



Presents

Highlights
of
Porgy and Bess

Teacher Guide

Teacher Activities by Melissa Sullivan

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In your hands is a teacher guide to accompany the Virginia Opera Education Performance you will be presenting at your school. It is our hope that this teacher guide will assist you and your students in making the most of your experience with Virginia Opera. Opera brings together music, drama, dance, language, literature, history, and geography, and we encourage you to incorporate this teacher guide into your curriculum and use the art form of opera to supplement your students' educational experience.

This teacher guide includes background information and essay/discussion topics as well as a series of ready to use student activity sheets. This guide is designed to benefit both educator and student with regard to the inter-disciplinary approach to education. Also included are follow up worksheets which encourage students to express what they saw, heard, and learned from the performance. We invite you to use this guide to augment your existing curriculum for language arts, music, social studies, science, and mathematics.

We at Virginia Opera believe that the performing arts are an essential component of every student's education and that all students should be afforded the opportunity to experience live theater. We sincerely hope that your experience with Virginia Opera is entertaining, educational, and inspiring and will serve as a catalyst for a life long appreciation of opera.



The Operatic Voice

A true (and brief) definition of the “operatic” voice is a difficult proposition. Many believe the voice is “born,” while just as many hold to the belief that the voice is “trained.” The truth lies somewhere between the two. Voices that can sustain the demands required by the operatic repertoire do have many things in common. First and foremost is a strong physical technique that allows the singer to sustain long phrases through the control of both the inhalation and exhalation of breath. Secondly, the voice (regardless of its size) must maintain a resonance in both the head (mouth, sinuses) and chest cavities. The Italian word “*squillo*” (squeal) is used to describe the brilliant tone required to penetrate the full symphony orchestra that accompanies the singers. Finally, all voices are defined by both the actual voice “type” and the selection of repertoire for which the voice is ideally suited.

Within the five major voice types (*Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Tenor, Baritone, Bass*) there is a further delineation into categories (*Coloratura, Lyric, Spinto, Dramatic*) which help to define each particular instrument. The *Coloratura* is the highest within each voice type whose extended upper range is complimented by extreme flexibility. The *Lyric* is the most common of the “types.” This instrument is recognized more for the exceptional beauty of its tone rather than its power or range. The *Spinto* is a voice which combines the beauty of a lyric with the weight and power of a *Dramatic*, which is the most “powerful” of the voices. The *Dramatic* instrument is characterized by the combination of both incredible volume and “steely” intensity.

While the definition presented in the preceding paragraph may seem clearly outlined, many voices combine qualities from each category, thus carving an unique niche in operatic history. Just as each person is different from the next, so is each voice. Throughout her career Maria Callas defied categorization as she performed and recorded roles associated with each category in the soprano voice type. Joan Sutherland as well can be heard in recordings of soprano roles as diverse as the coloratura Gilda in *Rigoletto* to the dramatic Turandot in *Turandot*. Below is a very brief outline of voice types and categories with roles usually associated with the individual voice type.

	<i>Coloratura</i>	<i>Lyric</i>	<i>Spinto</i>	<i>Dramatic</i>
	Norina (Don Pasquale) Gilda (Rigoletto) Lucia (Lucia di Lammermoor)	Liu (Turandot) Mimi (La Bohème) Pamina (Magic Flute)	Tosca (Tosca) Amelia (A Masked Ball) Leonora (Il Trovatore)	Turandot (Turandot) Norma (Norma) Elektra (Elektra)
Mezzo-Soprano	Rosina (Barber of Seville) Angelina (La Cenerentola) Dorabella (Cosi fan tutte)	Carmen (Carmen) Charlotte (Werther) Giulietta (Hoffmann)	Santuzza (Cavalleria) Adalgisa (Norma) The Composer (Ariadne auf Naxos)	Azucena (Il Trovatore) Ulrica (A Masked Ball) Herodias (Salome)
Tenor	Count Almaviva (Barber of Seville) Don Ottavio (Don Giovanni) Ferrando (Cosi fan tutte)	Alfredo (La Traviata) Rodolfo (La Bohème) Tamino (Magic Flute)	Calaf (Turandot) Pollione (Norma) Cavaradossi (Tosca)	Dick Johnson (Fanciulla) Don Jose (Carmen) Otello (Otello)
Baritone	Figaro (Barber of Seville) Count Almavira (Le nozze di Figaro) Dr. Malatesta (Don Pasquale)	Marcello (La Bohème) Don Giovanni (Don Giovanni) Sharpless (Madama Butterfly)	Verdi Baritone Germont (La Traviata) Di Luna (Il Trovatore) Rigoletto (Rigoletto)	Scarpia (Tosca) Jochanaan (Salome) Jack Rance (Fanciulla)
Bass	Bartolo (Barber of Seville) Don Magnifico (Cenerentola) Dr. Dulcamara (Elixir of Love)	Leporello (Don Giovanni) Colline (La Bohème) Figaro (Marriage of Figaro)	Buffo Bass Don Pasquale (Don Pasquale) Don Alfonso (Cosi fan tutte)	Basso Cantate Oroveso (Norma) Timur (Turandot) Sarastro (Magic Flute)

Opera Production

Opera is created by the combination of myriad art forms. First and foremost are the actors who portray characters by revealing their thoughts and emotions through the singing voice. The next very important component is a full symphony orchestra that accompanies the singing actors and actresses, helping them to portray the full range of emotions possible in the operatic format. The orchestra performs in an area in front of the singers called the orchestra pit while the singers perform on the open area called the stage. Wigs, costumes, sets and specialized lighting further enhance these performances, all of which are designed, created, and executed by a team of highly trained artisans.

The creation of an opera begins with a dramatic scenario crafted by a playwright or dramaturg who alone or with a librettist fashions the script or libretto that contains the words the artists will sing. Working in tandem, the composer and librettist team up to create a cohesive musical drama in which the music and words work together to express the emotions revealed in the story. Following the completion of their work, the composer and librettist entrust their new work to a conductor who with a team of assistants (repetiteurs) assumes responsibility for the musical preparation of the work. The conductor collaborates with a stage director (responsible for the visual component) in order to bring a performance of the new piece to life on the stage. The stage director and conductor form the creative spearhead for the new composition while assembling a design team which will take charge of the actual physical production.

Set designers, lighting designers, costume designers, wig and makeup designers and even choreographers must all be brought “on board” to participate in the creation of the new production. The set designer combines the skills of both an artist and an architect using “blueprint” plans to design the actual physical set which will reside on the stage, recreating the physical setting required by the storyline. These blueprints are turned over to a team of carpenters who are specially trained in the art of stage carpentry. Following the actual building of the set, painters following instructions from the set designers’ original plans paint the set. As the set is assembled on the stage, the lighting designer works with a team of electricians to throw light onto both the stage and the set in an atmospheric as well as practical way. Using specialized lighting instruments, colored gels and a state of the art computer, the designer along with the stage director create a “lighting plot” by writing “lighting cues” which are stored in the computer and used during the actual performance of the opera.

During this production period, the costume designer in consultation with the stage director has designed appropriate clothing for the singing actors and actresses to wear. These designs are fashioned into patterns and crafted by a team of highly skilled artisans called cutters, stitchers, and sewers. Each costume is specially made for each singer using his/her individual measurements. The wig and makeup designer, working with the costume designer, designs and creates wigs which will complement both the costume and the singer as well as represent historically accurate “period” fashions.

As the actual performance date approaches, rehearsals are held on the newly crafted set, combined with costumes, lights, and orchestra in order to ensure a cohesive performance that will be both dramatically and musically satisfying to the assembled audience.



MUSIC VOCABULARY & PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

ALTO (It.)

The lowest female voice. Also called contralto.

ARIA (It.)

pronounced (AH-ree-ah) - A song for solo voice.

BARITONE

pronounced (BARR-ah-tone) - The middle range male voice, between tenor and bass.

BASS

pronounced (BASE) - Lowest of the male voices.

COSTUME

Clothing a singer wears to portray a character.

COMPOSER

The person who writes the music.

DESIGNER

The person who creates the scenery, costumes and lights.

DUET

pronounced (do-ET) - Music written for two people to sing together, usually to each other.

ENSEMBLE

Two or more singers singing at the same time to express their emotions and tell the story.

LIBRETTO (It.)

pronounced (lih-BRET-oh) - The word literally means "little book." The text or words of an opera.

MELODY

A series of musical tones that make up a tune.

MEZZO-SOPRANO (It.)

pronounced (MEDZ-oh soh-PRANH-oh) - The middle female voice, between soprano and contralto.

OPERA

pronounced (AH-per-ah) - A play that uses singing instead of speaking and is accompanied usually by piano in rehearsals and orchestra in performances.

PIANO (It.)

pronounced (pee-AN-oh) - A musical instrument used to accompany singers in rehearsals when there is no orchestra. The orchestral score is reduced from parts for many instruments to one part for the pianist, which combines all the important music that must be played to give a complete sound for the singers.

RECITATIVE

pronounced (ress-it-uh-TEEVE) - A type of music using words sung with the rhythm of natural speech with some melody added. Recitative can come before an aria or stand alone and it gives information or moves the story along.

REHEARSAL

The time singers and musicians spend practicing before a performance.

PROPS

Objects placed on the stage, excluding scenery. Short for “properties.”

SCORE

The book which contains both the music and the text of the opera.

SET

The scenery used on the stage to show location for the action.

SOPRANO (It.)

pronounced (soh-PRANH-oh) - The highest female voice.

STAGE DIRECTOR

The person who decides how the singers will move on stage and how they will act while they are singing their parts.

TENOR

pronounced (TEH-nor) - The highest male voice.

TRIO (It.)

pronounced (TREE-oh) - Music written for three characters to sing together.

VIBRATO (It.)

pronounced (vi-BRAH-toe) - The natural way for a voice or instrument to enlarge its sound through a very rapid but very tiny waver in pitch.

