

Beethoven's Beginnings



[Left: Unknown master from Bonn; Right: Joseph Stieler](#). Left: Portrait of 13-year-old Ludwig van Beethoven; Right: Portrait of 50-year-old Beethoven (Public Domain)

Objectives

Overview

Students will learn about the music, life, and times around Beethoven's First Symphony.

Time frame: 20-30 minutes

Musical Selection

Symphony No. 1 - Ludwig van Beethoven

Symphony No. 104, *London Symphony* - Franz Joseph Haydn

Symphony No. 41, *Jupiter Symphony* - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Standards

Music Standards: MU.K-4.M-CE-E2 (Recognize basic notational symbols and express vocabulary that conveys precise musical meanings;), MU.K-4.M-AP-E1 (Understand and apply basic music vocabulary to describe aesthetic qualities of musical compositions;), MU.K-4.M-HP-E5 (Recognize great composers and their most significant musical works;)

MU.K-4.M-HP-E5 (Recognize great composers and their most significant musical works;),
MU.K-4.M-CA-E2 (Identify simple music events (e.g., dynamic change, meter change,
same/different sections) while listening to a work;)

Correlated Standards: Social Studies, Math

Resources: Attached timeline comparing Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn

Preparatory Exercise

In this lesson, we will be comparing what we know in United State and New Orleans history to the life and times of Ludwig van Beethoven and two of his influences, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Franz Joseph Haydn.

Begin by discussing other important events around New Orleans or the world in the period from about 1720 - 1830. These four events are examples, but feel free to choose 4 or more events drawing on students' prior knowledge.

- **Founding of New Orleans:** In the spring of **1718**, traditionally celebrated on May 7th, Jean-Baptist Le Moyne de Bienville founded the city of New Orleans. This year marks the **tricentennial**, or 300th celebration, of the city of New Orleans.
- **Birth of Thomas Jefferson:** Born in the colony of Virginia in **1743**, Thomas Jefferson was one of the Founding Fathers, renowned for being the primary author of the Declaration of Independence. He later became the 1st Secretary of State, 2nd Vice President, and 3rd President of the United States.
- **Declaration of Independence:** After the convening of the Second Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence was sign on July 4th, **1776**. This formally recognized the United States' separation from England.
- **The Battle of New Orleans:** At the end of the War of 1812, the final skirmish between American forces (led by Major General Andrew Jackson) and British forces took place in New Orleans from **December 1814 to January 1815**. Though the Treaty of Ghent was signed on December 24th 1814, hostilities were not ended until British forces retreated. Both countries recognized the treaty at the

beginning of February.

Composer Profile

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)



[Christian Hornemann, 1803](#) (Public Domain)

Ludwig van Beethoven (LOOD-vig VAN BAYT-oh-ven) was a composer in the late Classical and early Romantic style. He was born in Bonn in the Holy Roman Empire (now Germany) to a musical family. His father was a singer who taught Ludwig music from a young age. Inspired by how Leopold Mozart promoted his children Nannerl Mozart (NAN-erl MOAT-sart) and **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (WULF-gang ah-ma-DAY-us MOAT-sart) as child prodigies, he sought the same fame for his son.

From 1790 to 1792, Beethoven studied under the great composer **Franz Joseph Haydn** (FRAHNZ YOH-sef HIDE-n) in Bonn and Vienna, Austria. After this period, Beethoven settled in Vienna to establish his career. Around that time, one his patrons, Count Waldstein, said in a letter to Beethoven, "[Y]ou will receive Mozart's spirit through Haydn's hands."

Beethoven's music was considered groundbreaking in its time, and his legacy weighs heavy through classical music. His symphonic works were longer, more inventive in use of musical storytelling (called **program music**), and he included a wider range of instruments in his orchestra (such as a larger wind section and newer instruments like the piccolo and contrabassoon).

Notably, Beethoven began to lose his hearing in the height of his career. By the premiere of his Seventh Symphony, Fourth Piano Concerto, and Fifth Piano Concerto, he was entirely deaf. Still, his expansive repertoire of works for large orchestras, small chamber ensembles, and piano laid the groundwork for the music of the Romantic era.

Lesson Content

A Place in Time

Using the attached timeline, which can be adapted for your classroom, have students sort out the dates and what they describe on the chart.

The first page is a blank chart with a timeline with four rows - one for Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and other World events. The second page are several scattered events to be placed on the chart with the corresponding dates. Some of these list off the US & New Orleans historical events; the rest are events in the lives of these three composers. Students need to categorize which events go in which row and where they need to be placed in the timeline. You can do this as an individual, group, or class activity. The third page is the answer key.

