



W.C. Handy
Carl Van Vechten Collection,
Library of Congress



Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 8, WEBISODE 11

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide

In the 1920s, talented black musical geniuses took the innovative jazz art form to new heights. They also spread their music, with the Great Migration, beyond its birthplace in New Orleans, to northern cities – Chicago and New York – across the country and across oceans.

Among the innovators were W.C. Handy, “Father of the Blues,” who took the hymns and spirituals of the black church and the songs of the black laborers on the Tennessee River and formed the music he called “blues.”

Fabled trumpeter Louis “Satchmo” Armstrong lifted himself from poverty to perform all over the world as one of the greatest and best-loved jazz musicians. Joe “King” Oliver, an innovative New Orleans jazz player, gave Armstrong his first coronet and taught him how to play. Known for the new style he created, Satchmo gave his horn a voice-like quality and charmed listeners with his distinctive, gravelly singing voice.

Beginning with his first recordings in 1925, Duke Ellington was all elegance and flashy dress, but mostly he was music. As a composer, pianist, and orchestra leader, Ellington merged his African heritage with European atonal theory and Western classical traditions. But his jazz compositions were completely his own, difficult to classify but delightful to hear. He gave the world such hit songs as “Satin Doll,” “Sophisticated Lady” and “Mood Indigo.”

Using the highs and lows of her own life, Bessie Smith wrote songs that defined the blues and was considered one of the greatest blues performers in the country. Through the new technology of recordings and radio, Smith became the “Empress of the Blues”; her recording of “Downhearted Blues” sold a record 750,000 copies in 1932.

Teacher Directions

1. Ask the students the following questions.
 - Who are your favorite recording artists?
 - Describe their music.
 - What in their music makes them your favorite artists?
2. Allow students time to respond, encouraging them to think in specific terms about what makes an individual’s music stand out. Does the music make the listeners feel something or identify with something in their own lives? What makes the sounds unique?



Segment
Overview



Let’s Discuss

Let's Discuss, Cont.



History Sleuth

3. Tell the students that from New Orleans, Louisiana, in the 1920s, a new music came to the attention of the nation. It sprang from African and European music, but it was different; it was the blues and jazz.

Teacher Directions

Note to the Teacher: Have on hand recordings of music (available from public libraries or the Internet) by the artists on the personality cards for students to listen to and use in the following activity. Also have available a sheet of poster board, crayons, markers, and glue sticks for students to use in making posters.

1. Distribute the Student Sheets: *Great Jazz Age Personalities*, giving one personality to each team. Teams read about their personalities, listen to their music, and create a poster that illustrates important aspects of their lives in drawings, words and short sentences. The picture of the artist becomes a part of the poster.
2. Teams play their personalities' music and display and describe their posters to the rest of the class.
3. Students display their posters in the classroom or hallway for the entire school to view.

Teacher Directions

Ask the students.

- Why do you think the 1920s saw such an explosion of African American culture?
- What factors in society allowed or encouraged African American artists and athletes to gain recognition and fame?
- Which artist or athlete do you most admire and why?



What do you
Think?



Teacher Directions

Note to the Teacher: Students make posters for African American artists of the Harlem Renaissance and for African American baseball players of the 1920s in the same manner as used in the History Sleuth activity.

1. Students discuss how African Americans moved toward freedom in the areas of music, literature, art, and sports in the 1920s.
2. Students create a 1920s African American Hall of Fame display with their posters in the classroom or hallway for the entire school to view.

Activity One

1. Share the following information with students about the Harlem Renaissance.

The Harlem Renaissance—a flowering of black playwrights, poets, musicians, artists, and actors who lived and worked within a few blocks of each other—owed its existence in part to one of the biggest population shifts in the history of the United States. In the decade before, nearly one million African Americans had left their southern homes and farms and migrated north to industrial cities in search of employment. Artist Jacob Lawrence grew up knowing those people on the move. At the age of twenty-two, Lawrence began to paint his migration series of sixty numbered panels that told the story of the people who moved away from their southern homes. Another notable artist of the Harlem Renaissance was Romare Bearden. Writer Lora Neale Hurston shocked Harlem society with her outrageous behavior, including smoking in public, but she fascinated people with her tales of her native Florida. Her most famous book is *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Poet Langston Hughes expressed the attitude of African American artists of the 1920s when he said, "No great poet has ever been afraid of being himself. We younger Negro artists now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame." Countee Cullen, another notable poet, considered poetry raceless. He also penned children's books and wrote for the theater.

