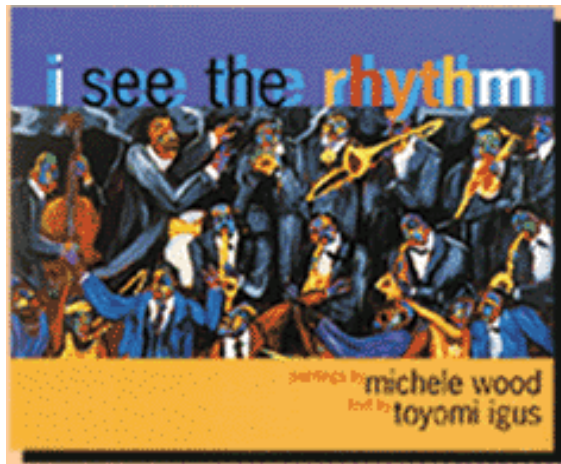


READING COMMUNITIES: CBP TEACHER’S GUIDES

i see the rhythm

Paintings by **Michele Wood**

Text by **Toyomi Igus**



WHAT’S IT ALL ABOUT?

i see the rhythm celebrates the rich history of African American music. From the first slave chants to contemporary hip-hop, African Americans have raised their voices in song against the oppression they have faced. *i see the rhythm* traces the story of the resilience, resistance, creativity, and spirit of the African American communities in the United States.

Artist Michele Wood and author Toyomi Igus worked together to identify critical periods of African American music. Michele’s paintings reflect the rhythm of the music they illustrate; Toyomi’s words capture the ideas and events underlying the music. A timeline running across each spread traces the historical developments—musical, political, and cultural—from which the music springs. Together, the book’s words, art, and chronology illustrate the intimate relationship between the development of African American music and African American communities in the United States.

Students will “read” the rhythm of this book in many ways: they will see it in the color and imagery of the paintings, feel it in the emotional tone of the poems, and understand it in the historical details of the timelines. *i see the rhythm* provides classrooms with entry points into studies of African American history, contemporary African American communities, cultural and historical perspectives on music, and it encourages creative exploration through poetry, music, and painting.

COMMUNITY: AFRICAN AMERICAN

THEMATIC UNITS

Music: Rhythm; the Role of African American Music in American Musical Development; Key Musicians; Jazz

African American History: The Middle Passage; Slavery; Reconstruction; the Great Migration; The Harlem Renaissance; the Civil Rights Movement

African American Communities: Resistance to Oppression, Family Histories, Popular Culture

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Michele Wood is an artist, educator, and visual historian. By creating complex images of the African ancestors she never knew, Michele transports herself back in time to witness their struggles and celebrations. Through her work, Michele says, she becomes “a seeker of knowledge, a creator of visions, and a keeper of my family’s history.” Two books by Children’s Book Press, *Going Back Home* and *i see the rhythm*, document her journeys. About her paintings for *i see the rhythm*, Michele says, “There is no present without the past. That’s why it’s so important for young people to learn about their heritage.” Other work, which spans social, cultural, and geographical boundaries, has been exhibited across North America and Africa. Michele lives in Savannah, Georgia.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Toyomi Igus, the daughter of a Japanese American mother and an African American father, recognized at an early age the value of both diversity and universality. Her parents, supportive of her interest in writing, encouraged her to pursue her vocation in college. Toyomi is the author of several award-winning books for children, including *Two Mrs. Gibsons*, *Going Back Home*, and *i see the rhythm*. In addition to her writing, she has been actively involved in Children’s Book Press Community Programs. Toyomi sees her workshops with students as an essential part of her work as author. She says, “If I can motivate children to put their experiences into words—to talk about our similarities—then I, in turn, become motivated by their individual perspectives.” Toyomi lives in Los Angeles, CA.

GETTING THE CLASSROOM READY

I hear the rhythm



Stereo; tapes and/or CDs (see Resource List at the end of this guide for suggestions); liner notes; pictures of the featured musicians; notebook.

