

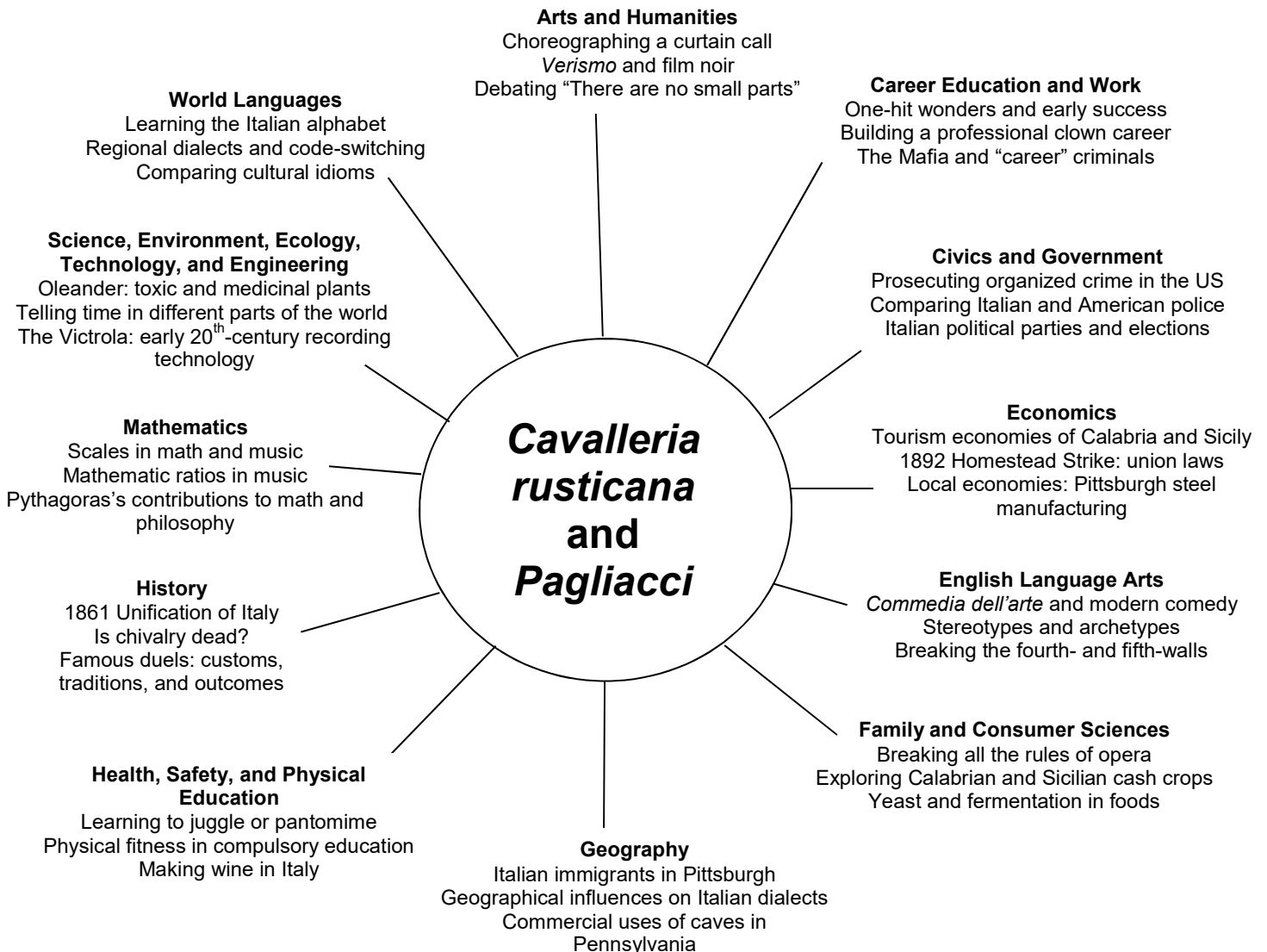
Lesson Plan Stems for 2024–2025

Developed by Opera on TAP, past and present:

Ray Beard	Ann Giorgi	Donna Priore
Cheryl Begandy	Michelle Hoffmann	Krista Reitz
George Blank	Robert Lee	Marie Romanelli, Editor
Athena Bober	James Lueers	Alan Shadgett
Lee Ann Conover	Marsha Owens	Shirley Tucker
Marilyn Egan	Elizabeth Parker	

Curriculum Circle for *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*

How do the operas *Cavalleria rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni and *Pagliacci* by Ruggero Leoncavallo intersect with all academic content areas?
Begin with the opera and brainstorm connections to all curricula.





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Lesson Plan Stems for *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*

How do the operas *Cavalleria rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni and *Pagliacci* by Ruggero Leoncavallo intersect with all academic content areas? Begin with a lesson plan stem and connect the opera to classroom curricula.

NOTES: Suggested grade levels are listed to the right of each lesson plan stem.
PreK =Pre-Kindergarten, ES=elementary school, MS=middle school, HS=high school

Lesson Plan Stems in the English Language Arts and Mathematics sections are *Common Core Friendly*, and are marked:



Arts and Humanities

State Standards: 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4

At the end of an opera, all the performers appear together on stage for a “curtain call,” which is when the audience shows its appreciation for the show. How do audiences show appreciation for performers? How do artists thank audiences during a curtain call? At the premiere of *Cavalleria rusticana*, its composer Pietro Mascagni took 40 curtain calls! What does that tell you about this opera? How would you organize a curtain call for either of these operas? Which characters go first? Last? Practice giving a curtain call with your classmates.

PreK

Conductors lead an orchestra by showing them when and how to play the music together. How does a conductor show the musicians what tempo to play? Imagine you are conducting an orchestra for an opera. How would you keep the orchestra on tempo? Show how you might guide an orchestra to change from one tempo to another.

PreK

Both operas use tubular bells in their orchestrations. Find a picture of tubular bells. How does a tubular bell look different from a bell you might see in a bell tower? Where else might you have seen tubular bells?

