Words are completely inadequate when attempting to convey the spirit of Louis Armstrong to anyone unfamiliar with his genius. It is far better to learn about Armstrong, also known as Satchmo, Pops, Papa Dip, through his music. And yet, to define his accomplishment solely through music is to overlook the totality of his unique contributions to the world. There is much to discover when we widen our focus. Through his story, we can examine how technology can be used to document change through the lens of a single person’s life. His long career spans the timeline of developing media: print media, photography, sound recordings, radio and television broadcasting, and film.

Even today his legacy is spread through developing new media. With Internet access, any student can get their daily dose of Satchmo through iTunes, YouTube, Facebook, or Twitter.

Satchmo used every means possible to create and communicate, and he was truly a pioneer exploring new technologies. Armstrong was constantly recording his story, first with pen and paper, next using with his trusty typewriter to write memoirs, essays and letters. He took to lugging around a reel-to-reel tape recorder on tour. He tucked scissors and scotch tape in his pockets to make collages whenever he had a spare moment. He amassed a personal collection of 1,600 recordings, 650 home recorded tapes in hand-decorated boxes, 5,000 photographs, and 86 scrapbooks. He was often the first African American performer to break through racial barriers — in radio programs, animated shorts, early soundies, television shows, commercial advertisements, and in full-length feature films — in a time when people of color could not walk through the front door of many public establishments, sit in the front of the bus, or go to an integrated school.

Without proof positive, his long career would appear to be nothing short of miraculous. Born on August 4th, 1901 in New Orleans, Armstrong spent his childhood living in extreme poverty, surrounded by violence in the roughest part of town. At six, little Louis formed a vocal quartet and began singing on street corners for tips. He got a job working on a junk wagon, playing a tin horn to draw customers. At the age of 11, he fired a pistol in the street to celebrate New Year’s Eve and was sent to the Colored Waif’s Home for Boys, where he learned how to read music and eventually becoming the band’s lead cornet. Mentored by Joe Oliver, one of the finest trumpet players in New Orleans, Louis becomes a skilled entertainer, playing in Uptown Red Light District saloons and exciting Downtown audiences as an orchestral soloist accompanying silent movies. At 18, he blew his horn from the decks of riverboats traveling the Mississippi. In 1922, he followed his mentor Joe Oliver to Chicago in the time of the Great Migration, moving to New York in 1924, taking the City by storm with his virtuosity. He toured America using every possible mode of transportation — car, train, boat, and plane. Eventually his fame grew to the point that he became known as America’s “Ambassador Satch.” Upon his death on July 6, 1971, more than 30,000 mourners traveled to pay their respects to a man that brought pure happiness to the world.
We hope that you will enjoy learning more about the “story behind the story” of Louis Armstrong through his music.

1. **CHIME BLUES**

Joe Oliver was Armstrong’s mentor and was known “King Oliver” from New Orleans. This 1923 Creole Jazz Band piece contains Armstrong’s first recorded solo.

2. **LA VIE EN ROSE**

This 1950 Armstrong recording of French singer Edith Piaf’s signature song, “La Vie En Rose,” is one of the more recent examples of Satchmo’s timeless appeal. In the 2008 animated movie WALL•E, this song was used to great effect by Pixar animators, underscoring the comical love scenes between a disinterested EVA and a head-over-heels-in-love WALL•E.

3. **MELANCHOLY BLUES**

This 1927 recording by Louis Armstrong and his Hot Seven is one of the musical selections that can be found on “The Golden Record,” a phonograph record made of gold-plated copper included on the two Voyager spacecraft launched in 1977. The records, containing sound and images selected by a NASA committee headed by Carl Sagan, portray the diversity of life and culture on Earth. The handwritten inscription on the records: “To the makers of music — all worlds, all times.” When Armstrong got his first phonograph in 1918, he used it to listen to the recordings of Irish tenor John McCormack and the great Italian tenor, Enrico Caruso.

