

## Music I: The Characters

### Students Will

- Read *The Story of the Opera*.
- Read the information sheet “The Characters” included with the lesson.
- Listen to audio selections from *Jack and the Beanstalk* online.
- Discuss and answer questions on the appropriate portion(s) of the **Activity Worksheet**.

### Before the Lesson

Print copies for each student of the information sheet “The Characters” and the **Activity Worksheet**.

Decide which section(s) of the worksheet you wish your group to complete.

Print a copy for the teacher of the Sample Answers for the **Activity Worksheet**.

Prepare internet access to *Jack and the Beanstalk* online listening selections at [www.operatales.com](http://www.operatales.com).

Gather pens, pencils and additional writing paper as needed for your group.

### Introduction

Have your students read *The Story of the Opera*. Give each student a copy of the information sheet “The Characters” or display it on screen. Read through the information, discussing each character and listening to the online selections as you go.

### Guided/Independent Practice

Depending on your grade level, the ability of your students, and time constraints, you may choose to have students work as a whole class, in small groups, with a partner, or individually. Read the directions on the **Activity Worksheet**. Have students complete the portion(s) of the **Activity Worksheet** you have chosen with opportunity for questions. If students are working with a partner or in small groups, give them time to discuss their answers before writing them down. Have students share their answers individually or by groups and tell why they gave their answers.

### Evaluation

Have students discuss and evaluate the answers of others. The teacher may want to guide the discussion with the sample answers provided. After individual or small group responses have been shared and/or turned in, the class can then formulate comprehensive answers for the class with the teacher asking leading questions to guide the discussion.

### For Further Study

The teacher may want to have students research varying versions of the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Students may want to do additional research on Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan, his other works, or other related topics online or in their school library. Their findings can be shared with the class at the beginning of a later lesson.

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## TEKS

### Music:

#### 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

(5) Describe aurally the music representing diverse styles, periods, and cultures. A.

### General Music:

#### 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

(5) Identify relationships between content, concepts, and processes of the other fine arts, other subjects and music. D.

#### 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

(5) Relate content, concepts, and processes of fine arts and music subjects. D.

### Music, Level I

(5) Define the relationships between the content, the concepts, and the processes of the other fine arts, other subjects, and those of music. D.

### Music, Level II

(5) Define the relationships between the content, the concepts, and the processes of the other fine arts, other subjects, and those of music. D.

### Music, Level III

(5) Define the relationships between the content, the concepts, and the processes of the other fine arts, other subjects, and those of music. D.

### Music, Level IV

(5) Define the relationships between the content, the concepts, and the processes of the other fine arts and those of music. D.

### Language Arts:

#### 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

(12) Analyze characters, including their traits, motivations, conflicts, and relationships. F.

#### 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

(12) Analyze characters, including their traits, motivations, conflicts and relationships. F.

#### 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

(12) Analyze characters, including their traits, motivations, conflicts and relationships. F.

### English Language Arts and Reading, English I

(5) Analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters in works of fiction through a range of literary devices, including character foils. B.

### English Language Arts and Reading, English II

(5) Analyze differences in the characters' moral dilemmas in works of fiction across different countries or cultures. B.

### English Language Arts and Reading, English III

(5) Analyze the internal and external development of characters through a range of literary devices. B.

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English Language Arts and Reading, English IV

(5) Analyze the moral dilemmas and quandaries presented in works of fiction as revealed by the underlying motivations and behaviors of the characters. B.

Correlates

Language Arts

Drama

Gardner's Intelligences

Verbal-Linguistic

Musical

Interpersonal

Bloom's Taxonomy

Knowledge

Comprehension

Application

Analysis

Evaluation

Synthesis

Bibliography

Warrack, John and West, Ewan, The Oxford Dictionary of Opera, Oxford University Press, 1992.

Online Resources

[www.operatales.com](http://www.operatales.com)

[www.oxfordmusiconline.com](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com)

[www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

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## The Story of the Opera

*Jack and the Beanstalk* is a one act opera based on the traditional children's story. The story is set in a fictitious old English village. The action takes place in and near the small cottage of Jack and his mother.

The opera opens with a narrator introducing the story. Jack enters, and introduces himself in the first aria of the opera. He is the famous Jack B. Nimble, center figure for all fairy tales involving a boy named Jack.

Jack's mother enters. She tells Jack that they must sell their cow to buy food. She asks Jack to take the cow to Old Market Street and sell her. Jack is sad at the thought of selling the cow, knowing that she in turn will become someone's dinner.