PreK

For either opera, compare the traditional settings and costumes from the late 1800s with a production set in the present day. Why might a director choose one type of setting and costume over another?

ES

Story plots keep a reader interested by using complications, the twists and turns that happen before a story is finished. Listen to a plot summary of either opera. Count how many times something happens that creates a change in the story. With a partner, draw a maze that reflects how many twists and turns you counted for the story.

ES

The orchestration for *Pagliacci* includes a bass tuba. What does it sound like? What does it look like? Why did Leoncavallo score for this instrument, rather than a Sousaphone? Could a Sousaphone be used in an orchestra pit? Why did the composer write for a stage band (*banda*) and an orchestra in the pit? What kinds of instruments appear in *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, but not in other operas from earlier eras?

ES

Cavalleria rusticana and *Pagliacci* are usually performed together in one evening, in what is known as a “double bill.” Why are these two operas double billed? What makes this pairing work? What other shows or movies have also been “double billed”? Create your own double billing: what two shows do you think should be shown together?

ES/MS

Pietro Mascagni and Ruggero Leoncavallo, the composers of *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, are often considered to be “one-hit wonders” because their other operas are seldom performed. What modern bands are also considered “one-hit wonders”? Name some “one-hit wonder songs.” Where do you hear this music played now? Can a performer make a living from a one-hit wonder?

ES/MS

What are the musical characteristics of *verismo*, and how does this style apply to *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*? How are singers for a *verismo* opera different from singers for a Mozart opera? How are *verismo* arias different from arias by Mozart and arias by Verdi?

ES/MS

Cavalleria rusticana and *Pagliacci* are often performed as a double bill. Create a chart of pros/cons describing why *Pagliacci* should be performed alone. When were the two operas first performed together? Why?

ES/MS

How does an opera company decide when to include an intermission at an opera performance? Pittsburgh Opera will include one intermission, between the performances of *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*. What financial, artistic, and other factors should be considered? Do any operas include more than one intermission?

ES/MS

Giovanni "Gianni" Versace, a charismatic and accomplished Italian designer of clothing and theater costumes, was from Reggio Calabria, Italy, the same location where the story of *Pagliacci* is set. How were Versace's designs influenced by Andy Warhol and modern abstract art?

MS/HS

Operas often contain small parts for characters that may be necessary for only a little piece of the story. How would you prepare if you were hired to play a “bit part” in a professional production as opposed to a school production? Debate the saying: “There are no small parts, only small actors.”

MS/HS

Cavalleria rusticana's "Intermezzo" is the most famous piece of music from this opera. Listen to a recording of this piece. Where in the opera's story is it played? What does the music suggest? Why would Mascagni include this music at this point in the story? What other movies or television shows have used this music, and to what effect?

MS/HS

Cavalleria rusticana and *Pagliacci* are considered *verismo* operas. Based on the synopsis of both stories, what are the characteristics of *verismo*? The first films screened in nickelodeons in the early 1890s, around the same time as these operas premiered. What style of film seems most like these *verismo* operas? What current TV shows could be described as *verismo*? What features could you add to a theatrical production at a school to make it *verismo*?

MS/HS

Cavalleria rusticana and *Pagliacci* are both through-composed operas. What does "through-composed" mean? What are the differences between a through-composed opera and a number opera? How can listeners determine when "scenes" begin and end? What other operas or musicals are also considered through-composed?

MS/HS

The opera *Pagliacci* is named for the main characters, who comprise a traveling troupe of comedic entertainers. What kind of space would a small, traveling troupe need for a performance? When might these performances take place? Would the audience sit or stand? What would be the challenges of having sound and light at night? How might technical factors like sound and light affect audience etiquette?

MS/HS

Celebrities in the arts are sometimes placed on pedestals. What happens when the public sees their human faults? How does celebrity worship relate to *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*?

MS/HS

The enduring "sad clown" image has become ingrained in popular culture largely due to Enrico Caruso's wild success singing the role of Canio. Caruso himself was a gifted caricaturist, and he often drew humorous pictures of fellow performers. Look at some samples of Caruso's drawings. How does he convey humor in these? Create your own humorous caricatures of friends, in the style of Caruso, imagining them as different characters in *Pagliacci*.

MS/HS

Brainstorm the classical and modern meanings of comedy, and how they have been used in the arts. Consider Pagliaccio's statement that the "comedy" is over. What are the many meanings of "comedy" in that context?

HS

Create some theater improvisation situations based on scenes from *Cavalleria rusticana* or *Pagliacci*. Create an activity like the comedy game show "Whose line is it anyway?" What are the pros and cons of trying to be creative in a competitive atmosphere?

HS

Career Education and Work

State Standards: 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.4

The title *Pagliacci* (or *I Pagliacci*) means “The Clowns.” What’s a clown? What do they look like? Where do we see them perform? What do they do? Do you like clowns? Why or why not? PreK

Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* was initially written for an opera competition, where three winners would have their operas performed in Rome. What is a competition, and why do people enter them? Have you ever participated in a competition? What type of prize would you compete for? PreK

Pietro Mascagni had a very successful career as both a conductor and a composer. How are the professions of composing and conducting related to one another? Do you know anyone who has more than one job? PreK/ES

Most operas are created through a collaboration of a composer and a librettist. What does it mean to collaborate? What other professions rely on collaboration? What other professions—both on and off-stage—collaborate to make an opera performance? Select one of those professions and research what requirements are needed to work in that job. ES/MS

What is a career like in the circus? Is it possible to have a career as a clown? How would one get training and work? What does a clown costume represent? What does a clown’s makeup represent? ES/MS

Both Mascagni and Leoncavallo became wealthy from the success of one opera, despite each having written many more. How many performers have built careers from “one-hit wonders”? How does early success impact a performer’s career? Name some “one-hit wonders” that you know.

