

## Enriching the Humanities Through Opera

**Script for Lesson:** Production Design Adaptation

**Grade Level:** 9-12<sup>th</sup>

**Length:** 45 minutes

**Literary Work:** *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster* (Jon Krakauer)

**Opera:** *Everest* (Joby Talbot, composer; Gene Scheer, librettist)

### Slide 1:

Today, we're diving into visual storytelling as we continue our exploration of adaptation and the opera *Everest*.

### Slide 2:

Our inquiry is: "How does production and visual design aid in storytelling?" By the end of the lesson, we will be able to: (List off objectives from slide.)

### Slide 3:

To start, we're going to listen to the prologue of *Everest*. I want you to jot down anything that comes to mind while you listen — colors, moods, textures, spaces you imagine. For example, does the music make you visualize the color green, perhaps a vibrant green field or a dark, mysterious forest? Or the smell of fresh cut grass and the feel of grass under your feet.

*Everest - Scene 1. Prologue: 'Is this how it ends?' Excerpt*

*Listen to music.*

Who would like to share what came to mind?

*Provide students space to share their thoughts.*

Think about how these thoughts relate to storytelling. How does music evoke strong visuals and feelings?

*Provide students space to share their thoughts.*

### Slide 4:

Here is the text for the prologue and scene summary. Does viewing this change your initial thoughts?

*Provide students space to share their thoughts.*

**Slides 5-11: Review short opera synopsis and key scenes – as much or as little as needed.**

**Slides 6-7: Key Scene #1**

Let's review this key scene. Driven by determination and Rob's encouragement, Doug finally reaches the summit after a challenging climb, only to be confronted with the emotional weight of his journey as time and exhaustion take their toll.

*Everest - Scene 4. Doug's Ascent Excerpt*

**Slides 8-9: Key Scene #2**

Let's reexamine this key scene. As a storm approaches, Jan discovers that her husband Rob, stranded on the mountain with Doug, refuses to leave his friend behind despite urgent pleas for help and advice on how to save himself.

*Everest - Scene 9 The Storm Hits Excerpt*

**Slides 10-11: Key Scene #3**

Let's go over this key scene. Jan and her stranded husband Rob engage in a tender, bittersweet conversation about their love and their future child, despite the grim situation on the mountain as the chorus signals the passing hours,

*Everest - Scene 12 The Phone Call Excerpt*

**Slides 12-18:**

As we just explored, artistic processes often start with our own experiences and perspectives. Let's explore how this translates into Production Design, shaping the visual world of an opera. This important process enhances storytelling and communicates mood.

*Briefly explain the definitions of set design, costume design, props, lighting design, projection design, and hair/makeup design.*

Together, these elements create an immersive experience for the audience, helping them feel connected to the story.

**Slide 19:**

Let's look at a different production of *Everest*. This is a staged version of the opera. What do you notice in this interpretation?

*Provide students space to share their thoughts.*

Pay attention to the details — along with the set, consider the costumes and props. What are the ways they play into our understanding?

*Provide students space to share their thoughts.*

**Slide 20:**

Designers consider the fundamental elements of color, line, shape, texture, form, space, value, and pattern, etc. to communicate their visions.

*Briefly define/review the elements of design found on the slide.*

**Slide 21:**

Now let's look at the elements of design highlighted in this production. What do you notice? How does the use of the element enhance the story?

*Analyze the example on the slide, using the text to direct and enhance the discussion.*

**Slide 22:**

I want us to think about how we can incorporate at least three elements of design into the opera pitch adaptations we created. As we dive into creating designs for our adaptations, remember, we'll be pulling inspiration from the literary work, opera and possibly other sources, but when we do so, we need to keep intellectual property laws and plagiarism in mind – give credit where it is due.

What questions do you have?

*Take time to answer any questions students may have.*

**Slide 23:**

Here are some ways to turn your adaptation pitches into designs. Notice the color palette as well as the use of line, space, shapes, textures, patterns, etc. in the set and costumes, the lighting, use of props, and how it all works together, establishing the mood, tone, and overall atmosphere of the production.

*Discuss examples on the slide.*

The visual components of storytelling are just as powerful as the words and music.

**Slide 24:**

We will be working in our groups to create set and costume designs based on your opera adaptation pitches. Each group will receive a Production Design Questionnaire to fill out that will help guide the process and reasoning behind your choices. We will have 20 minutes to complete the designs and questionnaire.

*Take time to answer any questions students may have.*

(Pass out each group's opera adaptation pitch worksheets as well as 1 set design, and 1 costume design worksheet per group. Provide them with the production design definitions handout and elements of design definitions handout, if needed.)

**\*\*Students may use the set design and costume design worksheets to sketch out ideas or create collages. If a digital approach is preferred, students may use a school district approved AI image creator to craft designs and/or mood/concept boards.**

(Walk around the classroom, offering assistance as students work. Provide a 10-minute, 5-minute, and 2-minute warning).

**Slide 25:**

Who is ready to share their designs? Groups, please use the questionnaire as a guideline when presenting your set and costume design sketches.

*Facilitate the sharing process, encouraging respectful listening and feedback among students.*

**Slide 26:**

As we wrap up, I want us to reflect on today's experience and this entire adaptation process. Consider how you refined your opera adaptation pitches through visual design. What did you learn about storytelling? How has this process shifted your perspective on storytelling and your approach to developing ideas?

*Allow a moment for reflection, then invite students to share their thoughts.*

**Slide 27:**

Thank you for your wonderful contributions today and throughout this process!