

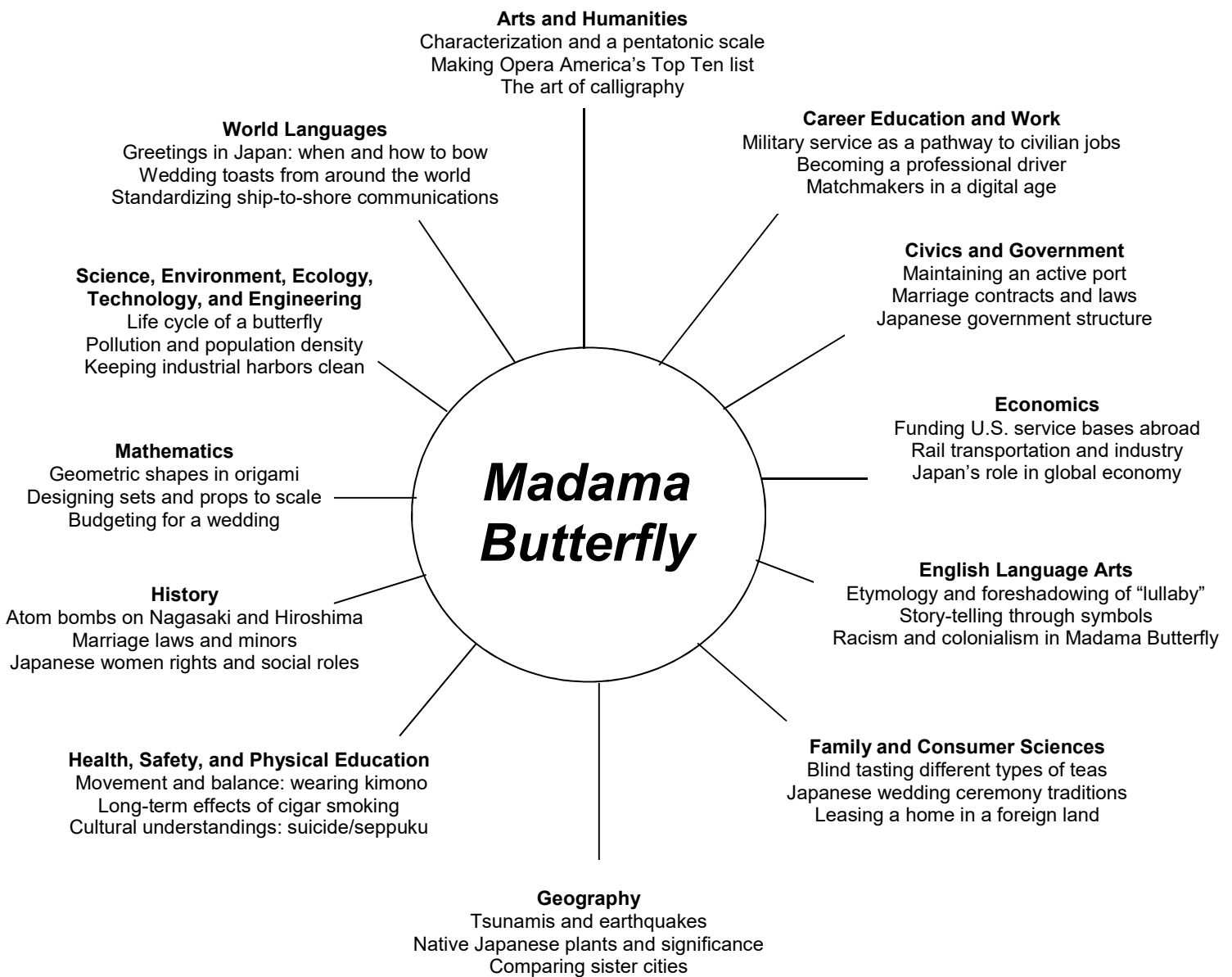
Lesson Plan Stems for 2024–2025

Developed by Opera on TAP, past and present:

Ray Beard	Marilyn Egan	Donna Priore
Cheryl Begandy	Deb Frauenholz	Krista Reitz
Carol Brinjak	Christy Hinkelman	Marie Romanelli, Editor
Lia Christulides	Thomas James III	Ralph Roskies
Lee Ann Conover	Robert Lee	

Curriculum Circle for *Madama Butterfly*

How does the opera *Madama Butterfly* by Giacomo Puccini intersect with all academic content areas? Begin with the opera and brainstorm connections to all curricula.





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Lesson Plan Stems for *Madama Butterfly*

How does the opera *Madama Butterfly* by Giacomo Puccini 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

Cio-Cio-San hums a lullaby to Sorrow. What is a lullaby? When and why is a lullaby usually sung? Do you know any lullabies? Sing a lullaby to your classmates. PreK

Color a picture of a kimono for Cio-Cio-San. What colors will you use? PreK

What do butterflies look like and how do they move? Make a butterfly costume. What materials and colors will you use? PreK

Music, emotion, and movement are interconnected. Listen to the "Humming Chorus" from *Madama Butterfly*. How does the music make you feel? Practice humming a song that you know. What is the difference between humming, singing, and talking? Cover some flashlights with different colors of gels or cellophane. Listen to the "Humming Chorus" again, and project your flashlights toward the ceiling to show how you feel the music moves. What do you see? How would you describe the movement of your lights? PreK/ES

Look at some photos of special instruments used in *Madama Butterfly*: Japanese gong, Japanese bells, and bird whistles. Can you match the sounds of these instruments to their photos? PreK/ES

What is the Japanese art form known as origami? Practice folding paper into easy shapes and animals. Read a book about a young Japanese girl who aimed to create a thousand origami cranes: *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*. How does this story make you feel? ES

