

SYMPHONY OF STORIES

Educator's Guide

[Story Factory Digital](#) has partnered with [Opera Australia](#) to develop this suite of free multimodal creative writing resources that encourage students to engage with the CBCA's 2026 Children's Book Week theme, a [Symphony of Stories](#).

Developed by experienced educators, these activities facilitate deep engagement with ideation and the mechanics of creative decision-making, aligned with Australian Curriculum: English and Music priorities.

These resources can be used to enhance learning through independent student work, small group work or whole group lessons.

This learning series follows a three-part pedagogical sequence:

PART I - SETTING

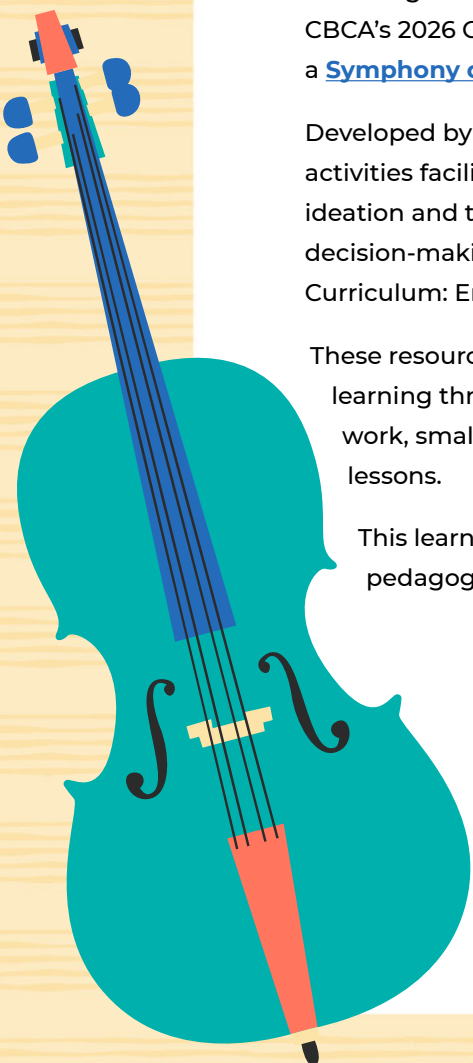
Students will be immersed in orchestral music, using their listening experience to create a soundscape in a cross-curricula lesson that converts music to words.

PART II - CHARACTER

Students will listen to a range of evocative, orchestral tracks creating characters that this music would soundtrack. Like the music itself, will their characters be frenetic, boisterous, lush, playful, or moody?

PART III - PLOT

Students continue their mindful creative expression as they create line drawings of iconic operas, giving them a playful, accessible entry point to confidently explore the highs and lows of plot.



Additional resources:

Students can expand their vocabulary by using an emotions wheel or adjectives card available for free at www.storyfactorydigital.org.au/teacher-resource-hub

Additional resources on opera and incorporating sung stories in the classroom can be found at www.opera.org.au/education

What you'll need

-  a display to screen the video components with clear audio
-  an interactive whiteboard or similar
-  printed worksheets for each student
-  something for students to write with

Video Symbol Key

Here's the icons we used in the video:



= listening



= writing/drawing

LINKS TO AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Year 3: AC9E3LY06

Students learn to plan, create, edit and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive written and multimodal texts, using visual features, appropriate form and layout, with ideas grouped in simple paragraphs, mostly correct tense, topic-specific vocabulary and correct spelling of most high-frequency and phonetically regular words

Year 4: AC9E4LY06

Students learn to plan, create, edit and publish written and multimodal imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, using visual features, relevant linked ideas, complex sentences, appropriate tense, synonyms and antonyms, correct spelling of multisyllabic words and simple punctuation

