



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



SAN FRANCISCO OPERA EDUCATION

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.



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MATHEMATICS

ATTRIBUTES

Comparisons in The Triplets of Belleville

Sorting and Classifying: What belongs, what does not belong, and why.

MEASUREMENT

The Triplets of Belleville's Use of Standard Units of Measurement in Story & Set Design.

2D & 3D Dimensions: Area, Perimeter, Volume, Scale, Proportion, Ratio.

- Create a set for *The Triplets of Belleville* to scale.

Weight: Physical, Metaphorical, Balance.

Time: Passage of time (real & theatrical time), times of day (morning, afternoon and night; yesterday, today, tomorrow; time of everyday events such as dinner & bed time), estimation, reading time, age of characters.

Create timelines for the Triplet's life in Belleville, what's happening in other places at the same time.

Come up with measurements for Belleville; area and perimeter.

Come up with measurements for The Triplet's home; draw a floor plan.

Estimate how many people are in large crowd scenes.

Count the number of people who need to be paid when putting on a cine-concert; use cast and company listings in the program to calculate.

Create a budget for a production of the cine-concert. Students are responsible for accomplishing production and staying within budget.

Frames per second – A foot of film is equal to 16 frames. Most animation for film runs at 24 frames per second.

in order to create animation you have to do a lot of drawing and rendering. In the earlier days of Disney Feature Animation, it was not uncommon for the animators to produce 3.75 feet of animation per day. That comes out to about 14 seconds of animation a week.

Now much of animation is computer rendered. *The Triplets of Belleville* uses both hand drawn and computer rendered animation. Differences between hand-drawn animation and computer animation in time and money.

GEOMETRY

As found The Triplets of Belleville's character, costume & set design.

Identification of Shapes, Repetition & Pattern, Rhythm & Symmetry.

Planes (Square, Rectangle, Triangle, Circle) & 3D (Cube, Pyramid, Sphere).

Positive & Negative Space, Interior & Exterior Space.

Build a scale model of a set for *The Triplets of Belleville*. What materials and what quantities of them would you need to build it?

Create analogies between polygons and different ensembles in the film (i.e. a trio is a triangle, a quintet is a pentagon).

NUMBER SENSE

Counting using the production elements and music of The Triplets of Belleville.

Formulas & calculations: Addition, subtraction, multiplication, division.

More, less, or same as.

Concept of zero (absences, disappearances. Ex. rests/silence in music.

Ordering & sequencing.

Recognizing and creating numerical patterns. Ex. beats, ABA pattern in music.

Survey taking: tallying and graphing.

Predictions.

Calculate the daily milage in the Tour de France

Make up story problems based on one hundred.

Grandma rents the small boat for 1 franc, what was franc equivalent to euro when the euro was created? Estimate what it would cost today if the film were set in 1963, given inflation and the conversion to the euro. Then convert to a dollar.

STATISTICS

Experiment with different kinds of charts or use computer programs to explore different styles of data visualization based on information from *The Triplets of Belleville*.

ACTIVITIES

Design and play a board game based on the film.

Design a bicycle race and create a budget for promoting and running the competition.

How much money would it cost to build a theatre like the hall that the Triplets sing in? Build a scale model. Take proportions into account.

Build a scale model of the Tour de France. Specify your materials and estimate the quantities and costs of the materials that you will use to build your model.

Create costume patterns for *The Triplets of Belleville*. Use yourself as a size model and design the patterns to fit you.



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SCIENCE

The principals of science used in The Triplets of Belleville.

THE FIVE SENSES:

Sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.

What are senses involved in experiencing opera?

PARTS OF THE BODY:

Identification of body parts important to performing. Ex. Diaphragm, larynx, throat, mouth, etc.

Identification of body parts associated with hearing music, how ears work.

Identification of body parts associated with viewing a film, how eyes work.

Examine the science of men and women and psychological and physical differences.

Learn about the anatomy of the legs – bones and muscles (human, dogs, frogs).

Madame Souza can see that Champion is sad and she seeks a remedy. Both find their purpose when Champion takes to bicycling. How might physical conditioning lead to achievement and personal satisfaction?

How does the body react in times of stress like those that occur in the film?

THE ELEMENTS

Fire, Water, Earth, Metal, Air, Wood.

What kinds of weather is depicted in the film? How does weather impact the lives of the characters?

The impact of weather on the Tour de France. On safe passage across the ocean.