Leoncavallo, the composer of *Pagliacci*, was the son of a Neapolitan police magistrate. What authority does a magistrate have in both common and civil law? Does this term for a judicial officer have the same meaning worldwide? Can a lawyer become a magistrate? MS/HS

Some famous performers began their careers as traveling street artists. What are the rules for legitimate street performers? How can working as a street performer help build a career? How much does the average street artist make? Can you support yourself this way? Brainstorm a list of artists who began their careers “on the street.” MS/HS

In *Cavalleria rusticana*, the character Turiddu is a returning soldier. What are the requirements for joining the army today? What are the pros and cons of enlisting in the military? What are some of the career options available for someone interested in a military career? What salary does an entry level soldier make? What promotions are available, and how does an enlisted person earn promotions? What percentage of high school students choose to join the military? What is the average length of a military career? MS/HS

Many people associate clowns with the circus. What does the word circus mean? Compare a circus of today to a circus in the late 1800s. What are all the jobs in both types of circuses? Read this casting description on the Cirque du Soleil official website: “At the centre of the creative energy found in every Cirque du Soleil show are acrobats, dancers, singers, musicians, clowns, and actors at the pinnacle of their art: Cirque du Soleil performers. These men and women possess a burning passion to challenge the limits of their skills.” How would someone prepare for a role with a current circus?

MS/HS

The operas’ settings of Sicily and Calabria are also known to be centers of organized crime, commonly known as the Mafia. What does the word “Mafia” mean? Did the Mafia exist in the early 1890s, when these operas premiered? What effect did poverty have on the rise of the Mafia? What does it mean to be a career criminal?

MS/ HS

Cavalleria rusticana and *Pagliacci* are often performed as a double bill, and in Pittsburgh Opera’s productions, baritone Sebastian Catana is singing the role of Alfio and Tonio. Research how many of the 11, 501 baritones listed in [100,000+ Opera Singers, Artists, Cast & Crew | Operabase](#) have sung both roles in other paired performances. Is this unusual?

HS

Civics and Government

State Standards: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4

In both operas, the main characters commit crimes in front of witnesses. What’s a witness? What does it mean to witness something?

PreK

In both *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, one character kills another out of jealousy. What is jealousy? What would you call the crimes these characters have committed? How are criminals punished nowadays when they commit crimes? Should these characters be punished, or are their actions justifiable?

PreK/ES

When both of these operas were written, Italy had a king. Does Italy still have a king today? What form of government does Italy have now? Who is the current head of the Italian government?

PreK/ES

Both operas concern people seeking justice by taking the law into their own hands. What do Italians call their policemen? What do their uniforms look like? What equipment do they carry? How do the duties and expectations of Italian police compare to those of American police?

ES/MS

In both operas, murders are committed in front of a lot of witnesses, who do not intervene to prevent the crime. What are the responsibilities of average people when they witness a crime? Is a witness morally or legally obligated to help? Is there a difference between moral and legal obligations? Can a citizen make an arrest?

ES/MS

Italians hold elections, as we do in the United States. Explore how Italian elections are structured. Who is eligible to vote? How is voting accomplished? What political parties currently exist in Italy? How do those parties compare to the political parties in the United States?

ES/MS

Explore the Italian court system and compare it to the judicial system in the United States. How is a typical trial in Italy conducted? How are judges chosen; are they elected or appointed, and if so, by whom? Is there a jury? If so, who may be part of a jury and how are they chosen? What rights do defendants have?

ES/MS

The settings for these operas—Sicily and Calabria—are locations that historically have been plagued with organized crime. What is organized crime? What types of organized crime exist in the United States? How do these organizations compare to their Italian counterparts? How is organized crime prosecuted in the United States? What statutes exist that apply specifically to organized crime? How successful has United States law enforcement been in prosecuting and convicting organized crime?

MS/HS

Consider this definition: “Murder is the unlawful killing of one human being by another through any action intended (or in some countries also being recklessly indifferent) to kill or cause grievous bodily harm.” How does the charge of murder vary between jurisdictions? In the United States, what punishments can be meted out if a person is found guilty of murder? Are these punishments the same regardless of location where a murder has been committed? In the United States, if someone commits a serious crime during which someone dies, can he/she be prosecuted for murder? What are considered “serious crimes” in the United States?

MS/HS

Music from both *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* is often used in other popular culture entertainments, such as films and commercials. Who owns the rights to this music, or can anyone use it for any purpose? Investigate copyright laws. How are artists protected by these laws, and for how long? Once an artist has died, do the copyrights also expire? How do opera companies acquire permission to perform operas? Do any profits from modern performances of older operas go back to the artists’ families or their estates?

MS/HS

As with Taddeo the Hunchback in *Pagliacci*, characters with disabilities were often portrayed as humorous or evil, and thus become the recipients of scorn and derision. Explore the Americans with Disabilities act, and the laws that currently protect differently-abled people. How has the passage of the ADA influenced how differently-abled people are treated in public and in the workplace? Has this act also impacted their portrayal in art and entertainment? How many different plays, movies, or books feature characters with a physical or intellectual disability? Should art works such as *Pagliacci*, where disabled characters are treated badly, still be performed?

MS/HS

What events led to the episodes of domestic violence in both *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*? What could have been done to prevent the violence? What factors increased the danger level for the wives and the husbands? Put Alfio or Canio on trial, using laws of 1860, and then using laws of today. MS/HS

The Mafia in Italy is a very real organized crime group. What other organized crime groups exist around the world? How do governments and law enforcement entities battle organized crime? How secretive are the groups? HS

Economics

State Standards: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5

As students in Milan, the composers Puccini and Mascagni shared a run-down apartment. Why would two strangers want to share an apartment? How does the idea of sharing with another person help someone's budget? With whom would you like to share your room? What are the pros and cons of sharing a living space? PreK

If you were to buy a ticket to see an opera in Italy, what kind of money would you need to use? Can you use the same money in the United States? PreK

Both *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* are very popular operas. Why do opera companies want to perform operas that are already popular? What advantages does that bring? Do brand new operas bring the same kind of advantages as ones that are already fan favorites? PreK/ES

