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The acronym AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) is used to recognize the diverse communities represented in this collection. This term is commonly used in the U.S. However, we acknowledge that *identity is personal and complex*. Some individuals may prefer terms such as AANHPI (Asian American Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander), APIDA (Asian Pacific Islander Desi American) or, more commonly, prefer cultural or region-specific identifiers like Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Filipino, Hmong, etc. We acknowledge that there will never be a term that truly captures the beautiful nuance of individual heritage, and this is why it is important to respect each individual's preferred self-identification. This book seeks to honor the contributions of musicians with cultural origins from the Asian, Pacific, and Pacific Indigenous diasporas while respecting the diversity within their communities.

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# Yo-Yo Ma

born October 17, 1955  
Chinese American Cellist  
Modern



- Yo-Yo Ma was born in Paris, France. His parents, both musicians, had migrated to France during the Chinese Civil War.
- Ma was a musical prodigy. He began studying cello with his father at age four and gave his first recital at five. His family moved to New York City when he was seven, and he debuted at Carnegie Hall at age nine.
- At 19, Ma studied at the famous Juilliard School. He later graduated from Harvard University.
- He became known for his fresh interpretations of standard cello repertoire, particularly all six of Bach's cello suites, and his collaborations with modern composers.
- In 1986, Ma performed with the New York Philharmonic under the baton of Zubin Mehta as part of the 100th anniversary tribute to the Statue of Liberty, which is in part a symbol of freedom and liberty for immigrants to the United States.
- In 1992, Ma collaborated with the improvisational singer Bobby McFerrin on an album called *Hush*.
- Yo-Yo recorded in various styles, including bluegrass, Chinese folk music, and tangos, which were not typical genres played by cellists.
- Ma was featured in several movie soundtracks, including *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), and *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* (2003).
- In 1998, Yo-Yo launched the Silk Road Project, an arts organization that explores the cultural traditions of the places along the ancient trading route between China and Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.
- Ma has performed for many significant events in the U.S., including the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, accompanying the singer Sting to open the 2002 Winter Olympics, performing as part of a chamber ensemble for Barack Obama's 2009 inauguration, participating in a service honoring the Boston Marathon bombing victims, and providing a pre-recorded rendition of "Amazing Grace" for Joe Biden's COVID-era 2021 inauguration.
- President Obama appointed Yo-Yo to serve on the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities in 2009. In 2010, Ma created the Citizen Musician initiative with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.
- In 2018, Ma began another world tour called the Bach Project. He performed Bach's cello suites in 36 concerts in settings with sociopolitical meaning. He spent a "day of action" meeting with local artists, community leaders, and students in each location. His goal for the concert tour was to heal divisions. The tour included stops at the U.S.-Mexico border, South Africa, Lebanon, and Korea.
- He has received many awards and accolades, including the National Medal of Arts (2001), the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2011), and the Kennedy Center Honors (2011). He has served as a United Nations Messenger of Peace since 2006.
- Yo-Yo was named one of *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2020.
- He has recorded dozens of albums and received over 15 GRAMMY® Awards. He has also collaborated with a diverse assortment of artists, including Carlos Santana, Diana Krall, James Taylor, and Miley Cyrus.

"Music, like all of culture, helps us to understand our environment, each other, and ourselves. helps us to imagine a better future. Culture helps turn "them" into "us." And these things have never been more important."

— Yo-Yo Ma



# Review

**Who was Yo-Yo's first music teacher?**

- ☐ He never had a music teacher.
- ☐ Johann Sebastian Bach
- ☐ His father
- ☐ Zubin Mehta

**How old was Ma when he first performed at Carnegie Hall?**

- ☐ 9
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 26
- ☐ 19

**Which vocalist did Yo-Yo collaborate with on a recording of *Flight of the Bumblebee*?**

- ☐ Bobby McFerrin
- ☐ Carlos Santana
- ☐ Pablo Casals
- ☐ Leonard Bernstein

**Who wrote the six cello suites that Ma recorded three times?**

- ☐ Johannes Brahms
- ☐ Pablo Casals
- ☐ Yo-Yo Ma
- ☐ Johann Sebastian Bach

**True or False: Yo-Yo has never played for a movie soundtrack.**

**Prove it!: Provide a fact that supports your answer of true or false.**

**Name the organization Ma created to promote collaboration across cultures through music.**

**Listen to a piece of music recorded by Yo-Yo Ma.**

- List the title and describe the work.
- What grabs your attention the most?
- What instruments do you hear?
- How does the music make you feel?

# Reflect

Yo-Yo Ma frequently collaborates with musicians and artists from diverse genres and cultures. How does this expand his audience?

Ma has said that music helps us understand each other and imagine a better future. After learning about his life, what role do you think music can play in bringing people together or helping us understand each other better?

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# Writing Prompt



Yo-Yo Ma uses music to engage communities and inspire positive change by pairing concerts with local “culture in action” events. If Yo-Yo were performing in your area, what type of event would be meaningful? How could he interact with the community to address a local issue? Describe the event you would plan and the positive impact it could have.

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# Musical Eras