VOCAL RANGE

The scope of the human voice from its highest to its lowest sounds. Voices fall into these categories:

female:	soprano-high	male:	tenor - high
	mezzo-soprano - middle		baritone - middle
	alto or contralto - low		bass – low

Musical Numbers from “Highlights of Porgy and Bess”

The “Highlights of Porgy and Bess” will be performed by two singers (a baritone and a soprano) who will perform the following songs.

Summertime

A Woman is a Sometime Thing

Little Stars

My Man’s Gone Now

Leavin’ for the Promised Land

It Take a Long Pull to Get There

I Got Plenty O’ Nuttin

It Ain’t Necessarily So

Struttin’ Style

There’s a Boat That’s Leavin

Oh Lawd I’m On My Way

Meet the Composer

George Gershwin

The composer of *Porgy and Bess*, George Gershwin, was born on September 26, 1898, to Russian immigrant parents living in New York City. His early life was spent as a typical New York youngster playing outside in the street and having little interest in music. The arrival of a piano intended for his brother Ira piqued his interest and he began to take piano lessons. By the time he was thirteen he had made rapid progress, becoming familiar with the works of all the major composers and acquiring a thorough technique. He also showed ability in composition, his favorite style being jazz-oriented pop songs. His parents wanted him to become an accountant and his piano teacher hoped he might become a concert pianist, but Gershwin wanted to work in the popular music industry.



In May 1914, before his sixteenth birthday, George Gershwin left school and went to work for a Tin Pan Alley publishing house where he became a “piano pounder” (the pianist who accompanied singers demonstrating a music’s publisher’s latest output). During this period he also wrote his own songs and became interested in writing for theater. The music of Jerome Kern, in particular, made him realize that music written for the musical comedy stage had more potential for him as a composer. Gershwin followed his instincts and by the spring of 1919 had written the score for his first Broadway show, *La, La Lucille*.

Between 1920 and 1924 Gershwin continued to write songs for Broadway shows but also turned his attention to the serious side of composing. Throughout his early career he cherished the ambition of introducing jazz and other elements of popular music into works intended for “classical” music audiences. Many gifted composers worked in either music field, serious or popular, but very few worked in both. Gershwin aspired to be one of those few exceptions. In 1924 he realized his dream when he was commissioned by Paul Whiteman to write his first concert work. *Rhapsody in Blue*, a work for piano and orchestra, was presented in New York’s Aeolian Hall on February 12, 1924, featuring Gershwin at the piano. Among the many distinguished musicians in the enthusiastic audience were Sergei Rachmaninoff, Leopold Godowsky, Walter Damrosch, Ernest Bloch, Leopold Stokowski, Fritz Kreisler, and Victor Herbert. The following year Gershwin produced his second serious work, *Concerto in F*, which was presented in New York’s Carnegie Hall with Walter Damrosch conducting the New York Symphony Society. After a visit to Paris in 1928, Gershwin produced his third orchestral piece, *An American in Paris*, which was again performed at Carnegie Hall to great acclaim.

Throughout this period, Gershwin’s musical theater career continued unabated with two of his shows opening on Broadway in the same month that *Concerto in F* premiered. By 1930, however, he was seeking new, unconventional ideas for his musical comedies. With his brother Ira as lyricist, Gershwin produced three satirical musicals, one of which, *Of Thee I Sing*, won the 1932 Pulitzer Prize for best play. It also had the distinction of being the first musical to win a Pulitzer.

In 1934 Gershwin turned his attention to his longstanding desire – to write an opera. Some years earlier he had read a novel he felt might be suitable material for an opera libretto.

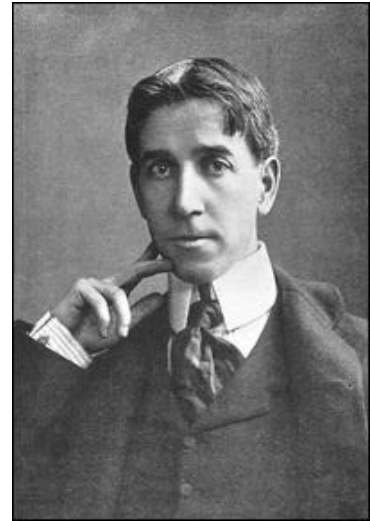
The novel, was *Porgy* by DuBose Heyward. Heyward enthusiastically wrote the libretto and, with Ira Gershwin assisting with many of the lyrics, George Gershwin's folk opera *Porgy and Bess* had its premiere on October 10, 1935. This work, instilled with Gershwin's love for jazz and the blues, is considered by many to be an American operatic original. Since its successful premiere it has been loved by audiences around the world.

After the success of *Porgy and Bess*, Gershwin headed to Hollywood to write songs for the movies. He and his brother wrote some of their finest songs for two Fred Astaire movies and were working on a third when Gershwin sought medical advice for severe headaches. He was diagnosed with a brain tumor and died after an unsuccessful surgery in July 11, 1937. He was considered a national hero and his early death, at age thirty-eight, shocked and saddened the nation.

Meet the Librettist

DuBose Heyward

DuBose Heyward was born in Charleston, South Carolina in 1885. While growing up, Heyward's grandmother read stories to the children of her family. Heyward liked them so much that he made a hobby of setting his own thoughts down on paper in the form of poetry. He had no idea then that he would one day make a living as a writer.



Growing up without a father, Heyward was forced to mature early. He hated school and at the age of fourteen, left school to work at a hardware store. At the early age of sixteen, he assumed the burdens of supporting his family, eventually working as a cotton checker for a steamship line on the Charleston docks. This was where he met and worked with the African-Americans who loaded and unloaded the ships. The setting of *Porgy and Bess* and some of its characters came directly from this experience.

When the steamship company went out of business, Heyward found himself unemployed. His lack of education proved a handicap and made him feel like a failure. Luckily, Heyward's friend Harry O'Neil was on hand to help. O'Neill and Heyward formed an insurance company. It was a risky business, but Heyward's natural charm made him a perfect salesperson. The business prospered and he began to feel fulfilled.

The feeling was short lived, however, as America entered into World War I in 1917. Because of his medical problems (a bout with typhoid, polio, and pleurisy throughout the course of his life), Heyward was unable to serve. He turned to artistic pursuits and became fascinated with words that he decided to consider a literary career. He was one of a significant group of southern writers who began, in the 20's and 30's, to translate southern history and culture into a body of notable literary works.

Heyward's first novel, *Porgy*, was considered his greatest. *Porgy* was loosely based on a real character, a black cripple known as "Goat Sammy." At first, his character was called "Pogo;" his setting included Cabbage Row and Catfish Row. He incorporated the *Gullah* dialect into the novel, taking great pains to spell this language so it would sound exactly as he had heard it spoken. *Gullah* was spoken by the community of African Americans who live on the sea islands off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina. Heyward began writing the story in the Spring of 1924 and had completed its first draft by the Fall of that year. In November, the central character's name was changed to Porgy, and thus generated the title of the work. *Porgy* was published in 1925 and was an immediate success.

After *Porgy*, Heyward wrote a number of other novels, among them *Angel*, *Mamba's Daughters*, and *Star Spangled Virgin*. He and his wife, Dorothy, dramatized *Mamba's Daughter's* for Broadway in 1939. Heyward died in 1940.

The Principal Characters

<u>Porgy</u> , a crippled beggar.	Bass-baritone
<u>Bess</u> , girlfriend of Crown	Soprano
<u>Crown</u> , a dockworker	Baritone
<u>Sporting Life</u> , a dealer of liquor and drugs.	Tenor
<u>Jake</u> , a fisherman	Baritone
<u>Clara</u> , his wife	Soprano
<u>Robbins</u> , another fisherman	Tenor
<u>Serena</u> , his wife	Soprano
<u>Mingo</u>	Tenor
<u>Peter</u> , the honey man	Tenor
<u>Frazier</u> , a lawyer	Baritone
<u>Annie</u>	Mezzo-Soprano
<u>Maria</u> , keeper of the cook-shop	Contralto
<u>Lily</u> , Peter's wife	Mezzo-Soprano
<u>Strawberry Woman</u>	Mezzo-Soprano
<u>Jim</u> , a cotton picker	Baritone
<u>Undertaker</u>	Tenor
<u>Nelson</u>	Tenor
<u>Crab Man</u>	Tenor

Setting

Catfish Row, a poor neighborhood in Charleston, South Carolina, in the 1920's

First performed on October 10, 1935, at the Alvin Theatre in New York City

The Story of Porgy and Bess

Act One:

The first scene is set in “Catfish Row,” a black slum in Charleston. It is a typical Saturday night: someone is at a piano playing blues, while a few people dance; Clara is singing a lullaby to her baby (“Summertime”); and the men are playing a crap game (although some of the women disapprove).

Porgy comes in on his little makeshift cart, drawn by a goat, and joins the game. Someone sees Crown coming, and Porgy asks whether Bess is with him. The men tease Porgy for being “soft” on Bess, but he says he’s not soft on any woman: when God makes a man crippled, he means for him to be lonely.

Crown and Bess enter. He is drunk and belligerent, and immediately buys more whiskey from Sporting Life. Bess drinks too, which disgusts the other women (one calls her a “liquor guzzlin’ slut”). Crown then joins the game, but when Robbins wins a throw Crown attacks him savagely with a cotton hook, and kills him. He is too drunk to run away until Bess tells him the police will be coming. At that word everyone goes off to hide. Crown tells Bess he will be coming back when the fuss dies down—and that he expects her to wait for him.

Bess is distraught. She begs Sporting Life for some “happy dust” (cocaine). No one will take her in to hide from the police, because she is known to be Crown’s woman. She tries to flee, but hears a police whistle and turns back—to see one door open to her: it is Porgy’s room, and she goes inside.

Scene two is in the room of Serena, the dead man’s wife. Robbins’ body is laid out on the bed, with a saucer on his chest. The mourners put in money to pay for his burial, as they sing a spiritual.

Suddenly a detective and two policemen interrupt the singing. The detective brusquely advises Serena that the body will be picked up and given to medical students if she doesn’t have it buried within a day. Then he randomly accuses an old man of the murder, and drags him off to be locked up as a material witness when he admits he saw Crown kill Robbins. Serena, meanwhile is overcome with grief (“My Man’s Gone Now”).

