

# Ludwig van Beethoven

## Level 1

Words to Know list, Reading Selection, and Reading Comprehension questions

Beethoven, the Composer

Fill in the circle by the correct answer.

**Beethoven, the Composer**

Ludwig van Beethoven was a famous German composer. He was born in 1770 in Bonn, Germany, and when he was four his father began teaching him to play the piano. He later composed the first two symphonies for the piano. Beethoven took lessons from other famous composers, but he was mostly self-taught. He also learned to play the violin and the organ.

In 1792, when Beethoven was 21, he moved to Vienna, Austria. There, he played for the famous musician and composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who praised Beethoven's talent. When he started to lose his hearing, he was told to stop playing the piano. But he didn't stop. He continued to play, and he became one of the greatest composers in the world. He wrote nine symphonies, 18 concertos, and many other pieces of music. He is famous for his Ninth Symphony, which is one of the most famous pieces of music ever written.

Beethoven was a great composer of his time, but he was also a great person. He was kind and generous to his friends, and he was always ready to help others. He was a true genius, and his music is still loved and played today.

Words to Know

- composer
- imagination
- musical
- melody
- performer
- sketchbooks
- revised
- conversations
- symphony
- orchestra

164 Ludwig van Beethoven ©

## Level 2

Words to Know list, Reading Selection, and Reading Comprehension questions

A Famous Composer

Fill in the circle by the correct answer.

**A Famous Composer**

Ludwig van Beethoven was one of the greatest composers of all time. He was born in 1770 in Bonn, Germany, and when he was four his father began teaching him to play the piano. He later composed the first two symphonies for the piano. Beethoven took lessons from other famous composers, but he was mostly self-taught. He also learned to play the violin and the organ.

In 1792, when Beethoven was 21, he moved to Vienna, Austria. There, he played for the famous musician and composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who praised Beethoven's talent. When he started to lose his hearing, he was told to stop playing the piano. But he didn't stop. He continued to play, and he became one of the greatest composers in the world. He wrote nine symphonies, 18 concertos, and many other pieces of music. He is famous for his Ninth Symphony, which is one of the most famous pieces of music ever written.

Beethoven was a great composer of his time, but he was also a great person. He was kind and generous to his friends, and he was always ready to help others. He was a true genius, and his music is still loved and played today.

Words to Know

- composer
- imagination
- musical
- melody
- performer
- sketchbooks
- revised
- conversations
- symphony
- orchestra

165 Ludwig van Beethoven ©

## Level 3

Words to Know list, Reading Selection, and Reading Comprehension questions

A Great Composer

Fill in the circle by the correct answer.

**A Great Composer**

Ludwig van Beethoven was one of the greatest composers of all time. He was born in 1770 in Bonn, Germany, and when he was four his father began teaching him to play the piano. He later composed the first two symphonies for the piano. Beethoven took lessons from other famous composers, but he was mostly self-taught. He also learned to play the violin and the organ.

In 1792, when Beethoven was 21, he moved to Vienna, Austria. There, he played for the famous musician and composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who praised Beethoven's talent. When he started to lose his hearing, he was told to stop playing the piano. But he didn't stop. He continued to play, and he became one of the greatest composers in the world. He wrote nine symphonies, 18 concertos, and many other pieces of music. He is famous for his Ninth Symphony, which is one of the most famous pieces of music ever written.

Beethoven was a great composer of his time, but he was also a great person. He was kind and generous to his friends, and he was always ready to help others. He was a true genius, and his music is still loved and played today.

Words to Know

- composer
- imagination
- musical
- melody
- performer
- sketchbooks
- revised
- conversations
- symphony
- orchestra

166 Ludwig van Beethoven ©

## Assemble the Unit

Reproduce and distribute one copy for each student:

- Visual Literacy page: Ludwig van Beethoven Timeline, page 161
- Level 1, 2, or 3 Reading Selection and Reading Comprehension page and the corresponding Words to Know list
- Graphic Organizer of your choosing, provided on pages 180–186
- Writing Form: Beethoven, page 162

## Introduce the Topic

Read aloud and discuss the timeline of Beethoven's life. Explain that Beethoven is considered even today to be one of the greatest composers of all time. Tell students that they will read more about some of the difficulties he faced in his lifetime.

