



Composers

Bach - Handel - Purcell

by Beatrice Wilder

Contents

- Worksheet 1 **Johann Sebastian Bach**
His early years - story and comprehension exercises
- Worksheet 2 **Johann Sebastian Bach**
His later years - story and comprehension exercises
- Worksheet 3 **Johann Sebastian Bach**
Time line with question boxes to complete
- Worksheet 4 **Georg Frideric Handel**
His early years - story and comprehension exercises
- Worksheet 5 **Georg Frideric Handel**
His later years - story and comprehension exercises
- Worksheet 6 **Georg Frideric Handel**
Time line with question boxes to complete
- Worksheet 7 **Henry Purcell**
His early years - story and comprehension exercises
- Worksheet 8 **Henry Purcell**
His later years - story and comprehension exercises
- Worksheet 9 **Henry Purcell**
Time line with question boxes to complete
- Worksheet 10 **Quiz - Name the Composer**
Tick the correct answer - multiple choice
- Worksheet 11 **Word Search**
Find answers to questions about Bach, Handel or Purcell
- Worksheet 12 **Crossword**

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Composers

Bach - Handel - Purcell

Sheet 1

Name

Johann Sebastian Bach - 1685 - 1750 his early years

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Germany, on March 21, 1665. He was born into a very musical family which produced many prominent musicians over several generations. Johann Sebastian's father, Johann Ambrosius Bach, was a well known musician. He was actively involved in local music and was a well known violinist and court trumpeter. Johann Sebastian, who was called by his middle name, Sebastian, began to learn about music from his father.

Sadly, by the time Sebastian was ten years old, both of his parents had died. He went to live with his older brother, Johann Christoph, in another town called Ohrdruf. Christoph was an organist at his church and he made sure that his younger brother kept up practicing his music.

While Sebastian was a young boy he began to learn to play the violin, viola, clavier (which was a keyboard instrument) and the organ. He also sang in the choir at the church.

Christoph was able to help Sebastian to develop his keyboard skills a lot because he himself was a fine organist and he had to repair and maintain the church organ as well, which meant that he could teach Sebastian very much about the instrument.

Apart from being a talented musician, Sebastian was deeply religious. While he was living with his brother Christoph, he went to school where music and religion were important parts of his studies. Sebastian stayed with his brother until he was fifteen years old. He then went to live in Lüneburg and continued his studies there while earning his own living as a chorister at the Church of Saint Michael. here he learned much more about church music and about music from other countries like France and Italy, which really interested him. He was by now a very accomplished musician and a talented composer.

At the age of eighteen he travelled to Weimar to play the violin in the chamber orchestra of Prince Johann Ernst of Weimar and after that he moved on to Arnstadt, to play the church organ there. Even though he was such a young man he was already getting to be well known and people liked his music very much.

Can you answer these questions?

What was the name of the town where Johann Sebastian was born?

Who was his first music teacher?

Who took care of him after his parents died?

What instrument did his brother play?

Name two instruments that he had to practice.

How old was he when he left his brother's house?

What did he learn about when he went to Lüneburg?

True or False

Johann Sebastian's father played the flute

He came from a very musical family

Johann Sebastian sang in the church choir

He helped repair the violins at church

He was deeply religious

His father died when he was 12

He played organ for Duke Johann Ernst



Composers

Bach - Handel - Purcell

Sheet 2

Name

Johann Sebastian Bach - 1685 - 1750 his later years

When Sebastian was twenty he spent three months studying with a famous German composer and organist, Dietrich Buxtehude. He was only supposed to be there for one month but he was learning so much that he stayed on for another two months just because he wanted to. He used a lot of what he learned in his own compositions and his own playing. Some of his new ideas sounded strange to his listeners but most people liked what they heard.

Two years later he married Maria Barbara Bach, a cousin of his, and they went to live in Mülhausen, where Sebastian played the organ in the Church of Saint Blasius. They didn't stay there long. In the following year, 1708, they decided to go back to Weimar where Sebastian was to work for Duke Wilhelm Ernst again as organist and violinist. He stayed there for nine years. During this time Sebastian wrote about thirty cantatas as well as music for organ and harpsichord. He was made leader of the court orchestra in Weimar in 1714 when he was twenty nine years old.

