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Lesson 6: MOTIVATIONS

 OBJECTIVES

- Identify and explain what makes the main characters in *Aida* (Aida, Amneris, Radames; also include Amonasro) do what they do
- Explain that the thoughts and feelings of characters cause them to act in a certain way and advance the plot

 STANDARDS

RL.6.3
 RL.9-10.3
 RI.7.3
 RI.8.3
 Music 5-8.6

 VOCABULARY

Motivation

 PROCEDURE

Discuss the concept that motivation is the reason behind a person's behavior. What motivates students to go to school? Play sports? Sing?

1. Review the story of *Aida*. Have the students generate a list of adjectives that describe each of the main characters, based on their actions in the story. For example:
 - Aida: patriotic, sad, noble, distressed, lonely, loving, humiliated, courageous
 - Radames: patriotic, gallant, brave, ambitious, honorable, honest, naïve
 - Amneris: proud, deceptive, imperious, devious, selfish, jealous, vengeful
2. Set up a chart on the board with columns that identify the characters, their actions, motivations, and results of the actions. For example,

Character	Action	Why?	Results
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3. Play “*O patria mia*” (“O my country”)/Chapter 25, in which Aida sings of the conflict between her love for Radames, the love for her father, and the love for her homeland. After listening to the aria, read the following English translation aloud.

O my country, nevermore,
Never again will I see you!
I will see you nevermore,
O skies of blue, O sweet, gentle breezes
Of my homeland, where my childhood
Glistened with pure joy.
O hills of green, and perfumed riverbanks;
O my country, I will see you nevermore.

4. With this aria in mind, have students discuss Aida’s actions, listing responses in the appropriate column of the chart. For example,

Character

Aida

Action

Tricks Radames into telling her where there is a safe route for the Ethiopians to use.

Why?

She loves her country.
Her father tells her to.

Results

The Ethiopians flee Egypt, but Radames is tried as a traitor for his role in their escape.

5. Play “*Celeste Aida*” (“Heavenly Aida”)/Chapter 4 in which Radames declares his love for Aida and tells her how he will finally win her hand. After listening to the aria, read the following English translation aloud.

Heavenly Aida, celestial being,
Mystical garland of flowers and light
You are the queen of my thoughts, the splendor of my life.
I want to give back to you
The beautiful sky, the sweet breezes
Of your homeland;
I want to place on your brow a royal wreath
And erect for you a throne near the sun.

6. Add Radames to the chart, and have students complete his entry by adding actions, motivations and results. Actions could include: Radames leads the Egyptian army as their general; Radames requests that the prisoners be spared; Radames gives himself up to the priests and guards. Each action has a particular motivation, while also causing results that lead to the opera's tragic end. For example, Radames gives himself up to the priests and guards because he loves Aida and does not want her to be captured. His action allows Aida and her father to escape, but leads to his trial and death.
7. Add Amneris and Amonasro to the list, identifying at least two significant actions taken by each, the motivations behind those actions, and the result of those actions.



EXTENSION

During the Lesson

Observe the students' ability to relate the events in the story to the human motivations of the character.

After the Lesson

Review the *Aida* character map (see page 93). Discuss its effectiveness in depicting the story and answer the questions that are under the character map.

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LESSON 7: MUSICAL CHARACTERIZATION

 OBJECTIVES

- Identify vocal types of the principal characters in *Aida*
- Examine the role that the score and the libretto play in helping the artists interpret their roles
- Analyze how the characters Aida, Radames, and Amneris are revealed in music and words

 STANDARDS

L.8.4

L.8.5

SL.6.1

SL.6.2

Music 5-8.6

Music 5-8.9

 VOCABULARY

Libretto

Score

 PROCEDURE

Discuss reasons the operatic voice sounds as it does, and that long and careful training is required to produce a sound that can be heard in large opera houses without electronic amplification.

1. Review and discuss the information about types of operatic voices, found in Lesson 2.
2. Inform students that in an opera, the score (music) and libretto (words) come together to tell the singer, stage director, music director, and audience many things.

For example, they indicate:

- Which character sings soprano, tenor, baritone, or other vocal part.
 - Whether the characters are happy, sad, angry, disappointed or in some other mood.
 - What action should take place on the stage.
 - Where the action takes place.
3. Play “*O patria mia*” (“O My Country”)/Chapter 25, in which Aida sings about her country. Read the translation of this aria (see Lesson 6, page 32). Discuss how it reflects what students have learned about Aida. What feelings is she expressing? How has the music (high/low, slow/fast, use of particular instruments, etc.) helped express these feelings?
 4. Read the libretto excerpts of Aida persuading Radames (“*Fuggiam gli ardori inospiti*” / “Let Us Flee from These Burning Skies,” see below) and Radames’ aria about Aida (“*Celeste Aida*” / “Heavenly Aida,” see Lesson 6, page 33). Discuss the feelings of Radames and Aida in these excerpts, and how the music helps to express their feelings.

