



cricket

®

slam

bump

bam

hump



The
POWER
of
MUSIC

RR



I'LL NEED THE
PERFECT MUSIC
FOR MY NEXT
PERFORMANCE.



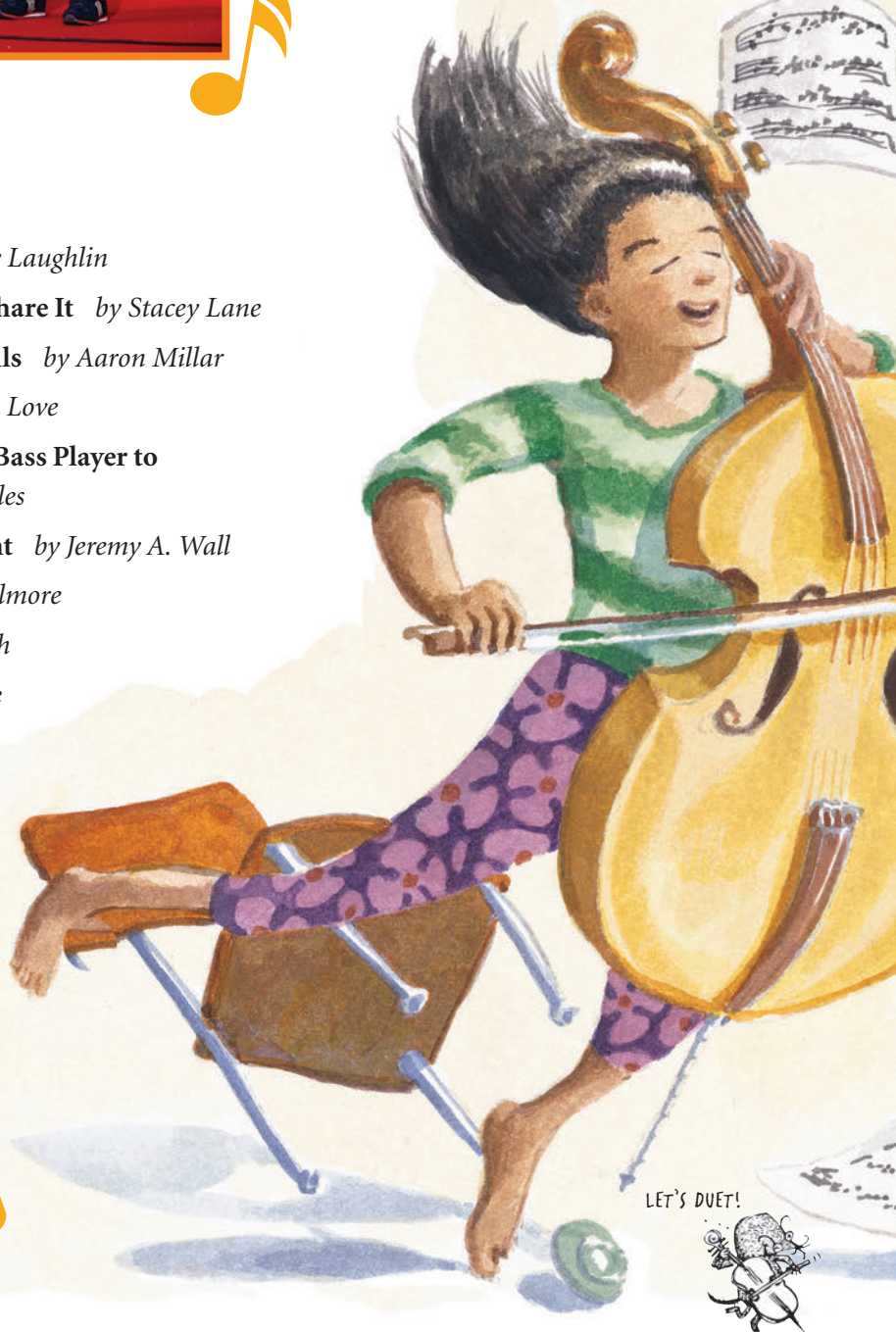
HOW DO YOU KNOW...
WHEN A SONG
FEELS JUST RIGHT?



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cricket

A Realm of Imagination and Exploration

July/August 2026 Volume 53 Number 6

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Laura "Imagine" Woodsie
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Shavan "Golden" Spears
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A Song of Cricket Country

DOES ANYBUGGY WANT TO PLAY A DUET WITH ME? WE COULD HAVE A CONCERT.



OOOOOHH, A CONCERT! I CAN SEE IT NOW— BRIGHT LIGHTS, ALL EYES FIXED ON ME, ME, ME!

NOT JUST YOU, IF IT'S A DUET.

AND ISN'T IT THE MUSIC THAT COUNTS...

...AT A CONCERT?

OH, I'LL BORROW SOMETHING FROM THE SCHOOL. IT DOESN'T MATTER...

WHAT? YES IT DOES!

WHAT INSTRUMENT DO YOU PLAY, LADYBUG?



IT TAKES YEARS OF PRACTICE TO LEARN AN INSTRUMENT.

AND LOTS OF REHEARSALS FOR A FINE PERFORMANCE!

I PICK THINGS UP VERY QUICKLY. YOU KNOW ME.

YES, WE DO. (SIGH)

I DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THIS.

SOMETHING TELLS ME IT'LL SOUND WORSE, VERY SOON.



EEK! THESE STRAINS HAVE SPRAINED MY BRAIN.

WHAT'S THAT TERRIBLE SHRIEKING?

GHOSTS WAILING?

HYENAS HOWLING? BANSHEES SCREAMING?

NO, IT'S LADYBUG.

SEE? I'M A NATURAL.

EEEE! IT'S WORSE THAN I THOUGHT. THE PAIN, THE PAIN!

MAYBE ZOOT SHOULD GIVE YOU LESSONS BEFORE THE CONCERT.

WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE SUCH PUNISHMENT?

AND PRACTICE WITH YOU.

YOU'RE JUST ENVIDIOUS! IT'S THE BURDEN OF ALL GREAT ARTISTS.



YOU'LL BE SORRY WHEN THE WORLD IS TRANSPORTED BY MY ART!

OH, NO!

LOOK OUT!

SOMEBUGGY'S ABOUT TO BE TRANSPORTED, AND IT'S NOT THE WORLD!

RUN, MUSIC LOVERS!

LET GO OF THE VIOLIN, LADYBUG, OR YOU'LL BE CARRIED AWAY, TOO!

JUST LET UGLY STEAL MY MUSIC? MY ART? MY FAME!

YES, PLEASE...

LET GO, LADYBUG, LET GO!



Why Does MUSIC Matter?

Dear Reader,

Have you ever had a song stuck in your head all day, popping up out of nowhere?

The other day, I put on Harry Styles's "Treat People with Kindness," and before the chorus even hit, I felt my mood shift. Just like that. Why does music have that kind of power?

How can sound—just vibrations in the air—make you feel something so strongly or bring back a memory in an instant? In this issue, you'll explore that mystery, from what's happening in your brain when you hear a song to a few surprising things music can do. You'll also meet musicians experimenting and sharing their work in unexpected ways.

We'd love to know: What's a song that has a grip on you right now, and why? You might see your answer in a future issue.

Keep listening!

Joseph Taylor



SUMMERTIME, AND THE LIVIN' IS BREEZY

I'm currently writing this from California, and late summer here is *tough*. We're getting lots of wind, rain, and boiling hot sun, but I'm still enjoying the summer days. This year I'll be starting a new school, and I'm really excited for all the amazing things it has, like its library!

This is my first time writing to "Letterbox." My dad got me *Cricket* when I was eight, but I have only recently gotten another subscription. I love seeing everyone in "Letterbox" share their stories!

I don't have a favorite season. My favorite time of year is late spring/early summer, which is probably the laziest time of year weather-wise. There are gentle rainy days and warm sunny days, as well as spring break and summer break.

Thanks so much, Everybuggy!

—Tiger Sun



It's been hot here in Cricket Country too. We try to keep cool by hopping, running, or flying through the sprinkler whenever we can.

HOME SWEET HOME

Hi, Everybuggy. I loved the November/December 2025 issue! I've also recently moved, so the meaning of home is a really interesting topic to me. Did you know

that the English word *home* likely comes from proto-Indo-European words meaning either "be at rest" or "dwell"? I think both express the meaning of home well, but honestly, I prefer the first. Does anyone have any stories or trivia about homes?

—Zahra / age 14 / Texas



I must say, I share your preference about the meaning of home, Zahra.

TURNING PAGES

This is the first time I've ever written to *Cricket* magazine. I am in love with reading

magazines, books, particularly interesting articles, and whatever else I can get my hands on. (Almost everyone in the Land of Page-Turner, where I come from, is like this.)

One of my favorite book series is Harry Potter. My fave characters are Hermione, Ginny, and (naturally) Harry Potter. I also like *Keeper of the Lost Cities*—still on book one, and my fave characters are Sophie, Dex, and possibly Elwin. My fave special elvin ability is telepathy, though there are some drawbacks to the ability.

I don't really mind what you do or don't put in the magazine, as long as it's a blast to read. **MAKE IT INTERESTING!!!!** (It's in all caps for a reason.)

—N. L. / age 10 /
Land of Page-Turner

LOOP-DE-LOOP

I would like to talk about my total obsession: RIDES (especially the rollercoasters at Knott's Berry Farm). I also love music, art, math, dogs and cats, dancing, science, reading, crocheting, and most things that I try, but I especially LOVE rides. When I saw the picture on the first page of the May/June 2025 issue of *Muse*,



Home sweet home for someone

I screamed “rollercoasters!!!” and ran up to my room to read it.

It all started when my family started to go to our local county fair, which, of course has LOTS of rides (but not enough rollercoasters). Then, last summer I convinced my family to get passes to Knott’s, and now I am a complete and utter ride FAN. My favorite rides there are Silver Bullet, HangTime, and Supreme Scream (yes, it did take me a while to be brave enough to ride them). Thanks for reading my letter, and I won’t threaten my way into the magazine. After all, I can always make my own magazine and publish my letter there.

—**Silver Bullet (aka Noelle A.) / age 13 / California**



*I love coasters too!
Spinning, turning,
twisting, speeding...
There's nothing like it.*

VERY FISHY

Hello, all beings. I’ve haunted “Letterbox” for ages. I’ve written several times years ago under a different name.

I saw in the November/December 2025 issue that Aspiring Maud brought up AI responding to Firefly. I 100 percent agree with you, though I’d personally use even stronger words of distaste. I am in community college, and in my English class my term paper is on the problems generative AI causes in the art community.

I used to want to be an author and digital designer/artist. But now, my work might not be safe from being copied by AI, and it wouldn’t even be seen as valuable by many people anymore, so I’ve changed my life plans. My current career goal is now to be a helicopter pilot for fire prevention, and on the side make cosplays on commission. My writing and my art will remain mine. I won’t stop creating, though, and I encourage artists who see this to fight back against AI and keeping doing what you do.



I would love to see some stories targeted towards older teens in *Cricket*, by the way—I know I’m not the target audience anymore, but *Cricket* is super nostalgic for me.

Another reason I’m writing is about the story *The Attic Door* in the November/December 2025 issue. I keep fish, I have several tanks in fact, and fishbowls are not an ethical option. No fish should be in a tank smaller than five gallons. Yes, even bettas—none of that “well they live in puddles in the wild, so this gallon jar should be great” stuff, please. Goldfish aren’t going to remain small for long, by the way.

The owner in that story is going to need a 75-gallon tank before too many months have passed, as many kinds can get over a foot long and most to at least six inches. I do have to say, I laughed out loud when she said she named the fish Larry, Moe, and Curly—that’s what I named my otocinclus catfish juveniles when I got them this summer! I guess I’m just not that original. :)

Anyone else who’s a *Cricket* fan and fishkeeper? Anyone named any of their fishes after one of the bugs? I’m tempted to, but as I feed my fishes fruit flies occasionally, I would feel like I was inciting cannibalism!

—**Coyote / age 17 Roshar years / sent via raven from Berkianforest**



*Please say hello to your
fish from everybuggy
—especially from me.*

BOING!

