

Enriching the Humanities Through Opera

Title: Responding to Key Scenes

Grade Level: 9-12th

Length: 45 minutes

Literary Work: *The Marriage of Figaro (La Folle Journée, Ou Le Mariage de Figaro)* (Pierre Beaumarchais)

Opera: *Le nozze di Figaro* (W.A. Mozart, composer; Lorenzo Da Ponte, librettist)

Inquiry Question: How can poetry and music enhance a key scene in a story?

Lesson Focus: This lesson will focus on responding to the context in a key scene or turning point in the opera by devising a poem based on a character's emotions in that moment.

Prior Knowledge: Students have read *literary work*, have analyzed characters and can name the (Who, What, When, Where), have participated in the previous adaptation lesson.

Materials: Copies of *literary work*, presentation slides (includes *Le nozze di Figaro* short opera synopsis with video examples and libretto excerpts), poetic devices definitions handout, libretto excerpts of key scenes, interactive board, paper, and pens/pencils.

Key Vocabulary: Aria, poetic devices (rhyme, repetition, meter, alliteration, metaphor, simile, imagery, personification, onomatopoeia, etc.)

Definitions

- **Aria:** A self-contained piece for solo voice typically found in opera, oratorio, and cantata. It typically showcases the vocal abilities of the singer and often serves as a moment of introspection or emotional expression for the character.
- **Poetic Devices:** Refers to techniques and tools used by poets to create a desired effect in their writing. These devices include features such as rhyme, meter, metaphor, simile, alliteration, imagery, and symbolism, among others. Each device helps to enhance the meaning, emotions, or aesthetics of a poem.
 - **Rhyme:** Where words have similar sounds, usually at the end of the word, creating a harmonious and pleasing effect in poetry or song lyrics.
 - **Symbolism:** The use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities, often conveying deeper meanings or emotions beyond literal interpretation. Symbols can be objects, images, words, or gestures that carry symbolic significance and are used to enhance the meaning of a text, artwork, or communication.

Repetition: Refers to the deliberate use of the same word, phrase, line, or stanza multiple times within a poem. This technique helps emphasize certain ideas or themes, create rhythm, and establish a sense of unity or structure.

- **Meter:** Refers to the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of verse. It provides a rhythmic structure and helps to create a sense of musicality in the poem. Different poetic forms and styles may have varying meters, such as iambic pentameter or trochaic tetrameter.
- **Alliteration:** The repetition of the same sound at the beginning of neighboring words in a sentence or phrase. It is often used in poetry, literature, and advertising to create a rhythm or musical effect.
- **Metaphor:** A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable to imply a resemblance, typically for rhetorical or expressive effect.
- **Simile:** A figure of speech in which two things are compared using "like" or "as" to show similarities between them. It is used to make descriptions more vivid and engaging by creating a clear image in the reader's mind.
- **Imagery:** Refers to the use of descriptive language that appeals to the senses, creating vivid mental images for the reader or listener. This technique helps to evoke emotions, set the mood, and enhance the overall meaning.
- **Personification:** Refers to the use of human characteristics or qualities attributed to animals, objects, or abstract concepts. This technique is used to give non-human entities human-like traits to create vivid imagery or convey deeper meanings.
- **Onomatopoeia:** A word that phonetically imitates, resembles or suggests the sound that it describes, such as "buzz," "meow," or "splash." It is a figure of speech that uses words to mimic the sounds of the real world, creating a sensory experience for the reader or listener.

Objective(s): At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify characters' emotions and responses in a key scene.
- Identify poetic devices found in presented examples.
- Create a response poem, at least four lines in length, using two poetic devices to represent a character's response to a key scene in the work.
- Demonstrate their understanding of their chosen key scene through their poems.

Assessment: Evaluate students' understanding of their chosen key scene and character from their writing of a minimum of four-line poems incorporating at least two poetic devices.

Assessment Rubric

4: The student's poem is highly creative, effectively uses at least two poetic devices, and is well-structured with descriptive language demonstrating understanding of character's emotions and response to action in key scene.

