



Congratulations! Your class is going to have the opportunity to experience the story of “Jack & the Beanstalk” through the musical genre of opera. Your students will be afforded a dramatic, musical experience with costumed performers, sets and lighting. This version of the story brings a new moral (The Golden Rule) to the end of an old tale. This children’s opera gives you the opportunity to introduce the impact this rule has had on religion, philosophy, laws, human rights and the world in which we live.

Before the Show

In opera, unlike other forms of entertainment, the more knowledge you have before the performance only enhances your pleasure and understanding. To maximize the impact and educational value of this rendition of “Jack & the Beanstalk”, it is recommended that you introduce your students to the synopsis, libretto, the children’s chorus, a few operatic terms, and of course, the “Golden Rule”.

What is a Synopsis?

- ◆ A Synopsis is a shortened telling of an opera’s plot or story.

Synopsis of “Jack & the Beanstalk”

“Jack & the Beanstalk” is an operatic version of the story of Jack & the Beanstalk based on scenes from the operettas of Sir Arthur Sullivan. Living in poverty with his mother, Jack sells the family cow to a mysterious dustman for a handful of beans. When he returns home and shows his mom the scrawny seeds, she throws them out a window in despair. The beans, of course, take root, and in the moonlight a magical stalk grows to the sky. Discovering the beanstalk and climbing it, as any boy hero would, Jack finds himself in the castle of a very large oaf and his kindly, but haggard, wife. The Giant tells him a little secret. The secret reveals that the Giant had actually stolen the golden chicken and the gold from a farmer in the dell whose name was Squire B. Nimble. This farmer was Jack’s father. Learning that this giant has taken his father’s golden hen, Jack, with the help of the Giant’s wife, stealthily takes it back. The Giant, in pursuit of Jack, receives a bump on the head after falling from the beanstalk, causing him to forget that he’s a bully and is supposed to be “bad.” Jack and the Giant’s wife tell him that he should be ashamed of the things he has done and that just being around him is not even fun. They tell him he is simply a bully who steals things and lies and that he should go pick on someone his own size. Realizing all the trouble he’s caused, the Giant promises to live by the “Golden Rule”. He agrees to return the hen and the gold and to never steal again. He agrees to treat other people the same way he would want to be treated. In the other versions of the story the Giant doesn’t have the opportunity to change his bully ways. In this version the Giant is allowed to show how a bully can change, make friends, and live according to the “Golden Rule”.

Glossary of Opera Terms

This online glossary of opera terms is provided by Opera America.

- ◆ <http://www.operamerica.org/content/audiences/Programs/glossary.aspx>

LIBRETTO

“Jack & the Beanstalk”

NARRATIVE

I'll tell you a story, the story of Jack. He climbed up to the sky, and then he climbed back. When he went up, he was hungry and cold, but when he came down, he was carrying gold. When he went up, he owned not a thing. And when he came down, he was as rich as a king.

JACK'S SONG

If you give me your attention I will tell you who I am. My name is Jack Be-Nimble and I'm known throughout the land. I am a famous fellow as you very soon shall see. For every Jack in this whole world is named after me. I'm Jack-a-Lantern, Jack B. Quick, I'm Jack of all the trades. A lumber Jack, a jumping Jack, I am the Jack of spades. Jack in the box, Jack rabbit, I'm Jack whose friend is Jill. I'm very good at playing Jacks, there's no one with my skills. Yes, my name is Jack. With a Jack knife in my pocket, I'll not fear if I get lost. And I always take my jacket, just in case I meet Jack Frost. There is no one in this kingdom who is quite as brave as me, for I am the bravest boy that any boy could ever be. If I meet a scary dragon breathing fire from his nose, I'll run around him three times and then step upon his toes. If a giant tries to catch me, 'cause he thinks I might taste yummy, I'll bop him on the head until he cries out for his mommy. For I am brave Jack. I'll tell you about a magic trick if you would like to know. I can plant these stones right in the ground and make a garden grow. I have cabbages and broccoli and pumpkins and potatoes, some radishes, asparagus, some spinach and tomatoes. So, if you're very hungry there is no need for you to worry. I've told my magic seeds that we are rather in a hurry. For I have not had a bite to eat since ever and a day. And if I do not find some food I'm sure to waste away. For I'm hungry Jack. I wish I had some Flap-Jacks!

