



0. BEETHOVEN - UNHAPPY CHILDHOOD - Story Preface

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Ludwig van Beethoven was born, in Bonn, on the 17th of December, 1770. He was born in this house, located at 515 Bonngasse. This pencil-drawing, by R. Beissel, was created in 1889—about 58 years after Beethoven's death.

Beethoven was born in the attic room of his family home in Bonn, Germany during December of 1770. Because his birth record is missing, no one can be sure of his exact birthdate.

His baptism record did survive, however. It reveals the child was christened on December 17, 1770 - at a time and place when infants were typically baptized the day after birth. As a result, Beethoven's birthday is commemorated on December 16.

As a lad, Ludwig had a difficult life. His father was a heavy drinker who never actualized his potential. Although Beethoven greatly loved his mother, she was unable to mitigate her husband's shortcomings. Their home, in Bonn, was generally an unhappy place.

Ludwig inherited his grandfather's musical talent, but his father treated him harshly. Although the senior Beethoven boasted of his son's ability, he did not praise him in public. Historians and biographers believe the young boy never knew his father was proud of him.

Beethoven, an impressive keyboardist, was composing by the time he was twelve. Greatly encouraged by his teacher - Christian Gottlob Neeffe - the youngster thought he had a muse who whispered in his ear.

Later Carl, his brother, recalled how fortunate it was - for the entire family - that Ludwig had such talent. Soon his skills produced income. The timing could not have been better since the family's inheritance - from Beethoven's paternal grandfather - was nearly gone.

Escaping the turmoil in his own house, Beethoven found peace at the home of friends - Eleonore and Stephan von Breuning - whose mother (Helene) understood the growing child was fragile, needing protection. "It's our job," she would say, "to keep the insects off the flower."

Lost in music, the teen-aged Beethoven went to Vienna where he could study with the best teachers. Plans changed, however, when his forty-year-old mother became extremely ill.

Returning home to Bonn, Beethoven lost the person he loved most. Thereafter, his father's drinking problem worsened.

Music lessons in Vienna were put on hold as Beethoven remained in Bonn. Realizing his father was incapable of managing the family's finances, Ludwig persuaded the Elector of Bonn (his father's employer) to pay him half the earnings, so he could care for the family's obligations. He was then nineteen years old.

By 1790, Bonn's leaders knew about Beethoven's skills. They selected him to write a cantata commemorating the death of Joseph II, the popular Hapsburg emperor. "Cantata on the Death of Joseph II," was the result.

This work, never publicly performed during Beethoven's lifetime, provides an early clue to the composer's blossoming genius. With its simple-yet-beautiful melody, the music initially rises - then falls back into itself.

It was a technique Beethoven would use - to great acclaim - for the rest of his composing career.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/BEETHOVEN-UNHAPPY-CHILDHOOD-Beethoven>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/BEETHOVEN-UNHAPPY-CHILDHOOD-Beethoven>

Media Stream

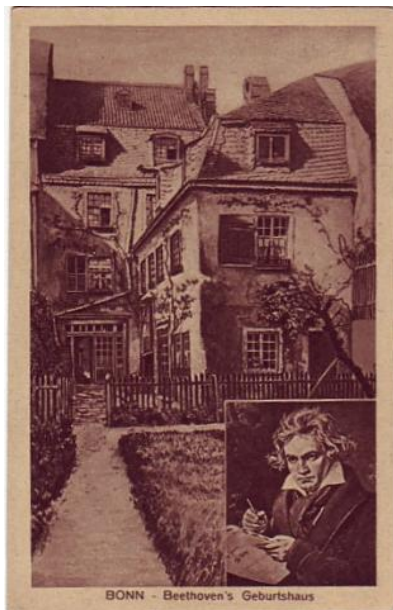


Beethoven's Birthplace

Image of Reiner Beissel's drawing, online courtesy [Beethoven-Haus Bonn](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-s-Birthplace>



Beethoven Birth Home

Sepia drawing of Beethoven's birth house, vintage post card.

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Beethoven's Father

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Beethoven's Mother

Image online, courtesy "Mad About Beethoven."

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Beethoven's Grandfather and Namesake

Portrait of Ludwig van Beethoven - the maestro's paternal grandfather - online, courtesy "Mad About Beethoven."

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beethoven-s-Grandfather-and-Namesake>



Christian Gottlob Neefe

Image online, courtesy [Beethoven-Haus Bonn](#).

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Beethoven at Thirteen

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Vienna - Late 18th Century

Map from the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv (the Austrian State Archives) - online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Scene in 18th-Century Vienna

Painting by Bellotto, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Joseph II - Holy Roman Emperor

Joseph II, 1775, painted by Anton von Maron. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Bonn, Germany - Map Locator

Quoted passages, regarding Bonn's history, from the English version of [Stadt Bonn](#) (the city of Bonn's web site).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bonn-Germany-Map-Locator>



Bonn - Old Town

Image by Thomas Wolf, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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BEETHOVEN - UNHAPPY CHILDHOOD

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Beethoven - Child Composer

Clip from "Beethoven," a 2005 [BBC television](#) production, featuring [Charles Hazlewood](#) and starring Paul Rhys as Beethoven.

Online, via [BBC Worldwide](#) Channel at YouTube. Copyright, BBC, all rights reserved.

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Director:

Ursula Macfarlane

Key Cast Members:

Paul Rhys

Ludwig van Beethoven

Jack Shepherd

Joseph Haydn

David Bamber

Prince Lichnowsky

Alice Eve

Countess Giulietta Guicciardi

Nicholas Farrell

Stephan von Breuning

Tom Goodman-Hill

Anton Schindler

Gareth David-Lloyd

Older Karl

Casper Harvey

Young Karl

Sarah Hadland

Johanna van Beethoven

Christian Coulson

Archduke Rudolph

Charles Hazlewood

Himself - Presenter

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Beethoven Moves to Vienna

Clip from "Beethoven," a 2005 [BBC television](#) production, featuring [Charles Hazlewood](#) and starring Paul Rhys as Beethoven. Copyright, BBC, all rights reserved.

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Christian Coulson

Archduke Rudolph

Charles Hazlewood

Himself - Presenter

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