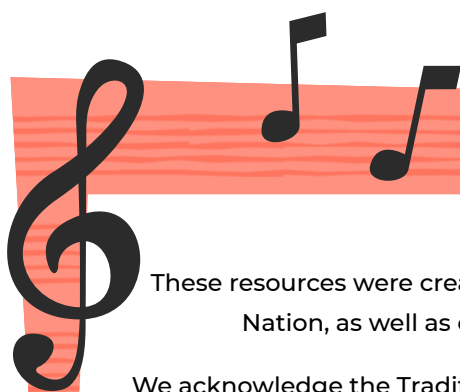
Year 5: AC9E5LY06

Students learn to plan, create, edit and publish written multimodal texts whose purposes may be imaginative, informative and persuasive, developing ideas using visual features, text structure appropriate to the topic and purpose, text connectives, expanded noun groups, specialist and technical vocabulary

Year 6: AC9E6LY06

Students learn to plan, create, edit and publish written and multimodal texts whose purposes may be imaginative, informative and persuasive, using paragraphs, a variety of complex sentences, expanded verb groups, tense, topic-specific and vivid vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and visual features

The overall focus of this unit is English, but it's also a great entry point for cross-curricula links to Music. We recommend AC9AMU4E01 for Years 3 and 4 and AC9AMU6D01 for Years 5 and 6.



These resources were created on the lands of the Burramattagal people of the Dharug Nation, as well as on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognise their ongoing connection to Country and community. We invite you to learn more about the lands you're on at <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>

Learning Outline



Part I: Setting

OVERVIEW

Students will be immersed in orchestral music, using their listening experience to create a soundscape in a cross-curricula lesson that converts music to words.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

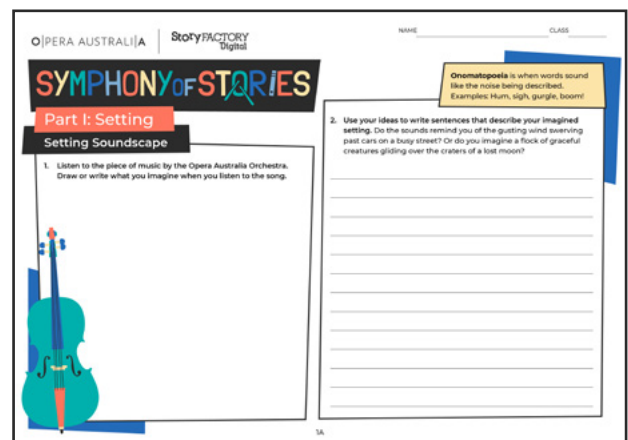
How could music, or a symphony, inspire a story?

1. Introduce [Book Week](#) and the 2026 theme, Symphony of Stories.
2. Engage the students with a group discussion using these prompts:
 - a. What is a symphony?
 - b. What would a symphony of stories look like? Sound like? Feel like?
 - c. What are the benefits of experiencing a symphony of stories?
3. After discussing, encourage big thinking:
 - a. What if we created a symphony of stories?
 - b. What would our stories need to have?
4. Guide students to recognise that most compelling stories require three core components: setting, characters and plot. As Part I focuses on setting, you might like to recap or explain the definition: setting is the time, place and general environment in which a story happens.

5. Explain that in order to write a great story, we need to gather a range of ideas first. Ask students:

- a. Where might we get ideas or inspiration from?

6. Remind them that inspiration is everywhere - in the places, music or art around us.



7. Introduce **Worksheet 1A**. Explain that they will need to listen closely to the music, drawing or writing the setting they imagine when they listen to the track.
8. Play the **Part I: Setting** video to kick off the listening process. Storyteller Angus will outline the task and share an example before the orchestra's performance. Afterward, the track will replay audio-only at 04:08 to give students dedicated, distraction-free writing time.
9. Give students time to complete their soundscape i.e. Activity 1 on Worksheet 1A. Encourage them to listen back to the audio multiple times if they need more time to capture their thoughts.

10. Facilitate a sharing session where students can share their setting ideas aloud. Prompt them with questions like:

- a. What sounds surprised you?
- b. What does that sound remind you of?
- c. What emotions would you use to describe what you heard?

