

Enriching the Humanities Through Opera

Script for Lesson: Exploring Story Adaptation

Grade Level: 9-12th

Length: 45 minutes

Literary Works: *One Hundred Years of Solitude*; *Love in the Time of Cholera* (Gabriel García Márquez)

Opera: *Florencia en el Amazonas* (*Florencia in the Amazon*) (Daniel Catán, composer; Marcela Fuentes-Berain, librettist)

Slide 1:

Today, we're going to explore the concept of story adaptation.

Slide 2:

Our inquiry question is: "What is story adaptation and how is it relevant to opera?" By the end of the lesson, we will be able to: (List off objectives from slide.)

Slide 3 or 4: **Choose either *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or *Love in the Time of Cholera*.**

We are going to begin with a word association exercise. Write down the first word that comes to mind for these words... (opera, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* / *Love in the Time of Cholera*, adaptation).

(Reveal each word independently to give students a chance to write down/come up with their answers.)

****Instead of having students write down their answers, Instructor could create a live word cloud such as with *Mentimeter*. Students can add their responses via their phones/computers/tablets (repeated words will increase in size.**

What comes to mind when you hear the word "opera"?

Provide students space to share their thoughts.

Those are some great responses! It seems like many of you think of (examples: music, singing, and performance, etc. ... that's all part of opera!) Opera is a dramatic work set to music, with singers performing entire roles accompanied by an orchestra. It typically includes arias, duets, and ensembles, and is known for its elaborate costumes, sets, and vocal prowess. Has anyone seen an opera before?

What words did we associate with *One Hundred Years of Solitude* / *Love in the Time of Cholera*?

Provide students space to share their thoughts. (Possible responses: love, longing, devotion, time, isolation, fate, transformation, nature, etc.)

Finally, what about “adaptation”? What does that mean to you?

Provide students space to share their thoughts.

That's a great start! Adaptation is when a creative work, such as a film, television show, play, opera, musical, or even book, is based on an existing story, like a novel or short story. It's when we take an idea and make changes to fit it into a new medium or vision.

Slide 5:

Let's review the story arc of our literary work. Can anyone remind us of the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution of this story?

Review the story arc of (*either One Hundred Years of Solitude / Love in the Time of Cholera*) as a class.

One Hundred Years of Solitude

Exposition: The Buendía family's founding of the town of Macondo, led by José Arcadio Buendía, and introduction of José Arcadio, Úrsula, and their children.

Rising Action: The family's complex relationships, including the romance between José Arcadio Buendía and Rebeca, and the arrival of Melquíades and revolutionary leader, Aureliano Buendía.

Climax: Aureliano Segundo's reign of prosperity ends, and Aureliano Buendía (the second) faces his inevitable fate. The family's cycle of repetition intensifies.

Falling Action: The final generations of the Buendía family begin to deteriorate and the town of Macondo faces destruction due to the family's cyclical misfortune.

Resolution: The last member of the Buendía family, Aureliano, deciphers the prophecy and realizes that the family's fate was always sealed, leading to the town's ultimate collapse.

Love in the Time of Cholera

Exposition: Love story between Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza begins when they are young. Fermina rejects Florentino after realizing the disparity between her romanticized feelings and reality. She later marries Dr. Juvenal Urbino.

Rising Action: Florentino silently vows to win Fermina back, enduring years of unrequited love and numerous affairs.

Climax: After Dr. Urbino's death, Florentino declares his love for Fermina again, reigniting their connection.

Falling Action: Fermina slowly warms to Florentino, and they rekindle their relationship in their old age.

Resolution: The couple sets off on a riverboat, embracing love despite their advanced years, symbolizing love's timeless nature.

Slide 6:

Great! Now we are going to look at an opera synopsis loosely based on García Márquez's literary works.

(Pass out opera synopsis handout.)

Read through the synopsis as a class.

Slide 7:

I would like for us to compare the story structure of the opera with the original literary work. Turn and talk with your neighbor and discuss what are some differences and similarities you noticed?

Questions on slide:

- Is the setting/time period the same for both the opera and literary work?
- Is there a difference in point of view? In historical context? In narrative structure?
- What else did you notice?

Give students a couple of minutes to discuss the questions in pairs or small groups.

Would anyone like to share what they discussed?

Provide students space to share their thoughts.

We are now going to delve deeper into *Florencia en el Amazonas* (Floh-REN-syah ehn ehl Ah-mah-ZOH-nahs).

Slides 8-13: Key Scenes: choose which key scene to introduce to the class.

Slide 8: Key Scene #1

Let's look at this key scene. In a tense moment, Rosalba's notebook falls into the Amazon River, prompting a warning from Arcadio not to retrieve it due to the danger of piranhas. This scene captures the high stakes of her predicament, leaving the audience to wonder: Will she recover her notebook, or will her hard work be lost to the depths forever?

Discuss any prominent and notable features in the image, including the identification of characters as well as any significant details that highlight their interactions or setting.

Slide 9: Key Scene #1

Here is an excerpt from that scene. As we watch, notice how any differences in the scene compared with the original literary work.

