

Reviewed by **Denise Phillips**

Spotty, Stripy, Swirly – What Are Patterns?

Written and Photographed By Jane Brockett
Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook Press, 2012

Vivid photographs by author Jane Brockett (Jane Brockett's Clever Concepts) capture patterns from our everyday world in *Spotty, Stripy, Swirly – What Are Patterns?* The text is simple and direct, rightfully placing the emphasis on the power of the images themselves.

The exploration begins by asking readers to observe patterns in their surroundings and on themselves. One of the many examples of Brockett's clever creativity, this activity sparked a lively discussion among my third graders as they searched for patterns in their clothing, as well as in objects and visuals throughout the music room. The book continues with photographs of neon-colored toy fruits and vegetables "jumbled up" alongside photos of the same objects organized into lines and rows, inviting readers to observe the emerging patterns.

The study of pattern continues with ways in which they function in our lives: "Patterns help us predict and plan. They make it easy to know what comes next." Readers are asked to identify this kind of pattern in rows of bright green and purple swirly lettuces in photographs taken from several different angles. The role of patterns in quilting, decorating cakes, and architecture is illustrated with pictures that zoom in to examine detailed stitches, fabrics, and layers, and zoom out to observe larger patterns inside

and outside houses and skyscrapers. Patterns in plant identification are illustrated by beautiful repeating shades of purple in a close-up photo of a dahlia, and the recurring shapes of multi-hued leaves revealing geraniums.

Components of patterns (number, color, and shape) are explored through bright, variegated stripes on socks and beach chairs and spots, illustrated with candies on cookies and cheery polka-dotted fabric. Combinations of patterns emerge from a spiral of beach rocks arranged by color and size. Stacks of caramel candy squares arranged in different formations demonstrate alternative patterns. "Look how many patterns can be made with just one thing."

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Almost every page of this appealing book invites multiple aural and/or movement explorations, with something for students of all ages and ability levels. For example, you might first ask students to explain to each other how one of the patterns is formed, or name the repeating elements. The everyday, yet beautiful, illustrations motivate English Language Learners to participate in the discussion. Students can follow one of the patterns as a musical score, matching vocal sounds to visual textures, adding dynamics or groupings. Patterns created by shadows might illustrate *forte* and *piano*, or echoing, or sequencing. Invite students to decide whether to illustrate pattern or no pattern, with examples of random sounds converging into a rhythm, of random movements turning into a dance, or their own interpretation of order emerging from chaos.

Potential activities for small groups are also abundant. Distribute pages of the book to small groups to create a sound and/or movement



pattern inspired or directed by the photograph. You can add instruments, of course, at any of these points, as students explore contrast and texture. Students may also experiment with ways in which to extend their sound and movement patterns into a small musical piece to share. Patterns can be combined to create a larger piece, the patterns either overlapping or sequential. Alternatively, you might have all groups interpret the same page as an example of expressing the pattern in different ways. Encourage older students to discuss more direct translations of visual ideas into musical concepts: How is color expressed in music? What about number, shadow, shape, or pattern within pattern?

Spotty, Stripy, Swirly – What Are Patterns? is a rich resource for exploring pattern, with dozens of examples of dynamic and diverse patterns and their components to stimulate your students' creativity. Using vivid imagery and simple, engaging language, this book invites readers to observe, to imagine, and to explore. The possibilities for the Orff classroom are endless, and delightful to contemplate. ■

DENISE PHILLIPS has taught elementary school music using the Orff approach for 34 years, and is currently the music specialist at Sunset Elementary School in Vancouver, WA. She has served on the POSA Board in various positions and on the AOSA National Board of Trustees as Region I representative. Denise has presented Orff workshops and conference sessions at national and local levels, and has taught Orff Level I teacher education courses.