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Michael Jackson
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Gale In Context: Biography,

link.gale.com/apps/doc/K2420005576/BIC?u=j015915005&sid=bookmark-BIC&xid=515180fa.

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Jackson, Michael, enormously successful pop/R&B singer, songwriter, and dancer; b. Gary, Ind., Aug, 29, 1958. Michael Jackson was a child prodigy who carried his brothers along with him to initial success¹ in the pop group The Jackson Five. His father had played guitar in a local group before his marriage², and passed his dreams of pop success onto his children. The older sons (Sigmund Esco "Jackie," b. May 4, 1951; Toriano Adaryll "Tito," b. Oct. 15, 1953; Jermaine La Jaune, b. Dec. 11, 1954; all Gary, Ind.) formed a trio in the early 1960s³ and were quickly joined by Michael and Marlon (b. Gary, Ind., March 12, 1957) to form the original Jackson Five. The group played locally and even began to undertake limited tours as an opening act for other R&B groups. They were invited to try out for Motown Records in 1969, and their filmed audition, showing a very young Michael performing James Brown-esque dance moves⁴, clinched

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the deal with Motown label chief Berry Gordy. He relocated the group to L.A. (where the label was then headquartered), and **in classic Motown fashion began reshaping their image⁵**, dressing them in the latest “mod” fashions (large floppy hats, flowered shirts, exaggerated bell-bottoms, and boots). **They hit it big almost immediately in January 1970 with “I Want You Back,” followed quickly by the top pop and R&B hits “ABC,” “The Love You Save,” and “I’ll Be There”⁶**; “Mama’s Pearl” and “Never Can Say Goodbye” were smash hits in both fields, and “Maybe Tomorrow” and “Sugar Daddy” became smash R&B and major pop hits. The group was so popular that **a cartoon series was launched in 1971 featuring animated Jacksons to appeal to the kiddie market.⁷**

Motown also tried to market the individual Jacksons as pop stars in their own right. In late 1971 **Michael Jackson’s solo career was launched⁸** with the crossover smash “Got to Be There” followed in 1972 by a remake of Bobby Day’s “Rockin’ Robin,” “I Wanna Be Where You Are,” and “Ben,” the title song to a movie about a trained rat. Jermaine’s solo career started in 1972, but his success was largely limited to a smash remake of Shep and The Limelites’ “Daddy’s Home” in early 1973. Jackie Jackson’s solo debut on Motown from 1973 failed to produce any hits.

The Jackson Five continued to score major pop and smash R&B hits⁹ for Motown through 1973 with a remake of “Little Bitty Pretty One,” “Lookin’ through the Windows,” “Corner of the Sky,” “Hallelujah Day,” and “Get It Together.” “Dancing Machine” became

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a top R&B and smash pop hit in 1974, followed by the R&B smash “Whatever You Got, I Want:” “I Am Love (Parts I and II)” (a major pop hit), and “Forever Caine Today.” In 1975 Michael scored the R&B smashes “We're Almost There” and “Just a Little Bit of You” (a major pop hit), yet he would not achieve another hit until leaving Motown.

In 1976 The Jackson Five switched to Epic Records¹⁰. Jermaine, who had married Berry Gordy's daughter Hazel in 1973, left the group and continued to record for Motown through 1982, scoring his biggest successes with 1980's “Let's Get Serious” and 1982's “Let Me Tickle Your Fancy.” Adding brother Randy (real name, Steven Randall) (b. Oct. 29, 1961), the group was legally forced to abandon the name Jackson Five, becoming simply the Jacksons, after Motown sued for breach of contract.¹¹ Their enormous success continued through 1980, highlighted by the pop and R&B smashes “Enjoy Yourself” and “Shake Your Body (Down to the Ground)” and the major pop and R&B smashes “Show You the Way to Go,” “Lovely One,” and “Heartbreak Hotel.” In 1978 Michael Jackson co-starred with longtime friend Diana Ross in the movie remake of *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Wiz*, which yielded his last Motown hit, “Ease on Down the Road,” in duet with Ross.