LIFE SCIENCE

Study examples of aging in the film. How does time impact how the Triplets move and sing? Compare how Bruno, Champion and Madame Souza age over the course of the film.

Survey and describe the legs of characters in the film. Ex: Champion's calves are oversized due to bicycling. He has leg cramps. Can they be prevented?

Do animals dream? Explore how neuroscience is monitoring the brain activity of animals while they are awake and when they sleep.

PHYSICS

Sound: Voice, Instruments, Acoustics, Amplification, Recording.

Speed – Compare the speed of trains and the speed of frames per second in film versus the human pace.

TED-Ed - Animation basics: The art of timing and spacing

Expert timing and spacing is what separates a slide show from a truly amazing animation. TED-Ed demonstrates, by manipulating various bouncing balls, how the smallest adjustments from frame to frame can make all the difference.

<http://ed.ted.com/lessons/animation-basics-the-art-of-timing-and-spacing-ted-ed>

ACTIVITIES

Explore the characters' psychological motivations.

The physiology and psychology of exercising: what goes on when we ride a bicycle or enter in a difficult race?
Create your own training regimen.

List references to natural vs. urban environments in *The Triplets of Belleville*. Record the sounds that you find in natural and urban environments.

Explore the sound qualities of ordinary everyday objects.

Listen to and/or record sounds. Try to imitate them with instruments or your voice.

Create your own instrument from everyday objects.

If you were hired as an architect to retrofit the Belleville Theatre, how would you make the building more energy efficient?

Animate a bouncing ball.



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SOCIAL STUDIES

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

Self-Identity.

Family: Immediate & Extended. Caring brother and sister relationship.

Roles of family members in your life and the choices you make.

Time: Past, Present, Future.

Place: Neighborhood, City, State, Continent, World, Universe.

Value of personal mementos and found objects.

CIVICS

Social Hierarchy: Class, Status. Gender Roles

What are the relationships between the heroes and villains in this story?

How are the members of the Mafia depicted by the illustrators?

How is illegal activity - corruption, gambling - dealt with in Belleville? Discuss the economic empire of the Mafia's impact on the social structure of Belleville.

What was Prohibition? Look for references in *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Reusing and recycling objects out of necessity vs. over-consumption and needless waste by the rich.

GEOGRAPHY

The Triplets of Belleville's setting: Where is Belleville? What evidence do you have to support your answer?

Examine where you live; how does your neighborhood influence your lifestyle or personality?

Research the places where director Sylvain Chomet and composer Benoît Charest were born. Where in the world have they worked?

Map the route of the 1964 Tour de France.

Map the distance that Madame Souza travels on her ocean journey to rescue Champion.

Research ocean travel by ship, routes and the time that it took to for passengers to travel by ship from Paris to New York or Paris to Montreal.

Explore the surrounds of the town of Belleville, Paris today via Google Maps. How does this place compare with the Triplet's Belleville, an imagined city that is a mash up of Paris, New York and Montreal. Research these cities. Create a map showing places important to the history of animated film, from the Lumiere Brothers to Hollywood. Review the cast list for this production of the cine-concert; where do the musicians come from?

HISTORY

During what time period is *The Triplets of Belleville* set? What hints are provided in the film?

Create a timeline of the story – which decades do the different periods of the film happen and what evidence do you have to support your answers?

How old are the characters during the different parts of the film?

Research the history of standard time – the need for synchronization of clocks with travel by railroad.

The impact of Radio, Television and Film on global communication on the speed and spread of communication. American culture being transmitted to other cultures via records, television and film.

Capitalism/urbanization and progress - more airplanes, more electricity, train comes right by house – How does the film portraying these themes? Positively or negatively?

Charles de Gaulle is on TV talking about Tour de France. Who is de Gaulle? What was his role in France's history?

What is the Tour de France? What is its history and traditions? Why did the Tour de France begin in 1903?

What was happening in the US and Paris when the film was set? What were the social structures at the time?

Examine city living in New York City, Paris and Montreal. What is similar about life in the three cities? Different?

What was the relationship between US and France at the time of the story? What about now?

Examine the use of bicycles as a mode of transportation throughout time.

Example of consumerism: all the vehicles have branding as they ride with bikers. Make a list of the corporate sponsorship and advertising in your surrounds.

How is historical information reflected in the viewpoints of the characters?

