

A Study Guide for

*Giacomo Puccini's*



Madama  
Butterfly

*Opera Guild of San Antonio  
Opera in the Schools*

This guide is made possible by the

# *Opera Guild of San Antonio*



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# Madama Butterfly

## Background Information:

Information for teachers and middle and high school students

### What is *OPERA*?

When most people think about opera they picture someone wearing horns, and singing in a loud voice. Of course, this same person must also die at the end of the opera, right? Well we are here to tell you that opera is much more than that. First, **Opera is a story told through music**. The music can be accompanied by an orchestra and opera singers train for years to be heard over the orchestra. To sing like this, an opera singer must be in incredible physical shape and in fact, many opera singers supplement their vocal training with physical training such as yoga, tai chi, and dance.

Opera began in Italy when a group of artists and great thinkers of the time formed a group called the *Florentine Camerata*. The Camerata wanted to recreate the ancient Greek form of theatre – which they believed was sung. Opera quickly caught on and became a popular form of theatre throughout Europe. Its popularity is probably due to the fact that it combines visual art (sets, costumes), drama (the story, acting), dance (sometimes even a full ballet) and music (the orchestra, the singing). Operas are based on myths, folktales, great works of literature, biblical stories, fantasy, as well as real-life stories. Operas are written in many languages. Recently opera houses began to use **supertitles (or surtitles)**, which are like captions for opera. Even if you don't speak the language of the opera, you will know what is going on by watching the super titles above the stage.

Opera is special because it takes so many people to make it work. Several elements put together make opera a spectacle for your eyes AND ears. First, singers who perform in operas have different voice types. Women singers are designated as **Soprano** (high), **Mezzo-soprano** (medium), and **Contralto** (low). Men are categorized as, **Tenor** (high), **Baritone** (medium), and **Bass** (low). **Principals** are the singers who have "named" roles such as Pamina in *The Magic Flute* or Mimì in *La bohème*. The group of singers who assist the action are called the **Chorus**. Sometimes, a children's chorus helps to tell the story (*Carmen*, *Turandot*, *Hansel and Gretel*). Most operas also use **Supernumeraries** or "supers". These actors do not sing but serve an important role on stage by participating in the story as extras in the opera (just like in a movie).

The **stage director** helps the singers by telling them where and how to move on the stage. The **conductor** helps the singers with the music and leads the orchestra and singers during the performance. A **costume designer** creates and builds the costumes that the singers, dancers and supernumeraries will wear. The **set designer** creates what the set will look like and the **lighting designer** helps create the desired mood or effect using special lights. All of the designers work as a team to help to create an opera.

## Opera Definitions

- **Aria** – a song in an opera
- **Baritone** – the mid-range male voice
- **Bass** – the lowest male voice
- **Bravissimo** – a word used in praising an opera performer
- **Choreography** – dancing
- **Composer** – one who writes music
- **Conductor** – the leader of the orchestra and performance
- **Costume Designer** – the artist who designs the clothing worn by the performers
- **Curtain Call** – occurs at the end of the performance when all the cast members and the conductor take bows. This can occur in front of the curtain or on the open stage
- **Diva** – literally, “goddess” in Italian. An important female opera star. The masculine form is divo
- **Duet** – a song for two people to sing together
- **Intermission** – a break between acts of an opera. The lights go on and the audience is free to move around. *Così fan tutte* has one 15 minute intermission
- **Librettist** – the person who writes the text of the opera. This can be an original story – like *Così fan tutte* – or an adaptation from an existing work – like Verdi’s *Otello* adapted from Shakespeare’s *Othello*
- **Libretto** – the text or words of an opera
- **Melody** – a group of notes organized to make up a musical phrase – like a sentence
- **Mezzo-Soprano** – the mid-range female voice
- **Opera** – a dramatic presentation which is set to music. Almost all of it is sung, and the orchestra is an equal partner with the singers. Like a play, an opera is acted on stage with costumes, scenery, makeup, etc. Opera is the plural form of the Latin word *opus*, which means “work.”
- **Opera Buffa** (Italian) – an opera about ordinary people, usually, but not always comic. First developed in the eighteenth century
- **Orchestra pit** – sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra sits
- **Properties** (props) – objects that are used or carried by a singer or performer on stage
- **Recitative** – the sung dialogue in an opera which is not as melodic as an aria
- **Scenic Designer** – the artist who designs the elements on stage
- **Set** – walls, furniture, etc. that create space or location
- **Soprano** – the highest female voice
- **Stage Director** – the person who oversees stage movement, scenery, costumes, etc.
- **Stage Manager** – the person who coordinates and manages elements of the performance
- **Supertitles (or surtitles)** – the English translations of the opera’s language, in this production Italian, that are projected above the stage during a performance to help the audience follow the story. Much like subtitles in a foreign film
- **Synopsis** – a summary of the story of an opera
- **Tenor** – the highest male voice

