

SAMSON AND DELILAH: FOR 3,000 YEARS, THEIR NAMES HAVE SYMBOLIZED reckless strength, ruthless cunning, and the inescapability of desire. When Camille Saint-Saëns, one of the leading composers of 19th-century France, decided to bring their story to the operatic stage, he had the perfect musical means to do so. Calling for a huge orchestra and a chorus of nearly 100 singers, Saint-Saëns built a mighty wall of sound that perfectly embodies Samson's miraculous strength. With his gift for lush melodies, Saint-Saëns crafted soaring tunes that give voice to Delilah's exquisite beauty. And with the librettist Ferdinand Lemaire, he turned the notorious biblical romance into a gripping psychological thriller. Sacred, scandalous, and irresistibly seductive, *Samson et Dalila* is now one of the most famous French operas of all time.

This season, the Metropolitan Opera presents Saint-Saëns's masterwork in a brand-new production by director Darko Tresnjak, who sees the opera as both an ancient story and a profoundly modern drama of passion and revenge. This duality is compounded by the work's conflicting themes of love and duty, belonging and independence, and tenderness and rage, which form the story's beating heart. *Samson et Dalila* on the Met stage is a sumptuous extravaganza, a spectacle sure to delight and thrill audiences of all ages.

This guide presents *Samson et Dalila* as a tale of superheroes set in the biblical era. It is designed to provide context, deepen background knowledge, and enrich the experience of the *Live in HD* performance. The materials on the following pages include biographical details about the composer, information on the opera's source and creation, and a series of activities that bring the opera and its music into the classroom. In addition to preparing students to engage confidently and enthusiastically with Saint-Saëns's opera, it will foster connections between multiple classroom subjects and invite students to understand *Samson et Dalila* through the music, movies, and entertainment they consume every day. It will thus empower students to continue enjoying opera and the performing arts even after they leave the theater.



GARANČA



ALAGNA



NAOURI



AZIZOV



BELOSSELSKIY

THE WORK: *SAMSON ET DALILA*

An opera in three acts, sung in French

Music by Camille Saint-Saëns

Libretto by Ferdinand Lemaire

Based on the story of Samson and Delilah from the Bible

First performed December 2, 1877
at the Grand Ducal Theater,
Weimar, Germany

PRODUCTION

Sir Mark Elder, Conductor

Darko Tresnjak, Production

Alexander Dodge, Set Designer

Linda J. Cho, Costume Designer

Donald Holder, Lighting Designer

Austin McCormick, Choreographer

STARRING

Elina Garanča

DALILA (mezzo-soprano)

Roberto Alagna

SAMSON (tenor)

Laurent Naouri

HIGH PRIEST (baritone)

Elchin Azizov

ABIMÉLECH (bass)

Dmitry Belosselskiy

THE OLD HEBREW (bass)

Production a gift of the Gramma Fisher Foundation,
Marshalltown, Iowa, and H.M. Agnes Hsu-Tang, PhD,
and Oscar Tang

Additional funding from The Walter and Leonore
Annenberg Endowment Fund, and William R. Miller

This guide includes five sections.

- **THE SOURCE, THE STORY, WHO'S WHO IN *SAMSON ET DALILA*, AND A TIMELINE**
- **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:**
Two activities designed to align with and support various Common Core Standard strands used in ELA, History/Social Studies, and Music curricula
- **PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES:**
Two activities to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, highlighting specific aspects of this production
- **POST-SHOW DISCUSSION:**
A wrap-up activity that integrates the *Live in HD* experience into the students' understanding of the performing arts and the humanities
- **STUDENT RESOURCE PAGES:**
Classroom-ready worksheets supporting the activities in the guide

The activities in this guide will focus on several aspects of *Samson et Dalila*:

- The relationship between Ferdinand Lemaire's libretto and the opera's biblical source
- Saint-Saëns's musical language and his use of multiple musical styles to add complexity and interest to the score
- Similarities between *Samson et Dalila* and other forms of art and entertainment with which students are familiar
- Creative choices made by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera for this production
- The opera as a unified work of art, involving the efforts of composer, librettist, and Met artists

This guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Samson et Dalila*, whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds, and seeks to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts as a whole—as a medium of both entertainment and creative expression.

