



FEATURE

WHEN BIG BANDS WERE BIG

Meets National Core Arts Anchor Standards 5, 7, 9 and 10

OBJECTIVES

- Develop and refine artistic work for presentation (*Pr5*)
- Perceive and analyze artistic work (*Re7*)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work (*Re9*)
- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art (*Co10*)

MATERIALS

- *Music Alive!* magazines (Vol.39 No.5)
- Computer or mobile device with Internet access

START

Ask your students to read “When Big Bands Were Big” on pages 6-9 before reviewing the words below. [This reinforces comprehension and vocabulary.]

- RIGID**—stiff and unmoving; unable to be changed
RAGTIME—music characterized by a syncopated melodic line
PHONOGRAPH—a record player
IMPROVISATIONAL—relating to spontaneous performance
ADAPT—make suitable for a new use; modify
INCLINED—to feel willing or disposed to do something
INTEGRATED—having been combined
JUBILANT—feeling or expressing great happiness and triumph
UBIQUITY—the fact of appearing everywhere or of being very common
BANKRUPT—declared in law unable to pay outstanding debts
EXPERIMENTAL—involving a new style
PRESERVE—maintain in its original or existing state
REIGN—the period during which a supreme ruler holds power
FLOURISH—grow or develop in a healthy way
VESTIGE—a trace of something that is disappearing or no longer exists
OUTMODED—old-fashioned
SUPLANTED—superseded and replaced
BUMPER CROP—a crop that has yielded an unusually productive harvest
ENTERPRISING—having or showing initiative and resourcefulness
GRANDIOSE—impressive in appearance or style

DEVELOP

Ask Students the following questions:

- What characteristics made swing music different from other popular genres at the time like blues and ragtime?**
How many bandleaders mentioned in the article can you name?
What caused the art of the arrangement to change and what was the result?
Name two dances that were popular during the 1920s.
What is said to be the performance that started the big band era?
What kinds of technological advancements allowed for the spread of big band jazz?
Who composed “It Don’t Mean a Thing If It Ain’t Got That Swing?”
What genre of music took over in popularity in the late 40s, and was known as the first “modern” style of jazz?
The popularization of what iconic band put the official end to the era of swing?

2. Play “Sing, Sing, Sing” by Benny Goodman.

Have students identify as many instruments from the song as they can. Then ask the following questions:

- Is this song’s tempo slow or fast?**
What is the spirit of the song? Is it something you would want to dance to?
Could you identify the time signature just by listening?

CLOSE

Play “ATisket-A Tasket” by Ella Fitzgerald. Compare and contrast with “Sing, Sing, Sing” by Benny Goodman. What do the two songs have in common? What’s different? Which is better?

ASSESS

- Did the students read the article?**
Did they answer the review questions?