Cio-Cio-San hums a lullaby to Sorrow. What is a lullaby? What is the importance of this type of music? Why did Puccini decide to start a scene in <i>Madama Butterfly</i> with a lullaby?	ES/MS
Design a kimono for Cio-Cio-San. Include in your design at least five items that represent who Cio-Cio-San is. What colors would you use? Write a short paragraph to explain your choices.	ES/MS
One of the most well-known melodies from <i>Madama Butterfly</i> is the “Humming Chorus.” How difficult is it to identify a piece of music that is hummed? Identify tunes that you hum.	ES/MS
Research Japanese pantomime. Create a dance based on this art form.	ES/MS
Explore a variety of Japanese music styles. What are some traditional instruments? Did Puccini try to replicate any of those traditional sounds in his score to be played by a modern Western orchestra? What, if any, instruments did he use that might not be found in a Western orchestra?	ES/MS
How can music express certain emotions? Did Puccini use specific instruments or musical motifs to express the emotions of his characters? How?	ES/MS
What is a pentatonic scale? Do you think music created with a five-note scale sounds Japanese? Listen for and identify some instances when you hear a pentatonic scale in this opera.	ES/MS
Geisha such as Cio-Cio-San were often practitioners of many different fine arts, sometimes including calligraphy, the art of beautiful handwriting. What is the difference between handwriting, printing, and more elaborate lettering? Practice writing with a pencil, pen, and ink brush. What color ink can be used for calligraphy?	ES/MS
In Japan, colors often have symbolic meaning. For example, white is used for purity, but it also symbolizes death. Sometimes brides wear white, but what is the traditional color for a Japanese bride? Red means peace and prosperity and is often used for festival decorations, but red is also used to ward off evil spirits. Look at a Japanese flag. What colors are there? Why might those colors have been chosen for a nation’s flag? What do colors symbolize in the United States? What do the colors of our flag represent?	ES/MS
Giacomo Puccini came from a long line of family musicians. What other composers had musical ancestry? Name some composers who didn’t have musical ancestry. Can you draw any conclusions based on your research?	ES/MS
Opera America, the national service organization for opera, lists on its website the top 10 most performed operas of each season. What other operas might appear on this list? Which operas were performed most often in 2024–2025? Why?	ES/MS

Madama Butterfly is through-composed. Describe the characteristics of through-composition and compare them to those of an opera that is not through-composed. Using a recording of *Madama Butterfly*, identify and list examples of this technique. MS/HS

Compare the opera *Madama Butterfly* with the musical *Miss Saigon*. How are the characters alike? Does the music convey the same emotions? What instruments are used in the orchestras for both pieces? MS/HS

What is a pentatonic scale? What kind of music has been written using this musical device? Did Puccini use pentatonic scales in his score for *Madama Butterfly*? Play a pentatonic scale on the black keys of the piano. Create sounds for characters and play them at the same time. Do they sound good together? Play a pentatonic scale on a xylophone by removing some bars so that only C-D-E-G-A are left. MS/HS

How do composers and librettists collaborate? Puccini worked with two librettists when writing *Madama Butterfly*. What role did each librettist play? What are some other collaborative teams involved in creating an opera? MS/HS

Giacomo Puccini studied composition at the Milan Conservatory from 1880–1883. Compare a modern music conservatory curriculum with that of a conservatory during the 19th century. MS/HS

Explore the art of Ikebana. What are the philosophies behind this art form? How does it relate to floristry? Design a display using the techniques of Ikebana. Where can one learn more about this tradition? MS/HS

Madama Butterfly was a failure at its premiere at La Scala in 1904. Why? How did it evolve into one of the world's most-beloved operas? MS/HS

Critics of traditional *Madama Butterfly* productions accuse the opera industry of “yellow face” and cultural misappropriation. How does the co-production from Cincinnati Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Detroit Opera, and Utah Opera address these issues? HS

Career Education and Work

State Standards: 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.4

Puccini's father was also a musician. Do you know of anyone who does the same job as his/her mother or father? What do the adults in your family do for a living? What do you want to be when you grow up? PreK

Cio-Cio-San is a *geisha*, which means “arts person” in Japanese. As an arts person, she would have learned how to play a musical instrument, dance, sing, and practice good conversation skills. Do you know anyone who can play an instrument, dance, or sing? How long have they been practicing their talent? How long does it take to learn a new skill from scratch? Learn a new skill with your classmates, such as a song or a dance step. How long did it take your class to acquire this new skill? PreK

Pinkerton is a U.S. Navy officer. When a person serves in any branch of the military the clothes they wear on duty are called uniforms. What clothes, or uniforms would U.S. navy officers wear to work? What other jobs require a person to wear a uniform?	PreK/ES
Sometimes officers like Pinkerton are called “decorated” when they have medals on their uniforms. What’s a medal? How might someone earn a medal? Name some military medals you’ve heard of. What are some medals only given to navy personnel? Are there any medals that service persons can earn, regardless of the military branch in which they serve?	PreK/ES
Puccini had a passion for fast cars and owned several as well as employing a professional driver. How does someone become a professional driver? What skills does a professional driver need to have? Are professional drivers and race car drivers the same profession? If not, where do the two professions differ?	ES
Pinkerton and Cio-Cio-San's relationship is arranged by a marriage broker. What is a Japanese marriage broker, and how did that role compare to the job of a matchmaker? Are matchmakers still used today? If so, how has this job evolved? Are matchmakers still relevant in our digital age?	ES/MS
In the opera, Pinkerton rents his Tokyo house from a marriage broker for a term of 999 years. What companies or digital services do we use now for renting housing? Is a human broker still required to complete the renting process? How have digital services changed the real estate industry?	MS/HS
Describe how a geisha is trained in modern day Japan. What subjects do geishas learn, how long is their training, and what skills must they achieve? Describe a typical working day in the life of today’s geisha. Are they respected? What characteristics of Cio-Cio-San are evidence of her geisha training? Is there a modern-day equivalent of geisha elsewhere?	MS/HS
Pinkerton is a naval officer, and nowadays, people often enter the military as a pathway to other careers in the private and public sectors. What training can a person receive in the military that can become a pathway to civilian jobs? What kinds of educational opportunities does military service help provide or fund? What kinds of jobs do former service members do? Are there any jobs where prior military service is required or preferred?	MS/HS
Giacomo Puccini decided to associate his musical career with the theater rather than the church, as his ancestors had done. Do you think Puccini’s family approved of his career choice? Was this a profitable decision? Should one choose a profession solely based on money?	MS/HS
Explore the history of the Ricordi publishing company and its relationship to opera composers, such as Puccini. How can a publisher make or break a composer’s career?	MS/HS