## Read and Respond

Form leveled groups and review the Words to Know lists with each group of students. Instruct each group to read their selection individually, in pairs, or as a group. Have students complete the Reading Comprehension page for their selection.

## Write About the Topic

Read aloud the leveled writing prompt for each group. Tell students to use the Graphic Organizer to plan their writing. Direct students to use their Writing Form to respond to their prompt.

**Timeline**

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

1770 Ludwig van Beethoven born in Bonn, Germany.

1782 Started to learn to play piano and other instruments.

1792 At age 13, had written and published piano sonatas.

1797 "Played for Mozart, who said that Beethoven would 'soon surpass the world'."

1798 Moved to Vienna to study with Joseph Haydn.

1799 Gave first public concert, considered a "great concert" player.

1800 Composed the first of nine symphonies, was losing his hearing.

1802 Wrote Symphony no. 3, one of his most famous works.

1815 Wrote six symphonies, fourteen piano sonatas, one opera, and many chamber music works by this time.

1820 Became totally deaf, continued to write and perform.

1823 Completed Symphony no. 9.

1827 Died in Bonn on an anniversary of his mother's death. About 10,000 people watched the funeral procession.

Visual Literacy

**Beethoven**

162

Writing Form

# Timeline

## Ludwig van Beethoven

- 1770 — Ludwig van Beethoven born in Bonn, Germany.
- 1774 — Started to learn to play piano and violin from his father.
- 1782 — By age 12, had written and published piano sonatas.
- 1787 — Played for Mozart, who said that Beethoven would “soon astonish the world.”
- 1792 — Moved to Vienna to study with Joseph Haydn.
- 1795 — Gave first public concert; considered a gifted concert pianist.
- 1800 — Composed the first of nine symphonies; was losing his hearing.
- 1808 — Wrote Symphony no. 5, one of his most famous works.
- 1815 — Wrote six symphonies, fourteen piano sonatas, one opera, and many chamber music works by this time.
- 1820 — Became totally deaf: continued to write and perform.
- 1824 — Completed Symphony no. 9.
- 1827 — Died in Vienna; an estimated 10,000 people watched the funeral procession.



Ludwig van Beethoven is one of the greatest composers of all time. This engraving was made by W. Holl in 1837 for a musical encyclopedia.



**Words to Know**

**Beethoven,  
the Composer**

---

composer  
imagination  
musical  
notation  
performer  
sketchbooks  
revised  
conversations  
symphony  
orchestra

**Ludwig van Beethoven ■**

**Words to Know**

**A Famous  
Composer**

---

composers  
extraordinary  
musician  
performance  
educated  
befriended  
improvise  
musical  
notation  
melodies

**Ludwig van Beethoven ■ ■**

**Words to Know**

**A Great Composer**

---

formal  
conductor  
musicians  
orchestra  
symphony  
applauded  
composed  
virtuoso  
performer  
notation  
muffled  
depressed  
conversation

**Ludwig van Beethoven ■ ■ ■**



# Beethoven, the Composer

Imagine your teacher has asked you to write a story. You sit at your desk with a pencil and paper. Story ideas pop into your head and you write them down. You keep thinking of more ideas and adding them to your story. Sometimes, you cross out parts of your story and rewrite them. Finally, your story is finished and other people can read it. When they do, they're reading ideas that came from your imagination.

Writing music is like writing stories. A person who writes music is known as a composer. A composer thinks of a musical idea and writes it on paper for others to read. Instead of writing words, a composer uses musical notation. Other people can read the notes and play them. When they do, they're playing music that came from the composer's imagination.

Ludwig van Beethoven was a famous German composer. He was born in 1770 in Bonn and began learning the piano when he was only four. He also learned to play the violin. Beethoven visited Vienna, which was a very musical city, in 1787. Two other famous composers lived in Vienna at that time. Wolfgang Mozart and Joseph Haydn met Beethoven and gave his music high praise. Beethoven made friends in Vienna and returned there in 1792. He studied music with Haydn and lived in Vienna for the rest of his life.

