

# Classics for Kids



Aaron Copland



Ballet is more than pink tutus!  
The dancers in *Rodeo* wear full rodeo gear.

## "Hoe-Down" from Rodeo

**Aaron Copland**  
**Born: November 14, 1900**  
**Died: December 2, 1990**

Aaron Copland was one of America's most famous composers. Born in Brooklyn, New York, he went to France as a teenager to study music with the well-known teacher Nadia Boulanger. While he started out traditionally, his style of composition soon became very "American."

Some of his most famous works are his ballets, which include *Billy the Kid*, *Rodeo* and *Appalachian Spring*. Copland wrote *Billy the Kid*, a work about the wild west, in 1928. When his friend, the choreographer Agnes De Mille, asked him to write another cowboy ballet a few years later, he at first refused. De Mille did not give up, however, and Copland finally agreed to compose the work. The music he wrote was perfect for this story about a cowgirl who

dresses as a cowboy to impress the head wrangler on the ranch.

The word "hoe-down" has many meanings. It can be used to describe a lively dance, the music played for this dance or a party where people come together to perform the dance.

Copland also wrote music for movies, including scores for *Of Mice and Men*, *The Red Pony* and *Our Town*. One of his best known pieces, *Fanfare for the Common Man*, was commissioned by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

Aaron Copland believed that simple tunes could be beautiful. We know he was right when we listen to his great music.

# WANTED

As you listen to *Hoe-Down*, draw a picture of your favorite instrument and write a sentence telling why you like it.

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## HOE-DOWN

What instruments and techniques does Aaron Copland use to tell this cowboy story? Listen for the following:

The woodblock (a percussion instrument) sounds like the clip-clop of a horse running. Can you hear it slow to a walk towards the end of the piece?

The instruments sometimes sound as if they were tuning up, getting ready for the dance.

There are hints of folk songs within the music, such as fiddlers at square dances might play.

Also, listen for the syncopated beat. This means that the accent is not where you'd expect it. Instead of hearing **ONE TWO ONE TWO**, you **ONE TWO ONE TWO**. This sounds almost like a hiccup. The oddly accented beat is often played very loud, or *sforzando*, to give it more emphasis.

Can you complete the names of these cowboy songs?



“Down in the \_\_\_\_\_” “Billy the \_\_\_\_\_” Get Along Little \_\_\_\_\_”  
“Jesse \_\_\_\_\_” “Old \_\_\_\_\_” “Red \_\_\_\_\_ Valley”

Answers: Valley; Kid; Dogies; James; Paint; River

Here's your chance to create your own piece of art while listening to "*Hoe-Down*."

Draw or write your own story.  
Use a blank 8 1/2" x 11" paper and send it to:

Classics for Kids  
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Or E-mail us at [classicsforkids@wguc.org](mailto:classicsforkids@wguc.org).



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