

**The Opera Guild of San Antonio
Study Guide**

**H.M.S.
Pinafore
or
The Lass That Loved
a Sailor**

by gilbert and sullivan

**Major funding for this project from
The City of San Antonio Office of Cultural Affairs
The Opera Guild of San Antonio**

BACKGROUND: H.M.S. Pinafore

TEKS. SOCIAL STUDIES: History 6.2—Geography 6.5—Culture 6.15, 6.16, 6.18, 8.27—WORLD HISTORY: High school 1, 2, 7, 20, 21—LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading/culture 6.14, 7.14, 8.14, High School I.9.

Gilbert and Sullivan

Gilbert and Sullivan collaborated on 14 comic operas from 1871-1896, a successful 25-year partnership. Both were knighted for their service to their country. **H.M.S. Pinafore**, was their fourth collaboration and the first "mega-hit." The opera opened at the Opera Comique in 1878 and ran for 571 performances. Both in England and America, the opera was a huge fad. One of their most popular operas "Pinafore" satirizes love between members of different social classes. The libretto is well-constructed, the tunes are infectious, and the comedy is full of silliness.

Librettist William Schwenck Gilbert (1836-1911) was trained as a military officer and served in the British militia for 20 years. He also held a government bureau job, which he disliked, and, after receiving an inheritance, became a lawyer. For many years he contributed dramatic criticism and humorous verse to the popular magazine, FUN. Many of Gilbert's libretti and arias are based on "Bab Ballads," comical poetry he wrote under the pen name "Bab." Even before working with Sullivan, Gilbert was a successful playwright who often directed his own plays and oversaw production and costumes.

Composer Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) was once described by Gilbert as "incomparably the greatest English musician of the age." Born into a musical family, Sullivan composed his first work at the age of 8 and thereafter won numerous scholarships and competitions. Before collaborating with Gilbert, he was England's best-known composer and traveled in royal circles. For 10 years he also served as professor of music, teacher and organist. For 20 years he was conductor of the Leeds Festival. Besides his comic operas and contributions to other operas, his work included cantatas, oratorios, concert overtures, incidental music to plays, numerous songs and a grand opera.

Historical Context

Gilbert and Sullivan created during the reign of Queen Victoria—called the Victorian era (1837-1901). During this time Great Britain experienced great power, wealth, and culture. The British Empire extended around the world to India, South Africa, Canada, Australia, and other regions. Within the country, there was a vast industrial revolution and the growth of railways, which made rapid transit possible for the first time. Although today's thinkers often see Victorians as repressed and old-fashioned, they actually began many modern trends. Victorians explored remarkable social changes such as democracy, feminism, unionization of workers, and socialism.

Satire

Through satire, humor and wit are used to criticize government or other institutions and/or the unfairness of certain social practices or attitudes. Both the foolish and the immoral actions of people can be lampooned by satire. In **Pinafore** there is an unwritten rule that citizens who are poorer; that is, from one social class; cannot marry citizens who are richer; that is, from another class. This "rule" serves to keep poorer citizens "in their place." During the Victorian period, some middle class citizens began to question these "rules" and sought to change their society for the better. The opera attempts to show how absurd these ideas really are.

SYNOPSIS: H.M.S. Pinafore

TEKS. MUSIC: Historical/cultural heritage 6.5, 7.5, 8.5, High school I.5—THEATRE: Historical/cultural heritage 6.4, 7.4, 8.4, High school I.4—ART: Historical/cultural heritage 6.3, 7.3, 8.3, High school I.3—LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading/culture 6.14, 7.14, 8.14, High School I.9—Viewing/representing/analysis 6.23, 7.23, 8.23, High school I.20—SOCIAL STUDIES: Culture 6.18, 8.27—WORLD HISTORY: High school 20.

Cast of Characters

The Right Honorable Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B.	First Lord of the Admiralty	baritone
Captain Corcoran	Commanding H.M.S. Pinafore	tenor
Tom Tucker	Midshipmite	young boy
Ralph Rackstraw	Able Seaman	tenor
Dick Deadeye	Able Seaman	bass
Bill Bobstay	Boatswain's Mate	baritone
Bob Becket	Carpenter's Mate	bass
Josephine	The Captain's Daughter	soprano
Hebe	Sir Joseph Porter's First Cousin	mezzo
Mrs. Cripps (Little Buttercup)	A Portsmouth Bumboat Woman	contralto

(Note: Vocal ranges vary from production to production)

Act One

Setting: Quarter-deck of H.M.S. Pinafore, off Portsmouth, Noon

(Note: Numbers refer to lesson plan and do not represent different scenes in the opera.)

