



Music & Movement Activity

Aaron Copland was very good at telling stories with his music! His music was called “popular music,” which means that it was accessible and understandable to lots of different people. Listen to the songs on the playlist at the bottom of the page and try dancing along!

Cat and Mouse: This is the very first song that Aaron Copland published. Do you hear the scattered piano notes? Aaron Copland was studying in Paris during the 1920s. Parisian art in the 1920s was “avant-garde,” which means it emphasized experimenting and breaking rules. This piece has elements of jazz, too. Can you hear the slinky rhythm? To me, it sounds like a cat stretching and then chasing a mouse! What do you imagine when you hear this?

→ How would a cat dance? How would a mouse dance? Try it!

Billy the Kid, Street in a Frontier Town: This song is from a ballet adaptation of Billy the Kid. Billy was an outlaw in the wild west! Can you imagine cowboys and horses when you hear this song?

→ Try dancing like a cowboy! Put your hands on your hips and march. Pretend you are using a lasso!

Appalachian Spring, Very Slowly: This is the very first song from Appalachian Spring, one of Aaron Copland’s most famous ballet pieces. Aaron worked closely with legendary choreographer Martha Graham to make this ballet, which tells the story of American pioneers in Pennsylvania. Listen to how **slow and soft** this song is. I think it sounds like the early morning, when the sun is just starting to rise and there might still be dewdrops on the grass. What do you hear?

→ Try moving very slowly here! Aaron used slow, rolling melodies. Can you open your arms in a big circle?

Playlist Links:

Spotify:
bit.ly/4tLD48Q



Youtube:
bit.ly/4cxM7mS



John Henry: When a group of composers were asked to create a musical piece inspired by American figures, Aaron Copland chose John Henry, a legendary folk hero. In stories, John Henry was a free Black man who worked hard to **build train tracks** and fought for the working class. Can you imagine a **big train coming** when you hear this?

→ Try moving like a choo choo train! Toot toot!

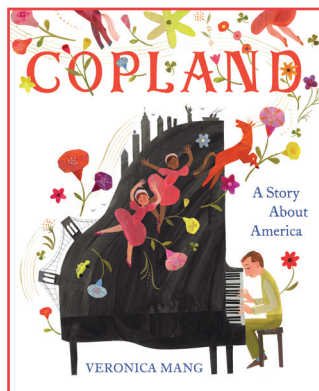
Appalachian Spring, Doppio Movimento: This is one of the acclaimed American ballet *Appalachian Spring*. Does this song feel familiar to you? Aaron Copland chose to use the Shaker hymn called “**Simple Gifts**” as a refrain in this ballet. This was a big deal when the ballet debuted! Around this time, American artists were becoming more interested in using our own American **folk traditions** as inspiration.

→ Can you dance your happiest dance? Dance like a flower blooming or the wind blowing!

Rodeo, Hoe Down: Like Billy the Kid, Rodeo is all about cowboys and the wild west. *Rodeo* is the story of Cowgirl, a young woman who is trying to fit in with the men on the ranch. She wants to be a cowboy too, but sometimes the men reject her. Cowgirl is persistent. She's tough!

During the ballet, the people on the ranch have a **hoedown**. A hoedown is a big party. Can you imagine cowboys and cowgirls dancing at a rodeo?

→ Freestyle dance! Party like you are at a hoedown!



Copland: A Story About America

written and illustrated by Veronica Mang

More at veronicamang.com