On the way to Old Market Street Jack meets a Trouble Man. He is a dustman, a stranger, who offers to buy the cow. He offers Jack five magic beans in exchange. Jack accepts his offer and takes the beans home.

Jack's mother cannot believe that Jack has been tricked. Now they will surely starve to death because of his stupidity! She throws the beans out of the window, and they both go to bed hungry.

During the early morning hours, Jack and his mother wake to a thundering sound and a shaking of the cottage. A huge beanstalk has grown up past the roof of the cottage and into the sky. Jack, being an adventurous boy, climbs the beanstalk.

At the top he finds a large house where there lives a dishonest Giant and his kindly Wife. The Giant isn't totally happy with being mean and dishonest. He wonders why he is so dishonest and likes the taste of blood. His Wife is not sure how to respond to his wonderings.

While the Giant's Wife is alone, Jack enters and asks her for some food. She gives him something to eat. Hearing her husband returning, she has Jack hide so that the Giant will not be tempted to eat him. The Giant smells Jack, however, and begins searching for him. The Giant's wife tells him he is mistaken, and helps keep him from finding Jack.

The Giant is determined to find whoever is hiding in his house. Jack decides to disguise himself as a spirit, and confronts the Giant. The Giant is shaken, and turns to his hen that lays the golden eggs to calm him. He talks of how he stole the hen from Jack's father years ago.

Jack decides to steal the hen back from the Giant. The Giant's Wife helps him. As he is running away with the hen, the Giant chases after him. Jack makes it to the beanstalk and climbs down. Seeing that the Giant is still after him, Jack chops the beanstalk with an axe. The beanstalk falls, the Giant with it. The Giant lands on his head, and loses his memory. He forgets his name, and that he is supposed to be bad. He realizes the trouble he has caused by stealing and being so mean. The Giant decides to be good, and to treat others as he would like to be treated.

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## The Characters

**Jack B. Nimble:** (soprano) A capable young man growing up in a poor household with his mother. Jack lost his father at a very early age. Jack is trusting, but is not afraid to take action. Listen to “If you give me your attention...” from the Opera Tales website. Jack introduces himself to the audience.

**Mrs. Nimble:** (mezzo soprano) Jack’s mother. She has been raising her son alone since the death of her husband. Mrs. Nimble has very little to work with, and is at the end of the belongings she can sell. She is horrified to find that Jack has actually traded the family cow for five allegedly magical beans. Listen to “Now Jack, am I to understand...” from the Opera Tales website as she reacts to the news and Jack tries to explain.

**Giant’s Wife:** (mezzo soprano) She does the best that she can with the Giant. She tries to take care of his needs and keep other people out of his way. She is very tired from trying to keep him happy.

**The Giant:** (bass or baritone) He is a large dishonest man, who doesn’t fully understand why he is so mean to people. Years before, he stole a valuable hen from Jack’s father. The hen lays golden eggs, and is the source of his income. The Giant cannot resist the smell of an English boy. Listen to “Come out, come out, wherever you are...” from the Opera Tales website, as the Giant searches for Jack, in hopes of a tasty snack.

**Trouble Man:** (baritone or bass) He is a dustman, a stranger who at first seems to cheat Jack out of the family cow. The dried up old beans he offers for the cow do indeed turn out to be magical.

**Narrator:** (various) The Narrator may be a separate character, or can be performed by the rest of the cast taking turns.

### Link to Musical Excerpts:

<http://www.operatales.com/jack-beanstalk.shtml>

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Part I**

**Activity Worksheet**

1. At the time of the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, most people grew or produced their own food. So when food was scarce, or the growing season did not go well, people had to buy food from others. Why do you think selling the cow was such a desperate thing for Jack's Mother to do?

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2. Do you think it was fair for Jack's Mother to give him such an important task of selling the cow? Why or why not?

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3. Would you have taken the "magic beans" for the cow? Why or why not?

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4. If you were the Giant's Wife, would you have helped to hide Jack? Why or why not?

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**Part II**

5. Do you think Jack was foolish to start climbing the beanstalk? Why or why not?

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6. Jack is obviously the hero of the story, restoring his family's wealth and teaching the Giant a good lesson. Which of the other characters do you consider to be hero(s) of the story? Why?

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7. Which of the characters is more like the people in your life? Why?

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8. Do you believe that the Giant will continue to be good to other people? Why or why not?

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**Part III**

In most versions of the story of Jack and the Beanstalk, the Giant is killed when Jack chops down the beanstalk. John Davies' version has the Giant getting hurt, then changing his ways.