NARRATIVE

Jack lived with his mother right here on the ground in a small cottage not far from the town. Their old cow was sickly so sadly she mooed for not even old cows could find any food.

MOTHER'S SONG

Oh, Jack my dearest boy. I have sad news for you. Our cow is old and must be sold. There's nothing else to do. There is no other way, for she has no milk to give. A lack-a-day, no other way, we must have food to live. Ah, poor old cow, there's no hope for her now. Ah, poor old friend, this is a bitter end, what an unhappy end. Ah, my poor boy, there's no happiness, no joy. Ah, great God above, watch over our old cow with love.

NARRATIVE

“Dear Jack”, said his mother, “My wonderful son. You must sell our old cow, before day is done. Take her to the village to old Market Street. Sell her for some money and buy food to eat”. So Jack and the old cow set off for the town and walked till they met a strange man dressed in brown.

TROUBLE MAN SONG

How do you do? Do you do how? I'm in the mood to buy a cow. Don't want a horse, or ox to plow, no dog to bark, I want a cow. I don't know why. I don't know how, but soon I think I'll buy a cow. If a bully tries to beat you in a fight... If you're scared of ghosts and goblins in the night... If it seems that you are never ever right... If your haircut makes you look an ugly sight. Then it's time to put your troubles in my sack. But I'm warning you I'll never give them back. Oh, double bubble toil and trouble, that's the thing to do. I'll buy your troubles for a bean or two. If your mother and your father seem unfair... If a spooky story gives you a nightmare... If you cannot find your sneakers anywhere... If you want to learn to swim but you don't dare. Then it's time to send your worries off with me. I shall buy them very happily. Oh, double bubble toil and trouble, that's the thing to do. I'll buy your troubles for a bean or two.

TROUBLE MAN

Well, it's about time that you came along, Jack. Just put your troubles in this old sack. Hurry up, boy, I have plenty to do. I've spent the whole morning just waiting on you. Your neighbors have worries that won't wait till noon. I'll dump them all on the dark side of the moon. Come along son, the time is now. By the way, how much do you want for that ragged old cow?

JACK

You want to buy my cow?

TROUBLE MAN

Well, I buy snakes, and bats, and friendly cats all the time. But, I must admit I never ever bought a cow.

JACK

Will you buy my cow?

TROUBLE MAN

I think I will, but what a great pity, she's not very pretty, she's very old.

JACK

Yes, that is so.

TROUBLE MAN

She's not worth any money and that is true sonny.

BOTH

She's not worth beans by any means.

TROUBLE MAN

But beans I have and beans I'll pay, I'll take good care of your cow until you buy her back someday. A riddle-dee, fiddle-dee, fiddle-aye, until you buy her back. Here boy, take these beans and plant them in your garden.

JACK

Five beans? That's all you're paying me for my cow?

TROUBLE MAN

Take my word young man, These beans are worth more than money.

JACK

What shall I do?

TROUBLE MAN

Go plant your beans by the moon's first light. They will grow in the night.

JACK

I'd better hurry.

TROUBLE MAN

But do not worry for your old cow will be quite all right with me. She's not worth beans by any means. But beans I have and beans I'll pay, I'll take good care of your cow.

NARRATIVE

Jack's mother was not in a very good mood. When she learned her son hadn't bought any food. With no fuel for the fire and no bread to bake, Jack soon understood he had made a mistake. But his mom didn't scold him or cause any scenes, though she was unhappy about those beans. No use to cry over spilled milk now or, speaking of milk, an old sick cow.

MOTHER

Now Jack, am I to understand that you were walking to the village? And as you were walking you met a stranger? And that he offered to buy from you our old cow? And that he paid you five miserable beans instead of money?

JACK

Yes mother, that is exactly what happened.