## About the composer...

*"Inspiration is an awakening, a quickening of all man's faculties,  
and it is manifested in all high artistic achievements. "*  
Giacomo Puccini

**Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)** is recognized as the most important Italian composer in the generation following Giuseppe Verdi. There are many wonderful books and websites where one can find information on this incredible musician and human being. We include a time-line of his life below with corresponding world events.

### Websites:

www.puccini.com: <http://www.puccini.com/>

Humanities Web: Puccini <http://www.humanitiesweb.org/human.php?s=c&p=c&a=i&ID=57>

Il Centro Studi Giacomo Puccini (English portal): <http://www.puccini.it/portale%20ing.htm>

**Suggested Reading:** (As suggested on Humanitiesweb.org with links to Amazon.com)

### [Famous Puccini Operas : An Analytical Guide for the Opera Goer and Armchair Listener](#) (Patrick Cairns Hughes, Spike Hughes )

For the opera-goer and armchair listener alike, here is an analytic guide to Madam Butterfly, La Bohème, Tosca, Manon Lescaut, The Girl of the Golden West, Turandot, along with Puccini's triptych of shorter operas--written by a British music critic, conductor, and composer, who focuses on the music, yet is not overly technical. 245 musical illustrations.

### [Giacomo Puccini](#) (20th-Century Composers Series - Conrad Wilson )

The latest in Phaidon Press Limited's fine 20th Century Composers series, this biography plows ground that's already been gone over many times, but does so very well. Like the rest of the books in this series, it's aimed at the more-than-casual but less-than-expert reader, and puts the composer's life and art into perspective, assisted by assorted photographs. This is a particularly good starting place for someone captured by Puccini's music dramas who's interested in how it all came about. There are no musical examples, which can be a positive or a negative depending on one's point of view and whether one reads music. New listeners may find the overly brief discography in the back of the book a useful guide.

### [Madame Butterfly: Japonisme, Puccini, & the Search for the Real Cho-Cho-San](#) (Jan Van Rij )

Long before Puccini wrote his masterpiece, the tale of the poor Japanese girl abandoned by her foreign lover had been taken up by numerous Western writers as part of the wave of Japonisme in late 19th-century Europe. But was there a "real" Madame Butterfly? Following the tragic trail back to its roots in Nagasaki, Jan van Rij believes he's found the answer. Opera lovers will delight in the revelation, and learn not only about the cultural forces and personal fixations that inspired this popular work but why many Japanese remain unconvinced.

### [Talks With Great Composers](#) (Arthur M. Abell)

Between 1890 and 1917, Abell engaged in lengthy, candid conversations with the greatest composers of his day--Johannes Brahms, Giacomo Puccini, Richard Strauss, Engelbert Humperdinck, Max Bruch, and Edvard Grieg--about the intellectual, psychic, and spiritual tensions of their creative endeavors. This book is the result of those conversations, and is, quite simply, a masterpiece that reveals the agony, triumphs, and the religiosity inherent in the creative mind.

## Puccini Timeline

### Puccini Events

Giacomo Puccini is born.

### Year

1858

1861-65

1867

### World Events

American Civil War.

