

## In the Mood for Instruments

### Parent Guide

Read the “Directions” sheets for specific instructions.

#### SUMMARY

In this activity children will use one or more online tools to explore the way a musician can change the mood of a song by changing the instruments that play the song.

#### WHY

This activity will get children thinking about artistic decisions, both through looking at examples and by making their own decisions.

#### TIME

- 5-10 minutes

#### RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

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

#### CHALLENGE WORDS

- **Call-and-response:** when one person makes a pattern of sounds, and the next person either repeats the same pattern or changes it just a little
- **Instrument:** a tool used to produce music
- **Rhythm:** a flow of sound in music with a pattern of beats

#### GET READY

- Read *Duke Ellington: The Piano Prince and His Orchestra*, a beautiful picture-book biography of one of America’s most famous jazz musicians. For tips on reading this book together, check out the Guided Reading Activity ([http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/jazz/jazz\\_reading.pdf](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/jazz/jazz_reading.pdf)).
- Read the Step Back in Time sheets.

#### YOU NEED

- Duke Ellington book
- Directions sheet (*attached*)
- Step Back in Time sheets (*attached*)
- Computer with Internet and speakers or headphones

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

## In the Mood for Instruments

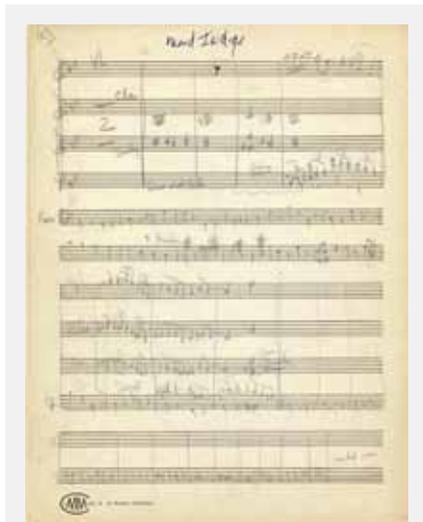
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For more information, visit the National Museum of American History Web site <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/jazz/>.

#### 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.



“Mood Indigo” sheet music composed by Barney Bigard and Duke Ellington. **Duke Ellington Collection, National Museum of American History**

#### 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.

## In the Mood for Instruments

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### 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](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



Duke Ellington, a native of Washington, D.C., in the 1930s. **Duke Ellington Collection, National Museum of American History Archives Center.**

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*For adults and kids to do together.*

1. Reread pages 13 through 20 in *Duke Ellington*, starting with the page featuring the A Train and drummer Sonny Greer.
2. Talk about each instrument and look at its illustration. What words does the author use to describe the instrument? What colors or pictures does the illustrator use to describe the instrument?

**Tip** For example, ask your child to say which pictures are more energetic or which ones are smooth and mellow.

3. Duke Ellington carefully chose the instruments that played each part of his music. Depending on what sound he wanted, he could chose instruments to blend together or to sound very different. For example, listen to this recording of “Take the A Train” ([http://americanhistory.si.edu/documentsgallery/video/jazz/jazz\\_5.mp3](http://americanhistory.si.edu/documentsgallery/video/jazz/jazz_5.mp3)). The first chorus, from 0:06 to 0:52, is the whole band playing together. Then the second chorus, from 0:52 to 01:37, is played by the muted trumpet. Then, the third chorus, from 1:45 to 2:17, is played by a trumpet without a mute. Can you hear the difference?

**Tip** The muted trumpet might sound squeakier to your ear!

4. Now it’s your turn to try changing the instruments in a song to change its mood. Visit the PBS Kids Bandleader page at <http://pbskids.org/jazz/bandleader.html>. Choose instruments by dragging them from the right side and into the left side “stage area.” Once you have made all of your choices, hit “play” to hear those instruments play a jazzy version of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”

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5. Now make your choices with the idea of changing the mood or feeling of the song. Start by making the happiest version of the song. What instruments do you pick and what made you pick them? Then make the saddest version of the song. Use what you've learned about the instruments from the *Duke Ellington* book and your own opinions about different instrument sounds.

**Tip** If you loved playing with Bandleader but want to try a more advanced tool, check out Roc (<http://advanced.aviary.com/tools/music-creator>) from Aviary.com. It is a free sound creation tool that includes the voices of many different instruments, like drums, pianos, and guitars. For tips on using the tool, check out our tutorial at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/v/RocTutorial.html>. Note: To download your creation, you will need to create a free account.

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For more activities about jazz and *Duke Ellington: The Piano Prince and His Orchestra*, visit <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/jazz/>.

## In the Mood for Instruments

### *For Teachers*

*Read the “Parent Guide” and “Directions” sheets for specific instructions.*

#### OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to:

- Identify the different voices of musical instruments.
- Use instruments to convey mood in music.

#### STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Creatively selects instruments.

#### STANDARDS

##### *NCHS History Standards*

*K-4 Historical Thinking Standards*

4B: Obtain historical information.

##### *National Standards for Arts Education (K-4)*

*Music Standards*

4: Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.

6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

##### *21st-Century Skills*

*Learning and Innovation Skills*

- Creativity and Innovation

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