MOTHER

Oh, Jack, my dear son, don't you know what you've done, that old man stole our cow. You've been cheated.

JACK

I think I've been cheated.

MOTHER

No fuel for our fire because of that liar and now with no food we're defeated. Beware of the dangers and don't talk to strangers is something they teach you in school. You must only go to the folks that you know when selling your cow it's a rule.

JACK

They teach me in school and I know it's a rule.

MOTHER

I don't mean to scold you, Jack, but I told you there are sneaky people out there. What horrible friends buy cows for beans and what do they do when they get them?

JACK & MOTHER

Our poor dear old cow she is hamburger now she is floating so high in the sky chewing clouds in high heaven. I'll be with her soon as she flies by the moon, if I don't find a morsel to eat by six or by seven.

NARRATIVE

Al through the countryside that night there blew a gentle breeze, as silver threads moonlit cobwebs danced among the trees. From far off in the forest an old owl wooed soft and low. While just behind Jack's cottage magic seeds began to grow. Gripping, grabbing, groping grimly, grew the grimy roots, while above the ground poked little green and grassy roots. The baby bean stalks greeted ants and crickets walking by and then they turned and pointed leafy tendrils to the sky. Jack at once sat up in bed, now very much awake. He felt his room, he felt his house, he felt the whole world shake. His mother called out to him, "Jack, I think I heard some thunder! But it didn't come from above. It seemed to come from under".

MOTHER

I think I heard thunder.

JACK

What was it I wonder?

MOTHER

The whole house was shaking.

JACK

The wide world was quaking. Please thank you and pardon. It's out in the garden. There's something out there in the night.

MOTHER

I am dying of fright.

JACK

I'm sure it's outside.

MOTHER

There is no place to hide.

JACK

I am sure it's outside.

(Jack runs into the night, leaving his mother alone in the house.)

MOTHER

It's ugly and scary. It's horribly hairy and when it first sees us, to death it will squeeze us. Oh, Jack, it is time to come back!

JACK

Mother! Mother! Come here quickly!

(Mother runs out to see what Jack has found.)

NARRATIVE

There's a place in the sky where great cloud castles fly, near the rivers of Fiddle and Styx, a place in the sky above Fairytale-town where smart pigs make their homes out of bricks. There's a place in the sky where an old giant dwells, guarding treasures of silver and gold. A place looking down on a boy climbing up, who is hungry, tired and cold.

JACK

Hear Ye, hear Ye, read all about it. Get your copy of Hey Diddle Diddle. Read all about the dog who laughed and a cat who can play the fiddle. Hear Ye, hear Ye, read all about it. Mrs. Dish has run away with Reverend Spoon. Jack's had some success with his beans, they say, and his old cow has jumped to the moon.

GIANT'S SONG

Fee, fie, foe, fum. When I smell the blood of an Englishman. Be he alive or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread. I'll tie him to a post and I'll cook him as a roast. Then I shall wait 'til he's done and serve him on some toast. If ever he is here, I'll smell his bones quite near. As soon as I find him, I will grind him into little pieces, let me make that clear. I'll throw him in a pot and I'll cook him up really hot. It's good for me and it's yummy, too! I'll cook him into stew. Yes, yes, some lovely English Boy stew!

GIANT & WIFE DUET**GIANT**

Oh, why am I moody and sad?

WIFE

I don't know.

GIANT

Why do I like being bad?

WIFE

Can't guess.

GIANT

Could it be that I'm utterly mad?

WIFE

You said it.

GIANT

I behave like a regular cad. Oh, why does my mouth tend to drool?

WIFE

Bad manners.

GIANT

And why do I like being cruel?

WIFE

Beats me.

GIANT

I believe only fools go to school.

WIFE

Why does that not surprise me?

GIANT

And I love to break each and every rule. Oh, why am I covered in grime?

WIFE

You don't wash.

GIANT

Is it just because I play in the slime?

WIFE

Could be.

GIANT

And why is my life full of crime?

WIFE

You had improper toilet training?

GIANT

It is true I would steal your last dime. Oh, why do I like to see blood?

