

African American Voices Lesson Plans

Lesson Plan: Introduction to Afro-Cuban Jazz

Subject: Music Appreciation, Language Arts, Social Studies

Grade level: 3 – 5

NGSSS: **MU.3.C.1.2** Respond to a musical work in a variety of ways and compare interpretations.



Description/Abstract of Lesson: The students will develop an appreciation of different variations of Jazz, especially Afro-Cuban Jazz, through a dance lesson. The students will describe the music through a poetry activity.

Objective(s): Students will

- Be introduced to jazz dance and jazz music.
- Explore basic jazz dance movements, and create a cinquain poem inspired by jazz music.

Materials:

- Visuals of jazz musicians and dancers
- Jazz music recordings
- Video of jazz dancing
- Sound System
- VCR or DVD Player

Vocabulary:

- jazz dance
- accent
- isolate
- rhythm
- unison
- improvisation

Duration: 1 class period

Lesson Lead In/Opening:

1. Play jazz music as students walk into the class.
2. Ask students some general questions. Write key words from their responses on the board:
 - "What kind of music is this?"
 - "How is jazz alike or different from some other kinds of music?"
 - "Jazz is also a form of dance. What do you know about the jazz dance form?"
 - "Jazz dance and jazz music both utilize improvisation. What is improvisation?"
 - "Where else is improvisation used?" (Theater, art, life)

Activity:

1. Discuss the background information of Jazz.

Background

Jazz dance originated in the United States with African American dancers who combined elements of tap and show dancing. Some important people in jazz dance were Katherine Dunham and Jack Cole. More modern Jazz dance is based on Afro-Caribbean dance, with a theatrical flair. It has been influenced by dance forms from Indian, Brazilian, and Cuban sources.

Jazz dance has rules like ballet, but the form arose from a need to be more free and flexible than ballet. You need to be able to isolate parts of the body as well, and keep a rhythm. Think of the body as a jazz instrument.

What makes jazz dance different from other kinds of dance? There are many styles: clean and cool, abstract, sensuous, and energetic. Jazz dance may be fast, or slow and lyrical. As a form, it is often associated with musicals.

2. Have students participate in a Guided Instruction activity:

- Lead the class in the basics of jazz dance, as abbreviated and appropriate for your class and grade level. If you are not a dancer yourself, collaborate with a dance instructor at your school or even with a student who has studied jazz dance. You can also use elements from instructional videos, including some aerobic dance routines.
- The jazz dance class may include the following:
 - Floor stretches: pelvis rocks, alignment check (lying on the back), as well as sitting, butterfly, parallel, and 2nd position stretches
 - Center floor: plies (use jazz hands, use parallel and turn-out foot positions during plies) foot articulations, tondues, isolations
 - Center, moving: three-step turns, slides, chases
 - Across the floor: walking patterns, jazz walk

Have the students listen to several recordings of jazz music. Explain to students that jazz music and jazz dance developed around the early 1900's. After listening to the first song, have students offer descriptive words for the music. Write these descriptors on the board, and follow the same process as students listen to each song. Students will use their words for their independent activity.

3. Have students participate in whole group activities:

- Explain to the students that during the 1950s, a new style of music known as Afro-Cuban jazz became popular.
- Have students learn about Afro-Cuban jazz and listen to examples of music.
- Then have the students research some of the jazz musicians (including Dizzy Gillespie and John Coltrane) who adapted Cuban sounds for their music, and Cuban musicians (including Machito and Mongo Santamaria) who immigrated to the United States to perform their

music.

4. Creating a Poem:

• Say to the students "Now, while you listen, create a poem. The form we will use is called a cinquain. Here is the form." Write the following on the board:

- noun
- two adjectives, describing the noun
- three verbs or adverbs
- phrase that tells about the noun
- repeat the noun

1. Distribute paper and pencils and allow students to work on their cinquains.
2. Encourage them to incorporate the descriptive words about jazz on the board. You may wish to have students share their poems with the class, if time permits.

Assessment:

You can evaluate each timeline entry using the three-point rubric:

Three points: complete content; perfect grammar and in chronological order as outlined in the instructions.

Two points: adequate content; phrases lacking coherence and unity; some errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, may have deviated from chronology outlined.

One point: insufficient content; weak phrases; many errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, lacking major structure.

Higher Order

Thinking Questions:

1. Describe the music you are hearing.
2. What are the basic elements of jazz?
3. How is jazz alike or different from some other kinds of music you may have heard?
4. Jazz is also a form of dance. What do you know about the jazz dance form?

Suggested Books In Lesson:

Graham, C. (1979) Jazz Chants for Children: Student Book, Oxford University Press

Web Resources:

<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/>

<http://dellington.org/lessons/lesson00.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/jazz/kids>

