

Language Arts: Sensory Language in Opera

Students Will

- Read "The Story of the Opera"
- Read "The Characters" included with the lesson.
- Watch the online video selections from *Turandot* included with the lesson.
- Discuss and answer questions on the appropriate portion(s) of the Activity Worksheet

Copies for the Student:

- The Story of the Opera
- The Characters
- Activity Worksheet

Copy for the Teacher:

- Activity Worksheet Answer Key

Getting Ready:

Decide which section(s) of the worksheet you wish your group to complete.

Prepare internet access for *Turandot* online listening selections.

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 Characters". Read through the information, discussing each character and viewing 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 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.

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

For Further Study: The teacher may want to have students read the accompanying articles from The Dallas Opera website. Students may want to do additional research

on Giacomo Puccini, Giuseppe Adami, Renato Simoni, *Turandot*, or related topics online or in their school library. Their findings can be shared with the class at the beginning of a later lesson. For more in-depth video tutorial, see

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL14hRqd0PELHpYZwltntfiJ7M2uIHasOn0>

Additional Material: "Two Librettists, One Libretto" –Renato Simoni and Giuseppe Adami

TEKs:

6th Grade

110.18.B.8 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

7th Grade

110.19.B.8 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

8th Grade

110.20.B.8 Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

English Language Arts and Reading, English I

110.31.B.7 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

English Language Arts and Reading, English II

110.32.B.7 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

English Language Arts and Reading, English III

110.33.B.7 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

English Language Arts and Reading, English IV

110.34.B.7 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

Correlates

Music

Drama

Gardner's Intelligences

Verbal-Linguistic

Musical

Interpersonal

Bloom's Taxonomy

Knowledge

Comprehension

Application

Analysis

Evaluation

Synthesis

Bibliography

Turandot Libretto

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

Holden, Amanda, The New Penguin Opera Guide, Penguin Books, 2001.

Clips

Label: Living Stereo

Puccini: Turandot

Conductor: Erich Leinsdorf

Orchestra: The Orchestra of Rome Opera

Chorus: The Chorus of Rome Opera

Artists: Nilsson, Birgit; Tebaldi, Renata; Tozzi, Giorgio; Bjoerling, Jussi.

The Story of the Opera

Any man who wishes to marry Turandot, the beautiful Princess of Peking, must correctly answer three riddles. If he fails, he will die. Timur, the deposed King of Tartary, arrives in Peking just as the Prince of Persia, having failed the test, is about to be executed. Timur is surprised to find his son, Calaf, in Peking; the two of them had fled separately when their kingdom was lost. Timur tells Prince Calaf that the servant girl Liù has cared tenderly for him during his time of exile. Liù tells the Prince that his own kind treatment of her inspired her care for Timur.

When Turandot arrives to preside over the execution of the Prince of Persia, Timur's son is stunned by her beauty and determined to try the riddles. His father warns him that he is certain to fail and die like the others. Liù pleads with him, confessing her love, but the Prince is obsessed and will not be dissuaded.

The ministers of Peking prepare for the trial and whatever may follow—either a wedding or a funeral—as they remember all the other Princes who have faced Turandot's riddles and failed. They lament their role in the kingdom's cruel affairs and long for their homes, describing the beautiful landscapes they traded for the laws and books of the imperial court.

The Emperor gives the Prince leave to attempt Turandot's riddles. Turandot explains that many years ago, her ancestress Princess Lo-u-ling was brutally assaulted and murdered by a man. As a result, Turandot has taken a two-fold vow: to avenge her ancestress and never to be possessed by any man.

When the Prince correctly answers Turandot's riddles, no one is more astonished than the Princess herself. Turandot begs for the Emperor to save her from a fate she loathes, but he will not. Wishing Turandot's love, not just her defeat, the Prince makes a counteroffer: if she can learn his name before dawn, he will surrender his life.

Turandot commands that no one must sleep until the Prince's name is discovered. The quest seems hopeless until guards bring in Timur and Liù, noting that they were seen talking with the Prince earlier that evening. Liù steps forward and claims that while she knows the name, the old man knows nothing. Turandot orders Liù tortured, but she will not speak. Finally, fearing the increasing pain may cause her to utter his name, she kills herself. All are astonished at the show of selfless love, even Turandot.

The Prince challenges Turandot to end the bloodshed, but she insists that it is necessary to avenge Lo-u-ling. After he protests that it is madness to sacrifice the living for the dead, Turandot makes a confession: The assault she seeks to avenge is not only Lo-u-ling's, but her own.