History of animation – Compare and contrast different styles of animation. European vs Japanese vs American.

Chomet cites Betty Boop as an inspiration to his animation work. Who was Betty Boop and what is the story and history of her character?

History of visual effects and sound effects in film.

Research the history of Gypsy Jazz and the influence of guitarist Django Reinhardt.

Learn about the career of Josephine Baker and the sensation created by her topless “danse sauvage” at the Folies Bergère. Jazz was popular in France in the 1920's and black entertainers received a warm welcome in Paris, in contrast to discriminatory treatment in the United States.

The Introduction – explore the movie's references to film history. What was popular at the time – what falls out of style, and what remains? The Triplets are placed with familiar entertainers and characters from the US and France. Where do you think the film's opening number “Belleville Rendez Vous” is taking place?

How might the film be interpreted differently by the French vs, the Americans audiences?

HISTORY OF OPERA

- How Opera began, history of San Francisco Opera, history of the Adler Fellow Program.
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*Examples: Applying the History-Social Science Standards to Charest's *THE TRIPLETS OF BELLEVILLE*

GRADE 2

History/Social Sciences

2.5 Students understand the importance of individual action and character
Lesson: explain how Madame Souza's actions affected Champion's life

GRADE 3

History/Social Sciences

1.2 Uses maps and globes to identify locations and physical environments
Lesson: Students are asked to find Paris, New York City, and Montreal on a map.(continued)

GRADE 10

History/Social Sciences: Industrial Revolution

10.3 Students analyze the effects of the Industrial Revolution in England, France, Germany, Japan, and the United States.
Lesson: In *The Triplets of Belleville*, the mafia boss drugs the kidnapped cyclists and employs a mechanic to build a stationary cycling machine for the racers to race on — to create their own mini Tour de France for gambling. One of the racers falls off his bicycle from exhaustion, at which point the bookmaker shoots him as one would an injured horse. Think about *The Industrial Revolution* and some of its effects on modern society. Can you draw a parallel to the corrupted use of the cycling machine?

ACTIVITIES

Assign different topics from the time of the opera to small groups, and have them present to each other: money and trade, social structures, military, the arts, etc.

Create a timeline of the story of *The Triplets of Belleville*; include events that were happening elsewhere in the world at the same time.

Create a Venn diagram: What was true about the time of *The Triplets of Belleville*, what is true about our time, and what overlaps?

Research development of *The Triplets of Belleville*. What is the process of making an animated film?

Research reception of *The Triplets of Belleville*, the film, and the cine-concert.

What kind of social background or class did Champion come from? How does his class affect how the other characters treat him? Examine his relationship with Madame Souza.

What are the class relationships in your school? How do you address different people in the hierarchy based on their relationship to you?

How does clothing indicate what culture, status you belong to?

What can schools and community organizations do to contest stereotypes and the status quo?



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PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Chart Champion's growth in *The Triplets of Belleville* – How does outdoor activity (exercise, nature, sunlight, relating to animals) impact his physical and emotional well-being? (positive thoughts, energy eating well, growing, color in the face)

What physical attributes stay the same as Champion ages? What will you look like when you get older?

How do you move differently when you're young and old?

What dances could you do to music from the different scenes?

What kinds of dances would you use to represent different characters?

MOVEMENT

Walking, dancing, jumping, balancing, leaping, lifting, etc. Ex. Move your body in different ways using the example of each character.

Act out how *The Triplets* move. What are the differences between movement in real life and animation?

Choreograph dances for selected scenes in *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Practice dancing to music from the film. What music selections lend themselves to dancing?

Research dances of the time; how were dances different for different classes?

Practice some of the physical activities mentioned in the story: skipping rope, fishing, bicycling.

PHYSICALITY OF PERFORMING

Endurance & strength, posture, breathing techniques.

Which characters in *The Triplets of Belleville* seem to be physically healthy?

Weight classes in sports – Champion has to maintain his weight.

TEAM-BUILDING

Cooperative games encourage collaboration and build trust.

Play number games, where students have to gather in groups of two, three, and so on. The object is to get together as quickly as possible. They can also be instructed to create pictures with their bodies, or move in unison.

Construct relays around relationships between characters.

Partner dancing, changing partners, partnering exercises, mirroring activities.

MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH:

Happiness – which characters do you see as being happy?

