

Fourth Grade Informational Text-Based Writing

Jazz Singer: Ella Fitzgerald

Source #1

Just Stand There and Sing

The year was 1934. A shy teenager stood on the stage of the Apollo Theater in Harlem, a neighborhood of New York City. She was competing in a talent contest called Amateur Night. The crowd laughed at her and yelled, "Boo!" But then she opened her mouth and started to sing, and soon the crowd fell silent. As she finished the song, the audience burst into applause and demanded another song. That night she left the theater with the first-place prize.

That evening at the Apollo was the beginning of Ella Fitzgerald's legendary career as a jazz singer. Amazingly, Ella did not even plan to sing that night. She had entered the contest as a dancer, but she felt she could not beat one of the dancing acts before her. So, at the last minute, she decided to sing instead.

Ella Jane Fitzgerald was born on April 25, 1917, in Newport News, Virginia. Early in her childhood, she moved with her mother, Tempie, and her stepfather to Yonkers, New York. Later, after Tempie's death, Ella lived with her aunt, Virginia Williams, in Harlem. She had a tough time in Harlem. Her grades fell in school, and she got into a lot of trouble. There was little money to go around.

Amateur Night at the Apollo was the turning point in Ella's life. She entered, and won, more singing contests. In 1935, she began singing with famous jazz drummer Chick Webb and his band. They often played at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem. At the Savoy, large jazz bands played a type of music called swing, and people danced through the night. The Savoy was nicknamed "the home of happy feet."

In 1938, when Ella was 21 years old, she recorded a song called "A-Tisket, A-Tasket." This was the song that made her famous. The album sold a million copies, and the song was a number-one hit.

In 1939, Chick Webb died, and Ella took over as leader of his band. Her career took off. After a couple of years as bandleader, she became a solo artist. Over the next 50 years, Ella recorded more than 200 albums and toured around the world. She worked with just about every great jazz and pop artist of her time: Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Frank Sinatra, and many more. Ella also sang on television shows, such as The Tonight Show and The Nat King Cole Show.

Ella became a great performer, even though she was a shy, humble, and private person off the stage. "I know I'm no glamour girl," she said, "and it's not easy for me to get up in front of a crowd of people. It used to bother me a lot, but now . . . I just stand there and sing."

Ella Fitzgerald was incredibly successful. She was the top female jazz singer in the United States for over half a century. She won 13 Grammy Awards, sold 40 million albums in her lifetime, and performed 26 times at New York's world-famous Carnegie Hall. In 1987, President Ronald Reagan awarded her the National Medal of Arts.

In 1991, at Carnegie Hall, Ella gave her last concert. It was a special conclusion to a historic career. She sang perfectly her final night on stage, and the audience roared with appreciation. Five years later, in 1996, Ella died in her California home.

Source #2

Ella Lives On

It takes a lot of talent to earn the nickname the “First Lady of Song.” Jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald had all that talent and then some. It is impossible to measure the influence that Ella has had even after her death in 1996. She lives on in the memories and hearts of music lovers around the world.

Ella’s greatest legacy is her music. This is the gift she gave to the world. People still buy and listen to her recordings every day. She is a hero to countless singers. Ella’s music still wins over new jazz fans all the time.

In Newport News, Virginia, Ella’s hometown, people are making sure to remember her. The Ella Fitzgerald Theater opened there in 2008. In 2013, Newport News hosted its 15th annual Ella Fitzgerald Music Festival. This festival includes a show where various artists sing Ella’s music as a tribute to her.

In 2007, the United States Postal Service honored Ella in a different way. It made a special stamp with her face on it. That same year, a group of well-known singers released a disc called We All Love Ella.

Ella also lives on through the Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation. She started this group before her death. It gives money to support children in need and to spread the love of music. When Ella was alive, she cared deeply about children from poor families. She once said, “It isn’t where you came from, it’s where you’re going that counts.”

Directions:

Write an informative essay in which you explain why Ella Fitzgerald is important to the history of jazz. Use information from the sources in your essay.

Manage your time carefully so that you can:

- Read the passages;
- Plan your responses;
- Write your response; and
- Revise and edit your response.

Fourth Grade

Opinion Text-Based Writing

Kids and Sports

Source #1

Kids and After-School Sports

After-school sports are a part of life for many students around the country. In elementary school, these sports could range from soccer to baseball and softball. Some schools offer football and basketball, too. The sports programs support the physical education that students receive at school.

Students practice their skills as a team. The practices may occur one or more days after school during the week. Students may put in one to four or five hours in practice time each week. They may also have games with other teams. Usually the practices are during the week and the games are on the weekends. The schedule is different for every school, though.

