

# Jazz Greats: John Coltrane



**John Coltrane** was born in 1926 in Hamlet, North Carolina. Inspired by his father, who played many different instruments, young John began studying the E-flat horn and clarinet. As a teen, influenced by musicians such as Lester Young, John switched to the alto saxophone, the instrument he would become famous for playing.

John served in the military during World War II, and he made his first recordings during that time. After the war, he joined the band led by jazz and blues great Eddie Vinson, which exposed him to new ways of playing the saxophone. In 1960, Coltrane recorded the album *Giant Steps*, made up of his own compositions. In the same year, he formed his first quartet. Their first recording together was also his debut playing soprano saxophone.



As his style developed and changed, Coltrane began to receive criticism from some audiences and jazz critics. Coltrane and Eric Dolphy, the second horn player in his quartet at the time, were harshly criticized as “Anti-Jazz” for their unusual sound. Perhaps because of this, Coltrane played more conservatively in his studio recordings of 1962 and 1963. In 1965, however, with the formation of his second quartet, his playing took on a more harmonious sound. He played with this band, which included his wife, Alice, on piano, until his death in 1967.

Coltrane continued to win awards even after death. Among others, he was awarded a Grammy for “Best Jazz Solo Performance” in 1982, and a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1997.

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

1. What is the main idea of Jazz Greats: John Coltrane? Write it in your own words.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

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# Jazz Greats: John Coltrane



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

John Coltrane was an award-winning musician.

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3. What can you infer about the fact that Coltrane continued to win awards even after he died?

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4. Describe what the author means when the text says, "...Coltrane began to receive criticism from some audience and jazz critics."

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5. How did playing in the band led by Eddie Vinson benefit John Coltrane?

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6. What did John Coltrane do after serving in the military during World War II?

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7. Who or what influenced John Coltrane as a musician? Include two pieces of evidence from the passage.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

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b. \_\_\_\_\_

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