

Music, Reading, and Writing



Overview

Music can be a powerful stimulus for some readers. By hearing music that is suggestive of the ideas in a text, some students are better able to focus on the content of the text. The following CDs could prove effective in accompanying the reading of *Wish You Well*:

- *The Music of the Great Smoky Mountains* by Gary Remal Malkin (available from Real Music, 85 Libertyship Way, Suite 207, Sausalito, CA 94965. Phone: 415-331-8273, FAX: 415-331-8278).*
- *Appalachian Journey*. Music by Stephen Foster, performed by Yo-Yo Ma, Edgar Meyer, Mark O'Connor, and others. Sony Classics #66782.
- *Appalachia* [sic] *Waltz*. Music by Edgar Meyer and Mark O'Connor, performed by Yo-Yo Ma, Edgar Meyer, and others. Sony Classics #68460.
- *Appalachian Spring* by Aaron Copeland, performed by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Leonard Bernstein. Sony Classics #63082.

(Note: All CDs are available through Amazon.com and local record shops.)

Activities

1. Many passages in *Wish You Well* describe the beauty of the mountains. Ask several students to locate and prepare a dramatic reading of those passages. During the reading, play in the background selected cuts from one of the CDs above to suggest the aura of the Appalachians.
2. While playing a cut from one of the CDs above, have the students write poems that cover the information in a specified section of the novel. Play the music again while the students read their poems aloud to the class.
3. Play "Settler's Waltz" (cut 10 on the Malkin CD) while the students are reading from chapter 24 the description of the evening Cotton, Diamond, and the others dance the evening away. Invite a dance instructor to the class to teach the students to waltz. Locate books in the library that provide directions for traditional American folk dances that can be tried. Hold a class discussion comparing the dances of mountain culture to popular dancing of today.
4. Ask students with strong musical backgrounds to compose an original selection that is reminiscent of Appalachian music, or ask them to learn and play selections from popular mountain music. (Music teachers will be able to help the students locate appropriate music.)
5. As the students listen to one of the CDs above, ask them to locate specific passages from the novel that "go along with" the music. Ask them to explain why the music and the passages seem to go together. Then, ask them to write about the meaning and/or importance of their selected passages.

* A note on the CD tray card explains: "Emmy award-winning composer Gary Remal Malkin paints the Smokies in orchestral colors, adding touches of mountain fiddle, Native American drums, and piano notes as soft and bright as raindrops. Appalachian melodies drift through like figments, presences from another time. A nostalgic solo flute calls out above shadowed chords, then soars over vast panoramas, propelled by distant drums."