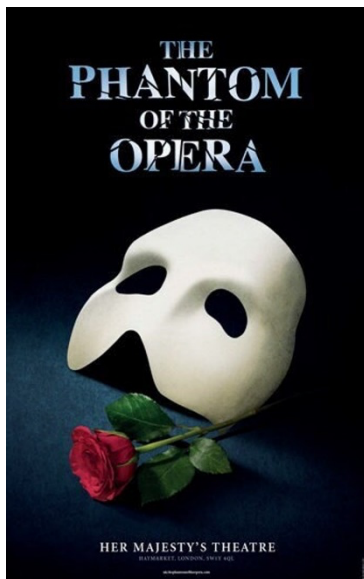


Phantom of the Opera by Gaston Leroux

It's the 1880s, and there's a mysterious figure about. Our narrator is investigating reports that the Paris Opera house is... gasp... haunted!? Or is it? We join our narrator as he attempts to figure out who or what is causing the chaos and drama occurring at the Paris Opera House. And when the phantom starts making demands about the performances at the Opera House under threat of a curse, the search intensifies.



There is a reason this book has endured in its many iterations since 1910. Any teen with an interest in musical theatre should take advantage of the joys of reading this modern classic. It is an emotionally vulnerable, beautiful story that functions as a metaphor for mental health, loneliness and isolation, something we all can relate to after the last few years. Despite not having quite the drama of the movie, the original book still has all sorts of wonderful nuggets of text which are extremely valuable to the plot. We get to know the narrator and the phantom in ways that we wouldn't necessarily if we watched the movie or saw the play in isolation, reading the backstory and better understanding his motivations. Read the book followed by the movie (2004 version, obviously) for optimum phantom-ness.

It is not specifically marketed to teens in general, and I would not recommend it as a way for teens to enter the theatre space, as the book itself was not originally intended to be a play. Its later adaptation by Andrew Lloyd Weber was a feat of inventiveness. If your teens are in theatre, have them instead read the script or watch one of the many stage adaptations. However, if your teens are the type to love murder mystery, drama, ghosts, or French culture in any form, they should absolutely be offered this book! Despite its age, it could still very much be appealing to teens today, especially given the fact that it, perhaps accidentally, covers all of these spooky themes that teens today love so much. Its content also, despite not being written

for teens, is teen appropriate, perhaps because it was written in the early 1900s when censorship laws were much more potent. This book could perhaps serve as a bridge into theatre for teens that are fascinated by historical books (Jane Austen fans, anyone?). Given these themes, the phantom of the opera could also appeal to teen educators who are looking to get teens engaged in reading and learning about “real literature” (whatever that means). This book is terribly undervalued as an educational tool, especially considering how detailed and for lack of a better word “analyzable” the writing style is.

References

Leroux, G. (2017). *The Phantom of the Opera* (A. T. de Mattos, Trans.). AmazonClassics.