11. Use the soundscapes and ideas shared as you model creating descriptive sentences i.e. Activity 2 on Worksheet 1A. Encourage students to consider how tempo, instrumentation or dynamics help build the setting's atmosphere. For example, fast-paced music might suggest a bustling city or rushing rivers; slow music might suggest a quiet, barren landscape. Dynamics, like a clash of cymbals, can represent dramatic shifts in the environment. This can be a good time to re-listen to the audio-only final section of the Part I: Setting video at 04:08.

12. Students complete Activity 2 on **Worksheet 1A**, creating descriptive sentences of their setting, either independently or collaboratively.

13. Introduce the writing challenge to the students, inviting them to use their draft sentences to write a descriptive paragraph of their imagined setting on **Worksheet 1B**.

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NAME _____ CLASS _____

Part I: Setting

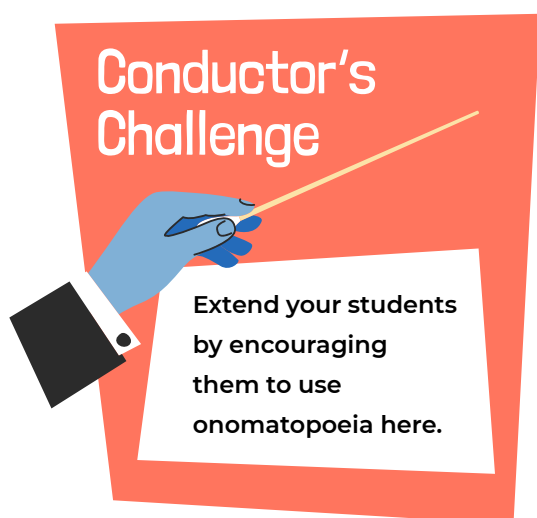
Writing Challenge

Write a descriptive paragraph of your imagined setting.

Try to include:

- ☐ lots of detail
- ☐ five senses: what can you see, hear, smell, taste and touch?

1B





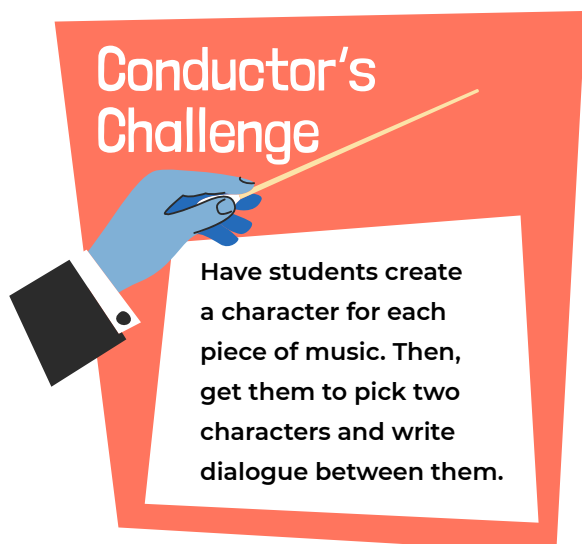
Part II: Character

OVERVIEW

Students will listen to a range of evocative, orchestral tracks creating characters that this music would soundtrack. Like the music itself, will their characters be frenetic, boisterous, lush, playful, or moody?

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Start by explaining that people are weird - wonderful, messy, complicated and totally unique. Share that characters are just the same; they aren't flat, but have layers, contradictions, secrets and dreams.
2. Facilitate a think, pair, share. Ask students:
 - a. Who are your favourite characters and what three words would you use to describe them to someone else?



3. Play **Part 2: Characters** video. Storyteller Angus will outline the task and share an example before the orchestra's full performance of all three tracks at 02:10. Storyteller Angus will then prompt students to fill out the character profile on **Worksheet 2A** based on the music. Students can create a character for each piece (in which case they'll need multiple copies of Worksheet 2A), or choose one piece to respond to. If working in a group, they can respond to one collaboratively.

NAME _____ CLASS _____

SYMPHONY OF STORIES
Part 2: Character
Character Profile

Complete the character profile and sketch as you listen to the tracks from the Opera Australia Orchestra. Complete one profile per piece.

