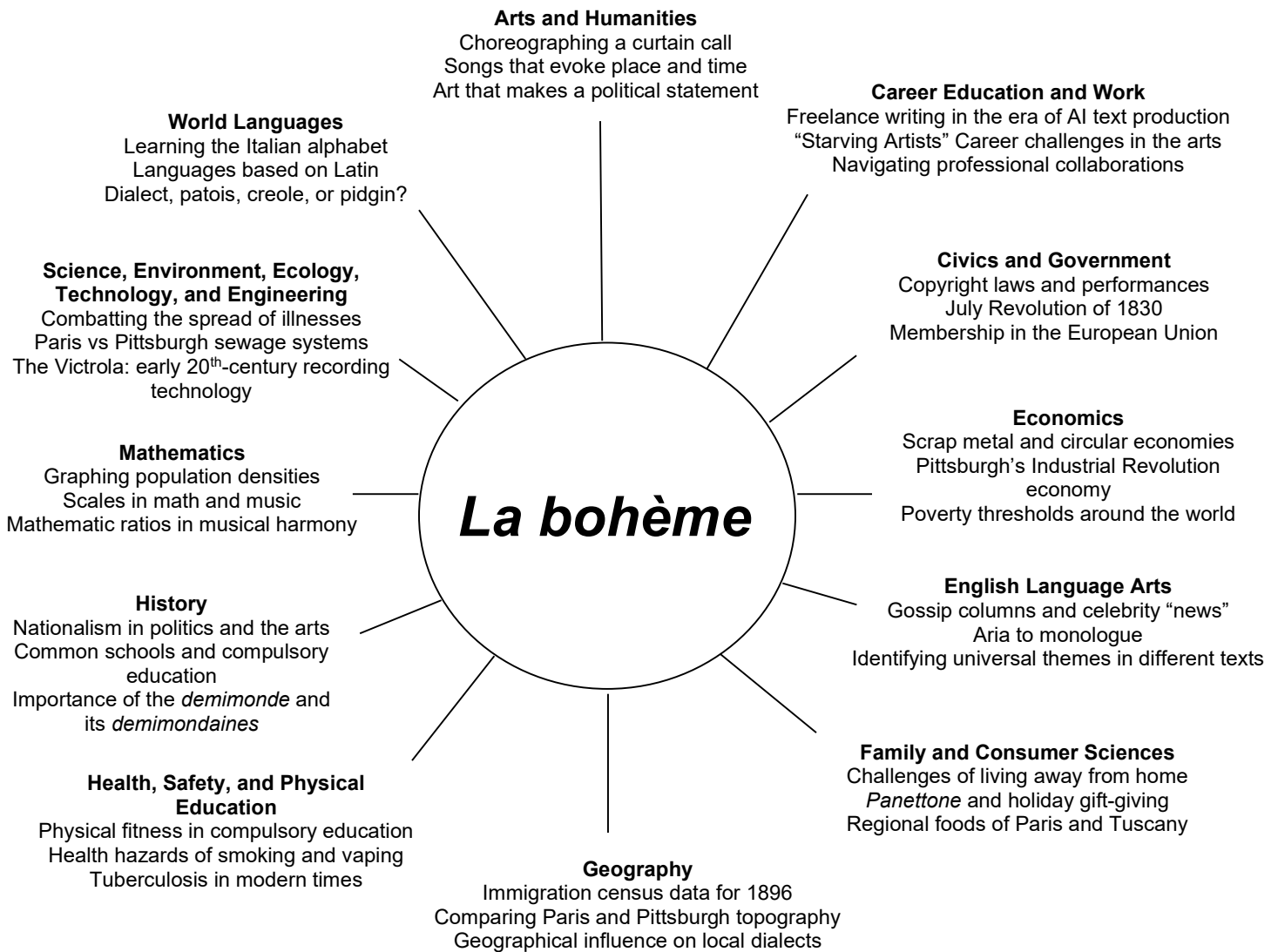


Curriculum Circle for *La bohème*

How does the opera *La bohème* by Giacomo Puccini, Luigi Illica, and Giuseppe Giacosa intersect with all academic content areas?
Begin with the opera and brainstorm connections to all curricula.





Lesson Plan Stems for 2025–2026

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Lesson Plan Stems for *La bohème*

How does the opera ***La bohème*** by Giacomo Puccini, Luigi Illica, and Giuseppe Giacosa 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

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? How would you organize a curtain call for this opera? Which characters will go first? Last? Why? Practice giving a curtain call with your classmates. PreK

One very famous song in *La bohème* is Musetta’s Waltz, which has three beats in each group. Practice clapping a series of STRONG-weak-weak beats. Listen to music in a meter of three and sway with the music. PreK

Puccini wrote ten operas, including one called *Il trittico*, which includes three short operas. Find examples of items in groups of three. PreK

In the first scene of *La bohème*, there is a fireplace in the bohemians’ apartment, but real fire cannot be used on stage. What colors would you use to paint a fire? 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/ES

For *La bohème*, compare a traditional set 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

