LA TRAVIATA
GIUSEPPE VERDI

Language Arts: Story Analysis and Theme

Students Will
- Read the "Synopsis" and "The Librettist"
- Read and discuss "Literary Elements Review"
- Complete the Activity Worksheets and Plot Diagram

Copies for Students
- "Synopsis"
- "The Librettist"
- "Literary Elements Review"
- Activity Worksheets

Copies for the Teacher
- "Synopsis"
- "The Librettist"
- "Literary Elements Review"
- Activity Worksheets
- ANSWER KEYS for Activity Worksheets

Getting Ready
Review the lesson. Gather pens, pencils, and additional writing paper as needed for your group.

Introduction
Read the "Synopsis" as a class. Continue reading through the Literary Elements Review, discussing concepts as you go.

Guided Practice
You may want to use a story your students are familiar with to complete an example linear plot diagram or review conflict types, etc. as a class before moving on to the Activity Worksheets.

Independent Practice
Depending on your student's grade level, the ability of your students, and time constraints, you may choose to have students work as a whole class, in small groups, with a partner, or individually. Read the directions on the activity worksheets. Provide instruction and model the activity as needed. Have students complete the activity worksheets with opportunity for questions.

Evaluation
Have students share their answers individually or by groups and explain why they gave their answers. The teacher may want to guide the discussion with the sample answers provided.

TEKS

(5) 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. (A. B. C.)

Correlates: Music

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

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

Sources:
La Traviata Libretto
https://www.texasgateway.org/resource/how-read-and-analyze-short-story-english-iii-reading

Synopsis

ACT ONE

In her Paris salon, the courtesan Violetta Valéry greets party guests, including Gastone, who introduces a new admirer, Alfredo Germont. This young man, having adored Violetta from afar, addresses her with a drinking song; she joins him in the salute to pleasure. An orchestra is heard in the next room, but as guests move there to dance, Violetta suffers an attack of faintness. Concerned, Alfredo returns and, since they are alone, confesses his love. At first Violetta protests that love means nothing to her. Something in the young man's sincerity touches her, however, and she promises to meet him the next day. After the guests have gone home, Violetta wonders if Alfredo could actually be the man to fulfill her need for love. But she decides she prefers freedom, though Alfredo's voice, heard outside, argues in favor of romance.

ACT TWO

Scene I

Alfredo and Violetta are living in a villa near Paris, where he praises their contentment. When the maid, Annina, reveals that Violetta has pawned her jewels to keep the villa, Alfredo leaves for the city to raise money. Violetta receives an invitation from Flora to a party that night. She has no intention of going back to her old life, but trouble intrudes with the appearance of Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont. He demands she renounce his son: the scandal of Alfredo's affair with her has threatened his daughter's engagement. Violetta says she cannot, but Germont eventually convinces her. Alone, the desolate woman sends a message of acceptance to Flora and begins a farewell note to Alfredo. He enters suddenly, surprising her, and she can barely control herself as she repeats how deeply she loves him before rushing out. A servant hands Alfredo her farewell note as Giorgio returns to console his son with reminders of family life in Provence. But Alfredo, seeing Flora's invitation, determines to confront her at the party that evening.

Scene II

At her soirée, Flora learns from the Marquis that Violetta and Alfredo have parted, then clears the floor for a band of Gypsies and dancers, who sing of a bullfighter and his coy sweetheart. Soon Alfredo strides in, making bitter comments about love and gambling recklessly at cards. Violetta has arrived with Baron Douphol, who challenges Alfredo to a game and loses a small fortune to him. Everyone goes in to supper, but Violetta has asked Alfredo to stay behind. Fearful of the Baron's anger, she wants Alfredo to leave, but he misunderstands her apprehension and demands that she admit she loves Douphol. Crushed, she pretends she does. Alfredo calls in the others, denounces Violetta and hurls his winnings at her feet. As the guests rebuke him and Douphol challenges him to a duel, the elder Germont enters in search of his son and also denounces his behavior.

ACT THREE

In Violetta's bedroom, Dr. Grenvil tells Annina that Violetta has not long to live; tuberculosis has claimed her. Alone, Violetta rereads a letter from Germont saying the Baron was only wounded in his duel with

Alfredo, who has now been told the truth and is on his way to beg her pardon. But Violetta senses it is too late. Paris is celebrating Mardi Gras, and after revelers pass outside, Annina rushes in to announce Alfredo. The lovers ecstatically plan to leave Paris forever. Giorgio Germont enters with the doctor before Violetta is seized with a last resurgence of strength. Feeling life return, she gets out of bed, staggers and then falls dead at her lover's feet.