What are the Calabrian and Sicilian tourist economies like today, and for what part of each region's GDP does tourism account? What other kinds of industries fuel their local economies? How do the local geographies and environments impact the general economies in these parts of Italy? ES/MS

Even though Leoncavallo and Mascagni are long dead, their operas are still frequently performed. How do opera companies gain permission to perform older operas? What does it mean when music rights are expired? When do literature copyrights expire? How much does it cost to copyright material? How much does it cost to pay royalties for an opera? How much does it cost to rent orchestra scores? Why would an opera company rent instead of purchasing scores? ES/MS

While writing *Pagliacci*, the composer Ruggiero Leoncavallo took note of the commercial success of his rival's opera, *Cavalleria rusticana*. How much money could a composer expect to make from an opera in 1892? Were profits made from publication, ticket sales, or other sources? What would the money equivalent be in today's dollars? In today's euros? ES/MS

At the time of these operas premieres in the 1890s, the steel and coal industries were paramount to shaping the Industrial Revolution. Explore the steelmaking process. What raw materials are needed to make steel, and where are these raw materials found? What was the economic impact of the steel mills on the local community then, and how has that changed? What was the impact of the 1892 Homestead Strike on the local economy? What are the main industries supporting Pittsburgh's economy today?

MS/HS

Pagliacci premiered in 1892, the same year that the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers clashed over contract negotiations with the Carnegie Steel Company, which led to the deadly "Homestead Strike." What is a trade union? How are they formed? What laws currently govern trade unions? What is considered a strike? Investigate the 1892 Homestead Strike; what did the workers want, what was the sliding scale wage that workers had negotiated into the contract, and what led to the clash between the union workers and management? Does what happened in 1892 to the Amalgamated Association workers count as a strike? Do modern union workers still have the right to strike? How important are trade unions in American industry today?

MS/HS

Leoncavallo sensed the economic trends of opera when *verismo* took hold of the public's imagination, and turned away from his dreams of creating a Wagnerian-like epic cycle. What other successful business people have pivoted away from their initial plan because of economics?

HS

English Language Arts CORE

State Standards: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5

Lesson Plan Stems in the [English Language Arts](#) section are *Common Core Friendly*:



The word for clowns in Italian is "zanni," which is where the English word "zany" comes from. What does it mean to be zany?

PreK

Mascagni adapted his opera *Cavalleria rusticana* from an 1880 short story and play. What stories do you know that might make good operas? What does an opera story need to have to be interesting to an audience?

PreK

Though both *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* are fictional stories, when they premiered opera audiences considered these works to be "*verismo*" or "realistic." How can a story be both fictional and realistic?

PreK/ES

Imagine you are visiting either Calabria or Sicily, the settings of these operas. Research the region of your choice and write a travel journal based on your imaginary trip. Include observations about the region that could connect to the operas.

ES/MS

Compare/contrast the characters of Tonio in *Pagliacci*, and the hunchback in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Explore character development and how disabilities are depicted.

ES/MS

Leoncavallo based the plot of *Pagliacci* on news clippings from a case that his magistrate father heard. Examine newspapers for stories that would make ideal opera plots. What news sources would be ideal resources for opera plots today? Discuss the similarities and differences of opera plots to “plots” in newspaper stories. What films include stories of violence involving husbands, wives, and lovers?

ES/MS

Pagliacci focuses on a troupe of traveling players. What traveling entertainers do we have in our modern culture? What are the stereotypes of traveling players in our culture? How do those stereotypes fit with our cultural concept of traveling salesmen and other nomadic peoples? Why do we form stereotypes? If someone was called a “clown,” how would you expect them to behave? Do you have a “class clown”?

ES/MS

Learn some vocabulary words that apply to both *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*:

ES/MS

Adultery	Chivalry	Colloquial	Infidelity	Jealousy
Machismo	Plagiarism	Possessiveness	Procession	Rage
Rekindle	Romance	Seduce	Vendetta	<i>Verismo</i>

What is the etymology of the word *verismo*? How does knowing its origins help us understand what is meant by *verismo*?

ES/MS

How would Alfio, Turiddu, or Canio behave if they were the heroes of a popular novel? How would Lola, Santuzza, or Nedda behave if they were the heroines? Rewrite a scene from either opera, recasting the characters as traditional heroes and heroines.

ES/MS

Pagliacci presents a story that uses the popular literary structure of a play-within-a-play by including traveling *commedia dell'arte* as main characters. What was the *commedia dell'arte*? Who were its stock characters? What stock roles do the opera characters play in the comedy troupe's play? How does art mirror life during the troupe's play? In groups, create an improvisational sketch by *commedia dell'arte* characters of today.

ES/MS

Rewrite the story of either *Cavalleria rusticana* or *Pagliacci* in the style of a mainstream newspaper, such as *The New York Times* or the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Investigate supermarket tabloids and social media news feeds such as the *National Enquirer*, *Facebook*, or *TikTok*, to determine how much celebrity news, gossip, and bizarre stories about ordinary people they include. How would the stories of *Cavalleria rusticana* or *Pagliacci* be told in the tabloids or on a social media feed?

MS/HS

Both *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* were praised for their *verismo*. What does the term *verismo* mean? What kinds of stories are told in *verismo*? How is this different from Romanticism? How long did the period of *verismo* last? What parallels are there in literature and the visual arts?