“*Fuggiam gli ardori inospiti*” / “Let Us Flee from These Burning Skies”

AIDA

Ah, fly from where these burning skies,
 Are all beneath them blighting;
 Towards regions new we’ll turn our eyes,
 Our faithful love inviting.
 There where the virgin forests rise,
 ’Mid fragrance softly stealing,
 Our loving bliss concealing,
 The world we’ll quite forget, ’mid loving bliss.

RADAMES

To distant countries ranging
 With thee thou bidst me fly,
 For other lands exchanging
 All ’neath my native sky.
 The land these arms have guarded,
 That first fame’s crown awarded,
 When I first thee regarded
 How can I e’er forget?

AIDA

Beneath our skies more freely
To our hearts will love be yielded,
The gods thy youth that shielded
Will not our love forget.

RADAMES

[hesitating]

Aida!

AIDA

Me thou lov'st not! Go!

RADAMES

Not love thee?
Ne'er in mortal bosom
Burnt yet love's flame with ardour more devouring.

AIDA

Go, thy Amneris
Waits thee!

RADAMES

All in vain!

AIDA

In vain, thou say'st?
Then fall the axe upon me
And on my wretched father!

RADAMES

Ah no! we'll fly then!

 EVALUATION*During the Lesson*

Notice whether students' perceptions about the characters deepened. How well do they articulate their observations of the music? Are they becoming comfortable with using the vocabulary of opera?

After the Lesson

Have students write a brief essay answering the following questions:

Why are the score and libretto important to opera singers?

Why was the operatic voice popular in the nineteenth century (1800s)?

 EXTENSION

Research works of music-theater that combine popular music with operatic conventions.

 OBJECTIVES

- Explore how music can establish setting
- Identify passages when music especially enhances the meaning of the plot
- Examine the role of ceremony and ritual in *Aida*
- Identify the elements of tragedy in *Aida*

 STANDARDS

SL.6.1

SL.6.2

L.8.4

L.8.5

Music 5-8.6

Music 5-8.8

Dance 5-8.3

Evaluation:

Visual Arts 5-8.6

Extension:

RL.8.3

 VOCABULARY

Action

Ceremony

Ritual

Tragedy

 PROCEDURE

Recall *Aida*'s five secrets (Lesson 3) and how they relate to events in the opera.

1. Review the definition of patriotic love (from Lesson 3), and have students discuss how it motivates Aida throughout the opera. List the other characters in the opera that are motivated by love of country. Discuss how their patriotism advances the plot.
 2. Explore the idea that ceremonies mark most of the important events in *Aida*: Radames is prepared in the temple to go to battle; the Triumphal March as Radames returns from battle; and the ritualistic trial of Radames. Discuss how the purpose of each ceremony shapes both the staging and its musical representation.
 3. Play the trumpet fanfare and start of the Triumphal March/Chapter 17. Have students follow the beat by tapping the steady pulse of the march on their desks. Where would you hear this type of music today? How does it reflect the feelings of the soldiers returning with Radames from war?
 4. Talk about the feelings that Aida, Radames, and Amneris may be experiencing when the march is played. How does the Triumphal March reflect or contrast with their individual feelings?
 5. Without revealing the visual image, play the Hymn to Phtah and the Dance of the Priestesses/Chapter 10. This scene provides an example of a different kind of ceremony: it is the religious, ceremonial music accompanying Radames as he is at the temple preparing for battle. How is this music different from the Triumphal March? Reflecting specifically on the dance music for the priestesses, ask students to describe how they envision the ceremony.
 6. Play the excerpt of the trial of Radames/Chapter 32, a combination of legal proceedings and ceremonial rites. Discuss the concept of ritual and ask students for examples of rituals with which they are familiar (e.g., baptism, first Communion, bar mitzvah/bat mitzvah, family traditions). What musical clues in this excerpt indicate that this is a serious and unhappy ritual ceremony? How is the music similar to and different from the previous two examples of ceremonial music (Triumphal March and Temple scene)?
 7. Recall that the ceremonies in *Aida* mark important events that lead to tragedy. Play the final duet of Aida and Radames/Chapter 34. How does this music differ from the ceremonial music? Discuss any similarities as well. Without knowing the words, how could students know that this duet ends a tragic story?
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 EVALUATION

During the Lesson

Notice how well students recall the story in terms of plot, action, and setting. How well do they use their knowledge of the story when confronted with the music? How well do they use new vocabulary words?

After the Lesson

Complete “A Ceremonial Setting in *Aida*” on page 97. Evaluate the students’ illustrations in terms of detail learned from the story and appropriateness of the selected ceremony. Discuss how the tragedy in this story could have been averted.

 EXTENSION

Ask the students to change one event in the beginning or middle of *Aida* and trace the resulting changes in plot developments through to the end of the opera.