

Nicolas Soames
FAMOUS PEOPLE IN HISTORY 2

Read by **Daniel Philpott • Laura Brattan • Garrick Hagon**

**JUNIOR
CLASSICS**



Alexander the Great
Joan of Arc • Leonardo da Vinci
Isaac Newton • George Washington
Ludwig van Beethoven
Louis Pasteur • Marie Curie • Mahatma Gandhi

1	Alexander the Great 356–323 BC	21:38
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2	Joan of Arc 1425–1431	19:27
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3	Leonardo da Vinci 1452–1519	18:09
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7	Louis Pasteur 1822–1895	21:19
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8	Marie Curie 1867–1934	13:55
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FAMOUS PEOPLE IN HISTORY 2

There are many millions of people living in the world today – more than ever before. Since man became civilised and began keeping records of history, billions of people have lived and died on this planet.

Some were well-known in their villages, their towns, their countries and even in other countries as well. They did good, important work which, in small ways, helped mankind to live more fulfilled and happier lives.

But a small number left large footsteps on the memory of the world. For eleven years – 2,300 years ago – **Alexander the Great** marched with his army from Macedonia to India. Even now, in the 21st century AD, people on the route he passed – the mountains, the villages and plains – tell the tale of his coming. In a way, he was perhaps the first ruler with a world perspective, because he dreamed of one big world country.

He died before he could achieve it, and others – both good and bad men – have tried to do it. None have succeeded yet.

Joan of Arc became famous in a totally different way. A village girl in medieval

France who couldn't read or write or even ride a horse at the beginning of her story, became a heroine for her people. She had visions, she said. For a little over a year, her light shone brightly as she led her people – before she was burned at the stake. Why should she be remembered now? Many people have said they had visions.

But there is little doubt that people who met her felt that she wasn't ordinary. She is remembered not so much for what she did, but for what she was.

It is easier to see why **Leonardo da Vinci** is remembered. The man and his work can be seen in thousands of remarkable drawings in his notebooks – they are direct records of his fertile mind. His mind overflowed with ideas and images, and he had the artistic skill to put them down for us to see. Even more memorable are his important paintings, including the Mona Lisa, the most famous portrait in the world.

Isaac Newton was a very different man. Though he seemed quite an ordinary boy, he turned into a man with a remarkably clear mind. He looked at the planets and the night sky and thought about why the stars

are there; and why things – an apple – falls to the earth. And he realized all about the pull of gravity.

He was a great mathematician, and a scientist. He had a job during the day – the Master of the Mint – but in his free hours he pushed forward the knowledge of the world we live in. He was the father of modern science.

George Washington was the father of the United States of America, the most powerful country on earth. He was brave in war, and a well-organised farmer in peace. Quite an ordinary man, really. But tall and straightforward, he was a hero that the people of a young country could all look up to and follow.

Ludwig van Beethoven wrote some of the most famous symphonies and piano concertos. Once you have heard the opening of his Symphony No 5, you will always recognise it. But he was also important because he made people take music and composers seriously. In the courts of Europe, before Beethoven, composers were regarded as servants. Count Waldstein, a friend and patron of Beethoven, told his servants that if he and Beethoven were to arrive at his house together, they were to look after Beethoven first. This was quite revolutionary!

We now know that tiny germs can harm mankind just as volcanic explosions or big

waves or winds. In the 19th century, people were only just beginning to realize how bacteria affected people's health and how they could stop the terrible illnesses that could wipe out communities.

Louis Pasteur, the French scientist, was fascinated by this micro world. He saw the bacteria wriggling around under his microscope, and gradually produced answers to many diseases. The vaccination programmes we have now began mainly with him.

