

Teacher's Guide

A Dream of Jazz

Story and Music

Kim Maerkl



A Dream Of Jazz takes place in Cleveland in the 1940's. The city, jazz, and friendship are portrayed through the eyes of the teenage friends Don and John. Their passion is jazz, and their dream is music. One day a door opens and changes their lives forever.

The music composed by Kim Maerkl and performed by the jazz quartet Fourscore, takes the listener on an energetic ride to Cleveland in the 1940s.

"What we play is life."

Louis Armstrong

**Atlantic Crossing
Records**

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Listen to the CD and Discuss the Story

Where does the story take place?

Cleveland, Ohio.

When does the story take place?

1948

Do you know anyone who was born in the 1940s? Ask them what life was like growing up in the 1940s.

Don and John are the main characters in the story. What instruments do they play?

Saxophone and Guitar

Don and John washed dishes at the Smiling Dog Saloon. After work they ran down the street to Val's in the Alley, a club where the musicians were jamming. What is jamming?

Jamming is another word for improvising. The players are making up the music a second before they play it.

Don and John were saving their money to buy instruments from the pawn shop. They had two summer jobs, washing dishes was the first, what was the second?

Delivering ice for refrigerators.

The old man working at the pawn shop told the boys about the history of the saxophone. Do you remember what he told them?

The saxophone was invented a hundred years ago in Belgium by a man named Sax, seems like many people think it came from America because of jazz, but it really was invented in Europe.

The high school music teacher Mr. Grover gave Don and John lessons on Saturday. The first lesson was about the blues. What are the blues?

The blues is very heavy-hearted music. When people sing the blues, they tell stories of hardship.

Don and John started a band. They asked two other kids to join them. What were their names and what instruments did they play?

Dave played bass, and Kenny played drums.

What was the name of Don and John's band?

The Northcliff Quartet

Vocabulary Words- Discuss their Meaning

Pawn Shop
Turntable
Soot
Improvise
Trudging
Application
Typewriter
Microphones
Announce

Listen to the CD and Discuss the Music

Jazz

Jazz originated in New Orleans. It is characterized by improvisation and syncopated rhythm. A song is played, and then the musicians improvise on the song's melody and harmony.

What is improvisation?

It is music that is made up (composed) in the moment. Something that is felt and then immediately played. If you made a poem up without writing it down, it would also be improvising.

Which instruments did you hear on the CD?

Saxophone, Guitar, Bass and Drums

What is melody?

A song or a tune made up of a series of notes.

What is harmony?

Two or more notes played simultaneously. These are chords.

What is rhythm?

A regular pattern of beats. The pulse of music, like your heartbeat.

Play a song from the CD and have the class clap the beat, or tap the desk top.

Listen to the CD again and write about your favorite piece. Why do you like it? How does it make you feel? Does it make you want to dance or tap your foot?

Worksheets

Map of Ohio-Find Cleveland

Facts About Jazz

Can you paint or draw something that shows the spirit of jazz.

Parts of the Saxophone

Parts of the Guitar

Parts of the Bass Guitar

Parts of the Jazz Drum Set

Use your imagination to make a drum. Play along with the CD

Learn to be a great narrator! The story manuscript is included.

Map of Ohio



Can you find Cleveland on the map?

Facts About Jazz

Improvisation is composing music as you play it.

Improvisation is one of the most unique and fascinating aspects of jazz.

Jazz is an original style of American music.

Jazz originated in New Orleans by African-American musicians in the late 1800s.

Some types of early jazz were ragtime, boogie woogie and blues.

Later types of jazz styles include: dixieland, bebop, cool jazz, Latin jazz, and swing.

The most popular time for jazz was the 1920s. This was known as the "Jazz Age."

Jazz musicians like to use cool words: A cat is a musician. A gig is a job playing music. Money is called bread. Dig is when you understand something.

In the early 1900s people listened to jazz in clubs and dance halls. They also listened at home on the radio.

In 1917 the first jazz records appeared in the stores.

The saxophone was invented in 1846 but became popular in America in the early 1900s.

Louis Armstrong is known as the first genius of Jazz because the concept of swinging is attributed to him.

Fill in the blanks using these words.

