

Elvis Aaron Presley, King of Rock 'n' Roll, took rhythm and blues, gospel, and country music and gave the world a whole new sound. It was the first music young people could call their own.

Elvis Presley was born January 8, 1935, in Tupelo, Mississippi. His parents, Vernon and Gladys Presley, lived in a two room house.

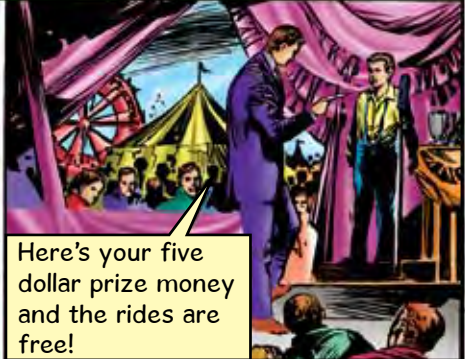
Vernon Presley worked whenever he could—sharecropping, driving a milk truck, or sorting lumber.



Gladys taught her son to be polite and kind. She took him everywhere she went. Vernon taught him to defend himself against bullies.



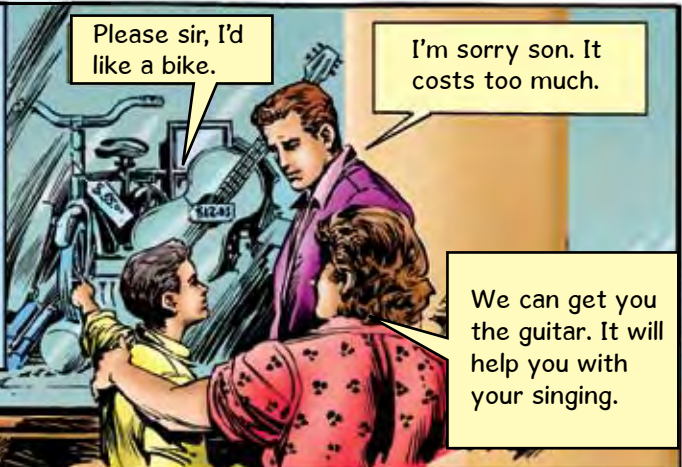
I like to see the minister shout, clap his hands, and get excited!



Here's your five dollar prize money and the rides are free!

When Elvis was ten, his school principal took him to the Mississippi-Alabama Fair and Dairy Show. Elvis won second prize for singing "Old Shep."

Elvis listened to the popular country music and the blues singers on the radio. He copied the sounds. He never did learn to read music, but he had a good ear for it.



Please sir, I'd like a bike.

I'm sorry son. It costs too much.

We can get you the guitar. It will help you with your singing.

First they lived in a one room apartment. Later they moved to a two bedroom apartment in a low cost housing development.



Well, there's no work here. Let's hope Memphis, Tennessee, will be better.

Vernon got a job packing paint cans starting at 83 cents an hour. Gladys sometimes worked in a curtain factory.

The high school Elvis attended had 1,600 students, more than the whole population of East Tupelo. He made some good friends. He liked football, ROTC, and shop.



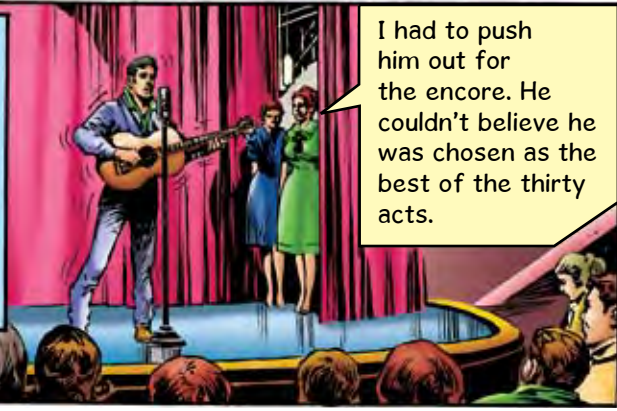
Elvis sure loves football. He's good too!



The boys make fun of your hair and loud clothes, Elvis.

That doesn't bother me. They make me look older.

Elvis liked to sing for his friends but not in front of a group. In his senior year of high school, a teacher persuaded him to sing in the variety show. The students loved his singing.



I had to push him out for the encore. He couldn't believe he was chosen as the best of the thirty acts.

During high school Elvis had a few jobs. But his parents felt they interfered with his studying. Even though money was scarce, his parents always managed to give him spending money.



I like this job. I can listen to the radio. I like working, and I like to listen to music.

After high school Elvis got a job driving a truck. He made \$1.25 an hour. At night he attended school to become an electrician.

You're lucky. The employment agency said you were a nice boy and not to be fooled by your long hair. The men here tease you because they like you. Remember the time they sent you to look for "sky hooks."



Then you said don't let them fool you. There is no such thing. I like them too!



Ma'am, I'd like to make a record for my mother.

In 1953 Elvis Presley paid \$4 to the Memphis Recording Service to make a record for his mother. He sang "My Happiness" and a sad ballad called "That's When Your Heartache Begins."

Once that boy started to sing, I knew you should hear him, Sam. So I taped the rest.

Yes, he's different. But he needs work.



Elvis came back to make a second record.

Sam introduced Elvis to Scotty Moore, a guitar player, and Bill Black, a bass player. They worked together for months, trying to find a style of music they liked.

What the devil are you doing!



I think we have got something.

Sam took the group's first record to Dewey Phillips, a disc jockey for radio station WHBQ. Listeners began calling in asking to have the record played over and over.

I've played that record fourteen times! In a row!



Elvis turned on the radio for his parents. Then he went to a movie, too nervous to listen.



That recording by Elvis, Scotty, and Bill was historic. To "That's All Right (Mama)," the blues song, they gave a country sound.

On the other side of the single, to bluegrass hit "Blue Moon of Kentucky," Elvis sang the blues. It was the first time that country music and blues were mixed. The form later was called "rockabilly."