

GIVE US SOME RAG: CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Hey, Charleston! The True Story of the Jenkins Orphanage Band tells the story of how the music genre known as rag, or ragtime, got its start. Give students a taste of this genre by tracking down and playing some rag music in the classroom. Here are a few places to start:

Fox Movietone News Story 1-507: Jenkins Orphanage Band

<http://library.sc.edu/mirc/playVideo.html?i=30>

Rag's Rag: Live Performances

<http://www.ragsrag.com/lp/lp-group.html>

Red Hot Jazz: Jim Europe's 369th Infantry "Hellfighters" Band

(The band was mentioned in the *Hey, Charleston!* Author's Note. Hyperlinked songs on this page are downloadable.)

<http://www.redhotjazz.com/hellfighters.html>

Play a sample of rag music for the class. Then open up the floor for discussion.

- What does this music sound like? (Fast? Slow? Quiet? Wild?)
- How is it similar to other music you've heard? How is it different?
- How does it make you feel?
- Can you hear any specific instruments? Which ones?



HEY, CHARLESTON!

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BAND

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Next, play another sample or replay the original sample. Invite students to get up from their desks and move around. If they feel like dancing, they should! If they feel self-conscious, you might turn off the lights or pull the window shades.

Either before or after the class dance session, show students video clips of people dancing the Charleston, the dance started by the Geechee boys in *Hey, Charleston!* Here are two links to get you started.

Charleston: Original AI and Leon Style

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s58iTzznkp0>

The “I, Charleston” Videos

<http://lindyhopmoves.com/i-charleston/>

Finally, invite students to write a poem or a song about what they learned. The poem or the song could be about rag music, about dancing the Charleston, or even about the Jenkins Orphanage Band.

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