The undertaker comes and agrees to bury Robbins rather than let his body be dissected, even though there is too little (\$15.00) in the plate.

Act Two:

Scene one takes place on Catfish Row, a month later. Jake and the other fishermen are singing and mending their nets. Bess is now living with Porgy, who happily sings, “I Got Plenty O’Nuttin”. Frazier, a swindler “lawyer”, shows up to sell Bess a “divorce” from Crown. It turns out that she was never married, but instead of making things simpler this apparently requires “expert” legal help that will cost Porgy another fifty cents: it isn’t easy to get a woman divorced when she’s not married!

A white man then enters and asks for Porgy. Fearing that Porgy is in some sort of trouble, everyone pretends not to know him. But when it becomes clear that the man means no

harm, they produce their friend. The white man has come to explain that he posted bond for Peter (the old man who was dragged off by the detective), because “his folks used to belong to my family.”

Everyone is pleased, but suddenly Porgy sees an evil omen: a buzzard is flying overhead, and if it lights on a house it will bring bad luck. In the “Buzzard Song” the inhabitants of Catfish Row pray for the creature to pass them by.

After the song, everyone goes off to get ready for a big picnic on nearby Kittiwah Island. Sporting Life tries to sell Bess more cocaine, but she rejects it and Porgy warns him to keep away from her. Porgy and Bess then sing their great duet “Bess, You Is My Woman Now.”

The crowd comes back, dressed up in their fanciest clothes for the picnic. They urge Bess to hurry and get ready, but she wants to stay with Porgy. He doesn’t want her to have to miss the picnic just because he’s crippled, and so at his suggestion she decides to go along.

The next scene is on the island. The picnic is drawing to a close: everyone is full, many are drunk. Sporting Life entertains the crowd with an irreverent song about some unlikely Bible stories (“It Ain’t Necessarily So”).

The boat whistle is heard, but as all start to leave Crown appears – he has been hiding out in the thicket on Kittiwah – and pulls Bess aside. She begs him to let her go, telling him about Porgy. Crown laughs, and forces Bess to kiss him. She struggles, but her resistance weakens. Crown pushes her down into the thicket as the curtain falls.

Scene three is back on Catfish Row a week later. Bess has returned from the island feverish and delirious, and has not recognized anyone since. Serena prays for her, and a little later, as some vendors come hawking their wares, Porgy hears Bess call his name.

He tells her that he knows she has been with Crown again, and she begs him to protect her when Crown comes back for her: she cannot trust herself to resist him. Porgy promises, and tells her not to worry.

Suddenly the waterfront’s most dreaded sound is heard; the hurricane bell. Everyone is struck with terror as the storm gathers. Clara falls down fainting – her husband Jake is out at sea in the storm.

The fourth scene takes place in Serena’s room, while the storm rages outside. Inside, prayers and a spiritual are sung. There is a knock at the door, and Crown himself bursts into the room. He orders Bess to come with him. She refuses, and Porgy tries to move between her and Crown, who knocks him down to the floor. Crown mocks the frightened, praying women with a song about red-headed girls. Suddenly, Clara screams. She has seen her husband’s boat upside down in the water. Thrusting her baby into Bess’s arms, she runs hysterically out into the storm. “Ain’t there no man here?” asks Bess, “won’t somebody go to Clara?” Crown mocks Porgy for his lameness: “Yeah, where is a man? Porgy, what you sittin’ dere for?” He goes out to rescue Clara, but warns Bess he will be back for her.

Act Three:

Scene one, again on Catfish Row, begins with a chorus of mourning for Clara, Jake, and Crown, all presumed to have been killed in the storm. Sporting Life chuckles at the mourners, and suggests to Maria that Bess’s “two mens” might be a source of trouble. He leaves, and Crown is seen sneaking on to the empty stage. He crawls stealthily towards Porgy’s door –but as

he passes under the window a hand reaches out and plunges a knife in Crown's back. Porgy pulls out the knife, grasps Crown by the neck, and strangles him. When he is dead, Porgy throws his body as far as he can from the window.

The next morning (scene two) a white coroner and detective come to investigate the murder. They question Serena (because the dead man had killed her husband), but she pretends to have been sick in bed for three days. It is decided that Porgy will have to go to the morgue to identify Crown's body, and he becomes hysterical because of his belief in the old superstition that a victim's wound will bleed when his killer looks at him. As soon as Porgy is dragged away, Sporting Life tells Bess the court will lock him up – “not for long – maybe one year, maybe two,” and gives her some dope. She resists him contemptuously, but then suddenly yields and takes it. Sporting Life urges her to go with him to New York (“There's A Boat That's Leavin' Soon For New Yawk”), and when she refuses a second sniff of dope he leaves it on her doorstep, confident that she will come back for it and that he has won.

The final scene takes place one week later. Porgy, who refused to identify Crown, has been in jail for contempt of court. With money he won in crap games he has bought presents for several friends – and for Bess. Everyone is awkward and embarrassed, because Bess has gone to New York with Sporting Life. When they finally manage to tell Porgy this, he calls for his goat and asks where New York is. Against the urging of all his friends, he prepares to set off “way up north pas' de custom house,” and sings a spiritual, “O Lawd, I'm On My Way,” as the curtain falls.

A Short History

During the early 1920's George Gershwin had established himself as a successful composer of songs and Broadway musicals and he was well on his way to making his mark with serious music forms. His desire to introduce elements of jazz into music performed in the concert hall was becoming a reality. Between 1924 and 1928, Gershwin wrote three orchestral pieces, *Rhapsody in Blue*, *Concerto in F* and *An American in Paris*, which placed Gershwin in a unique position among American composers – one foot on either side of the line dividing serious and popular music. It was during this period, in the autumn of 1926, that Gershwin read the novel, *Porgy*, by DuBose Heyward. The book struck a chord with him and he felt instinctively that it would be the perfect vehicle for a full-length opera. For Gershwin, writing an opera had always been an ambition, and to this end he had continued his technical study of composition right through his adult years. The subject matter held great appeal for him as well, for he had maintained a lifelong interest in the African-American experience, originating with his childhood attraction to ragtime, blues and jazz. He contacted Heyward, who was enthusiastic about a collaboration. However, nine years would pass before Gershwin would have time to do serious work on the project.

Gershwin termed *Porgy and Bess* a “folk opera.” It was his classification for a work that did not fit neatly into a traditional category. As a work, it was sung throughout and required trained opera singers, but unlike traditional opera, it was performed nightly on Broadway. Gershwin's use of the term “folk” reflected the opera's subject matter and its focus on an ethnic community living in poverty in the South. It received 124 performances after it opened in New York on October 10, 1935, and was also successfully presented in Boston. It became more of a commercial success when it was presented in 1941 with spoken dialogue instead of recitative. In 1959, Otto Preminger directed a movie version starring Sidney Poitier, Dorothy Dandridge, Pearl Bailey and Sammy Davis, Jr. over the years the opera has had its critics who have raised issues of authenticity and racial stereotyping. But since 1976, when Houston Grand Opera presented the complete Gershwin score in an acclaimed landmark production, *Porgy and Bess* has been reaffirmed as an American masterpiece that has been beloved from its earliest days by audiences around the world.

The Music of *Porgy and Bess*

For George Gershwin, *Porgy and Bess* was his masterwork. A popular songwriter and composer of Broadway revues and musicals, he nourished a long held desire to write an opera. To that he devoted years of preparation and technical study. The opera is infused with songs of every conceivable variety. Gershwin's boundless imagination created unforgettable songs for *Porgy and Bess* whose melodies can easily stand alone outside the dramatic setting of the opera. Well known as a jazz composer, he drew his inspiration from music that developed from the African-American experience. He termed his work a "folk opera" reflecting the opera's connection with the musical heritage of this ethnic group. To understand the folk stream of African-American music one must examine spirituals, worksongs, social songs, hymns, blues, and gospel. Gershwin drew upon these forms, writing original pieces, for *Porgy and Bess*.

The opera begins with a driving, energetic introduction which sets a mood of vitality. The strings and xylophone play a bright, fast-paced figure with offbeat accents. In contrast, the horns introduce a dramatic yet simple rhythmic melody that is harsh and hard-edged like the life in Catfish Row. This melody grows louder and harsher as it is repeated, foreshadowing the events to come. The music quiets to introduce the lullaby, "Summertime," that Clara sings to her baby. This song has a beautiful melody with a languid rhythm that reflects the slower pace of life during the hot season. Attention shifts to the men playing with dice, conversing through recitative. Strains of the "Summertime" theme are heard again interwoven with the men's comments. A contrasting "lullaby" follows as the baby's father, Jake, gives the infant advice about women, "A Woman is a Sometime Thing." Porgy's entrance is accompanied by a recurring theme associated with him.

The community of catfish Row is a main focus of the opera and its residents are on stage most of the time. Gershwin establishes the identity of the community through communal songs, such as spirituals. He did not make use of existing spirituals, but wrote original pieces. The first spiritual, "Gone, gone, gone," opens the second scene of the first act after the death of Robbins at the hand of Crown. Various characters act as leader and the group responds with the refrain during a wake for Robbins. The arrival of the police interrupts the singing. The police are treated respectfully but with distrust. Gershwin gives the police straight dialogue to ask questions and bully the residents while the people of Catfish Row respond with accompanied recitative. The police are clearly outsiders. The wake continues with Robbins' wife Serena singing a dramatic solo lament, "My Man's Gone Now," that takes her voice to its upper range as the song ends with a cadenza-like finish. The wake concludes with another spiritual lead by Bess, "Leavin' For the Promise' Lan'," that sets a more lively, optimistic tone as the scene is brought to an end.

The next scene begins with another song from the folk genre, a work song, "It'll Take a Long Pull to Get There," sung by Jake and the fisherman. The work song filled a particular need in the community, just as the spiritual did. This worksong follows a refrain/chorus format. Porgy appears, singing a banjo and minstrel song that reflects his happiness with Bess. Strings are plucked, imitating the banjo, while the clarinet adds a blues sound in the song, "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin." Porgy's bright and cheerful outlook express his satisfaction with the good and simple life. A chorus of neighbors join in as he sings another verse. The love Porgy and Bess feel for one another is emphatically stated in their beautiful duet, "Bess, You is my Woman Now." Gershwin uses the melody of this duet as a recurring theme.

