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## WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a child prodigy. This meant that he had exceptional musical talent as a performer and composer. He was born on January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria and began to demonstrate his extraordinary musical talent at a very early age. When he was just three years old, after hearing his older sister, Maria Anna, play the harpsichord, he began to play the instrument, too.

His father, Leopold, was the concert master and a violinist employed by the Archbishop of Salzburg, so the fact that his children were musical was not unusual. However, the outstanding ability of young Wolfgang was extremely rare.

Leopold taught Maria Anna, who was nicknamed Nannerl, to play the harpsichord, and seeing Wolfgang's talent began his lessons when he was only four years old. He also instructed the children in the theory of music, so that Wolfgang began to compose his own music by the time he was five years old. He also learned to play the violin and was considered to be a *virtuoso* on this instrument, too.

Wolfgang showed ability in other academic areas. He did not attend school, being instructed at home by his father. He was particularly fond of arithmetic and enjoyed solving mathematical problems. When he was older, he learned to speak several languages while travelling through Europe on his concert tours

He was not a healthy child and was often sick. This continued into his adult life probably because he led an unhealthy lifestyle, eating erratically and becoming so engrossed in his composing that he did not sleep properly.

Leopold was, naturally, very proud of the accomplishments of his children, but he was also very ambitious. He could see a way to achieve fame, and also make money, using Wolfgang and Nannerl's musical talents. He received permission to travel from the Archbishop, and decided to take his talented children on tour. He felt sure that with their musical ability and charm they would be invited to perform for many important people.

In 1762 they began the first of their many concert tours. They left Salzburg and travelled first to Munich, Germany where they performed for the Elector Maximilian Joseph of Bavaria. Later the whole family went to Vienna where they were invited to play for the Emperor Francis I and Empress Maria Theresa. Everyone who heard them perform was very impressed with the children, and they soon became known as the Wonder Children. Wolfgang was not only a talented musician, but his charming manner delighted everyone, too.

Later they journeyed to Paris, where they played for the King and Queen at the Palace of Versailles, then went on to London where they entertained King George III and Queen Charlotte. Wolfgang played the organ for the King and accompanied Queen Charlotte's singing on the harpsichord.

# WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

## Music Activities

1. There have been many different types of keyboard instruments in the last six hundred years. Mozart performed on a harpsichord, today many people play the piano. Use the resources available to make a list of keyboard instruments. Write three facts about each. Present your list and facts in chart form.
2. Many musical compositions are based on a theme and variations. The theme is the main melody, and variations can be changes in tempo, rhythm, from major to minor mode or dynamics.  
Mozart wrote a series of variations for the melody of the nursery rhyme, *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*.

Be a lyricist and write new words for the melody of *Twinkle, Twinkle Little star*. Choose one of the following topics as your theme:

- 1) School    2) Teenagers    3) Your Family    4) Animals.

Be imaginative, but make sure that the words make sense and fit the rhythm accurately. Work with a partner to develop a variation of the song. You can do this by changing the dynamics (loud and soft), the rhythm (smooth or syncopated), the language (English and French or any other language.)

Practise your song and variation, then present it to the class.

## Language Activities

1. Mozart and his sister traveled a great deal. They visited many cities in Europe. Pretend that you are the young Mozart. You have just entertained Empress Maria Theresa at a grand party in her palace in Vienna.  
Write a letter to one of your friends at home describing this event. Give details of the party, the food and the clothes that people wore. You might want to describe the palace. Tell how you felt and how the various guests reacted to your performance. You will probably need to do some research to ensure historical accuracy.
2. Create a poem about the night.  
Your poem should be at least sixteen lines in length, arranged in two stanzas of eight lines or four stanzas of four lines.  
Your poem should include similes or metaphors to describe the night.  
Use a thesaurus to help you find more interesting words for your poem.  
When you are satisfied with the final draft, write it out neatly and decorate the paper to improve the appearance of the poem. Remember to give the poem a title and add your name as author.

**EINE KLEINE NACHTMUSIK - ALLEGRO**  
**by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

**Introduction**

This is a collection of short, contrasting compositions, written for stringed instruments: two groups or sections of violins, violas, cellos and double basses.

Its title means “a little music for the night” and the overall mood is very light hearted.

This is the first movement of the suite or collection, and *allegro* means fast paced.

It has a strong rhythm, easily felt and is in common (four beat) time.

**ALLEGRO**

**Section A**

1. The first theme is played in unison: all instrument play the same notes.
2. The first violin plays the tune, supported by the other instruments playing repeated notes.
3. This is an ornamented line, with extra trills and staccato sixteenth note flourishes.
4. A bridge (connecting section) where the violin plays the melody in a higher pitch. This first part of the composition is played *forte*, loudly.
5. An abrupt change in dynamics: very quiet cascading figure, followed by a “tiptoe” like figure that is repeated twice.
6. A high-pitched cascading figure played staccato, and showing contrasting dynamics.
7. Final cadence, with “tiptoe’ effect again.
  
8. Section A is then repeated again.
  
9. The first theme is repeated in a different key: the same figures are played *forte* (loud) moving to *piano* (soft).
10. Bridge (a linking section) moving to .....
11. Section A is repeated
12. Bridge of smooth, even notes leading to final measures, which repeat the main theme.