



**St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra**

stéphane denève : music director

SLSO At-Home Learning

Clair de Lune

Every great story has a setting where the action and conflict happens. What is one story you really enjoy? Where does the story take place?

Sometimes when stories are told in movies or television shows, the director uses music to help enhance the setting. But music can also portray a setting all on its own, leaving your imagination to provide the visual aspect. Composers often turn to their environment or “setting” to find inspiration for their musical compositions.

Listen to [Claude Debussy's Clair de Lune](#). *Clair de Lune* is French for “light of the moon” or moonlight. Is this piece a musical representation of your neighborhood after dark? To answer this question, you may need to stay up a little later than usual to experience your neighborhood in the light of the moon. Or maybe a backyard campout is in order? Either way, start by answering the following questions about your neighborhood after dark:



- What do you see?
- What do you hear?
- How do you feel?
- If you made a movie and the setting was your neighborhood at night, would *Clair de Lune* be a good piece to use for the film? Why or why not?

Soundscapes

A soundscape is all the sounds in our environment. List all the different sounds you heard in your neighborhood after dark. Be descriptive about the sounds. Were they:

- Loud or soft?
- Short or long?
- Choppy or smooth?
- High or low?
- Other adjectives that may describe the sound?

After you finish your list, create your own soundscape. Use objects around your house that can be struck, scraped or shaken like percussion instruments, different voices, sound effects and/or programs such as Garage Band (if available) to create the sounds on your list. Decide what order to play the different sounds and how long each sound will be played for. Be creative!

You could also pick another place you have been or use your favorite book and create an accompanying soundscape.





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Claude Debussy (1862-1918) began piano lessons at a very young age and by the age of ten he was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire, the best music school in Paris at the time. When he didn't win the first prize for piano, Debussy changed his focus to composition. At age 22, he won the Prix de Rome with *L'Enfant Prodigue* (The Child Prodigy), a major composition prize that allowed him to stay and work for two years in Italy. Debussy constantly experimented with music and was a part of the symbolist and impressionist movements. Like many other composers of his style, Debussy created colorful sounds through new uses of orchestral instruments, as well as titled his pieces so that the listeners would be able to picture the music in their minds.



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