



The Biography® Channel presents
Ella Fitzgerald:
Forever Ella

classroom: **February 11-12**
March 24-25

Known as the “First Lady of Song,” she could do it all—swing, scat, bebop, pop, and much more. Her extraordinary talent and good nature made Ella Fitzgerald one of the most beloved entertainers of our time. From her days as a girl singer, hitting the big time with “A-Tisket, A-Tasket,” and throughout the ‘40s, ‘50s and ‘60s, she redefined jazz, performed with some of the greatest names in American music, and rose to the pinnacle of popular success. *Forever Ella* chronicles the life and talents of Ella Fitzgerald while exploring the worlds of music, popular culture, and the twentieth century. Students will examine the impact of Ella Fitzgerald on American popular music, as well as the influences of race and racism, on American popular culture.

national standards

Ella Fitzgerald: Forever Ella fulfills the following National Standards for History for grades 5–12: Chronological Thinking, Historical Comprehension, Historical Analysis and Interpretation, and Historical Research Capabilities for United States History Eras 8, 9, and 10.

curriculum links

Ella Fitzgerald: Forever Ella is suitable for classes in American history and culture, African American history, music and the media. It is appropriate for middle school and high school students.

discussion questions

1. Ella Fitzgerald was an amazing talent. Discuss the vast range of her vocal abilities.
2. Fitzgerald’s childhood was one of hardship and struggle. Discuss her childhood in relation to issues of poverty and race.
3. Fitzgerald’s family was part of the great northern migration of African Americans. When did this migration occur? What were some of the reasons for this large migration, and how did the migration affect the history of the United States?
4. Discuss the growth of popular music after World War I. What contributed to this growth?
5. How did a poor girl like Ella Fitzgerald get into show business?
6. Chick Webb was one of the most popular bandleaders of his day. Why was he reluctant to have Ella Fitzgerald out front as a lead singer of his band?
7. Ella Fitzgerald is known for her ability to scat. What is scat? What made Fitzgerald the master of this vocal form?
8. The legendary Savoy Ballroom was a landmark in Harlem. What made this dance hall so popular? Who are some of the entertainers that performed there?
9. After World War II, there was a decline in big band music. How did Fitzgerald survive this decline?
10. How did Fitzgerald get one of her nicknames, “First Lady of Song”?
11. Fitzgerald was part of the bebop movement. What is bebop?
12. Discuss the role of Norman Granz in Fitzgerald’s career.
13. Discuss the impact of Fitzgerald’s songbooks on popular music in the mid-twentieth century.
14. Discuss Ella Fitzgerald’s contribution to American music.

activities

1. Create a memorial or commemorative design to honor the life and talent of Ella Fitzgerald.
2. Listen to some of Ella Fitzgerald's recordings at <http://museum.media.org/ella/misc/listen.html>
3. Describe Ella's voice and your reaction to it.
4. Research the great migration, and create a poster illustrating some of its major events, destinations and influences.



vocabulary

Students should identify the following terms. Visit www.merriamwebster.com for definitions.

alleged	melancholy
definitive	notorious
emulate	perception
enthrall	precursor
exclusive	priority
humility	self-effacing
impeccable	solidify
impromptu	spontaneity
indifference	truant
integrate	unadulterated

websites & books

web sites

Ella Fitzgerald, 1917-1996
www.museum.media.org/ella

Ella Fitzgerald Tribute
www.public.iastate.edu/~wwindsor/Ella.html

"First Lady of Song" LC Collection Tells Ella Fitzgerald Story
www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9708/web/ella.html

The Kennedy Center Honors
www.kennedy-center.org/programs/specialevents/honors/history/honoree/ella.html

① For additional resources, visit us online at AandE.com/class

books

Hacker, Carlotta. *Great African Americans in Jazz*. Crabtree Publishing Company, 1997.
Reading level: Ages 12 and up.

Krohn, Katherine E. *Ella Fitzgerald: First Lady of Song*. Lerner Publishing Group, 2001. Reading level: Ages 9–12.

Nicholson, Stuart. *Ella Fitzgerald: A Biography of the First Lady of Jazz*. Da Capo Press, Incorporated, 1995.
Reading level: Adult.

Pinkney, Andrea Davis, and Brian Pinkney, illustrator. *Ella Fitzgerald: The Tale of a Vocal Virtuoso*. JATS, 2002.
Reading level: Ages 9–12.