SUMMARY Forty years before the events of the opera, the Israelites lost a war with the Philistines. Since then, they have lived as slaves under Philistine rule. The Israelites are miserable, but Samson, a young Israelite, tells his people not to lose hope. He believes God will send them a special weapon that will help them win back their freedom. Abimélech, a Philistine leader, laughs at the Israelites and threatens them with a sword, telling them they will never be free. Samson grabs Abimélech's sword and kills him. As the dust settles, Samson realizes that *he* is the weapon sent by God to free the Israelites.

With Samson as their leader, the Israelites rebel against their Philistine oppressors. Samson seems invincible, but he has one weakness: He has fallen in love with the beautiful Dalila. As a proud Philistine, however, Dalila hates Samson and the rebellion he leads, and when the High Priest of the Philistines asks her to help capture Samson, Dalila happily agrees. She invites Samson to visit her home, where Philistine soldiers are lying in wait. Dalila tells Samson she loves him, then asks him to prove his love for her by revealing the secret of his great strength. Samson relents and follows her inside. The Philistine soldiers leap out of the shadows and drag him off to prison.

The Philistines throw a huge party to celebrate Samson's defeat. The High Priest calls for Samson to be brought to the temple and tied to a pillar in the middle of the room so the Philistines can make fun of him. Realizing that this is his last chance to



A model of Alexander Dodge's
set for Act I

VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

SOPRANO

the highest-pitched voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian “mezzo” = middle, medium)

CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS

the lowest male voice



Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld's 1850s woodcut illustration of Samson destroying the temple

fight back against his captors, Samson pulls against the pillar with all his strength. The pillar snaps in two and the temple collapses, killing Samson and all the Philistines gathered below.

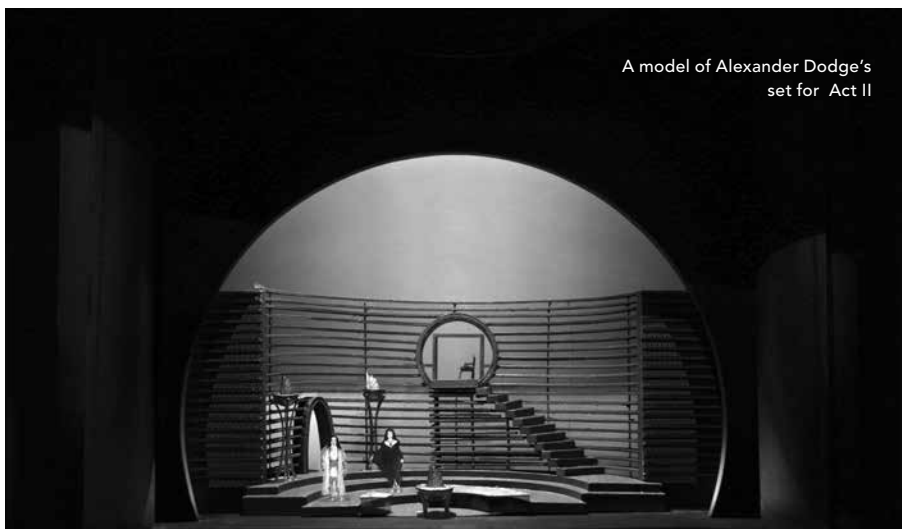
THE SOURCE: THE BOOK OF JUDGES, CHAPTER 16 “Samson and Delilah” is one of the most famous stories of all time, and yet is extremely brief: It takes up less than a single chapter in the Old Testament. It appears in the Book of Judges, which recounts the Israelites’ efforts to establish a kingdom of their own after the exodus from Egypt. Unfortunately, the land where the Israelites hoped to settle was already home to numerous tribes, and in staking out their territory, the Israelites were inevitably entangled in the region’s wars. Time and again, the Israelites—who had only just escaped slavery in Egypt—found themselves conquered and enslaved by rival tribes; each time, God would send a leader, or “judge,” to help them regain their freedom. Samson was the judge sent by God to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines, and Chapters 13–16 of the Book of Judges are devoted to his life. Chapters 13, 14, and 15 relate anecdotes about Samson’s childhood and miraculous strength, which is the physical expression of his relationship with God. Yet it is Chapter 16, which recounts Samson’s ill-fated affair with Delilah, which has made him a household name. Delilah’s appearance in the story is brief. The Bible provides no information about her background, nor details about how she and Samson met: After she delivers

