

SOME OPERAS DEPICT SWEEPING HISTORICAL PANORAMAS. SOME turn on mistaken identity, political intrigue, or legend. *La Traviata* is different. Verdi and his librettist, Francesco Maria Piave, spin an intimate tale of devotion, social expectation, and illness, centered on just three characters—it is the tale of a courtesan who falls in love and ultimately sacrifices everything. The opera explores the chasms between excess and the appearance of respectability, between choice and obligation—and makes us care so acutely about its heroine that her fate becomes the emotional core of the work.

La Traviata is the story of a woman whose tragic end is certain from the first few aching chords of the prelude. Violetta, the “fallen woman” of the opera’s title, knows that the tuberculosis she suffers from will take her life. In his Metropolitan Opera production, director Willy Decker paints this fatalism in bold strokes—from the blazing red dress Violetta wears to the ominous clock that ticks down the seconds of her waning life. Decker’s staging crystallizes the story’s drama through its striking use of a minimalistic, circular set and its laser-like focus on the characters and their psychological states.

This guide is intended to help your students appreciate the realism and tragedy of one of the most beloved operas in the repertoire. They will explore the social and historical context of the opera and compare its concerns with the challenges inherent in the modern metropolis. The activities on the following pages are designed to provide context, deepen background knowledge, and enrich the overall experience of this *Live in HD* transmission. This guide will also align with key strands of the Common Core Standards.

THE WORK: *LA TRAVIATA*

An opera in three acts, sung in Italian

Music by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave

Based on the play *La Dame aux Camélias* by Alexandre Dumas, fils

First performed March 6, 1853
at the Teatro La Fenice, Venice, Italy

PRODUCTION

Nicola Luisotti, conductor

Willy Decker, Production

Wolfgang Gussmann,
Set and Costume Designer

Hans Toelstede, Lighting Designer

Athol Farmer, Choreographer

STARRING

(In order of vocal appearance):

Sonya Yoncheva

VIOLETTA VALÉRY (soprano)

Michael Fabiano

ALFREDO GERMONT (tenor)

Thomas Hampson

GIORGIO GERMONT (baritone)

Production a gift of Karen and Kevin Kennedy,
and Mr. and Mrs. Paul. M. Montrone

Revival a gift of Rolex

Original production of the Salzburger Festspiele;
with thanks to Dutch National Opera, Amsterdam



YONCHEVA



FABIANO



HAMPSON

This guide includes five sections with two types of classroom activities.

- **THE SOURCE, THE STORY, WHO'S WHO IN *LA TRAVIATA*, AND A TIMELINE**

- **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:**

Two activities designed to align with and support various Common Core Standard strands used in History/Social Studies and Music curricula

- **PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES:**

Two activities to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, highlighting specific aspects of this production

- **POST-SHOW DISCUSSION:**

A wrap-up activity, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into the students' understanding of the performing arts and the humanities

- **STUDENT RESOURCE PAGES:**

Classroom-ready worksheets supporting the activities in the guide

The activities in this guide will focus on several aspects of *La Traviata*:

- The real-life conditions and experiences that informed Verdi's choice of plot
- The interpretation of the heroine's actions and choices
- The characteristics of Verdi's musical style
- Creative choices made by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera for this production
- The opera as a unified work of art, involving the efforts of composer, librettist, and Met artists

This guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *La Traviata*, whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds, and seeks to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts as a whole—as a medium of both entertainment and creative expression.

SUMMARY Violetta Valéry is a well-known courtesan in Paris whose life appears to be glamorous, but who also suffers from a serious illness. She lives on the money given to her by her male patrons. But when she meets Alfredo Germont, a young man from a good family, they fall in love and move to the country. Alfredo's father disapproves of their relationship and comes to tell Violetta that her involvement with Alfredo will ruin his family's reputation. Out of her love for Alfredo, Violetta agrees to leave him and returns to Paris. Thinking she has betrayed him, Alfredo is heartbroken. He follows her to a party and publicly insults her. A few months later, Violetta is close to death. Alfredo, who has learned why Violetta left him, returns to her. He is shocked by her weakness as she strains to get to her feet. They vow to be together forever, but she soon collapses and breathes her last.

THE SOURCE: LA DAME AUX CAMÉLIAS BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS, FILS The story of Verdi's *La Traviata* can ultimately be traced to the life of a historical figure, the courtesan Marie Duplessis, who died from consumption in 1847. Not long before her death, Duplessis had a brief affair with Alexandre Dumas, fils, who then transformed this personal history into a semi-autobiographical novel, *La Dame aux Camélias* ("The Lady of the Camellias"), in 1848. Dumas later adapted his work as a play, and this stage version premiered at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in Paris on February 2, 1852.

Giuseppe Verdi often turned to the French theater for inspiration—his *Ernani* and *Rigoletto* were both based on plays by Victor Hugo—and within a few months of the premiere of *La Dame aux Camélias*, he had chosen it as the subject of the new opera he was contracted to write for the Teatro La Fenice in Venice. Together with his librettist Francesco Maria Piave, he created one of his most realistic dramas, not shying away from the moral and medical tensions of his source material, calling it "a subject of the times."

SYNOPSIS

ACT I: *At the home of Violetta Valéry in Paris* Violetta Valéry, a high-class courtesan in Paris, is giving a party following her recent recovery from a protracted illness. Her salon fills with guests, and a few of them wonder whether she is up to drinking the champagne she offers. When Violetta is introduced to the young Alfredo Germont, she is surprised to learn that he visited her house daily during her convalescence—a kindness that even her patron, Baron Douphol, failed to show. Prompted by Violetta, Alfredo leads the assembled crowd in a



VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

SOPRANO

the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian “mezzo” = middle, medium)

CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

COUNTERTENOR

a male singing voice whose vocal range is equivalent to that of a contralto, mezzo-soprano, or (less frequently) a soprano, usually through use of falsetto

TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS

the lowest male voice

drinking song. Violetta invites her guests into the ballroom but finds herself too weak to follow. Alfredo stays behind and inquires after her health, and then declares his love for her. She tries to laugh it off, but Alfredo is undeterred, and replies that if she will not talk of love, he must leave. Intrigued, Violetta hands him a camellia. When it withers, she tells him, he is to return it to her. Alfred, overjoyed, departs.

Alone now, Violetta considers the possibility of finding the kind of true love that Alfredo spoke of. She hears him singing outside her window of the passion he feels, but she concludes that it is madness: She must forget him and continue to live, day to day, for pleasure alone.

ACT II: *Scene 1: A country house outside Paris, three months later* Alfredo and Violetta have been living together in the country for three months. Alfredo learns from Annina, Violetta’s maid, that Violetta has been selling her property in Paris to cover the household expenses. Upset and ashamed that his beloved has been secretly supporting him, he rushes off to the city to settle matters and to cover the expenses himself.

While he is gone, Violetta receives an unexpected visit from Giorgio Germont, Alfredo’s father. Disapproving of her lifestyle and her relationship with his son, Germont demands that Violetta leave Alfredo in order to protect their family name and enable his daughter, Alfredo’s sister, to marry well. Violetta is shocked and dismayed, but out of love for Alfredo eventually agrees to the sacrifice.