Motivation/dedication – The discipline of practice

Body image – how media influences what we want to see? Animation uses simple shapes to create characters that are distinct. How has animation influenced our ideas of physical beauty? The body shapes used in *The Triplets of Belleville* are quite different from those of animated superheroes and Disney princesses. How do artists influence how we interpret beauty and character?

Grandmother's physical disability (one of her legs is longer than the other) – it doesn't stop her from doing anything. How do adaptations, orthopedics and prosthetics help people with disabilities?

Obesity – negative health effects? Society's view of obesity? Some of the people in the film are obese. What is obesity and how does it affect your health? What are the social implications of being obese in America today?

Champion needs to maintain/gain weight. How do we know that? (he eats sitting on a scale; when he hits the target he stops eating) Why? What are the dangers of being underweight?

Moderation – Is anything done in moderation in *The Triplets of Belleville*? How might the grotesque be received differently in the real world vs. the animated world?

What is sea sickness? What are the symptoms and treatment?

What are the signs of addiction? – Smoking, Drinking, Gambling

Vices: The mafia men are gambling on the bikers. What is gambling? What are its negative consequences? The men are smoking and the room is full of smoke. What are the health effects of smoking? Of second hand smoke?



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HEALTH EDUCATION

The unifying ideas of health literacy are as follows:

- Acceptance of personal responsibility for lifelong health
- Respect for and promotion of the health of others
- An understanding of the process of growth and development
- Informed use of health-related information, products, and services

MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH

Taking care of your body. Ex. What do performers have to do to prepare their body for performing?

Dealing with emotions, stress. Ex. Explore from the point of view of each character.

Family issues.

Gender roles & body image.

Conflict resolution. Ex. How do the characters resolve their problems with each other? How don't they?

Champion is a very sad child, hinted as because his parents aren't present in his life. Madame Souza does her best to cheer him up and get him motivated. What does she try? (piano, puppy) What is ultimately successful (biking)? Why might that be? (We see a picture of his parents with bicycles on Champion's bedroom wall)

What do Madame Souza efforts to instill motivation in Champion say about her? What would you do to help him?

How does Madame Souza act as Champion's coach/personal trainer? (She hits his grotesque legs with umbrella; she vacuums his legs; she beats his legs with egg beater; she massages his back with lawn mower; she uses cleaning brushes to scrub back.)

How does Champion entertain himself? Bruno? Madame Souza? The Triplets?

What skills does Champion practice? How does Champion change over the course of the film?

What are the health benefits of biking? What are the dangers?

Are characters impacted by body image issues in the opera? Who and how? Grandma has a club foot – what is that? Does it impact her mobility? How is it treated today in America?



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

Curriculum Connections

California Content Standards
Kindergarten through Grade 12

CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Assign jobs from the opera to students in the classroom. What would be the most coveted jobs? What would be the most important jobs?

Examine the jobs that were available in New York City and Paris and Quebec during the time of the story. Compare those jobs with the employment opportunities available in those countries today.

What kind of jobs are depicted in the animated film, *The Triplets of Belleville*?

What jobs would people have had at the time of the story? What would their education have been?

How are jobs different now from then?

Explore the careers opportunities in the animation and film industry.

How do you get a career as an animator? What experiences do you need?

Critiques and portfolio reviews are part of being an artist. Learn how to give positive feedback.

Try using an online program, such as Pixar in a Box, to learn about character design and animation basics.

How would people do work differently in *The Triplets of Belleville's* vs. Charest's time? How would they be limited by available technology? What kinds of skills did they need that they don't need today?

Who are the professionals outside the film world who make the movie happen? Police, fire, caterers, etc.

What kind of personnel are required to run a race like the Tour de France?

Use Google Sketch-up to create a design of a home for The Triplets.

Use CAD to design a bike for Champion.

Find statistics and facts about the bicycle industry. <http://www.statista.com/topics/1448/bicycle-industry-in-the-us/>

Assign jobs for the production of the concert to different students; each has to present a concept for their part of the design. Create an evaluation rubric for their job performance, including creativity, presentation skills, budget management.

Jobs at the Opera. Explore the education, backgrounds and training of people who work at the Opera.

Organizational chart of San Francisco Opera.



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

Curriculum Connections California Content Standards Kindergarten through Grade 12

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

MUSIC

STORYTELLING & MUSIC: WHAT IS AN OPERA?

Character and plot development through musical themes. What is the difference between major and minor keys and how do changes between keys help tell the story?

