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Woodwinds vs. Brass

On the right side of the band room, Wendy Wood sucked on a reed. It was a key part of her clarinet. The other woodwind players had reeds in their mouths, too. The reeds were thin, flexible strips of wood. Damp reeds make better music than dry reeds.

The flutists - whose flutes do not require reeds - were the only members of the woodwind section not wetting anything. Instead, they held their flutes up and to the side. They blew across the hole while pressing different keys. It was part of their warm-up exercises. The other woodwind players slipped their reeds into place. Reeds fit into the mouthpieces of the clarinets, oboes, saxophones, and bassoons. Wendy blew through her mouthpiece. She pressed the keys on her long black clarinet and played different notes.

On the left side of the room, Barry Brazos warmed up in the brass section. The brass section was made up of trombones, trumpets, French horns, baritones, and one tuba. Their mouthpieces were cup-shaped. Players placed their lips inside the cups to blow. They had to make their lips buzz to play their horns. Most brass instruments have valves for changing notes, but the trombone is different. Barry changed notes on his trombone by moving his slide in and out. It was fun, but sometimes he hit the person sitting in front of him. He had to be careful with the slide.

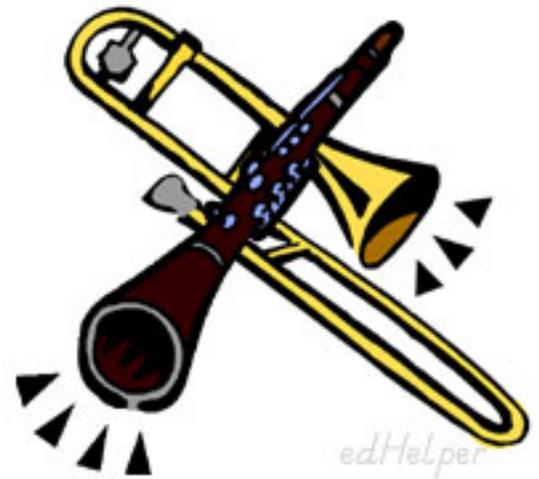
In the back of the band room stood the percussion section's drums, cymbals, and other rhythm instruments. Those players kept to themselves.

Wendy was the first chair clarinet. That meant that she was the best clarinet player. She had won the right to sit in the first chair and lead the clarinets. Barry was the first chair for the trombone section. Wendy secretly thought that woodwinds were the best. Barry thought the brass instruments were best.

Mr. Merrick was the band director. He came out of his office. The noisy warm-ups ceased. The band watched him approach his music stand. They listened as he told them how he wanted the music to sound. When he told them which song to play, the musicians put their sheet music where they could best read it.

Mr. Merrick raised his baton. Then he brought it down. The band members began to play. The drummers kept a steady beat going. However, the woodwinds and the brass section seemed to be having a contest! Each side was trying to blast the others out of their seats! The tuba player huffed and puffed and played the lowest notes heard in the room. The piccolo player piped the highest-pitched notes in the room with her tiny, flute-like instrument. The din was enough to give a rock a headache!

Mr. Merrick put an end to the rivalry. He tapped his baton on the stand to get their attention.



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"People, people, people!" he said. "What are you doing? This is a song about peace, but you make it sound like war!"

Wendy glared at Barry. If he hadn't been playing so loudly, she wouldn't have been forced to play loudly just to be heard.

Barry frowned at her. Why did Wendy think her clarinet was so much better than his trombone?

Mr. Merrick noticed the silent exchange. He sighed. "Some of you seem to think you are competing with your fellow band members," he said. Wendy blushed. Barry looked at his horn. Mr. Merrick continued. "Let me assure you that this is not a competition. You are all members of the same team. If you insist on fighting to outdo the others, you will ruin the music. If you work together, we will make beautiful music. We want to go out and compete against other bands. Pull yourselves together, and let's try that again!"

Wendy was ashamed. She looked across at Barry. He raised his eyebrows as if to say, "Can we play as a team?" She gave a small nod. Both smiled. Mr. Merrick smiled too and raised his baton.

