Life, Apprenticeship and Political Power

First & Last Name: _____ Date: _____

Grades 6–12 | Five day interdisciplinary inquiry

CENTRAL QUESTION: HOW DID ARMSTRONG TRANSFORM THE MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE HE INHERITED, AND HOW DID POLITICAL POWER SHAPE HIS PUBLIC ROLE?

Objective: Construct an explanation of artistic development and political agency using biography, a musical case study, diplomatic records and a precise chronology. Evaluate how an author’s language shapes what readers accept as established.

Demonstration of Learning: Explain one musical continuity and one innovation, then connect cultural diplomacy with the overthrow and murder of Lumumba. Support a RACE argument with at least four source labels and distinguish evidence from inference.

NJSLS Social Studies: 6.3.8.CivicsPI.2, evaluate forms of government; 6.3.8.CivicsPD.3, explain why democratic participation requires facts and diverse viewpoints. NJSLS ELA: RI.CR.6.1, textual evidence and inference; RI.CI.6.2, central ideas; W.AW.6.1, arguments with reasons and evidence. These grade 6 targets provide the entry point; teacher extensions deepen grades 9–12 work. [S12, S14]

National literacy: CCSS/CCLS RH.6–8.1, evidence; RH.6–8.7, integrate visual and quantitative information; WHST.6–8.1, historical argument. Extensions: RH.9–10.9, compare sources; WHST.9–10.1, argument. Music: melody, harmony, texture and improvisation. Mathematics: elapsed time and proportional change. Geography: movement and regional power. Amistad: sustained study of African American cultural innovation, discrimination and political agency.

Days 1–4: Read, annotate, collaborate, discuss and write. Day 5: 15 multiple choice questions plus RACE, scored with a 19 point rubric. Bracketed labels identify sources. Readings are instructional syntheses; only text inside quotation marks is a direct excerpt. No invented dialogue appears.

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Day 1 | Youth, Work and Musical Knowledge

Do Now: A biography calls someone “self taught.” What evidence would you need before accepting that description? Write a provisional answer in your notes.

SOURCE A: EDUCATION BEYOND A CLASSROOM

A1. Louis Armstrong was born in New Orleans on August 4, 1901. His childhood included poverty, work and interrupted schooling. His mother, Mayann, raised him within a city rich in musical activity. Employment with the Karnofsky family helped him purchase a cornet. These facts complicate the familiar image of genius arriving fully formed: obtaining an instrument required material resources, and developing skill required access to people and places where music could be learned. [S1]

A2. After his New Year’s Eve 1912 arrest, Armstrong was confined in the institution historically named the Colored Waif’s Home for Boys. There Peter Davis taught musical discipline and cornet technique. Armstrong eventually led its band and was released in 1914. The historical racial label belongs to the institution’s name. Its music program should be examined alongside its function as confinement, without turning imprisonment into a necessary condition for achievement. [S1]

A3. Armstrong’s museum credits his first reading of music to the home. His later work in Fate Marable’s riverboat band strengthened his ability to interpret written arrangements. A written arrangement organizes musical events in advance; improvisation creates choices during performance. These practices need not cancel each other. A musician can read a passage, understand its harmonic setting, and reshape rhythm or melody while maintaining coordination with other performers. [S2]

A4. Musical education therefore involved several kinds of knowledge: notation, listening, bodily technique, memory, rehearsal and professional judgment. A formal lesson may explain a symbol, while repeated performance teaches when to enter, how loudly to play and how to respond to another musician. Distinguish a documented teacher’s contribution from the wider inference that learning occurs in many settings.

A5. Calling Armstrong an exceptional individual is compatible with recognizing collective support. The analytical question is how individual effort worked within unequal access to education, employment and professional opportunity. A strong explanation identifies the mechanism connecting a condition to an outcome instead of merely listing hardships and accomplishments.

Vocabulary: agency = capacity to act within constraints; notation = written musical symbols; arrangement = a planned organization of a piece; mechanism = how a cause produces an effect.

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