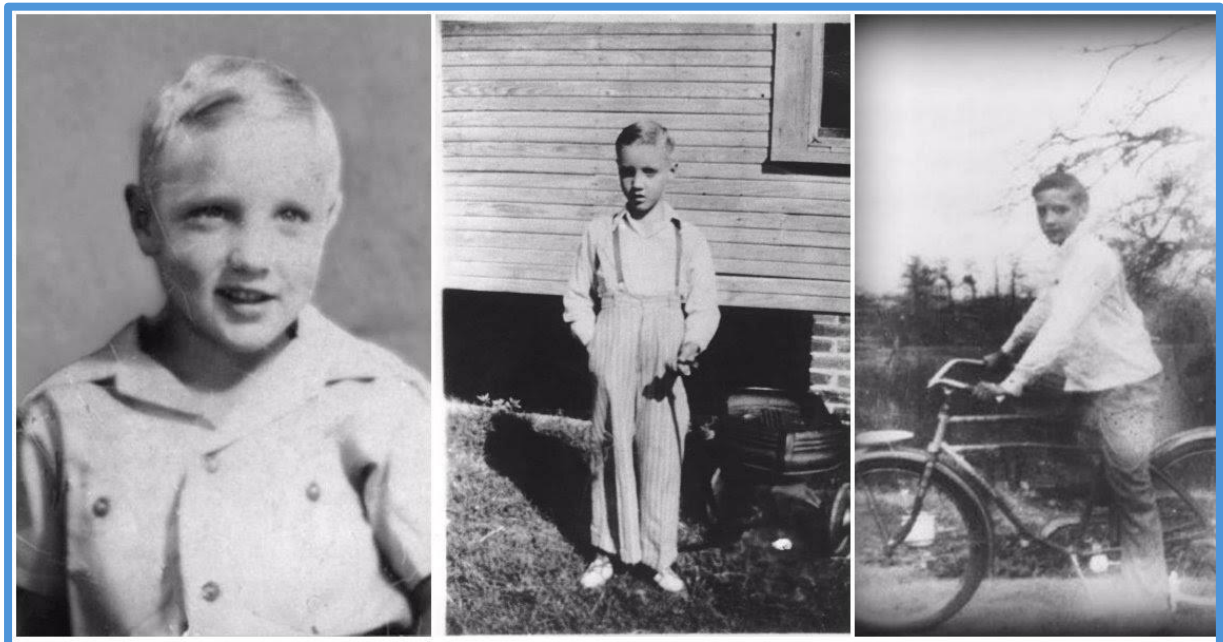


The schooling of Elvis

Elvis Presley's school years are a fascinating chapter in his early life, shaping the young man who would go on to revolutionise music. Though he grew up in a modest family in Tupelo, Mississippi, and later in Memphis, Tennessee, his childhood was marked by a passion for music that outshined most aspects of his schooling.

Early schooling in Tupelo, Mississippi

Elvis was born on January 8, 1935, in Tupelo, Mississippi, and began his schooling at *East Tupelo Consolidated School*. He was known to be a quiet and shy student, often keeping to himself. His family's financial situation wasn't easy, and his father, Vernon, struggled to maintain steady employment. Elvis's classmates reportedly teased him for his introverted nature and his family's poverty. However, he found solace in music early on. His first public performance was at the age of 10, when he sang "Old Shep" at a local fair and came in fifth place.



Elvis Presley attended *Milam Junior High School* in Tupelo, Mississippi, from 1946 to 1948. He enrolled at Milam after finishing fifth grade at East Tupelo Consolidated School. His time at Milam marked a transitional period before his family moved to Memphis, Tennessee, in November 1948.

While at Milam, Elvis continued to be a quiet and introverted student. During this time, he developed his love for music even further. He would often bring his guitar to school, although he was still quite shy about performing in public settings. His classmates at Milam noted his passion for music, but he wasn't considered "popular" during these years.



Elvis in 6th grade at Milam

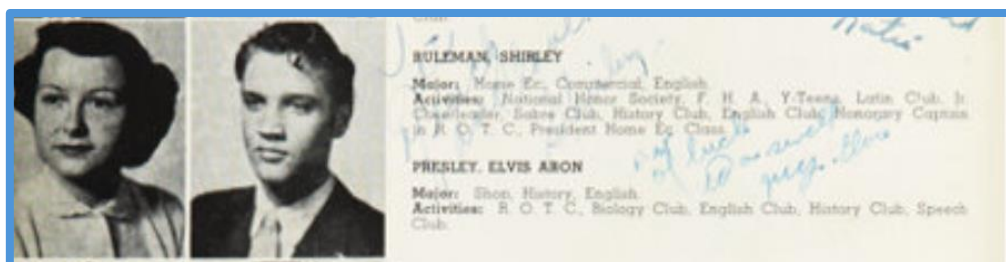
High School years in Memphis, Tennessee

In 1948, Elvis and his family moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where he attended *L.C. Humes High School*. This move to a more urban environment introduced him to a broader range of musical influences, including gospel, blues, and country, which later fused into his unique sound.