Just as Violetta is writing a farewell note to Alfredo, he returns. She effusively affirms her love for him, then rushes out. A messenger appears with her note. The moment Alfredo opens it, his father arrives to console him. But all the memories of home and a happy family can’t prevent the furious and jealous Alfredo from seeking revenge for Violetta’s apparent betrayal. Germont tries to comfort his son, but Alfredo is inconsolable. When he finds an invitation for a ball that Violetta had received from her friend Flora, he departs, swearing vengeance.

Scene 2: A party at Flora’s home in Paris At Flora’s ball, news has spread of Violetta and Alfredo’s separation. There are grotesque dance entertainments, ridiculing the duped lover. Meanwhile, Violetta and her previous lover, Baron Douphol, have arrived. Alfredo and the baron battle at the gaming table and Alfredo wins a fortune: lucky at cards, unlucky in love. When everybody has withdrawn, Alfredo confronts Violetta, who claims to be truly in love with the baron. In a rage Alfredo calls the guests as witnesses and declares that he doesn’t owe Violetta anything. He throws his winnings at her. Giorgio Germont, who has witnessed the scene, rebukes his son for his behavior. The baron challenges his rival to a duel.



ACT III: *Violetta's apartment in Paris* Months later, Violetta is at death's door. Dr. Grenvil appears and tells Violetta's maid that her mistress has only a few hours to live. Violetta rereads a letter from Alfredo's father in which he recounts that he has told his son the truth about Violetta's sacrifice, and Alfredo is on his way to see her and ask her forgiveness. Violetta is certain that it is too late and she will die before he arrives.

The sounds of a carnival are heard. Alfredo arrives and begs Violetta's forgiveness. Forgetting Violetta's hopeless situation, they reaffirm their love and dream of leaving Paris for a new life. Germont arrives, remorseful about his earlier treatment of Violetta. He asks for her mercy and declares that she is like a daughter to him. Violetta gives Alfredo her portrait and asks him to pass it along to his future wife, whoever she may be. Having made her peace with the world, she suddenly feels her strength returning, but then falls, dead.

WHO'S WHO IN LA TRAVIATA

CHARACTER		PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Violetta	A courtesan in 19th-century Paris	vee-oh-LET-tah	soprano	Even before the curtain rises, Violetta knows she will fall victim to a fatal illness.
Alfredo	A young man of good family but small financial resources	al-FRAY-doe	tenor	Alfredo has fallen in love with Violetta from afar, unknown to her, well before the opera begins.
Germont	Alfredo's father	djare-MONT	baritone	Germont's parental and social anxieties cause him to reject Violetta's involvement with his son.
Baron Douphol	A protector of Violetta's	doo-FOLE	baritone	Violetta was involved with the Baron before meeting Alfredo.
Flora	Violetta's friend, another "kept woman"	FLOH-rah	mezzo-soprano	Flora hosts lavish parties at her Paris home.
Dr. Grenvil	Violetta's physician	grahn-VEEL	bass	In this production, beyond being Violetta's doctor, Grenvil symbolizes her mortality.



KEN HOWARD / METROPOLITAN OPERA

18th–19th centuries

Tuberculosis, an infectious disease of the lungs (known historically as consumption or phthisis), becomes endemic across the world, at its height causing a quarter of all deaths in Europe. There is evidence of the disease as early as the Neolithic Age, and it was common in ancient Egypt, China, and Greece.

1813 Giuseppe Verdi is born in Le Roncole, a small village in northern Italy.

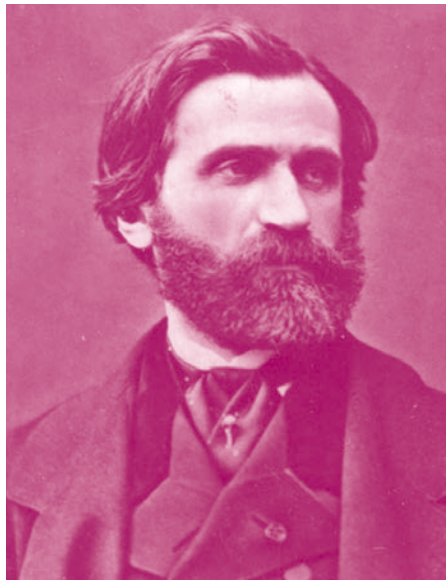
1820s The explosive growth of European urban centers at the close of the Industrial Revolution results in cramped, unsanitary living conditions and an environment primed for the rapid spread of tuberculosis and other diseases.

1836 Verdi's first opera to be completed and produced, *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*, opens at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan.

1842 *Nabucco* premieres at La Scala, its success establishing Verdi as Italy's foremost composer. He enters a period of remarkable productivity, writing 14 operas over the following ten years.

1843 Verdi is contracted to work on a new opera for the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, with the unknown poet Francesco Maria Piave as librettist. Their collaboration results in *Ernani*, the first of ten operas they would eventually work on together, including *La Traviata*.

1847 Verdi and Giuseppina Strepponi, an Italian soprano, begin a romantic relationship. They remain devoted to each other for the rest of their lives and eventually marry in 1857.



1848 French author Alexander Dumas, fils publishes his novel *La Dame aux Camélias* (*The Lady of the Camellias*), based on his real-life relationship with Marie Duplessis.

1852 Dumas's stage adaptation of *La Dame aux Camélias* premieres at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in Paris on February 2.

In April, Verdi is commissioned by the Teatro La Fenice to write an opera for early the following year, but by October he still has not decided on a subject. He eventually settles on Dumas's story, and composition proceeds in record time.

1853 The premiere of *La Traviata* on March 6 turns into one of the most notorious fiascos in operatic history. The audience's negative reaction likely is due to poor casting more than any artistic fault on the part of Verdi or Piave. After the premiere, Verdi writes to a friend, "*La Traviata* last night a failure. Was the fault mine or the singers'? Time will tell."

1854 Verdi makes a few changes to the score, most notably to the Act II duet between Violetta and Germont. With a new cast, *La Traviata* is an unequivocal success when performed at Venice's Teatro San Benedetto on May 6.

1882 After slow advances in the study of tuberculosis over the past century, the Prussian doctor Robert Koch identifies the bacillus *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* as the cause of the disease.

1901 Verdi suffers a stroke on January 21 and dies on January 27. His funeral procession in Milan draws tens of thousands of mourners.



History and Social Studies

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide entitled *Courtesans and City Life in the 19th Century*, as well as the synopsis or summary and the *Who's Who in La Traviata* chart.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Social studies, World History, Government, Women's Studies

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To become familiar with the characters and conflicts of *La Traviata*
- To compare historical and contemporary opportunities for women in society
- To interpret facts about the past based on a reading of primary sources
- To prompt curiosity about the interpretation of *La Traviata* as seen in the *Live in HD* production

Courtesans and City Life in the 19th Century

La Traviata tells the story of Violetta Valéry, a fictional character who makes her living as a courtesan—an escort to wealthy and powerful men. This “fallen woman”—as a rough translation of the opera’s title might read—is based on a real person, Marie Duplessis, who rose from humble beginnings in northern France to become one of the most sophisticated and celebrated courtesans of early 19th-century Paris. Duplessis was the favored partner of writers, composers, and even noblemen, and, like Verdi’s protagonist, suffered from consumption and met a tragic early death. The social successes of Violetta and Duplessis, however, belie the degradation they would have felt in the knowledge that despite their exalted status, they were still engaged in a form of prostitution, and the harsh reality faced by many unattached young women of the time who sought to find better lives on their own.

