The Music in George's Head

George Gershwin Creates Rhapsody in Blue

Suzanne Slade
Illustrated by Stacy Innerst
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Ages 9–11  •  Grades 4–6  •  48 pages  •  10 x 9

Language Arts: Writing, Research; Music Appreciation:
The Orchestra

After reading The Music in George’s Head, your class should listen to a performance of Rhapsody in Blue. At the link below, they can hear and watch Leonard Bernstein conduct the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and play the piano solo recorded in 1976 at the Royal Albert Hall in London, England. It’s just seventeen minutes long. Enjoy!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cH2PH0auTUU

Now it’s time to dig into the music and learn about the instruments in the orchestra. The conductor was diligent about showing many of the instruments individually and being sure all the instruments were captured on film in the context of the whole orchestra.

Welcome the students to your orchestra activity. Make sure they have chosen their instrument families and then share it with the class.

1. How did George Gershwin decide which instruments to use?
2. What instrument was difficult to play?
3. Can the students name that instrument?
4. What is the music of the 1920s called?

The class, with your help and the music teacher’s guidance, should see:

http://dsokids.com/listen/by-instrument.

Music Appreciation:

 Invite the school’s music teacher, or another musician in your community, to visit your classroom and bring a selection of musical instruments. Set up a music center in your room and display the illustrated sheet music.

Assign each student to find a noise that they want to contribute to the symphony. Each student should decide the loudness or softness of the sound, the pitch, and the number of beats or repetitions of the sound. Then, with your help, they should orchestrate the symphony.

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