

THE BILLY GOATS GRUFF

JOHN DAVIES



Music I: The Characters

Students will:

- Read “The Story of the Opera.”
- Read the information sheet “The Characters” included with the lesson.
- Listen to audio selections from *The Billy Goats Gruff* online.
- Discuss and answer questions on the appropriate portion(s) of the Activity Worksheet.

Copies for Each Student: The Story of The Opera, The Characters, Activity Worksheets

Copies for the Teacher: The Story of The Opera, The Characters, Activity Worksheets, Answer Sheets

Getting Ready

Print copies for each student on the information sheet “The Characters” and the Activity Worksheet. Decide which section(s) of the worksheet you wish your group to complete.

Print a copy for the teacher of the Sample Answers for the Activity Worksheet.

Prepare internet access to *The Billy Goats Gruff* online listening selections at www.operatales.com. Gather pens, pencils and additional writing paper as needed for your group.

Introduction

Have your students read “The Story of the Opera”. Give each student a copy of the information sheet “The Characters” or display it on the screen. Read through the information, discussing each character and listening to the online selections as your go.

Guided/Independent Practice

Depending on your 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 Worksheet. Have students complete the portion(s) of the Activity Worksheet you have chosen with opportunity 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 samples answers provided. After individual or small group responses have been shared and/or turned in, the class can then formulate comprehensive answers for the class with the teacher asking leading questions to guide the discussion.

For Further Study

The teacher may want to have students research varying versions of the story of *The Billy Goats Gruff*. Students may want to do additional research on Sir Arthur Beymour Sullivan, his other works, or 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

5th Grade

117.18.B.5.A Historical/cultural heritage.

The student relates music to history, to society, and to culture. The student is expected to identify aurally-presented excerpts of music representing diverse genres, styles, periods, and cultures.

6th Grade

117.33.B.5.A Historical/cultural heritage.

The student relates music to history, to society, and to culture. The student is expected to describe aurally-presented music representing diverse styles, periods, and cultures.

Language Arts

5th Grade

110.16.B.6.B 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 explain the roles and functions of characters in various plots, including their relationships and conflicts.

6th Grade

110.18.B.6.A 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 summarize the elements of plot development (e.g., rising action, turning point, climax, falling action, denouement) in various works of fiction.

Correlates: Language Arts, Drama

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

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

Sources:

The Billy Goats Gruff Libretto

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

Online Resources: www.operatales.com; www.oxfordmusiconline.com

The Story of the Opera

The Billy Goats Gruff is a one-act opera adapted from a traditional fairy tale, and features music by Mozart, Donizetti, and Rossini.

The story takes place in a forest clearing, along the road between the Billy Goats' home and school. The road crosses a bridge over a stream, and this bridge is the central focus of all the action.

The story begins as three billy goats named Lucy, Ernesto, and Dandini celebrate on their way home from school. From the other side of the bridge, another billy goat named Osmin watches them sing and play. When they begin a game of hide-and-seek, he declares that he will spoil their game. Hearing his voice, the three billy goats begin to feel afraid, but reassure each other and begin their game. Dandini is the first to count, and Lucy and Ernesto run off to hide.

Meanwhile, Osmin brags about being a bully. When the three friends return, he hides behind a tree. Then they hear Osmin's voice, asking sarcastically if he can join their game. The three billy goats are afraid, and decide to go home, but Osmin declares that he will not allow them to cross the bridge without a fight. He begins calling them names, steals Lucy's doll, and chases them all away. Then he puts up a sign next to the bridge reading "KLOSED," and leaves.

The three friends return, and Ernesto tells Lucy and Dandini that he recognizes Osmin, warning them about all the mean things a bully might do. They decide to avoid the bridge, taking the long way home, but Lucy refuses to leave her doll, which is still "hiding" in the tree on the other side of the bridge. The three billy goats muster up their courage to cross the bridge and get the doll, and declare that they will teach the bully a lesson. Osmin overhears them and steps onto the bridge, scaring the three friends away.

