

Claude Debussy Comprehension

Claude Debussy was born Achille-Claude on August 22nd 1862. He was born in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, near Paris. Debussy had four other siblings.

Debussy started taking piano lessons at the age of seven when his aunt first noticed how musically talented he was. When he was only ten years old, Debussy began studying at the very strict Paris Conservatory. He studied composition there for the next 11 years but did not achieve as highly as he had hoped as a pianist. He later won a special prize for composition, meaning he was given a scholarship to the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Debussy had to live there for four years and was quite unhappy; this stopped him from composing for a while.

Debussy had a keen interest in visual art, particularly favouring the new style called Impressionism. Impressionist paintings weren't lifelike pictures; instead they were paintings created using thousands of dots in order to create an 'impression' of what the painter was focusing on. Debussy tried to use this very idea in his own musical compositions as he was trying to create something different to what had been heard previously.

The Suite Bergamasque is one of Debussy's most famous piano suites. It is made up of four movements, or sections, of which 'Clair de Lune' is the third.

Another of his famous compositions is named 'Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune' which he composed for orchestra. This describes the dreams of a mythical half-human and half-goat creature. Many musicians believe that this was the first piece of the modern era of classical music.

After a lifetime of composition, Debussy died in Paris on 25 March 1918.



Claude Debussy Comprehension Questions

1. What is the composer's full name?

2. At what age did he begin taking piano lessons?

3. Where did he go to study at the age of 10?

4. Where was he given his scholarship to?

5. Why do you think he might have been unhappy there?

6. What style of painting did he try to recreate through his composition?

7. Where does 'Clair de Lune' appear in Suite Bergamasque?

8. What is the meaning behind 'Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune'?