How does orchestral music enhance the action and emotions on screen? How does the orchestra become another character?

What kinds of musical groupings are there within this story?

How does music associated with a particular character enhance their personality?

How does orchestral music communicate a character's state of mind? Set a mood?

How do instruments represent characters? Identify repetition and variation of themes.

How does the music suggest the setting? (i.e. what do we know about time and place based on the music?)

Key plot points: The composer determines the placement of sounds to accompany the visual images to heighten emotion in the story.

Source material for Opera: Novels (Puccini's *La Bohème*, Tan & Wallace's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*); Films (*The Fly*), Real-life events (Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, Adams' *Nixon in China*); Related genres – Musical Theater (*Sweeney Todd*, *Rent*), Rock Opera (*Tommy*), popular song versions of opera.

VOCABULARY

Musical Structure: Solos, duets, trios, choral numbers.

Composition: Arias, recitative, overture, incidental music. Identify characters expressing themselves through sound.

Musical Instructions: Tempo, legato; pianissimo; crescendo, etc.

Voice ranges: Soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, bass-baritone, countertenor, bass.

"Jazz Manouche" or Gypsy Jazz, Gypsy Swing, Le Jazz Hot

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

History of San Francisco Opera, the Adler Fellows program.

Benoît Charest: Biography, timeline of works, signature sound within genres. Listen to some of his other works.

Sylvain Chomet: Biography, timeline of works, signature sound within genres. Listen to some of his other works.

Listen to the film soundtrack. Compare the US version & French version.

Download the sheet music for Bach à la Jazz, written by Charest and Herkowitz for *Les Triplettes de Belleville* solo piano composition inspired by Bach's *Prelude No. 2 in C minor* from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

<http://www.mattherskowitz.com/pdf/Bach-a-la-Jazz.pdf>

Explore musical references found in *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Bach *Prelude in C minor* from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

Grandma and Champion watch Glenn Gould play the piece on the television.

https://youtu.be/_3MVZfLReo0

"Kyrie" - "Kyrie, eleison" (or "Lord, have mercy") Prayer of the Faithful- Mozart: Great mass in C minor, KV 427 I conducted by John Eliot Gardiner <https://youtu.be/TGCUPyrk4Eg>

Research other works of artists who influenced the sound of the 1920s and 1930s.

Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five <https://archive.org/details/LouisArmstrong-St.LouisBlues1929-1930>

Josephine Baker <https://archive.org/details/JosephineBaker-11-20>

Sidney Bechet <https://archive.org/details/SidneyBechet-TheCollection>

Fred Astaire <https://archive.org/details/TopHat1935AndTheGayDivorcee1934>

Duke Ellington Orchestra <https://archive.org/details/DukeEllingtonAndHisOrchestra1924-1927>

King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band <https://archive.org/details/KingOliversCreoleJazzBand-01-10>

Edith Piaf <https://archive.org/details/EdithPiaf268Songs>

Django Reinhardt and Gypsy Jazz <https://archive.org/details/DjangoReinhardt-TheCollectionI>

Charles Trenet <https://archive.org/details/CharlesTrenetBoum>

What are found objects in the musical sense?

What composers have used and still use found objects?

What found objects are used in *The Triplets of Belleville*? (Bicycle wheel, newspaper, vacuum cleaner, refrigerator shelf) Why won't the Triplettes let Madame Souza touch these objects in their apartment?

How does Grandma tune the bicycle spoke? With a tuning fork of course!

ACTIVITIES

Learn and memorize songs from *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Create your own music inspired by *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Research and perform music of the time, like that which The Triplets would have been singing in 1920s-1930.

Write themes, motifs for each character; start by writing themes for things in students' everyday lives.

Create mood music to go along with certain passages of the animated film.

Play the introductory passages for each character for students before they know the story of the film; have students respond to each piece of music, then see how it matches up to the story.

Create and perform songs for the characters/events of *The Triplets of Belleville*, using instruments and voices.

Graph out characters in the opera; while watching a clip of the film, fill out chart describing look, movement, voice of each character. How does the director tell the story through these details?

After seeing the cine-concert, write a critique of the music. Focus on how the music communicates the mood, the characters, etc.

Listen for the different instruments in the orchestra. How big is an orchestra usually?

Listen for the different styles of music in the opera; do different characters sing in different styles?

How is consonance and dissonance used in the opera?