African-American bebop jazz composing American ragtime 1920s

Gig radio records saxophone swinging

Improvisation is _____ music as you play it.

Improvisation is one of the most unique and fascinating aspects of _____.

Jazz is an original style of _____ music.

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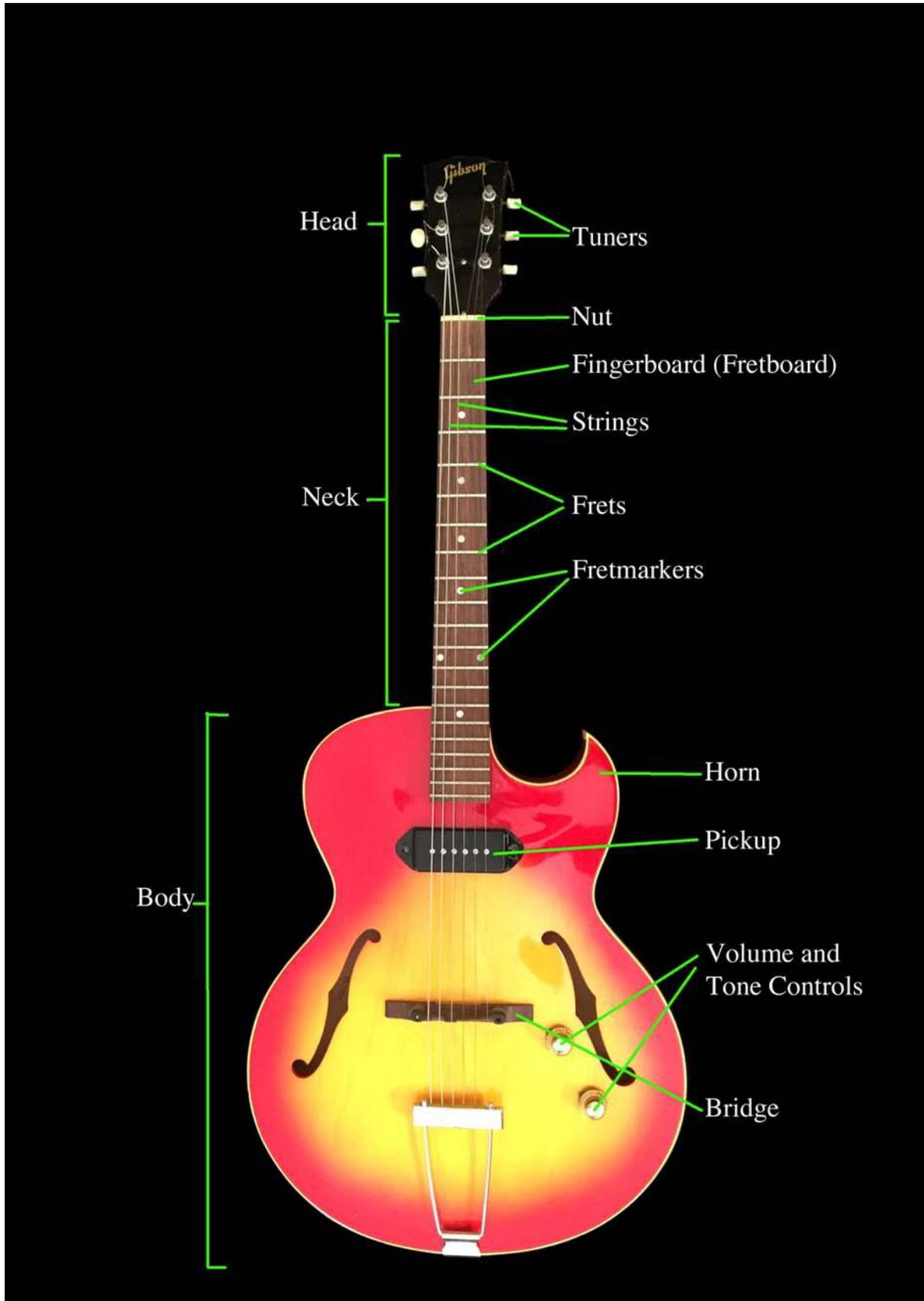
Louis Armstrong is known as the first genius of Jazz because the concept of _____ is attributed to him.