MS/HS

When they think of opera, most people visualize either Wagner's helmeted, warrior-maiden Brünnhilde, or the crying clown Pagliaccio, in a white pom-pommed blouse, trousers, and conical hat. These images are both stereotypes and archetypes. What is the difference between stereotype and archetype? How can a character represent both? MS/HS

Commedia dell'arte was a 16th-century Italian form of comedy that transcended social classes through the inclusion of stock characters, standard plot lines, pantomime, popular songs, physical comedy, and rude humor. Explore this art form, its costumes, customs, and symbols. How has *commedia dell'arte* informed modern concepts of comedy? What other famous operas or stories reference these same archetypal characters? Analyze a popular comedy show or movie. Can you identify some traces of *commedia dell'arte* in modern entertainments? MS/HS

During the Prologue of *Pagliacci*, Tonio talks directly to the audience, breaking through the "fourth wall" between the audience and the stage. Others in the theater have tried to breach the "fifth wall" of distrust, misunderstanding, and mutual patronizing between artists and critics. "The Fifth Wall" has recently been used by critics of the Internet, saying that it "closes in" users by discouraging normal social life. Compare/contrast the uses of the terms fourth and fifth walls, and their implications for modern society. HS

Clowns and fools are common motifs in literature. Explore the role of the clown/fool in *Pagliacci*, then compare it to other works, such as: HS

- Shakespeare's *King Lear* [1.4.146-8]
- *The Great Dictator*, a 1940 film directed by and starring Charlie Chaplin, a satire of Adolf Hitler and Nazism
- *A Night at the Opera*, a 1935 film about a sly business manager and two wacky friends of two opera singers who help them achieve success while humiliating their stuffy and snobbish enemies.

Family and Consumer Sciences

State Standards: 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4

In both *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, characters experience jealousy. What does it mean to be jealous? Is jealousy considered good or bad? Have you ever been jealous? PreK

Cavalleria rusticana and *Pagliacci* were the beginning of a new movement in opera stories that featured everyday people experiencing ordinary emotions, rather than gods and myths. What stories do you know that “feel real” to you? What do those characters experience? Compare a “real life” story you know to one that is imaginary, or more like a fairytale. What differences and similarities did you find between both? PreK/ES

Critics of *Cavalleria rusticana* were shocked by its realism and complained that Mascagni “broke all the rules” when he composed this opera. What does it mean to “break the rules”? When is it bad to break rules? When might it be a good thing to be a rule-breaker? PreK/ES

Leoncavallo’s father was a magistrate, and his career meant moving his family to different cities. Have you and your family ever lived in different places? How does moving frequently impact children? How can you make new friends? What’s it like to switch schools? ES/MS

Explore the foods of Calabria and Sicily. What foods are typical of each local cuisine? Research each region’s cash crops. What do they have in common? Where does each region differ? What are foods that are unique to each region? ES/MS

Cavalleria rusticana features a traveling troupe of artists. What are the nutritional needs of a traveling artist to have enough energy to perform? What should an opera singer eat before a performance to ensure adequate energy? Explore some opera performers’ blogs to determine what they eat before a long performance. ES/MS

Ruggiero Leoncavallo was born in 1857, the year that Louis Pasteur determined that yeast is able to reproduce without oxygen. What is yeast? How is it helpful in cooking? What types of foods contain yeast? How does it reproduce? Define fermentation. MS/HS

Composers such as Mascagni and Leoncavallo usually collaborate with librettists to produce an opera. What are the pros and cons of collaboration versus working alone? How can families, classrooms, and neighborhoods collaborate? Do the actions of the characters Alfio, Turiddu, and Canio reflect a lack of collaboration or dysfunctional families? MS/HS

A major theme of *Pagliacci* is infidelity. What films of today relate to infidelity? How is infidelity depicted? What are the effects of love triangles? Explore the implications of characters’ actions on friendships and family relationships. MS/HS

Commedia dell'arte performers travelled from city to city constantly, similarly to families who now make RVs their home. How would meal preparation need to be planned and executed when on the road? HS

The travelling performers in *Pagliacci* would sell tickets to their performances. Would they share the proceeds equitably or pool them so that all of the “family” would benefit. Discuss budgeting for families and individuals. HS

Geography

State Standards: 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4

In *Cavalleria rusticana*, the characters enter a church for part of the opera. What is a church? What do people do in a church? How do they look different from other buildings or the houses in our neighborhood? What features might they have in common with houses? Draw what you think the church in this opera might look like. PreK

The shape of Italy is often compared to a boot. What makes a boot different from a shoe? Look at the shape of Italy on a map. Which parts of this country represent different parts of a boot? PreK

With your teacher’s help, can you find on a map both the operas’ settings of Sicily and Calabria? What kinds of features do they have in common? What looks different about Sicily on this map? What do we call that kind of location? PreK/ES

The region of Calabria, where *Pagliacci* is set, is famous for its many caves, some of which are used as hideouts for criminal gangs. What is a cave? Where are caves located, and how are they formed? How are the caves of Calabria different from caves in Pennsylvania, such as the Laurel Caverns? How are caves used in Pennsylvania? Why would a cave be a good place for some of these uses? ES/MS

Consider the terrain around Calabria and Sicily. What “jobs” would the local populations have held at the time of the operas’ premieres? Would the towns depicted in each opera have been prosperous? What are the regions like today? ES/MS

Locate the great opera houses of the 1890s when *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* premiered. Do any of the locations surprise you? What determines the location of great/successful opera houses? Are any of them still in existence? Why or why not? ES/MS

Define the geographical terms island, peninsula, isthmus, bay, sea, ocean, basin, mountain, ridge, and volcano. Which of these terms can be applied to the regions of Calabria and Sicily? Locate these features on a map of both places. ES/MS

Reggio di Calabria, on the strait between Italy and Sicily, is the biggest and oldest city in Calabria. The city is famous for its seaside views and beautiful beaches, its botanic gardens, and its art nouveau-style buildings. What United States city could compare to Reggio Calabria? Compare and contrast geographic features of Reggio di Calabria with the United States city you've chosen.

ES/MS

Many Pittsburghers can trace their ancestry back to Italian immigrants. Investigate the censuses for immigration in the 1890s, when both operas premiered. From what parts of Italy did most Pittsburgh immigrants come? Why did they immigrate? How would Pittsburgh's climate and geography have compared to their home regions? Would Pittsburgh's climate have been an adjustment for them? Which part of Italy is most like Pittsburgh?

MS/HS

Investigate immigration to the United States in the early 1890s. How could a person trace his/her genealogy? Why were people emigrating from Italy or other parts of Europe at that time? How did they travel? What were the social and economic costs of emigrating? Where did they settle in the United States? What jobs did they take when they arrived?

