

Little Melba and Her Big Trombone

A RIF GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

Themes: Jazz, Music History, Perseverance

Book Brief: Ever since she was a little girl, Melba Doretta Liston loved music. One day, her momma bought her a big, shiny trombone—and the rest is history! This book tells the true story of one of the most famous female jazz musicians ever.

Author: Katheryn Russell-Brown

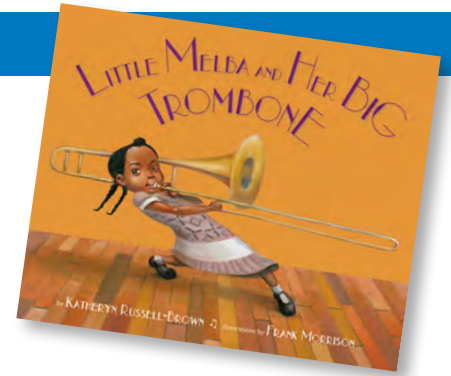
Illustrator:

Frank Morrison

Content

Connections:

Art, Music



TIME TO READ!



BEFORE WE READ, LET'S LOOK AT...

The Cover: What do you think this book will be about based on the title and cover picture? Do students recognize the instrument on the cover? What kind of sound does a trombone make?

The Pictures: Flip briefly through the pages. Based on the pictures, when do you think this book is set? Explain your answer.

Prior Knowledge: Play students one of Melba's songs or show them a clip of her performing (www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojwANp_D_fE). What do students know about jazz and the Jazz Age? How is jazz different from other kinds of music? Explain that this story is set in Kansas City, MO, one of the centers of jazz music in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. Locate Kansas City on a map.

Vocabulary: blues, jazz, gospel, rhythm, beat, lyrics, harmony, melody

Purpose for Reading: What challenges does Melba face as a Black woman playing in big bands? Pay attention to each obstacle and how she overcomes it.

WHILE WE READ

MONITORING COMPREHENSION:

- ◆ How does Melba get her first trombone?
- ◆ Who teaches Melba how to play?

- ◆ Where did Melba and her mother move?
- ◆ When does Melba first leave home?
- ◆ Why is it hard for Melba as the only woman in the band?

LET'S THINK ABOUT

Our Purpose: What challenges did Melba face as a woman in a profession full of men? What challenges did she face as a Black woman touring the country? How did Melba overcome these obstacles? Why do you think she was able to keep playing? Explain your answer with examples from the book.

Extending Our Thinking: Melba was a brilliant musician, but it didn't come easily. She taught herself how to play trombone by practicing constantly. Is there anything you've had to practice to get better at? Why is it important not to give up if you can't do something right away? Why do you think music was so important to Melba? What are some of the things that are most important to you? With a partner, talk about at least two of the things you're most passionate about. Can you think of any ways you might turn those passions into a career, or job, like Melba did?

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

- ◆ Extension Activities for Educators also available.
- ◆ Vocabulary Scaffolding Sheet also available.



Reading Is
Fundamental