Woodwinds vs. Brass

Questions

- _____ 1. Woodwinds and brass instruments need _____ to play music.
- A. time
 - B. air
 - C. silence
 - D. reeds
- _____ 2. Which character played in the brass section?
- A. Merrick
 - B. Wendy
 - C. Barry
 - D. Wood
- _____ 3. Which of these instruments do not have a mouthpiece?
- A. tuba
 - B. saxophone
 - C. cymbals
 - D. piccolo
- _____ 4. An instrument with a cup-shaped mouthpiece is the _____.
- A. trumpet
 - B. flute
 - C. bass drum
 - D. bassoon

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- _____ 5. The person who is "first chair" is the _____.
- A. best player of his or her section
 - B. earliest to arrive
 - C. oldest musician
 - D. band director
- _____ 6. What is the name of the thin, flexible strips of wood used in the mouthpieces of some woodwind instruments?
- A. picks
 - B. reeds
 - C. slides
 - D. spit cups
- _____ 7. Mr. Merrick raised his baton after the lecture. What happened next?
- A. The band played correctly.
 - B. Wendy and Barry tried to outblast each other.
 - C. There came a knock at the door.
 - D. Mr. Merrick gave up and went home.
- _____ 8. In the first paragraph, the word "key" is another word for _____.
- A. tone
 - B. important
 - C. keyboard
 - D. lock
- _____ 9. All musicians in a band should play as if they're all members of the same _____.
- A. war
 - B. musical
 - C. team
 - D. section

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Music! Music! Music!

By Kathleen W. Redman

Neal kept looking at the clock. He was waiting for music class. He was only in kindergarten, but he loved music. He liked to listen to music at home. He liked to listen to music in the car. He liked to listen to music anytime! Would his reading class ever be over? He had waited all week for music class.



Finally, it was 1:30. It was time for music class!

"Put your books away," Miss Lennon said. "It is time for us to walk to music class."

The boys and girls put their books on the shelves. They lined up by the door. Everyone was ready.

"Let's go," she said.

The class walked together down the hall. Just around the corner, Miss Lennon asked them to wait. They could all hear sounds coming from the next classroom. Miss Lennon knocked on the door and then led them inside.

It was a big room. There were a lot of chairs in the room. There was a big piano and lots of other musical instruments.

"Children, this is Mr. Reid. He is your music teacher. Mr. Reid, where do you want the children to sit?"

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A tall man with gray hair got up from the piano bench.

"Hi, boys and girls," he said. "Let's see . . . hmmm . . . For now, just choose a chair anywhere and have a seat."

All the children chose chairs and sat down. Mr. Reid looked around the room. "Shhhh," he said. "Listen carefully. What do you hear? Do you hear something outside? Do you hear something inside? Do you hear someone talking? Do you hear noises?"

Everyone was very quiet. Everyone listened.

"I hear someone walking in the hall," Jen said.

"I hear someone talking outside the window," Don added.

"I hear music somewhere," Neal said.

"I heard someone cough," Ana said.

"There are all kinds of sounds," Mr. Reid said. "Some of them make us happy. Some make us sad. We like some sounds. We don't like other sounds. We don't all like the same sounds, though. And we don't all like the same kind of music, either. Some music is played on instruments. Some music is for singing. Some music is for both. Can you think of some instruments?"

"A piano."

"A flute."

"A guitar."

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"A drum."

"A violin."

The children kept naming all the instruments they could remember. They were surprised at how many instruments they could name. Mr. Reid wrote them on the marker board. After a while, they couldn't think of any more instruments. Maybe there weren't any more instruments.

"And there are many, many more instruments," Mr. Reid said. He wrote some on the board - sitar, balalaika, nose flute, pan pipes, soprillo, tromboon, jug, and tuhu. "And that's just a few of them. Most countries have instruments that are used only in that country."

"There must be lots of music, then," Lars said.

"Yes, there is. You might be surprised where you can hear music," Mr. Reid said. "This week I want you to listen everywhere you go. Listen for music. Every time you hear music, write down where you are. We will put our lists together next Friday. We will see how many different places we heard music."

The children went back to Miss Lennon's classroom. Neal was thinking about where he might hear music. He could hear it on his MP3 player. On television. At the football game. He was going to listen to sounds all week. He was going to have the longest list ever!

When was the last time you heard music? Universal Music Day is October 10. Take some time that day to listen to music. Play an instrument yourself. Sing with some friends. Whatever you do on

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that day, just be sure to enjoy the music!

Music! Music! Music!

Questions

___ 1. What grade was Neal in?

- A. kindergarten
- B. second
- C. first
- D. third

___ 2. Who was Neal's music teacher?

- A. Mr. Reid
- B. Mr. Lennon
- C. Miss Lennon
- D. Miss Able

___ 3. At what time did the children go to music class?

- A. 2:00
- B. 2:30
- C. 1:30
- D. 1:00

4. After the children sat down, what did Mr. Reid ask them to do?

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___ 5. Who heard someone cough?

- A. Neal
- B. Jen
- C. Don
- D. Ana

6. Name two instruments Mr. Reid added when the children could not think of any more.

___ 7. The children left music class and went back to _____ classroom.

- A. Mr. Adams's
- B. Mr. Reid's
- C. Ms. Beck's
- D. Miss Lennon's

___ 8. What is the date for Universal Music Day?

- A. October 10
- B. August 10
- C. April 10
- D. June 10

Tell about a time when music made you feel happy or sad.
