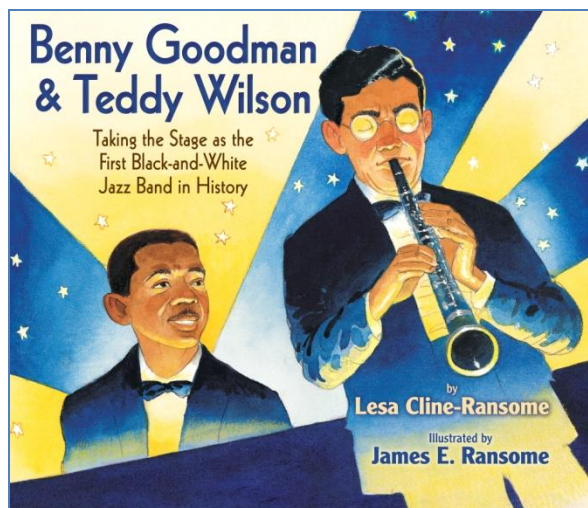


GRADES  
3–7



# BENNY GOODMAN AND TEDDY WILSON TAKING THE STAGE AS THE FIRST BLACK-AND-WHITE JAZZ BAND IN HISTORY

by Lesa Cline-Ransome  
illustrated by James E. Ransome

## About the Book

Brought together by the love of playing jazz music, Benny Goodman and Teddy Wilson broke the color barrier in entertainment when they formed the

Benny Goodman Trio with Gene Krupa. This lush and lyrical picture book tells the story of how two musical prodigies from very different backgrounds—one a young black boy growing up in Tuskegee, Alabama, the other the son of struggling Russian-Jewish immigrants from the West Side of Chicago—were brought together by their love of music, and helped create the jazz style known as swing.

HC: 978-0-8234-2362-0 / E-book available

## SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



### Literature/Language Arts

**Autobiography vs. Biography**—Students should learn the difference between these two genres of literature: that a **biography** is written about someone other than the author, and an **autobiography** is written by a person about his or her own life. **CCSS 3-5.RI.9**

**Questions for discussion / writing**—Students may discuss the following questions/issues as a whole class or in small groups, or choose one or more about which to write.

The author used poetry to tell Benny's and Teddy's stories. What is your opinion of this type of writing? Would you have preferred regular prose writing? Why or why not? In which type of writing do you think it's easier to find information? Why? What facts about Benny and Teddy did you learn? **CCSS 3-5.RL.2; 3-5.RI.6; 3-5.W.1, 2**

The author describes the music lessons that Benny and Teddy had when they were quite young. Are you taking music lessons? How have they changed your life? What is your feeling toward music? Would you like to learn to play an instrument? Why or why not? **CCSS 3-5.RI.6**

The author describes how the Benny Goodman Trio/Quartet were the first integrated musical groups of their time (1936). Why do you think music is able to break down barriers between different racial groups? What evidence do you see of that in the music you hear or the videos you watch today? **CCSS 3.RI.6**

What type of music do you like? Why?  
**CCSS3.RI.6**

## Research

Students may wish to find additional information about the lives of the noted jazz musicians mentioned in the text. For photos, they can search Google Images and enter the person's name plus "1930s" to see how those musicians looked then. They can also search the names in Google or other print or electronic information sources for more details. They can then write a short biography of each of the musician/s selected, or they can create a "Time Line" similar to the one at the back of the book. The names of the musicians may be also found in the "Who's Who in Jazz?" section at the back of the book.

Students can do research on their favorite genre of music to find its history, early performers in that genre, and noted performers today.

Students can find additional information on the history of jazz to determine exactly where "swing" music fits in and how Benny Goodman (and others) played an important role in integrating jazz recordings and live performances starting in 1936.

**CCSS 3-5.W.2,4,7,8**

## Online Resources

**Benny Goodman**—<http://www.bennygoodman.com/about/biography2.html>

Presents a very detailed biography of Benny Goodman.

**Teddy Wilson**—<http://www.wnyc.org/story/216860-teddy-wilson/>

Presents further details of Wilson's life and the audio of an excellent interview with Wilson conducted in 1950. (8+ min.)

**Gene Krupa**—<http://www.drummerworld.com/Videos/genekrupasingsingsing37.html>

Presents the first filmed example of Gene Krupa's drumming skill, with Benny Goodman on clarinet and a large (all-white) orchestra.

**Lionel Hampton**—<http://www.uiweb.uidaho.edu/hampton/bio.html>

Presents further details of Hampton's life, including several photos.

**The Benny Goodman Quartet**—<http://www.pbs.org/jazz/biography/>

Presents additional biographical information on the four members of the quartet. On the home page, artists are listed alphabetically, and students can click on the ones they are interested in viewing. There are also audio samples through which students can hear examples of the artists' work.

**"Swing" Music**—<http://americasmusic.tribecafilminstitute.org/session/view/swing-jazz>

Presents the history of "Swing" and mentions Benny Goodman's role in the popularity of this genre of jazz.

Classroom Activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.

## About the Author and Illustrator

**Lesla Cline-Ransome** and **James E. Ransome** have collaborated on several award-winning picture books for children. These include *Satchel Paige*, an ALA Best Book for Children, *Words Set Me Free: The Story of Young Frederick Douglass*, which received starred reviews in *Booklist* and *School Library Journal*, and *The Quilt Alphabet*, praised as "a blue-ribbon ABC book" in a *Publishers Weekly* starred review. Lesa and James live with their children in the Hudson River Valley region of New York. For more information, visit their websites at [www.lesaclineransome.com](http://www.lesaclineransome.com) and [www.jamesransome.com](http://www.jamesransome.com).