Use this high school lesson in a music class, a history class, or a German language class. After studying the life and works of Ludwig van Beethoven, spend the last 20–25 minutes of class time viewing the film, *Crescendo*, and discussing it with the students.

**Teacher/parent note:** The film, *Crescendo*, contains what some might feel is an intense birth scene. Please preview the film to make sure it’s appropriate for your audience.

**ABOUT LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**

Most famous for his Fifth Symphony, Ludwig van Beethoven is one of the greatest composers of all time. He was born in 1770 in Bonn, Germany, and was quickly drawn to music. Beethoven’s family lived in poverty caused by his father’s excessive drinking and violent temper. At the age of eight, Beethoven, a child prodigy, began to perform publicly. Beethoven’s life was struck by tragedy when his mother died of consumption at the age of 40. As his fame grew, Beethoven began to travel. He met with great composers such as Mozart and Haydn. As a musician, Beethoven greatly admired Mozart, Bach, and Handel, but his music was refreshingly new and creative.

At the age of 28, Beethoven began to lose his hearing. As his disability grew, Beethoven began to withdraw from the world, focusing on his compositions rather than his virtuoso playing. By 1817, Beethoven was completely deaf. He could only “hear” music by feeling the vibrations. Despite his disability, Beethoven wrote some of his most dramatic works during his deafness. When his Ninth Symphony was first performed, someone had to turn him around so that he could see the audience applauding him. Beethoven died in 1827, leaving behind a radically changed world of music.

**ACTIVITY**

Students of all ages can enjoy a virtual interactive tour of Beethoven’s life: [beethoven-haus-bonn.de](http://beethoven-haus-bonn.de)

**LISTENING SUGGESTIONS**

- Fifth Symphony
- Seventh Symphony
- Ninth Symphony
- Piano Sonata No. 8 Pathétique
- Piano Sonata No. 14 Moonlight Sonata
CRESCENDO FILM

Based on a true story, but taking some artistic license, Crescendo follows a day in the hard life of a young wife in the 16th century. As the woman feels forced to make a difficult decision, a series of events leaves viewers astounded. Note that this film contains an intense birthing scene that may or may not be suitable for younger students. Produced by Eduardo Verástegui, Jason Jones, and Patti Mallette.

Watch Crescendo online (approximately 15 minutes). It is filmed in German with English subtitles.
youtube.com/watch?v=CafJJNETvqM

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CRESCENDO

1. How is the story of the grain of rice and James Cook a metaphor for Beethoven’s life?
Every little thing can become something great. When we make small decisions, we have no idea how they can impact the future. Beethoven’s mother struggled with the idea of having a child with an abusive husband, but she courageously raised her son and he changed the world of music.

2. How do our everyday decisions affect the world?
Answers will vary.

3. What does the woman decide to do in the film? How does her decision play out?
At first, the woman decides to have an abortion. Then she pours enough elixir to commit suicide, but outside influences come into play and she can do neither—have an abortion or commit suicide.

What would have happened if she committed suicide or had the abortion?
Beethoven would have been killed.

4. Can you imagine doing something that changes the world? Give some examples.
Answers will vary.

Who are some other examples of famous people who might have been aborted had their mothers not made the courageous decision to reject abortion?
Justin Bieber, Tim Tebow, Celine Dion, Jack Nicholson, Andrea Bocelli, Nick Cannon, etc.

5. Imagine a world without Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony or Moonlight Sonata. How was the world of music changed because Beethoven’s mother did not abort him?
Each person is uniquely created by God with special talents, abilities, and a special mission (or vocation) from God. If Beethoven’s mother had aborted him, there would never be a Fifth Symphony or Sonata Pathétique because Beethoven wouldn’t have been there to write them. Abortion affects more than just the child, his mother, and his family, but also the rest of the world and history. We will never know just how much we have lost through the horror of abortion and how many great artists, musicians, writers, scientists, and heroes were denied the chance to live and change the world.

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