Listen to clips of the musical score for the film; what moods do they set?

Listen for the way that the music is used to describe nature vs. the city.

Watch the finale of the film. How does the music enhance this film's climax and resolution?



VISUAL ARTS

How are line, color, shape, and texture used in costumes and sets of *The Triplets of Belleville*?

LINE

Use of line qualities: soft or hard, wavy or angular, silly spirals.

COLOR

Symbolism of color; color associated with particular characters. (The warm color of sepia is used when Champion is a young boy)

The emotion of color. Ex. red=passionate, blue=calm, yellow=cheerful.

Personal associations with color.

Revealing character traits through the use of color—how do the characters' costumes, including fabrics and colors, reflect their status?

Chomet uses color and light to great effect in creating moods of various scenes. What are some examples?

What is a color script? How is colors used in different scenes in the film?

How do the lighting colors onstage match what is going on in the music?

Symmetry/contrast in character pairings.

SHAPE

The use of shape in character design.

Positive & Negative Space—the stage is a frame.

What is abstraction?

TEXTURE

Texture: Material use in sets and costumes.

Visual Texture: Pattern and repetition in sets and costumes. How is texture used to convey status?

SPACE

Set design: From 2D plans to 3D construction.

LIGHT

The use of lighting to establish mood and setting.

Examine contrast of light and dark; use of lighting.

The use of lighting to establish mood and setting.

How does time of day affect the lighting and the mood on the stage?

How are shadows and shading used in the opera to convey meaning?

PRODUCTION DESIGN

Listen to the music and watch the film prior to attending the cine-concert. Choose design elements based on the music and text.

Design paper dolls of characters. Dress them for different eras.

Design a production: dioramas, scale models, backdrops, props, costumes.

Design character make-up, costume, sets and props for classroom operas.

Study use of lighting in production design.

Study clothing of the time and setting for *The Triplets of Belleville*. What materials would have been used?

ACTIVITIES

Puppetry: Create your own version of *The Triplets of Belleville* using puppets (paper bags, stick puppets, shadow puppets, marionettes, and bunraku).

Draw the characters from *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Free-association drawing to music. Ex. Maurice Sendak's Fantasy Sketches .

Create a flip book animation.

Look at scenes from *The Triplets of Belleville*. Create a 3D model.

Create your own everyday instruments for *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Design your own props for the characters in *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Create dioramas of scenes from *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Design sets and costumes for a production of *The Triplets of Belleville* set in a different time and place of your choosing. Make sure the costumes reflect the characters.

Create costumes for the characters true to the time period; clothes that are suitable for different tasks.

Create paper dolls of the characters, with outfits for different scenes.

Create illustrations and storyboards outlining the plot of *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Explore the history of typefaces; design the title in an appropriate typeface.

Create posters and advertisements for the opera, or for a particular character in of *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Create an automata toy (a mechanical moving sculpture)

RELATED WORKS OF ART

Watch other animated films by Chomet, such as *Old Lady and the Pigeon*, *The Illusionist*, and *Mars et Avril*

Study the work of visual artists who have designed performing arts productions: Gerald Scarfe, David Hockney, Julie Taymor, Marc Chagall, Maurice Sendak, Oskar Kokoschka, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, William Kentridge, Gianni Versace, Bill Viola.

See how bicycles have been depicted in books, art & film by artists such as The Lumiere Brothers, De Sica, Tati and Ai Weiwei.

Learn about Disney's **Twelve Basic Principles of Animation**, a set of principles of animation introduced by the Disney animators Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas in their 1981 book *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_basic_principles_of_animation

- 1) Squash and Stretch
- 2) Anticipation
- 3) Staging
- 4) Straight ahead and Pose to Pose
- 5) Follow Through and Overlapping Action
- 6) Slow-Out and Slow-In
- 7) Arcs
- 8) Secondary Action
- 9) Timing
- 10) Exaggeration
- 11) Solid Drawing
- 12) Appeal

Explore the work of artists who have contributed to the history of the caricature and animation:

George Cruikshank <http://www.clevelandart.org/research/in-the-library/collection-in-focus/satire-and-social-commentary-life-george-cruikshank>

Honoré Daumier <http://www.wikiart.org/en/honore-daumier>

Walt Disney <http://waltdisney.org/>

Albert Dubout <http://heidicon.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/pool/ubsimpl/search/Dubout%20Albert>

