

OPERA UNIT

Day Three



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OBJECTIVES:

- Introduce some standard operas and compare them to their modern day counterparts.
- Understand issues that run through the opera and their contemporaries.

LESSON PLAN:

"No good opera plot can be sensible, for people do not sing when they are feeling sensible." – W.H. Auden

1. Watch All the Great Operas in 10 Minutes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vNReqUGtsc>

Operas covered in Video

La Traviata	Carmen
Don Giovanni	Aida
Tosca	Tristan and Isolde
Madame Butterfly	The Ring Cycle

ACTIVITY: After viewing this, can they see any stories from movies, TV or Broadway that are similar to these? List them on the board. What factors make them similar? Do they cover the same issues?

2. Discuss similarities and the issues they share.

Similarities/Issues – EXAMPLES

La Traviata/Moulin Rouge

	La Traviata (The Fallen One)	Moulin Rouge
Time Period	Mid 19 th Century Paris – <i>Napoleon III</i>	Late 19 th Century Paris – <i>Belle Epoque</i>
Female roles in the 19 th century	Violetta Valery – courtesan in the mid 19 th century. <i>How does she compare to married women of the 19th century?</i>	Satine – courtesan in the late 19 th century. Life in the Montmartre area of Paris (bohemians).
Male roles in the 19 th century	Alfredo – young admirer of Violetta. Comes from a family of high standing. Germont – Alfredo’s father. Later asks Violetta to give up Alfredo to save his engaged sister from shame. <i>How important were outside ties to the upper class family?</i>	Christian – young admirer of Satine. Comes from a family of high standing from the UK. Christian’s father – only appears in a sequence in the beginning. Is shown as a God fearing man who condemns Christian’s decision to go to Paris.

Madama Butterfly/Miss Saigon

	Madama Butterfly	Miss Saigon
Time Period	Early 20 th Century Japan – <i>Imperialism</i>	!970’s Vietnam – <i>Vietnam War</i>
Orientalism	<i>The Western view of Asian Countries – History from Butterfly’s time to modern times.</i>	

Other examples that could be explored:

Carmen and Beyonce Knowles’ Carmen – Feminism, Gang Violence.

The Ring of the Nibelungen (The Ring Cycle) and The Lord of the Rings Trilogy – Motifs, Symbolism.

ASSESSMENT (PROJECT): Put students into groups to create an “Opera” of their own. The music can come from their I-Pod playlists. Each group must tackle an issue important to them (with Teacher’s approval). Either use one storyline for all to interpret their own way, use an important moment in history or interpret a standard opera. Use of elements from Day One and Day Two must be included.