

Preparing for your Group Tour of the Louis Armstrong House Museum

All tours must be scheduled in advance, either by calling, emailing, or filling out the form on our website.

Availability: Scheduled tours are available from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Thursday through Saturday.

Group Size: A group is 8 or more. Large groups will be divided into groups of 8 and led through the House every 20 minutes. Visitors and students awaiting a tour can browse the exhibit room or virtual tour kiosks.

The tour is 40 minutes in length. Visitors must be able to climb two flights of stairs. K & 1st grades must have one adult for every 10 students. Older school groups should have an adult for every 12 students. Teachers are responsible for supervising their students while in the museum.

Special Needs: Please advise us of any special needs your group may have so that we are prepared and can provide your group with a comfortable experience.

Accessibility: Visitors in wheelchairs or walkers unable to take the house tour are provided with a virtual tour in the exhibit area.

Cost: The group rate is \$10 per person (including teachers and chaperones). Bus driver is free. Payment is made when you arrive at the museum by cash, business check, money order, or credit card (Visa or MasterCard).

Cancellations: Please contact us within 48 hours if you must change or cancel your trip.

Where to meet your tour guide: A staff member will greet you at the main entrance (Welcome Center, 34-56 107th Street).

Parking: Street parking available.

Food: No food allowed in the museum. A museum café is not available, however, a “where can I eat” pamphlet is provided during your tour with a list of neighborhood eateries. During the summer, schools are encouraged to bring bagged lunches and enjoy them in the Armstrong’s Japanese inspired garden

Museum Store: The Museum Store is open during regular museum hours. Our gift shop will be available to teachers and students after the tour, and purchases of pens, pencils, postcards, etc. should be planned in advance and supervised.

We look forward to your visit!

Study Guide for Teachers

The Louis Armstrong House Museum provides school tours designed for students in grades K-12. The tours meet the New York State Learning Standards in Social Studies.

School tour schedule: (reserve at least 1 hour for your trip)

- 15 min: Introduction to Louis Armstrong and his historic home (includes a short video of Armstrong in performance)
- 25 min: House tour
- 10 min: Questions at end of tour in exhibit room
- 10 min: Museum Store (optional)

After touring the museum, students will have learned about:

- Who Louis Armstrong was and why he is considered the king of Jazz.
- What Jazz music is, and how Hip-Hop, R&B, and other popular forms of music today all have their roots in Jazz.
- His humble beginnings in New Orleans to gaining world-wide fame.
- His struggles with segregation and unjust laws to becoming Ambassador of Goodwill for the U.S.
- His travels around the world (he was on the road more than 300 days per year).
- His Corona, Queens neighborhood where he lived with wife Lucille from 1943 through the end of their lives (what Queens was like in 1943, who lived on the block, and how it has changed).
- His historic home, with rooms frozen in time to reflect the 1950s – 1980s. Students walk through each room of the House, exploring the historic décor and paintings, while also learning about how this famous musician lived a regular life at home and gave back generously to the community.
- Armstrong's Den and his reel-to-reel tape recordings, which students will listen to as they tour the museum (a highlight of the tour!). He recorded hundreds of hours of himself telling jokes, practicing the trumpet, and enjoying life at home. The tour ends in the Den, where students can view the still intact reel-to-reel tape recorder (a 1950s l-pod).
- Armstrong's many other accomplishments – as author, movie star, artist, singer, and radio and TV entertainer.

The question and answer session after the tour allows students and teachers the opportunity to address questions not covered during the historic house tour.



Who is Louis Armstrong?

Louis Armstrong was born in a poor section of New Orleans known as “the Battlefield” on August 4, 1901. By the time of his death in 1971, the man known around the world as Satchmo was widely recognized as a founding father of jazz – a uniquely American art form. His influence, as an artist and cultural icon, is universal, unmatched, and very much alive today.

Louis Armstrong’s achievements are remarkable. During his career, he:

- developed a way of playing jazz, as an instrumentalist and a vocalist, which has had an impact on all musicians to follow;
- recorded hit songs for five decades, and his music is still heard today on television and radio and in films;
- wrote two autobiographies, more than ten magazine articles, hundreds of pages of memoirs, and thousands of letters;
- appeared in over thirty films as a gifted actor with superb comic timing and an unabashed joy of life;
- composed dozens of songs that have become jazz standards;
- performed an average of 300 concerts each year, with his frequent tours to all parts of the world earning him the nickname “Ambassador Satch”; and
- became one of the first great celebrities of the twentieth century.

