

The Life of Beethoven



Composer Ludwig van Beethoven was born on or near December 16, 1770, in Bonn, Germany. His personal life was marked by a struggle against deafness. The fact that Beethoven composed his most beautiful and extraordinary music while deaf is an almost superhuman feat of creative genius. He is widely considered the greatest composer of all time.

Sometime between the births of his two younger brothers, Beethoven's father began teaching him music with an extraordinary rigor and brutality that affected him for the rest of his life. Neighbors provided accounts of the small boy weeping while he played the clavier, standing atop a footstool to reach the keys, his father beating him for each hesitation or mistake.

On a near daily basis, Beethoven was flogged, locked in the cellar and deprived of sleep for extra hours of practice. He studied the violin and clavier with his father as well as taking additional lessons from organists around town. Whether in spite of or because of his father's draconian methods, Beethoven was a prodigiously talented musician from his earliest days and displayed flashes of the creative imagination that would eventually reach farther than any composer's before or since.

When the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II died in 1790, a 19-year-old Beethoven received the immense honor of composing a musical memorial in his honor. In 1792, with French revolutionary forces sweeping across the Rhineland into the Electorate of Cologne, Beethoven decided to leave his hometown for Vienna. In Vienna, Beethoven dedicated himself wholeheartedly to musical study with the most eminent musicians of the age. He studied piano with Haydn, vocal composition with Antonio Salieri and counterpoint with Johann Albrechtsberger.

In 1804, only weeks after Napoleon proclaimed himself Emperor, Beethoven debuted his Symphony No. 3 in Napoleon's honor. It was his grandest and most original work to date -- so unlike anything heard before that through weeks of rehearsal, the musicians could not figure out how to play it. At the same time as he was composing these great and immortal works, Beethoven was struggling to come to terms with a shocking and terrible fact, one that he tried desperately to conceal. He was going deaf. By the turn of the century, Beethoven struggled to make out the words spoken to him in conversation. Beethoven's Ninth and final symphony, completed in 1824, remains the illustrious composer's most towering achievement. The symphony's famous choral finale is perhaps the most famous piece of music in history.

Despite his extraordinary output of beautiful music, Beethoven was frequently miserable throughout his adult life. Beethoven died on March 26, 1827, at the age of 56.

Questions 1- 10

Do the following statements agree with the claims of the writer? Write:

- yes - if the statement agrees with the claims of the writer
 - no - if the statement contradicts the claims of the writer
 - not given - if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this
1. It is not known exactly when Beethoven was born.
 2. Beethoven's father was also a talented musician.
 3. Beethoven suffered due to his father's cruelty.
 4. It is possible that his early sufferings at the hands of his father resulted in his remarkable genius.
 5. He studied instrumental works with Antonio Salieri.

6. Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 was inspired by Napoleon.
7. Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 was so ground breaking that even his contemporaries did not know how to approach it.
8. By around 1804, Beethoven could hardly follow a conversation with someone.
9. Beethoven continued to write music even though he was going deaf.
10. Beethoven's life was full of great works and bliss.

Answers can be found on my blog: www.ieltsliz.com on the main reading page.

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