The highlight of the festive Kittiwah Island picnic is the song, "It Ain't Necessarily So," sung by Sportin' Life with a chorus of revelers. In this reinterpretation of Bible stories, Sportin' Life entertains the group and engages them in an imitation of "scat" singing, a form of vocal jazz

improvisation, in the chorus, “Wa-doo (Wa-doo), Zim bam boodle-oo (Zim bam boodle-oo), Hoodle ah da was da – Scatty wah.” When the picnic is over, Bess sees Crown, who has been hiding out on Kittiwah Island. He urges her to stay with him. This is the moment of truth for Bess. Gershwin handles it with recitative that rises over a chordal background before Bess sings the opera’s most conflicted song, “What You Want Wid Bess?” Bess and Crown join a somewhat discordant duet that is more like parallel singing before Bess succumbs completely.

When Bess returns to Porgy, she begs him to protect her from Crown in the song, “I Loves You Porgy.” This is the point where Porgy decides he must kill Crown to prevent him from taking Bess away. The hurricane scene follows, with its storm sounds in the orchestra and a vocal return to the spiritual. Crown arrives seeking refuge from the storm. He stops the spiritual singing and substitutes the song, “A Red-Headed Woman.” As Crown leaves, the individual prayers are resumed, all sung simultaneously creating dissonance.

After the hurricane the community mourns for Clara and Jake, who were lost in the storm, with a plaintive spiritual, “Clara, Clara.” Bess is singing the “summertime” lullaby to Clara’s baby as Crown returns to take her away. To a furious orchestral accompaniment Porgy ambushes Crown and kills him as they struggle. As he triumphantly tells Bess that he is her man now, the Porgy theme trumpets forth in the orchestra. The authorities arrive and once again they have only spoken dialogue with no underlying orchestral music. As they take Porgy away to identify Crown’s body, Sportin’ Life begins to undermine Bess’ confidence with the song, “There’s a Boat That’s Leavin’ Soon For New York.” He leaves her with a package of “happy dust” to complete her seduction and capitulation.

To the orchestral sound of Porgy’s theme, Porgy is welcomed back to Catfish Row. As he looks for Bess, the music of “Bess, You Is My Woman Now” is heard in the orchestra. When he realizes that she is gone he sings the anguished, “Oh, Bess, Oh, Where’s My Bess.” Porgy feels a resurgence of hope when he is told that she’s not dead, but gone to New York with Sportin’ Life. He resolves to go to New York to find her and sings, “Oh Lawd, I’m On My Way, “ as he starts on his journey. The orchestra concludes with the Porgy theme and the melody from “Bess, You is My Woman, Now.”

African American Music

Music has played a central role in the lives of African-Americans from the beginning of their history in America. Africans brought to America as slaves came from many different areas. The musical practices of a variety of African tribes were blended by the co-mingling of slavery. Common characteristics included complex rhythms, communal involvement, and an improvisatory spirit. The captured Africans might not speak the same language, but they could communicate and find solace through song and the use of improvised instruments such as the drum. The use of drums was eventually outlawed in some areas because it was suspected that they were being used to send messages about escapes and rebellions. Without drums, many slaves used their feet to pound out rhythms. Songs were also used as a form of communication and sometimes had hidden meanings or messages contained in their lyrics. For the most part, however, songs were sung to help the work move along faster, to brighten spirits, and to express feelings of sorrow or spiritual joy.

It is helpful to classify the majority of African American music into three main categories: Folk, Jazz, and European. Folk music has its roots in the rural experience and is associated with work, socials and the church. Jazz is urban and is the music of the cabaret and the vaudeville house. European music is that of the drawing room and the concert hall.

Early “folk” music originated with one individual and proceeded from the individual to the group, as the experiences of one person were often the experiences of any member of the group. Thus, group singing became a form of testimony or endorsement by the members of the community. The music which evolved lives on today, both as a form of communication and as a memorial to the conditions out of which it was born. The music had been called by various names including jubilees, mellows, melodies, plantation melodies and slave songs.

Much if the music has a basic rhythmic similarity, we must rely heavily on the textual differences when assigning a song to a particular category. The categories discussed here include: Spirituals, Blues, Art Song and Protest Songs.

Spirituals

Music accompanied all types of work. The work songs and field “hollers” usually followed the call and response form, a method in which individual singers sang solo verses that were alternated with group singing repeating a chorus. Call and response was also used in the more religious songs the slaves sang on Sundays or in the songs that expressed sorrow. These songs, called “spirituals”, are true American folk songs and sprang from the slaves’ African musical heritage, their exposure to Christianity and Protestant hymn singing, and their reaction to the reality of captivity. No one person can be credited with the creation of any particular spiritual. This rich body of music grew spontaneously out of the black slaves’ experience in America, containing beautiful melodies, distinctive rhythms, and deep, poignant, emotional energy. Some spirituals have solo lines which are immediately answered by the group. Others make use of strong syncopation. The words of spirituals relate the suffering and death of Christ directly to the slave’s own suffering. The spiritual was also used in a ritual, which has its roots in West Africa, called the “ring shout”. Participants moved around in a circle and used dance, drum and song to express themselves in ever-increasing levels of religious intensity and emotion.

Although expressed through sacred and biblical ideas, the main subject of spirituals was freedom from slavery. The songs expressed deep sorrow over the condition of slavery, great

jubilant at the promise of a better future, and a fervent desire to be free. In many ways spirituals serve as early protest songs. While under the domination of their white owners, slaves had to submit and keep their feelings under control. Singing spirituals in church or during a ring shout allowed them to release their emotions and cry out against their captivity.

The process of acquainting the wider American public with this music began with the first published collection of spirituals in 1867 entitled, *Slave Songs of the United States*. The music for this book was collected in 1861 on the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina. However, the principal credit for introducing spirituals to the American public goes to a black singing group called the Fisk Jubilee Singers.

Fisk University, located in Nashville, Tennessee, was founded within six months of the end of Civil War by the Freedmen's Bureau, a government agency formed in March 1865, to help the newly-emancipated slaves start lives as free men and women. One of the main objectives of the Freedmen's Bureau was improving education at all levels and, as a result, many institutions of higher learning were established, including Fisk in Nashville, Hampton Institute in Virginia, and Howard University in Washington, D.C. By 1871, Fisk University experienced a great shortage of funds and was in danger of closing. A decision was made by the treasurer and music director, George L. White, to form a chorus and go on tour giving performances to raise money for the school. He chose a group of ten women and eight men who gave concerts of art songs, ballads and popular songs of the day. White had named the group the *Jubilee Singers*, in honor of the Emancipation. They were politely received, but it was not until some spirituals were included in the program that audiences really began to take notice.

At first the singers did not want to perform spirituals. They associated the songs with the recent past that they would rather forget, or they thought of them as sacred pieces their parents sang in church. Under the encouragement of George White, the group performed some spirituals, and it became obvious that these songs really resonated with the public. Money began to flow in and an invitation to sing in New York in the church if the famous abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher soon followed. The New York newspapers gave them rave reviews and the Fisk Jubilee Singers became famous. That year their concerts raised over \$20,000, which was sufficient to pay off debts of their university and ensure it would not close down. The following year, the Jubilee Singers traveled to Europe repeating their triumphant success. In seven years of touring the group raised about \$150,000. Eventually the Fisk Jubilee Singers toured around the world and spawned many imitators among other traditionally black schools. In the hands of the Jubilee Singers the traditional spiritual was transformed by their European classical training into a new form called the "concert spiritual".

In the quest for recognition of the concert spiritual as "serious" music, there was an effort on the part of classically trained African American musicians and composers to write arrangements for these songs that would enhance their status. Harry T. Burleigh, Hall Johnson, Margaret Bonds, William Dawson, Nathaniel Dett and Florence Price are all composers and arrangers who contributed to elevating the status of the concert spiritual. Great singers like Paul Robson, Roland Hayes and Marian Anderson included concert spirituals in their repertoire of art song and arias to further establish the concert spiritual's place in serious musical literature.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the interest of African-Americans in the traditional spiritual began to change. There was less emphasis on the "sorrow" aspect and more on the hopeful, "good news" aspect of the songs. The need to be free from slavery was no longer relevant. As the new century progressed, the style of the spiritual was evolving into a religious form of music that would be called "gospel", a "twentieth-century spiritual" that celebrated the human spirit and gave credit to a higher power.

The Blues

In the realm of “sorrow” songs, spirituals have a close relative also rooted in slavery, but a more personalized one. “The blues”, a secular sorrow song, evolved from early slave laments. These songs belong to the individual and depict their experiences in slavery. As a secular form, the blues is concerned with worldly thoughts and concrete ideas rather than notions of heaven and the spiritual life to come. Where the spiritual is an intensely religious group effort, the blues is a solo expression of the trials of everyday life.

Musically, the blues has some special characteristics. The form has generally been a three-line stanza structure (AAB) in a call-and-response format. The first line asks a question or makes a statement, the second line repeats the first, and the third responds to the first two lines. As the vocal line descends, the singers frequently use a lowered or “blue” note on the third and/or seventh steps of the scale which produces a melancholy sound. The harmony is European, usually a straightforward I, IV, V combination. Blues music was a major component of one of the most significant musical developments of the twentieth century – jazz. Great names associated with the blues are “Ma” Rainey, Charlie Patton, Huddie Ledbetter, Bessie Smith, and W.C. Handy.

