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# Beethoven

WORKSHEET A

Most people who like classical music would say that Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was one of the greatest composers in history.

He was born in the German city of Bonn, but spent most of his life in Vienna, the capital of Austria.

His father, a musician in Bonn, encouraged him to play and compose music from an early age. The young Beethoven showed clear signs of being a musical genius, giving a public piano performance at the age of eight and then publishing his first musical composition when he was twelve.

One of the most well-known facts about Beethoven is that he started losing his hearing in his late twenties, and later became completely deaf. Amazingly, however, this did not stop him composing.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, most composers worked for the Church or for royal courts, but Beethoven was a freelancer who sold his music to publishers and also received money for playing the piano in public concerts. As a young man he often had money problems, which became worse when his deafness stopped him playing the piano, but later in his life, after becoming very famous, he received financial support from wealthy aristocrats.

Beethoven also suffered from depression, caused partly by his increasing deafness and partly by problems in his personal life – for example he wasn't able to marry the woman he loved because she was already married with children. In his thirties he almost committed suicide, but after choosing not to end his life he began working harder than ever, producing wonderful pieces of music such as his *Eroica* symphony. Like many geniuses, Beethoven was a true eccentric. He had a lot of strange habits, such as getting washed many times a day but deliberately wearing clothes that were dirty, and he always seemed to get into arguments with people, but he also had a close group of friends all the way through his life.

He had strong political beliefs. He supported the democratic ideals of the French Revolution (1789) and dedicated the *Eroica* to Napoleon Bonaparte, the leader of France, because it seemed he too supported those ideals. Later, however, Beethoven decided Napoleon had betrayed the revolution, so he furiously crossed out the Frenchman's name from the all the papers containing the music for that symphony.

## Beethoven

WORKSHEET B

### A

Decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F).

1. Beethoven did not always have a lot of money.
2. Although he composed a lot of music, he never learned to play music himself.
3. He composed most of his music early in his life, before he began to suffer from depression.
4. He had a group of friends when he was a young man, but lost them later in his life.
5. His parents were not interested in music.
6. He changed his opinion about Napoleon Bonaparte.
7. He thought democracy was a good idea.
8. For most of his life he composed music for the Church.
9. He was already beginning to go deaf when he published his first musical composition.
10. He was an adult when he almost committed suicide.
11. He wrote the *Eroica* symphony for a woman he loved.
12. He often wore dirty clothes, thinking they were clean.

### B

The eight answers below are to questions about the text on Worksheet A. Can you write the questions?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: In 1827.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: In Vienna.

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: In his late twenties.

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: No, he was able to continue.

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: Wealthy aristocrats.

6. \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: Many times a day.

7. \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: Because she was already married with children.

8. \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: Because he thought he had betrayed the ideals of the French Revolution.