

Jazz

Companion Text: Night Symphony, written by Lara Binn, and illustrated by Valia Ovseyko

Subject Area & Grade Level: Social Studies, 2nd Grade

Materials: World map, jazz recordings featuring the use of vocal scat (optional)

Objectives

After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Appreciate the diversity of cultures that came together to create jazz music
- Locate New Orleans on a map of the United States, and describe the migrations that led to its settlement
- Model scat singing as a means of exploring jazz

Introduction

Read the story once through without stopping. Then, go back to the Friday night page, and ask students what they think that “Skobba-dobba do-bop be-bop shoo!” means. Entertain any reasonable suggestions, but don’t give them an answer. If possible, play two or three recordings of jazz vocalists, using this “scat” vocal styling technique of improvisation (Ex. Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, or Dizzy Gillespie). Ask students what they notice about each selection, and try to get them to notice and point out the use of scat. Define this technique as the rhythmic use of nonsense words or syllables while singing jazz music.

Procedure

Tell students that scat singing started as part of jazz music, and that jazz music is a type of music that was first created in New Orleans. Ask students if they know where New Orleans is, and point it out within the state of Louisiana on a world map. Tell students:

The interesting thing about jazz is that it is a whole new kind of music that is a mix of other kinds of music. The different kinds of music that blended together to make jazz came from the different groups of people that lived in New Orleans about 100 years ago. The first jazz musicians were African-Americans who created jazz from the following elements: traditional African drumming, spiritual songs often sung when they were slaves, piano music called “ragtime,” and the blues music of the south.

On the map, trace the migration of different cultural groups to New Orleans-- Europeans through the East Coast, down to the South; and Africans, through the Caribbean islands and up to the South. Have each student “take notes” on what they learned about these migrations by taking out a sheet of paper and drawing (roughly) the European continent, the African continent, and the North American continent. Then, have them draw a line from Europe, to the East Coast of the U.S., to New Orleans, and a line from Africa to the Caribbean islands, to New Orleans. Have students put a star on New Orleans.



Discussion

Give students additional background on the inspiration for jazz, such as:

Jazz is a special kind of music because, in jazz, a song can sound different every time you hear it. Musicians who play or sing jazz change the words, and even the tunes of songs. This is because jazz music is linked closely with how people feel, and people's feelings change. Scat singing in jazz reflects this because sometimes people cannot easily describe how they feel, and when they try to, nonsense words come out instead. Many jazz songs are written on topics about which people feel very strongly.

As a culminating activity for this lesson, invite students to improvise scat singing of their own about a topic that matters greatly to them. You can give them a minute to collect their thoughts before sharing, but remind them that they should not write anything down or pre-plan their words, just say what comes into their mind when they feel strongly about their topic. Model scat singing of your own about something that comes to your mind.