9. Which ending do you prefer for the story? Why?

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10. What do you think is the intended lesson of this story?

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Many operas are treated as **concept operas**, with stories that can take place in any time or location. The story of *Jack and the Beanstalk* was originally set in old England, hundreds of years ago. Some settings of the story have Jack disguising himself as a newspaper boy, which would probably set the story in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

11. Would a different time or place in which the story is portrayed change the story in any real way? Why or why not?

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12. If you were to perform this opera, what location and time period would you like to use?

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**Part I:**

1. At the time of the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, most people grew or produced their own food. So when food was scarce, or the growing season did not go well, people had to buy food from others. Why do you think selling the cow was such a desperate thing for Jack's Mother to do?

***Answers will vary. Example: the cow produced milk for Jack and his Mother. It could also be food***

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***if it was butchered. They would be selling a source of future food, not just an object.***

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2. Do you think it was fair for Jack's Mother to give him such an important task of selling the cow? Why or why not?

***Answers will vary. Example: No. It was far too much responsibility for a young boy. The cow was***

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***a very precious item to sell. Jack's Mother should have been overseeing the sale herself.***

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3. Would you have taken the "magic beans" for the cow? Why or why not?

***Answers will vary. Example: I would NOT take magic beans in trade for anything. I don't believe***

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***in magic. I would not have trusted a stranger who told me such a story.***

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4. If you were the Giant's Wife, would you have helped to hide Jack? Why or why not?

***Answers will vary. Example: I don't know. I think I would be afraid to get caught helping Jack.***

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***Since the Giant was so mean, he might do something to harm me.***

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**ANSWER KEY**

**Part II**

5. Do you think Jack was foolish to start climbing the beanstalk? Why or why not?

***Answers will vary. Example: I don't think it was a good idea. I would be afraid to climb anything***

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***that tall. Jack didn't seem to think about possibly falling. It was also a bad idea to go alone.***

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6. Jack is obviously the hero of the story, restoring his family's wealth and teaching the Giant a good lesson. Which of the other characters do you consider to be hero(s) of the story? Why?

***Answers will vary. Example: I think the Giant's Wife was a hero. She helped to save Jack from the***

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***Giant, even though he could have done something to harm her. I also think that Jack's***

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***Mother was a hero. She was raising Jack on her own, with no money to buy food. She was doing a***

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***very hard job, without Jack's Father.***

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7. Which of the characters is more like the people in your life? Why?

***Answers will vary. Example: Jack's Mother reminds me of my mother. She does her best to take care***

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***of our family with what she has. She works hard both at a job and at home to make sure we have***

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***food and a place to live.***

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**ANSWER KEY**

8. Do you believe that the Giant will continue to be good to other people? Why or why not?

***Answers will vary. Example: I don't think a person can change that drastically. I think the Giant***

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***might try to be good to people. If the people in the village are kind to him, he might continue.***

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***If they are not, he could go back to being bad.***

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**Part III**

In most versions of the story of Jack and the Beanstalk, the Giant is killed when Jack chops down the beanstalk. John Davies' version has the Giant getting hurt, then changing his ways.

9. Which ending do you prefer for the story? Why?

***Answers will vary. Example: I like that the Giant has a chance to live and change his ways. The***

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***story can be too scary for little kids if he dies. It is a fantastic story anyway. There is no need for***

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***any death.***

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10. What do you think is the intended lesson of this story?

***Answers will vary. Example: I think the lesson of the story is that even someone very young can***

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***believe in others and themselves and take action to do great things. Jack was loyal to his Mother,***

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***and took action on behalf of his father's memory to restore his family's fortune.***

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**ANSWER KEY**

Many operas are treated as **concept operas**, with stories that can take place in any time or location. The story of *Jack and the Beanstalk* was originally set in old England, hundreds of years ago. Some settings of the story have Jack disguising himself as a newspaper boy, which would probably set the story in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

11. Would a different time or place in which the story is portrayed change the story in any real way? Why or why not?

***Answers will vary. Example: I don't think the story would really change. People are about the***

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***same as they were hundreds of years ago. The way they live may be different, but not their basic***

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***character.***

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12. If you were to perform this opera, what location and time period would you like to use?

