

## Meet Florence Price!

Name \_\_\_\_\_



### FLORENCE PRICE

Born in 1887 in Little Rock, Arkansas

Died in 1953 in Chicago, Illinois

Price was the first black woman composer to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra. In 1933, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra played the world premiere of her “Symphony No. 1 in E minor.”

The Chicago Daily News reported, “It is a faultless work, a work that speaks its own message with restraint and yet with passion... worthy of a place in the regular symphonic repertory.”

### 8 Fast facts!

- Florence was an only child. Her mother was a music teacher and her father was the city’s only black dentist.
- Florence was a prodigy. She played in her first piano recital at the age of 4, and her first composition was published when she was 11 years old.
- Florence graduated as high school valedictorian at the age of 14. She left home to attend the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and earned a Bachelor’s degree in music in 1906.
- Florence returned to Arkansas and taught in small colleges both in Arkansas and Atlanta, Georgia before focusing on composition. In 1912, she married attorney Thomas Price. She set up a music studio where she gave piano lessons and composed and published piano pieces.
- Due to racial tensions in Arkansas, Florence and her family moved to Chicago in 1927.
- In Chicago, Florence continued to study composition and orchestration. Her music was performed all around Chicago.
- Price became good friends with many black musicians including Estella Bonds and her daughter, Margaret; singer Marian Anderson; and composer William L. Dawson.
- Florence published more than 300 compositions including music for piano and organ, popular songs, concertos for violin and piano, four symphonies, and many spirituals and vocal works.

1. If you could ask Florence Price one question, what would you ask? \_\_\_\_\_

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Florence Price composed *Dance in the Canebrakes* for piano in 1953.



This type of cane, similar to bamboo, is a member of the grass family. It grows more than 20 feet tall

In the early 1900s, this cane grew in marshy areas of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas. Large thickets called “brakes” or “canebrakes” served as habitat for many birds and creatures such as black bears, panthers, and snakes.

Canebrakes had to be cleared to make open fields for growing cotton.

*Dance in the Canebrakes* has 3 movements. The first movement is titled “Nimble Feet” and composed in ragtime.


2. Use these words to predict the sound of the music:      dance                  nimble                  ragtime (ragged)

I predict the music will be \_\_\_\_\_

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View two performances of “Nimble Feet”:

- The original piece for piano, performed by Paige Talley <https://youtu.be/Zu8McIPcX60> (3:18)

Notice:  is when you see the pianist’s left hand cross over her right hand

 is repeated

- The piece was also arranged for full orchestra by Florence’s friend, William Grant Still and is performed by the orchestra from Concordia College, Moorhead, MN <https://youtu.be/TKh0vjWeek0> (0:00-2:33)

Notice: The instrument families      Strings                  Brass                  Woodwinds

3. Did the sound of “Nimble Feet” played by either piano or orchestra match your prediction? Explain.

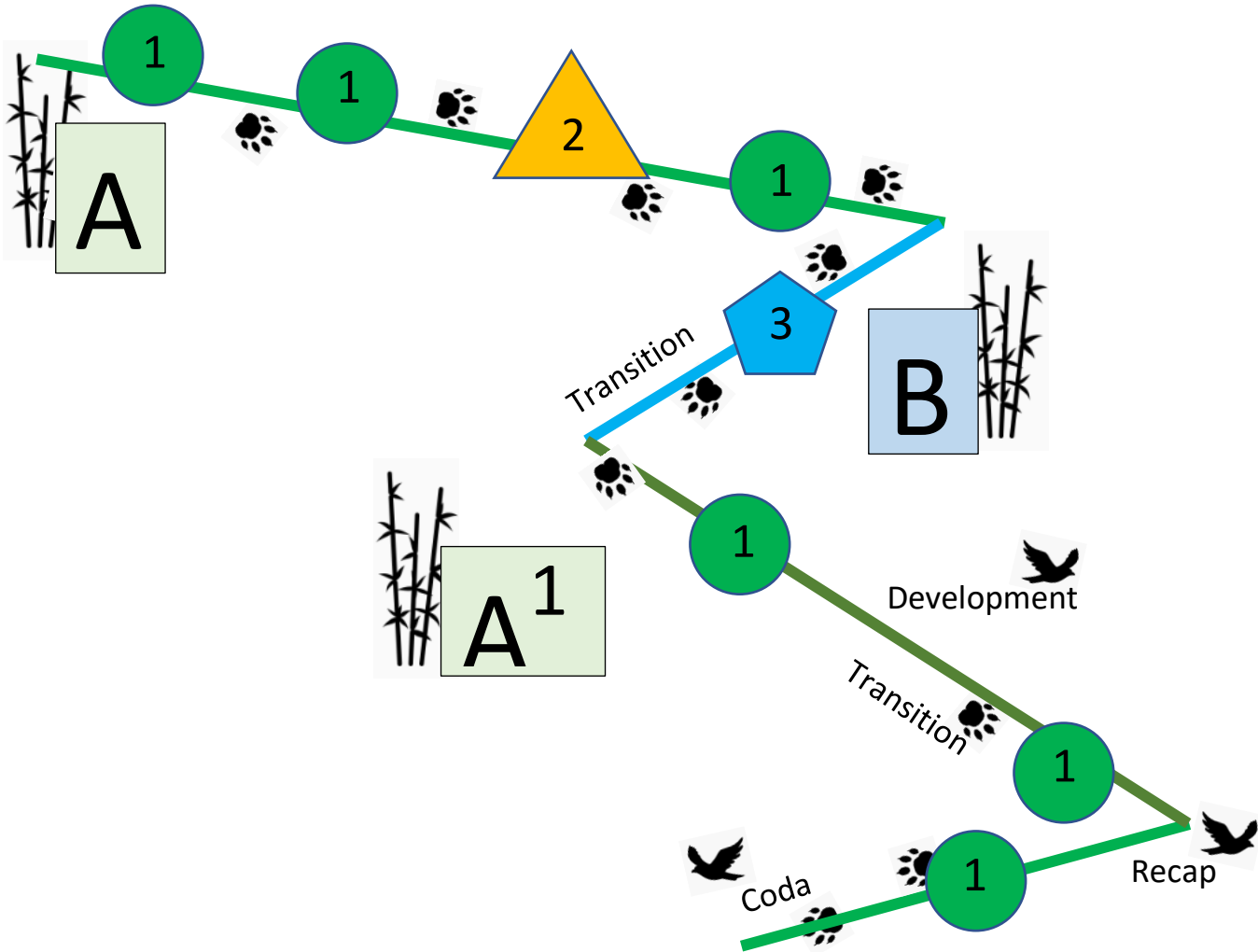
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# Dance in the Canebrakes

## I. Nimble Feet



4. Which performance did you like better? Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Florence Price died before she heard the orchestra version of *Dance in the Canebrakes*. Which performance do you think she would have liked better? Explain your answer.

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