



Every voice tells a story.



**STUDENT NIGHT AT THE OPERA  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026**

**Student Night at the Opera is generously supported by  
the City of San Diego, the Prebys Foundation, Elisabeth Crouch,  
The Ellen Browning Scripps Foundation,  
and many individual donors who care about introducing the next  
generation of opera lovers to this art form.**

*Carmen* Student Night at the Opera is supported by the  
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## **THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE ATTENDING STUDENT NIGHT AT THE OPERA**

- Opera is a story that is sung. As you watch and listen to the opera, think about how the words and music work together to develop character relationships, conflict, and an overall artistic effect. Opera composers use different voice types to create a dramatic or comedic effect. How do the singers' voices impact you as you experience the opera?
- Opera singers sound very different from pop or rock 'n' roll singers because they do not use microphones. Instead, they use their bodies to amplify sound. Opera singers have the ability to make their voices soar over an orchestra and a chorus without any electronic support.
- Opera is often performed in languages other than English. Opera was the most popular art form in Europe before movies, so operas were written in the language of the people who first attended them. Read the synopsis and listen to the musical excerpts before coming to the performance. The Civic Theatre projects supertitles, or translations, above the stage in English and Spanish for audience members to read along as the opera is performed.
- You will attend the final dress rehearsal of the opera, which is the last rehearsal before the public attends. Due to the fact that this is a rehearsal, there may be starting and stopping, and some singers may "mark" (not sing fully).
- The opera you will attend is a live performance. The performers can see you and hear you in the audience – your polite behavior, applause, and cheers tell them you are enjoying the performance.
- There will be a photographer and videographer present during Student Night at the Opera. If any one of your students is not able to be photographed for any reason, please notify us prior to attending the performance.
- Turn off and put away electronic devices (phones, tablets, etc.).
- Leave large purses and backpacks at home or on the bus. They will not be allowed inside the theatre.
- Food and gum are not allowed in the theatre.
- Please give the performance your full attention. You are going to have an amazing time!

**Location:** San Diego Civic Theatre, 1100 Third Ave. San Diego, CA 92101

**Date and Time:** Wednesday, March 25, 2026, 6:30 – 9:30 pm.

Running time is 2 hours and 50 minutes including one 20-minute intermission.

Tickets may be picked up in front of the Civic Theatre beginning at 5:00 pm. All attendees must be in their seats by 6:15 pm.

## OPERA AND *CARMEN* VOCABULARY

**Aria:** A song written for one singer, also known as a solo.

**Baritone:** The baritone is the most common male voice and has a lower range than the tenor. This voice is often described as having a vocal richness and a large vocal range.

**Bass:** The lowest of the male voices. Bass singers often portray servants or noblemen, as they project wisdom and seriousness.

**Character:** A person in an opera or story.

**Composer:** The person who writes the music of an opera.

**Conductor:** The person who leads the orchestra and makes sure everyone plays and sings together.

**Dramatic Irony:** A literary device in which the audience has knowledge that the characters on stage are not aware of.

**Duet:** A song written for two singers.

**Ensemble:** A song or musical passage written for a group of singers.

**French Grand Opera:** (or *grand opéra*) refers to a specific genre of 19th-century opera that flourished in Paris, primarily at the Paris Opéra. It was designed to be a massive, multi-sensory spectacle, catering to the tastes of the rising middle class who wanted "more of everything"—more singers, more dancers, more instruments, and more stage effects.

**Gypsy:** A term historically used in Europe to describe the Romani people. While common in opera scripts (librettos), the term is now considered outdated or offensive due to negative stereotypes.

**Librettist:** The person who writes the story and the words of the opera.

**Libretto:** The story of an opera written out as a play or poem. It includes all the words sung.

**Mezzo-Soprano:** The mezzo-soprano is a lower female voice and is almost always the antagonist or secondary role. In the opera *Carmen*, the female protagonist (leading role) is a mezzo-soprano.

**Opera:** A dramatic or comedic story told onstage by singers using words and music. Opera productions use sets, lights, and costumes to help create details of the story. Operas are usually accompanied by an orchestra led by a conductor.