Character type: ☐ Human ☐ Animal ☐ Object ☐ Hybrid ☐ Other	What is your character's mission or job?
What does your character look like? Give details. 	Favourite meal:
What is their personality like? 	Items your character would have in their bag:

Extra questions:

What's this character's wish?

What is this character feeling in this moment?

Why is this character feeling this way?

What's the most embarrassing thing that's happened to this character?

What is something this character always says?

Who are their friends?

Sketch your character

2A

4. Discuss the definition of characterisation: the way a writer creates and shows the personality, looks and feelings of a character in a story. Just as you have a special way of presenting, speaking and acting, writers use characterisation to make every character feel real and unique.
5. Once students have filled out **Worksheet 2A** they can explore their characters using the following dialogue drama game.
 - a. Encourage multiple students to volunteer to 'perform'.
 - b. Give each of them the same neutral sentence e.g. "are you ready yet?"
 - c. Ask students to think about the emotion or tone in which their character would say the same sentence.
 - d. Have each student perform the sentence in character.

- e. Encourage the 'audience' to identify the different voices and how they knew it was that emotion/personality trait.

NB: If there is only one student 'performing', ask them to try three different voices/tones, then reflect on what changes they made to account for different feelings.

- 6. Using this activity as a jumping off point, discuss the idea that different characters have different voices.

- a. What does that look like in our writing?
- b. How can we make our character's voice distinct?

As authors we build voice by carefully choosing specific words, deciding on the tone, and selecting how a character structures their sentences. For instance, a shy character might use short, quiet sentences, while an excited character might use long, energetic sentences to show their enthusiasm.

- 8. Introduce students to the writing challenge on **Worksheet 2B**, prompting them to write a descriptive paragraph introducing their character from a first person point of view. Students may choose to use the sentence starters provided on their worksheet or write their own.

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NAME _____ CLASS _____

Part 2: Character Writing Challenge

Write a descriptive paragraph introducing your character from a first person point of view.

Sentence starters

Hey, You might not know me, but I'm...

If you passed me by on the street, you'd probably just see... but there's a lot more to me than that.

Most people don't notice, but I have a strange habit of...

If there's something I'm known for, it's...

Everyone assumes I'm just... but my real secret is...

If you could peek into my bag, you'd find exactly what matters most to me...

2B



Part III: Plot

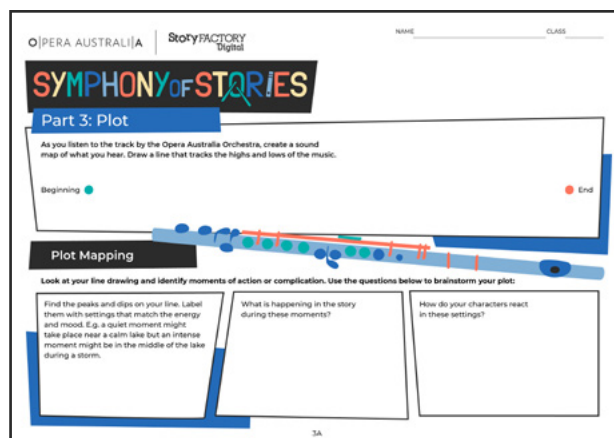
OVERVIEW

Students continue their mindful creative expression as they create line drawings of iconic operas, giving them a playful, accessible entry point to confidently explore the highs and lows of plot.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Lead a discussion recapping that most compelling stories require three core components: setting, characters and plot.
2. Assess students' prior knowledge by exploring what they already know plot to be. Discuss how plot acts as the journey or roller coaster ride of a story. This is the sequence of what happens and why. Most stories include a beginning, middle, climax and end. Consider drawing a plot line as a visual aid to support students' understanding.
3. Watch **Part: 3 Plot** video. Storyteller Angus will outline the task and students will be prompted to listen to the track performed by Opera Australia Orchestra, completing a line drawing that tracks the highs and lows of the piece on **Worksheet 3A**. Remind students that for their line drawing they have a beginning and end point on their worksheet. The video will display a progress bar as the orchestra plays, which you can use to guide your students.

