



# A TEACHER'S GUIDE

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: 2/3



# RENT PARTY JAZZ

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Watch the video of actor

**Viola Davis**

reading this story at

[storylineonline.net](http://storylineonline.net)



# ABOUT THIS STORY

## SYNOPSIS

This story is set in New Orleans in the 1930s. Sonny and his mother are scraping by to pay their rent. Mama works in a fish canning factory, and Sonny works for the coal man before school each morning. When Mama loses her job, they no longer have enough money for the rent and fear that the landlord will turn them out. One day Sonny meets Smilin' Jack, a jazz musician who is playing his trumpet in Jackson Square. Smilin' Jack offers to play at a party at Sonny's house to help raise money for the rent. The neighbors all come to sing and dance and before they leave, drop some coins in a bucket. Sonny learns how people can help one another "if they put their minds and hearts to it."

## THEMES IN THE STORY

Jazz music, Family & Community, Helping Others

# READING AND WRITING

## ELA COMMON CORE STANDARD

**Reading Literature:** Students read and respond to works of literature with emphasis on comprehension, making connections among ideas and between texts with focus on textual evidence. *(Standards listed below are for second/third grades, but can be adapted to 1st or 4th grade standards.)*

## BEFORE READING

**Standards:** CCSS.SL.2.1, CCSS.SL.3.1

Tap knowledge and build background about the African American culture in the 1920's and 1930's. Suggested questions to develop discussion:

1. Why is it important to help people in your community in times of need? Can you share any stories about a time when people in your community came together to help someone in need?
2. What do you know about Jazz? Have you ever read any other stories about African American Jazz musicians?

## DURING READING

**Standards:** CCSS.SL2.2, CCSS.SL3.2

**Focus:** What is a rent party and how does it help a community?

**Objective:** Students will listen to story and answer teacher posed questions appropriately.

During read aloud, pause at appropriate parts to ask questions or pose prompts. Some suggestions are:

- Why doesn't Mama want Sonny to quit school to help get money to pay the rent?
- Why do you think Sonny felt too sad or worried to clap and sing when he would go and listen to Smilin' Jack play?
- "For the first time in days, Sonny smiled." Why?
- When Sonny explains his rent party plan to Mama, does she think it's a good idea?
- Why doesn't Smilin' Jack take the extra money from Mama?
- Why, do you think, Sonny wants to learn to play the trumpet?

## AFTER READING

**Standards:** CCSS.SL2.2, CCSS.SL3.2; CCSS.RL.2.3, CCSS.RL.3.3

**Objectives:** Students will identify the problem in the story and explain how the problem was solved. Students will explain the theme in the story.

**Activities:**

1. Complete a story map to demonstrate the problem, what the characters did to solve the problem, and how the problem was solved. 🔍 **Google It!** Search "Problem-Solution Story Map"
2. Have students design a poster for Sonny's rent party. Include information where, when, and why the party is being held.
3. **Talk It Up:** Smilin' Jack tells Sonny about the rent parties back in Mississippi. Sonny thinks this is a "mighty fine idea" for paying the rent man. Do you think people in your community would have a rent party today? Why or Why not?

## READING RESPONSE

**Standards:** CCSS.RL.2.1, CCSS.RL.3.1; CCSS.W.2.3, CCSS.W.3.3

**Objectives:** Students will answer the prompt using at least two details from text to support the response.

What is the theme in the story? Use details from the story to support your response. *(Student response should reflect community support to solve a problem)*

## WRITING - INFORMATION PIECE

**Standards:** CCSS.W.2.2, CCSS.W.3.2

**Objective:** Students will write an information piece using grade appropriate sentence structure and spelling.

**Procedure:** Plan, research, and write a report on one of the following subjects:

- A famous jazz musician
- The history of jazz
- Jackson Square in New Orleans

# ACROSS THE CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES

## SOCIAL STUDIES: MODERN DAY “RENT PARTY BULLETIN

### OBJECTIVE:

Students will gain an understanding of community by finding real life stories of people helping others within their own community.

### PROCEDURE:

**Step 1:** Have students gather articles about modern “rent parties” from newspapers, magazines, or internet sources.

**Step 2:** Allow students who bring in a story to share with the class.

**Step 3:** Make a collage of the articles on a bulletin board.

Extension: Plan a Rent Party to raise money for a cause in the school community.

## SCIENCE

### OBJECTIVE:

Students will explore the science of sound by making a simple harmonica.

### MATERIALS:

Jumbo craft sticks (2 per student)  
Wide rubber bands (1 per student)  
Regular rubber bands (2 per student)  
Drinking straws  
Scissors

### PROCEDURE (For each harmonica):

**Step 1:** Cut 2 pieces of straw that measure 1 – 1.5 inches long.

**Step 2:** Stretch the thick rubber bank around one of the craft sticks. Place one of the straws under the rubber band.

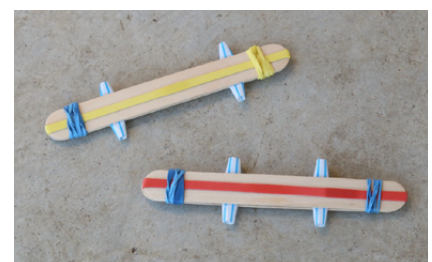
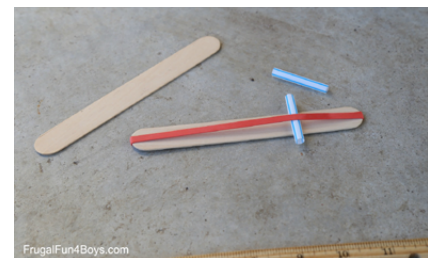
**Step 3:** Put the other craft stick on top and attach them with the small rubber bandon the same end as the straw.

**Step 4:** Stick the other piece of the straw at the end of the harmonica, but on top of the wide rubber band. Secure the end with the second small rubber band.

**Step 5:** Blow on the sticks to make a sound.

**Step 6:** Experiment to answer the following questions:

- Does the thickness or the tension of the wide rubber band affect the pitch?
- Can you change the pitch by blowing harder or softer?
- Does the shape of your mouth affect the pitch?



# ABOUT US

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