

Lesson 9

Directions: Read the following passage. Then answer questions 1 through 3.

Scott Joplin

by Marcelle Stern

Scott Joplin was an extraordinary figure in the history of American music. He was one of the originators of ragtime, a style of music that was a forerunner of jazz. He was also, arguably, its greatest composer.

Joplin was born in 1868. His father had played the violin in a band on the plantation where he had been a slave. Joplin's mother was a wonderful singer. She accompanied herself on the banjo. During young Scott's childhood he was constantly surrounded by music, and he decided to take up the piano.

While still in his teens, Scott left home to become a professional musician. In 1885 he ended up in St. Louis, Missouri. In St. Louis, he met musicians who were playing pieces called rags. They were derived mainly from popular songs, but played in an offbeat rhythm called ragtime. That rhythm put stresses in what sounded like all the wrong places. It made the tunes exciting to dance to.

Fascinated by ragtime, Joplin decided to become a composer. He began to perform regularly at the Maple Leaf Club. Later, in 1899, Joplin published his first important work, called "Original Rags." A publisher named John Stark published more of Joplin's works. Within a few years, Joplin became famous.

Joplin hoped that his pieces would be considered art, and that his music might be played in concert halls someday. He wrote some long dance pieces that were like mini-ballets. He even wrote a full-scale opera, *Treemonisha*, but he couldn't find any large producer for it. The rest of Joplin's life is a sad story. His music was popular for a while, but it was not performed in concert halls during his lifetime.

But then, in the 1970s, a new generation of musicians discovered Scott Joplin's music. Before long, his rags were being played in concerts and used in movies. His longer pieces have inspired many ballets. *Treemonisha* eventually succeeded on the opera-house stage. Today, the sounds of ragtime can be heard everywhere.

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Lesson 9**Practice: Using Cue Words**

Directions: Use “Scott Joplin” to answer the following questions.

1. Which statement in the second paragraph is an opinion?
- (A) Joplin was born in 1868. (C) Joplin’s mother was a wonderful singer.
- (B) His father had played the violin in a band on the plantation where he had been a slave. (D) She accompanied herself on the banjo.

Explain

Write the cue word that helps you know what kind of answer is expected.

2. Which event in this biography happened before Joplin was born?

Explain

Write two cue words that help you know what kind of answer is expected.

3. Find an opinion in the next-to-last paragraph. List a fact that the writer states to support the opinion.

Explain

Write the cue words that help you know what kind of answer is expected.

CHECK

Did you use cue words to help you think about the question?

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