- 1** The proud sailors of the H.M.S. Pinafore are busily scrubbing its decks in anticipation of the arrival of Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B., Britain's First Lord of the Admiralty. Song: **"We sail the ocean blue"**
- 2** Little Buttercup comes aboard to sell tobacco and other things to the crew. Songs: **"I'm called Little Buttercup"** & **"But tell me who's the youth?"**
- 3** Ralph, an accomplished and handsome seaman, tells his mates that he is in love with the Captain's daughter, Josephine. Another sailor, Dick Deadeye, reminds him that Captain's daughters do not marry common sailors. Songs: **"The nightingale"** & **"A maiden fair to see"**
- 4** The Captain arrives to inspect the crew. He sings about how he never uses bad language and is never sick at sea—well, "hardly ever." Songs: **"My gallant crew"** & **"Sir, you are sad"**
- 5** Josephine, the Captain's daughter comes in, singing sadly. She is secretly in love with Ralph but knows that she cannot marry a common sailor. Her father wants her to marry Sir Joseph. Song: **"Sorry her lot"**
- 6** The sailors hear Sir Joseph's female relatives, who accompany him, singing of his arrival. Songs: **"Over the bright blue sea"** & **"Sir Joseph's barge is seen"**
- 7** Sir Joseph arrives with his many "sisters and his cousins and his aunt," including the loyal but jealous cousin Hebe. Song: **"Now give three cheers"**
- 8** Sir Joseph tells how he rose to the top post in the Navy by never going out to sea. He gives the Captain advice. He encourages him to have the men follow an order with the phrase, "If you please." He shares his own belief with Ralph and the others that a British sailor is any man's equal, except his own. Sir Joseph and the Captain go below to discuss the proposed marriage to Josephine. Songs: **"When I was a lad"** & **"For I hold that on the sea"**

- 9** The sailors sing about the toughness of the British sailor. Ralph, seeing Josephine alone above decks, declares his love. Song: **"A British tar"**
- 10** She realizes the hopelessness of their love and rejects him—until he threatens suicide. Song: **"Refrain, audacious tar"**
- 11** The crew, sisters, cousins, and aunts all rejoice and conspire to help the lovers elope that night. Dick Deadeye warns them but the others ignore him. Song: **"Can I survive this overbearing?"**

Act Two

Setting: Quarter-deck of H.M.S. Pinafore, off Portsmouth, Night

- 12** Captain Corcoran, alone on deck, sings of his troubles. Song: **"Fair moon, to thee I sing"**
- 13** Buttercup reveals her love. He tells her—because of their class differences—he can only be a friend. She warns him that a change is coming. Song: **"Things are seldom what they seem"**
- 14** Sir Joseph comes in, complaining that Josephine does not want to marry him. Her father explains that she is probably dazzled by his lofty station. He tells her that his Lordship is too high a rank for her to marry. The Captain suggests Sir Joseph argue to her that "love levels all ranks." Sir Joseph leaves to try again.
- 15** Josephine, alone, sings of her fear and indecision—she cannot decide whom to marry. Song: **"The hours creep on apace"**
- 16** The Captain and Sir Joseph return and Sir Joseph puts his case to Josephine once again, unaware that he is giving her an argument to be able to wed his rival. Song: **"Never mind the why and wherefore"**
- 17** Dick Deadeye finds the Captain alone and tells him of the planned elopement. They hide and wait for the crew. **"Kind Captain, I've important information"**
- 18** As the crew tiptoes in, the Captain forgets himself and curses, "Damme!" Sir Joseph overhears and orders him to his cabin. Song: **"Carefully on tiptoe stealing"**
- 19** Sir Joseph finds out that Josephine and Ralph love each other and orders Ralph to the brig. Song: **"Farewell, my own!"**
- 20** Little Buttercup interrupts things and reveals that—when she was foster mother to both the Captain and Ralph—she exchanged one baby for the other. Ralph is now the Captain and the Captain is now a lowly seaman! Song: **"A many years ago"**
- 21** Since Sir Joseph cannot marry the daughter of a mere sailor, he consents to the marriage of Ralph and Josephine. The former Captain is now free to marry dear Little Buttercup, and Sir Joseph agrees to marry his cousin, Hebe, who has always cared for him. All ends with "joy and rapture unforeseen!" Song: **"Oh, joy, oh rapture unforeseen!"**

LESSON PLAN: H.M.S. Pinafore

BEFORE THE OPERA

RELATE

TEKS. LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading/comprehension 6.10, 7.10, 8.10, High school I.7.

