

How Nanita Learned to Make Flan

a magical musical fiesta



STUDY GUIDE

Cincinnati Opera Education Presents

How Nanita Learned to Make Flan

A multicultural opera for children
Music by Enrique González-Medina
Libretto by Campbell Geeslin
Commissioned by Cincinnati Opera Education
Based on the book by Campbell Geeslin

Cast of Characters

Nanita, a young girl, Soprano	Dione Johnson
Father, a Shoemaker, Tenor	Mark Kano
Senorita LaBamba, a dancer, Mezzo-Soprano	Sarah Klopfenstein
Village Mayor, Baritone	Joshua Jeremiah
Old Woman, mean lady, Mezzo-Soprano	Sarah Klopfenstein
Ranchero, a farmer, Baritone	Joshua Jeremiah
Parrot, a talking bird, Tenor	Mark Kano

Production Team

Director of Education	Charmaine Moore
Education Associate	Lauren Bailey
Music Director and Accompanist	Lisa Hasson
Tour Manager	Melissa Bennett
Stage Director	Mark Hardy
Costume Design	Tracey Ann Dunne and Rebecca Senske
Scenic Design	David Centers

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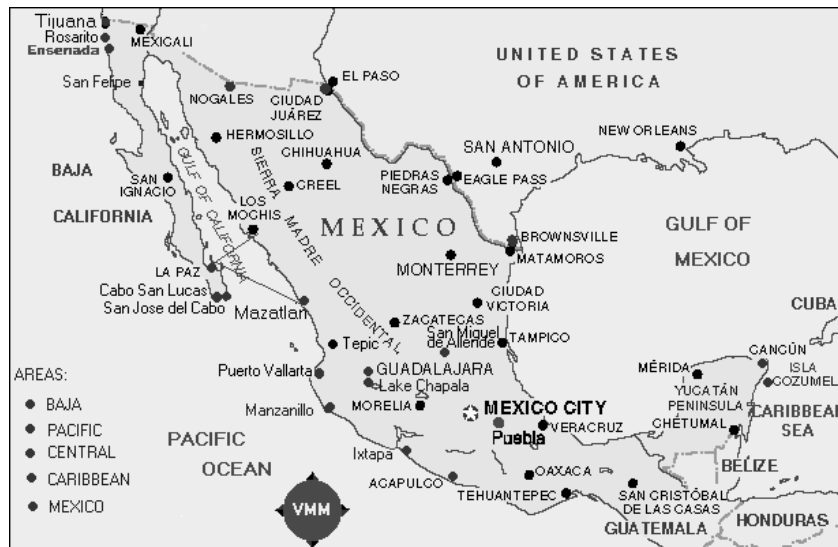
This study guide was compiled with support from CET Learning Services.

**Before you see
Nanita...**

ALL ABOUT MEXICO



Mexico is located south of the United States and borders the southwest states of California, New Mexico and Texas. It borders Guatemala and Belize to the south in Central America. The capital city is Mexico City, which is marked with a star on the map below.



MEXICO AND RELIGION



Most Mexicans who practice religion are Christians, most specifically Roman Catholic. Almost 90% of the country's population is Catholic. Mexican Catholicism is different from other countries that practice the religion because of the addition of many indigenous beliefs. For instance, in many Mexican communities, *curanderos* (traditional healers) use indigenous folk medicine, spiritual, and Christian faith healing to treat ailments. Catholicism is wide spread in Mexico, but is not the only religion practiced in the country. In the 1800s, European and American settlers introduced Protestantism and Mormonism. Also, there are a number of Jews, Buddhists and Muslims who call Mexico home.

In How Nanita Learned to Make Flan, Nanita is preparing for her first communion. This is a special event in the lives of all Catholic children. Between the ages of 7 and 10, children learn about the symbolism of taking Communion in the Roman Catholic Church. They dress in all white attire and have a special ceremony during mass for their first time to the altar. Typically a *fiesta* (party) occurs after the mass with great music and enough food for the entire neighborhood!

MEXICAN MUSIC

There are many different types of music that are native to the country. These three have their origins in Mexico and have spread throughout the world.



Mariachi: For many decades, *mariachi* has been widely considered to be the quintessential Mexican folk-genre, and has become an important symbol of Mexican music and culture. A mariachi band is an ensemble of five or more musicians that wear the traditional costume of a *charro* (Mexican cowboy). The costume consists of a waist-length jacket, tightly fitted pants, boots and a large sombrero. All are elaborately designed with colorful metal ornaments and intricate embroidery. Combining trumpets, violins, and guitars creates the unique sound of mariachi music.