The music for Musetta's Waltz "Quando me'n vo" in Act II and has become so famous that it could now be called an "earworm." What is an earworm? What are some other opera earworms?	ES
Listen to Musetta's Waltz, one of the most famous songs from opera. Can you hum along with it? What makes a song popular? How does Musetta's Waltz compare with your favorite song? Is music from the 19 th century similar to music today? Why or why not?	ES
Puccini also wrote an opera called <i>Il trittico</i> . A "trittico" or "triptych" is a work of art with three parts. Why would artists create art in three parts? Do triptychs exist in music and visual art? What are some famous examples?	ES/MS
Design and create costumes for <i>La bohème</i> set in our time. How will the different groups of people dress? What do we consider to be a "bohemian" look in 2025?	ES/MS
In many operas important action occurs offstage. Where does action occur off-stage in <i>La bohème</i> ? How does the audience know what happened?	ES/MS
What is a caricature? How are caricatures drawn? What does a caricature artist look for when creating a caricature of a subject? Draw caricatures of the characters in <i>La bohème</i> , based on their personalities and your imagination.	ES/MS
The music for "Quando me'n vo" in Act II is also called Musetta's Waltz. What is a waltz? How does waltz music sound? When was the waltz first invented, and how did it differ from other dances at that time? What different kinds of waltz forms are there? Are there any current popular songs that use a waltz tempo? Learn how to dance a basic waltz.	ES/MS
There are many sound effects that are used in operas, plays, musicals, and movies. How are these effects produced? Are they made in the same manner for both stage and screen? What sound effects should be included in <i>La bohème</i> ? How would you create these sound effects for this opera?	ES/MS
What are the plot and musical characteristics of <i>verismo</i> , and how does this style apply to <i>La bohème</i> ? How are singers for a <i>verismo</i> opera different from singers for a Mozart opera? How are <i>verismo</i> arias different from arias by Mozart and arias by Verdi?	ES/MS
At one point, there were two versions of <i>La bohème</i> . There are also two versions of <i>Phantom of the Opera</i> . What are the reasons for more than one form of a work? Compare the number of times Puccini's <i>La bohème</i> was performed at the Met during the run of <i>RENT</i> —a modern take on <i>La bohème</i> —both on and off Broadway. Was <i>RENT</i> the longest-running show in Broadway history?	ES/MS
What is meant by motive (or motif) in music? Explore Puccini's use of motive as well as other composers. Create your own characters; give each a motive that represents class, ideology, or disposition.	MS/HS

“La Vie en Rose” is a signature song of Paris and French singer Édith Piaf. Listen to Piaf’s version of this song. What does it mean to look at the world through “rose-colored” glasses? How does the song evoke Paris? Does <i>La bohème</i> depict French culture in a similar way?	MS/HS
Which aspects of the orchestra, orchestral color, and effects are specific to Puccini’s operas? Have there been attempts to “Americanize” the operas? What might that mean? Find reasons that a director would be for or against Americanizing a production.	MS/HS
What role does the orchestra play in <i>La bohème</i> ? Could a piano play the same role? How does the orchestra reflect the dramatic idea of the libretto? How does the orchestra play an independent role in developing the dramatic action?	MS/HS
Puccini composed another piece titled <i>Il trittico</i> , which contains three one-act operas, each of which depict contrasting moods and styles: <i>Il tabarro</i> is a <i>veristic</i> tragedy, <i>Suor Angelica</i> is a sentimental tale, and <i>Gianni Schicchi</i> is a comic farce. What do you think are the moods of Puccini’s other operas? What signals that mood for you?	MS/HS
Puccini set his operas in many different cultures. Listen to excerpts from <i>La bohème</i> , <i>Madama Butterfly</i> , <i>Girl of the Golden West</i> , <i>Turandot</i> , and <i>Tosca</i> . Would you describe them as essentially Italian operas? Why? Was Puccini successful in writing music to suggest the different settings of France, Japan, western United States, China, and Italy? Explain why or why not.	MS/HS
Operas often contain small parts for characters that may be necessary for only a little piece of the story, such as Parpignol in <i>La bohème</i> . 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
By choosing to portray the lives of poor characters, do you think Puccini was making a political statement? Study artforms from different eras to determine how artists use their art to make political statements, such as Picasso’s <i>Guernica</i> or Arthur Miller’s <i>The Crucible</i> . Draw or sculpt something that will express your own sentiments about something you care for or have concerns about.	MS/HS
What is meant by the term “program music”? How does Puccini use program music? Does he use it in the same way other composers do?	MS/HS
The contemporary musical <i>RENT</i> is very similar to Puccini’s <i>La bohème</i> . How does <i>RENT</i> modernize the story from <i>La bohème</i> for different audiences?	MS/HS
What is meant by the term “bohemian”? Determine the factors that make an artist to be considered a bohemian artist. In what era were bohemian artists common, and what purpose did they serve?	MS/HS

For safety reasons, working fireplaces (such as the one in the bohemians' apartment) cannot be used as a stage prop. How can a theater technician design a prop that gives the illusion of a working fireplace? What materials would be needed to simulate the look of a fire in a fireplace? What other hazards might this kind of setting generate?

MS/HS

Study theaters in late 19th-century Italy. What was used for lighting and sound effects? How were the sets designed, and how were scenes changed? How are these effects, set designs, and scene changes achieved today?

MS/HS

Discuss triads, transposition, and modulation. Listen to Mimì's aria. Transpose it to another key. Does the music still have the same effect?

HS

How can music be used instead of language? Using instruments, create an all-music-only version of a scene from your favorite play.

HS

Career Education and Work

State Standards: 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.4

The characters in *La bohème* earn their livings by working at different jobs: a seamstress, a musician, a poet, and a painter. What tool would you choose to represent each of these jobs? Find pictures that show these tools and tell your classmates why you think these tools are important for these jobs. Do you know anyone who also may have worked at one of these jobs?

PreK

In the 1800s when this opera is set, if a woman wasn't married and had to earn her own money, her work opportunities were very limited. In *La bohème*, Mimì worked as a seamstress. What does a seamstress do? Learn how to thread a needle and sew on a button. How does a person learn that skill? Do you think Mimì could make a lot of money at this job? Why or why not?

PreK

Mimì and her friends live in Paris, where nowadays many jobs are in the hotels and restaurants used by tourists. What kinds of jobs would be available in a restaurant? What kinds of jobs would be available in a hotel? If you were a young person in Paris looking for work, which of these jobs might you want to take? Why?

PreK/ES

Puccini was not a good student, but he became an outstanding composer. Where did Puccini learn to become a composer? What skills did he need to learn to be a successful composer?

ES

Librettists are often overlooked participants in an opera's creation. Research *La bohème* librettists Luigi Illica (1857–1919) and Giuseppe Giacosa (1847–1906). What other occupations did they have? What other composers did they collaborate with? What was their relationship with Puccini?

ES/MS

Imagine you are one of the four friends, and you work at his or her occupation: poet, painter, musician, seamstress. Using that character's viewpoint, write a description of the occupation and what that character sees as success or failure in business. What skills do you need to perform this occupation, and how would you learn those skills you need? What are the pros and cons of each? Do any of these jobs still exist today? Could you earn a living with any of these positions nowadays?

