



A Horn for Louis

by Eric A. Kimmel

illustrated by James Bernadin

Summary

When Louis Armstrong was young and growing up in New Orleans, he was in love with music, especially jazz. He idolized the music of the great Joe Oliver and wanted to play just like him when he grew up. The problem was that Louis was very poor. Seven-year old Louis didn't go to school. He worked each day riding a junk wagon to help put food on the table for himself, his mama and his sister. And, he blew his horn – a cheap tin horn because he couldn't afford a real horn. He could only dream about one.

One day, the junk wagon passes by a pawnshop that had a beautiful *real* horn in the window. Could Louis ever have a *real* horn of his own?

Ideas for Classroom Use

Suggested Uses:

This book is great to use during a celebration of Black History Month, or when teaching about Mardi Gras, jazz, the state of Louisiana or simply about the one and only Louis Armstrong.

Special note:

In light of the massive destruction of the southern coast of Louisiana as a result of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, teaching about the state and the fine city of New Orleans is especially important and also very poignant. Children may have relatives directly misplaced or affected by the hurricane and/or some may have been involved in the humanitarian aid that continues to pour into the region. Stories abound. This is a great little book to use as a catalyst for talking about the region and its rich cultural history.

Before you begin... the setting of our story.

Find Louisiana on a map of the United States. Where is the state in relation to where you live? Now, find the city of New Orleans on that map if it shows cities. If not, be sure to obtain a map of Louisiana and have students find New Orleans on that map. The city is where our story takes place.

If you like, you can share a map of Louisiana via the computer. Go to www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/usstates/la.htm

Discussion Questions

Encourage the children to find examples from the story and in the illustrations to document their answers.

Chapter 1 — A New Orleans Morning

- > *How would you describe 7-year old Louis? List at least 8 different adjectives describing him.*
- > *Louis was a dreamer. What are some of the things he dreamt about?*
- > *Describe how Louis reacted to hearing "King" Joe Oliver play. Can you use the five senses to explain how Louis might have reacted hearing him play?*



A Horn for Louis

by Eric A. Kimmel

illustrated by James Bernadin

Discussion Questions

Chapter 2 — The Junkyard

- > *Louis had to walk by a cemetery every morning on the way to his job at the junkyard. How are the cemeteries special in New Orleans? Share at least 3 ways they are different than most cemeteries.*
- > *Describe Louis' little tin horn. Why did he love it so much?*
- > *Louis had a special relationship with The Karnofsky Family. How was that special? Do you think 7-year old Louis liked working for them? Why or why not?*

Chapter 3 — In the Alley

- > *How did Louis' playing help the boys collect junk?*
- > *Why did the "sport" give Louis a silver dollar?*
- > *Why wasn't it a smart idea for Louis to chase after the boy who stole his tin horn? How did Louis outwit the boy and his gang friends?*

Chapter 4 — The Pawnshop

- > *Describe the horn that Louis sees in the window of the pawnshop and how he feels about it.*
- > *Why did the store owner put a different mouthpiece on the horn for Louis to try it out?*
- > *Many would say that Louis' friend Alex is a very young, but astute businessman. What does astute mean and why might we describe Alex' interactions with the pawnshop owner that way?*

Chapter 5 — A Jar of Oil

- > *How did singing the blues help Louis feel better?*
- > *Share at least six things Louis learned about celebrating Hanukkah.*
- > *Why did Louis feel sick after opening up the thoughtful gift from the Karnofsky's? Why couldn't he keep the horn?*

Chapter 6 — A Talk with Rosie

- > *Why did Louis run to the barn? Is there a place or someone you go to when you are confused and upset? Where is that place or who do you like to talk to?*
- > *How did Pop's story about their family help Louis feel better about the horn?*
- > *How did Pop and Louis solve Louis' problem?*

Chapter 7 — Sweet Dreams

- > *What gift did Louis share with the Karnofsky family that Hanukkah night?*
- > *What surprise was in store for Louis as he blew his horn on the way home?*
- > *Describe some of the stories that Louis might have shared with May Ann and Mama Lucy the next morning about his adventures the day before.*



A Horn for Louis

by Eric A. Kimmel

illustrated by James Bernadin

Responding to the Text

Music

Listen to the great Louis Armstrong and learn more about him

Bring in some of Louis Armstrong's music so children can hear just how wonderful he was. You might share some of *your* favorite songs. His most famous tune is "What a Wonderful World." Many students may be familiar with the song as it has been in movies and commercials in recent years and has been made into a children's book by the same name. To listen to Louis Armstrong play several tunes, and watch a short video clip and slide show about him, go to this fabulous website:

www.jalc.org/educ/jazzED/j4yp_curr/modules/louisArmstrong/module.html

Invite a trumpet player to come in and play

Invite a local trumpet player from a high school or other band to come in and demonstrate how to play the trumpet or coronet. It would be special treat if the person could play "It's a Wonderful World" or another of Louis Armstrong's signature songs.

Make "horns"

Very young children may like to make horns to play as they listen to music by Louis Armstrong. For directions on making a very quick "horn," go to the following PBS link to find directions. Then, put on a CD of Louis playing "The Saints Go Marching In," and let children march around the room playing their horns with Louis.

www.pbskids.org/rogers/R_house/object18.htm

Older children may prefer to make "Garden Hose Trumpets," or other homemade instruments to form their own classroom band. Directions for many instruments children can make with things found around their home and school can be found at the following website:

www.mudcat.org/kids/blowers.cfm and www.mudcat.org/kids

Social Studies

Learning more about New Orleans

Children may want to learn more about New Orleans and some of the events and things that are unique to it. Children could divide into committees to research some of the following subjects:

- Mardi Gras
- Creole, Cajun food and other food specialties of the area
- Jazz
- The French Quarter
- Cemeteries
- Tourism ideas for kids and their families in New Orleans

Children helping children

Do your students want to help the children and people of New Orleans who were affected by the results of Hurricane Katrina? This website lists many helping organizations and specific ways you and your students can help victims of the hurricane. Go to:

www.neworleanskids.net/news/hurricane_katrina.htm