

Study Guide: [Songs & Stories of Turlough O'Carolan](#)

VOCABULARY:

- **acoustic** -- not using electricity.
- **bow** -- a wooden stick, with horsehair on one side, that is used to play a string instrument.
- **cello** -- a string instrument in the violin family with four strings that are tuned in intervals of fifths. Sound is made by strings vibrating over a sound box. Different pitches are made by the fingers pressing on a fingerboard which extends above the sound box. Can be bowed or plucked. Evolved from the bowed lutes & the viols.
- **composer** -- someone who writes music.
- **courtship** — a man and a woman getting to know each other & falling in love.
- **duet** -- where two parts sound at the same time. They can either be sung or played instrumentally.
- **electronic** -- using electricity.
- **flute** -- the soprano voice of the woodwind family. It is usually made of silver and/or gold. Sound is made by the lips of the player shaping and directing the air-stream over a "flue" (similar to blowing over the top of a bottle to make sound). Played transversely, or "to the side."
- **folk music** -- music that relays stories or feelings of the people of a particular country.
- **form** -- the purposeful organization of the composer's materials. A typical song form is AABB, made up of two contrasting sections, each of which is repeated.
- **harmony** -- adds depth and richness to music. It's like adding full color to a black and white painting or photograph. Adding chords and accompaniment to a melody.
- **harp** -- a stringed instrument that has many strings (from 15 to 34 or more, depending on the size of the instrument). Vibration creates the sound; it is strummed when played, and has a beautiful, rippling sound. O'Carolan probably used a folk harp (one small enough to fit on his lap).
- **Ireland** -- a country above England, near Scotland. Developed an easily recognizable type of folk music.
- **melody** -- series of tones arranged in order to form a recognizable unit. Hearing and recognizing melodies may be the single most important part of listening to music.
- **mode** -- a type of scale used for a particular piece. There are seven modes used in Western music: Ionian (also known as Major), Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian (natural minor) & Locrian.
- **modulation** -- changing to a different key, or mode, in the middle of a piece.
- **pennywhistle** -- a small wind instrument, played to the front, not transversely. Also known as tin whistle, or Irish whistle. Popular in Ireland, it also became popular in the early 20th century in America.
- **phrase** -- like a musical sentence, or part of a sentence. It is a dependent idea within a melody. For example, when you see a comma in a sentence, you pause slightly. Those pauses would indicate the end of a musical phrase. As in speech (or writing), the pause doesn't necessarily indicate the end of an idea.
- **pizzicato** -- plucking a string with the finger. The name comes from an Italian word meaning "pinched."
- **planxty** -- a song (usually without words) written for a specific person. An Irish (gaelic) word meaning "in praise of."
- **reed** -- a tall swamp grass with jointed, hollow stalks. It also can mean a flexible strip of cane or metal used as a mouthpiece for a wind instrument.
- **rhythm** -- the organization of time in music. Usually grouped into equal segments, called beats. The gathering of beats into regular groups is called meter. The most common meter is four beats, with the stress on one: **1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4**, etc.). Three beats to a measure is less common & used for minuets & waltzes. (Can you spell rhythm?)
- **small pox** -- an acute, highly infectious viral disease which is often fatal. Occurs only rarely today.
- **strum** -- when several strings on a string instrument are played at once (like a guitar is played).

- **tempo** -- the speed at which a song flows (or flies!) by in time (see rhythm).
- **transverse** -- played to the side (how a flute is played).
- **Turlough O'Carolan** -- an Irish musician who played the harp & composed over 1700 songs.

Suggested Pre-Performance Activities:

- Locate the different countries we'll be visiting on a map (Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England).
- What are the four instrument families? (string, woodwind, percussion, brass) How do the instruments in each family sound? How are they played? How is the sound made?
- What are the elements of music? (rhythm, harmony, melody & form) Why is each important? Can you do each one? Clap your hands, stomp your feet, talk or sing to your friend, both of you talk or sing at once -- those are the elements of music!
- What are your five senses? (sight, sound, taste, smell, touch) Why is it important to be very quiet when you listen to music? (so you can listen to it, not just "hear" it) How many of your senses does music affect? (sight, sound & sometimes touch)
- Do a sound experiment. Ask your class to name all the different sounds in the room (clocks ticking, horns blaring, feet rustling, someone sneezing, breathing, etc.), then have your class try to sit and listen to all those sounds for two minutes. Do the sounds get louder? Do you hear even more sounds? Can you "tune out" some noises and focus on others?

Suggested Follow-up Discussion and Activities:

- What family of instruments is a cello in? Flute? Pennywhistle? How does each instrument make their sound?
- As a class, choose someone famous or someone that has influenced your life and write a planxty for them. Is this person sad? happy? did they make you feel happy or not? Is there a story you can tell about what stimulated you to write a song about them?
- Play or sing your planxty for your parents, friends, teachers. Do they get the same feeling you wrote about?