

Name _____ Date _____

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

One of the poorer sections of New Orleans welcomed Louis Armstrong to the world on August 4, 1901. He was a hard-working child who tried to help support his mother and sister by doing any job he could find. He sold newspapers, unloaded boats, and sold coal from a cart. Often he would sing on street corners for coins. When he was seven years old, he somehow managed to buy his first musical instrument, a cornet.



At the age of twelve, Louis was sent to the Jones Home for Colored Waifs because he had fired a pistol on New Year's Eve. It was at the home where Louis would receive his first formal musical training. He later played in the Home's band. After his release, he was able to support himself as a musician by playing in various bands and with his mentor, Joe "King" Oliver. Oliver and a few other musicians were creating a new type of music: jazz.

In the early 1920s Louis Armstrong left New Orleans for Chicago to play with "King" Oliver. He later moved on to New York where he improvised many new trumpet solos that wowed audiences. Some said Louis Armstrong used his horn like a singer's voice, and his voice like a musical instrument. In 1929, he returned to New York where he performed in Harlem and made his first jazz recordings. Jazz had turned into a worldwide phenomenon and Louis Armstrong was the leader. By the late 1930s, Louis was one of the most significant artists in music. His individual style influenced the big band sound and "swing" music. He was often labeled the "greatest of all jazz musicians".

As World War II and then the Cold War raged on, Louis Armstrong became known as "Ambassador Satch". He spread good will for America around the world. The state department sponsored many tours, which made Louis Armstrong into an international celebrity. His death on July 6, 1971 was front page news around the globe. More than 25,000 mourners filed past his coffin at the New York National Guard Armory.

Louis Armstrong is well known for his rendition of "It's a Wonderful World" which he recorded in 1970. He gave a spoken introduction that sums up his philosophy for life, "And all I'm saying is see what a wonderful world it would be if only we would give it a chance."

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Multiple Choice Questions about Louis Armstrong

1. How did the young Louis earn coins to support his mother and sister?
 - a. singing on street corners
 - b. washing cars
 - c. helping his mother clean
 - d. playing the horn

2. What instrument did Louis buy for himself at the age of seven?
 - a. trumpet
 - b. saxophone
 - c. cornet
 - d. tuba

3. At what age was Louis sent to a boy's home for firing off a pistol?
 - a. 12
 - b. 7
 - c. 9
 - d. 15

4. What new type of music did Louis Armstrong enjoy playing?
 - a. classical
 - b. jazz
 - c. rock
 - d. piano

5. Which city did Louis Armstrong go to after leaving New Orleans?
 - a. Chicago
 - b. New York
 - c. Trenton
 - d. Boston

6. What was one of his nicknames during the War years?
 - a. Ambassador King
 - b. Ambassador Oliver
 - c. Ambassador Armstrong
 - d. Ambassador Satch

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Multiple Choice Questions/Answer Key

1. A
2. C
3. A
4. B
5. A
6. D