

Suggested Activities to accompany *Nicolai's Overture to the Merry Wives of Windsor*

Listening and Movement

Objective: Help students develop listening skills and the ability to interpret music with movement.

- **Activity:** Play the overture and ask students to listen carefully. When they hear certain themes or changes in the music (like when it gets faster or slower, or changes from loud to soft), have the students freeze, hop, skip, or move in different ways to match the music's mood. For example, when the music is light and playful, they can do small, quick steps. When it becomes louder or more dramatic, they can take larger steps or even pretend to be part of a scene from the opera.
- **Variation:** After listening, ask them to come up with their own dance or movement routines that express the feelings they experienced while listening.

Introduction to Opera

Objective: Familiarize students with the characters from *The Merry Wives of Windsor* through music.

- **Activity:** Briefly explain who the main characters in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* are, like Falstaff, the merry wives, and their husbands. Play short excerpts of the overture and ask the students to imagine what type of character each section of the music represents. Then, have them draw or act out the characters based on the music they hear. For example, a section of music that sounds jolly and light could represent the playful wives, while a heavier or more dramatic section could represent Falstaff's comical but pompous character.
- **Discussion:** Ask the students to explain how the music made them feel about the characters and what qualities they think the music helped convey.

Music and Emotion Exploration

Objective: Help students identify emotions in music and relate them to personal experiences.

- **Activity:** Play different sections of the overture and ask the students to identify the emotions they think the music is expressing. Is it happy? Funny? Dramatic? A little sneaky or mysterious? After listening to a section, have them discuss in pairs or small groups how the music made them feel and why.
- **Extension:** Have students write a short reflection on a time they felt a similar emotion or use the music to create a short poem or piece of writing.

To listen to Nicolai's *Overture to the Merry Wives of Windsor*

<https://youtu.be/ut36OVDt8?si=JPG9d9tZsWMfui-L>