Name: _____ Date: _____

The Thin Piece of Cane Inside a Clarinet

Circle group

A clarinet is a long black tube with silver keys. But its sound starts in a tiny part most people never see. At the top, held on the mouthpiece by a metal clamp, is a flat sliver of cane called a reed. Without it, the clarinet would make no music.

The reed is cut from a tall grass. It is shaved thin at one end. The tip bends easily, and the back stays firm. A player blows into the mouthpiece. The air must squeeze through a narrow gap between the reed and the mouthpiece. The moving air makes the reed vibrate. It opens and closes the gap many times each second. The quick puffs of air go into the tube as a steady note.

The tube then shapes the note. Holes in the body are covered by pads, and keys work the pads. Opening a hole shortens the air that is vibrating. Less air makes a higher pitch. Closing the holes makes the air longer and the sound lower.

Reeds are delicate. They are used wet, because a damp reed vibrates more smoothly. They wear out after weeks. A chip can make a squeak. So players keep spares in a case. A good reed matters as much as practice.

Questions

1. What is a reed made from?

_____

_____

2. What happens when air squeezes through the gap between the reed and the mouthpiece?

_____

_____

3. What do the keys and pads control?

_____

_____

4. Why do players use their reeds wet?

_____

_____

5. What happens to the pitch when more holes are closed?

_____

_____

6. Why would a player keep several reeds in a case?

_____

_____

Words to know

reed: a thin strip of cane that vibrates to make sound
mouthpiece: the part of an instrument that goes in the mouth
vibrate: to move back and forth very quickly
pitch: how high or low a musical sound is
delicate: easily damaged or broken

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Thin Piece of Cane Inside a Clarinet

Triangle group

A clarinet is a long black tube covered with silver keys, but its sound begins in a tiny part that most listeners never see. At the top, held against the mouthpiece by a metal clamp, sits a flat sliver of cane called a reed. Without it, the instrument would make no music at all.

The reed is cut from a tall grass that grows in warm regions. It is shaved thin at one end, so that the tip bends easily while the thicker back stays firm. When a player puts the mouthpiece between the lips and blows, air has to squeeze through a narrow gap between the reed and the mouthpiece. The moving air makes the reed vibrate, opening and closing the gap many times each second, and these quick puffs of air travel into the tube as a steady musical note.

The tube then shapes that note. Holes along the body are covered by pads, which are worked by the keys. Opening a hole shortens the length of air that is vibrating inside, and a shorter column of air produces a higher pitch. Closing the holes lengthens the column and lowers the sound.

Reeds are surprisingly delicate. They are used wet, because a damp reed vibrates more smoothly, and they wear out after weeks of playing. A chip at the tip can make a squeak, so musicians often keep several in a case. Many players say that choosing a good reed matters as much as practicing, since a tiny difference in thickness can change the tone from rough to warm.

Questions

1. What is a reed made from?

_____

_____

2. What happens when air squeezes through the gap between the reed and the mouthpiece?

_____

_____

3. What do the keys and pads control?

_____

_____

4. Why do players use their reeds wet?

_____

_____

5. What happens to the pitch when more holes are closed?

_____

_____

6. Why would a musician keep several reeds in a case?

_____

_____

Words to know

reed: a thin strip of cane that vibrates to make sound
mouthpiece: the part of an instrument that goes in the mouth
vibrate: to move back and forth very quickly
pitch: how high or low a musical sound is
delicate: easily damaged or broken

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Thin Piece of Cane Inside a Clarinet

Square group

A clarinet is a long black tube dressed in silver keys, yet its sound originates in a tiny component that most listeners never notice. At the top, held against the mouthpiece by a metal clamp, rests a flat sliver of cane known as a reed. Without it, the instrument would produce no music whatsoever.

The reed is cut from a tall grass that flourishes in warm regions. It is shaved thin at one end, so that the tip bends readily while the thicker back stays firm. When a player places the mouthpiece between the lips and blows, the air must squeeze through a narrow gap between the reed and the mouthpiece. The rushing air sets the reed vibrating, opening and closing the gap many times each second, and these rapid puffs of air travel into the tube as a steady musical note.

The tube then shapes that note. Holes along the body are covered by pads, which are operated by the keys. Opening a hole shortens the length of air that is vibrating inside, and a shorter column of air produces a higher pitch. Closing the holes lengthens the column and lowers the sound.

Reeds are surprisingly delicate. They are played wet, because a damp reed vibrates more smoothly, and they wear out after several weeks of use. A chip at the tip can provoke a squeak, so musicians commonly keep several in a case. Many players insist that choosing a good reed matters as much as practicing, since a tiny difference in thickness can transform the tone from rough to warm.

Questions

1. What is a reed made from?

_____

_____

2. What happens when air squeezes through the gap between the reed and the mouthpiece?

_____

_____

3. What do the keys and pads control?

_____

_____

4. Why do players keep their reeds wet when they play?

_____

_____

5. What happens to the pitch when more holes are closed?

_____

_____

6. Why would a musician keep several reeds in a case?

_____

_____

Words to know

reed: a thin strip of cane that vibrates to make sound
mouthpiece: the part of an instrument that goes in the mouth
vibrate: to move back and forth very quickly
pitch: how high or low a musical sound is
delicate: easily damaged or broken

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: The Thin Piece of Cane Inside a Clarinet

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: The Thin Piece of Cane Inside a Clarinet

Easier · 209 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.6

1. Cane, cut from a tall grass.
2. The reed vibrates, opening and closing the gap many times a second.
3. Which holes in the body are open or closed.
4. A damp reed vibrates more smoothly.
5. The pitch gets lower, because the air is longer.
6. Reeds wear out or chip, so a spare can replace one.

Triangle: The Thin Piece of Cane Inside a Clarinet

This passage · 261 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 6.8

1. Cane, which is cut from a tall grass.
2. The reed vibrates, opening and closing the gap many times a second.
3. Which holes along the body are open or closed.
4. A damp reed vibrates more smoothly.
5. The pitch gets lower, because the column of air is longer.
6. Reeds wear out or chip, and a spare can replace a damaged one.

Square: The Thin Piece of Cane Inside a Clarinet

Harder · 262 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.8

1. Cane, which is cut from a tall grass that grows in warm regions.
2. The reed vibrates, opening and closing the gap many times each second.
3. Which holes along the body are open or closed.
4. A damp reed vibrates more smoothly.
5. The pitch becomes lower, because the column of air is longer.
6. Reeds wear out or chip, and a spare can replace a damaged one.