



Jazzy Instruments

Liz Wheeler and Bryna Bobick

Each year, I love teaching my students about the paintings and collages of Romare Bearden. This year, I tried a new project with my kindergarten students inspired by Romare Bearden and the book *I Live in Music*. For this lesson, students created giant, jazzy instruments surrounded by secondary colors.

Discussing Bearden

To begin, I introduced students to the artwork of Romare Bearden. We looked at several of his jazz collages, including *Jammin' at the Savoy*. Students talked about the various instruments, colors, and shapes they saw. We discussed what the people in the paintings were doing and what type of music we

imagined they were making.

I explained that the musicians in these paintings were all playing jazz music, which was Romare Bearden's favorite type of music. I read students

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the book, *I Live in Music*, written by Ntozake Shange and illustrated with Romare Bearden's paintings (connecting my art curriculum with literacy

standards). Following the story, we discussed that when the author says



she “lives in music,” it’s another way of saying she loves music just like Romare Bearden did.

Drawing Jazzy Instruments

After our class discussion, students drew large instrument pictures on 12 x 18" white paper. At each table, I put a folder of jazz instrument images for students to look at as they drew. I feel that it is hugely important for students to have references when they draw. Having a picture to look at improves hand-eye coordination and the overall quality of the image produced. After drawing with pencil, students outlined their instruments with black permanent markers and then colored them in with crayons, leaving the background around their images uncolored.

Color Mixing

I began the next art class with a review of Bearden’s artwork, asking questions such as: “What type

of music are the people playing in Bearden’s artwork?” “How do you feel when viewing Bearden’s work?” and “What questions would you want to ask the people in the artwork?”

After our review, I introduced the concept of color mixing. After writing red, yellow, and blue on the board, we discussed how to mix the primary colors to make secondary colors. Students then had to choose which secondary color they would like to mix for the background of their instrument picture. Students created a secondary color and used it to paint the background of their instruments while listening to jazz music.

I am excited to add this lesson to my repertoire as it incorporates art history, literacy, color theory, and music, and because students were very proud of their instruments. 🎨

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum.

WEB LINKS

www.beardenfoundation.org
www.apassion4jazz.net

Materials

- 12 x 18" (30 x 45 cm) white drawing paper
- black permanent markers
- crayons
- red, yellow, and blue tempera paint
- brushes