

Jazz





A jazz band plays
together in the early 20th
century.

Jazz Begins

Jazz was born in the United States more than a century ago. Nobody can say exactly when, because jazz grew slowly. When Africans were brought to North America, they brought their music with them. They continued to play drums and sing using African rhythms. When those rhythms met the simple tunes of people who had come from Europe, a new music was born. This music became known as jazz.

In other places around the world, white and black people lived near each other but did not mix. It was only in the United States, where slaves and owners lived near one another, that the brightest rhythms and simple tunes blended into jazz.

Key Notes:

What are the two parts of music that blend to make jazz?



Making Jazz

In Africa, drums have long been used to carry news from village to village. When African slaves arrived in North America, they made drums from logs or kegs. Then, slave holders became afraid that drums could help slaves plan escapes, so slaves weren't allowed to use drums. Instead, they clapped the best of their songs.

Later, European music was combined with African music. Pianos and horns combined with drums and made music with a strong beat. Although both use the same instrument, jazz piano music and European piano music sound different. Jazz piano music has a lively rhythm and a strong beat. Often, the music is created as the piano player plays.

Key Notes:

How did African and European music combine to make jazz?

This jazz band had many different instruments in it, including a piano and horns.



Wynton Marsalis has
played the trumpet since
he was a child.

Wynton Marsalis

Wynton Marsalis grew up playing jazz. His father, a music teacher who played piano, and his mother, a singer, taught their children to love music. As a child, Wynton Marsalis played the trumpet in a church marching band. As a teen, he toured the world playing jazz. In 1982, Wynton Marsalis started a jazz band with one of his brothers. Their band toured the world.

Today, Wynton Marsalis plays the trumpet and writes music. In 1997, he won an important award for music he wrote about slavery. Marsalis also teaches music to young people. Through his teaching and his love of music, Wynton Marsalis has taught many young people to love jazz.

Key Notes:

Write a new title for this reading. Explain your choice.



**Jazz musicians
experiment to create
different sounds and
types of jazz.**

Jazz Changes

Jazz has changed through the years because jazz musicians love to experiment. In the 1920s, some musicians mixed jazz with classical music. They called this music “jazzing the classics.”

In the 1930s, large groups of musicians played a kind of jazz called Big Band, or swing, music. Starting in the 1940s, on the West Coast, the sound was called “cool jazz,” and it was slower and sometimes based on classical music. On the East Coast, jazz musicians played a harder jazz sound.

Today, experimenting continues. Jazz musicians enjoy bringing different musical sounds into the music they love. In addition, the jazz beat has had an effect on other music, including hip-hop.

Key Notes:

How can people experiment with music?

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ISBN: xxx-x-xxxxxx-xx-x



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