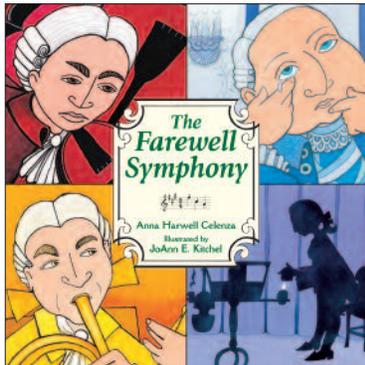


Musicians are often influenced by the times they live in. Through their music, we can experience melody and emotion. When we know the story behind the composition, we can also learn about the times and the culture in which the composer was living. Anna Harwell Celenza is a musician and professor of musicology who brings young readers the stories behind some of classical music's greatest pieces through her books. Share these stories with your class and explore history, culture, creative writing, vocabulary, and even mathematics. The composers highlighted in Anna Harwell Celenza's books were influenced by their times, and likewise influenced the world.

Using Music as a Window on History



Music is tied to a specific time and place. In the classroom, music can be used as a window on history. Here is a classroom activity that works well after students have read *The Farewell Symphony*.

You will find a portrait of Franz Joseph Haydn at www.classicalworks.com. Ask students to describe him. To get the conversation started, you might ask: Does this picture of Haydn remind you of another famous person from history?

Students will most likely answer: George Washington.

Haydn's wig and frilly white collar remind us of George Washington's clothes and hairstyle. We can tell by the fashion of their clothes that they lived during the same time period. In fact, George Washington and Franz Joseph Haydn were born in the same year, 1732.

Ask students to think about how fashions change. Each generation has its own special style. Kids growing up today dress differently from kids growing up in the 1950s and the 1920s.

Find pictures of popular styles of dress throughout the ages from the Internet, books, and magazines. Have students write about a particular era, such as Elizabethan England, including the style of dress that was popular, the music they listened to, who the leaders were, what was happening in government, etc. Have students share their findings.

Just as fashions of clothes change, so do fashions in music. Let the students talk about their favorite styles of music. Inevitably, someone will mention rap music. This is a brand new style of music. It wasn't around 25 years ago. Disco was the new music style in the 1970s. In the 1950s it was Elvis Presley's rock and roll. In the 1930s it was Louis Armstrong's Dixieland jazz. And if we go all the way back to the 1770s—the era of George Washington and Franz Joseph Haydn—the brand-new, fashionable style of music was the symphony.

Find pictures of famous musicians from different eras on the Internet, or in books and magazines. Play a game with students, asking them to identify the artists and the songs they made famous. Perhaps you can play these songs and discuss the time period that influenced the music and what kind of influence the artist had on his or her listeners. Consider artists and songs such as:

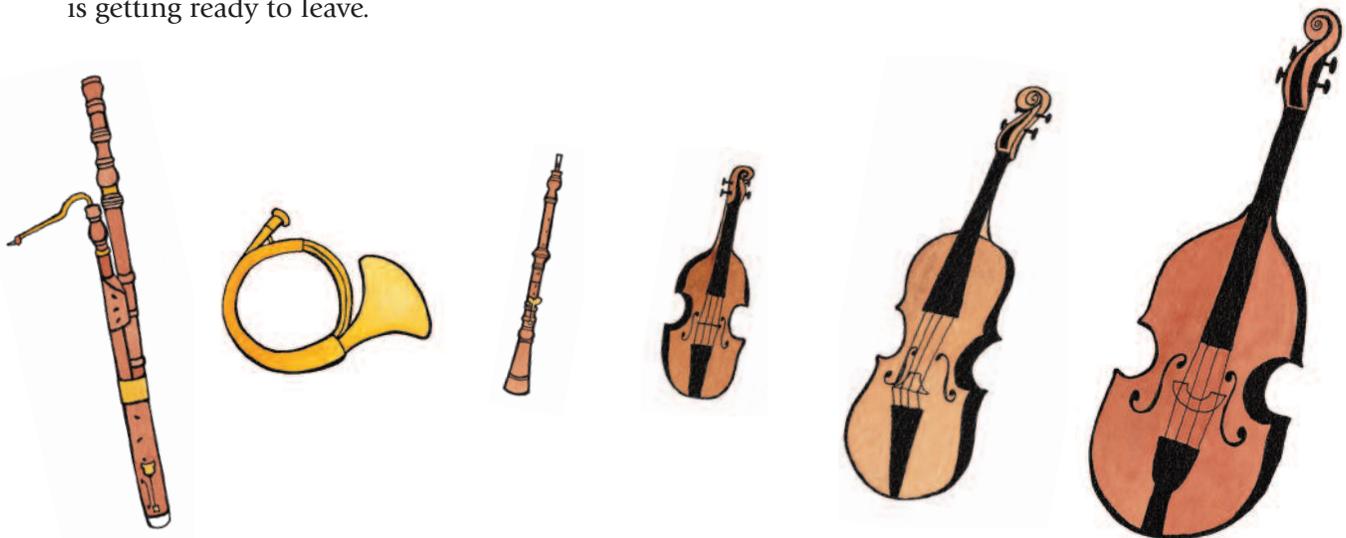
- The Beatles, *A Hard Day's Night*, 1964, England
- Madonna, *Holiday*, 1983, USA
- Johann Sebastian Bach, *The Goldberg Variations*, 1741, Germany
- Modest Mussorgsky, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, 1874, Russia
- Ludwig van Beethoven, *The Heroic Symphony*, 1806, Austria (Fun fact: Beethoven studied under Haydn)
- George Gershwin, *Rhapsody in Blue*, 1924, USA

