



Les Paul: A Living Timeline
Created by the First Stage Education Department

1. Bring up Les Paul's complete timeline and present this to the class to review. Allow students to insert additional moments or information from Les Paul's life that they find relevant and significant.
 - a. From here, choose 5-9 events or accomplishments the class feels are the most important on Les Paul's journey.
2. Place students into small groups and assign each group to one of the identified timeline events/accomplishments. Each group will be responsible for creating a tableau, a frozen picture, depicting the main idea/theme from their timeline event.
 - a. Allow groups 5-10 minutes to come up with their tableaux. Students should focus on gathering information about the specific steps Les Paul took, or events that impacted his journey, that ultimately helped him reach this identified timeline goal.
 - b. In a tableau, participants make still images with their bodies to represent a scene. A tableau can be used to quickly establish a scene that involves a large number of characters.
 - i. Remind students that they will be playing characters, not themselves. They need to consider the scene they are in from their characters' perspectives, not their own. This may mean holding a discussion about all the multiple people involved in this event, and the varying perspectives—why did people feel the way they did, how does historical circumstances and cultural beliefs impact perspective? They might also need to consider the setting and other inanimate objects that may be necessary to depict their tableau—how can we use our bodies and other found objects to create a representation of a specific setting or prop?
3. Once tableaux are ready to be presented, groups will share their picture in sequential order with the class.
 - a. As each is sharing, coach the audience through a discussion based on what they see depicted in the picture, and what they can infer based on this picture. The teacher may use a Thought Bubble to elicit inferences, encourage students to think from a character's perspective, and develop students' empathy—using "I think..." and "I feel..." statements.
4. After each of the tableaux have been presented and studied, have the class go back into their small groups. Their task is to take the comments and ideas generated from their tableau and now bring them to life for 30 seconds.

- a. Encourage students to consider what the most important themes and ideas are in this scene, which characters play a key role, and how action and dialogue will enhance their tableau.
 - b. Allow groups another 5-6 minutes to create and rehearse their scene.
5. Once the short scenes are ready to be presented, give each group a specific place in the room in where they will present their scene—they should be positioned in the order of the timeline. Instruct students that in a moment, we will be going into role as visitors to the Les Paul Museum in Waukesha, WI. As the “visitors” approach each installation, the group presenting the tableau will get into position.
 - a. First, the “visitors” will examine the tableau, as the “docent” describes the action of this installation. Then, the “docent” will push the installation button, which will bring the tableau to life for a brief moment.
 - b. Go through this process for the entire story. Use a performance rubric to evaluate individual groups and the:
 - i. Ability to recount a story, using relevant facts and details to support the main idea/theme;
 - ii. Ability to paraphrase text;
 - iii. Ability to explain concepts and ideas in an historical text, including what happened and why.
6. After all the scenes have been shared and the class comes out of role, discuss with students: “What did you realize or learn about Les Paul and his accomplishments by seeing the timeline come to life, that you did not recognize when you first read the text?”

Les Paul: A Living Timeline Performance Rubric

Group Names: _____

Accomplishment/Event: _____

	4	3	2	1
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.	Students include more than one key character and event detail straight from the text, in their scene, making precise inferences.	Students included at least one key character and event detail straight from the text, in their scene, making satisfactory inferences.	Student included only one key character or event detail straight from the text, in their scene, making passable inferences.	Student included only one key character or event detail straight from the text, in their scene, but did not make acceptable inferences.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.3 Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.	Students clearly and accurately demonstrated the events and theme in their scene, with action and dialogue presenting the “what” and they “why.”	Student clearly and accurately demonstrated the events and theme in their scene, with action and dialogue presenting the “what,” but little focusing on the “why.”	Students loosely demonstrated the events and theme in their scene, with action and dialogue suggesting the “what,” but little focusing on the “why.”	Students inaccurately demonstrated the events and themes in their scene, with action and dialogue not presenting the “what” or the “why.”
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.	Students presented the main idea of the text supported by key details displayed in their performance—including character actions, reactions, and dialogue.	Students presented the main idea of the text supported by certain details displayed in their performance—including character actions, reactions, and dialogue.	Students presented the main idea of the text, loosely supported by key details displayed in their performance—including some character actions, reactions, or dialogue.	Students inaccurately presented the main idea of the text supported by key details displayed in their performance—loosely including character actions, reactions, and dialogue.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.	Students use clear voices in their scenes, articulating their words, projecting their voices and speaking at a reasonable tempo, to accurately recount the text.	Students use satisfactory voices in their scenes, with only acceptable articulation of their words, projection of their voices and speaking at a reasonable tempo, to accurately recount the text.	Students use problematic voices in their scenes, not articulating their words, projecting their voices and speaking at a reasonable tempo, to accurately recount the text.	Students use incomprehensible voices in their scenes, with little articulation of their words, projection of their voices and not speaking at a reasonable tempo; the text was in accurately recounted

1923

When Lester Polfuss is 8 years old, he begins experimenting with music and sounds...in his own home. Les was known to punch new holes into his mother's player piano rolls to make new sounds on the piano. He also learns to play the harmonica, builds a crystal radio set and begins weekend studies of sound electronics with WTMJ radio engineer.

