



Jazz in America Glossary for Lesson IV - The Swing Era

arrangement: The specific organization or performance order of a given composition (i.e., who plays what when).

call and response: A means whereby instruments or sections of instruments in a band or combo play a passage which is in turn responded to by another instrument or section.

harmony: Two or more notes played simultaneously and compatibly; the combination of notes into chords and chord progressions.

homophony: Distinguished by a single melodic line with accompaniment (e.g., One musician improvising a solo with rhythm section accompaniment is an example of homophony.).

intonation: The degree of adherence to correct pitch by a given instrument; good intonation suggests close approximation of the pitch; poor intonation implies the opposite (horn players, unlike pianists, have the ability to adjust their intonation by pushing in or pulling out their mouthpieces as well as by adjusting their embouchure).

polyphony: The simultaneous sounding of two or more melodies of equal importance; also known in jazz as "collective improvisation:" the simultaneous expression of two or more instruments improvising with equal individual melodic and counter-melodic significance (e.g., Polyphony is a key element in Dixieland jazz.).

rhythm section: The musicians in the band whose primary function is to provide and maintain the pulse, rhythm, and feel of the music as well as its underlying chord structure; the rhythm section consists of piano, bass, guitar, and drums.

solis: A melody which is played rhythmically together by a section in harmony (e.g., a sax soli).

unison: The note or passage played exactly the same (pitches and rhythms) by two or more musicians.

virtuoso: An outstanding musician exceptional on his/her instrument; a musician with masterly ability, technique, and/or personal style.



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Jazz in America Student Handout--Lesson Plan IV--American History Essay

Race Relations During the Great Depression and World War II

The Great Depression

All Americans did not share the general economic prosperity of the 1920s. African Americans had migrated to urban areas of the North in large numbers during World War I seeking employment in war-related industries. Once the war ended, jobs that were once held by African Americans were passed on to returning white soldiers and to a new wave of post-war immigrants. The "Great Migration" was also prompted by the hope of escaping the rigid segregation policies imposed upon African Americans by Southern municipalities and state legislatures. The movement north, however had simply exchanged de jure segregation-segregation imposed by law, for de facto segregation-segregation in practice. Patterns of segregation existed in all major urban centers of the North and West. Housing covenants confined African Americans to segregated neighborhoods; most schools were segregated; and, even churches opted to establish Black parishes rather than integrate. A number of unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor either barred or segregated African American laborers.

When the stock market crashed in October 1929, the nation plummeted into a major depression. An economic catastrophe of major proportions had been building for years. The worldwide demand for agricultural goods during World War I vanished after the war and rural America experienced a severe depression throughout most of the 1920s. By the early 1930s, banks had foreclosed on farm mortgages displacing thousands upon thousands of American farmers. The U.S. economy, sound and robust on the surface, was actually superficial and shallow. Major businesses increased profits through most of the decade while wages remained low and workers were unable to buy the goods they had helped to produce. The financial and banking systems were largely unregulated and a number of banks had failed during the 1920s. The construction and automotive industries, whose booming business had ushered in the prosperity earlier in the decade, slowed. Declining sales resulted in higher rates of unemployment.

The Great Depression had devastating effects on African Americans. Tenant farmers and sharecroppers were among those hardest hit by the farm depression of the 1920s. Throughout the South, African American urban laborers had always had little job security, and when the Depression hit, they were the first to be dismissed. Industrial workers, who had ventured north during the Great Migration, likewise joined the ranks of the unemployed early in the Depression. By 1934, 38 percent of African Americans were regarded as incapable of self-support in any occupation while 17 percent of whites fell in that category. Relief rolls soared throughout the nation. In 1935, Atlanta reported that 65 percent of African American workers were in need of public assistance. In Northern cities the numbers in need of relief ranged between 25 and 40 percent of the African American work force.

When the Depression began, there was no federal relief for the unemployed or assistance for families facing starvation. Some states operated relief programs but curtailed them due to declining tax revenues. Religious and charitable organizations provided relief in many urban areas; however, some of these organizations operating in the North as well as the South excluded African Americans from their "soup kitchens." In communities where relief work was offered through state agencies, African Americans were given less in monthly aid than white applicants.



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In the election of 1932, African American voters who had been loyal Republicans since Reconstruction joined behind the Democratic candidate, Franklin D. Roosevelt. As President, Roosevelt appointed a large number of African-American advisers who became known as the "Black Cabinet." However, as the New Deal took shape African Americans experienced discrimination in many New Deal agencies including the National Recovery Administration (NRA), the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

In 1935, Roosevelt issued an executive order banning discrimination in Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects. Although inequities existed in many of the New Deal programs, the WPA made a conscious effort to offer employment opportunities for African Americans (<http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/african/afam012.html>). WPA projects were the subject of numerous protests. Casey Bill Weldon's "WPA Blues" (1936) and Porter Grainger's "Pink Slip Blues" (c. 1939) are two examples of musical renditions of this New Deal program's attempt to combat the Depression.

Although African Americans voted for Roosevelt in large numbers, their support was not unquestioned. They had vigorously objected to Roosevelt's failure to push for passage of an anti-lynching bill. The largest protest, however, centered over hiring policies in defense plants. By 1940, as the government increased military spending, jobs opened in defense-related industries and the nation began to move out of the Depression. But African Americans found themselves almost totally excluded from these new job opportunities. North American Aviation, expanding its work force in 1940 to fill government orders for new aircraft, announced that African Americans would be considered only for janitorial jobs. Other industries followed a similar policy.