America purchases Alaska from Russia.

Puccini's father, Michele Puccini, dies.

1870-71

1863

Franco-Prussian War.

Invention of the telephone.

Puccini sees Verdi's famous opera *Aida*, which inspires him to dedicate his life to being an operatic composer.

1876

Puccini receives scholarship from Queen Margherita to attend Milan Conservatory.

1880

Puccini's mother, Albina Magi, dies. *Le villi*, his first opera, premieres in Milan.

1884

Statue of Liberty dedicated.

Birth of his son, Antonio, to Elvira Gemignani.

1886

*Edgar* premieres in Milan.

1889

*Manon Lescaut* premieres in Turin.

1893

1896

*La Bohème* premieres in Turin.

1898

*Tosca* premieres in Rome.

1900

1901

Queen Victoria dies.

U.S. President McKinley murdered.

Theodore Roosevelt becomes President.

1903

Orville Wright makes first successful airplane flight.

*Madame Butterfly* premieres in Milan.

1904

Puccini marries Elvira Gemignani.

1909

Peary reaches North Pole.

*La fanciulla del West* premieres in New York.

1910

1914

Assassination of Archduke Ferdinand leads to outbreak of World War I.

Panama Canal opens.

1915

*Lusitania*, a passenger ship, sunk by German submarine.

*La Rondine* premieres in Monte Carlo.

1917

Russian Revolution.

U.S. enters war.

*Il Trittico* premieres in New York.

1918

World War I ends.

Puccini dies.

1919

Treaty of Versailles signed.

*Turandot*, Puccini's last opera, premieres in Milan.

1924

1926

First Television transmission.

## Puccini's Operas

The dates and locations are those of premieres. (Links are to Opera Glass at <http://opera.stanford.edu>)

- ❖ [Le Villi](#) (31.5.1884 Teatro dal Verme, Milan)
- ❖ *Le Villi* [rev] (26.12.1884 Teatro Regio, Turin)
- ❖ *Edgar* (21.4.1889 Teatro alla Scala, Milan)
- ❖ *Edgar* [rev] (28.2.1892 Teatro Communale, Ferrara)
- ❖ [Manon Lescaut](#) (1.2.1893 Teatro Regio, Turin)
- ❖ [La ème](#) (1.2.1896 Teatro Regio, Turin)
- ❖ [Tosca](#) (14.1.1900 Teatro Costanzi, Rome)
- ❖ [Madama Butterfly](#) (17.2.1904 Teatro alla Scala, Milan)
- ❖ *Madama Butterfly* [rev] (28.5.1904 Teatro Grande, Brescia)
- ❖ *Edgar* [rev 2] (8.7.1905 Teatro Colón?, Buenos Aires)
- ❖ *Madama Butterfly* [rev 2] (10.7.1905 Covent Garden, London)
- ❖ *Madama Butterfly* [rev 3] (28.12.1905 Opéra Comique, Paris)
- ❖ *La fanciulla del West* (10.12.1910 Metropolitan Opera, New York)
- ❖ [La rondine](#) (27.3.1917 Opéra, Monte Carlo)
- ❖ [Il trittico](#) (14.12.1918 Metropolitan Opera, New York):
- ❖ [Il tabarro](#)
- ❖ [Suor Angelica](#)
- ❖ [Gianni Schicchi](#)
- ❖ [Turandot](#) (25.4.1926 Teatro alla Scala, Milan)

## About the Librettists...

**Luigi Illica (1857-1919)** had a rough start in life; at an early age he ran away to sea, and in 1876 he found himself fighting the Turks. Three years later, however, he moved to the relatively peaceful enclave of Milan, Italy and there began his literary career. In 1882 he produced a collection of prose sketches, *Farfalle, effetti di luce*, and the following year wrote his first play, *I Narbonnier-Latour*. His greatest success in this field of playwriting was a comedy in Milanese dialect, *L'ereditaa di Felis* (1891).