This activity delves into the historical conditions and debates around women, their education, career options, and independent status in 19th-century Europe, as well as how these issues inform the opera. Through a study of primary source materials, students will discover the forces that combined to make prostitution a common career outcome for uneducated and unprotected young women in the 19th century. Students will:

- become familiar with the plot and characters of *La Traviata* as well as its inspiration from literature and real life
- describe Violetta’s predicament and imagine how her story might change in a contemporary time period
- read primary sources and historical accounts by women concerning education, work, and family attachment
- apply their knowledge by composing a diary entry in which Violetta reflects on her life prior to meeting Alfredo

STEPS

In this activity, students will first become familiar with the plot and characters of the opera. Then, they will imagine the struggles a young woman would face moving to a large city on her own, before turning to primary source readings to discover the social conditions for women in such a situation in the 19th century. Through group work and class discussions, students will learn how these issues relate to Verdi’s opera.

STEP 1: Because this activity requires that students have a firm grasp of the opera’s plot, you should begin class by distributing copies of the synopsis or the summary, as well as the *Who’s Who in La Traviata* chart, all included in this guide. You may choose to have students read them silently, have volunteers alternate in reading them aloud, or cover the plot material in an interactive game.

STEP 2: Initiate a discussion by asking students to imagine that they are 15 years old and have decided to move to a big city on their own. They should imagine that they've lived their entire lives in a small town, and they don't know anyone in the city.

Distribute the reproducible handout entitled *What Would You Do?* and ask students to record answers to the following questions:

- Where would you live?
- How would you find a job?
- What kind of job do you think you could get?
- What sorts of resources do you think you could find to help you get settled?
- Would you continue to go to school? If so, how would you do that?
- What sorts of dangers do you think you would encounter?

When students have had time to record their answers, lead a discussion in which they share them. Encourage students to recognize both the danger of the situation as well as the resources available (such as government agencies, local organizations such as the YMCA and other outreach centers, and churches). Also, invite them to consider the range of jobs available to them, as well as the pros and cons of those jobs.

STEP 3: Now, return to the plot and time period of Verdi's opera. Encourage students to imagine how Violetta might have become such a famous courtesan. What do they think her back story might be? Where did she start out and how did she rise to her level of success as a famous escort? You may like to draw on information from the timeline and information about the story's source, which include details about Marie Duplessis—the model for the main character of *La Dame aux Camélias*, the novel by Alexandre Dumas, fils, that was Verdi's source in developing *La Traviata*. After students have absorbed this information, follow up by asking them to imagine how her situation might have been different if she had lived in today's world.

STEP 4: Next, let's delve into what the situation for women actually was at the time of the story. Divide the class into groups and distribute the Historical Readings and Response Chart found in the reproducible handouts. Each group will read and discuss one of the texts and fill out the chart provided. The four texts include introductions to the following 19th-century figures and issues:

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND LA TRAVIATA

This activity directly supports the following ELA-Literacy Common Core Strands:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-12.2

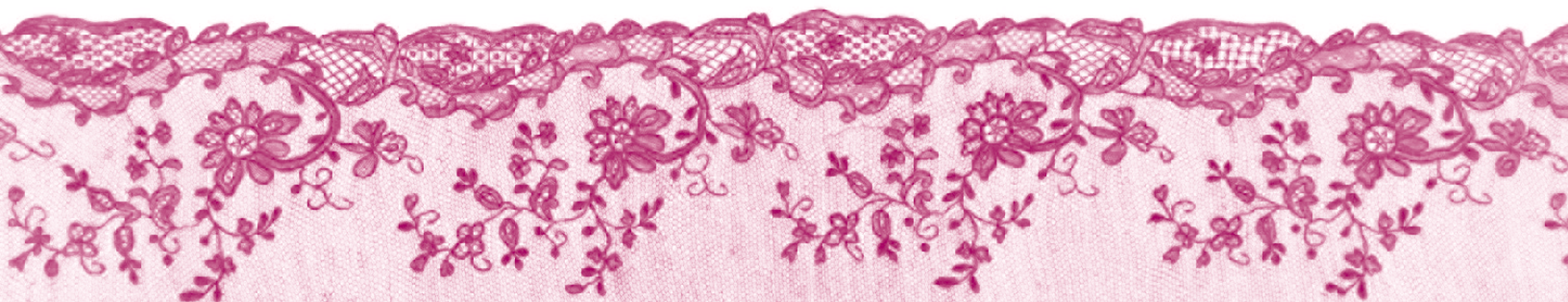
Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-12.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.



- Women’s pay in 19th-century America
- Mary Wollstonecraft on women’s right to an education
- Cora Pearl on her experience as a courtesan in mid-19th century France
- “Song of the Shirt” by Thomas Hood, a poem about the plight of the working class

Using their charts, students should record what their assigned reading indicates about the status of women in the areas of education, work, prostitution, family life, and the law. The worksheet also provides space for students to note what their reading may say about the life choices available to Violetta.

STEP 5: Once students have discussed their passages and filled out their charts, have each group select a representative to introduce and summarize the excerpt they read. Students will then present their findings, commenting on what they think their reading might mean for Violetta and what options were available to her after she left her home for Paris.

A Consuming Illness Violetta’s illness, embodied musically by the ethereal, mournful opening notes of *La Traviata*, is “consumption,” the same sickness from which the character in Dumas’s original story suffers and a frequent scourge of operatic heroines.

Today we know this disease as pulmonary tuberculosis, a bacterial infection of the lungs. Tuberculosis is highly infectious, but it is relatively rare in the developed world of the 21st century, and highly curable thanks to antibiotics. Tuberculosis patients lose a good deal of weight, as if the disease were “consuming” their bodies, which historically led to the term “consumption.”

In the 19th century, consumption occurred frequently among the urban poor, and was almost invariably fatal. It became a recurrent theme in art and culture of the period, and was the cause of death for artists and writers from across history, including John Keats, all three Brontë sisters, Frédéric Chopin, Edgar Allan Poe, Anton Chekhov, and many others. Literary and theatrical characters were also frequently felled by the illness, including Fantine in Victor Hugo’s novel *Les Misérables*, Mimì in Puccini’s opera *La Bohème*, and Little Eva in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

The artistic legacy of consumptive heroines continues today. In the 1996 musical *Rent*, which is based on *La Bohème*, Mimi suffers from AIDS. In the Baz Luhrmann movie *Moulin Rouge!*, a 2001 take on the *Traviata* story set in the world of Parisian cabaret, the performer and “kept woman” Satine succumbs to consumption.