4. **WEST END BLUES**

“Very few works of art in any genre have attained the status that the recordings Louis Armstrong made between 1925 and 1928 with the Hot Five and the Hot Seven have in jazz. This is the music that taught musicians how to speak the jazz language and showed listeners how to understand what was, at the time, an audaciously new art form. Few were actually aware of the revolutionary nature of these recordings when they were made because they were so clearly couched in the vernacular of the blues.” — liner notes from Ken Burns’ Jazz

5. **POTATO HEAD BLUES**

This 1927 recording by Armstrong and his Hot Seven, illustrates Armstrong’s inventiveness as both musician/composer. With his Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings, he invented the improvised jazz solo. Before Armstrong, Dixieland was the style of jazz that everyone was playing. This was a style that featured collective improvisation where everyone soloed at once. Armstrong developed the idea of musicians playing during breaks that expanded into musicians playing individual solos. His brilliant, inventive playing became a symbol of the energy and freedom of the ‘jazz age’ - the riotous pre-Depression America of the Roaring Twenties.

6. **CHINATOWN, MY CHINATOWN**

This song was recorded by Louis Armstrong and His Orchestra in 1931, and was one of Armstrong’s early hits. Chinatown in New Orleans developed when Chinese laborers, imported for work on the upriver plantations after emancipation, found the work unsuitable and migrated to the city. Chinatown was located a few blocks away from Louis Armstrong’s childhood neighborhood, which was colorfully known by many names such as Storyville, Back O’Town, the Red Light District, or the Battlefield. The place where jazz was born was extremely diverse, home to African-Americans, Chinese-Americans, Italian-Americans, and Jewish-Americans.
7. **HEEBIE JEEBIES**
This tune, recorded in 1926 by Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five, introduced the musical invention of “scat” singing, vocal improvisation with random sounds and syllables. Scat singing gives singers the ability to sing improvised melodies and rhythms, to create the equivalent of an instrumental solo using their voice. Popular legend had it that Armstrong improvised and began scatting when his music sheets fell to the floor while recording the song. While this story is probably not true, he was the person who popularized scat with this recording that left musicians and listeners astounded with his inventiveness.

8. **ST. LOUIS BLUES**
In 1925, Armstrong backed Queen of the Blues Bessie Smith on a slow rendition of W.C. Handy’s “St. Louis Blues.” American composer Handy, who used folk melodies from the South in his formal compositions, is often referred to as the “Father of the Blues.” Handy wrote this song in 1914 using a tango-like rhythm. His objective was "to combine ragtime syncopation with a real melody in the spiritual tradition." In 1929, Armstrong’s orchestra picks up the tempo and swings the blues, turning Handy’s composition into a huge hit record. This song is often referred to as “the jazzman’s Hamlet,” and both of Armstrong’s versions were inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame.

9. **BLACK AND BLUE**
“Black and Blue” is a Fats Waller song written for a 1929 Broadway musical, *Hot Chocolates*, which had an all-black cast. The song when first sung was about a dark-skinned woman who has lost her man to a lighter skinned rival. The song as recorded by Armstrong became an anthem of protest of against racial discrimination. Author Ralph Ellison was moved so moved by Armstrong’s playing of the song, that he references the song in the opening chapters of his book, *Invisible Man*. “Perhaps I like Louis Armstrong because he’s made poetry out of being invisible. I think it must be because he’s unaware that he is invisible.” Armstrong recorded the song again in 1955, and the times gave new weight to the song’s meaning. The album “*Satch Plays Fats*” was recorded eleven months after the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka. In the months before and after, there were a series of brutal murders of blacks in Mississippi and elsewhere (most famously, Emmett Till); and in December ’55, Rosa Parks sparked the prime active phase of the civil rights movement by refusing to give up her bus seat. Two years later, Armstrong spoke out against President Eisenhower’s reluctance to act when African-American teens were barred from Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas and cancelling his State Department sponsored tour of Russia.

10. **AIN’T MISBEHAVIN’**
*Ain’t Mis’behavin’* is a 1929 Fats Waller tune that was first heard as an Armstrong-Waller duet in Hot Chocolates. The recording illustrates Armstrong talents as both a vocal and instrumental soloist. With his unique singing style, “the greatest singer in the world without a voice” revolutionized popular singing and began the tradition of recording the pop songs of the day, helping to define the Great American Songbook. Louis Armstrong and His Orchestra were largely responsible for the rise in popularity of swing jazz during the 30s and 40s.