In January 1941, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, proposed a massive march on Washington in July to protest discrimination in hiring. In order to prevent a massive march on Washington that the administration considered harmful to American interests, Roosevelt called for a meeting with Randolph and ultimately promised to issue an order prohibiting discrimination in employment at defense industries. Randolph agreed and Roosevelt, on June 25, 1941, issued Executive Order 8802. The order stated that ". . . there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or Government because of race, creed, color, or national origin. . . . And it is the duty of employers and of labor organizations . . . to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries, without discrimination because of race, creed, color or national origin. . . ." African Americans hailed the Executive Order as the most important accomplishment since the Emancipation Proclamation while Southern whites were generally opposed to the Fair Employment Practices Commission set up in pursuant to the Executive Order.

World War II

As Europe and Asia were engulfed in war, the United States, under the Selective Service Act of 1940 began registering men for service in the armed forces. By the end of the war an estimated one million African American men and women had served in the military. The administration of the Selective Service System during World War II was considered much less discriminatory than it had been in World War I; however, the military remained segregated throughout the war (the armed forces were integrated in 1949).

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On some military posts during the war, African American newspapers were prohibited and publicly burnt. In 1944, cognizant of the discriminatory policies on military bases, the War Department forbade racial segregation in recreational and transportation facilities at Army posts. The policy, however, was not strictly enforced, especially in the South. In those southern communities where German prisoners of war were held, the POWs often had more freedom of movement than African American soldiers in uniform. This humiliating treatment of uniformed American servicemen added to the low morale among African Americans in the armed forces.

During the war, African Americans began a new migration north and west seeking employment in defense industries. The lack of housing and discriminatory policies heightened racial antagonism in large urban areas. Interracial clashes became all too commonplace. In June 1943 the most serious race riot during the war broke out in Detroit. After 30 hours of rioting, 25 African Americans and nine whites had been killed in the streets and property valued at several hundred thousands of dollars had been destroyed.

At the beginning of the war, the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, declared that no one could expect African Americans to feel that the nation was worth defending "if the Negro continues to be treated as he is now." Throughout the war, African Americans sought to improve their status. The "Double-V" became the symbol for victory over aggression abroad and victory over segregation and discrimination at home.

Tour the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) online exhibit "A People at War." Examine the section entitled "New Roles" (http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/a_people_at_war/new_roles/general_benjamin_davis.html) for documents relating to General Benjamin O. Davis' investigation of discrimination and racial disturbances in the army during World War II and an account of the 99th Pursuit Squadron (The Tuskegee Airmen). For a brief history of the Tuskegee Airmen, examine the website, "Tuskegee Airmen" (<http://nasaii.ited.uidaho.edu/nasaspark/safety/history/tusk.html>).

Questions to consider:

1. What was the status of African Americans in the North after World War I?
2. What were the effects of the farm depression of the 1920s on African Americans?
3. What were the causes of the Great Depression?
4. How did the Great Depression affect African Americans in the South? In the North?
5. To what extent did the New Deal change the conditions of African Americans?
6. How did A. Philip Randolph convince President Roosevelt to support a Fair Employment Practices Act?
7. How important was the Fair Employment Practices Act?
8. How did World War II affect the lives of African Americans?
9. What did the "Double-V" symbolize?



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Further reading:

Roosevelt Blues: African-American Blues and Gospel Songs on FDR by Guido van Rijn

For further information and/or to order this book from amazon.com, click on the following URL address:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0878059385/qid=971220601/sr=1-1/002-4911178-8514448>

Jazz in America Student Handout--Lesson Plan IV--Jazz Biography 1

LESTER YOUNG, TENOR SAXOPHONE (1909-1959) Biography

(<http://www.downbeat.com/artists/window.asp?action=new&aid=381&aname=Lester+Young>)

Lester Young was born in Mississippi and spent much of his youth in and around New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz. Young grew up in a musical family; his father was a trumpeter and bandleader. As a teenager, Young began to express his own musical ideas and at 18 left his father's band and set out on his own. During his tours he developed a new and more relaxed style, setting the tone for what was to become "cool jazz" in the 1950s.

Consider the following questions as you read the biography of Lester Young:

1. How was Lester Young's early musical experience similar or different from that of other young jazz artists?
2. What success did Young have in his early career during the Great Depression? During the 1940s?
3. How did Young's jazz style change during his musical career?



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Jazz in America Student Handout--Lesson Plan IV--Jazz Biography 2

BENNY GOODMAN, CLARINET (1909-1986) Biography

(<http://www.downbeat.com/artists/window.asp?action=new&aid=46&aname=Benny+Goodman>)

Benny Goodman, the son of Russian Jewish immigrants in Chicago, began his musical career with a borrowed clarinet in a band formed by his synagogue. At 14, he was making money playing the clarinet in dance halls and speakeasies in Chicago's South Side. Goodman, inspired by jazz pioneers King Oliver and Louis Armstrong, became known for the next style following New Orleans jazz, "swing." He was among the first to form a racially integrated jazz group in the 1930s.

Consider the following questions as you read the biography of Benny Goodman:

1. How did Benny Goodman begin his musical career?
2. Who inspired Goodman's form of jazz? How did Goodman influence music of the 1930s and 1940s? Other than jazz, what other music was part of Goodman's repertoire?