2. Teams research the lives of the following artists: Langston Hughes, Lora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, Jacob Lawrence, and Romare Bearden. Images of these artists are available @ <http://www.memory.loc.gov>. Search on the artists names.

Activity Two

1. Share the following information with students about African American baseball players in the 1920s.

Because African Americans were barred from playing on major league baseball teams, they formed their own leagues in 1920. Players on the Negro Leagues, as they were called, received much lower wages than their white counterparts and used shabby equipment, but they could really play ball. Having no ballparks of their own, they rented them and played double-headers and night games (most often on the same day) to pay for the use

Moving Toward Freedom,
Continued.

of the field. Besides regular league games, the players “barnstormed” around the country bringing entertainment and fancy ball playing to blacks all across America. The travel was brutal; and, in segregated times, the black players almost always had trouble finding hotel rooms and places to eat.

But regardless of the segregated nature of the teams, there was no end to the major talents who played ball for the Negro Leagues. Satchel Paige, one of the greatest pitchers in the history of baseball, practically invented the fastball. Batters swore they never saw it coming, just heard it strike the catcher’s glove. Josh Gibson could do everything—hit the ball a mile and “throw like a rifle.” Cool Papa Bell ran with such speed that even Jesse Owens, the fastest runner in the world, refused to race him. Finally, in 1947, professional baseball leagues became integrated, initiating a mad rush to sign African American players.

2. Teams research the lives of the following players: Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, Cool Papa Bell, Smokey Joe Williams, Oscar Charleston. Images of the players are available @ <http://www.negrobaseball.com> or <http://www.baseballhalloffame.org>.

Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

Music/Library — Students listen to the recordings of Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington. Students create musical timelines and presentations that trace the roots of jazz and show the influence of jazz on today’s music.

Art/Music — Students listen to jazz music and create abstract drawings that capture their personal reactions to the harmony, rhythm, and melody of the musical piece.

Music/Dance — Students listen to jazz music and create abstract dances that capture their personal reactions to the harmony, rhythm, and melody of the musical piece.

Literature — Students read *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems* by Langston Hughes. (An Alfred Knopf edition of Hughes poetry is especially appropriate for middle school students.)

Media — Students view segments of the Ken Burns PBS video series *Jazz*.

Literature — Students read one of the following: *Lou s Armstrong: An Amer can Success Story* by James Lincoln Collier; *Duke Ell ngton* by James Lincoln Collier, *Cobblestone Magaz ne Baseball, Jazz, Lou s Armstrong, Duke Ell ngton*, and *Harlem Rena ssance*.



Connections

Great Jazz Age Personalities

W.C. Handy

William Christopher Handy was born in a tiny log cabin in Alabama in 1873, just eight years after the end of the Civil War.

His father and grandfather were ministers in the African Methodist Episcopal church.

Handy loved the Negro spirituals and hymns that he heard in the church services.



W.C. Handy
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As a little boy he would sneak down to the banks of the Tennessee River near his home to hear the songs of the black laborers. Their music expressed hope in the face of endless toil and hardship.

Handy combined this sad music with the African rooted music of the church and created a new music, “the blues.”

He called all his music blues: “St Louis Blues,” “Yellow Dog Blues,” “Joe Turner Blues,” “Beale Street Blues.” He wrote forty blues songs.

Even after he became blind, Handy continued to write music. He also wrote books about the blues and an autobiography *Father of the Blues*. That is what people who love his music call him.

Handy died in 1958. His hometown in Alabama holds a weeklong tribute every year called the W.C. Handy Music Festival.

Great Jazz Age Personalities

Joe “King” Oliver

Joe “King” Oliver, one of the first great New Orleans jazz musicians, was born in Louisiana in 1885.

In 1918, he moved from New Orleans to Chicago where he made his most famous jazz recordings.

Oliver played in marching bands: The Olympia, The Onward Brass Band, The Original Superior, and The Eagle Band.

He gave Louis Armstrong his first coronet and taught him how to play.