Puccini was influenced to become an opera composer by Verdi's *Aida*. Interview adults to determine if they had an "instant" recognition about a career path. Is it necessary to have a "light bulb going off" experience to decide on a personal career? MS/HS

Puccini's mother wrote to Queen Margherita to obtain a scholarship for her son to study at the Milan Conservatory. What kind of income was required to send a student to study at a university in Italy during the late 19th century? What is the average cost of college tuition today? MS/HS

When were trains introduced to Japan? What training and requirements does an engineer need in order to operate a train? How does this training and licensing differ from the training needed to operate an automobile? MS/HS

Pinkerton is a lieutenant in the United States navy, and as an officer he is expected to be a leader. Investigate the leadership structures of the military, federal government, and private corporations. What management skills are needed for the top leadership roles in each? How does each leader's responsibilities differ among these groups? Do you think Pinkerton has the skills to make a good leader? Why or why not? HS

Civics and Government

State Standards: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4

Japan has a royal family. What does it mean if someone is royal? This family includes several princes and princesses. What is a prince and princess? What do you think they do? What other princes and princesses have you heard of? PreK

Japan has a governing body with three branches that are similar to the three branches of the United States government. Who is the head of the government in the United States? What is that person's title? PreK

Most countries have flags. What does the Japanese flag look like? What colors does it use? Compare the Japanese flag to the United States' flag. How are they similar or different? Pretend you have your own imaginary country. Design a flag to represent your imaginary nation. What would it look like? What colors and shapes or symbols will you have on your flag? PreK

Madama Butterfly takes place in a port city. Have you ever been to a port or a dock? Who makes safety rules for boats? In Pittsburgh, it's common to see one of the boats of the Gateway Clipper fleet sailing up and down the three rivers. Who makes sure it is safe to be on one of the boats? PreK/ES

The current Japanese government includes legislative, executive, and judiciary branches. What do those words mean? The Japanese Emperor is its Head of State, but he has no power. His role is ceremonial and representative. What does that mean? What is the title of the head of state in Japan who does hold power? ES

Bicycling is an important means of transportation in Japan and is becoming more popular in the United States. As more cyclists and automobile drivers share the streets, should cyclists also be required to get a license to ride on city streets? Where may a cycling enthusiast learn the correct and current rules of the road? Should cyclists be held to the same accountability standards as motorized drivers?	ES/MS
Nagasaki, the setting of <i>Madama Butterfly</i> , is a port city in Japan. How are ports maintained in modern times? How are goods entering and leaving ports regulated? What government agencies play a role in this process?	MS/HS
In modern-day Japan, what laws or regulations govern the marketing industry? How are these regulations enforced?	MS/HS
Cio-Cio-San renounced her Buddhist religion in order to marry Pinkerton. Why was this significant? Why would that decision anger her family? How do people change religions today?	MS/HS
Imagine that the story of <i>Madama Butterfly</i> happened today and imagine that Butterfly does not die. Consider the implication of Pinkerton having two wives. What rights would Cio-Cio-San and Kate have? What laws exist to support them? Would Butterfly have claims to American citizenship? Consider the position of Kate, Pinkerton's American wife. Is her marriage to Pinkerton an act of bigamy? What rights would she have?	MS/HS
B.F. Pinkerton is a U.S. Navy Lieutenant. Research U.S. Navy ranks. Have they changed since the Navy was established by Congress in 1794? What are the roles, uniform features, and customs associated with each rank? How do U.S. Navy ranks compare with other U.S. Armed Forces?	MS/HS
The libretto of <i>Madama Butterfly</i> is based on the play <i>Madame Butterfly</i> by David Belasco. Puccini had to apply for the rights to use Belasco's play. When did copyright laws come into effect? How did the laws affect opera libretto development?	MS/HS
As cycling grows in popularity, what laws exist to accommodate non-motorized vehicles on public streets? What safety laws, measures, and protocols exist to protect cyclists and drivers? Are these measures adequate? What laws may need to be enacted?	MS/HS
Pinkerton signed a 999-year marriage contract with a monthly renewal option. Research marriage contracts of the early 20 th century and today. Explore the language of marriage contracts. Debate the implications of Pinkerton's deal with contracts of today.	HS

Economics

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

Japan ranks third in the world for manufacturing output. Do you own any books or toys that were made in Japan? Have you seen any Japanese cartoons (anime)? Do you think it costs more to buy a toy made in a different country or made in the U.S.? Why or why not? PreK

Both the U.S. and Japan have paper money. What is each called and what does each look like? Compare Japanese to U.S. paper money. Design your own paper money. What would you call it, and what would it look like? PreK

Japan has a reputation for building excellent cars. Can you name some brands of Japanese cars? PreK

Cio-Cio-San is a working mother raising her son by herself. What kinds of expenses does a single parent have? Cio-Cio-San is a professional entertainer, which means she often must work at night. How might this kind of work schedule impact her expenses, when compared to a parent who works during the day? ES

Cio-Cio-San must support her family with just her income. What is the monthly rent for an apartment in your town? What are the utility expenses? What would it cost to feed three people for a month? Develop a reverse budget, based on these expenses. How much income would a person need to earn to support a three-person household? Keep in mind that the recommended rent-to-income ratio means that rent should be no more than 30% of a person's income. How does that recommendation impact your calculated income amount? ES/MS