You can present this in a few different ways. You can print or hand-write the chart template onto a poster board, and then print out the events on card stock. You can have students add these to the correct place on the timeline using tape or sticky-tack. You can also project the chart with a computer projector, and then place the events (printed on paper) on the right place on the board. Do you have another way that you have put timelines together in your classroom? Do what works best for you!

Once you are done, have students make observations on what they see. For example, compare the founding of New Orleans to Haydn's birth. Which one happened first? To reinforce how to read the timeline, you can use a yard stick or measuring tape to draw students' eyes from the event to its date at the bottom. Another example would be Beethoven's birth and the Declaration of Independence. You can also count how many years between each composers' first and last symphonies. How long were their careers? This can be done by subtracting one year from another.

Comparing the Three

We are going to compare the lives and symphonies of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. Beethoven's First Symphony shares a lot in common with Mozart's and Haydn's symphonies. Haydn wrote his first symphony in 1759, when he was 27. Mozart wrote his first symphony in 1764, when he was only 8 years old!

Have students listen to some samples of Mozart's and Haydn's symphonies. These clips are from their last symphonies, written in 1788 (Mozart) and 1795 (Haydn). As they listen, ask them to think of descriptive words to describe what they heard. Have them focus on the way the music makes them feel, as well as the tempo (speed) and dynamics (low and soft volume) of the music. After the clip, have students list out their descriptive words and write them on the board.

Video Clip: [Mozart Symphony No. 41 "Jupiter" \(I. Allegro vivace\)](#) (0:32 - 3:06)

Video Clip: [Haydn Symphony No. 104 "London Symphony" \(I. Adagio - Allegro\)](#) (0:00 - 2:46)

Beethoven waited until he was nearly 30 to write his first symphony, which was in the year 1800. Mozart had died just a few years before in 1791, and Haydn wrote his last symphony in 1795. How does Beethoven's First Symphony compare? As above, have students listen to this clip and then respond with their descriptive words for their aesthetic perception, tempo, and dynamics.

Video Clip: [Beethoven Symphony No. 1 \(I. Adagio molto - Allegro con brio\)](#) (0:06 - 2:35)

What words do we find in common for these?

Debrief Discussion

Ask students if they were surprised by anything in this lesson. Does some of the music sound "newer" or "older" than the times of the US / New Orleans events? What other music do you know that falls in this timeline (e.g., Yankee Doodle, Chester, The Star-Spangled Banner, some folk songs)? Did the three pieces sound similar / different? Mozart inspired Beethoven and his father, and Haydn was Beethoven's teacher. Do you hear that influence in Beethoven's music?

Enrichment Activities

Expand Listening Selections

Above we compared the opening movements of these four symphonies, which were all written within 12 years of each other. What comparisons can we find in other movements? Use the same exercise as above (comparing aesthetic description, tempo, and dynamics). Chart these for the class along with their words for the opening movements.

Video Clip: [Mozart Symphony No. 41 "Jupiter" \(IV. Molto Allegro\)](#) (25:36 - 27:28)

Video Clip: [Haydn Symphony No. 104 "London Symphony" \(IV. Spiritoso\)](#) (22:51 - 25:15)

Video Clip: [Beethoven Symphony No. 1 \(IV. Adagio - Allegro molto e vivace\)](#) (22:10 - 28:15)