In 1979 Michael Jackson also moved to Epic Records, where his debut, *Off the Wall*, became a phenomenal success, staying on the album charts for more than three years and selling more than six million copies.¹² The album yielded two top pop and R&B hits, “Don't Stop ‘Til You Get Enough” and “Rock with You,” and two major pop hits, “Off the

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Wall (an R&B smash) and “She’s Out of My Life.” LaToya Jackson (b. May 29, 1956), who had sung backup with The Jackson Five, started her solo career on Polydor Records in 1980, switching to Private I Records in 1984, where she scored her only significant success with “Heart Don’t Lie” , a major R&B hit. She is estranged from the rest of the family, and has been the most vocally critical of her parents and siblings. LaToya has provoked scandal by posing nude for Playboy, as well as through her well-publicized brawls with her husband, who manages her career.

Thanks to the production of Quincy Jones and a carefully orchestrated and sequenced promotional campaign, Michael Jackson’s 1982 release, *Thriller*, became the best-selling album of all time, eventually moving nearly 50 million copies worldwide¹³.

The first single, “The Girl Is Mine,” a duet with Paul McCartney, became a top R&B and easy-listening and smash pop hit. The second, “Billie Jean,” became a top pop and R&B hit, in large part due to frequent airplay of its promotional video on MTV, the first by a black artist to receive such extensive exposure¹⁴. Jackson’s incredible dance moves, a highlight of all his videos, were highlighted on the Motown 25th Anniversary TV special, helping also to launch this song. The third, “Beat It,” was heavily promoted as a video by MTV and featured the dynamic lead-guitar playing of heavy-metal icon Eddie Van Halen. Subsequently, “Wanna Be Startin’ Somethin’” and “Thriller” became smash pop and R&B hits, “Human Nature” became a smash pop and major R&B hit, and “P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)” became a major pop hit. The elaborate video for “Thriller” was itself the subject of a documentary, the first “behind-the-scenes/making of” film which

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became a huge-selling home video success.¹⁵ In the meantime, a second duet with McCartney, "Say Say Say" from McCartney's Pipes of Peace album, became a top pop and smash R&B hit.

The year 1984 was the most successful year in the career of many of the other members of the Jackson family. Jermaine scored major pop and R&B hits with "Dynamite" and "Do What You Do " on Arista Records. Rebbie (real name, Maureen) (b. May 19, 1950), who had worked with the Jacksons from 1977, achieved a major pop and smash R&B hit with "Centipede" on Columbia Records. Jermaine rejoined his other brothers in the Jacksons for their hugely successful Victory album and tour. The album yielded a pop and R&B smash, "State of Shock," with lead vocals by Michael and Mick Jagger, and a major pop and R&B hit, "Torture," with lead vocals by Michael and Jermaine. However, by 1986 Michael had left The Jacksons, and the group endured into the 1990s with little success. Marlon's 1987 debut solo album on Capitol yielded the R&B smash "Don't Go."

*After co-writing with Lionel Richie and performing on the "We Are the World" single in 1995 and starring in the 15-minute movie Captain Eo shown exclusively at Disneyland and Disney World, Michael Jackson recorded another album under producer Quincy Jones. **Bad was released in August 1987. The album sold nearly 20 million copies worldwide in its first year¹⁶** and yielded an astonishing seven hits, including four top pop and R&B hits: "I Just Can't Stop Loving You " (also a top easy-listening hit) with Siedah*

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Garrett on backing vocals, “Bad,” “The Way You Make Me Feel” and “Man in the Mirror.” “Dirty Diana,” recorded with Billy Idol’s guitarist Steve Stevens, became a top pop and smash R&B hit, and “Another Part of Me” and “Smooth Criminal” were smash R&B and major pop hits through 1988. Again, Michael produced a series of memorable videos to promote the songs, working with distinguished directors such as Martin Scorsese on “Bad.” Between September 1987 and January 1989, Michael Jackson conducted his first solo tour, playing venues around the world.

