

LANGUAGE ARTS: A Penny for Your Thoughts

Students will

- Read the *Norma* Synopsis and The Characters
- Research the life of one of the main characters in the opera
- Write five journal entries for their character, each describing the character’s emotional response to a different event or aspect of their life.

Copies for Each Student: *Norma* Synopsis, “The Characters”, Research Materials, “A Penny for Your Thoughts: Journal Activity

For the Teacher: *Norma* Synopsis, “The Characters”, Research Materials, “A Penny for Your Thoughts: Journal Activity”

Getting Ready

Makes copies of reading selections and instructions for each student.

Prepare internet access for *Norma* online listening selections.

Plan library or computer lab time for student research.

Gather pens, pencils and additional writing paper as needed for your class.

Introduction

Read the *Norma* Synopsis and “The Characters” with your students and listen to the online listening selections as you go. Read through the “A Penny for Your Thoughts: Journal Activity” and have students select a main character from the opera as their subject. Provide research guidelines appropriate for your grade level and the ability of your students.

Guided/Independent Practice

Depending on your grade level, the ability of your students, and time constraints, you may choose to have students work as a whole class, in small groups, with a partner, or individually. Provide instruction and model the activity as needed.

Evaluation

Have students read one journal entry aloud either in groups or to the whole class and guide class discussion.

TEKS

English Language Arts and Reading:

6th Grade

110.18.B.5 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

110.18.B.15 Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.

110.18.B.23 Research/Gathering Sources. Students determine, locate, and explore the full range of relevant sources addressing a research question and systematically record the information they gather.

7th Grade

110.19.B.5 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

110.19.B.15 Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.

110.19.B.23 Research/Gathering Sources. Students determine, locate, and explore the full range of relevant sources addressing a research question and systematically record the information they gather.

8th Grade

110.20.B.5 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

110.20.B.15 Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.

110.20.B.23 Research/Gathering Sources. Students determine, locate, and explore the full range of relevant sources addressing a research question and systematically record the information they gather.

English I

110.31.B.4 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

110.31.B.14 Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.

110.31.B.21 Research/Gathering Sources. Students determine, locate, and explore the full range of relevant sources addressing a research question and systematically record the information they gather.

English II

110.32.B.4 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

110.32.B.14 Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.

110.32.B.21 Research/Gathering Sources. Students determine, locate, and explore the full range of relevant sources addressing a research question and systematically record the information they gather.

English III

110.33.B.4 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

110.33.B.14 Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.

110.33.B.21 Research/Gathering Sources. Students determine, locate, and explore the full range of relevant sources addressing a research question and systematically record the information they gather.

English IV

110.34.B.4 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.

110.34.B.14 Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.

110.34.B.21 Research/Gathering Sources. Students determine, locate, and explore the full range of relevant sources addressing a research question and systematically record the information they gather.

Correlates: Music, Drama, Social Studies

Gardner's Intelligences: Verbal-Linguistic, Musical, Interpersonal

Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Evaluation, Synthesis

Sources:

Norma Libretto

Warrack, John and West, Ewan, The Oxford Dictionary of Opera, Oxford University Press, 1992.

Online Resources:

www.oxfordmusiconline.com

www.aria-database.com

Norma

Synopsis

ACT I

The High Priest Oroveso and members of a Druidic cult meet at their temple to prepare for the rites of winter solstice. They pray to their god, Irminsul, that Norma, High Priestess and Oroveso's daughter, will declare war on the Romans and end their occupation.

After the Druids leave, Pollione, Proconsul of the Roman forces, arrives. His Celtic aide, Flavio, urges him to go, but Pollione insists on staying to meet Adalgisa, a priestess whom he loves. Flavio is distressed to learn that Pollione plans to abandon Norma, who has secretly borne him two children during the long Roman occupation. He cites the risks of engendering Norma's rage. Pollione acknowledges this, recounting a terrifying dream in which Norma savagely avenges herself for his infidelity.

The Druids return to perform their ritual. Norma warns that their warlike posture is futile and commands them to wait until Rome falls through its own vices. A group of virgin priestesses enters, Adalgisa among them. Norma cuts the sacred mistletoe and makes a burnt offering to the moon goddess. She promises to declare war on the Romans should the god Irminsul appear to her but reserves the right to kill Pollione herself. Privately, however, she longs that his love for her be rekindled.

As everyone leaves, Adalgisa stays behind to implore the gods to eradicate her feelings for Pollione, at which point the Proconsul returns and declares his love. Fearing that his dream may be a prophecy, he entreats Adalgisa to accompany him to Rome, where he has been ordered to return the next day. Adalgisa agrees.

Norma reveals her ambivalent feelings toward her children as she waits for them to be brought to her by Clotilde, who cares for them in secret. Aware of Pollione's order to return to Rome and his aloofness toward her, she fears he will abandon them. Hearing Adalgisa approach, Clotilde hides the children. Adalgisa confesses that she has fallen in love and asks Norma to forgive her and release her from her vows. Norma is sympathetic as she remembers her own love. Just as she agrees, Pollione appears. It becomes clear to Norma that it is he who has stirred the young priestess to love, and she furiously condemns him. Adalgisa, shocked to learn of the relationship between Pollione and Norma, vows to remain faithful to the High Priestess.