In small groups or individually make a list of the way modern society (or high school) separates people into different groups.

Discuss with everyone:

- Are all people equal? Why or why not?
- Are all people treated equal? Why or why not?
- Would you make friends with someone in a different group? Why or why not?
- Would you marry someone from a different group? Why or why not?
- Who determines who is allowed to marry whom? Has it always been like this in all parts of the world?

READ AND DISCUSS

LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading/variety of texts 6.8, 7.8, 8.8, High School I.8—Reading/comprehension 6.10, 7.10, 8.10, High school I.7.

Read a synopsis of the opera and consider the following questions.

Part	Questions
1, 2, 3	In this opera, the characters are separated into what two groups? Why can't a Captain's daughter marry a "common sailor"?
4	What is your idea of what makes a good captain?
5	What do you think will happen? How can she get to marry Ralph? Will she end up marrying Sir Joseph?
6	How do you think Sir Joseph will look? How will you be able to tell him from the Captain and the Captain from the sailors?
7	Why do you think Hebe is jealous?
8	What do you think about the head of the Navy having never gone out to sea? What do you think of his other views?
9	Will Josephine accept or reject Ralph? Why do you think so?
10, 11	Why do you think everyone is conspiring together?
12, 13	This is the second couple separated by class differences. What do you think will happen to them? What do you think Buttercup is talking about?
14	What do you think of the Captain's reasoning? Why is saying what he says?
15	What do you think of Josephine's indecision? Would you be like her or not? Why or why not?
16	Why is Sir Joseph's argument liable to backfire?
17	How would you describe Dick Deadeye's personality?
18	Why is the Captain sent to his cabin? What is wrong with what he says?
19	Why is Sir Joseph throwing Ralph in jail? Will that solve his problem? Why or why not?
20	What do you think of this revelation? Far-fetched? Will this solve everyone's problems? How?
21	What do you think of the ending?

LISTEN AND DISCUSS

TEKS: Perception 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, High school I.1—LANGUAGE ARTS: Listening/speaking/purposes 6.1, 7.1, 8.1—
Listening/speaking/critical listening 6.2, 7.2, 8.2—Listening/speaking/ appreciation 6.3, 7.3, 8.3—Listening/speaking/culture 6.14,
7.14, 8.14—Listening/speaking/evaluation High School I.15.

Listen to the Overture

- What kind of mood is set? What themes do you hear?
- Do you think the opera will be serious or comic? How does the music convey that to you?

Listen to some of the songs from the opera. Follow along in the libretto. Ask yourself:

- How many voices are singing?
- Are they expressing different viewpoints? What are they?
- What is the mood of the song?
- What does the music express about the opera or characters?
- How does the music make you feel?

ACT I

"We sail the ocean blue" Introduction and chorus sung by the sailors.

"I'm called Little Buttercup" sung by Buttercup. Recitative and aria. Recitative is sung or melodiously spoken narration with minimal or no musical accompaniment. An aria is a melodic solo song of a reflective nature. This simple tune has remained one of the most popular over the years. It can be heard again in the Entr'acte.

"But tell me who's the youth?" sung by Buttercup and Boatswain. Recitative. Buttercup asks about Ralph, a handsome but sad sailor and is upset when she realizes who he is.

"The nightingale" sung by Ralph and chorus of sailors. This is a madrigal, or part song for several voices.

"A maiden fair to see" sung by Ralph and chorus of sailors. Ralph sings about his love for Josephine, "a lass above his station."

"My gallant crew" sung by Captain Corcoran and chorus of sailors. Captain Corcoran greets his men and brags about his habits. A boastful song with the famous repeated exchange:

Chorus: What never?	Captain: No, never!
Chorus: What never?	Captain: Hardly ever.

"Sir, you are sad" sung by Buttercup and Captain Corcoran. The Captain tells that his daughter will not marry Sir Joseph.

"Over the bright blue sea" sung by Sir Joseph's female relatives, off stage. A barcarolle, or lilted song.

"Sorry her lot" sung by Josephine. In a lovely aria, Josephine confesses her love for a common sailor.

"Sir Joseph's barge is seen" sung by Chorus of sailors and Sir Joseph's female relatives

"Now give three cheers" sung by Captain Corcoran, Sir Joseph, cousin Hebe, and chorus. A tune with the famous repeated refrain: "and so do his sisters, and his cousins, and his aunts."

"When I was a lad" sung by Sir Joseph and chorus. A famous autobiographical song explaining how Sir Joseph was able to rise to his lofty station as head of the Navy without ever going to sea. In it he reveals his shallowness, snobbery, and self-importance.

