

# Educator Resource Guide

## MY PIANO

Written by Jen Fier Jasinski  
Illustrated by Anita Bagdi

Explore the workings of a grand piano through the eyes of a young musician preparing for recital. The cumulative structure should satisfy curious readers interested in how pianos function, from the pedal pressed to the ground to the keys that hoist the hammers. It's sure to be a musical treat!

Juvenile Fiction

32 Pages ~ 10 x 10

Grades K to 3rd ~ Ages 5+

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**Key Concepts:** Music, performance art, STEAM learning, and cumulative story structure.

**About the author:** Jen Fier Jasinski grew up outside of Washington, D.C. and spent most of her childhood exploring creeks and reading books. She has taught special education for more than ten years, where her favorite part of the school day continues to be Story Time. Jen enjoys spending time with her spouse and kids, reading, and playing outside. Her favorite days are when she gets to do all three. Her extra favorite days include cake. Connect with Jen at [www.jenfierjasinski.com](http://www.jenfierjasinski.com).

**About the illustrator:** Anita is a self-taught freelance illustrator, living in Dorset, the sunniest part of UK. Her days are mostly about her neurodiverse family, creating and reading children's books, drinking coffee and raising awareness about climate emergency.

With her quirky, whimsical illustrations she loves creating mood, telling stories with heart and important messages, stories that spark further conversations, deeper thoughts, and positive change. She is determined to add her art to missing voices, to help children become more confident in finding their own voices.

### Using this guide:

This educational resource guide can be used by anyone interested in sharing enthusiasm about *My Piano* with children of all ages. If you are a teacher, librarian, home school instructor, camp counselor, or super cool parent, grandparent or guardian, this guide is for you! Feel free to adapt

the suggested learning projects and activities according to your needs, interests, time, audience, and goals.

***We have done our best to provide information, discussion points, and resources that may be useful for you and your learning participants. However, this is not an exhaustive list of ideas or topics. Also, website content and accessibility is subject to change. Please review all suggested resources and websites prior to sharing them in your learning environment to ensure they meet with your individual standards and contain age-appropriate content for your participants.***

This guide is broken down into two general categories: 1) learning opportunities (with associated activities) related to pianos and musical instruments and 2) learning opportunities (with associated activities) related to practicing and performing for others . These are broad categories with overlap between subjects, and each activity will vary in complexity depending on the age of the participants. Please modify as you see fit.

Suggested learning activities can be found for each category and are intended to align with appropriate Common Core, NGSS and/or National Core Arts Standards. To inquire about additional materials or if you have questions about this guide, please view our website at: [www.gnomeroadpublishing.com](http://www.gnomeroadpublishing.com).

## **PART 1: PIANOS AND MUSIC**

### **Learning Opportunity #1: *Let's talk about pianos!***

- The author of *My Piano* packed a lot of information about these beautiful instruments into the pages of her book. She used something called a cumulative structure to gradually introduce readers to each part of the piano and to show how they are connected through repetition. Hopefully this helped YOU understand more about the process by which pianos are played and make sound. Can you share some of the parts you remember? What do they do and how are they connected to the rest of the piano?
- The piano in the book is based on what is called a grand piano, but there are other types of pianos, too. For example, there are upright pianos, “baby” (petite) grand pianos, electric pianos, and player pianos. If you can find pictures of different pianos, take a look at how each is similar to or different from the piano in the book. Why do you think there are different types of pianos? How could they be used in different ways
- Pianos have been around for a long time (hundreds of years)! And a lot of talented people have played and composed music for pianos throughout those many years. People like Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Johann Sebastian Bach, Claude Debussy, Ludwig van Beethoven, Frederic Chopin, Franz Liszt, and Sergei Rachmaninoff (just to name a few). In more modern times, people like Elton John, Billy Joel, and Ray Charles have played piano for audiences around the world. (For more information, see <https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Piano>). Are any of those names familiar to you? Do you know anyone who plays the piano, too?

## Suggested Activities (2) ~

### *Become a Piano Technician (sort of)!*

- Did you know some piano make a living by tuning and working on pianos. They keep the instruments in good working condition so others can play beautiful music on them. Using what you learned from reading *My Piano*, including the pages in the back that define each part of the instrument, can you describe how a piano is put together? Draw or write a picture of a grand piano and label the parts! (Hint: If you need some help, the diagram in the back of the book will help get you started). Make sure to share your work with your classmates, or if you have a piano at home, point out each part to your family members.

