



Louis Armstrong

- 1 Louis Armstrong had two famous nicknames. Some people called him Satchmo, short for “Satchel Mouth.” They said his mouth looked like a satchel, or large bag. Musicians were more likely to call him Pops, as a sign of respect for his influence on the world of music.
- 2 Armstrong was born on August 4, 1901, in Jane Alley, one of the toughest areas of New Orleans, Louisiana. He grew up poor, but surrounded by great musicians. Jazz was invented in New Orleans a few years before he was born. Armstrong often said, “Jazz and I grew up together.”
- 3 Armstrong was arrested in his early teens for a minor offense. That arrest proved to be lucky. He was sent to a boy’s home where Professor Peter Davis taught him to play the cornet. Armstrong had a great talent for music, and he went quickly from being the bass drummer in the school band to first bugler and cornetist.
- 4 On leaving the boys’ home in his late teens, Armstrong began to live the life of a musician. He played with bands in parades, clubs, and on the steamboats that traveled on the Mississippi River. At that time, the city was defined by the new music of jazz and was home to many great musicians. Armstrong learned from the older musicians and soon became respected as their equal. He was the best student of the great cornetist and trumpeter Joe Oliver, and played second cornet in his famous band, King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band.
- 5 In 1918, Joe Oliver moved to Chicago. At first, Armstrong remained in New Orleans, but in 1922 he went to Chicago to rejoin Oliver’s band. There, the tale of Louis Armstrong, the genius, begins. From then until the end of his life, Armstrong was celebrated, imitated, and loved wherever he went. Armstrong had no equal when it came to playing the American popular song.
- 6 His trumpet playing had a deep humanity and warmth that caused many listeners to say, “Listening to Pops just makes you feel good all over.” In addition to being a brilliant trumpeter, he was also the father of the jazz vocal style. He toured constantly, and during the last twenty years of his life, he was one of the best-known and most-admired people in the world. His death, on July 6, 1971, was headline news around the world.

