

Billie Holiday

Billie Holiday is an American jazz music legend.

She was born Eleanora Fagan on April 7, 1915. Her father, Clarence Holiday, was a musician. As a child, she was neglected, abused, and very, very poor.

In 1928, she moved to Harlem in New York City. She changed her name to Billie Holiday and starting singing in local nightclubs. Many people liked her music.

In 1932, she recorded some songs with the Benny Goodman Orchestra, a popular big band of the time. This got her recording work with Columbia Records. Over the next decade, she recorded some of her finest songs and became more and more successful.

In 1937, Holiday toured the country, first, with the Count Basie and, then, with the Artie Shaw big band. She faced so much racial discrimination on the Shaw tour that she left it. Back in New York, she began singing at the Café Society. This club attracted all types of people - black, white, rich, and poor. Soon, she had many new fans. From 1944 to 1950, she recorded some of her biggest hits, including her most popular record, "Lover Man." She also wrote two of her hits - "God Bless the Child" and "Don't Explain."

Beginning in the 1940s, Holiday's personal life became more and more troubled. Her husband abused her and she started taking drugs. In 1947, she was convicted of heroin possession and spent most of that year in jail. Her conviction meant she could no longer sing in clubs, but her records were still popular.

By 1952, her personal life was affecting her singing career. She kept making records, but they were not as good as her earlier recordings. Her voice was suffering from drugs and alcohol, but she could not stop using them. In 1959, she collapsed and then died on July 17, 1959. She was just 44 years old.

Pre-Reading Warm Up Questions ☀

1. What kind of music do you like?
2. Do you like jazz?
3. Who are your favorite musicians?
4. Have you ever heard of Billie Holiday? If so, do you like her music?
5. What is the meaning of "racial discrimination"?



COMPREHENSION 📖

A. True or False. Read the statements below. If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence. If it is false, write F. If it is false, correct the information.

1. Billie Holiday had a very happy childhood.
2. Billie Holiday's music was popular with many kinds of people.
3. Billie Holiday had a very difficult personal life.
4. Billie Holiday wrote all her own hits.
5. After Billie Holiday went to jail, people stopped buying her records.

B. Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner. Then write the answers in complete sentences.

1. What did Billie Holiday's father do?
2. What did Billie Holiday do when she moved to New York?
3. Name three famous bands she sang with over the years.
4. Describe her personal and professional life during the 1940's.
5. Why did Holiday spend almost a year in jail?
6. How did her conviction affect her professional life?
7. How did her drug addiction and alcoholism affect her career?



DISCUSS 

1. Do you think that Billie Holiday's unhappy childhood had a big affect on her adult life?
2. Why do you think that many famous musicians and entertainers become drug addicts and alcoholics?
3. How do you think racial discrimination affected Holiday's life and career? Is there racial discrimination in your country now? Explain.

VOCABULARY REVIEW 

A. Billie Holiday is an American jazz music legend. What is the meaning of "music legend"? Name several other jazz legends.

B. Match the words on the left with the correct meaning on the right.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| _____ 1. neglect | a. liked by many people |
| _____ 2. abuse | b. a drug that is very addictive |
| _____ 3. decade | c. supporter, admirer |
| _____ 4. hit | d. profession, way of making a living |
| _____ 5. popular | e. pay no attention to , not take care of |
| _____ 6. attract | f. experience something bad, feel pain |
| _____ 7. fan | g. fall down |
| _____ 8. convicted | h. a big success |
| _____ 9. heroin | i. get attention |
| _____ 10. career | j. treat very badly |
| _____ 11. suffer | k. found guilty by a court of law |
| _____ 12. collapse | l. ten years |

C. Choose the right word from the left column above to complete the following sentences. (You may have to change the verb tense or pluralize a noun.)

1. When the soccer team scored the winning goal, the _____ shouted loudly.
2. Many new Internet businesses have started in the past _____ and there will be many more in the next few years.
3. If you continue to _____ your studies, you will not pass your exams.
4. He is planning to go to university next year, but he hasn't decided yet what he wants to do for his _____. He is thinking of medicine or dentistry.
5. She hasn't eaten all day and is feeling very weak. If she doesn't eat soon, she may _____.

ANSWER KEY**Please note:**

The reading for this topic is also available in full-page format at the end of the lesson (page 4).

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1-5. Individual answer (and...)

5. Racial discrimination is the abusive or negative judgement of people based on their skin colour, cultural heritage or religion.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**A. True or False**

1. F 2. T 3. T 4. T 5. F

B. Written Answers

1. Billie Holiday's father was a musician.
2. When Billie Holiday moved to New York, she started singing in local nightclubs.
3. Billie sang with the Benny Goodman Orchestra, Count Basie, and the Artie Shaw Big Band.
4. During the 1940's Holiday's life was very troubled. Her husband was abusive and she became addicted to drugs.
5. Holiday spent almost a year in jail for the possession of heroin.
6. Her conviction meant she could no longer sing in clubs.
7. Drugs and alcohol affected Holiday's singing voice and overall health.

VOCABULARY REVIEW

A. A music legend is someone whose musical ability has influenced many people and made them very famous. Other jazz legends include Fats Domino, Louis Armstrong, and Tony Bennett.

B. Match the words

1. e 2. j 3. l 4. h 5. a 6. i 7. c 8.
k 9. b 10. d 11. f 12. g

B. Choose the word

1. fans 2. decade 3. neglect 4. career 5. collapse



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