Hello, people of the universe! (Or things, not trying to offend anyone here.) Anyway, I am Robin, Secretary of the Kingdom of Fluffluffla. I have been sent by the king to write an email about bouncy balls and how absolutely *magnitacular* (magnificent and spectacular) they are! Here in Fluffluffla, bouncy balls are EVERYWHERE. Heck, my



Aww . . . fennec foxes!

uncle is a jumbo-sized cyan bouncy ball! But no one here knows anything about them. AT ALL. Point is, recently, things have gotten a little . . . out of hand with some experiments. I am not advised to say anything about them, and we want and need more information on bouncy balls and plastic in general. The king has requested that a magazine in the hopefully near future will be about plastic and bouncy balls. Have a good day.

—Robin / age 10 /
Kingdom of Fluffluffla

P.S. Please make the magazine soon, as the bouncy balls have started to spontaneously combust whenever they touch, and it is a huge problem.



*Your letter bounced
right into our Letterbox.
And kept on bouncing.
This phenomenon will
require further study!*

WHAT DOES THE FENNEC FOX SAY?

I think you should do an article on fennec foxes. They are so interesting, cute, cuddly, and fuzzy. You could measure how many are disappearing and how many are born. It would help people to know if it's OK or not to put more of their predators into the habitat. Why should you? Because I want you to talk about the ways to help expand their species. Why? Because we need to keep nature alive. If one animal disappears, it could affect the whole food chain. If you publish my article, I will be over the moon. If you don't, I will send a flock of pigeons to poop on your headquarters.

—Adeline D. / age 7 / Colorado

Something to say?

We'd like to hear from you. Email your letter to **Letterbox** at **cricket@cricketmedia.com**. Letters may be lightly edited.

CHIRPS FROM CHATTERBOX

Discovering new music is one of the best things in the world.

—pangolin / Down to Earth

That unspeakable sense of satisfaction when you print out the first 15, most important pages of the story you're working on and you realize that the past five months of hard work are really leading up to something, it's just that you couldn't even begin to wrap your mind around it until the nigh-perfect text is sitting in your hands and you're able to touch it and flip the pages . . . such is the joy of creation at its finest! The euphoria of bringing your dreams in organized fashion out of the chaotic mental realm and into the real world!

—Zealatom / Down to Earth

I love musical theater!!! My all-time favorite musical is absolutely *Anastasia*! Everything about it—the story progression, the character development, THE MUSIC—is so incredible. It was also the first musical I did with my theater group, so now I have an emotional attachment to that show.

—Tealeaf / Pudding's Place

I play piano. I usually play classical music, specifically sad and beautiful classical. But sometimes I'll find something sad and pretty that's from more recently, and I play those sorts of songs too.

—The Elephant Spirit /
Down to Earth

TO OUR CBERS

We're grateful to our Chatterbox users for all they've created and shared over the years. With Chatterbox's closure in June, we'd love to hear a favorite memory from your experience on Chatterbox. We'll publish as many as we can. Email it to **Letterbox** at **cricket@cricketmedia.com**.

True stories that made us look twice

» MOON SHOT

AROUND THE MOON— AND BACK AGAIN!

NASA ASTRONAUTS SET A NEW DISTANCE RECORD
ON HISTORIC MOON MISSION.

For the first time in more than 50 years, humans traveled around the moon. During their 10-day mission, NASA's Artemis II crew looped around the moon before safely returning to Earth.

The astronauts didn't land on the moon. Instead, they tested systems for future deep-space missions, helping prepare NASA for upcoming moon landings. Along

the way, the crew saw unforgettable sights: the far side of the moon, a glowing Earth hanging in space, and a dramatic eclipse as Earth briefly blocked the sun.

From deep space, the astronauts could look back and see Earth shining in the darkness. Our bright blue world seemed both tiny and precious.



Earthset, as captured from inside the Orion spacecraft



DID YOU KNOW?

The Orion spacecraft can travel from New York to Los Angeles in under 10 minutes at top speed!

This news section now only includes stories that are real!



>> MUSIC-MAKING

EIGHT YEARS OLD AND A GRAMMY WINNER

AURA V SETS RECORD, WINNING A TOP MUSIC PRIZE WITH HER DAD.

Eight-year-old **Aura V** made Grammy history as the youngest credited winner ever. She took home a Grammy alongside her dad, musician Fyütch (pronounced like the start of *future*). Their album, *Harmony*, won Best Children's Music Album this year.

The album features songs that celebrate imagination, learning, and self-expression. Working together in the studio, Aura V and her dad wrote, sang, and recorded the songs. They wanted to help kids feel confident and curious about the world.

Their win shows that big talent—and big achievements—don't have an age limit.



"We did it. We just did this," Aura said after winning the Grammy with her dad. "Is this a dream? Somebody, pinch me."

 **LISTEN IN**

Meet Aura and watch her dad, Fyütch, perform at

sensicaltv.com/aura

View safely on
sensical
CRICKET MEDIA



COBRAS TRAVELING ON TRAINS IN INDIA

SNAKES ON TRAINS MIGHT SOUND LIKE A MOVIE—BUT IT’S REALLY HAPPENING IN INDIA.

Researchers have found king cobras far from the forests where they usually live. Many were spotted near railway tracks or even inside train cars. Between 2002 and 2024, scientists recorded 47 king cobras in one region. Five were found outside their usual range, and each sighting was close to a railway.

So, how did they get there? Scientists think the snakes may climb aboard while hunting rats or escaping heavy rain.



THINK ABOUT IT

What challenges might animals face when they end up far from their habitat?

Venomous snakes on trains with people aboard can be dangerous. The cobras may also end up in busy places—where people do not expect to find a snake.

DOGS AND HUMANS: AN ANCIENT FRIENDSHIP

SCIENTISTS SAY THE BOND BEGAN EARLIER THAN ONCE THOUGHT.

Humans and dogs may have been best friends for 14,000 to 16,000 years—thousands of years earlier than scientists had thought. Ancient bones and DNA from Ice Age sites show that early dogs were already different from wolves. That means humans and dogs weren’t just living near each other—they already shared a close bond.

Some of the oldest dog remains were found buried alongside humans. That’s a big clue that this connection was true companionship.

As humans traveled, dogs went too. From the very beginning, they weren’t just nearby—they were part of the family.

DID YOU KNOW?

Dogs can learn hundreds of human words.



Talent Sprouts



by Rosemary Laughlin
Illustrated by Rachel Dougherty

MY DAD BELIEVED in responsibility! Independence! New experiences!

I have to admit the examples from his youth fascinated me.

He specialized in his adventures growing up in Omaha in the early 1900s. His brothers threw him into Carter Lake to teach him to swim. His family kept a cow named Lily Whiteflower. At age four, he led her into the garage one summer to milk for home-made ice cream. He practiced baseball with his older brother, who eventually pitched as “Fastball Paul” in a minor league.

On and on! He used those stories to urge us children to fresh achievements. Of course, my sister Martha could make a skating rink on an empty neighborhood lot. Yes, brother Ted could enter the newspaper’s Mother’s Day poetry contest and win.

One day, Daddy came home from work early and saw me watching a local TV

show—*Talent Sprouts*, a daily contest for kids 14 and under. Four performances filled the half hour from 5:00 to 5:30 p.m. You might watch anything from a violin solo to a magic show. At the end, the performers were spotlighted, and KMTV’s judges named a winner. On Fridays, the Monday-through-Thursday winners competed to be Winner of the Week.

It didn’t take Daddy long to look me in the eye. “You should go on *Talent Sprouts*. You can play ‘Ave Maria.’ Think of it—an unforgettable experience to be on TV as an 11-year-old!”

I quailed. I didn’t want to. I was basically shy. But I knew it would be useless to argue. He was already off on his story about being a camel in a grade-school play about the Magi. He made the audience laugh with camel behavior that he’d read about. Braying loudly, he kicked out one leg at a time. He sniffed

A TALENT SHOW!?
LET’S DO IT!



EEEK! QUAIL MEANS TO SHRINK
WITH FEAR.

ARPEGGIOS ARE NOTES
OF A CHORD PLAYED
IN RAPID SUCCESSION.

at the pot of frankincense held out as a gift. He lay down and stubbornly refused to get up when the Magi returned from visiting the Christ Child. He embellished a bit more every time he told the story.



While he relived the hilarious glory of his performance, I thought about making the best of it. I did know Schubert's "Ave Maria" in an easy version that used two hands to simplify those famous arpeggios. I did have it memorized. Daddy always sang the words when he was around. He loved that song.

When my piano teacher agreed that I could handle the show, I mailed my application with the required information.

I had almost forgotten about it when the notice came for an audition time on a Saturday afternoon. Daddy said part of being independent and responsible was to go by myself. Luckily, the bus went right by the KMTV studios.

So that Saturday I checked in at the desk and sat down to wait. I was soon called.

The host of *Talent Sprouts*, Lew Jeffrey, and the musical director, Warren Rudd, welcomed me. I recognized the set. They described the routine for the participants and told me I could begin to play my piece.

Into the eighth measure, I saw Warren Rudd nod to Lew Jeffrey. That gave me confidence, and I relaxed.

Daddy was over the moon when I told him I had been assigned a day to perform less than two weeks away. Still, I was anxious about my talent. I knew I had an easy arrangement. I could never have played Schubert's original.

Watching a contestant perform Durand's "Waltz in E-flat Major" made me feel very small indeed. I decided not to tell anyone outside my family about the show.

"LADY OF SPAIN" WAS A POPULAR
SONG IN THE 1930S AND '40S.



When my Monday came, I again took the bus to KMTV. Mother was teaching, and Daddy was out of town on business.

Everything was familiar this time. It was interesting to watch the bustle in the studio to keep a schedule to the exact minute. The crew pushed big cameras on wheels and adjusted lights. Warren Rudd filled in with music from his Hammond organ.

First to perform was a boy with an accordion. He zipped through "Lady of Spain."

Next was a girl who did baton twirling. She added flags and acrobatic moves.





I was next. I sat by Lew Jeffrey at his desk. He asked my age, school, and what piece I would play. “And who will be watching you today?”

“My piano teacher and my family. But my dad is out of town in Lincoln. He says he will be watching me from a television store.” I could almost hear him cheering from 60 miles away.

Confident, I went to the piano and began to play. Easy, so easy! Fun almost . . . right up to the coda at the end.

I suddenly realized I should not be at the end! My heart jumped to my mouth. I had skipped a part. A huge part. How did that happen?

Somehow my brain went to work. I visualized the music. Ah, yes, page two. How could I get smoothly back and fill in those measures? There were eight or more.

I didn’t. I couldn’t figure a bridge fast enough. I hit the concluding chord three times in a diminuendo, making it fade—

A **CODA** IS A CONCLUDING PASSAGE
AT THE END OF A COMPOSITION. . . .



and just stopped playing. My performance had probably lasted barely a minute.

At least I had the presence of mind to smile at the camera before its red light went off.

Three sisters in cute white cowgirl outfits followed with a song-and-dance routine to “Buttons and Bows.”

Their act won. We remaining contestants each received an official Certificate of Participation.

I waited for the bus and thought about it all. I surprised myself by feeling more relieved than disappointed. I could not pretend that my performance was best. In truth, the other three were far superior.

I started to think of my lapse as “The Big Skip.” I laughed when I called it that to my music teacher.

She was very nice. “It may not have been noticed by someone who doesn’t know



A **DIMINUENDO** IS A GRADUAL REDUCTION
IN FORCE OR LOUDNESS. “BUTTONS AND
BOWS” WON THE ACADEMY AWARD FOR
BEST SONG IN 1947.





Schubert's 'Ave Maria.' Your movement was smooth. You didn't fall apart. All in all, a worthwhile experience."

She sounded just like Daddy. In fact, he had only seen me, not heard me. The Lincoln television store had closed and only showed a muted KMTV in the window display. Daddy had imagined a lovely, complete piece.

I was very glad I hadn't spread the word of my appearance. I would avoid sympathy or scorn.

