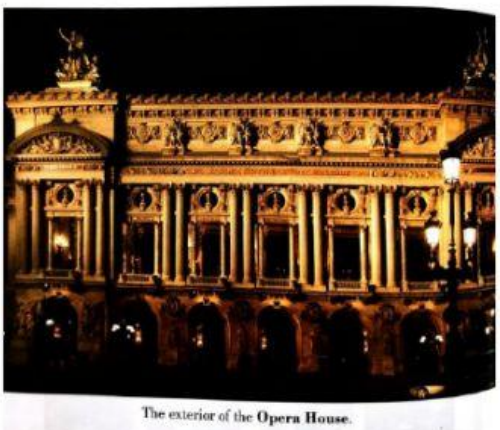
# The Paris Opera House

Work on a new Opera building began in 1862, on the orders of Napoleon III. The building was built in a mixture of different architectural styles, including Renaissance, Baroque and Classical styles. The building is a symbol of the wealth and confidence of France during the Second Empire.

The large ramp [1] on the West side of the building was put there so that the Emperor could drive directly into the main hall of the Opera. Although building started in 1862, a war in 1870 and a fire in 1873 delayed the work, and the Opera did not open until 1875.



The exterior of the **Opera House**.

1. **ramp** : a slope connecting two levels of a building (historically, for horses; now, for trolleys, wheelchairs).

The architectural plan of the Opera was just one of the many projects of Baron Haussmann, who was responsible for rebuilding much of central Paris. The architect Charles Garnier was chosen to design this important building, and the Opera House is often called the Garnier Palace. It was a very ambitious project, and the difficulties in building it were enormous. A special underground lake had to be created to make the foundations of the building safe. The underground lake plays an important role in *The Phantom of the Opera*.

The huge auditorium has five levels, and the stage is the largest in Europe. The facade contains four allegorical groups: Music, Lyric Poetry, Lyric Drama and Dance. Above it there is an enormous dome. In 1964 the ceiling of the Opera was decorated by the Russian-born French painter Marc Chagall, one of the early Surrealists. A huge rococo staircase leads to the large foyer, [1] which is decorated with mosaics and sculptures. The foyer then leads to the various levels of galleries and balconies. Eight tall columns support the great dome above the hall.

The **staircase in rococo style**. The Opera House has so much public space in its corridors, staircases and foyer that it soon became a popular meeting place for the upper and middle classes.

The paintings by **Marc Chagall** around the chandelier. They caused controversy in 1964; many people thought they were too different from the styles of the rest of the Opera House.

## 1 Comprehension check

**Answer the questions below.**

1. Who ordered the construction of the Opera?
2. What are its various architectural styles?
3. What was the purpose of the large ramp on the West side of the Opera?
4. Why was the completion of the Opera delayed?
5. Who designed the Opera?
6. What was the purpose of the underground lake?
7. What are the four allegorical groups on the facade?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

## 3 The Masque of the Red Death

Gaston Leroux refers to several famous stories of world literature in his novel. In this chapter he refers to the famous short story 'The Masque of the Red Death' by the American author Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849). Poe was very well-known in France when *The Phantom of the Opera* appeared because of the translations of the great French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867).

Look at the statements below about the story *The Masque of the Red Death*. Read the short version of the story to decide if each statement is correct or incorrect. If it is correct, mark A. If it is not correct mark B.

| | A | B |
|---|---|---|
| 1 It took a long time to die from the Red Death. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2 Prince Prospero was worried about the suffering of his people. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3 Prince Prospero did not want to worry about the Red Death. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4 Many people were dressed as the Red Death. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5 The masks and costumes at the prince's party were all very good and decent. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6 People stopped dancing and celebrating every hour. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7 The people at the party were afraid of the stranger. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 8 The costume of the stranger seemed to be empty. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 9 The people at party eventually attacked the stranger. | ☐ | ☐ |
| 10 The Red Death arrived secretly in the costume. | ☐ | ☐ |

The Red Death came to the land of Prince Prospero. When someone became ill with this disease, blood came out of his skin and he died in half an hour. Blood was the distinctive sign of the Red Death. Prince Prospero decided to leave death and disease behind. He and one thousand of his nobility went into one of his castles. They locked all of the doors and waited there for the disease to leave the land.

