Guitars and fretted instruments are among the most popular in the world. This episode looks at frets, chords, tuning, and how to play a wide variety of guitar-like instruments. When a number of curiously dressed musicians enter the shop and head directly to the studio, Quaver remembers that he is hosting The Big Strum, a special event for guitars and fretted instruments. The day is spent tuning in the lab, fret-stepping on a giant guitar, and touring different guitar-driven concerts, culminating in a musical celebration of all things fretted.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

*Students will learn:*  
- How one guitar, when skillfully played, can produce many different styles of music.  
- How the acoustic guitar, electric guitar, classical guitar, and banjo all produce different sounds.  
- How the shape of the body, the thickness of the string, and the way the strings are played affect the timbre.  
- How to tune a guitar and why tuning is important.  
- How different guitar types are appropriate for classical, folk, and rock music.

**Vocabulary**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Necks</th>
<th>Strings</th>
<th>Frets</th>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Bluegrass</th>
<th>Rock</th>
<th>Classical</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Metal</td>
<td>Tuning</td>
<td>Plucking</td>
<td>Strumming</td>
<td>Amplifier</td>
<td>Effects pedal*</td>
<td>Finger-picking*</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A quirky collection of instrument bodies and sounds

The unique sounds of guitars and fretted instruments are affected by their design, the materials of which they are made, and how the strings are struck and plucked.

Tuning a guitar

Tuning an instrument is really important. It requires very careful listening.

Fret-stepping on the giant guitar

Frets help position the fingers on the fret board to play melodies and chords accurately.

Phone box adventures to witness classical, folk, and rock music

Different styles of music employ different types of guitars.

Song: Feel the Guitar Get Hot

A concert featuring the various guitars and fretted instruments presented in the episode.

**Music Standards in Lesson**

1: Singing alone and with others*
2: Playing instruments*
4: Composing and arranging music
6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
7: Evaluating music and music performance
8: Understanding the relationship between music and the other arts

Complete details at [QuaverMusic.com](http://QuaverMusic.com)

**Key Scenes**

<table>
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<th>What they teach</th>
<th>Music Standard</th>
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<td>A quirky collection of instrument bodies and sounds</td>
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<td>Tuning a guitar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fret-stepping on the giant guitar</td>
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<td>Phone box adventures to witness classical, folk, and rock music</td>
<td>6, 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Song: Feel the Guitar Get Hot</td>
<td>1, 3, 6</td>
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**Lesson Intro**

Introducing the episode

Survey students to see who has attended a rock, pop, or country concert. Ask them to describe the experience.

Play *Don’t Say You’re Sorry (Track 1)*. Ask students what instrument was most noticeable. Invite them to take turns performing their best rock air guitar solo. (If no one volunteers, this could be your big break.) Ask students to name instruments that are typically used by a rock band (drums, keyboards, electric guitars, bass, vocals).

What makes a guitar a guitar? Make a list of its unique parts.

- six strings
- body (the big part)
- frets (where the fingers press)

- neck (the thin part)
- tuning pegs

What other instruments have similar frets, necks, and bodies but are not guitars?

- banjo
- ukulele
- bass

- mandolin
- sitar

* concepts included in the Teacher Guide, but not in the DVD
Discussion Points

- Name four of the instruments that played in The Big Strum?
  - acoustic guitar, banjo, electric guitar, classical guitar
- What purpose do frets serve?
  - they show you where to place your fingers
- Which is the quietest fretted instrument shown in the episode?
  - classical guitar
- What is the difference between an acoustic guitar and an electric guitar?
  - an electric guitar uses electricity to amplify the sound

Materials Needed
- Card stock
- Scissors
- Glue
- Colored pencils

Strum Fun
Tracks 2, 3, 4 & 5

Purpose: How to identify different types of guitars and styles of music
Have students listen to these tracks of guitar and fretted instrument music. Using the IWB have students decide whether the players are strumming, picking, playing a lead guitar solo, or playing a melody on their instrument.

Track 2  Strummering - strumming
Track 3  Picky - finger picking
Track 4  Electric Show Off - lead guitar solo
Track 5  Floating Down the River - acoustic guitar strumming with electric guitar melody

Have the students pretend they are the player by strumming, finger picking, soloing, or playing a melody along with the track.

Terrific Tuning

Purpose: How to tune an instrument
Play a low E on a piano. Tell students to hum the note while you pick the low E string on the guitar and turn the peg to make the pitch go up and down. Have them give you a thumbs up if the pitch needs to go higher, thumbs down if it should go lower, or an okay hand sign if it is just right. Repeat with the other strings on the guitar.

Note: Listening is essential for tuning and playing music; they can hear if it’s right or wrong, even when they can’t see the instruments.

