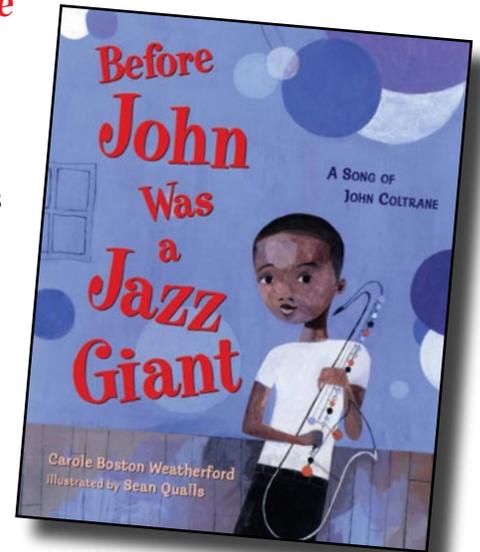


Before John was a Jazz Giant: A Song of John Coltrane

Classroom Activities

Before John was a Jazz Giant: A Song of John Coltrane demonstrates how the sounds John Coltrane heard as a child influenced his musical compositions, playing, and style. Here are some activities that introduce young children to the basics of listening to and playing with the sounds around them. The first three topics introduce the three basic components of music: dynamics (loud and soft), rhythm, and melody. The following activities help children to think about everyday objects in a different way – in a musical way.



Introducing Soft and Loud, High and Low

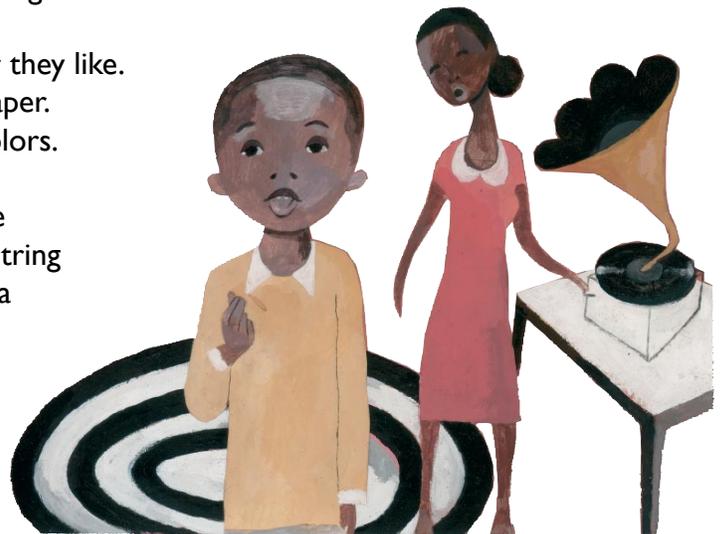
- Ask the class to speak softly, then loudly. List soft and loud sounds they hear everyday.
- Speak with a high, squeaky voice and then with a low voice. Ask the class to do the same. List high and low sounds they hear everyday.

Introducing Rhythm

- Clap out rhythms to the syllables in the children's names.
- Clap out a simple rhythm like short-long, short-long and have the children repeat the pattern with their hands or with a pencil on a desk or other surface. Try other patterns like long-short-short, long-short-short, or long-long-short, long-long-short.

Introducing Melody

- Fill 6 jars or glasses with different levels of water. Using a metal utensil like a spoon, demonstrate that the pitches vary. Strike one glass and then another. Ask the class if the second sound is higher or lower than the first.
- Label each of the glasses with a different color. Prepare a set of strips of construction paper using the same colors on the glasses. If the class is small, hand out a set to each child. If the class is large, form small groups and have the children do this activity together.
- Ask the children to arrange the strips in any order they like. Have them glue the strips on to a large piece of paper. Each child now has a “melody” made out of the colors.
- Play each child's melody on the glasses, striking the corresponding glass for each color strip. You can string together several children's sets of strips to create a longer musical piece.



Listening to Everyday Sounds

- Ask the children to close their eyes, be very quiet, and listen to all the sounds in the classroom and outside the classroom for 30 seconds to a minute. List all the sounds they hear. Ask the class:
 - Can you describe the sound?
 - Can you imitate the sound?
 - Do you know what is making the sound?
 - Is the sound soft or loud? short or long? high or low?
- If possible, take a walk with the class outside, and explore sounds the children hear using the same questions as above.
 - Ask each child to select one sound that they will describe, imitate, and draw about.
- With their eyes blindfolded, see if the children can recognize their classmate's individual voices.