"For I hold that on the sea" sung by Sir Joseph, cousin Hebe, female relatives, and sailors. Sir Joseph gives advice to Captain Corcoran.

"A British tar" sung by Ralph, Boatswain, Carpenter's Mate, and chorus of sailors. A glee, or song for three or more voices, singing different parts simultaneously.

"Refrain, audacious tar" sung by Josephine and Ralph. A duet, or song for two voices.

"Can I survive this overbearing?" Finale. Most all of the characters are onstage—singing and dancing.

Entr'acte

A grand reprise of "I'm Called Little Buttercup."

ACT II

"Fair moon, to thee I sing" sung by Captain Corcoran. A solo in which he asks, "why is everything either at sixes or sevens?"

"Things are seldom what they seem" sung by Buttercup and Captain Corcoran. Buttercup cryptically hints at changes that are coming.

"The hours creep on apace" sung by Josephine. A scena, or dramatic solo, that usually includes recitative. Josephine sings in "grand opera dimensions" as she weighs the value of love in poverty vs. loveless social security.

"Never mind the why and wherefore" sung by Josephine, Captain, and Sir Joseph. A trio, or song for three voices. Sir Joseph sings that people of different ranks may love and marry. He and the Captain think that Josephine's agreement means she will marry Sir Joseph. In reality she is using Sir Joseph's position to justify marrying Ralph.

"Kind Captain, I've important information" sung by Captain and Dick Deadeye. A duet with a sea-ditty style.

"Carefully on tiptoe stealing" sung by soli and chorus. (Soli is the plural of solo.) A very silly but memorable song. The conspirators prepare for the marriage of Ralph and Josephine but are interrupted by the Captain. Ralph declares his love aloud. The song ends with the famous and rousing patriotic tune, "For he is an Englishman!"

"Farewell, my own!" sung by Octet and chorus. An octet features 8 voices, singing simultaneously.

"A many years ago" sung by Buttercup and chorus. "When I was young and charming...I practiced baby-farming..."

"Oh, joy, oh rapture unforeseen!" Finale with a reprise of many songs. Finally the music returns to "He is an E-e-e-e-e-Englishman!"

DURING THE OPERA

DESIGN/SPECTACLE

TEKS. ART: Perception 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, High school I.1—LANGUAGE ARTS: Viewing/representing/analysis 6.23, 7.23, 8.23, High School I.19, I.20

What is your impression of the setting when the curtain comes up? How does Act II differ from Act I?

Notice the following visual elements:

- Sets
- Costumes
- Number of people onstage
- Make-up
- Lighting
- Props
- Dancing

ARIAS/DUETS/ENSEMBLES

TEKS. MUSIC: Perception 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, High school I.1—LANGUAGE ARTS: Listening/speaking/purposes 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, High school 16.—Listening/speaking/critical listening 6.2, 7.2, 8.2, High school I.14—Listening/speaking/appreciation 6.3, 7.3, 8.3—Listening/speaking/culture 6.4, 7.4, 8.4

Listen carefully and consider the following:

- How difficult do you think it is to sing the songs?
- What is the difference in hearing the music live vs. on a recording?
- What gestures and other movements do the singers use?
- When does the singing get "flashy?"

STORY

TEKS. LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading/comprehension 6.10, 7.10, 8.10, High school I.7.

Look for satire, as well as silliness, in the unfolding plot.
Consider how each character is introduced.
Notice what problem must be solved.

AFTER THE OPERA

REACT

TEKS. THEATRE: Response/evaluation 6.5, 7.5, 8.5, High school I.5—LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading/comprehension 6.10, 7.10, 8.10, High school I.7—Reading/literary response 6.11, 7.11, 8.11, High school I.10—Writing purposes 6.15, 7.15, 8.15, High school I.1.

Write or talk about the following:

- Did you like the opera or not? Why or why not?
- What did you like best/least?
- What were its strengths/weaknesses?

Write a review of the opera as if you are a critic.

RETELL

TEKS. LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading/comprehension 6.10, 7.10, 8.10, High school I.7.

Answer the following questions:

- What was the main idea of the opera?
- Who were the main characters?
- What was the sequence of the plot?
- What comic elements were used?

ACT

TEKS. THEATRE: Creative expression/performance 6.2, 7.2, 8.2, High school I.2.

Divide students into small groups to make "frozen pictures" of a part of the opera. (The group poses without moving as if a part of the opera had just been photographed.) The other groups will guess which part is being portrayed.

