



San Francisco Opera's Charest's *THE TRIPLETS OF BELLEVILLE*

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. **Triplets = T-r-i-p-l-e-t-s.**

Letter/Sound Association: Name the letters and the beginning and ending sound in a word. **B-run-o**

Match and list words with the same beginning or ending sounds. Ex. **Bicycle** and **Bruno** have the same beginning letter "b" and sound /b/; but end with different letters and ending sounds. Additional example: **animation**, **improvisation**.

Syllables: Count the syllables in a word. Ex.: Champ-i-on

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, toprano, koprano.**

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: *The Triplets of Belleville* script.

Examine the different names in the story; what would you name your characters or places?

Find words in *The Triplets of Belleville* that are unfamiliar and find definitions and roots.

Define words in the story that are unfamiliar: *rendez-vous*, *voiture-balais* (broom wagon), *Col de femur* *Tripes du jour* (on a sign referring to a pig on a bicycle in the shop window)

Concepts of Print: Sentence structure, punctuation, directionality.

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

Vocabulary Lists: Ex. *The Triplets of Belleville*, Opera glossary, Music and Composition terms

Opera vocabulary: soprano, mezzo-soprano, bass, trouser role.

Analyze the language in *The Triplets of Belleville*. Are there any particular expressions the French dialect uses that are different from our common American usage?

Dialects: Where might we hear dialects in everyday life? What are some expressions that are specific to certain dialects?

Find analogies in *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Metaphors, such as the train, the umbrella, shoes, bicycles and machines.

READING COMPREHENSION:

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

What made this happen?

Creative writing:

The sequencing of events, climax, and resolution.

What is the voice of the film? Who is telling the story?

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

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

Read: *The Triplets of Belleville* has very little dialogue. Watch the film and write down all of the spoken words.

Read articles, reviews, biographies, etc.

Examine poetry inspired by bicycles.

Reflect on your viewing of the cine-concert by sharing your thoughts and questions with others.

CREATIVE WRITING

Set the story in a different time and place. Create your own dialogue.

Reinterpret the story by creating a new version using your own characters, time period and setting. Ex: Champion is a young girl living with her grandmother Souza and her cat Bruno.

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 about what you would do in Champion's place, or in Bruno's place.

Write about what would happen to the characters if the story continued.

GENRES

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

Parody, Satire, Drama

Stereotypes - grotesque rendering of characters. Absurd, possibly offensive imagery. Are there limits to what can be shown without offending the audience? How does the film maker make mischief without harm?

Silent film & Animated comedy – How does the lack of dialogue effect how the characters are portrayed visually? Exaggeration of characteristics and physical action – With drawing and the big screen, the artist can expand what is real by making things larger than life.

Surrealist, Dada – Surrealism originated in the late 1910s and early '20s as a literary movement that experimented with a new mode of expression called automatic writing. How does the animation call upon this visual experimentation. Rendering absurdity.

Retro-futuristic, Steampunk

Similarities to Film Noire

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.

Play segments of the score; students journal after listening the segments.

Compare the format of the concert to the format of the film.

Students respond to a letter from Madame Souza or Champion asking them for advice.

Chart out the elements of the plot.

Examine the relationships in the film, i.e. between Champion and Bruno, between Champion and Souza. How do they interact? How do they feel about each other?

Examine one scene from the film; how does each character see and respond to the scene differently? Write about the scene from the perspectives of the different characters?

What are some emotions or feelings the characters exhibit in the story? How do you feel about how they act upon or express their emotions?

List some transformations or changes that the characters experience in the story. How do they respond to the changes? How do their characters change?

How are the characters of Champion and Madame Souza similar? How are they different?

How is the passage of time shown, along with the transformation taking place in the characters?

Analyze the characters in the animated film. What motivates their actions? What are their main traits? Do they change over the course of the film?

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

Examine the use of subtext in the film. With so little dialogue, how does body language reveal the characters thoughts?

Examine character development: do the characters grow beyond their expected roles?

Explore the use of exaggeration in depicting the characters in the film.

How do the characters go about getting what they want in the film?

Realm of emotions: how do the characters express their emotions throughout the story? Do they express them appropriately?

Themes:

Loneliness and Friendship, Belonging,

Overcoming Adversity, Love and Loss

Hope and Transformation

Imagination – which elements are overly imaginary, which elements are overly realistic. Dreams – We only see Bruno’s dreams. Why?

Reality vs. expectations – how quickly do we adapt to expectations?