### *Show what you know!*

- You're a piano expert now, so a vocabulary matching worksheet should be easy. Or should it? Complete the worksheet provided with this resource packet, and for extra fun, finish the word search too.

## **Learning Opportunity #2: Let's talk about other instruments!**

- There are many types of instruments you can play. Most instruments can be classified into one of four main categories: stringed, percussion, woodwind, or brass. Can you think of an example from each category?
- The piano is unique in that it incorporates both strings and percussion elements. Now that you've read *My Piano*, can you explain why the piano would be considered a stringed instrument? How about a percussion instrument? (Hint: What do the hammers do?)
- Instruments can be found all over the world and have been around for thousands of years. Which instrument or category of instrument do you think is the most common? Which do you think came first? The answer might surprise you! Take a look at this: <https://hellomusictheory.com/learn/oldest-instruments/>.
- Do you think the human voice is an instrument? If so, what kind? (Hint: we use air to make sound and we have vocal chords.)

## Suggested Activities (2) ~

### *If You Know It, Show It!*

- You might have been surprised to find out there are so many instruments throughout the world (and throughout history). Now that you know, why don't you take it one step further. Work on your own or in groups to test out your research skills and find out more about an unfamiliar instrument. Try answering some of these questions:
  - How is the instrument classified? How is/was it typically played?
  - Where and when did it originate?
  - Is there a specific type of music people like to play with the instrument?
  - Are there any famous performers on that instrument?
- When you're done with your research, draw or make a model of the instrument and share this along with your new knowledge in your classroom or group environment.

### *Build Your Own Instrument!*

- Get ready to use your creative energy to come up with an instrument of your own. Use what you've learned about instruments and design something new. If you don't have time to come up with a new idea, here are a few examples you can follow:
  - 52 Original Homemade Instruments
- If you're building a new instrument, make sure to show it to your classmates or in your group and answer the following questions:
  - What do you call it?
  - How would you classify it and why?
  - What kind(s) of music do you think it would be best suited for and why?

## **PART II: PRACTICING AND PERFORMING FOR OTHERS**

### Learning Opportunity #1: *Let's talk about practicing for performances!*

- The main character in *My Piano* is performing in a recital. That means by the time you see her she has done a lot of practicing at home and with her piano teacher. This helps her to perform her very best at the recital, not only because she knows what to do and how the song is played, but because she has more confidence and less anxiety about performing. In other words, practice = less to worry about! Can you think of other activities you do that would be easier or less stressful if you practice? (Hint: If you like sports, art, music, writing, or just about anything that takes a little while to learn, then practicing it will be helpful)
- There's a famous author named Malcolm Gladwell who suggests in his book *Outliers* that a person needs over 10,000 hours of practice at something to become an expert at it. Woah! That seems like a lot, doesn't it? What is something you have practiced? How many hours have you spent practicing it? Are you an expert yet, or do you have more practicing to do?
- Not to keep repeating it (or are we just practicing writing it?), but practice takes time. We can't practice something overnight and expect to be great the next day. We have to practice, practice some more, and then practice even more. And this goes for all kinds of things. For example, when you have a spelling test at the end of a school week, what do you do to get ready for it? Practice, of course! Sometimes we just need to practice practicing so that it seems as easy as preparing for a spelling test.

### **Suggested Activities ~**

#### *Practice Makes . . . More Practice!*

- It's your turn to show how good you are at practicing. Choose an activity that you want to practice for a week (Hint: It can be anything you want to get better at!). Use the practice chart provided at the end of this resource guide to mark off each day of practice. You can make notes, too. For example, how long it took to practice, how you felt afterwards, and whether you improved from the last time you practiced. At the end of the week, give yourself a small reward for taking the time to practice your practicing!

