

# Painted Sky Opera | Session 3:

## Children's Opera - *The Pirates of Penzance*

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**List of Required Supplies:** Internet access, screens for viewing, classroom space, worksheets (link provided), art supplies, pencils

**Additional Links:**

[https://streaming.uco.edu/media/t/1\\_jf7cgm20/27106841](https://streaming.uco.edu/media/t/1_jf7cgm20/27106841) (video)

<https://www.paintedskyopera.org/s/Pirates-of-Penzance-worksheets-Opera-In-Place.pdf> (worksheet)

**Space/Facility Requirements:** Internet access, viewing screens, classroom

**Student Time Required:** 60 minutes

**Step-by-step Instructions:**

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

**Respond:**

- Verbalize in their own words what the opera was about
- Recognize arias and recitatives within the opera
- Identify which voice types each of the major characters belong
- Respond to questions provided on a worksheet and asked by teacher regarding opera content

**Connect:**

- Recognize emotions that operatic music communicates and how the character's actions reflect those emotions
- Describe what they like and dislike about the opera

**Perform:**

- Work toward building confidence in their own abilities to participate in opera and other musical forms

**Create:**

- Create artwork using coloring sheet provided

**Introduction:** Before starting the video, introduce the name of the opera: *The Pirates of Penzance*. This opera will help reinforce concepts from the *Opera Basics* video and prompt students to compare and contrast this opera to *Sid the Serpent*.

Based on the title alone, ask the students the following questions:

- What do you think the opera is about?
- What do you think you will hear in the opera?
- What do you think you will hear in the opera that you heard in the *Opera Basics* video?
- How do you think this will compare to *Sid the Serpent*?

*The Pirates of Penzance* contains music that is familiar to many students. It may help to introduce the most famous song – “I am the Very Model of a Modern Major General” – prior to watching the video. Various versions can be found on Youtube. As an additional activity after watching the video, you may try to see if students can learn the first verse of “Modern Major General” by rote (lyrics also available in many places on the internet along with karaoke tracks), or even race to see who can sing it the fastest. It may also help to describe some of the things that the Major General is singing about. A glossary of terms is available on The Gilbert and Sullivan Archive (<https://www.gsarchive.net/>).

The basic plot of *Pirates of Penzance* is a bit confusing and it may help to go over it ahead of time as well. Frederic is a pirate who has turned 21 and released from his service to the pirates to go out into the world. However, he learns from his nursemaid Ruth that she accidentally apprenticed him as a “pirate” when she should have apprenticed him as a “pilot”. Frederic leaves her and meets with the daughters of Major General Stanley and falls in love with Mabel. The pirates capture the daughters but release them when Major General Stanley claims to be an orphan (for which the pirates have a particular soft spot). The pirates later find out that the Major General was not telling the truth and in an epic battle with the police, they re-capture the Major General and his daughter only to release them again in honor of the Queen and England.

Prior to the video, it will be helpful to once again review the terms aria and recitative, and review the four voice types.

***Pirates of Penzance* video:** Play the video in its entirety and inform the students that they will have the opportunity to ask questions at the end. Remember to pay close attention, as there will be questions about the opera on the worksheet.

**Question and answer time:** After the video is over, hand out worksheets to be completed separately or as a group. There is also a coloring sheet that can be completed in class or at home. Some questions to ask:

- Was this opera about what you thought it would be?
- What did you hear that made you think of the *Opera Basics* video?
- How is this opera like *Sid the Serpent*?
- How was the opera different from *Sid the Serpent*?
- Which characters sang arias?
- Were there any sections of recitative?
- What did you like about it?
- What did you not like about it?
- Is this still an opera even though there was spoken dialogue?  
Why or why not?