

Who is CJ Jones?

Name _____

Class · period _____

Date _____

THE SHORT VERSION

CJ Jones (1950–present) was a hearing child of two Deaf parents who lost his hearing at 7 after spinal meningitis. He became an actor, comedian, and producer, and in 2017 became the first Deaf actor to have a part in an international blockbuster.

EARLY LIFE AND SCHOOL

Deaf parents, an illness at seven, and a father who would not take no

01 CHILDHOOD AND HEARING LOSS

01 CJ Jones was a hearing child born to two Deaf parents in St. Louis, Missouri.

However, when he was 7, Jones contracted spinal meningitis, which resulted in his hearing loss.

02 Although American Sign Language (ASL) was his native language, he still had some remaining hearing, which disqualified him from attending the Missouri School for the Deaf (MSD).

CJ tried an oral education for a brief time, but his father lobbied and eventually succeeded in getting him into MSD.

02 SCHOOL LIFE

01 Although he was initially shy, CJ flourished in an all-Deaf environment and was involved in many activities, such as student leadership, scouts and sports, while also keeping up with his academics.

02 Jones graduated as class valedictorian and continued his education at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) in Rochester, New York.

A CAREER ON STAGE AND SCREEN

Touring companies, three one-man shows, and a summer blockbuster

03 STARTING HIS CAREER

- 01 After graduating from NTID, CJ toured with the National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD) and the Little Theatre of the Deaf for a few years.

Outside of NTD, Jones joined a touring company of *Children of a Lesser God*, which his cast received a Tony for.

- 02 CJ also developed three one-man shows that have toured both nationally and internationally, and produced an *International Sign Language Theater Festival*, which hosted theater artists from the United States, Mexico and Russia.

04 JOINING THE SCREEN

- 01 CJ Jones recently became the first Deaf actor to have a part in an international blockbuster when he played the role of Joseph in the 2017 summer movie hit *Baby Driver*.

In the same year, CJ was also the leading part in an independent horror film entitled *Door in the Woods*.

- 02 CJ also plays Odin in the show *Castle Rock*, which was drawn from the work of Stephen King, and is working with director James Cameron on the *Avatar* sequels.

- 03 In the past, CJ has appeared in shows like *Frasier* and *Sesame Street* as well as a few documentaries.

BRANCHING INTO OTHER FIELDS

A media company, school visits, and stand-up comedy

05 SIGN WORLD TV

- 01 CJ is also an established writer and speaker, and founded the media company *Sign World TV*, where he co-wrote, directed and acted in a classic fairy tale series called *Once Upon A Sign*.

CJ plans to add more to his company, such as creating TV series, documentaries and cooking shows all done in sign language with voiceovers and captions.

- 02 The goal of *Sign World TV* is to:

...get both Deaf and hearing people to work together, become more comfortable working as actors, writers, directors, producers.

C J JONES

06 SCHOOLS, EVENTS, AND COMEDY

- 01 CJ Jones also does work in schools and universities by visiting and speaking, along with fun events like the ASL *Idol* sign language song-singing competitions held at College of the Canyons in September 2017.

CJ also does work as a stand-up comedian.

THE START OF HIS LEGACY

Several hats, and a door held open for the people behind him

07 AWARDS AND WHAT COMES NEXT

- 01 Along with receiving numerous grants, honors and awards, CJ has become a beloved Deaf icon with no intention of slowing down. As he said in an interview:

We need to educate people, and it's our duty, I think, to always be educating people... I need to be a teacher. I need to be an actor. I need to be an educator.

CJ JONES

- 02 Jones is determined to keep paving the way for others, stating in the same interview that he feels he is breaking barriers and opening up doors for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.

If that's their passion, that's their dream, they have the right to make their dreams come true.

CJ JONES

08 NAMES AND TERMS TO KNOW

NAME OR TERM	WHY IT MATTERS IN THIS STORY
Spinal meningitis	The illness Jones contracted at age 7, which resulted in his hearing loss.
Missouri School for the Deaf (MSD)	The school his remaining hearing disqualified him from, until his father lobbied to get him in.
NTID	The National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, where Jones went after graduating as valedictorian.
<i>Children of a Lesser God</i>	The touring company Jones joined outside of NTD; the cast received a Tony.
<i>Baby Driver</i>	The 2017 film in which Jones played Joseph, making him the first Deaf actor in an international blockbuster.
<i>Sign World TV</i>	The media company Jones founded to get Deaf and hearing people working together behind and in front of the camera.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer in complete sentences using what you read

09 WRITTEN RESPONSE

01 How did CJ Jones become Deaf, and how old was he?

02 ASL was Jones' native language, yet he was at first kept out of the Missouri School for the Deaf. Explain why, and what changed.

03 What does the reading say changed for Jones once he was in an all-Deaf environment?

04 Why was Jones' role in *Baby Driver* considered a first?

05 What is the goal of Sign World TV, and how does that goal show up in what the company makes?

06 Jones says he wears several hats: teacher, actor, educator. Using two things from this packet, explain why he thinks all three matter.

10 WHERE THIS INFORMATION COMES FROM

3Play Media	Faces Behind the Screen · 3playmedia.com
CJ Jones' website	cjjones.com
Internet Movie Database	Biography written by CJ Jones · imdb.com