ES/MS

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-stage 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

Investigate one of the following professions in opera: the stage manager, the conductor, or a principal artist. How does someone qualify to work at this profession? What education and experience are needed to land this job? What are your responsibilities? What are the benefits and drawbacks of working in this position? For the position you've chosen, create a bulleted list of "To Dos" for the day before a performance.

ES/MS

Puccini worked as an opera composer instead of following the family business of working as a church musician. How common was that decision in the late 1800s? Did most people follow in their parents' footsteps, or did they choose their own professions?

ES/MS

What occupations were available to Mimi and Musetta in the mid-1800s, the time of the opera's setting? What educational opportunities were available to women of their class at that time? Could a woman make a living wage as a seamstress?

ES/MS

The characters in *La bohème* are all artists and entrepreneurs, who had to find ways to promote their art to make a living. What skills do artists need to promote and sell their work? What support systems and technology are available today for self-promotion that did not exist at the time when the opera is set?

MS/HS

Discuss the stereotype of the "starving artist" that is portrayed in this opera. What are the challenges of choosing a career in the performing, visual, plastic, or literary arts? How might these challenges be overcome? Should the arts still be considered "career-worthy"? Should college degrees, funding, and scholarships still be available in the fine arts and humanities today? Debate the value of the arts in today's STEM-driven education.

MS/HS

Find examples of computer-generated art. What impact has digital technology had on the production, quality, and critique of art, both visual and audio? If you were to set this opera in current times, how might technology have impacted each character? Would they have been able to

MS/HS

afford access to technology? Interview some current artists working in or with digital media. How has using this technology impacted their art and ability to earn a living with their art?

What are the major industries based in Paris? If you wanted to move to Paris, what employment opportunities exist? What documents, permissions, skills, and supports would you need, as a foreigner, to obtain employment in Paris, or another city not located in the United States? What is the average level of education for a worker in Paris? How does that compare to the average level of education in New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles?

MS/ HS

Nowadays, Rodolfo would be considered a “free-lance” writer: someone who earns a living selling his written work to interested parties, rather than being directly employed by a publisher or corporation. How has the development of mass-production, digital media, and AI assistants such as Chat GPT impacted those who write for a living? Explore the technology of computerized writing and compare articles generated by computer programs to those written by human authors. Can you tell the difference? What are the limits and advantages of this kind of text production? Are writers like Rodolfo in danger of losing their “jobs” to computer programs?

HS

Civics and Government

State Standards: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4

If the Christmas Eve party in *La bohème* had gotten too loud, could someone at the Café Momus have called the police? How do you call the police in Pittsburgh? What is the phone number for calling in emergencies?

PreK

In the 1830s, when *La bohème* was set, France was ruled by King Louis-Philippe I. What is a king? Did the United States have a king in the 1830s? Who is head of government in the United States? How is that person chosen to be the head of government?

PreK

In Puccini’s lifetime, Italy unified and became the Kingdom of Italy, with Victor Emmanuel II presiding as its first monarch. What other countries have kings or queens? How is a king different from a president?

PreK/ES

As a 17-year-old student at the Milan Conservatory, Puccini was already a heavy smoker who was so poor that he couldn’t afford tobacco. Unlike the character in *La bohème* who sells his coat to buy medicine, though, young Puccini found money to buy his cigarettes by secretly selling off pipes from the organ that he was hired to play as the church’s organist. What might this opera be like if Puccini had been caught stealing these pipes and sent to jail?

PreK/ES

During the 1830s, the time period in which <i>La bohème</i> is set, there was extensive political unrest in Paris and throughout France. Does Puccini include any references to those political times in the opera?	ES/MS
Describe the type of government in power in France in 1830. Was it a monarchy, dictatorship, republic? Chart the different kinds of governments in France from 1790 to the present.	MS/HS
How has France's system of government changed from the 1830s to the present? How has membership in the European Union affected the government of France and other countries that are member-states? Create a graphic organizer to show this change.	MS/HS
Puccini loved fast automobiles, and was an early adopter of this new technology, long before owning an automobile was commonplace. When did driver licensing become required to operate a vehicle? Are autos the only vehicles for which formal operator's licenses are required? What kinds of skills did early drivers need to demonstrate to obtain a license? How has the licensing process changed over time?	MS/HS
In 1830, the year that Puccini set <i>La bohème</i> , the July Revolution succeeded in overthrowing Charles X and the Bourbon monarchy in favor of Charles' cousin Louis-Philippe I, who ascended the throne as a constitutional monarch. What led Parisians to revolt against the Bourbon monarchy? What is the difference between an absolute monarch and a constitutional monarch? How did this change reflect larger social and political shifts of that time and influence French government in the modern era? Did Puccini include any reference to this governmental change in the opera?	MS/HS
Even though Puccini has been dead for more than 100 years, his 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? What happens if someone uses copyrighted music or literature without gaining permission first? How might an artist or an estate obtain recourse or recompense for "stolen" intellectual property?	MS/HS
<i>La bohème's</i> story, musical themes, and individual songs have been adapted as pop songs, jazz pieces, a short story, and even a Broadway musical (<i>RENT</i>). How does an artist obtain permission to create a derivative work from another work of art? Is permission even needed?	MS/HS

Economics

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

As a student in Milan, Puccini shared a run-down apartment with another composer. 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

The main characters in *La bohème* are poor. What does the word "poor" mean? What is the opposite of poor?

PreK

The four friends in *La bohème* don't have enough money for firewood or food, but they go out to a restaurant on Christmas Eve. Should they have spent or saved their money? Why or why not?

PreK

La bohème is set in the 1830s, when the prices of bread, milk, eggs, and cheese was regulated by the French government. How much do these items cost today? Add up the prices of a gallon of milk, a carton of eggs, a loaf of bread, and a pound of cheese. If this was the only food you could afford, how many meals would these items make? Would they be enough for a week? Why or why not?

PreK/ES

La bohème is one of the top 10 most-performed operas world-wide. 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

If you were a financial adviser, what would you say to the four friends about saving and spending their money? Do they demonstrate good fiscal discipline?