Puccini returned royalties after the disastrous premiere of *Madama Butterfly*. What are royalties and how are they calculated? To whom are they paid? MS/HS

Pinkerton was a U.S. naval officer stationed in Japan. Who pays for U.S. military personnel stationed abroad? What is the budget allotted for maintaining U.S. service bases and personnel abroad? Does the host country also contribute to covering this expense? MS/HS

How important is Japan to the global economy today? What economic challenges does Japan currently have, and how are they addressing these concerns? What is the state of trade between Japan and the U.S.? MS/HS

How did the introduction of trains to Japan impact Japan's economy? How important is the railroad industry to Japan? Compare the significance of rail transportation in Japan to rail transportation in the U.S. MS/HS

Japan first opened its society to trade with Europeans in 1543, but ended relations with the West in 1639, and remained closed until Commodore Perry forced trade to begin anew in 1854. How did this re-opening of the Far East to western countries impact western trade? How did this shift impact both local and global economies, as well as the balance of regional power? 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*:

Sometimes at the end of an opera like *Madama Butterfly*, the “bad guy”, or villain, is booed by the audience because he/she did such a good job of playing a “bad guy”. How would you feel if someone booed your work? What is appropriate theater etiquette to show artists that they’ve done a good job, even if their characters are villains?

PreK

Haiku is a three-line Japanese poem that follows a five-seven-five syllable format. What is a syllable? Listen while your teacher recites a haiku. Can you count the syllables in each line? How are syllables different from words? How many syllables are in your name?

PreK

The story of *Madame Butterfly* is a fictional adaptation of a different novel called *Madame Chrysanthème*, which in turn was partly based on the author’s real-life experience. What is the difference between real life and fiction? How can a fictional story have some real-life parts to it? Make up a story based on an experience you’ve had but add some fictional elements.

PreK/ES

Look at a manga, the name for a Japanese comic book or graphic novel. Usually, the stories begin with what we think of as the back cover, and flow from top to bottom and from right to left. How is that different from the way Americans read books?

PreK/ES

Stories can be told in words, pictures, music, and by other means. Design a *Madama Butterfly* charm bracelet that tells the story of the opera. What will each of your charms look like? How many will you need to tell the story?

PreK/ES

In the opera, Cio-Cio-San hums a lullaby to Sorrow. What is a lullaby? What is the etymology (word origin) of the word “lullaby”? How might those origins foreshadow what happens to her son Sorrow? What is the plural of lullaby? What language rule applies when changing a word ending in “y” to plural?

ES

Authors choose names for their characters that will help with characterization and may also foreshadow a character’s role or their fate. Consider the names Butterfly, Sorrow/ Trouble, Pinkerton, and Sharpless. How might each name help an audience understand the character and the role each one plays?

ES

Imagine you are 15 years old and forced to marry. Write a journal entry describing your feelings and reservations, if any.

ES/MS

Write a journal in the voice of either Cio-Cio-San or Pinkerton. What assumptions did each of them bring to their marriage? How did they view the other?

ES/MS

Explore Japanese styles of communication. How do they differ from Western styles of communication?	ES/MS																					
What is a haiku? What are the rules that guide haiku writing? Write a haiku that uses characters and events found in <i>Madama Butterfly</i> . Explore another form of Japanese poetry—renga. How is renga different from haiku?	ES/MS																					
Using words, pictures, or collage, design a graphic organizer to represent an element of fiction (setting, characters, problem, solution, author’s message) of the story line of <i>Madama Butterfly</i> .	ES/MS																					
Research the meaning of some of the vocabulary used in <i>Madama Butterfly</i> and Japanese culture:	ES/MS																					
<table><tr><td>Geisha</td><td>Obi</td><td>Hara-kiri</td></tr><tr><td>Kimono</td><td>Katana</td><td>Kabuki</td></tr><tr><td>Zori</td><td>Jigaki</td><td>Katakana</td></tr><tr><td>Shogun</td><td>Geta</td><td>Tanto</td></tr><tr><td>Seppuku</td><td>Tatami</td><td>Bushido</td></tr><tr><td>Samurai</td><td>Kaishaku</td><td>Hiragana</td></tr><tr><td>Kanji</td><td>Tabi</td><td></td></tr></table>	Geisha	Obi	Hara-kiri	Kimono	Katana	Kabuki	Zori	Jigaki	Katakana	Shogun	Geta	Tanto	Seppuku	Tatami	Bushido	Samurai	Kaishaku	Hiragana	Kanji	Tabi		
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What qualities do you associate with a butterfly? Consider the anatomical characteristics of butterflies. How are these similar to Madama Butterfly’s character? List the qualities of other characters. What animal would you associate with each? Explore the use of “metaphor” in the opera.	MS/HS																					
Consider the position of the character Kate, Pinkerton’s American wife. Is her marriage to Pinkerton an act of bigamy? What rights would she have? Retell the ending of <i>Butterfly</i> from Kate’s perspective. How well does she understand the nature of the man she’s married? What challenges lie ahead for her and Sorrow?	MS/HS																					
Stage a debate over whether racism played a role in Pinkerton’s attitude toward Cio-Cio-San. Was racism a factor in the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II? What other confrontations may have racism as a factor? What can be done to foster understanding between different races and cultures?	MS/HS																					
Trace the story of <i>Madama Butterfly</i> to its origins as Loti’s <i>Madame Chrysanthème</i> . How did the story change from Loti’s original version?	MS/HS																					

Family and Consumer Sciences

State Standards: 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4

Because Cio-Cio-San is a working mother, she employs Suzuki, a maid to help with the housework. Who does the housework in your home? What chores do you do to help with the household work? PreK

In *Madama Butterfly*, Cio-Cio-San and Pinkerton come from two very different backgrounds: she is from Japan, and he is from the United States. Do you know any couples who also come from different backgrounds or different countries? PreK

