



SAN FRANCISCO OPERA EDUCATION

San Francisco Opera's Donizetti's *THE ELIXIR OF LOVE FOR SCHOOLS*

Curriculum Connections

California Content Standards
Kindergarten through Grade 12

[English-Language Arts](#)

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LANGUAGE ARTS

WORD ANALYSIS, FLUENCY, AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Vocabulary

- Name origins: Adina, Dulcamara, Belcore, Nemorino.
- Idioms: Top of the world; bright as a button, wed in haste, other popular expressions.
- Vocabulary Lists: Ex. *Elixir of Love*, Opera glossary, Music and Composition terms.

Phonics and Phonemic Awareness:

Letter Recognition: Name the letters in a word. Ex. **elixir** = **e-l-i-x-i-r**.

Letter/Sound Association: Name the letters and the beginning and ending sound in a word. Ex. *football* > beginning sound "F" = /F/ > ending sound "L" = /L/

Match and list words with the same beginning or ending sounds. Ex. *love* and *lose* have the same beginning letter "L" and sound /L/; but **love** and **lose** end with different letters and ending sounds.



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Syllables: Count the syllables in a word. Patter singing of Dulcamara. (Ex.: “Good for pimples, for carbuncles, for dispatching wealthy uncles...”)

Match and list words with the same number of syllables. Clap out syllables as beats.

Ex.: sweet (sweet) 1 syllable tasty (tas-ty) 2 syllables elixir (e-lix-ir) 3 syllables

Phoneme Substitution: Play with the beginning sounds to make silly words. What would a “boprano” sound like? (Also substitute middle and ending sounds.) Ex. **s**oprano, **b**oprano, **t**oprano, **k**oprano.

Phoneme Counting: How many sounds in a word? Ex. **elixir** = 6.

Phoneme Segmentation: Which sounds do you hear in a word? Ex. **elixir**. e/l/i/x/i/r.

Use of alliteration, particularly with Dulcamara’s patter song. “Come, **p**urchase youth and beauty for the **p**ittance that you **p**ay!”

Parts of speech: Noun, verb, adjective, adverb, prepositions.

Reading Skills: Build skills using the subtitles on the video and related educator documents.

Concepts of Print: Sentence structure, punctuation, directionality.

READING COMPREHENSION

Story Development: Character desires and motivation; Cause and effect: What made this happen?

Explore the different ways of narrating a story.

Creative writing: Interpret the story and create a new version. Create your own characters. Ex. Adina > School librarian.

Types of text: Poetry, lists, fairy tale, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, etc.

Read: [Source material for *The Elixir of Love*](#), *The Elixir of Love for Schools* libretto, letter from Donizetti, biographies, etc.

LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS

Elements of a Story: Character, plot, setting, conflict.

Character:

- Archetypes/Stock characters/Commedia dell arte: Hero, heroine, trickster, pompous powerful man.
- What are characters’ defining traits?
- Character Development: Growth & depth beyond expected roles. Adina grows from imaginary love to real love.

Themes:

- Romance, love vs. desire, sincerity vs. bravado, love triumphs over all challenges
- What is a man? What kind of men do Nemorino and Belcore and Dulcamara represent? What is a romantic hero vs. a warrior hero?



Genres:

- Fantasy vs. Reality, Myths, Legends. Tristan and Isolde.
- Is *The Elixir of Love* a straight comedy, or is it a romance? Talk about Donizetti's ability to mix drama and comedy.

Sequence of Events: Cause and effect: Nemorino's need for elixir, choice to join army.

Vocabulary: Reading for understanding using the subtitles on the video and related educator documents.

Where do we find lists? Grocery lists, list poems.

Point of View: Identify first, second and third person speeches. Define fourth wall (asides).

Place: The setting of an opera can be changed (example: Italian village > Napa Valley)

Alliteration: Recognize the similarities of sounds and rhythmic patterns. Ex. Dulcamara's patter song.

Figurative Language: Simile, Metaphor, Hyperbole, Personification, Allegory.

