



San Francisco Opera's Wagner's *DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG*

Curriculum Connections

California Content Standards
Kindergarten through Grade 12

LANGUAGE ARTS

WORD ANALYSIS, FLUENCY, AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Phonics and Phonemic Awareness:

Letter Recognition: Name the letters in a word. Ex. **Meistersinger = M-e-i-s-t-e-r-s-i-n-g-e-r.**

Letter/Sound Association: Name the letters and the beginning and ending sound in a word. **E-v-a**

Match and list words with the same beginning or ending sounds. Ex. **Beckmesser** and **Walther** have the same ending sound /er/; but begin with different letters and sounds **Beckmess** and **Walth**.

Syllables: Count the syllables in a word. Ex.: Beck-mess-er

Match and list words with the same number of syllables. Clap out syllables as beats. Ex.: 1 syllable 2 syllables 3 syllables **bass = bass tenor = ten-or soprano = so-pra-no**

Phoneme Substitution: Play with the beginning sounds to make silly words. What would a "boprano" sound like? (Also substitute middle and ending sounds.) Ex. **soprano, boprano, topoprano, kopoprano.**

Phoneme Counting: How many sounds in a word? Ex. **bell = 3**

Phoneme Segmentation: Which sounds do you hear in a word? Ex. **bell = b/e/l.**

Reading Skills: Build skills using the subtitles on the video and related educator documents.

Examine vocabulary in source material texts: *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* libretto.

Opera vocabulary: soprano, mezzo-soprano, bass, prelude, dramaturg.

Metaphors: birds, shoes, songs, the nightwatchman, etc.

Make a list of words that evoke the myths of knights, whether through meaning or sound. Are there languages that reflect the speech of the knights (i.e. courtly language)?

Find words in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* that are unfamiliar and find definitions and roots.

Find analogies in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Concepts of Print: Sentence structure, punctuation, directionality.

Parts of speech: Noun, verb, adjective, adverb, prepositions.

Vocabulary Lists: Ex. *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Opera glossary, Music and Composition terms such as leitmotif.

READING COMPREHENSION

Story Development (What's the beginning, middle and end?): Character desires and motivation; Cause and effect: What made this happen?

Creative writing: Interpret the story and create a new version. Create your own characters that are missing from the opera (family at home?)

The sequencing of events, climax, and resolution.

Examine poetry inspired by the real Hans Sachs of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Read version of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* legend; watch DVD of opera. Compare.

Examine how themes of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* compare to themes from Shakespeare, particularly *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Falstaff*.

Reflect on your viewing of the opera by sharing your questions about it with the other students.

Read: Opera source material: Source material for *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, libretto, letters from Wagner, biographies, etc.

Read sections of the libretto. Write a brief synopsis based on the libretto.

Explore literary devices such as the use of point of view, internal/external conflict, repetition of phrases and foreshadowing.

Types of text: Poetry, fairy tale, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, etc.

CREATIVE WRITING

Explore different genres of writing: poetry, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, autobiography, short story, historical novel, etc.

Reinterpret the story by creating a new version using your own characters, time period and setting.

Creative writing: Interpret the story and create a new version. Create your own characters or change the opera's time period and setting. Ex. Hans Sachs = an aging rock star on tour.

Could you transform this story to another environment? Where would it make most sense?

Explore literary devices such as the use of point of view, internal/external conflict, repetition of phrases and foreshadowing.

Analysis and Interpretation: Expository writing, critiques/reviews.

Persuasive Writing: Letter writing, copywriting: advertising, fundraising, press release.

Write dialogue for two of the characters in the opera. Each character only says one line, but uses different inflections each time he/she says it.

Write a different ending for the opera.

Write or draw a deleted scene for the opera; a scene we hear about, but don't see.

Keep journals from the point of view of the characters during the events of the opera.

Write parrot poems from the point of view of the characters. Parrot poems are conversational poems in which partners write each line in turn.

Write a "me" poem for each of the characters: begin the poem with "I am" and list the characteristics of each person in separate phrases.

Rewrite a scene from the opera, switching the genders of the characters. How does the scene change? Rewrite a scene, changing the ethnicities. How does it change?

Rewrite libretto using today as a setting. Use contemporary characters: who would be Eva today? Walther? Hans Sachs?

What happens to Walther and Eva after the opera ends? Write a sequel for the opera.

Students respond to a letter from Eva or Walther asking them for advice.

Write a passage expressing several characters' inner thoughts at the same time.

Writing exercise in which feelings are expressed like those in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* arias.

Create a storyboard of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* as a soap opera.

Examine how other writers have been influenced by *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

What's the value and harm in competition and learning?

What is a song? What are the forms of a song?

Besides a singing competition what else is this opera about?

LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS

Elements of a Story:

Character, plot, setting, conflict.

Vocabulary:

Reading for understanding using the subtitles on videos and related educator documents.

What is a prelude?

Use of chorus in opera. Compare to a Greek Chorus, commenting on action. Play segments of the opera; ask students to journal after watching the segments.

Genre: Comedy versus Tragedy/Seria - Identify the comic/serious parts of the opera

Chart out the elements of the plot.

Read a synopsis of Act I; how would you complete this story?

How do authors draw on works by others? How does Wagner use the work of the real life Hans Sachs?

Themes: Examine the themes of the opera:

Love and Honor. Self-pride

The Love of Art. Does the Art stand apart from the artist?

Class structure, Nationalism

Bullying vs. Social Support

Female agency/independence/marriage

Aging and Human Frailty – A Fall from Grace

What is Mastery? How do you define mastery? What skills are the meistersingers attempting to master? What are other stories that revolve around mastery?