Making Sounds with Everyday Things

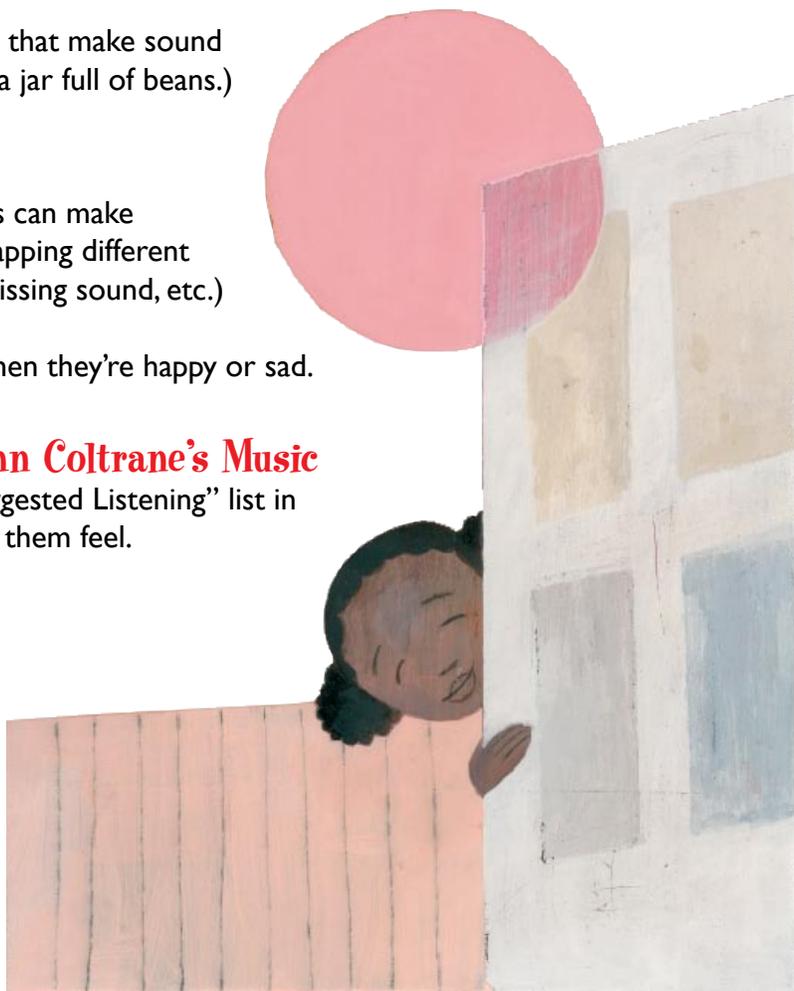
- Walk around the classroom, stopping at ordinary objects to see what kinds of sounds it can make (include crumpling and creating other sounds with paper, pencils, a pencil sharpener, a stapler, a book, chairs, clock ticking, venetian blinds, etc.) Ask one child to make sounds with each object.
- Have the children sit in a circle. Gather everyday things in the center of the circle (bubble wrap, beans or rice in a bag or container, wooden spoons, velcro on a sneaker, items found in classroom while doing the above activity.) Ask the children to close their eyes and identify the objects by their sound.
- Do a show and tell of objects found at home that make sound (for example, items you shake: a baby rattle, a jar full of beans.)

Using Your Body to Make Sounds

- Ask the children how many ways their bodies can make sounds (clapping, snapping, tongue-clicking, slapping different parts of your body, foot stomping, making a kissing sound, etc.)
- Ask the class what sound do people make when they're happy or sad.

Activities to do While Listening to John Coltrane's Music

- Play a John Coltrane recording from the "Suggested Listening" list in the book. Ask the class how the music make them feel. Happy? Sad? Excited? Sleepy?
- Ask the class to clap or move to the beat.
- Using the beat of the music, ask the class to move crayons or markers on paper. Do the same using another piece of music with a different beat. You can also do this activity with clay (tapping, making ridges, or pounding on it) or with fingerpainting.



Homemade Instruments

Kids love to make music. There are lots of simple instruments that kids can make. Here are a few ideas:

- Use old tin foil pans to make cymbals, attaching strings as handles.
- Fill film canisters or other plastic containers with dried beans, popcorn, or rice to create a shaking percussion instrument.
- Make a harp from an old shoebox by stretching different sized rubber bands around the box. To make it into a guitar, attach a ruler or stick to the back of the box. Plucking the rubber bands produces different sounds.
- Use a paper towel holder as a tube that children can hum into to produce kazoo-like sounds. They can decorate the tube with markers, too.
- Make a tambourine using two paper plates. Have the children color the bottom of the plates. Then place beans, rice, or pebbles between them. Staple the plates together and shake!
- Make a comb buzzer by folding a piece of tissue paper over the tooth edge of a comb. To play, hum through the tissue paper.
- Ask the children if they know anyone who plays a musical instrument or sings.
- Ask the children to talk about family members that play instruments or sing.
- Have children describe the instrument and how it is played.
- If possible, ask the family member to demonstrate to the class.

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