**Opera Comique:** is a genre of French opera characterized primarily by the use of **spoken dialogue** to bridge musical numbers, rather than the continuous singing (recitative) found in Italian opera or French "Grand Opera." Despite the name, the genre is defined by its **structural format** rather than its mood; while it began as lighthearted comedy, it eventually evolved to include intense dramas and tragedies.

**Opera Seria:** (Italian for "serious opera") was the dominant style of Italian opera throughout Europe during the 18th century. It is defined by its noble themes, rigid structure, and focus on virtuosic solo singing.

**Opera Singer:** A person who portrays a character in an operatic story by singing and acting.

**Orchestra:** A large group of musicians who play different instruments together, accompanying the singers in an opera.

**Orchestra Pit:** The area below the stage where the orchestra sits and plays their instruments.

**Orchestration:** The assignment and combination of musical instruments in an opera. Orchestration is a tool used by composers to create moods and enhance storytelling by using the color of the instruments.

**Overture:** An instrumental piece of music often played at the beginning of an opera.

**Romani:** An ethnic group with a rich history of music and art. They migrated from Northern India to Europe over 1,000 years ago.

**Soprano:** The soprano is the highest female voice and is almost always the heroine or protagonist (leading role) of an opera.

**Synopsis:** A summary of the opera's story.

**Tarot:** A deck of 78 cards featuring symbolic images. In operas, characters often "read" these cards to create dramatic tension about what might happen next in the plot.

**Tenor:** The tenor is the highest of the male voice types and is often, but not always, the lead male role.

**Toreador:** A term for a bullfighter, famously used in the "Toreador Song" from the opera *Carmen*. In Spanish, the more common word is *torero*.

## **THE CHARACTERS OF *CARMEN*** ***(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)***

**Moralés** (pronounced moh-rah-LESS) (Baritone)

A corporal in the Spanish army

**Micaëla** (pronounced mee-kah-EH-lah) (Soprano)

A young village girl, in love with Don José

**Don José** (pronounced don ho-ZEH) (Tenor)

A soldier who falls in love with Carmen

**Zuniga** (pronounced zoo-NEE-gah) (Bass)

An army officer

**Carmen** (pronounced KAR-men) (Mezzo-Soprano)

A free-spirited Romani woman who works at the cigarette factory

**Frasquita** (pronounced frahs-KEE-tah) (Soprano)

Friend of Carmen

**Mercédès** (pronounced mehr-SEH-dess) (Mezzo-Soprano)

Friend of Carmen

**Dancaïro** (pronounced don-kai-ROH) (Baritone)

A smuggler

**Remendado** (pronounced reh-men-DAH-doh) (Tenor)

A smuggler

**Escamillo** (pronounced ess-kah-MEE-yoh) (Baritone)

A famous bullfighter

## **SYNOPSIS OF *CARMEN***

*Carmen* is about a spirited Romani who values her freedom above all else. While working in the city of Seville, she meets a soldier named Don José. Although José is a man who follows strict rules, he becomes fascinated by Carmen's bold personality and eventually leaves his life in the army to join her and a group of adventurous travelers in the mountains.

Trouble arises when the famous and glamorous bullfighter Escamillo arrives, capturing Carmen's attention with his bravery. Don José becomes deeply jealous, leading to a heated rivalry between the two men. In the end, Carmen must choose between a life of rules or staying true to her independent spirit. Despite José's pleas for her to change, Carmen remains brave and firm in her choices, leading to a dramatic conclusion outside the great bullring of Seville.

Carmen explained

<https://youtu.be/TuqWDyp2tSc?si=SQUfCJvUI7wHvU> X

**ABOUT CARMEN:**  
**MUSIC BY GEORGES BIZET**  
**LIBRETTO BY HENRI MEILHAC AND LUDOVIC HALÉVY**

*Carmen* is an opera in four acts composed by Georges Bizet. The libretto is based on an 1845 novella by Prosper Mérimée. The story takes place in Seville, Spain, and follows Carmen, a fiercely independent woman who refuses to follow society's rules. Her strong personality and choices deeply affect the soldier Don José and set into motion a chain of events that become more serious and intense as the opera unfolds.

Instead of perfect heroes and clear villains, *Carmen* presents people who feel real and complicated. Carmen values her freedom and does not want to belong to anyone. Don José begins as a disciplined and respectful soldier but gradually becomes consumed by his feelings for Carmen. As his attachment grows, he starts to lose sight of his responsibilities, and he struggles to make good decisions, leading to tragic consequences.