Through the years, Louis entertained millions, from heads of state and royalty to the kids on his stoop in Corona. Despite his fame, he lived a simple life in a working-class neighborhood. To this day, everyone loves Satchmo – just the mention of his name makes people smile.



What is Jazz?

Like any art form, there is no steadfast definition for jazz. Whatever statement you make about this uniquely American invention, there is bound to be an exception. Keeping this in mind, here are some characteristics of jazz that are generally true:

Jazz is a style of music developed by black Americans in the early years of the twentieth century. Many of the most famous early jazz musicians, including Louis Armstrong, lived in New Orleans. Today, jazz is played all over the world.

Each member of the band has a specific musical duty to perform. The drums keep the beat. The bass outlines the harmony. The wind instruments (clarinet, trumpet, trombone, saxophone, etc.) play the melodies.

Jazz performances frequently use two important musical techniques: 'improvisation' and 'the solo'. Improvisation means that a musician spontaneously 'makes up' a melody, usually in the form of a solo. A solo normally consists of a single band member taking the lead while the rest of the band provides accompaniment.

In jazz, each musician is encouraged to use his or her own style of phrasing and musical tone to create a distinctive sound. Jazz also encourages musicians to perform together as a group while maintaining their own individual styles.

Suggested Readings on Louis Armstrong

Armstrong, Louis. *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1954; reprint, New York: Da Capo, 1986.

A captivating autobiography that covers Armstrong's early life until his debut with King Oliver in Chicago in 1922.

Brothers, Thomas, editor. *Louis Armstrong: In His Own Words*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

This book includes a wealth of previously unpublished Armstrong manuscripts and letters held by the Louis Armstrong Archives, the Institute of Jazz Studies, the Library of Congress, and private collections. Among its many treasures are captivating passages that describe how Louis got his first trumpet at the age of seven (before he entered the Waif's Home).

Bryan, Ashley, et al. *What a Wonderful World*. New York: Simon & Schuster Children's, 1995.

In this picture book children put on a puppet show, using the words to the song "What a Wonderful World," which represents all races and demonstrates the wonderful beauty of diversity in the world.

Cogswell, Michael. *Louis Armstrong: The Offstage Story of Satchmo*. Portland: Collectors Press, 2003.

"The Official Book of the Louis Armstrong House & Archives" and a companion book to the newly-opened Louis Armstrong House Museum. This book offers an intimate backstage perspective of Satchmo through never-before-published photos, writings, and recordings. Drawing from the Louis Armstrong Archives where he has worked for over 13 years, Director Michael Cogswell tells the previously untold story of Satchmo's offstage life.

Jones, Max. *Louis: The Louis Armstrong Story, 1900-1971*. New York: Da Capo, 1988.

The first book length biography to appear after Armstrong's death, this book is filled with a wealth of primary source material, including transcriptions of interviews, and letter from Armstrong to the authors. Also included in a list of films, a chronology, and an insightful discographical essay

Orgill, Roxanne. *If I Only Had a Horn: Young Louis Armstrong*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

A charming biography for young readers that maintains interest without sacrificing historical accuracy. One of the best of the biographies for young readers. The narrative ends with Louis receiving his first trumpet in the Waif's Home.

Checklist for Your Visit to the Louis Armstrong House Museum

- () Telephone, e-mail, or fill out the form on the website to reserve a day and time to visit. Please let us know if your students have any special needs.
- () Spend some time with your class learning about Louis Armstrong and his legacy. The more prepared students are, the more they will get out of their visit the museum.
- () Please telephone us one day in advance to confirm your visit. (If we haven't heard from you, we will try to telephone you.)
- () Do you know how to get to the museum? Detailed directions are on the website.
- () In nice weather you may wish to eat lunch in the Armstrong's beautiful garden. We have two picnic tables for this purpose.
- () Our museum store has books, CDs, DVDs, t-shirts, hats, stickers, pencils, pens, postcards, etc. We have many "kids'items" for \$1.

We look forward to showing you Louis and Lucille Armstrong's home!



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