To make this collaborative and interactive, have students reach up high to demonstrate when the music is chaotic or energetic, or crouch down low when it's soft and sweet as one person draws the line on the board. Then, listen again for students to draw their own line.



4. Once students have their line drawings, encourage them to identify potential moments of action or complication. Discuss:
 - a. What settings might apply in the peaks and dips?
 - b. What might be happening in these moments? Encourage use of verbs.
 - c. How do your characters present or react in these settings? What do they see?

Encourage students to collect their ideas on **Worksheet 3A**.

5. Play a variation of the drama game Fortunately/Unfortunately by aligning the 'fortunately' moments with quieter, lower-energy dips in the plot, and 'unfortunately' moments with high-action peaks.
 - a. Have students sit in a circle, or establish a clear playing order. Then proceed to follow the story as it's drawn, with each person saying one sentence at a time. Each sentence must start with either 'fortunately' or 'unfortunately' depending on if it is a low-energy dip in the plot or high-action peak.

6. Students will then detail their own points using the storyboard on **Worksheet 3B**.

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NAME _____ CLASS _____

Part 3: Plot

Fortunately/Unfortunately Storyboarding

Use the spaces in the storyboard to jot down your plot points.
Use 'Fortunately' for your lower-energy dips and 'Unfortunately' for your high-action peaks.
E.g. Fortunately, the kingdom was guarded by dragons.
Unfortunately, the fiercest dragon had a flu and sneezed fire on the Queen's prized apple garden.

3B



SYMPHONY OF STORIES

Part I: Setting

Setting Soundscape

1. Listen to the piece of music by the Opera Australia Orchestra. Draw or write what you imagine when you listen to the song.



Onomatopoeia is when words sound like the noise being described.

Examples: Hum, sigh, gurgle, boom!

2. Use your ideas to write sentences that describe your imagined setting. Do the sounds remind you of the gusting wind swerving past cars on a busy street? Or do you imagine a flock of graceful creatures gliding over the craters of a lost moon?

[illegible]

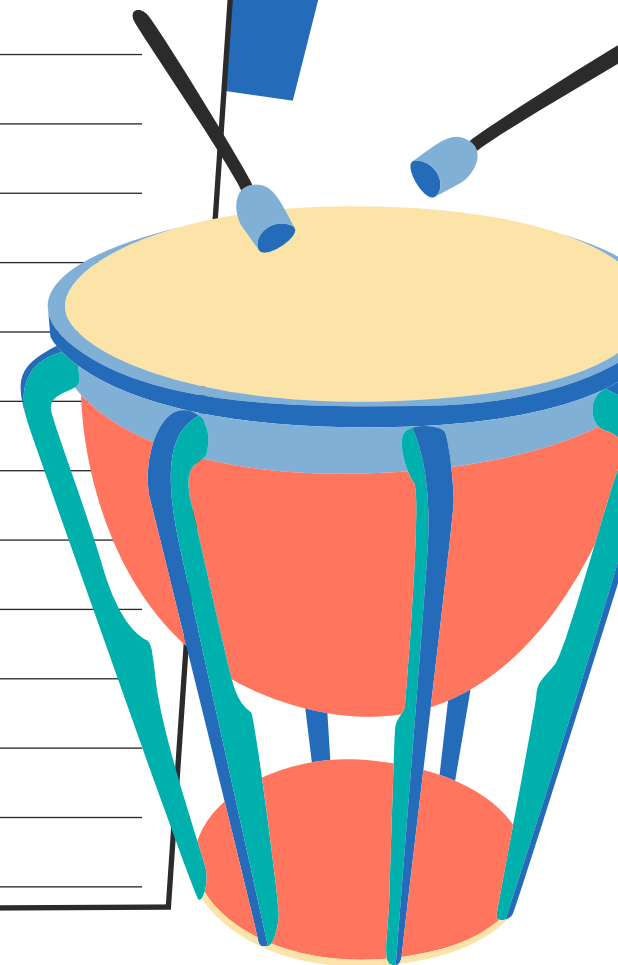
Part I: Setting

Writing Challenge

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Try to include:

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SYMPHONY OF STORIES

Part 2: Character

Character Profile

Complete the character profile and sketch as you listen to the track/s from the Opera Australia Orchestra. Complete one profile per piece.

