**The String Family**

“String instruments are easy to recognize, with pretty, curve shapes and long strings and a really wide range of beautiful sounds. Depending on how you pluck, strum, or rub the strings, you can make so many different sounds.

The four main string instruments are the violin, viola, cello, and double bass.” (Rumens-Syratt 60)

These instruments are played by using a bow. A bow is a long, specially shaped stick, often made from wood, and strung using hair from the tail of a horse. The bow is then scraped or rubbed along the strings of the instrument to create the sound.”

**Violin**

The violin is the smallest member of the string family. Even though this is the case, people manufacture smaller versions of the violin in order to accommodate children who are interested in learning to play the violin. If you are playing music in an orchestra or a string quartet, the violin often plays the melody or solos. A string quartet is a group of four string instruments playing together. Many times a string quartet is made up from two violins, a viola, and a cello.

**Viola**

The viola is the middle sounding instrument of the string family. It is lower in tone than the violin. Many musicians who play the viola often begin with the violin and transition to the viola at a later time. Since the viola is larger than the violin, you may need to space your fingers further apart in order to play the correct notes.

**Cello**

The cello may look like a big violin and have the same features, but the cello is a completely different instrument. The cello player, who often is seated while they play, holds the cello between their knees. The body of the instrument rests against the musician’s chest. The musician who plays the cello is known as a cellist. Even though the cello is played while it rests on the floor, the musician still uses a bow to produce sound. While the bow for a cello might be held in the hand differently than a violin or viola, the cellist still moves the bow to the left and right in order to create sound. Many cellists use a technique called a vibrato while they play. A vibrato is a technique used by instrumentalists and vocalists where they wobble the sound of a note without changing the note. This allows the note to be more interesting and expressive.

**Double Bass**

The double bass is a large, stringed instrument. The bassist must stand or sit in a high chair in order to play the double bass. While the violin, viola, and cello all have four strings, some double basses have a fifth string. Double basses (or any string instrument for that matter) make use of a technique where they pluck the strings to create different sound. This technique is called pizzicato. Due to the size of the double bass, a musician who plays the instrument using the pizzicato technique will often create a loud sound.

**Harp**

A harp is a string instrument that has been around for many centuries. In fact, a harp can be traced back as far as the year 3500 BC! A harpist usually plays notes with both their left and right hands. A harp creates sound by the musician plucking the strings. A harp also has a petal. This petal is used to tighten or loosen the strings.

Syratt, Becky. *Batsford Book of Music for Children*. B T Batsford Ltd, 2016.

Please answer the following questions:

1. The four main string instruments are the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. These instruments are all played by using a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
3. The smallest of these instruments is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is the middle sounding instrument.
5. When playing string instruments with a small group of four, this is called a string \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
6. Most violists start by playing the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ first.
7. A musician uses a technique called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to create a wobbling sound in the note.
8. The double bass is played using a bow. If this strings are plucked, this technique is called\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.