

Reading Passage #2 JAZZ

Try your hand at the following humanities passage and questions. Use question-answering tactics that you learned while working on the preceding sample questions. Answers and explanations follow the questions.

Historically the journey that jazz has taken can be traced with reasonable accuracy. That it ripened most fully in New Orleans seems beyond dispute although there are a few deviationists who support other theories of its origin. Around 1895 the almost legendary Buddy Bolden and Bunk Johnson were blowing their cornets in the street and in the funeral parades which have always enlivened the flamboyant social life of that uncommonly vital city. At the same time, it must be remembered, Scott Joplin was producing ragtime on his piano at the Maple Leaf Club in Sedalia, Missouri; and in Memphis, W.C. Handy was evolving his own spectacular conception of the blues.

(5) Exactly why jazz developed the way it did on the streets of New Orleans is difficult to determine even though a spate of explanations has poured forth from the scholars of the subject. Obviously the need for it there was coupled with the talent to produce it and a favorable audience to receive it. During those early years the local urge for musical expression was so powerful that anything that could be twanged, strummed, beaten, blown, or stroked was likely to be exploited for its musical usefulness. For a long time the washboard was a highly respected percussion instrument, and the nimble, thimble fingers of Baby Dodds showed sheer genius on that workaday, washday utensil.

(10) The story of the twenties in Chicago is almost too familiar to need repeating here. What seems pertinent is to observe that jazz gravitated toward a particular kind of environment in which its existence was not only possible but, seen in retrospect, probable. On the South Side of Chicago during the twenties the New Orleans music continued an unbroken development.

(15) The most sensationally successful of all jazz derivatives was swing, which thrived in the late thirties. Here was a music that could be danced to with zest and listened to with pleasure. (That it provided its younger auditors with heroes such as Shaw, Sinatra, and Goodman is more of a sociological enigma than a musical phenomenon.) But swing lost its strength and vitality by allowing itself to become a captive of forces **concerned** only with how it could be sold; not how it could be enriched. Over and over it becomes apparent that jazz cannot be sold even when its practitioners can be bought. Like a truth, it is a spiritual force, not a material commodity.

(20) During the closing years of World War II, jazz, groping for a fresh expression, erupted into bop. Bop was a wildly introverted style developed out of a certain intellectualism and not a little neuroticism. By now the younger men coming into jazz carried with them a GI subsidized education and they were breezily familiar with the atonalities of Schönberg, Bartók, Berg, and the contemporary schools of music. The challenge of riding out into the wide blue yonder on a twelve-tone row was more than they could resist. Some of them have never returned. Just as the early men in New Orleans didn't know what the established range of their instruments was, so these new musicians struck out in directions which might have been untouched had they observed the academic dicta adhering even to so free a form as jazz.

(25) The shelf on jazz in the music room of the New York Public Library fairly bulges with volumes in French, German, and Italian. It seems strange to read in German a book called the *Jazzlexikon* in which you will find scholarly résumés of such eminent jazzmen as Dizzy Gillespie and Cozy Cole. And there are currently in the releases of several record companies examples of jazz as played in Denmark, Sweden, and Australia. Obviously the form and style are no longer limited to our own country. And jazz, as a youthful form of art, is listened to as avidly in London as in Palo Alto or Ann Arbor.