The three billy goats return again, whispering a plan to tiptoe across the bridge. Meanwhile, Osmin listens from a distance. Ernesto manages to sneak over the bridge to retrieve Lucy's doll. Osmin pops up to scare him and Ernesto is so startled that he throws the doll up in the air.

Osmin catches the doll, plays with it in a mocking way, and declares that he will keep it. He puts the doll in the tree and hides again.

From his hiding place, Osmin warns the three billy goats to go away, threatening the doll. Ernesto and Dandini leave to tell an adult about trouble they have been having with the bully, but Lucy still refuses to go anywhere without her doll. She confronts Osmin, asking him to give her doll back. She steps onto the bridge and approaches Osmin to take back the doll. Osmin threatens her and says she's "just a girl," but she does not listen. When Osmin grabs Lucy's arm, she hits him in self-defense, causing him to fall off the bridge. He comes out of the water on the verge of tears, and Lucy reproaches him, telling him never to mess with a mother. Then she asks Osmin if he is all right. He says he is, and then asks Lucy if she is all right. She says she is all right, but that her doll doesn't like to be thrown.

When Ernesto and Dandini return, they are surprised to see that Lucy has her doll back. When they ask how she did it, Lucy says that Osmin was nice enough to give it back. She even claims that Osmin has promised to play nicely and consider others' feelings in the future. When Osmin looks surprised, she whispers to him, asking if he would like her to tell them that a *girl* pushed him into the swamp. He agrees to this understanding, and all four billy goats become friends, joining in a game of hide-and-seek.

The Characters

Osmin: (baritone) A big boy billy goat who has no friends. Osmin is a bully. He is mean and gets enjoyment from making other people feel bad. At the end, he explains that he has been very lonely and really does want to play with the other billy goats. It takes getting knocked off the bridge by little Lucy to get his attention and make him behave.

Lucy: (soprano) A young girl billy goat who loves to play with her doll, Lucy D. Lammermoor, and her best friends Ernesto and Dandini. Lucy is small and not very strong, but she is very brave and not afraid to do the right thing. She is also smart, and is the reason everyone becomes friends in the end.

Ernesto: (mezzo soprano) A young boy billy goat who loves his friends. Ernesto is brave when he tries to get Lucy's doll back, but is also not afraid to ask for help when he needs it.

Dandini: (tenor) A young boy billy goat who also loves his friends, Lucy and Ernesto. Dandini goes with the flow and chooses to accompany Ernesto to ask a grownup for help with the bully.

Link to Musical Excerpts:

<http://www.operatales.com/billy-goat.shtml>

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Billy Goats Gruff
Activity Worksheet

Part I

1. In this story, Lucy, Ernesto and Dandini were walking home from school by themselves when they met the bully Osmin. Was it wise for them to be unsupervised? Why or why not?

2. The first time Osmin appeared, the three billy goats gruff decided to ignore him. What could they have done differently? How would it have affected the story?

3. Ernesto bravely tried to cross the bridge when he thought Osmin was not around. Why do you think he backed down so quickly when Osmin came back?

4. Lucy, the smallest of all the billy goats, was the one to teach Osmin a lesson. Where do you think her bravery came from? What would make you act bravely when you feel afraid?

Part II

5. Lucy loved her doll Lucy D. very much and claimed that the doll had feelings. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?

6. At the end of the story, Osmin said he was lonely. Is loneliness a good reason for being mean? Why do you think he felt good when other people felt bad?

7. Which of the characters is most like the people in your life? Why?

8. Do you believe that Osmin will continue to be kind to other people? Why or why not?

Part III

In most versions of the story of *The Billy Goats Gruff*, the bully is a troll that is beaten up and thrown in the river by the biggest billy goat and never heard from again. John Davies' version has the bully getting knocked off the bridge, then changing his ways and joining the circle of friends.

