



30 Facts About Ludwig van Beethoven



Facts About Ludwig van Beethoven:

- 1 Beethoven died during a thunderstorm on the 29th March 1827 in Vienna.
- 2 When he died, Beethoven's headstone had only a single word – 'Beethoven'. Such was his fame at the time it was all that was needed.
- 3 It was reported that Beethoven often dipped his head in cold water before composing – neither he nor anyone else has given any reason why.
- 4 For three years (early in his career), Beethoven earned his living playing the Viola in an orchestra – possibly one of the reasons he was said to compose for the piano 'as if it was a stringed instrument'.
- 5 Beethoven's Sonata Opus 27 no. 1 (the one before the Moonlight Sonata) took over two years to compose because he had to write the Prometheus Ballet just after he'd started it; the Ballet was a commission so he had to finish that first before he could go back to the Sonata.

- 6 After his mother died of consumption in 1787, and he was forced to look after his younger brothers, Beethoven took his responsibilities very seriously; to the point where he refused to allow them to marry women who he thought were unsuitable.
- 7 Thomas Broadwood, the English piano builder, sent Beethoven one of his pianos as a gift in 1818. But, by the time he received it, he was profoundly deaf and wouldn't have heard a note.
- 8 We know a lot about how Beethoven composed from his sketchbooks that have mostly survived – all his ideas were written in these books first.
- 9 In one of Beethoven's letters, he said that he thought his deafness had started when he tripped and fell over after being startled. No one knows the real reason but it is believed to have been more likely to have been as a result of one of his many childhood illnesses – typhus, smallpox.
- 10 Beethoven was always ill. The catalogue of his ailments is long and his suffering would have been very real. During his life, he was known to have suffered from deafness, colitis, rheumatism, rheumatic fever, typhus, abscesses, ophthalmia, jaundice, chronic hepatitis, infections and cirrhosis of the liver.
- 11 Beethoven drunk a lot of alcohol; his father had been an alcoholic. He was once even arrested as a vagrant due to his drunkenness. The cirrhosis of his liver was only discovered after his death.
- 12 Beethoven's final words are believed to have been 'Pity, pity, too late!' Apparently, this was in response to having just received the gift of a case of wine from a music publisher.

- 13 Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is often known as the Choral Symphony – it was the first symphony ever to have parts for singers.
- 14 A disco version of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony arranged by Walter Murphy and called 'A Fifth of Beethoven', was used in the film Saturday Night Fever. The use of the word 'Fifth' in this context was referring to a bottle of liquor which was usually sold in bottles that contained a fifth of a gallon.
- 15 The Seventh Symphony by Beethoven was used in the 2010 award-winning film, 'The Kings Speech'.
- 16 Beethoven's father, a failed musician, was a bully. He realised his son's talent and, seeing financial rewards for himself, decided that he should be the new Mozart – he made the young Ludwig practice for hours. He died in 1792 before Beethoven's greatness was truly realised.
- 17 Young Ludwig had to leave school aged only 11 to help with family duties. As a result, he never learned to do multiplication or division.
- 18 Beethoven didn't call his Sonata Opus 27, No. 2 the 'Moonlight' He called it No. 14. The name was penned by the German poet Ludwig Rellstab, some years after Beethoven had died. Apparently, the poet thought the music sounded like moonlight reflecting on Lake Lucerne. The name stuck.
- 19 Beethoven's Third Symphony, known as the Eroica, was initially dedicated to Napoleon Bonaparte, whose ideas were mightily respected by Beethoven. However, when Napoleon declared himself Emperor, Beethoven went into one of his rages, ripped off the front page of the score and scribbled out Napoleon's name from the work.

- 20 Beethoven only wrote one opera, Fidelio. On the basis that took him over ten years of revisions, it's not surprising that he didn't write another. The original version is still occasionally performed and is known as Leonora.
- 21 After realising that his deafness was permanent and irreversible, Beethoven wrote a letter in 1802 to his two younger brothers – it is now known as the Heiligenstadt Testament – in which he faced up to his disability (surely the greatest a musician/composer can suffer) and announced his determination to overcome it. The letter was never sent and was found in his papers after his death in 1827.
- 22 After becoming deaf he communicated with his friends with 'conversation books' where they would write down what they wanted to ask him.
- 23 Deafness began to descend on Beethoven when he was only 25 years old – he suffered from tinnitus (ringing in his ears) for some years before it deteriorated completely.
- 24 The date of Beethoven's birth is not actually known. He was baptised on the 17th of December 1770, so it is usually assumed that he would have been born on the previous day – the 16th. Children at that time were usually baptised quickly on account that many of them didn't survive very long.
- 25 Beethoven taught for most of his life although he would only teach pupils if they had the genuine talent or were pretty girls. The girls weren't required to have any talent.
- 26 Beethoven always fell in love with unobtainable women so never consummated his love or married.
- 27 He fell in love with one of his pupils, Josephine Brunswick, in 1799; she was believed to be the intended recipient of his famous 'immortal beloved' love letter. She married a Count instead.

- 28 Beethoven also fell in love with a girl called Julie – she was a Countess. However, she couldn't marry him because he was deemed a commoner. He wrote 15 passionate and unrequited love letters to her.
- 29 His first composition was written when he was only 12. It was a set of 9 variations for piano on a March by Ernst Christoph Dressler, in C minor. As a portent for what was to come, it was extremely difficult to play.
- 30 The final movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is known as the 'Ode to Joy' – the words in the movement are sung to the poem of the same name written by Freidrich Schiller in 1785. The piece was subsequently adopted as the 'National Anthem of Europe' by the EU. Parts of it were also used in a Bruce Willis film (Die Hard) to accompany crooks cracking a safe, and Michaels Jackson's 1993 single (Will You Be There).Facts About Ludwig van Beethoven: