



Can you imagine someone the age of a grandparent ranking number one in the top pop music charts? Jazz musician Louis Armstrong did it on two occasions with two different songs in his life. At the age of 63 he knocked the Beatles off the top of the charts with the song *Hello Dolly*, then once again at the age of 69, he reached the top of the charts in two countries with *What a Wonderful World*.

Louis Armstrong is one of the best known jazz musicians of all time. He was an exceptional trumpet player and vocalist who heavily influenced future generations of jazz artists and was the first jazz musician to popularize an improvised solo in the jazz band setting. He was the vocalist that popularized scat singing and throughout his long career he played and sang together with some of the most influential and important instrumentalists and vocalists of the time. He starred in more than thirty movies, played in Broadway musicals and toured the world. Many of his songs are featured in TV shows and movies even today.

As a child, Louis Armstrong lived in poverty with his mother and younger sister. He collected food that was thrown away then sold it to restaurants and delivered newspapers to earn money. He hauled and sold coal for the Karnofsky family who lent him money for him to buy his first cornet. While doing odd jobs for the family, he would often sneak into nightclubs and listen to jazz jams especially those where his future mentor “King” Oliver and other famous musicians would drop in and play.

When Louis was twelve years old, he was sent to a reform house for boys because of an incident where he fired a pistol in the air at a New Years Celebration. It was here that he met his teacher, Peter Davis who helped him focus on playing the cornet. Louis excelled and was made leader of the ‘house’ band.

After Armstrong left the reform school at the age of fourteen, his career began as he hauled coal by day and played cornet by night. He first played in bands around New Orleans and on river boats that crossed the Mississippi river. Then in the early 1920s, his mentor, “King” Oliver asked him to move to Chicago and join his Creole jazz band.

In the mid-twenties, Armstrong switched from playing the cornet to the trumpet so that he could blend in better with the other musicians he was playing with at the time. He formed his own bands called the **Hot Fives** and the **Hot Sevens**, some of the best examples of Armstrong’s instrumental abilities. He started to develop his own distinctive style and could play several octaves on his instrument. Louis was also a natural singer and had a distinctive voice that often imitated trumpet sounds. His expressive, wide open eyes and belly laughter, along with the stories he told on stage and improvisational techniques always made him a favorite among crowds.

FAST FACTS

NAME: Louis Armstrong

BORN: August 4, 1901 New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

DIED: July 6, 1971, New York City, USA

STYLE: Dixieland, jazz, swing, popular music

INSTRUMENTS: Trumpet and Vocals

IMPORTANT WORKS

Ain’t Misbehavin, *What a Wonderful World*,
Hello Dolly

FUN FACTS

Louis Armstrong puffed his cheeks out when he played, which earned him the nickname ‘Satchmo’ which was short for satchel mouth.

During the recording of *Heebie Jeebies*, Louis dropped his lyric sheet. He resorted to singing nonsense syllables because he didn’t have the words in front of him. This type of singing became known as scat.



Heebie Jeebies

Listen to Louis Armstrong's song "Heebie Jeebies", in which he first recorded scat singing. Identify the instruments at the beginning of the song and fill in the blanks by adding the missing words that you hear.

Instrumental: What five instruments do you hear? _____, _____, _____, _____ and _____.

“ Say, I've got the _____ (1),
I mean the _____ (2),
Talking about
The _____ (3), the heebie jeebies,
Do, because they're _____ (4),
Because it _____ (5) me to be joy!

Say don't you know it?
You don't know how, don't be _____ (6),
Someone will _____ (7) you;
Come on, and do that dance,
They call the heebie _____ (8) dance,
Yes, _____ (9),
Papa's got the heebie jeebies _____ (10)!

[Scatting... Just for fun, how many sounds can you identify?]

Say, _____ (11) on, now, and do that dance,
They call the _____ (12) jeebies dance,
Sweet _____ (13)!
_____ (14)'s got to do the heebie jeebies dance!

Listen to "Heebie Jeebies" at:

<http://www.redhotjazz.com/hot5.html>

<http://www.archive.org/details/1920s-louisArmstrong-11-20>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksmGt2U-xTE>

**Word Patch**

For each pair of words, use letters from the right to fill in the blanks. All words are related to Louis Armstrong and found on the fact page.