Samson to the Philistines, she is never heard from again. All told, Delilah appears in only seventeen Bible verses. Nevertheless, she has become just as famous as her lover-turned-victim, a symbol of seduction and betrayal, and a reminder that even the strongest warrior can be felled by love.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I: *A town square in Gaza, outside the Temple of Dagon* The Israelites sing a sorrowful prayer to God. They are enslaved to the Philistines and beg God for relief from their torment. Yet Samson, an Israelite leader, tells them not to lose hope. He reminds the Israelites of the many battles they have already won and promises that God will send a miraculous weapon to help them win back their freedom. Abimélech, the Philistine commander of Gaza, enters and begins to taunt the Israelites. He says that their prayers would be better spent begging the Philistines for pity. But when Abimélech declares that the Israelites' God is nothing next to the Philistine god Dagon, Samson grabs Abimélech's sword and kills him. The Israelites realize that the weapon God has sent them is in fact Samson himself.

Under Samson's leadership, the Israelites stage a revolt and burn the Philistines' crops. The High Priest is furious. He has heard that Samson is invincible on the battlefield, but he wonders if there might a subtler way to defeat the Israelite leader. A group of priestesses emerges from the temple at the edge of the square; among them is the enchantingly beautiful Dalila. Samson watches as the priestesses sing and dance. Dalila notices Samson staring at her and invites him to join her in the valley of Sorek, where she lives. An old Israelite warns Samson to be careful. Samson declares that his place is fighting alongside the Israelites, not in the valley of Sorek with the unknown beauty. Deep down, however, Samson already knows he will be unable to resist Dalila's charms.



A model of Alexander Dodge's
set for Act II

ACT II: *The Valley of Sorek* Dalila sits in front of her house filled with thoughts of revenge. She observes a delicious irony: Samson, who wishes to free the Israelites from slavery, is now slave to her love. The High Priest arrives to speak with Dalila. With Samson at the head of the Israelite army, the Philistine soldiers have no hope of stopping the rebellion. The one person who can destroy Samson is Dalila, and the High Priest offers any price for her help. Dalila replies that she has no desire for money—vengeance is payment enough. She knows Samson will visit her that very night, and she tells the Priest to lie in wait with his soldiers.

Under the cover of darkness, Samson arrives at Dalila's door. He tells Dalila he must end their affair because of his duties to the Israelites and God. "But what about the God of Love?" Dalila asks. Overcome with emotion, Samson confesses that he loves her. Dalila replies with a soaring declaration of her own love. When her song ends, however, Dalila demands proof of Samson's feelings: He must tell her the secret of his strength. Suddenly, thunder and lightning split the sky. Samson understands the storm as an expression of God's anger. Furious that Samson has not told her his secret, Dalila heads into her house. After a moment of hesitation, Samson follows her. He has been betrayed: The Philistine soldiers lying in wait seize him.

ACT III, Scene 1: *A prison in Gaza* Samson sits alone in his filthy cell. He has been blinded by the Philistines and is now forced to perform heavy labor for them. Yet he is even more tormented by the knowledge that because of his foolish trust in Dalila, the Israelites are once again enslaved by the Philistines. From far away, he hears the voices of the Israelites lamenting their fate: "Samson sold us for the love of a woman," they sing. Samson yearns for the deliverance of death while praying to God for his people.