- Set up a listening station devoted to African and African American music. Provide a range of musical genres. Leave covers and liner notes with commentary and lyrics available for students to explore.
- Decorate the area around the station with pictures of the featured musicians, taken from the web (see resource list for recommended web sites).
- Encourage students to listen to the music during independent work time. Leave a notebook at the listening station and ask the students to use it as a group music journal. Ask students to record the music they listened to and their reactions to the music in the journal. Later, refer back to these notes as you discuss the book.

GETTING READY FOR READING

The Rhythms of Africa

Students will listen to African drumming and discuss the roles of music in different cultures.



15 min.



small group and/or whole class

CA Music Standard 3.0: Students analyze the role of music in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting cultural diversity as it relates to music, musicians, and composers.



Stereo; tapes and/or CDs of African drumming. Good albums include the *Drums of Passion* series by Babatunde Olatunji (Rykodisc) and the *Africa* or *Mali to Memphis* compilations from the Putumayo label.

- Play a piece of African drumming for the students. Ask them to close their eyes and think about the images the music brings to them.
- When the music is finished, ask students to open their eyes and share the images they “saw” in the music. What did they imagine as they heard the drums?
- Ask students to brainstorm the different uses of drums in African culture. Prompt them to think about drums as instruments for communication and as the original “telephones,” as well as musical instruments used in songs, dances, and storytelling. Ask students how Africans came to the United States, and how they might have used their drums here. Discuss the connections between African and African American music and culture.

Creating Rhythms

Students explore the concept of rhythm by playing a clapping game and brainstorming a definition of the term.



15 min.



small group and/or whole class

CA Music Standard 1.0: Students read, notate, listen to, analyze, and describe music and other aural information, using the terminology of music.

1. Lead the group in clapping out different rhythms. Clap out the rhythm of one line of a well-known song (such as “*Happy Birthday to You*”), then ask students to clap the rhythm back to you. Experiment with clapping the rhythm at different tempos, pointing out how the speed changes but the beat stays the same.
2. Have students take turns playing the leader and experimenting with different kinds of rhythms and tempos. You can vary the activity by asking them to tap their feet and slap their knees as well as clap their hands.
3. Brainstorm a definition of rhythm based on the exercise. Ask students to compare their definitions of rhythm with a dictionary definition. Talk about how different rhythms can make you think or feel differently. Discuss what it might mean to “see” a rhythm. What would different rhythms look like?

EXPLORING THE BOOK

Diving In



20 min.



large or small groups

Introduce the book to students in a large or small group. The focus of this first reading should be reading for pleasure—encouraging students to enjoy the beauty of the book and the story it tells. In order to foster this enjoyment, try some of the following activities:

- Discuss the cover, the title, and the illustrations. Look at the structure of the book—how it is set up in two-page spreads made up of paintings, poetry, and timeline. Ask students what story they think the book tells, and how each part of a spread might tell that story differently. List these predictions and ask students to check them after the reading is complete.
- Read sections aloud to the group, or have students read the book on their own, in pairs, or in small groups.
- Encourage students to further explore the book actively by taking a “picture walk” through the book, thinking about the story as it is told in the illustrations.
- Ask students to read the book aloud and experiment with reading in different rhythms or voices.

FIRST TIME AROUND: VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Civil Rights Vocabulary

Students learn about the “-ation” word family by examining vocabulary from African American history.



20 min.



whole class

CA Reading Standard 1.0: Students select letter patterns and know how to translate them into spoken language by using phonics, syllabification, and word parts.

1. Share a list of “-ation” words found in *i see the rhythm* with students: *emancipation*, *proclamation* and *segregation* (p. 8). Add related words: *desegregation*, *integration*, *liberation*.
2. Discuss the meanings of each word. How does each differ from the other? What are the time periods associated with each?
3. Ask students to read the words aloud. Ask: How is the “-ation” ending pronounced? Can you sound out this ending? Is this ending pronounced the same each time?
4. Have students hunt for additional words in the book (e.g., *association* and *migration*, p. 10, and *education*, p. 21).
5. Brainstorm other words students might know using this ending (e.g., *celebration*, *illustration*, and *nation*).

