

5th Grade Lesson Plan: Arkansas composers Florence Price, and William Grant Still

Two Lesson Plans on Arkansas Composers Florence Price and William Grant Still

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Students

5th grade

High School

To expose your students to the life and works of William Grant Still and Florence Price, we have included two lesson plans for your classroom. Each lesson plan contains links to provide audio and video examples for your students. To be able to hear the musical examples on Spotify, you must have a current account with Spotify. Sign up at <https://www.spotify.com/us/> for either the free ad-supported version or the premium version (no ads + offline access). Log on to Spotify. Then use the link for the playlist in the lesson plan.

<p>Desired Results (Enduring Understandings) Students will be able to identify Florence Price and William Grant Still as important composers, and recognize Arkansas cultural heritage. Students will recognize two pieces, one by each composer, and discover expressive musical elements in each piece.</p>	
<p>Understandings: By the end of this unit, students will understand that 2 important classical composers grew up in Little Rock, and went on to make important contributions in music. They will also know that the ASO is going to perform their music on Nov. 9 & 10 at Robinson Center</p>	<p>Essential Questions: If these powerfully expressive artists came from Arkansas, and I'm from Arkansas too, what creative gifts do I have? How can I use body percussion for exciting music-making? How does a composer express joyful dance rhythms? How does a composer express thoughts about the spirit of a playful dog?</p>
<p>Students will know... that body percussion is something anyone can do; that African-American syncopated dance rhythms are exciting and beautiful; that a composer tells a story with music, and there is music in the movements of a playful animal;</p>	<p>Students will be able to... perform body percussion and identify syncopated juba rhythm in Price's piece, 3rd movement from Symphony #1. For Still's piece Quit Dat Foolishness, identify the instruments that are playing and their relationship; come up with a short story about a pet they have or know.</p>
<p>Evidence (Assessment) Students will recognize juba as they listen to the recording of Juba Dance, the 3rd movement from Price's symphony; will identify the playful roles of the instruments, and write a short story in response to Quit Dat Foolishness.</p>	
<p>Learning Activities What sequence of teaching and learning will equip students to engage with, develop, and demonstrate the desired understandings? A 16-minute video has been provided by Dr. Holzer, introducing both composers, and then focusing on a piece by Florence Price. Go to YouTube https://youtu.be/VZ1BB6A5cc8 It includes an excerpt from a podcast, StickyNotes. At 7 min. 01 sec, conductor Joshua Weilerstein talks about Price's orchestral music. At 8 min., the singing group Sweet Honey in the Rock talks, sings, and pats juba. Then Weilerstein shares some clips from Price's piece Juba Dance. At 14 min. 46 sec, pause the video. Your class can imitate some juba rhythms with body percussion. Then the teacher may choose to go to the Spotify playlist, https://spoti.fi/39YFk53 and play the entire 3rd movement of the symphony for the class.</p> <p>1) Juba Dance, from Symphony #1 in E Minor, 3rd movement by Florence Price</p> <p>Duration of musical example: 3 min. 40 sec Ft. Smith Symphony, conducted by John Jeter</p> <p>What is juba? A lively, rhythmic dance. Originated in West Africa (in what is now Angola), and became a plantation dance in the days of slavery, in Caribbean and African-American cultures. Performed with onlookers forming a circle around two</p>	

dancers, who do body percussion (hand clapping, foot stomping and hand patting of the thighs).

Activity: Use body percussion to tap a syncopated juba rhythm; divide the class into 2 groups: group 1 does a stomp on beat 1 and 3; group 2 slaps their thighs on the off-beat 16th notes.

Now, listen to the symphonic music by Florence Price 2 times. The first hearing: Listen especially for the percussion (tympani, drums) Raise your hand when you hear a juba pattern in the orchestra. The second hearing: group 1 stomp on beats 1 and 3 (or play low drums) group 2 slap your thighs on the off-beats.

2) Quit Dat Foolishness by William Grant Still

WGS was inspired to compose this piece after watching his dog, Shep.

Performers: Zina Schiff, violin; Cameron Grant, piano. Duration of musical example: 1 min. 15 sec The piece bears the dedication: "Shep, my mischievous dog." Composed 1935.

Briefly resume the video at 14 min. 56 sec. Then go to the Spotify playlist, <https://spoti.fi/39YFk53> and play the entire piece "Quit Dat Foolishness."

Activity: Listen to the music by William Grant Still 3 times. The first hearing: identify the instruments that are playing. How many characters do you see in this story? How is the music telling a story, which instrument is Shep? Second hearing: There are 3 places in the piece where the music pauses. Using your imagination for this story, what is happening during each pause? 3rd hearing: Write a short story about a pet you have or know. Describe what music would sound like if you composed a piece for them.

Hook – Students: Listen to a short video on the composers, and Juba. Clap, Slap, Stomp. Body Percussion. Syncopation. The topic is syncopated body percussion, and the way Florence Price used it in the 3rd movement of her symphony, Juba Dance. Then work with the Still piece that was inspired by his mischievous dog.

Lesson Activity – See above. **Resource List:** My video, on YouTube, <https://youtu.be/VZ1BB6A5cc8> which includes photos from the composers' childhoods, and an excerpt from a podcast about juba by Joshua Weilerstein; Spotify playlist <https://spoti.fi/39YFk53> .

Supplemental materials: You may want to introduce Sweet Honey in the Rock in a prior class period, with this video, which shows them singing and performing with percussion <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2T216XgiOo>

Also, there is a demo of body percussion here <https://www.bodypercussionclassroom.com/juba.html>

Closure – Which piece sounded more dancelike: Juba Dance? Or Quit Dat Foolishness? What do you remember most about Juba Dance? About Quit Dat Foolishness?