

*Jazz: A History of America's Music*  
Episode 1: "Gumbo" Video Guide  
Episode 2: "The Gift"  
**Suggested Answers**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Please read this guide in its entirety. Enjoy the 8-minute intro to Episode 1 of Ken Burns' documentary then proceed to answer the following questions based on Episodes 1 and 2 of *Jazz*.

1. What is improvisation? **To "create art on the spot," individual expression within selfless collaboration. Slaves had to learn to improvise in a new world.**
2. How did the diverse population of New Orleans help to create jazz? Note the contributions of each group:  
African slaves- **complex percussive rhythms**  
  
Slaves from the West Indies- **Caribbean rhythms**  
  
Slaves from the interior South- **Work songs, spirituals, call and response**  
  
Free people of color / Creoles- **"European," classically trained, played every kind of dance**
3. Describe New Orleans' "mania for horns."- **love for the brass bands, parades: weddings, funerals, feast days, Mardi Gras**
4. What was minstrel music? What national impact did it have? **"plantation songs," lively music, comedy, blacks and whites interpret each other for decades, enforced ugly racial stereotypes. First national entertainment, national humor and songs. Gave us the term Jim Crow.**
5. How did the Civil War and Reconstruction impact New Orleans? **Union occupation a new birth of freedom, a burst of creative energy. Former slaves are Americans. Reconstruction meant federal troops who enforced integration and civil rights.**
6. In the 1890s two new styles of music came to New Orleans. Describe and state the significance of ragtime and the blues. **Ragtime-** from the Midwest; a blend of spirituals, minstrel songs, military marches, and European melodies. **SYNCOPATED** rhythms! Most popular music for 25 years, sheet music sold nationally, engaged dancers across the country. **Blues-** sung by the refugees from the Mississippi Delta seeking a better life in New Orleans. 3 chords in 12 bar sequences- infinite number of variations! Intensely personal story sung to feel better. Tell a story. Feeling. Basic language. Call and response, shouts, moans, exhortations! Blues are about freedom.
7. How did the collapse of Reconstruction impact New Orleans and its music? **Collapse of Reconstruction meant segregation, Jim Crow, KKK, and lynching. Public facilities segregated. Jim Crow conquered New Orleans. Plessy v. Ferguson established "separate but equal" doctrine. Creoles classified with blacks as second class citizens. Creoles become blacks overnight. Music transformed. Rise of jazz parallels the rise of segregation. Spirit of improvisation- freedom and individual expression!**

## THE BIG NOISE

8. Who was Buddy Bolden? Why is he considered a jazz pioneer? Best known black musician in New Orleans by 1906. Played everything, best remembered for his “hot” music. “The moan in his cornet went through you.” Played Storyville, sexuality of jazz.
9. Describe the background and jazz contributions of Jelly Roll Morton. Did he invent jazz? Creole. Mother from Haiti. Very French Grandmother loved opera. Worked as “night watchman” in Storyville. Created a new music from ragtime, minstrelsy, and the blues. Wrote jazz standards, first to put compositions on paper. Brought Caribbean rhythms to jazz- the “Spanish tinge.” Took jazz to the rest of the country. No one person could create jazz. He certainly advanced it.
10. Why was Sidney Bechet considered a genius? What were his contributions to jazz? Creole. Self-taught musician. A real prodigy. “He could play.” Hot and fiery!” Vibrato, biting attack, loved the blues. Gave musicians the freedom to have their own voice. Spread jazz to vaudeville, carnivals, eventually Europe!

## THE SOUL OF THE NEGRO

11. What were the reasons some Americans rejected and criticized jazz? Why did young Americans love jazz? Who made jazz more respectable? Americans under the influence of the Negro! A primitive morality. The Africanizing of American culture. Jazz was dance music! Dancers hold each other close, rejecting Victorian morality! Jazz defined the younger generation- freedom. The Castles, Irene and Vernon and the music of James Reese Europe made African American music available to a wider audience and made dancing respectable.

## THE “CREATORS” OF JAZZ

12. How did Freddie Keppard’s refusal to record jazz lead to racial controversy about the origins of jazz? Victor records the Original Dixieland Jazz Band- all white! Record sold 250,000 copies- more than Sousa or Caruso. Nick LaRocca of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band claims jazz was a white creation. “Blacks had nothing to do with it.” IMPOSSIBLE!

## THE GIFT (00:00- 22:40 of Episode 2)

13. Note the impact of each of the following on the early life of Louis Armstrong in New Orleans.  
The Karnofsky Family- Hired Armstrong to sell coal in Storyville at the age of 7! Mrs. Karnofsky made sure he was fed. Loaned him the money to buy his first cornet. Armstrong wore a Star of David his whole life.  
  
The Colored Waif’s Home- Armstrong becomes best cornet player in Home band and its leader. Gets noticed in parade. Band swings to “Maryland My Maryland” earning money for new instruments and uniforms for band members  
  
Joe “King” Oliver- Big impressive man, authority. Vocal effects on his horn. Gorgeous sound. Allowed Armstrong to carry his trumpet. Oliver took the time to teach Armstrong.  
  
Steamboats- 3 summers; New Orleans to St. Paul, MN; first time other regions heard and loved “colored” bands; “Louis Armstrong descending from the sky like a god.”

Discussion Questions:

- Does New Orleans have a legitimate claim as the birthplace of jazz? Explain.
- How did the cultural diversity of New Orleans create a new American music?
- Why do jazz musicians equate improvisation with freedom?
- Does the rejection of jazz by the white and black middle class remind you of culture clashes today?
- What does the early life of Louis Armstrong inform us about our humanity?
- Why is music essential to our lives?

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