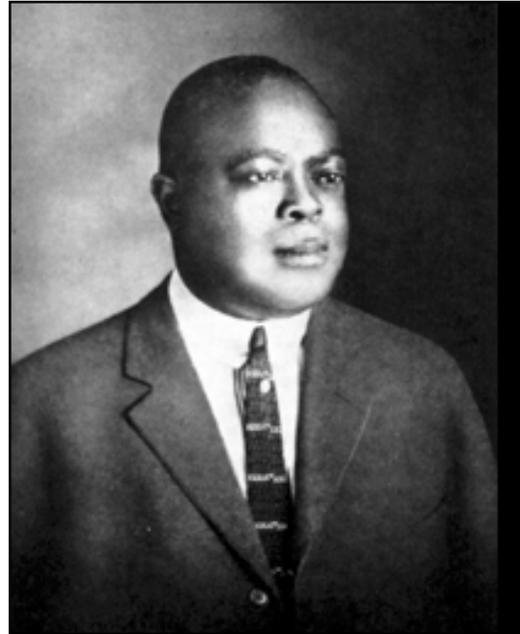
Oliver was very inventive, and created things like mutes to change the sound of the coronet.

He started King Oliver’s Creole Band and introduced Louis Armstrong with the band.

Oliver had a sweet tooth. He ate too many sugar sandwiches, which made his teeth rot so his mouth hurt too much to play his coronet.

Oliver made several poor business decisions until he ran out of money.

He worked as a janitor in a poolroom in Georgia until his death in 1938.



Joe “King” Oliver @ All That Jazz: Early Jazz History

Great Jazz Age Personalities

Bessie Smith

Bessie Smith began her career at the age of nine singing in the streets of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

She joined a traveling vaudeville show as a dancer, but her real talent was singing.

By the 1920s, Smith had become the most popular blues singer in the country. Her fans called her the “Empress of the Blues.”



Bessie Smith @ Red Hot Jazz.com

Smith made her first recording in 1923, “Down-Hearted Blues,” which sold 750,000 copies.

Smith made lots of money, but she spent it as fast as she made it.

When the Depression, radio, and talking movies stole the audience away from recorded music, Smith’s career went down hill.

She started a successful comeback as a Swing singer.

In 1937, she died in a car accident.

Great Jazz Age Personalities

Edward K. “Duke” Ellington

Edward K. “Duke” Ellington was born in Washington, D.C., in 1899.

Ellington began to study piano at the age of seven. He copied ragtime pianists and taught himself harmony.

His school friends gave him the nickname Duke because he dressed and acted like royalty in high school.



Duke Ellington @ Red Hot Jazz.com

Ellington was not just a composer and arranger, but also an improviser – he and his fellow players would make up the music as they went along, tossing a melody back and forth.

His biggest success came when he and The Duke Ellington Orchestra became the house band at the Cotton Club in New York City.

Musicians who played with Duke Ellington stayed with him for a long time.

He and his band toured Europe and the United States.

Duke Ellington’s music continued to change and grow with the times.

Howard and Yale Universities awarded him honorary doctorates; he was the first jazz musician to be elected to the Royal Music Academy in Sweden, and he won the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Duke Ellington’s many recordings span the history of jazz from the 1920s to the 1970s. When he died, his son Mercer Ellington took over the band.

Great Jazz Age Personalities

Louis Armstrong

Louis Armstrong was born in poverty in New Orleans in 1900.

When he was twelve years old, he fired a gun into the air on New Year's Eve and ended up in reform school for two years. There he first tried playing a coronet.

At age fourteen he began selling newspapers and coal on the streets and unloading boats at the New Orleans docks.

When he met Joe "King" Oliver at the Funky Butt Hall, Oliver befriended him, gave him his a coronet to keep, and taught him how to really play. Armstrong called Oliver "Papa Joe."

Armstrong left New Orleans for St. Louis, Missouri, where he began playing on Mississippi riverboats between the two cities.

He joined Papa Joe's Creole Jazz band in Chicago, and his playing soon made him famous.

He married, Lil, a piano player who convinced him to leave the band and move to New York City.

Armstrong made dozens of recordings with other famous jazz musicians, both playing the trumpet and singing in his gravelly voice.

He lived and toured all over the country from Chicago to Los Angeles, and back to New Orleans. He even toured and played in Europe, Africa, and Asia where he was a great success.



Louis Armstrong @ Red Hot Jazz.com