Tea is an important part of Japanese culture. Have you ever tasted tea? What is tea, and how is it made? Have your teacher prepare two different types of tea, green and black. Taste each; what does each taste like? Which do you prefer? If you tasted each while blind folded, could you tell which was green and which was black? Explain. PreK/ES

During the “Flower Duet”, *Madama Butterfly* and Suzuki decorate the house with flowers when they learn that Pinkerton is returning home. How do you decorate for special occasions? How do people from different cultures use flowers for special occasions, such as using marigolds for Indian weddings? PreK/ES

Japanese people eat their food using chopsticks, called *hashi*. Have you ever eaten food with chopsticks before? Learn how to hold chopsticks, and practice eating some different kinds of food with them. Can you pick up small pieces of food with your chopsticks? One of the staples of Japanese cuisine is a sticky rice called *uruchimai* rice. How easy is it to eat rice with your chopsticks? Does using chopsticks change how you eat, or what food you might serve? PreK/ES

In the opera, Pinkerton and Cio-Cio-San perform a marriage ceremony. What are Japanese wedding traditions? Explain the ceremony and reception. Are there specific clothes, food, music, and/or dances? Compare a traditional Japanese wedding to a typical Western wedding in the U.S. ES

Geishas practice careful etiquette when they are entertaining. What is meant by etiquette? Why is learning good social etiquette important? What is the proper etiquette when meeting someone from Japan? From the United States? ES

Goro is a marriage broker in *Madama Butterfly*. How do most people decide to get married today? ES

Learn about Japanese food and tea ceremonies. Why do certain foods and tea have special significance in the Japanese culture? Learn to make a Japanese dish and eat it with chopsticks. ES/MS

What is a kimono? How are kimonos worn and/or folded to represent stages of life and death? What colors are age-appropriate for kimonos? Research how social classes and occupations are represented in Japanese clothing. ES/MS

In Act II of *Madama Butterfly*, the marriage broker Goro introduces Cio-Cio-San to Prince Yamadori in hopes that she will marry him. In what societies and cultures do families or suitors use matchmakers to find mates? Do modern-day personal ads or online dating services fulfill this role? Why or why not? MS/HS

In the opera, Pinkerton rents his house for a term of 999 years. What is the length of a typical lease for renting a house today? How would a person go about renting a house in a foreign country? Compare rental housing in Japan to rental housing in your town. What would you need to earn in a year to afford the cost of renting a home in Tokyo or another big city? MS/HS

After Japan's ports were reopened to the world in 1854, American and European cultures began to use a Japanese style or aesthetic in decoration, fashion, and architecture. Find pictures of these kinds of goods. Design a diorama to represent this era in decorating. MS/HS

Geography

State Standards: 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4

Madama Butterfly takes place in Nagasaki, Japan. Locate Japan on the globe or a world map. What is Japan surrounded by? What do we call this kind of land mass? Superimpose Japan on a U.S. map to compare how large the two countries are. PreK

Learn the names of some famous mountains in Japan. Can you recognize Mt. Fuji in some photographs? What shape is Mt. Fuji? Do we have mountains in Pennsylvania? If so, what are some of their names? PreK

What is the weather like in Japan? Is it similar to the weather in Pittsburgh? PreK

Pinkerton tells *Madama Butterfly* that he will return when the robins nest in the spring. Learn about birds in Japan and America. Are they the same or different? Are Japanese robins the same as American robins? PreK/ES

In many traditional productions of *Madama Butterfly*, *Madama Butterfly's* house has a terrace and a garden. What is a terrace? Why would someone have a terrace in the yard? *Madama Butterfly* and Suzuki also decorate their house with flowers. What kinds of flowers are common in Japan? If you wanted to decorate your house with flowers, what kinds of flowers would you want to use? Do these flowers grow in your garden, or do you get them from a store? PreK/ES

Japan sometimes has earthquakes and tsunamis. What are those? Could we ever have a tsunami in Pittsburgh? Why or why not? What places in the United States might be impacted by tsunamis or earthquakes?	ES
Locate Japan on a map. How many islands make up Japan? Where is Nagasaki? Research the climate, landscape, and agriculture of that area. What are the major exports of Japan?	ES/MS
Nagasaki is a port city. Describe the geographical features that make for a good commercial trading port. What types of ports are located in Nagasaki? What tangential industries are found in port cities? What goods are transported to and from Nagasaki?	ES/MS
Sister cities are two cities in different countries that have a long-term partnership. Is there an American sister city for Nagasaki? Compare the size, characteristics, economic drivers, and geography of these sister cities.	ES/MS
On what side of the road do the Japanese drive? Why do some countries drive on different sides of the road? Compare driving rules and training in Japan to that of Pennsylvania. How old do you need to be to drive a car in Japan?	ES/MS
Puccini traveled all over Europe to help direct, produce, and advise opera companies about his operas. How did he travel? What modes of transportation were available for him to use?	ES/MS
Explore traditional Japanese social and business etiquette. What cultural differences need to be acknowledged when communicating?	ES/MS
<i>Madama Butterfly</i> is set in Nagasaki. Compare the importance of agriculture to Japan's economy in 1904 to that of today. What are Japan's most important agricultural products?	ES/MS
Cio-Cio-San and Suzuki decorate their home with flowers to celebrate Pinkerton's homecoming. What flowers are native to Japan? What flowers did they use? What did they represent? Research the meaning or significance of specific flowers. What flowers would you use to welcome home an old friend? A long-lost family member?	MS/HS
In 1904, the year of the opera's premiere, how did the opening of the Far East to western trade influence Western culture and impact the world?	MS/HS
What are the driving conditions typically like in Tokyo? Are there special rules, restrictions, or conditions for driving in Tokyo, as compared to other cities in Japan? How dangerous is driving in Tokyo?	MS/HS
Where is Mt. Fuji? What significance has this volcano had in the Japanese culture? How has its image been used as an art motif? How long does it take to climb Mt. Fuji on a traditional pilgrimage?	MS/HS