Beethoven was known as a great performer at the piano, but he wanted to compose his own music. He always seemed to have musical ideas in his head. His sketchbooks show how hard he worked to get the music just right. He often wrote and then revised his music by scratching it out, so it is possible for us to see how he was thinking about the music.

During the late 1790s, Beethoven began to lose his hearing. At first it was difficult for him to hear people and have conversations with them. Even when he became completely deaf, he did not stop creating music, however. He heard the music in his mind even though he couldn't hear it with his ears.

Most people have heard of Beethoven's Symphony no. 5, but they may not know he wrote it when he was growing deaf. A symphony is a long piece of music for orchestra. Symphony no. 5 starts like this: ta-ta-ta-TUM. Beethoven used this pattern over and over in his symphony. Try saying it aloud two times: ta-ta-ta-TUM, ta-ta-ta-TUM. Now try hearing it in your mind, like Beethoven did: ta-ta-ta-TUM.



Ludwig van Beethoven was a musical genius. This painting shows Beethoven around 1804, when he was writing his Symphony no. 5.

## Beethoven, the Composer

Fill in the circle by the correct answer. Then write the answers to numbers 3, 4, and 5.

1. A person who creates music is known as \_\_\_\_\_.

- Ⓐ a teacher
- Ⓑ a symphony
- Ⓒ a composer
- Ⓓ an orchestra

2. In writing music, Beethoven used \_\_\_\_\_.

- Ⓐ musical notation
- Ⓑ a computer
- Ⓒ words and letters
- Ⓓ conversations

3. What skills and talents do you think a composer needs to possess?

---

---

4. Beethoven overcame great difficulty in his life. Explain what it was and give your opinion about him.

---

---

5. Do you think it was easy for Beethoven to compose music? Support your opinion with facts from the text.

---

---

### Write About the Topic

Use the Writing Form to write about what you read.

Write three interesting facts you have learned about Ludwig van Beethoven. Explain why they are interesting to you.



# A Famous Composer

Ludwig van Beethoven was one of the greatest composers of all time. He was born in 1770 in Bonn, Germany, and when he was four his father began teaching him to play the piano. His father recognized the little boy's extraordinary gift for music. Later, Beethoven took lessons from other teachers. He also learned to play the violin and the organ.

In 1787, when Beethoven was 17, he visited Vienna, Austria. There, he played for the famous musician and composer Wolfgang Mozart, who praised Beethoven's performance. When his mother became gravely ill, Beethoven returned home. After her death, Beethoven took care of his two younger brothers because their father couldn't. Beethoven became friends with a kind family of educated people, the von Breunings. Also, Count von Waldstein befriended Beethoven. These friends took the young man under their wing. Beethoven was able to move to Vienna in 1792 to study with the famous composer Joseph Haydn. He lived in Vienna the rest of his life.

Beethoven played music written by other people and became well-known as a performer. But he also liked to improvise. Beethoven would ask someone to play a few notes on a piano. Then he would sit down and play those same few notes, plus add more. Soon, he would create a whole new tune.

Beethoven liked to compose his own music. He heard the music in his head and used musical notation to put it on paper. While composing, Beethoven played his songs on the piano to hear how they sounded. He would rewrite his music over and over until at last, he was pleased with it.

Around 1798, Beethoven began to lose his hearing. At first, he had trouble hearing people talk. Later he couldn't hear his own music. By 1820, Beethoven was totally deaf. Even though he couldn't hear, Beethoven kept playing music. He even kept composing! When Beethoven composed, he heard the melodies in his mind and wrote them down.

How did Beethoven hear music in his head? Softly sing aloud a song you know well, such as "Mary Had a Little Lamb." As you sing, you can hear the song with your ears. Then silently sing the same song to yourself in your mind. Can you hear how it sounds inside your head? Beethoven composed some of his greatest pieces of music when he was nearly or completely deaf, including "Moonlight Sonata," his Symphony no. 5, and Symphony no. 9.