Urbanization/industrialization – Violence and waste – comedic expression vs. the depressing reality

The Absurdity of Life – What makes something funny? Fine line between funny and sad? What things are funny and what aren’t? Politically correct?

Character Actions and Motives: How do characters’ actions move story along? What are characters’ real motives? Contrasts of character traits drive the story forward.

Examine the characters of Champion, Bruno and Madame Souza as different types of people, in contrast with stock characters such as the Mafia henchmen.

Nature vs. Nurture – Grandmother and Champion

How do the motivations of grandmother and Champion differ? How are they the same?

Is this what Champion wants? Or is this mostly what Grandmother wants for him? Do you feel like you are ever pushed too hard to achieve?

What does Madame Souza give up to help Champion, both in the race and in rescuing him?

How do different characters resemble different animals or objects? Why? What are the traditional interpretations and traits of the different animals? Horse, dog, mouse, frog, etc.

The Waiter – what does his body posture tell us about what he thinks about the people he’s serving?

The Mafia – What does the Mafia want? How do their operations affect the citizens of Belleville?

Symbolism/metaphors: Trains, in reality and in dreams,

Bicycles in the Tour de France, Ships crossing the Ocean.

Horse: Champion’s resemblance to a horse – race horse/work horse

The singing Triplets – Back in the day and aged.

Food - frogs, wine, overweight citizens



Archetypes: The melancholy child, the determined old lady, the loyal dog, the bad guy and his henchmen.
The American vs. The French.

Character Development: Examine character development: do the characters grow beyond their expected roles?

Champion – The development of his appearance and character from childhood to adulthood. Why is he named Champion? He never has a voice.

Bruno and the train – The first time he sees the toy train it runs over his tail, how does his relationship to trains evolve? How do trains relate to his relationship with Champion?

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

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

Poetry, fairy tale, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, program, program article, synopsis, etc.

Analysis and Interpretation:

The Triplets of Belleville production materials: artist biographies, program and program notes, synopsis, expository writing, critiques/reviews, etc.

The images of the characters are very large with exaggerated features. What do you see reflected of yourself in the characters? What are the commonalities? What are the most important traits for each character based on their exaggerated elements?

How are Champion and his grandmother Madame Souza similar? How are they different?

Compare the emotions from this movie to emotions from other contemporary cartoons, such as *Inside Out*.

What do you think is the point of the introduction cartoon? Where is it set? Why were these individuals depicted by Chomet?

Why do characters get eaten? A visual gag or is there a deeper meaning? Focus on eating in the film and obesity.

Compare and contrast the real Tour de France to what we see in the movie. Use of close-ups and falling off the side of the road.

Persuasive Writing:

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.

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

Writing exercise in which feelings are expressed like those in *The Triplets of Belleville*’s arias.

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

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

Rewrite libretto using today as a setting. Use contemporary characters: Who would be Champion today? Madam Souza? The Triplets?

Create a storyboard of *The Triplets of Belleville* produced in the style of soap opera.

Write journal entries for each character: how does each character see Belleville?

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

Write a letter from one character to another.

In the film, Bruno dreams. Can you write words for Bruno to speak?

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

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

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?

Write a different ending for the film.

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

WRITTEN AND ORAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Spelling: Spell the names of the characters in *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Watch French and English versions of the film on DVD and write reviews. Read example reviews first.

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.

Learn to sing the Triplet's song, *Belleville Rendez-vous*, in French.

How do the elderly and the young speak differently in the story? What does that mean for their status? Can you speak like the different characters in the story?

Reflection: What did you see, think, hear and feel? Ex. Verbal & written responses to *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Persuasive language:

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 film.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sylvain Chomet, Director, and Benoît Charest, Composer: Biographies, timeline of works.

ACTIVITIES

Create a character sketch.

Write a letter from one character to another, choosing a moment in the story to write about. Use the “Friendly Letter” format.

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

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

Write a journal entry from Madame Souza or Bruno’s point of view searching for Champion.

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

Libretto writing: Adapt *The Triplets of Belleville* (existing source material) or create a new story/characters.

Create Reader’s Theater of *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Interview characters in *The Triplets of Belleville*; write a news story based on the interviews.

Create a news report about *The Triplets of Belleville* using HyperStudio.

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

Write a prequel for the opera about The Triplets’ and/or Madame Souza’s life.

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

Read and report on feature articles from the opera program for *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Play “Hot Seat”: one student acts as one of the characters from the story, and the other students ask him or her questions based on that character.

Create a board game for the film, focusing on the opening scene, The Tour de France or Belleville.