Draw a Scene from the Story

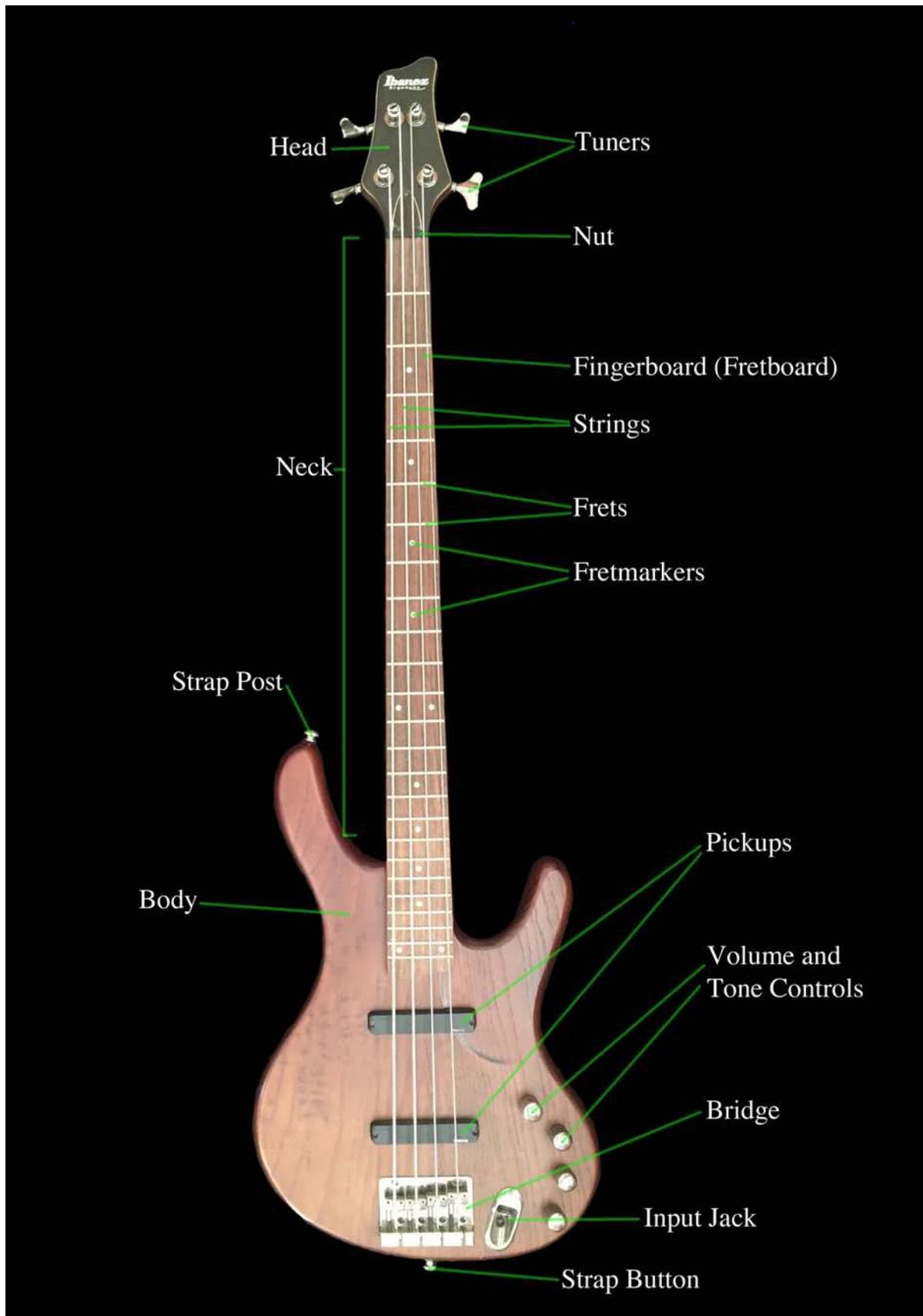
Parts of the Saxophone



Parts of the Guitar



Parts of the Bass



Parts of the Drum Set



Draw a Saxophone and Name Five of its Parts

Draw a Guitar and Name Five of its Parts

Draw a Bass and Name Five of its Parts

Draw a Drum Set and Name Five of its Parts

Narration

Narrating a story is an art.