MS/HS

The dialects of the Italian language spoken by people in Italy vary so much from region to region, that people from northern Italy often cannot understand people from the southern regions. Why would this be true? What geographical, historical, and cultural elements may have contributed to this divergence?

MS/HS

Plan an Italian road trip to visit all the birthplaces of *verismo* composers—Leoncavallo (Naples), Puccini (Lucca), and Mascagni (Livorno). Research significant points of interest, lodging, mileage, and historical locations.

HS

Health, Safety, and Physical Education

State Standards: 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 10.5

Photographs of the composer Leoncavallo picture him as having a very large moustache. What is a moustache? Who can grow a moustache? How do people with moustaches keep them clean and neat? Draw a moustache that you would like to wear!

PreK

Traveling artists such as the clowns in *Pagliacci* had to know many different types of physical entertainment skills. What are some things that clowns need to know how to do?

PreK

The character of Tonio in *Pagliacci* has a disability; he has a hunchback. What does that mean? How is he treated by others in the opera? Does this affect how Tonio treats others? How does his treatment make you feel?

PreK/ES

Explore training methods for physical comedy. How do actors and comics learn "moves," pantomime, choreography, and stunts? How could students improve physical comedy?

ES/MS

Both Mascagni (1863–1945) and Leoncavallo (1857–1919) were born in the mid-1800s. What sports were also invented in the mid-1800s? What sports could both composers have played or viewed? Could either composer have played pickleball? Why or why not?	ES/MS
Tonio's disability is that of a hunchback, a condition marked by a deformation of the spine. How are spinal deformations found today? What kind of screening tests exist? What is scoliosis? How is it treated?	ES/MS
In <i>Cavalleria rusticana</i> , the opera's climax comes during a knife fight (off stage). Explore the requirements for a career as a choreographer or a teacher of on-stage combat. Compare/contrast the training needed for careers in dance and theater movement. How does this training compare to a career teaching or choreographing hand-to-hand combat?	ES/MS
When did physical fitness become part of an American student's compulsory education? What sorts of fitness was first introduced into schools? Why was it implemented? If you were a student in the 1890s when both the operas premiered, would you have had a physical fitness class? If not, how would you have maintained a healthy body?	ES/MS
Wine features prominently in <i>Cavalleria rusticana</i> . What is wine? How is it made? Do Italians make wine by crushing the grapes with their feet, as is shown in some old cartoons and movies? Is wine healthy to drink? What impact does it have on your body? How does wine compare to other types of alcohol? Are there any health benefits from drinking red wine?	MS/HS
Using a list of hazards on stage during a performance of <i>Cavalleria rusticana</i> or <i>Pagliacci</i> , act as the stage director of the opera to plan the blocking so performers avoid being hurt. Develop a list of typical hazards for a traveling troupe, such as the Cirque du Soleil. Compare the list to plays or musicals at a school.	MS/HS
Singing opera is physically demanding. On the day of a full-length performance, what are the nutritional needs of an opera singer? Plan a healthy menu for that entire day, one that provides the singer with the nutrients and energy he or she needs for the performance.	MS/HS
Some of the skills needed by a traveling troupe of comedic artists are physical: pantomime, juggling, acrobatics, and other novelties. Where can an aspiring comedian learn these skills? Try your hand at juggling or pantomime. What physical skills does it take to successfully do either? What skills are needed to make your juggling or pantomime clear to a large audience in a large space, such as the Benedum Center?	MS/HS
Learn how to juggle well enough to teach someone else. What balance and eye-hand coordination skills are needed? What objects, or "props," should beginners use? Are there cognitive as well as physical benefits to juggling?	HS

History

State Standards: 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4

Cavalleria rusticana's premiere was attended by Queen Margherita of Italy. What's a queen? What do you call the husband of a queen? Does the American government have a position for a queen or other royalty? Who is the head of the American government? PreK

The title *Cavalleria rusticana* translates to "rustic chivalry," and chivalry is a form of polite behavior. What does it mean to be polite? What are some things you can do to be polite to other people? Why is it important to be polite? PreK

Mascagni was awarded the Order of the Crown medal by the King of Italy in 1890. What is a medal? Why do people receive medals? The Order of the Crown is a medal given by the government of Italy. What medals does the United States government award? For what are they given? PreK/ES

Leoncavallo and Mascagni were famous composers in their homeland. Name some other famous Italians. Why were they famous? Are they still famous now? Why or why not? ES/MS

Cavalleria rusticana's premiere was attended by Queen Margherita of Italy. Who was Queen Margherita? To whom was she married? What is remarkable about this royal couple? Are any of their descendants still alive today? ES/MS

How are social classes depicted in *verismo* opera? Explore the American social classes of the early 1890s, when both operas premiered. Consider the Frick Art & Historical Center in Pittsburgh as an intersection of Gilded Age social classes. In what ways are American social classes represented in this center? ES/MS

Both operas include the use of bells in their orchestras. What are vesper bells? Describe the tradition of bells calling folks to church. Why were bells used? What are other methods used by world religions to call people to worship? Compare church bells to cell phones and the internet. What do ring tones signify? ES/MS

Many famous artists created art for the Vatican or were influenced (and in some cases censored) by the Roman Catholic Church. How much influence did the Church have on composers in the 1800s? On what operas were performed? What role does a local religious ceremony in Calabria play in *Cavalleria rusticana*? Did the church have any additional influence on *Cavalleria rusticana* or *Pagliacci*? ES/MS

Nationalism was an important movement in the 1800s. How is *verismo* a type of nationalism? Name other pieces of nationalistic music (opera, choral, or orchestral). MS/HS

In *Cavalleria rusticana*, Alfio challenges Turiddu to a duel. What is a duel, and why do people do it? What are the traditions and customs of a duel? Name some famous historical duels and their outcomes. When was dueling outlawed in the United States? What were the penalties if you were caught dueling?

