The story

In 1880 in the famous Opera House in Paris there is a phantom. He watches the operas from Box 5, wears dark clothes, and has a yellow face with no nose. The famous singer La Carlotta is ill and cannot sing, so the young unknown Christine Daaé replaces her. Everyone loves her, especially Raoul, Vicomte de Chagny, who met her four years ago and fell in love with her then. But when he goes to her dressing room she sends him away. Outside, he hears a man’s voice in her dressing room – but there is nobody there.

The Phantom is becoming angry with the directors, who won’t give him money or leave Box 5 for him. Christine meets Raoul outside the Opera House. She explains that the voice he heard belongs to her music teacher. She never sees him, but he sees everything. And he has made her famous. When La Carlotta returns to sing at the Opera House, the angry phantom makes the chandelier crash down from the ceiling. La Carlotta never sings again.

Christine disappears for several days. She meets Raoul high up in the Opera House and tells him that the Phantom took her to his house on a lake below the Opera House. The Phantom, her music teacher, showed her his face, which is terribly ugly. He told her that he loved her and that he was going to kill Raoul. As they leave, a man called the Persian appears and sends them out by a different way. Raoul decides to take Christine away from the opera house after the opera on Saturday and marry her. In the middle of the opera, however, the lights suddenly go out and Christine disappears from the stage. Raoul and the Persian go in search of her but they become trapped in the Phantom’s house, where the Phantom has taken Christine. She takes pity on the Phantom and kisses him lovingly. He releases her to marry Raoul. Some weeks later, the Persian reveals that the Phantom is now dead. Raoul and Christine are never seen again.

Background to the story

The book of *The Phantom of the Opera*, by Gaston Leroux, was first published in 1911. It was hugely successful, and has continued to be so to this day. It has been filmed four times: a silent version in 1925, two more versions in 1943 and 1962, and a rock version in 1974. More recently it has appeared as a musical with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. Its *Beauty and the Beast* theme is one of the reasons for its popularity. The theme of the beautiful young heroine who transforms the ugly beast or monster through her love has been the basis for many fairy stories and tales. Although Christine’s loving kiss does not change the phantom into a handsome young man, she does nonetheless free him to die in some way happy. And although he has been responsible for several deaths, and much fear and anxiety in the Opera House, he has also given to Christine the gift of his teaching, which has made her so much admired.

The tale does not end with a conventional happy ending. The fate of Christine and Raoul is unresolved: do they flee from the Opera House and find happiness together far away, or do they meet a sombre end somewhere beneath the Opera House? The answer remains a mystery.

Before Reading

Here are some ways to help your students approach the story:

1. Give students the title of the book and show them the picture on the cover. Ask them to try and guess what kind of story it is.
2. Give students a copy of the text on the back cover of the book, and of the story introduction on the first page. When they have read the texts, ask them a few questions about the story, or use the Before Reading Activities in the back of each *Bookworm*.
3. Use the pre-reading activity in this worksheet.
4. If there is a recording of this title, play the first few pages and stop at an interesting point.
The Phantom of the Opera

Pre-reading activity

Who are these people?

The characters:

Raoul, a rich, handsome young Frenchman
Christine, a beautiful young singer from Norway
La Carlotta, a famous Spanish opera singer
Madame Giry, a woman who looks after the boxes in the Opera House
The Persian, a strange man who watches the phantom
Monsieur Firmin, a director of the Opera House

1. The phantom teaches one of the characters to sing. Which one?
2. The phantom loves one of them. Which one?
3. Someone else loves the same person. Who is it?
4. One of the characters laughs at the phantom at first, then later is afraid of him. Which one?
5. One of them knows the phantom well, but never sees him. Which one?
6. One of them never sings in public again after a terrible accident in the Opera House. Which one?
7. Two of them nearly die in the phantom’s house. Which ones?

To the teacher

Aim: To anticipate character and relationships
Time: 10–20 minutes
Organization: Give each student a copy of the worksheet. Explain that all of the characters are involved with the Phantom in some way. Their task is to decide which characters answer which descriptions. (Note that some characters’ names will appear more than once in the answers.)
When Angie Sorelli sees a farmer in the Steak House, all the opera singers talk about it. Meg tells them that her sister looks after Box 8, the ghost’s box, and the ghost sends her chocolates. Meg’s mother tells them that Joseph Kennedy is dead. The doctors of the Prague Opera Hat get a phone call from the ghost; he wants 50,000 dollars a month. But their singer, La Corbata, can’t swim, because she is old. Christine Duck, a young salad from New York, is going to sing that night.

**To the teacher**

*Where:* At the end of Chapter 2  
*Aim:* To summarize, revise reading and check text for detailed information  
*Time:* 15 minutes  
*Organization:* Give each student a copy of the summary of Chapters 1 and 2. It includes a large number of mistakes. Ask the students to cross out the mistakes and write in their corrections as in the example and then compare their work. They can use the book.

After Chapter 6, students can look back at the pre-reading task and confirm their answers where possible. Allow them to compare their existing answers and discuss any changes they would make to answers which have not been confirmed.  
*Key:* 1: Christine, 2: Christine, 3: Raoul, 4: Not answered yet, 5: Madame Giry, 6: La Carlotta, 7: Not answered yet.
The Phantom of the Opera

After reading activity

What really happens at the end of the story?

To the teacher

Aim: To speculate about the resolution of the plot and the relationship of characters
Time: 10–15 minutes
Organization: Give students the worksheet, and ask them in groups to come up with what they think is the most likely ending, and the reasons for their choice. This may involve a combination of the events suggested, and students may also come up with another answer not given here. Then let each group explain what they think really happened, and why. The end of the story is quite ambiguous. It is not clear whether Raoul and Christine are alive or dead, where they are, what really happened in the phantom’s house, etc.