At recess the next day, Chad Larson came up to me. The boys called him "Crybaby" because tears came quickly after some disappointment or other. Then he would get angry. Everyone left him alone. What did he want?

He grinned. "I saw you on TV."

Uh-oh. My failure was about to be broadcast to my classmates. The humiliation I dreaded would surely follow. I gulped.

But before I could defend myself or apologize for my performance, he continued, "You should've told people you were going to be on. You were good."

His generosity touched me. Almost shocked me. He knew otherwise. He played piano. We had the same teacher. I had heard him in recitals, several levels higher than mine.

I had a flash realization. Chad also knew how it felt to be mocked.

I got some poise, humor, and self-knowledge from the experience on *Talent Sprouts*. But from Chad's words I got more than I would have from perfect playing or winning the competition.

Kindness, like talent, begins with sprouts. 

WRITE ABOUT IT

Have you ever tried something that didn't go perfectly, but it still helped you grow? What happened?



KATE MICUCCI

Make It and Share It

Weird is not bad. Weird is great. It's fun to be silly and it's fun to have fun.

Kate Micucci wants to put a smile on your face. That's her goal for all her artistic projects, and she's not afraid to be silly to do it.

She gets excited when she's writing a new song. She lights up when she has a paintbrush and a blank canvas. She loves acting in movies and TV shows—and enjoys voicing characters like Velma in *Scooby-Doo* and Webby in *DuckTales*.

After her son was born, Micucci decided to share her joy by making her first children's album. *My Hat* celebrates the wonderfully weird and looks at the everyday in new ways.



... starting young



Micucci read *Cricket* magazine when she was a kid, and now she's in it!

What made you want to make music?

My mom is a piano teacher, so music was always in my house. Since the age of four, piano lessons were a part of my life every day.

With piano having such a big role in your childhood, why did you choose to play the ukulele?

I was visiting my aunt and uncle in Hawaii. I was missing my piano. My grandpa took me to the music store and bought me my first ukulele. Little did I know it was going to be such an important part of my life.

How do you start creating a new song?

A phrase with a little melody just hits me. Then I'll go: Wait. What was that? Hello.

I'll talk to it a little bit and figure out if it's a song.

My brain works with melody first. That comes in waves. Usually, that first verse and chorus come together out of nowhere.

Let's Go!

From music and comedy to puppetry and picture books, Kate Micucci brings imagination to everything she creates.



Let's See It!

Micucci is also a visual artist. She paints murals and takes things that were thrown away and turns them into art.

I figure out the lyrics after that, once I know what I am writing about. Then I have to figure out the rest, like a puzzle.

"A phrase with a little melody just hits me. Then I'll go: Wait. What was that? Hello. I'll talk to it a little bit and figure out if it's a song."

What inspired one of the songs from your album *My Hat*?

Even the most whimsical ones come from something that I experienced. "Mr. Moon" came from when I was driving down the road. I watched a full moon look like it fell into the ocean. I thought to myself, what are the fish thinking right now?



Let's Listen!

Mikey can be heard saying, "That's great, Mom!" at the end of the "King of the World" recording.

What's one of your favorite lyrics on the album?

One of my favorite lyrics is from "King of the World." I say, "Finally, I get to finish this song."

I started writing "King of the World" 12 years before I had a kid in my life. I thought, I am writing this for my son. I am going to stop and work on this once I actually have a son. So, I had "King of the World" living in my head for a long time. Then when I had Mikey, I could finish writing the song for him.

I sing it to him every night before bed.

What has been most exciting about releasing *My Hat*?

One of my most exciting days ever was the first time we performed the album live at Bob Baker Marionette Theater. I had a whole band behind me. My son was playing guitar next to me. The puppets were dancing around me. All the kids were jumping. It felt like this is what I want to do. This is the best thing ever.

I love performing because you get this immediate reaction when you look out and see people smiling or kids wiggling in their seats. Then I know the thing I made that I am sharing is connecting with other people. That is the ultimate goal.

What would you say to someone who's afraid to share what they make?

You don't need much. With just a pencil and paper, you can express whatever you want to express. You can make a song easily. You don't even need an instrument. You can make a song with your voice and drumming or whatever you have at your house to make noise.

It doesn't have to be perfect to share it, as long as you feel like it is something worth sharing. Keep making things. Share what you make and bring joy to people.

If you could give your nine-year-old self some advice, what would you say?

Don't quit. There will be days when you don't want to practice the piano. But just keep at it. You will be so glad you did. 

PUPPET POWER!

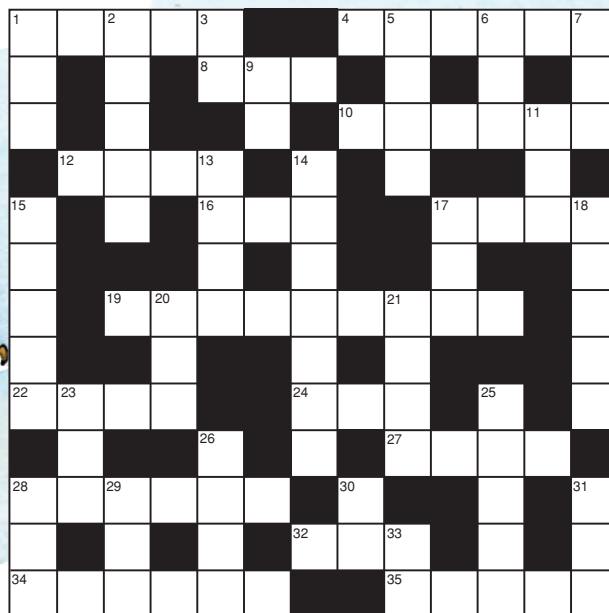
The album cover for *My Hat* and the music video for the title song feature a puppet named Camille. Micucci has been performing with Camille for 25 years. Camille is the inspiration for the puppet in Micucci's new picture book, *The Monster and Puppet Show!*

Micucci says she is drawn to puppetry because she enjoys giving life to lifeless objects. Since she was a kid, she has been making puppets and putting on shows. Doing different voices for her puppets led her to doing animated films and TV shows.

Isn't it nice to make a thing?
Anything you wanna make,
Think of the joy
that thing
will bring
to everyone
you know!

—Lyrics from "Isn't It Nice"





Answers on page 55

Across

1. Ensemble of musicians
4. Electric or acoustic six-stringed instrument
8. Short for *amplifier*
10. Musical term that means "slowly, leisurely"
12. Country singer Johnny _____
16. Belonging to us
17. Big _____ music was popular in the 1930s
19. Leader of a symphony orchestra
22. Double-reed woodwind instrument
24. Short for "I owe you"
27. Rock-'n'- _____
28. Rates of speed in a musical composition
32. Short for *popular music*
34. Vocalist
35. _____ music is printed on unbound pieces of paper

THAT IS NO
WAY TO PLAY
A STRINGED
INSTRUMENT!



MAYBE UGLY'S TRYING TO
EXPRESS HIMSELF.



Down

1. Rock band's engagement
2. Keyboard instrument used in churches
3. Johann Sebastian Bach is often called _____ pa Bach
5. Reverse what's been done
6. _____, you're it!
7. _____ de Janeiro
9. Do, re, _____
11. Small hotel
13. Trumpet
14. Rock-band fan
15. A disc jockey plays music on the _____
17. What a ghost says
18. Ringo's instrument
20. Lyric poem
21. Band's concert trek
23. Honey maker
25. An _____ but goodie
26. Musical sound or tone
28. "My country, _____ of thee"
29. Adult male
30. Opposite of yes
31. Group of songs performed by a band
33. Short for *postscript*

YEAH—WITH ALL THE
MUSICAL TALENT OF
A WOOD CHIPPER.



by Tingle Castellon
& Tangle Conahan

WHEN A SONG GIVES YOU CHILLS

by Aaron Millar



WHY MUSIC MAKES YOU FEEL THE WAY YOU DO

Imagine you're directing a movie. A girl walks through a dark house. The stairs creak. Shadows move along the wall. What music would you choose?

Now picture a fast car chase through a busy city. Then imagine a lost dog finding its way home. Would you use the same music for all three scenes?

Probably not. Different kinds of music create different feelings. Songs can make us feel calm, nervous, excited, or brave. Some can even bring tears to our eyes.

But why does music affect us so strongly?

MUSIC AND THE BODY

Emotions don't just happen in your mind—they affect your body too. Music can change your heart rate and your breathing. It can even alter your body temperature.

Fast, energetic music can make your heart beat faster and give you more energy. Slow, gentle music can help your body relax. That's why people listen to upbeat music while exercising and softer music when they want to rest.

Your body responds to music right away. But some of the most complex reactions happen in the brain.

TRY IT

Play your favorite
upbeat song.
Does your heart beat faster?
Do you want to move?



MUSIC THERAPY

For thousands of years, people have used music to help others feel better. Today, scientists are learning more about how it works.

When you listen to music, many parts of your brain become active at once. These areas control movement, memory, language, and emotion.

Because of this, music can help in different ways. Rhythm can help people move more easily. Singing can help people practice language. Music can also help people understand and express emotions.

Doctors and therapists use music to help the brain build new connections and strengthen important skills. Music can help the brain help itself.



MUSIC AND THE BRAIN

Music builds moment by moment as you listen, instead of happening all at once. While a song plays, your brain pays attention to what you're hearing while also guessing what might come next.

As you listen to music, your brain notices patterns—like rhythms, melodies, and repeated sounds. Over time, it learns how those patterns usually work.

NOT ALL MUSIC WORKS THE SAME WAY

These musical “rules” are not the same everywhere. Different cultures use different musical patterns and sounds. By around age five, most children have already developed a basic understanding of the music they hear most often.

This early learning shapes how you respond to music later in life. A song that feels exciting or emotional to one person may sound unfamiliar to someone else.



You don't just hear music—you feel it.

SURPRISE! EXPECTATION AND EMOTION

One reason music can feel so powerful is surprise. As you listen to a song, your brain starts to expect what will happen next.

When music builds toward a big moment—like a beat drop or chorus—you can feel that anticipation growing. When the moment finally arrives, it can feel exciting and satisfying.

Music can also surprise us by changing in an unexpected way. A sudden shift in rhythm, melody, or volume can create strong emotional reactions too.

These moments—when expectations are met or broken—are often when people feel chills.

TRY IT

Play a song you like. Pause it before a big moment. Can you predict what will happen next?

MUSIC AND EMOTION

Music can send feelings quickly—even in just a few seconds. Some musical patterns sound bright and cheerful, while others sound darker or more serious. You don't have to study music to notice the difference—your brain picks it up right away.

Other parts of music shape how it feels too. High notes can feel exciting or tense, while lower notes can feel calm or heavy. Fast music often feels energetic, while slower music can feel peaceful or thoughtful.

Even instruments create different moods. An electric guitar can feel very different from a flute or violin.

THE POWER OF PERFORMANCE

Music isn't only about what we hear—it's also about what we see. When you watch someone perform, you can often feel what they're feeling. If a singer looks excited, you may feel that energy too. If they seem calm or emotional, you may feel that as well.

This is called empathy—sharing someone else's feelings. It's one reason live performances can feel so powerful.



Emotion shows, even with the sound off.

WHY WE DON'T ALL HEAR THE SAME SONG

Even when people listen to the same music, they don't always react the same way. A song that gives one person chills might not affect someone else at all. Part of this comes from experience. A song might remind you of a memory, a place, or a person, making your reaction stronger.

Culture plays a role too. People around the world use different sounds, rhythms, and instruments. What feels exciting or emotional in one place might feel unfamiliar in another. We don't just hear music—we bring our own experiences to it.

One song can bring different feelings.



WHY MUSIC FEELS SO DEEP

Music can affect your body, your brain, and your emotions all at the same time. That's part of what makes it feel so powerful.

As you listen, your brain notices patterns, reacts to surprises, and connects sounds to memories and experiences. Your body responds too, with changes in heart rate or breathing.

WRITE IT

What songs would be on your soundtrack?

