



THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GIOACCHINO ROSSINI / CONNECTIONS TO MUSIC

by Dr. Joseph Piro, District 24 - Arts Coordinator / Queens, NY

Designed for upper elementary grades

LESSON PREVIEW

This lesson will introduce the composer, [Gioacchino Rossini](#), and discuss his life and musical culture.

[New York State Learning Standards for the Arts](#)

- 3 - Responding to and analyzing works of art
- 4 - Understanding the cultural dimensions and contributions of the arts

INTERDISCIPLINARY AREAS:

Music
Music History
Social Studies

THEMATIC STRAND

Culture

WEB RESOURCE

<http://www.karadar.it/Dictionary/rossini.html>

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

1. Display a picture of Rossini. Play an excerpt from any of his music, such as an [overture](#).
2. Introduce Rossini as the [composer](#) of the music. Elicit student responses to the music. Record responses.



DEVELOPING THE LESSON

1. Discuss the following Rossini "biofacts:"

- Born February 29, 1792 in Pesaro, Italy off the Adriatic coast.
- Father was a trumpet player; mother was an [opera](#) singer
- As a child, he showed early music talent; he sang in a church choir and played the harpsichord, violin and piano
- Started composing at a young age and wrote thirty-nine operas in nineteen years. This allowed him to take a very early retirement
- Died on November 13, 1868

2. Discuss Rossini's musical style. Talk about the musical device known as the "overture." List important information using, for example, a graphic organizer.

Discuss the meaning of an overture. Ask why an overture is important to a work (sample answers: sets mood, prepares audience for the opera, quiets audience).

3. Listen to overtures from operas by Rossini. Some of these may include *La Cenerentola*, *The Barber of Seville*, *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, and *William Tell*.

Compare and contrast the works.

- Ask: What musical clues tell you that these overtures may have been composed by the same composer? (Sample answers: [tempos](#), [melody](#), humor in the music, use of [crescendo](#)) Record all answers.
- Cite the fact that Rossini frequently recycled his own music and used it over again in his other compositions.

4. Have students respond to the overtures using the structure of a narrative procedure for this question: What Should You Listen for in a Rossini Overture?

EXTENDING THE LESSON

1. Discuss other composers who lived at the same time as Rossini (e.g. [Bellini](#), Beethoven, [Verdi](#), [Donizetti](#) and Mendelssohn). Construct a "Composers Timeline" by placing a cutout figure on the timeline complete with dates.



2. Many of Rossini's operas were set in different geographic places, e.g. *The Turk in Italy*, *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, *Moses in Egypt*, *William Tell*, and *The Journey to Reims*. Distribute a map and introduce the activity "Rossini's Geography." Have students locate these places on the map and create a music-relevant symbol to identify them.

3. Encourage students to keep a music journal in which they are able to record their responses to Rossini's music. Include written and illustrated reactions.