



Teacher Resource

Dame Nellie Melba

Women's History Month

Focus Questions

Discuss the BTN story as a class and record the main points of the discussion. Students will then respond to the following:

1. Summarise the BTN story. Share your summary with another student.
2. Nellie Melba was a world famous...
 - a. Ballet dancer
 - b. Opera singer
 - c. Portrait painter
3. Where did Nellie Melba move to chase her dreams?
4. Nellie changed her last name to "Melba" to honour which Australian city?
5. Why was Nellie Melba made a dame in 1918?

Activity: Personal Response

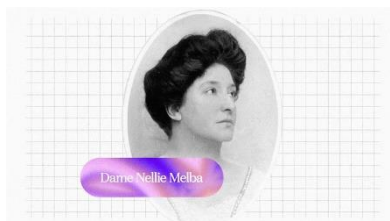
Respond to the BTN Dame Nellie Melba story as a class. Students will complete one or more of the following incomplete sentences:

- Dame Nellie Melba is an important Australian because...
- It was interesting to learn...
- These are five words that I would use to describe Dame Nellie Melba...
- This story made me feel...
- It is important to celebrate Dame Nellie Melba because...

Activity: Class Discussion

After watching the BTN story, hold a class discussion using the following discussion starters.

- What did the BTN story tell you about the life of Dame Nellie Melba?
- Name at least one of her achievements.
- Why do you think Dame Nellie Melba became so famous?
- What questions do you have about Dame Nellie Melba?



EPISODE 5

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KEY LEARNING

Students will learn more about the life and work of Dame Nellie Melba.

CURRICULUM

HASS – Year 3 and 4

Pose questions to investigate people, events, places and issues.

Locate and collect information and data from different sources, including observations.

HASS – Year 5 and 6

Develop appropriate questions to guide an inquiry about people, events, developments, places, systems and challenges.

Locate and collect relevant information and data from primary sources and secondary sources.

History – Year 6

The contribution of individuals and groups to the development of Australian society since Federation.

HASS – Year 7

Construct significant questions and propositions to guide investigations about people, events, developments, places, systems and challenges.

Activity: Dame Nellie Melba's life

Students will research and write a biography about Dame Nellie Melba. Before they begin their biographies, discuss what students already know about biographies. What type of information is included in a biography and what do they tell us about a person.

Class Discussion

Use the questions below to get a class discussion started with your students about biographical writing.

- What does a biography tell us about a person?
- Where can you look to find information for your biographical writing? Why is it important to use more than one source of information?
- What makes a biography interesting? For example, key information and facts, a timeline of events, photographs, illustrations and quotes.



Create your Biography

Using the biography worksheet at the end of this activity, students will research and record information about Dame Nellie Melba. Some possible areas of research include:

- When and where was Dame Nellie Melba born? Describe her family life growing up.
- What were some of her achievements? Choose one to explore in more detail.
- What inspired Dame Nellie Melba to become an opera singer?
- What were some challenges that she faced and how did she overcome them?
- What contributions did she make to Australian society?
- What do you admire about her?
- Interesting facts about Dame Nellie Melba.

Further Investigation

- How did Dame Nellie Melba influence Australian culture and the arts beyond her singing career?
- How important do you think it was for an Australian woman to gain international recognition in the early 1900s?

Interview

- Imagine you could sit down and talk to Dame Nellie Melba. What questions would you ask about her life and achievements?
- In pairs, students can role play the interview – one taking on the role of interviewer, the other, as Dame Nellie Melba.

Portrait

- Create a portrait of Dame Nellie Melba. Look at [portraits of Nellie Melba](#) at the National Portrait Gallery for inspiration.
- Explore and experiment with different techniques and mediums to produce a portrait.
- Organise a class exhibition.

Creative Writing

- Write a short story imagining you are at one of Dame Nellie Melba's performances in the late 1800s early 1900s. Describe the performance and how it made you feel. Use descriptive language to capture the power of the performance. [Listen to Nellie Melba perform](#) for inspiration.

Activity: Explore our Banknotes

The \$100 banknote celebrates the contribution made by Dame Nellie Melba. Students can examine the banknote in detail on the [RBA website](https://www.rba.gov.au/notes-and-coins/100-dollars). The following questions can guide students' investigation:

- What do you see? Write down as much detail as you can about what you see.
- Can you find any icons, images, writing or clues about Dame Nellie Melba on the banknote? Record your discoveries.
- Why do you think Dame Nellie Melba is on the \$100 banknote?
- What questions do you have about what you see on the banknote?
- Share your findings with the class.



Students will [explore the next generation of banknotes](https://www.rba.gov.au/notes-and-coins/next-generation) to discover the components of Australia's banknotes including their representation of Australia's history and culture, and their unique design and security features.

Focus on the \$100 banknote and find out as much as you can about Dame Nellie Melba.



Did you know Australia's banknotes have areas of text unreadable to most human vision? The text is approximately 0.25mm in height and can only be read with the help of a magnifying glass! Learn more about the RBA's [Microprinting](https://www.rba.gov.au/notes-and-coins/microprinting) process.

[Listen to the microprint excerpt](#) from Dame Nellie Melba's memoir *Melodies and Memories*, in which she declares her connection to her home country

Useful Websites

- [Nellie Melba: In their own words](https://www.nationalportraitgallery.gov.au/our-collections/dame-nellie-melba) – National Portrait Gallery
- [Dame Nellie Melba](https://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/special/australian-dictionary-of-biography/) – Australian Dictionary of Biography
- [Dame Nellie Melba](https://www.rba.gov.au/notes-and-coins/100-dollars) – Reserve Bank of Australia
- [Nellie Melba Museum](https://www.nelliemelbamuseum.com.au/)

BIOGRAPHY

Name

Born

Family

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