

MUSIC: The Characters

Students will

- Read the *Norma* Synopsis
- Read the information sheet “The Characters” included with the lesson.
- Listen to audio selections from *Norma* online.
- Discuss and answer questions on the appropriate portion(s) of the **Activity Worksheet**.

Before the Lesson

Print copies for each student on the information sheet “The Characters” and the **Activity Worksheet**.

Decide which section(s) of the worksheet you wish your group to complete.

Print a copy for the teacher of the Sample Answers for the **Activity Worksheet**.

Prepare internet access to the *Norma* online listening selections.

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

Introduction

Have your students read the *Norma* Synopsis. Give each student a copy of the information sheet “The Characters” or display it on the screen. Read through the information, discussing each character and listening to the online selections as your go.

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. Read the directions on the **Activity Worksheet**. Have students complete the portion(s) of the **Activity Worksheet** you have chosen with opportunity for questions. If students are working with a partner or in small groups, give them time to discuss their answers before writing them down. Have students share their answers individually or by groups and tell why they gave their answers.

Evaluation

Have students discuss and evaluate the answers of others. The teacher may want to guide the discussion with the samples answers provided. After individual or small group responses have been shared and/or turned in, the class can then formulate comprehensive answers for the class with the teacher asking leading questions to guide the discussion.

For Further Study

The teacher may want to have students further research *Norma*. Students may also want to do additional research on Vincenzo Bellini, their lives and other works, or other related topics online or in their school library. Their findings can be shared with the class at the beginning of a later lesson.

TEKS

Music

6th Grade

117.208.C.4

Historical and cultural relevance. The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (B) describe written and aurally presented music representative of diverse styles, periods, and cultures; (C) identify relationships of music concepts to other academic disciplines such as the relationship between music and mathematics, literature, history.

7th Grade

117.209.C.4

Historical and cultural relevance. The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (B) examine written and aurally presented music representative of diverse genres, styles, periods, and cultures; (C) identify relationships of music content and processes to other academic disciplines such as the relationship between music and mathematics, literature, history, and the sciences.

8th Grade

117.210.C.4

Historical and cultural relevance. The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (B) compare and contrast written and aurally presented music representative of diverse genres, styles, periods, and cultures; (C) compare and contrast relationships of music content and processes to other academic disciplines such as the relationship between music and mathematics, literature, history, sciences, and language.

Music, Level I

117.310.C.5

Historical and cultural relevance. The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (A) compare and contrast music by genre, style, culture, and historical period; (C) identify and describe the uses of music in societies and cultures; (D) identify and explore the relationship between music and other academic disciplines; (E) identify and explore the impact of technologies, ethical issues, and economic factors on music, performers, and performances.

Music, Level II

117.311.C.5

Historical and cultural relevance. The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (A) compare and contrast music by genre, style, culture, and historical period; (B) define uses of music in societies and cultures; (C) identify and explore the relationships between music and other academic disciplines; (E) identify and explore the impact of technologies, ethical issues, and economic factors on music, musicians, and performances.

Music, Level III

117.312.C.5

Historical and cultural relevance. The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (A) classify representative examples of music by genre, style, culture, and historical period; (B) explore the relevance of music to societies and cultures; (C) define the relationships between music content and concepts and other academic disciplines; (E) analyze and evaluate the impact of technologies, ethical issues, and economic factors on music, performers, and performances.

Music, Level IV

117.313.C.5

Historical cultural relevance. The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (A) discriminate representative examples of music by genre, style, culture, and historical period; (B) evaluate the relevance of music to societies and cultures; (C) define the relationships between music content and concepts and other academic disciplines; (E) analyze and evaluate the impact of technologies, ethical issues, and economic factors on music, performers, and performances.

Correlates: Language Arts, Drama, Music, 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

www.ancient-literature.com/greece_euripides_medea.html

Norma

Synopsis

ACT ONE

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 TWO

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

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=JISodSvo1Lg>

“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

Ancient Greece – Tragedy – *Medea*

Medea (Gr: “*Medeia*”) is a tragedy written by the ancient Greek playwright Euripides, based on the myth of Jason and Medea, and particularly Medea’s revenge against Jason for betraying her with another woman. Often considered Euripides’ best and most popular work and one of the great plays of the Western canon, it only won third prize when it was presented at the Dionysia festival in 431BCE, along with the lost plays *Philoctetes*, *Dictys*, and *Theristai*.

SYNOPSIS

After the adventures of the Golden Fleece, the Greek hero Jason took his wife Medea into exile at Corinth. However, he then left her, seeking to advance his political ambitions by marrying Glauce, the daughter of King of Corinth.

The play opens with Medea grieving over the loss of her husband's love. Her elderly nurse and the Chorus of Corinthian women (generally sympathetic to her plight) fear what she might do to herself or her children. King Creon, also fearing what Medea might do, banishes her, declaring that she and her children must leave Corinth immediately. Medea begs for mercy, and is granted a reprieve of one day, all she needs to extract her revenge.

Jason arrives and attempts to explain himself. He says that he does not love Glauce but cannot pass up the opportunity to marry a wealthy and royal princess (Medea is from Colchis in the Caucasus and is considered a barbarian witch by the Greeks), and claims that he hopes one day to join the two families and keep Medea as his mistress. Medea and the Chorus of Corinthian women do not believe him. She reminds him that she left her own people for him, murdering her own brother for his sake, so that she can never now return home. She also reminds him that it was she herself who saved him and slew the dragon which guarded the Golden Fleece, but he is unmoved, merely offering to placate her with gifts. Medea hints darkly that he may live to regret his decision, and secretly plans to kill both Glauce and Creon.