Ranchera: Another very popular Mexican music format is the *ranchera* (ranch song), which originated during the time of the Mexican Revolution. The singers dress in the style of the Mexican horseman with tight breeches, jacket, boots, gun holsters and a large sombrero. The lyrics of ranchero songs deal with rural life and the struggles of ordinary people. They are often sung in a passionate manner with the singer crying out “Ay! Ay! Ay!” at various points.

Norteña: Popular in northern Mexico, the *norteña* has its origins in the ballads that were traditionally sung by people living along the U.S.-Mexico border. This music style is a hybrid of many other musical forms, including the waltz, polka, and country music. Norteña bands are large with a full horn section, strings, and accordion. The high-energy music is driven by booming bass and is admired by Mexicans and Americans alike.



EXTENSION

Have students listen to the different styles of Mexican music. Using rhythm instruments, create ostinato patterns for children to play while listening to a piece of music. Make it challenging by using pieces of varying tempos and meters!

**Before you see
Nanita...**

**¡BUENOS DIAS!
GOOD MORNING!**

By Sarah Barton Thomas

Objective:

Students will use the vocabulary from *How Nanita Learned to Make Flan* to enhance their knowledge of the Spanish language, to facilitate their understanding during the opera performance.

Grade Level: Pre K-4

Standards:

Ohio K-4 English Language Arts:

Students enhance their understanding of the human story by reading literacy texts that represent a variety of authors, cultures, and eras.

Ohio K-4 Grade Social Studies:

People in societies: students use materials drawn from the diversity of human experience to analyze and interpret significant events, patterns and themes in the history of Ohio, the United States and the world.

Time: Two 30-minute class periods

Materials: Chalkboard or Flipchart, Paper, Pencils, Markers

Description of Classroom Experience:

- Student will gain an understanding of familiar Spanish words and phrases.
- Student will apply vocabulary in a creative writing assignment.
- Student will apply vocabulary in conversation.

Step by Step Instructions:

1. Read the “Nanita” story with students (students can take turns reading aloud).
2. Discuss the setting, language, and culture of Mexico (use information from “All About Mexico” and glossary provided).
3. Ask if any students speak Spanish or any other language.
4. Explain that “Nanita” is a bilingual opera with words in both Spanish and English.
5. Using the glossary, students will write a short story using 6-8 new vocabulary words and phrases (this can be done independently or in groups).
6. Students will read their stories aloud. Classmates will listen and identify new words and their meanings.

Cross-curricular Connections:

Music: Students can write and perform a song using new vocabulary words.

Art: Students can use the Internet to research Mexican art and use techniques of indigenous artists to advertise the “Nanita” performance at their school.

**Before you see
Nanita...**

A MEXICAN STORY TOLD THROUGH MUSIC

By Linda Cook

Objective:

Students will tell a story (*How Nanita Learned to Make Flan*) through movement and the use of percussion instruments.

Grade Levels: Pre K-1

Standards: National Arts Standards

Theatre K-4:

6(c) Comparing and connecting art forms by describing theatre, dramatic media, and other art forms

Music K-4:

1(c) Experiment with a variety of instruments and other sound sources

1(e) Sing alone and with others

2(b) Improvise instrumental accompaniments to songs, recorded selections, stories, and poems

Time needed for the lesson: 20-30 minutes; this lesson might have to be split into smaller segments for preschool children

Materials needed for lesson: How Nanita Learned to Make Flan by Campbell Geeslin; various percussive instruments; chart paper; markers

Description of classroom experience: The students will read the book detailing the story that they will see performed at the upcoming opera visit, and develop an understanding of what constitutes an opera. They will also learn about the Mexican culture.

