

# Claude Debussy

## Important Facts to Know About Claude Debussy



**Born:** 1862 in France

**Died:** 1918

**Period of Music:** Impressionistic

**Instrument(s) He Played:** Piano

**Major Compositions:**

Piano: *Suite bergamasque; Children's Corner Suite; Preludes, Books 1 and 2*

Orchestra: *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun; La Mer; Images*

Opera: *Pelléas et Mélisande*

**Interesting Facts:** Debussy won the Grand Prix de Rome for composers when he was 22.

His *Children's Corner Suite* was inspired by his daughter, Chou Chou.

**Suggested Listening:** *Clair de lune (from Suite bergamasque)*

## Hey Kids, Meet

# Claude Debussy

French Impressionist Era Composer (1862-1918)

Claude Debussy was born in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France, on August 22, 1862. He was the oldest of five children. His father, owned a china and crockery shop, and his mother, Victorine Manoury Debussy, was a seamstress.

Claude began piano lessons at the age of seven with an Italian violinist named Cerrito. His musical talent was quite evident, and by the age of ten Claude began studying music at the Paris Conservatoire. During his time there he studied composition, music history, piano, organ, and solfège. His experimental approach to composing music was problematic to his teachers however, as he did not like following the

strict rules of the Conservatory.



In 1884 Debussy was awarded the Prix de Rome for his composition *L'enfant prodigue* (The Prodigal Son), and received a scholarship to the Académie des Beaux-Arts. In the next year Debussy wrote of his longing to pursue his own way composing, saying, "I am sure the Institute would not approve, for naturally it regards the path which it ordains as the only right one. But there is no help for it! I am too enamoured of my freedom, too fond of my own ideas!"

Debussy returned to Paris in 1887, and soon after was introduced to Gamelan music (Indonesian music performed with bells, gongs and xylophones, and sometimes voices). In the following years Debussy would incorporate these sounds in his own music, producing a unique new sound. The music written during this period represents his early masterpieces, including *Ariettes oubliées* (Forgotten Arias) (1888), *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun) (1892), and the *String Quartet* (1893).

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Debussy's opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, was a sensation when first performed in 1902. The attention gained with *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, earned Debussy significant recognition, finally establishing him as a leading figure in French music.

Claude Debussy died on March 25, 1918. He is remembered as one of the most influential composers of the Impressionist period. His most popular pieces include *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1892), *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *La Mer (The Sea)* (1905), and *Children's Corner Suite* (1908), a six-movement suite for solo piano which includes the popular Golliwogg's Cakewalk.



8 Words/Phrases

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

**Instructions**  
 Read *Hey Kids, Meet Claude Debussy!*, and then enjoy the word search. The words you are looking for are keywords from the biography - the important stuff - so you'll need the biography to help you figure out what the words are. Have fun!

Composer Word Search

# Claude Debussy

# Composer Claude Debussy



## In the Moonlight

- For this activity, you will listen to Debussy's "Claire de Lune." Before starting the music, think about the following questions.
  - Do you enjoy looking at the moon?
  - How does the moon make you feel?
  - What phase of the moon do you enjoy seeing the most?
  - Which do you like better, a moonlit night or a night with no moon?
- Debussy's "Claire de Lune" is about moonlight. (The French word for "moon" is "lune.") Listen to the piece several times. Your listening could include the piano version, the orchestral version, or both. As you listen to "Claire de Lune," draw a picture that expresses how the music makes you feel. Write down what you are thinking as the music is played. After the piece is over, draw a picture of a scene with moonlight in it.
- Write an acrostic poem about how moonlight makes you feel. An acrostic poem is made by writing the subject word vertically on the page and using each letter to begin a word or phrase that is related to the subject. (In this case, "moonlight.")

	_____	<b>J</b>
	_____	<b>H</b>
	_____	<b>G</b>
	_____	<b>I</b>
	_____	<b>L</b>
	_____	<b>N</b>
	_____	<b>O</b>
	_____	<b>O</b>
	_____	<b>M</b>
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