

Madama Butterfly

Lesson: Cultural Exploration-What Does it Mean to be American?

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Duration: 2 lessons/ 50 minutes each

Grade Levels: 6 (easily modified for 7th grade)

Subjects: Literature, English

California State Board of Education Content Standards

Language Arts

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

GRADE 6

1.0. LISTENING AND SPEAKING STRATEGIES: Students deliver focused, coherent presentations that convey ideas clearly and relate to the background and interests of the audience. They evaluate the content of oral communication.

Comprehension:

- 1.1. Relate the speaker's verbal communication (e.g., word choice, pitch, feeling, tone) and non-verbal messages (e.g., posture, gesture)
- 1.2. Identify the tone, mood, and emotion conveyed in the oral communication
- 1.3. Restate and execute multi-step oral instructions and directions

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication:

- 1.4. Select a focus, organizational structure, and point of view, matching purpose, message, occasion, and vocal modulation to the audience
- 1.5. Emphasize salient points to assist the listener in following main ideas and concepts
- 1.6. Support opinions expressed with detailed evidence and with visual or media displays that use appropriate technology
- 1.7. Use effective rate, volume, pitch, and tone, and align non-verbal elements to sustain audience interest and attention

2.0 SPEAKING APPLICATIONS (GENRES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS): Students deliver well-organized formal presentations employing traditional rhetorical strategies (i.e., narration, exposition, persuasion, and description). Students speaking

demonstrates a command of standard English and the organization and delivery strategies outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0.

2.2 Deliver informative presentations:

- a. Pose relevant questions sufficiently limited in scope to be completely and thoroughly answered.
- b. Develop the topic with facts, details, examples, and explanations from multiple authoritative sources (e.g., speakers, periodicals, online information).

2.3 Deliver oral responses to literature:

- a. Develop an interpretation exhibiting careful reading, understanding, and insight.
- b. Organize the selected interpretation around several clear ideas, premises, or images.
- c. Develop and justify the selected interpretation through sustained use of examples and textual evidence.

NOTE TO TEACHER- THIS LESSON PLAN CAN BE EASILY MODIFIED FOR 7TH GRADE, SEE BELOW FOR CONTENT STANDARDS:

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

GRADE 7

1.0. LISTENING AND SPEAKING STRATEGIES: Students deliver focused, coherent presentations that convey ideas clearly and relate to the background and interests of the audience. They evaluate the content of oral communication.

Comprehension:

- 1.1. Ask probing questions designed to elicit information, including evidence to support the listener's claims and conclusions
- 1.2. Determine the speaker's attitude toward the subject
- 1.3. Respond to persuasive messages with questions, challenges, or affirmations

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication:

1.4. Organize information to achieve particular purposes and to appeal to the background and interests of the audience

1.5. Arrange details, reasons, descriptions, and examples effectively and persuasively in relation to the audience

1.6. Use explicit techniques for effective presentations, including voice modulation, inflection, tempo, enunciation, and eye contact

Theatre

Derivation of Meaning from Works from Works of Theatre

4.2 Explain how cultural influences affect the content or meaning of works of theatre.

Classroom Teacher Prep/Materials:

1. Copies of **Synopsis, Worksheet A** and **Worksheet B**.
2. Computer lab with access to Internet.

Goals & Objectives

1. Allow students to write and discuss elements that define American culture.
2. Introduce students to the opera *Madama Butterfly*.
3. Allow students to identify and articulate different cultures depicted in a work of art.
4. Allow students to contrast these depictions with their own experience.
5. Allow students to complete an interview process with a community member for another perspective, and to successfully present the findings to a class.
6. Allow students to compare their original ideas, concepts from class discussions, and interview process, as well as the class presentations.

Procedure

Lesson 1

1. The students will write a journal entry on the meaning of being American (American culture).
2. When students have completed the journal entry, the class will “brainstorm” findings. The teacher will keep track on the board. **Topics to discuss: What makes a culture? Traditions, celebrations, family events, food, language, heroes, sports, stereotypes- make sure students understand the meaning, etc.**
 - a. **Stereotype-**
 - i. A generalization usually exaggerated or oversimplified and often offensive, that is used to describe or distinguish a group. (*American Heritage New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, third edition*)
 - ii. A too-simple and therefore distorted image of a group, such as “Football players are stupid” or “The English are cold and unfriendly people.” (*American Heritage New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, third edition*)
3. The teacher will distribute **Synopsis of Madama Butterfly and Worksheet A**.

4. The teacher will talk about the evolution of the story leading up to *Madama Butterfly* composed by Giacomo Puccini
 - a. **See LA Opera Resources Page for *Madama Butterfly* for links to information. Especially helpful:** <http://www.balletmet.org/Notes/ButterflyStory.html>
5. The class will read the synopsis and the teacher will guide a discussion. (see **questions on Worksheet A**)
6. The teacher will divide the class into groups.
7. In groups, students will research the culture of their choosing. During their research they develop questions to ask during an interview, in addition to questions listed in **Worksheet B**.
8. Students will have interview questions pre-approved by the teacher.
9. Homework: Each group will conduct the interview.