The Librettist

Francesco Maria Piave was born on May 18, 1810 in Murano; then considered the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy. He was the son of a glass blower. Piave first studied for the church and then became a proofreader. He moved to Rome where he met and became friends with a librettist. When he moved back to Venice, he became the resident poet and stage manager at La Fenice opera house. Later, he moved to Milan and worked in these same positions at La Scala opera house.

Due to his work in the opera houses, Piave began to write libretti. Over the next twenty years, he wrote for many composers. Among these composers was Giuseppe Verdi. Piave wrote the libretti for ten of Verdi's operas, including La Traviata in 1853. While Piave's libretti are not all recognized as outstanding accomplishments, those he wrote for Verdi were excellent. Piave could take Verdi's prose and turn it into verse that satisfied Verdi's demanding instructions for brevity and illuminating passages.
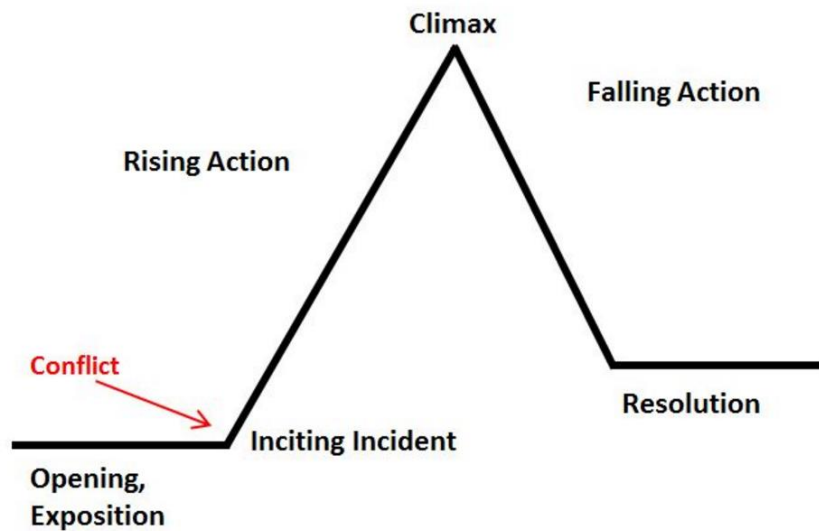
On December 5, 1867, Piave was on his way to rehearsal at La Scala when he had a stroke. He was left unable to speak and paralyzed for the rest of his life. Verdi remained a life-long friend of his. Both Verdi and his wife helped Piave and his family during the last years of his life. It was Verdi's idea that an album of pieces by the famous composer be compiled and sold for Piave's benefit. Francesco Maria Piave died on March 5, 1876. He was buried in the Cimitero Monumentale in Milan.

Literary Elements Review

Plot Analysis

A Linear Plot is one way to organize the plot of a story. The story moves continuously forward from point A to point B and contains some specific elements:

Basic Plot Diagram

Climax

Falling Action

Rising Action

Conflict

Inciting Incident

Resolution

Opening,
Exposition

Opening/Exposition: introduces the characters and sets the tone of the story

Inciting Incident: what happens to kick off the action of the story – the main conflict is introduced and reveals the protagonist (good guy) and the antagonist (bad guy)

Rising Action: everything that happens in the story that adds conflict and builds suspense

Climax: the turning point of the story – the rising action builds to this most intense moment in the conflict

Falling Action: what happens after the climax to let us know how the resolution could be achieved

Resolution: how the conflict is resolved and all the loose ends of the story are tied up to finish the story

Conflict is always what keeps the story moving forward and keeps the reader interested. Events and actions build to increase the conflict until it is resolved and the story ends.

Setting

The setting is when and where a story takes place. It can also convey the mood and tone. Every story needs a location – a time and a place. If you were to take the plot of any story and change the setting, it would change the entire story, and in some cases, even the theme of the work. To help analyze the setting, ask the following questions:
- What does it look like, sound like, feel like?
- How long does it take for the action to occur? What clues does the author give to indicate how much time is passing?
- What is the social environment portrayed in the work – the manners, customs, codes of conduct of a society? What does the author seem to think about them?

Characters

Literary characters can be simple or complex. Complex characters undergo a change sometime during the story, so they are also dynamic. Simple characters are often static – they do not change or grow in any way. Complex characters tend to not always take heroic action during the plot. In any story there are always characters defined as the protagonist and the antagonist. The protagonist is the character whose interests the reader is most concerned with, and sympathetic toward. The antagonist is the character who opposes what readers want for the protagonist. Out of this opposition comes the conflict in the story.