SECOND TIME AROUND: READING COMPREHENSION



ongoing



whole class

CA Reading Standard 2.0: Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate material. They draw upon a variety of comprehension strategies as needed (e.g., generating and responding to essential questions, making predictions, comparing information from several sources).



Butcher or chart paper; magic markers

1. Several two-page spreads in the book highlight specific historical events and use important vocabulary to describe people and places. As you read the book with your class, pause to talk about the words associated with each period. People, events, and phrases to highlight in the timeline include:
 - *Africa: Origins* (pp. 4-5) Ibo, Yoruba, and Bantu kingdoms; shackles; the slave trade; the Middle Passage; the differing roles of griots
 - *Slavery: Slave Songs* (pp. 6-7) Nat Turner; Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad; the Fugitive Slave Act; the Civil War
 - *Reconstruction: the Birth of the Blues* (pp. 8-9) The Emancipation Proclamation; Jim Crow laws; Fisk College; Ida B. Wells; lynching (For further discussion of lynching, see the note on Billie Holiday in the timeline of *A Tribute to Jazz Women*, p. 16)

- *The Great Migration: Ragtime and Jazz Beginnings* (pp. 10-13) National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Madame C. J. Walker; Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association
 - *The Harlem Renaissance: the Sounds of Swing* (pp. 14-17) the Great Depression; “race records”; Marian Anderson
 - *Civil Rights Movement: Cool Jazz, Gospel, and Rhythm & Blues* (pp. 21-25) *Brown v. the Board of Education*; Rosa Parks; Septima Clarke; Martin Luther King, Jr.; the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom; the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Malcolm X
 - *Black Power: Black Rock and Funk* (pp. 26-29) Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and the Black Panther party; Vietnam
2. Use a roll of butcher paper and markers to create a timeline, marking each period and having students add vocabulary words, people, and events to the appropriate era as you discuss them. As students read the book on their own, have them add other key words they come across.
 3. Keep this timeline up throughout the unit, using it as a reference to discuss the book and adding relevant words as they emerge during your unit of study.

AFTERWORDS: LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS

Picture Reading

Students interpret and respond to an illustration, making connections between the themes in the images and the text



30 min



small group

CA Reading Standard 3.0: Students read and respond to a wide variety of significant works of children’s literature. They distinguish between the structural features of the text and literary terms or elements (e.g., theme, plot, setting, and characters).

1. Have the students look through the book and select one picture to which they will respond.
2. Ask each student to share his or her response with the group. Ask: How did you pick your picture? What does the picture make you feel? How do the colors affect you? What stories do you see in the pictures?
3. Have the group read the text on the accompanying pages. Ask students to identify the theme of the text. How does that theme connect to the illustration? How does it connect to the stories they saw in the image?

LANGUAGE ARTS

Writing Rhythm Poems

Students write poems in which they “see,” “hear,” and “feel” rhythms, practicing using different parts of speech.



2 hours (can be over several sessions)



individual, partner, whole class

CA Writing Standard 1.0: Students progress through the stages of the writing process.



Poem Worksheet (at end of this document): I see the rhythm of . . . , I hear the rhythm of . . . , I feel the rhythm of . . .

Plan

- Read several poems from the book as a group (for example, “Birth of the Blues” (p. 8) or “Sounds of Swing” (p. 15). Discuss with the students the role of sensory imagery in poetry. Ask: How does the poem make you see, hear, or feel the scene? What are other ways that a poem can use the senses to make something come alive? Ask students to identify examples of how the senses are used in these poems.
- Talk about the use of language patterns in the poems— how the words have a rhythm of their own, and how the poem structure helps create that rhythm. For example, in “Birth of the Blues,” the pattern is “I see the (noun) in . . .” In “Sounds of Swing,” the pattern is “the (compound adjective) (noun) of (person). Focus on the parts of speech that your class is studying: verbs, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, and so on. Pull out examples of rich vocabulary and language patterns based on these parts of speech.

- Generate a discussion about the importance of using descriptive language in poetry. Encourage students to refer to a thesaurus as they write their poems. Have them create their own language patterns using the parts of speech you’re studying.

