EPISODE 9: THE CAT AND THE MOUSE
COPLAND “THE CAT AND THE MOUSE”

TODAY’S WORKSHEET

“The Cat and the Mouse” was one of the earliest pieces of music written by well-known American composer Aaron Copland. In fact, it was the very first piece of music he ever published! Buddy tells us in this week’s video how old Aaron Copland was when he wrote this piece—do you remember his age? ____________

Have you ever watched Tom and Jerry? In this piece of music, the composer makes the piano sound like a cartoon chase between a cat and a mouse. It’s as if you’re watching the cartoon with your ears! He does this in a few different ways. Let’s figure out what they are!

First, Buddy shows us the cat’s music. Let’s describe the music to help us imagine the cat.

Is it low or high? ________________________________________________________________

Fast or slow, or maybe both? ____________________________________________________________

Does it move all around the keyboard, or stay in one place? ________________________________

Is the music smooth, or choppy? ________________________________________________________

How does the music make you feel? ______________________________________________________

Is this cat lazy, or sneaky? _____________________________________________________________

What color do you think this cat is? ______________________________________________________

Is it a kitten, or a full-grown cat? _______________________________________________________

What is the cat doing before he sees the mouse? ____________________________________________________

Draw a picture of what you think our cat looks like!

Now, let’s listen to the mouse music and describe the mouse in our story.

Is it low or high? ______________________________________________________________________________

Fast or slow, or maybe both? _____________________________________________________________________

Does it move all around the keyboard, or stay in one place? _______________________________________________________________________________

Is the music smooth, or choppy? ___________________________________________________________________

How does the music make you feel? __________________________________________________________________

What color is this mouse? _________________________________________________________________________

Does the mouse move quickly or slowly? _______________________________________________________________________

What is the mouse doing before it sees the cat? _______________________________________________________________________

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Draw a picture of the mouse!

Finally, let’s listen to and describe the “chase” music!
Is it low or high? ________________________________
Fast or slow, or maybe both? ________________________________
Does it move all around the keyboard, or stay in one place? ________________________________
Is the music smooth, or choppy? ________________________________
How does the music make you feel? ________________________________

Where does this chase take place? In a house, a barn, or maybe outside? ________________________________
Does the cat jump, or maybe fall? How and when can you tell? ________________________________

How does the music end? Is it loud and cheerful, or does it fade away quietly? Is it low or high?

Based on the music, who do you think wins our chase? How can you tell?
AARON COPLAND 1900–1990

Aaron Copland was born in 1900 in Brooklyn, New York. He did not grow up in a musical family; his parents were Russian immigrants who never even went to a concert. However, when Copland was a teenager, he began to have an interest in music. He learned to play the piano from his older sister Laurine, and in less than one year Copland had learned everything she could teach him.

Aaron began formal music lessons and played in his first concert when he was 15. It was shortly afterwards that he decided to become a composer. When Copland graduated from high school he dreamed of studying music in France, and for the next several years, he saved his money and continued to practice. Finally, in 1921, Copland went to France to study at a new American school for music in Paris. He studied for three years in France, toured Europe, and then returned to New York.

Copland’s musical works range from ballet and orchestral music to choral music and movie scores. He wrote music for American audiences with American themes. One of these pieces is Lincoln Portrait, a piece about Abraham Lincoln. His most famous works are the ballets Rodeo and Appalachian Spring, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1945.

Aaron Copland’s early music mixed very modern musical ideas with the styles of Latin American jazz music. His style began to change during the Great Depression as his concern with modern techniques lessened, and his music emphasized simpler harmonies, broad melodies, and hints of folk melodies. While Copland never abandoned his more adventurous approach, he is best remembered for creating a truly American symphonic style.