



# Duke Ellington Black History Facts

*"Music is how I live, why I live and how I will be remembered."  
- Duke Ellington*

- Duke Ellington's father's full time job was making blueprints for the U.S. Navy.
- Duke began playing the piano at age 7. Ragtime, church and classical music were influencers in Duke's love of music.
- Also, he also loved baseball and sold peanuts at the Washington Senators baseball games.
- In 1914, Ellington worked as a soda jerk at the Poodle Dog Cafe. During that time, he wrote a composition called Soda Fountain Rag. Soda Fountain Rag is also known as the Poodle Dog Rag.
- Also, Duke started listening and imitating ragtime pianists. A music teacher from Dunbar High School gave Ellington private harmony lessons.
- Additionally, he learned to read music and worked to improve his technique.
- Duke formed the group, The Duke Serenaders. He earned 75 cents from his first performance. The band thrived, and as a result he performed throughout Washington, DC and Virginia. He preferred playing for embassy and private parties.
- At age 19, Duke married his high school sweetheart Edna Thompson. They had a son named Mercer Kennedy Ellington. Ellington moved to New York in 1923. In 1924, he became the leader of his big band and began recording.
- Duke Ellington played regularly at the Cotton Club in Harlem, NY in 1927. He performed there for 5 years. All Cotton Club performances were broadcast almost nightly.
- By 1930, Duke Ellington and his band were famous. President Richard Nixon invited Duke Ellington to the White House for his 70th birthday. He was given the Presidential Medal of Freedom.
- One of Duke Ellington's favorite places to eat was Ben's Chili Bowl when he was in the Washington, DC area.
- Duke Ellington was a genius of instrument combinations. His music made him stand out among other composers of his time.
- Ellington ranked with composers such as a George Gershwin, Cole Porter, and Irving Berlin. The piano was Duke's favorite instrument. Duke wrote more than one thousand compositions. His work became a standard in jazz music.
- Duke Ellington won 12 Grammy Awards. Additionally, he received the Life Time Achievement Award in 1966.
- Additionally, Duke Ellington was a Freemason. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge.
- In 1976, Stevie Wonder wrote the song "Sir Duke" as a tribute to Duke Ellington.
- Duke Ellington led his band from 1923 - 1974, 50 years. The Duke Ellington Orchestra is still in existence today.
- The Duke Ellington School of the Arts was established in Washington, DC in 1974.
- In 1986, a Commemorative stamp was issued with Duke Ellington's image.
- Duke Ellington's son, Mercer Kennedy Ellington, managed the Duke Ellington Orchestra after his dad's death.
- New York City Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, declared April 29, 2009 Duke Ellington Day.

# Duke Ellington History

1. Who gave Duke Ellington his nickname?

- A. Parents
- B. A Friend
- C. Teacher
- D. Pastor

2. What was the name of Duke Ellington's first band?

- A. The Poodles
- B. The Duke Serenaders
- C. The Soda Pops
- D. The Harlemettes

3. What was the name of Duke's first song?

- A. Satin Doll
- B. The Mooch
- C. If It Ain't Got That Swing
- D. Soda Fountain Rag

4. What President gave Ellington the Presidential Medal of Freedom?

- A. Obama
- B. Kennedy
- C. Nixon
- D. Carter

5. What was Duke Ellington's favorite instrument?

- A. Saxophone
- B. Drum
- C. Piano
- D. Guitar

6. What was Duke Ellington's first job?

- A. Soda Jerk
- B. Selling Peanuts
- C. Chauffer
- D. Waiter

7. What was one of Duke's favorite places to eat in Washington, DC?

- A. Chicken & Waffles
- B. Peaches
- C. Sylvia's
- D. Ben's Chili Bowl

8. Where is Duke Ellington buried?

- A. New York
- B. Chicago
- C. Washington, DC
- D. Virginia

# Duke Ellington History

1. Who gave Duke Ellington is nickname?

- A. Parents
- B. A Friend
- C. Teacher
- D. Pastor

2. What was the name of Duke Ellington's first band?

- A. The Poodles
- B. The Duke Serenaders
- C. The Soda Pops
- D. The Harlemettes

3. What was the name of Duke's first song?

- A. Satin Doll
- B. The Mooch
- C. If It Ain't Got That Swing
- D. Soda Fountain Rag

4. What President gave Ellington the Presidential Medal of Freedom?

- A. Obama
- B. Kennedy
- C. Carter
- D. Nixon

5. What was Duke Ellington's favorite instrument?

- A. Piano
- B. Drum
- C. Saxophone
- D. Guitar

6. What was Duke Ellington's first job?

- A. Soda Jerk
- B. Selling Peanuts
- C. Chauffer
- D. Waiter

7. What was one of Duke's favorite places to eat?

- A. Chicken & Waffles
- B. Peaches
- C. Sylvia's
- D. Ben's Chili Bowl

8. Where is Duke Ellington buried?

- A. New York
- B. Chicago
- C. Washington, DC
- D. Virginia



## DUKE ELLINGTON WORKSHEET ANSWERS

Answers to Matching Worksheet:

Ragtime - Music evolved by African Americans in the 1890 and played on the piano.

Composer - Someone who writes compositions.

Symphony - A musical composition for a full orchestra.

Composition - Original piece of music either vocal or instrumental.

Maestro - Conductor of classical musical.

Orchestra - A group of instrumentalist who play classical music.

Soda Jerk - A person who serves or sells soft drinks and ice cream.

Broadcast - Radio or TV transmitted over airwaves for public reception.

Conductor - A person who directs the performance of an orchestra.

Answers to Multiply Choice Questions:

B

B

D

C

C

B

D

A

*Mother 2 Mother Blog*





**DUKE  
ELLINGTON**