Scene 2: *The Temple of Dagon* The Philistines have gathered to celebrate Samson's defeat. They begin by singing an ode to spring, but the gentle song soon turns into a wild dance. As the festivities reach their height, Samson is led in. The High Priest thanks Dalila for delivering Samson to the Philistines, and Dalila, singing a tune reminiscent of the love song she sang in Act II, taunts Samson that she never felt anything for him but hatred. The High Priest has a servant boy lead Samson to the center of the hall so that everyone can see and mock the disgraced warrior. Quietly, Samson asks the servant to tie him to the marble pillar that holds up the roof. The High Priest and Dalila laugh at how Samson has been brought so low, while Samson, mustering the last ounces of his strength, pulls against the pillar with all his might. The pillar snaps and the roof of the temple comes crashing down, killing Samson and all the Philistines gathered below.

WHO'S WHO IN *SAMSON ET DALILA*

CHARACTER		PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Samson	A warrior and leader of the Israelites	sam-SOHN	tenor	Samson is a seemingly invincible warrior, and the secret to his strength is his long hair. He has one major vulnerability: He is in love with Dalila. Ultimately, this love causes his downfall.
Dalila (Delilah in English)	A priestess of Dagon	dah-lee-LAH	mezzo-soprano	A proud Philistine, Dalila hates Samson and resents the Philistine deaths he has caused. Nevertheless, she pretends to love him because she knows it is the best way to capture and weaken him.
Abimélech	The satrap of Gaza (the provincial governor)	ah-bee-MEH-lek	bass	Abimélech is a brash Philistine leader who appears for only a single scene before his death. His downfall at the hands of Samson helps launch the Israelite rebellion.
High Priest of Dagon	A religious official	dah-GONH	baritone	The de facto leader of the Philistines, the High Priest of Dagon conspires with Dalila to capture Samson.

- 1835** Camille Saint-Saëns is born in Paris on October 9. The child's extraordinary musical gifts are evident from an early age; he receives his first music lessons from his maternal grandmother at the age of three and is able to read music before he can read words.
- 1846** At only ten years old, Saint-Saëns makes his debut as a pianist at the Salle Pleyel, one of the most important concert halls in Paris.
- 1848** Saint-Saëns enters the Paris Conservatory, where he studies piano, organ, and composition. Hector Berlioz and Franz Liszt, two of the most important musicians of the day, express their amazement at the young boy's talent. Three decades later, Liszt will play a pivotal role in the creation of *Samson et Dalila*.
- 1857** Saint-Saëns is hired as chief organist at the Madeleine, a majestic church in the center of Paris. He will remain in the post for 20 years.
- 1867** Saint-Saëns continues to compose despite his busy schedule as an organist. He submits a work to a competition hosted by the Grande Fête Internationale du Travail et de l'Industrie (the World's Fair of Work and Industry). The jury, which includes five of the most famous composers in the world, awards Saint-Saëns first prize.

Around this time, Saint-Saëns approaches the poet Ferdinand Lemaire about crafting a libretto for an oratorio, a large-scale choral work based on a biblical theme. The young poet suggests collaborating on an opera instead, one based on the story of Samson and Delilah. Saint-Saëns is thrilled with the idea and begins composing right away. Unfortunately, he gets little encouragement from his friends, who find the opera's music incomprehensible, and Saint-Saëns abandons the project.



Camille Saint-Saëns, in a portrait by famed Parisian photographer Nadar

- 1870** At a centennial celebration for the composer Ludwig van Beethoven, Saint-Saëns once again crosses the path of Franz Liszt. When Saint-Saëns mentions his abandoned opera on Samson and Delilah, Liszt encourages him to complete the work.
- 1876** Saint-Saëns finally finishes composing *Samson et Dalila*. Unfortunately, he cannot find an opera house in Paris willing to host the premiere. Operas based on biblical subjects are considered taboo in France, and the Parisian producers have no desire to run afoul of censors.
- 1877** In contrast to the Parisian impresarios, Liszt, who lives in the German city of Weimar, is tremendously enthusiastic about Saint-Saëns's new opera. He organizes *Samson et Dalila*'s premiere performance, which takes place on December 2 at Weimar's Grand Ducal Theater.
- 1890** *Samson et Dalila* receives its first performance in France, in the city of Rouen. In October, it will finally be performed in Paris, almost 13 years after its premiere.
- 1892** *Samson et Dalila* is heard for the first time in New York. However, it is not performed as a staged opera, with sets and costumes; rather, it is presented as a concert, with the singers standing in front of the orchestra.
- 1921** Saint-Saëns dies on December 16 in Algiers. His body is returned to Paris and his funeral is celebrated at the Church of the Madeleine, where Saint-Saëns spent his career as an organist. He is buried in his family's tomb in the city's Montparnasse Cemetery, where his grave may still be visited today.