11. **MY SWEET HUNK O’ TRASH**
As a young teen, Billie Holiday learned how to sing by listening to recordings by Louis and Bessie Smith. Billie and Louis worked together on the 1946 motion picture, *New Orleans*. This duet, "My Sweet Hank o’ Trash,” was composed by James P. Johnson, king of Harlem stride piano. Armstrong often turned his performances into ad-libbed conversations, different from the stiff way duets had been performed in the past. Like Armstrong, Lady Day’s voice and way of delivering a song are completely unique.
12. **LET'S CALL THE WHOLE THING OFF**
With her beautiful, sweet sound, you might never guess that Ella Fitzgerald's early days were as grim as Billie Holiday's. Growing up in poverty, Ella was homeless broke and alone before she got her big break in 1934, winning an amateur contest at the Apollo Theater in Harlem at the age of 15. Ella went on to become known as "The First Lady of Song." Together, the Ella and Pops recorded many classic tunes, including this 1937 classic by George and Ira Gershwin, first written for Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in the movie Swingtime.

13. **DUKE’S PLACE**
Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong recorded a single record together in 1961, and the historic event is fondly known as “The Great Summit.” Duke tinkles the ivories, while Armstrong sings the vocals on “Duke’s Place.” The 1941 song, also known as “C Jam Blues,” is a improvisational number set in the key of C. The lyrics, “Baby, take me down to 'Duke's Place'” were added in 1950. Duke had this to say about Satchmo: "If anybody was Mr. Jazz, it was Louis Armstrong. He was the epitome of jazz and always will be. He is what I call an American standard, an American original."

14. **MACK THE KNIFE**
“Mack the Knife” originally appeared in 1928's Berlin production of *The Threepenny Opera*, a musical drama composed by Kurt Weill with lyrics by Bertolt Brecht. With this 1954 English translation of the German lyrics by Marc Blitzstein, the song became a hit in the United States with Armstrong's 1956 rendition. San Francisco jazzman Turk Murphy took a flat fee of $300 to create the arrangement for Armstrong's recording, because neither Louis nor Turk imagined that the song would become a hit. Louis left for Europe shortly after the recording session and returned home to discover that that song surprisingly had become a hit with over one million copies sold. In order to relearn the song, Louis and Turk went to a bar with a jukebox and used a stack of nickels to play the song over and over, because no one had a copy of the score.

15. **NOW YOU HAS JAZZ**
It is a delight to see Bing Crosby and Louis Armstrong sing this Cole Porter song, written for the 1956 movie *High Society*. Crosby was the most popular performer in the early 20th century and was in the words of esteemed jazz critic Gary Giddins, "the first white performer to appreciate and assimilate the genius of Louis Armstrong." When asked in 1950 who had influenced him most, Bing replied, "I'm proud to acknowledge my debt to the Reverend Satchelmouth. He is the beginning and the end of music in America. And long may he reign." Armstrong was one of the first African American entertainers to be featured on film with top billing, performing in over thirty movies.

16. **HELLO, DOLLY**
Written for the 1964 Broadway musical, *Hello Dolly* was originally sung by Lowell High School alumni Carol Channing. Armstrong's recorded version was made to promote the show. It was quite a surprise when Ol’ Satchmo at 62 knocked "Can't Buy Me Love" by the Beatles out of the number one spot, when "Hello Dolly" topped of the US Billboard Hot 100. When Armstrong was asked about his new #1 song, he replied, "It sure feels good to be up there with those Beatles." Louis Armstrong received a Grammy for the song in 1964 for "Best Vocal Performance, Male," and he also performed the song with Barbra Streisand) in the popular 1969 film.

17. **WHEN IT'S SLEEPY TIME DOWN SOUTH**
"When it's Sleepy time Down South" became Louis Armstrong's theme song, and he played it at every concert. Louis first heard the song around 1930 and "carried it in my trunk for a year before recording it." This song is about the sense of longing for home felt by the thousands of African Americans who left the South looking for greater opportunity, heading up to Chicago during the Great Migration.
18. RUSSIAN LULLABY
When Louis was a boy of 6 in New Orleans, he worked for the Karnofskys, a family of Russian Jewish ancestry. The family took care of him and gave him his first job, selling odds and ends from a junk wagon. The Karnofsky's loaned him the money to buy his first cornet, and they praised his talents. “They could see I had music in my soul,” Armstrong said. “They really wanted me to be something in life. And music was it.” In his memoirs, Louis recalls how he learned Yiddish, gained a lifelong love of Jewish home cooking, and his introduction to Jewish music. He wore a Star of David all his life in gratitude to this family. Louis wrote that Mrs. Karnofsky sang a Russian lullaby whenever she put her baby to bed. “We all would sing together until the little baby would doze off ... when I reached the age of eleven I began to realize it was the Jewish family who instilled in me singing from the heart.” “Russian Lullaby,” written by Jewish American songwriter Irving Berlin, features bassist Arville Shaw.

