

# Classical Composers

## Teaching with Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

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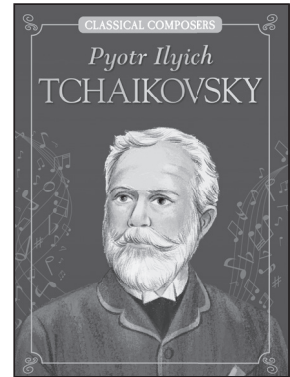
### Introduction or Review

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky is known as one among Russia's greatest composers. He became famous for his emotional and passionate music. Born in Votkinsk, Russia, on May 7, 1840 his music remains celebrated nearly 200 years later, and it captivates audiences everywhere in the world.

Expectations for Tchaikovsky had been low at the start. No one believed he would be successful as a composer, but he became dedicated to music. His determination led him to create several of the most loved pieces in classical music. He offers listeners an abundance of emotion. Now, Tchaikovsky is considered one of the greatest musical talents to have ever existed despite early expectations.

Tchaikovsky's life story is captivating, and much like his music it is full of ups and downs. He knew both the heights of love and the lows of depression. His music is full of love and tragic beauty and comes from a life both wondrous and full of sadness. Tchaikovsky's life and music are inseparable.

He was not just a composer, he became a notable artist: a true genius. Tchaikovsky's mark on music history is permanent. His music is timeless will be remembered for many years more.



Lexile: 750L Words: 1,310

### Vocabulary Review to supplement the Glossary

#### 1. COMPOSER

**Definition:** a composer is a person who writes music. Composers imagine and write melodies, harmonies and rhythms. These are combined to make pieces of music.

**Example:** Tchaikovsky was a famous composer that wrote beautiful pieces such as "Swan Lake" and "The Nutcracker".

#### 2. ORCHESTRATION

**Definition:** orchestration is the process of writing music for an orchestra or a choir. It includes different musical parts to various instruments to create a balanced and wanted sound..

**Example:** when Tchaikovsky composed his famous symphonies, he sensibly orchestrated each piece, deciding how each section of the orchestra would contribute to the whole sound.

### 3. CONDUCTOR

**Definition:** to conduct means to lead or direct musical performance. Usually, it is an orchestra or a choir. The Conductor uses arm gestures to guide the performers. The goal is to make sure the performers play together.

**Example:** Tchaikovsky conducted many of his own compositions. This Includes the first performance of his Sixth Symphony. In this performance, he guided the Orchestra through the music.

### 4. CONSERVATORY

**Definition:** a Conservatory is a specialized school. Here students learn about music theory, how to play instruments, how to compose music, etc.

**Example:** Tchaikovsky assisted the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Here he studied music composition. He learned about different musical styles.

### 5. OVERTURE

**Definition:** an Overture is a musical introduction. It introduces a larger work like an opera or ballet. It includes themes that will appear later in the piece.

**Example:** Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" is a well-known overture. It commemorates Russia's victory over Napoleon. This celebration is done with dramatic festive music.

### 6. SYMPHONY

**Definition:** a Symphony is a large complicated musical composition. Typically, it is written for an orchestra. It usually consists of multiple sections called movements. Each movement has its own theme.

**Example:** one of Tchaikovsky's most famous works is his 6th Symphony. Also known as "Pathétique," it is known for its deep emotion and dramatic melodies.

### 7. BALLET

**Definition:** Ballet is a form of dance performance. It tells a story through dance movements. Ballet often involves elaborate costumes and staging.

**Example:** Tchaikovsky wrote several renowned ballets like "Swan Lake" and "The Nutcracker". These ballets are performed around the world. They are mostly performed during special occasions. Christmas is one such occasion.

### 8. CLERK

**Definition:** a Clerk is a Person who works in an office. The job is mainly focused on performing administrative tasks. This includes keeping records, answering correspondence and handling paperwork.

**Example:** Before dedicating himself to music, Tchaikovsky worked as a clerk. He worked for the Ministry of Justice in Russia. At the Ministry, he managed administrative tasks.

### 9. ENCOURAGE

**Definition:** Encourage means to give support. It is about giving confidence or hope. With encouragement a person gets motivated. They are more likely to continue their efforts or try new things.

**Example:** During his time at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Tchaikovsky got encouragement. His teachers encouraged him to pursue his passion for composing music. This inspiration led him to become a famous composer.

## 10. CHOLERA

**Definition:** Cholera is a bacteriological infection. The symptoms include diarrhea and dehydration. This disease spread through contaminated water or food..

**Example:** Sadly, Tchaikovsky became ill. His illness was cholera. He died on November 6 1893. It was shortly after conducting his Sixth Symphony. This event took place in St. Petersburg.

## 11. PATRON

**Definition:** a Patron funds an artist's work. Patron supports creative endeavors. This support allows artist to avoid financial concerns. Patron also supports various projects. They could be scientific or humanitarian in nature. Fundings may also be for developing new business ideas.