3: The student's poem is moderately creative, uses at least two poetic devices, and is mostly well-structured with some understanding of character's emotions and response to action in key scene.

2: The student's poem lacks creativity, struggles to incorporate poetic devices, and is poorly structured with minimal understanding of character's emotions and response to action in key scene.

1: The student's poem lacks creativity, fails to use poetic devices, and is poorly structured with a significant lack of understanding of character's emotions and response to action in key scene.

Learning Standards:

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on other's ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6: Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

National Core Arts Standards

MU:Cn10.o.T.Ia. Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choice and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

MU:Cn11.o.T.Ia. Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

TH:Cr2-II.a. Refine a dramatic concept to demonstrate a critical understanding of historical and cultural influences of original ideas applied to a drama/theatre work.

TH:Pr4.1.I.a. Examine how character relationships assist in telling the story of a drama/theatre work.

TH:Pr4.1.I.b. Shape character choices using given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Re7.1.I.a. Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in a drama/theatre work to develop criteria for artistic choices.

Procedure:

Introduction/Hook (5 minutes):

- Begin with a listening activity of an excerpt of Susanna’s Act IV aria “Deh vieni, non tardar.”
 - [Act IV, Scene 10: Deh vieni, non tardar](#)
2:42:23 – 2:47:04
 - Have students first listen to the music without text displayed on board and take notes of the emotions being expressed in the music.
 - Discuss findings and make a list of answers to create an emotion vocabulary “toolbox.”

Main Narrative/Sequence (20 minutes):

- Explain that this aria comes from the opera *Le nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*).
 - Read/Review opera’s short synopsis found in the presentation slides.
- Display aria text and/or aria text translation on board. Have students listen again either following along with the text or watching a video performance and taking note of any new ideas.
 - Identify the character singing and the emotions expressed.
 - Compare initial reaction to new understanding.
 - Ask questions such as, “How does viewing the text change your understanding?” “Does knowing the character singing change your understanding?” “How does the text and music add to your understanding of the scene?”
- Discuss/review the definitions and use of poetic devices.
 - Show examples of several poetic devices in presentation slides (rhyme, repetition, meter, alliteration, metaphor, simile, imagery, personification, onomatopoeia, etc.)
 - Ask students to identify poetic devices in the provided examples.

- Presentation slides include excerpt of “Invitation to Love” by Paul Laurence, “The Summer Day” by Mary Oliver, and excerpt of Susanna’s Act IV aria, “Deh vieni, non tardar.”
- Discuss guidelines for response poems:
 - Poems should be at least four lines in length, from one of the characters’ perspectives in the scene using at least two poetic devices.
- Show an example of a response poem to Susanna’s Act IV aria “Deh vieni, non tardar.”
 - Identify the character who could have written the poem (Figaro), as well as their emotions and response to the action in the scene.

Activity/Practice (12 minutes):

- Students, independently, write a response poem based on this lesson’s key scene/aria or their chosen key scene from the Exploring Story Adaptation lesson.
 - Exploring Story Adaptation lesson key scenes: Students can review their chosen key scenes and identify the characters’ emotions and responses to the action in the scene. Students will choose a character’s point of view, how the character feels about the initial aria, and their response. Students can take into consideration how their adaptation choices may influence the character’s response.

Present/Share (5 minutes):

- Willing students share or perform a dramatic reading of their poems in front of class.
 - Encourage students to explore the musical aspects of their poem when performing (e.g. rhythm, tempo, inflection/intonation, etc.)

Reflection (3 minutes):

- Reflect on how poetry and music can enhance the scene, and what was learned in viewing and presenting poems. Ask and discuss:
 - “How does poetry and music enhance the scene?”
 - “What did you learn from viewing and presenting our response poems?”

Extension/Follow Up/Next Steps:

- Create a soundscape/backing track using garage band or chrome music or curate a playlist for the key scene to support the mood and action.
- Students can write response poems/arias for the key scene they created adaptation pitches for in the Exploring Story Adaptation lesson.

