

## **Grade 8 -- Informational**

### **American Ambassador of Music: Duke Ellington**

Edward Kennedy Ellington, age fifteen, rushed home to his mother with seventy-five cents that he earned after he played piano at a party. He had played for such a long time that his fingers had become very sore, and he could not touch a piano for weeks. Such was the humble beginning of the career of the outstanding African American musician, performer, and composer who would become known to the world as Duke Ellington.

Ellington was born in Washington, D.C., on April 29, 1899. He was surrounded by a supportive family. One day when he was only four years old, he heard his mother play piano. He loved hearing her play. Three years later, he began to play piano himself. Even at such a young age, his self-confidence was obvious when he told a neighbor that he was sure that one day he would become famous.

As a teenager, Ellington became serious about his music. While working at a drugstore soda fountain, he composed his first song, "Soda Fountain Rag." However, his musical skill did not match his goal. He was dropped from two large musical groups because he did not read music very well. Learning more about reading music would come later. However, he did play well enough to make it with smaller groups. By his late teen years, Ellington had earned enough money playing music to help his parents move into a better house. In 1918 he married Edna Thompson. They became parents of a son, Mercer, in 1919. Besides playing music, Ellington earned extra money as a sign painter.

Ellington and his band, the Washingtonians, got a big break in 1923 when they performed in New York. At first his band sounded much like most of the other New York dance bands, but that soon changed. In 1926 and 1927, the band recorded some of his original jazz compositions. These recordings featured new sounds and styles, setting the Washingtonians apart from other bands in the city. Ellington was finally developing his own style and finding his place in the world of music.

Another big break came for Ellington in 1927 when the band landed a job at one of New York's most famous entertainment spots. Here New York's top African American musicians performed their own works as well as music written by other talented composers. Evening performances were broadcast on the radio, spreading Ellington's name and sound across the nation. Ellington began to thrive in this environment, composing more and more tunes for his band. Soon talented musicians clamored to join his group.

Ellington respected his band members and studied their strengths and weaknesses. He wrote compositions for specific instruments. By doing this, he promoted the talents and emphasized the strong points of various members of the band. He wrote miniature concertos, allowing a single band member to play three-minute solos backed up by the rest of the band.

In 1933, Ellington and his band were invited to Britain to perform for nearly six weeks. Large audiences came to hear the concerts. From Britain the band traveled to Holland and France. Ellington got the nickname "Duke" because of his love of fancy clothes and his fondness for elegance. He kept his preference for a sophisticated lifestyle throughout his life, but he was never snobbish toward anyone. Although he appreciated sophistication and elegance, his day-to-day lifestyle was not so glamorous. His band toured for most of the year. He composed music constantly, jotting down notes as he rode in a car or seated at his portable piano in a hotel room in the wee hours of the morning.

For a long time, Ellington talked of writing music about the lives of blacks in America. In 1943, he completed an opera that premiered at Carnegie Hall in New York City. Proceeds from the

performance of “Black, Brown, and Beige” were donated to a special charity organization. Ellington’s performance marked the first time a prominent black composer presented an entire evening of original music in what was considered the most famous concert hall in the nation. He began a series of performances at Carnegie Hall that spanned the next five years. Duke Ellington’s works resulted in his being thought of as a “serious” musician who composed jazz instead of as a jazz musician who composed serious music. In 1944, a critic in New York called Ellington “The Hot Bach.”

By the 1950s, the era of the big bands was ending. Young peoples’ preference for rhythm and blues or rock ’n’ roll caused big bands to break up. A few lead players in Ellington’s band left to start their own small ensembles. New band members joined the group. This gave a new sound to the band and called for a new style to Duke’s composing. With new music and a fresh sound, the band staged a triumphant appearance at the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival. Ellington and his band began traveling again, as they had in previous years, crossing North America and making trips to Europe.

When Ellington entered his sixties, he continued composing, performing, and traveling. Many people still think of Duke Ellington primarily as a jazz musician. He was that and so much more. A prolific creator, he composed over fifteen hundred works, including jazz compositions, scores for musicals and movies, and even music for ballet. His career as a bandleader lasted more than fifty years.

In 1993, the Smithsonian Institute’s Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., opened an exhibit honoring the genius of Duke Ellington. The young boy who earned seventy-five cents playing piano at age fifteen displayed boundless energy throughout his entire life. He chronicled the memories of his exciting life in a book published in 1973. Edward Kennedy Ellington, better known as “Duke,” died on May 24, 1974.

**1) Using context clues, what is the meaning of the word **sophistication** found in paragraph eight? (LA.8.a.5.c)**

- a) cultured
- b) intelligence
- c) rural life
- d) unworldly

**2) What can the reader infer about Duke Ellington's success? (LA.8.1.6.d)**

- a) It was due to his natural musical ability.
- b) It was due to his extensive musical training.
- c) It was due to his self-confidence and determination.
- d) It was due to his family's support and encouragement.

**3) What organizational pattern is used in this passage? (LA.8.1.6.e)**

- a) cause and effect
- b) compare and contrast
- c) description
- d) sequence

# C4L Reading - Item Writing Tally Sheet

## Grade 8 - Informational

**Passage Name: Duke Ellington**

Gr8 Vocabulary	DOK Level	DOK 1	DOK 2	DOK 3	Item Total
<b>LA 8.1.5 Vocabulary: Students will build literary, general academic, and content specific grade level vocabulary.</b>					
<b>LA 8.1.5.a</b> <i>Determine meaning of words through structural analysis, using knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon roots, prefixes, and suffixes to understand complex words, including words in science, mathematics, and social studies</i>	1, 2				
<b>LA 8.1.5.c</b> <i>Select a context clue strategy to determine meaning of unknown word appropriate to text (e.g., restatement, example, gloss, annotations, sidebar)</i>	2		1		1
<b>LA 8.1.5.d</b> <i>Analyze semantic relationships (e.g., figurative language, connotations, subtle distinctions)</i>	2,3				
Gr8 Comprehension	DOK Level	DOK 1	DOK 2	DOK 3	Item Total
<b>LA 8.1.6 Comprehension: Students will extract and construct meaning using prior knowledge, applying text information, and monitoring comprehension while reading grade level text.</b>					
<b>LA 8.1.6.a</b> <i>Analyze the meaning, reliability, and validity of the text considering author's purpose, perspective, and information from additional sources</i>	3				
<b>LA 8.1.6.c</b> <i>Analyze author's use of literary devices (e.g., foreshadowing, personification, idiom, oxymoron, hyperbole, flashback, suspense, symbolism, irony, transitional devices)</i>	2, 3				
<b>LA 8.1.6.d</b> <i>Summarize, analyze, and synthesize informational text using main idea and supporting details</i>	2, 3			1	1
<b>LA 8.1.6.e</b> <i>Apply knowledge of organizational patterns found in informational text (e.g., sequence, description, cause and effect, compare / contrast, fact / opinion, proposition / support)</i>	2		1		1
<b>LA 8.1.6.f</b> <i>Analyze and evaluate information from text features (e.g., index, annotations, maps, charts, tables, graphs, headings, subheadings, lists)</i>	2, 3				

<p><b>LA 8.1.6.g</b>  <i>Analyze and make inferences based on the characteristics of narrative and informational genres</i></p>	<p>2, 3</p>				
<p><b>LA 8.1.6.j</b>  <i>Generate and/or answer literal, inferential, critical, and interpretive questions, analyzing and synthesizing prior knowledge, information from the text and additional sources, to support answers</i></p>	<p>1, 2, 3</p>				