WRITING

Creative Writing

- Writing letters between characters. Choose a moment in the story to write a letter about.
- Create a diary for a character.
- Create backstories for characters.
- Write character resumés or curricula vitae.
- Write about story from point of view of town observer.

Create a list of ingredients or write the directions for how to make an ice cream sundae or an elixir. Make up your own potions, like Dulcamara's elixir.

Persuasive writing

- Write and design your own recruitment poster. Write the contract Nemorino signs to join army.
- Write and design your own flyers for library and ice cream stand.
- Write and design advertisements for Dulcamara's elixir. What does your elixir do?
- Create your own pamphlet for your own brand of ice cream or elixir.
- Write pick-up lines for Belcore.
- Letter writing, copywriting, advertising, fundraising, press release for the opera.

Analysis and Interpretation:

- Expository writing, critiques/reviews.
- Poetry, fairy tale, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, program article, synopsis, etc.

WRITTEN AND ORAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Spelling: Spell the names of the characters in *The Elixir of Love*.

Metaphors, symbolism. Double entendres (crush queen).

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Explore the rhythm of speech. Try to speak quickly and still be understood. (ex. Dulcamara's enunciation in his patter song.)

Oral Speaking: Connection between the written words and oral interpretation (recitative and sung), the phrasing and musicality of speech.

Create a persuasive speech like Dulcamara's or Belcore's.

Reflection: What did you see, think, hear and feel? (ex. Verbal & written responses to *The Elixir of Love*.)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Gaetano Donizetti, Composer: [Biography](#), [timeline of works](#).

ACTIVITIES

Create a character sketch. Introduce character to classmates.

Write a character's curriculum vitae, backstory.

Bragging exercise (use your body as well).

Libretto writing: Adapt *The Elixir of Love* or create a new story/characters.

Story writing: Adapt existing source material; create story/characters.

Write a letter from one character to another; choose a moment in the story.

Write a character's diary; fake Facebook page, fake Twitters.

Create written copy: program, poster design, advertising, biography, etc.

Read and report on Feature Articles.

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MATHEMATICS

Create ingredient list for elixirs and ice creams, with measurements.

- How much milk do you need to make ice cream? What other ingredients? What measurements?
- Metric vs. standard measurements of ice cream, elixir.
- What is the calorie count for different kinds of ice cream?

Create word problems using Nemorino's ice cream shop; using multiplication. (ex: How much ice cream do you need if you sell a certain amount in one day?)

How much money does Nemorino make selling his ice cream? What are his expenses?

What is the cost of an ice cream cone, then vs. now? How much did a banana cost in 1914?

What do you need to set up an ice cream shop?

- Business plan for the ice cream shop.
- Graphs of profits for ice cream shop.
- Graph of favorite ice cream flavors.
- How much would you charge for ice cream?
- Practice making change in ice cream shop.

What is the cost of the ingredients in Dulcamara's elixirs?

How much money does Dulcamara make selling his elixir?

Graph the profits for Dulcamara's elixirs.

What would you get paid for joining the military then and now?

Would Belcore or Nemorino have gotten a regular salary?

Explore statistics using casualty charts of WWI.

Timeline of Donizetti's life.

Time signatures of patter song vs. Nemorino's ballad.



Create a scale model of set.

- [Slideshow: San Francisco Opera / Jose-Maria Conde / Allen Moyer Set Plans and Photos \(2008 Production; same as DVD\)](#)
- [Slideshow: San Francisco Opera / Lotfi Mansouri / Robert Darling / John Coyne Set Plans and Photos \(2000 Production\)](#)

MEASUREMENT:

The Elixir of Love's Use of Standard Units of Measurement in Story & Set Design.

2D & 3D Dimensions: Area, Perimeter, Volume, Scale, Proportion, Ratio.

Weight: Physical, Metaphorical, Balance.

Time: Passage of time (real & theatrical time), times of day (morning, afternoon and night; yesterday, today, tomorrow; time of everyday events such as dinner & bed time), estimation, reading time, age of characters. Opera takes place over the course of two days.

GEOMETRY

As found in The Elixir of Love's character, costume & set design.

Identification of Shapes, Repetition & Pattern of sets, Rhythm & Symmetry.