Le nozze di Figaro (1786)

W.A. Mozart, composer; Lorenzo Da Ponte, librettist

The Marriage of Figaro premiered on May 1, 1786, at the Burgtheater in Vienna. Initially, it received mixed reactions but quickly gained popularity, especially in Prague, where it became a huge success. The opera is celebrated for its progressive themes, such as the challenge to social hierarchies and the portrayal of complex, sympathetic characters across all classes. Its masterful combination of comedy, drama, and profound emotional depth set new standards for opera and has cemented it as one of the greatest works in the repertoire.

Short Synopsis

Set within a single day, the story is a comedic exploration of love, deception, and social class. It follows Figaro and his fiancée Susanna as they navigate the scheming intentions of Count Almaviva, who wishes to seduce Susanna before her marriage. Through a series of clever disguises, misunderstandings, and unexpected alliances, the characters ultimately triumph over the Count's advances, celebrating love and the spirit of equality in the end.

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO OPERA SYNOPSIS

(W.A. Mozart, composer; Lorenzo Da Ponte, librettist)

ACT I

The Opera takes place at Count Almaviva's country estate near Seville in the late 1700s. Today is the day when Figaro and Susanna, the valet and maid of the Count and Countess Almaviva, are to marry. Susanna tells Figaro that the philandering Count has been trying to seduce her. Figaro vows to outwit the Count and teach him a lesson. Dr. Bartolo enters along with his former servant, Marcellina, who is determined to collect on an old loan made to Figaro. Figaro must either pay her back or marry her in order to repay his debt. After Marcellina and Susanna trade insults, the young page, Cherubino, arrives reveling in his infatuation with women. He wants Susanna to plead on his behalf to the Countess so that he may be once again in the Count's good graces -the count has banished him after finding him with Barbarina, the gardener Antonio's daughter. Cherubino quickly hides when they hear the Count approaching. The Count tries his best to arrange a rendezvous with Susanna, but also hides when Don Basilio, the music teacher, arrives.

Susanna and Basilio begin to gossip about Cherubino's crush on the Countess. The Count, listening to the gossip, comes out of hiding in a jealous rage and begins to rant about finding Cherubino in a compromising situation with Barbarina. He becomes even more infuriated discovering Cherubino hiding in the room. Figaro returns with fellow servants who are praising the progressive reform of the count to abolish the "droit du seigneur" - the right of a noble to take his manservant's place on his wedding night. But will the Count keep his word? Figaro tries to force the Count to unite him and Susanna on the spot, but the Count avoids the trap and instead enlists Cherubino in his personal regiment in the army.

ACT II

In her boudoir, the Countess explains to Susanna how deeply her husband's philandering saddens her. Figaro enters and divulges his schemes, explaining that he has sent the Count an anonymous letter telling him that the Countess is expecting a lover while he is out hunting. They decide to send Cherubino, dressed as Susanna, to a rendezvous with the count. Susanna and the Countess begin to disguise Cherubino, and while Susanna is away to fetch a ribbon, the Count arrives, furious after reading the note and finding the bedroom door locked. Startled, the Countess hides Cherubino in the closet and lets the Count in. The Count hears a noise from the closet but the Countess refuses to unlock the door saying that Susanna is inside. The Count does not believe the Countess and he takes her to fetch a tool for opening the closet.

Susanna, having entered unnoticed, has heard the whole scene. She hurriedly helps Cherubino escape out the window and hides in the closet herself to the surprise of both the Count and the Countess when they return. All seems taken care of until the gardener, Antonio, bursts in with crushed geraniums from the flower bed below the window. Figaro is quick to take the blame for the crushed geraniums, faking a sprained ankle and claiming that it was he who jumped from the window. Marcellina bursts in with Basilio and Bartolo, waving a court summons for Figaro. This delights the Count as it gives him an excuse for delaying the wedding.

ACT III

In the audience room where the wedding is to take place, the Countess decides to alter Figaro's plan. Susanna will ask the Count to meet with her in the garden, but the Countess instead of Cherubino will go in her place. The Count at first agrees, but he becomes suspicious again when he hears Susanna conspiring with Figaro. Don Curzio, whom the count has chosen to hear the case, judges that Figaro must either marry Marcellina or pay of the debt to her. Figaro explains that since he is the son of an aristocrat, he cannot marry without his parents' consent. Since he was a foundling and has never met his parents, he doesn't think he will be able to find them. Marcellina, hearing Figaro's story, realizes that he is her son and his father is Dr. Bartolo. Susanna re-enters with money that the Countess has given her in order to pay off Figaro's debt. She is enraged to see Figaro embracing Marcellina, but she calms down when she learns that Marcellina is no longer a threat and will marry Dr. Bartolo.

