

# *Carmen- Verismo and Realism*

## **Lesson Plan: REALISM IN ART AND MUSIC**

*Written by Olga Bezrukova for L.A. Opera*

**Duration:** Two lessons, 50 min each (not counting the fieldtrip or DVD viewing)

**Grade Levels:** Secondary

**Subjects:** Arts, Literature, Music

**Standards:**

*California State Board of Education*

*Language Arts Content*

Grades 9/10; 2.0 Reading Comprehension (focus on informational materials): Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate material. They analyze the organizational patterns, arguments, and positions advanced.

Grades 9/10; 3.0 Literary response analysis: Students read and respond to historically or culturally significant works of literature that reflect and enhance their studies of history and social science. They conduct in-depth analyses of recurrent patterns and themes.

*Music*

Grade 9-12; 4.3 Explain how people in a particular culture use and respond to specific musical works from that culture.

*Theatre (Proficient)*

Grades 9-12; 3.1 Identify and compare how film, theatre, television, and electronic media productions influence our values and behaviors.

Grades 9-12; 3.2 Describe the ways in which playwrights reflect and influence their culture in such works as *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Antigone*, and *Mahabarata*.

Grades 9-12; 3.3 Identify key figures, works, and trends in world theatrical history from various cultures and time periods.

*Theatre (Advanced)*

Grades 9-12; 3.2 Analyze the impact of traditional and nontraditional theatre, film, television, and electronic media on society.

**Process:**

**Class 1**

**Preparatory:**

- 1) Copies of **Worksheet A and B**.
- 2) Copies of synopsis from *Carmen* (copies are available from: <http://www.laopera.com/production/0809/carmen/synopsis.aspx> )

**Optional:** copy of librettos

- 3) As homework, the students will research the art movement, **REALISM**, before class and bring an article (can be a print out from a website or a personal item) to class as an example of **REALISM**.

- 4) Suggested websites for students to check/read before class:

Realism: <http://www.tate.org.uk/collections/glossary/definition.jsp?entryId=240>

Verismo (or Realism) in opera:

<http://www.operainfo.org/broadcast/operaBackground.cgi?id=3&language=1>  
<http://operaamerica.org/Content/Audiences/Programs/Cornerstones/pagliari/pagverismo.htm>

**Procedure:**

- 1) Have students demonstrate and share examples of the articles they brought to class to demonstrate **REALISM**.
- 2) As a class, discuss the meaning of **REALISM** and fill out **Worksheet A**.
- 3) As a class, look at a painting from the time period. For example:  
Alphonse Legros  
*Le Repas des Pauvres*  
1877  
<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=8558>
- 4) Explain to class that **REALISM** extends to many different aspects of art, such as literature and music.
- 5) As a class, fill out **Worksheet B, section 1**.
- 6) As homework, students will write an essay: Do you think some of the ideas and elements of **REALISM** can be found in present day art? What about television and film?

\*Suggested: Fieldtrip to see *Carmen*, or a class viewing of a DVD between the two classes.

**Class 2**

**Procedure**

- 1) The teacher will divide the class into three groups and give them synopsis from *Carmen*.
- 2) Students will discuss the similarities and differences between the elements of the painting and the opera. Each group will decide whether the synopsis they are reading is a representation of a verismo, or not.
- 3) In groups, students will present their findings and give examples from the synopsis/opera.
- 4) Individually, students will write essays.

**Goals:**

- 1) To allow students to research a topic.
- 2) To introduce students to the **REALISM** movement.
- 3) To analyze how this movement was present in different art forms.
- 4) To engage students in a class discussion about the elements of **REALISM**.
- 5) To see the parallels within the arts.
- 6) To see how movements in art reflect in our society and culture.

**Assessment:**

- 1) Students will be able to research the topics presented.
- 2) Students will be able to engage in the class discussion.

- 3) Students will be able to give examples, demonstrating their understanding of the given topic.
- 4) Students will be able to do **Worksheet A & Worksheet B Section 1** as a class.
- 5) Students will be able to discuss the topic in groups and decide whether given synopsis of a story is a good representation of the **REALISM**.
- 6) Students will be able to do **Worksheet B** as a class.
- 7) Students will be able to discuss the topic in groups and fill out **Worksheet B Section 2**.
- 8) Students will be able to write an essay on how ideas of **REALISM** can be seen in our society.

### **Answers- Worksheet A REALISM IN ART:**

**Definition:**

-Term “**REALISM**” was coined by the Fr. novelist Champfleury in the 1840s

-Subjects include scenes of:

- \*Peasant and working class life
- \*Cafes and popular entertainments
- \*Poverty, brutality, passion, lower classes
- \*Portrayals of the way things and people appear every day
- \*Photographic representations of subjects
- \*Images of the middle and lower classes (very shocking to the upper class!)
- \*Everyday situations are portrayed, for ex. people eating

**Elements that are important to this movement:**

This movement grew out of:

- Reaction against ROMANTICISM (Romanticism was also influenced by the nationalism and urbanization. Romantic music dealt with love, heroism, mother nature. It had darker subjects such as death.)
- Technological advances (photography, train/travel)
- Scientific advances and theories (Darwin)
- Realism in art is impossible, but the appearance of REALISM or “verisimilitude” is an important idea.

