

Name _____

Date _____



Louis Armstrong

From rags to riches (rags to riches).

Poverty to sovereignty (poverty to sovereignty).

Innovation, improvisation, creativity.

His legacy is long, so try to sing along.

Louis Armstrong, born 1901.

Here's the story of how he got it out the mud.

Raised in the poorest neighborhood in the city,

The Battlefield, New Orleans, tough and gritty.

He worked odd jobs to help feed his family.

Nicknamed Satchmo as a young man. He

Was Arrested at age 12—a moment that changed

The course of his life. He was sent to stay

At the New Orleans Home for Colored Waifs,

Where he learned the cornet and developed his musical taste.

He learned by listening to pioneers of jazz,

Like King Oliver. He started rising fast—

Marching bands, jazz bands, he even replaced King

Oliver in the Kid Ory Band in 1918.

Improvisation was the key to hot jazz,

And Louis Armstrong became a master.

In 1922, he received a new choice

From Oliver himself in Chicago, Illinois:

To join his big Creole Jazz Band as second cornet.

And with no doubt, Louis showed up at his doorstep. (knock knock)

His spot in the band earned him more buzz.

He married the band's pianist Lil Hardin. Then one

Day Hardin said to Louis: He should quit to further his fame.

And so he did, became a solo artist without shame.

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Armstrong switched from cornet to trumpet.

His early recordings as a band leader show an abundance

Of creativity, innovation, and skill.

His solos alone put him at the top of the bill.

By 1929, Louis Armstrong

Was internationally known—he was putting the world on

To jazz. But it goes even deeper;

He was also a pioneering jazz singer.

He used his gravelly voice and unique sense

Of rhythm to turn his voice into an instrument.

He popularized a style called scatting,

Using nonsense sounds instead of words. His imaginative

Spirit, personality, and humor shined through

In every last thing he decided to do.

Every jazz guy in town followed suit,

Allowing jazz music to flourish like a growing fruit.

His fame only grew as he appeared in movies,

Hosted a radio show, and toured internationally.

But it wasn't all sweet,

As a Black performer in the Jim Crow Era he

Faced racism every step of the way.

Some critics claimed he didn't do enough to advocate

For civil rights, while others applauded

All the doors that he opened up for Black artists.

Late in life, poor health slowed down

His trumpet playing, but he kept singing loud

Till 1971, when he passed away.

Looking back at his legacy today:

An innovator and an ambassador for jazz,

A comedian, a writer, a Hollywood actor.

An American icon—that's for sure.

From the Battlefield to fame just him and his horn.

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