WIFE

Don't know.

GIANT

And why is my nose full of crud?

WIFE

You don't blow.

GIANT

There's nothing I enjoy more than a flood.

WIFE

Well, we all do.

GIANT

And why do I think you're a dud? The reason I hate a good deed.

WIFE

Do tell.

GIANT

If I were a plant I'd be a weed.

WIFE

I believe it.

GIANT

The reason I'm driven with greed. I am a bad guy that is guaranteed. The reason you think I annoy.

WIFE

I do.

GIANT

The reason I would break your best toy.

WIFE

Shame on you!

GIANT

The reason I've got to destroy.

WIFE

It's true.

GIANT

I'm a very, very bad boy.

(Jack sneaks quietly into the room and politely addresses the Giant's wife.)

JACK

Please excuse me, lady. I don't mean to be rude, but I'm hungry, may I have a piece of bread, please? I have climbed up here, for I haven't any food. And may I have another for my very hungry mother?

WIFE

You may take this bread and some cheese, my gentle sir.

GIANT

Fee, fie, foe, fumy. I smell something delicious – yummy!

WIFE

(to Jack)

If you don't say goodbye he'll bake you in a pie.

(Jack hides as the Giant enters the room.)

GIANT

It's very clear. There's someone here. I have a nose that knows. He'll never get away from me, no matter where he goes. It's very clear. He's hiding near. I know I shall find him. There's not a doubt. I'll sniff him out and sneak up right behind him.

GIANT & WIFE DUET

GIANT

Come out, come out, wherever you are, I tell you. Sing hey, the simple Giant that I am. I'm sure to find you soon, for I can smell you. I'll eat you for my lunch with bread and jam.

WIFE

Dear husband I'm afraid you are mistaken. Sing hey, the simple Giant that you are. That smell you smell is the smell of smelly eggs and bacon.

GIANT

Be quiet wife, I know he's not too far. Come out, come out, wherever you are I think that he's playing hide and seek, sing hey the hungry Giant that I be. I'll count to ten and promise not to peek. At least I won't until I get to three. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten olee-olee-enfree.

WIFE

There's no one in this place but you and me, my love. Sing hey, the simple husband that you are. It's only just the two of us you see, my love.

GIANT

I'll catch that boy and put him in a jar. I've looked here and I've looked there. But I can't find him anywhere. I've looked high and I've looked low, but where he is, I do not know. It's getting late and I can't wait. I've got to find him soon. I'll teach this little smarty pants to sing a different tune.

JACK

Aoooooh! (Sounding spooky)

GIANT

What was that?

JACK

Aoooooh! (Raises his head out of the laundry basket with a sheet over his head)

GIANT

I think I heard a scary groan. I think my blood has turned to stone. I think that I am not alone. I think I need to use the phone.

JACK

You can't do that.

GIANT

Why not?

JACK

Because the telephone hasn't been invented yet.

GIANT

Oh.

GIANT & JACK

Yeow! (They see each other)

GIANT

Who are you?

JACK

(With a sheet over his head and a stick for a sword)

I am Sir Smarty Pants, brave and bold. I lived long ago in days of old. Listen to me and do what you're told. Give me one piece of your ill-gotten gold.

GIANT

(Frantically pulling treasure chest out and opening it)

Here, here's my gold. Take a piece if you want.

JACK

(Pulls out the Golden Hen)

What's this?

GIANT

Oh, you can't have that. You see that belongs to me. Well, actually, it doesn't really belong to me. You see... I stole it.

JACK

(Loudly)
You stole it?

GIANT

Shh! I stole it. I'll tell you all about it if you would like to know.

JACK

Yes, I would like to know.

ENSEMBLE (GIANT, WIFE & JACK)**GIANT**

I've got a nasty little secret, but you must promise not to tell, for I stole this golden chicken from a farmer in the dell. The farmer's name was Squire B. Nimble and he had a pretty wife and a baby boy named Jack. He had just begun his life.