W.C. Handy is called “father of the blues” not because he developed it, but because he was the first to catch its spirit and write it down. Handy published his first blues song in 1912, called the *Memphis Blues*, followed by *St. Louis Blues* in 1914. He saw the commercial possibilities of this music and created a publishing company along with his brother called Handy Brothers Music Company which is still in business today and still run by the Handy family. *St. Louis Blues* has been sung in almost every country and language. Handy continued to compose blues – *Joe Turner Blues*, *Yellow Dog Blues*, and *Beale Street Blues* among them – for many years. He compiled several anthologies of blues and spirituals. It was his arrangement of the spiritual, *I’ll Never Turn Back No More* that was sung by the great gospel singer Mahalia Jackson at the dedication of a statue honoring his memory in St. Louis in 1960. The singing of this song sent a powerful message during the Civil Rights Movement concerning the steadfastness of African-Americans in their quest for equal rights.

Art Song

In the drive to transform the concert spiritual into “serious” music worthy of the classical concert stage, there was a pronounced effort by composers and arrangers to use their classical training to enhance the spiritual to the greatest degree possible. In 1898, European composer Antonin Dvorak used authentic spiritual melodies to represent American folk music in his symphony *From the New World*. By the late nineteenth century, black composers were using their skills to write songs in the European classical tradition that were independent of the spiritual. This budding effort was further spurred in 1904 by the visit to America of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, a black English composer who was a professor at the Royal College of London and the conductor of the Handel Society of London. His three visits to America before his death in 1912 served as an inspiration to many aspiring black composers. He has a pronounced effect on composer Harry T. Burleigh who, in a career that spanned fifty years, added greatly to the repertoire of songs sung by the finest singers in America.

The cultural flowering among black writers, artists, musicians and intellectuals that occurred after the First World War in Harlem, New York, added to the expression of the black aesthetic in music. During the 1920’s, the Harlem Renaissance represented the center of black intellectual life. Among these talented and creative people was a growing discontentment with

the treatment of black people in this country. It had been fifty years since the Emancipation Proclamation and the time for equal rights was long overdue. As a result, there was an outpouring of literature, poetry and art that reflected this dissatisfaction. Black musicians responded by setting poetry of Harlem Renaissance writers to music. The rhythms, harmonies and melodies of spirituals, blues and jazz became fully utilized in concert music. Black performers made an effort to include works of black composers in their recitals. The first symphony composed by a African-American, the *Afro-American Symphony* by William Grant Still, was completed in 1930 and performed in 1931. Stills' work fulfilled the ideals of the Harlem Renaissance, effectively blending African and European musical values, while being true to each individually.

The ideals of the Harlem Renaissance did not fade away after the full flowering of that period came to an end. An example of these ideals is demonstrated by a concert in June 1933 performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra entitled "Negro Music and Musicians." Featured was the African-American soloist Roland Hayes singing an excerpt from a well-known black composer's cantata, the pianist Margaret Bonds performing an extended piece by white composer John Alden Carpenter, and the premiere of the *Symphony in E Minor* written by black female composer, Florence B. Price. Margaret Bonds won prizes for her art songs, set poems by Langston Hughes to very evocative music, and wrote a ballet, *The Migration*, about the Great Migration of blacks out of the rural South. Black composer William Dawson wrote many orchestral works, including *The Negro Work Song for Orchestra* commissioned by the Columbia Broadcasting System in 1940. In December 1937 the Chicago Civic Opera Company featured two black opera singers, La Julia Rhea, and William Franklin, in the roles of Aida and Amonasro in the Verdi opera *Aida*. There are abundant examples of rich concert activities involving black singers, composers and musicians that continue through the years of the 1930's and 1940's.

Protest Songs

The earliest protest songs were the spirituals themselves. It was the music of the spirituals, with words changed to fit the occasion, that led the vanguard of the Civil Rights Movement. Other musical styles such as blues, gospel, and rock 'n' roll, also provided the framework for lyrics of anger, determination, and militancy. Ending the segregation and unequal treatment that plagued the lives of African Americans took many years of protests, demonstrations and court actions. Music, with lyrics sometimes improvised on the spot, was a pivotal force in maintaining unity, bolstering courage, and forging a sense of purpose among people facing formidable, even fearful opposition. This music helped change the course of history.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

SLAVERY (1600-1865)

The first Africans were brought ashore in 1619 at Jamestown, Virginia. They arrived as indentured servants, which meant they had to endure a specific period of enforced servitude. Gradually, permanent hereditary bondage took place of indenture. Eventually, slavery as an institution was centered in the Southern states. A system of laws developed regulating slavery in detail. Slavery provided the labor for the agricultural economic system of the South which was based on the cash crops of tobacco, rice, sugar and cotton grown on plantations of varying size. By 1840 there were four million slaves in the United States. Opposition to slavery in the North came from people called abolitionists who became increasingly militant beginning in the 1830s. As the country grew and new lands were admitted to the Union, there was political conflict between Northern and Southern states over whether the new areas would be admitted as free or slave states. A series of compromises were made over several decades to maintain an even balance of power in Congress. Eventually, during the 1850s, these compromises began to break down and by 1860, four decades of sectional rivalry over political, social and economic differences reached the breaking point. The Southern states, feeling threatened and determined to preserve slavery and their way of life, seceded from the Union after the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. Armed conflict broke out on April 12, 1861 and lasted until April 9, 1865.

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD (1780-1860)

The Underground Railroad was a system for helping fugitive slaves reach safety in free states or Canada, begun in the 1780s by the Quakers, who were staunch opponents of slavery. Committed abolitionists, both black and white, served as guides and set up secret routes and safe houses to help slaves escape their bondage. Runaway slaves would walk, mainly at night, using the north star for directional guidance. They would be met by guides, called “conductors”, at critical points such as the border crossings between free and slave states. Among the most famous of the “conductors” were Levi Coffin, a Cincinnati Quaker, and Harriet Tubman. Called “the Moses of her people”, Tubman escaped slavery in 1849 and returned many times to lead other slaves out of the South. There was also a story about one anti-slavery activist called Peg Leg Joe who was part of the organization. He reportedly was a white sailor who had lost his foot in an accident and wore a wooden peg in its place. He found work in plantations in southern Alabama and befriended some of the slaves. After he moved on, slaves would start disappearing, supposedly following the little round marks made in the ground by his peg leg. There is no way to verify this story but it stands as a symbol of the other great function of the Underground Railroad – its ability to catch the imagination of Northern people and prompt them to think about the evils of slavery. This, in turn, helped the abolitionist cause.

EMANCIPATION (January 1, 1863)

President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, freeing all slaves in the rebelling states. In many ways it was only symbolic. Slavery was not actually abolished until the Civil War was won, and the Thirteenth Amendment the Constitution was passed. In 1865, however, the Proclamation was an important political step because it provided a moral justification for fighting that was in addition to its original intention of fighting to preserve the Union. It also unified the Republican Party under the banner of a righteous cause and influenced the strong anti-slavery sentiments of the French and English people, making it harder for their governments to

provide ant assistance to the Confederacy. News of the Emancipation greatly excited the Southern slave population who called this day the “Jubilee.”

RECONSTRUCTION

(1865-1877)

Once the Civil War was over, Union Troops governed much of the South. The process of bringing the Southern states back into the Union began with rules and regulations determined by Congress. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution were passed to abolish slavery, make former slaves American citizens, and ensure their right to vote. The Freedmen’s Bureau was set up in March 1865 to assist the newly-freed slaves in starting new lives. The Freedmen’s Bureau had some success on the education front, improving literacy rates and starting several black colleges, but many of their other initiatives, such as land distribution, failed. The occupation of the defeated Southern states by the Union Army did give blacks some measure of political freedom, and some black citizens were elected to legislative offices. But the end of the war did not bring the newly-freed slaves the freedom they had hoped for. White landowners were able to restrict the rights of blacks through laws called black codes. The ex-slaves were still economically dependent on whites, and the vast majority became sharecroppers leading lives of virtual slavery.

TURN OF THE CENTURY

(1880-1920)

The economic and social conditions that existed in the years after the Civil War grew continually worse in much of the South. The heavy hand of Reconstruction made white Southerners increasingly bitter while the reality facing black Americans grew increasingly grim. Many whites could not accept the changes forced by civil war and found ways to circumvent the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution eroding the rights black Americans had fought so hard to win. “Jim Crow” laws were passed to limit the freedoms of black Americans, and legal segregation of the races was upheld by the Supreme Court-as long as the facilities were “equal.” Some black Americans were able to overcome these inequities and be successful enough to enter the middle class. However, the great majority of blacks remained trapped in rural poverty in the South, unable to break away from the unequal and unfair circumstances of their lives. Without equal protection under the law, blacks were vulnerable to mob violence, and the lynching of black men became a common atrocity. The Ku Klux Klan, an organization dedicated to white supremacy and the terrorization of blacks, became very powerful. As a result, there was a growing exodus of blacks from the rural South to the industrial cities of both the North and South. Tens of thousands of black Americans moved to the industrial North seeking a living wage and a better life. The situation in the North was an improvement over what could be expected in the South, but there was still considerable racial bigotry. There was routine discrimination in public places and in public accommodations. Unions refused to admit blacks, the drawing of district lines segregated many schools, and there was widespread inequity in the workplace. During World War I, most black leaders urged black Americans to support the war effort, and many blacks joined the Army even though it was segregated. Some whites resented black participation in the war effort, and there was an increase in racial strife and conflict in areas where black troops were stationed. There was also an increase in black migration to northern industrial cities during the war to meet the increased need for workers to fulfill war contracts. One result of the black migration northward was the emergence of an area in New York City called Harlem as the social and cultural center of black America.

