

Black Artists and Musicians

6 Articles

Check articles you have read:

☐

Nina Simone
161 words

☐

Jean-Michel Basquiat
180 words

☐

Edmonia Lewis
209 words

☐

Louis Armstrong
214 words

☐

The First Lady of Song
211 words

☐

Henry Ossawa Tanner
195 words

Nina Simone



Nina Simone

One of the most incredible musicians of the 20th century is Nina Simone. She sang folk, blues, and jazz music. Her rich, low voice is very unique. Nina told stories with her songs. She also sang about ideas important to her.

Nina's musical talent was obvious at a very young age. She started playing the piano when she was three years old. As a kid, she played the piano in her mother's church. She also studied classical music. She learned to play the music of great classical musicians, including Beethoven and Bach.

As an adult, Nina became known for her beautiful, powerful voice. Her original music was a mix of folk, blues, and jazz. Some of her well-known songs include, "I Put a Spell On You" and "My Baby Just Cares for Me." Nina Simone also created songs that reflected African Americans' fight for equality. Today, she is recognized as one of the key voices of this fight.

Jean-Michel Basquiat

Jean-Michel Basquiat was a painter. His art often shows words, symbols, stick figures, and animals. He used strong colors in his art. He showed emotion through his art.

Jean-Michel grew up in New York City. When he was a child, Jean-Michel's mother would take him to museums. She would encourage his interest in art. She would draw with Jean-Michel. He loved to draw cartoons. Jean-Michel once said that he got his art from his mother.

When he was a teenager, Jean-Michel started to create graffiti on buildings and trains in New York City. Graffiti is something written, scratched, or drawn on subway cars, buses, or walls in public spaces. He also made paintings. They were soon shown in museums in New York. Basquiat started to become famous in his twenties. His paintings started to sell for a lot of money.

Unfortunately, Jean-Michel died when he was young. He was only 27 years old when he died. But even in his short life, he was able to make a big impact with his art.

Edmonia Lewis



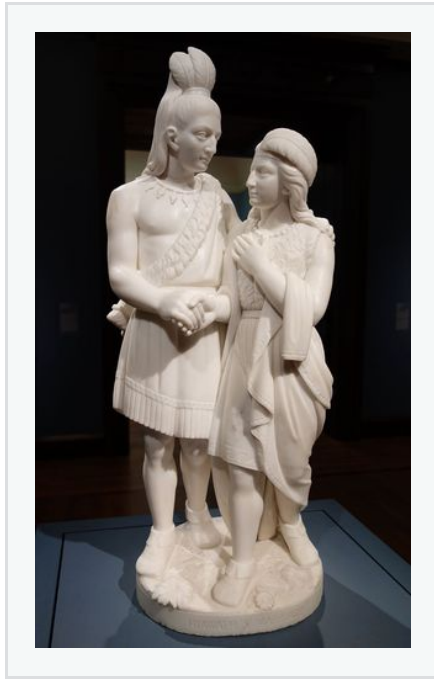
Edmonia Lewis

Edmonia Lewis was the first professional African American sculptor. She made sculptures of abolitionists, presidents, and figures inspired by poetry and her background. An abolitionist is someone who supported the end of slavery before the Civil War.

Edmonia was born in New York. Her father was African American. Her mother was Native American. She moved to Boston when she was about 19 years old. She started to learn how to make sculptures while she was there. She started to make sculptures of abolitionists like John Brown.

A few years later, Edmonia traveled to Europe. She decided to live in Rome, Italy for a while. She continued to make sculptures there. Unlike most sculptors working in Rome at the time, Edmonia made her sculptures without help from others. She created sculptures of presidents Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant. She made a sculpture inspired by her Native American background. This sculpture showed a father teaching his daughter how to make an arrow.

Many of Edmonia Lewis's sculptures have been lost. The ones that have survived show how talented Edmonia really was.



This is one of Edmonia Lewis's sculptures. It is called Hiawatha's Marriage. It was inspired by one of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poems about a Native American warrior.

Louis Armstrong



Louis Armstrong playing the trumpet

Louis Armstrong is remembered as one of the greatest jazz musicians of all time. In fact, some think he is *the* greatest. Louis sang and played the trumpet. Louis Armstrong was a very innovative musician. Someone who is innovative creates or tries new ideas or styles. Louis played new jazz rhythms on the trumpet. His voice was rough and different. He made jazz music no one had heard before.

Early in his music career, Louis played with different musical groups. He would play very long trumpet solos. No one had done this before in jazz music. People began to copy Louis. He became very, very popular. He played in his hometown of New Orleans. He also played in Chicago and New York City. People couldn't get enough of Louis!

Louis also became popular in other countries around the world. Louis started to perform all over the world. He performed throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa. His childhood nickname was "Satchmo." As he toured around the world, he earned the nickname "Ambassador Satch."

Louis' musical talents didn't just include playing the trumpet and singing. He also wrote music. Beyond music, Louis also made films, hosted a radio show, and wrote an autobiography. It seems like there wasn't anything Louis couldn't do.

The First Lady of Song



Ella Fitzgerald

In 1934, a teenager named Ella Fitzgerald was going to perform at the Apollo. The Apollo is a famous theater in New York City. Ella had planned to dance. Before Ella's turn, two sisters danced for their performance. They danced so well, Ella was afraid her dance would not be as good. So she decided to sing instead. When it was her turn, Ella got on stage and the crowd started to boo. But when she sang, they became quiet. By the end of her first song, they wanted her to sing more!

That performance was a very important event in Ella's life. It helped start her music career. Ella grew up to become one of the best jazz singers of all time. Ella started out by singing in different bands. Then she began to perform on her own. Ella's voice was warm and clear. She could sing a variety of notes. She could copy the sounds of different instruments while she sang. This type of singing is called scat singing. It's no wonder people call her "The First Lady of Song."

Ella also recorded songs created by other musicians. A songwriter once said, "I never knew how good our songs were until I heard Ella Fitzgerald sing them."

Henry Ossawa Tanner



The Thankful Poor painting by Henry Ossawa Tanner

The painting shown here is called *The Thankful Poor*. The painting shows a grandfather and his grandson giving thanks before eating their food. What do you notice about the way the grandfather and his grandson are painted? What do you notice about other details shown in the painting? Why might the painting have been titled *The Thankful Poor*?

This painting was made by Henry Ossawa Tanner in 1894. Henry was the first African American painter who became known around the world for his art. He often painted religious paintings. He painted scenes from the Bible. The Bible is the main holy book of the Christian and Jewish religions.

Henry's artistic work was influenced by his childhood. He grew up in a religious home. His father was a minister. Henry was raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In the United States, he faced racism. As an adult, Henry moved to Paris, France with the hope of escaping this racism. He wanted to be judged for his art, not his skin color. Soon after moving to Paris, Henry achieved success. People around the world began to admire him for his work.