After groups have presented their findings, engage the class in a free discussion. You may like to prompt them with the following questions:

- What are the factors that limited women’s opportunities?
- What were the careers available to women?
- How did education or marriage change women’s opportunities?

STEP 6: Now turn the class’s attention to the opera and remind them that in a crucial scene, Alfredo’s father, Germont, confronts Violetta and asks her to leave Alfredo for the good of his family. Outline the context of the scene: Violetta has retired to the country so she can live happily with Alfredo. She has been selling her property to support their life together and she no longer needs to accept money from other men.

Encourage students to consider what it would have meant for Violetta to leave the man she deeply loves and return to her former life. What are the ramifications of her decision to leave Alfredo? What else would Violetta be giving up besides love? Did Violetta have a “safety net”?

An excerpt from this scene is provided in the reproducible handouts and the music is available on **Track 1**.

STEP 7: Conclude the activity by asking students to reflect on the opera’s plot and characters, their primary source readings, and their *What Would You Do?* handouts from earlier in class. In an open discussion, prompt students to comment on how Violetta’s life after leaving Alfredo might have been different if she had lived in today’s society rather than that of the 19th century. Knowing what they know now, what do students view as the true tragedy of the opera? Is it the mere fact of Violetta’s death? Is it her sacrifice? Or something else? There is no correct answer to this question; it merely aims to encourage students to consider the full range of events and societal contexts that lead to Violetta’s tragic end.

FOLLOW-UP: In class, or for homework, ask students to write a diary entry in the voice of Violetta. In their entry, they should reflect on some aspect of Violetta’s life prior to the start of the opera. Students may choose to imagine the family that Violetta came from, why they are seemingly not a part of her life, or the steps she took to become a celebrated courtesan. Encourage your students to bear in mind what they have learned about the social conditions for women at the time, drawing on their primary source readings.

FUN FACT The opera’s title, “La Traviata,” is drawn from the feminine adjective form of the verb *traviare*—to lead astray. A *traviata* in everyday English might be called a “fallen woman.”

tra-vi-'a-re

Double Aria Jeopardy

Music

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide entitled *Double Aria Jeopardy*, as well as the synopsis and the audio selections from *La Traviata* available online or on the accompanying CD. If available, you can use your school's quiz bowl buzzers. You will also need prizes of some sort for the winning group.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

General Music, Band, Orchestra, Chorus, Humanities, Art

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To introduce and/or reinforce knowledge of musical terminology
- To identify new musical vocabulary by listening to selections from *La Traviata*
- To develop aural memory and recognition through an interactive game

In *La Traviata*, Verdi makes use of a musical-dramatic form common in 19th-century Italian opera and known as the double aria. This two-part solo depicts a character moving through a wide range of emotions within a single scene, while providing the singer with an opportunity for virtuosic vocal display. The following activity is designed to provide students with an introduction to the music of some of Verdi's double arias, while also becoming familiar with the themes and musical style of *La Traviata*.

In the following lesson, students will:

- explore the different aspects of Verdi's style in *La Traviata*
- learn new musical terminology to describe what they hear
- recognize the distinct sections of the Italian double aria and their musical attributes

STEPS

Students will explore the musical characteristics of the Italian double aria in *La Traviata* by listening to musical excerpts from the opera, both in audio examples of the *Ten Essential Musical Terms* and in independent excerpts. Their understanding of the form as well as other musical attributes will then be tested in a listening cognition exercise, "Double Aria Jeopardy."

STEP 1: It will be necessary for students to have a basic understanding of the plot of *La Traviata*. You may like to distribute copies of the synopsis ahead of time and assign it as homework reading. Alternatively, you may prefer to wait until your class period to review the summary, which provides an abridged version of the plot. In any case, students should understand the overarching story and be able to identify the major characters.



STEP 2: Distribute copies of the *Ten Essential Musical Terms* as well as the Voice Type sidebar and review them as a class. Using your voice, musical instruments, and the audio tracks outlined below, demonstrate each term, as well as the supplemental tracks that provide examples of voice types.

TRACK	MUSICAL TERM/EXAMPLE
2	brass
3	cabaletta
4	cadenza
5	cavatina
6	recitative
7	strings
8	woodwinds
9	soprano
10	mezzo-soprano
11	tenor
12	baritone
13	bass

STEP 2: Now it is time to explore Verdi’s use of the double aria form more closely. Explain to students that a double aria consists of two self-contained sections, connected by a short intermediate segment often in the form of a recitative and sometimes involving other characters.

The initial aria usually is written in the form of a cavatina (cah-vah-TEEN-ah), a comparatively simple piece in slow to moderate tempo, in which the character reflects on his or her situation—thoughtfully, somberly, even sadly.

In the middle section, something will change the mood: news might arrive, another character might express himself, do something, or prevent something from being done. This sets up the second section, called a cabaletta (cah-bah-LET-tah). It is faster, more energetic, and has a strong rhythmic drive. The character’s feelings have changed: he or she may be joyful or angry, or may have come to a decision.

You may play **Tracks 3 and 5** from the *Ten Essential Musical Terms* again, or, alternatively, Violetta’s full double aria “Ah fors’è lui – Sempre libera.” The text is provided in the reproducible handouts, and the music can be found on **Track 14**. Be sure to call students’ attention to the differences in musical style between the two sections.

STEP 3: In order to give students an additional roadmap to the music of *La Traviata*, it will also be helpful to work through the opera’s main musical themes. The *Double Aria Jeopardy* questions in the game to come will also draw from this work. The themes are described on the following page, along with score excerpts and audio track numbers.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND LA TRAVIATA

This activity directly supports the following ELA-Literacy Common Core Strands:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

TRACK 15: VIOLETTA'S SACRIFICE THEME

A lush and tuneful melody in the major mode spun out in this excerpt by the cellos, against a waltz-like accompaniment.



TRACK 16: DEATH THEME

A slow, sad-sounding, expressive melody in the minor-mode, played in a high range by the violins. It includes chromatic harmonies.



TRACK 17: DRINKING THEME

A boisterous melody in the major mode played against a strong "oom-pah-pah" accompaniment, which gives the excerpt a celebratory and dance-like feeling.



TRACK 18: LOVE THEME

A major-mode, triple-time outpouring of passionate emotion, marked “con espansione” (“expansively”) in the score. It recurs throughout the opera, signaling Alfredo’s love.



STEP 4: Now distribute copies of the *Double Aria Jeopardy* handout at the back of this guide and divide students into groups of equal size, with ideally no more than five groups. The *Jeopardy* chart is organized in the same way as in the game show: there is a series of categories (Characters & Voice Types; Musical Characteristics; Instruments; and Theme Identification), organized in order of increasing difficulty.

You should set up your classroom so that there are chairs at the front of the room—the number of chairs should match the number of groups. (If your school has quiz bowl buzzers, you can set them up on a long table in front of the chairs.) Prior to each round, the groups should nominate one student from their ranks to go to the front of the room and choose a seat.

Unlike in the game show, you should identify which group will select the first question (e.g., “Musical Characteristics for \$300,” etc.). Rather than having the winner of each round continue by selecting the next question, you should cycle through each group, so that everyone has a chance to choose a question.