Inside they all enjoyed themselves and forgot the suffering outside. They held party after party. One evening the prince put on a special masquerade and everybody wore the strangest and most horrible masks. There was a large clock with a pendulum, and each hour it sounded in a disturbing way: then for a short moment, all the people at the party stopped their dancing, eating and immoral activities. Then they began again their wild movements of pleasure and enjoyment.

At midnight this pause in the festivities lasted longer as the clock sounded twelve times. It was then that the people at the party noticed a strange figure in the room. At first they were simply curious, and then they were horrified and disgusted. This was strange because everything was permitted at Prince Prospero's party — a party where there was no right and no wrong.

Now, this stranger was tall and thin, and he wore the clothing that was then worn by the dead in their graves. His mask looked like the dried face of a dead man, and his clothing was all covered with blood, the blood of the Red Death.

Prince Prospero became angry at this bad joke and shouted, 'Who is this man? How can he offend me with this horrible mask?' But no one had the courage to attack the stranger, and the stranger walked slowly through the castle. The prince then ran after him and came to the stranger. He pulled out a knife to kill the stranger, but Prospero screamed and fell to the ground, dead. Then the other people finally attacked the stranger, but they found that there was nothing inside the costume: it was empty.

It was then that everybody knew that the Red Death had arrived secretly. Then each person at the party fell in pain and was dead. The big clock stopped when the last person died. Then the Red Death was the ruler of all.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

**Look at the text in each question. What does it say? Choose the correct letter, A, B or C.**

This week's fitness class will be half an hour earlier, at 6:30 p.m., and in the sports hall, not the gym! Next week's class will be back in the gym at the usual time.

**A** The fitness class will only last for half an hour this week.
**B** There won't be a fitness class next week.
**C** The fitness class will be somewhere different this week.

2

*Tara, we've run out of coffee! Can you get some at the supermarket when you're coming back from college this afternoon? I'll pay you back tomorrow. Daisy*

**What should Tara do?**
**A** buy coffee tomorrow
**B** go shopping on her way home
**C** give Daisy some money to go to the supermarket

3

**BANK OPENING HOURS**
**Monday – Friday** 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
**Saturday** – 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.
The cash machine outside is in use 24 hours

**A** You can't go into the bank on Saturday afternoons.
**B** The cash machine can only be used when the bank is open.
**C** The bank closes at the same time every day.

4

There's a problem with the shower. You can't use it unless you want a cold one! Someone's coming to fix it this afternoon, so it'll be OK tomorrow.

**A** Someone is mending the shower at the moment.
**B** It isn't possible to have a hot shower this morning.
**C** Max will have to take a cold shower tomorrow.

5

Hi Mia,

I might be late for the band practice tonight. I usually get the bus, but there are lots of delays this week. =) See you later. Henry

**Why has Henry written the text?**
**A** to warn Mia that he may not be on time
**B** to remind Mia about delays on the buses
**C** to ask which bus he should get to band practice

**For each question, choose the correct answer.**

**Emma Watson**

The actress Emma Watson grew up near Oxford in the south of England and trained as an actress at the Stagecoach School in Oxford. Although she had only acted in a few school plays, in 2001, she was lucky enough to get the **(1)** ..... of Hermione in the Harry Potter film **(2)** ..... . This was the part which first **(3)** ..... her famous. She appeared in all eight of the Harry Potter films from 2001 to 2011. After the Harry Potter films, Emma **(4)** ..... to work in films, but also **(5)** ..... a few years studying English Literature at university. She acted while she studied, and since 2012 she has continued to develop her career and has appeared in **(6)** ..... very successful films.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **A** title | **B** person | **C** role | **D** hero |
| 2 | **A** set | **B** series | **C** group | **D** collection |
| 3 | **A** produced | **B** created | **C** caused | **D** made |
| 4 | **A** continued | **B** kept | **C** stayed | **D** remained |
| 5 | **A** passed | **B** spent | **C** gave | **D** allowed |
| 6 | **A** several | **B** plenty | **C** lots | **D** few |

LIVEWORKSHEETS