

MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE

Education and Community Programs

EDUCATION GUIDE: *La Pizza Con Funghi*

Presented by the Department of Education and Community Programs
and the Michigan Opera Theatre Touring Ensemble

La Pizza Con Funghi written by Seymour Barab

Program made possible by:



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About Michigan Opera Theatre



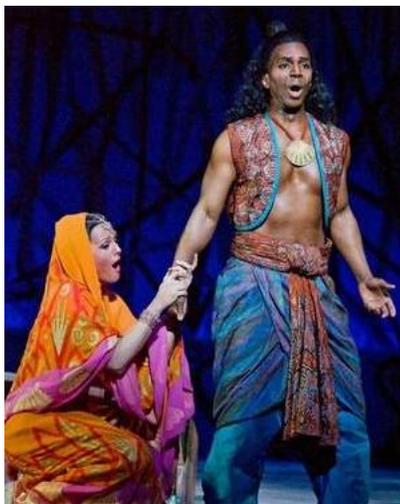
Mission Statement

Michigan Opera Theatre is the premier multi-disciplined producer and presenter for opera, musical theatre, and dance in the Great Lakes Region. Based in the city of Detroit, the organization engages artists of national and international stature for stellar main stage and outreach performances, and provides compelling cultural enrichment programs for the diverse audiences and communities that it serves, making it one of Detroit's pillars of arts and culture.



Department of Education and Community Programs

For over 40 years, Michigan Opera Theatre has stood for excellence in opera entertainment and education. Regarded as one of the finest cultural resources serving the state, Michigan Opera Theatre has also achieved national stature as one of the country's 10 largest opera companies. The vision of Founder and Artistic Director Dr. David DiChiera, and led by President and Chief Executive Officer Wayne S. Brown, Michigan Opera Theater makes its home at the newly restored Detroit Opera House.



The Department of Education and Community Programs Department has brought its varied musical programs to every age group in Michigan for over 30 years. Artists visit clubs, offices, schools and community stages, performing shows that range from lively children's operas to musical revues to full length operas produced by the local community. Founded by Karen V. DiChiera, the Department of Education and Community Programs serves the entire state with quality entertainment and education.

Contact Michigan Opera Theatre at:

(313) 961-3500

1526 Broadway

Detroit, MI 48226

MichiganOpera.org

The Role of the Audience

In Mozart's time, formal operas lasted four to six hours, during which time the audience would feel free to wander around, talk, sing along, and eat things like fruit and candied chestnuts. If they did not like a performance they might even begin to throw fruit at the singers! Times have changed considerably since then, and these behaviors are inappropriate. Here are some guidelines for today's audiences.

Students attending Michigan Opera Theater educational performances are expected to know how to be good audience members. Please take the time to educate your students for this live performance; it may be their first opera! Have students discuss and develop their own guidelines for audience behavior; the students then become active members of the performance. Please share the following with your students:

As an audience member, your role is to:

- Listen closely!
- Respect fellow audience members by keeping your hands and feet to yourself.
- Make sure you don't talk or whisper during the performance.
- Laugh at the parts that are funny.
- Make sure that gum, candy, food, or drink stays OUT of the theater.
- Stay in your seat during the performance.
- Clap and shout "Bravo! Brava! Bravi!" when you like the performance.

Applause, applause! As a general rule, each performance ends with applause from the audience. This is how the audience thanks the performers for a job well done! Applause says, "Thank you, you're great!" Applause is a compliment that is defined by the loudness of the clapping of hands. In most opera performances it is traditional to applaud after the overture (opening music) is played and the curtain rises. It is traditional to applaud at the end of each musical selection. In opera there are arias, duets, and acts where the audience may clap at the end. When the final scene of the opera has ended, the cast will often take a bow at the curtain call while they are rewarded with audience applause. If audience members really enjoy the performance, they may stand and clap in what is called a "standing ovation".

Before and After the Performance

Before the Performance:

Make sure to establish expectations for audience behavior (page 4).

