

Jazz Greats: Charlie Parker



Charlie Parker is one of the best-known names in saxophone jazz. He is considered by many to be the greatest jazz saxophonist in history.

Parker was born in 1920 in Kansas City, Missouri. He began playing the saxophone at the age of 11. He said once in an interview that, during his early career, he practiced 15 hours a day for three or four years. In 1939, he moved to New York. At first, he supported himself as a dishwasher, making \$9 a week. Then, in 1942, Parker met Dizzy Gillespie, a jazz trumpeter. The two would later become a famous duo.

Parker played with a talented group of young musicians, such as Gillespie and Thelonious Monk, in Harlem after-hours clubs. In 1939, he hit upon a new method of playing, one that would lead him to become one of the creators of bebop, a new form of jazz. Some classic jazz musicians rejected the new sound, but others embraced it, playing jam sessions with the young beboppers and learning their ways.

Parker was a great innovator and created many new musical techniques. A fusion of jazz and classical music that Bird worked on with the string section of a chamber orchestra resulted in the album *Charlie Parker with Strings*, which was so popular, he recorded a second, longer album of the same name. Parker also created a unique version of the 12-bar blues that he used in his song "Blues for Alice." Many of Parker's innovations are still used by jazz musicians today.



Directions: Answer the questions below. Use text evidence to support your answers.

Answer Sheet - Sample Answers

1. What is the main idea of *Jazz Greats: Charlie Parker*? Write it in your own words.

Charlie Parker is known as one of the greatest jazz saxophone players in history, and his work still influences musicians today.

Name _____

Date _____

Jazz Greats: Charlie Parker



2. Choose a quote from the text that supports the following statement, and record it on the lines below.

Charlie Parker worked hard during his early career.

“He said once in an interview that, during his early career, he practiced 15 hours a day for three or four years.”

3. Why did Charlie Parker create a second album named *Charlie Parker with Strings*?

He created a second album named *Charlie Parker with Strings* because the first album was so popular. He made the second album longer.

4. Describe what the author means when the text says, “Some classic jazz musicians rejected the new sound, but others embraced it...”

The author means that when some other jazz musicians heard *bebop*, they didn't like it, but many other jazz musicians loved the new sound.

5. What was the result of Charlie Parker's experience playing with a talented group of young musicians in Harlem after-hours clubs?

Charlie Parker's experience resulted in helping to create the new form of jazz called *bebop*. He also created new musical techniques and was able to make some of his own music albums.

6. One of Charlie Parker's nicknames is Bird. Why do you think this nickname was chosen for him?

Answers will vary, but may include: Charlie Parker might be nicknamed Bird because of the sounds he was able to create on the saxophone.

7. What evidence in the passage shows that Parker was influential in jazz music? Include two pieces of evidence.

a. He was one of the creators of *bebop*.

b. He created a unique version of the 12-bar blues.