

<sup>1</sup> *In the middle of his life, Ludwig van Beethoven, the German musician, slowly began to lose his hearing. Beethoven was afraid he would have to stop writing music. People tell the following story about how he found the courage to continue. No one knows to this day whether the story is true or not.*

<sup>2</sup> It was a cold winter night in 1801. The city of Vienna, Austria, lay sleeping under a full moon.

<sup>3</sup> A young man hurried home through a strange section of the city. He was Lud-

wig van Beethoven, a famous writer of music.

<sup>4</sup> Suddenly Beethoven stopped. From a nearby cottage came the sound of a piano. In fact, Beethoven recognized one of his own works. But it was not being played very well.

<sup>5</sup> After a moment the music stopped. Then he heard the sound of crying. "I can't get it right," sobbed a girl's voice. "I'll never get it right."

<sup>6</sup> Beethoven knocked at the cottage door. A young man opened it. Inside, the room was lit by only a few candles.

# Sounds of Moonlight

by Ron Shelley

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Beethoven could barely make out an old piano and a girl sitting in front of it.

7 "I heard music and then crying," said Beethoven. "Can I help in any way?"

8 The girl sighed. "I have been trying all night to play this piece of music. But I'm afraid I'll never get it right."

9 The girl was embarrassed. She told Beethoven that she and her brother had little money for music lessons. But she had gone to a concert and had heard this music. She and her brother knew that she would never play well unless she could hear good musicians play.

10 Beethoven smiled. "Would you like to have a concert now?" he asked. "I am a musician also."

11 "That is very good of you, sir," replied the girl. "But the piano is old and we have no sheet music."

12 This surprised Beethoven. "No sheet music?" he asked. "But you were playing . . ." Then he was silent. He suddenly understood why the piano was in the dark. The girl was blind. She couldn't read a note from a sheet of music. She was playing his music from memory.

13 Beethoven's eyes filled with tears. He sat down at the piano and began to play. He played all the pieces of music that he knew. He played with all the feeling and skill that he had.

14 Finally the candles burned out. Beethoven went to the window and swept back the curtains. Moonlight flooded the room. It covered the bare floor and furniture with silver light. Then Beethoven started to play something new. He tried to describe for the girl what the moonlight was like. The notes filled the room with flowing sound. He had never played so well. The music grew softer. When it finally stopped, the girl whispered, "You must be Beethoven. No one else could play so well." Her brother added, "We will never forget this kindness."

15 That night Beethoven went home and finished the music he had played. It came to be called the *Moonlight* Sonata and is still played today. A few years later Beethoven started to grow deaf. Soon he could hardly hear. Sounds seemed to be coming through a blanket that got thicker and thicker.

16 Finally Beethoven could not hear a note. But still he kept on writing music. He heard the notes in his head. Some of his greatest works were written after he'd become deaf. It may be that the blind girl's struggle to play the piano that night gave him the courage not to give up.

oven could barely make out an old and a girl sitting in front of it. "I heard music and then crying," said the girl. "Can I help in any way?" The girl sighed. "I have been trying all my life to play this piece of music. But I'm afraid I'll never get it right." The girl was embarrassed. She told her mother that she and her brother had no money for music lessons. But she went to a concert and had heard the music. She and her brother knew that they would never play well unless they could hear good musicians play. Beethoven smiled. "Would you like to go to a concert now?" he asked. "I am a musician also." "That is very good of you, sir," replied the girl. "But the piano is old and we have no sheet music." The girl surprised Beethoven. "No sheet music?" he asked. "But you were playing." Then he was silent. He suddenly understood why the piano was in the room. The girl was blind. She couldn't read a note from a sheet of music. She was playing his music from memory. Beethoven's eyes filled with tears. He sat down at the piano and began to play. He played all the pieces of music that he had. He played with all the feeling and passion that he had.

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## How Well Did You Read?

Write the letter of the best answer for each question.

- 1 Why did Beethoven knock at the door of the cottage?
  - a He heard someone playing his music.
  - b He heard someone crying.
  - c Both a and b
- 2 Why was the girl upset?
  - a She was feeling sorry for herself.
  - b She couldn't buy sheet music.
  - c She was having trouble playing the music correctly.
- 3 Who was the *least* important person in the story?
  - a The blind girl
  - b The girl's brother
  - c Beethoven
- 4 What did the story tell about Beethoven's character?
  - a He could be an understanding man.
  - b He had the courage to overcome a handicap.
  - c Both a and b
- 5 If the story is true, what importance did the girl have in Beethoven's life?
  - a She taught him certain things about writing music.
  - b She inspired in him the courage to conquer his own difficulties.
  - c Both a and b
- 6 Why was the story called *Sounds of Moonlight*?
  - a Beethoven used musical sounds to describe the moonlight.
  - b Moonlight makes no sound.

## Learn about Words

### Vocabulary

**A** You can often tell the meaning of a word by reading the words around it.

Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. Then find the word that fits the meaning. Write the word.

- 1 uneasy and self-conscious (9)
- 2 musical performance (9)
- 3 person with skill in music (10)
- 4 quickly; all at once (12)
- 5 ability to remember (12)
- 6 window hangings; draperies (14)
- 7 great effort (16)

**B** A word may have more than one meaning. Its meaning depends on the way it is used. The word *band* is an example.

The *band* will play a march.

The hat had a wide *band* around it.

Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. See how the word in **heavy type** below is used in the paragraph. Decide whether it has meaning **a** or **b**. Write *a* or *b*.

- 8 **hearing** (1)
  - a sense by which a person tells sound
  - b formal or official meeting
- 9 **playing** (12)
  - a having fun
  - b performing on a musical instrument
- 10 **note** (12)

## Word Study

### C Large cats have **big** paws.

Words that have the same or almost the same meaning are called synonyms. *Large* is a synonym of *big*. Read each sentence and the words below it. Write the word that has the same meaning as the word in **heavy type**.

- 11 My sister is very **slim**.  
slender fat
- 12 This pot is too **hot** to handle.  
warm cold
- 13 The dog is **harmless**.  
dangerous safe
- 14 Marta answered **rapidly**.  
quickly slowly
- 15 My brother is a **powerful** man.  
strong weak
- 16 The grass was **moist** with the morning dew.  
dry damp
- 17 Please **mix** the butter, milk, and flour.  
blend separate
- 18 The growling dog **frightened** the child.  
calmed scared

### D Pups are **little** dogs, not **big** ones.

Words with opposite meanings are called antonyms. *Little* is an antonym of *big*. Read each sentence and the words below it. Write the word that means the opposite of the word in **heavy type**.

- 19 Jim's room is very **messy**.  
neat dirty

- 20 That bunny is **fat**.  
heavy thin
- 21 I **found** the gloves on the table.  
discovered lost
- 22 The **top** of the chest is dusty.  
side bottom
- 23 The pillows are very **hard**.  
soft firm
- 24 It was **noisy** in that big class.  
quiet loud
- 25 I think that your answer is **correct**.  
right wrong
- 26 That is an unusually **beautiful** kitten.  
ugly pretty

E Each word below fits in one of two areas: science or music. If the word fits best in the science area, write S. If the word fits best in the music area, write M.

- 27 piano  
28 song  
29 labs  
30 flute  
31 tune  
32 experiment  
33 temperature

## Use Your Imagination

This story tells about a great man who had to overcome a handicap. Others have had to do the same. Who, among the people you know, has had the greatest struggle? Write a brief story telling about the person. When you've finished, share the story with a friend.