



Meet Mr. Beethoven

An Introduction to Beethoven's Music and Life

Suggested Grades: 3-5

Polina Mann

National Core Arts Standards


- #7 – Perceive and analyze artistic work
- #8 – Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- #11 – Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Objectives

- Learn about Beethoven's life and works.
- Play Ode to Joy on the recorder.

Materials

- Recorders
- Ode to Joy sheet music for recorder
- YouTube Recording: [Beethoven 9th Symphony-Movement IV-Ode to Joy](#)
- Book: The 39 Apartments of Beethoven by Jonah Winter
- Movie: Beethoven Lives Upstairs



POLINA MANN

I PreK-8th grade music at the St. Rita School in Hamden, CT. This is my 8th year in a private school setting and love it! I am certified in music, theatre and technology. I also work as a church music director on the weekends and started the Instagram page Grants for Music Teachers. You can find me on Instagram, Pinterest, or Facebook.

Context:

Ludwig van Beethoven is considered to be one of the greatest composers of all time. In this lesson, students will learn interesting facts about his life. Students learn to play *Ode to Joy*, one of Beethoven's most recognizable pieces on the recorder. Next, students discuss the origin of the piece and why this song was so important in Beethoven's oeuvre of work.

Students will read about Beethoven's personal life in the story "The 39 Apartments of Beethoven." Discover why as an adult, Beethoven moved frequently, had numerous pianos, and other facts about his life as a composer. The book summarizes Beethoven's life condensing factual information and conjecture about why he may have moved so much. This book provides contextual information about Beethoven as portrayed in the movie "Beethoven Lives Upstairs."

The movie is a fictional story about Beethoven renting a room from a family and living in a room on the top floor. At first, the main character, young Christoph, cannot believe such a rude and careless person has moved into their house. Beethoven's music changes their opinions when he begins composing his 9th Symphony. The movie starts with Beethoven's funeral, and Christoph remarks that while Beethoven is gone, "his music will never die."

Suggested Teaching Process:

Ode To Joy

- Students read the notation of Ode to Joy, using letter names.
- Support student reading by providing some note names while decoding the others using the note names provided.
- Remind students of the mnemonic devices used to remember line and space names on the treble clef.
- I recommend teaching the song in sections.





- Personal preference will determine if you teach a single bar or a whole phrase at a time.
- Once each section is secure, begin linking the sections until students can play the entire piece.

History of a Song

- Ask students where they think **Ode To Joy** originated?
- Discuss facts about Beethoven.
- Ask students why **Ode To Joy** is significant in music history.

Ode to Joy is the melody used in a symphony that required singing instead of simply playing the instruments. Thus, the 9th Symphony was the first Symphony to use voices instead of only instruments.

- Play recording of [9th Symphony-Movement IV-Ode to Joy](#)
- If you use the YouTube Recording hyperlinked above, start the video playback at 12 minutes and 45 seconds.
- Students listen to the original melody sung by the choir in German.
- Some questions to consider:
- Do symphonies usually have voices? Explain that this was the first Symphony to do so.
- Ask if the students know any other famous symphonies or famous works by Beethoven.

“**The 39 Apartments of Beethoven**” by Jonah Winter.

- Read the story.

Beethoven Lives Upstairs

- Watch movie
- Ask students to compare how the movie is similar to the book.

Movie Summary:

Students will see a fictional story of a boy named Christoph, whose mother rents an upstairs room out to Beethoven. The entire household doesn't like Beethoven because he is rude, irritable, and challenging to deal with.

He bangs on the piano and does not converse much with the outside world. The movie chronicles Beethoven's musical life, including him composing and rehearsing his pieces. While initially a complicated situation, as the household acclimated to Beethoven, they begin to realize his genius. Christoph and his mother are won over by the music when Beethoven begins composing the 9th Symphony.

Students will hear many of Beethoven's famous works such as “Moonlight” Sonata, “Pathetique” Sonata, 5th Symphony, and 9th Symphony. Excerpts in the book confirm what is shown in the movie, for example - the legless pianos that he composed on and that Beethoven splashed himself with water when he wrote. The film is fiction but reflects what we know about Beethoven's personality and compositional style.

Extension:

Ask students if they know any other works by Beethoven.

- Listen to the beginnings of some of his other works, specifically the 5th Symphony.
- Discuss the four-note common melodic motif that creates the melodic framework of the work- compare this with the Ode to Joy melody.



**Some questions to consider:**

- Why is the mood of the 5th Symphony angry in comparison to the 9th?
- What was going on in Beethoven's life that could generate such intense emotion?

Add a Game:

- Students play musical chairs.
- Students sit down every time they hear the four-note motif.
- Stop the music, remove a chair, repeat.
- Keep going until everyone is out.