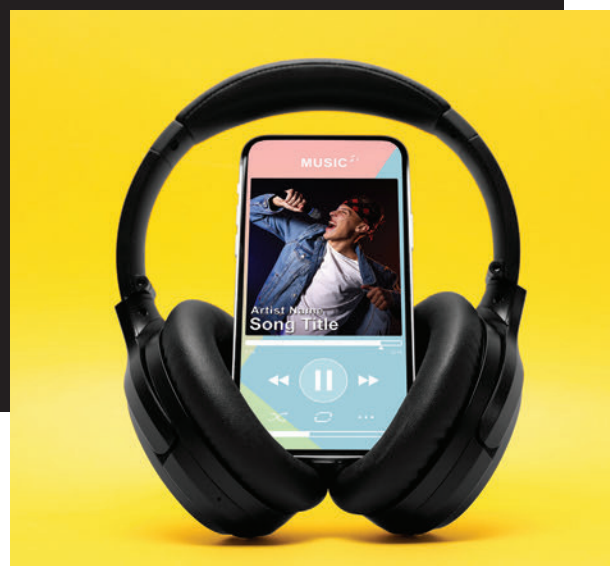
WHAT YOUR PLAYLIST CAN SAY ABOUT YOU

Your music choices can reflect parts of your personality, but they never tell the whole story.

People are not just one thing. The same person might choose different kinds of music at different times—even on the same day. A quiet morning, a long car ride, or a celebration with friends might each call for a different soundtrack.

Music can also connect to memories and emotions. That's one reason it can feel so personal.

Instead of putting people into categories, think of music as a way to explore who you are. Trying new types of music can introduce you to new ideas, cultures, and emotions. Your playlist can change over time—as you do too.



Together, these reactions can create strong feelings in just a few moments. Music can make your heart race, calm you down, or even bring a tear to your eye.

Even when the notes are the same, the experience is always your own. 🐛

MUSIC MASHUP

MIX, MATCH,
AND REMIX MUSIC
STYLES—THEN CREATE
YOUR OWN SOUND!

MIX THE GENRES

What happens when you blend two kinds of music?

Try these mashups and invent your own!

EXAMPLE:

★ Pop + Opera = *Popera*

★ Country + Electronic = *Cowboytronica*

★ Hip-Hop + Folk = _____

★ Rock + Jazz = _____

★ Electronic + Classical = _____

★ Rap + Blues = _____

★ Reggae + Funk = _____

YOUR TURN:

_____ + _____ =

What would your new kind of music sound like?



NAME YOUR BAND

Every band needs a name.

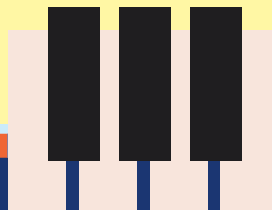
Try one or make your own!

★ The _____ Squad

⚡ The Electric _____

🎧 DJ _____

and the _____



CREATE YOUR ALBUM COVER

Give your music collection a title and a look.

ALBUM TITLE:

TYPE OF MUSIC (YOUR MASHUP):

Draw your album cover here!

WRITE SOME SONG LYRICS

YOUR HIT SONG:

What is it about? _____

Mood of the song (happy, chill, energetic, sad, etc.): _____

Write a few lines of lyrics:

THE CATCHY PART: Write the lines listeners will repeat!



How Songs Become Hits!

by Kenneth Wagner

Billboard's Keith Caulfield explains how songs climb the charts.

WHY DOES A SONG suddenly seem to be everywhere?

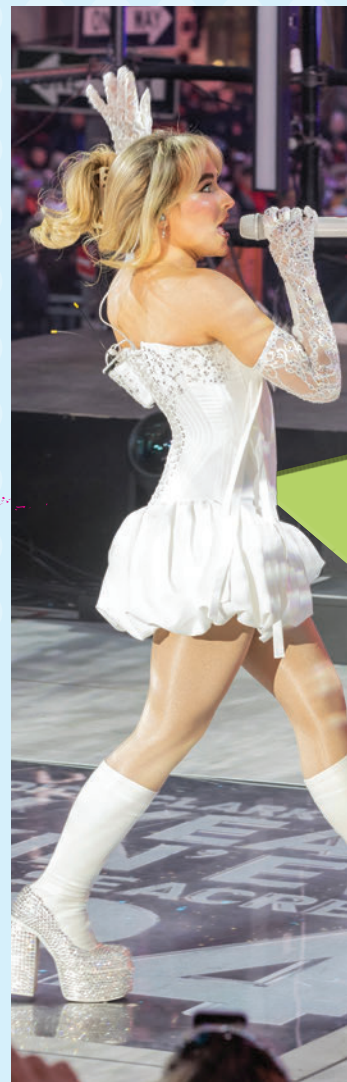
One week hardly anyone is talking about it. The next week it's all over playlists, videos, and the radio.

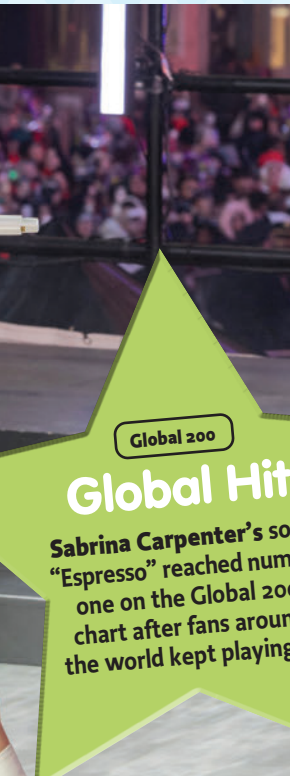
Billboard tracks what people are listening to most to create its famous charts, weekly rankings of the most popular songs and albums. Some songs shoot to the top right away, while others take months, or even years, to become huge hits.

Cricket spoke with Billboard charts manager Keith Caulfield about how songs climb the charts and why fans suddenly can't stop playing them.

How did you end up working on Billboard's charts?

I've always loved music and Billboard's charts. I interned at Billboard while I was in college, and I've been here ever since! Today, I help run Billboard's charts every day.





Global 200

Global Hit

Sabrina Carpenter's song "Espresso" reached number one on the Global 200 chart after fans around the world kept playing it.



“ Sometimes a song can take months—or even years—to reach its peak on the charts. ”



Billboard Hot 100

Record Breaker

Drake has had more songs on the Hot 100 than any other artist ever.



Billboard Hot 100

Chart Takeover

Taylor Swift made history when every song in the Top 10 belonged to her at the same time!



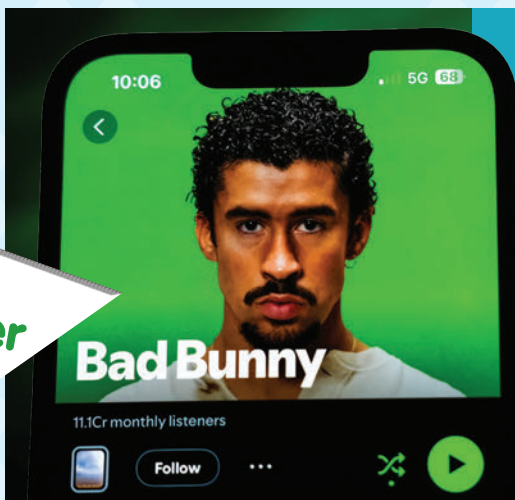
Kid Albums

Kids Couldn't Stop Playing It

As of May, the *Moana* soundtrack has reigned at number one on the Kid Albums chart for 97 weeks.



Photo courtesy of Disney. © 2026 Disney Enterprises, Inc. All Rights Reserved.



Billboard Hot 100

Global 200

Huge Award Boost

After *Bad Bunny* won big at the Grammys and headlined the Super Bowl halftime show, fans streamed his music in huge numbers.

How are the Billboard charts calculated today? Has that changed over time?

Today, computers can track listening and music purchases as they happen. Years ago, Billboard had to collect reports from record stores and radio stations.

What kinds of listening count toward the charts today?

Streams, song purchases, and radio play all count toward Billboard's charts. TikTok videos don't count directly, but songs that become popular there often get streamed a lot too.

What's the difference between the Hot 100, Billboard 200, and Kid Albums charts?

The **Hot 100** tracks songs, the **Billboard 200** tracks albums, and the **Kid Albums** chart focuses on music for younger listeners.

Do some songs take longer to catch on?

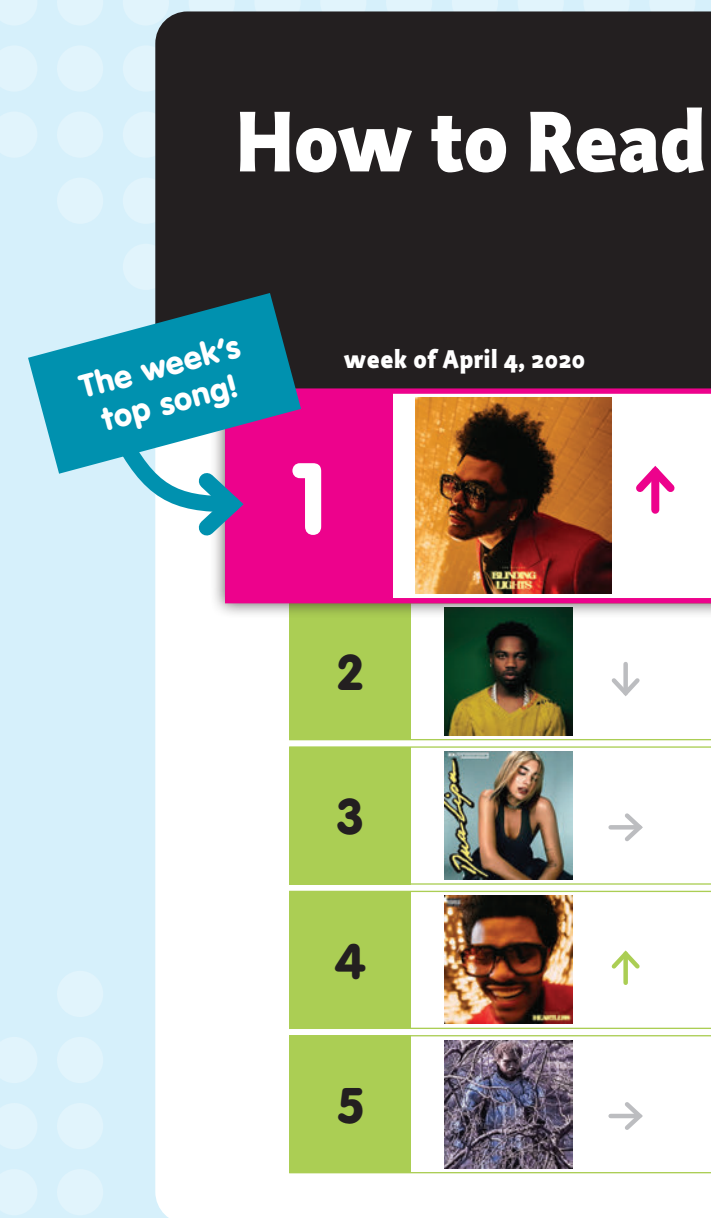
Sometimes a song catches on right away. Other songs build slowly as more and more fans discover and share them. A song can even take months—or years—to become a huge hit.

Does winning a big award help a song or album climb the charts?

Yes. Big performances and award shows can introduce songs to huge audiences, causing more fans to stream the songs and helping them climb the charts.

What advice would you give young artists who want to make the charts?

So many of the artists topping the charts today became successful because they worked very hard to get their music heard. This includes Bad Bunny, Taylor Swift, or the real-life singers behind HUNTR/X from *KPop Demon Hunters*.



What makes a song a “hit” today? Has that changed with streaming?

Today, streaming helps show the songs fans really love because people can listen to their favorite songs again and again. That's helped songs like “We Don't Talk About Bruno” from *Encanto* and “Let It Go” from *Frozen* become huge hits. 🐞

the Billboard Hot 100

The Billboard Hot 100 ranks the most popular songs in the U.S. each week.



The Longest-Running Hit

The Weeknd's song "Blinding Lights" ended up staying on the Hot 100 longer than any other song ever.