Calaf insists that life, not more death, will bring her peace. When Turandot dismisses his arguments, he places his life in her hands, telling her his name. After a moment of hesitation,

Turandot chooses mercy. "I know the name of the Stranger," she tells her people. "His name is Love." Turandot orders a royal burial for Liù and commands the Executioner to put away his blade. All celebrate the dawn of a new order, ruled by Turandot, who is mercy, compassion, wisdom, and strength.

Synopsis by Washington National Opera

The Characters

Princess Turandot (*soprano*)

A Chinese princess in legendary times

The Emperor Altoum (*tenor*)

Turandot's father

Timur (*bass*)

An exiled king now living in poverty

Calàf (*tenor*)

A prince, Timur's son

Liù (*soprano*)

A young slave girl who takes care of Timur

Chancellor, Majordomo, Head Chef (*baritone, tenor, tenor*)

Three government officials who work for Princess Turandot and Emperor Altoum

Watch and Listen

- In Act II, Scene 2, Calàf presents himself to Emperor Altoum and demands his chance to win Turandot's hand in marriage. He must pass her test and answer the three riddles she presents. Before you watch this scene, see if you can answer the riddles. *See *Activity Worksheet Part One*.

Act II, Scene 2: Turandot's Three Riddles

https://youtu.be/utvY1jxGmz0?si=YBb_s_eUF7NvlUNK

- *Stop video after Turandot answers the third riddle (7:30)*

- Watch Liù's aria from Act I. Calàf has decided to pursue Turandot at great risk to his own life. Liù tells Calàf she has taken care of his father because of her love for him. She pleads with Calàf to listen and not abandon them.

Act I: "Signore, ascolta!"

https://youtu.be/1izUCMU39FE?si=dey7E8Lsj7wrKx_0

Name _____ Date _____

Activity Worksheet- Part I

Turandot's Riddles - Can you solve them?

Riddle #1: In the dark night flies a many-hued phantom. It soars and spreads its wings above the gloomy human crowd. The whole world calls to it, the whole world implores it. At dawn the phantom vanishes to be reborn in every heart. And every night 'tis born anew and every day it dies.

Riddle #2: It kindles like a flame but it is not flame. At times it is a frenzy. It is fever, force, passion! Inertia makes it flag. If you lose heart or die it grows colds, but dream of conquest and it flares up. Its voice you heed in trepidation, it glows like the setting sun.

Riddle #3: Ice which gives you fire and which your fire freezes still more. Lily-white and dark, if it allows you your freedom it makes you a slave; if it accepts you as a slave it makes you a King.

Watch Act II, Scene 2 to find the answers.

Now that you know the answers, look again at the riddles. What were the clues? Discuss ways that sensory language, imagery and irony were used to create the riddles.

Why do you think Turandot used these questions as her test?

Name _____ Date _____

Activity Worksheet- Part II

Character Contrasts: Turandot and Liù

Puccini added the character of Liù when he turned the fable of Turandot into an opera. Using what you know from the Story of the Opera, list some similarities and differences between the two characters below.

Turandot	Both	Liù

The libretto text for both Liù's aria and Turandot's aria is found on the following page. Use the sensory language and imagery from the libretto to support the similarities/differences you found. Add your findings to the chart.

Name _____ Date _____

Activity Worksheet- Part II cont.

"Signore, ascolta!" (Liù's Aria from Act I)

Liù: My lord, hear me! O, hear, my lord! Liù can bear no more, her heart is breaking! Alas, how many miles have I walked with your name in my heart, with your name on my lips! But if your fate tomorrow be decided we shall die on the path of exile. He will lose a son... I, the remembrance of a smile. Liù can bear no more! Have pity!

"In questa Reggia" (Turandot's Aria from Act II)

Turandot: Within this Palace many thousand years ago a desperate cry rang out! And down the generations, that cry has found refuge in my heart. Princess Lo-u-Ling, my ancestress sweet and serene, who ruled in silence and pure joy, defying the abhorred tyranny of man with constancy and firmness, today you live again in me!

The Crowd: It was when the King of the Tartars unfurled his seven standards.

Turandot: At that time - 'tis known to all - war brought horror and the clash of arms. The Empire was conquered and subdued and Lo-u-Ling, my ancestress, dragged away by a man like you, like you a stranger, in that cruel night when her young voice was stifled!

