

Children's Literature Across the Curriculum Ideas

Created by students at the University of North Carolina Charlotte

Title: *Duke Ellington*

Author: Andrea Davis Pinkney

Publisher: Hyperion Books for Children, 1998

Grades: 2-6

Summary: Andrea Davis Pickney gives a brief overview of the life of Duke Ellington. She begins with Ellington's childhood in which he did not like playing the piano and continues with an explanation of how he came to be one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century.

Reading/Writing Connection

1. Before reading the story, provide students with a list of relevant vocabulary from the story and have them write a probable passage predicting what the story is about.
2. The text contains phrases such as "cuttin' a rug" and "press on the pearlies". Have students identify these phrases and others and create a Jazz dictionary explaining the terms.
3. Listen to Ellington's music and write a paragraph describing how it makes you feel.

Vocabulary

cabaret	crude	jambalaya	maestro
percussion	pomade	ragtime	romp

Library Connection

1. Research another famous ragtime musician and create a picture book of his or her life.
2. The illustrations are scratchboard renderings. Research this type of art and create scratchboard drawings.
3. Brian Pinkney has illustrated many children's books. Locate other books he has illustrated and compare the illustrations.

Communication Arts Connection

1. Listen to works by Duke Ellington and a present day jazz musician. Discuss the similarities and differences in the sound of the music.
2. Working in co-op groups, students write a poem, song, or rap telling about Duke Ellington's life.

Social Studies Connection

1. Research Black dance in America. Practice these dances for a performance for other classes.
2. Besides music, research African-American's influences on other areas of art. Create a mural displaying this information.
3. Create a timeline of Duke Ellington's life with illustrations.

Science Connection

1. People listened to Duke Ellington and the Washingtonians on the radio. Study sound waves and how sound is transmitted.
2. Throughout the book, Andrea Davis Pickney mentions the season of the year in which Ellington and his band performed (example: "Then, on an autumn day in 1927"). Do a study of the seasons and why they change.

Math Connection

1. Students can create a game board showing a timeline of Ellington's life. Have students incorporate the math skills they are currently working on.
2. Using the instruments mentioned in the story (piano, trumpet, snare drum, etc.), survey the class to find out which instrument is each person's favorite. Use this information to create a bar or picture graph.
3. Band instruments can be very expensive. Use the classified ads to locate the price of each band instrument then determine what the total amount of money that would be needed to purchase the instruments.