ES

La bohème is set in the 1830s. What were the prices of household staples such as bread, milk, eggs, and cheese during that era, and what do those items cost today? How do today's prices compare to the average worker's income; what percentage of a person's salary is expected to go to food? Research price index formulas and estimate the cost of those items 70 years from today.

ES/MS

Puccini was already a heavy smoker, but couldn't afford tobacco when he was a student. The story goes that he sold organ pipes out of the church where he was the organist to find money for cigarettes. How much would scrap metal dealers pay for organ pipes today? Do different metals generate different payments per pound? How important are these circular economies—such as scrapping—to a country's overall economic picture? What are some other examples of circular economies?

ES/MS

The main characters in *La bohème* are poor. Is it possible to change from being poor to having enough money to thrive? In modern times, how can people in the United States raise themselves out of poverty? How important is education? Were the characters in *La bohème* educated? If so, how did that impact their financial situations? Research and analyze statistics on poverty in the United States for the last century. At what points in history were more people living in poverty? When did we see the least amount of people living in poverty? What circumstances might account for these trends?

ES/MS

What is the Parisian tourist economy like today, and for what part of France's GDP does Parisian tourism account? What other kinds of industries fuel Paris's economy? What other industries support the French economy nation-wide?

ES/MS

Pittsburgh Opera marketing materials describe *La bohème*: "Set against the backdrop of 1830's Paris, *La bohème* follows four impoverished artists surviving with little more than friendship, passion, and their love for art." What does it mean to be impoverished? What is the current definition of "poverty" in the United States? In France? Who sets the federal poverty level, an annual income threshold, in the United States? What resources does each country provide for those who are living in poverty? Create a chart comparing official poverty thresholds in different countries around the world.

ES/MS

Describe the economy of modern-day France and its membership in the European Union. What supports are in place for French citizens if they fall on hard times? How does having those supports in place help the overall French economy, if it helps the economy? Does membership in the EU impact a member-state's ability to support its citizenry? What economic benefits would have been available to the characters in this opera, had they been alive in modern times?

MS/HS

At the time of *La bohème* premiere in 1896, the Pittsburgh's Industrial Revolution had been shaped by the steel and coal industries. 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

What is inflation? How is it related to the law of supply and demand? What circumstances cause inflation? Create a budget as though you were living in an apartment and had a fixed income. Determine the smallest amount necessary to pay bills, eat, and maintain your apartment today, 100 years ago, and 200 years ago. Has inflation risen proportionally to the cost of living?

MS/HS

English Language Arts

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

Choose several favorite books. Which ones tell stories about real people? Which ones tell stories about made-up people? Is *La bohème* a story about real people? PreK

What happens at the end of *La bohème*? Make up another story that tells what happens next to the rest of the characters. PreK

Mimi and Rodolfo are girlfriend-boyfriend in *La bohème*. Pretend you are telling a story about their first meeting, first from Mimi's memory and then from Rodolfo's. PreK/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 *La bohème*. 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. PreK/ES

Though *La bohème* is a fictional story, the opera's style is considered to be "verismo" or "realistic." How can a story be both fictional and realistic? PreK/ES

What is a monologue? What takes the place of a monologue in opera, and how do the two forms differ? Pick a character from *La bohème* and create a monologue for this person. What did you need to add or change to make a successful monologue from the libretto's text? Perform your monologue for the class. ES/MS

Write two new versions of *La bohème*, the first from Mimi's perspective and the second from Rodolfo's. What are the differences from the original opera? ES/MS

Pretend that the characters of *La bohème* are on Facebook. How might each describe the events of his/her day? What pictures/events might be posted to reveal his/her circumstances? Write a sample blog of a day's events from the viewpoint of one of the characters. ES/MS

Learn these vocabulary words from the opera: ES/MS

bohemians	faints	indignation	philosopher	spontaneously
concealing	feigned	indiscretions	possessions	succumbs
detain	flirtatious	merrymaking	poverty	tavern
dramas	garret	muff	shrewd	undoubtedly
enact				

How many different definitions are there for "bohemian"? Which did Puccini intend when describing the main characters in *La bohème*? ES/MS

Why did Puccini choose Mimi's death as the climax of *La bohème*? What elements of opera did Puccini combine to create the deepest impact on the audience? What other literary works also end at the climax? ES/MS

One reason why <i>La bohème</i> endures may be its exploration of universal themes. What is meant by the term “universal theme”? What are some of the themes present in this opera that could be called “universal”? Brainstorm other themes present in popular literary works (such as novels, shows, movies, etc.,) to determine some common themes. How many of these common themes are also present in <i>La bohème</i> ?	ES/MS
<i>La bohème</i> is an example of <i>verismo</i> opera. What is the etymology of the word <i>verismo</i> ? How does knowing its origins help understand what is meant by <i>verismo</i> ? Do you agree with the <i>verismo</i> characterization of <i>La bohème</i> ?	ES/MS
Choose a character from <i>La bohème</i> and create a diary for that person, or write diary entries for each character after Mimi’s death.	ES/MS
Analyze the relationships between the characters in <i>La bohème</i> . Would these relationships be plausible in the 21 st century? Why or why not?	MS/HS
<i>La bohème</i> is based on a collection of stories by Henri Murger: <i>Scènes de la vie de bohème</i> . Explore how many operas are based on literary sources, such as novels, short stories, and plays. Why would composers and librettists use already-existing stories instead of creating an opera libretto from scratch?	MS/HS
<i>La bohème</i> is based on French author Henri Murger’s stories and play <i>Scènes de la vie de bohème</i> . Murger used his own experiences as an impoverished writer in Paris as the basis for this episodic series of vignettes set in 1830s Paris. He later converted the vignettes (<i>Scènes de la vie de bohème</i>) into a successful play that became the inspiration for Puccini’s <i>La bohème</i> . What is “episodic prose”? What other literary works use this style? What other important literary movements were taking place in the mid-late 1800s? How does Puccini’s <i>La bohème</i> fit into these new approaches to narrative?	MS/HS
Rewrite the story of <i>La bohème</i> in the style of a mainstream newspaper, such as <i>The New York Times</i> or the <i>Pittsburgh Post-Gazette</i> . Investigate supermarket tabloids and social media news feeds such as <i>The National Enquirer</i> , Facebook, or TikTok, to determine how much celebrity news, gossip, and bizarre stories about ordinary people they include. How would the story of <i>La bohème</i> be told in the tabloids or on a social media feed?	MS/HS
Explain why Puccini set <i>La bohème</i> in the 1830s when he was producing it in the late 1890s. Compare <i>La bohème</i> to Mark Twain’s <i>Huck Finn</i> , which was written in the 1880s but set in the 1840s. Why did both authors set their stories in a time period almost 50 years prior to their work’s premiere or publication?	HS
Compare Flaubert’s <i>Madame Bovary</i> (1865) and Tolstoy’s <i>War and Peace</i> (1869) to the story behind <i>La bohème</i> . What connecting threads emerge among all three stories?	HS

