

Music Lesson I: The Characters

Students Will:

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

Copies for the Student: "The Story of the Opera", "The Characters", and the "Music Activity Worksheet".

Copy for the Teacher: Answer Key for the Music Activity Worksheet

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" or display it on screen. 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 an 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 sample answers provided. After individual or small group responses have been shared and turned in, the class can then formulate comprehensive answers for the class with the teacher asking questions to guide the discussion.

For Further Study: Students may want to do additional research on Giuseppe Verdi, *Aida*, 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. For more in-depth video tutorial, see <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL14hRqd0PELHpYZwltfnfiJ7M2uIHasOn0>

TEKs:

Music:

6th Grade

(5) Describe aurally the music representing diverse styles, periods, and cultures. (A)

General Music:

7th Grade

(5) Identify relationships between content, concepts, and processes of the other fine arts, other subjects and music. (D)

8th Grade

(5) Relate content, concepts, and processes of fine arts and music subjects. (D)

Music, Level I

(5) Define the relationships between the content, the concepts, and the processes of the other fine arts, other subjects, and those of music. (D)

Music, Level II

(5) Define the relationships between the content, the concepts, and the processes of the other fine arts, other subjects, and those of music. (D)

Music, Level III

(5) Define the relationships between the content, the concepts, and the processes of the other fine arts, other subjects, and those of music. (D)

Music, Level IV

(5) Define the relationships between the content, the concepts, and the processes of the other fine arts and those of music. (D)

Language Arts:

6th Grade

110.22.B.7.B

(7) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts-- literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student

is expected to: (B) analyze how the characters' internal and external responses develop the plot;

7th Grade

110.23.B.7.B

(7) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts-- literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to: (B) analyze how characters' qualities influence events and resolution of the conflict;

8th Grade

110.24.B.7.B

(7) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts-- literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to: (B) analyze how characters' motivations and behaviors influence events and resolution of the conflict;

English Language Arts and Reading, English I

110.36.C.6.B

(6) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts-- literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to: (B) analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters in works of fiction through a range of literary devices, including character foils;

English Language Arts and Reading, English II

110.37.C.6.B

(6) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts-- literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to: (B) analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters, including archetypes, through historical and cultural settings and events;

English Language Arts and Reading, English III

110.38.C.6.B

(6) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts-- literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student

is expected to: (B) analyze how characters' behaviors and underlying motivations contribute to moral dilemmas that influence the plot and theme;

English Language Arts and Reading, English IV

110.39.C.6.B

(6) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts-- literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to: (B) analyze how characters' behaviors and underlying motivations contribute to moral dilemmas that influence the plot and theme;

Correlates

Language Arts

Drama

Gardner's Intelligences

Verbal-Linguistic

Musical

Interpersonal

Bloom's Taxonomy

Knowledge

Comprehension

Application

Analysis

Bibliography

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

Freeman, John W., The Metropolitan Opera Stories of the Great Operas, W. W. Norton and Company, 1984.

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

Online Resources

www.oxfordmusiconline.com

www.wikipedia.com

The Characters

Princess Turandot (*soprano*): A princess of ancient China. She claims to be the reincarnation of Princess Lou-Ling, an ancestor. Because Lou-Ling's kingdom was invaded and she was murdered by the King of Tartar, Turandot now hates all men, and she swears that none will possess her. Watch and listen to "In questa reggia," as Turandot tells the story of her betrayed ancestress.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xr_tsuJa4JE&list=RDxr_tsuJa4JE&start_radio=1. Whether this is real or only a ploy to remain unmarried is not clear. Much to her surprise, Turandot's icy countenance is finally won over by Calaf's devotion and love. It is totally unexpected, and Turandot surrenders to her love for Calaf.

Liù (*soprano*): A slave girl. She is the only person who stayed with the exiled King of Tartary. She is so devoted because Calaf once smiled at her, and she felt deep love for him from that day on. Watch and listen to "Signore ascolta," as Liù pleads with Calaf not to risk his life on the riddles. <https://youtu.be/Wf0h8bbQfWs?si=Ha4ipCXxbCJyZ73>. Liù risks her own life to save the King from torture. Her final accomplishment is to sacrifice her own life rather than reveal the Unknown Prince's true identity. Watch and listen to "Tu, che di gel sei cinta" as Liù tells Turandot that she will be conquered by Calaf's love.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-Gsj70wPrg>.

Emperor Altoum (*tenor*): Emperor of China and Turandot's father. He has absolute power over his empire, but not over his daughter's heart. He wants to find a worthy husband for her. He goes along with her insistence that a suitor must answer riddles to prove his worth, and face death if they fail. In the end, he prevents Turandot from backing out of her own promise, and insists that she marry the Unknown Prince. When she begins to love the Prince and accepts him, he is happy.

