



Beethoven: The Sound and the Fury **Classroom Guide**

As one of the world's most beloved composers, it is almost impossible not to have heard the stirring music created by Ludwig von Beethoven. His immortal compositions have survived for generations and are as much a part of the modern world as they were almost two centuries ago. But the beauty of Beethoven's music was born amidst the darkness of a tortured soul. A frequently angry and emotionally turbulent man, Beethoven lost his hearing before he was thirty. Despite these setbacks and his own personal difficulties, he continued to produce some of the world's greatest music. This Biography is a wonderful introduction to the life of the man whose musical genius has delighted the ears for centuries. It is an excellent opportunity for students to learn about Beethoven's extraordinary talent and the complex personality behind some of the world's most treasured music.

Curriculum Links:

Beethoven: The Sound and the Fury would be useful for classes on European History, Western Civilization, World Culture and Music. It is appropriate for middle school and high school.

Terms to Define:

- [aristocrat](#)
- [caricature](#)
- [eccentric](#)
- [mediocre](#)
- [nobility](#)
- [prodigy](#)
- [refuge](#)
- [renegade](#)
- [repertoire](#)
- [sublime](#)
- [surly](#)

Discussion Questions:

1. Beethoven was undoubtedly a genius. But what is genius? What is the price of genius? Who else in history has possessed genius?
2. Beethoven was a surly, ill-tempered man. Do you think that his father and childhood were the roots of his bitterness? Did they have an affect on his career?
3. Why is Beethoven's music so difficult to play?
4. Beethoven spent his life in the courts of Vienna but he was not a nobleman. Discuss the class implications of Beethoven's life at court.
5. Beethoven lost his hearing by the time he was thirty. How did this hearing loss affect him? Why was he embarrassed by his hearing loss and how was he able to continue to compose beautiful music?
6. Do you think Beethoven's ability to compose such amazing compositions was the result of talent, hard work, or both?

7. What role do you think Beethoven's personality played in determining his approach to musical composition? Can you tell from his music what kind of man he was?

Extended Activities:

1. Compare the music of Beethoven to the music of Mozart. What are the differences in their musical styles? Write a short essay comparing and contrasting the two composers.
2. Listen to Beethoven's music and describe your reaction to the recording and list the instruments you hear.
3. Create a timeline of Beethoven's life to gain insights into the historical context into his era.

For More Information on Beethoven:

Books:

- Kinderman, William. *Beethoven*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Lockwood, Lewis. *Beethoven: the music and the life*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2005.

Websites:

- <http://www.biography.com/articles/Ludwig-van-Beethoven-9204862>
- <http://www.lvbeethoven.com/Bio/BiographyLudwig.html>