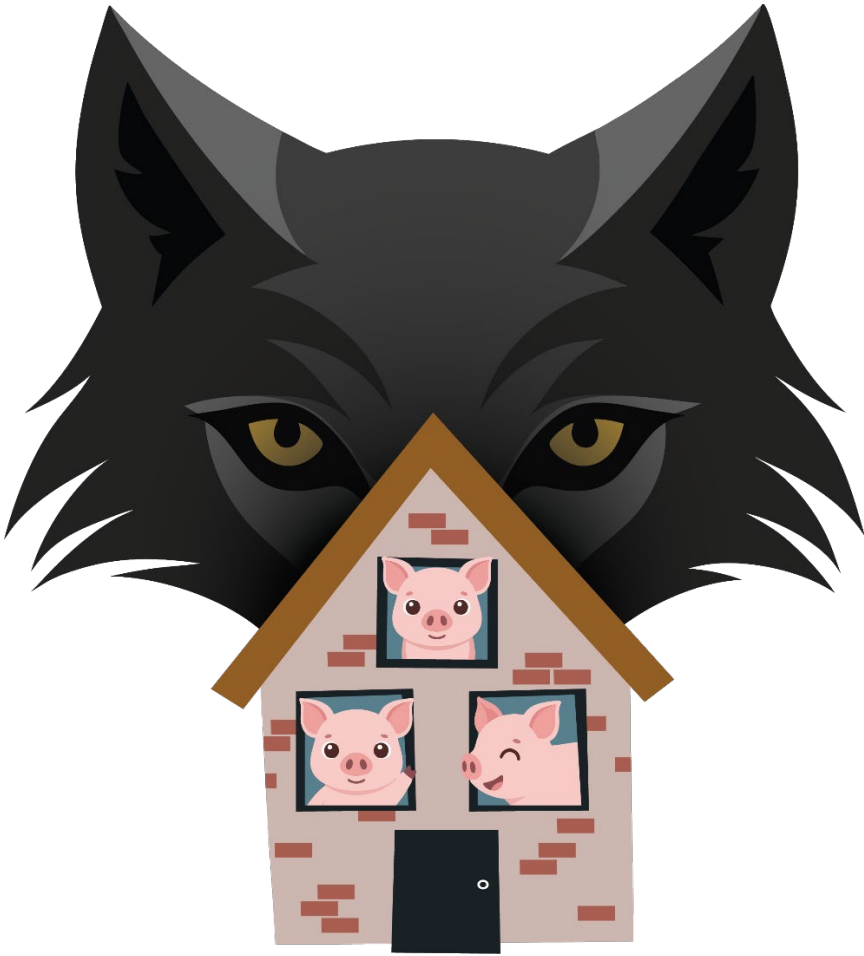




VIRGINIA OPERA'S 2026-2027 IN-SCHOOL PRODUCTION OF

The Three Little Pigs

By John Davies

With Music by Mozart

TEACHER GUIDE

VAOPERA

***This Production of The Three Little Pigs is
Made Possible by Our Generous Sponsors:***

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BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

Suggested Preview Activities

- Discuss the story, the characters, and the art form.
- Ask the students if they have ever seen an opera before, either live or on television. What did they like about the operas they saw? What didn't they like?
- Have the students draw pictures or create artwork illustrating the story.
- Discuss how opera is like and unlike a musical, play, rock concert, etc. (e.g. it is a theatrical event which tells a story through words and action; actors perform before a live audience, unlike film or television; no use of a microphone, etc.)
- Discuss the rigors and requirements of a career as a professional musician with students, covering such topics as training, competition for jobs, artistic discipline, traveling, etc.
- Explain to the students that they might not understand every word, especially when characters sing high or when two or more characters are singing at the same time. Encourage them to listen for the "sense" of each song and to remain attentive when the voice gets higher and louder or when the music becomes more complex.
- Have students prepare questions to ask the Virginia Opera's Emerging Artists during the question-and-answer time immediately following the performance (e.g. questions regarding opera singing, careers in music, etc.).
- Review the glossary of opera and musical terms.
- Discuss the qualities that make an operatic or "trained" voice different than that of a rock, pop, folk, or gospel singer. Focus on aspects such as range (opera singers usually vocalize over more than two octaves), volume (opera singers must be able to sing to large audiences without the use of a microphone), etc.
- Discuss how opera is different from other forms of entertainment (e.g. the text is sung rather than spoken; the actors sometimes sing in a foreign language, etc.).