Many boys and girls enjoy being in after-school sports and look forward to their practices. The sports are good for them, too. Students remain active and learn to work together as a team. In fact, many students love the experience so much that they continue playing the sport through middle school and high school.

Although sports are a lot of fun, schoolwork should always come first in a student's life. Students should not spend less time on their homework and projects after school just because they are playing a sport. Parents need to make sure that they help students balance their schoolwork and their sport. Students should always continue to work hard on getting good grades.

After-school sports can be a lot of fun and are a good way to stay active. They also teach students how to work with others as a team. But students must remember that their education should always be more important than any sport they play after school.

Source #2

Grades Come First!

After-school sports are available at many elementary schools. Students love to join these sports to have fun and make new friends. But the sports can easily take up too much time in a student's life. There are practices up to a few times a week, and then there are games on weekends. Students also practice at home to improve their skills. All of this takes time away from more important things like studying for tests. For this reason, students must be required to get good grades in order to play a sport after school.

Schools were not created to train athletes. Their main goal is to educate. Schools that provide an optional sport should do so only if the student is able to handle schoolwork as well. The only way to know this is by looking at the student's grades. A student who is doing well and succeeding in all subject areas should be able to take on a sport after school. That student can likely handle the responsibility and manage his or her time so that schoolwork does not become less important. But if a student needs to improve scores in one or more subject areas, it does not make sense to allow that student to take time away from schoolwork by joining a sport. It would mean having less time to study due to all the practices and games.

Allowing any student to play an after-school sport regardless of grades suggests that schoolwork is not as important as sports. This is simply not true. Obviously, schools know that education is very important. That is why schools need to require good grades to play sports. This will help parents and students understand that learning comes first.

After-school sports should be viewed as a reward for working hard and succeeding in school. Students who want to play a sport must work to get the grades needed. This will motivate them to try harder in school. The hard work and dedication will then transfer to the sport. Once students are accepted into an after-school sport, they will already know what it is like to set a goal and achieve it. They will have learned lessons that they can apply to being a team player.

It may be difficult to turn down some students because their grades are not high enough; however, schools must remember that their most important goal is to teach kids. Using after-school sports as a reward for getting good grades will help schools achieve that goal. And along the way, kids will learn a lot more than just reading and writing.

Source #3

Sports Are Separate from School

Some schools have decided that students cannot play sports after school if they do not get good grades. This is unfair. Students should not be stopped from playing sports based on how well they can read, write, or do math. Schoolwork is most important for a student, but sports are not related to it.

This is a “hot topic” that people are talking about all over the country. They have different opinions. They have even done research that studies the relationship between getting good grades in school and playing a sport after school. One study found that playing a sport did not have a bad effect on a student’s grades. It found that playing a sport sometimes even caused a student to get better grades. This supports the idea that students should not have to get good grades to play.

“How can playing a sport improve my grades?” you may ask. The answer has to do with the ideas behind playing a sport. It teaches you to be responsible and to practice. You learn to set goals and work hard to achieve them. This type of self-discipline is helpful in the classroom, too. It can help you study harder and finish your homework even when you feel like doing something else. The coach of the team can help you push yourself to do better on and off the field.

Playing a sport also has other benefits. Sports help to keep students active and healthy. Students learn about teamwork, and they make new friends with the same interests. Sports also teach students to be responsible in all parts of their lives. Every student should be allowed to have these benefits, not just the students who get good grades.

Many schools have created policies related to after-school sports. They have decided that students must have a certain grade point average or they must score a certain number on tests to be able to play in a sport after school. This does not make sense. Students learn in different ways. Some students learn certain subjects more easily than other students. Is it fair to punish a student because he or she did not score a few points higher on a test? What kind of message does this send to students and their parents? These policies do not help students improve their grades. They only make students feel like they are not good enough.

The main problem with connecting good grades to sports, though, is that schools are deciding which students get to play and which do not. After-school sports should be open to everyone. Parents and families should decide whether a child can play a sport, not the school. Sports are fun activities that take place outside the classroom. They have nothing to do with what happens inside the classroom.

Directions:

The passages are about sports programs in school. Write an essay in which you give your opinion about whether or not schools should require students to get good grades in order to play sports after school. Use information from the sources in your essay.

Manage your time carefully so that you can:

- Read the passages;
- Plan your responses;
- Write your response; and
- Revise and edit your response.

Be sure to include:

- an introduction
- support for your opinion using information from the passages; and
- a conclusion that is related to your opinion.

Your writing should be in the form of a well-organized, multi paragraph essay.

Planning Sheet