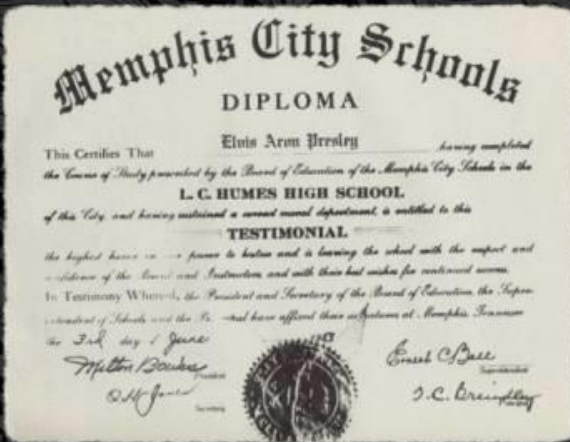
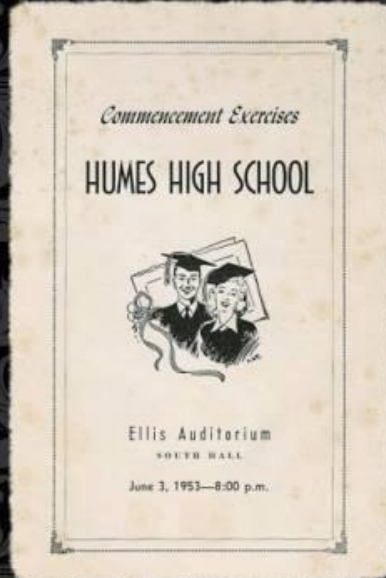
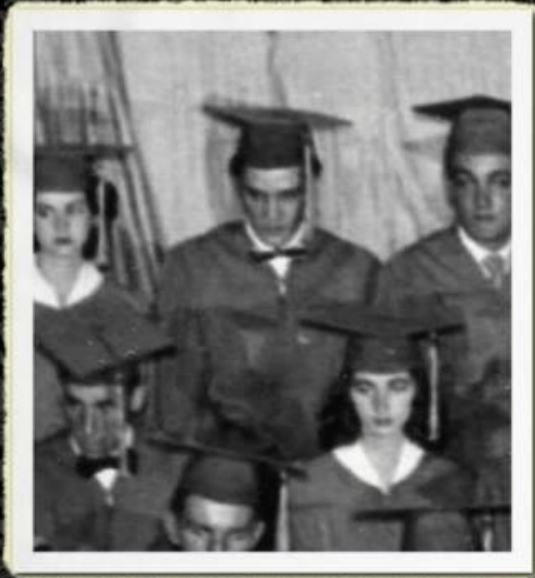
At Humes High, Elvis was again described as shy and quiet. He kept a low profile, and classmates often viewed him as somewhat of a loner. In terms of academics, Elvis was an average student. He wasn't particularly interested in schoolwork and often daydreamed about music instead.

However, despite his reserved nature, he was known for his distinctive style, often wearing flashy clothes and growing his sideburns longer than most boys at the time, which earned him the nickname "The Hillbilly Cat".

It was during his high school years that Elvis began visiting *Beale Street* in Memphis, where he soaked up the local blues scene and was exposed to African-American musical influences that deeply impacted his developing style.



June 3, 1953



Did you know?



Humes Preparatory Academy Middle School
School in Memphis, Tennessee

Humes Preparatory Academy Middle School, formerly the L. C. Humes High School, is a middle school located in Memphis, Tennessee. It has also been known as North Side High School and as L.C. Humes Junior High School. [Wikipedia](#)

Graduation and Post-School years

Elvis graduated from Humes High School in 1953. There are stories that, despite his reserved nature, he became slightly more outgoing in his senior year, playing his guitar more often and showing off his burgeoning musical talent.

After graduation, Elvis took a job at *Crown Electric*, where he worked as a truck driver. His original career plan was not music but to be an electrician. However, fate took a different course when, in 1953, he recorded a demo at *Sun Records*, which eventually led to his first commercial recording and the start of his music career.