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Suggested Follow-Up Activities

- Review what the students saw, what they thought about the performance, and how it was the same or different from what they expected.
- Have the students discuss the ways in which the music expressed the emotions of the characters; discuss how the colors, costumes and set represented each character and sound. Pick a well-known opera story to study. (Examples: Bizet's *Carmen* has a powerful story and many famous melodies; Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* is another well-known story set to music; Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is also a familiar story.) Over a period of time, read the story of the opera to your students, one act at a time. When you have read the entire story:
- Play a recording of excerpts (available at your public library) for students and help them identify the music that goes with each character and part of the narrative. Have students act out parts of the stories using the recorded music as a soundtrack.
- Secure a video of an opera (preferably in English) from any online resource such as YouTube, etc. Allow your students to watch the video during special or elective class time.
- Complete age-appropriate study guide materials.
- If your students have reacted favorably to this introduction to opera, encourage them to take advantage of future opportunities to see opera live, on television, or on film. If there is tremendous interest, arrange a field trip to a live performance.
- Discussion questions:
 - When you think of opera, what do you think of first? Why?
 - Is opera relevant to today's society? Defend your answer.
 - Is it easy to be an opera singer? Why or why not?
 - How long has opera been in existence?
 - How has opera changed?
 - If you could see into the future, what would opera be like in one hundred years?
 - How many people are involved in putting together a production?
 - What sorts of careers are involved with opera production?

INFORMATION ABOUT OPERA AS A GENRE

WHAT DOES THE WORD “OPERA” MEAN?

The word *opera* comes from the Latin word *opus*, which means “work.” What is a *work*? It is something a person makes or thinks up. It is a poem, song, drawing, composition or any other creative thing a person makes. The plural of *opus* is *opera*. *Opera* means *works* in the Latin language. Today, we use the word *opera* to describe one large work of performing art that contains many kinds of performances. An opera is many works that are combined together. In opera there is a symphony orchestra, a dramatic play or comedy, singing and acting, costumes, special lighting, and sometimes dancing.

WHERE DID OPERA BEGIN?

Opera was created over 400 years ago in Florence, Italy. During this period, educated people were fascinated with the world of ancient Greece. In 1597 a composer named Jacopo Peri wrote a play that was sung throughout instead of spoken. Peri was attempting to imitate the Greek style of playwriting. His opera was about a character in Greek mythology called Daphne. The idea of presenting plays that were sung became very popular and more and more composers began to combine music and drama. Love of opera spread all over Europe and eventually the world. Operas have been written in every language, and its popularity continues today.

As in a play, designers create costumes, lights, sets, wigs, and makeup for opera productions. When the actual performance approaches, the singers have “dress rehearsals” where they have an opportunity to wear their full costumes and perform in front of scenery. These rehearsals give the singers a chance to practice singing and acting at the same time.

Opera Vocabulary and Pronunciation Guide

Aria (AH-ree-ah).	A musical piece for solo voice.
Baritone (BARE-ih-tone).	The middle range male voice.
Bass (BASE).	Lowest male voice.
Bel Canto (behl-CAHN-toh).	Literally “beautiful singing”. Also a style of Italian opera made popular by composers Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti in the 19th century, which showcased the singing voice.
Coloratura (coh-loh-rah-TOO-rah).	A singing style when singers sing very fast florid scales and arpeggios, usually all on one sound or syllable of a word.
Contralto	The lowest female voice.
Conductor	The person who leads the orchestra.
Composer	The person who writes the music.
Designer	Person who creates the scenery, costumes, and light.
Ensemble	Two or more singers singing and expressing their emotions at the same time.
French Operetta	A style of light opera with spoken dialogue from 19th century France.
Libretto (lih-BREHT-toh).	Literally “little book,” this is the text or words of an opera.
Mezzo-Soprano (MEH-tso soh-PRAH-noh).	The middle female voice.
Opera (AH-peh-rah).	A play that uses singing instead of speaking and is accompanied by instrumental music.
Opera Buffa (BOOF-ah).	Funny or lightheartedly themed opera.