Create patterns with elixir bottles.

Shape, perimeter, area of gazebo.

Planes (Square, Rectangle, Triangle, Circle) & 3D (Cube, Pyramid, Sphere). Positive & Negative Space, Interior & Exterior Space.

Volume of Dulcamara's elixir bottles, ice cream cones.

NUMBER SENSE

Counting using the production elements and music of The Elixir of Love.

Formulas & calculations: Addition, subtraction, multiplication, division.

More, less, or same as.

Concept of zero (absences, disappearances). Ex. rests/silence in music.

Ordering & sequencing.

Recognizing and creating numerical patterns. Ex. beats, ABA pattern in music.

Survey taking: tallying and graphing.

Predictions.

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SCIENCE

The principals of science used in The Elixir of Love.

THE FIVE SENSES: Sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. What happens to you when you take the potion?
What does ice cream taste like?

PARTS OF THE BODY: Identification of body parts important to performing. Ex. Diaphragm, larynx, throat, mouth, etc. Dulcamara's demonstration of body parts with his assistant.

LIFE SCIENCE

Placebo effect.

Physical responses to love and hate.

PHYSICS

Sound: Voice, Instruments, Acoustics, Amplification, Recording.

Concepts of Gravity, Time & Space.

Study dynamics of sound waves. Do high or low voices project more? Graph sound waves.

PHYSICAL SCIENCE

How is ice cream made? How is salt used to make ice cream?

Food chemistry: Learn how food scientists constantly adjust recipes, based on cost of ingredients.

History of refrigeration in different places. How long does it take ice cream to melt vs. ice?

What is the nutritional value of ice cream?

Mixing potions.

History of quack medicine. Why did people believe in quack medicine? Do they still believe in it?

Growing of grapes in Napa, fermentation of grapes for wine.

How do engines work? What fueled early cars? Study energy.

Study nature of sound: low vs. high voice parts.

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SOCIAL STUDIES

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

Self-Identity & Cultural Identity.

Family (Immediate & Extended), Friends & Community.

Time: Past, Present, Future.

Place: Neighborhood, City, State, Continent, World, Universe.

CIVICS

Social Hierarchy: Class, Status. Ex. General, lieutenant.

Types of Government: Democracy.

Political events during Donizetti's time.

Labor / Economics: What jobs and occupations were available to men and women during Donizetti's time? What about during the time period of the production?

What do average workers in different positions earn?

GEOGRAPHY

The Opera's setting: Where is this place? What is this culture?

[Location of Donizetti's birth](#). Where else did he live?

[Historic and contemporary maps of Napa, setting of The Elixir of Love DVD](#)

HISTORY

Chronology: Ex. What was life like in 1914?

Date when Donizetti was born. Time period when Donizetti lived. What are the differences and similarities to when Donizetti lived in Europe and now?

History of Opera: [How Opera began](#), [history of San Francisco Opera](#), [history of the Adler Fellow Program](#).

ACTIVITIES

Timeline of Donizetti's life.

Trace Donizetti's travels throughout Europe. Compare maps of Europe then and now.



Study Bel canto opera.

Study Commedia dell'Arte characters.

Learn about characters from history referenced in *The Elixir of Love*, such as Mars and Venus, Paris, Tristan and Isolde, Aristotle:

[List of, and information about, historical and mythological characters mentioned in The Elixir of Love](#)

Have an old-fashioned ice cream social. Examine the history of ice cream; what would Nemorino be serving from his truck? Where would bananas have come from then and now?

Study educational system of 1914. What would characters have learned? What effect does education have in this opera? Does it make a difference to the characters?

Town meetings, communities study. The gazebo is a meeting place for the town between characters. Where are your community's meeting places?

Examine modes of transportation used in 1914. Research the cars and motorcycles from 1914. How would you have traveled without the bridge? San Francisco to Napa—how long does it take now, how long did it take then? Use Google Maps/Google Earth to find out what Napa looked like then and now.

History of Napa Valley, Italian-American communities. What would life have been like for boys and girls in the Napa Valley in 1914?

