



## San Francisco Opera's Donizetti's *DON PASQUALE*

### Curriculum Connections California Content Standards Kindergarten through Grade 12

---

#### LANGUAGE ARTS

##### WORD ANALYSIS, FLUENCY, AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

###### Vocabulary

- Name origins: What do all of the names mean and how do they relate to the character?  
Sofronia (Greek meaning: "sensible, prudent"), Malatesta, Ernesto, Norina, Don Pasquale.  
  
Are there characters in other stories who have names starting with "mal-"  
What is the meaning of the prefix? Are they typically bad characters? How would you describe Doctor Malatesta?
- Idioms: Top of the world; bright as a button, wed in haste, other popular expressions
- Vocabulary Lists: Ex. *Don Pasquale*, Opera glossary, Music and Composition terms.

###### Phonics and Phonemic Awareness:

Letter Recognition: Name the letters in a word. Ex. **door** = **d-o-o-r**.

Letter/Sound Association: Name the letters and the beginning and ending sound in a word. Ex. **doctor** > beginning sound "**d**" = /**d**/ > ending sound "**r**" = /**r**/

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

Syllables: Count the syllables in a word. Patter singing of Malatesta and Don Pasquale.

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

Ex.: wife (wife) 1 syllable                      marry (mar-ry) 2 syllables                      notary (not-a-ry) 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. **soprano**, **boprano**, **toprano**, **koprano**.

Phoneme Counting: How many sounds in a word? Ex. **bell** = 3.

Phoneme Segmentation: Which sounds do you hear in a word? Ex. **bell** = b/e/l.

Use of alliteration, particularly with Malatesta and Don Pasquale's patter song.

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. Put your own twist on the characters.

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

Read: Source material for *Don Pasquale*, *Don Pasquale* libretto, letter from Donizetti, biographies, etc.

## LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS

Elements of a Story: Character, plot, setting, conflict. Map out story arc.

Characters:

- Archetypes/Stock characters/Commedia dell arte: Hero, heroine, trickster, grumpy old man, the “confirmed bachelor”
- What are characters’ defining traits?
- Character Development: Do you see character development seen within the story arc? Are there moments of vulnerability when the disguises drop and characters reveal their true intentions and motives?
- Character Actions and Motives: Are any of these characters moral? Admirable? Classically flawed?  
How did Pasquale get his wealth?  
Why isn’t Ernesto in on the plot from the beginning?  
What was in this for Malatesta?  
Old man marrying a young women – How often do we see an old woman marrying a young man in media? What is each person gaining from this arrangement?  
Why was Pasquale so quick to accept the outcome of this plot and bless the marriage in the end?  
What is the moral of this story? What do you think it is? What is a better moral of this story? How would you end it differently?
- Themes: Jealousy, greed, trickery, disguise, love and lust, wealth, morality
- Romance, love vs. desire, sincerity vs. bravado, love triumphs over all challenges
- What is a man? What kind of men do Ernesto and Don Pasquale and Malatesta represent?
- Genres: Opera buffo, romantic comedy, sitcom.
- Is *Don Pasquale* a straight comedy, or is it a romance? Talk about Donizetti’s ability to mix drama and comedy.

Sequence of Events: Cause and effect: Don Pasquale’s will not allow Ernesto marry Norina.

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

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

Place: The setting of an opera can be changed (example: Rome > New York City)

Alliteration: Recognize the similarities of sounds and rhythmic patterns. Ex. Don Pasquale and Malatesta’s patter.

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

## WRITING

### Creative Writing

Plot – Talk about instances where you have been involve in an plot like this

- What would the sequel look like? What do you think happens next after the abrupt ending? What would be the prequel? Why is Pasquale so grumpy? How did Norina get her wealth?
- Writing letters between characters. Choose a moment in the story to write a letter about. Norina drops a letter – what happens when letters/text messages/emails get into the wrong hands? What could have gone wrong?
- Create a diary for a character.
- Create backstories for characters.
- Write character CV's.
- Write about story from point of view of a household servant.
- Create a social media profile for each of these characters and how would they interact with each other?
- Where do we find lists? Grocery lists, list poems. Create a list of Norina's demands for Don Pasquale.

### Persuasive writing

- How does Malatesta convince everyone to go through with his plot and convince Don Pasquale to marry "his sister" Sofronia?
- Write a letter from Ernesto to Norina, persuading her to elope.
- 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 *Don Pasquale*.

Metaphors, symbolism. Doors and chairs, ladder, moon. The inward and outward facing set.

## LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Explore the rhythm of speech. Try to speak quickly and still be understood. (ex. Don Pasquale and Malatesta's enunciation in their patter duet.)

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

Deliver a persuasive speech for Ernesto.

Reflection: What did you see, think, hear and feel? (ex. Verbal & written responses to *Don Pasquale*.)

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Gaetano Donizetti, Composer, Librettist: Biography, timeline of works.

When and where was the opera first performed? (1843 at Theater Italien in Paris)

Who wrote the libretto? (Giovanni Ruffini as well as the composer) What was it based on? (a libretto by Angelo Anelli for Stefano Pavesi's opera *Ser Marcantonio* written in 1810)

What was the controversy about the writing of the libretto? (Ruffani refused to let his name be put on it as Donizetti had changed it so much.) Was this a form of plagiarism? What is plagiarism and what are the consequences?

Was the opera successful? It was an immediate success. It remains one of the most popular of Donizetti's operas. It is frequently performed.

Where is the opera set? (Rome) When? Early 19<sup>th</sup> century

## ACTIVITIES

Create a character sketch. Introduce character to classmates.

Write characters' CV's, backstories.

Libretto writing: Adapt *Don Pasquale* 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.