Opera Seria (SEH-ree-ah).	Dramatic or seriously themed opera.
Overture	The prelude to an opera, played by the orchestra alone.
Recitative (reh-chih-tah-TEEV).	A type of musical speaking where the words of the singer are sung in the rhythm of natural speech with melody added. Recitative is usually used between arias and ensembles to propel the story line.
Props	Objects placed on the stage and used by the actors.
Score	The book that contains the music and words of an opera.
Set	The scenery used on the stage to show location.
Singspiel	A type of opera created in Germany that uses spoken dialogue between arias and ensembles.
Soprano	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 (TEH-nor).	The highest male voice.
Verismo (veh-RIHZ-moh).	A style of Italian opera with very realistic characters popular in the late 19th and early 20th century.
Vibrato (vih-BRAH-toh).	The natural way for a voice or instrument to enlarge its sound through a rapid and small waver in pitch. Vibrato makes sound carry further and sound more powerful.

The Three Little Pigs

Creative Team

Composer	W. A. Mozart
Librettist	John Davies
Set Designer	Roberta Brennan
Costume Designer	Pat Seyller
Stage Director	Jason Kypros
Pianist	Oleg Bellini

The Characters

Despina	Maggie Kinabrew
Cherubino	Melanie Dubil
Don Giovanni	Douglas Culclasure
Wolfgang Bigbad	Joel Clemens

Meet the Authors

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – Composer

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg Austria in 1756. Many consider him the greatest composer who ever lived. When he was young, he was called a ‘wunderkind’ (VOON-dur-kihnt) or a child prodigy. At about the age of three his father Leopold, who was an established musician and composer, discovered his son’s talent at the piano. By the age of six, young Mozart was making lengthy concert tours throughout Europe and had developed an interest in composition.

Although Mozart was born in and called Austria home, he traveled all around Europe during his lifetime and spent a great deal of time in Italy. He fell in love with Italian opera and to this day is considered one of the best composers of Italian opera. He wrote his first opera by the age of eleven, titled *Apollo et Hyacinthus*. This opera showcased his talent for writing for the theater in the grand opera seria style.

Mozart wrote a number of operas in his early years, but his first big success was *Idomeneo*, which premiered in Munich, Germany in 1781. When Mozart moved home to Salzburg from Vienna, he was commissioned to compose a singspiel for the German opera company called *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (The Abduction from the Seraglio). It was a great success and strengthened his growing reputation as an operatic composer.

In Vienna around this time, Italian opera had become very popular and Mozart took advantage of this and wrote one of his masterpieces of opera *Le Nozze di Figaro* (leh NOHT-zeh dee FEE-gah-roh, The Marriage of Figaro). *Figaro* was so popular that Mozart was commissioned to write *Don Giovanni* (dahn joe-VAHN-nee) for the Prague Opera. Although *Giovanni* was quite popular in Prague, there was mixed reception elsewhere. More unfavorable receptions followed with *Così fan tutte* (koh-SEE fahn TOO-tee). Meanwhile, Mozart was working on an opera for a small local theater that catered more to the common people. This last opera, *Die Zauberflöte* (dee TZOW-behr-fluh-tuh, The Magic Flute), is one of his most enduring and popular.

Mozart was only 35 when he died in 1791, but in his short life, he composed over 400 pieces of music and these pieces remain some of the most performed and listened to works ever.

John Davies – Words and Story Adaptation

John Davies is a professional opera singer who has performed with opera companies throughout the United States, including the Metropolitan Opera Company, San Francisco Opera and the opera companies of Boston, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, Atlanta, St. Louis, and Anchorage. He has also performed in concert as bass-baritone soloist with many symphony orchestras.