Investigate Japanese road signs. How do road signs in Japan compare to road signs in other countries? If symbols are used, are these symbols unique to Japan, or universal symbols? MS/HS

Study British Imperialism in Asia, including India, Southeast Asia, China, and Japan. Identify these areas on a map. What other European countries were present in those areas? How did this affect the population and culture in Asian countries? HS

Health, Safety, and Physical Education

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

Lieutenant Pinkerton is a naval officer, so he spends much of his time on boats. Learn how to be safe on a boat or in the water. How can you be safe when you go to the pool? What are some important skills to learn so you can play in the water safely? Who keeps you safe when you are near a pool, a lake, or the beach? PreK

Geishas such as Cio-Cio-San are singers and dancers. Singers warm up their vocal cords before singing; dancers warm up their muscles. What are some good stretching exercises to warm up your muscles before dancing? What are some good exercises to warm up your vocal chords before singing? Practice these exercises with your classmates. PreK

Japanese children have many traditional games, board games, card games, dice games, and word games. What are games that American children play? PreK

Puccini wrote an “Intermezzo” in *Madama Butterfly*. An intermezzo is a short piece of music, or break, between larger sections. What does it mean when we say we are “taking a break”? Is it like recess? What other kinds of breaks do people take from school or work? Why do we need breaks? PreK/ES

Try on a kimono and practice kneeling and rising smoothly, like Suzuki does when she’s carrying a tray. Carry a tea set on a tray without tipping or jerking the tea. What muscles do you feel working to keep your balance? PreK/ES

Suzuki insists that Butterfly rest instead of staying up late and waiting for Pinkerton. What are the benefits of a full night's sleep? What are the negative effects of sleep deprivation and fatigue? What does the medical community recommend as a full night's rest? What is the average amount of sleep American adults get each night? Create a sleep log for yourself. What is the average amount of sleep you get in one week? ES/MS

Towards the end of the opera, flower petals are spread all over the stage. While these props are swept up every night, they are not permitted to be reused. What are the health and safety concerns that prevent the re-use of these kinds of props (such as snow, glitter, and petals)? ES/MS

Some opera stories utilize weapons, which could become safety problems for performers. How might a props master create realistic-looking stage weapons that will not harm the performers? For example, Butterfly commits ritual suicide at the end of the opera. What does an audience need to see in order to understand what she's doing? How can this be safely staged? What kind of training is needed to choreograph a realistic fight scene?	ES/MS
In one of the opera's scenes, Cio-Cio-San has to kneel for a long period of time. What effect does prolonged kneeling have on a person's knees? What precautions can be taken to protect the performer's knees during this scene? How does a kneeling position impact breathing and a singer's ability to perform?	ES/MS
After being rejected and dishonored by Pinkerton, Butterfly sees ritual suicide as her only choice. How was ritual suicide, seppuku, viewed differently for men and women in Japan during the early 20 th century? If Butterfly were rejected in the same way in the United States, what other options would our culture have afforded her?	MS/HS
Puccini was often photographed smoking a cigar. Were there any social stigmas attached to smoking in his lifetime? When did the view of smoking change? Did Puccini's smoking contribute to his fatal throat cancer?	MS/HS
At the end of the opera, Cio-Cio-San commits female ritual suicide, but Western viewers might interpret her actions as negative. What are the cultural differences between the Western concept of suicide and the Japanese concept of seppuku? What resources are available in your community to help people through the crisis that Cio-Cio-San faced?	MS/HS

History

State Standards: 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4

Customs or traditions are practices that are important to a community and have been passed down from generation to generation. Japanese people have strong cultural customs, such as bowing to show respect, and removing shoes when entering someone's house. What are some customs that have been passed down in your family or your community?	PreK
As a professional entertainer, Cio-Cio-San would perform traditional tea ceremonies. What is tea? What do you need to make tea at home? Is Japanese tea the same as English tea? How do Japanese people make tea? Where does tea come from?	PreK
As professional entertainers, geisha learn a variety of social skills, one of which is flower arranging. Why might people like to have flowers in their houses? What are your favorite flowers? What are some of the important elements in making a flower arrangement? Are there general rules to follow? Pretend you are Cio-Cio-San; make a flower arrangement to welcome home Pinkerton.	PreK/ES

Geisha are usually dressed in traditional kimonos. What is a kimono? Who wears a kimono in Japan? How should a kimono be worn, and what does it represent? How are social classes represented in the kimono style?	ES
In her role of a geisha, Cio-Cio-San would know how to perform a traditional tea ceremony. What is a traditional Japanese tea ceremony? What do these ceremonies celebrate? What kind of tea is used? How is this special kind of tea prepared? What equipment is used? When are tea ceremonies performed?	ES/MS
Compare Nagasaki in 1904 (the year of <i>Madama Butterfly</i> 's premiere) and today. How has it changed?	ES/MS
The character Cio-Cio-San is 15 years old. She agrees to a marriage contract with Lieutenant Pinkerton. What laws, if any, existed to protect minors in the 19 th and early 20 th centuries? Would any of these laws have made the contract void?	MS/HS
What is the role of a geisha in modern Japan? How has that role changed since the 18 th century? What societal forces have caused those changes? How does a geisha's clothing and make-up relate to Japanese history?	MS/HS
Japan was a closed society from 1639–1854. What does it mean to be a "closed society?" Why was it closed? How was it opened again?	MS/HS
What are the major customs of Japanese Buddhist religions? Find pictures of temples and sculptures used in 19 th century Japan; research the iconography and rituals for which they were used.	MS/HS
Many national customs around the world are fading. What are some examples of customs that either still thrive or have passed from common practice? Does doing away with customs impact a society's identity?	MS/HS
What were the social roles of Japanese women in 1904, the year that the opera premiered? What career options did they have? What was the role of a Japanese woman once married? Create a paper doll book for Cio-Cio-San using clothing to represent each career she might pursue.	MS/HS
When were bicycles introduced to Japan? Trace the importance of the bicycle to Japanese society. What economic and social impacts did the bicycle have? How significant is the bicycle in modern Japanese society?	MS/HS
On August 9, 1945, the United States detonated "Fat Man", an atomic bomb, over Nagasaki, three days after an atomic bomb was detonated over Hiroshima. Why were these cities chosen as targets for an atomic bomb attack? Why was Nagasaki bombed after the first atomic attack on Hiroshima? How did both attacks impact these cities and their surrounding areas? Were the bombings justifiable? What has become the significance of these bombings in popular and political culture? Explore the history of the <i>Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons</i> , enacted by the U.N. General Assembly in 2017. Which countries have signed the treaty?	HS