Beethoven took long walks in the country because he loved nature. In his Symphony no. 6, he expressed strong feelings about nature.

## A Famous Composer

Fill in the circle by the correct answer. Then write the answers to numbers 3, 4, and 5.

1. In paragraph 2, the phrase “took under their wing” means \_\_\_\_\_.  
Ⓐ left someone alone  
Ⓑ took someone into their care and protection  
Ⓒ let go and released someone  
Ⓓ neglected someone
2. To create and perform without preparing ahead of time is to \_\_\_\_\_.  
Ⓐ improvise  
Ⓑ teach  
Ⓒ use musical notation  
Ⓓ rewrite
3. Throughout his life, Beethoven’s friendships were important to his success. Why do you suppose people reached out to help him?

---

---

4. What skills and traits do you think Beethoven possessed that made him a composer?

---

---

5. Write a sentence from the text that explains how Beethoven composed music after he became deaf.

---

---

### Write About the Topic

Use the Writing Form to write about what you read.

Make a list of methods Beethoven used to compose music.  
Explain how each was used.





# A Great Composer

Dressed in a formal black jacket, the 54-year-old conductor stood on stage and wiped his brow. He had just finished conducting the musicians of an orchestra in a new symphony. A symphony is a major piece of music with several different parts. The conductor himself had recently written the new symphony, and his audience had been excited to hear it.

Behind the conductor, the audience stood and applauded loudly. But the conductor didn't turn around to bow to the audience. Instead, he stood facing the orchestra until a musician on stage quickly stepped forward and guided the conductor to face the audience. He was able to see their reaction, and the conductor was overjoyed that they liked his new symphony. The conductor never heard the audience, and he also never heard the symphony he had written. That conductor, Ludwig van Beethoven, was one of the most famous composers of all time, and he was deaf.

Beethoven wasn't always deaf, however. From the time of his birth in 1770 until his late twenties, Beethoven could hear well. During this time, he learned to play the piano, the organ, and the violin. He also composed many pieces of music. He became a virtuoso performer at the piano. When Beethoven composed, he heard the music in his head and wrote the musical notation on paper. Later, Beethoven could look at the musical notes and know exactly what the music sounded like.

Around 1798, Beethoven began having a hard time hearing people speak. At first, he didn't tell people that he couldn't hear. He simply withdrew from people. He also secretly went to many doctors. He was given an ear trumpet to use to help him hear. This device helped Beethoven hear muffled sounds, but his hearing kept getting worse, and he became very depressed. However, Beethoven realized that he could still compose and play music despite his deafness.

By the time Beethoven was 50 he was totally deaf. When friends visited him, he used a conversation book. They wrote something about what they were saying, and Beethoven spoke or sometimes wrote his thoughts. Today his conversation books give us a look at the great composer's ideas about his music. While Beethoven could no longer hear with his ears, he could hear the music perfectly in his mind. Beethoven composed some of his greatest music when he was deaf. One of these pieces of music was his Symphony no. 9—the music the orchestra had played the day when Beethoven was the conductor.



Beethoven's birthplace, Bonn, Germany, honored him with a statue. The great composer holds his pen.

## A Great Composer

Fill in the circle by the correct answer. Then write the answers to numbers 3, 4, and 5.

1. A person who is highly skilled in performing music is \_\_\_\_\_.

- Ⓐ a major
- Ⓑ an ear trumpet
- Ⓒ a muffler
- Ⓓ a virtuoso

2. The cause of Beethoven's deafness was \_\_\_\_\_.

- Ⓐ not stated in the text
- Ⓑ playing the piano loudly
- Ⓒ being born deaf
- Ⓓ conducting the orchestra

3. Beethoven used a conversation book when he could no longer hear. What modern inventions can you think of that might have helped him?

---

---

4. What evidence can you find that it was very difficult for Beethoven to lose his hearing?

---

---

5. What do you think about the fact that Beethoven composed music after he became deaf?

---

---

### Write About the Topic

Use the Writing Form to write about what you read.

Write about the accomplishments that earned Beethoven a place in history as one of the greatest composers.