Have a discussion with your students that will contextualize what they are about to see. You might ask:

- What is art? What is music? How does it fit into our lives?
- Have you attended a live performance before? If you have, what was it? If you haven't, what do you think it would be like to attend? What do you expect to experience with this opera?
- Compare going to sports events and attending the theater or going to a concert. How are these experiences the same/different? How is a live performance different from going to the movies?
- Imagine being in an opera. What story would you like to be made into an opera? Which character would you be? What would the music be like? Where would the story take place?
- Do you know what kinds of jobs are associated with an opera company? What is a costumer, dancer, director, singer, stage manager, set designer, orchestra member, etc.? If you could work in the theater, which job would you choose?

After the Performance:

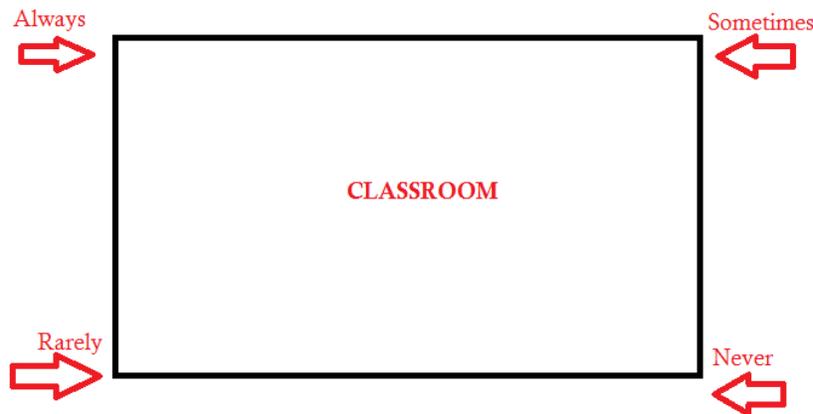
After the performance, please conduct follow-up activities with your students. Have students think, talk, and write about the performance they've just seen. Students can write thank-you letters, make drawings, or even try their hand at being an opera critic and turn in a review! These items will be shared with the artists and financial supporters who make these performances possible. A sample feedback form is included at the back of this guide. Encourage students to be creative and write letters and/or draw pictures, murals, dioramas of scenes, etc. Send these to:

Michigan Opera Theatre
Department of Education and Community Programs
Attn: Andrea Scobie
1526 Broadway
Detroit, Michigan 48226
E-mail: ascobie@motopera.org

Pre- and Post-Performance Activity

Always, Sometimes, Rarely, Never

Assign four corners of the room (or four spaces within the room) to be the location for Always, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never.



When a statement is given, have students move to the location that matches their answer and discuss with their group members why those chose their answer. After several minutes of discussion, choose one group member from each area to share with the whole class why the group as a whole answered Always, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never.

Pre-and Post-Performance Example Statements:

- I (always, sometimes, rarely, never) think that attending a live performance (a play, concert, or sporting event) is more enjoyable than watching the same event on television.
- I (always, sometimes, rarely, never) think that attending live performances is an important thing to do.
- Live performances (always, sometimes, rarely, never) hold my interest.
- When I attend live performances, I (always, sometimes, rarely, never) feel like the story is relevant to my life.
- I (always, sometimes, rarely, never) want to attend live performances more often than I do.

Notes on this activity:

Remember to encourage your students to talk about WHY they chose their answer. Follow questions with more questions- for example, if students think that operas and live performances are RARELY relevant to their lives, make sure to ask why. And how can we change that? Who is telling the stories right now? How do we position ourselves to make sure our stories, and stories that are important to us, get told? What stories would we like to see represented on stage? Also, if this activity is conducted both pre- and post-performance, make sure to encourage students to note if their answer has changed, and why it changed.

A Brief Overview of Opera



What is an opera?

An opera is a play with music. In opera, the performers on the stage are normally singers instead of actors. The story is told in song and by the music from the orchestra or piano. Operas can be very exciting- not only is there music to listen to, but there is also a stage to watch, a story to think about, and often subtitles to read. Opera fills the ears, eyes and mind. The music sets an opera apart from a play or a musical, but these sounds always support the most important part of an opera, the story.