Remind students that they should frame their answers in the form of a question, then provide the first prompt. (A completed chart is provided on the following page.) If you are not using buzzers, make sure you are watching the students carefully so you can see who raises his or her hand to answer first. That student has the first opportunity to provide an answer; if they are incorrect, you can cycle through the other group representatives until one provides the correct answer. For the next question, a new round of students should come to the front to play. Keep a running tally of the score on the blackboard.

The game of *Double Aria Jeopardy* can continue until all of the questions have been answered or the class period ends. The team with the highest score wins!

FUN FACT: While the story of the Lady of the Camellias remains essentially the same throughout its many versions, the heroine’s name has changed over the years—from the historical Marie Duplessis (who was born Alphonsine Plessis) to Marguerite Gautier in Dumas’s novel and play, to Violetta Valéry in *La Traviata*, to Camille in some of the film versions.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Double Aria Jeopardy **ANSWER KEY**

<p>CHARACTERS & VOICE TYPES</p>	<p>MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS</p>	<p>INSTRUMENTS</p>	<p>THEME IDENTIFICATION</p>
<p>Who is the character being described?</p>	<p>What is a prominent musical attribute of the example, with an emphasis on style or structure?</p>	<p>What is the most prominent instrument or instrument family you hear?</p>	<p>What musical theme do you hear?</p>
<p>\$100 PROMPT: The name of the tenor and main love interest of the opera. ANSWER: <i>Who is Alfredo?</i></p>	<p>\$100 PROMPT: Audio Track 19 ANSWER: <i>What is recitative?</i></p>	<p>\$100 PROMPT: Audio Track 20 ANSWER: <i>What is the violin?</i></p>	<p>\$100 PROMPT: Audio Track 21 ANSWER: <i>What is the Love Theme?</i></p>
<p>\$200 PROMPT: The major soprano character in the opera. ANSWER: <i>Who is Violetta?</i></p>	<p>\$200 PROMPT: Audio Track 22 ANSWER: <i>What is a cadenza?</i></p>	<p>\$200 PROMPT: Audio Track 23 ANSWER: <i>What are the woodwinds and brass?</i></p>	<p>\$200 PROMPT: Audio Track 24 ANSWER: <i>What is the Drinking Theme?</i></p>
<p>\$300 PROMPT: Violetta returns to this character in Act II. ANSWER: <i>Who is Baron Douphol?</i></p>	<p>\$300 PROMPT: Audio Track 25 ANSWER: <i>What is a cavatina?</i></p>	<p>\$300 PROMPT: Audio Track 26 ANSWER: <i>What is the cello?</i></p>	<p>\$300 BONUS / DAILY DOUBLE #2 <i>(see below)</i></p>
<p>\$400 PROMPT: The character who persuades Violetta to leave Alfredo. ANSWER: <i>Who is Germont?</i></p>	<p>\$400 PROMPT: Audio Track 28 ANSWER: <i>What is a cabaletta?</i></p>	<p>\$400 BONUS / DAILY DOUBLE #1 <i>(see below)</i></p>	<p>\$400 PROMPT: Audio Track 29 ANSWER: <i>What is the Death Theme?</i></p>

DAILY DOUBLE:

- PROMPT: All of the common brass instruments in a symphony orchestra ANSWER: *What is trumpet, French horn, trombone, and tuba*
- PROMPT: Audio Track 27 ANSWER: *What is the Violetta's Sacrifice Theme?*

Ten Essential Musical Terms

Aria A self-contained piece for solo voice, typically with orchestral accompaniment. Arias form a major part of larger works such as operas or oratorios.

Brass An instrument family that includes trumpet, trombone, French horn, and tuba, among others. These instruments are usually made from brass, and sound is created by the player blowing through a mouthpiece with buzzing lips. The opposite end of the instrument has an enlarged opening called a bell. With a timbre that can range from bright to mellow, brass instruments are the loudest members of a standard symphony orchestra.

Cabaletta The second and final section of a double aria in 19th-century Italian opera. In contrast to the first section, the cabaletta is usually fast, rhythmically driving, and may include florid ornamentation.

Cadenza A musical passage performed by one or more soloists as a virtuosic display of elaborate embellishment before the end of a phrase or section. Cadenzas sometimes are not written out by the composer but left to the improvisational skills of the singer. During a cadenza, the orchestra remains silent in order to focus all the attention on the soloist and give him or her the flexibility to improvise freely.

Cavatina A term that throughout operatic history has been used to describe different types of arias. In modern usage, it often refers to the first section of a double aria in Italian operas of the 19th century. Also called a "Cantabile," this section is frequently characterized by a slow to moderate tempo, a simple melodic style, and a text that can be reflective, somber, or sad. In double arias, the cavatina is followed by a brief section of recitative and the cabaletta.

Double aria An extended solo in 19th-century Italian opera, featuring two self-contained sections, connected by a short intermediate segment often in the form of a recitative and involving other characters.

Recitative A term with far-reaching significance across the history of opera, recitative refers to a type of vocal utterance that can be characterized as song-speech. It is derived from the Italian verb that translates as "to recite" and is meant to capture the gestures of the spoken word. Recitative is understood in contrast to the more tuneful and reflective mode of arias and ensemble pieces, in which texts are often repeated. The middle part of an Italian double aria (between the cavatina and the cabaletta) employs a recitative-like style; this section is called a "tempo di mezzo."

Strings The string family includes instruments that produce sound by drawing a bow across a string, most notably violins, violas, cellos, and double basses. (In a wider sense, guitars, lutes, harps, and other plucked instruments are also part of it.) In the modern symphony orchestra, strings are grouped into four or more sections, which may include ten or more players per part.

Theme Musical themes are melodies or melodic fragments that can act as building blocks for a composition. A theme is often recognizable as a distinct tune and may reappear, in its original form or different variants, throughout the piece. Especially in opera, a specific theme may be associated with a particular character, object, or emotion.

Woodwinds A group of instruments, including flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon (as well as versions of these instruments with different ranges, such as the piccolo and contrabassoon), that are sounded by blowing air across an opening or against a reed, through a conical chamber. Although modern flutes are made of metal, in their earlier form they were made of wood, like the other instruments in the family.

Supporting the Student Experience during *The Met: Live in HD* Transmission

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the Performance Activity reproducible handouts found in the back of this guide.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *LA TRAVIATA*

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.3

Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Watching and listening to a performance is a unique experience that takes students beyond the printed page to an immersion in images, sound, interpretation, technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities help students analyze different aspects of the experience and engage critically with what they see and hear. They will consider the creative choices that have been made for the particular production they are watching and examine different aspects of the performance.

Each Performance Activity incorporates a reproducible sheet. Students should bring this activity sheet to the *Live in HD* transmission and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to details of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed.

For *La Traviata*, the first activity sheet, *Colors, Circles, and Clocks*, directs students' attention to the minimalistic, modular set design of this *Live in HD* production. While students may readily recognize that this production chooses an alternate time frame than the opera's original 19th-century setting, they might overlook how other design choices shape the impact of this staging. Using this activity sheet, students will be prompted to note three key elements of the staging so they can think about the effect they have on the audience.

