

A creative writing exercise using Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong - By Mick Carlon

Jazz Power ON Summer Institute 2020



*Students will first need to hear information about Ella and Louis' lives—their challenges, their courage, and the glorious artistic successes of their careers.

*Students will also listen to several duet tracks by the pair. I recommend the ELLA AND LOUIS album (Verve) recorded in August 1956 in Hollywood with Oscar Peterson on piano; Herb Ellis on guitar; Ray Brown on bass; and Buddy Rich on drums.

*Students can work in duos or trios.

Ella and Louis have finished recording for the day in Hollywood, California and have decided to go out for a meal.

Be a fly on the restaurant wall (before the manager squashes you!) and write a 3 to 5 page mini-play detailing what these two magnificent artists discuss during their meal.

Remember that plays have only TWO components: stage directions and dialogue. (Hey, it certainly beats 37 components).

IF you have trouble starting your mini-play, you may use the example below:

(Ella and Louis are led to a table in the back of the restaurant where they will have privacy. Louis holds Ella's chair for her like the gentleman he is).

Louis: You're going to love this place, Ella. They serve red beans and rice just like my mother Mayann's.

Ella: This is my treat, Pops. You paid the last time.

What Ella and Louis discuss is TOTALLY UP TO YOU. Perhaps have them talk about their childhoods, the hardships they have overcome. Perhaps have them discuss their artistic process. By 1956 both artists have enjoyed many towering successes. Louis has revolutionized 20th Century music—both instrumentally and vocally. Princes and popes are among his fans. Ella, barely out of her teens, took over the leadership of the Chick Webb Orchestra after the leader's death. Have them swap jokes. Bring your reader closer to these two giants of American music.

Dive in and have FUN. Being creative IS fun! When your skits are finished and polished later in the week, you can choose any two classmates to play the roles in your mini-play.