



## San Francisco Opera's Rossini's *THE BARBER OF SEVILLE*

### Curriculum Connections

California Content Standards  
Kindergarten through Grade 12

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## LANGUAGE ARTS

### WORD ANALYSIS, FLUENCY, AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

#### Phonics and Phonemic Awareness:

Letter Recognition: Name the letters in a word. Ex. **Figaro = F-i-g-a-r-o.**

Letter/Sound Association: Name the letters and the beginning and ending sound in a word. **R**-osin-**a**

Match and list words with the same beginning or ending sounds. Ex. **Bartolo** and **Berta** have the same beginning letter "**b**" and sound **/b/**; but end with different letters and ending sounds. Additional examples: Figaro, Basilio, Fiorello; Rosina, Almaviva.

Syllables: Count the syllables in a word. Ex.: Fig-a-ro

Match and list words with the same number of syllables. Clap out syllables as beats. Ex.: 1 syllable 2 syllables 3 syllables **bass = bass tenor = ten-or soprano = so-pra-no**

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. **sing = 4**

Phoneme Segmentation: Which sounds do you hear in a word? Ex. **sing = s/i/n/g.**

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

Concepts of Print: Sentence structure, punctuation, directionality.

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

Vocabulary Lists: Ex. *The Barber of Seville*, Opera glossary, Music and Composition terms

Examine contrasting vocabulary.

Find words in *Barber of Seville* that are unfamiliar and find definitions and roots.

Find analogies in *Barber of Seville*.

Examine vocabulary in source material texts: *Barber of Seville* libretto.

Define words in the story that are unfamiliar: notary, barber, factotum.

Opera vocabulary: soprano, mezzo-soprano, bass, contralto.

Visit the website [flocabulary.com](http://flocabulary.com); create a similar rap for opera vocabulary.

Metaphors: Count Almaviva's reputation is described as a natural disaster in the opera. How do metaphors work? What are some other metaphors in the opera? Can you think of any that apply, even though they're not in the opera?

## **Reading Comprehension:**

Story Development (What's the beginning, middle and end?): Character desires and motivation; Cause and effect: What made this happen?

The sequencing of events, climax, and resolution.

Watch different versions of the opera on DVD; how do they differ and why?

Reflect on your viewing of the opera by sharing your questions about it with the other students.

Read:

Opera source material: Source material for *The Barber of Seville*, *The Barber of Seville* libretto, letter from Rossini, biographies, etc.

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

Creative writing:

Interpret the story and create a new version. Create your own characters or change the opera's time period and setting. Ex. Count = movie star. Create your own characters that are missing from the opera.

Explore different genres of writing: poetry, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, autobiography, short story, historical novel, etc.

Explore literary devices such as the use of point of view, internal/external conflict, repetition of phrases and foreshadowing.

## **CREATIVE WRITING**

Reinterpret the story by creating a new version using your own characters, time period and setting.

Explore different genres of writing: poetry, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, autobiography, short story, historical novel, etc.

Explore literary devices such as the use of point of view, internal/external conflict, repetition of phrases and foreshadowing.

Analysis and Interpretation: Expository writing, critiques/reviews.

Persuasive Writing: Letter writing, copywriting: advertising, fundraising, press release.

Persuasive writing: create posters, advertisements for one of the characters.

Write about what you would do in Almaviva's place, or in Rosina's place.

Write about what would happen to the characters if the story continued.

Set the story in a different time and place. Update the dialogue.

## **LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS**

### **Elements of a Story:**

Character, plot, setting, conflict.

### **Vocabulary:**

Reading for understanding using the subtitles on videos and related educator documents.

### **Genres:**

Comedy: Farce, slapstick. Trace history of Commedia characters to current day.

Social Drama examining class structures and the relationship between nobility and servants, as depicted in “Upstairs, Downstairs” or nanny movies.

Romantic comedy highlights the relations between men and women.