HARLEM RENAISSANCE

(1920-1932)

In the decade after the First World War, Harlem became a mecca for blacks looking for a better life. It was seen as a refuge, a place where black people could escape the ubiquitous white control, and as a place of opportunity and excitement. Tens of thousands of blacks migrated and made their home in Harlem joined by thousands of blacks from the West Indies. It was rapidly

becoming a city within a city, a place where more than ninety percent of the population was black. It was a symbol for the experience of black America as Harlem became increasingly urbanized. Among the people drawn to this exciting environment were writers, intellectuals, artists, and musicians who lived and worked together in a mix that knew no class boundaries. The young writers were drawn to established black intellectuals who were members of the Urban League, the NAACP, and various universities. These older, established figures served as advisors, critics, and liaisons with the white literary establishment. The people who made up this literary and intellectual movement and the emerging culture they wrote about in their creative endeavors became known as the Harlem Renaissance. Their work allowed them to vent their disappointment and impatience with the slowness of black integration into American society and helped to call attention to the reality of racial inequities. The “city” itself provided the setting and the material for many of the literary works created by young writers such as Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Rudolph Fisher. Art forms influenced each other in ways that expressed the very soul of the black experience in America. Langston Hughes, in particular, used jazz and other forms of black music to set the tempo and rhythms of his poetry. Some other names associated with the Harlem Renaissance are James Weldon Johnson, Jean Toomer, Zora Neale Hurston, Wallace Thurman, Countee Cullen, and Jessie Faucet. The flowering of creativity and self-affirmation that was the hallmark of the Harlem Renaissance began to recede in Harlem during the Depression but resurfaced and flourished in Chicago during the 1930’s and beyond.

DEPRESSION AND WAR

(1930-1945)

The severe economic problems of the 1930’s hit the black population especially hard, and many of the government relief programs were of no benefit. This was particularly true for small farmers and domestic workers. However, black factory workers were able to gain a toehold in a few unions, strengthening their position in several industries. The NAACP fought a vigorous battle against racial discrimination, especially in public education. In 1938, the NAACP won a court case in which the University of Missouri was forced to admit a black man because the state did not have equal facilities for blacks. Just before the beginning of World War II, the government ordered an end to racial discrimination in government jobs. As a result, thousands of blacks sought these jobs and migrated west to work in the defense factories. World War II helped bring about change. Blacks were needed to help the war effort, and black men volunteered to fight in the armed forces. Even though the military was segregated and there was widespread discrimination, over 500,000 black Americans fought in the war. In 1945, President Truman integrated the armed forces. Additionally, the fight against fascism made whites realize the danger of racist ideas and made blacks more intent on changing their lives at home. In the South, black Americans wanted to see an end to separate water fountains, separate bathrooms, and specially designed seats on public transportation. They wanted equal access to hotels, restaurants, and lunch counters, and they wanted the right to vote without restrictive rules or intimidation. Whites began to gain a new appreciation and understanding of the black experience, and racial attitudes began to undergo significant changes. The stage was being set for a full assault on legal segregation and the acceptance of the now outdated “separate but equal” doctrine.

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

(1950-1970)

In the years after the war, blacks made economic gains that translated into greater political power. Black voters were becoming a significant voting block, favoring those candidates who supported civil rights reforms. The first major victory in this struggle occurred in 1954 with the Supreme Court decision that began the process of reversing 58 years of legal segregation. In a case concerning public schools, the doctrine of “separate but equal” was struck down. The Supreme Court decision stated that separate facilities were “inherently unequal.” This paved the way for desegregating public facilities. In 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, a black woman named Rosa Parks

defied Alabama law by refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. She was arrested. In response, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a black civil rights leader, organized a nonviolent boycott of the Montgomery bus system. A federal court eventually ruled that Alabama's segregated bus laws were unconstitutional. In the wake of this victory, groups formed to challenge segregated public facilities in other states by using various methods of civil disobedience. There was also strong interest in voting rights that had been severely restricted for blacks in many states. In Mississippi alone, only seven percent of the black population could vote. Federal civil rights legislation was introduced in 1963 and supported by a march on Washington, D.C. where Dr. King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. The Civil Rights Act finally passed in 1964 barring any further discrimination in public services. Voting rights legislation passed in 1965, following widespread demonstrations in Selma, Alabama. The effort to bring about change in the treatment of black Americans, particularly in the South, involved thousands of committed people, both black and white, and spanned many years. Some died, many were jailed, and others were knocked over by water from fire hoses or terrorized by police dogs. Amid the hostility, these individuals held firm, united by the songs they sang, by the knowledge that their cause was just, and by the belief that their fight was one that had to be won.

Discussion Questions

For grades 9-12

1. Discuss how dialect establishes character and setting (who they are and where they live). Consider which would be more effective, the libretto with or without dialect? Discuss how dialect adds atmosphere, and realism to this community of people whose particular language gives them a separate identity.
2. Research the history of the Gullahs with your students, and examine the accuracy of Gershwin and Heyward's portrayal of the community.
3. Discuss the African influences on their means of religious expression: gospel-like singing, incantation, and dialect. How is this different from what your students may experience, personally?
4. Explain the concept of foreshadowing. Cite examples of this concept.
5. Ask students to research Gershwin's other music. Compare the music the students find with selections from *Porgy and Bess*. Ask students to look up terms such as jazz, Tin Pan Alley, improvisation, etc., and relate them to Gershwin's life and work. Discuss how the music they listen to may have developed from this era of improvisation.
6. *Porgy and Bess* was written when segregation was still the law in this country. One of the reasons Gershwin did not want to have it given at the Metropolitan Opera was that African Americans were not allowed to perform there. Now that the opera world is integrated, should *Porgy and Bess* still be performed by an all-black cast? Why or why not?
7. Some critics think that *Porgy and Bess*, written by a white composer and white author, paints an unrealistic picture of southern black culture. Have your students discuss this.
8. Ask students whether a story similar to *Porgy and Bess* could occur in other nations or among other minority groups? Discuss what features of the opera could be transferred to similar situations elsewhere such as harassment and arbitrary treatment by the police?
9. Heyward turned a small idea in to the story for *Porgy and Bess*. Have students pick a short newspaper clipping involving one or two people. Ask them to create other characters and events to the story that will give it a surprising turn. Have students exchange these stories and read them aloud.
10. Discuss the similarities and differences between Porgy's collaborators, Gershwin and Heyward. (Similarities: Both grew up poor, disliked school/quit before graduation, and studied their art while in their twenties and thirties to make up for their educational deficiencies. Both had success on Broadway. Differences: One was a writer, one a musician. One was a Southerner, one a Northerner. Different backgrounds.)
11. Opera singers train their voices through years of practice. Why must voices be so powerful? How is this different from a rock and roll singer's voice? Why do they not use microphones?

Activities

Written by Melissa Sullivan

Introduce the vocabulary with WORD SORT (Grades 6-8)

Porgy and Bess

Objective: To introduce vocabulary of *Porgy and Bess* with the strategy of Word Sort.

Procedure:

The teacher provides a list of opera terms (listed below) prior to viewing *Porgy and Bess*. Students identify the meaning and properties of each word and then "sort" the list into collections of words with similar features. This "sorting" process links students' prior knowledge to the basic vocabulary of the opera .

Vacca and Vacca (1996) describe two forms of Word Sorts:

- Closed Word Sort–The teacher provides the categories (and the specific features of each) to the students. The students then match the words with the features to create the word collections.
- Open Word Sort–The teacher provides only the list of words. Students work together to discern the common features and to describe the categories for collecting the word groups.

Steps to a Word Sort:

1. List the opera vocabulary on the chalkboard or have them on index cards.
2. Divide the class into small groups of 4 or 5 students. (Distribute the index cards – one pack of cards per group - if this method is used.)
3. For a Closed Word Sort, provide students with the categories into which they will sort the vocabulary words. For an Open Word Sort, instruct the student teams to suggest categories for organizing the words.
4. Have student teams assign the words to the appropriate categories. Provide a dictionary or use <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> to look unknown words up on the computer.
5. Conduct a class discussion with each group presenting their word list for one of the categories. Require the students to defend their sorting of terms by asking about the common features of the categories and how each specific word meets these criteria.

Porgy and Bess vocabulary: accent, action, arrangement, bass, carpenters, characters, choreographer, chorus, composer, costume designers, cutters, design team, duet, electricians, ensemble, Gullah, Harlem Renaissance, jazz, language, librettist, libretto, lighting designers, makeup designers, meter, mezzo-soprano, moral, music, opera, orchestra, orchestra pit, painters, play, playwright, plot, poetry, rehearsals, rhyme, set designer, score, script, sewers, solo, soprano, stage, stage director, stitchers, tenor, text, theatre, wig designers

SOLs met in this activity:

English: 9.3, 9.4, 9.9, 10.1, 10.11, 11.1, 12.4

Creating a Timeline for Porgy and Bess

(Grades 9-12)

Timeline

Objective:

The students will create a timeline and then discuss the content using critical thinking questions.

Procedure:

1) Have the students create their own timelines (alone, in partners, or groups) using the following information (if you want to give more of a challenge – don't give them the dates)

Time Periods

Slavery – 1600 to 1865
Civil War – 1861 to 1865
Reconstruction – 1865 to 1877
Civil Rights Era – 1950 to 1970

Movements

Underground Railroad – 1780 to 1860
Great Migration – 1880 to 1920
Harlem Renaissance – 1920 to 1932

Presidents

Abraham Lincoln – 1861 to 1865
Andrew Johnson – 1865 to 1869
Ulysses S. Grant – 1869 to 1877
Woodrow Wilson – 1913 to 1921
Franklin D. Roosevelt – 1933 to 1945
Harry S. Truman – 1945 to 1953
Dwight D. Eisenhower – 1953 to 1961
John F. Kennedy – 1961 to 1963
Lyndon B. Johnson – 1963 to 1969

People and Events

Emancipation Proclamation Issued January 1863
Freedman's Bureau Established March 1865
Thirteenth Amendment 1865
Fourteenth Amendment 1868
Fifteenth Amendment 1870
W.C. Handy writes *Memphis Blues* 1912
Marian Anderson sings at the Lincoln Memorial April 1939
William Grant Still composes the first African-American Symphony 1930
Rosa Parks refuses to give up her bus seat 1955
Montgomery Bus Boycott 1955
Martin Luther King gives his "I Have a Dream" speech 1963
Civil Rights Act passed 1964

2) Monitor timelines as they are being created

3) Use the following critical thinking questions to discuss the timelines:

Critical Thinking Questions

- What trends, or changes over time does this timeline suggest?
- Would the trends look different if the scale, or unit of measurement, were changed?
- Select 2 events on the timeline and explain what they do and do not have in common.
- How were events selected for this timeline? What was left out? Would missing elements change the timeline's representation of this time period?
- Which events on this timeline "caused" other events to occur? Explain.

