

Name _____ Date _____

Louis Armstrong

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b'

Louis Armstrong was born in 1901 in one of the poorest neighborhoods in New Orleans the Battlefield. As a child, he worked odd jobs to help support his family. He was given the nickname Satchel Mouth, Satchmo for short, because of the size of his mouth. At the age of 12, Armstrong was arrested for firing a gun in the air during a New Year celebration an arrest that would change his life. Armstrong was sent to the Colored Waifs Home juvenile detention center. It was there he learned to play cornet and developed a passion for music.

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2. b'

Armstrong learned to play throughout his teens by listening to pioneering jazz artists, like King Oliver, a cornet player from New Orleans. He rose quickly, playing in marching and jazz bands. He eventually replaced Oliver in the Kid Ory Band in 1918, a top New Orleans hot jazz band. Armstrong's ability to improvise was on full display during his time in the Kid Ory Band. In 1922, King Oliver himself invited Armstrong to play in his Creole Jazz Band in Chicago. Armstrong became well known for his duets with Oliver as well as his solos. He eventually married the band's pianist, Lil Hardin, in 1924. Hardin thought Armstrong had the potential to be famous and encouraged him to go solo. Encouraged by her support, Armstrong quit Oliver's band and started his own.

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3. b'

Armstrong made the switch from cornet to trumpet. His innovative style and creativity shined through as the leader of the Hot Five and later Hot Seven bands. Early recordings showed off his skill as a soloist and helped establish the solo as a central part of jazz. By 1929, Armstrong was internationally known and a driving force in introducing jazz to the world.

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He was also a pioneering jazz singer. He used his unique sense of rhythm to turn his gravelly voice into an instrument. He popularized a style called scatting, in which a singer would sing nonsense sounds instead of words. Armstrong could do it all, and his big personality shined through in his humorous songs while his unparalleled skill elevated jazz standards.

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4. b'

Armstrong's fame only grew as he appeared in movies, hosted a national radio show, and earned the nickname 'Ambassador Satch' for his nonstop international touring schedule. As a performer in the Jim Crow Era, Armstrong dealt with racism and discrimination throughout his career. Some critics believed Armstrong didn't do enough to advocate for civil rights. Others applauded him for paving the way for so many Black artists. Poor health late in Armstrong's life slowed his trumpet playing, but he continued singing until his death in 1971. Louis Armstrong left behind a massive legacy. He was not only an innovator and ambassador for jazz, but also a movie star, comedian, and an icon in American culture.

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