Family and Consumer Sciences

State Standards: 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4

In *La bohème*, a poet, a painter, a musician, and a philosopher live together in a rented apartment. How could they form a kind of "family"? How could they share household tasks? PreK

Puccini's full name was Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini. How many names did he have? Why do you think his parents gave him so many names? Are you named for someone older in your family? PreK/ES

In the first part of *La bohème*, it is Christmas Eve. What does "eve" mean? What other holidays can you name? What traditions are related to those holidays? PreK/ES

Composer Giacomo Puccini worked with two librettists, Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, to create *La bohème*. How do groups of people learn to collaborate on a group project? How would you work with different people to complete a task? What makes working with other people fun? What makes it challenging? PreK/ES

In the opera, a poet, a painter, a musician, and a philosopher living together in an apartment form a kind of "family". What economic circumstances would draw them together? How do they each provide basic necessities of life? With three other partners, investigate how you could also pool your resources to "live together" for one month in your current town. What would your living expenses be? How much will you need to cover these expenses? What kinds of work would you need to do to support yourselves? ES/MS

The main characters in *La bohème* all live apart from their families. What are the challenges of living far away from your home or your family? How important is it to have friends or family support? ES/MS

Puccini loved to eat. What kinds of foods are typical of Tuscany, the Italian region where Puccini was born? What foods are typical of Paris, France, where *La bohème* is set? Explore the reasons different cultures use different cooking ingredients. Prepare food for the class from different cultures. Do an experiment to determine if people's tastes come from their genes or from their geography. ES/MS

When Puccini was a poor student, he wrote about his lack of food, saying he needed nothing more than a simple pot of beans cooked with good olive oil to be satisfied. By the time Puccini was a wealthy man, though, he formed a Club Bohème where he would cook elaborate meals of pasta and game meats for his male friends. How might what you like to eat reflect your financial or social status? Which Puccini operas include food on stage? What kinds of food are present in operas? ES/MS

<i>Panettone</i> is an Italian type of sweet bread and fruitcake. Every Christmas, Puccini sent <i>panettone</i> to friends, but one year he quarreled with the conductor Toscanini, and tried to cancel his gift order. However, it was too late and the <i>panettone</i> had already been delivered. Puccini sent a telegram to Toscanini saying: “<i>Panettone</i> sent by mistake,” to which the reply came: “<i>Panettone</i> eaten by mistake.” What makes <i>panettone</i> special? Why would <i>panettone</i> make a good holiday gift? Could this kind of gift help heal a quarrel between friends? What does Puccini’s telegram and Toscanini’s reply show about the nature of quarrels between friends? Explore the commercial production of this bread and how to buy it from Italy.	ES/MS
Trace Puccini's family tree and the custom of parents naming children for their ancestors. How many names did Puccini have? What other cultures give children many names? How many names do you have? In the “family tree” of Italian opera composers, where does Puccini fit in? Create a world-wide family tree of opera composers. How do you decide where to put all the names on your tree?	ES/MS
How do the characters of <i>La bohème</i> manage their interpersonal conflicts? How does each offer support to his/her friends? Explain sources of support used today that offer help for personal relationship problems.	ES/MS
In the first part of <i>La bohème</i>, it is Christmas Eve. What holiday (both secular and sacred) traditions existed in France in the 19th century? What traditions existed in the United States at that time? How have these traditions changed? How do these traditions compare to those in other countries?	ES/MS
The main characters in <i>La bohème</i> all come from the lower classes. Compare the lifestyles of these poor bohemians to those of the nobility or the wealthy. What are the advantages and disadvantages of both life styles? Are there any similarities between these comparisons and modern society?	MS/HS
How do the main characters of <i>La bohème</i> illustrate strength in decision making and responsible behavior relating to the needs of each of their friends?	MS/HS
A major theme of <i>La bohème</i> 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

Geography

State Standards: 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4

La bohème takes place in the Latin Quarter, a neighborhood in Paris. Find Paris and France on a globe or map. What nickname do people use for your neighborhood? PreK

Even though *La bohème* is set in France, Puccini was from Italy. 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

Create a map of Mimi's apartment. Pretend you are looking down into the apartment from the ceiling (a bird's eye view) and draw the furniture. PreK/ES

Look at a map of Paris and a map of Pittsburgh. Does either city have straight streets? Could you call either one a grid? PreK/ES

For the student matinee of *La bohème*, find the best way to get to the Benedum if you are coming from the north, south, east, or west of Pittsburgh. If needed, find detours from the PennDOT website. ES/MS

Find the setting of *La bohème* on a world map. What other countries are nearby? 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 Paris, France? Why or why not? ES/MS

Paris, the setting of the opera, is a large, congested city. How do residents and visitors get to different parts of the city? Are there special rules or restrictions for driving in Paris? What other modes of transportation are available to Parisians? Do most Parisians own cars? Why or why not? ES/MS

On a map, locate all of the settings for Puccini's main operas. Why do you think Puccini chose different locations and cultures for each? What was his favorite location? Look for similarities across stories that have the same or similar settings. ES/MS

Locate Bohemia and study the culture. Is Bohemia the same as the Czech Republic? Are Bohemians—people from Bohemia—the same as the bohemians depicted in *La bohème*? Compare the culture of Bohemia to that of Paris's bohemians in the 1830s and now. Why did Puccini set *La bohème* in Paris? Write and perform a skit that begins in 1830 and progresses to current times. What kinds of changes are key to your story? ES/MS