Character type:

- ☐ Human
- ☐ Animal
- ☐ Object
- ☐ Hybrid
- ☐ Other

What is your character's mission or job?

Favourite meal:

What does your character look like? Give details.

What is their personality like?

Items your character would have in their bag:



Extra questions:

What's this character's wish?

What is this character feeling in this moment?

Why is this character feeling this way?

What's the most embarrassing thing that's happened to this character?

What is something this character always says?

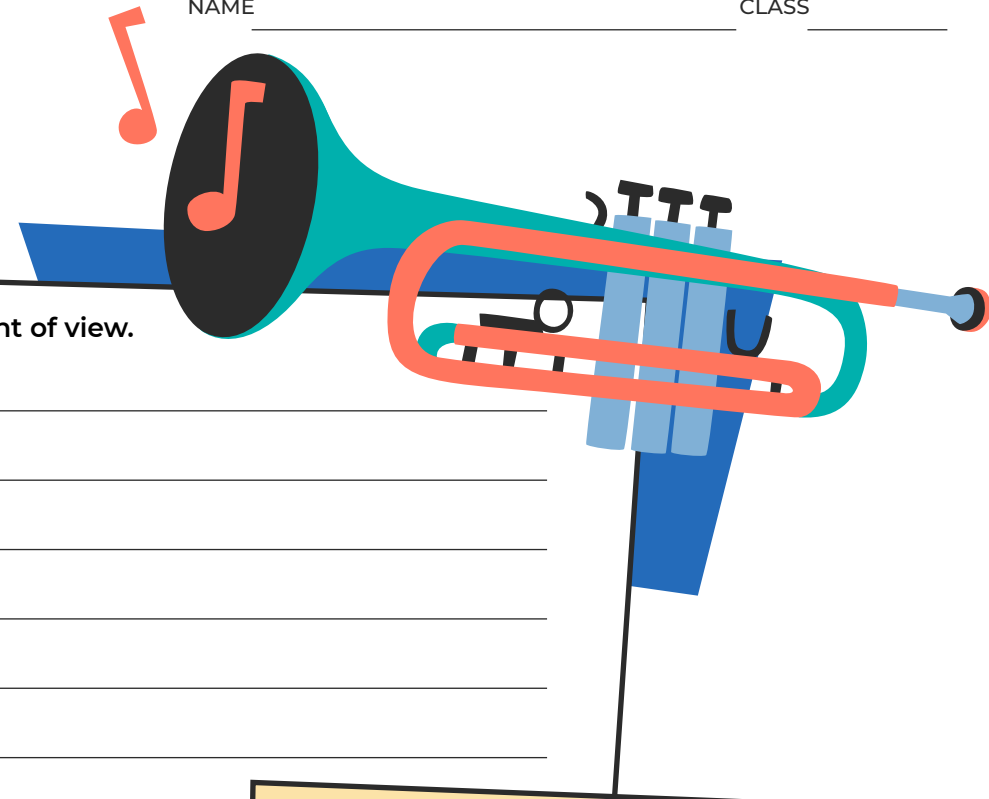
Who are their friends?

Sketch your character

Part 2: Character

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Hey. You might not know me, but I'm...

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Everyone assumes I'm just _____ but my real secret is...

If you could peek into my bag, you'd find exactly what matters most to me...

SYMPHONY OF STORIES

Part 3: Plot

As you listen to the track by the Opera Australia Orchestra, create a sound map of what you hear. Draw a line that tracks the highs and lows of the music.

Beginning ●

● End

Plot Mapping

Look at your line drawing and identify moments of action or complication. Use the questions below to brainstorm your plot:

Find the peaks and dips on your line. Label them with settings that match the energy and mood. E.g. a quiet moment might take place near a calm lake but an intense moment might be in the middle of the lake during a storm.

What is happening in the story during these moments?

How do your characters react in these settings?

Part 3: Plot

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Use the spaces in the storyboard to jot down your plot points.
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