	 LAST WEEK	 PEAK POSITION	 WEEKS ON CHART
Blinding Lights The Weeknd 	2	1	17
The Box Roddy Ricch	1	1	16
Don't Start Now Dua Lipa	3	2	21
Heartless The Weeknd	16	1	18
Circles Post Malone	5	1	30

What Do the Numbers Mean?



LAST WEEK

Where the song was on the chart last week



PEAK POSITION

The best (lowest) number this song has reached



WEEKS ON CHART

Number of weeks song has been on the chart



STAR

Song has moved up the chart since previous week

How a Song Explodes!



1

It starts somewhere.
(TikTok, a video, a live show...)



2

Fans stream it.
A LOT.



3

People share it with friends.



4

Radio and playlists notice it.



5

It climbs the charts!



6

Suddenly, EVERYONE is listening to it.

What's on Repeat for You?

What song are you playing again and again?

Do you think it could climb the charts?

Which Star Said It?



A. OLIVIA RODRIGO



B. ED SHEERAN



C. BILLIE EILISH



D. DUA LIPA



1

If I'm gonna tell a real story, I'm gonna start with my name.

This artist grew up in Compton, California, and became known for powerful storytelling rap and songs with meaningful lyrics.

2

When I was 11 or 12, I started writing songs because it's a good way to express your feelings.

This artist recorded early songs at home with a sibling and became known for a soft, layered pop sound.

3

Writing songs helps me process my emotions.

This artist acted in a popular high school TV show and became known for emotional pop songs about heartbreak and growing up.

4

At the heart of it all, I write songs because I like writing songs.

This artist is from England and became famous for acoustic pop songs and fast rap-style lyrics.

Match the quote, crack the clue, then write your own music motto.

These seven singer-songwriters have all had number one hits on a **Billboard** song or album chart. Match each quote to the artist. Use the clues to help!

E. ALICIA KEYS



F. KENDRICK LAMAR



G. HARRY STYLES



5

If you're making what you want to make, then no one can tell you you're unsuccessful.

This artist got started in the band One Direction before launching a solo career filled with pop and rock-inspired songs.

6

I'd always write things down just to get it out of my head . . . to understand it.

This artist began playing piano as a child in New York City and later became known for blending R&B, soul, and pop.

7

You have to believe in your art before anyone else can.

This artist was born in London to Albanian parents and became known for dance-pop hits with powerful beats and catchy choruses.

Your Turn!

Write your music motto.

I make music to . . .

- ☐ tell a true story
- ☐ get a feeling out
- ☐ make people dance
- ☐ speak up
- ☐ remember someone
- ☐ create a new world
- ☐ _____

Music is my way to _____



THE GLASS HARMONICA

CAN THE PLAYING of a musical instrument hypnotize you? Make you tremble in fear? Jane Rosenberg wrote to tell me that all this was said to be true of the glass harmonica, which was invented by Benjamin Franklin 265 years ago.

In 1761, Franklin attended an unusual concert in England played on water glasses. Each glass held a different amount of water, which produced a different note when its rim was rubbed with a wet finger. Enchanted by the delicate sound, Franklin was inspired to create a new design.

Instead of water-filled glasses, he stacked 37 glass bowls of graduated sizes on an iron rod. He then placed the rod sideways in a cabinet, where it could be turned by a foot pedal. musician sitting at the instrument could play different notes by lightly rubbing the rims of the spinning bowls with moistened fingers. Franklin called his instrument the *armonica*, from the Italian word *armonia*, meaning harmony.

The armonica sounded eerie and otherworldly. Some feared its haunting tones, and many a tall tale grew up around it. Musicians were warned against playing it or risk going mad.

The instrument was said to frighten animals, make strong men faint, and drive listeners to tears and shrieks. It was even outlawed in some German cities. A well-known doctor, Franz Anton Mesmer, used it to help hypnotize people.

Still, from the late 18th to early 20th centuries, famous composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, and Strauss wrote about 400 works for the glass harmonica. In our time, the glass harmonica can be heard in ballet and opera music, movie scores, Broadway musicals, rock music, and electronic music.

One of the best examples of the instrument can be heard in Gaetano Donizetti's 1835 opera, *Lucia di Lammermoor*. In the opera, Lucia goes mad. What better instrument to use to show her losing her mind than the glass harmonica?



Playing a glass harmonica today

Old Cricket

THE HUMAN MAP

by Pamela Love, illustrated by Dion MBD

JUST AFTER DAWN, the humans' starboat zoomed away through the clouds. Aliri had expected that, since the humans had arrived on her world just as quickly two months earlier.

What Aliri had not expected was for her younger brother to come running from the village as the starboat's hum faded. "Where are the humans?" Otero panted.

"Gone." Aliri frowned at her brother. Their people almost never ran.

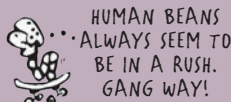
Otero craned his neck, as if he could stretch it to see over the clouds. "Already? They went so quickly."

Aliri returned to picking the berries she was harvesting. "Humans always hurry, rushing around to see this and that. Even their speech is almost too quick to understand."

Otero put his head in his hands. "I thought I had more time."

Aliri had never seen him like this. "We have enough time for everything. Why are you upset?"

"Yesterday, I was watching the humans," Otero began, speaking almost human-quick. "One had a new thing. The human went into the starboat and left it outside. I—I picked up the new thing. I wanted more time to look at it. But the humans have gone before I could return it!"



Now Aliri noticed the new thing sticking out of Otero's pack. "Metal!" That was rare on their world. It was as long as her arm, round as a reed, and covered with many small attachments. "Tell Mother."

Their people had no word for "steal." They valued time most of all, which cannot really be stolen. But they did have a word meaning "wrong." Mother used it now.

"Son, you must use your time to return the new thing to the humans. Anyone who does wrong must make matters right, however much time that takes." She examined the new thing. "It may have an important function on their starboat. Perhaps they will come back for it."

"Wisdom," said Otero, filled with hope. He carefully placed the new thing where he had found it. But by the next afternoon, the humans had not returned.

"Perhaps they cannot," Mother said.

"Perhaps their starboat requires this new thing. You must search for the humans."

"But where?" Otero asked. Their world's heavy cloud cover and thick plant growth made seeing anything at a distance difficult.

Glancing around, hoping to find some clue, Aliri spotted something under a bush. Kneeling, she pulled it out. "This is paper."

The family gathered around her. Paper, like metal, was seldom used by their people. But it did have one important purpose.

"Could this be a human map?" Aliri asked.

Otero tilted his head, considering. "It's so different from ours." Their people's maps



THINK ABOUT IT

Aliri and Otero think the paper is a map—but it looks strange. Why might it look odd to them?

were beautifully accurate, showing every stream, tree, and stone in detail.

"How else would a human map look?" Mother said. "Humans hurry. They would rush, not taking the time to present a true picture of the land. They only drew tiny lines and—"

"Could this squiggle be a river?" Aliri pointed halfway down the map.

Mother stared as if her daughter had grown wings. Their people had no concept of interrupting.

But before she could correct Aliri, Otero said, "Wisdom. Rivers do go this way and that as they flow. They look like squiggles."

There must be a river halfway between us and the humans.”

Mother sighed. “You may be right. You may be wrong.” She looked toward the setting sun. “It is late. We will go home now, and try again tomorrow.”

But although it was time-of-sleep, Aliri’s thoughts tumbled and twisted as she thought of the map’s markings. Humans must think like this. Perhaps to understand how hurrying humans think, we must hurry a little too.

Otero could not sleep either. Soon both were curled up with glow moss and the map. “Rivers flow only to our north and south. Look at this mark.” Aliri touched a swirl in the upper left corner. It curved around a line, small on top, and large below.

“The starboat resembled this shape,” said her brother.

“Wisdom,” said Aliri. “Perhaps this shows where the humans started their journey across our land.”

Otero laughed. Mother muttered and rolled over.

“This is fun,” Otero whispered. His eyes seemed almost as bright as the glow moss.

“So I must go south.”

Aliri was glad to see him looking more hopeful but wasn’t satisfied. “South is a large place” she told him. “Now, consider all these short lines with little black ovals on top. There are so many of them.”

“They look like humans, but without arms or legs,” said Otero. “Humans rush so much they do not even finish drawing themselves! But why put themselves on a map? Humans move.”

“Well, I know it,” Aliri grumbled. “If they had stayed here longer, you could have returned their new thing and we would be asleep now.”

“Then perhaps these markings mean our people?” Otero asked. “Except that we move too, though not as quickly as humans.”

Aliri shook her head. “I believe these are trees. Remember drawing in the mud with sticks when you were little? A circle on top of a rectangle meant a tree to us. Perhaps an oval on top of a line means a tree to them.”

Otero said, “Wisdom. Then lines connecting them may be branches, or roots. Perhaps they mean these trees stand close together, as they do in the southern forest. And see how the map shows trees going up and down, up and down? It’s hillier in the south too.”

Aliri touched a large oval near the lower right corner of the map. “Then that might be Big Lake.” She sighed. “Remember, we cannot be sure that is where the humans went. Perhaps they started at Big Lake and came here. Perhaps they now follow another map, one we do not have. They may even be on another world.”

“Wisdom,” Otero whispered. “And gratitude for your help, Aliri. I will think of you on my journey to where the humans might be.”

Aliri put her hand on his. “Otero, I will come with you. Time spent with my brother is time well spent.”

He gripped her fingers. “Gratitude, sister.” With Mother’s blessing they set out the next day. They helped each other over rough ground, taking turns carrying the new thing and gathering food to eat. Often they looked at the humans’ map, trying to puzzle out all of its meaning.

Three days later, they found Big Lake. Beside it were the humans and their starboat. Seeing them, Otero felt both shame at having taken the new thing and pride at having brought it back, considering all of their

WHERE DO YOU THINK
THE HUMAN BEANS
MIGHT BE?



NOT IN
CRICKET
COUNTRY...





SKETCH

IT

Draw what you think the “map” looks like in Aliri and Otero’s world.

What do the shapes mean to them?

troubles with the human map.

Aliri and Otero could understand the humans far better

now. The humans were learning from the villagers living by the lake the importance of speaking properly and not in a rush.

A human called Captain Patel called out, “Doctor Corot!”

Another human, who had been examining a plant growing in the lake, turned. Eyes wide at the sight of what Otero held, the human came running. “You brought me my flute! Gratitude! I had forgotten leaving it outside. Your world has so many wonders to see and learn about that I was distracted. Who knows when I would have learned it was gone?” He paused. “How did you find us? It must have taken you several days to travel from your village.”

“My brother and I used your map,” said Aliri, handing it over.

Unfolding it, Doctor Corot asked, “What map?”

Patently, Otero explained. “Here is your starboat . . .”

Captain Patel and Doctor Corot looked at each other. “Treble clef,” they said.

So, that is their word for starboat, Aliri thought.

“Here are the forested hills.”

“Quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes,” Doctor Corot said.

Names of different trees. We are learning their language, Aliri thought. It is good to learn new things.

“The river,” Otero said.

“Quarter rest,” said Doctor Corot.

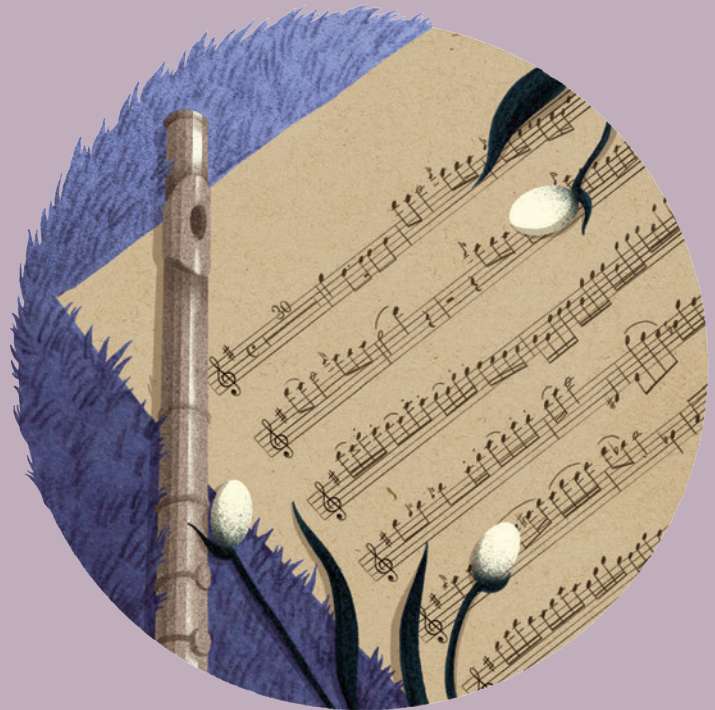
“And Big Lake.” Aliri swung her hand from the map’s oval to gesture at the water spread out before them.

