

The Pirates of Penzance

When I know more of tactics than a novice in a nunnery;
In short, when I've a smattering of elemental strategy,
You'll say a better Major-General has never *sat* a gee.

ALL. You'll say a better Major-General, etc.

GEN. For my military knowledge, though I'm plucky and adventury,
Has only been brought down to the beginning of the century;
But still, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,
I am the very model of a modern Major-General.

ALL. But still, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,
He is the very model of a modern Major-General.

GEN. And now that I've introduced myself, I should like to have some idea of what's going on.

KATE. Oh, Papa – we –

SAM. Permit me, I'll explain in two words: we propose to marry your daughters.

GEN. Dear me!

GIRLS. Against our wills, Papa – against our wills!

GEN. Oh, but you mustn't do that! May I ask – this is a picturesque uniform, but I'm not familiar with it. What are you?

KING. We are all single gentlemen.

GEN. Yes, I gathered that – Anything else?

KING. No, nothing else.

EDITH. Papa, don't believe them; they are pirates – the famous Pirates of Penzance!

GEN. The Pirates of Penzance! I have often heard of them.

MABEL. All except this gentleman – (*indicating* FREDERIC) – who was a pirate once, but who is out of his indentures to day, and who means to lead a blameless life evermore.

GEN. But wait a bit. I object to pirates as sons-in-law.

KING. We object to Major-Generals as fathers-in-law. But we waive that point. We do not press it. We look over it.

GEN. (*aside*) Hah! an idea! (*aloud*) And do you mean to say that you would deliberately rob me of these, the sole remaining props of my old age, and leave me to go through the remainder of my life unfriended, unprotected, and alone?

KING. Well, yes, that's the idea.

GEN. Tell me, have you ever known what it is to be an orphan?

PIRATES. (*disgusted*) Oh, dash it all!

KING. Here we are again!

GEN. I ask you, have you ever known what it is to be an orphan?

KING. Often!

GEN. Yes, orphan. Have you ever known what it is to be one?

KING. I say, often.

ALL. (*disgusted*) Often, often, often. (*Turning away*)

GEN. I don't think we quite understand one another. I ask you, have you ever known what it is to be an orphan, and you say "orphan". As I understand you, you are merely repeating the word "orphan" to show that you understand me.

KING. I didn't repeat the word often.

GEN. Pardon me, you did indeed.

The Pirates of Penzance

KING. I only repeated it once.

GEN. True, but you repeated it.

KING. But not often.

GEN. Stop! I think I see where we are getting confused. When you said “orphan”, did you mean “orphan” – a person who has lost his parents, or “often”, frequently?

KING. Ah! I beg pardon – I see what you mean – frequently.

GEN. Ah! you said "often", frequently.

KING. No, only once.

GEN. (*irritated*) Exactly – you said “often”, frequently, only once.

FINALE – ACT I

GEN. Oh, men of dark and dismal fate,
Forgo your cruel employ,
Have pity on my lonely state,
I am an orphan boy!

KING and SAM. An orphan boy?

GEN. An orphan boy!

PIRATES. How sad, an orphan boy.

GEN. These children whom you see
Are all that I can call my own!

PIRATES. Poor fellow!

GEN. Take them away from me,
And I shall be indeed alone.

PIRATES. Poor fellow!

GEN. If pity you can feel,
Leave me my sole remaining joy –
See, at your feet they kneel;
Your hearts you cannot steel
Against the sad, sad tale of the lonely orphan boy!

PIRATES. (*sobbing*) Poor fellow!
See at our feet they kneel;
Our hearts we cannot steel
Against the sad, sad tale of the lonely orphan boy!

KING and SAM. The orphan boy!
See at our feet they kneel, etc.

ENSEMBLE.

GENERAL. (<i>aside</i>)	GIRLS. (<i>aside</i>)	PIRATES. (<i>aside</i>)
I'm telling a terrible story	He is telling a terrible story	If he's telling a story
But it doesn't diminish	Which will tend to diminish	He shall die by a death that
my glory;	his glory;	is gory,
For they would have taken my	Though they would have taken his	One of the cruellest
daughters	daughters	slaughters
Over the billowy waters,	Over the billowy waters,	That ever were known in
		these waters;
If I hadn't, in elegant diction,	It is easy, in elegant diction,	It is easy, in elegant diction,
Indulged in an innocent fiction;	To call it an innocent fiction;	To call it an innocent fiction;
Which is not in the same	But it comes in the same	But it comes in the same
category	category	category