The Crowd: For centuries she has rested in her massive tomb.

Turandot: O Princes, who with vast caravans from every corner of the earth come here to try your lot, I take revenge on you, on you for her purity, her cry and her death! No man shall ever possess me! Hatred for him who killed her lives on in my heart. No! No man shall ever possess me! Ah, the pride of her great purity is reborn in me!

Opera logic...

Why do you think Calàf chose Turandot over Liù? If this story were re-written today, do you think he would have made the same choice? Who would you choose?

Answer Key

Activity Worksheet- Part I

Turandot's Riddles - Can you solve them?

Riddle #1: In the dark night flies a many-hued phantom. It soars and spreads its wings above the gloomy human crowd. The whole world calls to it, the whole world implores it. At dawn the phantom vanishes to be reborn in every heart. And every night 'tis born anew and every day it dies. Hope

Riddle #2: It kindles like a flame but it is not flame. At times it is a frenzy. It is fever, force, passion! Inertia makes it flag. If you lose heart or die it grows cold, but dream of conquest and it flares up. Its voice you heed in trepidation, it glows like the setting sun. Blood

Riddle #3: Ice which gives you fire and which your fire freezes still more. Lily-white and dark, if it allows you your freedom it makes you a slave; if it accepts you as a slave it makes you a King. Turandot

Watch Act II, Scene 2 to find the answers.

Now that you know the answers, look again at the riddles. What were the clues? Discuss ways sensory language, imagery and irony were used to create the riddles.

Answers will vary. Encourage students to use specific examples from the text and from the story to support their answers. For example: In Riddle #3, 'fire' and 'ice' are opposites used to describe Turandot's anger and revenge (fire), her unyielding attitude towards men (ice), and a suitor's love (fire).

Why do you think Turandot used these questions as her test?

Answers will vary. Encourage students to use specific examples from the text and from the story to support their answers.

Answer Key**Activity Worksheet- Part II****Character Contrasts: Turandot and Liù**

Puccini added the character of Liù when he turned the fable of Turandot into an opera. Using what you know from the Story of the Opera, list some similarities and differences between the two characters below.

Turandot	Both	Liù
<i>Answers will vary.</i> <i>Examples:</i> Takes the lives of others Rich Motivated by revenge Keeps men away	<i>Answers will vary.</i> <i>Examples:</i> Calàf Strong women Have influence over Calàf	<i>Answers will vary.</i> <i>Examples:</i> Sacrificed her life for love Poor Motivated by a smile Walked many miles to find love

The libretto text for both Liù's aria and Turandot's aria is found on the following page. Use the sensory language and imagery from the libretto to support the similarities/differences you found. Add your findings to the chart.

Answers will vary - encourage students to find specific examples from the libretto text to support their answers.

Two Librettists, One Libretto

Renato Simoni and Giuseppe Adami

Renato Simoni was an Italian critic, playwright and librettist. The main focus of his career was journalism, first as a music critic in Verona and Milan, then as editor of the Milan's *Corriere della sera*. He remained the drama critic there until the end of his life. His experience as a critic and a playwright led him to a unique opportunity to team up with Giuseppe Adami on the libretto for Puccini's *Turandot*. They worked well together. Adami worked out the dialogue while Simoni translated it into verses that could be sung. Puccini collaborated very closely with Adami and Simoni on this project, sending the libretto back for several rewrites until he was satisfied with the result. In addition to his work as a librettist, Simoni wrote several plays, translated operettas and was well known through the pseudonym 'Turno' as a writer of elegant children's verses.

Giuseppe Adami was an Italian playwright, librettist, and journalist who was best known for his work as a librettist for three of Puccini's operas. Adami earned a degree in law from the University of Padua but devoted his career to literature, first as a theater critic and then as a playwright. He wrote several successful plays, one of which was adapted to film in 1938. In 1911, Adami met the very influential Giulio Ricordi, head of the most powerful publishing house in 19th century Italy. Ricordi introduced the young writer to Puccini, who liked his work very much. Adami worked with Puccini on *La rondine* in 1917, followed by *Il tabarro* in 1918 and *Turandot* in 1926. After Puccini's death, Adami assembled a collection of letters written by the composer and published them in 1928. He was also one of Puccini's earliest biographers, and much of his writing was based on personal recollections. A writer, a music critic, a publicist and a friend to the powerful Ricordi family, Giuseppe Adami remained an important figure in the Italian musical world until the end of his life.