MS/HS

Consider the role of newspapers at the time of *Cavalleria rusticana*'s and *Pagliacci*'s premieres, and our view of news sources today. What media corporations exist today? (Consider those that own daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations, cartoon and features syndication services, cable networks, and social media.) What expectations do consumers have for news sources? What are the modern ethical tenets of journalism? Consider tabloids, scandal sheets, and yellow journalism. Could the stories of *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* appear as news stories today? What type of media would most likely publish these kinds of stories, and why?

MS/HS

Cavalleria rusticana translates to "rustic chivalry." What was chivalry? When was the concept of chivalry an important social and political construct? What were the rules of chivalry, and what was it intended to accomplish? Consider the popular expression "Chivalry is dead." What does that mean, and how is this expression used? If chivalry is truly dead, is that a positive or a negative?

MS/HS

The unification of Italy occurred in 1861, after a successful war against Austria, and after Giuseppe Garibaldi organized an invasion of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies (Naples and Sicily). Vittorio Emanuele II became the first king of the united Italy. Why did the Southern populations oppose unification? Compare this political situation to the American Civil War, which occurred around the same time. How much of the population spoke Italian at that time? Trace the use of language in Italian history.

HS

Mathematics CORE

State Standards: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

Lesson Plan Stems in the Mathematics section are *Common Core Friendly*:



Cavalleria rusticana and *Pagliacci* are usually presented as a "double bill." What does it mean to double something? What other famous or other kinds of "doubles" do you know?

PreK

The word "scale" can be used in many contexts, including math and music. Picture a scale. What does it do? In music, singers usually warm up their voices by singing scales. With your teacher's help, sing a simple scale. How many notes did you sing? Try another scale in a different key. How many notes did you count in that scale? What conclusions can you draw about musical scales?

PreK

<i>Cavalleria rusticana</i> and <i>Pagliacci</i> are usually performed on the same night. Brainstorm with your classmates: Why would an opera company want to perform two different operas on the same night? What are the pros and cons?	PreK/ES
Compare the costs of producing <i>Cavalleria rusticana</i> and <i>Pagliacci</i> at their premieres to the costs of this current Pittsburgh Opera production. Convert lira to euros and to dollars. Compare the costs of tickets.	ES/MS
Using several different recordings of <i>Cavalleria rusticana</i> and <i>Pagliacci</i> , time the length of each performance. Calculate both with and without intermission. Determine the length of an intermission, based on needs of the front-of-house staff, the audience, and the stage crew. Investigate rules for the stagehands to determine if they must have a break.	ES/MS
Make a plan to take a show “on the road.” Include costs, routes, logistics, vehicles, stage sets, costumes, personnel, and accommodations. Make a spreadsheet to calculate a range of costs, depending on the high and low costs for each factor.	ES/MS
The term “scale” is used in music and also used in math. What is the definition of “scale” in mathematics? Find the dimensions of the Benedum Center stage. Create a diagram of the stage drawn to different scales. What does it mean to draw a stage set ground plan to scale? Using the same scale as stage set designers use, create a scaled “stage set” draft for a room in your home.	ES/MS
What is the role that mathematical ratios play in music? What is the mathematical difference between a just-toned scale and an equal-tempered scale? What are the effects of using each method for tuning a piano? Is one preferred over the other? Why?	MS/HS
Pythagoras, the Greek mathematician and philosopher who discovered the Pythagorean Theorem in geometry, founded a community in the region known today as Calabria, which is the setting for <i>Pagliacci</i> . Known as “the father of numbers,” Pythagoras made influential contributions to philosophy and religious teaching in the late 6th century BCE. What did he believe about numbers, rhythm, and cycles?	HS

Science, Environment, Ecology, Technology, and Engineering

State Standards: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9

(SEETE Standards to take effect on July 1, 2025)

Sicily and Calabria are known for producing excellent lemons. What is a lemon? What do they taste like? What do we make with lemons? Do lemons grow well in Pittsburgh? PreK

Sicily and Calabria are home to two very active volcanoes: Mt. Etna and Mt. Stromboli. What is a volcano? What does it mean if a volcano is active? What's another famous volcano in Italy? Draw a picture of a volcano. PreK/ES

Find Sicily and Calabria on a world map. What other countries are these regions near? What do you think the weather is like there, based on their locale? Find Pennsylvania on the world map. Based on its location, do you think Pennsylvania would have the same type of weather as Sicily and Calabria? Why or why not? PreK/ES

Ruggiero Leoncavallo was born in 1857, the year that English inventor Henry Bessemer developed a steel-making process that uses blasts of air to remove impurities. How did the Bessemer process revolutionize steel production? What famous structures were built in the late 1800s using Bessemer process steel? ES/MS

Both Mascagni (b. 1861) and Leoncavallo (b.1857) were born during the time period known as the Industrial Revolution. What industries created the most pollution at that time? What parts of the environment were most impacted by the Industrial Revolution? Are those same industries functional today? What is their current impact on the environment? Group modern industries by "green" standards on a chart. ES/MS

The "play" put on by the traveling clowns in *Pagliacci* takes place at 11:00 pm, according to the libretto. When was telling time standardized? How is time told onboard ship? What is "military" time? Who else uses a 24-hour clock instead of AM and PM? ES/MS

Oleander is a native flowering shrub that thrives in Calabria, and is highly toxic to both humans and animals, so much so that skin contact with its sap can warrant a trip to the doctor, and if ingested it can be fatal. What other plants are poisonous to people or pets, and to what degree? Sometimes, poisonous plants can also be important components of medicine. What poisonous plants are used to create medicine? ES/MS

In 1892, the year *Pagliacci* premiered, George W. G. Ferris designed his Ferris Wheel for the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. Where was the Ferris Wheel invented? Explore the mechanics of the Ferris Wheel to other carnival rides used in a traveling show, a circus, or a street carnival. MS/HS

In the early 1890s, around the times when *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* premiered, boll weevils entered Texas from Mexico and infested cotton fields in the South. How is an infestation defined? How can agricultural products be protected from foreign pests? What other invasive species have recently entered the United States, and what parts of the environment have they damaged? How do countries protect themselves from invasive species? What rules exist to prevent these kinds of infestations?

