disney Concert Hall in 2003. Adams wanted to compose a piece that embodied the feeling of being on the West Coast. In his words, the piece expresses the “so-called ‘shock of recognition,’ when one reaches the edge of the continental land mass.”
- [Pacheco/Redtail Hawk](#)” by American folk singer/songwriter Kate Wolf, paints a picture of northern California’s Pacheco Pass between the San Joaquin Valley and Santa Cruz.
- ["One Earth, One People, One Love" from Sun Rings](#), by Terry Riley is a collaboration with the Kronos Quartet and a commission by NASA that incorporates recorded sounds from space and explores the meaning of our place in the vast universe.
- ["Going to California"](#) is a ballad recorded by the English rock band Led Zeppelin that describes someone who is looking to go to California to “make a new start.”
- *Treeology: A Musical Portrait of California’s Redwood, Sequoia and Joshua Trees*
 - ["My Roots Spread Far and Wide \(Giant Sequoia\)"](#) by Billy Childs
 - ["Desert Ecology \(Joshua Tree\)"](#) by Gabriella Smith
 - ["Red Wood"](#) by Steve Mackey





Accompanying Worksheets

Access and download these resources on the [CA Festival website](#).




A Guide for Young
Composers

Creating a California Soundscape

Think about the California community landmark that inspires you. Take a physical or mental walk through that place and answer these questions.

What do you notice?	What do you hear?	What do you see?
What people and/or places do you see?	What emotions or feelings come to mind?	What important elements of this place would you like for others to know or experience?

Draw a picture (or create a collage) that represents the elements you want to communicate through your music.

Creating a California Soundscape 1 

Creating a Soundscape

Explore the California Festival

Celebrating the collaborative and innovative spirit that thrives in California

cafestival.org