

**Objective**

- Introduction to the life of Lester Young through student reading and listening example

**Materials**

- **PowerPoint:** Lesson 8 - *Lester Young* page 24
- **JAZZ CLUB Listening Example:** *Lester Leaps In* page 25
- **Student Worksheet:** Lesson 8 - *Lesson and Listening Assessments* page 26

**I. PowerPoint Lester Young**

1. Show the students PowerPoint Lesson 8 and have students take turns reading the slides.
2. Have students complete the Lesson ASSESSMENT individually or as a class.

**Lester Young** was born in Woodville, Mississippi, in 1909. His father taught Lester to play saxophone as well as violin, trumpet and the drum set. He eventually moved to Kansas City and performed with Count Basie. Lester later performed with his great friend the famous jazz singer Billie Holiday. She gave Lester the nickname "Prez" which was short for honorary president of the saxophone.

Lester thought that originality was the most important aspect of music. He was original in everything he did. Young must have been an interesting sight. He was slow moving with an unusual walk. Lester always looked cool. Young wore flashy clothes and held his saxophone at a 45-degree angle when he played. Lester had his own language too. "I'm feeling a draft" meant something bad was going to happen.

Lester's jazz solo style was powerful yet "**laid back**." His swing rhythm was very relaxed and slightly after the steady beat. Unlike many jazz soloists, Lester often left "**space**" in his solos by not playing continuously. Many of the greatest jazz musicians studied Young's style among them two we will read about another time - Charlie Parker and Miles Davis. Young recorded many records with the Count Basie Orchestra including "Lester Leaps In."

**ANSWER KEY Student Reading Lesson ASSESSMENT**

1. Where and when was Lester Young born? (*Woodville, Mississippi, 1909*)
2. What did Lester do that was original (outside of music)? (*wore flashy clothes, slow moving unusual walk, made up his own sayings*)
3. What was his nickname? Who gave him that name? (*"Prez" - Billie Holiday*)
4. With whom did Lester Young perform? (*Count Basie Orchestra and Billie Holiday*)
5. Young's jazz soloing style was "**laid back**" and left "**space**." This meant that \_\_\_\_\_. (B.)
  - A. Lester was usually sleepy and distracted.
  - B. Lester's swing rhythm was slightly behind the steady beat and he used rests as well as notes.
  - C. Lester was not very good.

## II. JAZZ CLUB Listening Example

**Title: "Lester Leaps In"**

*Composer:* Lester Young

*Performer:* Count Basie's Kansas City Seven

available on: *The Essential Count Basie, Vol. 2* (Columbia/Legacy CK 40835)

*YouTube* [www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaKH33E7zJM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaKH33E7zJM) [3:14 Process/Assessment below]

*iTunes* Ken Burns "Jazz" CD 2 track 12 [Process/Assessment below]

**Suggested YouTube Search** Lester Leaps In, Lester Young [1<sup>st</sup> video - other choices: 10 - 1939 Take 1 version]

## SUGGESTED TEACHING PROCESS JAZZ CLUB Listening Example

1. Explain that the piece is swing jazz but not a big band and that students will hear:
  - Brass section:* trumpet and trombone
  - Woodwind section:* saxophone - Lester Young
  - Rhythm section:* piano - Count Basie, bass, guitar and drum set
2. Review tempo and meter (conduct examples - include presto).
3. Explain that the melody is a repeating riff and that after the sax solo the piano and sax "trade 4's" (each solos for 4 bars). The bass is the last soloist. The bass continues playing the quarter note "walking pattern." This type of very simple bass solo was fairly common in Dixieland and swing era jazz.
4. Instruct students to listen for the instruments, tempo, meter, mood, style and which instruments improvise a jazz solo.
5. Play recording while conducting a presto tempo with a 4/4 meter.
  - Video locations:* 0:00 Introduction, 0:05 A section, 0:20 B section, 0:29 A section, 0:36 sax solo, 1:38 piano/sax trade 4s, 2:10 Melody riff trades 4's with sax and piano, 2:41 "walking" bass solo
6. Have students complete the Listening ASSESSMENT individually or as a class.

## ANSWER KEY JAZZ CLUB Listening ASSESSMENT

1. Identify the instruments you hear. (7) (*Saxophone - Lester Young, trumpet, trombone, piano - Count Basie, guitar, bass and drum set*)
2. Determine the tempo and the meter. (*Very fast [presto], 4/4*)
3. Which instruments improvised a jazz solo? (3) (*Saxophone, piano and bass*)
4. Explain the jazz term trading 4's. (*Soloist take turns soloing for 4 measures*)
5. Describe the mood of the song. (*Happy, fun, exciting, etc.*)
6. Name the style of this piece. (*Swing*)

## Related Activity **JAMMIN' WITH THE JAZZ CATS** Orff Improvisation Songbook

### **VERY BLUE BLUES** Pages 16-19

- Orff mallet instrument (recorder) song E G A B<sup>b</sup>
- Swing/blues style
- *Performance and Accompaniment* tracks
- Improvisation lesson