JACK

(Aside) So it's true this ugly Giant stole my father's Golden Hen. Then it's me, Jack Be-Nimble, who will steel it back again.

WIFE

You horrible meany. You cowardly weeny, why don't you go pick on someone your own size? Please understand fully, you dishonest bully, you may think you're smart now, but crime doesn't pay!

GIANT

Yes, I stole it from Squire B. Nimble down below.

JACK

I cannot believe my ears. Now I must take back that Golden Hen.

WIFE

Forsake and forsooth, I am telling the truth, and I tell you that robbery surely is wrong. Your strength and your might does not give you the right just to take a man's property by dead of night.

GIANT

My story's done so say, "amen". I'm sure that we will meet again. Who knows where? Who knows when? (Angrily) Now give me back my Golden Hen!

JACK

I'll give you this hen when white is black, when up is down and front is back, when chickens bark and donkeys quack and when my first name isn't Jack!

DUET (JACK & GIANT)**JACK & GIANT**

Now say, "Goodbye", you're about to die. You're going to pay for your misdeed. By end of night you'll lose the fight and on this ground your blood will bleed, you monster, you villain, you thief! (Jack runs out the door)

GIANT

(Seething with fury)

I'm very calm. I'm not upset, for I shall catch that scoundrel yet. I'll trap him in my Giant's net and teach him so he won't forget.

(Jack appears at the door and is blocked from entering the room by the Giant.)

I know that he'll be back for more. And when he opens up this door I'll shout a great big giant roar and throw the culprit on the floor.

(Jack crawls between the Giant's legs into the room. He picks up the treasure chest.)
I'll snag him in my clever trap. I'll tie him with my giant strap.

JACK

Excuse me. (Asking the Giant to step aside so that he can leave.)

GIANT

Oh, certainly. (The Giant politely steps aside so that he can leave.)

He thinks I'm stupid, but he's wrong. I'll catch him soon. It won't take...

OH, RATS! (The Giant runs out the door in pursuit of Jack.)

TRIO (GIANT, WIFE, JACK)**JACK & GIANT**

You may think you're clever, but I disagree. You will never ever be as smart as me. There is no hope for you. You might as well give in. There's nothing you can do for I am sure to win.

WIFE

We must go! Time to go!

NARRATIVE

Jack B. Nimble climbed below. He climbed as fast as he could go. And when he made it to the ground he looked and looked until he found.

JACK

An Ax!

NARRATIVE

Jack B. Nimble took his ax and gave that beanstalk forty whacks. The Giant shouted from a cloud...

GIANT

You can't do that. It's not allowed!

JACK

Oh, Yeah?

NARRATIVE

The Giant made an angry sound and started climbing to the ground. Oh, Jack B. Nimble, chip and chop! No time to rest, no time to stop. He's getting close. He's climbing near. We'd better get away from here. I see his nasty knobby knees. He's just above those willow....

GIANT

(Falling) Ahhh!

WIFE

What happened, Jackie? Can you tell me

JACK

I think that nasty fellow fell.

WIFE

We can't stay here. It would be wrong. Oh, hurry, Jackie. Come along.

GIANT

(Moans pathetically)

JACK

In summer it rains. In winter it snows. That's what we all learn in science. There's spring and here's fall, but what do you call, the day when it starts raining Giants?

GIANT

(Dazed) I fell on my head in a flowerbed. I forget my name. You can call me Fred. I was way up high where the eagles fly. Way up in the sky. I can't remember why.

Jack and the Wife sneak up behind the Giant)

GIANT

Oh, now I remember, I understand fully. They ran away because I am a bully. Now I'm alone and I must admit sadly, that right up to now I've behaved very badly.

WIFE & JACK

Just a moment, we know you. It is very clear. You're the great big Giant who followed us down here. If you do not go we will push you hard. We think you should know that you are in Jack's backyard.

GIANT

(Thoroughly intimidated)

Don't be angry. Don't be mad. Don't shout, for heaven's sake. I was never very good, at being very bad. You're making a mistake.

WIFE & JACK

We don't believe you! You should be ashamed for the things you have done. Just being around you is not any fun. You're simply a bully who steals things and lies. Go pick on someone your own size.