Bizet's music is full of catchy melodies, strong rhythms, and colorful sounds that help bring the world of the opera to life. Some of the most famous songs include "Habanera," the "Toreador Song," and Carmen's playful "Seguidilla." These musical moments help us understand who the characters are and what they are feeling.

When *Carmen* premiered in Paris in 1875, many audience members were surprised by its serious tone and realistic story. They were accustomed to lighter operas with happy endings, and *Carmen* felt very different. Early reactions were mixed, and some people were unsure what to think.

Over time, audiences began to appreciate the opera's honesty and emotional power. Today, *Carmen* is one of the most performed operas in the world. Its music appears in movies, television, and commercials, and its themes of freedom, choices, and consequences continue to connect with audiences of all ages.

**ABOUT THE COMPOSER: GEORGES BIZET (1838-1875)**

Georges Bizet was born in Paris, France, into a family that loved music. His father was a voice teacher, and his mother was a skilled pianist. Bizet showed musical talent at a young age and began studying at the Paris Conservatory when he was only nine years old.

As he grew older, Bizet wrote many different kinds of music, including operas, orchestral pieces, piano works, and songs. Even though he was very talented, most of his music did not become popular during his lifetime. He often struggled with money and was disappointed that his work was not better known.

Bizet cared deeply about writing music that helped to tell a story. He wanted his characters to feel real to the audience and his music to reflect their emotions. This approach is especially clear in *Carmen*, where the music closely follows the characters, choices, and conflicts.

Sadly, Bizet died at the age of 36, only a few months after *Carmen* was first performed. He never knew that his opera would later become one of the most famous and frequently performed works in the world. Today, Bizet is remembered mainly for *Carmen*, a piece that continues to inspire audiences more than a century later.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR: PROSPER MÉRIMÉE (1803–1870)**

Prosper Mérimée was a French writer who was fascinated by intense personalities and dramatic situations. He also worked as a historian and government official, but he is best remembered for his short stories.

Mérimée loved to travel and was especially interested in Spanish culture. During his travels, he collected stories and legends, some of which later inspired his novella *Carmen*, published in 1845.

Unlike many writers of his time, Mérimée did not create idealized heroes. His characters often make questionable choices. They can be selfish, brave, cruel, tender, or contradictory, sometimes all at once. This approach gave his stories a sense of realism that felt fresh and unsettling to readers.

Mérimée's writing helped shape a new kind of storytelling, one that treats characters as complicated human beings rather than perfect symbols. That same spirit lives on in Bizet's opera.

## CARMEN IN POP CULTURE

The music of *Carmen* is some of the most recognizable opera music ever written. Even if people have never seen the opera, they have often heard its melodies in cartoons, movies, television shows, and commercials.

Watch the clips below to hear *Carmen*'s music in fun and familiar settings.

*Carmen Jones* (Film 1954) — An adaptation of the *Carmen* story as a Hammerstein musical.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFqxxktYYjw>

*Carmen: A Hip Opera* (MTV Film 2001) — A modern TV-film reimagining.  
<https://youtu.be/xqAmxHZ76jA>

*The Bad News Bears* (Film 1976) — Credits use the overture to *Carmen*.  
<https://youtu.be/97o7Nggf8wk?si=hLz2wUE2pUDANLiQ>

The Muppets – “Habanera” short (Swedish Chef, Beaker, Animal) — A comedic performance built directly on *Carmen*'s “Habanera.” <https://youtu.be/jXKU5A1auM>

Sesame Street – “Toreador” featuring opera singer Samuel Ramey “L Toreador” — A comedic performance about the letter “L” built directly on *Carmen*'s “Toreador Song.”  
<https://youtu.be/85ezTttDh0I?si=WQ-7nhzjNGQGoRBW>

### Commercials

Pepsi ad featuring Beyoncé (2002) — Uses the “Habanera” melody as a recognizable hook.  
[https://youtu.be/bFDAME4S\\_9Q](https://youtu.be/bFDAME4S_9Q)

Bertolli commercial — Reported use of *Carmen*'s “Habanera” in advertising.  
<https://youtu.be/wA3hSrqkyzc?si=jILGkTVD-0VWysvb>