### *Practice Makes . . . Being Prepared!*

- You've probably heard the saying "practice makes perfect", but that seems like an unreachable goal. How about substituting this with the idea that practice makes you prepared for reaching your goal(s)? Now choose a goal that is important to you and put it on your "I'm Prepared to \_\_\_\_\_" handout provided with this resource guide. On the back, write down your baseline for this activity ("baseline" means how easy or hard it feels, how much you can do at one time, and other information about what you accomplished that first time you practice). Keep this sheet out to see each day. Once you've done four rounds of weekly practice (using the sheet found in this resource guide and used in the above activity), you can measure your're improvement.
  - o Is the activity easier? Does it take less time? Have you learned more about it?
  - o If you're ready, create a new goal and start the process again. You will be on your way to becoming an expert in . . . another 9,950 hours (but aren't you glad it's not 10,000 anymore?).

### Learning Opportunity #2: *Let's talk about performing!*

- o When you practice and prepare, you will be ready to perform. In *My Piano*, the author provides a few tips about getting ready to perform. Do you remember what some of those were?
- o A really important reminder is that mistakes are likely going to happen, even if you do your best and practice as much as possible. If you go into the performance knowing this, it can make it easier to deal with when it happens. What are some things you can do if you make a mistake while performing? How about after the performance?
- o Sometimes when we have to worry about our own performance, it's easy to forget that other people are performing, too. What can you do to help others who might be feeling the same way? (Hint: A little applause can go a long way!)

### **Suggested Activities ~**

#### *You Know You!*

- Everyone relaxes in a different way. When it comes to performances, there are lots of ways to relax ahead of time in addition to practicing, getting good sleep and showing up in plenty of time to start. You can use a simple piece of paper or the handout provided in this guide to brainstorm some activities that work for you. If you're in a classroom or with a group, share what helps you to relax. You might learn some new ways to relax from other participants, too!

#### *It's Show Time!*

- One of the best ways to understand how to do something is to do it. Get ready to put all your practice and preparation to use and perform for some friends, family or even your favorite stuffed animals. Here are some ideas of what you can do:
  - o Perform a skit or play (alone or with a group);
  - o Demonstrate how to use a toy, do a craft, or cook a snack;
  - o Put on a music or dance recital;

- Read for one or more people (storytime!);
- Share an assignment or project in front of your class or group.
- Congratulate your success in finishing the performance!

**Wonderful websites about pianos and musical instruments:**

- **Carnegie Hall Kids**
- **Piano History and Fun Facts**

**Wonderful websites about performing arts:**

- **Performing Arts Benefits**
- **Performing Arts Activities For Kids**
- **<https://www.teachstarter.com/us/blog/drama-games-for-kids-years-4-7-us/>**

# My Piano

## WORD SEARCH



E T H A M M E R S D  
S F T P K U L G I R  
A I R S R E T A M A  
C P I A N O Y E R O  
A E F A M R F S V B  
I D A M P E R S O D  
L A J I Q D G C E N  
E L A U N E E T A U  
G S R O L B N J B O  
O M L S G N I R T S



piano  
case  
legs

strings  
hammers  
dampers  
soundboard

keys  
pedals  
frame



# My Piano

## WORD SEARCH



piano  
case  
legs

strings  
hammers  
dampers  
soundboard

keys  
pedals  
frame



# Parts of the Piano

Draw a line to match the part of the piano to its image and description.



These keep the case and all the inside parts off the floor. Most have wheels so they are easier to move around (some pianos weigh over nine hundred pounds!)



Each piano has over 250 of these! Most are steel, but the bass ones are wound in copper. The added weight helps create lower pitches.



Though some grand pianos can have up to 108 of these, most have 88 (36 black and 52 white). Today, they are made of wood and covered in plastic.

Dampers

Pedals

Strings

Keys

Hammers

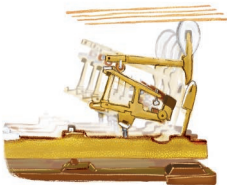
Soundboard

Frame

Legs



These are made of wood and felt. They cover the strings to stop their vibrations.



A piece of wood with a felt- covered tip. When it lifts, it strikes the strings to make them vibrate.



Modern grand pianos have three of these. They are called the sustain, the sostenuto, and the soft.



This is the heart of the piano. It has a series of hardwood bridges installed across the top. These resonate and produce the same pitch the strings would produce on their own, only louder.



Though only one of these is mentioned in this story, grand pianos have two – a wood one and an iron one. The two are bolted together to hold the high amount of tension from the strings (over 20 tonnes!)



# Practice makes... more practice!



Fill out this weekly practice log and show your improvement!

