

Friedrich Schiller, *Die Räuber* (1781)

Abstract

Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), the most important poet in German literary history alongside Goethe, was born in Marbach am Neckar in the Duchy of Württemberg. By order of the duke, Schiller had to attend the military academy from 1773, where he first studied law and later medicine alongside his military training. However, he soon began to occupy himself with literature and philosophy and read the works of Lessing, Shakespeare, Rousseau, and Goethe. After graduating from the academy in 1780 with a dissertation in medicine, Schiller initially found employment as a regimental doctor, but was already working on his first literary works. In 1781, he published his drama *Die Räuber* [The Robbers] anonymously and at his own expense. After its successful stage premiere in Mannheim the following year, the play was staged in numerous German cities. Schiller fled Württemberg as he was threatened with imprisonment for leaving his workplace without permission (to secretly attend the premiere of *The Robbers*). After living in constant financial hardship and moving between places, Schiller received a professorship in history at the University of Jena in 1789 as well as the title of *Hofrat* [privy councilor], which came with a fixed income. After meeting Goethe, who was living in Weimar, a lively correspondence ensued which had a lasting influence on the work of both writers. In addition to dramas and poems, Schiller also wrote theoretical works. In 1799, Schiller moved to Weimar with his family, where he and Goethe were part of an intellectual circle that shaped Germany's cultural life. This period is known in German cultural history as Weimar Classicism.

Here you can hear an excerpt from Schiller's play, *The Robbers*. The plot of the drama revolves around the two very different sons of a Franconian nobleman who resort to extreme means to free themselves from the shackles of their parents' generation and whose actions trigger a chain of catastrophic events with fatal consequences. Stylistically, the drama belongs in the late phase of the *Sturm und Drang* [Storm and Stress] movement. In this excerpt from Act 2, Scene 3, we hear one of the main characters, Karl Mohr, who, after being disinherited by his father, has become the leader of a band of robbers. The scene is set in the Bohemian Forest, an area that was considered wild, inaccessible, and dangerous at the time.

Source

Source: Friedrich Schiller, *Die Räuber*, Act 2, Scene 3, 1781. Performed by Rolf Henninger. From: Der junge Schiller. Monologe und Szenen: Die Räuber. *Literarisches Archiv* (n.d.), https://archive.org/details/lp_der-junge-schiller_die-rauber/disc1/01.05.+Ernst+Ginsberg.mp3

Recommended Citation: Friedrich Schiller, *Die Räuber* (1781), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/the-holy-roman-empire-1648-1815/ghdi:audio-5044>> [July 16, 2024].