He began writing librettos in 1889. While his work on three of Puccini's operas (*La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *Madama Butterfly*) is recognized as his chief contribution to the field, he also wrote librettos for several other composers, including those for Giordano's *Andrea Chenier* (1896--the same year as *La Bohème*), an opera still popular and performed today, and two operas of Mascagni.

### **Giuseppe Giacosa (1847-1906)**

Giuseppe Giacosa began his professional life, not as a writer, but as a lawyer. He graduated in law from Turin University and immediately joined his father's firm in Milan. He moved permanently into the literary world, however, when his one-act verse comedy, *Una partita a scacchi*, became a popular success. From 1888-1894 Giacosa held the chair of literature and dramatic art at the Milan Conservatory.

The Puccini/Illica/Giacosa partnership was organized by the publisher Giulio Ricordi in 1893. The head of the most powerful publishing firm in Italy during the 19th century, Ricordi had the ability to make or break any young composer who came along, much in the same way that a CEO of a major record label can do today.

Having taken Puccini under his wing, Ricordi was intent on hiring the best writers to work with the young composer on his *La Bohème* – he found them in Illica and Giacosa. The three had a very clear division of responsibilities when working together: it was Illica's job to plan the *scenario* (i.e. the opera's plan, and division into acts and scenes) and to draft the dialogue; next, Giacosa transformed the prose into polished verse; finally Puccini set this verse to music. This collaboration was such a success that the three worked together (dividing the responsibilities in the same way) on two other operas: *Tosca* (1900) and *Madama Butterfly* (1904).

The collaboration ended with the death of Giacosa in 1906. Puccini continued to discuss the idea of translating the story of Marie Antoinette into an operatic setting with Illica, but this project never came to fruition. For his final operas, Puccini turned to other librettists.

## About the story...



# Madama Butterfly

*Music by Giacomo Puccini*  
*Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa*

*Madama Butterfly*, or *Madame Butterfly* as it is known in English, is today the most performed opera in the United States and it ranks number one in [Opera America's](#) list of the twenty most performed operas in North America. However, when the opera opened on February 17, 1904 at the famous [La Scala Opera House](#) in Milan, Puccini's masterpiece was poorly received, even booed.

Despite the opera's inauspicious beginning, Puccini reworked the opera, primarily rearranging it from two acts to three, and on May 28, 1904, this version was performed in Brescia to wonderful reviews and praise.

*Madama Butterfly* tells the story of a young Japanese geisha, Cio-Cio-San, and her marriage to a United States Navy Lieutenant, F. B. Pinkerton. The story is set in Nagasaki, Japan in the 1890s and is believed to be based on factual events depicted in a short story, *Madame Butterfly* (1898), by John Luther Long. American playwright David Belasco secured the rights to the story and in 1900 adapted the story into a one-act play. While in London to attend rehearsals for a new production of *Tosca* in the summer of 1900, Puccini attended Belasco's play at the Duke of York's Theatre. Although he was not able to understand a word of the dialogue, Puccini was deeply affected by the story of the simple, trusting Butterfly and her tragic fate, and immediately saw the potential for an operatic adaptation.

## Cast of Characters and vocal range:

MADAMA BUTTERFLY (CIO-CIO-SAN)	<i>Soprano</i>
SUZUKI, servant of Cio-Cio-San,	<i>Mezzo Soprano</i>
KATE PINKERTON	<i>Mezzo Soprano</i>
B.F. PINKERTON	<i>Tenor</i>
SHARPLESS	<i>Baritone</i>
GORO	<i>Tenor</i>
IL PRINCIPE YAMADORI	<i>Tenor</i>
LO ZIO BONZO	<i>Bass</i>
YAKUSIDÉ	<i>Bass</i>
IL COMMISSARIO IMPERIALE	<i>Bass</i>
L'UFFICIALE DEL REGISTRO	<i>Bass</i>
LA MADRE DI CIO-CIO-SAN	<i>Mezzo Soprano</i>
LA ZIA	<i>Soprano</i>
LA CUGINA	<i>Soprano</i>
DOLORE	<i>N.N.</i>

Family and Friends of Cio-Cio-San, Servants.