During this time Sebastian traveled around Germany quite a lot giving concerts. He was getting to be famous. At the same time his own family was growing. Sebastian and Maria had seven children altogether, but in those days many children died, especially when they were still babies. Only four of their children survived.

In 1717 Sebastian took his family and moved to Köthen to become the conductor of the orchestra for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen. In between writing musically professionally, which he did a great deal of, he also managed to write music books for his wife and children, to help them advance musically as well. He wrote the 'Well Tempered Clavier,' the 'Inventions,' and the 'Little Organ Book' for them.

Suddenly, in 1720, his wife Maria died. This left him very sad and with four young children to care for. It must have been a very difficult time for him.

About a year later he married Anna Magdalena Wilcken, who was a singer and the daughter of a musician. She took over the care of his children and helped him to get on with his work. They had thirteen more children but only six of them survived.

The Bach family stayed in Köthen until 1723 when when they moved to Leipzig. Sebastian was appointed musical director and choirmaster of Saint Thomas' church. He stayed in Leipzig for the rest of his life and wrote the greatest of all his music there.

Can you answer these questions?

Which great organist and composer did he study with?

Who was Johann Sebastian Bach's first wife?.....

What work did he do soon after his first marriage?

How many of his children survived altogether?

Who did he go to work for in 1708?.....

What music books did he write for his family

Where did he move to from Köthen

True or False

He taught Dietrich Buxtehude

He wrote 13 cantatas in Weimar

Sebastian wrote 'Inventions' for his family

His second wife, Anna, was a pianist

He moved to Weimar in 1708

He became a conductor for Prince Leopold

He stayed in Leipzig for nine years



Composers

Bach - Handel - Purcell

Sheet 3

Johann Sebastian Bach

- 1685 - 1750

Name

Time Line

1685	1695	1700	1703	1708	1717	1723	1729	1741	1750
Born in Eisenach on March 21st	Lived in Ohrdruf with his brother	Chorister at the Church of St Michael	Moved to Arnstadt Married Maria 1707	Lived in Weimar	Wrote Toccata and Fugue in D minor Lived in Cothen Maria died in 1720 Married Anna Magdalena 1721 Moved to Leipzig	1723 Wrote Passion of St. John 1723	1729 Prince Leopold's funeral Wrote The Passion of St Matthew in 1729	1741 Serious eye trouble was developing	1750 Died at Leipzig on July 28th

Both of his parents had died by the time he was ten years old

Worked for Duke Ernst and was placed under house arrest when he tried to leave without the Duke's permission in 1717

Appointed conductor to Prince Leopold Wrote Brandenburg Concertos in 1721

Wrote Passion of St. John 1723

Wrote 295 Cantatas

Wrote the Peasant Cantata in 1742

Visited the court of Frederic The Great King of Prussia

Became totally blind after failed eye operation

Completed Mass in B Minor

Johann Sebastian Bach's wife died in poverty ten years after her husband died. None of his music was published for 50 years.

Where did Johann Sebastian Bach live in 1695?

In which year did he study with Dietrich Buxtehude?

What did he do in the Church of St Michael?.....

Who did he work for in Weimar?

In which year did Maria die?

Why was he placed under house arrest?

When were the Brandenburg Concertos written?

Where did he live for 27 years of his life?

How many cantatas did he write after he moved to Leipzig?

What health problem did he suffer before he died?



Composers

Bach - Handel - Purcell

Sheet 4

Name

George Frideric Handel - 1685 - 1759

his early years

George Frideric Handel was born about a month before Johann Sebastian Bach and would have been playing children's games around his home in Halle, Germany at the same time that Sebastian was playing in his home town, Eisenach, which was not all that far away. There were a lot of musicians in Halle, so it would not have been uncommon for a young boy to take an interest in music. George loved to watch the musicians play. He especially liked to watch the horn players on the bridges over the rivers.