The second, basic activity sheet is called *My Highs & Lows*. It is meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season. This sheet serves to guide students toward a consistent set of objective observations, as well as to help them articulate their own opinions. It is designed to enrich the students' understanding of the art form as a whole. The ratings system encourages students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark discussions that require careful, critical thinking.

The Performance Activity reproducible handouts can be found in the back of this guide. On the next page, you'll find an activity created specifically for follow-up after the *Live in HD* transmission.

Love in the Abstract: The Staging of *La Traviata*

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? The discussion offers an opportunity to apply the notes on students' *My Highs & Lows* sheet, as well as their thoughts about the visual design of the Met production—in short, to see themselves as *La Traviata* experts.

The Met's production of *La Traviata* takes a distinct and unusual position on sets and costumes. Whereas other productions have offered period settings of the opera, director Willy Decker and his designer Wolfgang Gussmann chose a different approach. As students have seen, this *La Traviata* is all white, black, and red, with a variety of circular forms conveying the themes of time and its inevitable passage. Violetta is mostly dressed in red. A semicircular wall and a huge clock dominate the stage. The many features of the set identified in the Performance Activity *Colors, Circles, and Clocks* not only carry symbolic value, but may also help concentrate an audience's attention on the human drama, as opposed to the visual representation of a colorful setting.

Now that students have had a chance to reflect on these production elements, ask them to offer their interpretation of how they are used within this staging. Some questions to ask include:

- Why do you think the set is dominated by a huge clock? When did you particularly notice it? What do you think it means?



IN PREPARATION

This activity requires no preparation other than attendance at the *Live in HD* transmission of *La Traviata*.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To discuss the students' overall experience of watching *La Traviata*
- To consider the history of minimalism and its use in the production's design
- To assess the design of the Met's production and interpret its meaning

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND LA TRAVIATA

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1d

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

THE GOOD DOCTOR For those familiar with *La Traviata* in its more traditional stagings, Willy Decker's production holds many surprises. One of these is his take on the character of Dr. Grenvil, Violetta's physician. The score and libretto specify his presence both at Violetta's Act I party and Flora's party in Act II, though he is not called upon to sing until the party at Flora's, and then only to express surprise that Violetta and Alfredo have parted. In Decker's production, the doctor's few lines in Act II are assigned to another singer (simply referred to by the director as "A Gentleman"). As a result, in this staging, the doctor speaks only in the opera's final scene, as Violetta is close to death.

But instead of treating him as a minor figure who exists mostly to declare Violetta dead, Decker turns Grenvil into a constant presence and the visual representative of death and mortality. The doctor is on stage, mostly silently, throughout the opera, even before Violetta's first entrance, representing both her fear of death and her process of coming to terms with the inevitable. This directorial choice creates unprecedented gravity, poetry, and foreboding coming from a character that usually is no more than a very minor player.

- Why do you think all the singers in the large party scenes are dressed in men's suits? What is the effect of that choice? What about the costumes for the act set in Violetta's country house when she and Alfredo have spent three months together?
- What were some of the most striking uses of circles in the staging? Do these circles always suggest the same thing? Ask students to cite a few examples and suggest what impact they had.
- Why do you think the director chose to put the singers in modern costumes and not to use a set that suggests the 19th century (when the story is originally set)? What is the benefit of using a more traditional set? What is the benefit of using the more abstract set seen in this staging?

There are, of course, no correct answers to these questions. Any response is valid, especially to the extent that the critic can cite specific characteristics of the works to support his or her opinion.

Willy Decker's production has been called minimalist—a design approach summarized in an aphorism often attributed to the early 20th-century German architect Mies van der Rohe: "Less is more." Minimalists believe a work of art can be stripped down to its essential elements, and that such art is both more beautiful and more effective than a more elaborate style.

A fun way to explore minimalism is by trying it out. As a follow-up activity or for homework, students can choose a favorite film or TV show, then imagine how they might restage the same story in a minimalist style.

- What would the sets look like?
- How would costumes be designed?
- Would contemporary styles be a part of the design, or might they convey too much information about the time and place of the production?
- What aspects of the original might be lost in such a stripped-down version? What might be gained in terms of the audience's experience?

- 1 Germont confronts Violetta
- 2 brass
- 3 cabaletta
- 4 cadenza
- 5 cavatina
- 6 recitative
- 7 strings
- 8 woodwinds
- 9 soprano
- 10 mezzo-soprano
- 11 tenor
- 12 baritone
- 13 bass
- 14 Violetta's double aria "Ah fors'è lui – Sempre libera"
- 15 Violetta's Sacrifice Theme
- 16 Death Theme
- 17 Drinking Theme
- 18 Love Theme
- 19 Musical Characteristics for \$100—recitative
- 20 Instruments for \$100—violin
- 21 Theme Identification for \$100—Love Theme
- 22 Musical Characteristics for \$200—cadenza
- 23 Instruments for \$200—woodwinds and brass
- 24 Theme Identification for \$200—Drinking Theme
- 25 Musical Characteristics for \$300—cavatina
- 26 Instruments for \$300—cello
- 27 Theme Identification for \$300/Daily Double—Violetta's Sacrifice Theme
- 28 Musical Characteristics for \$400—cabaletta
- 29 Theme Identification for \$400—Death Theme

**Excerpts taken from the
Metropolitan Opera broadcast of
December 27, 2014**

VIOLETTA
Marina Rebeka

ALFREDO
Stephen Costello

GERMONT
Quinn Kelsey

Conducted by
Marco Armiliato

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra
and Chorus

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Courtesans and City Life in the 19th Century

What Would You Do? Activity Sheet

Imagine you are 15 years old and have left home to live in a big city on your own. What would you do? Think of yourself as a more contemporary version of Violetta, the heroine of *La Traviata*. All you have to guide you is your imagination, wits, and resourcefulness. Record your answers to the following questions:

Where would you live? _____

How would you find a job? _____

What kind of job do you think you could get? _____

What sorts of resources do you think you could find to help you get settled? _____

What sorts of dangers do you think you would encounter? _____

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Courtesans and City Life in the 19th Century (CONT'D)

Historical Readings

A short time before I left New York, several thousand females struck for an advance of wages, and the *Sun American* paper of March, 1834, observes, “The low rate of female labour (in America) is a grievance of the very first magnitude, and pregnant with the most mighty ills to society. It demands the most serious consideration of those whose situations in life give them influence upon manners and customs. This unjust arrangement of remuneration for services performed diminishes the importance of women in society—renders them more helpless and dependent—destroys in the lower walks of life much of the inducements to marriage—and of course in the same degree increases the temptations to licentiousness. It is difficult to conceive why, even in those branches, wherein both sexes are engaged, there should be such an extreme degree of disparity in the recompense of labor as every person acquainted with the subject knows to exist.” I was told by several tailors that the reason why their labor was paid so badly was, a great many women were employed in the trade, who worked for next to nothing. None but the very best hands amongst the men could get what was called good wages.

