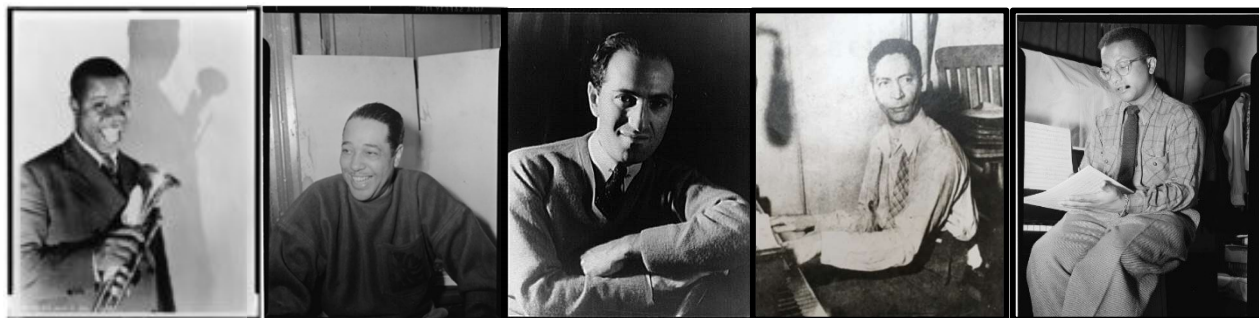


**Schooltime**  
**EXPLORING JAZZ WITH BYRON**  
**Meeting of the Jazz Greats – Role Play Project**



**The Scene**

The year is 1935. Some of the hottest names in jazz are gathering at the Cotton Club in New York City for one of its famous “Celebrity Nights.” Even though the Great Depression is well underway, jazz music has become a way for people to forget their troubles for a while and lift their spirits. Jazz, especially swing music, is exploding in popularity. Five jazz greats will be together for one evening only to discuss what makes jazz so special and where they think this uniquely American artform is headed.

**Before You Start**

Break the class into 6 teams. Assign one team to be the Moderator Team. Assign one of the musicians listed below to each of the remaining groups, which will be the Character Teams. One member of each Character Team will take on the “persona” of the musician and participate in the role play discussion, supported by their team.

The jazz greats participating in the discussion are:

- **Louis Armstrong**
- **Duke Ellington**
- **George Gershwin**
- **Jelly Roll Morton**
- **Billy Strayhorn**

### **Directions for Moderator Team**

Research the five jazz musicians meeting at the Cotton Club. Think about how you want to shape the discussion: What do you want to learn? What questions will you ask? What topics would you like to hear the musicians discuss with each other?

Make sure you are prepared with some background knowledge about each musician and some of their accomplishments to date. Also consider how jazz has evolved in the United States thus far. Encourage conversation between the jazz musicians as well as asking each of them direct questions.

**Note:** *All members of the Moderator Team can participate in the role play discussion by asking questions and encouraging conversation. Or, if the team prefers, they can select one or two members to serve as the discussion moderators with the remaining team members conducting research only.*

### **Directions for Character Teams**

Learn as much as you can about your assigned musician so that you are ready to answer questions from the Moderator Team and to engage in discussion with the other jazz musicians meeting at the Cotton Club. Be ready to answer biographical questions such as when “you” (your musician) was born and where they grew up. Think about what they were doing in their careers in 1935 and what they had accomplished by that time. What do you want people to know about you as a jazz musician? As a person? How do you think your music is affecting the United States in the 1930s? What do you think your legacy will be?



PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PSO SCHOOLTIME LEARNING RESOURCES 2022-23