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Activity Guide

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Charlie Parker Played Be Bop

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ABOUT THE STORY

In this picture book, an ALA Notable Children's Book and one of *Publisher's Weekly* Year's Best Books, Chris Raschka uses the rhythm of words to capture the sound of Charlie Parker's saxophone.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Chris Raschka loves jazz and has written about Theolonius Monk, another jazz great. He is also the author of *Yo! Yes?*, a Caldecott honor book, and *Can't Sleep*. Raschka lives in New York City with his wife, son, and two cats. As well as jazz, he enjoys playing the viola, walking, and surfing.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children if they have ever heard any jazz music played. Explain that be bop is a kind of music with a snappy, swinging beat, and tell the group that they will hear Charlie Parker play the saxophone as they listen to words of the book.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "What instrument did Charlie Parker play?"
- "How do the words in the book make you feel?" (Interpret)
- "Why do you think the author chose the words he did?" (Analyze)
- "Do you think the book gives a good sense of what Charlie Parker's music was like? Explain your answer?" (Make judgments)

Vocabulary

The author uses several three-syllable words to emphasize the rhythm of be bop. Go over the meaning of these words with children. Then ask them to think of other three-syllable words that have the same rhythm as these.

saxophone alphabet chickadee overshoes

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Social Studies: Jazz Greats

On the recording of "A Night in Tunisia", Charlie Parker plays with jazz greats Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Mingus. Have children look in books or encyclopedias to find out more about one of these musicians. Children can write a brief biographical sketch of the musician they choose and present the information to the class.

Music: Jazz Instruments

Charlie Parker played saxophone. Have children choose one of these jazz instruments to research. They can use books about instruments or encyclopedias to learn about how the instrument is made and played. Encourage them to write short reports and present them to the class.

Health: Be Bop Dancing

With its strong rhythms, be bop is great for dancing. Have children work in small groups to devise dances to go along with recording of "A Night in Tunisia". Groups can take turns performing their dances for the class.

Social Studies

Tell students that the Charlie Parker song they heard was called "A Night in Tunisia". Point out where Tunisia is located on a map, and show the group pictures of Tunisian buildings, outdoor scenery, and people. Lead a discussion of how the song evokes a sense of the beauty and mystery of the country.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Listening to Bird

If their computers are capable, have children listen to other works by Charlie Parker by using the keywords *Charlie Parker* to find websites. Some songs they might enjoy include "April in Paris", "Stardust", and "Embraceable You".