MS/HS

In 1906, Enrico Caruso was the first opera singer to embrace the nascent 20th-century recording technology by entering into a lucrative agreement with the Victor Talking Machine Company, later renamed RCA Victor. These best-selling recordings cemented Caruso's reputation as one of the greatest-of-all-time opera singers. What was a Victrola? How did a talking machine record the sound and play it back? What were early records made from? Even with today's sophisticated recording technology, some people still prefer listening to phonograph records. Why? What can records let a listener hear that digital recordings do not?

MS/HS

Italy has four active volcanos. There are more than 1300 potentially active volcanos worldwide, include the "Ring of Fire" along the Pacific Rim. Investigate the locations of the world's volcanos and compare their histories to locations of major art centers.

HS

World Languages

ACTFL Standards: 1 Communication, 2 Cultures, 3 Connections, 4 Comparison, 5 Communities
(National Standards from American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages)

Many words from other languages make their way into English through the foods we eat. Name some Italian foods you've had. What other foods from other languages and cultures do you know?

PreK

If you were an Italian living in Italy, what words would you use for parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents?

PreK

The Italian alphabet is a little different from the English alphabet. How many letters are in the Italian alphabet, compared to English? What letters are missing? How do you say each letter in Italian?

PreK/ES

The word for clowns in Italian is "zanni," which is where the English word "zany" comes from. What other English words share origins with Italian words?

PreK/ES

Ruggero Leoncavallo, the composer of *Pagliacci*, was well-read, cultured, and in touch with the avant-garde trends of his time. What is the literal translation of the French term "avant-garde"? What does it mean? How does it apply to entertainment and popular culture? Is this term still used today? What performers would you consider to be "avant-garde" today?

ES/MS

Search a section of either opera's librettos to find familiar-sounding words. ES/MS
What do the following Italian words mean:

Intermezzo Forza Prologo Ritornano Scena Villaggio

The character's name Santuzza means "little saint" in Italian, and is also a ES/MS
nickname for Saint Rosalia, the protector of Sicily. Look at the list of
character names for both operas. Which names have other meanings?
What does your own name mean?

Italians from different parts of Italy sometimes have difficulty understanding MS/HS
one another because of regional dialects. What is a dialect? How does it
differ from patois, creole, or pidgin? What caused the different Sicilian and
Calabrian dialects? Compare students' dialects when they converse with
their friends as opposed to what is expected in the classroom. What is
code-switching? How do language and dialect reflect a person's life
status? What different dialects exist in the United States? What are some
challenges to understanding people from other areas?

Learn several famous sayings from southern Italy, and compare them to MS/HS
idioms in common use today:

- "a solitudine è ppi ll'anima chiddu cu manciari è ppu cuarpu" =
solitude is to the soul as food is to the body
- "a poesia 'ngjungi vita 'a vita" = poetry adds life to life
- "a fantasia 'i l'omu esti chhjù povara assai d' 'a verità" = the human
imagination is immensely poorer than reality
- "a' lingua è assai cchiù inquieta da vita" = language is much more
restless than life

The independent city-states of Italy were unified in 1861, after Giuseppe MS/HS
Garibaldi invaded the Kingdom of Two Sicilies (Naples and Sicily). At that
time, Italian became the official language of Italy. How much of the
population spoke Italian at that time? What languages were spoken in the
different regions of Italy in the mid-1800s? Trace the use of language in
Italian history. Do these linguistic tensions still exist in Italy today?

The "Intermezzo" in *Cavalleria rusticana* functions as a connector between HS
scenes to demonstrate the passage of time. Find similar words in multiple
languages that show connections.

"Vesti la giubba," the most famous music from *Pagliacci*, expresses how HS
the clown must make people laugh even though his heart is breaking.
Translate the aria into a target language, being careful to capture the exact
meaning of the emotional conflict.

Character Themes for *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*

Eleanore N. Childs, a Pittsburgh attorney and child advocate, worked with teachers for more than a decade to research character education and develop the Heartwood Ethics Curriculum for Children. Heartwood's life lessons through literature promote understanding and practice of seven universal character attributes, which constitute the foundation of community among all people.

The Heartwood Institute defined seven universal character attributes:

- **Courage** is not only mastering fear; it is the ability to face difficulty or risk with integrity and honor.
- **Loyalty** is being faithful to a person, group, or ideal based on understanding that we are all part of something greater than ourselves.
- **Justice** is being guided by a balance of truth, reason, and fairness to all.
- **Respect** is regard for all life on earth. It calls us to value all people and their contributions, viewpoints, and differences, such as culture, religion, age, race, and ability.
- **Hope** guides our future through faith and aspiration, helping us to rise above selfishness and despair.
- **Honesty** is being truthful and honorable, the foundation for friendship and community.
- **Love** is deep care and concern for others, encompassing all the attributes. The more love we give, the richer we become.

Discuss two attributes—*justice* and *love*—after reading the synopses of *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*.

1. Based on their behaviors, how would each of the following characters define love?
 - Men: Alfio, Turiddu, Canio, Taddeo
 - Women: Lola, Santuzza, Nedda
 Do the men define love differently from the women? If so, why might that be? Do you think men and women have different concepts of love today? If so, what are they and why?
2. Each of these operas' conflicts is resolved—for the moment—by public deaths. Do the main characters in each opera believe justice has been achieved? Did the actions of the characters deserve a public death? For whom has justice not been served? Can two "wrongs" make a "right"?
3. In *Cavalleria rusticana*, Alfio and Turiddu duel over the infidelity of Alfio's wife. What kind of justice is represented by a duel? What are the rules of a duel? Why do people think a formal duel will resolve a problem? What problem is Alfio hoping to resolve with this duel? Are justice and honor the same idea?
4. In your opinion, how should justice have been achieved in either opera? What do both operas have to tell us about the nature of love? Do the men act out of true love for their wives, or some other emotion?