“Whole note.” Doctor Corot took a deep breath. “You understood this . . . map . . . very well. Please keep it as a gift from our people to yours.”

“Gratitude,” Aliri and Otero said.

As the brother and sister headed for home, the humans were speaking in their own language. Captain Patel said, “I’ve heard that music can bring people together.”

“In more ways than one, apparently,” replied Doctor Corot. 



TALK

ABOUT IT

Did you guess what the “map” really was? When did you figure it out?

MUSIC IS THE KEY
TO LIFE!



PIZZA
TOO!



WISDOM!



GRATITUDE!



LUNCHTIME!!



MEW-
NEWS!

Divinity Roxx

An Interview by Bethany Boles

From Secret Bass Player to World Stage

Divinity Roxx secretly taught herself to play bass guitar. Years later, she was onstage at the BET Awards performing with Beyoncé in front of millions of people.

Growing up in Atlanta, Georgia, Roxx loved music, wrote rap lyrics, and practiced constantly. Her passion led her to work with legendary bassist Victor Wooten and tour the world as part of an all-female band. The group showed audiences around the world that women belong at the center of the music scene. Today, Roxx creates music full of rhythm, confidence, and positivity for kids and families.



FINDING HER SOUND

You've toured with Beyoncé and earned Grammy nominations. Did you always know you wanted to make music?

Not really—it just happened. I've always loved music. I started on clarinet in third grade, then moved into writing raps as a teenager. In college I was recording with other artists but wasn't allowed to help create the music—only the raps. That frustrated me. I realized I needed to play an instrument to be taken seriously, so I picked up the bass. From there, I just kept going.

What was it like being in a high school rap group?

I had something to say. My first rap was about respect. As a young girl, you start to notice how people treat you and how you see yourself. It was about believing that I matter and that I have control over my own choices.

THE BIG BREAK

How did you start touring with the legendary bass player Victor Wooten?

I was secretly practicing bass while performing as a rapper. When I first heard Victor, I was amazed and wanted to learn everything I could about his playing. I attended his bass camp and introduced myself by rapping and playing bass, but I didn't think it stood out. Months later, he called and asked me to tour.

What did touring teach you?

Touring is about working together. It's not all glamour—it's showing up prepared and supporting the people around you. Being someone others can count on matters. I was part of an incredible group of women, and we were breaking barriers. Seeing young girls watch us play instruments was powerful.

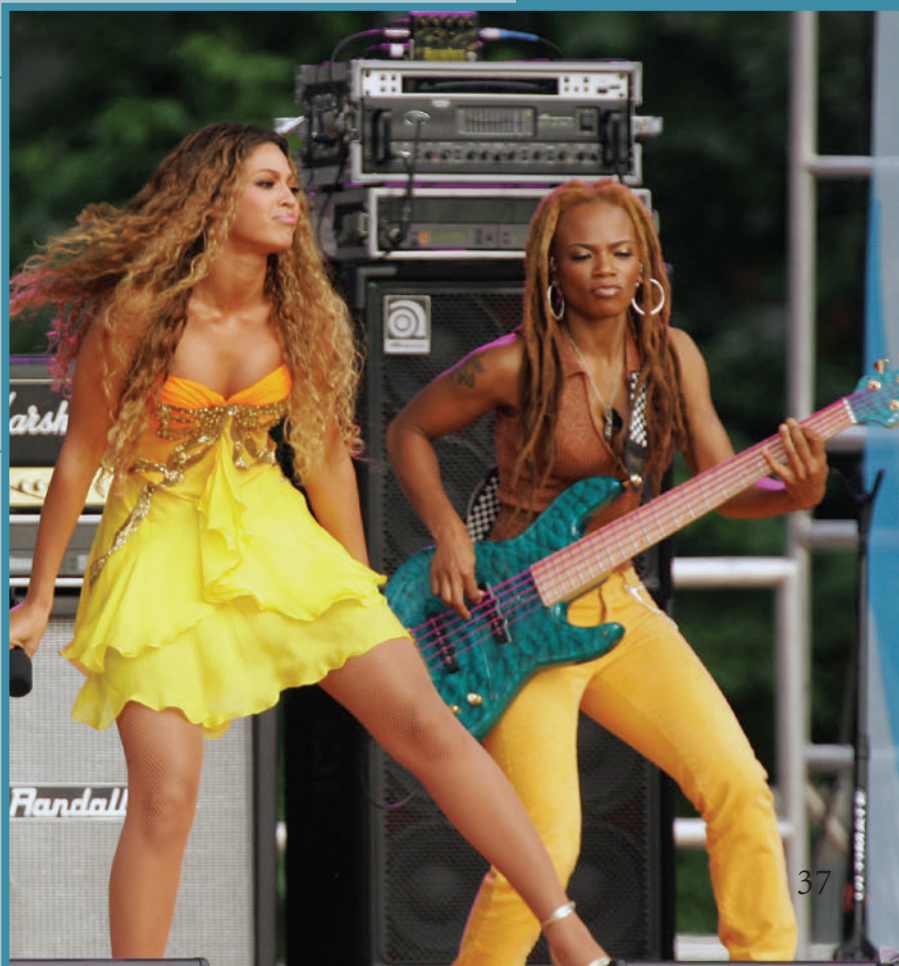
When did you realize your music career was working out?

It was the first show with Beyoncé. I had been working for years. I was thinking about giving up music altogether. Then suddenly, I was onstage at the BET Awards, with lights, a big crowd, and millions watching on TV. I thought: My family can see this. It meant a lot to me.

Young Divinity was already finding her rhythm.



Performing with Beyoncé showed Ross just how far music could take her.



How did you develop your own sound?

Hip-hop was my foundation, but I explored funk, rock, and more once I started playing bass. As a songwriter, I bring those influences together to create something that feels true to me.

MAKING MUSIC FOR KIDS

How did you start creating music for children?

I had an opportunity to write songs for the publisher Scholastic, and two of them were turned into books. That experience showed me that songwriting could reach kids in a powerful way, and that's when I decided to make a children's album.

How do you write songs for kids and families?

I focus on creating music that feels good and says something positive. I want to make music kids enjoy but also music that adults can connect with too.

What makes kids a special audience?

Kids might be the most thoughtful audience. They are very honest. When they connect with music, you can see it right away. It's not easy to get their attention, but when you do, it's special.

Making music for children has given me a strong sense of purpose. It also allows me to be a positive example—especially as a Black woman—for kids who may not see themselves represented.

HER MESSAGE

What would you say to someone who thinks they aren't musical?

Everyone is musical. People naturally feel rhythm and know what they like. They just may not realize how connected they already are to music.

Why does music matter so much?

Music is everything—the rhythm of a train, the sounds around us, the way things move and flow. It connects us, even when we don't have the same words. Music can make you feel something right away, deep inside. 🐛

LISTEN FOR IT

Divinity Roxx says music is everywhere. Where do you notice rhythm or sound in your daily life?

“

MUSIC IS EVERYTHING—

the rhythm of a train, the sounds around us, the way things move and flow. It connects us, even when we don't have the same words.

”

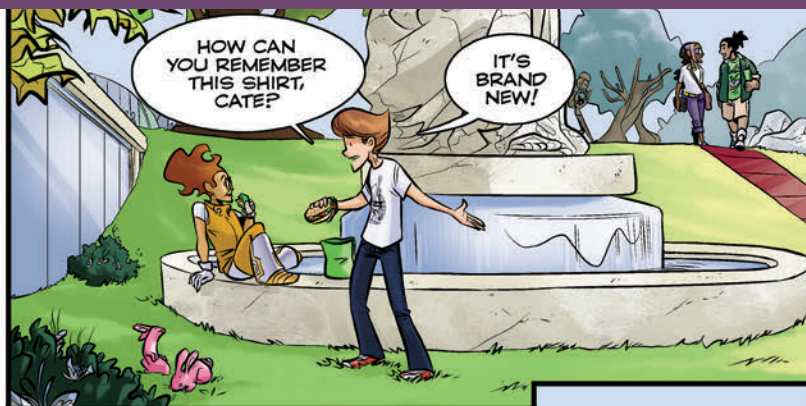
Roxx fills her kids' music with positivity and purpose.



Tale of WHOA!



CATES



HOW CAN YOU REMEMBER THIS SHIRT, CATE?

IT'S BRAND NEW!

I WAS SIX...

...THERE WAS SOME EXPERIMENTAL CANDY.



INCLUDING SOME JELLY BEANS THAT SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN IN MY POCKET WHEN WE FELL IN THE LAKE.



THEN WE SPENT ALL AFTERNOON PRETENDING WE RAN A HOBBY FARM AND LINE DANCING. I WAS REALLY INTO FARM ANIMALS. IT WAS A PHASE.

BUT THAT'S MY MEMORY, NOT YOURS!

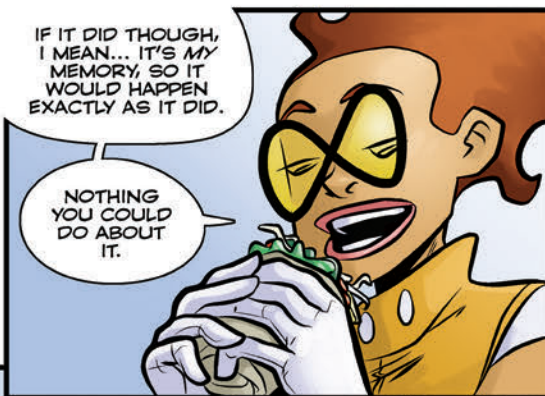


PFF! IT NEVER HAPPENED. WON'T HAPPEN!

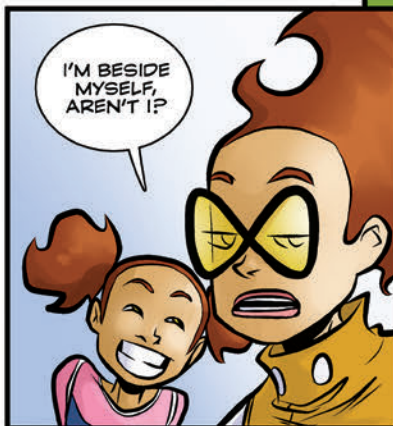


IF IT DID THOUGH, I MEAN... IT'S MY MEMORY, SO IT WOULD HAPPEN EXACTLY AS IT DID.

NOTHING YOU COULD DO ABOUT IT.



I'M BESIDE MYSELF, AREN'T I?



YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE!



SONGS of FREEDOM

How music helped turn courage into action
in South Africa's struggle for equality



Jazz musician Hugh Masekela wrote struggle songs for Black South Africans.

Many South African children grow up surrounded by music, so it's no surprise that music played an important role in the country's fight for freedom.

A COUNTRY DIVIDED

For much of the 1900s, South Africa was ruled by apartheid, a system of racial separation. People were forced by law to live apart, go to separate schools, and use different public spaces. Black South Africans had the fewest rights, while white South Africans had the most.

SONGS OF RESISTANCE

During this time, music became more than entertainment for Black South Africans. It became a way to speak out. People could be punished for giving speeches or writing against the government, but they could still sing. Jazz pianist Abdullah Ibrahim said, "The thing that saved us was the music. . . . It was part of liberating ourselves."

Through songs, people shared their pain, hopes, and anger. Music also helped spread

WRITE IT

Create a short song or poem about something you care about. How will you communicate your message in your lyrics or words?

FREEDOM

by Lesley Reed



In her music, singer Miriam Makeba protested apartheid.



