

Young Portrait Explorers:

Dizzy Gillespie

Learning Objective: Learn about trumpeter, composer, and modern jazz pioneer Dizzy Gillespie. Then create a colorful poster to advertise your own concert.

Portrait Discussion:

Look at the portrait of Dizzy Gillespie. Spend 30 seconds letting your eyes wander from top to bottom and all through the center of the portrait.

Pose: What is Dizzy Gillespie doing in this portrait? He is doing what made him most famous – playing the trumpet! Can you pose like he does? Hold your imaginary trumpet as you play. Gillespie played a special trumpet that bent upward. What does your imaginary trumpet look like?

Facial Expression: Dizzy Gillespie's eyes are closed. Why do you think they are closed? Is he tired? Or thinking hard? Notice his cheeks full of air. Gillespie was famous for puffing his cheeks when he played. Do his cheeks tell you he's playing loudly or quietly? Take a deep breath and blow into your imaginary trumpet. Do your cheeks fill up with air, too? What does a trumpet sound like as air passes through it? Can you make that sound? What song can you play?

Style: This portrait is **abstract**, meaning there are parts of the artwork, like shapes and colors, that do not look like real life. The artist used his imagination to come up with a unique way of portraying Gillespie.

Color: What colors stand out to you? Are you curious about any of them? Notice how the colors in Gillespie's face are defined and separated by thick black lines, but the colors in the background blend together. There is also a large black shape behind Gillespie. What do you think that might be?

Historical Context: *Dizzy Gillespie is considered one of the greatest jazz trumpeters of all time. He was known for his fun performance style and his **improvisations**, or songs he invented as he played. He composed exciting, energetic jazz tunes that combined notes with brand new rhythms. He performed for more than fifty years and helped popularize styles of music like bebop and Afro-Cuban jazz. Artist Avi Farin made this portrait for a poster advertising a concert with Dizzy Gillespie in New York City.*

Related Children's Book:

Dizzy by Jonah Winter

Activity: Abstract Portrait Poster

Materials:

Black marker

Crayons or colored pencils

White paper

Instruction:

- Using the black marker, draw yourself using one long, continuous line. Do not lift the marker off the paper.
- Keep the marker on the paper to connect the eyes, nose, mouth – everything!

- Color the inside of the lines, just like Dizzy Gillespie's poster.
- Write down the details of your concert, like your band name and when and where you will perform.
- Decorate the background with lots of colors.

Need more inspiration? Play songs by Dizzy Gillespie! Many artists like to listen to the sounds and beats of jazz music while they work.





Dizzy Gillespie by Avi Farin, color photolithograph with halftone, 1979. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; gift of Jack Rennert. © 1979 Avi Farin, A Contemporary Poster Classic

Find the portrait on our website, here: https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.2007.167