We learn about characters through what they do or say directly, the way the narrator or another character describes them, through their thoughts and interactions with other characters, and through the author's descriptions. They can be developed directly (by telling the reader what they are like) or indirectly (showing the reader what they are like).

Conflict

Conflict is the key to every good story. It's what keeps us interested, leaves us wondering what's going to happen to the characters so we'll finish the story to see how everything works out. Will the superhero defeat the villain at last? Will the dog find his way back home? Will everything be ok again? When you ask these kinds of questions during a story, it's a signal you're in the middle of a conflict.

There are two main types of conflict: external and internal. External conflict exists when there is a problem between the character and an outside source, like another character, society as a whole, or nature. These are usually labeled as character vs. character, character vs. society, or character vs. nature. Internal conflict is the opposite. It describes a conflict within a character, usually centered around values or feelings about an event.

Point of View

The point of view is the perspective from which events in a story are told. See the chart below for a few commonly used points of view.

Point of View (POV)	Description
Third-person Omniscient	The narrator tells the story in the third person from an all-knowing perspective. The knowledge is not limited by any one character's view or behavior, as the narrator knows everything about all characters.
Third-person Limited	The narrator restricts his knowledge to one character's view or behavior.
Third-person Objective	The narrator reveals only the actions and words without the benefit of the inner thoughts and feelings.
First person	The narrator restricts the perspective to that of only one character to tell the story.

Theme

The theme of a work is an abstract idea or observation that addresses human motivation, the human condition, or human ambition, and it rises from every element of the story. Choices made about the setting, characters, conflict, plot, and point of view all influence the theme.

When discussing the theme of a story, make sure your observation:

- is not too terse to express the complexity of the human experience
- avoids moralizing words such as *should* and *ought*
- avoids specific reference to plot and characters (difference between theme and plot summary)
- avoids absolute words such as *anyone, all, none, everything,* and *everyone*
- avoids clichés such as "love is blind"

Name_____Date_____

Activity Worksheet 1: Literary Elements & Theme

Answer the questions below after you are familiar with the story of *La Traviata*. Your answers will help guide your theme analysis in Activity Worksheet 2.

1. By way of exposition, we are told that
    a. Violetta is a Parisian courtesan
    b. Alfredo Germont has a gambling problem
    c. Violetta has pawned her jewels to keep her villa

2. The rising action in the story is made up of
    a. Violetta's decline due to her illness
    b. Violetta & Alfredo's troubles as they attempt a happy life together

3. The point of view in the story is that of
    a. Third-person limited
    b. Third-person omniscient
    c. First person

4. The character of Alfredo Germont is largely developed by
    a. What another character says about him
    b. Direct statements by the author describing his actions and thoughts
    c. His own words and actions

5. Which character is the protagonist?
    a. Violetta
    b. Alfredo Germont
    c. Baron Douphol

6. The main conflict in the story can best be described as:
    a. Internal, character vs. self
    b. External, taking the form of character vs. character or character vs. society
    c. External, taking the form of character vs. nature or the supernatural

7. Which event could be considered part of the rising action?
    a. Violetta greets her party guests and meets Alfredo
    b. Alfredo's father visits Violetta and convinces her to leave him
    c. Alfredo returns to Violetta's side when he learns she is sick

8. The climax is the story's high point, which may take the shape of a decision, an action, an affirmation or denial, or an illumination or realization. Given this definition, identify the climax of *La Traviata*.
    a. It is revealed that Violetta is dying from tuberculosis
    b. Alfredo denounces Violetta at Flora's party and throws his gambling winnings at her feet
    c. Baron Douphol is wounded in a duel with Alfredo