Draft

Ask students to use their senses to create poems of their own that follow the structure of the book. Have each student pick a time period from the book and describe the era through the sentences “I see the rhythm of . . .,” “I hear the rhythm of . . .,” and “I feel the rhythm of . . .” (For a template, download the worksheet in the “Materials” section.)

Revise

Ask students to share their first drafts (on the worksheets) in pairs and give each other feedback. Have them use that feedback to revise their work and rewrite it on regular paper, creating second drafts. Encourage them to look at how line breaks are used in **i see the rhythm** and to experiment with line breaks of their own in these drafts.

Edit

Ask students to edit their second drafts for publication, checking spelling and punctuation. Read through the drafts and mark errors. Encourage students to use a word wall, a dictionary, or other classroom reference tools as they correct their work.

Publish

Publish the poems by posting them in the classroom or creating a class anthology.

OTHER WRITING ACTIVITIES

- *Genre Study*: Discuss the different kinds of language, sentence structure, and punctuation that the poems and the timeline use. Ask students to practice both kinds of writing as they create chronological books of their own. (Whole class)
- *Creative writing*: Ask students to write first-person narratives based on a particular era. Pick a time period that students have already explored together in class, so they have some knowledge of the experiences of individuals during those times. Then ask them to imagine themselves in those moments. For example, they could respond to the “Origins” painting and text by writing narratives beginning “When I was on the boat I . . .” or to the “Black Rock” section beginning “I am here to protest . . .” (Individual student)

SOCIAL STUDIES

Family History Timelines

Students interview family members about their family histories and create timelines for these histories.



3 hours over one
week



individual

CA Social Studies Standard: Students learn more about our connections to the past and the ways in which particularly local, but also regional and national, government and traditions have developed and left their marks on current society, providing common memories.



Family Interview Worksheets (at end of this document); adding machine tape, Popsicle or crafts sticks, and tape to create timelines.

1. Generate a discussion about how we learn about the past. When students volunteer that we read books, ask them about other ways to learn about history, such as songs, poems, interviews, or family stories. Discuss oral histories and interviews as a way to learn about time periods and events.
2. As a homework assignment, ask students to talk to their family members (parents, grandparents, godparents) or family friends about the students' family histories. Link these questions to the chronology of the book. Have students ask questions such as: Where were our family's "origins"? What were our family members doing during the era of "ragtime"? Have students take notes on the family interview worksheets.
3. Have students share interesting facts they learned with the class. Discuss the differences and similarities in the various family histories.

4. Using the *i see the rhythm* chronology as a model, have students create timelines of their family histories.

OTHER SOCIAL STUDIES ACTIVITIES

- **A Historical Geography of Africa and the U.S.:** Using a map and colored pushpins, have students trace African American migration in the chronology, beginning in Africa with “Origins,” through the South in “Slave Songs” and “Blues,” and moving North with the Great Migration in “Ragtime.” Discuss the factors influencing migration: Why did these people leave their homes? What were they moving away from? What were they moving to?
- **Comparative History of the African Diaspora:** View *The Roots of Rhythm* (New Video Group, 1994), a video that describes the influence of African musical traditions on Latin American music. Explore the history of slavery in Latin America and discuss the role of people of African descent in Latin American cultures. (Whole class)

ART

Seeing Rhythms

Students explore the connections between music and images by creating their own “rhythm pictures.”



1.5 hours



whole class

CA Visual Arts Standard 5: Students apply what they learned in visual arts across subject areas.



Tape recorder or CD player; recordings of selected songs (see Resource List for ideas); pastels or crayons; drawing paper

1. Play African or African American music for the students and discuss what that music might “look” like. Ask students: Would the rhythm move in waves, fly around like polka dots, or glide in straight lines?
2. Ask students to move to the music and explore the different ways their bodies can respond to the rhythms. How does what something sounds like connect to what it feels like? How does a body move in response to rhythm? What patterns can a body make? How could you move your arm or hand as you draw a rhythm? How does what something sounds like connect to what it looks like?
3. Discuss the connection between rhythms and visual patterns.
4. Have students create their own visual images of music using patterns to show the rhythms. Ask them to listen to music featured in *i see the rhythm* with their eyes closed first, then begin to draw. When a song ends, they must move on to a new artwork to convey the rhythm of the new music.

