

Playing History

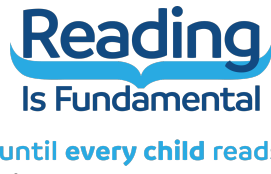
On September 27, 2022, Lizzo played a 200-year-old crystal flute at her concert in Washington, DC. “History is . . . cool, you guys!” she said to the audience. How did a historical instrument and a modern rapper join together to make music? Let’s find out.

Lizzo started playing the flute in elementary school. She went on to become a classically trained flautist, which means flute player. When she was a teenager, Lizzo also started rapping. She is now a famous singer and rapper. She still plays her flute, named Sasha, when she performs onstage.

The crystal flute was made in France in 1813. It was a gift for President James Madison, in honor of his second inauguration. When the British army set fire to Washington, DC in 1814, James and Dolley Madison left the White House. They took the flute with them.

The flute now resides at the Library of Congress. The Library of Congress is the national library of the United States. It is the largest library in the world and one of the oldest government institutions in the country. James Madison’s crystal flute is one of many special, historical flutes in their collection.

In 2016, Carla Hayden became the first woman and the first African American to lead the Library of Congress. Her title is the Librarian of



Congress. In 2022, Carla invited Lizzo to come and visit the library. Lizzo accepted the invitation.

When she visited the Library of Congress, Lizzo played several of the historic flutes. She then played the crystal flute at her concert. The police escorted the flute to and from the concert hall. Lizzo was the first person to ever play the delicate flute onstage.

During the concert, Lizzo thanked the Library of Congress for preserving history. She and her audience recognized this unique moment as a joining of past and present. Instruments are made to be played, and Lizzo was playing history.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Who played the crystal flute?
 - a. Lizzo
 - b. Carla
 - c. Sasha
 - d. Dolley

2. When did the Madisons leave the White House?
 - a. 2022
 - b. 2016
 - c. 1814
 - d. 1813

3. Who gave James Madison the crystal flute?
 - a. Britain
 - b. France
 - c. Dolley Madison
 - d. George Washington

4. Why do you think the Librarian of Congress invited Lizzo to play the flute?
 - a. Because Lizzo is a good flautist
 - b. Because it would be a joining of past and present
 - c. Because instruments are made to be played
 - d. All of the above

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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 - b. Carla
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 - d. Dolley
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