

# Theory of Minor Scales

A piece in a **minor key** may sound mysterious, sad, or dark.

A piece in a **major key** generally has a brighter quality.

## Relative Minor Key

Every *major* key also has a *minor* key that shares the same key signature. This minor key is called the **relative minor** because it is related by key signature.

To find the relative minor scale, start on **scale degree 6** of the major scale.

**C major scale**

6th scale degree

half step

half step

scale degrees: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (1)

tonic dominant

**A natural minor scale**

half step

half step

scale degrees: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (1)

tonic dominant

## Playing and Listening

- Play the **C major scale** above and listen to the sound.  
The major scale has half steps between *scale degrees 3–4* and *7–8*.
- Now play the **A natural minor scale** (the relative minor scale).  
*Listen* to the difference in sound. The natural minor scale has half steps between *scale degrees 2–3* and *5–6*.

**Notice that the natural minor scale uses only notes from the relative major scale.**