

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

music by W.A. MOZART adapted by JOHN DAVIES

Social Studies: The Tales of Stories and Operas

Students Will

- Read for information
- Research and identify the lessons of multiple fairytales and folktales of various cultures
- Answer questions about characters cultural significance of fairytales and folktales
- Create an opera based on research

Copies for Each Student

- “The Story of the Opera”
- “The Characters”
- Activity Worksheets

Copy for Teacher

- “The Story of The Opera”
- “The Characters”

Getting Ready

Prepare materials for presentation, such as class board, PowerPoint Presentation, or butcher paper as needed. Prepare internet access for research for guided practice or group work. Gather poster-board, pens, pencils and additional writing paper as needed for your group.

Instructional Time

One – two 45-minute class periods

Introduction

Explain to your students that many cultures use Fairytales and Folktales to both entertain and teach a lesson. Ensure that your students are familiar with the original story of *The Three Little Pigs*. Then, read “The Story of the Opera” to your students or have them read aloud to the class. Provide each student with a copy of the 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.

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 class, in small groups, with a partner, or individually. Read the directions on the Activity Worksheet being sure to provide examples of fairytales from several different cultures. Have students select fairytales and/or folktales and begin research. Students can research as a class assignment or as an outside assignment. Have students fill in their research information about the stories and characters and tell why they chose their fairytale and/or folktale. Students can share their findings individually or by groups.

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 folktales. Their findings can be shared with the class at the beginning of a later lesson. This Social Studies Lesson can be adjusted to fit your individual needs as a teacher.

TEKS

Social Studies

Grade 5

- (21) Culture. The student understands the relationship between the arts and the times during which they were created. (B)
- (24) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. (D. E.)
- (25) Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. (B. C. D. E.)

Grade 6

- (17) Culture. The student understands relationships that exist among world cultures. (A)
- (18) Culture. The student understands the relationship that exists between the arts and the societies in which they are produced. (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. B. C. D)
- (22) Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. (A. B. D. E. F.)

Correlates: Language Arts, Drama

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

Bloom's Taxonomy: Remember, Understand, Analyze, Create

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.

Online Resources:

- www.operatales.com
- www.oxfordmusiconline.com
- <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter113/index.html>

The Story of the Opera

The Three Little Pigs is a one-act opera adapted by John Davies from the traditional fairy tale featuring music by Wolfgang A. Mozart.

The story begins with three little pigs at their mother's house. Despina, a little girl pig who loves going to the library, is reading a book. Her brothers, Cherubino and Don Giovanni, have not yet learned how useful the library can be. But they are about to find out, for Wolfgang Bigbad, the Big Bad Wolf, is on his way. Despina explains that it is time for them to build their own house, and immediately her two brothers begin to argue about the choice of building materials. Cherubino claims that straw is the best; however, Don Giovanni is sure that sticks would be better. They turn to Despina to settle the argument and she tells them that she is going to the library to check out books that will teach her about building houses. The boys laugh as if it is the most ridiculous idea they have ever heard!

Despite Cherubino and Don Giovanni's doubts, they follow Despina as she makes her way through the woods to the library, where Wolfgang Bigbad himself is pacing back and forth in front of the building. He hasn't eaten all day and would love to get his paws on a small pig, or better yet, two or three! When he sees the three little pigs, he "hides" himself by pretending to be a statue in order to surprise them. Despina goes directly into the library while the boys play outside. Soon they realize that the "statue" is really Wolfgang Bigbad! Cherubino sees that Don Giovanni is terrified, and makes him approach the "statue" to invite him to dinner. The "statue" (Wolfgang) nods his head to accept the invitation.

Meanwhile, Despina has found all of the books she needs, and the three pigs prepare to build their houses. Don Giovanni has built his house of sticks, which Wolfgang blows down. Cherubino has gone ahead with his plans to build a straw house, but it proves to be even less "huff-proof, puff-proof" than his brother's because Wolfgang blows it down, too! Now that both of the boys' flimsy homes are gone, they run to the safety of Despina's house, which she has made of bricks. Wolfgang, now very, very hungry, cannot blow it down! He tries every trick he can think of to get into Despina's sturdy home, but it is no use!

In the end, after their scary, hair-raising encounter with Wolfgang, Cherubino and Don Giovanni both wholeheartedly agree that Despina's idea of going to the library and reading books is a pretty smart thing to do after all.

The Characters

Despina: (soprano or mezzo) A little girl who loves the library. Despina is hardworking and believes that many problems and questions can be solved by simply learning about it at the library.

Cherubino: (mezzo or tenor) Despina's older brother. Cherubino loves to play with his brother. Like his brother, he does not take Despina seriously when she advises them to learn how to build a proper home.

Don Giovanni: (bass or baritone) Despina's younger brother. Don Giovanni wants to prove that he is brave when he invites what he believes is Wolfgang Bigbad's statue to dinner.

Wolfgang Bigbad: (bass or baritone) The Big Bad Wolf, himself. Wolfgang is eager to eat the pigs as a snack and takes advantage of Despina's brothers when he sees that their homes are not sturdy.

Link to Musical Excerpts: <http://www.operatales.com/three-little-pigs.shtml>

Social Studies Activity

Stories, including fairytales like *The Three Little Pigs*, are used for many different purposes and are often told to both educate and entertain the reader. Many of our most popular Fairytales have a lesson for the reader to learn. These same lessons are often used in our everyday lives. Think of some popular fairytales such as *The Ugly Duckling* or *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*. John Davies rewrote the famous story to include a new lesson for the readers.

A librettist, the person who writes the story or words for an opera, can use many different topics as inspiration for an opera; including fairytales, folktales, and current events. Many librettists have used stories and events as resources for their operas. The operas were meant to entertain while serving a socially conscious purpose or as a teaching method. Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* challenged the aristocratic authority and customs of his day. Rossini's *Cinderella* took a famous fairytale and focused on how humans can affect life without magic. Hammerstein's *Show Boat* both challenged and brought social injustices to the forefront of conversations in the early 20th century. In this assignment, you will research various cultures and societies throughout the world to obtain a story or subject for your opera. These stories can be folktales, fairytales, or current social movements and events. After researching your society and story, you will re-tell the story as an opera.

Use the following questions to help guide your research.

- What society are you researching?
- What story have you chosen as the subject of your opera?
- Is it a current event, social movement, folktale, or fairytale?
- Will you change the story in your opera?
- Will you change any of the characters for your opera?

Use the following questions to create an outline for your opera.

- What is the setting of your story? Is it in the original location or is it set elsewhere?
- Who are the characters of the story?
- Tell a bit about the story.
- Is this the original story or has anything changed?
- What would you like the audience to realize after watching your opera?

Social Studies Activity: Lessons in Stories and Opera Activity Worksheet - Research

Answer the following questions to help organize the research for your opera.

1. What society are you researching? List one interesting fact about the society.

2. What story or event have you chosen as the subject of your opera? Why?

3. Is the subject of your story a current event, folktale, or fairytale?

4. Will you change anything about the story or characters in your opera? Why or why not?

Social Studies Activity: The Tales of Stories and Operas Activity Worksheet - Opera Outline

Answer the following questions to create an outline for your opera.

1. What is the setting for your opera? Is it set in the original location or somewhere different?

2. Who are the characters in your opera? Names are not necessary, but provide a few details about each character.

3. What is the plot or main conflict of the opera?

Social Studies Activity: The Tales of Stories and Operas Activity Worksheet - Opera Outline cont.

4. Did you change anything in the story for your opera? If yes, what did you change and why?

5. What is the lesson of your opera? What would you like the audience to realize or learn after watching your opera?