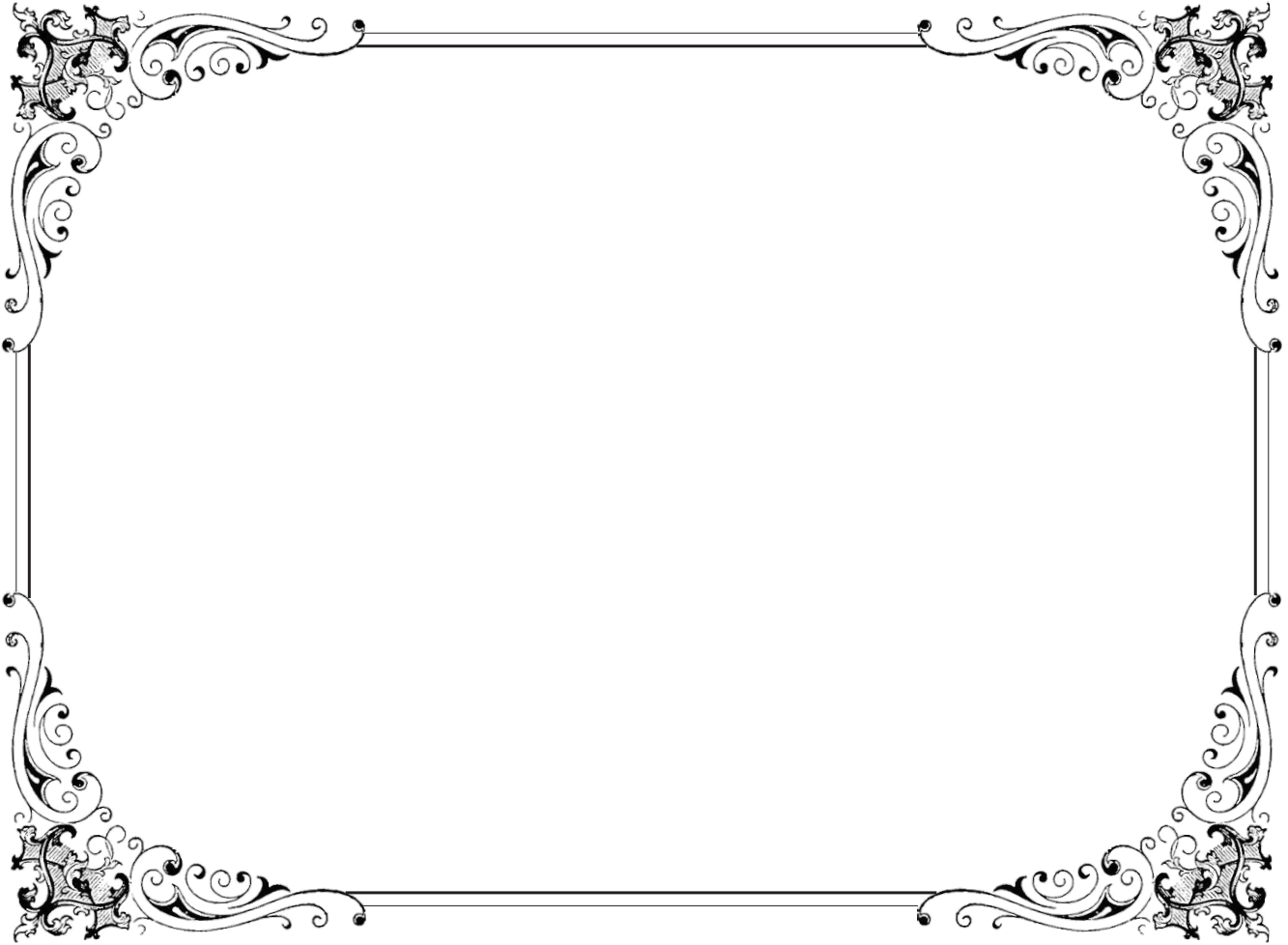
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday	Notes:
Monday	Notes:
Tuesday	Notes:
Wednesday	Notes:
Thursday	Notes:
Friday	Notes:
Saturday	Notes:

Reward: \_\_\_\_\_ Keep it up. You're doing great!

# I am Prepared!

Write or draw your goal or future achievement.



MY PIANO

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# My Relaxation Tips

A large, light purple bracket-shaped frame containing 15 horizontal lines for writing.