When Haydn wrote *The Farewell Symphony* to convince Prince Nicholas it was time to go home, he used the brand-new, hip style of music—the symphony. We can compare this to music today. When Snoop Dogg has something important to say, he uses the hip style of music—a rap song—to get his message across to his listeners. Regarding each of the musicians discussed in the pictures, discuss the times these people lived in: who the world leaders were, how many people populated the earth, what scientific progress had been made, etc.

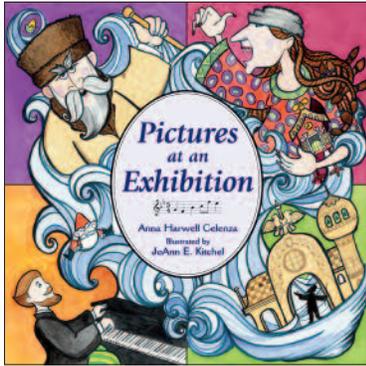
Listening Exercise

The students now have an understanding of when and why the symphony was written. This is the perfect time to listen to the music. Now it can serve as a window on history.

Listen to the slow section of the final movement. Notice how the orchestra plays the same music over and over. At the end of each section, one instrument in the orchestra plays a solo passage. This is the musician's way of saying "farewell," since right after the solo, the musician leaves the stage. See if the students can identify, by listening to the solo passages, which instrument is getting ready to leave.



Creative Writing and Storytelling



There are various ways to tell a story:

- You can tell a story using words, such as, "Once upon a time . . ."
- You can use pantomime and tell a story with gestures alone.
- You can tell a story by drawing a picture or a series of pictures.
- You can tell a story using music to express feelings.

Pictures at an Exhibition uses four storytelling techniques at once:

1. It uses words to tell the story of Modest, Victor, and Vladimir.
2. It uses pictures to tell the story.
3. Modest's music tells the story of his visit to the art gallery.
4. A variety of symbols are used in the borders surrounding the pictures. These help tell the story, too.

Give students a copy of page 4, a few of the illustrator's notes regarding symbols. Read the story and ask the class how each symbol relates to what's happening in the text and the illustrations. How do the symbols help in the telling of the story?

Creative Writing Exercise

Ask the students to tell a story of their own, using at least two of the techniques mentioned above.

Listening Exercise

Read the description of what Mussorgsky heard as he composed *Pictures at an Exhibition* at the piano. Listen to the CD. Ask the students if they can hear what Mussorgsky heard and imagine all the characters that he knew from his friend Victor's art. Ask students to draw their own pictures based on one of the four movements of *Pictures at an Exhibition*.



Pictures at an Exhibition
spot illustrations -

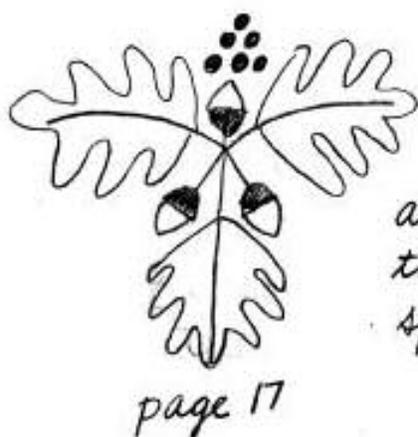
①



Flower, beauty, wisdom and humility



Spirals, mystery of life and death
Red - passion Black - death



oak leaves, the cycle of life and death, the leaf dying in the fall and being replaced in spring

Dots - from sorrow come unexpected blessings



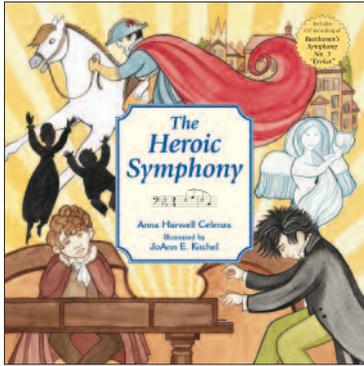
Butterfly - the resurrection

99 Ram's horn - Leadership and the kind of strength that overcomes problems

light green - spring, new growth and hope

JOANN E. KITCHEL

What Is a Hero?



Beethoven called his Symphony No. 3 the *Heroic Symphony*. The goal of this activity is to figure out why.

When Beethoven first began writing his symphony, he saw Napoleon as a hero, but then he changed his mind. Perhaps Beethoven believed that a hero is someone who puts the needs and desires of others before his or her own. Perhaps he believed that a hero must struggle against difficult odds. Can a hero be selfish? Should he or she be proud? Is our idea of a hero the same as the one Beethoven had 200 years ago?