—Richard Gooch, “Female Labour in America”
from *America and the Americans in 1833-4*.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Courtesans and City Life in the 19th Century (CONT'D)

After considering the historic page, and viewing the living world with anxious solicitude, the most melancholy emotions of sorrowful indignation have depressed my spirits, and I have sighed when obliged to confess that either Nature has made a great difference between man and man, or that the civilisation which has hitherto taken place in the world has been very partial. I have turned over various books written on the subject of education, and patiently observed the conduct of parents and the management of schools; but what has been the result?—a profound conviction that the neglected education of my fellow-creatures is the grand source of the misery I deplore, and that women, in particular, are rendered weak and wretched by a variety of concurring causes, originating from one hasty conclusion. The conduct and manners of women, in fact, evidently prove that their minds are not in a healthy state; for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity. One cause of this barren blooming I attribute to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers; and the understanding of the sex has been so bubbled by this specious homage, that the civilised women of the present century, with a few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect.

—Mary Wollstonecraft, from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

Wollstonecraft was an 18th century writer, intellectual, and early advocate for women's rights. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft's most famous work, is a vigorous argument in favor of women's education.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Courtesans and City Life in the 19th Century (CONT'D)

But the grog was sickening, the atmosphere reeking with smoke, the noise more and more deafening. Someone brought me cakes, but I could not touch them, my head was so heavy. I fell asleep upon my chair. The next morning I found myself by the side of the man in his bed. It was one more child ruined—wickedly, beastially. I have never pardoned men, neither this one nor the others who are not responsible for his act...

...This man gave me money.

“If you like we will stay together,” he said while he was dressing. “You will have everything you want, and, if it will amuse you, we will go all over London together. What do you say?”

I was absolutely stupefied. Everything appeared to me a nightmare. Like my poor old grandmother when she dreamed of falling over the precipices, I hoped for some shock that might awake me. However, soon I realized what had happened, and that I could never more darken the doors of either my mother or my grandmother.

—from *The Memoirs of Cora Pearl, The English Beauty of the French Empire* (1886)

English by birth, Cora Pearl became a renowned courtesan in France in the mid-19th century.

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
LA TRAVIATA

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Courtesans and City Life in the 19th Century (CONT'D)

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the “Song of the Shirt.”

“Work! work! work!
While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work—work—work,
Till the stars shine through the roof!
It’s Oh! to be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
If this is Christian work!

“Work—work—work,
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work,
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

“Oh, Men, with Sisters dear!
Oh, men, with Mothers and Wives!
It is not linen you’re wearing out,
But human creatures’ lives!
Stitch—stitch—stitch,
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

“But why do I talk of Death?
That Phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear its terrible shape,
It seems so like my own—
It seems so like my own,
Because of the fasts I keep;
Oh, God! that bread should be so dear
And flesh and blood so cheap!

“Work—work—work!
My labour never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread—and rags.
That shattered roof—this naked floor—
A table—a broken chair—
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

“Work—work—work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work—work—work,
As prisoners work for crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain
benumbed,
As well as the weary hand.

“Work—work—work,
In the dull December light,
And work—work—work,
When the weather is warm and bright—
While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling
As if to show me their sunny backs
And twit me with the spring.

“Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet;
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal!

“Oh! but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!”

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,—
Would that its tone could reach the
Rich!—
She sang this “Song of the Shirt!”

—“Song of the Shirt” by Thomas Hood, published in *Punch*,
or the *London Charivari* (1843)

Thomas Hood was an early 19th century writer who often contributed to London magazines. His poem “Song of the Shirt” quickly spread across Europe and brought popular attention to the plight of the working class, particularly that of working women.

LA TRAVIATA

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Courtesans and City Life in the 19th Century (CONT'D)

Response Chart

Author: _____

What is life like for women in this reading? _____

What are their current opportunities for education and work? _____

What are the forces that contribute to this status? _____

Notes on the type of family life available to women in this reading: _____

What does your reading say about the life choices available to someone like Violetta Valéry? _____

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Courtesans and City Life in the 19th Century (CONT'D)

TRACK 1

GERMONT: Pura siccome un angelo

Iddio mi diè una figlia;
se Alfredo nega riedere
in seno alla famiglia,
l'amato e amante giovine
cui sposa andar dovea
or si ricusa al vincolo
che lieti ne rendea...

Deh non mutate in triboli
le rose dell'amor...
a' prieghi miei resistere no,
non voglia il vostro cor.

VIOLETTA: Ah! comprendo... dovrò per alcun tempo
da Alfredo allontanarmi... doloroso
fora per me... pur...

GERMONT: Non è ciò che chiedo...

VIOLETTA: Cielo, che più cercate? offersi assai!

GERMONT: Pur non basta.

VIOLETTA: Volete che per sempre a lui rinunzi?...

GERMONT: È d'uopo!

VIOLETTA: Ah no... giammai, no, mai.
Non sapete quale affetto
vivo, immenso m'arda il petto?
che né amici né parenti
io non conto fra i viventi?...
e che Alfredo m'ha giurato
che in lui tutto troverò?
Non sapete che colpita
d'atro morbo è la mia vita?
che già presso il fine vedo?
ch'io mi separi da Alfredo?...
Ah il supplizio è sì spietato
che a morir preferirò.

GERMONT: È grave il sacrificio,
ma pur tranquilla uditemi!
Bella voi siete e giovine...
col tempo...

VIOLETTA: Ah più non dite...
v'intendo... m'è impossibile...
lui solo amar vogl'io...

GERMONT: Sia pure... ma volubile
sovente è l'uom...

God gave me a daughter
pure as an angel;
if Alfredo refuses to return
to the bosom of his family,
her beloved and loving young man
whose bride she was to be
would now reject the bond
that would make us happy...
Ah do not change love's roses
into devil's horns...
no, no, may your heart
not resist my entreaties.

Ah! I understand... I shall have to leave
Alfredo for a time... it would be
painful for me... yet...

That is not what I ask.

Heaven, what more do you seek? I offered much!

Yet it does not suffice.

You want me to renounce him forever?

It is necessary!

Ah no... never, no, never.
Do not you know what lively,
immense feeling burns in my breast?
that I count neither friends nor relatives
among the living?...
and that Alfredo swore to me
that I should find everything in him?
Do not you know that my life
has been struck by a dark disease,
that I see it already near its end?
that I should leave Alfredo?...
Ah, the torment would be so cruel
that I should prefer to die.

The sacrifice is great,
but hear me out calmly!
You are young and beautiful...
in time...

Ah, say no more...
I understand... it is impossible for me...
him alone shall I love...

That may well be... but men
are often fickle...

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Courtesans and City Life in the 19th Century (CONT'D)

VIOLETTA: (*struck*) Gran Dio!

GERMONT: (*simply*) Un dì, quando le veneri
il tempo avrà fuggate
fia presto il tedio a sorgere...
Che sarà allor? pensate...
Per voi non avran balsamo
i più soavi affetti;
poiché dal ciel non furono
tai nodi benedetti...

VIOLETTA: È vero!

GERMONT: Ah dunque sperdasi
tal sogno seduttore,
siate di mia famiglia
l'angel consolatore...
Violetta, deh pensateci,
ne siete in tempo ancor!
è Dio che ispira, o giovine,
tai detti a un genitor.