## Synopsis

### ACT I

At the turn-of-the-century, on the outskirts of the harbor town of Nagasaki, U.S. Navy Lieutenant Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton inspects the house which he has leased and is soon to occupy with his Japanese bride, Cio-Cio-San, known as Madama Butterfly. Goro, the marriage broker, has arranged both the match and the house with a 999-year contract cancelable at a month's notice. Presently, Sharpless, the United States Consul arrives, and Pinkerton shares with him his carefree philosophy of a sailor and the beautiful Japanese girl who has captivated him. Sharpless tries to persuade him that there is danger in his convenient arrangement; the girl may not regard her vows so lightly. The Lieutenant laughs at such apprehension and proposes a toast to America and the American girl who will someday be his "real" wife.

The hour for the wedding ceremony approaches. Butterfly, accompanied by her friends, arrives joyously singing of her wedding. She tells Pinkerton that since the death of her father she has had to earn her living as a geisha. Her relatives noisily bustle in, commenting on the bridegroom. In a quiet moment, Cio-Cio-San shows Pinkerton her few earthly treasures and tells him that she has secretly renounced her traditional faith in favor of Christianity. The Imperial Commissioner performs the brief ceremony, and the guests toast the couple when, suddenly Cio-Cio-San's uncle, the Bonze, bursts in shouting. A Buddhist priest, he curses her for renouncing her ancestor's religion. The relatives instantly turn on the young bride. When Pinkerton angrily orders all the guests away, Butterfly is left weeping. Pinkerton consoles her with tender words, and as night falls, the lovers share a moonlit duet.

### ACT II

Three years later, with a gaze fixed upon the horizon, Cio-Cio-San patiently awaits her husband's return. Beside her, Suzuki prays to an image of Buddha, imploring the gods for aid. The money Pinkerton left is now almost gone. Butterfly bids her maid to have faith. One day, Pinkerton's ship will appear in the harbor and he will again embrace his beloved wife.

Soon Sharpless enters with a letter from the Lieutenant and tries several times unsuccessfully to explain the reason for his visit. The letter tells of Pinkerton's marriage to an American girl. But before he can break the news to Butterfly, Goro interrupts, bringing with him a noble suitor, the wealthy Prince Yamadori. Cio-Cio-San greets the prince with dignity, but firmly refuses his offer of marriage insisting that her American husband has not deserted her. Sharpless again attempts to read the letter, and gently advises the girl to accept the prince. He asks her what she would do if Pinkerton never returns. Cio-Cio-San proudly carries forth her young son, "Sorrow". As soon as Pinkerton knows of his son, she insists, he will return to them and that day "Joy" will become the child's name. If her husband does not come back, she says she would rather die than return to her former life. Utterly defeated, but moved by Butterfly's devotion, Sharpless quickly exits.

A cannon roars from the harbor. Seizing a spyglass, Butterfly discovers that Pinkerton's ship, the Abraham Lincoln, is coming into port. Deliriously happy, she orders Suzuki to help her strew the house with blossoms. As evening falls, Cio-Cio-San dons her wedding gown and, with her maid and her son, she prepares to keep vigil throughout the long night.



### ACT III

The pale light of dawn finds Suzuki and the baby asleep. Butterfly still stands watching and waiting. Suzuki awakens with the sunshine and insists that Cio-Cio-San rest. Humming a lullaby, the young mother carries her boy to another room. Before long, Sharpless, Pinkerton, and Kate, his new wife, approach the house. Suzuki almost at once realizes who the strange woman is. Overcome with despair, she reluctantly agrees to aid in breaking the news to her mistress. Pinkerton, now surrounded by evidence of his fragile Butterfly's unwavering faith and devotion, bids an anguished farewell to the scene of his former happiness. He then rushes away leaving the consul to arrange things as best he can. Cio-Cio-San hurries in expecting to find her husband, and instead finds Kate. She instantly guesses the truth and with touching dignity, Butterfly wishes "the real American wife" happiness. She asks Kate to tell Pinkerton that he may have his son if he will return for him in half an hour. Kate sadly departs with Sharpless.

