For parents and children to explore together.

SUMMARY
During this activity, you and your child will actively read *Duke Ellington*, using the suggested reading questions.

WHY
Through this activity, your child will have fun while learning about jazz. In the process, your child will build reading skills, including the ability to compare and contrast, and use pictures as sources of information.

TIME
- 30 minutes

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP
This activity will work best for children in kindergarten through 4th grade.

CHALLENGE WORDS
*Duke Ellington* uses many special words to describe people, things, and actions that are a part of life as a jazz musician. Don’t worry if you don’t understand all of them!

- **Cat**: (jazz slang) musician, or also a “cool” person
- **Crude**: done in a rough or unskilled way
- **Gig**: (jazz slang) an entertainer’s job for set amount of time
- **Joint**: (jazz slang) a place where music is heard, a room or club
- **Maestro**: a master of music or other art
- **Melodies**: series of sounds meant to be pleasing
- **Notion**: idea or thought
- **Percussion**: steady tapping

More information at [http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/jazz/](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/jazz/).
CHALLENGE WORDS (CONTINUED)
- **Romp**: rough and noisy play
- **Wail**: make a sound like a sad cry

PARENT PREPARATION
- If you have time, read the story yourself before sharing it with your child. Also read the Step Back in Time sheets and the notes on the last page of the book.
- If you have time, preview some of the reading suggestions below. Pick just a few suggestions that look interesting and fun for you.

YOU NEED
- This reading guide
- Step Back in Time sheets *(attached)*
- *Duke Ellington: The Piano Prince and His Orchestra* book written by Andrea Davis Pinkney and illustrated by Brian Pinkney

BEFORE YOU READ
  Keep in mind the differences in these two styles of music as you read.

  **Tip**  
  You only need to listen to a minute or two of each recording to hear the difference.

More information at [http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/jazz/](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/jazz/).
DURING READING

- As you read, listen for ways that the author stretches the normal rules of writing to tell her story.

  Tip: For example, the first line of the story doesn’t follow the rules of writing, but it makes a fun rhythm to say out loud. If the sentence followed the rules, it might sound like “Have you ever heard of the jazz playing man? He was a man with a band of cats who could swing.”

- As you read, listen for new words or words that seem to have new meanings in this story. Some of the words are defined in the Challenge Words section, so check there first if you get stuck. Some of the words are old fashioned words we no longer use very often, others are part of the culture shared by jazz musicians.

AFTER READING

- Take another look at all the instruments described in the book. Think of a few things that help you remember what each kind of instrument looks like. Then go through the book again to name the instruments in each picture.

  Tip: For extra challenge, try to guess what instruments are in the cases on the picture where Duke Ellington’s Orchestra is boarding a train.

Did your eagle eyes spot instruments that aren’t described much in the book? One you might have noticed is the banjo (http://historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu/resource/?key=1507), which was popular in early jazz, but not as common for jazz music today.

- Talk about what kind of music your family likes to listen to. Do you have a favorite song? What is the story behind that song?

More information at http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/jazz/.
JAZZ HISTORY

Some people consider jazz as “America’s classical music.” Jazz was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, during the early 1900s when musicians mixed ragtime, marches, blues, and African American musical traditions. At first jazz was mostly for dancing, but it soon became just as enjoyed for listening.

After the first recordings of jazz were made in 1917, the music spread widely and developed quickly. The growth of jazz was led by brilliant musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, and Miles Davis, who helped define new styles of jazz, like swing and bebop. At the same time, jazz spread from the United States to many countries, and today jazz can be heard around the globe.

JAZZ MUSIC

There is a lot of variety in jazz, but most jazz is very syncopated, has a forward-moving energy called “swing,” and uses “bent” or “blue” notes.

You might listen to a dozen different jazz recordings of the same song, but each will sound different. In most jazz performances, individuals play solos, which they improvise. Jazz artists—both vocalists and instrumentalists—also like to perform their music in their own personal styles.
DUKE ELLINGTON

Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington (1899–1974) was an expert in exploring his musical imagination. Duke paid attention to new musical forms and used the instruments in his band to create his own style of jazz. As you listen to Duke’s music, pay close attention to some of his signature sounds, such as muted trumpets, high clarinet notes, his unique piano playing, and unusual combinations of instruments. Because of his skills in writing song, leading his band, and performing music, some experts think Duke is America’s greatest all-around musician.

For more information, visit the Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn: Jazz Composers online exhibition at http://americanhistory.si.edu/documentsgallery/exhibitions/ellington_strayhorn_1.html.

**Improvise:** make up on the spot

**Musical forms:** the overall plans for pieces of music, such as when verses are repeated in songs

**Syncopated:** rhythm that includes an accent on a normally weak beat in music
Read the “Reading Guide” sheets for specific reading tips.

OBJECTIVES
The students will be better able to:

- Read for understanding.
- Answer questions using written and pictorial resources.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
- Discussion exhibits understanding of story and historical details.
- Discussion exhibits logical connections and comparisons.

STANDARDS
NCHS History Standards
K-4 Historical Thinking Standards
  3F. Analyze illustrations in historical stories.

K-4 Historical Content Standards
  1B. The student understands the different ways people of diverse racial, religious, and ethnic groups, and of various national origins, have transmitted their beliefs and values.

IRA/NCTE Language Arts Standards
  1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

  3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

More information at http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/jazz/.