Medea is then visited by Aegeus, the childless king of Athens, who asks the renowned sorceress to help his wife conceive a child. In return, Medea asks for his protection and, although Aegeus is not aware of Medea’s plans for revenge, he promises to give her refuge if she can escape to Athens.

Medea tells the Chorus of her plans to poison a golden robe (a family heirloom and gift from the sun god, Helios) which she believes the vain Glauce will not be able to resist wearing. She resolves to kill her own children as well, not because the children have done anything wrong, but as the best way her tortured mind can think of to hurt Jason. She calls for Jason once more, pretends to apologize to him and sends the poisoned robe and crown as a gift to Glauce, with her children as the gift-bearers.

As Medea ponders her actions, a messenger arrives to relate the wild success of her plan. Glauce has been killed by the poisoned robe, and Creon has also been killed by the poison while attempting to save her, both daughter and father dying in excruciating pain. She wrestles with herself over whether she can bring herself to kill her own children too, speaking lovingly to them all the while in a moving and chilling scene. After a moment of hesitation, she eventually justifies it as a way of saving them from the retribution of Jason and Creon’s family. As the Chorus of women laments her decision, the children are heard screaming. The Chorus considers interfering, but in the end does nothing.

Jason discovers the murder of Glauce and Creon and rushes to the scene to punish Medea, only to learn that his children too have been killed. Medea appears in the chariot of Artemis, with the corpses of her children, mocking and gloating over Jason’s pain. She prophesies a bad end for Jason too before escaping towards Athens with her children’s bodies. The play ends with the Chorus lamenting that such tragic and unexpected evils should result from the will of the gods.

ANALYSIS

Although the play is now considered one of the great plays of ancient Greece, the Athenian audience did not react so favourably at the time, and awarded it only third place prize (out of three) at the Dionysia festival of 431 BCE, adding another disappointment to Euripides' career. This may have been due to the extensive changes Euripides made to the conventions of Greek theatre in the play, by including an indecisive chorus, by implicitly criticizing Athenian society and by showing disrespect for the gods.

The text was lost and then rediscovered in 1st Century CE Rome, and was later adapted by the Roman tragedians Ennius, Lucius Accius, Ovid, Seneca the Younger and Hosidius Geta among others. It was rediscovered again in 16th Century Europe, and has received many adaptations in the 20th Century theatre, notably Jean Anouilh's 1946 drama, "*Médée*".

As in the case of most Greek tragedies, the play does not require any change of scene and takes place throughout outside the facade of Jason's and Medea's palace in Corinth. Events which occur off-stage (such as the deaths of Glauce and Creon and Medea's murder of her children) are described in elaborate speeches delivered by a messenger, rather than enacted before the audience.

Although there are virtually no stage directions in the texts of Greek tragedies, Medea's appearance in a chariot drawn by dragons towards the end of the play (in the manner of a "deus ex machina") would probably have been achieved by a construction on the roof of the skene or suspended from a "mechane", a kind of crane used in ancient Greek theatres for flying scenes, etc.

The play explores many universal themes: passion and rage (Medea is a woman of extreme behaviour and emotion, and Jason's betrayal of her has transformed her passion into rage and intemperate destruction); revenge (Medea is willing to sacrifice everything to make her revenge perfect); greatness and pride (the Greeks were fascinated by the thin line between greatness and hubris, or pride, and the idea that the same traits that make a man or woman great can lead to their destruction); the Other (Medea's exotic foreignness is emphasized, made still worse by her status as an exile, although Euripides shows during the play that the Other is not exclusively something external to Greece); intelligence and manipulation (Jason and Creon both try their hands at manipulation, but Medea is the master of manipulation, playing perfectly on the weaknesses and needs of both her enemies and her friends); and justice in an unjust society (especially where women are concerned).

It has been seen by some as one of the first works of feminism, with Medea as a feminist heroine. Euripides' treatment of gender is the most sophisticated one to be found in the works of any ancient Greek writer, and Medea's opening speech to the Chorus is perhaps classical Greek literature's most eloquent statement about the injustices that befall women.

The relationship between the Chorus and Medea is one of the most interesting in all of Greek drama. The women are alternately horrified and enthralled by Medea, living vicariously through her. They both condemn her and pity her for her horrible acts, but they do nothing to interfere. Powerful and fearless, Medea refuses to be wronged by men, and the Chorus cannot help but admire her as, in taking her revenge, she avenges all the crimes committed against all of womankind. We are not, as in Aeschylus' "*Oresteia*", allowed to comfort ourselves with the restoration of male-dominated order: "*Medea*" exposes that order as hypocritical and spineless.

In the character of Medea, we see a woman whose suffering, instead of ennobling her, has made her into a monster. She is fiercely proud, cunning and coldly efficient, unwilling to allow her enemies any kind of victory. She sees through the false pieties and hypocritical values of her enemies, and uses their own moral bankruptcy against them. Her revenge is total, but it comes at the cost of everything she holds dear. She murders her own children in part because she cannot bear the thought of seeing them hurt by an enemy.

Jason, on the other hand, is depicted as a condescending, opportunistic and unscrupulous man, full of self-deception and repugnant smugness. The other main male characters, Creon and Aegeus, are also depicted as weak and fearful, with few positive traits to speak of.

Source: http://www.ancient-literature.com/greece_euripides_medea.html#

Name _____

Date _____

Part I

Norma
Activity Worksheet

1. Several characters in the opera experience moments of loyalty and betrayal. List some examples of these moments for the characters Norma, Adalgisa and Pollione.

2. What is your opinion of Norma? Do you think she is a good person? Why or why not?

3. Pollione had a change of heart towards Norma when faced with death. What do you think caused his change of heart and why?
