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Hey Kids, Meet Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven (Baptized Dec 16, 1770-1827)

German Classical/Romantic Era Composer

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn, Germany in 1770, to Johann van Beethoven and Maria

Magdalena Keverich. Although Beethoven's exact birth date is not known, his family celebrated it on

December 16. Ludwig's first musical instruction came from his father Johann who was said to have

been a harsh instructor. Johann later asked his friend, Tobias Pfeiffer, to teach his son. It seems that

the harsh treatment continued, as Johann and his friend would come home late on occasion to pull

young Ludwig from his bed to practice until morning.

Ludwig's talent was recognized early on, and by 1778 he was learning to play the organ and viola in

addition to his piano studies. His most important teacher in Bonn was Christian Gottlob Neefe, a

Court organist. It was Neefe who helped Beethoven publish his first piece of music.

In 1787, young Beethoven decided to travel to Vienna, hoping to meet and study composition with

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. It is not clear if he succeeded in meeting or studying with Mozart. By his

twenties, Beethoven began to suffer from hearing loss. He did, however, continue to compose,

conduct and perform, even after he was completely deaf. One story recalls that after conducting the

premiere of his Ninth Symphony he had to be turned around to see the overwhelming applause of

the audience. When he heard nothing, he began to weep.

Ludwig van Beethoven's most popular pieces are his Fifth Symphony, *Für Elise* for piano solo, and

his Ninth Symphony, which includes the melody *Ode to Joy*. He is remembered as an important

composer in the transitional period between the Classical Era and Romantic Era in music and

continues to be one of the most famous and influential composers of all time.

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