OTHER ART ACTIVITIES

- **Artistic Storytelling:** Compare the paintings in *i see the rhythm* with Jacob Lawrence’s work in *The Great Migration* (HarperTrophy) and Romare Bearden’s in *I Live in Music* (Stewart, Tabori, and Chang). (See Resource List for more information on these books.) How are the paintings similar? How are they different? How does each book tell a story through art? (Small group)

MATH

Fractions, Rhythms, and Beats

Students use rhythms and beats to understand the relationships between fractions and whole numbers.



45 minutes



whole class

CA Math Standard 3.0: Students understand the relationship between whole numbers, simple fractions, and decimals.



CD or tape of music featured in *i see the rhythm*. (Also helpful: a metronome and/or a songbook with sheet music for selected songs.)

1. Have your class listen to a song featured in *i see the rhythm*. One good song to start with is “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” on page 22. Replay a small portion of the song for the class and ask them to clap, stomp, or pat out the rhythm of the song. Experiment with several other parts of the song until students have practiced clapping different rhythms.
2. Ask the group to clap out a steady beat. (A metronome set to 60 can help.) Explain to the class that these beats are whole notes. Then, ask some students to clap twice as fast, while others continue clapping out the original beat. Explain that these new, fast claps are half notes, and that you can clap out two half notes in each whole note. Continue the demonstration with quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenths.
3. Explore the connections between these concepts and mathematical notation for fractions. Ask students how many half notes fit in a whole, how many quarters in a half, and so on. Draw diagrams demonstrating the relationships of these fractions to each other and to the whole. Ask students to make connections between the images

and the beats. Explain that the visual and rhythmic comparisons are different ways of expressing the same idea.

4. Return to one of the original rhythms that the class clapped out. Ask them to clap out the rhythm again, slowly, and to identify the different types of notes. Then, have students diagram the rhythm of the song on graph paper, using four squares to represent a whole note, two to represent a half note, and so on.

RESOURCES

Related Titles from Children's Book Press

Going Back Home: An Artist Returns to the South. Toyomi Igus and Michele Wood
Honoring Our Ancestors: Stories and Pictures by Fourteen Artists. Edited by Harriet Rohmer

Books from Other Publishers

Bryan, Ashley. *All Night, All Day: A Child's First Book of African-American Spirituals.* Atheneum, 1991.

Bryan, Ashley. *I'm Going to Sing: Black American Spirituals, Volume Two.* Knopf, 1982.

Greenberg, Keith Elliot. *Rap.* Lerner Publications, 1988.

Johnson, James Weldon. *Lift Every Voice and Sing.* Hawthorn Books, 1970.

Kliment, Bud. *Ella Fitzgerald.* Chelsea House, 1988.

Lawrence, Jacob. *The Great Migration: an American Story.* HarperTrophy, 1994.

Mattox, Cheryl Warren. *Let's Get the Rhythm of the Band: A Child's Introduction to Music from African-American Culture with History and Song.* JTG of Nashville, 1993.

Monceaux, Morgan. *Jazz: My Music, My People.* Knopf, 1994.

Shange, Ntozake. *I Live in Music.* Stewart, Tabori, and Chang, 1994.

Silverman, Jerry. *Just Listen to this Song I'm Singing: African-American History through Song.* Millbrook Press, 1996.

Selected Recordings

These are songs or artists featured in i see the rhythm, organized by era. In many cases, an artist has many collections that cover the same material. If this is the case, the discography simply states the artist's name and "various collections," since many albums could be used interchangeably. These are only suggestions and beginning points for your reference — a wide range of music could be used in conjunction with the book.

