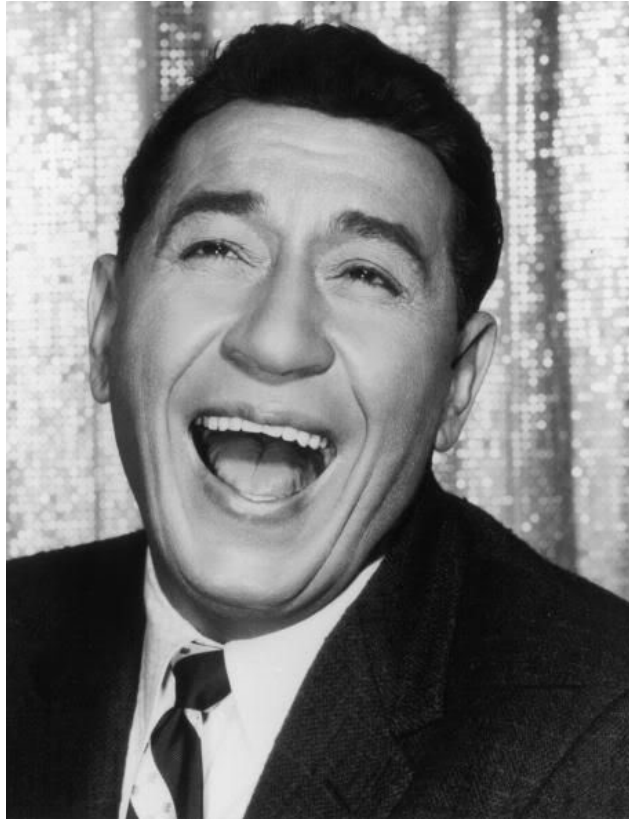


LOUIS PRIMA (1910-1978)

Birth Name: Louis Prima
Place of Birth: New Orleans, Louisiana



Career Highlights: Born in New Orleans to immigrant parents, Louis Prima was heavily influenced by the Jazz sounds for which the city had become known in the early 20th century. Prima began his musical career as a trumpet player, heading a succession of Swing and Big Band groups over the course of his long career. He played at a birthday celebration for President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1939 and performed with Frank Sinatra at the inaugural celebration for President John F. Kennedy in 1961. Prima did not have as refined a singing voice as many other male vocalists of his day, and often added a comic aspect to his recordings. In the early stages of his career, he was best known for a variety of Italian-themed songs, most notably “Angelina (The Waitress at the Pizzeria),” named for his mother.

Recording: “Angelina (The Waitress at the Pizzeria),” 1944



Questions to consider:

- What image does Prima present in the pictures above and below?
- What references to Italian culture do you hear in “Angelina”? Who do you think was the target audience for this song? Would only Italian-Americans have enjoyed this song?
- What can you conclude about Prima’s popularity based on the fact that he played for two different U.S. presidents?