**Example:** Nadezhda von Meck was a great patron. She supported Tchaikovsky. With her help, he could compose music full-time. This led to some of his best works.

## Reading Comprehension Questions

### 1. Where was Tchaikovsky born?

**Answer:** Votkinsk Russia.

### 2. Why did Tchaikovsky first study law instead of music?

**Answer:** His parents wanted him to become a lawyer. So, he studied history politics and law at a boarding school.

### 3. What was Tchaikovsky's first ballet? How was it received?

**Answer:** His first ballet was "Swan Lake". It was not well received initially. Some people found the music too

### 4. What was the name of Tchaikovsky's patron and how did this help him?

**Answer:** Nadezhda von Meck was his patron. This financial support allowed Tchaikovsky to focus on composing music.

## Writing Activity

### A Composer's Journey"

**OBJECTIVE:** Write a creative text, imagining yourself as P. I. Tchaikovsky.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Imagine you are Tchaikovsky. Write a diary entry about a significant moment in your life. This moment may be when you first started composing music. It could be about when you received support from Nadezhda von Meck. In the diary entry be sure to include details about how you felt. Tell us what you hoped to achieve with your music. Use 3 or more vocabulary words that are provided. The vocabulary words must appear in the diary entry.

**EXAMPLE:** The day was remarkable. I finished composing a new piece of music. I hope everyone will love it. It has been a long journey. The orchestration was very challenging. I feel so grateful for the support that my patron gives me, that allows me to focus only on my music and encouraged me in the process.

## Music Activity

### 1. Rhythm and Movement

**OBJECTIVE:** Understand rhythm and tempo through movement.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Listen: play a Tchaikovsky's music piece. Choose one with a strong rhythm just like "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" from "The Nutcracker".

**CREATE MOVEMENTS:** Students will create dance movements. They can also create actions that match rhythm. Make sure to match tempo of the music.

### 2. Music and Art Integration

**OBJECTIVE:** Connect music with visual art.

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

**LISTEN:** Play a piece of Tchaikovsky's music.

A good source of music for the educator is: <https://www.classicfm.com/composers/tchaikovsky/>

**CREATE ART:** Students should draw or paint while listening to the music. Ask them to think of colors shapes and patterns. This should match mood of the music.

Have students present their artwork. They should explain how music inspired them, talking about the creative process.



### 3. "Tchaikovsky's Musical Journey"

**OBJECTIVE:** Exploring Tchaikovsky's life and music. This is accomplished using a timeline activity.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Creation of Timeline: A timeline of Tchaikovsky's life is to be built. This will include key events. Also, it will encompass his major compositions.

## Evaluation

### 1. Comprehension

**1.1** What were some of Tchaikovsky's most prominent works? What themes or stories did they represent?

**EXPECTED ANSWER:** "Swan Lake, "The Nutcracker" and "1812 Overture." "Swan Lake" is a ballet about a princess who becomes a swan. "The Nutcracker" tells a magical Christmas story. "1812 Overture" honors Russia's victory over Napoleon complete with sounds from a battle.

**1.2** Describe early life of Tchaikovsky. Explain how his family played key role in his career in music.

**EXPECTED ANSWER:** He was born in Votkinsk, Russia. Tchaikovsky's family initially did not support his musical motivations. In his childhood he started taking piano lessons, even though his family wanted him to be a lawyer. Later he pursued music as a serious vocation, and a patron financially supported him.

**1.3** What was the role of Nadezhda von Meck in Tchaikovsky's life and career?

**EXPECTED ANSWER:** Nadezhda von Meck supported Tchaikovsky financially. This support allowed him to compose fulltime. Her patronage (or sponsorship) was crucial for his career development.

## 2. Understanding Vocabulary

**2.1** What is a “Clerk”? How did this role fit into Tchaikovsky’s early career?

*EXPECTED ANSWER:* Clerk performs administrative tasks in an office. Tchaikovsky worked as clerk for the Ministry of Justice before he fully committed to writing & playing music.

**2.2** How Did Tchaikovsky’s teachers at Conservatory encourage him in his musical career?

*EXPECTED ANSWER:* Tchaikovsky’s teachers supported his passion for composing, and also helped him develop his musical skills. They led him to focus on music instead of law.

**2.3** What does the term “Conductor” mean in the context of a musical work?

How Did Tchaikovsky engage in conducting his own music?

*EXPECTED ANSWER:* To conduct means to lead an Orchestra during a performance. It also means to lead. Tchaikovsky conducted his own works. One of them was his Sixth Symphony. He guided (or conducted) performers through the music.

**2.1** What does “cholera” mean and how did it affect Tchaikovsky’s life

*EXPECTED ANSWER:* Cholera is a serious disease that causes diarrhea and dehydration. Tchaikovsky got cholera and died from it in 1893.

