

Beethoven Beginnings

Repertoire:

Activity 1

1. Coriolanus Overture: https://youtu.be/Vvn2oGyji8s (0 – 1' 30")
2. Symphony No 9, 4th movement excerpt: https://youtu.be/-kcOpyM9cBg (20" – 3' 20")
3. Leonora Overture No. 3: https://youtu.be/5OibQYjPUqc (0 – 2')
4. Spring Sonata for violin and piano, 1st movement: https://youtu.be/qizSgHRRbEo (0 – 52")

Activity 2

5. Fidelio Overture: https://youtu.be/fq7g6du9S3s (0 – 2')
6. Leonora Overture No. 3: https://youtu.be/5OibQYjPUqc (0 – 2')

Resources:

1. Beginnings sheet (four opening paragraphs of books)

Activity 1:

1. Distribute the opening paragraphs of four stories provided below:
2. Next discuss:
    a. What have these extracts got in common?
    b. What makes you think they are all opening paragraphs?
    c. Do they all start in the same way?
    d. If there are different sorts of story beginnings can we categorise them? (e.g. Dramatic plunge in.... Scene-setting.... Intriguing puzzle.... Character building)
3. Next listen to the beginnings of four musical pieces by Beethoven (Youtube links 1 – 4).
4. Discuss together
    a. Which are beginnings?
    b. How do you know?
    c. What categories of story-beginning do they match?

Activity 2:

Leonora Overture No 3 was one of four overtures originally composed for Beethoven's only opera called Fidelio. He rejected three attempts at composing overtures before deciding on a fourth, simply called 'Fidelio' overture.

1. Discuss what they think is the purpose of an overture and in which musical contexts are overtures used?
    a. e.g. setting the scene, anticipating key events, introducing characters through e.g. leit motifs etc
    b. Opera, musical, opening of a concert etc

Fidelio is often described as an escape opera. It's story can be crudely summarised as:

A man called Florestan is falsely imprisoned by prison governor Don Pizzaro. Wife, Leonora (dressed as a Man calling herself Fidelio), gains employment in the prison. She hears that a minister is due to inspect the prison and that Florestan must be executed before it takes place. Leonora searches for Florestan. She hears of a man in the dungeons who is at death's door. She persuades other prison warders to allow her to help dig his grave. The prison governor appears and attempts to murder Florestan. Leonora draws a gun and saves Florestan. The minister arrives, Florestan is released and Don Pizzaro imprisoned.

Listen to the opening two minutes of both:

- Leonora Overture No. 3: https://youtu.be/5OibQYjPUqc (0 – 2')
- Fidelio Oveture: https://youtu.be/fq7g6du9S3s (0 – 2')

Discuss:

- What was Beethoven trying to achieve in each overture beginning?
- Why do you think that Beethoven chose the Fidelio Overture rather than the Leonora overture to begin his opera?

Beethoven Beginnings

The shockwave from the explosion threw Otto tumbling out of control through the air. He could hear his own quick panicky breathing, suddenly loud within the confines of the helmet. The stars in the night sky spun past crazily, huge pieces of burning debris whistling past his falling body, close enough to touch.

Hive – The Overlord Protocol by Mark Walden

Matt Freeman knew he was making a mistake.

He was sitting on a low wall outside Ipswich station, wearing a grey hooded sweatshirt, shapeless, faded jeans, and trainers with frayed laces. It was six o'clock in the evening and the London train had just pulled in. Behind him, commuters were fighting their way out of the station. The concourse was a tangle of cars, taxis and pedestrians, all of the m trying to find their way home. Someone leant on their horn and the noise blared out, cutting through the damp evening air. Matt heard it and looked up briefly. But the crowd meant nothing to him. He wasn't part of it. He never had been – and he sometimes through he never would be.

Raven's Gate by Anthony Horowitz

In a valley shaded with rhododendrons, close to the snow line, where a stream milky with melt-water splashed and where doves and linnets flew among the immense pines, lay a cave, half hidden by the crag above and the stiff heavy leaves that clustered below. The woods were full of sound: the stream between the rocks, the wind among the needles of the pine branches, the chitter of insects and the cries of small arboreal mammals, as well as the bird-song; and from time to time a stronger gust of wind would make one of the branches of cedar or a fir move against another and groan like a cello.

The Amber Spyglass by Phillip Pulman

When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow. When it healed, and Jem's fears of never being about to play football were assuaged, he was seldom self-conscious about his injury. His left arm was somewhat shorter than his right; when he stood of walked, the back of his hand was at right-angles to his body, his thumb parallel to his thigh. He couldn't have care less, so long as he could pass and punt.

To Kill a Mocking Bird by Harper Lee