

OPERA ARCHIVE

TEACHER MATERIALS

The Basics: Introducing Your Students to Opera

Introducing Your Students to Opera

What is an Orchestra?

What is Opera?

Introducing a Specific Opera.

Additional Ideas.

What is an Orchestra?

- Brainstorm with your students about what an orchestra is.
- Make a semantic map: put suggested words around the board as the students brainstorm.
- Have students justify their ideas.
- Discuss the instruments and classification of instruments in the orchestra.
- Introduce how the orchestra is arranged, using a diagram for illustration.
- Using words in the semantic map, have students write a composition on what an orchestra is.

What is Opera?

- Brainstorm with your students about what an opera is. What stereotypes have they heard?
- Discuss how opera singers' voices are not amplified and how singers must project.
- Introduce the voice parts and operatic singing.
- Make a chart of the voice parts from high to low.
- Play examples of different voices and have students brainstorm on the character's personality.
- Discuss typical roles of different voice parts. (ie. Soprano is often the heroine, Bass is often evil.)
- With the class, choose a current movie or tv show and assign each character a voice part.

Introducing a Specific Opera

- Start by introducing the characters of the opera and their voices.
- Tell a little bit about the story through the characters.
- Ask students for adjectives to describe the characters.
- Using their adjectives, ask students to write character analyses.
- Using character analyses, have students write their own story before learning the full synopsis.
- Use the students' stories to then introduce the full synopsis.
- Ask students to draw a picture of the opera's setting as it is described in the libretto.
- Have students read the libretto aloud as play. Stop periodically to review what has happened.
- As you progress through the libretto, listen to the music from different sections of

the opera.

- Point out how the music highlights the drama.
- How does the music convey characters' emotions?
- Play each character's introductory aria. Does it match their character analyses?
- Have students draw a picture of their favorite character in appropriate costume.
- Have students draw a picture of their favorite scene.
- After studying each act, ask students to predict what will happen next.
- Before teaching them the end of the story, ask students to write their own endings.

Additional Ideas

- After each class, have students summarize the story covered that day.
- Have students research the composer and librettist.
- Have students research the time of the opera (ie., ancient egypt, gypsies, Paris, etc.).