



THE LIFE OF MONK

Meets National Core Arts Standards 7-9, 11

OBJECTIVES

- Perceive and analyze artistic work (*Re7*)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work (*Re8*)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work (*Re9*)
- Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding (*Cn11*)

MATERIALS

- *Music Alive!* magazines (April 2018)
- *Music Alive!* Classroom Worksheet #7: About the Artist (download at musicalive.com)
- Computer or mobile device with Internet access

START

1. Ask your students to read “The Life of Monk” on pages 10-13. Then, go over the following highlighted words.
[This reinforces comprehension and vocabulary.]

AFFINITY—a natural liking for someone or something

INEPT—having or showing no skill

CONFISCATED—taken or seized with authority

SUBSEQUENT—coming after something

RECLUSIVE—avoiding the company of other people

DEVELOP

► 1. Play Thelonious Monk’s “Ruby, My Dear (feat. John Coltrane)” (Hear the Music **track 2** on musicalive.com).

ASK

What is the overall mood of the song? (Contemplative.)

How would you describe the tempo? (Slow, relaxed.)

How does the rhythm section influence the song’s mood?

(The drummer is playing slow, sweeping motions with brushes, which create a softer sound than drumsticks. The bassist is playing a simple line. Monk is following Coltrane, the soloist, with piano embellishments.)

What’s the song’s time signature? (4/4.)

When does John Coltrane, the saxophonist, first take a solo?

(After the 2:00 mark.)

What does Monk play on the piano while Coltrane is soloing?

(Chords with improvised rhythm.)

What is distinctive about Coltrane’s solo? (Subjective; he plays a lot of rapid ascending scales.)

What changes about the instrumentation when Monk takes his solo? (Coltrane is no longer playing.)

Whose solo do you like better? Why or why not? (Subjective.)

► 2. Play Thelonious Monk’s “Crepuscle with Nellie” (Hear the Music **track 3** on musicalive.com)

ASK

What’s different about this track in comparison to the last one? (It begins with solo piano.)

Is there any improvisation? (No—the piece is entirely composed.)

How would you describe the mood in the intro? (Subjective; it’s ballad-like with unusually dissonant chords.)

When does the rest of the band come in? (At the 1:00 mark.)

What other instruments do you hear? (Saxophone, drums, bass.)

What scale do you hear at 1:50? (A whole-tone scale.)

Is this song structured like a typical jazz song? (Not really—a standard instrumental jazz song typically has a chorus and verse that features solo improvisations. This song has a very loose structure outside of the repeated theme.)

When do we first hear the theme? (In the intro.)

Do you like this song? Why or why not? (Subjective.)

► 3. Play the Thelonious Monk Quartet’s “Round Midnight” (Hear the Music **track 4** on musicalive.com).

ASK

How does this song begin? (With a solo piano part.)

Is the drummer playing with sticks or brushes? (Brushes.)

What does the saxophone play in the introduction? (The song’s theme.)

How long is the theme repeated before someone takes a solo? (For about a minute and a half.)

Who takes a solo first? (Monk.)

Who else is playing while Monk is soloing? (Bass and drums.)

What other sounds do you hear in the background? (Voices, the clink of glasses, etc.)

This is a recording of Monk playing with his Quartet in the late ’50s. Based on your reading, where are they playing? (The Five Spot Café.)

Does the drummer play the same rhythm during Monk’s solo, or play different rhythms? (Different rhythms.)

How does this affect the music? (It gives a more interesting background texture.)

When does Coltrane take a solo? (At around 4:15.)

Whose solo do you like more? Why or why not? (Subjective.)

CLOSE

Pass out to students copies of the About the Artist worksheet. Have them fill them out based off of their reading. Afterwards, collect their work and go over the answers with students, later checking the worksheets for accuracy.

ASSESS

Did the students read the article?

Did they discuss the three listening selections?

Did they fill out the About the Artist worksheets?