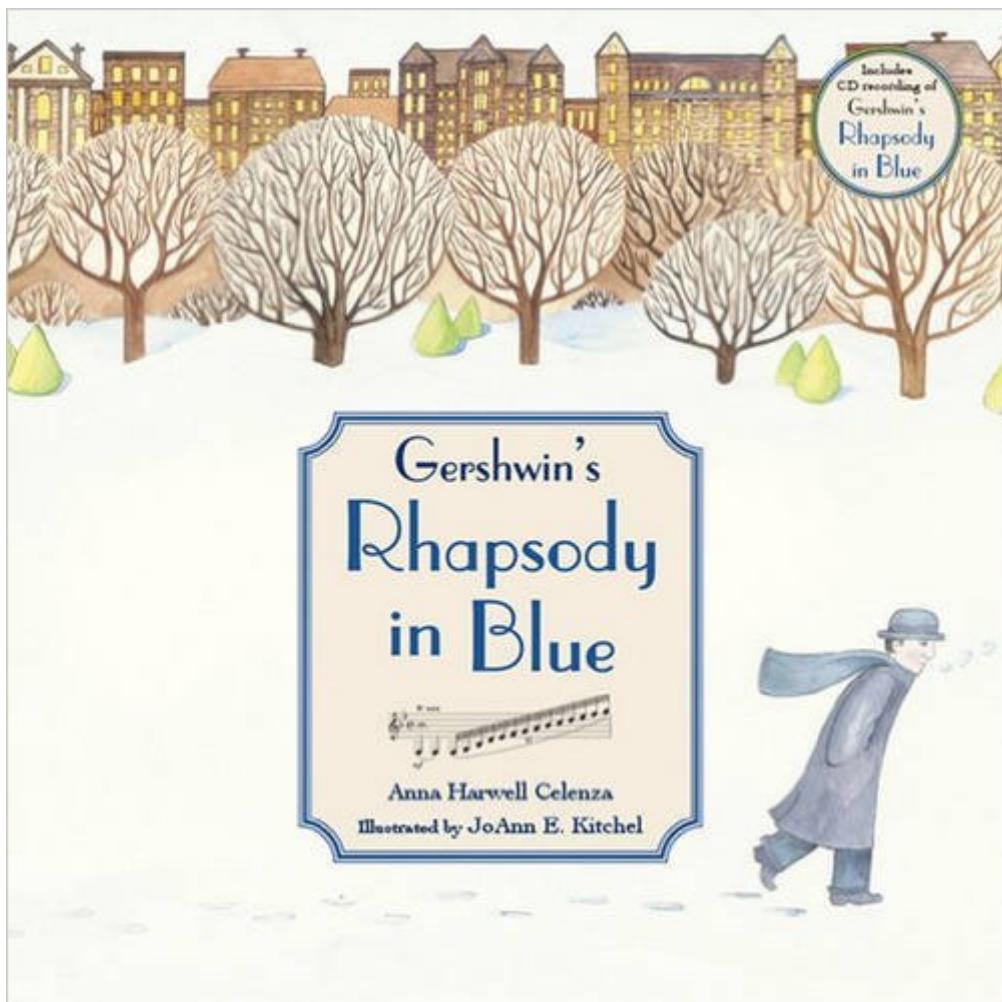


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# Gershwin's Rhapsody In Blue



## **Synopsis**

George Gershwin only has a few weeks to compose a concerto. His piece is supposed to exemplify American music and premiere at a concert entitled "An Experiment in Modern Music." Homesick for New York while rehearsing for a musical in Boston, he soon realizes that American music is much like its people, a great melting pot of sounds, rhythms, and harmonies. JoAnn Kitchel's illustrations capture the 1920s in all their art deco majesty. Includes a CD of "Rhapsody in Blue" performed by George Gershwin (1925 piano roll) and the Columbia Jazz Band, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 830L (What's this?)

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars See all reviews (15 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 3 - 4

## **Customer Reviews**

Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe arrived in the United States as learners of American culture and within a generation became its creators. In print, on stage and screen, on radio and in the world of music, their children created now iconic works which consciously or unconsciously melded their Jewish roots and American experiences. A prime example is George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue, a work that contains elements of Jewish, ragtime and blues music. The concerto is a living example of how a "melting pot society" led to the development of a uniquely American art form. Through invented dialogue, the author reconstructs Gershwin's thought processes as he begins to envision the music and then creates the work. The only mention of Gershwin's Jewish heritage are

references to klezmer music - e.g. "the klezmer band at Ira's bar mitzvah" - but the term is not defined. The terms "ragtime" or "blues" are also not explained. In life, Gershwin was very much influenced not only by the Jewish music of his youth but also by his exposure to African American music. The book offers a very well written and illustrated glimpse into the creative process of a musical genius and could serve to open further discussion with young readers on the contributions of Jews to American music. A CD of Rhapsody in Blue (from an original piano roll played by Gershwin himself) accompanies the book. For ages 8-10. Reviewed by Norman H. Finkelstein

A fictionalized account of the creation of George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" details how the composer was pressured to create a new concerto in just a few weeks, how he was inspired by the rhythm of a train ride, the klezmer band at his brother's Bar Mitzvah, the harmonies of nightclub dance music, ragtime, and the blues, and the enthusiastic reception the piece received at its first performance. Kitchel's illustrations authentically depict the spirit of the roaring twenties, an author's note gives readers additional information, and the included CD recording provides added value.

This is a great book. It comes with a CD which is wonderful. I am very pleased to have it. I teach elementary music and it is great for my library in my classroom.

This is another evocative and personal book by Ms. Celenza, who has a gift for building a story that appeals to young readers. This book definitely \*does\* come with a CD - it is inside the back cover. Perhaps the other reviewer who didn't get a CD was expecting a separate CD case? Regardless, it's a nice combination.

The Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation is grateful to the author and the illustrator of this magnificent book for children. It should be in every Elementary School classroom in the world! We are proud to feature it as our "Children's Book of the Month" for August, 2014. Ella Fitzgerald was famous for singing Gershwin, and this book is a great introduction to a true American hero. Many thanks. Fran Morris Rosman Executive Director The Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation [www.ellafitzgeraldfoundation.org](http://www.ellafitzgeraldfoundation.org)

This was a wonderful book. My girls (6 & 8) have played the included CD over and over again. A favorite part is when Gershwin waves his hands in the air and say, "I can't do it!" A great resource to introduce music to kids.

Very nicely done...excellent for classroom use to teach the history and circumstances surrounding the composition of the tune. I would use it in conjunction with a unit on Tin Pan Alley or Gershwin, or music of the times. Great gift for aspiring pianists!

This is such a great story and so well written. Gershwin's music is a wonderful example of a person's ability to even produce under pressure. He was one of a kind. My grandchildren loved these books.

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