Doritos Super Bowl Commercial (2008) ad — Uses the “Habanera” in advertising.  
<https://youtu.be/h8qgk5tXuUA?si=xTQflzBr2-keFlgr>

PXG golf clubs ad uses the “Habanera” in advertising.  
[https://youtu.be/KjwWB4PkdU4?si=CYqr4brQm7Wzo\\_fl](https://youtu.be/KjwWB4PkdU4?si=CYqr4brQm7Wzo_fl)

Arm & Hammer, Slide Cat Litter (2018) ad uses the “Habanera” in advertising.  
[https://youtu.be/72HIUN7AMhU?si=z1RSfi2yzcg\\_L\\_wQ](https://youtu.be/72HIUN7AMhU?si=z1RSfi2yzcg_L_wQ)

Comcast ad uses the “Habanera” in advertising.  
[https://youtu.be/pYDR\\_Eylw0s?si=7ijCIE80PaAlyEQu](https://youtu.be/pYDR_Eylw0s?si=7ijCIE80PaAlyEQu)

Kentucky Fried Chicken Commercial (1988) ad uses the *Carmen* overture in advertising.  
<https://youtu.be/89bhKyk-UzM?si=qcM7C3wFncCd7eSk>

## FUN FACTS ABOUT *CARMEN*

### Premiere (March 3, 1875)

- *Carmen* premiered at the Opéra-Comique in Paris and immediately stirred debate. The theatre was known for presenting works that were gentle, humorous, and family-friendly. Audiences expected polite characters, clear morals, and comforting endings. What they encountered instead felt startlingly different.
- Onstage, they saw characters who argued, fought, broke the law, and made dangerous choices. *Carmen* herself did not behave like the typical operatic heroine. She spoke openly, challenged authority, and refused to apologize for who she was. Some audience members were fascinated. Others were deeply uncomfortable.
- Critics complained that the opera was too realistic. They were unsettled by the violence and disturbed by the idea that a woman could drive the story through her own decisions. While a few musicians immediately sensed that something new and important had been created, many viewers left unsure of what they had just experienced.
- Georges Bizet died only three months after the premiere, believing the opera to be a failure.
- In the years that followed, *Carmen* began to be performed in other cities. Gradually, audiences and critics came to recognize its emotional depth, bold storytelling, and unforgettable music. Today, it is one of the most frequently performed operas in the world and is widely considered to be a masterpiece.

# ELEMENTARY / MIDDLE SCHOOL LESSON #1: PREPARING TO ATTEND THE OPERA

Performance and Audience Etiquette  
Music Evaluation  
Music Connections

## Common Core Standards for Elementary and Middle Schools

### Demonstrating Audience and Performance Decorum

**Elementary (Grades 3-5) PAE1:** Demonstrate performance decorum and audience etiquette for the context, venue, genre, and style.

**Middle School (Grades 6-8) PAE:** Demonstrate performance decorum and audience etiquette for the context, venue, genre, and style.

### Music Evaluation

**Elementary (Grades 3-5) MU: Re9.1:** Demonstrate and describe how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes, or contexts.

**Middle School (Grades 6-8) MU: Re9.1:** Apply appropriate personally-developed criteria to evaluate musical works or performances.

### Music Connections

**Elementary (Grades 3-5) MU: Cn10.0 & MU: Cn11.0:** Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

**Middle School (Grades 6-8) MU: Cn10.0 & MU: Cn11.0:** Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

### Outcomes:

This lesson will help students learn how the Civic Theatre informs opera etiquette (behavior) at a live performance. We will explore what makes opera singers so special and how they work with a conductor and orchestra to tell an opera story.

### Activity:

#### Step 1: Understand the theatre setting:

As a class, look at the images of the San Diego Civic Theatre where you will see San Diego Opera's production of *Carmen*.