Vocabulary:

- Opera – a play in which all or most of the words are sung
- Shoemaker – an individual who makes shoes
- Parrot – a tropical bird with a curved beak and brightly colored feathers; some parrots can learn to repeat things that are said to them
- Desert – a dry, often sandy area where hardly any plants grow because there is so little rain
- Priest – a member of the clergy who can lead church services
- Mayor – leader of a town or city government
- Dance teacher – a teacher that instructs students about specific dance steps
- Colonel – an officer in the army, air force, or Marine Corps ranking below a general

Spanish Words

- **zapatos**- shoes
- **ranchero** - farmer
- **uno** – one
- **dos** – two
- **tres** – three
- **cuatro** – four
- **cinco** – five
- **seis** – six
- **siete** – seven
- **ocho** – eight
- **nueve** – nine
- **diez** - ten

Step by step instructions:

- Sing a nursery rhyme or children’s song that the students are familiar with. Discuss the story that is told in that song. For example, ‘The Itsy Bitsy Spider’ tells the story about a spider climbing up a waterspout. The entire story is told in a song.
- Discuss the elements of an opera.
- Read the story How Nanita Learned to Make Flan by Campbell Geeslin. Discuss what happened in the story. List some of the events on chart paper. Create motions to go with each main event so that the children may physically recreate the highlights of the story.
- Using percussion instruments, create sounds to imitate (define) each event. Some students may act out events and others play instruments while teacher reads.
- Perform the story in small groups for each other and for other classes. Video record performance and let the class critique the experience.

Cross-curricular connections – possible enrichment activities

Social Studies/Art

- Locate Mexico on the map. What do you think the weather/climate is like there? What would they see during the wintertime? Snow, rain, sun, etc.?
- Draw a picture of what you might wear in Mexico. How would the characters in the story dress? What types of clothes do we wear in the summer? Winter?
- Using newspaper, construction paper, fabric scraps, etc. make a shirt, skirt, pants, or other clothing that you might wear in Mexico. Discuss the patterns, color, textures, they could use.
- Match fabric swatches of different colors and/or patterns. Use a mystery bag or box to introduce different fabric textures such as silk, cotton, leather, etc.
- What are some of the jobs of the community helpers that they mention in the book? What does a shoemaker do? A mayor? Priest? Dancing teacher? Colonel? What kind of jobs do we do in our school community to help one another?
- What is a first communion? Where does it usually occur?

Math/Science

- Make flan. Discuss what happens to the mixture as it is heated/baked. As you continue stirring the mixture, why is it harder to stir? What can we use to measure the ingredients for the recipe? How do the measurements compare? Is a tablespoon larger or smaller than a teaspoon?
- Count to ten as you add the extra ten strokes to the flan mixture. Learn to count to ten in Spanish.
- Graph whether you liked/disliked the taste of flan.
- Read The Doorbell Rang by Pat Hutchins. Discuss how you could divide flan so that everyone in the class could get a sample taste.

Language Arts

- Use magnetic letters to build some of the vocabulary words in the story.
- Make a book of the vocabulary words pertaining to the story. These could be copied from a model or spelled phonetically.
- Write words or a story about something that happened in the book.

Physical Education/Music

- Teach steps to a Mexican hat dance.

**Before you see
Nanita...**

NANITA TELLS A STORY

By Jeanine Jason

Objective(s):

Students will be able to compare and contrast the elements of a *story* with the elements of an *opera*.

Students will be able to demonstrate audience behavior appropriate for a live theatrical performance.

Grade Level(s): 2 - 4

Standards: National Arts Standards: Music K – 4

8(b) Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

9(e) Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Time needed for lesson: Two 30 - 45 minute lessons

Materials needed for lesson: *How Nanita Learned to Make Flan* by

Campbell Geeslin; chart paper and markers ; photos, books, souvenirs, etc. from Mexico ; Story and Opera word cards to be sorted by category (teacher-created), Venn Diagrams; selected music by Latin performers/Latin rhythms; optional instruments: maracas, cabasas, claves and congas.

Description of classroom experience:

Students will learn how the elements of a storybook are related to the elements of an opera. They will have an opportunity to dramatize a story and strengthen their understanding and comprehension of the text.

Vocabulary:

ad lib (improvise, to make up as one goes along)

flan (an open tart filled with custard or fruit)

Other necessary vocabulary and Spanish translations are included in the Glossary.