Every night you'll hear her Croon
A Russian Lullaby
Just a little Plaintive Tune
When Baby Starts to Cry
Rock a bye my Baby
Some where there may be
A Land that's Free
For you and Me
And a Russian Lullaby.

19. THAT'S MY HOME
Louis was a well-traveled representative of the United States, traveling to South America, Europe, Asia, Australia, and Africa. He taught the world to swing, performing an average of 300 concerts each year. Arriving in Ghana in 1956, his band, The All Stars, were greeted at the airport by a crowd of 10,000 and played for a crowd of 100,000 people. "Ambassador Satch", noted that, "There's cats everywhere, y'know!" Through music, Armstrong always shared the spirit and his love for his hometown. One of the highlights of his life was returning to New Orleans as King of the Zulu's for the 1949 Mardi Gras Parade. But upon seeing the discrimination and segregation in his hometown, Mr. Armstrong left disgusted with the injustice, vowing never to return. He finally did return in 1965, after passage of the Civil Rights Act, triumphantly playing with an integrated band in the city's Jazz Museum. Armstrong and his wife Lucille spent the remainder of their lives in a working class neighborhood in Queens in New York City. Their home is now preserved as the Louis Armstrong House Museum.

20. WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN
In 1938, Louis Armstrong and His Orchestra first recorded a song Armstrong had played as a child. The song was “When the Saints Go Marchin' In” and that first Armstrong recording of the tune transformed the piece from a traditional gospel hymn to a jazz standard. Louis Armstrong recalled hearing the song frequently as a child, both as a sober hymn and as a joyous romp during the second line parades that gathered after a funeral. The song is still associated with the city of New Orleans.

21. BOY FROM NEW ORLEANS
New lyrics were written to the tune of "When The Saints Go Marching In" for this autobiographical song outlining the events of Louis Armstrong's life, “from the time that I was born to this present day.” Towards the end of his life, he used this song to share his story and thank his fans for a wonderful life.
While the song says that he was born on July 4, 1900, a New Orleans baptismal registry records his real birthday as August 4, 1901. Armstrong's family ancestry was traced in a City Hall registry labeled "Acts, Jan.-July 1818, Marc Lafitte, Notary" which outlines thousands of property transfers, including the sale and purchase of slaves. On May 18, 1818, a slave owner named Antoine Turcas purchased Daniel Walker, 32, from Richmond for about $600, a substantial price at the time. Walker had a son, also named Daniel, who married Catherine Washington, who was auctioned off with her mother and sister from a plantation in Mississippi and brought to New Orleans. Catherine and Daniel Walker had a daughter named Josephine who later married Ephraim Armstrong. They had a son named Willie, the father of Louis Armstrong. Catherine Walker, Louis's great-grandmother, attended the baby's baptism in 1901 as a sponsor. Louis spends the first years of his life living with his paternal grandmother, Josephine Armstrong. After the age of 5, Louis and his younger sister, Beatrice (nicknamed Mama Lucy) were raised by their mother, May Ann, in a two room house in the Back O'Town section of New Orleans.

22. **DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO MISS NEW ORLEANS?**

"Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans" was first heard in the 1947 movie New Orleans, with Billie Holiday singing vocals and Louis Armstrong playing the trumpet. Presently, the song has acquired a new layer of meaning with the devastation of New Orleans brought on by Hurricane Katrina.

23. **WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD**

Pops enjoyed a career of unparalleled longevity, with hit songs spread over five decades. "What a Wonderful World" is a song written by Bob Thiele and George David Weiss written especially for him, first recorded and released as a single in 1968, amidst civil rights demonstrations and protests against the Vietnam War. Satchmo wanted a song that would promote positive feelings in the midst of all this strife. The song sold less than 1,000 copies in the US (The head of ABC Records disliked the tune and chose not to promote it), but the record was a huge success in the United Kingdom, reaching #1. Twenty years later in the US, the song's popularity with its inclusion the 1987 movie, "Good Morning, Vietnam," and the single was rereleased in 1988. Pop's posthumous hit is now a beloved American standard. Louis shared his life philosophy in a spoken introduction to the song, "And all I'm saying is, see what a wonderful world it would be if only we would give it a chance. Love, baby, love. That's the secret. Yeah."