

A biography tells the story of a person's life. Read this biography of Dame Nellie Melba, written by Mark Ellison of Macgregor Primary School, then answer the questions.



Nellie Melba was one of Australia's greatest singers. Her real name was Helen Porter Mitchell and she was born in 1861. At the age of 20 she went to Queensland and was married. In October 1883 her son was born. Shortly after, she returned to Melbourne to take singing lessons from Pietro Cecchi. She was advised to continue her musical studies overseas.

In 1886 she travelled to London and then went to Paris where she became a student of Mathilde Marchesi. The first opera she sang in was *Rigoletto*. This was in Brussels and she used the name Nellie Melba for the first time. She became well-known in Paris as well as Brussels.

By 1889 she was singing at England's greatest music centre, Covent Garden, and other opera houses in Europe. She became famous world-wide as a superb opera singer.

In Australia from 1924 to 1928 she staged many seasons of opera. Her last performance in England at Covent Garden was in 1926.

Nellie Melba died in 1931 and was buried at Coombe Cottage in Victoria.

1. What was Nellie Melba's real name? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What did she do after her son was born? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the name of England's great music centre? \_\_\_\_\_

4. During which years did Nellie Melba stage several seasons of opera in Australia? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Write the meanings of these words.
- a. opera \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- b. superb \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- c. performance \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- d. advised \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
6. Did the biography state or indicate these points? Answer yes or no.
- a. Nellie Melba was born in Victoria. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Her first successful opera performance was in Brussels. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Nellie Melba enjoyed Covent Garden more than any other opera house. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. *Rigoletto* was her favourite opera. \_\_\_\_\_
7. The following sentences are about events in Nellie Melba's life. Number them from one to five in the order they occurred.
- a. Nellie Melba began singing at Covent Garden. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. From 1924 to 1928 many seasons of opera were staged. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Helen Mitchell went to Queensland. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Pietro Cecchi gave lessons to the young singer. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Nellie Melba sang in *Rigoletto* in Brussels. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Why were these dates important?
- a. 1861 \_\_\_\_\_
- b. 1883 \_\_\_\_\_
- c. 1886 \_\_\_\_\_
- d. 1889 \_\_\_\_\_
- e. 1926 \_\_\_\_\_
- f. 1931 \_\_\_\_\_

#### FOLLOW-UP

Mark's biography includes the following:

- Introductory statement: who the person was, why she was famous and where she was born
- Important dates and events in the singer's life in sequence

Prepare a short biography on a famous Australian.