9. Summarize the resolution of the story:

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Linear Plot Diagram

Complete a linear plot diagram of *La Traviata* in the space below:
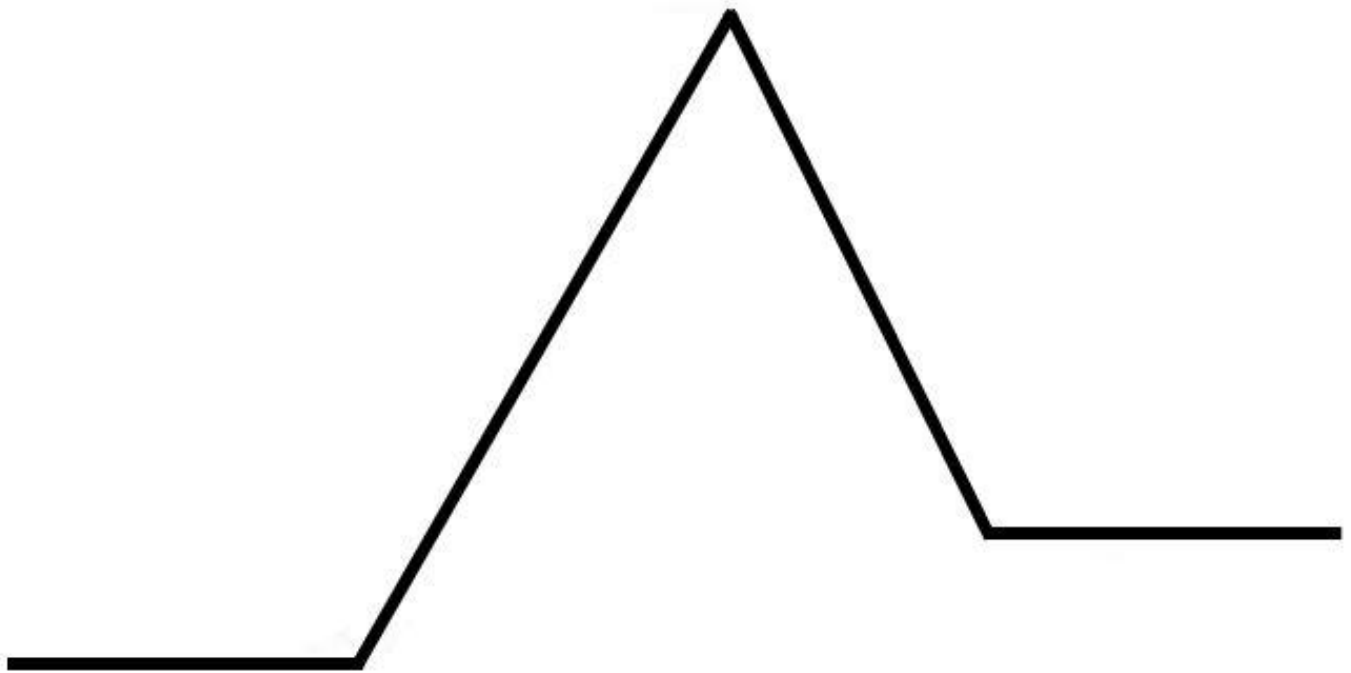
ANSWER KEY 1

Activity Worksheet 1: Literary Elements & Theme

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    a. **Violetta is a Parisian courtesan**
    b. Alfredo Germont has a gambling problem
    c. Violetta has pawned her jewels to keep her villa

2. The rising action in the story is made up of
    a. Violetta's decline due to her illness
    b. **Violetta & Alfredo's troubles as they attempt a happy life together**

3. The point of view in the story is that of
    a. Third-person limited
    b. Third-person omniscient
    c. **First person**

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    a. What another character says about him
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    a. It is revealed that Violetta is dying from tuberculosis
    b. **Alfredo denounces Violetta at Flora's party and throws his gambling money at her feet**
    c. Baron Douphol is wounded in a duel with Alfredo

ANSWER KEY 1

9. Summarize the resolution of the story:
   Violetta dies of tuberculosis just as she and Alfredo are reunited at last.
   (Sample, answers will vary slightly)

Linear Plot Diagram

Complete a linear plot diagram of *La Traviata* in the space below:

* Answers will vary

Climax:
Alfredo confronts Violetta at a party she attends with another man. He denounces her in front of all the guests.

Falling Action:
Violetta's illness worsens and she does not have long to live. Alfredo returns and the couple is reunited.

Rising Action:
Alfredo and Violetta experience troubles as they live together in Paris. Alfredo's father convinces Violetta to leave Alfredo.

Resolution:
Violetta dies as she tries to get out of bed and go to Alfredo.

Inciting Incident/Conflict:
Violetta faints, Alfredo takes care of her and confesses his love for her. She tells him love means nothing to her, but she is touched by his sincerity.

Exposition:
Violetta throws a party and meets Alfredo

Name_____Date_____

Activity Worksheet 2: Theme Analysis

In the space below state the theme of *La Traviata*. Then, write a three paragraph summary supporting your theme with evidence from the story. Remember to include all the literary elements which support the theme: plot, characters, point of view, etc.

THEME:_____

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ANSWER KEY 2

Activity Worksheet 2: Theme Analysis

In the space below state the theme of *La Traviata*. Then, write a three paragraph summary supporting your theme with evidence from the story. Remember to include all the literary elements which support the theme: plot, characters, point of view, etc.

* Answers will vary. It is left to the teacher to determine whether the student has a clearly stated theme that is supported by literary evidence.