How is an opera different from a musical or a play?

A play doesn't have music that is central to the story; in fact, it may not have music at all. Musicals are plays with music. This is something they have in common with operas, but in a musical, the story is told mainly through spoken words, not songs. Music is much more important to the story in an opera than in a musical or a play. That's why the performers in an opera need to be good singers as well as good actors!



Why is opera so special?

Opera is a unique combination of words, music and design. All together, these ingredients deliver large amounts of information about the characters to the audience. Many different people--the composer, librettist, set designer, director, musicians, and singers--all work together to produce this special art form. In schools, opera is especially important because it represents literature come to life!



How old is opera and where did it come from?

Opera is about 400 years old. It started in Italy, towards the end of the 16th century.

What's in an opera?

Traditionally, operas began with an overture, which usually introduces the audience to musical themes used later in the opera. Because of this, some composers write the overture last! Operas contain musical numbers for many different combinations of characters – solos, duets, trios, quartets, quintets and so on. Then there also may be a chorus as well as an orchestra or piano to provide the music.

The Composer and Librettist: Seymour Barab



Mr. Barab was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1921, and began his professional career as a church organist at the age of thirteen. “I was preparing for a career as a pianist when the conductor of the high school orchestra persuaded me to study the cello. I later became a cellist in the orchestra and after graduation auditioned for the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. I was accepted and have since appeared with principal orchestras throughout the country such as the Cleveland, San Francisco, and Philadelphia.”



Mr. Barab's interest in contemporary music led to a close association with American composers, whose music he began to perform while he was still in high school. Before leaving Chicago, he became a founder of the New Music Quartet; and then in New York City of the Composer's Quartet, the resident quartet of Columbia University, whose primary purpose was to promote contemporary music. On the other end of the spectrum, he played the viola da gamba and helped form the New York Pro Musica, one of the first contemporary ensembles to reintroduce baroque and renaissance music.

Following military service in World War II, he took advantage of the G.I. Bill to spend a year in Paris, where he explored his own talents for musical composition. In this one year alone, he produced over two hundred art songs and other works. Vocal music became Barab's favorite means of musical expression. “It is less abstract,” he observes. “The words of a poem immediately suggest music to me.”



Barab's proclivity for musical theatre has made his operas consistently performed, especially his comic one-acts and those for young audiences. According to Central Opera Service, during the 88-89 season, he was the most performed composer of opera in America. His fellow composer, Miriam Gideon, has called him “the Rossini of our time” and Kurt Vonnegut, author and one-time collaborator with Barab says, “Barab's music is full of magic. He proved to an atheist that God exists. What an honor to have worked with him.” In 1998, Barab was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the National Opera Association.

SOURCE: seymourbarab.com

La Pizza Con Funghi: Characters and Synopsis

SETTING:

Italy, 1920s

CHARACTERS:

Voluptua, Countess Formaggio (The Soprano)

Phobia, Her Maid, (The Mezzo-Soprano)

Scorpio, Her Lover (The Tenor)

Count Formaggio, Her Husband (The Baritone)

SYNOPSIS:

Voluptua is in love with Scorpio. In order to be free to marry him, she plans to poison her husband, Count Formaggio. Her maid, Phobia, warns the Count of his wife's duplicity. For this show of loyalty, she must lose her life. Eventually, of course, so must all the other members of the cast.

PRODUCTION NOTE:

This is a fictitious translation of a fictitious opera that might have been written by an obscure nineteenth-century Italian composer. The musical clichés, the melodramatic language, and the insane plot all serve as an accompaniment to the entire catalog of mishaps that can befall an opera performance. This is, in short, a parody of opera.

