
HIP CAT

Author: Jonathan London

Illustrator: Woodleigh Hubbard

Publisher: Chronicle Books

THEME:

Music is an unpredictable delight that moves its creators and its listeners in such a way that it may never be played or heard exactly the same way twice.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

This is the story of a cat who creates a sound all his own and then experiences how the rhythm enchant his audience.

Jazz, America's most original music form, is the topic of this show. Viewers experience examples of improvisation in music, literature, art and dance, and meet Joshua Redman, a jazz saxophonist who talks about how music has influenced his life.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Discuss why music is important in the lives of people.

Before viewing the program, listen to some jazz and discuss with students how it makes them feel.

Hip Cat had a dream. Discuss his dream with students and how he was able to make it come true.

Invite students to share their experiences with learning to play a musical instrument—its rewards and its frustrations.

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Invite a saxophonist into the classroom and have her/him play, demonstrating how to get different sounds from the instrument. Listen to music played by well-known saxophonists, such as Charlie Parker (from the past) and Branford Marsalis (a contemporary musician), and compare their sounds and styles.

Listen to jazz music as it is played by different musicians. Work with the music teacher to help students compare and contrast jazz with other types of music and to help them notice how jazz is interpreted differently among musicians.

Play different types of music and have students brainstorm words that describe each type.

Do a chain story, one that is made up as it goes along. The first person begins the story, and it is passed around with each person adding to it. For a written version of the story, take dictation as the story is created. Have students edit it and then publish it into a book for the classroom library.

The story contains many colorful expressions (e.g., “hip cat,” “daddy-o,” “rad,” “gig,” etc.), some of which are slang (“pay with peanuts”) and others are music-related (referring to his saxophone as his “ax”). Discuss the meanings of the expressions used in this story. Have students interview their parents and grandparents about expressions that were popular when they were young (e.g., “cool,” “groovy,” “far-out,” etc.). Discuss these expressions in class along with some used in more recent years (e.g., “awesome”).

Involve the students in some simple dramatic improvisations. Improvisation is a type of creative drama that involves reenactment of a scene with dialogue that is not written down or memorized. The scene may be done differently every time it is performed. Devise some situations that might be familiar to students in their everyday lives and allow small groups to improvise how to play them. For example, students might improvise the following scenes: 1) “You and your friends are at the park and you find a stuffed animal by the swings. All of you like it. What will you say and do?” 2) “You and your friend are going to a movie. Your little brother wants to go along, but you know he wouldn't like this movie. What will you say and do?” 3) “Your mother has given your favorite t-shirt to your cousin, who is spending the weekend at your house. What will you say and do?” There are many other possibilities for improvisations, including imaginative ones, such as “It is Christmas Eve in a toy store. At the stroke of midnight, you and the other toys that were not sold come alive. What will you talk about?”

Play different types of music and have students move creatively according to how the music makes them feel.

Work with the library media specialist to introduce students to jazz musicians by locating biographical references. Possible subjects include Louis Armstrong, Scott Joplin, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Dizzy Gillespie, Wynton Marsalis, Fats Waller, Count Basie, Jelly Roll Morton, Bessie Smith, and others. In particular, focus on the path they followed to achieve their dream.

RELATED THEMES:

dream fulfillment
music appreciation
creative expression

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #30 — Mama Don't Allow
Program #125 — Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin
Program #82 — The Wall
Program #15 — Ty's One Man Band

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Jonathan London is a poet and author of several children's books, including *Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back*, a **Reading Rainbow** review book. He enjoys listening to jazz as he writes stories. He lives with his wife and sons in northern California.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:

Woodleigh Hubbard both writes and illustrates children's books. She makes her home in the Pacific Northwest. *Hip Cat* is the recipient of a Society of Children's Illustrator's Award.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

CHARLIE PARKER PLAYED BE BOP
by Chris Raschka (Orchard Books)

CONGA CROCODILE
by Nicole Rubel (Houghton Mifflin)

WILLIE JEROME
by Alice Faye Duncan, illus. by Tyrone Geter (Simon & Schuster)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

FROM MISS IDA'S PORCH
by Sandra Belton, illus. by Floyd Cooper (Four Winds)

BIG BAND SOUND
by Harriett Diller, illus. by Andrea Shine (Boyd's Mills)

THE FROG WHO WANTED TO BE A SINGER
by Linda Goss, illus. by Cynthia Jabar (Orchard)

LITTLE LIL AND THE SWING-SINGING SAX
by Libba Moore Gray, illus. by Lisa Cohen (Simon & Schuster)

BEN'S TRUMPET
by Rachel Isadora (Greenwillow)

RAGGIN': A STORY ABOUT SCOTT JOPLIN
by Barbara Mitchell, illus. by Hetty Mitchell (Carolrhoda)

MAX FOUND TWO STICKS
by Brian Pinkney (Simon & Schuster)

SATCHMO'S BLUES

by Alan Schroeder, illus. by Floyd Cooper (Doubleday)

RAGTIME TUMPIE

by Alan Schroeder, illus. by Bernie Fuchs (Little Brown)

WILLIE BLOWS A MEAN HORN

by Ianthe Thomas, illus. by Ann Toulmin-Rothe (HarperCollins)

**READING RAINBOW TEACHER'S GUIDE**

Program #127 — Hip Cat