His father, however, did not want him to grow up to be a musician and insisted on him studying law instead. George's family were hard workers and had little time for music. George's father, also called George Handel, was a surgeon and because of this he knew the Duke of Saxony. At one meeting the Duke heard George playing the organ and said that he would provide him with lessons. His father gave his permission and George became so good at playing the organ that he became the assistant organist at the church when he was just twelve years old.

Sadly, at this time George's father died. In his grief George wrote a poem to remember him by. Because he was very concerned about obeying his father's wishes George decided to go to school and study law. However, his heart was not in it. He was so much drawn to music that he did not finish his studies. At that time a position became vacant as organist at a Cathedral. He applied for it and was accepted. When George turned eighteen he moved to Hamburg, which is a big city. In Hamburg George became a violinist at the German Opera House. By now he had learned to play the organ, the harpsichord, the violin and the oboe. He was drawn to the horn players and of these George liked the oboe the best. He was hard working and ambitious, always looking for ways to improve his music and interested in meeting people who could help him in his career. He also began to think about travelling to other countries.

Can you answer these questions?

What was the name of the town where George was born?

Which other composer was born in the same year?.....

What did George's father want him to study?

Who organised music lessons for George?

What major decision did George make when he was 18?.....

How old was he when his father died?

Name three instruments that he could play?

True or False	
George Handel was born in Hamburg	He liked watching the horn players
He studied law	His father wanted him to be a musician.
He was taught to play the organ	Handel played a violin at church
	He was offered a job as an organist



Composers

Bach - Handel - Purcell

Sheet 5

Name

George Frideric Handel - 1685 - 1759

his later years

George Handel wanted to travel and expand his musical career. In When he was 22 he decided to visit Italy, where he learnt a lot about their style, which he liked and used in his own music as well. He spent time at Florence, Rome and Naples and while he was there he wrote a lot of music, including operas, oratorios and cantatas. The last opera that he wrote in Italy was 'Agrippina,' which he wrote in 1709 in Venice. It was a huge success.

The following year he returned to Germany to become the court composer and conductor for the Elector of Hanover, but he soon wanted to travel again and by the end of the year he left for London, where he found more success with his new opera, 'Rinaldo.'

When he went back to Germany, he asked permission for a short trip back to London, which was granted. He never returned from that trip but made his home in London permanently.

London was an exciting place, which had just been rebuilt after the disastrous Fire of London, which lasted for five days and burnt down most of the old buildings.

Handel became very popular in England. Queen Anne, the Queen of England at the time, liked him very much. After he wrote a piece of music called 'Birthday Ode' for her she was so happy she said she would pay him two hundred pounds a year for the rest of his life.

In 1719 Handel started the Royal Academy of Music where he presented some of his greatest operas over the next ten years. He had many successes and a few failures but he was a popular person and was happy in London. Handel became a naturalized British subject in 1727.

As well as operas, Handel wrote music for national celebrations. One of his most famous pieces was the 'Water Music' which he wrote for the King to listen to as he sailed down the Thames River.

He was later appointed composer to the Chapel Royal by the King. It was around this time that he composed one of his greatest and most well known oratorios, 'The Messiah.' This work is performed by many choirs today at Christmas time.

Can you answer these questions?

Name two places that Handel visited in Italy.

Name an opera that he wrote while in Italy.

How long did he stay in Italy?

Where was he when he wrote 'Rinaldo'?

What major project did he undertake in 1719?.....

Who did he write 'Birthday Ode' for?

Name two other pieces that he wrote.

True or False	
Handel wrote 'Agrippina' in Italy	Queen Anne liked his music.
He lived in Hamburg most of his life.	He wrote music for celebrations.
He was in the Fire of London	He became composer to the Chapel Royal
	He died in Germany



Composers

Bach - Handel - Purcell

Sheet 6

George Frideric Handel - 1685 - 1759

Name

Time Line

Organised yearly concerts for the London Founding Hospital

Had eye surgery which left him almost blind.

