

Activity 1

Complete the sentences using the information in the box. Be careful! There is one extra date and one extra nationality.

1943 1873 1811 1756 Austrian French Hungarian Russian

1. Liszt was born in _____. He was a _____ composer.
2. Rachmaninov was born in _____. He was a _____ composer.
3. Mozart was born in _____. He was a _____ composer.

Now read the texts and check your answers.

Texts

Quite possibly the most famous classical composer ever – Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – was born in Salzburg in 1756. His father, Leopold, was a composer and violinist, so young Wolfgang was brought up surrounded by music. By the age of five he could already play the piano and violin, and a year later he toured Europe giving concerts as a child prodigy. By the time he was 16 Mozart had written three operas and 25 symphonies. Mozart continued to compose at an amazing rate and by the time of his death at the age of 35 he had produced in excess of 500 pieces.

Like Mozart, Franz Liszt was regarded as a child prodigy. He was born in Doborjan (now Raiding) in what was then part of Hungary in 1811. By the age of 12 he was playing concerts across Europe and is still regarded as one of the greatest ever pianists. However, Liszt's greatest achievement and legacy was probably his work in helping other composers and musicians. Between 1848 and 1859 he was the musical director and conductor at Weimar in Germany and later on he set up the Conservatory of music in Budapest, Hungary. In 1886 he was visiting Bayreuth in Germany, attending a feast held in honour of Wagner, when he fell ill and died.

Sergei Rachmaninov was born in Semyonovo, Russia in 1873. At a young age his family moved to St Petersburg where he studied at the conservatory. He composed and performed his first piece of work at the age of 13, but it wasn't until the age of 19 that he completed his first piano concerto. However, it was his second piano concerto composed in 1901 for which he is probably best known partly because it was used in films such as *Brief Encounters* and Marilyn Monroe's *The Seven Year Itch*. In 1918, after the October Revolution, Rachmaninov left Russia and emigrated to New York. He died, at the age of 69 in Beverly Hills, California in 1943.

Activity 2

Read the texts again and complete each sentence with the name of the correct composer.

1. _____ and _____ were regarded as geniuses at a young age.
2. _____ composed more than 500 pieces of music.
3. _____ didn't perform his own work until he was a teenager.
4. _____ died at a young age.
5. _____ died from a sudden illness.
6. _____ followed in his father's footsteps.
7. _____ moved to the USA.
8. _____ played the violin.
9. _____ worked in Germany.
10. _____ wrote a piece of music that has been used in a number of films.

Activity 3

Discuss the questions.

1. Do you like listening to classical music?
2. Do you know any famous classical composers from your country?
3. Have you ever been to a classical concert?
4. Can you play the violin or piano?
5. Would you like to learn a musical instrument?

Great Composers

Adrian Tennant

Level

Pre-intermediate/Intermediate

Topic

Great composers

Subject(s)

Music/History

Time (approx)

Activity 1: 10 – 15 minutes

Activity 2: 15 – 20 minutes

Activity 3: 5 – 15 minutes

Preparation

All activities: One photocopy for each student.

Note: If you can get hold of recordings of any of the composers' pieces you could start off your lesson by playing a short extract and seeing if your students can identify the composer.

Activity 1

- 1 On the board write up the names *Liszt*, *Mozart* and *Rachmaninov* and ask your students if they can tell you anything about each one of them.
- 2 Write up the information they give you (however, you might want to check the information later to make sure it is all correct – either ask a music teacher or check using the websites given at the end).
- 3 Now hand out the worksheet to your students, but ask them to cover the texts (you could ask them to fold the page so that the texts are hidden).
- 4 Put the students in pairs and ask them to complete the three sentences using the information from the box. Tell the students there is one date and one nationality they don't need to use. Encourage the students to work together.

- 5 Now, pair the pairs and ask them to compare their sentences together.
- 6 Next, ask the students to quickly read through the three texts and check their answers. Tell them not to worry about understanding everything.
- 7 Check the answers as a class.

Answers

- 1 1811/Hungarian
- 2 1873/Russian
- 3 1756/Austrian

Activity 2

- 1 Hand out the worksheet.
- 2 Ask the students to read through the three texts again and then complete each sentence with the name(s) of the correct composers.
- 3 If you aren't sure your students understand what to do then try doing sentence 1 together and check before allowing the students to continue with the rest of the sentences.
- 4 Monitor and help where necessary.
- 5 Put the students in pairs and get them to check together.
- 6 Check as a class.

Answers

- 1 Mozart/Liszt
- 2 Mozart
- 3 Rachmaninov
- 4 Mozart
- 5 Liszt (*Mozart did as well, but there is no information in the text that the students read*)
- 6 Mozart
- 7 Rachmaninov
- 8 Mozart
- 9 Liszt
- 10 Rachmaninov

Activity 3

- 1 Put students into pairs or small groups.
- 2 Hand out the worksheet and ask the students to discuss the questions.
- 3 Encourage them to ask follow-up questions i.e. for question 5 if a student answers *Yes*, then a possible follow-up question is: *What instrument would you like to learn?*
- 4 Monitor and listen to what the students have to say.
- 5 Finally, ask each group to report back to rest of the class about their discussion.

Useful websites

There are lots of websites with information about these composers. Why not start with the ones below, all of which have great links to some of the best of the other websites.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/artist/jfw6/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/artist/m2qv/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/artist/pvcz/>