Guitar Mnemonics

Purpose: Memorizing the tuning for guitar strings
Coming up with a mnemonic for E, A, D, G, B, E will help students remember guitar tuning. For example: Eating A Dewy Grape Beats Everything. Divide the students into groups of three or four, and have them create their own mnemonic. Have each group announce its creation to the others. Pluck a string of a guitar and have students call out the word that corresponds to that note.
**Chord Quick Draw**

**Worksheet # 1**

**Purpose:** Learning basic hand positions for the guitar

For an in-class version of Quaver’s giant guitar, photocopy the chord shapes worksheet onto card stock, and instruct students to cut out the three guitar necks. Have them place their fingers on the circles that represent finger placement. Challenge them to do it without looking at their fingers.

Once they have familiarized themselves with their “guitars”, play Chord Quick Draw. Ask two student volunteers to come to the front; announce a chord, and have them form the chord as quickly as possible on the appropriate guitar neck.

*Note: Consider enlarging the “guitars” on your photocopier.*

**VIDEO REPLAY**

**Feel the Guitar Get Hot**

**Track 6**

**Purpose:** Identifying different types of guitars and styles of music

Play the song *Feel the Guitar Get Hot (Track 6)* again, and have students sing along. Notice all the different ways guitars and fretted instruments are played.

**WEB ACTIVITIES**

**QStrum**

Have a blast with chords, strumming, and making cool guitar grooves on QStrum. These guitar grooves can become part of a bigger piece of music in the producer window. Students can add guitar and bass guitar parts to a play-along song by Quaver or one of their own. They can also choose a style of guitar (acoustic, rock, mellow) and bass guitar (electric, fuzz, upright) for each song that they build.

**Metro / Style Venues**

Ride the metro to Reggae Beach, Rock Concert, Blues Street, and other venues that use some type of guitar to produce their unique sound. Do some research and discover how the guitar has been instrumental in the rise of many music styles.
Homemade Harmony

Purpose: Constructing a guitar-style instrument

Using materials readily available, students can build their own customized string instruments by following directions found in the worksheet. For added fun, schedule a combined performance of their completed projects.

My Instrument File

Purpose: Learning names and types of fretted instruments

Print out this worksheet for students, which presents the main types of guitars plus other fretted instruments. Students must color in each instrument and fill in the blanks. When completed, the worksheet should be stored with other instrument family worksheets.

Materials Needed

- Colored pencils

QTips

Why not ask a student’s parent or friend to come and demonstrate a guitar or fretted instrument to your students?

Homework

PrintWorksheets

Materials Needed

- Colored pencils

Assessment

Super Styles

Tracks 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11

During The Big Strum, Quaver’s friends demonstrate different instruments and musical styles. Using the word bank on the IWB, play the tracks for your class, and have them identify the instruments and styles they are hearing.

Track 7 Hillbilly Hollow - banjo, bluegrass
Track 8 Hear Me - electric guitar, rock
Track 9 Bach’s Prelude in C Minor - classical guitar, classical
Track 10 Look This Way - acoustic and electric guitar, country
Track 11 Falling Leaves - acoustic guitar, folk

If you have additional time, have students use their hands and body as though they are playing the featured instrument.
8 CROSS-CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES

Social Studies  Tracks 12, 13 & 14  IWB 4
Many places around the world are known for their own particular fretted instruments. Have students match these three tracks – Sitar Ride (Track 12), Waikiki (Track 13), and The Amalfi Coast (Track 14) – to the picture of the featured instrument and its place of origin. With students, find these countries on a map, and place a picture of the instrument on the country of origin. Track 13 uses a style of guitar playing called slack key which creates that twangy Hawaiian sound.

Note: For further study, investigate the cultures of these three places.

Art
The design of electric guitars has become increasingly bizarre over the years – Flying V’s, double-neck guitars, and see-through guitars. Show students pictures of really way-out guitars, and discuss with them why these designs may have been chosen and what they add to the music.

Challenge students to come up with guitar designs that reflect something of their own style.

9 DIGGING DEEPER

Going Electric  Tracks 15, 16, 17 & 18
Purpose: Examples of how electric guitars have enhanced the sounds traditionally heard from guitars
Ask students to listen closely to these four tracks of music. The first features acoustic guitar; the other three employ effects on an electric guitar.

Track 15 Quiet Times - traditional acoustic guitar
Track 16 Wah Wah - electric guitar using a wah-wah pedal (a special pedal that is controlled by the foot to alter the sounds of the notes)
Track 17 The Star Spangled Banner II - adds distortion, which makes the guitar sound loud and raucous
Track 18 Moonbeams - uses effects to give a spacey sound

Ask students to rank the guitar sounds in order of preference. Discuss with them why they choose their ranking in that way.

VIDEO REPLAY
Classical Guitar  Track 19
Purpose: What makes the classical guitar a unique instrument
The electric guitar is one of the loudest instruments used. By contrast, the classical guitar is one of the quietest. Listen to Viotti’s Guitar Concerto, 2nd Movement (Track 19), which is very soft and gentle but very intricate. The classical guitar is one of the most difficult instruments to play. The player must have special nails on his/her right hand to pluck, pick, and strum the guitar while the left hand is constantly moving.

Watch the clip of the classical guitar player again, looking closely for the movement of his hands.