

# Music in the Movies





Early movies had no sound, but music was played during the movie.

## Music in the Movies

When you watch a movie, you're also listening to it. You're listening to the words the characters speak and to the movie's music. Sometimes you're not fully aware of the music. The director may use music to help set a scene or to help tell the story that is taking place.

At other times, the director wants you to be aware of the music. Certain music might be used to represent a character. That's called theme music. A character's theme music might play whenever the character appears on the screen.

Music can change the way you understand a movie even if you're not aware of it. Next time you watch a movie at home, turn off the sound for a minute. Notice the difference that music makes.

### Key Notes:

How can music change the way you think during a movie?

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Music might make  
a movie scene  
more exciting.

## Music Sets the Scene

People who make movies use music to help the scene. A movie director can use music to convey that a movie takes place at a specific time or place. Some kinds of music are easy for an audience to recognize and can help the director create a mood. For example, soft violin music may convey to an audience that a movie is set in a peaceful place.

A movie director can use music to convey other information, too. The sound of drums played in a marching rhythm might be used to convey the idea that characters are going to war. In addition, a chase scene might have music that is played in a fast, exciting rhythm. A movie's music can help explain the action on the screen.

### Key Notes:

How can music convey information in a movie?

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Music in a movie  
may let you know  
about danger about to  
happen.

## Music Tells the Story

You're watching a movie, and suddenly you feel that something dangerous is about to happen. You might not be conscious of the movie's music, but it may be helping you understand the action you are viewing.

Even if you're not conscious of it, though, music can help you understand that the characters are feeling happy, sad, excited, scared, or romantic. When you hear romantic music, you are prepared for a scene to be about falling in love. In this way, a movie director can move the plot along with music and with words.

### Key Notes:

Describe the kind of music that might be used in an exciting movie scene.

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John Williams wrote the music for many films, including *Star Wars*.

## John Williams

You may never have heard of John Williams. However, you've probably heard his music. John Williams has written music for many popular films, including *Star Wars*, *E.T.*, some of the *Harry Potter* films, and *Jaws*.

Williams was born in New York City, but he and his family moved to California when he was 16. As a young man, Williams studied and played jazz. Later, he moved away from jazz and started writing music for films. Williams has written music for more than 200 films and television programs. He's also written music for international sports competitions.

Over the years, Williams has competed for an Academy Award more than 35 times and has won five Academy Awards. An Academy Award is perhaps the highest honor people in the film industry can receive.

### Key Notes:

Why is John Williams famous?

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