Learning Adjectives through the Duke

Grade Level:
3-5

Integrated Subjects
Language Arts, Performing Arts-Music, Social Science, Visual Arts

Lesson Overview
In a series of two short lessons, your students will learn about the important contributions made by Duke Ellington to the field of jazz, and the creativity expressed in his music. As the students explore the language of the 1920s, connections will be drawn between popular expressions and the sounds created in jazz. Your students will create an original poem using these words and expressions. Finally, your students will have the opportunity to respond to a piece of Duke Ellington's music through the use of adjectives (or metaphors and similes).

Student Learning Overview
The students will describe the life of Duke Ellington and his contributions to the field of jazz. The students will create "nick names" similar to jazz performers of the 1920's by using adjectives that describe themselves. The students will create an original poem using a variety of popular vocabulary from the 1920s as well as adjectives that describe a mood they feel from listening to the musical selection. The students will create an illustration to decorate an adjective word wall in the room. The adjectives chosen will be in response to a song performed by Duke Ellington's orchestra.

Learning Sequence
Day One: 1. Ask students to write down anything they know about Duke Ellington. Feel free to have some students share responses. 2. Read Getting to Know the World’s Great Composers: Duke Ellington by Mike Venezia, or any short biography on Duke Ellington. When reading the biography by Venezia, be sure to share the comic style illustrations on each page to keep students engaged. 3. Ask the students to write two things they remember about the story. Choose a few students to share their responses. 4. Expand on the discussion by relating what students have learned about the treatment of African American performers during this time period in America. 5. Explain that during Duke’s lifetime, Jive was the dialect of choice in Harlem. Use the Jive Dictionary to give examples of Jive. 6. Add the following words to the board: hot-buttered; sassy; cool; slick-steppin’; Daddy-O; fine-as-pie; ivory eighty-eights; press on the pearlies; and, cats and ace. A fun song to listen to would be Cab Calloway's Dr. Hepster's Dictionary. 7. Ask the students to write three words that describe themselves. Encourage the students to be daring and choose any jive terms that are appropriate. 8. Have the students create a name tag with a nick name inspired by one or all of the words chosen. Use the yarn to make a hanging name tag, or stickers for a temporary name tag. 9. Play samples of Duke’s music as the students create their name tags.
Day Two: 1. Lead a discussion about adjectives. The students should understand that adjectives are words that describe what kind, which, or how many. Listen to any available samples of compositions by Duke Ellington. I suggest *In a Sentimental Mood* and *It Don’t Mean a Thing If You Ain’t Got That Swing*. Ask the student to write at least three adjectives that come to mind when they hear the samples. Students choose their favorite list and create a poem using one or all of the adjectives they have chosen. Students share their poems aloud to the class. Students create an illustration to accompany their poem.

**Assessment**

This lesson should be graded on participation. A follow-up assessment would review the purpose of adjectives, and require the student to select all words that are adjectives within a poem or short passage.

**Classical Music Used In This Lesson**

*In a Sentimental Mood* and *It Don't Mean a Thing* by Duke Ellington

**Materials & Equipment**

Computer with Internet access; *Getting to Know the World’s Great Composers: Duke Ellington* by Mike Venezia; notebook paper; pencils; blank white name stickers or hole punched cards and yarn for name tag necklaces; drawing paper, blank cards for the adjective word wall; a variety of markers

**Time Required**

Two 45 minute sessions

**National Music Standards**

Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

Understanding music in relation to history and culture

**State Standards**

Oklahoma: Third Grade, Language Arts, Modes/Forms of writing, 2.5; Language Arts, Grammar Usage, 3.1i; Art, Visual Art Appreciation, 4.2; Music, Music Appreciation,4.1-3

**Connections to Pathways to Integration**

GREEN: Music content merged with other content areas

**Inclusion/English Language Learner**

Duke Ellington has a wide variety of compositions from which to choose. I would suggest a Latin-inspired work for a class of native Spanish speakers.

**Teacher to Teacher**

I referred to each student by their new “jive” nickname in order to keep excitement within the second lesson. My students loved sharing their responses, but time did not allow for all to share. You may opt to showcase a few students daily throughout the unit on adjectives. The student can read their poem and wear the name tag...
to remind the students that this student is a Harlem Renaissance artist. Students can create a single poem for each song; each student writing a stanza.

**Portfolio Links**

Jive terms

http://www.cabcalloway.cc/jive_dictionary.htm

Alphabetical arrangement of Jive terms

http://www.savoyballroom.com/nets/context1/jivetalk1.htm

Music Clip: *In a Sentimental Mood*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sR13ECD71xU

Music Clip: *It Don’t Mean a Thing*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDQpZT3GhDg&NR=1