- Look at a picture of the outside of the Civic Theatre.  
<https://images.app.goo.gl/xRikMHdGAS7ei4Es7>

- Look at a picture of audience seating in the theatre. All the seats are facing the stage so everyone can watch the opera.  
<https://images.app.goo.gl/1Axs9L9DZUuNrxG46>
- This is a picture of the stage. This is where the opera singers will perform. They can see and hear the audience, just like the audience can see and hear them.  
<https://images.app.goo.gl/Bi67spU8XX9Mb3QS6>
- This is a picture of the orchestra pit; the orchestra pit is located between the stage and the audience. Up to 90 musicians and an opera conductor can play their instruments in the orchestra pit.  
<https://images.app.goo.gl/YoC8Q9F33FVPwDy39>

**Step 2: Discuss in small groups why the audience, stage and orchestra pit are set up this way:**

- Predict how the set-up of the theatres helps to tell the story of the opera.
- Opera singers can see and hear the audience. How do you think this will affect how you watch the performance? Also, opera singers don't use microphones — they use their trained voices to be heard over the orchestra. Where on stage do you think they should stand to be heard best? Discuss how where they stand may impact the way you react to each performance.

**Step 3: Review the role of the conductor:**

- The opera conductor helps the singers and the orchestra sing and play together. The conductor uses a baton in their hand to guide the music.
- When you are watching the opera, look for the conductor at the center of the orchestra pit. Describe how the singers keep eye contact with the conductor and other singers on stage.

**Step 4: After you attend Student Night at the Opera:**

Describe the relationship between the audience and the singers during a live performance and how it is different from watching TV or a movie.

# **HIGH SCHOOL LESSON #1: PREPARING TO ATTEND THE OPERA**

## **Demonstrating Audience and Performance Decorum**

### **Music Evaluation**

### **Music Connections**

#### **Common Core Standards for High School**

#### **Demonstrating Audience and Performance Decorum**

**High School (Grades 9-12) TH: Pr6.1:** Perform a scripted drama/theatre work for a specific audience, demonstrating performance decorum and audience etiquette appropriate to the context, venue, genre, and style.

#### **Music Evaluation**

**High School (Grades 9-12) MU: Re9.1:** Justify evaluation of musical works and performances using criteria, context, and research.

#### **Music Connections**

**High School (Grades 9-12) MU: Cn10.0 & MU: Cn11.0:** Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make music; demonstrate understanding of relationships between music, other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life, possibly using research.

#### **Outcomes:**

Students will understand the jobs needed to create a live performance.

#### **Activity:**

Students will research and discuss various jobs and expertise needed to present an opera.

#### **Step 1:**

Imagine you and your classmates are asked to create a live performance. Break into small groups and list all the roles you think are needed for the performance. Remember, many of these roles are not on stage.

#### **Step 2:**

As a group, analyze the expertise required for each role on your list. Each group member should choose a role to research, then present a description of that role to the group. (Resource links are provided below.)

#### **Step 3:**

Discuss how people acquire the skills needed for these roles. Do you think they learn these skills independently, or do they attend a trade school, college, or conservatory program? Compare the time required for training in different fields.

**Step 4:**

Create a Venn diagram with your group to identify the common goals shared by everyone involved in a live performance. Discuss how understanding these shared goals affects the audience's experience. Also, consider how the audience's response might influence the goals of those working on the performance.

**Step 5:**

Choose one role from your discussion that interests you. During Student Night at the Opera, observe and identify evidence of that role in action. Share your observations with your group and teacher.

Resources and information about careers in opera:

<https://www.sfopera.com/learn/about-opera/people-at-the-opera/>

<https://www.berklee.edu/careers/communities/opera>

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LESSON #2: CHARACTER

### Characters and Text Music Creation

#### Common Core Standards for Elementary Schools

#### Key Ideas and Details – (Grades 3–5)

**Grade 3 RL.1:** Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

**Grade 3 RL.3:** Describe characters in a story and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

**Grade 4 RL.1:** Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

**Grade 4 RL.3:** Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (a character’s thoughts, words, or actions).

**Grade 5 RL.1:** Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

#### Music Creation (Grades 3–5)

**3MC2. MU: Cr2.0 (Grades 3–5):** Describe how the music relates to its purpose or context and how it conveys expressive intent.

#### Outcomes:

Students will understand the characters and how they are portrayed through the words and music of the opera.

#### Activity:

Students work in pairs to read part of a song (aria) sung by the central character Carmen. Make predictions about the character based on the words and music.

#### Step 1: Read with a Partner

Read the following aria sung by Carmen, from Act I. Take turns reading the aria aloud and answer the questions at the end.

