

Picture Books and Music Tie-Ins

**Books for subsequent-day read-alouds or center rotations

****Burleigh, Robert. 2001. *Lookin' for Bird in the Big City*. Illustrated by Mark Los.**

Harcourt. A wide-eyed, teenage trumpet player, Miles Davis, comes to New York City to find famous saxophonist Charlie “Bird” Parker. When he finds him, they blend their musical genius to explore a new sound called “bop,” or “bebop”—cool jazz, man. The text twists and turns like their music, and the impressionistic pencil, oil paint, and watercolor illustrations provide a vibrant tour of NYC. Davis’s fictionalized story tells what can happen when you follow your dreams and your heroes. **Music Tie-in: “Blue in Green”**

Davis, David. 2001. *Jazz Cats*. Illustrated by Chuck Galey. Pelican. Jazz and the people who play and enjoy it have just too much fun. This romp, written in rhyme and illustrated with well-heeled cats and mice, will make listeners/readers want to sing and dance. Each double-page spread contains four lines of text and two lines of “Jazz Cats! Swing’ Jazz Cats!” (The adjective changes on each page: swayin’, groovin’, wailin’, and so on.)

Igus, Toyomi. 1998. *I See the Rhythm*. Illustrated by Michele Wood. Children’s Press. As the book jacket says, this is a “uniquely visual and poetic introduction to the history of African American music.” Michele Wood’s vibrant paintings of musicians and singers (with captions) bring the timeline of African American music to life. With rhythmic poetry by Toyomi Igus, this multigenre title is a wonder—a book to be savored. Share selections and provide multiple copies for students to enjoy.

London, Jonathan. 1992. *Hip Cat*. Illustrated by Woodleigh Hubbard. Chronicle. Written in both free verse and rhyme, the sax-wailin’ and blues-singin’ “Oobie-do John the Sax Man” heads to the big city to find an appreciative audience for his talent. The words on the page vibrate with his sounds. There is movement in the shape of the text as well as in the bold, bright illustrations. Listeners/readers will cheer when the hip cat arrives! The story strongly communicates a theme: Do what you love and do it well.

****Pinkney, Andrea Davis. 1998. *Duke Ellington: The Piano Prince and His Orchestra*. Illustrated by Brian Pinkney. Hyperion.** Following Duke Ellington and his band’s journey to fame, the Pinkneys create a rich blend of musical print and scratchboard illustration that captures jazz rhythms. As a child, Duke gave up the piano because it was boring and then discovered ragtime rhythms that inspired him to write and perform original melodies. He took his talent to the Cotton Club in Harlem and soon became “King of the Keys.” The Duke’s great contribution to American music is clearly portrayed in this text. **Music Tie-ins: “Mood Indigo” and “Black, Brown, and Beige”**

****Raschka, Chris. 1991. *Charlie Parker Played Be Bop*. Orchard.** Inspired by a recording of “A Night in Tunisia,” a tune made famous by Charlie “Bird” Parker, Raschka infuses the book with sound and rhythm and clearly conveys his love and understanding of the alto saxophone great’s contribution to jazz. Raschka’s illustrations reflect the bebop beat. “I hope that children will learn that Charlie Parker and bebop had something to do with rhythm, surprise, and humor,” says Raschka on the back cover of this book. There is an audiotape of this book that sets the print to syncopated jazz rhythms. Pair the tape with *Jazz for Kids: Sing, Clap, Wiggle, and Shake* (CD). **Music Tie-in: “A Night in Tunisia”**

****Raschka, Chris. 2002. *John Coltrane’s Giant Steps*. Atheneum.** Raschka’s creativity is at an all-time high in this volume. Raschka tells and shows readers that Coltrane played soprano and

tenor sax and composed and performed music in which his hands became “sheets of sound.” The author-illustrator uses the images of a box, a snowflake, some raindrops, and a kitten to convey Coltrane’s famous composition “Giant Steps.” In the illustrations, Raschka builds the sound with visual elements and then deconstructs them in the text to reinforce the features of Coltrane’s artistry. **Music Tie-in: “Giant Steps”**

****Schroeder, Alan. 1996. *Satchmo’s Blues*. Illustrated by Floyd Cooper. Doubleday.** This fictional re-creation of Louis Armstrong’s childhood in New Orleans tells about his early love for music, particularly the sound of Bunk Johnson’s hot cornet. It took the young Louis many months to earn the \$5 he needed to buy a horn, but all the while he was practicing blowing—even without an instrument. Cooper’s illustrations capture Louis’s passion and the warmth of Louis’s family life. **Music Tie-in: “What a Wonderful World”**

****Winter, Jonah. 2006. *Dizzy*. Illustrated by Sean Quails. Scholastic.** This book tells the story of bebop jazz musician Dizzy Gillespie. As a small boy, he picked fights until he found a way to channel his rage into blowing his trumpet. Dizzy left his hometown for Philadelphia and New York, where he played with some of the greatest musicians of the time. He broke all the rules and played music people could not dance to, but they sure did listen when he “played diddly diddly bop de biddly wah wah de BLEEEEP.” Quails’s illustrations are big and bold. Font features emphasize keywords. **Music Tie-in: “Salt Peanuts”**

Jazz Poetry

Adoff, Arnold. 1995. *Street Music: City Poems*. Illustrated by Karen Barbour. HarperCollins. “Street Music”

Greenfield, Eloise. 1997. *Honey, I Love and Other Love Poems*. Illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon. Crowell. “I Get Down”

Lewis, J. Patrick. 2000. *Freedom Like Sunlight: Praisesongs for Black Americans*. Illustrated by John Thompson. Creative Editions. “Nickel-a-Bucket Tune” (Louis “Satchmo” Armstrong) and “Lady Day” (Billie Holiday)

Marsalis, Wynton. 2005. *Jazz A-B-Z: An A to Z Collection of Jazz Portraits*. Illustrated by Paul Rogers. Candlewick. This title includes poems in various formats about jazz artists, including Louis Armstrong, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, and Dizzy Gillespie. It also includes biographical sketches.

Mora, Pat. 1996. *Confetti: Poems for Children*. Illustrated by Enrique O. Sanchez. Lee and Low. These poems are particularly musical and colorful: “Colors Crackle, Colors Roar,” “I Hear, I Hear,” “Words Free as Confetti,” and “River Voice.”

Multimedia

Burns, Ken. 2000. *Jazz. Florentine Films and WETA*. Choose selections from ten episodes that cover the birth and development of jazz.

***Jazz for Kids: Sing, Clap, Wiggle, and Shake* (CD). 2004. Verve Music Group.** The eleven tunes sung for children on this CD are presented by jazz artists, including “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” by Ella Fitzgerald and “What a Wonderful World” by Satchmo.

Jazz Pathfinder: <http://storytrail.com/Impact/Jazz.htm>