What was status of jobs in the opera? Librarian vs. ice cream man? What are other jobs, roles in this community? How do people fit in? What would \$7 have been worth in 1914?

History of vineyards in the Napa Valley. Why are grapes grown in the Napa Valley?

History of different ethnic groups in California and Napa Valley. Study census of Napa Valley at that time. Who was living there in 1914? History of interaction between different ethnic groups.

History of public library system.

History of quack medicine. History of traveling salesmen.

History of American football and boxing, uniforms. Sports in general.

Study the history of uniforms.

Learn about the recruitment methods of the time. How much would a soldier have made? Why did Nemorino choose to join the army? Where is the war and who is fighting and why? How did they get there?

Discuss the tactics used by the character of Belcore, the "macho" military man. Bullying.

Idea of what it means to be an American; how we are seen, how we see ourselves, then and now?

Small-town Americana vs. big city. Small town values and community traditions. (ex: What is harvest day? Crush queen.)

History of marriage.

Differences between behavior of men and women, then and now.

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PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Boxing, football. Choreograph a football game, a boxing match. Football playbook. Fight choreography.

What are differences between team sports and solo sports?

What was phys. ed. in 1914? For girls and for boys?

Dancing—different dances Nemorino does with women.

Reference the human body (ex: Dulcamara's demonstration of parts of the body with his assistant.)

MOVEMENT

Walking, dancing, jumping, balancing, leaping, lifting, etc. Ex. Move your body in different ways using the example of each character. Demonstrate bravado, shyness with your body.

Balance exercises (ex: Nemorino standing on motorbike).

Choreograph stage fights for appropriate scenes in opera. Explore ways to keep stage fighting safe.

PHYSICALITY OF PERFORMING

Endurance & strength, posture, breathing techniques.

Coordination of motion and singing.

TEAM-BUILDING

Moving as a group, as soldiers.

Moving as a group like chorus in a production.

Cooperative games—football pile-up.

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HEALTH EDUCATION

- The unifying ideas of health literacy are as follows:
- Acceptance of personal responsibility for lifelong health
- Respect for and promotion of the health of others
- An understanding of the process of growth and development
- Informed use of health-related information, products, and services

MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH

Taking care of your body. Ex. What do performers have to do to prepare their body for performing?

Dealing with emotions, stress. Ex. Explore from the point of view of each character.

Conflict resolution: fight between Belcore and Nemorino, Nemorino's joining the army to make money.

Violence and danger. Ex. Belcore, Nemorino going to war.

Gender roles & body image.

Family issues.

Research effect of alcohol, smoking on your body.

Research the nutritional value of ice cream.

Study history of quack medicine.

Real diseases vs. fake diseases in Dulcamara's patter song.

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CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

What were job options for men and women in 1914?

What would an ice cream man have earned in 1914? A librarian? A soldier? A quack medicine man?

What is hierarchy of people's jobs in *The Elixir of Love*? What was their job satisfaction?

Why were there quack medicine men in 1914? Are there people who have jobs like that today

What was the structure of the military in 1914? What is hierarchy and where does Belcore fit in?

Research famous sopranos, tenors and baritones who have played the roles of Adina, Nemorino and Dulcamara.

[Jobs at the Opera](#)

[Organizational Chart of the SF Opera](#)

Learn about the different jobs at the Opera.

Explore backgrounds and training of people who work at the Opera.

How does the opera support other types of jobs in San Francisco?

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VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

MUSIC

STORYTELLING & MUSIC: WHAT IS AN OPERA?

Character and plot development through musical themes. Explore how the composer creates different kinds of music for different moments in the story. Patter song vs. Nemorino's ballad.

Musical moods. Legato vs. staccato, adagio vs. allegro.

Instruments representing characters and emotions (bassoon at beginning of Nemorino's aria); repetition and variation of themes.

Key plot points: The composer and librettist determine the placement of arias within the libretto to heighten emotion in the story.

Call and response between singers and instruments.

Definition of overture. How is orchestra set up in pit? What are instruments in an orchestra? Tuning of different instruments.

What is a fanfare? How is it used in this opera?