In March 1991 Michael Jackson re-signed with the parent company of Epic Records, Sony Corporation. The 15-year contract was reportedly worth in the neighborhood of \$1 billion. However, his next album, *Dangerous*, was met with mixed reviews, but nonetheless, produced seven hit singles.¹⁷ “Black or White,” recorded with Guns N’ Roses guitarist Slash, became a top pop hit, while “Remember the Time” and “In the Closet” became smash pop and top R&B hits. “Jam,” recorded with rapper Heavy D, “Heal the World,” and “Who Is It” proved major crossover hits. “Will You Be There,” also featured in the movie *Free Willy*, became a smash crossover hit. In early 1993 Michael Jackson made a technologically stunning appearance during the half-time show at Super Bowl XXVII and took part in a rare television interview with Oprah Winfrey reportedly watched by 90 million viewers¹⁸. However, in July, a 13-year-old boy alleged that he had been molested by Jackson. As the news dominated the front pages of newspapers worldwide, Jackson launched his next tour in August, only to cancel it¹⁹ in

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November and slip into seclusion as the press speculated about his whereabouts. He eventually surfaced in southern Calif., on Dec. 22, 1993 to tell an international television audience that the accusations were “totally false.” The next month he settled out of court with the boy and his family for an estimated \$20 million, although the case remained open. In the meantime, Jackson secretly married Elvis Presley's daughter, Lisa Marie, on May 26, 1994.

*In 1995 Michael Jackson attempted to resume his musical career with the release of the double-CD set HIStory-Past, Present and Future, Book 1. Composed of 15 remastered greatest hits and 15 new songs, the album was promoted by a \$30 million campaign by Epic Records. Although his duet with sister Janet on “Scream” became an instant hit, the promotional film for HIStory was compared to Leni Riefenstahl's Nazi propaganda film Triumph of the Will. Allegations of anti-Semitism were made about the lyrics to “They Don't Care about Us,” and some took exception with Jackson's use of four-letter words on an album directed at youngsters. In June, Jackson and wife Lisa Marie were interviewed live on ABC's Prime Time Live by Diane Sawyer. Despite the fact that the interview was seen by an audience estimated at 60 million, the appearance failed to slow the collapse of Jackson's career. Soon after, the couple separated. HIStory sold only around 2 million copies (not 20 million, as predicted), and by October the album was already being discounted by major record stores. Jackson further faltered when a planned concert at N.Y.'s Beacon Theater to be presented live on HBO, **was canceled after the star collapsed; follow-up medical tests revealed that he was suffering from***

*dehydration and perhaps heart and kidney disease.*²⁰

*Jackson has been off the charts and the pop-music scene ever since*²¹, *although his name still appears in the gossip columns on occasion. He remarried, but this wedding also did not last long, although it did produce two children. Meanwhile, in late 1999 it was rumored that Jackson was back in the studios working on a new album, but no further information was available.*

Research Reflection:

What new insight did you gain—or what understanding was reinforced—about your person’s impact on society from this source? Explain how this source deepened your understanding of their influence.

What information or perspective did this source provide that you did not gain from Research #2 or #3?

Be sure to blend in at least two meaningful quotes from the article that go beyond stating facts and instead demonstrate the person’s impact, influence, or legacy.

>>What this source tells us is that Michael Jackson changed things a lot, and for a long time, not just with his music. It really shows how much MJ changed the music scene for pop and R&B, starting super young with the Jackson Five, then really taking off as a solo artist. His early wins showed everyone that a kid performer really could become popular worldwide, paving the way for other young artists later on. Jackson really changed the game as his career took off, showing everyone what a pop star could be by mixing music, dancing, fashion, and visual stories all into one amazing thing. The source also gives us a better grasp on how Jackson impacted media and race relations. His music videos for “Billie Jean,” “Beat It,” and “Thriller” completely changed the game. They set a new standard for how artists promoted their songs. They even helped take down some racial barriers on MTV, making it easier for other black artists to get their music out there in mainstream pop culture. He sold so many records it was astonishing, and his marketing ideas were super fresh, actually changing the game for everyone and people to this day still copy them. The source also tells us that Michael’s influence was not so straightforward. Even though people really admired his creativity and the good things he said about humanity, some public disasters that happened later in his life really changed how everyone looked at celebrities, fame, and how much power the media really has. Michael Jackson really had a huge cultural impact. He changed global entertainment and left a lasting dent on society as a whole. Deeper information that I gained that the other articles did not go into was how Jackson produced a lot of short films during his career which I found interesting,

Word Count= 307
(at least 100 words)

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