

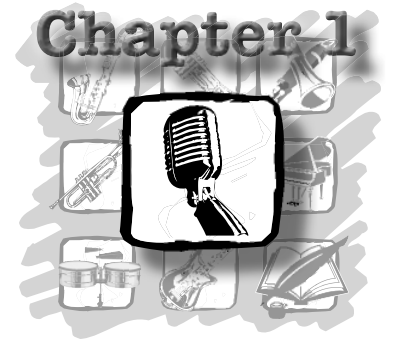
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Scatting — Ella Fitzgerald

"The only thing better than singing is more singing."
attributed to Ella Fitzgerald



JAZZ GREAT—Ella Fitzgerald (1917–1996)

Ella Fitzgerald was born in Newport News, Virginia on April 25, 1917. Shortly after her birth her family moved to Yonkers, New York. Ella was an excellent student and enjoyed school. But what Ella loved to do most was to dance and sing. She often danced on the sidewalk for her friends. Ella imagined that the sidewalk was her stage.

On November 21, 1934, at the age of 17, Ella entered a talent contest at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, New York. She had wanted to dance at the talent contest. However, when Ella arrived at the theater, she was discouraged. All of the other dancers were dressed quite stylishly and she was embarrassed by her appearance. She was wearing old clothes that had been handed down to her. So, at the last minute she changed her mind and decided to sing. It was a good decision. The crowd loved her and she won first prize that night at the Apollo Theater Talent Contest! Ella's first big hit was "A Tisket, A Tasket" with the Chick Webb Orchestra.

Ella went on to become one of the world's most famous jazz singers. She sold over 40 million albums and won 13 Grammy awards. One of her most famous songs was "Take the A Train."

Ella was well-known for her vocal improvisations. She learned how to make her voice sound like an instrument by using made up word-sounds. We call this scatting. In fact, Ella was known as the "Queen of Scat."

One of Ella's biggest idols was Louis Armstrong who is often credited with having invented scat. Both Louis and Ella influenced many other singers. For more on Louis Armstrong, go to Chapter 4. For a list of other scat singers, please go to the Appendix.

Ella Fitzgerald Teaching Suggestions

Tell the class a little bit about Ella Fitzgerald. Be sure to mention:

- Ella was born in Virginia but grew up Yonkers, New York.
- She loved to dance and sing and often pretended that the sidewalk was her stage.
- On November 21, 1934, at the age of 17, Ella won a talent contest at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, New York. She had planned on dancing but was intimidated by the stylish clothing of the other dancers and at the last minute, decided to sing instead.
- Her first big hit was "A Tisket, A Tasket" with the Chick Webb Orchestra.
- "Take the A Train" was one of her biggest hits.
- She was well known for her scatting (vocal improvisation).

Note to Teachers: Children are introduced to Ella Fitzgerald's love of scatting and her unforgettable voice through the simple poem below. It references the "A" train, a famous subway in New York City. The "A" Train travels through Harlem, home to the Apollo Theater where Ella entered the talent contest. Ella undoubtedly rode this train.

The Poem

Materials needed

- *Ella Fitzgerald Sang Bop Boo Day*, Track #3 on CD.
- Words to the poem on the CD.

*Ella Fitzgerald sang bop boo day.
Her Beboppin' voice is here to stay.
She bopped along the track on a train called A,
And Ella Fitzgerald Sang Bop Boo day.*

Procedure

- Listen to Track #3 with the children.
- Recite the entire poem and have children echo back line by line.

Teacher: Ella Fitzgerald sang bop boo day

Class: Ella Fitzgerald sang bop boo day

Teacher: Her beboppin' voice is here to stay

Class: Her beboppin' voice is here to stay

Teacher: She bopped along the track on a train called A

Class: She bopped along the track on a train called A

Teacher: And Ella Fitzgerald sang bop boo day

Class: And Ella Fitzgerald sang bop boo day



Ella Fitzgerald Sang Bop Boo Day

Lousie Rogers

Swing

El - la Fitz - ger - ald sang bop boo day, — Her

be - bop - pin' voice is here to stay. — She bopped a - long the track on a

train called "A" — And El - la Fitz - ger - ald sang bop boo day. —