**Themes:**

Love and the complexity of the emotion: Happiness/Misery, Jealousy/Trust, Betrayal/Forgiveness

Power struggles and the games people play – gender, age, class

Examine the themes of the opera: the relationships between men and women, the use and abuse of power, jealousy, addiction; appetites; friendship and loyalty, destiny, fate.

**Character Actions and Motives:** How do characters’ actions move story along? What are characters’ real motives? Contrasts of character traits drive story forward. Contrast characters of the Rosina and Berta as different types of women.

**Symbolism/metaphors:**

**Archetypes:** Commedia dell’arte characters such as the trickster, villain, and the young lovers.

**Character Development:** Examine character development: do the characters grow beyond their expected roles? What is status of servants at the end of the opera? What is the status of the women vs. the men?

**Alliteration:** Recognize the similarities of sounds and rhythmic patterns in the libretto.

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

Language style and music reflects emotion of characters, and instrumental sounds or musical phrases can be used symbolize character.

Play segments of the opera; students journal after listening to the segments.

Compare the format of the libretto to the format of the original book.

Students respond to a letter from Rosina asking them for advice.

Chart out the elements of the plot.

Read a synopsis of Act I; how would you complete this story?

What kind of genre does this story fit into?

Examine the relationships in the opera, i.e. between Almaviva and Rosina, between Figaro and Almaviva. How do they interact? How do they feel about each other?

Watch a scene from the opera and list verbs that describe the action that’s happening.

Examine how conflicts escalate in the opera.

What are some emotions or feelings the characters exhibit in the story? How do you feel about how they act upon or express their emotions?

List some transformations or changes that the characters experience in the story. How do they respond to the changes? How do their characters change?

Analyze the characters in the opera. What motivates their actions? What are their main traits? Do they change over the course of the opera?

Examine the use of farce in the opera.

Who are the characters that drive the action in this opera?

Pick your favorite character in the opera and describe him/her. Write a letter from his/her point of view to another character.

Play a particular passage from the opera; list adjectives that the music makes you think of, instrumental and vocal.

Examine character development: do the characters grow beyond their expected roles?

Compare and contrast the behavior of the different characters in the opera.

How do the different characters speak? What does that say about their social status?

Explore the nuances of the characters in the opera.

How do the characters go about getting what they want in the opera?

### WRITING STRATEGIES

Poetry, fairy tale, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, program, program article, synopsis, etc.

Letter writing, copywriting: advertising, fundraising, press release.

#### **Analysis and Interpretation:**

*The Barber of Seville* production materials: artist biographies, program and program notes, synopsis, expository writing, critiques/reviews, etc.

#### **Persuasive Writing:**

Write a “me” poem for each of the characters: begin the poem with “I am” and list the characteristics of each person in separate phrases.

Write parrot poems from the point of view of the characters. Parrot poems are conversational poems in which partners write each line in turn.

Writing exercise in which feelings are expressed like those in *The Barber of Seville* arias.

Write a passage expressing several characters’ inner thoughts at the same time. Use stream of consciousness writing.

Write dialogue for two of the characters in the opera. Each character only says one line, but uses different inflections each time he/she says it.

Write a piece that brags about yourself (like “Largo al factotum”), or create a new one for Figaro.

Write stage directions for the scene when Figaro and Almaviva sneak into Rosina’s room, or another scene of your choice.

Rewrite a scene from the opera, switching the genders of the characters. How does the scene change? Rewrite a scene, changing the ethnicities. How does it change?

Rewrite libretto using today as a setting. Use contemporary characters: Who would be Almaviva today? Rosina?

Divide into small groups. Each group writes the story from the point of view of a different character.

Imagine what’s in Rosina’s letter to Lindoro and write it.

There are many rhymes in Italian in the opera; write a rhyming couplet in another language.

Write passages describing how different characters in the opera move.

Write a “serenade by proxy” when one person pretends to be another.

