



Lesson Ideas

Younger Students

- Discuss Duke Ellington's childhood and young adulthood with the students. Ask each student to imagine himself or herself as Duke Ellington. Each student creates a comic strip about life as child or teenage Duke Ellington. Comic strips can incorporate factual and imagined storylines. Showcase the finished comic strips in the classroom or compile into a newspaper. Distribute a newspaper photocopy to each student.
- Provide students with white card stock and markers so they can construct a one-octave piano keyboard (with eight keys). Make your own to provide an example or allow students to model theirs using the classroom's piano. Instruct students to write an adjective describing Duke on each piano key, based on what they have learned in class, and to draw a picture to accompany each qualifier. Examples of adjectives include musical, charismatic, noble, graceful, inventive and stylish. Play some of Duke Ellington's music in the background as students create their piano keyboards.

Older Students

- Divide students into groups to record a podcast about Duke Ellington. Designate students for specific tasks:
 - Scriptwriters to write the podcast script
 - Podcast host to read the main narrative
 - Recording engineer to tape the podcast
 - Actors to read pretend commercials or act as interviewees
 - Sound effects artist

You can choose to do a live newscast format instead of a podcast format depending on available resources and number of students. Recording is optional.

- Duke Ellington became popular during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s. Langston Hughes, a prominent poet during the Harlem Renaissance, often wrote his poems while listening to jazz music at the local clubs. Read two or three of his poems to the class and/or encourage the students to share their favorite poems from Hughes. Discuss how the words and rhythm of the text relate to the sounds of jazz. Find Langston Hughes poems at: <http://www.poemhunter.com/langston-hughes/>

Listening Activity

Duke Ellington mastered both jazz and classical musical forms in over 2000 works. Play several excerpts from Duke Ellington's music which represent different musical styles, such as *Caravan* (1937), *Beggar's Holiday* (a musical, 1946), *Symphony in Black* (1935), *Take the "A" Train* (1941).

Encourage a discussion with questions like:

- 1) How are these examples similar?
- 2) How are these examples different?
- 3) What role does instrumentation play?
- 4) What roles do the lyrics play in each piece?
- 5) When do you think Ellington wrote this piece? Why?

Emphasize how Duke Ellington combined African-American and Western European styles of music in his works.



Suggested Listening List

Links to download recordings from iTunes & view on YouTube are available in the Resources Area

http://www.funmusicco.com/private/pmlp_module_4/resources

- *Take the "A" Train* - Duke Ellington
- *The Mooche* - Duke Ellington and His Orchestra
- *On the Fringe of the Jungle* - Duke Ellington Trio
- *It Don't Mean a Thing* - Duke Ellington Orchestra
- *In a Mellow Tone* - Duke Ellington
- *Satin Doll* - Duke Ellington Orchestra
- *Mood Indigo* - Duke Ellington and His Orchestra

Internet Links

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duke_Ellington - A detailed article on Duke Ellington's life
- <http://www.dukeellington.com> - Duke Ellington Official Website
- <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0228/p18s02-hfes.html> - "Langston Hughes set poetry to a jazz beat", by Elizabeth Lund, *Christian Science Monitor*
- <http://www.americanpoems.com/poets/Langston-Hughes> - Biography of Langston Hughes
- <http://pbskids.org/jazz/nowthen/duke.html> - PBS Kids Duke Ellington Bio

YouTube Links

- <http://www.dukeellington.com/videomultimedia.html> - Multimedia site about jazz legend Duke Ellington. Includes listening samples of *Take the "A" Train*, *Symphony in Black*, *The Mooche*, and *Cabin in the Sky* and mini-documentaries
- <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/musician.php?id=6521> - Profile of Duke Ellington. Excellent source for video, articles, and music reviews about Duke Ellington. Scroll to the bottom to see videos such as *On the Fringe of the Jungle*, *Take the "A" Train* and *Hawk Talks*
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDQpZT3GhDg> - *It Don't Mean a Thing*, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPMAVlZz9LY> - *Symphony in Black*, Duke Ellington featuring Billie Holiday
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MjliLx1Nw0> - *In a Mellow Tone*, Duke Ellington
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDDCzb3dv_Y - *Satin Doll*, Duke Ellington Orchestra
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GohBkHaHap8> - *Mood Indigo*, Duke Ellington and His Orchestra