Source material for Opera: Novels (Puccini's *La Bohème*, Tan & Wallace's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*); Films (*The Fly*), Real-life events (Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, Adams' *Nixon in China*); Related genres – Musical Theater (*Sweeney Todd*, *Rent*), Rock Opera (*Tommy*), popular song versions of opera.

VOCABULARY

[Music and Composition Vocabulary](#)

Musical Structure: Solos, duets, trios, choral numbers.

Composition: Arias, recitative, overture, incidental music.

Musical Instructions: Tempo, legato; pianissimo; crescendo, etc.

Voice ranges: Soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, bass-baritone, countertenor, bass. Identify voice parts of different characters.



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Research the [history of San Francisco Opera](#), [the Adler Fellows program](#).

Research famous sopranos, tenors, and baritones who have played the roles of Adina, Nemorino and Dulcamara.

Gaetano Donizetti: [Biography](#), [timeline of works](#), signature sound.

ACTIVITIES

Listen to multiple recordings of *The Elixir of Love* and study different interpretations.

Learn and memorize songs from *The Elixir of Love*.

Create and perform songs for the characters/events of *The Elixir of Love* using instruments and voices. Study natural vs. amplified sound. Study high vs. low voices. Study head voice vs. chest voice.

Research songs from 1914.

Study the evolution of patter song.

Explore musical instruments used in this opera; have they changed since Donizetti's time?

What kinds of musical instruments are used in opera today? What are different sounds, volumes of different instruments?

Build simple string instruments with rubber bands and boxes, strings and any space.

Set parts of opera to different styles of music. Ex. Dulcamara's patter song as a rap.

(See musical selections in "Media, Visuals, and Audio" resource materials for [The Elixir of Love](#)).

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VISUAL ARTS

How are line, color, shape, and texture used in costumes and sets of *The Elixir of Love*?

[Slideshow: San Francisco Opera / Jose-Maria Condemi / Allen Moyer Set Plans and Photos \(2008 Production; same as DVD\)](#)

LINE

Use of line qualities: soft or hard, wavy or angular, silly spirals.

COLOR

Symbolism of color; color associated with particular characters. How do colors of costumes define characters?

Symmetry/contrast in character pairings. Ex. Adina/Nemorino.

Examine contrast of light and dark; use of lighting.

The emotion of color. Ex. red=passionate, blue=calm, yellow=cheerful.

The color palette of opera uses tints, not primary colors. What effect does the color choice have on the feeling of the production? Dulcamara is the only one with shiny costume, bright color—why? How are character traits revealed through the use of color?

Explore personal associations with color.

The use of lighting to establish mood and setting.

SHAPE

The use of shape in character design.

Positive & Negative Space—the stage is a frame.

How can patterns and repetition of shape be used to create the illusion of perspective?

TEXTURE

Texture: Material use in sets and costumes.

Visual Texture: Pattern and repetition in sets and costumes.

SPACE

Set design: From 2D plans to 3D construction.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Examine work of [James Flag](#)—creator of Uncle Sam.

Examine work of Grant Wood—effect on set, American image.

Examine art of signage, advertising.

Examine the art of 1914.



ACTIVITIES

Create illustrations and storyboards outlining the plot of *The Elixir of Love*.

Design your own production of *Elixir*: dioramas, scale models, backdrops, props, costumes. Set in a box.

Study uniforms, create costumes for characters. Design hats.

Create a tunnel book of set.

Create an ice cream prop. Create bottle props.

Design a community space for a different time, setting.

Puppetry: Create your own version of *The Elixir of Love* using puppets (paper bags, stick puppets, shadow puppets, marionettes, and bunraku).

Masks: Create masks of *The Elixir of Love* characters.

Design character make-up, costume, sets and props for classroom operas.

Design paper dolls of characters. Dress them for different eras.

Design a production: dioramas, scale models, backdrops, props, costumes.

Listen to audio-only examples prior to viewing the opera. Choose design elements based on the music and text.

Explore scale in production design; how do imposing sets make people look small? How do you make something that fits on an opera set? What is the scale of a tree on a set?

Set and costume designers' portfolios.