1927

When Lester is 12 he receives his first guitar and he performs in Waukesha as "Red Hot Red." Les also attempts first "solid-body" guitar, using a railroad track strung with wire and a telephone amplifier as the pickup – this is the beginning of his invention of the electric guitar.

1937

When Les is 22, he joins Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians on NBC radio, and brings the first sounds of the electric guitar to millions of listeners coast to coast.

1941

When Les is 26, he continues his work on building a solid body electric guitar and the Gibson Guitar company takes interest in this. Les calls his electric guitar "The Klunker."

1945

When Les is 30, he plays guitar in Bing Crosby's post-war record hit "It's Been a Long, Long Time." Impressed with Paul's technical wizardry, Crosby urges him to build a studio. Paul soundproofs his garage in Hollywood and starts a recording studio.

1948

When Les is 33, he records his first solo hit, "Lover." This new sound showcases multitrack recording.

1948

Les Paul goes back to Waukesha to play a concert. Driving back to California, his convertible car slips on ice and they get into a bad accident. Les' right arm is badly damaged and doctors recommend amputation, but he persuades them to re-set arm in a crook so that he can continue to play guitar.

1949

Bing Crosby commissions Ampex Corporation to produce the first tape recorder, based on the wartime German prototype. Bing gives first Ampex model to Paul, who promptly orders an additional recording head and invents the "sound-on-sound" tape machine. Paul marries Mary Ford and hosts a radio show, "The Les Paul Show," which airs for 23 weeks.

1950

Gibson Guitar Corp. begins work on a solid-body electric guitar and seeks endorsement of the most prominent guitarist of the day.

1951

"How High the Moon" and "Walkin' & Whistlin' Blues" are chart-busters; Paul and Ford play the London Palladium.

1951-6:

Paul and Ford create a string of 14 consecutive pop hits, including "Mocking Bird Hill," "Tennessee Waltz," "Bye, Bye, Blues," "Tiger Rag," "Waiting for the Sunrise," and "I'm Sitting on Top of the World."

1952

Moves to Mahwah, New Jersey, to produce "Les Paul & Mary Ford At Home," a series of 5-minute television shows (170 episodes) sponsored by Listerine. Release of the Gibson "Gold Top," the first commercial "Les Paul model" solid-body electric guitar.

1953

Conceives of 8-track tape recorder and works with Ampex to refine and manufacture the equipment. Release of Paul and Ford's biggest hit, "Vaya Con Dios."

1955

As guest speaker at Audio Engineers Society convention, Paul proposes the "use of light for recording sound."

1956

Invents the "Les Paulverizer," a remote-control device he attaches below the tailpiece of his guitar to manipulate the taped accompaniment he and Ford used during their White House concert for President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

1957

Ampex delivers first operational 8-track recorder to Paul. Capitol Records contract ends as rock and roll pushes Paul and Ford off the charts. They sign with Mitch Miller at Columbia Records.

1963

Paul and Ford separate.

1964

Retires from performing, but not from tinkering with pickup designs and other electronics.

1964

Divorced from Mary Ford.

1975

Carnegie Hall concert with Bucky Pizzarelli, George Benson and Laurindo Almeida.

1976

Emerges from retirement to record "Chester & Lester" with Chet Atkins, and a 1978 follow-up, "Guitar Monsters." The former receives a 1977 Grammy for "Best Country Instrumental Performance."

1977

Mary Ford dies in Los Angeles after lapsing into diabetic coma.

1979

Receives Recording Academy's Grammy Hall of Fame Award for "How High the Moon."

1980

Quintuple by-pass heart surgery at the Cleveland Clinic.

1983

Receives prestigious Trustees Award from the Recording Academy.

1984

Launches a regular Monday night gig with his trio in New York City, first at Fat Tuesdays and then at the Iridium Jazz Club.

1985

Induction into Hollywood Guitar Center's "Rock Walk of Fame."

1988

Lauded in a Cinemax tribute, Les Paul: He Changed the Music, with B.B. King, Eddie Van Halen and others.

1988

Induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as "Architect of Rock 'n' Roll."

1996

Induction into New Jersey Inventors Hall of Fame; presented The John Smithson Bicentennial Medal by the Smithsonian Institution.

1997

Featured in a celebrated Coors "Original" beer commercial: Young rocker: "What's your name?" Les Paul: "It's on your guitar."

2001

Awarded a Technical Grammy by the Recording Academy.

2005

Celebrates his 90th birthday with a tribute concert at Carnegie Hall; inducted into National Inventors Hall of Fame; receives Sammy Cahn Lifetime Achievement Award from the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

2006

Two 2005 Grammy awards – Best Pop Instrumental Performance (“Caravan”) and Best Rock Instrumental Performance (“69 Freedom Special”) – for Les Paul & Friends (Capitol), his first new album in almost 30 years. Among Paul’s musical partners: Keith Richards, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, and Buddy Guy.