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

Many Pittsburghers share an Italian heritage with Puccini, and can trace their ancestry back to Italian immigrants. Investigate the censuses for immigration in the 1890s, when *La bohème* 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

On the "Operapedia" website, Henry Stewart described the difference between Puccini's portrayal of an actual Parisian neighborhood and its actual state: "*La bohème* is set in an epochal Paris of starving artists that the opera helped iconize. Puccini recreated a city very different, spiritually and geographically, from the one that existed at the time of the opera's premiere. By the 1860s, Café Momus, where the characters party during Act II, had already become a paint store, and today it's a boutique hotel—a long way from a SoHo Right Bank bar! Act III's tavern just beyond the city limits—at the Barrière d'Enfer (Gate of Hell), now the Place Denfert-Rochereau—was no longer the edge of town but well within the new walls. Today it's a major traffic intersection—not the opera's sleepy, snowy, secluded hideaway." How does Stewart's description change your view of Paris at the time of *La bohème*?

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

Health, Safety, and Physical Education

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

In the opera, Mimi is sick. How can you tell if someone isn't feeling well? How does your body let you know when you may be catching a cold?

PreK

The composer Puccini died of cancer from smoking cigarettes. Why is smoking bad for your health?

PreK/ES

In the opera, Mimi contracts a serious disease called tuberculosis. How does someone get a disease? Can a sick person such as Mimi pass her illness to someone else? How can people protect themselves from getting sick?

PreK/ES

The main characters in *La bohème* are poor and often can't afford food. What is meant by the word "starving"? What does it mean to be malnourished? How much food does a person need every day to survive? What kind of food is best to eat?

PreK/ES

Puccini was born in 1856. What sports were also invented in the mid-1800s? What sports could Puccini have played or viewed? Could he have played pickleball? Why or why not?	ES/MS
Find the minimum amount of nutrition humans need to survive and the criteria that are used to determine when someone has crossed the poverty threshold. Which of the characters in <i>La bohème</i> would be classified as poor? As malnourished?	ES/MS
Mimi died of tuberculosis. Did she have a doctor? How important are health care workers to keeping people healthy? Could Mimi have afforded a doctor?	ES/MS
How could Mimi have contracted tuberculosis? What were her medical options to get well? Could she have infected the other friends with TB? What are the symptoms of TB? How can we stay safe today?	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 <i>La bohème</i> premiered, would you have had a physical fitness class? If not, how would you have maintained a healthy body?	ES/MS
Puccini smoked cigarettes from an early age and ultimately died of cancer. Research the connections between smoking and cancer; when did scientists discover the health hazards of smoking? Do these same connections apply to vaping, too? Can all cancers be prevented?	ES/MS
The Nobel Prizes were established in 1896, the year that <i>La bohème</i> premiered. What is a Nobel Prize, and why are they called "Nobel" prizes? What are the categories in which a Nobel is awarded? How many of these prizes are awarded in the sciences? Who discovered how TB was spread? Did he receive a Nobel Prize for his work? How significant is the Nobel Prize to the field of medicine?	ES/MS
Find the public health hazards that were most prominent in the mid-1800s, the time in which <i>La bohème</i> is set. Which disease caused the most fatalities? How did they treat the disease? How is it now treated, and what knowledge had to be acquired prior to modern treatment?	MS/HS
The treatment for tuberculosis, called "consumption" in <i>La bohème</i> , has evolved greatly since the 1800s. Is there a vaccine to prevent infection? Is the disease still around? Research the differences in treating TB with the "iron lung" and streptomycin. Who should get the BCG vaccine? Are people who are immunocompromised more likely to get TB today?	MS/HS
In <i>La bohème</i> , Mimi died of consumption, but in <i>RENT</i> , a modernized take on <i>La bohème</i> , Mimi is faced with AIDS. Why did Jonathan Larson, the creator of <i>RENT</i> , choose AIDS? Are there parallels between tuberculosis in the 1800s and AIDS in the 1900s?	MS/HS

Mimi is a seamstress before the advent of sewing machines and factories. MS/HS
What muscles would she be using to perform her work? What physical conditions or injuries might arise from the nature of this work? What modern jobs share these same problems? How could Mimi prevent injury from her profession? How are these concerns addressed today?

Singing opera is physically demanding. On the day of a full-length MS/HS
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.

History

State Standards: 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4

Since the United States was founded, France has been considered our PreK
nation's friend for most of this time. What does it mean to be friends with someone? How can countries be "friends?" What other countries can be called United States' friends?

La bohème is set almost 200 years ago. How would you show an audience PreK
that a story took place a very long time ago? How would the characters look? What kinds of clothes and accessories would you have your cast wear? What kinds of items would you include as stage props?

Look at a photo of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, which was built after Puccini PreK/ES
wrote *La bohème*. The Eiffel Tower is probably the most famous building in Paris. What are some famous buildings you can name? What are some famous buildings in Pittsburgh? When were they built?

During his lifetime, Puccini became a famous composer in his homeland of ES/MS
Italy. Name some other famous Italians. Why were they famous? Are they still famous now? Why or why not?

Paris's most iconic landmark, the Eiffel Tower, did not exist at the time ES/MS
when the opera was set. When and why was the Eiffel Tower built? Who was its creator? What made its architecture a technological wonder? Compare its structure to other famous buildings of the 19th century.

How are social classes depicted in *verismo* opera? Explore the American ES/MS
social classes of the early 1890s, when *La bohème* 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?

An anachronism is something that appears in a time period where it didn't ES/MS
originally exist. After watching *La bohème*, list some items that should not be in the opera because they didn't exist in 1830, the time the opera was set.