SOLs met in this lesson:

U.S. History - VUS.1, VUS.6, VUS.7, VUS.8, VUS.10, VUS.14, VUS.15

English – 10.1, 11.1

I-Search

(Grades 9-12)

Objective:

- Students will investigate topics, related to *Porgy and Bess*, using a the I-Search Process

Information on I-Search:

An *I-Search* provides an opportunity to embed a focus on process into the search for information. This student-centered approach to researching gives as much attention to the process as it does to the final product. In a format that combines journaling, reflective writing, and researching, students investigate a topic about which they have personal interest.

Procedures for I-Search:

- 1) The I-Search begins with a topic selection. All work on the I-Search is done in a notebook. Emphasize to students the importance of writing about the search in addition to what they find, what resources they use, and how they feel about their findings.
- 2) The first section of the I-Search is the Introduction which addresses the following questions: *Why did you chose the topic? What do you already know about the topic? What do you want to discover about your topic (approximately ten questions)?*
- 3) The second stage of the I-Search is searching. The searching emphasizes the use of traditional resources (library books, internet, periodicals, encyclopedia) and non-traditional resources (pamphlets, surveys, experiments, interviews, store visits, business letter inquires, field studies). In the notebook reflections, students should include their thoughts and feelings that go through their minds as they seek the answers to their questions. Both problems and discoveries are detailed. It will include what they find out about the topic, what excites them about the search and the information, and what frustrates them as they search.
- 4) The final organization of the I-Search paper includes: introduction, description of the search in chronological order including information about the topic in response to the set of questions, conclusion or summary of the search, and a bibliography. The final product may be differentiated, but must include all of the elements.
- 5) The process notebook should be reviewed and assessed, but not necessarily evaluated.

Topic suggestions from *Porgy and Bess*:

Billie Holiday	Bus Boycott	Civil War	NAACP
Emancipation	Proclamation	Florence Price	Freedmen's Bureau
Great Migration	Hall Johnson	Harlem Renaissance	Harriet Tubman

Topic suggestions from *Porgy and Bess* (cont.):

Jim Crow Laws	Langston Hughes	Mahalia Jackson	Margaret Bonds
Marian Anderson	Martin Luther King	Rosa Parks	
Segregation	Underground Railroad	Thirteenth Amendment	
WC Handy	Civil Rights Movement		

SOLs met in this lesson:

English 9.6, 9.8, 9.9, 10.7, 10.11, 11.7, 11.10, 12.7, 12.8 History USII.3, USII.4, USII.9

Gathering and Organizing Information (Grades 9-12)

Objective:

- Students will use a graphic organizer tool to gather and organize information.

Procedures:

1) Identify a topic of study at the top of the *data retrieval chart*. You could choose *Freedmen's Bureau, Thirteenth Amendment, Henry "Box" Brown, Harriet Tubman, Underground Railroad, Fourteenth Amendment, etc.*

2) Identify the sub-topics or questions for investigation on the subject and create columns on the data retrieval chart. Much like a matrix, categories may overlap one another on the chart.

3) Have students work independently or in small groups to investigate the sub-topics or questions and complete their data retrieval chart.

4) Have the class work together to review the information gathered.

Topic: _____

	Sub-topic (question)	Sub-topic (question)	Sub-topic (question)
Feature			
Feature			

SOLs met in this lesson:

English 9.6, 9.8, 9.9, 10.7, 10.11, 11.7, 11.10, 12.7, 12.8

History USII.3, USII.4, USII.9

Questions from Porgy and Bess (Grades 9-12)

Objective:

Students will use a strategy for debriefing during and after viewing *Porgy and Bess*.

Procedures:

1) As the students come into class, each is handed a sealed envelope which contains a question pertaining to the discussion of *Porgy and Bess*. This is a good opportunity to differentiate according to student readiness as the questions posed may be tiered in accordance with readiness levels.

Examples of basic questions:

Who were the main characters in Porgy and Bess?

Who was part of the poker game at the beginning of the show?

What happened at the poker game?

What was Bess like?

How did Porgy and Bess get together?

Examples of harder questions:

How are Crown and Porgy alike? How are they different?

Why do you think Bess doesn't follow the "rules" of what a typical woman is like?

How do you think Bess felt about Sportin' Lifes proposal at first?

2) The students are instructed to keep the envelope sealed until the end of the lesson.

3) At a time designated by the teacher, the students may open their envelopes, read their questions, and respond (orally or in writing) based upon the information provided during the lesson.

SOLs met in this lesson:

English 9.1, 10.1, 11.1, 12.1

Question Cubes (Grades K-5)

Objective:

- Students will be prompted to create questions about *Porgy and Bess*

Procedures:

1) Discuss the story of *Porgy and Bess*.

2) You should then give pairs of students “cubes”. You can either print words on wooden cubes (purchased from a craft store) OR make paper cubes (design below). Students may work individually, in pairs, triads or quads. No more than 4 students per group is recommended for this activity. One cube should have the words; *how, where, why, who, what, when*. The other cube should have the words; *might, would, can, is, did, will*

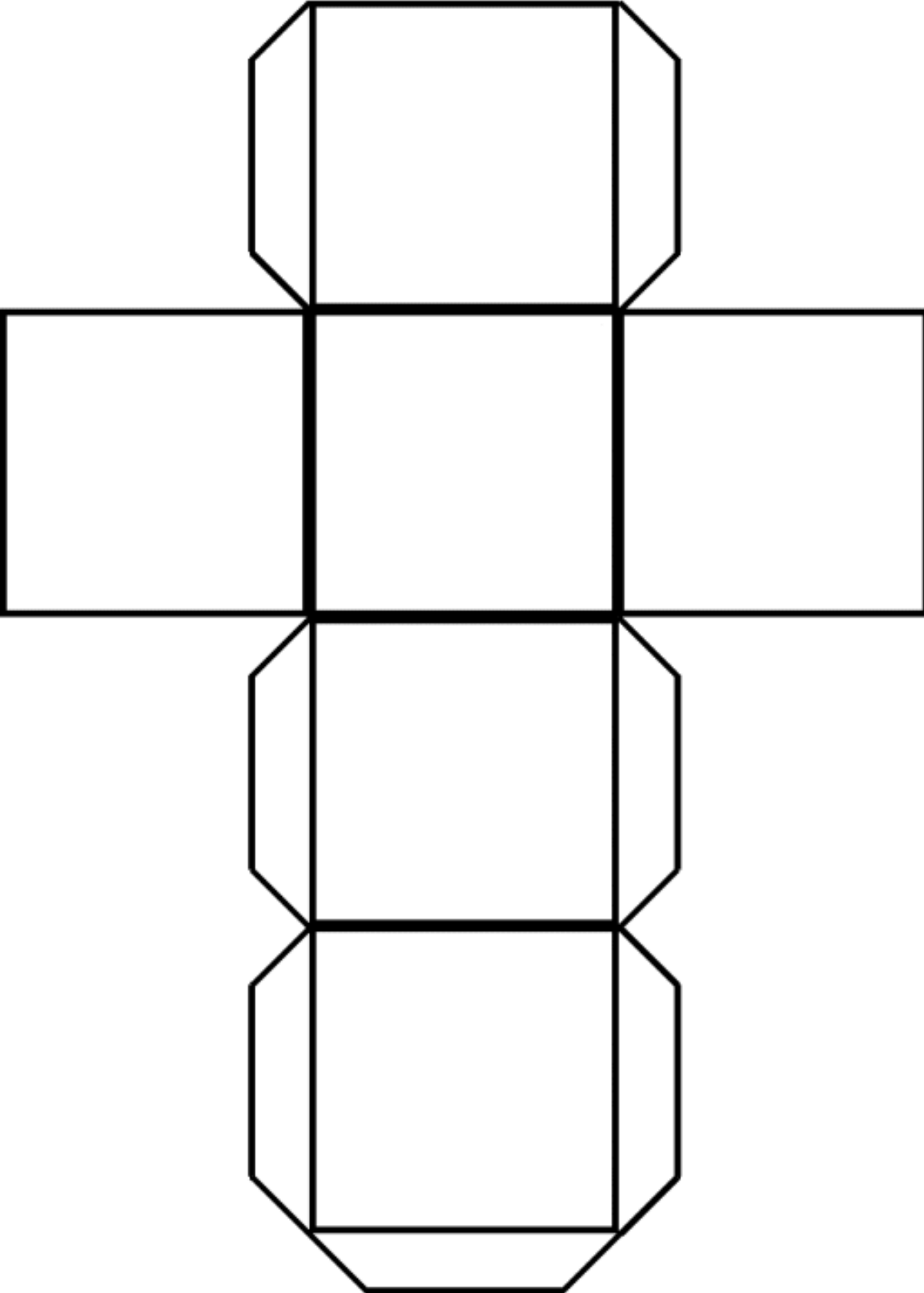
3) Have the students roll both cubes. Using the words that appear on both cubes, have the students write a question For example, if the words “how and “would” appear on the cubes when rolled, a question may be “How would you have handled the situation of Crown coming to the picnic?”. Questions must include both words that appear on the cubes.

4) Have the students create a list of questions without editing, revising, or eliminating ideas. In the beginning, this is similar to brainstorm.

5) Have the students review their list of questions in order to create a final list of questions. Some questions may be repetitive while others may need to be revised or edited.

SOLs met in this lesson:

E/W K.2, K.3, K.8, K.11, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.9, 1.12, 2.1, 2.3, 2.8, 2.12, 3.1, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.8, 5.1, 5.2, 5.5, 5.8, 5.9



Reflective Writing (Grades 3-5)

Objective:

Students reflectively write about two poems written by Langston Hughes

Information about the activity:

Langston Hughes was a great African American poet and writer. In a number of his works, including *Dream Deferred*, Hughes uses rhythm and imagery to depict the thoughts and emotions of everyday people living under racism.

Students will read the following poems and do a **reflective writing** on them.