RELATED WORKS OF ART

Opera & Visual Art: Study the work of visual artists who have designed performing arts productions: Gerald Scarfe, David Hockney, Julie Taymor, Marc Chagall, Maurice Sendak, Oskar Kokoschka, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, William Kentridge, Gianni Versace, Bill Viola.

Illustrated children's books of *The Magic Flute* and other operas.

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THEATRE

Commedia characters; opera buffa origins in commedia.

History of vaudeville, stock characters.

Stock theater types: boy meets girl; traveling salesman.

Compare to similar stories in musical theater (*Oklahoma*, *Music Man*).

What are characters' motivations? How do they grow?

How would theater have looked in 1914?

What is audition process for opera? What criteria are involved in getting a role?

STAGING

Stage vocabulary: Upstage, downstage, levels, blocking.

Theater Exercises: Tableaux, pantomime, improvisation, vocal projection.

How does scene fill space of stage?

Stage etiquette & audience behavior.

Talking to the 4th wall.

THEATRE JOBS

Opera Production Team: Director, stage manager, choreographer, designer, diction coach, artistic administrator, choreographer, lighting, adaption, abridgement, supernumeraries, etc.

In-House Personnel: Marketing, accounting, ticket takers, ushers etc.

ACTIVITIES

Act out characters and emotions in gestures: shyness, snobbery, bravado, persuasion. How can you exaggerate gestures to show emotion? Other students guess who you are.

Act out scenes from opera in different settings and times (Dulcamara as QVC salesman).

Students pick characters to portray; determine how they would act out story. Examine how characters play off each other. Partnering.

Create tableaux of different scenes.

Improvise prologues and epilogues to the story.

Choreograph football game and boxing match.

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DANCE

Dance and Creative Movement in Stage-Blocking. Ex: Nemorino's different dances with chorus (Charleston, waltz), fight scene, football pile-up.

Examine history of dance around 1914 (Castle Walk).

Examine fight and football choreography.

ACTIVITIES

Create character dances.

Create gestures for elements of opera (music, drama).

Match movement with characters.

Create a gesture to embody each character.

Create relationship dances between characters.

Do the whole story in a dance.

Interpret emotions through gesture and dance. Static and in motion. Ex. Joy, bravado.

Interpreting the instruments through dance– improv to music.

Create dances for scenes that need it.

Create dances based on movements that can be seen at a football game and/or a boxing match.

Mirror dancing–partners and symmetry.

Choose a dance style that best represents each character. Ex. Adina and the waltz.

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MEDIA ARTS

Research how innovations in technology have influenced the development of Opera: Acoustics and Lighting, Audio Recording, Film and Video, the development of Supertitles, Internet.

Learn about technology currently used by SF Opera: Technology used in staging, SFO's Media Suite, podcasts, cinemacasts, simulcasts, opera vision, etc.

Explore role of editors in creating film and DVD. Explore role of film director.

Research use of blue screen.

List camera angles; note when camera angles change.

Study use of media for propaganda, especially in war.

Study use of subtext in advertising, propaganda.

Study available media in 1914. Books, newspapers, broadsheets, town crier, telegraph, etc.

Study history of recording.

Learn about experiments in future technology use involving opera, such as the development of Personal Opera @ MIT Media Lab, *Death and the Powers*.

Use television, films, web content about opera to teach media literacy.

Opera & Popular Culture: Cartoons (Bugs Bunny in *What's Opera, Doc?*, *The Wabbit of Seville*); Television (*Sesame Street*); Movies (*The Godfather*); Commercials (Nike's 1993 ad *Charles Barkley of Seville*); Event themes (*Nessun Dorma - 1994 World Cup*).

Watch films & DVD of *The Elixir of Love* and other operas.

ACTIVITIES

Film and Animation: Explore photographic stopmotion techniques. Ex. Use digital media to create 1-minute scenes from *The Elixir of Love*.

Storyboard the opera.

Use digital audio to record student readings, musical performances.

Create a 30-second audio spot, a one-minute podcast, or *The Elixir of Love* activities website.

Create an ad for Dulcamara's elixir, visual or video.

Explore history of opera recordings.

Create a montage of scenes from the opera to tell the story.