Butterfly orders Suzuki and the child away. She pulls from its sheath the dagger with which her father committed suicide. She reads aloud its inscription, "To die with honor when one no longer can live with honor." As she raises the blade to her throat, Suzuki pushes the boy into the room. Cio-Cio-San drops the knife, and embraces her child, passionately imploring him to look well upon his mother's face. After finally sending him off to play, she takes her father's dagger in hand and stabs herself. As Butterfly dies, Pinkerton's voice is heard crying out her name.

### Japanese Phrases in the Libretto

Puccini and his librettists used (and mis-used) many Japanese words in the libretto

<b>Bonze</b>	Archaic English word for a Japanese Buddhist monk (Japanese <i>bonso</i> ).
<b>Cio-Cio-San</b>	Pronounced Cho-Cho-San in English; "san" is an honorific title.
<b>Kami</b>	"Higher ones" in the Shinto religion. Suzuki (a Buddhist!) prays to <i>Izanagi</i> , <i>Izanami</i> , <i>Sarudahiko</i> , and <i>Tenshokodaijin</i> (names are garbled in the libretto); and quotes "Ocunama," an invention of the librettists.
<b>Nagasaki</b>	The center of Western influence until well in the 20th century. America dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki in 1945. Its leading tourist site today is the Glover House. Tom Glover, known in Japan as Guraba Tomisaburo, was the son of a Japanese woman and the Scottish businessman who built the house. Many believe he is the real model for Trouble. Having been shunned by his countrymen for years because of his mixed ancestry, Tomisaburo committed suicide after the atomic bomb shattered his city.
<b>Nakodo</b>	Marriage broker (Goro).
<b>Obi</b>	Long sash that binds a kimono.
<b>Otoko</b>	<i>Hotoké</i> are deceased ancestors represented by small wooden figures.
<b>Samurai</b>	Members of the feudal military class. They rarely had to fight after 1650, so devoted themselves to the study of Confucianism, the arts, or government.
<b>Seppuku</b>	Ceremonial suicide in the samurai class, also known as <i>hara-kiri</i> . Women committed <i>jigai</i> by piercing their necks.
<b>Shoshi</b>	<i>Shoji</i> are sliding rice-paper doors of a Japanese home.

### Interesting Links ...

- **'Madame Butterfly' Turns 100: A Century Ago, Puccini's Tragic Heroine First Took the Stage**  
Originally aired on February 17, 2004  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1672482>
- **San Diego Opera Talk! Madama Butterfly**  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06QUSg23Ks4>

# Activities: Madama Butterfly

Try some or all of the following activities to enhance the educational experience of your students before, during and after the performance. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) listed represent only a sampling of how introducing students to live theatre performances can enhance their education.

## Before Going to the Opera

### Connect and motivate.

TEKS. LANGUAGE ARTS. 7.3, 7.4, 8.3, 8.4, HS 3, 4 THEATER 7.3, 7.4, 8.3, 8.4, HS 3, 4 MUSIC 7.5, 8.5, HS 5

Read and Discuss the Synopsis:

- What do you know about the story of *Madama Butterfly*? What do you think is the point of the story?
- Should the opera end with a happy ending? Why or why not?
- What do you think the opera will be like?

Listen to musical examples:

- How does recitative differ from an aria?
- What does the music express about the opera or characters?
- How does the music make you feel?
- Can you visualize what the opera will be like when you listen to the music?

Watch a video/dvd production:

- There are several productions of *Madama Butterfly* available to view. You may even want to look at short clips which can be found on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

### What is Opera?

TEKS. MUSIC 7.4, 7.5, 8.4, 8.5, HS THEATER 7.4, 8.4, HS

- Discuss the differences between Opera, Musical Theatre, and Plays
- Discuss the history or the beginnings of Opera
  - A brief history can be found at: [http://www.operagifts.com/history\\_of\\_opera.php](http://www.operagifts.com/history_of_opera.php)
- Discuss the different orchestra instruments used in the “pit” for an opera
- For more information see The Opera Guild of San Antonio’s teacher’s guide, *What is Opera?*

### Discuss audience etiquette.

TEKS. MUSIC. 7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6 High School 5, 6. THEATER.7.5, 8.5, HS 5.