#### CARMEN

Love is a rebellious bird  
that no one can ever tame.  
It’s completely useless to call it  
if it doesn’t feel like coming.  
Nothing works—not threats, not begging.

One guy is a smooth talker,  
the other stays quiet;  
and it's the quiet one I prefer.  
That's love, that's love!

Love is a wild child,  
it has never, ever followed any rules.  
If you don't love me,  
then I love you;  
and if I love you,  
you'd better watch your back!

The bird you thought you'd caught  
by surprise flapped its wings and flew away.  
Love is far off;  
you can sit and wait for it;  
but the moment you stop waiting,  
there it is! All around you, fast as can be,  
it comes, it goes, then it doubles back.  
You think you've grabbed it?  
It slips away. You think you've escaped it?  
It's got you!

### **Step 2: Find Clues**

With your partner, look for clues in Carmen's aria that tell us about her personality.

- Do you think Carmen is different when she is alone compared to how she acts around other people?
- Carmen talks about Love being a rebellious bird, why does she say that? What hints does she give in her song that lets you know that she is a free-spirited woman?

With your partner, discuss and describe Carmen's feelings based on what you read in the song. Is she happy? Is she sad? How can you tell by the words she is singing?

### **Step 3: Listen to the Music**

Using the link, watch and listen to Carmen's aria, sung in French with English titles (please note this video may contain suggestive material that may not be suitable for young children)

<https://youtu.be/K2snTkaD64U?si=g97KO7x7z2ITzJYn>

### **Step 4: Discuss What You Heard**

After listening to the music, share with your partner what stood out to you in the aria.

- How do the words and music give you clues about Carmen's character?
- Can you find parts of the music that match the words in the aria?
- What did the music add to the aria?

## MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL LESSON #2: LIBRETTO

### Common Core Standards Middle School

#### Key Ideas and Details

**Middle School (Grades 6–7) RL.1:** Identify textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

**High School (Grades 9–12) RL.9-12.1:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

#### Craft and Structure

**Middle School (Grades 7–8) RL.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

**High School (Grades 9–10) RL.9-10.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.

**High School (Grades 11–12) RL.11-12.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

**Middle School (Grades 7–8) RL.6:** Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

**High School (Grades 9–10) RL.9-10.6:** Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

**High School (Grades 11–12) RL.11-12.6:** Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

#### Outcomes:

In this lesson, students will look for clues in the libretto of *Carmen* to understand the characters and their relationships.

#### Activity:

Students work in pairs to read parts of an example from the libretto in *Carmen*. They then make predictions about the character based on the words and music.

#### Lesson Steps:

**Step 1: Work with a partner or in a small group.**

Read the sections below from the libretto and discuss. (The Card Trio)

**FRASQUITA & MERCEDES**

Shuffle! Cut! That's it! Three cards here...  
four there! And now, speak, my beauties,  
Give us some news of the future;  
Tell us who will betray us. Tell us who will love us!

**FRASQUITA**

Me, I see a young lover  
Who loves me more than anyone!

**MERCEDES**

Mine is very rich and very old,  
But he speaks of marriage!

**FRASQUITA**

I'm being settled in a fine carriage,  
And showered with honors!

**MERCEDES**

Mine takes me to a castle,  
A castle fit for a king!

**FRASQUITA & MERCEDES**

*(Together)*

Again! Again! Speak, my beauties,  
Give us some news of the future!

**CARMEN**

*(Watching the cards alone)*

Let's see, let me try my turn...  
Diamonds... Spades... Death!  
I've read it correctly...  
me first...  
Then him...  
for both of us, death!

*(The Card Aria)*

In vain, to avoid bitter answers,  
In vain will you shuffle,  
It serves no purpose,  
the cards are sincere  
And they will not lie!

If in the book above your page is happy,  
Shuffle and cut without fear;  
The card under your fingers will turn up joyful,  
Announcing happiness to you.

But if you must die,  
if the dreaded word Is written by fate,  
Start again twenty times...  
the pitiless card Will repeat: death!

Again! Again! Always death!

### **Step 2: Discuss with your group**

- What kind of card game are they playing? These women are what are considered Gypsies. How much do you think superstition affects their culture and thinking? What are some superstitions that you have heard of or grew up with?
- Based on the text, discuss the relationship between Frasquita, Mercédès and Carmen. Look for specific examples that support your ideas.
- What is the difference between the state of minds of Frasquita and Mercédès compared to Carmen?