Step by step instructions:

Lesson 1

- Review the elements of a story : **Title, Author, Illustrator, Characters, Setting, Plot** (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and Denouement) and **Problem/Conflict, etc.**
- Introduce the storybook *How Nanita Learned to Make Flan* (share pertinent background information on Mexican culture/environment: importance of First Communion, lifestyle & family values, socialization, climate, architecture, economy, music, etc.
- Read the story to the class (Be sure to tell children to listen for words in Spanish and use context clues and illustrations to determine the meaning.
- Post word cards of the elements of a story on the chalkboard or wall. Randomly place word cards generated from *Nanita* on the chalkboard or wall to be placed under the proper category by individual students. (For example: Category :**Problem**; Answer : *Can't Find Way Home*)

Lesson 2

- Announce that an opera company will bring the story of *Nanita* to life. Define *opera* and related terminology as needed. Children must understand the importance of audience behavior and active listening. (sit quietly; focus is on the performers; applause is rendered at the beginning of the performance, after each scene, at the end of a song in a musical performance, at the end of the performance and for each of the participants in the production; do not create distractions; do not enter the room while a scene is in progress; remain in your seat until intermission or the end of a performance)
- Review the story of *Nanita*.
- Allow children to dramatize the story of *Nanita*, this will give students an opportunity to be the performers and audience. Children may **ad lib** their lines as long as the content of the story remains intact. Selected Latin music or rhythms (using maracas, cabasas, claves, congas) may be used to enhance actions.
- Have students create a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting the elements of a story with the elements of an opera (**Title, Librettist, Set Designer, Characters/Players, Sets, Story, Themes, Aria, Props, Costumes, Orchestra/Accompanist, Staging, etc.**)

Cross-curricular connections:

- **Reading/Language Arts:** Students compare and contrast elements of a storybook with elements of an opera
- **Social Studies:** Students can plan a Mexican *fiesta* and prepare Mexican dishes, including flan.
- **Mathematics:** Using the flan recipe in the front of the book, have students determine the ingredients necessary and cost to cover the ingredients to prepare flan for the entire class or a certain number of guests.

Worksheet

- Venn Diagram comparing Storybooks and Operas.

**After you see
Nanita...**

NANITA'S MAGICAL JOURNEY

By Jeanine Jason

Objective(s):

Students will explain, using appropriate music terminology, their personal preferences regarding the opera Nanita.

Students will place events from the opera Nanita into chronological order (beginning, middle, end).

Grade Level(s): 2 - 4

Standards: National Arts Standards: Music K – 4

7(b) Evaluating music and music performances

Time needed for lesson: One 30 - 45 minute lesson

Materials needed for lesson: How Nanita Learned to Make Flan by Campbell Geeslin ; 11 x 14 paper; markers, crayons, colored pencils, colored construction paper and other art supplies; event flashcards

Description of classroom experience: Students will write a *synopsis* of the performance of Nanita, including previously taught music terminology, and express their personal preferences of the live performance. Then, students will organize selected events from Nanita on a timeline in chronological order.

Vocabulary:

synopsis (a plot summary)

Step by step instructions:

- Immediately following the performance students will write a brief plot synopsis. Remind them to include a **beginning, middle and end**. In addition, ask them to include another paragraph expressing their **personal experience** in viewing the opera, making use of appropriate **music terminology**. Allow about 10 minutes for this exercise.
- Arrange the following events, written on flashcards, in random order and post them on the chalkboard or wall.

Nanita Makes Her Own Shoes
Nanita's Shoes Take Her Far Away
Nanita Makes Friends With Senor Parrot
Nanita Learns To Make Flan
Papa Makes Shoes For Nanita
A Fiesta For Nanita

- On a sheet of 11 x 14 paper, have students create a timeline and place the events in chronological order according to the production. Encourage students to make their timelines neat, colorful and creative.
- When students have completed their timelines invite students to place the events posted on the board in chronological order.

Cross-curricular connections:

- **Music/Reading/Language Arts:** Students can create a chart that classifies the characters by their voice types and includes adjectives to justify the composers choice of voice type for a particular role.
- **Social Studies:** Students can compare and contrast Mexican culture with American culture.
- **Theatre:** Students can dramatize each event by performing charades.

**After you see
Nanita...**

FANCY SHOES

By Linda Cook

Objective:

Students will create a picture showing a favorite scene of the opera

Grade Levels: PreK-1st grade

Standards: National Arts Standards

Theatre K-4:

6(c) Comparing and connecting art forms by describing theatre, dramatic media, and other art forms

Music K-4:

7(b) Evaluating music and music performances

Time needed for the lesson: 20-30 minutes; this lesson might have to be split into smaller segments for preschool children

Materials needed for lesson:

- paper shoes (precut for younger children)
- shoe patterns (for older children to trace)
- colored construction paper
- markers, crayons, pencils
- large chart paper

Description of classroom experience: Students will reflect upon the opera performance and draw a picture on a paper shoe depicting a favorite scene from the opera.