Discuss the following with the students prior to attending the performance:

- Is it alright to laugh? Cry?
- Is it alright to applaud? When?
- What does “Bravissimo” mean and when is it appropriate to call out during an opera performance?

### Read the background information. (Grades 7-12)

TEKS. MUSIC. 7.5, 8.5, HS 5. THEATER. 7.4, 8.4, HS 4. SOCIAL STUDIES. 8.27 HS 20.

- How did life differ in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century from the times in which we live now?
- How was life different in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Japan than it is now?
- How do you think the times may have inspired the story/opera?

## During the Performance of the Opera

### Look.

TEKS. THEATER 7.5, 8.5, HS 5. MUSIC 7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6, HS 5, 6

What do you see? Notice the following:

- colors
- sets
- costumes
- hair and make-up
- movement - choreography
- lights
- conductor
- orchestra

### Listen.

TEKS. MUSIC 7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6. HS 5, 6

- How does each scene begin?
- What arias or other songs are sung?
- How does the music change the mood?
- Note the skill of the singers.
- What are the voice ranges of the singers?

### Think.

TEKS. THEATER 7.5, 8.5, HS 5

- What problems happen in the opera?
- How are the problems solved?

## After Going to the Opera

### React to the experience.

TEKS. MUSIC. 7.6, 8.6, HS 6. THEATER. 7.5, 8.5, HS 5.

Write or talk about the following:

- Did you like the opera or not? Why or why not?
- What did you like best or least?
- How would you rate the student performances?
- Discuss the different voice types in the opera.
- Discuss the director's concept. Did you like his interpretation? Why or why not?
- How did the orchestra support the story?
- What is the message at the end of the opera?
- The plot of the opera is very convoluted. How much time passes during MADAMA BUTTERFLY?



## Retell the story.

TEKS. THEATER 7.2, 8.2, HS 2

What was the main idea of the opera? Who were the main characters? What was the sequence of the plot? Was the opera serious or comic or a combination of the both?

- Write about the performance as if you are a critic.
- Retell the entire story in 50 words or less.
- Write a headline for a newspaper article that expresses the main idea of the opera.
- Act out your favorite scene using words and gestures.
- Turn the opera into a dance and present your favorite part.
- Write a song to express a lesson to be learned from the opera.
- Draw a picture to illustrate a scene in the opera.

## Write something original.

TEKS. MUSIC: 7.4, 8.4, HS 4.

- Write a song for one of the characters in the opera.
- Write a song for a character in story of your choice.
- Write a story, song, poem or skit with ideas from the opera. Examples:
  - 19<sup>th</sup> Century
  - Japan
  - Marriage
  - Nationalism
  - Pride
  - War
  - Peace

## Research.

TEKS. MUSIC. 7.5, 8.5, HS 5.

Find out more about one of the following:

- opera
- careers in opera
- La Scala Opera House
- Nagasaki, Japan
- Giacomo Puccini
- Luigi Illica
- Giuseppe Giacosa
- Giulio Ricordi
- U.S. Navy
- Consulate

## Sets.

TEKS. THEATER 7.3, 8.3, HS 3

Create your own scenic design for the production.

- Keep in mind the following:
  - What time period do you want to set your opera?
  - What scenic elements are necessary to tell the story?
  - How can your scenery support the singer's need to project their voice?

# Resources

- San Diego Opera Study Guide: Madama Butterfly  
<http://www.sdopera.com/Operapaedia/MadamaButterfly>
- Opera Guild of San Antonio: <http://www.operaguildda.org/>
- Orchestra London Opera at the Grand: Madama Butterfly Study Guide  
<http://www.orchestralondon.ca/0708/pdf/Butterfly%20Study%20Guide%20OL%20version.pdf>