Musical Connections

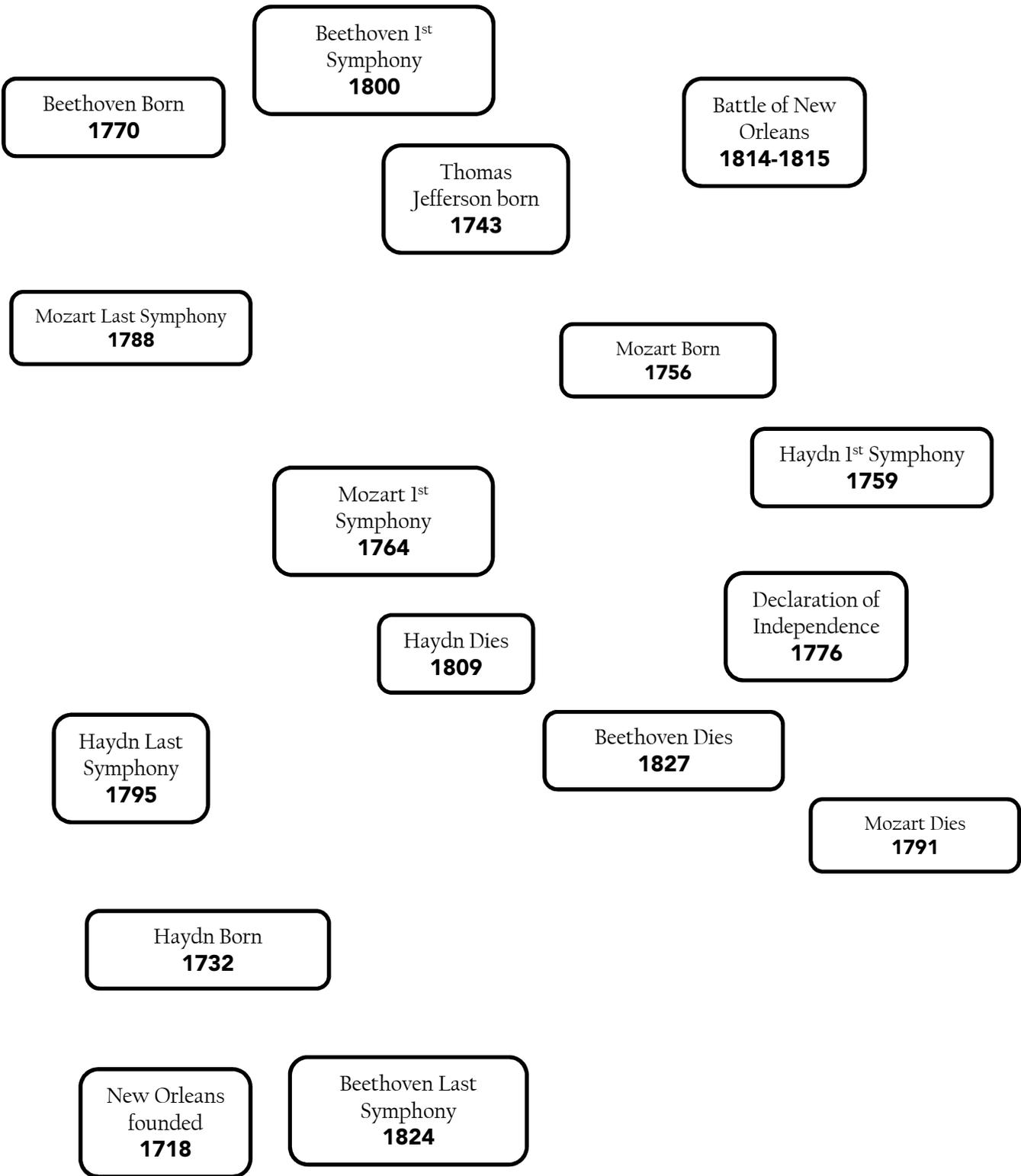
The finale to Mozart's Jupiter Symphony is based on a chant melody first found in the music of 17th-century composer Josquin des Prez (zhos-KANH deh-PREH). Mozart used it in a number of his compositions. However, Haydn also used it in one of his earliest symphonies. Listen to compare:

Video Clip: [Haydn Symphony No. 13 \(IV. Allegro molto\)](#) (14:00 - 17:10)

Using an older chant melody to write new music was a common practice for all three of these composers. This can be traced back to a book that all of them used to learn and teach music theory, *Gradus ad Parnassum (Steps to Parnassus)* written in 1725 by Johann Joseph Fux. This book taught **counterpoint**, a way of composing music with separate voices singing or playing different rhythms on top of each other.

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Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra: Sound Education



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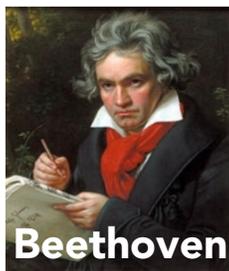
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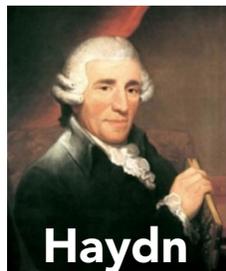
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Beethoven



Haydn



Mozart

1720
1730
1740
1750
1760
1770
1780
1790
1800
1810
1820
1830

New Orleans founded 1718			
		Haydn Born 1732	
Thomas Jefferson born 1743			
		Haydn 1 st Symphony 1759	Mozart Born 1756 Mozart 1 st Symphony 1764
	Beethoven Born 1770		
Declaration of Independence 1776			
			Mozart Last Symphony 1788
	Beethoven 1 st Symphony 1800	Haydn Last Symphony 1795	Mozart Dies 1791
		Haydn Dies 1809	
Battle of New Orleans 1814-1815	Beethoven Last Symphony 1824		
	Beethoven Dies 1827		