



What was the first ever piece of music?

KS2 Ages 7-11  3 min read

Imagine you're trying to find the world's oldest song. Not just old — really, really ancient. The kind of old where woolly mammoths were still walking around outside. That's exactly the sort of mystery scientists called archaeologists are trying to solve!

Before There Was Writing, There Was Singing

The tricky thing about finding the first ever piece of music is that the very earliest music was never written down. People sang, clapped, and banged things together long before anyone invented a way to write music. So that music is gone forever — like a song sung in an empty field with no one left to remember it.

Think of it like a playground game you know by heart. You and your friends know how to play it, but it's not written down anywhere. If everyone forgot, it would just disappear. Early music was exactly like that.

The World's Oldest Instruments

Even though we can't hear those ancient songs, we can still find the instruments people used to play them. Archaeologists have found flutes made from bird bones and mammoth tusks that are over **40,000 years old**. That's so long ago that woolly mammoths were still alive!

These flutes were found in caves in Germany. Someone carefully carved holes into the bones so that blowing into them made different notes. That means humans were making proper music tens of thousands of years before the ancient Egyptians even started building the pyramids.

The Oldest Written Music

The oldest piece of music that was actually **written down** was found on a clay tablet in the ruins of an ancient city called Ugarit, in what is now Syria. It's about 3,400 years old.

It's called the **Hurrian Hymn**, and it was a song written to honour a goddess. Scientists have figured out how to play it, and you can actually listen to it on the

internet today. It sounds strange and beautiful at the same time.

Imagine if someone found your school song written on a piece of clay and played it 3,000 years from now. That's a bit like what happened with the Hurrian Hymn!

So What Was the Very First Music Ever?

Here's the honest answer: nobody knows for certain. Music probably started before humans even invented instruments. Birds sing, whales have songs, and frogs make musical calls — early humans almost certainly heard all of this and started copying the sounds around them.

Most scientists think the very first music was probably a **human voice** — humming, singing, or making rhythmic sounds while working or sitting around a fire. Then came clapping and drumming on hollow logs. Then, eventually, instruments like those ancient bone flutes.

The first piece of music ever was probably something very simple — a few notes hummed by someone sitting by a fire, tens of thousands of years ago. We'll never know exactly what it sounded like. But just knowing it happened, and that people have been making music ever since, is pretty wonderful.