

# THE BILLY GOATS GRUFF

## JOHN DAVIES

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## Social Studies: Historical Settings for Opera

### Students Will

- Read for information
- Research a civilization, landmarks, or literary work with which to set a story
- Write a brief setting and story as the basis for an opera

**Copies for Each Student:** Our Arranger and Librettist, John Davies, The Story of The Opera, The Characters, Activity Worksheets

**Copy for Teacher:** Our Arranger and Librettist, John Davies, The Story of The Opera, The Characters, Activity Worksheets, Answer Key

### Getting Ready

Prepare internet access for possible research for guided practice or group work.

Gather pens, pencils and additional writing paper as needed for your group.

### Introduction

Have your students read “Our Arranger and Librettist, John Davies”. Give each student a copy of the Social Studies Activity Worksheet or display it on a screen. Give an overview of the assignment, and point out the information your students are expected to research and write about. To align with Texas TEKS, it is recommended that research topics be tailored according to grade level:

6<sup>th</sup> Grade: Societies of the contemporary world.

7<sup>th</sup> Grade: Texas history, from natural Texas to present.

8<sup>th</sup> Grade: United States history from the early colonial period through Reconstruction.

U.S. History Studies since 1877: U.S. History from Reconstruction to the present day.

World History Studies: Societies of ancient Greece, Rome, India, Persia, China, and Medieval to Renaissance Europe.

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## **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 select topics and begin research. This can be done in class or as an outside assignment. Have students fill in their research information, characters, and write a short summary of their dramatic plot. Have students share their answers individually or by groups and tell why they chose their settings and story elements.

## **Evaluation**

Have students present their ideas to the class for discussion and evaluation. The teacher may want to guide the discussion.

## **For Further Study**

Students may want to do additional research on civilizations and landmarks in which to stage a drama 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**

### Social Studies

#### **6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

##### (16) Culture

The student understands that all societies have basic institutions in common even though the characteristics of these institutions may differ. (A)

##### (21) Social studies skills

The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. (A)

#### **7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

##### (21) Social studies skills.

The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. (A)

#### **8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

##### (23) Culture

The student understands the relationships between and among people from various groups, including racial, ethnic, and religious groups, during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. (C)

##### (29) Social studies skills

The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. (A)

#### **United States History Studies Since 1877**

##### (26) Culture

The student understands how people from various groups contribute to our national identity. (C)

##### (29) Social studies skills

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The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology.

### **World History Studies**

#### **(25) Culture**

The student understands how the development of ideas has influenced institutions and societies. (A and B)

#### **(29) Social studies skills**

The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. (F)

### **Language Arts**

#### **6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

(12) Analyze characters, including their traits, motivations, conflicts, and relationships. (F).

#### **7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

(12) Analyze characters, including their traits, motivations, conflicts and relationships. (F).

#### **8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

(12) Analyze characters, including their traits, motivations, conflicts and relationships. (F).

### **English Language Arts and Reading, English I**

(5) Analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters in works of fiction through a range of literary devices, including character foils. (B).

### **English Language Arts and Reading, English II**

(5) Analyze differences in the characters' moral dilemmas in works of fiction across different countries or cultures. B.

### **English Language Arts and Reading, English III**

(5) Analyze the internal and external development of characters through a range of literary devices. (B)

### **English Language Arts and Reading, English III**

(5) Analyze the internal and external development of characters through a range of literary devices. B.

### **English Language Arts and Reading, English IV**

(5) Analyze the moral dilemmas and quandaries presented in works of fiction as revealed by the underlying motivations and behaviors of the characters. B.

**Correlates:** Language Arts, Drama

**Gardner's Intelligences:** Verbal-Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical

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

### **Sources**

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

Freeman, John W., Stories of the Great Operas, W. W. Norton & Company, 1984.

Goulding, Phil G., Ticket to the Opera, Fawcett Columbine, 1996.