Max Fleischer <http://www.fleischerstudios.com/>

Hergé (Georges Rémi) <http://en.tintin.com/>

Al Hirschfeld <http://www.alhirschfeldfoundation.org/>

William Hogarth <http://www.wikiart.org/en/william-hogarth>

Katsushika Hokusai <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/hokusai-manga-the-hokusai-sketchbooks#/>

Francisco Goya <http://www.wikiart.org/en/francisco-goya>

George Grosz <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-grosz-george.htm>

Käthe Kollwitz <http://www.moma.org/collection/artists/3201>

Winsor McCay <http://www.comicstriplibrary.org/>

Thomas Nast <http://cdm16100.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15387coll2>

Jose Guadalupe Posada <http://www.wikiart.org/en/jose-guadalupe-posada>



THEATRE

STAGING

Stage vocabulary: Upstage, downstage, levels, blocking.

Theater Exercises: Tableaux, pantomime, improvisation, vocal projection.

Stage etiquette & audience behavior.

Examine storyline, character development through theater games (similar to writing exercises in ELA connections).

Explore different tones/feelings in monologues vs. dialogues vs. crowd scenes.

Explore soliloquies in theater, movies, etc.

Create entrances and exits for different characters in opera; what would their music be?

How do the performers act when they're singing their thoughts vs. singing to each other?

How do performers move onstage differently than offstage? How do they have to move so that the audience can translate their movements?

Stage and practice the movement required for crowd scenes. How do individuals act like individuals in a crowd scene?

Play "status" games. How do people act differently toward you based on your class or job status? How do the performers act when they're singing their thoughts vs. singing to each other?

How does the film mark the passage of time? How does the audience know time has passed between acts?

How would you tell the story of *The Triplets of Belleville* in a different theatrical style, like slapstick comedy?

Opera Production Team: Director, stage manager, choreographer, designer, diction coach, choreographer, lighting, supernumeraries, etc.

In-House Personnel: Marketing, accounting, ticket takers, ushers etc.

ACTIVITIES

Act out scenes about the themes from the film: loneliness, obsession, friendship and loyalty, etc.

Create movement and gestures to react to particular lines of the script and to particular musical moments.

Practice moving as a large ensemble.

Create props used by the characters – Madame Souza's shoe or Champion's bicycle.

If you were voicing Champion or Bruno, how would they sound when we first meet them?

How would you have to walk if you were playing Madame Souza?

"Hot seat" Activity: children ask questions of someone in the "hot seat" as if that someone were a character in the opera

RELATED WORKS OF ART

Research additional theatrical works related to *The Triplets of Belleville*, such as *Old Lady and the Pigeons*, or *Swing Papa Swing*



DANCE

Dance and Creative Movement in Stage-Blocking. Ex: The Triplets Dance “Rendez-Vous Belleville.”

Research dances of the time period. How are they similar/different to the dances of today.

How is dance incorporated into the opera, into the music of the opera?

How is age and gender communicated through the way performers move in a dance?

What are the roles of choreographers, dance captains and dancers?

Dancing inside v. Dancing outside: who dances where, and how is that reflective of their class?

ACTIVITIES

Character Dances: Mirror dancing—partners and symmetry.

Match movement with vocabulary. Ex. glide, slither, leap, tremble.

Interpret emotions through dance. Ex. Joy, fear.

Create movements for characters’ emotions. Show how characters’ movements change when they’re in different situations.

Try your hand at Body Music. Body Music around the world with Keith Terry <https://youtu.be/gKzko9z8jU8>

The Triplet’s dance was inspired by the “gumboot,” handclapping and thigh-slapping step. Learn more about the historical origins of the dance. <http://worldartswest.org/plm/guide/printablepages/gumboot.pdf>

Choose a dance style that best represents each character. Ex. The Triplets are individually known as Rose, Blanche and Violette. Choreograph a new routine for The Triplets in which the characters relate to each other.

Choreograph a dance for the Triplets on stage inside theatre, and one for the audience outside in the street. How are they different?

Create dances to your favorite parts of the animated film.

Interpreting the action through dance— improv as music.

Work with media arts students to create a dance with projected backgrounds.

RELATED WORKS OF ART

Research famous dances of the 1920s and 1930s, such as Josephine Baker’s infamous banana dance https://youtu.be/W_uETOtEQYQ and Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers doing The Continental. <https://archive.org/details/SwingTimeTrailer>

Research the use of dance in animated films.