Died in London on April 14th

The music for the Royal Fireworks was written

1745 Jacobite forces entered Edinburgh. Invaded as far as Derby.

Wrote the Messiah in 1741 (this took him only 23 days)

Suffered a stroke

1727 - Became an English citizen by naturalization

Visited Italy and Germany

Was Director of Italian Opera at the Royal Academy

Composed four anthems for Coronation of George II

Giulio Cesare 1724 Tamerlano 1724 Rodelinda 1725

1720 George I Radamisto 1720

Water Music 1717

Wrote the Birthday Ode for Queen Anne who then gave him a pension of 200 pounds a year

Wrote 'Almira' 1704

Wrote 'Rinaldo' 1711

Went to Italy 1706

Left Italy

Went to London

His father died

Studied law at Halle University

Learnt to play the organ

Born in Halle on February 24th

1685 1688 James II

1697 William III and Mary II

1702 Queen Anne

1710

1714

1720 George I

1724

1726

1737 George II

1741

1749

1752

1759

What did he study at the university?

Name an opera he wrote in Italy.

Where did Handel live for most of his life?.....

Who was King of England when he wrote the Water Music?

When was the Music for the Royal Fireworks written?

Who did he write coronation anthems for?

How long did he take to compose The Messiah?

When did he become an English citizen?

For which hospital did he organize yearly concerts?

What health problem did he suffer before he died?



Composers

Bach - Handel - Purcell
Sheet 7

Name

Henry Purcell - 1659 - 1695

his early years

When Henry Purcell was a little boy, he would have played in the cobble-stone lanes around his home in London with his little brother, Daniel, who was only one year younger than Henry. He grew up to be a composer as well.

Some sad things happened during their childhood years. Henry was only about six years old when the Great Plague spread to London. This was a terrible disease that killed about a hundred thousand people in only one year. When Henry was seven years old he lived through the great fire of London as well. It lasted for five days and destroyed most of the city because most of the buildings were made of wood.

After that, Henry saw the city being rebuilt, but this time the buildings were made out of brick and stone so they were much safer and better looking.

Henry had a fine singing voice. This was not surprising because both his father and uncle Thomas were musicians and Gentlemen of the Royal Chapel, where musicians who played for the king were trained. When he was about nine years old, Henry became one of the Children in the Chapel Royal and was taught to sing properly by a man named Henry Cooke. Mr Cooke used to be a captain in the army and he disciplined the boys in his care and made sure that they practiced as much as they needed to and studied all the subjects that they had to learn.

The boys didn't only learn to sing. They had to work at all their usual school subjects as well, and they also had to learn how to read and write music and to play all sorts of musical instruments like the violin and the lute and the organ and the harpsichord. Henry Purcell was a very good student and learned faster than many of the older boys. He was particularly good at writing music.

When Henry was only thirteen years old, his teacher, Henry Cooke, died. Mr Cooke's son-in-law, Pelham Humphrey, who was a very clever musician, took his place and taught Henry a lot about writing different styles of music. Mr Humphrey had been to the continent of Europe and had learned about the French and Italian styles of music and he taught Henry as much as he could.

Henry had to leave the choir when his voice broke, but he then became an apprentice to the keeper of the royal instruments and also had the job of tuning the organ in Westminster Abbey while he continued his studies and began seriously writing music.

Can you answer these questions?

What was the name of the city where Henry Purcell was born?

Name one terrible thing that happened when he was a boy?

Who was Henry's first teacher?

What subject was Henry particularly good at?

Who taught Henry after Mr Cooke died?

Which two styles of music did Henry learn about?

What job did Henry have in Westminster Abbey?

True or False	
Henry had a fine singing voice	Henry learned music in France
His father and uncle were musicians	He was good at writing music
He taught Henry Cooke to sing	He tuned the piano in Westminster Abbey
	His first teacher was Mr Humphrey



Composers

Bach - Handel - Purcell
Sheet 8

Name

Henry Purcell - 1659 - 1695

his later years

When Henry Purcell was eighteen years old, Matthew Locke, who was the composer for Court Violins, died. Henry was appointed to take over this role. This was the real beginning of his work as a composer. He became composer to the Kings Band two years later and soon after that he began writing music for the stage as well. He also wrote a lot of music for the church.

