

HAPPY BEETHOVEN'S BIRTHDAY!

Peanuts, Schroeder, and Beethoven



In October 1950, St. Paul native Charles Schulz began publishing [the comic strip Peanuts](#). It featured a group of young children and centered around Charlie Brown, the little round-headed kid that failed at everything from kicking a football, to flying a kite, to pitching a baseball.

Gradually, other characters were added, including Charlie Brown's dog Snoopy, his thoughtful friend Linus and Linus' bossy sister Lucy, Snoopy's little bird friend Woodstock, and many others. One early addition to the strip was Charlie Brown's friend Schroeder. Schroeder is the catcher on their baseball team and plays hockey, but mainly he plays his toy piano. It is a mystery how he gets all those notes out of those few keys. Lucy has a crush on Schroeder and spends a lot of time leaning on the piano while he plays.

Schroeder's idol is Ludwig van Beethoven, and to him, Beethoven's birthday is a holiday. Charles Schulz said, "I kind of like Schroeder. He's fairly down to earth, but he has his problems, too. He has to play on the painted black piano keys, and he thinks Beethoven was the first President of the United States."

Almost every year, Schroeder celebrated Beethoven's birthday on December 17 (or thereabouts). There were many references to Beethoven throughout the 50-year run of Peanuts. There were often music notes drawn in the strip, too, as Schroeder played. While Charles Schulz did not read music, he loved it and was very careful to copy the music exactly from the score. Fans have made a game of guessing which piece Schroeder is playing.



Your turn! Based on the Peanuts comic strip examples linked above or other links below, complete one project (A, B, or C) to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth.

- A. Create a comic strip, cartoon, or video in which your characters celebrate Beethoven's birthday.
- B. Watch the video clip from *A Boy Named Charlie Brown*, featuring animation with the 2nd movement of Beethoven's Sonata No. 8 nicknamed "[Pathetique.](#)" Write about how the animator used visual art to echo the themes or expressive qualities of the music.
- C. Create your own video to music by Beethoven—animation, a slide show of photographs, live action, or anything you choose. Here are many musical excerpts you might choose from—recordings that are in public domain.

<https://www.loc.gov/audio/?fa=online-format:audio&q=beethoven>

<https://archive.org/details/audio?and%5B%5D=beethoven&sin=>