

Hot and Cool Music



Erica Wars

As a student-teacher, my mentor teacher, Rhonda Sherrill presented me with the task of designing a lesson for second-grade students to celebrate Black History Month. At first it seemed like a daunting mission since there are so many great African American artists to honor, but I narrowed down my choices once I started to consider what Black history is about. I thought about Romare Bearden and Faith Ringgold and their representations of African-American heritage through their favorite media. Together, Rhonda and I decided to focus upon

I focused instruction on the artist's use of line, pattern, color, and rhythm to communicate the lively, spontaneous feeling of jazz music.

Romare Bearden and the inclusion of jazz music and heritage in his art.

Incorporating Ancestry

I began by discussing with students the significance of heritage and what it means to be "American." We then analyzed and evaluated two different works by Bearden: *Brass Section*, *Jamming at Minton's* and *Instruments of Dixieland*. I talked with students about how Bearden chose to demonstrate his love of jazz music and its connection to his African-American heritage through his artwork. Bearden was also a musician himself.

While looking at the two works, I focused instruction on the artist's use of line, pattern, color, and rhythm to communicate the lively, spontaneous feeling of jazz music. Students also viewed a traditional African wood sculpture, and we compared its look and characteristics to figures within Romare Bearden's works and talked about how he incorporated this aspect of his African ancestry.

Crayon Resist

I decided to have students create a jazz instrument resist using crayon in warm colors, with a tempera wash in cool colors. I encouraged students to make the instruments large and to use layering, overlapping, and diagonal lines to create a bold and dynamic arrangement. I also instructed stu-



Left to right: Samantha Caracciolo, grade two; Jordan Espinoza, grade two; Blase Martin, grade two.

dents to use loose, fluid movements and lines to draw their instruments to emulate the free and unprompted rhythm of jazz music.

Students used red, yellow, orange (warm colors) and black only on jazz instruments to keep the lively quality of the music in the picture. I stressed that they focus on the spontaneity of the drawing and I discouraged making the objects exact and detailed. While students worked on their drawings, I played jazz music to inspire them.

After they had colored their pictures to a degree of opacity, I mixed some water and tempera washes in blue, green, and violet and asked them to use all three cool colors to paint over their instruments. I referred them back to *Brass Section*,

Jamming at Minton's and discussed the use of swift and impulsive brushstrokes to create a feeling of movement. Students were encouraged to use a variety of brush sizes and color combinations in layers to paint their background wash.

Embellishment

Once the pictures were dry, the last step in the process was to add detail, highlights, and emphasis on top of the pictures with oil pastel (Rhonda's suggestion). This element really brought the energy and brilliance back into the composition. Students added emphasis in some areas of their instruments with highlighted or bold colors (warm only) and finer detail to create visual interest. They also used their cool color pastels to refine and

define some of their background areas and to improve the sense of movement and rhythm.

Students really enjoyed the project and my mentor and I both felt pleased with the results. 🌀

Erica Wars was a student teacher at Sam Houston Elementary in Denton, Texas when she taught this lesson.

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students understand and use similarities and differences between characteristics of the visual arts and other arts disciplines.

WEB LINK

www.beardenfoundation.org/index2.shtml