The show, STOMP, inspired Benoît Charest’s musical compositions using ordinary objects for *The Triplets of Belleville*. Create your own STOMP-inspired dance. <https://youtu.be/urfc3QLifjc>



SAN FRANCISCO OPERA EDUCATION

MEDIA ARTS

Watch DVDs of *The Triplets of Belleville*. Watch different productions and compare.

View clips of *The Triplets of Belleville* found on the Internet.

Learn about projectors and projections, and various ways to project images with light. Create media that can be projected. Explore how images can influence mood.

Explore ways to explore negative space through media.

Research archival photographs of New York City and Paris during the early 1900's when *The Triplets of Belleville* was written and compare/contrast with images from those countries using today's Flickr & Instagram photostreams.

Create media pieces inspired by *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Research how innovations in technology have influenced the development of Opera: Acoustics and Lighting, Audio Recording, Film and Video, the development of Supertitles, Internet.

Learn about technology currently used by SF Opera: technology used in staging, SFO's Media Suite, podcasts, cinemacasts, simulcasts, opera vision, etc.

Learn about experiments in future technology use involving opera, such as the development of Personal Opera @ MIT Media Lab, *Death and the Powers*.

Use television, films, web content to teach media literacy.

How is opera advertised? Research San Francisco Opera's advertising and media efforts.

Opera & Popular Culture: Cartoons (Bugs Bunny in *What's Opera, Doc?*, *The Rabbit of Seville*); Television (*Sesame Street*); Movies (*Pretty Woman*); Commercials (Nike's 1993 ad *Charles Barkley of Seville*); Event themes (*Nessun Dorma - 1994 World Cup*).

Opera Imaginaire, a collection of animated interpretations of twelve of opera's most popular arias, features Mozart's "Voi Che Sapete" from *The Marriage of Figaro*, as animated by artist Susanne Danco

RELATED WORKS OF ART

Films & DVD of *The Triplets of Belleville* and other operas, based on well-known children's stories such as Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, Portman's *The Little Prince*, Knussen's *Higglety Pigglety Pop* and *Where the Wild Things Are*.

Watch trailers for films by directors that influenced Chomet's animated film, *The Triplet of Belleville*:

Max Fleisher's Talkartoons <https://archive.org/details/SwingYouSinners>,

Winsor McCay *The Sinking of the Lusitania* https://archive.org/details/Sinking_of_the_Lusitania

Walt Disney's *Aristocats*, <http://video.disney.com/watch/to-the-rescue-4c51ef047efc42743580f26e>

Walt Disney's *101 Dalmations* <http://video.disney.com/watch/cruella-de-vil-cruella-de-vil-if-she-doesn-t-scare-you-50ad6e421c34662bf0e35b9c>

Walt Disney's *The Jungle Book*. <http://video.disney.com/watch/finding-the-music-the-jungle-book-4f127c32e141e02ecef27af0>

Jacques Tati's *Jour de Fete* (1949) <https://youtu.be/HV5mBY2Oaow>

Robert Bresson's *A Man Escaped* (1956) <https://youtu.be/QwqeEm9ocdk>

ACTIVITIES

Sylvain Chomet talks about animation. An excerpt from *'The Secret of Drawing'*, a television documentary broadcast on the BBC in 2005. <https://vimeo.com/12397782>

Try inking the blue line storyboard sketches from *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Create a line test – a short animated sequence.

Create your own character for *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Try 3D rendering on the computer.

Create a color script for your own version of *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Storyboard an action scene; see blue line sketches for *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Record your own scratchtrack, a preliminary soundtrack, for a scene from *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Create a montage of scenes for a trailer to promote *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Film and Animation: Explore animation and photographic stop motion techniques. Ex. Use digital media to create 1-minute scenes from *The Triplets of Belleville*.

Create video interviews of various characters.

Create podcasts from the points of view of various characters.

Create a poster to advertise a performance of *The Triplets of Belleville*. What information needs to be included?

Create a graphic treatment for the opera's title. What typeface would be appropriate?

Use digital audio to record student readings, musical performances.

Create a 30-second audio spot, a one-minute podcast, and/or a *The Triplets of Belleville* activities website.

Create a fake blog or Facebook page for one of the characters. What would *The Triplets* username be?

Create a #hashtag to use for your school visit to the cine-concert

Create YouTube video testimonials for characters in the opera.