### **Step 3: Listen**

Now listen to the music and watch the scene. What clues do you get from the text and the music about how each character feels over the course of the scene in the opera?

*Carmen Trio*

[Elīna Garanča \(Metropolitan Opera\) card trio](#)

### **Step 4: Expand the Ideas and discuss**

- If you were friends with Carmen, what advice would you give her at the end of the scene?
- How is Carmen similar to characters you may know from other stories you have read or seen in a movie or TV show?

### **Step 5: Wrap up**

- Write down your predictions and compare them to what happens when you attend Student Night at the Opera.

Libretto Translation:

<https://lyricaloperatheater.com/PDFs/Carmen-libretto-with-translation-and-dialog.pdf>

## **ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE, AND HIGH SCHOOLS LESSON #3:** *CARMEN* DESIGN LABS

### **Common Core Standards Alignment**

#### **Reading Drama and Character Analysis**

**Elementary (Grades 3-5) RL.3:** Describe characters in a story or drama, explaining their traits, motivations, and how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

**Middle School (Grades 6-8) RL.3:** Describe and analyze how a drama's plot unfolds, how characters respond and change, and how elements of story or drama interact.

**High School (Grades 9-12) RL.3:** Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

#### **Writing and Design**

**Elementary (Grades 3-5) W.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

**Middle School (Grades 6-8) W.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

**High School (Grades 9-12) W.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

#### **Visual Arts and Design**

**Elementary (Grades 3-5) VA:Cr1.1 & VA:Cr2.1:** Elaborate on imaginative ideas; experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.

**Middle School (Grades 6-8) VA:Cr1.2 & VA:Cr2.1:** Formulate artistic investigations of personally relevant content; demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials and methods.

**High School (Grades 9-12) VA:Cr1.2 & TH:Cr1.1:** Choose from a range of materials and methods to plan works of art and design; understand and apply technology to design solutions for drama/theatre work.

#### **Outcomes:**

In this lesson, students will analyze the characters' personalities from *Carmen* to create historically accurate costume designs inspired by late 20th-century Spanish fashion. They will also design practical set pieces for Seville, Spain, making artistic choices about color, accessories, and staging while justifying their design decisions through written explanations.

Modern opera directors often choose to adapt classic works to contemporary settings to bridge the gap between historical tradition and the lived experience of today's audiences. By moving away from a "museum piece" approach, directors can strip away the distance of period costumes to highlight the timeless psychological depth and universal social themes inherent in

the music. This modernization serves to revitalize the original emotional urgency of the drama, making complex narratives more accessible and relatable while providing a fresh lens through which to examine enduring human truths.

**Activity:**

**Step 1: Review**

Review the synopsis and character descriptions from *Carmen* to identify personality traits of each character.

**Step 2:**

Using the costume design worksheet, select appropriate colors, accessories, and fashion elements from late 1970's to early 2000's Spain that reflect your chosen character's personality. Sketch your costume designs on the provided templates.

**Step 3:**

Using the set design worksheet, create a stage design of the streets of Seville, Spain, in the late 1970's to early 2000's, with a cigarette factory, the inn Lillas Pastias, and the bull fighting ring.. Complete your designs with a ground plan (top view) and front view sketch.

**Step 4:**

Explain how your design choices support the story and characters.