A father of six children, Mr. Davies takes an active interest in the performing arts for young people. He spends part of each year writing, narrating and hosting educational programs for opera companies, symphony orchestras and children’s museums in the United States. His opera, *The Night Harry Stopped Smoking* has been listed as one of the most often performed operas in North America and recently won a national award. Mr. Davies’ operas for young audiences include *The Three Little Pigs*, *Never Tickle a Mule*, *The Billy Goats Gruff*, *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *Little Red’s Most Unusual Day*. His operas have been presented by more than 25 opera companies throughout the United States and Canada.

The Three Little Pigs

Introduction to the Operatic Version

This hilarious adaptation of the classic fairy tale uses music from famous operas by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Young and old will belly-laugh as Despina, Cherubino, and Don Giovanni out-run and out-smart the overblown Wolfgang Bigbad. This opera, adapted by John Davies, promotes reading and problem solving skills.

A Simple Version

Once upon a time there were three little pigs. Their mother said “It is time for you to leave home and seek your fortune. Whatever you choose to do, be sure to do your very best, because that is the way to get along in the world.”

The first little pig built his house out of straw because it was the easiest thing to do. The second little pig built his house out of sticks, and it was a little stronger than the straw house. The third little pig built his house out of bricks.

One night the big bad wolf, who dearly loved to eat fat little piggies, came along and saw the first little pig in his house of straw. He said “Let me in, little pig or I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house in!” “Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin,” said the little pig. The wolf huffed and he puffed and he blew the house in...and ate the first little pig.

The wolf then came to the house of sticks. He said “Let me in, little pig or I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house in!” “Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin,” said the little pig. The wolf huffed and he puffed and he blew that house in too...and ate the second little pig.

Then the wolf came to the house of bricks. “Let me in, let me in,” cried the wolf, “Or I’ll huff and I’ll puff ‘til I blow your house in.” “Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin,” said the third little pig. Well, the wolf huffed and he puffed...and he huffed and he puffed...but he could not blow down that brick house.

But he was a sly old wolf. He climbed to the roof, looking for a way into the house. The third little pig was pretty smart, too. He guessed the wolf’s plan, so he lit a roaring fire in the fireplace and placed a large kettle of water over it to boil. When the wolf finally found his way down the chimney he crawled down and KERSPLASH, he fell right into the boiling water.

That was the end of the troubles with the big bad wolf. The next day the little pig invited his mother over. She said, “You see it is just as I taught you.”

“The way to get along in the world is to do things as well as you can.”

The third little pig had learned that lesson and lived happily ever after.

The Three Little Pigs

Suggested Lesson Plans

We hope that teachers of all elementary grade levels, pre K – 6, will find something in our handbook to use in their classroom. Below are some suggestions for lesson plans in various curriculum areas.

While specific grade levels are listed, the lessons can easily be adapted for older or younger students.

Before attending the performance:

Every student should know the story line from the opera. Encourage students to read the story for this production or read it to them. Encourage older students to read to younger students, partnering students in a “big brother, little sister” program. As a class, identify and discuss literary elements appropriate for your students’ ages such as plot, characters, conflict, etc.

PreK-1st grade – K.RV.1, K.RL, K.C, 1.RV.1, 1.RL, 1.C

Have students complete the cut and paste worksheets, identifying like pictures, and completing patterns as they are able.

3rd Grade

Social Studies – 3.2, 3.3, VS.7, VS.8, VS.9, USI.9

- Geography. The student understands the concepts of location, distance, and direction on maps and globes. The student is expected to create and interpret maps of places and regions that contain map elements, including a title, compass rose, legend, scale, and grid system.

Students will follow instructions on Bigbad’s Map worksheet. Students will demonstrate an understanding of reading maps and legends. Students may share maps later and compare/contrast their differences.

4th and 5th Grade

English Language Arts – 4.RV.1, 4.RL, 4.C, 5.V.1

- Reading/text structures/literary concepts. The student analyzes the characteristics of various types of texts (genres). The student is expected to analyze characters, including their traits, motivations, conflicts, points of view, relationships, and changes they undergo.