VIOLETTA: (Cosi alla misera ch'è un dì caduta,
di più risorgere speranza è muta!
Se pur benefico le indulga Iddio,
l'uomo implacabil per lei sarà!...)

(*to Germont, weeping*)

Ah! Dite alla giovine sì bella e pura
che avvi una vittima della sventura,
cui resta un unico raggio di bene...
che a lei il sacrifica e che morrà!

GERMONT: Piangi, piangi, o misera, supremo, il veggo,
è il sacrificio che ora ti chieggo...
Sento nell'anima già le tue pene...
coraggio... e il nobile tuo cor vincerà.

Great God!

One day, when time
will have chased off carnal desires...
tedium will quickly arise.
What then will be? think...
Even the deepest feelings
can bring you no balm;
since such bonds were never
blessed by heaven.

It is true!

Ah may so seductive a dream
be dispelled,
be my family's
consoling angel...
Violetta, ah think,
you are still in time!
it is God, young lady, who inspires
a parent to speak thus.

(Thus for the wretch who erred one day,
hope of rising again is silent!
Even if God were to grant her indulgence
man will be implacable!...)

Ah! Tell the youth so lovely and pure
that there is a victim of misfortune,
to whom remains a single ray of fortune...
that she sacrifices it to her and that she will die!

Weep, weep, oh poor one, I see
that the sacrifice I now ask you is supreme...
Already I feel your pains in my soul...
be brave... and your noble heart will triumph.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Double Aria Jeopardy

TRACK 14

VIOLETTA: È strano!... è strano!... in core
scolpiti ho quegli accenti!...
Saria per me sventura un serio amore?...
Che risolvi, o turbata anima mia?...
Null'uomo ancora t'accendeva... oh gioia
ch'io non conobbi, esser amata amando!...
E sdegnarla poss'io
per l'aride follie del viver mio?

Ah, fors'è lui che l'anima
solinga ne' tumulti
godea sovente pingere
de' suoi colori occulti!...
Lui che modesto e vigilante
all'egre soglie ascese,
e nuova febbre accese,
destandomi all'amor.

A quell'amor ch'è palpito
dell'universo intero,
misterioso altero,
croce e delizia al cor.

[the following stanza is typically cut in performance]

[A me fanciulla, un candido
e trepido desire
questi effigiò dolcissimo
signor dell'avvenire,
quando ne' cieli il raggio
di sua beltà vedea,
e tutta me pascea
di quel divino error.

Sentia che amore è palpito
dell'universo intero,
misterioso altero,
croce e delizia al cor!] *(absorbed in thought)*

(recovering herself)

Follie!... follie!... delirio vano è questo!...
Povera donna, sola,
abbandonata in questo
popoloso deserto
che appellano Parigi,
che spero or più?... che far degg'io?... Gioire.
Di voluttà ne' vortici perire.
Gioir, gioir!

It is strange!... it is strange!... I have
those words engraved upon my heart!...
Would true love be a misfortune for me?...
What do you resolve, oh my troubled soul?...
No man has yet enflamed you... oh joy
that I have not known, being loved and in love!...
And can I scorn it
for the arid follies of my life?

Ah, perhaps it is he whom my soul
lonely in its tumults
often enjoyed painting
with its secret colors!...
He who modest and vigilant
visited my sickroom,
and ignited a new fever,
awakening me to love.

To that love that is the heartbeat
of the entire universe,
mysterious noble,
cross and delight of the heart.

[As a girl, a pure
and anxious desire
depicted him, a most gentle
lord of my future,
when in the heavens I saw
the ray of his beauty,
and nourished my whole self
with that divine fancy.

I felt that love is the heartbeat
of the entire universe,
mysterious noble,
cross and delight of the heart!]

Follies!... follies!... this is vain delirium!...
Poor woman, alone,
abandoned in this
crowded desert
they call Paris,
what more do I hope?... what should I do?... Revel.
Die of pleasure in the whirlwinds.
Revel, revel!

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Double Aria Jeopardy (CONT'D)

Sempre libera degg'io
folleggiar di gioia in gioia,
vo' che scorra il viver mio
pei sentieri del piacer.
Nasca il giorno, il giorno muoia,
sempre lieta ne' ritrovi
a dilette sempre nuovi
dee volare il mio pensier.

ALFREDO: (*under the balcony*)

Amore, amor è palpito
dell'universo intero,
misterioso altero,
croce e delizia al cor.

VIOLETTA: Oh! Amore
Follie! follie! follie!... gioir, giorir!
Sempre libera degg'io, etc.

I must always be free
to frolic from joy to joy,
I want my life to run
along the paths of pleasure.
Be it dawn, be it dusk,
always happy in meeting places
my thought must fly
to ever new delights.

Love, love is the heartbeat
of the entire universe,
mysterious noble,
cross and delight of the heart.

Oh! Love
Follies! follies! follies!... revel, revel!
I must always be free, etc.

LA TRAVIATA

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Double Aria Jeopardy (CONT'D)

CHARACTERS & VOICE TYPES	MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	INSTRUMENTS	THEME IDENTIFICATION
Who is the character being described?	What is a prominent musical attribute of the example, with an emphasis on style or structure?	What is the most prominent instrument or instrument family you hear?	What musical theme do you hear?
\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100
\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200
\$300	\$300	\$300	\$300
\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400

At the Met: *Colors, Circles, and Clocks*

This production of *La Traviata* is remarkable for its restricted color palette, its use of circular shapes and patterns, and the presence of a gigantic clock. Use this worksheet to keep track of the moments when the staging brings these elements into play, whether by changes in costumes, sets, or lighting, or by the performers' movements. Then, after watching the transmission, use this sheet to jot down your interpretation of the color, shape, and time symbols in the production.

Colors

The colors mainly used here are _____.

Colors used during the production:

WHAT?	WHEN?

Circles

Circular forms that appear in the production:

WHAT?	WHEN?

The Clock

Movements of the clock's hands during the production:

WHAT?	WHEN?

La Traviata: My Highs & Lows

THE MET: LIVE IN HD

MARCH 11, 2017

CONDUCTED BY NICOLA LUISOTTI

REVIEWED BY _____

THE STARS	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
SONYA YONCHEVA AS VIOLETTA	*****	
MICHAEL FABIANO AS ALFREDO	*****	
THOMAS HAMPSON AS GERMONT	*****	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
THE OPENING: VIOLETTA AT HOME MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ALFREDO'S DRINKING SONG MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ALFREDO AND VIOLETTA BY THEMSELVES DURING THE PARTY MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
VIOLETTA, ALONE, THINKS ABOUT HER LIFE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ALFREDO FINDS OUT WHY ANNINA WENT TO PARIS MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
GERMONT VISITS VIOLETTA MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
VIOLETTA'S DECISION MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE PARTY AT FLORA'S MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ALFREDO GAMBLES MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ALFREDO CONFRONTS VIOLETTA MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE DOCTOR'S VISIT MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
VIOLETTA READS GERMONT'S LETTER MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ALFREDO ARRIVES MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
VIOLETTA'S LAST MOMENTS MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5