Rumours and interesting stories

- **Elvis and his teachers:** One interesting story from his school years is that when he was in 8th grade, he entered a talent show and performed "*Till I Waltz Again with You*", winning first place. His classmates and teachers were shocked because they had never seen the quiet Elvis perform in such a confident manner.
- **A teacher's remark:** Elvis reportedly once received a C in music class, which is ironic given his later success. The music teacher, however, didn't think much of Elvis's guitar playing at the time. Elvis later brought his guitar to school to prove her wrong, playing in front of the class.
- **Introverted but stylish:** Despite his shyness, Elvis was always conscious of his appearance. As mentioned, his flashy style (long hair, bright clothes) made him stand out. Interestingly, these choices didn't make him a "cool" kid by 1950s standards. In fact, some of his peers found him odd and even bullied him for it, but these style choices became central to his image later on.

- **Personal study of Gospel and Blues:** Though he did not pursue formal education after high school, Elvis was constantly absorbing and studying music. He frequently attended all-night gospel singings at local churches, which influenced his vocal style. He also continued to immerse himself in the blues music he heard on Beale Street.
- **Karate:** Later in life, Elvis pursued a serious interest in martial arts. He studied karate during his Army years in the late 1950s and continued practicing it for the rest of his life, even achieving a black belt in the discipline. This was one of the few areas where he pursued formal instruction beyond his music.

Elvis Presley's school years were marked by a passion for music that was already evident, even though he didn't necessarily excel academically. His shy demeanour and flashy style made him an outlier, but his unique talent set him on a path that would soon change music forever. His informal "study" of blues, gospel, and country music during these years were much more formative than anything he learned in school. His karate training later on is one of the few examples of formal study beyond his high school graduation.

Interested in “schooling” your own children about Elvis?

Try some of these books!

1. "Elvis: The Story of the Rock and Roll King" by Bonnie Christensen

- **Summary:** This beautifully illustrated biography introduces young readers to the life of Elvis Presley. The book emphasizes his humble beginnings in Tupelo, Mississippi, and traces his rise to fame, focusing on his love of music and how he shaped the genre of rock and roll. It also touches on the significant cultural impact Elvis had.
- **Target Audience:** Ages 4-8
- **Themes:** Perseverance, creativity, passion for music

2. "Who Was Elvis Presley?" by Geoff Edgers

- **Summary:** Part of the popular "Who Was?" series, this book provides a detailed and accessible biography of Elvis Presley for young readers. It covers his early life, his music career, and his influence on pop culture. It also features illustrations, timelines, and interesting trivia to engage children.
- **Target Audience:** Ages 8-12
- **Themes:** Hard work, resilience, influence of music and culture

3. "Elvis Presley's Love Me Tender" by Elvis Presley and Tom Browning

- **Summary:** This picture book pairs the lyrics of Elvis's famous song "Love Me Tender" with touching illustrations that tell a story of love between a family. While not strictly a biography, it connects Elvis's music with themes of love and togetherness, which resonate with children.
- **Target Audience:** Ages 4-8
- **Themes:** Love, family, connection through music

4. "Elvis: The King of Rock 'n' Roll" (Childhood of Famous Americans) by Saddleback Educational Publishing

- **Summary:** This book, part of the "Childhood of Famous Americans" series, focuses on Elvis's childhood and early years, before he became a worldwide sensation. It details his struggles and how his musical talents began to develop. It's a great way to introduce children to his life in a more structured, story-like way.
- **Target Audience:** Ages 8-12
- **Themes:** Ambition, overcoming obstacles, following your dreams

5. "Shake, Rattle & Roll: The Founders of Rock & Roll" by Holly George-Warren

- **Summary:** This book is not exclusively about Elvis Presley but includes a chapter on him as one of the pioneers of rock and roll. It's an engaging introduction to the founders of the genre, and Elvis is prominently featured as a major figure in shaping modern music. The book includes vivid illustrations and fun facts about other rock legends too.
- **Target Audience:** Ages 6-10
- **Themes:** Music history, creativity, trailblazing

6. "Elvis: A Little Golden Book Biography" by Geof Smith

- **Summary:** A charming addition to the Little Golden Book biography series, this book tells the story of Elvis Presley in a simplified format with bright, colorful illustrations. It introduces young readers to his life, from his early struggles to becoming the King of Rock 'n' Roll.
- **Target Audience:** Ages 2-5
- **Themes:** Passion for music, perseverance, fame

7. "The Elvis Presley Story" (Step into Reading) by Step Publishing

- **Summary:** This early reader biography is designed to help young children practice reading while learning about Elvis Presley. It covers his life in easy-to-read language, with illustrations to help younger readers follow along.
- **Target Audience:** Ages 5-8
- **Themes:** Music, resilience, achieving dreams

