

Classics for Kids



George Gershwin

As you listen to *Rhapsody in Blue*, describe the music using words that begin with the letters in Gershwin's name:

G _____
 E _____
 R _____
 S _____
 H _____
 W _____
 I _____
 N _____

"Andante"

From *Rhapsody in Blue*

GEORGE GERSHWIN

Born: September 26, 1898

Died: July 11, 1937

George Gershwin was a 20th century American composer born in Brooklyn, New York. He taught himself to play the piano at a friend's house by following how the keys moved on a player piano. His family finally got their own piano when he was 12 years old, and George surprised everyone by sitting down and playing the songs he had learned by himself.

George liked to compose both classical and popular music and was able to put the two together like no other composer. His most famous work, *Rhapsody in Blue*, was written in 1924. Gershwin also had a hit show on Broadway that same year.

Perhaps that's why he almost forgot to write *Rhapsody in Blue*. George had promised band leader Paul

Whiteman that he would write a concerto for his band to perform. One morning in January, 1924, he read in the newspaper that Paul Whiteman's band concert was going to feature a jazz concerto by George Gershwin. The concert was just a month away! George began writing immediately, using the popular jazz style that was also part of his Broadway works. On the train to Boston for another performance, he wrote the melodies and rhythms. He later said the bumping of the train was his inspiration for the rhythmic piano parts. It took Gershwin only three weeks to write the entire *Rhapsody in Blue*. He performed the piano part himself at the Paul Whiteman Band concert on February 12, 1924.

Gershwin also wrote the opera *Porgy and Bess* and several more classical works during his career. He is regarded as one of America's greatest composers.

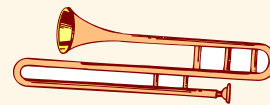
Name Scramble



AOPIN



IIONVL



MBNEOTRO



TTMRUEP



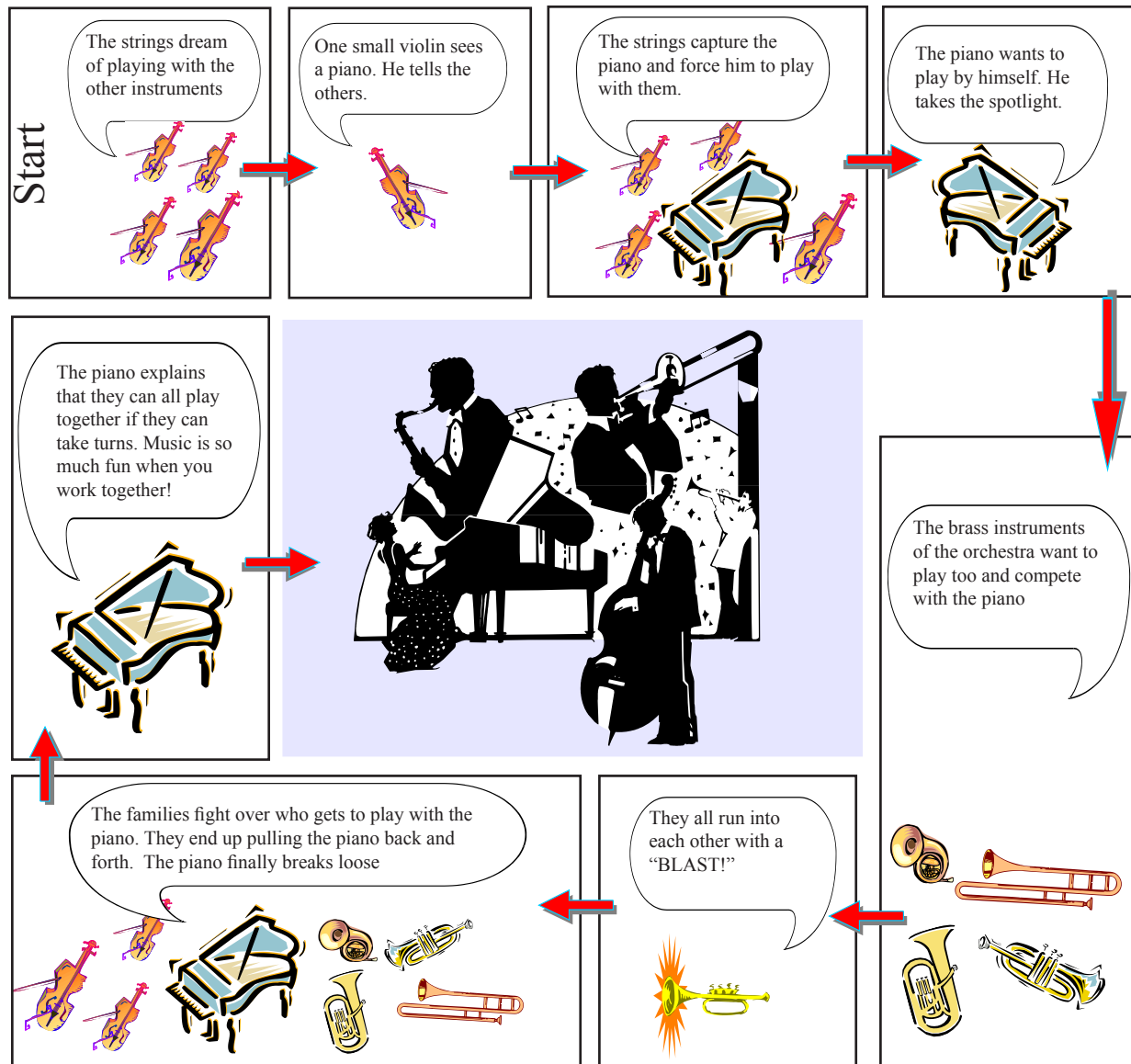
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"Andante" From *Rhapsody in Blue*



WHAT IS JAZZ?

Jazz is American-born music that uses syncopation, altered scales, specific harmonies, and improvisation.

Learn more about jazz at these websites for kids:

<http://pbskids.org/jazz>
www.smithsonianjazz.org

For more about George Gershwin and his music, visit www.gershwin.com.

George Gershwin was inspired by a train ride while composing "*Rhapsody in Blue*." Does his music inspire you?

Write a story while listening to "*Rhapsody in Blue*."

Send it to:
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