Lesson 2

10. Each group will present their topic using their research as well as the interview, to discuss the elements of the chosen culture.
11. After the interview presentations, the teacher will instruct the class to write journal entries discussing the elements in the interviews, and contrast these findings to their original journal entries.

Note to teacher: for 7th grade, the journal entry or essay can be on how cultural influences affect the content or meaning of works of theatre.

Assessment

1. Students will be able to write and discuss elements that define American culture.
2. Students will be able to identify and articulate different cultures as depicted in a work of art.
3. Students will be able to contrast these depictions with their own experience.
4. Students will be able to complete an interview process with a community member for another perspective, and to successfully present the findings to a class.
5. Students will be able to contrast, in writing, their original thoughts with elements learned from discussion, interviews, and class presentations.

Synopsis

Synopsis of Madama Butterfly

ACT ONE Outside a house in turn-of-the-century Nagasaki, Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton, an American naval officer and admitted Yankee vagabond, arranges with Goro to lease a residence for himself and his new bride, Cio-Cio-San, also called Butterfly. He is then introduced to Butterfly's servants, one of whom is Suzuki. While talking to Sharpless, the American consul, Pinkerton reveals that he purchased his bride for a hundred yen and that he can bow out of the marriage contract whenever he wishes. Sharpless tries to warn the officer that his teenage bride could really love him, but Pinkerton ignores the consul, drinking to the day when he will marry an American. Butterfly arrives with friends and relatives, greets Pinkerton, and shows him her paltry belongings, including the dagger her father used to kill himself. She confides to Pinkerton that she secretly converted to Christianity the day before so that she could worship the same God as her husband, for whom she is willing to forget her own people.

As they celebrate their wedding, the Bonze, Butterfly's devout uncle, storms in. He found out that she converted and denounces her for abandoning her faith and her family. They renounce her, and Pinkerton, visibly annoyed, demands that they all leave. Night falls and Butterfly joins Pinkerton outside, where she rapturously confesses her love. He leads her into the house.

ACT TWO Three years have passed since Pinkerton sailed for America. The devoted Butterfly tells Suzuki that one day soon they shall see Pinkerton's ship enter the harbor. Sharpless, who knows that Pinkerton and his new wife will soon arrive in Nagasaki, tries to persuade Butterfly to marry Prince Yamadori, but she refuses to listen. She shows the American consul the son that she has borne Pinkerton, convinced that her husband would never abandon her or his own child. The harbor cannon announces the arrival of Pinkerton's ship, and an elated Butterfly prepares for his imminent arrival.

Butterfly, her son, and Suzuki wait all night for Pinkerton, who finally appears the next morning with Sharpless and his new wife, Kate. Butterfly is resting, so Suzuki meets them. Suddenly overwhelmed by remorse, Pinkerton leaves because he cannot face the wife he abandoned. While Kate asks Suzuki to explain to Butterfly that Pinkerton's son would be better off in America,

Butterfly awakens and emerges, seeing the strange woman in her garden. Sharpless tells her that the woman is Pinkerton's wife. Distraught, Butterfly retreats to the house to stab herself with her father's dagger. She parts sorrowfully from her son. When Pinkerton rushes into the room, it is too late to save her.

Worksheet A

Fill in the character traits for each of the individuals in the story.

Japanese Character	Character Traits	American Character	Character Traits
Cio-Cio-San		Pinkerton	
Suzuki		Kate	
Goro		Sharpless	
Prince Yamadori			

Questions:

How is Japanese culture portrayed in this story?

How is American culture portrayed in this story? How does that compare with what you wrote in your journal?

If Cio-Cio-San, Suzuki, Goro, and Prince Yamadori represent Japan, what are the good and/or the bad qualities they represent?

If Pinkerton, Kate and Sharpless represent America, what are the good and/or the bad qualities they represent?

Are these qualities stereotypes? Explain your answer.

Worksheet B- What does it mean to be American?

In groups, be CULTURAL EXPLORERS!!! Choose a culture other than American (make sure you have a person in mind who you can interview, for example: a person of Asian or Asian-American descent). While researching, come up with questions you would ask if you were to interview an individual from your chosen culture. (ex. Are there any special celebrations that we do not have in America? How similar/different is the language, food, stereotypes, etc) Make sure the teacher approves your questions before you conduct the interview. As a group, present the culture you researched to the class.

Questions for the interview:

1. Name of the person interviewed: _____.
2. Interview taken at date/time _____ / _____ am/pm.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
10. From your perspective, what is American culture? Give examples