It was an interesting time to be a composer in London because so much had changed in a short space of time. All the great buildings in London had to be planned and rebuilt after the great fire of 1666. All the houses and shops had to be rebuilt. Also when Charles II became the king of England there had been no king before him for eleven years. The previous king (Charles I) was beheaded in 1649. Charles II intended to bring music and joy back to England and he certainly achieved this goal. London became a bright, merry place that was alive with music and theatre.

Purcell's first attempt at writing music for the theatre was the music to a play called 'Theodosius,' which was written by Nathaniel Lee. After this he was asked to write the music for many other plays. A well known man called John Dryden wrote a play called 'King Arthur' in 1691 and he asked Henry Purcell to write music for it. Henry wrote a great deal of music for public entertainment.

When he was twenty two years old, Purcell married his wife, Frances. They had six children but three of these died. One of his children, a son named Edward, also grew up to be a musician. During his life, Purcell produced over one hundred songs. He became very well known for his song writing. He also continued to write music for special occasions like coronations, funerals and Saints Days.

In 1689 he wrote his only true opera, which was called 'Dido and Aeneas.' It was a miniature opera that was intended to be performed at a girls' school in Chelsea. It was a great success.

He was writing music for a semi-opera called 'The Indian Queen' but he suddenly became so ill that he couldn't complete it. His brother Daniel had to take over for him.

Henry Purcell died at his home in London on November 21, 1695.

Can you answer these questions?

Who did Purcell take over from when he was 18?

Name a play that Purcell wrote the music for?

At least how many songs did Purcell write?

Name his only true opera.

Name a special occasion he might have written music for.

Which of his children grew up to be a musician?

What was his final work (completed by his brother)?

True or False	
Henry wrote music for the stage	His first opera was called 'King Arthur'
He wrote coronation music	He wrote no church music
He wrote over 1000 songs	He wrote music for John Dryden
	His completed 'Indian Queen' and then died



Composers

Bach - Handel - Purcell

Sheet 10

Name

QUIZ

Name the Composer - tick the correct answer

Dido and Aeneas

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Brandenburg Concertos

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Music for the Royal Fireworks

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Tamerlano

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Music for King Arthur

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

The Messiah

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

St. Matthew Passion

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

The Indian Queen

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Rinaldo

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Music for Theodosius

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

St. John Passion

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Water Music

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Almira

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Peasant Cantata

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Tocatta and Fugue in D minor

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Rodelinda

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Giulio Cesare

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Dioclesian

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

My Heart is Inditing

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Radamisto

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell

Mass in B minor

Bach
 Handel
 Purcell



Composers

Bach - Handel - Purcell

Sheet 11

Name

Wordsearch

Find the answers to the questions on these composers reading across, up, down or diagonally.
Draw circles around them and write the answers on the dotted lines.

W S Y E R H P M U H L P L H L
 E E U Y C C P C P C L E A S E
 I B S L H H I C T A I L G G P
 M A K T S O N O G N L N I E A
 A S R T M R D U A E O Z D S H
 R T O N I I E D N S P U A A C
 F I W A D S N N S I H T I N N
 D A E S N T A S E E A S B O I
 N N R A S E E L T T S L E D L
 W A I E E R L X N E I G N N O
 U G F P C Z U A M N R A K O I
 E R Y Q N B C V D U L V M L V
 C O C H A R L E S G I T A L Y
 H R B E R N M R N S A M O H T
 M G M O F I R E A R I M L A V

Johann Sebastian Bach.

Was born in

His middle name

An instrument he played

..... at Church of St Michael

Studied with Dietrich

Married Anna

Lived here for 9 years

Wrote 295 at Leipzig

Lived in for 27 years

Wrote Cantata in 1742

Went before he died

George Frideric Handel.

Wrote(opera) in 1704

Wrote Birthday Ode for Queen

Lived most of his life in

Music for Royal (1749)

Was born in

Went to in 1706

Went to in 1710

Wrote the in 1741

Was fond of this instrument

First instrument he learnt

His father was a

Henry Purcell.

Joined the Children of theRoyal

KingII reigned in 1659

His brother's name was

Only opera wasand Aeneas

He saw the Greatof London

His wife's name was

Taught by Pelham

He lived through the Bubonic

Wrote more than 100

He had an uncle named

Was buried inAbbey