Vocabulary:

- Opera – a play in which all or most of the words are sung.
- Shoemaker – an individual who makes shoes
- Parrot – a tropical bird with a curved beak and brightly colored feathers; some parrots can learn to repeat things that are said to them
- Desert – a dry, often sandy area where hardly any plants grow because there is so little rain.
- Priest – a member of the clergy who can lead church services
- Mayor – leader of a town or city government
- Dance teacher – a teacher that instructs students about specific dance steps
- Colonel – an officer in the army, air force, or Marine Corps ranking below a general

Step by step instructions:

- List some of the students' favorite parts of the opera on large chart paper. Discuss their personal feelings and reactions to the performance.
- Give each child a precut paper shoe (older children may trace the shoe pattern on their favorite color of construction paper.)
- Draw a picture of a scene from the opera that you remember or that you particularly enjoyed. Older students may enjoy writing words or sentences that describe their illustration.
- Decorate paper shoes with different materials (ribbon, yarn, string, paint, paper, sequins, glitter, etc.)
- Display these shoes on a hall or classroom bulletin board

Cross-curricular connections:**Social Studies**

- Make a shoemaker's workshop in the dramatic play area, using plastic hammers, 'nails', 'leather', etc.

Art

- Paint/decorate old pairs of shoes that have been donated

Math/Science

- Graph the colors of shoes that the students are wearing

Language Arts

- Write a story answering this question....if you had a special pair of shoes like Nanita's, where would you want them to take you?
- What fairy tale has a special pair of shoes in it? (Cinderella)
- Write a class or individual thank you notes to the sponsor of the program. Write a letter to the opera company sharing with them what you liked about their performance.
- Use magnetic letters to build the vocabulary words in the opera

RESOURCES

Books

Brill, Marlene Tang. Tooth Tales from Around the World
Clayton, Elaine. Ella's Trip to the Museum
Dorros, Arthur. Abuela
Dorros, Arthur. Isla
Evetts-Secker, Josephine. The Barefoot Book of Mother and Son Tales
*Geeslin, Campbell. In Rosa's Mexico
Luenn, Nancy. Celebrations of Light: Holidays around the World
Marcos, Subcomandante. The Story of Colors
Milord, Susan. Hands Around the World
Siberell, Anne. Bravo! Brava! A Night at the Opera (opera specific children's book)
Sierra, Judy. Silly and Sillier
Zaslavsky, Claudia. Math Games and Activities from Around the World

Recordings

Divas: The Ultimate Album (Famous arias by famous female singers)
Pavarotti's Opera Made Easy: My Favorite Opera for Children (Opera selections appropriate for children)
Tenors on Tour: The Three Tenors
The Opera Album (2 disc compilation of Operas greatest hits)
A Mis Niños de Treina Años
El Dario de Daniela (Latin American Children's Songs)
Friends by Chick Corea (A variety of Latin tunes by the famous Latin/Samba artist Chick Corea.)
Lullabies of Latin America
Papa's Dream (A blend of Mexican and Tex-Mex songs with spoken narrative)
Puras Para Niñas Volume 1

On the Web

Cincinnati Opera
<http://www.cincinnatiopera.org>

WGUC Classics for Kids
<http://www.wguc.org/cfk/index.html>

Encarta Encyclopedia and Atlas online
<http://encarta.msn.com>

OPERA America
<http://www.operaamerica.org>

Alta Vista Online Translation
<http://www.altavista.com>

Interactive Map of Mexico
http://www.yourchildlearns.com/mexico_map.htm

National Geographic's Guide to Mexico
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/mexico/learn>

The CIA World Fact Book about Mexico
<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mx.html>

HOW NANITA LEARNED TO MAKE FLAN

Glossary

SPANISH	ENGLISH
Adios	Good Bye
Amarillo	Orange
Asistente	Assistant
Azul	Blue
Buenos Dias	Good Morning
Buenos Noches	Good Night
Caliente	Hot
Caramba	Caramba (Oh my Gosh!)
Centuria	Century
Delicado	Delicate
Delicioso	Delicious
El Capitan	The Captain
El Mundo	The World
El Padre	The Father (Priest)
El Regalo	The Gift
El Sol	The Sun
El Zapatero	The Shoemaker
Fiesta	Party
Gracias	Thank you
La Bamba	La Bamba (a dance)
La Bruja	The Witch
La Luna	The Moon
Las Botas	Boots
Los Oceanos	The Ocean
Maravilloso	Marvelous
Muchacha	Friend
Muy Malo	Much Pain
Nino	Child
Papgayo	Bird
Piratas	Pirates
Por Favor	Please
Ranchero	Farmer
Rojo	Red
Senor	Sir (Mister)
Senorita	Woman
Si	Yes
Siesta	Nap
Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis	one, two, three, four, five, six
Verde	Green
Zapatos	Shoes