How would women's rights organizations view the role of geisha? What were the events in the 20th century that most impacted the role of women? HS

How did the industrialization of Japan change relationships and cultural traditions of that country? HS

Mathematics CORE

State Standards: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

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



When Pinkerton leaves Cio-Cio-San, he is gone for three years. Look at a multi-year calendar and count out three years. How many months are there in a year? PreK

Learn how to count to 10 in Japanese: PreK

- 1 いち (ichi)
- 2 に (ni)
- 3 さん (san)
- 4 よん (yon) or し (shi)
- 5 ご (go)
- 6 ろく (roku)
- 7 なな (nana) or しち (shichi)
- 8 はち (hachi)
- 9 きゅう (kyuu) or く (ku)
- 10 じゅう (juu) – 10

Even though the U.S. and Japan use different money, both the U.S. dollar and the Japanese yen are based on 100 smaller units: U.S. *cents* and Japanese *sen*. Practice counting to 100. If 100 *cents* make one dollar, how many *cents* are in a penny, nickel, dime, and a quarter? PreK

The 2024–2025 Pittsburgh Opera production of *Madama Butterfly* imagines that Pinkerton has entered a virtual reality game, meaning his VR headset shows him what looks like a 3-dimensional (3D) reality, but in fact it's just 2-dimensional (2D) images. Compare a circle to a ball. Which is 2D and which is 3D? Based on your comparison, what is the difference between 2D and 3D? PreK/ES

Puccini loved his cars. How much did a car cost in 1904 when *Madama Butterfly* premiered? Compare the cost with the cost of a car today. How has inflation affected the cost of automobiles? ES/MS

Explore origami. What patterns are used to create this paper art? How can you use geometry to design origami figures? Create an origami butterfly. What shapes are used in this paper creation? ES/MS

Convert U.S. dollars to yen. Convert yen to euros. Convert euros back to U.S. dollars. Write each conversion as a ratio, for comparison.	ES/MS
Write the numbers 1–10 in Japanese characters. Lieutenant Pinkerton signed a 999-year marriage contract. What is the cultural or numerical significance of the number 999? Write that Japanese character.	ES/MS
A past Pittsburgh Opera production of <i>Madama Butterfly</i> included four inches of water on the stage of the Benedum Center. Using the dimensions of the Benedum stage, determine the surface area. How much water would need to be pumped on the stage to have a pool four inches deep? How much would that amount of water weigh?	MS/HS
Design a ground plan of the sets for <i>Madama Butterfly</i> based on the dimensions of the Benedum Center stage. Practice drawing sets and props to scale.	MS/HS
Cio-Cio-San and Pinkerton sign a marriage contract before their wedding ceremony. What marriage contracts exist today? How much does a typical wedding cost in current times? Plan a budget for your dream wedding. Research the cost of churches, musicians, flowers, reception sites, catering, clothing, etc. How many guests will you invite? What is the “cost per head”? If you have \$5,000 to spend, how many people can you invite?	MS/HS
Track Pinkerton’s possible sailing route from the naval station at San Diego to the Nagasaki port. How far did he travel? How is speed measured on water? What would have been the average speed of a naval vessel in 1904? In 1904, a new American naval base was already operational at Pearl Harbor. How long would it have taken Pinkerton’s ship to get to Nagasaki from this “new” base in Pearl Harbor? Trace another possible sailing route for Pinkerton from this base.	MS/HS
The character of Sorrow will be played by a child supernumerary. What is a supernumerary? Using the score of <i>Madama Butterfly</i> , determine how many minutes the “super” will be on stage. Must Sorrow be played by a boy? How many minutes will that supernumerary have to be “wrangled”, or supervised, backstage? Create charts to compare.	MS/HS
The score for <i>Madama Butterfly</i> calls for both an on-stage and off-stage chorus. Using a copy of the score, determine how many costumes the wardrobe department of Pittsburgh Opera will need to have available. How many chorus members will need multiple costumes?	MS/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)

