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# Content-Specific Words

L.7.6, RI.7.4, RH.7.4, RST.7.4

● Lexile: 1050L

● Informational

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## Test Yourself

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

### Forbidden Music

by Pedro Villareal

The Renaissance (REH•nuh•sahnts) in Europe was a time of cultural flowering. Everyone knows about the great works of painting and sculpture produced during this period by such artists as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, and the literary works of writers like William Shakespeare in England and Miguel de Cervantes in Spain. Less well known are the musical works of this period, which were part of the development of what is sometimes called classical music. Today, this Renaissance music is heard in special concerts that are usually given in churches. That's only appropriate, since most of the music was originally liturgical, to be performed as part of church services. In fact, one such piece that's often performed today was for years heard in only one church. To perform it elsewhere or even to make copies of the music was forbidden—until a 14-year-old boy let the secret out.

The piece was by an Italian composer named Gregorio Allegri (Ah•LAY•gree). It was an a capella piece for two choirs, a setting of a Roman Catholic prayer called *Miserere*, from a Latin phrase that means "Have mercy on me, God." Allegri was commissioned to write it in the 1630s by Pope Urban VII. It was to be performed only at a predawn service during Easter week, and only in the Sistine Chapel. This chapel, famous for the frescoes on its walls and ceiling by Michelangelo and other great artists, is in the pope's official palace in Rome. Then as now, it was open to the public and popular among tourists. However, the Allegri *Miserere* was the pope's property. Copying it was forbidden, under penalty of excommunication from the Church. The rule was further enforced by the fact that the *Miserere* was performed in the dark, so that a skilled musician could not transcribe the notes as he or she heard them.



Sistine Chapel



Gregorio Allegri

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

### ● Skill Strategy

Content-Specific Words—see pages 10–11 of the teacher’s edition

### ● Vocabulary

a capella, excommunication, frescoes, liturgical, Renaissance, service, summoned, transcribe

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The ban lasted for more than 130 years, through the reigns of many popes. Then, in 1770, that young boy happened to be in Rome with his father during Easter week. He was an unusually gifted musician whose name was already widely known. Sitting in the chapel that Wednesday morning, he memorized the piece at a single hearing. He wrote down the notes that afternoon in his hotel room. On Good Friday, he went back to the chapel to hear it performed again and to catch any details he may have missed. The boy later sold his manuscript to a music publisher in England. The Allegri *Miserere* was secret no longer.

The boy was summoned to Rome by Pope Clement XIV. However, times had changed. Instead of excommunicating him, the pope praised him for his genius. You probably never have heard of Allegri’s *Miserere* before, but you may have heard of the boy who let the secret out. His name was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

1 The term Renaissance describes a period of history most famous for \_\_\_\_.

- A questioning of authority
- B a revival of art and learning**
- C the brutal repression of new ideas
- D the development of new forms of music

**L.7.6, RI.7.4,  
RH.7.4**

2 The word liturgical means \_\_\_\_.

- A out of date
- B privately owned
- C difficult to perform
- D used in religious worship**

**L.7.6, RI.7.4,  
RH.7.4**

3 The musical term a capella means \_\_\_\_.

- A played for fun
- B sung without instruments**
- C made up as one goes along
- D performed at private parties

**L.7.6, RI.7.4,  
RH.7.4**

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UNIT 1  
Vocabulary Development

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## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

### ● Listening/Speaking

Have students download a performance of the *Miserere* by Gregorio Allegri from the Internet and listen to it. Ask students to share their thoughts about it.

### ● ELLs

Have students think about someone who has a particular talent that they admire. Invite students to describe the talent and why they find this talent special.

4 Excommunication means \_\_\_\_.

- A to legally put someone to death
- B to embarrass someone in public
- C to isolate someone from other people
- D to cut someone off from membership in a church**

L.7.6, RI.7.4,  
RH.7.4

5 What is a commissioned work of art?

**A commissioned work of art is something that an artist is officially hired to create. L.7.6, RI.7.4, RH.7.4**

6 What are frescoes?

**Frescoes are paintings made directly on walls instead of paper or canvas. L.7.6, RI.7.4, RH.7.4**

7 What is the relationship between the words transcribe and manuscript, and what do they mean?

**Transcribe and manuscript both have a root that means "write." To transcribe means "to copy something in writing."  
A manuscript is something written by hand. L.7.6, RI.7.4, RH.7.4**

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