

"Freedom in Congo Square" -The beginnings of Jazz Music- 5th grade lesson plan

In the French Colony of Louisiana there was a law that prohibited labor on Sundays, this included enslaved Africans. Enslaved Africans in New Orleans were permitted to gather, even after it became part of the United States, one afternoon a week. Eventually they were only allowed to gather in one location, which became known as Congo Square. Congo Square was a center for music, dance, culture, and buying and selling items. Jazz evolved from a mix of African rhythms kept alive in Congo Square.

Go to this YouTube video to preview the book. The Forward is read at the end of the story so you can skip ahead to that if you like it has much of the same info as the Authors Note in the back. We will have printouts of the Authors Note for your class to read along with.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOjJvPvN1Ko>

Read the Author's Note with your class from the book, Freedom in Congo Square, by Carole Boston Weatherford.

Discussion questions:

Go to this website:

https://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/bhistory/history_of_jazz.htm

play "The Blues back to the source": it's about 3 min long

A lot of The Blues has roots in enslaved African music.

He said "If you want to get rid of the blues you play the blues".

Can you think of another example? Do you ever listen to upbeat music when you want to do something upbeat like exercise?

What about other music? How do you think listening to loud harsh music (like hard rock) would make you feel? What about soft quiet music?

Play "New Orleans melting pot of sound":

Can you hear any similarities between the first song and this one?

Play "Improvisation: the expression of freedom":

Do you think it would be easier or harder to play by improvisation?

What about improvisation reminds you about what you learned about Congo Square?

Discuss how the informal musical gatherings at Congo Square gave rise to the distinct element of Jazz music being improvisational.

Optional Activity:

With their copies of the Authors Note, have the students complete the crossword puzzle. The answers can be found in the note by the author. It a pretty simple puzzle. We have provided a key for the teacher.