What makes a great narrator:

A narrator should draw the listener into the story by speaking slowly and clearly.

A narrator must use correct pronunciation for all the words in the story.

A narrator should be able speak at many different volumes from soft to loud. The words must come to life and should be spoken expressively.

A narrator should hold the attention of the listener through his interpretation of the words. We must hear the words smiling or crying. The mood of the story must be expressed through inflections in the voice.

Use a colored pen to write instructions above the words in the story: soft, loud, fast, slow, happy, sad, angry. This will help you to remember to speak expressively when narrating in front of an audience.

What did you like or dislike about the narrator on the CD?

Print the story for each child and have the students take turns narrating a few paragraphs of the story.

Discuss ways to improve the narration of each student, as well as complimenting the positive aspects of each narration.

A Dream of Jazz

Kim Maerkl

America 1948

Don and John always took a few minutes away from delivering papers to daydream in front of the pawn shop window. Longing for the sax and guitar on display, and deaf to the passing traffic, jazz was playing in their heads. One day soon they were going to walk down the street carrying those instruments.

When they got home, the boys put a record on the turntable and were hypnotized by the thousand swinging notes flying around the room. They closed their eyes and filled up with all that jazz energy. Worries and troubles were carried away on the magic carpet of the music.

On Friday nights, Don and John washed dishes at the Smiling Dog Saloon. They rode the bus into downtown Cleveland, a city gray with smoke that bellowed day and night from the chimneys of the steel mills. In the summertime kids played outside barefoot, and the soles of their feet were black from the soot covered sidewalks.

The bus dropped them off in front of the gas station, and the boys walked a couple of blocks to the Smiling Dog. Wrapped in steam they scrubbed and scoured the greasy plates. A fan in the corner blew hot air around the kitchen.

After work they rushed out of the restaurant and ran down the street to *Val's in the Alley*, a club where the musicians were jamming. Jamming is what they do in jazz, the players are improvising, making up the music not even a second before they play it. Their imagination sweeps them up and carries them on a musical adventure. The more you do it the better you get, and the better you get the more you want to do it. Feet stomping, heads bopping. No classy cars in this neighborhood, just music, great music, played by great people with names like Dizzy, Bird, Fats, Duke and Bud.

“Man John, some day that’s going to be us in there,” said Don.

The boys took the bus home and had a cold glass of lemonade on John’s front porch before going to bed. Summers in Cleveland were hot, and the nights seemed hotter than the days. The air was like a heavy wet blanket that couldn’t be pushed away. Mosquitos and fireflies came out to play, and the

boys watched the flirting insects. The kids in their neighborhood didn't have much money, but they always had a good time. Days were filled with baseball games, fishing, delivering papers, and going to the park. In the evening, people sat on the porch talking and waiting for a breeze.

On Mondays, Don and John helped the ice man with his deliveries. Only a few houses had electric refrigerators, and the others needed a big block of ice to keep the refrigerator cold. Trudging up steps with heavy blocks of ice was hard work, but their love of jazz was the driving force. At the end of summer, they would have enough cash to buy the sax and the guitar.

August 20, 1948 was a day to remember. Don and John stuffed their summer earnings into their pockets and hurried to the pawn shop. A bell rang as they opened the door. An old man sat behind the counter reading the paper and chewing a wad of gum. Piles of books, old furniture, and junk were scattered everywhere. The kids maneuvered around the dusty, thrilling mess and stepped up to the counter.

"Excuse me sir, we want to buy the sax and guitar in the window. We have enough money," said John excitedly.

"Is that so," he said folding his newspaper.

The old man shuffled over to the display window. He carefully removed the saxophone. "Which one of you kids is gonna play this?"

"I am," said Don.

"You want to hear a little secret. The saxophone was invented a hundred years ago in Belgium by a guy named Sax, seems like a lot of people think it came from America because of jazz, but it was really dreamed up in Europe."

The owner handed Don the sax and reached into the display case for the guitar. He gave it to John, and the boy turned it in his hands; it was the most amazing thing he had ever seen. "Thank you sir," said John, "I can't believe it's finally mine."