[www.oxfordmusiconline.com](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com)

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## Our Arranger and Librettist, John Davies

Since 1974, John Davies has performed with opera companies throughout the United States, including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, and the opera companies of Boston, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, Atlanta, St. Louis, Kansas City, Omaha, Cincinnati, Phoenix, Nashville, and Anchorage. He has also performed in concert as bass-baritone soloist with the symphony orchestras of Boston, San Francisco, St. Louis, Detroit, San Antonio, Indianapolis, Chattanooga and Syracuse.

A father of six children, John takes an active interest in the performing arts for young people. His operas for young audiences have been presented by more than 100 opera companies and university opera programs in the United States and Canada.

### Connection to the Dallas Opera

John Davies has written several children's operas based on many familiar childhood folk stories and fairy tales. The Dallas Opera recently performed Mr. Davies' opera, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, for afterschool programs and community performances.

*Biography courtesy of [www.operatales.com](http://www.operatales.com)*

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# 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.

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# 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>

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## Social Studies Activity

John Davies created the opera, *The Billy Goats Gruff* using the Norwegian fairy-tale and music from operas written by Mozart, Rossini, and Donizetti. The characters and main plot could possibly be set in any time period in any society on earth. Three friends devoted to one another, a bully who is mean to everyone he meets, and the courage to stand up for your friends—all could be reinterpreted to other settings and eras you have studied. Or maybe a different story is in order. After all, the human animal is the same in all cultures and all times in history.

Similar to John Davies, you will plan an opera based on a folk tale or familiar story in history. Select a story from a time period, society, or culture that you may have previously read about in social studies. You may plan new characters and their story or use characters from the original story. Be sure to select a place for the action to happen. It may be a real place, like the acropolis in Athens, the Forbidden City of China, Machu Picchu in Peru, the Alamo, or even the civil War South. You will need to do a little research on your topics, obtain information and possibly images, write out your idea, and present your plan to the class.

### Your Plan:

Your plan for a new dramatic opera should contain the following:

1. What era, civilization, or society would be the basis for your opera?
2. What is the original story? Do you plan to change anything? If so, tell us what plan to change.
3. What characters would you use? Names are not necessary, but tell us who these people are.
4. What place would be the setting? Would you use a landmark that still exists, or something generic, like a Native American village in Texas?
5. Briefly tell the story you would like to portray. What is the main conflict or problem of the story?
6. Tell why you chose the time and place that you selected, and share your research on the topic, either from the library or web.

**Bonus:** Choose a familiar tune or song to compose an aria of your opera to. You do not have to perform it, but share the name of the melody and what the aria will be about with your class.

All of this information can be as brief or as detailed as your teacher requests. The basic facts would probably fit on a single sheet of notebook paper. You may use the planning form below. Your research may yield much more information.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*The Billy Goats Gruff*  
**Social Studies: Planning Your Opera**  
**Activity Worksheet**

1. What era, civilization, or society would be the basis for your opera?

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2. What is the original story? Do you plan to change anything? If so, tell us what plan to change.

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3. Briefly tell about two or three main characters in your opera.

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4. What place would be the setting? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What is the main conflict or problem of the story? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Tell why you chose the time and place that you selected, and share your research on the topic, either from the library or web.

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**Bonus:** Choose a familiar tune or song to compose an aria of your opera to. You do not have to perform it, but share the name of the melody and what the aria will be about with your class.

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**ANSWER KEY**

*The Billy Goats Gruff*  
**Social Studies: Planning Your Opera**  
**Activity Worksheet**

1. What era, civilization, or society would be the basis for your opera?

**All answers will be unique and individual.**

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2. What is the original story? Do you plan to change anything? If so, tell us what plan to change.

**All answers will be unique and individual.**

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3. Briefly tell about two or three main characters in your opera.

**All answers will be unique and individual.**

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4. What place would be the setting? **All answers will be unique and individual.**

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5. What is the main conflict or problem of the story? **All answers will be unique and individual.**

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6. Tell why you chose the time and place that you selected, and share your research on the topic, either from the library or web.

**All answers will be unique and individual.**

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