Write a patter song, like “Largo al factotum,” for a different part of the opera.

Write a different ending for the opera.

Write or draw a deleted scene for the opera; a scene we hear about, but don't see.

Keep journals from the point of view of the characters during the events of the opera.

Write a letter from one character to another.

Create a storyboard of *The Barber of Seville* produced in the style of a sitcom episode (*Glee*) or comic soap opera.

Scenes, letters, diary or blog pages can be written from a particular character's point of view; make sure to take relationships between characters into account. Diary pages could focus on how characters convince themselves to do something — internal debate.

### WRITTEN AND ORAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Debates between characters. Deliver persuasive speeches, identify tactics used.

Write a monologue with two scenes based on the alternate points of view held by a single character.

Spelling: Spell the names of the characters in *The Barber of Seville*.

Facial cues, expressions, gestures can sometimes amplify message being delivered, or can sometimes run contrary to meaning of words (subtext).

Watch different versions of the opera on DVD and write reviews. Read example reviews first.

Examine the structure of *Barber of Seville*; can you relate it to other stories you've read or seen that have the same character(s) in different stories?

*The Barber of Seville* comes from a trilogy of plays; what are the other ones? Have any of those been made into operas?

Define climax. Define denouement. How are they used in *Barber of Seville*?

### LISTENING AND SPEAKING

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

**Reflection:** What did you see, think, hear and feel? Ex. Verbal & written responses to *The Barber of Seville*.

**Persuasive language:** How does Rosina distract Bartolo to protect Lindoro (Count Almaviva)?

Act out main events of the story, in tableaux or longer scenes. Improvise. Give small groups different scenes, and then act out in succession.

Write dialogue for two of the characters in the opera. Each character only says one line, but uses different inflections each time he/she says it.

Separate into small groups; each group researches and comes up with evidence for certain characters' motivations, then defends them in a classroom debate.

Tell the story of the *Barber of Seville* in your own words to other members of your class.

There is a lot of repetition in the *Barber of Seville*; act out a scene with repetitive scenes, in which each character adds a new word to the phrase.

Characters often make “asides” in the *Barber of Seville*. What are asides? Have one character say one phrase and have another respond with an aside.

The opera’s libretto is written with a great deal of rhythm and pattern; have one person start a story with a sentence that begins with “A”; have the next person continue the story with a sentence that begins with “B”, and so on.

Almaviva uses a different voice when he pretends to be a music teacher; how would you change your voice to disguise it?

With their voices, the singers express the characters’ emotions. How would you express love, happiness, exasperation with your speaking voice?

Try reading some lines of recitative; how does it sound without the music? How does the music change it?

Conduct a debate between two characters in the opera.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Gioachino Rossini (composer): biographies, timelines of work.

*The Barber of Seville* comes from a trilogy of plays; what are the other ones? Have any of those been made into operas?

What was the initial reception of the opera?

### ACTIVITIES

Create a character sketch.

Create Reader’s Theater of *Barber of Seville*.

Interview characters in *Barber of Seville*; write a news story based on the interviews.

Create a news report about *Barber of Seville* using HyperStudio.

Write a Dear Abby letter from one of the characters in the opera, and Abby’s response.

Write a letter from one character to another, choosing a moment in the story to write about. Use the “Friendly Letter” format.

Using a letter from one character to another in the opera; edit the letter down to a tweet or Facebook post.

Write a fake twitter feed for Almaviva or Rosina.

Write a scene of conflict between two people who start out as friends, then end up arguing. Compare it with a scene of conflict in the opera.

Play “Hot Seat”: one student acts as one of the characters from the story, and the other students ask him or her questions based on that character.

Write a prequel for the opera about one of the characters’ life.

Write a blog post from the point of view of one character.

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

Libretto writing: Adapt *The Barber of Seville* (existing source material) or create a new story/characters.

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

Read and report on feature articles from the opera program about *The Barber of Seville*.