Marie Curie was also fascinated by physics and chemistry. In a world when women were still expected to be only mothers and wives, looking after the house, she showed that women were just as capable as men. She was an important research scientist and discovered the element radium. She was the first woman to win the Nobel Prize – and she won it twice.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi became an icon for one of the most densely populated countries on earth – India. He led India to independence. But he did it in a most unusual way – by peaceful means. He insisted on non-violence... that by protesting in a peaceful way, the end could be achieved. There didn't always have to be violent revolution, causing so much unhappiness, pain and death.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT (356–323BC)

The son of Philip, King of Macedonia, Alexander was a strong king and conquerer. He was taught by the famous philosopher Aristotle, and Alexander wanted not only to conquer many lands but also to create a world empire which would be peaceful. Often fighting against huge odds, he crushed the powerful Persian Empire, and took his army into India, winning battles there. But he died as a relatively young man, before he could put his ideas of one world country into practice.



JOAN OF ARC (1412–1431)

Born in a French village, Joan began hearing voices when she was 13. She was convinced they were the voices of saints – St Michael, St Catherine and St Margaret. They told her to lead France against the English enemies. When she was 17, she convinced the local governor to help her meet the Dauphin, the French prince. Joan made a great impression on Prince Charles. She led the French troops to victory and saw the Dauphin crowned King of France. But she was captured, and burnt at the stake by the English. She was only 19.



LEONARDO DA VINCI (1452–1519)

A great painter and inventor and a man of ideas, Leonardo da Vinci was born in a village in Italy. His talent for art took him to nearby Florence, then one of the great centres of Italian art. His remarkable abilities made an impression when he was still young. After some years, he travelled to other Italian cities to live and work – in Milan, in Rome and back to Florence.

Among his most famous pictures was the Mona Lisa. But he also designed big cannons, giant crossbows and other war machines. He studied the birds, designed a helicopter, loved mathematics. A Renaissance man.



ISAAC NEWTON (1642–1727)

The English mathematician, physicist, astronomer and philosopher, was the father of modern science. He established laws of physics – including gravity; he invented the reflecting telescope. He made important advances in mathematics. He was Master of the Mint, looking after the coins of Great Britain.



GEORGE WASHINGTON (1732–1799)

He was born in Virginia and began his career as a soldier fighting against the French for the British. But he became the commander of the American forces in the War of Independence, and over eight years led the army to its final victory. He then became the first President of the United States of America. Many towns, rivers and mountains are named after him, including the capital, Washington DC.



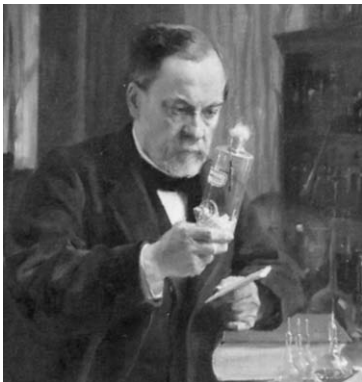
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

The great German composer who overcame the terrible handicap of becoming deaf. A stormy personality, he wrote nine symphonies, five piano concertos, thirty-two piano sonatas, seventeen string quartets, one violin concerto, one opera, many overtures and other works. He brought in a new period of music – the beginning of the Romantic age – where composers expressed their own personalities.



LOUIS PASTEUR (1822–1895)

The French chemist who developed the method of pasteurization – heating liquids such as milk and wine to rid them of harmful bacteria. He made a major contribution to health by demonstrating that small microbes carry diseases, yet it was possible to prevent the disease taking hold by vaccination. In this way, diseases in animals (anthrax) and human beings (rabies) were controlled. This led the way to the worldwide vaccination programmes we have today.



MARIE CURIE (1867–1934)

The first important woman scientist. She was born in Poland, Manya Skłodowska, the daughter of a physics teacher and eventually made her dream come true – travelling to Paris to study science at the Sorbonne. She met and married Pierre Curie, and discovered new elements which she called *polonium* and *radium*. Radium proved particularly important in health treatments for cancer and other diseases. In 1903 she was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics jointly with her husband and in 1911 won the Nobel Prize for chemistry.



MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI
(1869–1948)

Gandhi was trained as a lawyer, studying in England. On qualifying as a barrister, he went back to India, but moved to South Africa in 1893. There, he became active in politics, trying to win freedom from racial persecution for the Indian community and black people. Unusually, he chose non-violent means, a method which was to become his hallmark. He returned to India in 1915, and began working for independence from British rule – again by peaceful demonstrations. It took 32 years before his aim was achieved.

