

***Cavalleria rusticana* & *Pagliacci* 2025|26**

Post-performance discussion and reflection questions

Now that you have seen the opera, consider the following questions:

1. Did you like the opera? Why or why not?
2. Did you relate to any of the characters? Which one(s) and why?
3. Did you have a favorite part?
4. Did anything surprise you?
5. Did you change your mind about anything? Did it affect your view of opera?
6. If you were writing the opera, would you make any changes to it? How?
7. What did you see that was visually interesting?
8. Did you recognize any of the music?
9. Was there any music that stood out to you? What made it remarkable?
10. Now that you've seen an opera, why do you think we've performed them for hundreds of years? Why do you think we are still performing them today?
11. How did you feel about being in the opera house?
12. Would you see another opera? Why or why not?
13. If you worked in an opera house, what job would interest you? (singer, lighting designer, usher, director, orchestra member, costumer, set designer, carpenter, etc.)
14. Is there a story that you would like to see in the form of an opera?

Consider these additional prompts for ***Cavalleria rusticana***, listed here and in the learning resources slide deck:

15. **Jealousy and Betrayal:** Jealousy drives much of the conflict in *Cavalleria rusticana*, from Turiddu's affair with Lola to Santuzza's decision to reveal the secret to Alfio. Discuss how jealousy can damage relationships and trust. Do you think Santuzza was justified in telling Alfio the truth, or was it an act of revenge?
16. **Honor and Revenge:** In Sicilian culture at the time, honor was extremely important, and dueling was seen as a way to defend it. In the opera, Alfio challenges Turiddu to a fight to restore his honor after Lola's betrayal. Do you think Alfio's reaction was understandable, or was it excessive? How do ideas of honor and revenge compare between the opera's setting and today's society?
17. **Fate and Tragedy:** From the very beginning, the opera foreshadows that Turiddu's choices will lead to a tragic outcome. His final farewell to his mother shows that he knows his fate is sealed. Do you believe Turiddu was doomed by his circumstances, or could he have made different choices to avoid tragedy? Explain your reasoning using evidence from the story.

Consider these additional prompts for ***Pagliacci***, listed here and in the learning resources slide deck:

18. **Jealousy and Betrayal:** Several characters act out of jealousy in the opera, leading to betrayal and violence. Do you think jealousy can ever be justified, or is it always destructive?
19. **Love and Freedom:** Nedda wants to escape her unhappy marriage and follow her heart, even though it means betraying Canio. Is it more important to stay loyal to commitments or to pursue personal happiness? Why?
20. **Reality vs. Performance:** In *Pagliacci*, the line between the staged comedy and real life disappears. What does this reveal about the power of emotions, and how might it relate to times when people today “perform” different roles in their lives?

Consider these additional prompts comparing the two operas, listed here and in the learning resources slide deck:

21. Why do you think opera companies often program these two operas together?
22. Both operas deal with themes of love, jealousy, and violent revenge in small, close-knit communities. How do these shared themes reflect everyday human emotions, and why do you think audiences are so drawn to these intense stories?
23. In *Cavalleria rusticana*, the tragedy unfolds during a religious holiday, while in *Pagliacci*, it happens during a theatrical performance. How does the setting in each opera influence the way the story is told and the impact it has on the audience?