**How was REALISM apparent in different art forms of the period?**

**Art-** Everyday life depicted with a variety of subjects that included lower classes and at times a photographic perception of the scene.

**Literature-** Included subject matter and scenes which could be observed in every day life

**Drama-** The actors as well as staging depict real life as well as suggest scenes that are more believable.

**Opera-** The ideas of real characters dealing with everyday problems are explored. Opera that uses a verismo text, where characters are drawn from the ordinary social classes.

**Examples of REALISM brought to class:**

This will vary depending on what students brought!!!

**Name important artists, writers, musicians who made contributions to this movement:**

**Art-** Gustave Courbet, Honoré Daumier (painting and sculpture) and Jean-François Millet

**Literature-** The actual term was coined by the Fr. novelist Champfleury in the 1840s; Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Émile Zola's *Germinal*, and Proust's *Du côté de Chez Swann*

**Drama-** David Belasco's *Madame Butterfly* and *The Girl of the Golden West*; Mark Twain's *Is He Dead?*

**Opera-** Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Ruggero's *Ruggiero*, Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, Giacomo Puccini's *Il Trittico*, *La Rondine* and *La Bohème*, Bizet's *Carmen*

**How do you think this movement continues to influence our society?**

This is an open ended question meant for classroom discussion. Ideas to discuss: realism in television and film, realism in commercials, radio, pod casts, "reality TV shows,"etc...

**How do you think this movement continues to influence our society? Do you think that some of the works previously studied in class were influenced by REALISM?**

This is an open ended question meant to engage students in class discussion. Discuss how some of the previous works studies in class might have been influenced by realism.

**Ideas for Discussion:**

How did technologic innovations influence this movement?

How did scientific ideas influence this movement?

There is no question that **REALISM** is artful. What elements make something "real?"

Question for discussion: Considering that art is an interpretation by an artist, can art be "real?"

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Teachers Guide- Worksheet A**

**REALISM IN ART:**

**Definition:**

**Elements that are important to this movement:**

**How was REALISM apparent in different art forms of the period? (art, literature, opera, drama)**

**Examples of realism:**

**Name important artists, writers, musicians who made contributions to this movement:**

**How do you think this movement continues to influence our society? Do you think that some of the works previously studied in class were influenced by REALISM?**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Answers- Worksheet B- Elements of REALISM

After learning what REALISM means, list some of the elements that reflect REALISM in art. In the MUSIC- Verismo column, include the elements that transferred from the REALISM movement into this style of opera.

Section 1- ART	Section 2 MUSIC- VERISMO
Depending on the painting chosen, the answers will vary...	-Opera that uses a verismo text, where characters are drawn from the ordinary social classes.
Generally the painting will have representations of landscapes or settings of people depicted in real life situations	-different social classes represented: <i>bourgeoisie, students, painters, elegantly dressed ladies and gentlemen, nuns, girls and dancing girls, waiters.</i>
The subjects will mostly be lower classes or middle classes, something that probably was shocking to the higher class	-The story has an accurate description of life during the period depicted.
The paintings are usually very detailed, some of them almost of photographic quality	-Everyday low social class people are depicted in bright colors.
Paintings of people at work	-The shape of the story is based on changing demands of the unfolding text.
Some paintings have a rugged quality	-The story line may explore love, lust, hatred, murder.
Subjects do not tend to sit and pose, they are usually painted in action	- All characters are everyday individuals with problems regular people have. They are not demigods or gods.
Subjects will wear the clothes of the period	-The protagonist often questions if love is more important than wealth as well as wonders what is the purpose in life.
	-The characters are not perfect, they have flaws.
	- The purpose of one's life may be questioned.
	-Betrayal, murder, lust, and hatred are portrayed vividly.

Essay: Do you think some of the ideas and elements of REALISM can be found in present day art? What about television and film?

Assignment: Write an essay explaining the ideas of REALISM and give some of the examples on how some of the ideas of this movement are present in our society in visual art, film, television, literature, etc...\*\*Extra Credit: Research a movement in history, such as ROMANTICISM, BAROQUE, etc and in your essay contrast it to REALISM.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Worksheet B- Elements of REALISM**

**After learning what REALISM means, list some of the elements that in your opinion reflect the movement in ART. After in-class discussion, In the MUSIC- Verismo column, include the elements that transferred from the REALISM movement into this style of opera.**

Section 1-ART	Section 2- Music/Verismo

Discussion: Do you think some of the ideas and elements of **REALISM** can be found in present day art? What about television and film?

Assignment: Write an essay explaining the ideas of **REALISM/VERISMO** and give some of the examples on how some of the ideas of this movement are present in our society in visual art, film, television, literature, etc...

\*Extra Credit: Research a movement in history, such as **ROMANTICISM, BAROQUE, etc** and in your essay contrast it to **REALISM/VERISMO**.