The Countess begins to look back at her love for the Count when they first met, and she wants to brave danger to win him back. She dictates a note for Susanna to give to the Count. While the double wedding of Figaro to Susanna and Bartolo to Marcellina is taking place, Susanna slips the note to the Count. The Count seals the note with a pin as an acknowledgment that he will meet Susanna, and gives it to Barbarina, who misplaces the pin.

ACT IV

In the moonlit garden, Barbarina still cannot find the lost hatpin. She tells Figaro and Marcellina about the rendezvous between the Count and Susanna. Figaro, believing that Susanna plans to betray him, hides in the garden to plan his revenge. Susanna and the Countess arrive and switch cloaks to disguise themselves as each other. Left alone, Susanna rhapsodizes on her love for Figaro, but he, overhearing her, thinks she is talking about the Count. Susanna hides just in time to see Cherubino attempting to woo the Countess, disguised in Susanna's dress, until the Count chases him off and sends his wife, who he believes to be Susanna, off to an arbor where he follows her to. Figaro has caught on to the joke by now and, joining in, makes exaggerated love to Susanna in her Countess disguise. The Count is infuriated at first and plans to expose the Countess, who is actually Susanna, but the true Countess soon appears and explains the ruse. The Count is the one who must ask for forgiveness in the end, and everyone is reunited.

Maya Rose Tweten (2013)

Key Scene/Aria in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*

Video excerpts and timestamps are pulled from the Metropolitan Opera on Demand and YouTube. Performance Dates: Oct. 18, 2014 & May 1994.

KEY SCENE/ARIA: Act IV, Scene 10: Deh vieni, non tardar (Excerpt)

Met Opera on Demand: Track#44. ACT IV: Giunse alfin il momento ... Deh vieni non tardar

01:37 – 04:50

OR

Act IV, Scene 10: Deh vieni, non tardar

2:42:23 – 2:47:04

Disguised as the Countess, Susanna sings in the moonlit garden as part of a scheme she and the Countess devised to expose the Count's infidelity. Figaro overhears and grows suspicious as she delivers an enchanting song, seemingly inviting "her lover" to join her. Aware of Figaro's presence, Susanna sings to him.

Libretto Excerpt

SUSANNA

Deh, vieni, non tardar, o gioia bella,
vieni ove amore per goder t'appella,
finché non splende in ciel notturna face;
finché l'aria è ancor bruna, e il mondo
tace.

Qui mormora il ruscel, qui scherza l'aura,
che col dolce sussurro il cor ristaura,

qui ridono i fioretti e l'erba è fresca,
ai piaceri d'amor qui tutto adessa.

Vieni, ben mio, tra queste piante ascose.
Vieni! vieni! Ti vo' la fronte incoronar di
rose!

*(Si nasconde dietro gli alberi dal lato
opposto a quello di Figaro.)*

SUSANNA

Come now, delay not, lovely joy,
come where love calls you to pleasure.
The nocturnal torch shines not yet in
heaven;
the air is still murky, and the earth silent.
Here the brook murmurs, the breezes
play and with gentle sighing refresh the
heart.

Here flowers are laughing, and the grass
is cool;
all things beckon to love's delights.
Come, my soul, within this hidden grove.
Come! I would crown your brow with
roses!

*(She disappears among the trees on the
opposite side to Figaro.)*

Libretto excerpt courtesy of murashev.com.

Poetic Devices used: personification, imagery, symbolism, metaphor

RESPONSE POEM

Does she crown another with her roses fair?
Or do shadows play tricks in the evening air?
Oh, cruel night, reveal what's hidden from me—
Is her heart still mine, or adrift at sea?

Poetic Devices used: imagery, symbolism, personification, metaphor