

About Opera

What is opera?

Opera is a theatrical work where the entire story is sung to music instead of spoken. In addition, all of the music is played by a live orchestra without any electronic amplification.

How is an opera different from a musical or a play?

An opera is different from a musical or a play because all of the text is sung with musical accompaniment in an opera. In a musical, some of the text is sung and some of the text is spoken. In a play, all of the text is spoken and none of the text is sung.

What are the main components of an opera?

An opera is made up of **four** main parts. They are:

- 1. Recitative-** A passage in opera in which words are sung in a way that resembles speech. Recitative is used to tell the story and progress the plot forward. Unlike an aria, the words of a recitative are not repeated.
- 2. Aria-** An accompanied elaborate melody sung by a single voice often used as a way for a character to express or examine his or her feelings towards the story.
- 3. Ensemble** – A melody that is sung by two or more voices oftentimes sung in harmony.
- 4. Chorus-** A large group of singers that sing together either in harmony or unison to comment on the story.

Fun Fact: Opera is a very old art form. The oldest known opera was written in 1597. That's over 400 years old!

What are the main vocal categories in opera that describe a singer's voice?

- 1. Soprano** – The highest female vocal range
- 2. Alto or Mezzo-Soprano** – The lower female vocal range
- 3. Tenor** – The highest male vocal range
- 4. Baritone** – The middle male vocal range
- 5. Bass** – The lowest male vocal range

Timbre – Timbre is the vocal color or vocal quality of a voice. In addition to the range at which a singer is comfortable singing, the quality and color of voice also play an important role in categorizing a voice.

Fun Fact: Mezzo means half in Italian. So mezzo-soprano translates to half soprano. This means that a mezzo-soprano sings half as high as a soprano.

Opera as Storytelling

Opera is simply another way of telling a story!

Like a book, an opera is made up of many of the same ingredients like:

- **Setting:** Where the story takes place
- **Conflict:** The main problem of the story
- **Characters:** The people (or animals) who are involved in the story's conflict
- **Events:** Situations that lead to the resolution of the story's conflict
- **Climax:** The highest point of drama in the story. This is the turning point of the story.
- **Moral:** A lesson that is learned from the story

However, there are also some differences between storytelling through opera and storytelling through a book.

Perhaps the biggest difference is the use of music. Quite simply, opera tells the story through sight and sound while a novel tells a story through the reader's imagination.

Think of music as a way to color the story differently. Instead of using descriptive words and passages to develop a story, opera uses music to take the place of these adjectives and adverbs. It colors the text and brings the story to life for the ears to hear.

Fun Fact: Did you know that stories like *How Tortoise Got His Shell* would be told **orally**, meaning spoken by a storyteller. Over 500 years ago, long before there was a pen or paper to write stories down, people would gather around a fire after dark and listen to a storyteller tell a story like a one person drama! These stories could be myths, folktales, or even local history and beliefs. Oftentimes, drums would be used to give the story shape and heighten the drama.

After reading the story *How Tortoise Got His Shell*, use the talking points below to discuss the story.

- Who were the main characters of the story?
 - What did each character want in the story?
 - If you were Tortoise, what would you have done differently to avoid the conflict? Why?
- What was the moral of the story?
 - Have you read a story or seen a movie that you feel has a similar moral? How were they similar to this story?

About Nigeria

Where is Nigeria?

Nigeria is a country in West Africa and is slightly larger than the state of Texas.

How Many people live in Nigeria?

Nigeria has over 170 million inhabitants made up of over 500 ethnic groups making it the most populated country in Africa as well as one of the most diverse.

Animals in Nigeria

Below you will see some of the animals that are common to Nigeria. Have you seen any of these animals at the zoo?

- **Cheetahs**
- **Chimpanzees**
- **Crocodiles**
- **Elephants**
- **Gorillas**
- **Geckos**
- **Hippopotamuses**
- **Leopards**
- **Lions**
- **Monkeys**
- **Parrots**
- **Tortoises**

These animals live throughout four main **habitats** (the natural homes animals) within Nigeria. They are:

1. **Savanna grasslands**
2. **Tropical forests**
3. **Mountain plateaus**
4. **Mangrove swamp**

Fun Fact: Did you know that Elephants are **Herbivores**. This means that they only eat plants. Other animals like lions are called **Carnivores**. This means that they only eat meat. There are also animals that eat both plants and meat such as Gorillas. These animals are known as **Omnivores**.

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