Glossary of Opera Terms

TERM	DEFINITION
Act	A section of the story, often followed by an intermission in long operas.
Baritone	An adult male singing voice between tenor (highest) and bass (lowest) range.
Composer	The person who writes the music for the opera.
Conductor	The person who leads the orchestra.
Director	The person who teaches the singers/actors how to do their roles.
Finale	The last or final number in an 'act' or entire opera.
Libretto	The words/lyrics (text) to an opera.
Librettist	The person who writes the words (text) to an opera.
Mezzo-Soprano	Female singing voice whose vocal range lies between the soprano (high) and the contralto (low).
Orchestra	A group of instrumental musicians led by a conductor.
Overture	Music played by an orchestra or a piano before an opera begins.
Opera	A dramatic play, set to music, and entirely sung by the performers.
Role	The character that a singer portrays
Rehearsal	The practice it takes to get ready for a performance.
Props or Properties	Small items that singers/actors use or carry on stage.
Score	A printed sheet or book with the words and music of an opera.
Set	The scenery on stage.
Soprano	The highest of the four standard singing voices.
Tempo	The speed of the music.
Tenor	The highest of the ordinary adult male singing range.

Cross-Curricular Connections and Activities

GRADES 9 and 10

English Language Arts

1. Write a review of *La Pizza Con Funghi* and send a copy to the Michigan Opera Theatre.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1.D
Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
2. Compose an essay on Italian life in the 1920s- the place and period in which *La Pizza Con Funghi* is set.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.2
Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.
3. Create and present an informational presentation about opera that utilizes video and/or audio clips, Power Point slides, photos, etc.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4
Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

World History and Geography

1. *La Pizza Con Funghi* pokes fun at the kind of operas that were written in the 1800s, like those by Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi. Verdi was writing during a time in Italy known as the Risorgimento (“Resurgence” or “Rising Again”), when the many different states of the Italian peninsula were unified into a single country. Compare a map of the Italian states in the 1800s and a modern map of Italy, then research and discuss what effects unification had on political and social spheres. Finish with a monologue from the POV of a state citizen (e.g. from Sicily or Sardinia) who is either for or against the unification of Italian states, giving reasons why or why not.
WHG.6.3.1b
Analyze the economic, political, and social transformations in Europe by using historical and modern maps to describe how the wars of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods and growing nationalism changed the political geography of Europe.

- Michigan Opera Theatre has set its production of *La Pizza Con Funghi* in the 1920s in Italy. During this period, Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini ruled in Italy, dismantling democratic institutions and taking the title "Il Duce" ("the Leader"). In groups, create a visual timeline of Mussolini's rise to power, with reasons why his brand of nationalism was able to take hold post-WWI.

7.2.2b Inter-war Period – Analyze the transformations that shaped world societies between World War I and World War II by describing and explaining the rise of fascism and the spread of communism in Europe.

Science

- Discuss toxicity levels in local mushrooms, and how Michigan's forest climates create an ideal growing atmosphere for mushrooms (full lesson plan on page 17).

B4.3C

Give examples of ways in which genetic variation and environmental factors are causes of evolution and the diversity of organisms.

Cross-Curricular Connections and Activities

GRADES 11 and 12

English Language Arts

- Using *La Pizza Con Funghi* as a starting point, examine and compare the devices of parody and satire in art and media (full lesson plan on page 14).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6

Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

- Think about "the moments before" the opera takes place, and create a scene of one of the events leading up to the day *La Pizza Con Funghi* is set- e.g. Voluptua and Scorpio's meeting or Phobia's job interview.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- Write a review of *La Pizza Con Funghi* and send a copy to the Michigan Opera Theatre.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.1.D

Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

World History and Geography

1. La Pizza Con Funghi pokes fun at the kinds of operas that were written in the 1800s, like those by Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi. Verdi was writing during a time in Italy known as the “Risorgimento”, or Italian Unification (the ideological movement that led to a series of political events that freed the Italian states from foreign domination and united them politically). Have students research this period and create newspapers, essays, speeches, scenes, and/or poetry examining the process of and reasoning behind uniting the Italian states.

WHG.6.3.1a

Analyze the economic, political, and social transformations in Europe by explaining how democratic ideas and revolutionary conflicts influenced European society, noting particularly their influence on religious institutions, education, family life, and the legal and political position of women.

