

THE GOLDEN COCKEREL

Rimsky-Korsakov

Music I: The Characters

Students Will

- Read *The Golden Cockerel* synopsis
- Read **The Characters** for character analysis
- Listen to audio selections from *The Golden Cockerel* online.
- Discuss and answer questions on the appropriate portion(s) of the **Activity Worksheet**.

Before the Lesson

- Print copies for each student of **The Characters** and the **Activity Worksheet**.
- Decide which section(s) of the **Activity Worksheet** you wish your students to complete.
- Prepare internet access to the online listening selections.
- Gather pens, pencils and additional writing paper as needed for your group.

Introduction

Have your students read *The Golden Cockerel* synopsis. Give each student a copy of **The Characters** or display it on the screen. Read through the information, discussing each character and listening to the online selections as you go.

Guided/Independent Practice

Depending on your grade level, the ability of your students and time constraints, you may choose to have your class work as a whole, in small groups, with a partner or individually. Read the directions on the **Activity Worksheet**. Have students complete the portion(s) of the **Activity Worksheet** you have chosen with opportunities for questions. If students are working with a partner or in small groups, give them time to discuss their answers before writing them down. Have students share their answers individually or by groups and tell why they gave their answers.

Evaluation

Have students discuss and evaluate the answers of others. The teacher may want to guide the discussion with the sample answers provided. After individual or small group responses have been shared and/or turned in, the class can then formulate comprehensive answers with the teacher asking leading questions to guide the discussion.

For Further Study

The teacher may want to have students research the original sources of *The Golden Cockerel*. Students may want to do additional research on Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, along with other related topics online or in their school library. Their findings can be shared with the class at the beginning of a later lesson.

TEKS: Music

6th Grade

117.33.C.5 Historical/cultural heritage. (A)

7th Grade

117.36.C.5 Historical/cultural heritage. (A)

8th Grade

117.39.C.5 Historical/cultural heritage. (A)

High School, Level I

117.60.C.5 Historical/cultural heritage. (A)

High School, Level II

117.61.C.5 Historical/cultural heritage. (A)

High School, Level III

117.62.C.5 Historical/cultural heritage. (A, B)

High School, Level IV

117.63.C.5 Historical/cultural heritage. (A, B)

TEKS: Social Studies

History: The student understands the influences of individuals and groups from various cultures on various historical and contemporary societies. The student is expected to: evaluate the social, political, economic, and cultural contributions of individuals and groups from various societies, past and present.

TEKS: Language Arts

Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction: Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

Students are expected to: analyze the development of the plot through the internal and external responses of the characters, including their motivations and conflicts.

Correlates: Language Arts, Social Studies, Drama

Gardner's Intelligences: Verbal-Linguistic, Musical, Interpersonal

Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Evaluation, Synthesis

Sources:

The Golden Cockerel Libretto

Warrack, John and West, Ewan, The Oxford Dictionary of Opera, Oxford University Press, 1992.

Online Resources:

www.oxfordmusiconline.com

www.metopera.org

www.aria-database.com

The Golden Cockerel Synopsis

PROLOGUE

A mysterious Astrologer warns the audience that he is about to conjure up a cautionary tale.

ACT ONE

Dodon's Throne Room

Tsar Dodon complains that he is tired of warfare and that his neighbors threaten invasion. He asks his councilors and his two sons how to avoid future conflicts, but they offer differing opinions. The Astrologer appears with a magic Golden Cockerel who, from a high perch, can warn of any danger. Dodon is elated and promises any reward the Astrologer can name. The Astrologer wants a binding contract from Dodon, but he refuses, explaining that his whims and orders are the law. Later, the Cockerel offers reassurance to all for a restful evening. In his dreams, Dodon sees a vision of the Queen of Shemakho. Suddenly the Cockerel sounds the alarm and the army is mobilized, led by Dodon's two sons. Dodon dons his rusty armor, which he has grotesquely outgrown, and goes off to battle.

ACT TWO

A Mountain Gorge

Looking in vain for the battle, Dodon stumbles upon the bodies of his two sons, who have apparently stabbed each other to death. The beautiful Queen of Shemakha appears, singing her Hymn to the Sun, and brazenly declares that she has come to subdue Dodon, not by force, but through seduction. At her request, Dodon banishes his loyal commander Polkan, and orders his beheading in an attempt to impress her. The Queen agrees to return with Dodon as his wife.

ACT THREE

The Capital

A procession welcomes Tsar Dodon and his Queen to the capital. The Astrologer reappears to claim his promised reward, demanding the Queen of Shemakha. Dodon flares up in fury, striking down the Astrologer. The sky darkens. The Golden Cockerel, loyal to the Astrologer, pecks Dodon to death. When light returns, both the Cockerel and the Queen of Shemakha have vanished. The terrified crowd laments.

EPILOGUE

The Astrologer announces the end of his story, reminding the audience that what they have witnessed was “merely illusion.” He leaves with the cryptic assurance that only he and the Queen of Shemakha were real people; all the rest were dream and delusion.

Courtesy of Santa Fe Opera

The Characters

Tsar Dodon: (bass) Ruler of a fairy-tale kingdom. He wants to rule his kingdom by his whims and is worried about being invaded.

General Polkan: (bass) The King's most trusted advisor.

Astrologer: (tenor) The narrator of the opera and an adviser to the Tsar. He gives Dodon the Golden Cockerel in exchange for a binding contract.

Tsaritsa of Shemakha: (soprano) queen of the kingdom at war with Tsar Dodon, her goal is to conquer Tsar Dodon through seduction.

Golden Cockerel: (soprano) A magical bird who can warn of coming danger.

Listening Examples

Act II: "Hymn to the Sun" | Tsaritsa Shemakah sings to the sun, praising its beauty and light-giving powers. She tells Tsar Dodon and General Polkan how her country is beautiful and happy because of the joy that the sun brings to it.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AF4Y7kaB_g8

Act III: "Wedding Procession" | Dodon brings Tsaritsa Shemakah back to his city as his bride.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tzvjG8OReI>

Name _____

Date _____

Activity Worksheet Part I

Directions: The characters in *The Golden Cockerel* deal with many internal and external conflicts throughout the opera. In the chart provided, list five conflicts the characters face and their resolutions, along with the motivation of each character involved.

Conflict	Resolution	Character Motivation

Name _____

Date _____

Activity Worksheet Part II

1. What is your overall impression of King Dodon? Is he an effective ruler? Why or why not?

2. Kings and rulers are almost always surrounded by advisors to help them make decisions. What are some of the most important qualities in a helpful advisor? Why is it important for rulers to listen to advice from others?

3. What is the moral of *The Golden Cockerel*? Provide specific examples from the opera to confirm your statement.

Name _____

Date_____

Activity Worksheet Part III

Talk it out

The Golden Cockerel was based on a poem by Alexander Pushkin written in 1834. Rimsky-Korsakov wrote the opera in the early 1900s and was intended as an ironic commentary on the Russian ruler Nicholas II. As a group, research Nicholas II of Russia and talk about how his rule compares to that of Tsar Dodon. You can record your findings on this sheet or use additional paper if necessary.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.