INTERMEDIATE GROUP

Class:_________ Name:________________________
Ella Fitzgerald was born on April 25, 1918, in Newport News, Virginia, but spent her formative years in New York, and received her musical education in its public schools. Ella received her first big break at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, when she won an amateur night contest and impressed saxophonist bandleader Benny Carter. He recommended her to drummer-bandleader Chick Webb, who hired her in 1935. She soon became a recording star with the band. Her own composition "A-tisket, A-tasket" was such a smash hit that it became her trademark for many years thereafter. When Webb died in 1939, Fitzgerald assumed the leadership of the band for the next year.

By 1940 Fitzgerald was recognized throughout the music world as a vocal marvel. She was a singer with clarity of tone, flexibility of range and fluency of rhythm. Above all, she was admired as a talent for improvisation that was equally effective on songs and up-tempo tunes. Unfortunately, for a long time her fame with musicians and other singers exceeded that with the general public. However, she managed to change this soon after joining Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic (JATP) in 1946. She made annual tours with the group and was invariably the concert favorite.

Under Granz's personal management, Fitzgerald also began to play choice hotel jobs and made her first featured film appearance, in "Pete Kelly's Blues"(1955). In 1957 she worked at the Copacabana in New York City and gave concerts at the Hollywood Bowl. In 1958, in the company of the Duke Ellington Orchestra, she gave a concert at Carnegie Hall as part of an extended European and United States tour with the band. In the 1960s she continued to work for the hotels and tour Europe, Latin America and Japan, usually on her own, without a specific band.

Fitzgerald was always accompanied by superb musicians; from the full orchestral support of Chick Webb and Duke Ellington to the smaller JATP groups. This is what mostly contributed to her legend. Unfortunately, in 1970s her singing began to show evidence of decline: the voice that was once an instrument of natural luster became a lot thinner and tense. Nevertheless, her artistry was so great that she continued to excite concert audiences and to record effectively. She appeared after the mid-1960s with over 50 symphonic orchestras in the United States.

Was Ella Fitzgerald essentially a jazz singer or a pop singer? Experts such as jazz purists say that she lacked the emotional depth of Billie Holiday and the imagination of Sarah Vaughan. However, there were many factors which made her a great musician. Fitzgerald was definitely one of the pioneers of scat singing; i.e. performing the sounds of an instrument using her voice. Beyond that, she was a modest singer whose harmonic variations were always natural, and a supreme melodist who never let her ego get in the way of any song she sang. In her lifetime she was honored with no less than 12 Grammys. Fitzgerald died on June 15, 1996 at the age of 78.
A. What do the following refer to?

1. its (para. 1) : __________________
2. it (para. 1) : __________________
3. that (para. 2) : __________________

B. Find the word in the text which means the following. **DO NOT** change the form of the word and write **ONE WORD ONLY**.

1. yearly (adj) (para. 2) : __________________
2. beauty (n) (para. 4) : __________________
3. basically (adv) (para. 5) : __________________

C. Mark the following statements True (T) or False (F).

T F 1. Fitzgerald became the leader of the band in 1939.
T F 2. Fitzgerald went on tour in Japan with the Duke Ellington Orchestra.
T F 3. In 1970s, Fitzgerald started losing popularity.
T F 4. According to experts, Ella Fitzgerald was not as emotionally deep and imaginative as Holiday or Vaughan.

D. Answer the following questions according to the information in the text. Give **SHORT** answers where possible.

1. How did Ella Fitzgerald first become famous?
   ____________________________

2. What was the most important characteristic of Ella that made her well-recognized in 1940s?
   ____________________________

3. What plays a significant role in Fitzgerald myth?
   ____________________________

4. What are the two most evident strengths of Ella Fitzgerald as a musician?
   ____________________________
INTERMEDIATE GROUP
ANSWER KEY

A.

1. New York’s

2. her own composition
   A-tisket, A-tasket
   The (smash) hit + (A-tisket, A-tasket)

3. (her) fame

B.

1. annual
2. luster
3. essentially

C.


D.

1. She won an amateur night contest (and impressed saxophonist bandleader Benny Carter)

2. Her talent for improvisation that was equally effective on songs and up-tempo tunes.
   She was admired as a talent for improvisation (that was equally … tunes).

3. (The fact that) she was always accompanied by superb musicians (from the full orchestral support… groups).
   Always being accompanied by superb musicians (from… groups).

4. Any two of the following:
   • She was one of the pioneers of scat singing
   • She was a modest singer
   • Her harmonic variations were always natural
   • She was a supreme melodist
   • She never let her ego get in the way of any song she sang