Margarete Matzenauer sang the role of Dalila at the Met in 1913.

Samson et Dalila

Superhero Stories: The Amazing Adventures of Samson and Delilah

English Language Arts

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible handouts available at the back of this guide entitled *Superhero Stories*. You will also need copies of the opera synopsis, drawing materials (such as colored pencils or pens), and scratch paper. You may wish to make copies of the sidebar *Samson and Delilah: The Original Story* and the *Who's Who in Samson et Dalila* chart.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Creative Writing, Visual Arts, Film and Media, Graphic Design, Computer-Based Design

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To increase familiarity with *Samson et Dalila's* story
- To explore the roles of dialogue and design in a narrative context
- To connect *Samson et Dalila* to other media that students know and enjoy

With his superhuman strength, feats of power, and extravagant hairstyle, Samson can easily be seen as a sort of biblical superhero. Today, superheroes are everywhere, from the pages of Marvel Comic books to the giant screens of summer blockbusters. This exercise will deepen your students' understanding of *Samson et Dalila* by asking them to re-imagine the opera as a superhero comic. Students will consider how visual aspects (such as what the characters look like, how they are dressed, and the settings in which they find themselves) can tell a story, inspiring them to engage with the appearance and design of the Met's production during the *Live in HD* broadcast. Students will:

- analyze superhero stories with which they are already familiar and identify the genre's major themes
- apply these analyses to *Samson et Dalila's* story and hypothesize what makes Samson a superhero
- re-fashion *Samson et Dalila* as a comic book or graphic novel, making decisions about dialogue, layout, and design
- illustrate the comic book and present their work to the class

STEPS

Students will begin by recalling—individually, in small groups, or as a class—superhero stories they know well. Then, as a class, they will identify three main themes that all superhero stories have in common (e.g., a special power, a nemesis, and a goal or cause). They will continue by analyzing *Samson et Dalila* as a superhero narrative. Finally, they will sketch their own multi-panel comic book that tells the opera's story.



Comic books of the 1950s told the story of Samson as a paragon of strength
IMAGES: COURTESY DIGITAL COMICS MUSEUM

STEP 1: Begin by inviting your students to think of superheroes with whom they are familiar. These may come from comic books, movies, video games, or any other medium your students enjoy; some examples might include Black Panther, Wonder Woman, Spider-Man, and Batman. Your students may also think about characters who are not officially “superheroes,” but who possess an exceptional ability, such as Sherlock Holmes. Next, ask your students to consider (in small groups, or as part of a class-wide discussion) what makes their hero “super.” As a class, guide students to home in on three particular elements common to all superheroes: an exceptional or superhuman skill, a nemesis, and a goal or cause. Write these three themes (“superpower,” “nemesis,” and “goal”) on the board, and ask your students the following questions.

- What is your superhero’s superpower? Is it something magical or superhuman (like Spider-Man’s spider bite–induced abilities), or is it a basic human trait that the hero employs exceptionally well (like Sherlock Holmes’s powers of deduction)?
- Does s/he have a single nemesis, or does s/he have to fight many villains?
- What is his/her goal or cause? What does the superpower compel him/her to do; or, alternatively, what is the problem s/he is called to solve?

STEP 2: Distribute copies of the synopsis and have your students take turns reading the plot aloud. It may be helpful for your students to read the original version of the story as well, which gives more details about Samson’s superhuman strength, available in the sidebar *Samson and Delilah: The Original Story*.