ART

TEKS. ART: Creative expression/performance 6.2, 7.2, 8.2, High school I.2

Draw your own caricatures of the characters. Exaggerate their features to show:

- The snobbery of Sir Joseph
- The bragging of the Captain
- Josephine's indecisiveness
- The sincerity of Ralph
- The trickiness of Dick

LANGUAGE

TEKS. LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading/comprehension 6.10, 7.10, 8.10, High school I.7.

What synonyms can you find for "satire"? What are the different shadings of meaning conveyed by each?



lampoon sarcasm irony ridicule
pasquinade
burlesque wit humor mockery parody
farce caricature

Read and/or declaim one of the Bab Ballads. Practice reading quickly, expressively, and with perfect pronunciation. Look at http://math.boisestate.edu/gas/bab_ballads/html/ballads.html

SIMILES

TEKS. ART: Creative expression/performance 6.2, 7.2, 8.2, High school I.2—LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading/vocabulary development 6.9, 7.9, 8.9, High school I.6—Reading/literary response 6.16, 7.16, 8.16, High school I.10—Reading/literary concepts I.11—Writing/purposes 6.15, 7.15, 8.15, High school I.1—Viewing/representing/production 6.24, 7.24, 8.24, High school, I.21

Create a simile for your favorite character. Use as the title for a song or poem.

_____ was as _____ as _____.

RELATE

TEKS. THEATRE: Response/evaluation 6.5, 7.5, 8.5 High school I.5—LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading/comprehension 6.10, 7.10, 8.10, High school I.7—Reading/literary response 6.11, 7.11, 8.11, High school I.10.

What other famous stories tell of people from different classes or groups who fall in love?

- Romeo and Juliet
- West Side Story

How do these tales compare to *Pinafore*?

What present-day art forms use satire?

- Cartoons, comics
- Animated cartoons
- TV shows
- Movies

WRITE

TEKS. LANGUAGE ARTS: Writing/purposes 6.15, 7.15, 8.15, High school I.1—MUSIC: Creative expression/performance 6.4, 7.4, 8.4, High school I.4.

Re-write the opera as if it took place in your community. To imitate Gilbert and Sullivan, try including the following elements:

- Lots of rhymes, even within the same line
- So much alliteration the words sound like tongue-twisters
- Words with multi-syllables
- Figures of speech
- Rapid tempos
- Humor
- Contrasts between what a character says and what he/she really feels/believes

Create a new ending for the opera.

Write a story, song, poem, or skit with ideas from the opera. Examples:

- Belonging to different groups
- Mix-ups at birth

- Snobs
- People who brag

Write your own "Bab Ballad" or "Tall Tale." Suggestions:

- Invent or choose a "larger-than-life" or "unforgettable" character.
- Write superlative adjectives to describe him/her: smartest, strongest, cleverest, fastest, largest, etc.
- Use the adjectives in exaggerations: "She was so beautiful that she had to cover her face to keep strangers from falling in love with her." "He was so mean that he ate nails for breakfast and washed them down with Clorox."
- Give your character an adventure. Define a "larger-than-life" problem that only he/she can solve.
- Give your character a few contradictions or flaws.
- Use as much alliteration, rhyme, and exaggeration as you can to tell the tale.

RESEARCH

TEKS. MUSIC: Historical/cultural heritage 6.5, 7.5, 8.5, High school I.5—THEATRE: Historical/cultural heritage 6.4, 7.4, 8.4, High school I.4—LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading/inquiry/response 6.13, 7.13, 8.13, High school I.10—SOCIAL STUDIES: Culture 6.15, 6.16, 6.18, 8.27—WORLD HISTORY: High school 1, 2, 7, 20, 21

Find out more about one of the following:

- Opera
- Careers in opera
- Victorian era
- Other Gilbert and Sullivan operas

RECORDINGS AND RESOURCES

Recordings:

H.M.S. Pinafore by Gilbert and Sullivan. The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. The New Symphony Orchestra of London, Isidore Godfrey, O.B.E. Decca Record Company Limited, London.

Websites:

For a libretto:

<http://www.Kentisview.freereserve.co.uk/libretti/Pinafore.pdf>

or

<http://www.Gilan.screaming.net/stage/plays/th-hms1.html>

For karaoke-style music to sing along:

http://www.broadwaymidi.com/opera/h_m_s_pinafore.html

Movie:

"Topsy-Turvy," a biography of collaboration of Gilbert and Sullivan, starring Jim Broadbent (The making of "The Mikado" is featured.) Note: Teachers review the movie and choose parts suitable for showing students. The film is rated R and 160 minutes long but has great authentic Victorian sets and good acting.

"H.M.S. Pinafore," DVD released in 2004, film directed by Rodney Greenberg.

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