Perfection of Performance/Fear of Failure – How does fear of failure effect students/learners? How does it affect performance?

Character Actions and Motives: How do characters' actions move story along? What are characters' real motives? Contrasts of character traits drive story forward. Contrast characters of Walther and Beckmesser as different types of men, and Eva and Magdalene as different types of women.

What archetypal characters can you find in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*?

What are Hans Sachs motives?

What is Beckmesser trying to achieve by winning the competition?

What are the motives of the other master singers?

How is Eva controlled? Who is she controlled by? Explore the nuances of the characters in the opera. How do the characters go about getting what they want in the opera?

Examine the relationships in the opera, i.e. between Walther, David, Beckmesser, Hans Sachs and the other Meistersingers. How do they interact? How do they feel about each other?

Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the point of view of different narrators or characters in a text.

Pick your favorite character in the opera and describe him/her. Write a letter from his/her point of view to another character.

Character Development: Analyze the characters in the opera. What motivates their actions? What are their main traits? Do they change over the course of the opera? Do the characters grow beyond their expected roles?

Symbolism/metaphors: What might the singing competition be a metaphor/symbol of?

Who were the ones singing in the competition? Why is it exclusive?

Explore the symbolism of Nature throughout the opera – What do the teachers represent? Who are do the singers represent in nature?

What were Wagner's connections to nature?

Popular appeal vs. elite

Raw talent vs. refined talent

Why is Beckmesser rejected and not invited back in? What does that mean?

Archetypes: Characters such as the noble Knight, the naïve beauty, and the wise mentor.

Explore Walter and Eva's role – how are they the typical hero and damsel?

Explore each character's archetype.

Alliteration: Recognize the similarities of sounds and rhythmic patterns in the libretto.

Figurative Language: Simile, Metaphor, Hyperbole, Personification, Allegory:

Language style and music reflects emotion of characters, and instrumental sounds or musical phrases can be used symbolize character.

WRITING STRATEGIES

Analysis and Interpretation:

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg production materials: artist biographies, program and program notes, synopsis, expository writing, critiques/reviews, etc.

What other themes can you identify in the opera?

Why a singing competition and not an art competition?

What is the role of Hans Sachs in the opera?

Why do things revolve around Hans Sachs?

What other sectors of practice might the *Meistersingers* be compared to?

Can you identify the moral issues in the opera?

What does it mean to create a light work during a dark time?

Censorship - Should the life and values of a composer prohibit the sharing of a work of art?

Does an opera company have a responsibility to address the moral compass of the composer?

How much do you really know about an artist and does it matter?

What is the value of the work of art that doesn't reflect the values of your time?

Explore the issue of Nostalgia – how is it represented in the opera? How did it play in the life of Wagner?

Persuasive Writing:

Write a compelling argument to stage/present *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* – or not.

Writing exercise in which feelings are expressed like those in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg's* arias.

Write a passage expressing several characters' inner thoughts at the same time.

Examine how other writers have been influenced by *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Letter writing, copywriting: advertising, fundraising, press release.

Persuasive writing: create posters, advertisements for one of the characters.

Write persuasive letters from Eva to Walther, etc.

Keep journals from the point of view of the characters during the events of the opera. A different character writes every day.

Research different source material for the *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg story*; how do they differ? What do they share in common?

Write dialogue for two of the characters in the opera. Each character only says one line, but uses different inflections each time he/she says it.

Retell the story from different characters' points of view: Eva or Hans Sachs.

WRITTEN AND ORAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Debates between characters. Deliver persuasive speeches, identify tactics used.

Write a monologue with two scenes based on the alternate points of view held by a single character.

Spelling: Spell the names of the characters in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Facial cues, expressions, gestures can sometimes amplify message being delivered, or can sometimes run contrary to meaning of words (subtext).

Watch different versions of the opera on DVD and write reviews. Read example reviews first.

Examine *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* as a story about a guild of apprentices and masters. Compare to other heroic journey sagas, e.g. from mythology, current novels or comic books. How has the hero's journey evolved?

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Oral Speaking: Connection between the written words and oral interpretation (recitative and sung), the phrasing and musicality of speech.

Act out main events of the story, in tableaux or longer scenes. Improvise. Give small groups different scenes, and then act out in succession.

Write dialogue for two of the characters in the opera. Each character only says one line, but uses different inflections each time he/she says it.

Reflection: What did you see, think, hear and feel? Ex. Verbal & written responses to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Persuasive language: How does David try to explain the rules of songwriting to Walther?

Write two speeches about the same thing; write one to be delivered to a friend, and one to be delivered to a person of authority. How does your language differ?

Conduct a debate between two characters in the opera.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Richard Wagner (composer & librettist): biographies, timelines of work.

ACTIVITIES

Create a character sketch.

Write a letter from one character to another; choose a moment in the story.

Create Reader's Theater of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Interview characters in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*; write a news story based on the interviews.

Write a Dear Abby letter from one of the characters in the opera, and Abby's response.

Using a letter from one character to another in the opera; edit the letter down to a tweet or Facebook post.

Story writing: Adapt existing source material; create story/characters.

Libretto writing: Adapt *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (existing source material) or create a new story/characters.

Create a news report about *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* using HyperStudio.

Write a blog post from the point of view of one character.

Write a prequel for the opera about Beckmesser's or Magdalena's lives.

Create written copy: program, poster design, advertising, biography, etc.

Read and report on feature articles from the opera program for *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Create a board game for the opera, similar to Chutes and Ladders reflecting the characters' ups and downs.

Create your own singing competition, a la *American Idol*. How will you determine who will be The Meistersinger?