

JAZZTIME

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Screenplay by Maxine Fisher

Themes: Families, Friendship, Multiculturalism, Music

Grade Level: 2–6

Running Time: 26 minutes

SUMMARY

This story is a nostalgic look back at one night in Harlem, in 1919. The tale intertwines two stories: how two girls become friends and how Fats Waller began his career. Lucy, Fats Waller's next-door neighbor, meets Rose Scott on a Friday, the day of the weekly big show at the Lincoln Theater. Rose is the daughter of a talent scout. She lives on the other side of town, but on the day of the story, Rose hides in the back seat of her father's car, rides to Harlem, and wanders onto Lucy's block. Lucy's mother and uncle decide to take Rose along to the Lincoln, where their family always goes to see the Friday show. Rose's father eventually finds her there. Rose and her dad are reunited just in time to hear Fats enter music history as he becomes the first performer to play jazz on an organ.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will watch and listen to a fictional story based on real people and events.
- Children will follow a story that has multiple plots.
- Children will appreciate the importance of Fats Waller in music history.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Tell students the title and ask them to predict the setting of the story. Explain that jazz started becoming popular about 100 years ago in African American communities such as Harlem, New York. Ask students to volunteer what they know about

Harlem. Explain briefly that during the early 1900s Harlem was full of African American artists, writers, and musicians. Alert the students that this story, set in Harlem, is about one of the musicians who helped make Harlem world-famous. Suggest that they applaud when they recognize his name in the program.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

The program has a toe-tapping score complete with silent movie music and Fats Waller tunes. Ask students to recall what the story told them about the history of jazz. Why did ministers like the Reverend Waller call jazz "the devil's music"? How did other people respond to jazz? Elicit details about the other music in Fats Waller's life. What gospel song did Mrs. Waller sing? What music did Fats play on the theater piano? Replay the organ performance by Fats at the end of the program. What made people like jazz so much?

Connect the story to literature by discussing the way the program told the story. Who is the narrator? Ask students to recall details about how Lucy and Rose met. How do we know that Rose and Lucy stayed friends for life? (At the end, we discover that Lucy is telling the story to Rose's great-granddaughter.) How are Rose and Lucy alike and different? With older students, discuss the subtle and clever ways the animation deals with differences in race. Draw students' attention back to the silent movie within the story. Discuss how the music and the plot of the silent movie reflect the feelings of the characters. Encourage students to watch the program again to pick up these details.

Connect the story to social studies by locating New York City on a map or globe. If possible, locate Harlem on a map of New York City. Have students

help you collect books, articles, videos and other items about Harlem in 1919 and during the 1920s. Have students research and write biographies of Fats Waller and other luminaries of the Harlem Renaissance. Create a study center for students to enjoy.

Connect the story to science by focusing on entertainment technology. Have students recall details about entertainment at the Lincoln Theater in 1919. Who provided sound for the movies? What other kinds of acts were put on stage? Remind students that at the end of the story Lucinda says, "Soon after that Fats started making records." Discuss how recording technology changed the lives of musicians and the way we appreciate music. Encourage students to report on the science of audio recording.

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