The kids dug the money out of their pockets and placed the bills next to the register.

"We're going to take good care of these. The instruments we've been borrowing from school are pretty beat up." They left the shop and walked home on top of the world.

When they got to Don's house they sat on the floor of his room listening to music while cleaning their instruments. Their thoughts were filled with nothing but jazz.

On the afternoon of the first day back at school Don and John went to talk to the music teacher Mr. Grover. He was a fine jazz musician, and he also loved to teach. The boys stood in the doorway of the band room and knocked on the door frame.

“Come on in boys, how was your summer vacation?”

“Terrific. We bought the sax and guitar from the pawn shop, and we’re teaching ourselves how to play jazz, but there are a few things we don’t understand.”

Mr. Grover rubbed his chin and paced the room. “Well boys, I sure could use some help in my yard on the weekends. Maybe you could cut the grass, and I could show you a thing or two afterwards.”

“That would be swell, Mr. Grover.”

The next Saturday Don and John were up early to mow Mr. Grover’s lawn. Every blade of grass was cut, raked and swept from the sidewalk. It was the best looking yard on the street when Don and John were finished.

Suddenly, the front door swung open, and Mr. Grover stepped onto the front porch, “Honestly boys, my lawn has never looked better. You did a great job, come on in and let’s get started with your lesson.”

He held the door open and John and Don went inside. The biggest Hi-Fi stereo system they had ever seen and hundreds, maybe even thousands of albums lined one entire wall of the living room. Mr. Grover picked out a record and placed it on the turntable, it sounded like the musicians were right there in the room. The boys closed their eyes and let the music drench their souls.

“OK kids, unpack your instruments, and let’s get down to work. That was the blues and that’s what we’re learning today; that velvet music that frees the soul, and haunts the heart.”

The lesson was as thrilling as a roller coaster ride, and Mr. Grover’s stories were riveting.

“The blues started in the cotton fields when blacks were slaves, when they were frying in the sun, hopeless and heartbroken. Like the rain washing away the dust, the blues washed away some of their sadness.

When I was growing up in the 1930s black people didn’t have many choices, they were still playing and singing the blues because there were many things they couldn’t do: study law and medicine, drink from the water fountains, ride on the front of the bus, and stay in hotels for whites. But, if somebody was lucky enough to have a talent, let’s say in sports, music or preaching, they wouldn’t have to spend their life sweltering in the steel mills. If you want to get anywhere in life you

need a vision, and that vision keeps you going even when things get tough, and if you want to succeed in music you have to tell a story with your sound, with your instrument, and with your music. You want to keep people on the edge of their seats, and play like your life depended on it. ”

They drank in their teacher’s words like a cold drink on a hot day. Mr. Grover swept them up into a galaxy of rhythm, chord changes and improvising. Coming up with a melody the instant you played it made the music so alive, it was like dreaming up a poem right on the spot. A whole new world opened up for them.

Don and John practiced every day. Playing music was like eating delicious food, they couldn’t get enough of it. One day they and asked their friend Dave who played bass and the school drummer Kenny if they wanted to jam together. The kids thought it was a swell idea and they started practicing in Ken’s garage. Word soon got around that there was hot music at Kenny’s house on Wednesday nights, and the yard was packed with kids before the jamming began. The music squeezed through the door and out the window, swinging on the breeze.

“Hey Kenny, open the garage, we want to see you guys play,” the kids cried.

“I don’t know, the neighbors might complain.”

“Come on man, just give it a try.”

The garage door flung open, the street lights flickered on, and the music started. There was dancing on the lawn and smiles in their souls.

When John woke up the next morning, the newspaper was open on the kitchen table. His mother had circled an announcement:

WEOL Jazz Band Competition, enter and perform live on the radio.

First prize: 500 dollars!

John ripped out the ad, dropped it into his bag and ran to school. In the classroom, he thumped down next to Don and showed him the paper. “Look at this, there’s a notice for a music competition, do you think we should apply?”

Don read the announcement and smiled, “Yeah, we definitely have to do it. I’ll ask Ken and Dave to come over to my place after school, and we can write the application.”