STEP 3: Now that your students are familiar with the opera’s plot, continue your exploration of character by having students consider Samson in terms of his superhero qualities. Ask your students:

- What is Samson’s superpower?
- Who is Samson’s nemesis? Is it Abimélech? The High Priest? Dalila? (If it is Dalila, how does it complicate matters that Samson is in love with her?)
- Samson is often viewed as weak because he lets his love for Dalila overwhelm his goals and his better judgment, but can you think of any other superheroes who find their nemeses strangely alluring (for instance, Sherlock Holmes and Moriarty)? Why do you think that might be?
- Does Dalila have a superpower? Could her beauty be construed as such? What about her ability to control Samson by inciting his love?

STEP 4: Explain to your students that the bulk of their effort in the lesson will be to draw a comic book based on *Samson et Dalila*’s plot. Although their comic books

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND SAMSON ET DALILA

This activity directly supports the following ELA-Literacy Common Core Strands:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1.d

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3.b

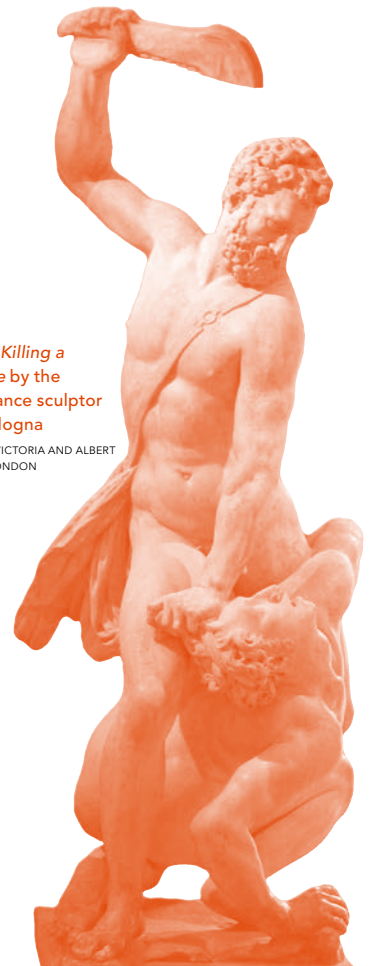
Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.6

