

# George Gershwin Comprehension

George Gershwin was born on September 26th 1898 in Brooklyn, New York. He was an American composer and pianist. Gershwin was one of four children and his parents were immigrants from Russia.

As a youngster, Gershwin often missed school and was quite badly behaved. When he was about 12 years old his parents bought a piano. It quickly became clear that Gershwin was naturally gifted as he taught himself how to play. He later had formal piano lessons and was considered a genius by his piano teacher.

In 1916, he composed his first song, however his first major hit was 'Swanee', which was composed in 10 minutes on a bus! 'Swanee' sold an estimated two million records.

When he was in his twenties, Gershwin really found fame and success. He wrote songs with his brother and wrote shows for Broadway theatre, leading to popularity in London too. He also became friends with other notable composers and the dancer, Fred Astaire.

George liked to write both popular and classical music and found ways of mixing the two. His most famous classical piece of work is 'Rhapsody in Blue' which has been used in numerous films and television advertisements.

Sadly, Gershwin died of a brain tumour at the young age of 38. In his short life he had written operas, classical pieces, musicals and popular songs.



# George Gershwin Comprehension Questions

1. How many brothers and sisters did Gershwin have?

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2. Which instrument was Gershwin particularly gifted at playing?

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3. What was the name of his very successful piece which is estimated to have sold around 2 million copies?

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4. Which family member did Gershwin work with to write songs?

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5. Which classical piece of music is Gershwin well known for?

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6. As well as classical music, which other types of music did he compose?

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