Overview

Say it Loud! A celebration of Black Music in America (Rhino) – a 6 CD compilation
Trying to Get Home: A History of African American Song (Heebie Jeebie Music) – videotape

Origins

Drums of Passion series by Babatunde Olatunji (Rykodisc)
Africa and Mali to Memphis (Putumayo)

Slave Songs

“Let My People Go” on various gospel collections

Blues

Mali to Memphis compilation (Putumayo)
B.B. King, “Why I Sing the Blues” on various collections

Ragtime

Scott Joplin, “Maple Leaf Rag” on *The Entertainer* (Madacy Records, 1995) and other collections

Jazz Beginnings

“Jelly Roll” Morton, various collections
Louis Armstrong, various collections

Swing

Duke Ellington, “It Don’t Mean a Thing” on *Echoes of Harlem* and various collections
Cab Calloway, “Minnie the Moocher” on *Best of the Big Bands* (Sony/Columbia 1990) and various collections

Jazz Women

Ella Fitzgerald, various collections
Billie Holiday, “Strange Fruit” and “God Bless the Child” on various collections

Be Bop

Charlie Parker, various collections
Dizzy Gillespie, various collections

Cool Jazz

Miles Davis, *Birth of the Cool* (EMD/Blue Note, 1998) and various collections

Charles Mingus, “Fables of Faubus” on various collections

Gospel

Mahalia Jackson, “Move On Up a Little Higher” on *Greatest Hits* (Sony/Columbia 1963) and various collections

Aretha Franklin, various collections

Rhythm & Blues/ Soul

Aretha Franklin, “Respect” on various collections

James Brown, “Say it Loud — I’m Black and I’m Proud”

Black Rock

Little Richard, “Tutti Frutti” and “Good Golly, Miss Molly” on various collections

Jimi Hendrix, “If 6 was 9” and “The Star Spangled Banner” on *Experience Hendrix* (UNI/MCA, 1998)

Funk

James Brown, various collections

Earth, Wind and Fire, *That’s the Way of the World* (Sony/Columbia, 1975)

Rap/Hip Hop

Arrested Development, “Africa’s Inside Me” on various collections

Queen Latifah, “Mama Gave Birth to the Soul Children” on *All Hail the Queen* (1989)

(Note: there is some obscenity on the introduction to this song, but none on the song itself)

Web sites:

- Jazz History web site: www.jazzhistory.f2s.com
- Blueflame Café blues history web site: www.blueflamecafe.com
- Gospel Music homepage: www.afgen.com/gospel.html
- The African American Sheet Music collection of the Library of Congress web site (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/rpbhtml/aasmhome.html>)
- The African American Odyssey page of the Library of Congress web site (memory.loc.gov/ammem/aohtml/aohome.html)
- Juneteenth African American history web site: www.juneteenth.com/middlep.htm

CONTRIBUTORS

Linda Fox, Bree Picower, and Carrie Secret participated in a Children’s Book Press LitLinks project at Prescott Elementary School in the 2000-2001 academic year. Linda, Bree, and Carrie used *i see the rhythm* to teach thematic units in African American history. Prescott serves a diverse group of students in West Oakland, California and is nationally recognized for its innovative and culturally relevant curriculum and instruction.

Maya Christina Gonzalez serves as LitLinks Artist-in-Residence at Prescott Elementary School. Maya has illustrated eight books for Children’s Book Press.

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TIPS FROM THE PROS

Please share your own ideas for how to use *i see the rhythm* in the classroom. We’ll be pleased to post your work on the web site for other teachers to use. Email us your lesson plans at communityprograms@cbookpress.org.

FAMILY INTERVIEW WORKSHEET

Your Name:

Date of Interview:

Who you interviewed and how you're related:

Questions:

Where did our family live before we came to the United States?

What was our life like there?

Why did we come to the U.S.?

How did we get here?

Where did our family first live in the U.S.?

Where else have we lived?

When did we come here?

What are some important events in our family's history? When did they happen?

FAMILY INTERVIEW WORKSHEET

Other questions and answers:

1.

2.

3.

4.

RHYTHM POEMS WORKSHEET

Title: _____

Author: _____

i see the rhythm of

i hear the rhythm of

I feel the rhythm of