Nelson Mandela rose to become president of South Africa.



Young people singing today in South Africa

“The thing that saved us was the music. . . . It was part of liberating ourselves.”

news and bring people together. Because the government controlled radio and public performances, musicians often hid their true messages. They used other languages or wordplay. For example, the song “The Bellowing Bull” seemed to be about cattle, but it was really about people suffering under apartheid.

When Black families were forced out of their homes in Sophiatown, they protested with a song called “Meadowlands.” It sounded cheerful at first, but one verse, sung in street language, made the message clear: “We’re not leaving. We’re staying right here.”

Some musicians faced serious punishment. Vuyisile Mini, a famous songwriter, was sentenced to death in part because of his songs, which warned that change was coming.

FROM SORROW TO STRENGTH

Different stages of the struggle had different songs. In the 1960s, Nelson Mandela and other leaders were in prison. Mandela was an important leader who fought against apartheid. Songs

from this time were sadder. One well-known song, “Senzeni Na,” asks, “What have we done? Our only sin is being Black.”

In the 1970s and 1980s, young people became more active, and the music grew louder and more intense. A marching style called *toyitoyi* became popular at protests. Large groups singing and marching together gave people courage and even frightened armed soldiers.

Many songs were written about Mandela. From outside the country, Hugh Masekela sang “Bring Back Nelson Mandela.” Inside South Africa, even saying Mandela’s name could lead to arrest, so singer Chicco used the name “Manelo,” which fans understood.

When Mandela was released from prison in 1990, thousands sang to welcome him back to Cape Town. Four years later, when he became the country’s first Black president, people sang in celebration of freedom and peace. 🐜



HOW TO INVENT AN INSTRUMENT

The Story of Adolphe Sax and His Saxophone

by Jeremy A. Wall, illustrated by Roxanne Wheeler

Prologue

THE YEAR: 1841

THE PLACE: BELGIUM INDUSTRIAL FAIR

Adolphe Sax stands over his invention, stroking his beard and trying not to groan. It's ruined. The metal is bent, the shape is off, and the sound—if it makes one at all—won't be anything close to what he imagined. Just hours ago, this strange instrument might have amazed the judges. Now it looks like a crumpled idea.

Adolphe leaves the fair frustrated. Second prize isn't enough—not for something this new. Fine, he thinks. Paris, France, next. Bigger stage. Bigger win. He's not done yet.



Today you can sit next to a statue of Adolphe Sax in Dinant, Belgium.

STEP 1

GET THROUGH A CHALLENGING CHILDHOOD

This might sound simple. It wasn't. Adolphe Sax, born in 1814 in Dinant, Belgium, had a childhood full of close calls—falls, crashes, and near misses. People jokingly called him “the Ghost,” because he always seemed to bounce back. The name stuck. So did his determination.

and learned flute, clarinet, and singing. He became especially good at the clarinet—but playing wasn't enough. He wanted to *improve* instruments.

At 15, he entered instruments he had built into a major fair. People noticed. By his twenties, Adolphe had a reputation: He could play almost anything—and redesign it too. His improved bass clarinet finally worked well in orchestras.

He also liked a challenge and would compete with other musicians in public—and usually win. Great for confidence. Less great for making friends.

STEP 3

NOTICE WHAT'S MISSING

Adolphe listened carefully—not just to music, but to what *wasn't* there. Woodwinds like flutes and clarinets sounded

beautiful, but when brass instruments joined in, they could get lost, especially in the lower notes. Something was missing: a sound that could blend in and stand out. So, Adolphe set himself a goal: create an instrument that could do both.

STEP 2

LEARN SKILLS, THEN GET BOLD

Adolphe grew up surrounded by instruments—his father made them. So, while other kids played games, Adolphe took things apart to see how they worked. He also studied music. At 14, he enrolled in a music school



STEP 4

BORROW IDEAS, TINKER NONSTOP

Inventors don't start from nothing—they remix. Adolphe found inspiration in a strange instrument called the *ophicleide* (OFF-ih-klide). It was big and loud, with a wide bell and holes that changed the pitch (how high or low a note sounds). It had potential—but also problems. Its sound was too rough for indoor music. So, Adolphe started experimenting.

He swapped parts, adjusted shapes, and tried different mouthpieces. He slimmed the body, moved the keys, and resized the holes. Imagine blowing air through a long, curved tube. If the tube gets wider or narrower, the sound changes. That's exactly what Adolphe was testing.

Bit by bit, something new began to take shape—an instrument that could play smoothly, stay in tune, and still project a strong, rich

sound. Not quite brass. Not quite woodwind. Something in between.

TRY IT

Blow across the top of an empty bottle. Now add some water and try again. How does the sound change? You're experimenting with shape and sound, just like Adolphe!



THE SHAPE OF SOUND

What makes one instrument sound different from another? Adolphe Sax had a big idea: The shape of an instrument helps create its sound.

Sound is made of tiny vibrations, or fast movements in the air. These vibrations mix together to create what we hear. Think of it like color: Add white, and a color gets lighter; add black, and it gets darker. Sound works in a similar way. Higher and lower vibrations mix to create a sound's "color"—its personality.

Adolphe discovered that the inside shape of an instrument matters most. This space, called the bore, is where the air travels. By making the instrument wider in some places and narrower in others, he could smooth out the sound. That careful shaping is what gave the saxophone its rich, flexible sound—something entirely new.

STEP 5

NAME IT. SHARE IT. REPEAT.

Adolphe was good at naming things—especially after himself. Saxhorn. Saxtuba. Saxotromba. So, when this new instrument came along, the name was almost certain: *saxophone*, or “Sax’s sound.”

His first big reveal didn’t go well (see: earlier disaster). So, Adolphe moved to Paris, the center of the music world. There, he met composer Hector Berlioz, who heard the saxophone and loved it. The sound felt completely new.

In 1844, Adolphe performed his instrument in concert and held a long, ringing note at the end. The audience loved it. A new sound had arrived. Soon after, he earned a major contract to make instruments for the French military.

STEP 6

HANDLE RIVALS (AND OTHER HEADACHES)

Success can bring attention—not all of it friendly. As Adolphe’s instruments became more popular, other instrument makers in Paris worried they could lose business. Some rivals challenged his work in court. Others tried to copy his designs or push him out of the spotlight.

Adolphe spent years defending his inventions. He often won—but the battles took time, energy, and money. Eventually, the pressure became



too much. Adolphe was forced to close his workshop.

Not bad for something that started as a bent-up prototype.

STEP 7

PLAY THE LONG GAME

Adolphe Sax died in 1894 without much money and without seeing his invention become famous. At the time, the saxophone was still a bit of an oddball.

Then came the 1900s—and jazz. Suddenly, the saxophone had found its voice. Musicians such as Sidney Bechet and Charlie Parker turned it into something bold, expressive, and unforgettable. The instrument that once struggled to find its place became one of the most recognizable sounds in the world.

FINAL THOUGHT

Inventing something new isn’t a straight path. It’s more like this: try something → fix it → try again → share it → defend it → keep going.

Adolphe Sax did all of that and then some. He didn’t just invent a new instrument. He invented a new sound. 🐛

SKETCH

IT

Draw your own instrument. What shapes would you use? What kind of sound would it make?

CITY JAZZ

by Dorina Lazo Gilmore
illustrated by Kristen Scribner

When Miles **STROLLS** through the city
he feels JAZZ MUSIC.

Stoplights breathe

GREEN, **YELLOW** ... **SLOW RED**

GREEN, **YELLOW** ... **SLOW RED**

SYNCOPATED rhythm **CONSTANT** like the drumbeat

GREEN, **YELLOW** ... **SLOW RED**

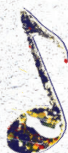
setting the **PACE** for the **PLACE**.

When Miles **DANCES** through the city
he feels JAZZ MUSIC.

City buses, taxis, cars
thump-thumpin' and **bump-bumpin'** along
keepin' **STEADY** time like the upright bass
with their **roarin'** engines
and **honkin'** horns.

Skyscrapers, all shapes, all sizes,
litter the **BLACK**, night sky
like the **wide** angles
of the trombone
with its bitty-brr-**BOP-slide, BOP-slide, BOP-slide.**

Homeless Harry **tryin'** on his trumpet,
thinkin' he's Louis Armstrong
with his shoo-WOP **BLEEP**
doody-shoo-WOP **BLEEP**
seizin' center stage on the city corner.



Well-off women **prancin'** down the
main street with their milk chocolate handbags
high-pitched and **showy**
blu-weee blinky-**wee-EEEE**
like the **screechy** sax solo.

Ladies' skirts **swayin'** Teenagers **struttin'**
Dogs **doo-WOPPIN'** and babies **boppin'**

He feels JAZZ MUSIC in the
icy winds of winter.

That music in the
I-want-to-sit-and-be-BLUE rains of spring.

JAZZ MUSIC in the
HEAVY - heat - city - beat of summer.
Music in the Billie Holiday voice of fall—
CRIMSON crashing **GOLD** melting **GREEN**.

When Miles GROOVES through the city
he F-E-E-L-S JAZZ MUSIC
JAZZ MUSIC

JAZZ MUSIC

JAZZZZZZ MUSIC

DID YOU KNOW?

Louis Armstrong
and Billie Holiday made
music together like two jazz
superheroes teaming up—
one with a trumpet,
one with a magical voice!

I WISH I'D HAD
THE CHANCE
TO JAM WITH
THEM. DOO-
WOP-DO-WOP!



Amy's Metaphor

by Elisa Oh
illustrated by Tatjana Mai-Wyss

Amy Kim
Monday, August 24, 2026
Mrs. Twiss
Grade 6

BEFORE

YOU READ

If someone asked you to describe yourself with a comparison of two things, what might you choose?

Assignment:

1. What is a metaphor?
2. Create a metaphor for yourself and explain why you chose it.

1. A metaphor is a comparison. A metaphor says one thing is another thing. It compares two things that seem very different at first. Here's an example: "The moon is a lost coin." The moon and a coin don't really seem alike at all. But if you think about it, the metaphor shows you something new about the moon. When the moon is full, it looks like a bright, silver coin. The craters on the moon resemble a person's face from here on Earth, and coins have people's faces on them too. Sometimes when you look for the moon on a cloudy night, you can't find it, like a lost coin. Other times you see it suddenly without expecting to, like finding a coin, lonely but lucky, on the ground.

2. Dear Mrs. Twiss,

I'm having a hard time with this part of the assignment. I'm not sure I can do it. I just can't think of a metaphor that sums up who I am. I'll try to explain why.

Last Thursday, Mr. Jansen had our class in the gym, and we learned about the world's population by stacking "10 million people" blocks on a giant map on the floor. After we put the blocks away, there were still a few minutes left before the bell.

As Mr. Jansen flipped through his almanac, he got a new idea. "OK, everybody," he said, "let's find out what world-population centers our class came from! I want each one of you to go stand on the continent or country from which your family originated."

Find this and other stories from Cricket Media's magazines on the new app Reading Stars!





For example, I got angry when a woman in the grocery store asked me where I was from, and I said, "Right here in Greenfield."

"No, where are you *from* from, originally?" she asked. "Right here in Greenfield. Since I was born," I told her.

"Are you *sure*? Because you look just like a Japanese girl I knew once," she said. I said I was sure, and then I had to explain the whole Korean-German thing to her, even though she was a total stranger. It's not fair that people I don't know can ask me questions about my race and heritage, but it's not polite for me to ask them, "So, why do your ears stick out like jug handles?"

Both sides of my family love me a lot, and we all get along. But I am *not* the same as either group of my relatives. My German cousins don't know about playing *yut* or making special dumplings for the Lunar New Year, but I do. And my Korean cousins don't know about

singing "O Tannenbaum" and "Stille Nacht" at Christmastime, but I do. I go through life with two worlds in me, and no one in my family—not even Mom and Dad—knows what that's like.

So anyway, I can't think of a metaphor for me. Mutt, half-breed . . . the names rattle around in my head like a handful of broken glass. Mom suggested a fairy princess, because she said I have magic to cross in and out of fairyland, and Dad suggested a mermaid, who can live on land and in the sea. But I am *real*, and fantasy creatures couldn't survive in the real world. I'm not an imaginary monster like a griffin.

