

Classics for Kids



Symphony No. 8 in F Major Second Movement

Ludwig van Beethoven
Born: December 16, 1770
Died: March 26, 1827

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn, Germany. His father, who was a singer, was his first teacher. After a while, even though he was still only a boy, Ludwig became a traveling performer, and soon he was supporting his family.

In his early twenties Beethoven moved to Vienna, where he spent the rest of his life. Beethoven was one of the first composers to make a living without being employed by the church or a member of the nobility. At first, he was known as

a brilliant pianist, but when he was around 30 years old Beethoven began going deaf. Even though he could no longer hear well enough to play the piano, Beethoven composed some of his best music after he lost his hearing!

Beethoven is considered one of the greatest musical geniuses who ever lived. He may be most famous for his nine symphonies, but he also wrote many other kinds of music: chamber and choral pieces, piano works, string quartets, and an opera.



Beethoven

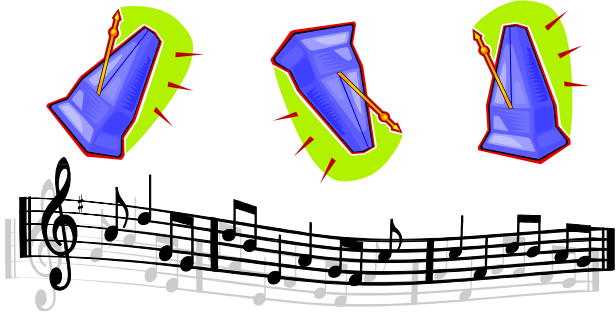
Beethoven's Music

Listen to the second movement of Beethoven's 8th Symphony, then answer the questions below.

1. How many "ticks" do you hear before the melody begins?
a. 2 b. 5 c. 7 d. 8
2. What instrument plays the melody first?
a. violin b. viola c. cello d. bass
3. Does the orchestra get loud suddenly?
a. yes b. no
4. Does the music sound like it's jumping around the orchestra?
a. yes b. no
5. Does the "ticking" ever stop completely? (except at the end)
a. yes b. no
6. If you were to move to this music, would you...
a. stomp b. tip-toe c. ice skate
7. What do you think the "ticking" represents?
a. metronome b. clock c. woodpecker

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Beethoven lived in an amazing time in history. Plot these world events on the timeline. Add additional events you know from history.



Many of us can do two things at once. For instance, we can walk and chew gum at the same time. However, not many of us could write two completely different symphonies at the same time! This is what Beethoven did, though, when he wrote his seventh and eighth symphonies. The seventh symphony is a much larger work and was more popular at its opening than the short little eighth. But great things come in small packages! The eighth symphony continues to be a favorite among many fans.

The second movement of this work is a humorous tribute to Beethoven's friend Johann Nepomuk Maelzel, who helped perfect and promote the metronome. The metronome is a device that marks exact time by the beats of a pendulum. It gave composers a way to specify precise tempos for their music. Listen closely and you will hear the playful ticking from the woodwinds throughout most of the second movement. The ticking is sometimes interrupted by a sudden loud jump of quick notes as if the musicians suddenly were surprised. This music is a lively play between extremes: loud and soft, upper and lower strings, short and long phrases. Can you hear the metronome breaking down as the movement ends?

One more "note." Beethoven slowly lost his hearing until he became totally deaf in 1812. This means that he never heard his seventh, eighth, or ninth symphonies.



The Beat Goes On

The world is full of music if we take the time to hear it. Music is based on a steady beat. This beat can be fast or slow. The beat can change, but it must be there or we are lost in the music. Name five everyday items that have a steady beat.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Beethoven was born
1770



American Revolution
begins
1775



Eli Whitney invents
cotton gin
1793



Edward Jenner introduces
vaccination against smallpox
1796



U.S. Bill of Rights (first 10
Amendments) ratified
1791



Beethoven died
1827



Lewis and Clark
expedition begins
1806



First steam
locomotive built by
George Stephenson
1814



Robert Fulton's steam
paddle wheeler first sails
the Hudson River
1807