2. Michigan Opera Theatre has set its production of La Pizza Con Funghi in the 1920s in Italy, the period during which European dictators Benito Mussolini, Joseph Stalin, Francisco Franco, and Adolf Hitler were rising to power. Divide the class into four groups (representing Italy, Spain, Germany, and the Soviet Union) to research the 1920s – 1940s in their given country, along with an earlier time period of their choosing. After much research, host a classroom debate where students will play historical figures and argue for the merits of their respective time periods, policies, and ideologies.

WHG 7.3.2

Compare the ideologies, policies, and governing methods of at least two 20th-century dictatorial regimes (Germany, Italy, Spain, and the Soviet Union) with those absolutist states in earlier eras.

Biology

1. Create a fictional case study predicting the sustainability of Michigan morel mushrooms if moved to different eco-systems around the world.

B2.2G

Propose how moving an organism to a new environment may influence its ability to survive and predict the possible impact of this type of transfer.

Lesson Plan: 11th Grade ELA

“Parody and Satire in the Arts”

Title: Parody and Satire in the Arts

Grade Level: 11th

Length of Lesson:

Two hours

Essential Understanding:

(The “Big Idea” that encompasses arts unit)

The definitions of parody and satire, and their use in literature, media, and the arts.

Lesson Overview/Description:

After viewing Michigan Opera Theatre’s production of *La Pizza Con Funghi*, students will explore the literary devices of parody and satire, and how and why they are used in literature, the arts, and popular culture.

Supplies/Materials

(Identify art or classroom supplies, tools, instruments, props, special classroom set-up arrangements)

Video of The Colbert Report

Article from theonion.com

“The Butter Battle Book” by Dr. Seuss

Excerpts from some or all of the following:

 “A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift

 “1984” by George Orwell

 “Pride and Prejudice and Zombies” by Seth Grahame-Smith

Key Vocabulary

Parody

Satire

Farce

Horatian

Juvenalian

Content Standard (s)

(Specific Content Standard goals/objectives achieved in lesson)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6

Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Learning Targets <i>(What you want students to know and be able to do as a result of learning process)</i>	Assessment (s) <i>(The observable traits and dimensions of meeting the learning target)</i>
Students will be able to define satire and parody, and be able to explain their different purposes and use.	Correctly identifying satire and parody from examples of literature and pop culture; active participation in discussions and Q&A.

Instructional Plan

<p>Warm Up</p> <p>Begin with a “Think Pair Share” discussion that reflects on the MOT performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you see in the performance that made you laugh? • What elements were exaggerated? • What point was Seymour Barab making by using exaggeration and humor? • Where else have you encountered this type of exaggerated humor on TV, in movies, books, or music?
<p>Introductory Activity</p> <p>Introduce and define “satire” and parody” through a handout or PowerPoint. Other vocabulary/concepts to note could include Horatian vs. Juvenalian satire, farce, and/or irony.</p> <p>Read “The Butter Battle Book” by Dr. Seuss as a class. Discuss how the author uses satire, and why. Who is his audience? What does he hope to achieve?</p>
<p>Developmental Activity</p> <p>Divide class into four groups:</p> <p>Two groups view a short clip from The Colbert Report http://www.cc.com/video-clips/oztyjs/the-colbert-report-the-word---truthinews</p> <p>Two groups read article from theonion.com http://www.theonion.com/article/girl-moved-to-tears-by-of-mice-and-men-cliffs-note-2029).</p> <p>Each group must decide whether their piece is satire or parody, and present their reasoning to the full class.</p>
<p>Guided Practice</p> <p>In groups of three, students will be given excerpts from “A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift, “1984” by George Orwell, or “Pride and Prejudice and Zombies” by Seth Grahame-Smith. They will adapt these excerpts into scripted scenes to be presented to the class, bringing heightened awareness to the satire and/or parody presented in the original</p>

text. When students are audience members, they are allowed/encouraged to ask questions after each scene is presented.

Reflective Practice

Question Ball

In a circle, the students will throw the ball to one another. Whoever catches the ball answers the questions asked by the teacher. 2-4 students will answer each question.