Examine the class struggle in Italy. Explain why Mimì, or any other woman who didn't have a dowry, wasn't likely to get married. What would become of a single woman who didn't marry? ES/MS

Learn about the culture of 19th-century Paris. Working in groups, promote a product that existed in 19th-century France, perhaps something that one of the characters might use. For your promotion create a television commercial, a radio commercial, and a billboard. ES/MS

In France at that time, keeping a mistress was to be part of the *demimonde*, a whole separate kind of society with its own rules and pastimes, mostly for wealthy men who could afford it. Mimì and Musetta are also "kept" women. What were the activities of the *demimonde* and *demimondaines*? How important were these activities to the Parisian economy at that time? When did the *demimonde* lose its power? What, if anything, has replaced it? MS/HS

Find the cultural restrictions regarding public behavior that were placed on the upper classes in the early 1800s. What behaviors were expected? What was taboo? Compare them to the restrictions of the lower classes at that same period. MS/HS

What was happening politically in both Italy and the United States during Puccini's early life and young adulthood, in the mid-1800s? Were the controversies similar? MS/HS

In the 1830s—the same time in which *La bohème* is set—Horace Mann's common school movement began to take hold in the United States, meaning more youngsters were able to get a basic, public education. Though initially a voluntary arrangement, by mid-century, the idea of basic literacy education as compulsory gained traction, and by 1918, schooling was compulsory nationwide. Trace the history of public education in the United States: what was its purpose, who could attend, and why was it needed? Compare the education you could receive at a Horace Mann common school to an elementary education today. When was secondary education made available? How is the education system different in the United States today? Who is required to go to school? MS/HS

What was the structure of the judicial system in 1890's France, when *La bohème* premiered? Compare that to the judicial structures in 1790 and 1990. How have the judicial systems changed? Have they improved or deteriorated? Explain. MS/HS

Study the French educational system in 1830s, when *La bohème* is set. Who went to school? What did they study? Compare the French system to American education in the same period. How has education changed in France and America since the early 1800s? Follow a 19th-century French or American curriculum in your classroom for one day. Discuss what you liked and disliked about this one-day experience. MS/HS

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

Examine the European Industrial Revolution. How might it have affected or influenced Puccini? What changes did industrialization bring? How would industrialization impact the main characters in the opera? Where would they be working? MS/HS

Consider the role of newspapers at the time of *La bohème*'s premiere, 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 story of *La bohème* appear as a news story today? What type of media would most likely publish this kind of story, and why? MS/HS

What alliances did France have with other countries in the 1830s, at the time when *La bohème* is set? How have those alliances shifted from then until now? How does membership in the European Union and NATO affect France's alliances? HS

Mathematics

State Standards: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

La bohème is often listed on "Top Ten" lists of favorite operas. Create a Top Ten list of favorite books, favorite foods, or favorite colors. How will you decide what to list? PreK

La bohème is set in Paris, France, when the "franc" was the name of their money. In 2002, France changed its currency to the "euro". What kind of money does the United States use? PreK

A man named Gustave Eiffel and his company built the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France, just a few years before *La bohème* premiered. It took the workers two years, two months, and five days to build the tower. Track that much time on a calendar. PreK

One of Puccini's operas is called *Il trittico*, which means three shorter operas. Make a list of items that come in groups of three. 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

On the “Operapedia” website in 2016, Henry Stewart wrote: “The Metropolitan Opera has performed *Bohème* 1,290 times, more than any other opera.” Research how many times *La bohème* has now been performed at the Met. Create a “Top Ten” list of operas performed at the Met to determine the ranking of *La bohème*. ES

The 19th century includes the same years as the 1800s. What century are we living in today? In what century was *La bohème* composed? Would the years be classified as BC or BCE? Why? Write the centuries to which the 2000s and 1900s are equivalent. ES

La bohème is set in Paris, France. What currency would have been used in France in the 1830s? What currency is used today? How does this currency compare to the value of the United States dollar? ES/MS

For *La bohème* determine the cost of the total production, including labor, materials, performing artists, understudies, lighting and sound crews, theater rental, copyright fees, publicity, printing, renting rehearsal space, directors, ushers, costumers, and creating or renting costumes. How many tickets would have to be sold at what cost to make a profit? ES/MS

Make a model of the theater where *La bohème* premiered. Discuss the importance of scale to architects using a CAD program on the computer. ES/MS

The iconic landmark in Paris, the Eiffel Tower, was built by Gustave Eiffel’s civil engineering firm in two years, two months, and five days, using 7,500 tons of iron and 2.5 million rivets. Research some other numbers associated with the tower and create math word problems. ES/MS

The term “scale” is also used in math. What is the definition of “scale” in mathematics? Find the dimensions of the Benedum Theater 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

Create an equation to determine the number of buses needed to transport the performers, costumes, and scenery for a tour. Find the total cost for transporting the show. ES/MS

How is mathematics integral to music, such as how pitch relates to sound waves? What other mathematical relationships exist in music? MS/HS

Graph the United States’ population densities in relation to the number of deaths each year for the following dates: 1858, 1896, 1924 (the dates of Puccini’s birth, *La bohème*’s premiere, and Puccini’s death), as well as the centennial of these events: 1958, 1996, and 2024. How do the figures from today compare to those in the 1800s? Graph the life expectancy 200 years ago, 100 years ago, and today. Based on your charts, predict what American population density, deaths, and life expectancy will be for each event’s bicentennial: 2058, 2096, and 2124. MS/HS

Create charts and graphs that compare the level of poverty (such as the four friends of *La bohème* experienced) in different parts of the globe: the United States, France or Italy, and a third country of your own choosing. Compare the prices of bread, milk, and other such items in the same countries, as well as the average person's income. MS/HS

One of the characters in *La bohème* is the painter Marcello. In the early 20th century, painting took new turns towards the *avant garde* styles of Cubism and Futurism. Both styles involved breaking down subjects into angles, shapes and planes for the purpose of depicting space, mass, time, volume, movement, and dynamics. Investigate the connections between geometry, trigonometry, and both art movements. MS/HS

What is the role that mathematical ratios play in musical harmony? What is the mathematical difference between a just-toned scale and an equal-tempered scale? What are the harmony effects of using each method for tuning a piano? HS

Science, Environment, Ecology, Technology, and Engineering

State Standards: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5

In the opera, characters burn pages of a manuscript to provide heat for the night. Lighting a fire can be dangerous, even if it's for a good purpose. What is meant by fire safety? How does your school keep you safe from a fire? PreK