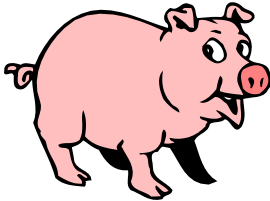
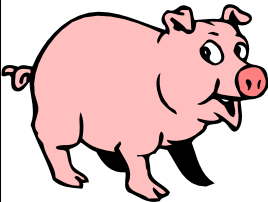
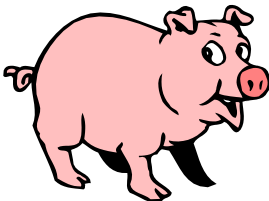
Students will complete You Be the Author worksheet, creating a new version of The Three Little Pigs.

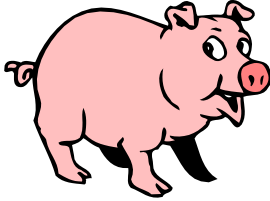
The Three Little Pigs

Matching Pictures

Name _____

Cut and paste the pictures from the bottom next to the pictures that they match.

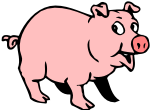
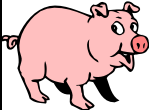
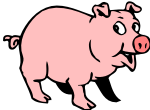
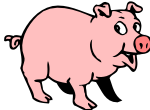
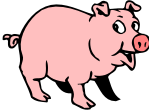
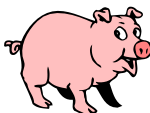
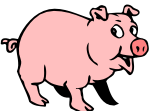
			
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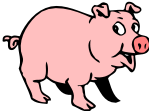
The Three Little Pigs

Complete Patterns

Name _____

Find the picture from the bottom that completes the pattern and cut and paste it in the empty square.

				
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The Three Little Pigs

Bigbad's Map

In the space below, create a map for the wolf so he can find the homes of the three pigs. On your map include the homes of the pigs, a river, and a forest. You may include more things, perhaps the wolf's lair. Include a legend on the next page so that the wolf knows what your symbols mean. Remember a compass rose so that he knows which way is north, south, east, and west and a scale so that he knows how far he must travel.



The Three Little Pigs

You Be the Author

There are many versions of *The Three Little Pigs*. Now it is your turn to be the author (Use more paper if necessary).

Write your own version; be as creative as you like, but try to follow these guidelines:

- 1) Good stories always have a conflict...that is when a character has a difficult problem.
- 2) Your story must have a resolution...that is when the problem is solved.

Use the questions below to plan your story.

1. List your characters. How are they like the characters from *The Three Little Pigs*? How are they different from those characters? Who is/are the hero(s)? Who is/are the villain(s)?

2. Briefly describe your characters' conflict and resolution.

3. A story's setting is where the story takes place. Describe your story's setting.

On a separate piece of paper, create your version of The Three Little Pigs.



Teacher/Administrator Evaluation Form

Date of Performance _____ School _____ Grade levels _____

Address _____ City/Town _____ State _____ County _____

Total students in attendance: _____ BOCES: _____

Demographics: (this information is important for our grant documentation)

Percentages of student population: White _____ Black _____ Hispanic _____ Other _____

Percentage of student population living in homes below poverty level: _____

Percentage of students receiving government assisted lunch program: _____

Please circle below to rate our program, 1-unacceptable, 2-below average, 3-average, 4-good, 5-excellent

Were the preparatory materials helpful? 1 2 3 4 5

Were the performers courteous and professional during their visit? 1 2 3 4 5

Was the production suitable for an educational environment? 1 2 3 4 5

Was the production suitable for the age group attending? 1 2 3 4 5

Did the performance hold the students' attention? 1 2 3 4 5

Please describe the students' reaction to the performance: _____

Comments: Please include here any other comments or suggestions about the teacher guide or performance that you may have that would help us improve our program. Your comments may be included in future marketing materials. If you do NOT want to be quoted, please check here . ____

Would you be willing to book a visit from Virginia Opera next year? _____

Signature _____ **THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM!**