*Met Opera on Demand: Track #7. ACT I: Londres, Tahití, Sierra Nevada
00:28 – 01:23*

(Watch excerpt.)

What did you notice?

Provide students space to share their thoughts.

Slide 10: Key Scene #2

Let's analyze this key scene. In the aftermath of a devastating storm that wrecks the steamboat El Dorado, Florencia is left grappling with uncertainty. Is she alive or dead? Can Cristóbal hear her, and is he still alive? This moment immerses the audience in Florencia's inner turmoil, highlighting themes of survival, love, and the fragility of human connection.

Discuss any prominent and notable features in the image, including the identification of characters as well as any significant details that highlight their interactions or setting.

Slide 11: Key Scene #2

Here is an excerpt from that scene. As we watch, notice how any differences in the scene compared with the original literary work.

*Met Opera on Demand: Track #15. ACT II: Cristóbal, Cristóbal
03:56 – 05:32*

(Watch excerpt.)

What did you notice?

Provide students space to share their thoughts.

Slide 12: Key Scene #3

Let's examine this key scene. In this scene, Rosalba, who has turned away from love, unknowingly speaks with the disguised Florencia, who shares that love was the source of La Grimaldi's musical brilliance. The moment raises compelling questions for analysis: Has Florencia revealed her true identity? Will Rosalba recognize she is speaking with her idol? And will she ultimately open her heart to Arcadio? This interaction offers rich themes for discussion, blending mystery, self-discovery, and the transformative power of love.

Discuss any prominent and notable features in the image, including the identification of characters as well as any significant details that highlight their interactions or setting.

Slide 13: Key Scene #3

Here is an excerpt from that scene. As we watch, notice how any differences in the scene compared with the original literary work.

*Met Opera on Demand: Track #21. ACT II: ¡Ya! ¡Quite esa cara!
3:01 – 4:54*

(Watch excerpt.)

What did you notice?

Provide students space to share their thoughts.

Slide 14:

Why do we adapt stories?

Provide students space to share their thoughts.

How does storytelling and adaptation add relevance for an audience?

Provide students space to share their thoughts.

This was composer Daniel Catan's third opera. Gabriel García Márquez was supposed to write the libretto (text/script of the opera), but he had too many other projects, so Marcela Fuentes-Berain, one of his pupils wrote the libretto. Catán and Fuentes-Berain travelled to García Márquez seeking advice, who gave the team suggestions for an operatic story. This was the first Spanish opera to be commissioned in the United States.

Slide 15:

To further our understanding of the adaptation process, we will create an adaptation pitch for one of the three chosen key scenes from the opera. Before we do, let's look at the adaptation guidelines. We will focus on the Who, What, When, and Where in the scene. When we say, "who," we mean the characters in the scene, "what" means the action in the scene, "when" means the time period and time of day and/or year, and "where" is the location and setting. Please note that the character identity can be adapted, but characters may not be eliminated or added to the scene.

Our adaptation pitches are to be intentional, thoughtful and show our knowledge of the original literary work.

What questions do you have?

Take time to answer any questions students may have.

Slide 16:

Using the background knowledge of the story and our new understanding of the opera, let's do a quick adaptation pitch for the key scene we just looked at. How could we adapt the "who?"

(Add student suggestions to the slide.)

The action? The "what?"

(Add student suggestions to the slide.)

The "when?"

(Add student suggestions to the slide.)

The "why?"

(Add student suggestions to the slide.)

Please note that each decision you make will have a ripple-like effect on the overall story.

Are there any other questions?

Take time to answer any questions students may have.

****Students can either work in groups selected by the instructor or students choose their own groups – number of students per group depends on class size. Students can either adapt the same key scene or choose a different key scene provided using their laptops/tablets. Libretto excerpts of the key scenes can be accessed on the OPERA America website. Print outs of the libretto excerpts can be distributed as well.**

We are now going to break out into groups and choose one of the three key scenes from the opera and brainstorm an adaptation pitch. You may use your laptop/tablet to find the additional key scenes provided in the slides. You will have 10 minutes to create your opera adaptation pitches and answer the questions. Each group will be given a worksheet with the same questions on the slide to complete and help guide the process. Please answer the last two questions using complete sentences.

(Return to Slide 15. Have students break out into groups by preferred method. Pass out the opera adaptation pitch worksheets, 1 per group, or have students answer the

questions on a separate piece of paper [stay on Slide 15]. Students work in groups for 10 minutes.)

Begin!

(Walk around the classroom, offering assistance as students work. Provide a 5-minute, 2-minute, and 1-minute warning.)

Slide 17:

Now it's time to share our ideas! Each group will present their opera adaptation pitch to the class. Remember to explain your creative decisions and rationale.

Groups take turns presenting their opera adaptation pitches.

Slide 18:

Thank you for sharing! How did your understanding of the story change as you adapted it?

Provide students space to share their thoughts.

Have any new insights or perspectives emerged?

Allow a moment for reflection, then invite students to share their thoughts.

Slide 19:

Thank you all for your work today!

****If planning to continue with Responding to Key Scenes lesson, add an announcement about exploring the opera more next class.**