Read *The Heroic Symphony* and discuss:

- Ask students to write a definition of the word “hero.”
- Compare their definitions to one found in a dictionary. Discuss any similarities and differences.
- Discuss with the class how Beethoven might have defined the word “hero.”
- Why did Beethoven change his mind about Napoleon being a hero?

Creative Writing Exercise

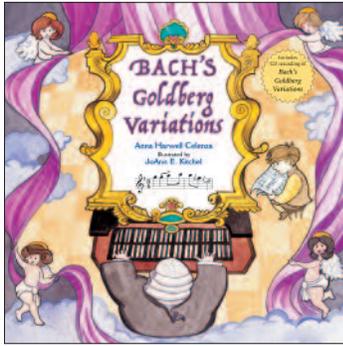
Once the students have come up with their own solid definition of a hero, ask them to write a poem or story about a person that fits their personal definition.

Listening Exercise

Beethoven’s *Heroic Symphony* is divided into four distinct movements: an Allegro con brio (fast with vigor), a slow Marcia funebre (funeral march), a Scherzo allegro (jovial and fast), and a final Allegro molto (very fast). Read the book then play the symphony. Ask the students to identify the four movements and compare them with the events of the story.



Thinking in Threes



When Johann Sebastian Bach composed the *Goldberg Variations*, he was thinking in threes. There are 31 parts to this composition: one theme and thirty variations. Bach divided the variations into ten groups of three. Each group contains 1) a dance, 2) a difficult piece, and 3) a canon.

When this pattern of three is repeated ten times, you get a total of thirty variations.

$$3 \times 10 = 30.$$

When Anna Harwell Celenza wrote the story *Bach's Goldberg Variations*, she was also thinking in threes. As you read the story, see if you can identify the pattern.

When JoAnn Kitchel illustrated *Bach's Goldberg Variations*, she was thinking in threes, too. Can you identify her tripartite (three-part) illustrations?

Thinking in threes is popular in storytelling and art. Can you think of other stories that use a pattern of three? Fairy tales often use a pattern of three. For example: *The Three Little Pigs*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, and *Rumplestiltskin*.

Creative Writing Exercise

Now it's your turn to think in threes. Write a story or draw a picture that's organized according to a pattern of three.

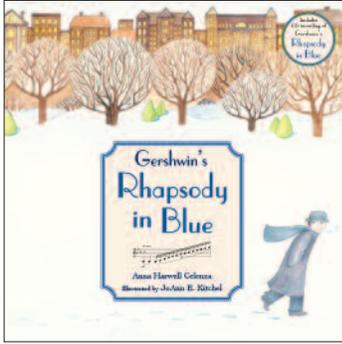
Listening Exercise

Play Variation One. This variation is based on a dance called the polonaise. Ask the students to consider what kind of movements they think make up this dance. Would they take big steps or little steps? By thinking about how they would move their feet, students can discover the beat or pulse of the music. Now ask them if the beats of the music are divided into groups of two or groups of three. If they have difficulty with this, have them listen as you clap along with the music. They will soon notice that as you clap, you divide the beats into groups of three.

Now listen to Variation Two. Remind the students of the basic characteristics of the Baroque style as illustrated in *Bach's Goldberg Variations*—a decorative style of capricious, elaborate, and ornate forms. Ask students to describe the many ways this variation reflects that style: the music sounds complex and busy, there are few pauses and little use of empty “sound space,” the music seems to be difficult to play, etc.

Now listen to Variation Three. Ask students if there is anything special about this variation. Although only one person is playing, it sounds as though there are two separate parts. Why? The students will probably notice that the variation begins with one hand playing the melody. A few seconds later the second hand echoes what the first hand played. This is a common characteristic of a genre called the canon. It resembles what we call today a “round.” To bring the lesson to a close, ask students to perform their own round. *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* is a great example.

The Joy of Listening



When George Gershwin wrote his *Rhapsody in Blue*, he listened to the world around him: the clicky, clickety, clack of the train as he traveled to Boston; the memories of his childhood; and the variety of music that surrounded him in New York. Here are two activities students can do after reading the book.

Creative Writing Exercise

Our musical tastes say a lot about who we are. Gershwin thought about all his favorite music when he composed *Rhapsody in Blue*. Ask students to write an essay about their musical tastes. What are their favorite types of music? Are there musical pieces they like to listen to every day? What music do they associate with various holidays? Are there any songs they remember singing when they were in nursery school or kindergarten? Students might like to focus on a fun theme, such as: “If I were a Rock Star,” “Dinner with Gershwin,” “Music Makes Me Happy Because,” “If George Gershwin Composed Today.”

Listening Exercise

Listen to the world around you. This activity can be done anywhere: in the classroom, at home, outside, or in the car. Ask students to close their eyes and listen to the sounds around them. Ask them to make a list of the various sounds they hear. Do any of the sounds have a rhythmic quality, like Gershwin’s train? Do any of them have a musical quality, like birdsong?

One by one, ask students to focus on one sound and imitate it—by clapping, tapping, stomping, vocally, or however they think best. Then have the class combine their sounds into their own rhythmic orchestra. Feel free to explore arrangement and conducting.