***Answers will vary. Example: I would like to perform it in the old, traditional way. I might use***

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***special effects, though, to create a growing beanstalk. I would have Jack and his Mother in***

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***traditional costumes. I might want to have two extra actors under a cow costume.***

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## Our Composer: Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan

Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan was born May 13, 1842 to Thomas and Mary Clementina Sullivan. Thomas Sullivan was a military bandmaster, clarinetist, and music teacher. From 1845 to 1857 Thomas was bandmaster at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

Arthur showed early talent in music, learning how to play many different instruments, and writing his first anthem at age eight. His father, knowing how difficult it could be to make a living in music, did not encourage Arthur's interest. Even so, Arthur was admitted to the Chapel Royal at the age of 11, very late for a boy soprano at the time. The choirmaster encouraged Arthur in his studies and even arranged for the publication of some of Arthur's earliest works.

In 1856, Arthur was awarded the first Mendelssohn Scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music. The scholarship was renewed twice, allowing Arthur to study for two years at the Academy, and a third year in Germany at the Leipzig Conservatoire. His graduation piece was a suite of incidental music to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. It created a sensation when it was first performed in London in 1862.

Sullivan launched his composing career with a series of serious works as well as hymns, ballads and other light pieces. During the period from 1861 to 1872, Arthur also worked as a church organist and a music teacher to help support himself. In 1866, Sullivan composed his first surviving opera, *Cox and Box*, which is still widely performed. His most successful orchestral work, the *Overture di Ballo*, premiered in 1870.

In 1871, Sullivan began his first collaboration with W. S. Gilbert in *Thespis*. After, each returned to their usual projects. In 1875, producer Richard D'Oyly Carte reunited Gilbert and Sullivan to create *Trial by Jury*, which became a hit. Their continued collaborations of *H.M.S. Pinafore* in 1878, *The Pirates of Penzance* in 1879, and *Patience* in 1881 forever linked the composer and the librettist as a team whose popular operas would be their lasting legacy. After collaborating for the next 15 years, the pair discontinued their partnership in 1890. They reunited in later years, but did not achieve the level of success that they had once enjoyed.

Sullivan's works from this period are the source of music used for *Jack and the Beanstalk*, the setting of the story by John Davies. Davies borrowed several of Sullivan's most known arias and wrote new words to fit the story.

Sullivan gained many friends in musical and social circles, including Queen Victoria's son Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh. Sullivan composed several pieces for royalty, especially for the wedding of the Prince of Wales in 1863. Sullivan was knighted for his contributions to music in 1883. This honor was for his serious orchestral works. His operas were always the source of his financial success, but not critical success. His ballet, *Victoria and Merrie England*, opened at the Alhambra Theatre in 1897 to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Sullivan died of heart failure in London on November 22, 1900. By order of Queen Victoria he was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral.

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## Did You Know...?

Sullivan always conducted on the opening night of his operas.

In his later years, Sullivan suffered from kidney disease, which forced him to conduct sitting down.

Sullivan's most famous and enduring works, his operettas, were not well liked by music critics, who felt they were beneath his ability and reputation as a composer.

Sullivan's brother Fred was an actor and singer who originated the character of Cox in *Cox and Box* and the Judge in *Trial by Jury*. Fred continued to play many roles in his brothers' operas for the rest of his career.

After the death of Arthur's brother Fred, he supported Fred's widow and children, and adopted his nephew Bertrand.

Sullivan seldom wrote the overtures to his operettas. He wrote the songs and the accompanying music, but usually let the overtures to his assistants.

Initial funds for the Mendelssohn Scholarship were raised through a concert by the famous soprano Jenny Lind. Felix Mendelssohn had written the oratorio *Elijah* for her, but died before it could be performed. Its first performance raised a thousand pounds to establish a scholarship in his name.

## Our Librettist: John Davies

John Davies has had a career in opera performance with companies all over the United States. He has sung with the New York Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, and opera companies in Boston, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, Atlanta, St. Louis, Kansas City, Omaha, Cincinnati, Phoenix, Nashville, and Anchorage. He has also performed in concert as a bass-baritone soloist with several American symphony orchestras.

Mr. Davies first began writing operas to entertain his own six children. His children's works combine his own settings of traditional children's fairy tales with well known music from some of the great masters of music. Through his series of Opera Tales, he has provided high quality children's operas to organizations across the United States and Canada

Few children's stories have been given full treatment as operas. Mr. Davies has responded to the call for such works to give young audiences quality experiences in opera. *Jack and the Beanstalk* was written in 1993 at the request of the Arkansas Opera Theater. It was intended for a small cast, minimal sets, and simple costumes.

The story and characters of *Jack and the Beanstalk* have the right blend of excitement and wonder that are just right for children's audiences. His libretto, set to the already popular music of English composer Sir Arthur Sullivan, creates a fun, fast moving telling of the ever popular tale.