Sample questions:

- What was successful about adapting these writings to the stage?
- What was challenging?
- What elements of parody did we see in our scenes?
- Where did you find satire in the scenes?
- What point was the author of your literature excerpt making?
- Was *La Pizza Con Funghi* a satire or a parody?

Next Steps

- Students can read the full text of “A Modest Proposal”, etc, or identify other works of satire or parody to read and examine.
- Students can turn scenes into a one-act of full-length piece.
- Class can put together a satiric news report focusing on a variety of topics and/or issues.

Lesson Plan: 9th Grade Biology

“Michigan Mycology”

Title: Michigan Mycology	Grade Level: 9th
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Length of Lesson: One hour
Essential Understanding: <i>(The “Big Idea” that encompasses arts unit)</i> Mushrooms require specific conditions for optimal growth, which are met in Michigan’s forests where mushrooms are plentiful.
Lesson Overview/Description: After viewing Michigan Opera Theatre’s production of <i>La Pizza Con Funghi</i> , students will be introduced to different types of mushrooms (edible and poisonous) and explore the growing conditions of mushrooms in Michigan.
Supplies/Materials <i>(Identify art or classroom supplies, tools, instruments, props, special classroom set-up arrangements)</i> “Stalking The Wild Mushroom” video (http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/sf10.sci.lv.ls.orgenv.mushprint/science-friday-video-stalking-the-wild-mushroom/) Information from the Michigan DNR about state forests: http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10370_22664-61596--,00.html
Key Vocabulary Mycology Fungus/fungi Hypha Mycelium Spore
Content Standard (s) <i>(Specific Content Standard goals/objectives achieved in lesson)</i> B4.3C Give examples of ways in which genetic variation and environmental factors are causes of the diversity of organisms. B1.1A Generate new questions that can be investigated in the laboratory or field.

Learning Targets <i>(What you want students to know and be able to do as a result of learning process)</i>	Assessment (s) <i>(The observable traits and dimensions of meeting the learning target)</i>
Why and how Michigan's forest environment leads to the growth of local mushroom varieties.	Information presented in students' commercials/news reports will be accurate and draw from research and/or readings, and will also correctly utilize key vocabulary words.

Instructional Plan

<p>Warm Up</p> <p>Begin with a “Think Pair Share” discussion that reflects on the MOT performance and transitions focus to the content area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you feel about the performance? • Which elements or scenes did you like best? • Which pieces of the show felt realistic? • Can someone be poisoned by mushrooms? • Do poisonous mushrooms grow in Michigan? • What are the elements that create high levels of toxins in mushrooms?
<p>Introductory Activity</p> <p>Essential Question Brainstorm</p> <p>Using a “Who, What, Where, When, Why, How” box, the class will brainstorm questions about mushrooms (Where do mushrooms grow? How can you identify a poisonous mushroom? How many varieties of mushrooms exist? Etc.)</p>
<p>Developmental Activity</p> <p>Watch “Stalking The Wild Mushroom” video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWZG50VD9_o</p>
<p>Guided Practice</p> <p>Comparing informational sheets/readings about ecological conditions in Michigan's forests and the conditions needed for mushrooms to grow (with emphasis on mushrooms not being part of the photosynthesis process), and by defining key vocabulary words, students in small groups will create a commercial or news report about the relationship between Michigan's forest and the fungi that grow within.</p>
<p>Reflective Practice</p> <p>Rose and Thorn- creation of news reports and commercials</p> <p>Essential Questions Recap- Refer to essential questions. Were any of them answered? Have new questions come up? Are there topics we want to re-visit?</p>
<p>Next Steps</p>

- If unanswered essential questions exist, students can conduct research in their own time and present findings to the class. These questions can also serve as the basis for a more in-depth field study, project, experiment, or essay.
- For more information on Michigan's poisonous mushrooms, print MSU's "Don't Pick Poison!" guide:
<http://web2.msue.msu.edu/bulletins/Bulletin/PDF/E2777.pdf>