Bonsai is the art of trimming a potted plant to keep it miniature. Look at a real bonsai and compare its size to what the tree or shrub would be like if it had not been pruned.	PreK
In this current production, Butterfly's world is virtual (not real), so Pinkerton needs to use a special virtual reality headset to enter it. Have you even gone to a 3D movie? How is it different from a movie you see at home? What equipment do you need to watch a 3D movie? Do movie theaters sell or give away 3D glasses?	PreK
"Butterfly" is a nickname given to Cio-Cio-San. Explore the life-cycle of a butterfly. What happens in each of the four stages of the butterfly's life? Scientists identify butterflies as insects called "Lepidoptera". Learn to say that scientific name.	PreK/ES
Cio-Cio-San remembers when Pinkerton called her "fragrance of verbenal!" How does the fragrance of verbenal compare to roses or other fragrant flowers? Is verbenal considered a flower or an herb? What is a flower, and what is its biological purpose?	ES
In the 2024–2025 Pittsburgh Opera production of <i>Madama Butterfly</i> , Pinkerton is using virtual reality glasses to enter Butterfly's world, which means he's seeing optical illusions of three-dimensional scenes. Some people can look at a 2D image and their eyes and brains see hidden 3D images. What is an illusion? What is real?	ES/MS
Madama Butterfly is a nickname given to Cio-Cio-San. Explore the life-cycle of a butterfly. Chart the characteristics of each stage of the cycle and compare these to Cio-Cio-San. Based on your investigation, why do you think Cio-Cio-San was nicknamed Madama Butterfly?	ES/MS
The Louisiana Purchase Exposition happened in St. Louis, MO in 1904, the year that <i>Madama Butterfly</i> premiered. What were some of the new inventions on exhibit there?	ES/MS
What kind of furniture is found in Butterfly's house? Why? What is her house made of? How is this appropriate for the area in which she lives?	ES/MS
How has the set designer used elements of Japanese design in the sets for this opera? If there were a garden depicted, consider the use of water, mountains, and plants. What does each element symbolize?	MS/HS
Explore battleship technology in 1904, the year that <i>Madama Butterfly</i> premiered. Why would the U.S. Navy be present in Japan at that time?	MS/HS
Japan has been plagued by many natural disasters. Given Japan's geography, what natural disasters is the country prone to having? What	MS/HS

recent natural disasters has Japan endured? How have these disasters affected the environment, either directly or indirectly (such as the Fukushima nuclear plant partial meltdown)? What is Japan doing to help the environment recover from these disasters?

What is the population of Japan today? Chart population densities across Japan. How do dense populations impact the environment? Does Japan have a problem with pollution? If so, what kind of pollution has been the most problematic? Compare population densities to pollution maps.

MS/HS

Nagasaki is home to one of Japan's largest ship builders and thus is a major center of trade and manufacturing. When ships arrive and leave Nagasaki docks, what systems are in place for disposing of garbage, sewage, and keeping the harbor clean?

MS/HS

In Japan, the driver seat and controls are on the right side of the car, and cars drive on the left side of the roads. Are there any ecological or environmental advantages to driving on the left as compared to driving on the right?

MS/HS

Madama Butterfly premiered in 1904. What were the standard forms of communication at that time? How would Pinkerton have communicated with Cio-Cio-San once he was back at sea? How many common forms of communication in the early 20th century are still used today? How has communication technology changed?

MS/HS

Find pictures or films of 19th century Japanese architecture and garden designs. What is the religious, philosophic, or theological basis for the designs? How can a set designer use that information when creating a stage setting?

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)

Explore how to say hello, or to greet someone from different parts of the world, such as Tibet, Yemen, France, New Zealand, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Malaysia, Cambodia, Greenland, and China. PreK

How do we greet each other politely in the United States? How do our greetings change with different situations? In Japan, people greet each other by bowing, but polite bows may range from a small nod to a deep bend, or sometimes people bow from a kneeling position, depending on the situation. What kind of bow would you use with a stranger? A teacher? Your grandparents? Guests in your home? Learn when to use different kinds of bows, and practice bowing respectfully. PreK/ES

A compound word is a combination of two words that mean something different alone. In English, the word “butterfly” is a compound of the words “butter” and “fly.” Why do you think a butterfly is called that? What other English compound words do you know? Do you know any compound words in a different language? PreK/ES

Write the numbers 1–10 in Japanese characters: PreK/ES

1	一
2	二
3	三
4	四
5	五
6	六
7	七
8	八
9	九
10	十

Sing a Japanese folk song, such as “Sakura” (Cherry Blossoms). Watch a video online and sing with the music: [Sakura - Japanese Cherry Blossom Song さくら \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KX8F8F8F8F8). What do the words mean? ES

In Japanese culture, butterflies may symbolize: ES

- Transformation
- Soul of the living and the dead
- Girls, as they spread their wings and emerge into womanhood
- Happiness in marriage
- Joy
- Longevity

What are some symbols and their meanings that are common in American culture?

Cio-Cio-San and Pinkerton are from two different countries and presumably do not speak each other's language. How would they communicate with each other?	ES/MS
Count to ten in Japanese. Count to ten in Italian. What are some differences? Compare the sounds of the vowels in both languages.	ES/MS
Create a KWL (What I Know, What I Want to Know, What I Learned) chart for Japan: origami, haiku, holidays, religion, education, family and community, weather, and geography. Investigate topics and complete the chart.	ES/MS
What is Cio-Cio-San's son's name, translated into English? Explore the significance of the name that Cio-Cio-San gives her son. Why was that name chosen for the child?	MS/HS
If you were best friends with either Cio-Cio-San or Lieutenant Pinkerton and had to make a toast at their wedding, what would you say? Are there traditional Japanese sayings that you could translate into English that could be appropriate? What traditional wedding toasts are given at celebrations in other cultures? What do those toasts reveal about each culture's values?	MS/HS
Pinkerton's ship fired a cannon shot when entering the harbor. Why was that done? What other ways did ships use to communicate with others in 1904? Were there international communication standards between ships from different countries? How do ships communicate today?	MS/HS
Lieutenant is sometimes abbreviated as Lt. How is the title pronounced in American English versus British English? What are some other ranks in the navy and their equivalents in other languages?	HS

Character Themes for *Madama Butterfly*

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—LOYALTY and LOVE—after reading the synopsis of *Madama Butterfly*.

1. What problems do both Cio-Cio-San and Suzuki face in the story? What do they do to solve their problems? How do they show loyalty to each other? How can you demonstrate loyalty to a friend?
2. Which characters in *Madama Butterfly* discuss loyalty? Was Cio-Cio-San loyal to her family and her religion? Was Pinkerton loyal to Butterfly? Brainstorm characters in the opera who truly demonstrate loyalty.
3. Who expresses love in *Madama Butterfly*? Does any character express deep care and concern for another character? How is that love expressed? How do you show love in your family?
4. Would the ending of *Madama Butterfly* have turned out differently if characters had shown loyalty and love? Would the opera have been as strong?