9. Which ending do you prefer for the story? Why?

10. What do you think is the intended lesson of this story?

Many operas are treated as concept operas, with stories that can take place in any time or location. The story of *The Billy Goats Gruff* was originally set in Norway, hundreds of years ago. Other authors have imagined new settings and time for the story, just like Davies has.

11. Would a different time or place in which the story is portrayed change the story in any real way? Why or why not?

12. If you were to perform this opera, what location and time period would you like to use? Would you use a troll, a billy goat or something else as the bully character?

ANSWER KEY

The Billy Goats Gruff
Activity Worksheet

Part I

1. In this story, Lucy, Ernesto and Dandini were walking home from school and playing in the woods by themselves when they met the bully Osmin. Was it wise for them to be unsupervised? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. Example: It was wise for them to walk home alone because they were old enough to have some freedom and knew how to find help if they needed it.

2. The first time Osmin appeared, the three billy goats gruff decided to ignore him. What could they have done differently? What could they have done differently? How would it have affected the story?

Answers will vary. Example: Yes. They could have invited him to play their game. He was a stranger, and was really mean so they probably would have been bullied anyway.

3. Ernesto bravely tried to cross the bridge when he thought Osmin was not around. Why do you think he backed down so quickly when Osmin came back?

Answers will vary. Example: Ernesto mentioned he had seen Osmin before and knew he was a bully that did bad things to other people. He probably backed down quickly because he was afraid of what Osmin would do.

4. Lucy, the smallest of all the billy goats, was the one to teach Osmin a lesson. Where do you think her bravery came from? What would make you act bravely when you feel afraid?

Answers will vary. Example: Lucy's bravery came from her love for her doll. If I felt afraid, thinking of protecting someone or something I love would help me be brave.

Part II

5. Lucy loved her doll Lucy D. very much and claimed that the doll had feelings. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. Example: Yes and no. Lucy's doll felt afraid because Lucy was afraid – she used her doll to show her own emotions.

6. At the end of the story, Osmin said he was lonely. Is loneliness a good reason for being mean? Why do you think he felt good when other people felt bad?

ANSWER KEY

Answers will vary. Example: No – there is never a good reason for being mean to others, but it helps to understand where someone comes from. He probably felt a lot of pain from his experiences and didn't know how to show anything but that same pain to others.

7. Which of the characters is most like the people in your life? Why?

Answers will vary. Example: Lucy reminds me of my sister. She always helps me when I have a problem.

8. Do you believe that Osmin will continue to be kind to other people? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. Example: Maybe, but Lucy really tricked him into saying he would be nice. People have to change for themselves, not because someone else tells them to.

Part III

In most versions of the story of *The Billy Goats Gruff*, the bully is a troll that is beaten up and thrown in the river by the biggest billy goat and never heard from again. John Davies' version has the bully getting knocked off the bridge, then changing his ways and joining the circle of friends.

9. Which ending do you prefer for the story? Why?

Answers will vary. Example: I like the bully being a billy goat instead of a troll because he can have a chance to change his ways. A scary troll dying might be too much for little kids.

10. What do you think is the intended lesson of this story?

Answers will vary. Example: It is always best to be kind and respect everyone and sometimes it's best for kids to learn how to work out problems themselves.

Many operas are treated as concept operas, with stories that can take place in any time or location. The story of *The Billy Goats Gruff* was originally set in Norway, hundreds of years ago. Other authors have imagined new settings and time for the story, just like Davies has.

11. Would a different time or place in which the story is portrayed change the story in any real way? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. Example: Not really, bullying is something that happens anywhere in any time.

12. If you were to perform this opera, what location and time period would you like to use? Would you use a troll, a billy goat or something else as the bully character?

Answers will vary. Example: I would like to perform it in today's time in a zoo with other animals instead of just goats. The bully would be a lion and the three friends would be a zebra, a monkey and an elephant.