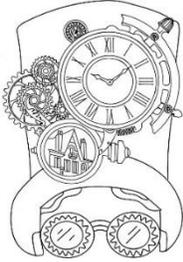


Victorian Time Traveler Kit

Technology Activity: Recorded Music



In this activity, we will identify musical instruments and learn about the phonograph, which was developed in the Victorian Era.

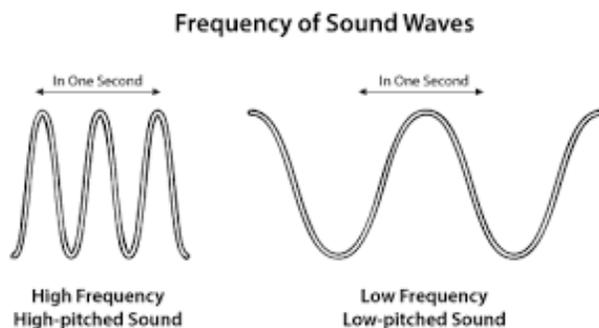
Supplies Needed: computer with audio, markers, color pencils, or crayons

Time: Approximately 30 minutes

The PHONOGRAPH was invented in 1877 by Thomas Edison, who was trying to create a machine that could play recorded music. He came up with a system that captured sound waves first on a metal cylinder, and then into on a large, flat disc, similar to vinyl records that we see today. This machine was also known as a gramophone, and amplified (made louder) a stylus moving across grooves through a large, flared horn. These “talking machines” revolutionized the world, as speeches, books, and especially music could be mass-produced for millions to enjoy. Recorded music would eventually evolve into cassette tapes, compact discs (CDs) and finally, digital files (MP3s) that we use today on phones, computers, and iPods.

The Körners owned a Victrola, an updated gramophone that concealed the large horn inside a cabinet, to play their large collection of music. The family were great music lovers and musicians: Polly Alice played the piano, Gilmer played the piano and violin, and Doré played the piano and cello. Listening to each other play, playing together, and enjoying recorded music was a popular pastime of Victorian times at Körner’s Folly.

We can enjoy some of the same music that the family listened to, and even identify the instruments they played. Use the link included in the download kit to listen.



Here, we see a picture of the sound waves that the phonograph would record and play. The higher the pitch of the sound, the closer the waves are to each other. The phonograph could record sound and play it back.

The receiver that would record the music consisted of a tin foil wrapped cylinder and a very thin membrane, called a diaphragm, attached to a needle. Sound waves were directed into the diaphragm, making it vibrate. A hand crank turned the cylinder to rotate the tinfoil cylinder while the needle cut a groove into it to record the sound vibrations from the diaphragm.

The phonograph was a major influence on Victorian times, allowing for greater communication and enjoyment of music, as well as launching the recording industry.

The phonograph illustration below can be used as a coloring page for younger students.