Dream Deferred

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore - -
And then run?
Does it sink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over
Like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

Dreams

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

Information on **Reflective Writing**:

Reflective writing focuses on the goal of metacognitive thinking and provides a method for students to pause and reflect on their learning. Used at key points during the course of a unit of study, reflective writing may also be used as a tool for gathering on-going assessment information.

Procedure:

- 1) Give students a focus question related to the poems they read by Langston Hughes. Tell them the time allotment for their reflective writing. A minimum of 4 minutes is recommended.
- 2) Reflective writing is not graded and therefore students should be encouraged to write freely. This is not an exercise where students should edit anything, including their thoughts. Thus, if a seemingly unrelated thought pops up in their minds, students should put it in their reflective writing. The reason behind recording all thoughts is that the brain is making connections.
- 3) As students participate in a reflective writing, there may be times when they can't think of anything to write. When this happens, students should write the following phrase: "I can't think of anything to write" and repeat it until their brains interject something to write.
- 4) Reflective writing has a variety of applications. It may be used periodically during a difficult lesson to help students synthesize information. It may be used prior to class or group discussion to help students think about a concept independently before sharing their ideas with others. It may be used at the start of a lesson to help students recall information from previous lessons.

SOLs met in this lesson:

E/W 2.7, 3.7, 4.6, 4.7, 5.1, 5.6, 5.7

Jigsaw Discussion Questions (Grades 6-12)

Objective:

To have the students jigsaw and discuss information based on the history that is associated with *Porgy and Bess*.

Topics to be discussed (information is attached to this packet):

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) Slavery | 5) Turn of the Century |
| 2) Underground Railroad | 6) Harlem Renaissance |
| 3) Emancipation | 7) Depression and War |
| 4) Reconstruction | 8) Civil Rights Movement |

Procedure:

1) Divide your class into eight groups. When they get into their groups have them give each other individual numbers (or you can assign them). For example, each student in a group of five will take a number counting one through five, until all group members have a number.

2) Regroup the students according to their individual numbers. Specifically, all number ones will regroup together, all number twos will regroup together, and so on.

3) With students regrouped distribute the information (you will need to assign what you the 1s to read, the 2s to read, etc.) Have them read their section and discuss the information. The goal is to become an expert on the assigned information. Encourage students to discuss the information, pose questions, and seek clarification with their group.

4) Following completion of the task, students rejoin their original group. Now, group members bring knowledge of their topic to the rest of the team. The task of the group is to piece together the content that was discussed in order to understand the information in its entirety. Through sharing, discussion, questions and activities, the group constructs the content's big picture. Now the jigsaw is rejoined, but with greater understanding.

SOLs met in this lesson:

English 9.1, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5, 10.1, 10.3, 10.5, 10.6, 11.1, 11.5, 11.6, 12.1, 12.5, 12.6 History: 5.7, 6.1, 6.4, 6.5, 6.11, 11.6, 11.10, 11.13

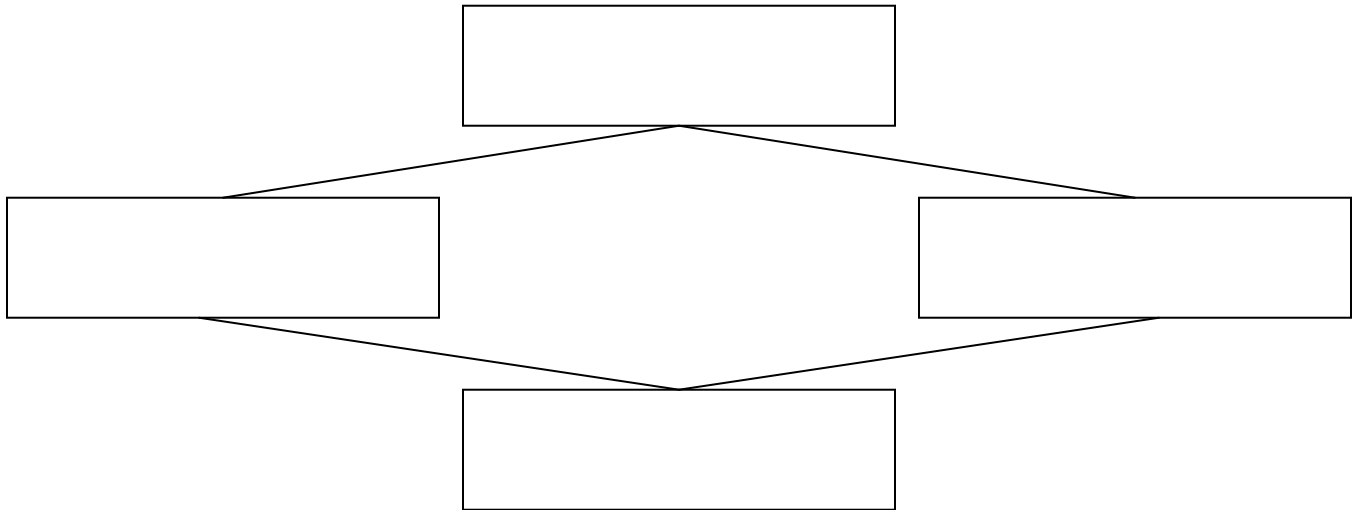
Creating Generalizations (Grades 9-12)

Objective:

- Students will create generalizations using vocabulary from *Porgy and Bess*.

Procedures:

- 1) Using chart paper, the chalkboard, a smart board, or overhead, create the four dance diagram:



- 2) Write the content focus keyword in the box at the top and ask students to visualize the topic. (You may want to use one of the words from *Activity Eight* for this activity). Ask the students, “What word or phrase comes to mind?”
- 3) Field various ideas and work with the class to select two of the ideas. Write those words in the middle boxes.
- 4) Cover the keyword and ask students to focus on the words in the middle boxes. Ask students for a one-word connection between the two words. Place this word in the bottom box.
- 5) Have the students work in groups of two or three to create sentences that use two or more of the words in the boxes (the sentences they are creating are called *generalizations*). Have them create 5-10 generalizations.
- 6) Each group should pick one or two of their “best” generalizations to write on chart paper. Put the generalizations around the room.
- 7) Have the students look at the criteria below to judge their generalizations. Student can change the wording of their generalizations as the criteria is being discussed.

Criteria for Generalizations:

- 1) **Tentativeness** – The statement avoids words such as: all, always, and never, and instead, uses the words: many, some, often, and seldom.
- 2) **Abstractness** – The statement uses broadly applicable, inclusive terms like fruit, rather than specific, concrete terms, such as apples.
- 3) **Accuracy** – The statement is supported with evidence.
- 4) **Qualification** – The statement does not include qualifying elements which limit the statement, such as “when _____, then _____”
- 5) **Applicability** – The statement yields testable hypothesis or predictions about other, similar situations.

8) Once the generalizations are created, you can keep them up throughout different units of study to see if they “hold up” as you are learning new material.

SOLs met in this lesson:

English 9.1, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5, 10.1, 10.3, 10.5, 10.6, 11.1, 11.5, 11.6, 12.1, 12.5, 12.6

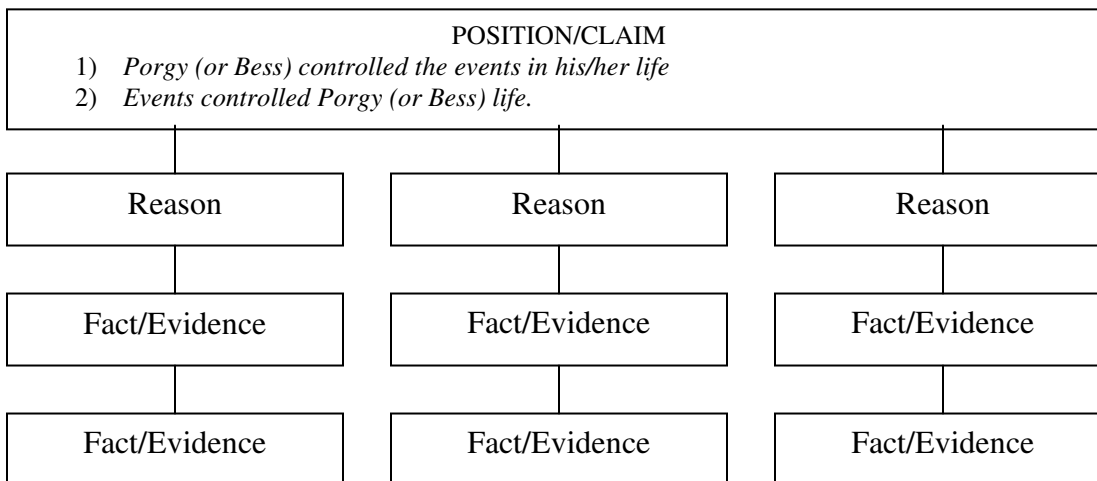
Position/Claim (Grades 9-12)

Objective:

- Students will take a position or establish a claim about *Porgy and Bess*. They will then build reasons as well as evidence to support their statement.
- Students will use an advanced organizer to plan for writing.

Procedures:

1) Discuss the story of *Porgy and Bess*. 2) With the students, establish two positions about *Porgy and Bess* and place the position on the graphic organizer (example below)



3) Divide the students either by interest or randomly to one of the two positions. It is quite effective to poll the students informally or their initial reactions to an issue and then assign the opposite position to them for the graphic organizer. In this way, there are far more analytical in their approach to the task.

4) Have students review the story and then give reason, which are the general causes that prove the position to be correct. Fact/Evidence are the specifics that support the reasons. A minimum of three facts or pieces of evidence that support each reason are required for ample support.

5) Using the graphic organizer for written work or discussion in small or large group is the last step in the process.

6) Guiding questions that assist students in backing up opinions, claims, or assertions with support or proof include:

- Am I stating facts or opinions?
- If it is an opinion, do I need to support it with facts or evidence?
- How can I present the facts to support my opinion in a logical way?
- If I can't support my claim, should I tell people that I am not sure about the information?

SOLs met in this lesson:

English 9.2, 9.4, 9.6, 9.8, 10.1, 10.4, 10.7, 10.10, 11.1, 11.2, 11.4, 11.7, 11.10, 12.4, 12.7