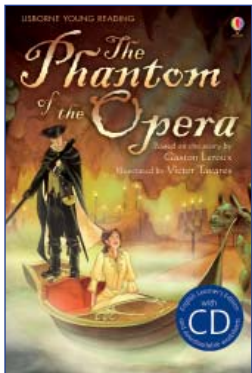


## The Phantom of the Opera • Teacher's notes



**Author:** Gaston Leroux, adapted by Kate Knighton

**Reader level:** Advanced

**Word count:** 2456

**Lexile level:** 550L

**Text type:** Adapted classic

### About the story

At the Paris Opera House, rumours are rife about a masked phantom. More pressingly, Carlotta, the star of the show, is refusing to sing. A shy girl, Christine, takes the part instead. She's an instant success, but is overcome by the occasion and faints at the end. A handsome Count comes backstage to congratulate her. As he leaves, he hears a mysterious male voice coming from her dressing room...

Meanwhile, the new manager receives a note, demanding money and for Christine to sing every night. He laughs at such cheek, until stage-hands report that his beloved dog has been captured by a cloaked figure. The Count is worried for Christine's safety. He follows her to a graveyard where she sings by her father's grave. Suddenly, a hand clamps the Count's shoulder and he gets a brief, frightening glimpse of the phantom. Christine hears the Count's cry and runs over. She explains that she's never actually seen the phantom, she's only heard the voice of an "angel of music" who has taught her to sing.

Carlotta is back on stage in spite of the phantom's threats. When she tries to sing, only a croak comes out and the opera house is plunged into darkness. In the chaos, the phantom sweeps Christine away to the misty underground lake beneath the Opera House. Christine recognizes her angel of music, but he is too ashamed to show his face. He returns her to the Opera House, and she becomes its new star.

After a dazzling performance, the phantom snatches Christine away again. A chase ensues. The phantom is full of bitterness and Christine tries to comfort him, but when the Count wades out to rescue her, the phantom makes the water blaze with flames. Christine kisses the phantom, and instantly the fire goes out. Deeply moved by her kindness, the phantom disappears. Christine is safe with the Count at last.

### About the author

Gaston Leroux (1868-1927) was a French journalist and author, well-known in France for his detective fiction but most famous in the English-speaking world for his novel, the Phantom of the Opera. The story has been adapted into several films and stage plays, most notably Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1986 musical.

### Words and phrases of interest, and unfamiliar words

Help your students to develop strategies for unfamiliar words, so that you don't have to interrupt the flow of the story often to explain vocabulary. You might suggest they make a quick note of words as they read, or mark their place on the page with removable sticky notes or index tabs. Encourage them to deduce meanings: are they familiar with any part of the word? Can they guess from the context (e.g. "fainted" followed by "limp body" must mean collapsed in some way)? You could look at different strategies for learning new vocabulary, such as making word clouds or thematic lists.

p3 phantom	p13 cast	p22 crook	captivated	p50 contract
p6 performance	p15 applause	swindle	p35 misfortune	p53 abruptly
p9 horrific	fainted	p24 Mark my	p41 ghoulish	p56 lair
p10 crisis	p16 Count	words	p44 captor	p59 blazed
p12 eagerly	p17 You had quite	dreadful	p45 melodic	p61 sobbed
chandelier	a turn	p30 trance	p46 enchanted	p63 bewilderment



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## Before reading

You may like to search in advance for some pictures of the Paris Opera House (inside as well as outside), or you could use some illustrations from this book, e.g. p1, p12, pp14-15. You could also search for samples or sound clips of famous arias.

Start by showing a picture of the outside of the building. Does anyone know or can anyone guess what this building is for? [The students will probably have a sense of it being grand and important, a public building rather than a home.] Then show a picture of the auditorium and the stage. If students recognize the theatrical space, encourage them to think what kind of performances might take place in it. Point out the orchestra pit. Which performances are accompanied by music? [Students may initially guess musicals rather than opera.] Do students know what an opera is, or know the names of any?

You could play sound clips at this point. Opera isn't always to children's taste, but they will most likely recognize the style, and some arias have become widely known through advertising and TV or movies.

This story takes place in the famous Paris Opera House shown in the pictures. It's called the Phantom of the Opera. Does anyone know what a phantom is? If not, they're about to find out...

## Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same.

## During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

- p3 Do you think the phantom really existed? This is chapter 1 of the book, so has the storytelling already started?
- p4 What do stage hands do? [Prepare and move scenery.] What are props? [Items that actors carry or use as part of a performance.]
- p5 What can we tell already about Carlotta?
- p6 What kind of costumes are the girls wearing?
- p13 Who's the man in white gloves in the orchestra pit? [The conductor.] What does he do? [Directs the musical performance.]
- p16 Why is Madame G excited about the visitor?
- p19 We can see who the male voice belongs to, but do you think Christine knows?
- p24 Have you seen this dog in the book already? [p4, p15, photo on p20]
- p26 Why do you think Christine looks nervous?
- p27 What do you think of the way Christine is behaving? What will the Count think?
- p30 Why would Christine sing in a graveyard?
- p37 Carlotta isn't scared. Should we admire her?
- p39 Who are the three people on the balcony?
- p44 How would you describe the world under the Opera House?
- p48 Why won't the phantom show Christine his face? What's he afraid of?
- p54 Why doesn't Christine stop? [Perhaps because she's living the part so intensely?]
- p59 Why does Christine offer to stay with the phantom? [To save the Count? Because she likes her angel of music?]
- p61 The phantom says he was lonely. How else would you describe his state of mind? [Rejected, angry, unstable, and so on.]

## After reading

Ask the class to imagine how Christine feels at the end of this story. Do you think she loves the Count? Will she ever see the phantom again? His lair has been discovered now. Will he ever come back?

This story has been much more popular as a film and a stage musical than as a book. Why do you think that is? [Perhaps it's more dramatic when you can hear the singing and sit in the audience yourself.]

## Did you know?

The phantom in the original novel was called Erik. He was one of the Opera House architects, who secretly built himself a home underground so that he could hide his physical deformity.