

Everything Beethoven!

Celebrating Beethoven's 250th Birthday in 2020

Have you selected December's composer of the month?

This is a special year! Ludwig van Beethoven was baptized December 17, 1770, making this the 250th anniversary of this birth.

Here's a question for your students to ponder: Why is Beethoven's music still recognized and popular even two centuries after it was composed?



There are three parts to this document.

1. Read and discuss the **Short Biography** with students. Is there another storybook about Beethoven's life you can share? What other details would help make him more realistic to students? Listen to some of his most well-known pieces.
2. Once students have had a chance to absorb some facts about Beethoven, look for a nice day to take your class outside and play **Shadow Tag**. "Rules" and questions are included, but of course you are welcome to create your own variation of the game.
3. Have students make an **"Ask me about _____"** game board using facts of Beethoven's life and music.
 - Duplicate the "Ask me about" page on heavier paper and distribute one to each student.
 - Have students fill in the blank "Ask me about Ludwig van Beethoven"
 - On each numbered square, have students write a question about Beethoven's life or music.
 - After students have finished their 8 questions, have them cut the short solid lines from the edge of the paper to the center, stopping at the dotted line. Fold each square back to the dotted line.
 - On the back of the page, generously apply glue down the center of the page. Press the glued part to a plain piece of the heavier paper.
 - Students can now fold back each flap to supply the answer to that question.
 - With game boards complete, have students trade and try to answer questions in their friend's game board. Students might enjoy stumping family members with their questions about Ludwig van Beethoven, too.

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Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Ludwig van Beethoven was a great German composer and pianist. He was born in the city of Bonn in Germany. His father and grandfather were musicians in Court of the Archbishop-Elector of Cologne.

Young Beethoven showed his musical talent from a young age. His father taught him keyboard and violin lessons, and forced him to practice day and night. His father wanted young Ludwig to be a famous musician like Mozart. To impress the public with his son's talent he told people that young Ludwig was born in 1772, not 1770. This made Ludwig appear younger and possibly more talented.

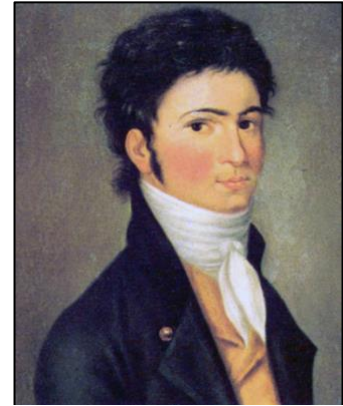


Beethoven began to study composition and by the time he was 13 years old, he had published his first pieces for piano. He continued to practice and compose, and took a job as the assistant organist for the court chapel. After his mother died, he also taught lessons to help support his brothers.



Ludwig moved to Vienna, Austria in his early 20s to study composition with Joseph Haydn. He continued to practice piano, however, and became known as a piano virtuoso—the greatest player of his time. His days were filled with practicing, giving piano lessons, and composing. Beethoven also loved to go for long walks in the woods.

Around the year 1800, Ludwig started noticing that he was having trouble hearing. Just think how upsetting that would be for a musician to no longer be able to hear his own music! The hearing loss grew worse over the next decade until it became impossible for Ludwig to perform concerts.



Portrait of Beethoven c. 1800
by Carl Traugott Riedel

Communicating with his friends became more difficult, too. For a time, he had others speak into an ear trumpet to amplify their voices. When that did not work out, Beethoven carried around a notebook so people could write down what they wanted to say to him. He hid his growing deafness from the public.



Beethoven's ear trumpet

Sample of Beethoven's manuscript



Ludwig van Beethoven was still able to compose music because he imagined musical ideas in his head and knew how to write them down. Over his lifetime, he composed a lot of music including:

- Pieces for piano. Two of the most famous pieces are "[Moonlight Sonata](#)" and "[Fur Elise](#)."
- String quartets. A string quartet has 2 violins, a viola, and a cello.
- One opera, *Fidelio*, that wasn't very successful when it premiered in 1805. Beethoven revised it and it is still performed today.
- Music for the church.
- Nine symphonies. A symphony is a musical composition for full orchestra. His most recognized symphonies might be [No. 5](#) (think "da-da-da-dum, da-da-da-dum") and [No. 9](#) ("Ode to Joy") (3:17-10:16).

Beethoven's life had its share of personal, family, and legal troubles, and various wars across Europe often impacted conditions in Vienna.

Beethoven died in 1827, reportedly during a thunderstorm. Before he was buried, several visitors came to pay their respects and clipped off a few locks of his hair to keep as a memento. A funeral procession in Vienna was attended by about 10,000 mourners. Today his remains are buried at a specially marked grave site in the city of Vienna.



Beethoven's funeral procession by F.X. Strober



Monument at Beethoven's grave



This is a famous portrait of Ludwig van Beethoven painted by Joseph Karl Stieler in 1820. What can you tell about Beethoven's life from this painting?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

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Beethoven Shadow Tag for Younger Elementary Grades

Read the short biography of Beethoven (provided) and discuss the information.
Move outside to play a game of Beethoven Shadow Tag and reinforce facts about his life.

- Choose a sunny area for the game, and determine the borders of the area where students are allowed to run.
- One student is "it."
- Teacher announces, "Ready, Set, Go!" and students move/walk/run(?) through the sunny area.
- The student who is "it" will tag another student by standing on his/her shadow. The teacher will announce "tagged" so all students freeze/stop moving.
- In order for the group to become unfrozen, one student must correctly answer a question about Beethoven. (Any student may answer the question to unfreeze the group.)
- When the question has been answered, the "tagged" person becomes "it" and the game continues.

I can tell facts about the life and music of Ludwig van Beethoven.

1. In what country was Beethoven born? (Germany)
2. What was the year of Beethoven's birth? (1770)
3. What two instruments did Ludwig learn to play as a child? (piano and violin)
4. Who was Ludwig's first teacher? (his father)
5. Beethoven's father wanted his son to be famous like what other musician? (Mozart)
6. True or False: Beethoven's father made him practice day and night. (True)

7. How old was Beethoven when he moved to Vienna? (in his early 20s)
8. To take a break from his music, what did Beethoven like to do? (take a long walk in the woods)
9. Which of his senses did Beethoven begin to lose in his early 30s? (his hearing)
10. What is one way he was able to communicate with friends later in life? (they spoke to him using an ear trumpet or would write to him in a notebook he carried around)

11. What is the title of one of his piano pieces? ("Moonlight Sonata" or "Fur Elise")
12. What instruments are part of a string quartet? (2 violins, a viola and a cello)
13. True or False: Beethoven composed an opera. (True)
14. True or False: Beethoven composed music for church. (True)
15. How many symphonies did Beethoven write? (9)
16. What is a symphony? (A symphony is a musical composition for full orchestra)

17. In what year did Beethoven die? (1827)
18. When he died, visitors came to pay their respects. What did they take as a memento/souvenir? (a lock of his hair)
19. True or False: Not many people came to mourn Beethoven's death. (False)
20. In what city is Beethoven buried? (Vienna)



8

7

9

5

Ask me about _____

1

2

3

4