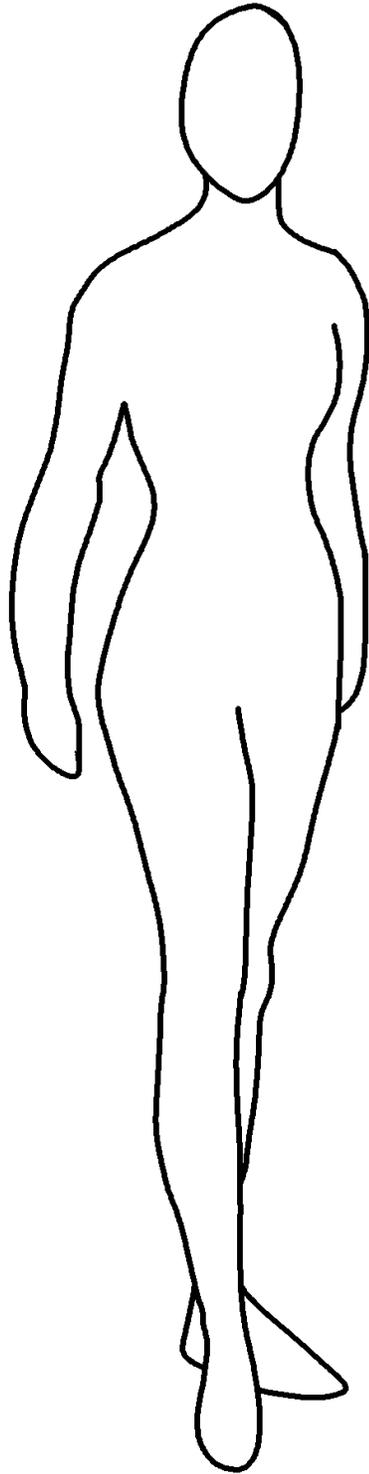
## Step 2: Explore late 20th Century Spanish Fashion (1970's to early 2000's):

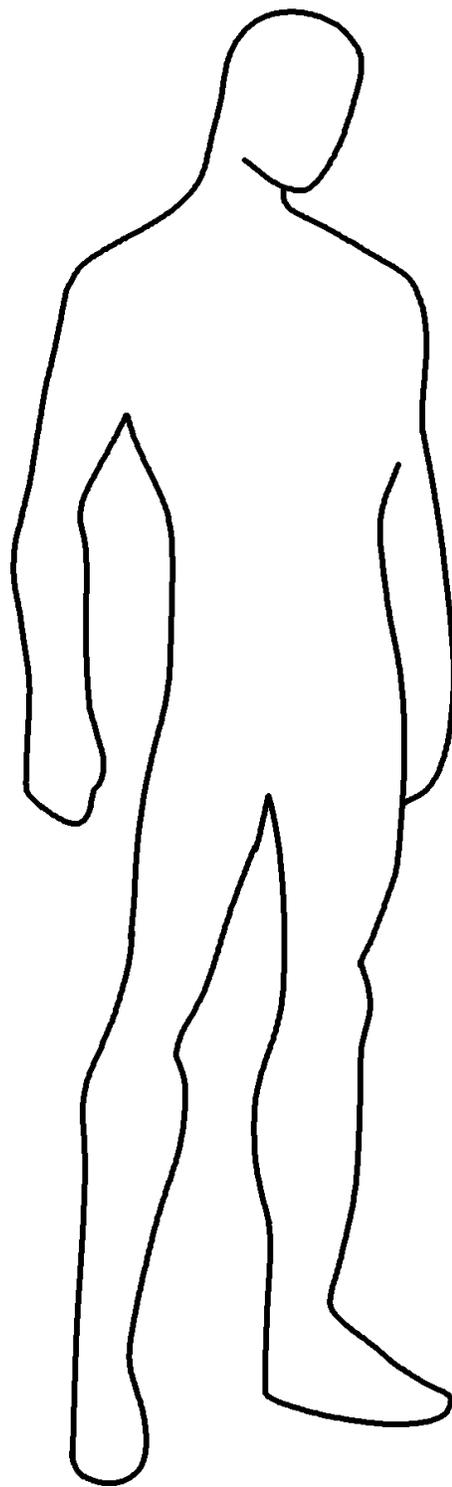
- Men: Leather bomber jackets, ornate cropped matador jackets, dark button-up shirts, plain t-shirts, dark denim jeans, high-waisted wide-leg trousers, heavy work boots, and berets.
- Women: Off-the-shoulder floral midi dresses with ruffled necklines, modest patterned blouses, button-down cardigans, high-waisted pleated midi skirts, wedge sandals, and lace-up oxford shoes.
- Colors: Neutral base tones (brown, charcoal, khaki, black) with accents (vibrant floral blues and reds, metallic gold, and soft pinks).

### Examples of late 20th Century Spanish Fashion:











**Step 5: Front View**



Please describe the scene you have designed, start with the backdrop, scenic elements and any ideas like color palate and buildings.

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Cut out, trace, or use these silhouettes to inspire your set design