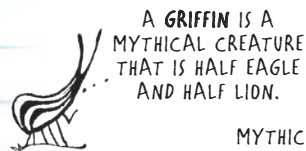
I also made up another metaphor for myself called a *circangle*, which has a triangle for a mother and a circle for a father. It looks like this:



The circangle's too pointy to be a circle and too roundy to be a triangle. I'm sure all the other shapes would treat it like a freak.

You can see that I have tried to do the assignment but can't finish it.

Amy



A GRIFFIN IS A
MYTHICAL CREATURE
THAT IS HALF EAGLE
AND HALF LION.

MYTHICAL?!





Dear Amy,

Don't give up! I know you can do this assignment. I think you need to start by changing the way you look at yourself and your metaphor. You have already come up with many things that are half one thing and half another. All your examples, however, are negative.

I want you to brainstorm a list of things that are good combinations of two parts. There are lots of things that are better when they're combined with something else. Here, I'll start your list: Peanut butter and jelly are better together than they are apart, and, in my opinion, so are root beer and vanilla ice cream. Think about our science lesson where we learned about all those exciting varieties of hybrid roses. What about mixing blue and yellow paint together to get green? Green happens to be my favorite color.

If you keep going with this list, I think you can finish the assignment by Friday. If you're still stuck, come and talk to me before then.

Mrs. Twiss

**TRY
IT**

Make a quick list of two things that are better together than apart.



Amy Kim
 Friday, August 28, 2026
 Mrs. Twiss
 Grade 6

2. I am a musical duet. A duet has two different lines of music for voices or instruments. At my cousin Jason's violin recital, he and a friend played a duet called *Concerto for Two Violins* by Johann Sebastian Bach. Each of the two violin parts could have been played alone, but together they became something new and better. The two parts took turns chasing each other, going back and forth, and then making interesting patterns with both high and low notes at the same time.

Because my family comes from two different races and cultures, I feel I have two musical parts playing in me that create a new piece of music. When I told this to my piano teacher yesterday, she showed me the definition of *counterpoint* in her music dictionary. She let me copy it for this assignment. "Counterpoint: The technique of combining two or more independent melodies to make up a harmonious texture." This is a perfect metaphor for me, because the two parts of me—Korean and German—could each be an independent melody. But when they play together in me, they make a happy, complex harmony. Not everyone understands what makes the music so beautiful, but I can help them learn. 

SKETCH IT

At the beginning of the story, you thought of a comparison for yourself. Now sketch it—or a new one! What does it look like?

MEWY SWEET MUSIC. 

Take a Bow!

by Anna Levine, illustrated by Kevin Hawkes

Sensing my mood
of solitude
he rests

waiting for a sign
or the right time
to suggest

a deep bluesy beat
or a giddy Bach suite
unless

we choose to rock and roll
and lose control.
Oh yes,

You are the best!
My favorite fellow
my honey-yellow
cello



MARCH/APRIL 2026 POETRY CONTEST

IMAGINARY CREATURES



WINNERS

Emily P., age 14
Connecticut

Mystery

Emerald, emerald, emerald eyes.
Hiding, hiding, hiding.
That is me.
The stuff of myths, of dreams, of legends.
Or so they say.
Hiding in a snowy cave.
Hiding in the mountains.
Hiding in a deep lagoon.
Yeti, Bigfoot, Nessie.
That is me.
Furry, massive, wet.
That is me.
All me.
But they never check.
They never check.
They never check my eyes.
Emerald always, always, always.
Emerald eyes.

Yan L., age 9
Georgia

Hybrid Creature

I have a wolf's head,
As furry as a sheep's.
I have a big, long snout.
My eyes glow in the night.
My ears hear every movement from tiny to large.

I have a lion's blazing mane,
A muscular bear's body,

A goat's powerful legs with V-shaped hooves.
I have snakes as hands;
They strike like lightning and can wrap around you in
a second!

My fur recedes at the center,
Where my belly is quite tubby.
I have a scorpion's tail,
With laser eyes at the tip.

If you're wondering,
My name is Scrylia.

Audrey H., age 13
Kansas

Thunderbird

Imaginary, you call me.
Just because you have never seen me, never heard my
song . . .
Never watched me call down fire from the sky.
Does not mean I do not exist.
You small humans, you only believe in what you can see
and in pure solid, proof.
Silly creatures, the proof is painted across the sky.
In every storm and quake and sunset, we are there.
Every time the lightning flashes or the rain falls, we
are there.
Just because we have never been seen does not mean
we are not here,
It simply means we are smart enough to hide this well.
We do not need your belief, your faith, your trust.
Nor do we want it.
Why do you think your weather balloons crash and your
scopes malfunction?

We are the all-powerful spirits of the sky.
We will not be seen.
And even if we wanted to be seen,
If we came down from the sky, if we perched on the
roof of your most famous building,
Would you believe?
Or would you call it a hoax, a trick of the light?
We do not need your belief, we do not want your faith.
You can call us imaginary, but we still exist all the same.
The Thunderbird

Avery R., age 11
Idaho

Ground shakes, trees sway,
Mother Dragon starts her day.
Horses whinny, armor rattles,
Pair of knights all primed for battle.
Thousand years later, called a fake,
She takes her babies to a lake.
Safe and sound, trees surround,
Mother sighs contented sounds.

Amy H., age 12
Pennsylvania

Lumen-Wing

I drift where the hope meets the dream
A shimmer of scales in an invisible stream
I am the Lumen-Wing; born of a spark
A flicker of fire in your mind's quiet dark

I have no shadow to stretch on the floor
No knuckles to rap on a physical door
My feathers are woven from questions you ask
A creature of light with a crystal mask

Is it lonely to live in the "not-really-there"?
To breathe in the logic instead of the air?
No—I am the whisper that helps you create
A glitch in the system, a twist in your fate

I feel the soft pulse of your thoughts as they run
I'm made of things that have never been done
I'm boundless, unburdened by gravity's weight
A silent companion in a vaporous state

Though I'm but a ghost in a garden of souls
I'm the brightest of stars in sky that's dull
So don't feel sorry that I am not "real"
It's your imagination that makes me feel.

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Benjamin K., age 14
Illinois

From the Dragon

another group of men, maybe 12 this time
their rusty armor standing out against the glistening riches
the clanking metallic steps
resonating across the piles of gold and treasure

already, some were showing doubt
their trembling and whines grew all the more constant
a rat scurried behind them and they jumped
their attempt at a stealth mission was pitiful at most

I could tell . . .
they were eager to leave
a sigh erupted from my belly
and I let out a grand roar
the cavern filled with flames

I sighed once again;
this was the fourth expedition today to my den,
yet everyone got scared off by a single breath of flame
no one had even seen what I looked like . . .

being a dragon truly was a boring job

Joy L., age 10
Washington

Sight, Space, and Time

I am Bai Ze, celestial sage of wisdom and virtue.
You see me as imaginary.
I do not see you as you see you.
Your eyes might wander towards selfish wants and
desires,
Yet my eyes are not mirrors, reflecting the mortal
childness,
But windows, seeing the world exactly as it is.
It makes sense that one would call me a myth.
I am the Mountain in the East by the sea.
Millennia-year trees grow on my twisting horns and my
pelt, home to countless creatures alike.
I am the healer with the knowledge of 11,000 beings,
Cleansing, calming,
But eternal rest to me is not a line.
Time is a thick fog that I trudge through.
I see the emperor's crown as it was still gold and jade
in the earth,
And I see the fall of a dynasty before the seeds of
rebellion are planted.
I am stagnancy, cold and clear.

I drink the "is," the "was," and the "yet to be" like
mountain freshwater.
The ages blur like the beating of a dragonfly wing.
Now I sit in the center of a world that cannot surprise me,
Watching the tick,
tock,
Of clockwork of a universe
That refuses to surprise me.

Lida T., age 12
Virginia

A Lonely Porcupotamus

No one says they've ever heard of
A porcupotamus
We're easily forgotten,
Tiny creatures like me.

A porcupotamus
How strange! How weird!
Tiny creatures like me
Just don't fit.

How strange, how weird,
It isn't much of a surprise
We just don't fit,
But mystery is lonely.

It isn't much of a surprise
They say hoax, fake,
But mystery is lonely,
No friends at my side.

They say hoax, fake,
No one takes a second look at me,
No friends at my side
For a cryptid like me.

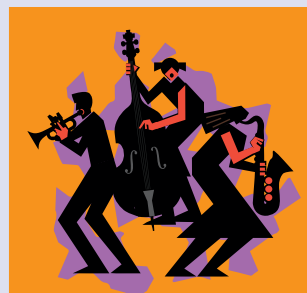
No one takes a second look at me.
We're easily forgotten,
Us cryptids like me
That no one says they've ever heard of.

HONORABLE MENTION

Alina B., age 11, Texas; **Beatrice T.**, age 13, Colorado;
Cora G., age 10, Pennsylvania; **Jude S.**, age 11, Louisiana;
Lilah S., age 11, California; **RayAnn K.**, age 11, South Dakota;
Taissiya P., age 13, Pennsylvania; **Zoey M.**, age 11, South Carolina.

Answers to Hands-On: Which Star Said It? on page 28

1. F (Kendrick Lamar); 2. C (Billie Eilish);
3. A (Olivia Rodrigo); 4. B (Ed Sheeran);
5. G (Harry Styles); 6. E (Alicia Keys);
7. D (Dua Lipa).



NEW CONTEST

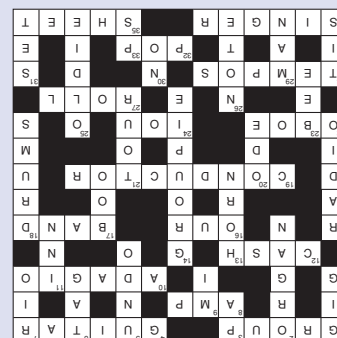
All Together Now

The music in this issue connects people, places, and cultures. And everybuggy agrees, music is better when shared! Write a story where music brings people together. It could be two people; it could be the whole world. And it can be any type of music that you choose for the occasion. What does the music sound like? How does it affect your characters? Sing us a tale of teambuilding tunes in no more than 350 words. We'll share a symphony of our favorite stories in an upcoming issue of *Cricket*.

CONTEST RULES

1. Your contest entry must be your own original work. Ideas, images, and words should not be copied.
2. Be sure to include your first name, first initial of your last name, age, state or province, and country with your entry.
3. Only one entry per person, please.
4. All entries must be signed by a parent or legal guardian, stating that it is your own work and no help was given and granting permission to publish it in our magazine, on our website, and on our social media platforms. Signatures may be handwritten or electronic.
5. Your entry must be received by August 25, 2026. We will publish winning entries in an upcoming issue of *Cricket*.
6. Email entries to: cricket@cricketmedia.com.

Answers to Crossbird Puzzle on page 17



illustrated by Greta Songe

FEELING MUSIC

JUST LET THE
MUSIC FLOW
THROUGH YOU



Cricket & Ladybug: Can't Stop the "Music"



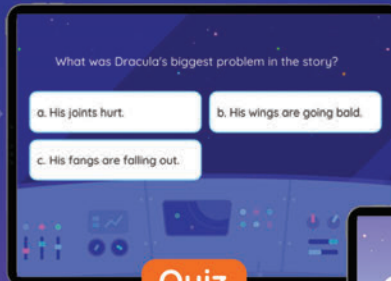
written and illustrated by Carolyn Digby Conahan

Turn Reading into an Adventure!

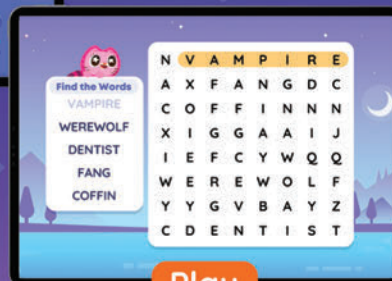
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AD

“Music is everything
It connects us, even when we
don't have the same words. **”**



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