

The Beauty of Beethoven

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Aesthetic Response Lesson Plan

Grade Level 9-12

Summary

After reading excerpts from the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, students will analyze and interpret aesthetic beauty. They will apply their knowledge by identifying, analyzing and interpreting beauty in excerpts from Beethoven's Fifth symphony.

Standard

Analyze and interpret a philosophical position identified in works in the arts.

Indicator of Achievement

Students will:

Analyze and interpret beauty based on philosophical excerpts from Plato

Identify, analyze and interpret beauty in excerpts from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony

Materials

Plato, Philebus, sections 25c-26a, Republic, sections 401b-401e, Symposium, sections, 188a, 197c-197d

Available at:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>

Simple Analysis of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 (If possible have students use classroom computers, if unavailable prints score excerpts and record music.)

Lesson Description

After reading the philosophical excerpts students should discuss questions from the teaching guide. Once the questions have been explored have students analyze score excerpts while playing music of Beethoven. After each excerpt have students interpret the music in terms of aesthetic beauty.

Assessment

Have students answer questions and interpret the musical examples from the Teaching Guide orally or by written exam.

Teaching Guide

Ancient Greek Philosophical Studies

1. What is beauty according to Plato? (Philebus, sections 25c-26a)

Beauty is the result of a unity of opposites in a proportionate and harmonious way. Symmetry is the result of the ratio 1:1, and is the most popular ratio used in the arts although not the only one. The aesthetic interpretation of beauty in musical works requires the identification of musical opposites (i.e. loud-soft, major-minor, slow-fast, legato-staccato).

2. What is the relationship between beauty and love? (Symposium, sections 188a, 197c, 210e)

Love is the force that brings the opposites together in order to create beauty. The study of beauty consists of studying love as beauty and love are counterparts. Love consists of beauty and goodness, and is the cause of beauty and goodness in others.

3. What effect does beauty have? (Republic, sections 401b-401e)

Beauty influences character by making individuals good and friendly while imparting grace, refining taste, and facilitating clear thinking. This influence occurs subconsciously over time.

Additional Questions:

What is the relationship between beauty and ethics?

How does beauty contribute to civilization?

What is a symbol and how do they effect us? (Carl Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.)

Aesthetic Interpretation

Have students listen to the excerpts form Beethoven's 5th symphony while following score. After each example have students analyze the musical phrases and identify the combinations of musical opposites listed below:

First Movement

Example 1:

Short and long note duration

Example 2:

Gradual change from sparse to dense texture

Example 3:

Loud and soft dynamics, horns and violin sections

Example 5:

Strings and woodwind sections, low and high register

Example 6:

Legato and staccato articulation

Second Movement

Example 7:

Odd time signature in relation to First Movement using even , legato and staccato articulation, loud beginning and soft ending of phrase

Example 8:

Smooth rhythm and jerky dotted note rhythm

Third Movement

Example 9:

Melodic contour goes up and down

Example 10:

Short and long note duration, legato and staccato articulation

Example 11:

Short and longer note duration creating the sensation of fast and slow movement

Example 12:

Relatively longer note duration and shorter staccato notes

Example 14:

Loud and soft dynamics, legato and staccato articulation , ascending and descending melodic contour

Example 15:

Loud accented note of longer duration and softer notes of shorter duration

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Example:7:

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Third Movement

Example 9: Melodic contour goes up and down

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