

DUKE ELLINGTON

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(Hyperion)

Themes: Biography/Music

Grade Level: K – 4

Running Time: 15 minutes

SUMMARY

As a boy, Duke Ellington was more interested in baseball than in practicing the piano. However, when Duke grew older and heard piano played in a way that tickled his senses, he sat right down and practiced and practiced until he could make music magic. This is the story of Duke's rise from his early years learning the piano through forming his own band and becoming one of the few African Americans ever to perform at Carnegie Hall. Today people still enjoy the innovative music of one of the greatest jazz artists of all time—Duke Ellington.

OBJECTIVES

- To introduce children to Duke Ellington and his music
- To help children learn about musical instruments
- To help children explore the history of jazz

BEFORE VIEWNG ACTIVITIES

Share the book *Duke Ellington* with children.

Then ask:

- How did Duke Ellington feel about playing the piano as a boy?
- What changed his mind about the piano?
- What kinds of instruments did Duke Ellington

have in his band?

- What special places did Duke Ellington perform in when he came to New York City?
- What was the name of the composer's special tribute to African Americans?

Collect recordings of Duke Ellington's compositions and play them for children. As children listen, see if they can describe how the musical pieces make them feel. Encourage them to listen carefully and try to identify the different instruments playing on the recordings.

Ask children to describe the different musical instruments they may be learning to play. Ask: What do you need to do to learn to play your instrument well? How do you feel about practicing? What other instruments would you like to learn to play? Why?

Show children photographs and/or illustrations of jazz bands found in books and magazines. Have children identify the different instruments they see. See if children can use their bodies or voices to imitate the sounds the various instruments make. Later, play some jazz for children on your tape or CD player and encourage children to move to the music!

AFTER VIEWNG ACTIVITIES

Remind children of the ways Duke Ellington's band members made music that made people think of kites flying and colors swirling. Play some of Duke Ellington's music and provide children with

large sheets of paper and paint. Have children listen to the music and paint freely. Later, have children share their jazz-inspired paintings with the group.

Have children bring in instruments from home, or make home-made instruments (sticks, pot covers, bean filled jars) and have a jam session in the classroom. When children have practiced some of their own original compositions, invite other classes to come in as children present a classroom jazz concert.

Talk with children about life in the 1920's. Share pictures showing the kinds of transportation available, how people dressed, radios people listened to. Help children become acquainted with the radio experience by listening as you tell a story while sitting behind a door or screen so that you cannot be seen. When finished, discuss how listening to the story without the aid of visual images, including facial expressions, changed the story experience.

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