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Activity Guide

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Ben's Trumpet

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ABOUT THE STORY

Ben loved to listen to the musicians at the Zig Zag Jazz Club – especially the trumpet player. He wishes he had his own trumpet but has to be content with playing a pretend horn. When some neighborhood kids make fun of him, Ben is crushed – that is, until the Zig Zag's trumpeter decides to help out.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Rachel Isadora grew up in New York City and trained to be a ballerina. When an injury forced her to stop dancing, she began writing and illustrating children's books, such as *Max* and *My Ballet Class*, focus on dancing. Others touch on subjects as different as music (*Ben's Trumpet*), the senses (*I Touch*), and life in South Africa (*Over the Green Hills*).

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children if they ever heard any jazz music. Explain that jazz is a form of music that became popular in the 1920s and is still popular today. If possible, play a selection of instrumental jazz music for the group.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- “What kind of music do the Zig Zag musicians play?”
- “Which musicians are in the band?”
- “Why does the trumpet player praise Ben?”
- “What do the other kids do to Ben?” (*Compare and Contrast*)
- “Why do you think Ben stops pretending to play the trumpet?” (*Draw Conclusions*)
- “What do you think Ben and the trumpet player will do?” (*Predict*)

Vocabulary

Go over these words and their meanings with the group. Encourage the children to use each word in a sentence about music. Ask volunteers to give examples of other words that name people who play music, such as violinist and harpist.

musicians	rhythm
saxophonist	stoop
trombonist	

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Music: A Trumpet's Noise

To give the group a fuller idea of the sounds a trumpet can make, play different kinds of trumpet music for them. You might try recordings of baroque trumpet music, marching band music (John Phillip Sousa), big band trumpeters (Harry James), and jazz trumpeters (Charlie Parker). Encourage the children to discuss how the trumpet sounds in each type of music.

Language Arts: Twenties Slang

Ben's Trumpet contains some slang expressions from the 1920s such as “the cat's meow” and “red hot”. Have the group figure out the meaning of the terms and introduce others such as “the bee's knees”. Ask children to think of current slang phrases that have similar meanings.

Music: Play It, Sam

Use objects from the classroom to make band instruments. Stretched rubber bands, glasses filled to different levels with water, boxes, as drums are some possibilities. Encourage each child to make an instrument or use an object as an instrument. Then the group can work together to play a musical piece of their own creation.

Art: Music in Pictures

Rachel Isadora used wild, jagged lines and curves in her art to show how music makes Ben feel. Have the children draw pictures that show a favorite piece of music makes them feel. Encourage them to use colors and shapes to express the music's effect.