He was assassinated by a fanatical Hindu in 1948.



Notes by Nicolas Soames



Laura Brattan trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She has appeared in the films *Crime Time* and *Tomorrow Never Dies*. Her many television credits includes *Casualty*, *The Bill*, *Wycliffe*, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *Melissa*, *Five Children* and *Touching Evil*.



Garrick Hagon has appeared in many films including *Batman*, *Cry Freedom*, *Star Wars*, *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Fatherland*. His TV credits include *A Perfect Spy*, *Henry V*, *The Chief* and *Love Hurts*. In London's West End he played Chris Keller in *All My Sons* and he reads frequently for the BBC.



Daniel Philpott trained at LAMDA and, after success in the prestigious Carleton Hobbs Award for Radio Drama, recorded for BBC Radio 4. His theatre work includes various productions on the London fringe.

The music on this recording is taken from the **NAXOS** catalogue

Alexander the Great

RIMSKY KORSAKOV MASSACRE AT KERZHENTZ 8.550230
CSR Symphony Orchestra, (Bratislava) Ondrej Lenard

Joan of Arc

THE BLACK MADONNA 8.554256
Ensemble Unicorn, Michael Posch
CHOMINCIAMENTO DI GIOIA 8.553131
Ensemble Unicorn

Leonardo da Vinci

MUSIC OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE
ARCADELT LA PASTORELLA MIA 8.550615
Shirley Rumsey, lute

George Washington

THOMSON SYMPHONY ON A HYMN TUNE 8.559022
New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, James Sedares, conductor

Isaac Newton

HANDEL WATER MUSIC 8.550109
Capella Istropolitana, Bohdan Warchal, conductor

Ludwig van Beethoven

BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY NO 5 8.553476
Nicolas Esterhazy Sinfonia, Bela Drahos, conductor
BEETHOVEN FUR ELISE 8.553795
Jeno Jando, piano

BEETHOVEN PIANO TRIO 'THE GHOST'	8.550948
Stuttgart Piano Trio	
BEETHOVEN APPASSIONATA SONATA	8.550294
Jeno Jando, piano	
BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY NO 3	8.553475
Nicolas Esterhazy Sinfonia, Bela Drahos, conductor	
BEETHOVEN PIANO CONCERTO NO 5	8.550121
Stefan Vladar, piano, Capella Istropolitana, Barry Wordsworth, conductor	
BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY NO 9	8.553478
Nicolas Esterhazy Sinfonia, Bela Drahos, conductor	
Louis Pasteur	
TANEYEV SYMPHONY NO 4	8.223196
Polish State Philharmonic Orchestra (Katowice), Stephen Gunzenhauser	
GLAZUNOV FINNISH SKETCHES:FROM KALEVALA	8.553839
Moscow Symphony Orchestra, Igor Golovschin	
Marie Curie	
CHOPIN BARCAROLLE	8.550215
Balazs Szokolay, piano	
KANDING ENTBERGEN	8.224113
Sofia Asuncion, harp	
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi	
RAG CHANDRA KANHRA	
Imrat Khan, sitar	
Sitar music by courtesy Nimbus Records	

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Here are the life stories of nine famous people who have left their mark upon the world. There are men of action such as **Alexander the Great** and **George Washington**, and a woman, **Joan of Arc**, who inspired a nation. There are scientists whose voyages of discovery took place in laboratories – **Isaac Newton**, **Louis Pasteur** and **Marie Curie**.

Imagination is the fuel of the artist. The paintings of **Leonardo da Vinci** and the symphonies of **Ludwig van Beethoven**, though centuries old, still affect us today. And finally, there is the story of **Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi**, who gained freedom for his country while at the same time promoting the idea of peace and non-violence.

These men and women were important in their time and, even in our computer age, show what individuals, with ideals and energy, can achieve.

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