In the opera *La bohème*, Mimì is very sick. What are some common illnesses that children get and how can the illnesses be prevented? PreK

Mimì was impoverished and her apartment would have been very humble and possibly in poor condition. Do you think insects or other animal pests might have been in her attic apartment? If you find pests in your house, how do you get rid of them? PreK/ES

At the time *La bohème* took place, the Paris sewage system was not good enough to handle the population growth. Where does sewage go in Pittsburgh? How is it treated so it doesn't go into the rivers? ES

What insects or other animal pests might have been commonly found in housing in 1830s Paris? What health problems would these pests create or exacerbate? How would Mimì have managed the pests? How do we manage pests today? ES/MS

Puccini was born during the Industrial Revolution. What were some of the most significant inventions of that era, and who created them? Are these inventions still relevant today? In what ways do scientific inventions of the Industrial Revolution influence modern science and our lives today? ES/MS

Puccini was born during the era 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

Paris, the setting of the opera, is a large, congested city. Are there special rules or restrictions for driving in Paris? Why would some cities want to restrict cars from entering certain parts of town? What has been the impact of automobiles on historical structures? What other cities also have restrictions on private cars? What are the pros and cons of designating auto-free zones? What other modes of transportation are available to Parisians? Do most Parisians own cars? Why or why not?

ES/MS

The Latin Quarter of Paris is famous for its sewer system. What makes this sewer system famous? When was it constructed? Is it still in use today? How does it compare to modern sewer systems? Is it possible to take a tour of the sewers? What would that be like?

ES/MS

Research vaccinations that have been developed to combat plagues and pandemics. How successful have they been? Is there a vaccine that would have prevented Mimi’s contracting tuberculosis? What is herd immunity? Can communicable diseases return? How do scientists calculate when a disease has been eradicated?

ES/MS

In the opera, characters burn pages of a manuscript to provide heat for the night. Study the many characteristics of fire and heat. Investigate the best ways to start a fire in a fireplace and to keep it going. What are the fastest- and slowest-burning materials used in a home fireplace? How can something be made fireproof?

ES/MS

What is meant by a “plague”? At what point does a disease reach “plague” status? What illnesses were plaguing people in the 1890s, when *La bohème* premiered? What are the ways that people today prevent or cure these illnesses? Could tuberculosis be considered a “plague”? How does TB fit into the history of deadly plagues, including the COVID19 pandemic? Determine the effects of plagues on societies.

ES/MS

Study some of the common illnesses in opera such as tuberculosis, gangrene, mental illness, plague, starvation, and poison. Why are these types of diseases so common in operas?

MS/HS

In what ways did climate play a part in the way buildings were built in the 19th century? What are some of the features that 19th century structures display that indicate design with climate in mind. Does climate still play a role in how buildings are designed today? Build your own climate-conscious model house, and then build a second model house using only materials that were available in 1830. Which performs better when exposed to the elements?

MS/HS

How many people died in 1830 from diseases such as the tuberculosis that kills Mimi? Investigate statistics for consumption, polio, malnutrition, anemia, cholera, dysentery, and typhus. Are these illnesses still common in the 21st century? Have any new diseases taken the place of these? When compared to the population increase, have the diseases become more or less widespread? Have any of these diseases been eradicated?

MS/HS

In the 1890s, close to the time when *La bohème* 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 1902, Enrico Caruso was among the first opera singers to embrace the nascent 20th-century recording technology, and he eventually entered 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 records. Why? What can records let a listener hear that digital recordings do not?

MS/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 and/or French foods you've had. What other foods from other languages and cultures do you know? PreK

When she meets Rodolfo, Mimì sings "My name is Lucia, but I'm called Mimì." How do you say "My name is..." or "I am called..." in your target language? What are some common nicknames in your target language? Do you have a nickname? 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

Arturo Toscanini conducted the first performance of *La bohème*. The name Arturo in Spanish or Italian is the same as Arthur in English, and it means "bear". Giacomo Puccini composed the opera *La bohème*. The name Giacomo in Italian is the same as James in English. What would your name be in Italian? Does your name-word have a meaning? If so, what does your name mean? PreK/ES

Translate the characters' names in *La bohème* from Italian to English, German, and French. Determine why some of the names can be translated but others can't. ES/MS

Act II takes place in the Latin Quarter of Paris. What is the Latin Quarter? Why is it called this? Is Latin spoken today? What languages are based on Latin? What are some English words that come from Latin roots? ES/MS

Acts I and II take place on Christmas Eve in Paris. What French Christmas carols would you expect to be sung for the occasion? In the opera, in what language are the carols sung, if at all? Learn some Christmas carols in your target language. ES/MS

What are French terms for *La bohème*'s main characters' occupations? Create a scenario in which each occupation is needed to solve a problem. Perform the scenes. ES/MS

Rodolfo is a poet who falls in love with Mimì. Write Mimì a love poem in your target language. MS/HS

Examine *La bohème* libretto, viewing both the original Italian and translated versions. Find places where the meaning has been altered because of translation. Write and perform scenes illustrating how communication and translation problems can be avoided. MS/HS

Italians from different parts of Italy sometimes have difficulty understanding one another because of regional dialects. What is a dialect? How does it differ from a patois, creole, or a pidgin? What caused the different Italian 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?

MS/HS

The independent city-states of Italy were initially unified in 1861, after Giuseppe Garibaldi's victories in the south. 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?

MS/HS

Character Themes for *La bohème*

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 three attributes—**loyalty, hope, and respect**—after reading the synopsis of *La bohème*.

1. How do Rodolfo, Mimì, Marcello, and Musetta demonstrate their loyalty to and respect for each other? How does each character demonstrate respect for himself or herself?
2. What purpose can hope serve during trying times in our lives? Is it difficult to choose hopeful action in the face of abject poverty?
3. How does Colline demonstrate hope for Mimì when he sells his coat? Do you think he knows his action won't have any impact? If so, then, why does he do it?
4. What are some actions taken by the four friends that show they are part of something greater than themselves individually?
5. Explore the respect that is evident in the complicated relationship between Puccini and the two librettists for *La bohème*.