1 ___ O ___ S

C ___ R ___ E ___

O L N U T I

2 ___ E ___ ___ R ___ AN ___

___ C ___ T

N A S S O W E L

3 ___ A Z ___

S ___ T ___ H ___ O

A J Z M C

4 ___ R ___ P ___ T

___ R E O ___ E

L U E M C T

5 ___ E L ___

___ ___ L ___

O L Y D L H O



Lesson Ideas

Younger Students

- Organize a scat circle with your students. Assign each student a consonant letter. Play some instrumental jazz music in the background. Allow each student, one at a time, to improvise and scat with sounds that begin with their consonant for 20 seconds to the beat of the music.
- Ask students to make a picture book about Louis Armstrong's childhood and how he became a famous jazz musician. Arrange a time when they can read their books to younger grades.

Older Students

- Students pick one of Louis Armstrong's famous quotes (below) and answer the following questions:
 - Perform some background research on Louis Armstrong. Describe what you think Armstrong meant when he expressed this quote.
 - How does one of your talents, musical or otherwise, relate to this quote?

"My whole life, my whole soul, my whole spirit is to blow that horn..."

"Never play a thing the same way twice."

"We all do 'do, re, mi,' but you have got to find the other notes yourself."

"I don't let my mouth say nothin' my head can't stand."

- During Louis Armstrong's career he played with a variety of orchestras and bands and collaborated with several artists. Divide your students into groups of three to five. Assign each group a band or collaboration period. Ask them to do some background research and write a mini play or musical about Armstrong's performances and interactions with these artists. Each group can act out their play in front of the class. Suggestions for topics include:
 - Louis' busking quartet as a young teenager
 - Joe King Oliver's Creole jazz band
 - Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra
 - Louis own bands: The Hot Five and The Hot Six
 - Collaboration with Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington or Bing Crosby
 - Louis starring in Broadway musicals

Listening Activity

Ask students to listen to several of Louis Armstrong's songs and to pick their favorite. Ask them to describe why they like this song. Is it his trumpeting/cornet style? Is it the song lyrics or his voice? Detail aspects of his instrumental or vocal techniques such as pitch, tone, rapid cadence, scatting or solo sections. How does this song compare to a favorite present day song?

Play *What a Wonderful World* sung by Louis Armstrong for your students. Read the lyrics to the song. Ask students to draw a picture or create a collage based on how the song inspired them and what a wonderful world looks like to them. A live performance can be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xotoDy5806Y>. The lyrics are found at: http://www.lyricsfreak.com/l/louis+armstrong/what+a+wonderful+world_20085347.html



Suggested Listening List

Links to download recordings from iTunes & view on YouTube are available in the Resources Area

http://www.funmusicco.com/private/pmlp_module_4/resources

- **Heebie Jeebies** - Louis Armstrong
- **Let's Call the Whole Thing Off** - Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald
- **I Can't Give You Anything But Love** - Louis Armstrong
- **Muskrat Ramble** - Louis Armstrong (great instrumental showcasing the trumpet solo)
- **Panama** - Louis Armstrong (swing style instrumental)
- **Chinatown, My Chinatown** - Louis Armstrong

Internet Links

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Armstrong - A detailed description of Louis Armstrong's life
- http://www.npr.org/programs/jazzprofiles/archive/armstrong_singer.html - An article about Armstrong's musical styles with recorded interviews
- http://www.smithsonianjazz.org/class/armstrong/la_match.asp - The Smithsonian chronicles Armstrong's life and includes a timeline of relevant songs
- <http://www.louisarmstronghouse.org> - Louis Armstrong House Museum

YouTube Links

- <http://www.last.fm/music/Louis+Armstrong/+tracks> - Over 100 Louis Armstrong song excerpts and full tracks
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GG_t6tPIF5s - Scatting session, **When the Saints Go Marching In**, Louis Armstrong and Danny Kaye
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmfeKUNDDYs> - **Hello Dolly**, Louis Armstrong
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3fGrQYHHBI> - **Dinah**, Louis Armstrong
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZO1uMjz3n3w> - **Umbrella Man**, Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie showcasing their trumpeting talents
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GuDExkBmnU> - **Basin Street Blues**, Louis Armstrong
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksmGt2U-xTE> - **Heebie Jeebies**, Louis Armstrong and the Hot Five
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2oEmPP5dTM> - **Let's Call the Whole Thing Off**, Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvKEzc3JXo4> - **I Can't Give You Anything But Love**, Louis Armstrong
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vpuFYQwZ5o> - **Muskrat Ramble**, Louis Armstrong
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RG7sKbqLoQU> - **Panama**, Louis Armstrong & and His All Stars
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugP69-lBK7o> - **Chinatown, My Chinatown** and **You Rascal You**, Louis Armstrong