Calaf (*tenor*): An unknown prince of an exiled royal family. Calaf has had to make it on his own. In order to stay alive he has not been able to reveal his true identity. When he sees Turandot he falls instantly in love. Risking life itself, he takes on the challenge of the three riddles. He lets no one talk him out of it. After winning the challenge, Calaf gives Turandot two more chances to get out of marrying him. He wants her to love him, and does not seem afraid of death if she does not. Watch and listen to “Nessun dorma” as Calaf awaits the morning, convinced that he will be victorious in keeping his identity secret and winning over Turandot to his love. <https://youtu.be/SgjBKuWY2hc?si=3Od4OlSV3uT1cWIO>. His perseverance pays off when Turandot’s heart finally opens to him and they can be married as a loving couple.

Timur (*bass*): The blind exiled King of Tartary. He finds his son after many years only to face the possibility of losing him again to a pointless challenge for the hand of Turandot. He knows how many others have been executed after failing the challenge and is not convinced that Calaf will be any more successful. Liù has been his only comfort and help for all these years. She has sacrificed herself to save him and his son. He is faced with being totally alone. He is overjoyed when Calaf succeeds in winning Turandot’s hand and heart.

The complete performance of the opera is also available at: https://youtu.be/A01_CoQxvTY?si=QTL5BX1BWvIKf0tg.

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

Name _____ Date _____

MUSIC ACTIVITY WORKSHEET - THE CHARACTERS

Part I:

1. Do you think that Calaf should have tried to win Turandot's hand in marriage by accepting the challenge of the three riddles? Why or why not?

2. Do you think that Turandot and Calaf will be happy together? Why or why not?

3. Which of the characters is more like the people in your life? Why?

4. Which of the characters do you consider to be hero(s) of the story? Why?

Name _____ Date _____

MUSIC ACTIVITY WORKSHEET - THE CHARACTERS

Part II

5. Do you think that Liù did the right thing by sacrificing herself to save Timur and Calaf? Why or why not?

6. If you were one of the characters in the opera, could you have done something to help prevent the death of Liù? What would you have done?

7. Do you think that this story could have ended tragically? How could the outcome been different?

8. Would you have taken the kind of risk that Calaf took for someone you loved? Why or why not?

Name _____ Date _____

MUSIC ACTIVITY WORKSHEET - THE CHARACTERS**Part III**

9. What do you think is the important lesson to be learned from this story and how the characters acted?

A concept opera is one that can take place in any time or location. This opera is not really a concept opera. *Turandot* was written especially as a story set in ancient China. China was opening up to the West after being closed from it for centuries. There was a great deal of interest in China and Chinese culture throughout the world.

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

11. If you were to put on this opera, what location and time period would you like to use?

Answer Key**MUSIC ACTIVITY WORKSHEET - THE CHARACTERS****Part I:**

1. Do you think that Calaf should have tried to win Turandot's hand in marriage by accepting the challenge of the three riddles? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. Example: I think it was an awful risk for someone he had only seen and never met. Calaf risked his life for someone who might never have loved him in return.

2. Do you think that Turandot and Calaf will be happy together? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. Example: I think they will be happy together. Now that Turandot has real feelings for Calaf, and they have the support of the fathers, they have a real chance for happiness.

3. Which of the characters is more like the people in your life? Why?

Answers will vary. Example: Liù reminds me of my mother, who always puts others in the family ahead of herself. She does what she can to protect her loved ones.

4. Which of the characters do you consider to be hero(s) of the story? Why?

Answers will vary. Example: Calaf and Liù are both heroes. They both face death to take a chance at true love or to protect the ones they love unconditionally.

Answer Key**MUSIC ACTIVITY WORKSHEET - THE CHARACTERS****Part II**

5. Do you think that Liù did the right thing by sacrificing herself to save Timur and Calaf? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. Example: I think that Liù did what she had to for the protection of Timur and Calaf. Under torture, she would have eventually given up Calaf's identity.

6. If you were one of the characters in the opera, could you have done something to help prevent the death of Liù? What would you have done?

Answers will vary. Example: I think if I were Calaf, I would have realized when Turandot's decree was read that it posed danger for Timur and Liù. I would have tried to hide and protect them.

7. Do you think that this story could have ended tragically? How could the outcome been different?

Answers will vary. Example: Had Turandot's heart not have yielded to Calaf, Timur, Liù, and Calaf could have all wound up dead. The risks could have been for nothing.

8. Would you have taken the kind of risk that Calaf took for someone you loved? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. Example: No. No one is worth that kind of risk, especially when only loved by sight, without ever meeting.

Answer Key**MUSIC ACTIVITY WORKSHEET - THE CHARACTERS****Part III**

9. What do you think is the important lesson to be learned from this story and how the characters acted?

Answers will vary. Example: I think that we are to see that love is worth sacrifice and risk. Calaf risked his life and Liù sacrificed hers for the only thing in life that is truly worth it.

A concept opera is one that can take place in any time or location. This opera is not really a concept opera. *Turandot* was written especially as a story set in ancient China. China was opening up to the West after being closed from it for centuries. There was a great deal of interest in China and Chinese culture throughout the world.

10. 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: I think that the story would be the same at any time in history or place in the world. Love is universal to all people and cultures. Power and pride are also universal concepts.

11. If you were to put on this opera, what location and time period would you like to use?

Answers will vary. Example: I think any setting involving a royal family or a family of power could effectively tell this story. Royalty is often substituted for money in our society. The resulting influences seem to be the same.