GIANT

Please, if you won't scold me I'll try to be good. I'm simply a fellow who's misunderstood. I really don't want all your gold or your hen. No, I promise that I'll never take them again.

WIFE & JACK

You promise to be a good Giant from now on?

GIANT

Yes.

WIFE & JACK

Are you sure?

GIANT

I promise. I'll treat others, as others would do, if the others and I were in each other's shoe.

WIFE & JACK

(To each other)
Huh?

GIANT

(Proudly)
That's the GREAT GOLDEN RULE.

WIFE & JACK

Oh.... (with relief) THE GREAT GOLDEN RULE.

GIANT, WIFE, JACK

Oh, happy the day when a Giant so cruel, trades all of his gold for the THE GREAT GOLDEN RULE.

You must treat other people the same way that you would want other people to treat you.

WIFE & JACK

He's a jolly good fellow now nobody can deny, our very best friend that we have in the sky.

GIANT

I'm a jolly good fellow now nobody can deny, I'm the very best friend that you have in the sky.

GIANT, WIFE, JACK

Oh, happy the day when the sun shines above. Oh, happy are we when our heart's filled with love. Oh, happy are we when the sky is so blue. Oh, happy the time that we spent here with you!

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

We'll tell you the story, the story of Jack. Hey, hey nonie-nonie hey-noo.
He climbed up to the sky and then he climbed back. Hey, hey nonie-nonie hey-noo.
When he went up he was hungry and cold but when he came down he was carrying gold. Oh, such a wonderful sight to behold. Hey, hey nonie-nonie hey-noo. Tink-a-tink, Tink-a-tink, Tink-a-Tank, Tink-a-Tank, Tink-a-Tank, Tink-a-tink,. The story of Jack, the Brave and the Bold. Hey, hey nonie-nonie hey-noo.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER/LIBRETTIST

Since 1974, John Davies has performed with opera companies throughout the United States, including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, and the opera companies of Boston, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, Atlanta, St. Louis, Kansas City, Omaha, Cincinnati, Phoenix, Nashville, and Anchorage. He has also performed in concert as bass-baritone soloist with the symphony orchestras of Boston, San Francisco, St. Louis, Detroit, San Antonio, Indianapolis, Chattanooga and Syracuse. A father of six children, John takes an active interest in the performing arts for young people. His operas for young audiences have been presented by more than 60 opera companies and university opera programs in the United States and Canada.

A NOTE FROM JOHN DAVIES

I wrote *Jack & the Beanstalk* in 1993 in response to Arkansas Opera Theater asking me if I'd consider writing a children's opera that could travel with a cast of 3 singers. It seemed to me that by double casting Jack's Mother with the Giant's Wife and The Giant with the man that buys Jack's cow, five characters ought to squeeze out rather smoothly from a cast of 3 performers. I put the opera together envisioning that casting arrangement and was pleased to learn at the end of the Opera Theater's statewide tour that the show had worked well. (Other companies have used casts of 4 and even 5 performers by not double casting.) The story of *Jack & the Beanstalk* possesses just the right larger-than-life characters for a children's opera. With an adventuresome boy, his sweet mother, a giant and his beleaguered wife, and a mysterious trader in magical beans, the English folktale moves along with energy and personality. With that in mind, I used the music of English operetta composer, Sir Arthur Sullivan. Sir Arthur's music is highly accessible, lots of fun and always healthy to sing: three essential qualities when presenting performances before 9:00 a.m. in school gymnasiums.

ABOUT THE MUSICAL COMPOSERS GILBERT & SULLIVAN

<http://www.ompersonal.com.ar/music/gilbertsullivan.htm>

UNIVERSITY OF MARY HARDIN-BAYLOR MUSIC

<http://www.umhbmusic.net/>

ETHIC OF RECIPROCITY

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethic_of_reciprocity

THE GOLDEN RULE

<http://www.jcu.edu/philosophy/gensler/goldrule.htm>

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/reciproc.htm>