ACT II

Although certain that her children are doomed to suffering as slaves or outcasts, Norma finds herself unable to kill them. Instead, she makes Adalgisa promise to go to Rome with Pollione and raise the children as her own. But Adalgisa insists on confronting Pollione and convincing him to return to Norma.

Oroveso and the Druids are gathered at the temple to secretly plan an attack on the Romans, when a Roman detachment arrives to inform Oroveso of the identity of the Roman Consul who will be replacing Pollione, a man

Norma

Synopsis cont.

reputed to be more savage and brutal. Oroveso takes this as a sign to abandon their planned attack and counsels his fellow Druids to feign submission and patiently await their chance to rebel.

Norma anxiously awaits the outcome of Adalgisa's mission and upon learning that it has failed, sounds the signal for war. As she prepares a sacrificial victim, uproar is heard in the inner temple and Pollione, who has been captured, is brought before her. Dismissing the Druids, she attempts to bargain with Pollione. He refuses to renounce Adalgisa, offering his own life instead.

Norma summons her followers and informs them that a priestess has broken her vow and must be sacrificed. However, it is not Adalgisa she indicts but herself. She reveals to Oroveso the existence of her children and exacts his promise to care for them. Pollione, moved, feels his love for her reborn and requests to die with her. Devastated, the Druids witness Norma's ascent to the pyre and, with her, the destruction of their temple.

Synopsis courtesy of Florida Grand Opera

Norma

The Characters

Norma: (soprano) daughter of Oroveso, High-priestess of the Druids. Despite her status in the Druid order, she falls in love with Pollione and bears him two children, whom her friend Clotilde takes care of in secret. Pollione's love for Norma fades and he falls in love with Adalgisa. Norma fears Pollione will abandon her and their children, so she conjures a plan to save them, though she and Pollione both meet their demise.

Adalgisa: (soprano or mezzo-soprano) Druid priestess in the grove of the Irminsul statue. She falls in love with Pollione and asks Norma to release her from her vows so she can go with him to Rome. When Adalgisa learns of Norma's affair with Pollione, she swears allegiance to Norma and tries to persuade Pollione to return to her.

Pollione: (tenor) Roman proconsul in Gaul. Has an affair with Norma but leaves her and their two children for Adalgisa. When Norma lays down her life to save her children and Adalgisa, he is moved and his love is rekindled. He chooses to die with Norma out of love.

Oroveso: (bass) Norma's father, Chief of the Druids. Incites the Druids to rebel against the Roman empire and leads them in their plans for war.

Clotilde: (soprano) Norma's friend. She cares for Norma's two children and keeps their existence a secret.

Flavio: (tenor) Pollione's aide. Assists Pollione in his endeavors and counsels him to stay with Norma so as not to incite the rage of the powerful High-priestess.

Links to Musical Excerpts:

“Casta Diva...Fine al rito” – Anna Netrebko, The Opera Gala – Live from Baden-Baden (2007)

The Druids have come to meet with Norma, their high priestess. They want to revolt against their Roman oppressors but Norma convinces them that their time to rise up has not come yet. The Romans will be defeated by their own failings. Norma then invokes the moon and prays for peace. While the chorus of Druids sings their derision for the Romans, Norma sings her cabaletta, privately worrying that that the hatred for the Romans must also translate to hatred for Pollione, her secret Roman lover.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlSodSvo1Lg>

“Meco all’ altar di Venere” – Salvatore Fisichella – Helsinki Opera 2004

Pollione tells his friend Flavio that Norma has violated her vows as a priestess by having his two children. He declares that he is now in love with Adalgisa, a holy virgin in the temple. He has dreamed about taking Adalgisa to Rome, but it is bothering his conscience. In his dream, Norma has achieved his revenge upon him.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ze0TtCEPN0s>

“Norma mira o Norma” – Elina Garanca & Anna Netrebko, The Opera Gala – Live from Baden-Baden (2007)

In the beginning of Act II, Adalgisa and Norma discuss Norma's children and what to about Pollione.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvXiwOkg1mk>

Norma

A Penny for Your Thoughts: Journal Activity

Instructions:

Choose one of the main characters from *Norma* and write five journal entries as that character. Research facts about the Roman occupation of Gaul, life in 50 BC, the life of the Druids or other pertinent factors to the life and times of your character, and include these facts in your journal entries. For example, if you choose Flavio, you may research the role of the Proconsul Aide in the Roman Army and write an entry about his daily activities. In each entry, explore the emotional state of your character as they react to different events from the story (for example, Norma could talk about how she felt when she found out Pollione was having an affair with Adalgisa.) Be as detailed as possible and base your entries on events in the opera or on your research. Provide a list of sources with your finished journal entries.

Below are a few web sources to help get you started:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Druid>

<http://history-world.org/druids.htm>

<http://www.athenapub.com/caesarg1.htm>

http://www.ancient.eu/Roman_Army/