The school day dragged, and the hands of the clock crept like two turtles. Math, English, history was all just a tangle of information. At 3:00 the bell rang and the boys dashed over to Don’s house.

John lifted the typewriter from the shelf and put it on the kitchen table. He rolled a piece of paper into the machine and said, “Well guys, I guess were a band now and we need to have a name.”

“How about *Garage Band*,” said Ken.

“I don’t know, what about the *Northcliff Quartet*,” said Don. “John and I both live on Northcliff street and I think it sounds catchy.”

“Yeah, I think so too,” said Dave.

“Then *Northcliff Quartet* it is.”

John started typing, and Dave grabbed his bass and played along to the rhythm of the machine.

“And here it is,” said Don as he whipped the paper out of the typewriter.

“Let’s get this thing in the mail.”

The kids practiced every night in Ken’s garage and once in a while Mr. Grover dropped in to coach them. The band was getting better by the day.

A few weeks later when John came home from school a letter from WEOL was lying on his bed. He felt like tearing it open right then and there. At rehearsal that night he dropped the letter on the snare drum. “Who wants to open it?” he asked.

Ken picked up the envelope, tore it open and pulled out the letter. He swallowed and began reading: “*The Northcliff Quartet* has been invited to participate in the WEOL jazz band competition on Sunday, November 28, 1948.”

“We did it, we’re going to be on the radio! Even if we don’t win, we’re still going to play live on the radio.”

That night they played music like never before. It had the intensity of a thunderstorm. The kids felt as if gravity had abandoned the Earth, and they were flying high on happiness.

Time flies when it has a purpose, and the months passed quickly in a frenzy of creative energy. The day of the competition snow drifted on the cold November air. The bus stopped in front of the radio station, and the boys were jittery as they walked into WEOL. They handed the receptionist their invitation, and a man with a clipboard took them up to their warm up room. Ken sat down and started drumming. Don put on his best reed, John strummed his guitar, and Dave tuned his bass.

“We’ll run it a couple of times,” said Don. “But, let’s save our energy for the performance.”

They started to play, but Dave didn’t move, he just stared at the wall.

“Dave, come on man, we have to warm up, what’s wrong?” asked John, with panic rising in his voice.

“I need to sit down, just give me a minute.”

The room was spinning. Dave sat down on a chair and put his head into his hands. His nerves ran wild and his hands shook. Ken paced the room, Don played scales, and John pretended that everything would be all right, but his hope was unraveling like the yarn of a sweater. Dave just sat, trembling. Suddenly, the door opened and a WEOL assistant came in, “You’re on in ten minutes, come with me please.”

They all looked at Dave who stood up without a word, picked up his bass, and said, “Let’s go, I’m ready.” The band hadn’t warmed up and they walked down the hall in a daze.

The boys hobbled into the room and took their positions in front of the microphones. Anguish hung in the air like summer humidity. Dave raised his eyebrows, looked at the group and smiled. A green light burst on and Ken counted off, “a one, two, a one two three four.”

After they finished the assistant opened the door, “You kids were great. Put your instruments away and I’ll take you to the waiting room.”

The *Northcliff Quartet* waited in a steamy room with a dozen other bands. When the door opened and the announcer walked in everyone sat up in their seats.

“The whole show was a great success. Cleveland can be proud of its next generation of musicians. You all won today.”

The kids struggled to stay calm. Legs jiggled, feet tapped, and knuckles cracked.

The announcer continued, “The good news is that two bands will share the prize. The winners of the WEOL talent competition are: *Keynote* and the *Northcliff Quartet*! Congratulations. Grab your instruments and head back to the studio. You get to play another tune.”

The band was stunned and thrilled. “We’ve been given a chance, and we’re gonna take this chance and give it our best.”

Back in the studio the DJ announced the winners. “Cleveland, I am thrilled to present the next generation of young jazz musicians. The spirit of jazz lives on through the kids that played for the talent competition in the studio today. Kids who are making music, pooling their energy, and efforts for the common goal of producing something terrifically beautiful. Music, jazz it’s an unparalleled union of mind, body, and soul. Turn up your dials for the *Northcliff Quartet*, and prepare to swing.”

Saxophone



Electric Guitar



Electric Bass



Drum Set