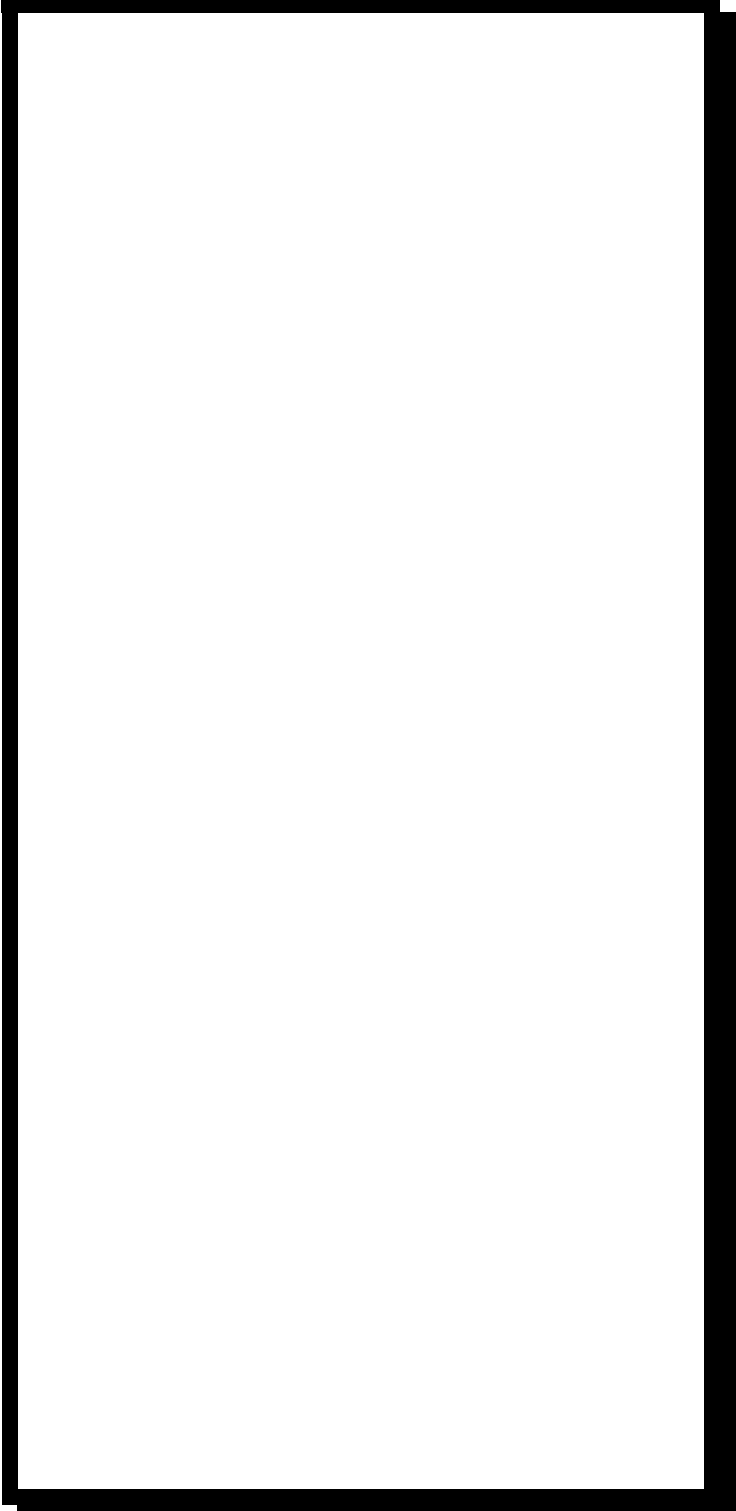
MY FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT

How Nanita Learned to Make Flan

Dear Cincinnati Opera,

I saw *How Nanita Learned to Make Flan* today. Of all the things I saw, these are my favorites.

Draw your favorite character or scene here.



The title of my drawing is

My name is

Grade _____

