

## *Birdland*, Weather Report

### Thinking about Bird - Intermediate level, grades 3-6

#### **Objectives:**

1. The student will compare and contrast *Birdland* with other recordings.
2. The student will identify the groove as rock-influenced.
3. The students will journal about what Charlie Parker might think if he had lived twenty-two years longer and had heard *Birdland*.

#### **Optional Objectives:**

1. In a journaled reflection, the student will synthesize all the styles and approaches to improvising and creating jazz.

**Time:** One class period

#### **Materials Required for Objectives:**

Computer access to recording on Internet and speakers for playback to class. “Comparing Two Songs” worksheet. Journal. Optional: projector to show pictures of 52<sup>nd</sup> Street from Internet websites listed below.

#### **Procedure:**

**Activity 1** - Allow students to choose one other recording from the fourteen previously listened to and use the “Comparing Two Songs” worksheet to contrast it with the recording of *Birdland*. Ask students to discuss similarities and differences in the two recordings.

**Activity 2** - Listen to *Birdland* as a class and ask students what kind of groove the recording has. It is a new groove the class hasn’t heard yet. Ultimately, students should be able to identify rock elements in the recording including synthesized instruments, electric bass, and drums playing in more of a rock style. Ask for similarities first. There is an ostinato present similar to *We Be Doinit* and *A Night in Tunisia*. There is fast playing like we heard in *Now’s the Time* and *Everybody’s Boppin’* and they may hear other similarities. Ask for differences.

**Activity 3** - Ask students to journal about what Charlie Parker might think about the song *Birdland* if he were able to hear *Birdland* twenty-two years after he died. Remind the students that the night club, Birdland, in New York was named for Charlie Parker. Parker’s nickname was “Bird” and he was one of the greatest jazz musicians at the time. 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, near Birdland and many other jazz clubs, no longer exists as it was; there are now tall buildings and hotels. Look at the photos on the web sites listed below to see what 52<sup>nd</sup> Street looked like. Imagine Charlie Parker hearing this song called *Birdland* and what he would think about it. Would he like it? Why or why not?

#### **Optional Activity:**

Journal about what it might be like to stand in the middle of 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and hear all of the jazz coming out of the jazz clubs. What would you hear? Which club might you go in to listen more closely? If you could perform on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, what would you play or would you sing? Who would be in your band? Of all the music you have listened to, which song might sound the closest to your sound? Jazz musicians copied Charlie Parker and others, but eventually all great jazz musicians have to develop their own unique sound. What would your sound be? Do you think you could invent a new type of jazz as Miles Davis and Charlie Parker did? Do you think you could compose great new tunes as Mary Lou Williams and Quincy Jones did?

**Extension:**

Ask students to share their reflections in their journals.

**Indicators of Success:**

Students will synthesize their understanding of a variety of different jazz styles and the musicians who created jazz. Students will think about how they can create jazz and what it might sound like.

**Learn more about Weather Report:**

<http://airjudden.tripod.com/jazz/weatherreport.html>

<http://www.hypermusic.ca/jazz/weather.html>

**Look at pictures of the original 52nd at:**

<http://www.jazzphotos.com/52ndst.htm>

<http://www.jazzphotos.com/gallery52.htm>

**Other resource:**

“The Street,” an illustrated essay by Tad Lathrop on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, in *Jazz: The First Century*, ed. John Edward Hasse. New York: Wm. Morrow, 1990, pp. 94-95.