## DON PASQUALE OVERVIEW with QUESTIONS

### **Characters:**

Don Pasquale is a classically flawed character. He is an elderly bachelor (almost 70), wealthy stubborn and vain. He does not want to let Ernesto marry the woman he loves because she is poor. If he marries Norina, DP won't let him inherit his fortune. DP has money and social status.

Dr. Malatesta: Don Pasquale's physician, who is the mastermind of the whole joke. He gets DP to think a young woman would marry him.

Ernesto is Don Pasquale's nephew. Malatesta is helping him get what he wants. Ernesto has social status but no money.

Norina is also Sofronia, when she "marries" DP. She also has social status but no money.

### **Act I**

Overture begins Act I. What is an overture? What is the purpose? How does this overture make you feel? (excitement, anticipation)

Scene I opens in a room in Don Pasquale's house. Don Pasquale is impatient to see his bride. He sings of all the qualities his wife will have (pretty as an angel, innocent, ingenious, kind) **Does such a woman exist? Does Don Pasquale really believe she does? What does this opening scene tell you about his character?**

Don Pasquale sings "I feel as if I were twenty again, I'll have half dozen children!" **Does love make you feel young again?**

"I have a fever!" **Does love make you sick?**

Don Pasquale: I promise you a beautiful woman and I'll give you my estate. He offers Ernesto the bride he offered him a month ago but Ernesto says he can't, he loves Norina.

Ernesto: "She's poor but respectable."

Don Pasquale: "I'll throw you out. Provide for yourself. I'm getting married!"

Don Pasquale sings "I'm well on in years but well preserved." **What does it mean to be well preserved?**

Ernesto: "sweet and chaste dream of my youth, farewell. I desired riches and luxury only for your sake darling. I renounce your dearest darling. Beautiful aria.

Ernesto: "I am losing the one I adore. Why do I still live?" **What might Ernesto do if he can't marry Norina?**

Who is Don Pasquale's new wife? Sofronia is her name but she is really Norina. **Disguise is used in this opera to further the plot. Discuss the use of disguise as a theatrical device and its importance in opera.**

Scene 2: Norina's house - She is reading a book. What does this tell us? She has social status. Even though she's poor, she can read and she has a book.

She was in on the plot but receives a letter from Ernesto saying that he is going to be thrown out of his house. I'm leaving Rome and Europe soon. Malatesta says he'll make Ernesto part of this plot. **Why is Ernesto left out of the plot? Does this makes the story more interesting?**

To punish his nephew for disobeying his orders, DP is going to get married but it's all a plot against him. **What is a plot? Have you ever devised a plot?**

M: DP knows I have a sister in a convent. **What is a convent? Who lives there?**

## **Act II**

In Don Pasquale's house - Ernesto is bummed. Poor Ernesto! Thrown out by uncle deserted by all. One friend remained and he conspired against me. He thinks he's losing Norina. But if you are happy, your faithful lover will be satisfied. Ernesto wants the best for Norina no matter what. **What do we learn about Ernesto's character here?**

Don Pasquale is nearly 70, marrying a young woman. **Does this ever happen? Is it common for women to marry older men? Do men marry older women? Compare and contrast the reason for the difference.**

Sofronia/Norina refuses to remove her veil. She says at the convent we were always alone. Don Pasquale wants veil removed but she says she wouldn't dare in front of a man. She removes it and Don Pasquale practically has a heart attack. He thinks she is beautiful! **Could someone have a heart attack over a woman's beauty? Hasn't Don Pasquale ever met Norina? How believable is it that he hasn't?**

Malatesta brings his own notary (part of the ruse). **What is a notary? What is his role here in the story?**

**How does Norina's character change after the wedding contract is signed?**

**Don Pasquale sings "Am I dreaming or awake?": Why is he dumfounded? He has been deceived.**

**What does Norina do? (she doubles servants wages, asks for younger servants, better looking. Wants carriages, horses, better furnishings, a hairdresser tailor, jewelry.**

## **Act III**

Scene I in DP's house opens with Norina and all of her new purchases and staff running around

Don Pasquale: looks at the bills... "We'll be in poorhouse!" **Have you ever spent too much money or has someone you know well? What is a budget what is the importance of a budget and sticking to it?**

She is off to the theater on her wedding night! The husband should keep his mouth shut!!! No one takes notice of what the husband says. Go to bed and sleep well. He says you're not going out and she says I am and slaps him.

On the side, Norina shows some remorse. **What is remorse? Have you ever felt remorse?**

He says if she leaves she'll find the door shut when she returns.

She tells him to be nice and remember your age, go to bed. Divorce he says! Never was there a match so bad. **What is divorce? Do people usually divorce so quickly? What are the impacts of divorce on the family?**

The chorus appears and sings what endless coming and going...there's money to burn. **What is the role of the chorus here?**

Scene 2: in the garden

Sofronia is alone in the garden. Ernesto arrives and they hug and sing a beautiful duet.

In comes Malatesta and Don Pasquale. Ernesto covers himself with a cloak and runs to the house. DP says where is your lover? Norina says no one was here.

Malatesta takes over and pretends to negotiate with Norina/Sofronia. He tells Pasquale that the only way to make her leave will be to allow Ernesto to marry his beloved, whom "Sofronia" apparently despises and won't live with. Pasquale consents, and calls out to the house, from which Ernesto emerges. He instructs Ernesto to send for his would-be bride, but Malatesta reveals that Norina is in fact the woman Pasquale thinks he married, while the real Sofronia remains in a convent. All are reconciled, and the moral of the story – not to marry in old age – is revealed in a playful quartet. **Moral of the story: what is a moral of the story? What other morals could there be here? (Don't stop people from true love) What will happen next in the opera?**