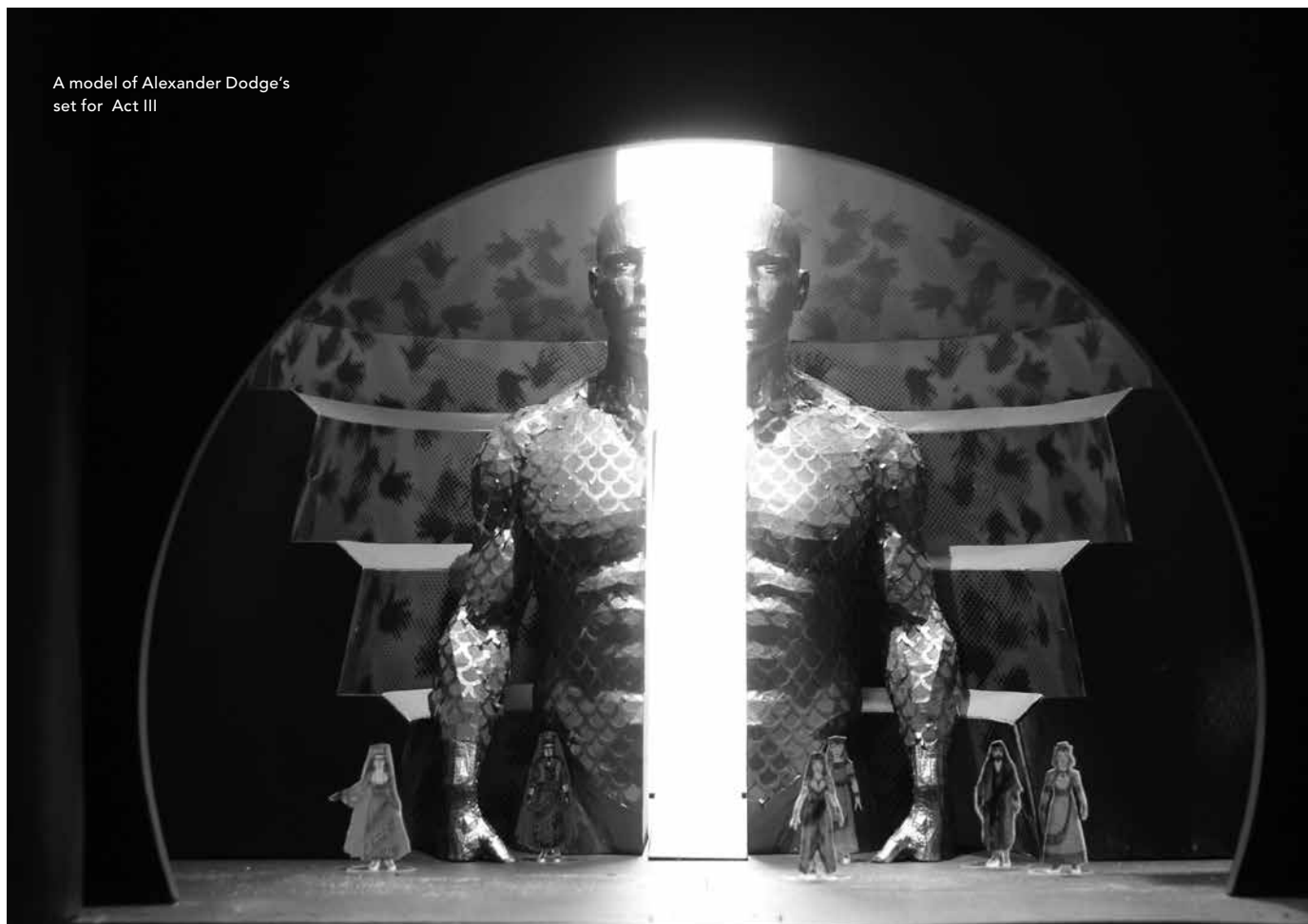
Use technology, including the internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

Samson Killing a Philistine by the Renaissance sculptor Giambologna

COURTESY VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON



A model of Alexander Dodge's
set for Act III



should depict the events in the opera, they may also include events from the original story (such as Samson killing the lion) if they like.

Distribute the *Superhero Stories* reproducible handouts and point out that they only have nine panels in which to tell the story of Samson and Dalila. Divide students into small groups and task them with brainstorming how best to use each panel. One might be dedicated to the Israelites' prayer, one to Samson's duel with Abimélech, and one to Dalila's first encounter with Samson, for instance. The first page of the handout provides space for students to make notes on the actions and text that will appear in each panel.

Let students know that they may use either captions or speech bubbles with dialogue to tell the story of the opera in their comic books. In each case, however, the space for text is very limited. In general, the main characters will only get to speak once or twice in any given panel, and the words can't take up too much space. Thus, they will need to write extremely concise dialogue or captions that still make clear what is

SAMSON AND DELILAH: THE ORIGINAL STORY

Shortly before Samson's birth, his mother was visited by an angel. The Israelites had suffered under 40 years of Philistine enslavement, and the angel declared that the as-yet unborn child would be a "judge" sent by God to deliver the Israelites from bondage. To this end, the boy would grow into a warrior of unsurpassed strength. There was just one catch: He could never cut his hair. Even as a child, Samson displayed a strength verging on the miraculous. When menaced by a lion, he slaughtered the beast with



his bare hands. When attacked by a Philistine regiment, he slew 1,000 soldiers with the jawbone of a single donkey. And yet, for all his physical strength, Samson was not without certain weaknesses. He was impetuous, prone to angry outbursts, and totally uninterested in delayed gratification. When he saw something he wanted, he took it, with little or no concern for the consequences.

One day, Samson saw Delilah, a woman from the Valley of Sorek, and promptly fell in love. Delilah's interest in Samson, however, was considerably less romantic: The Philistine elders, weary of being vanquished by Samson on the battlefield, had offered her a large quantity of silver if she could uncover the secret of Samson's strength. Throwing caution to the wind,

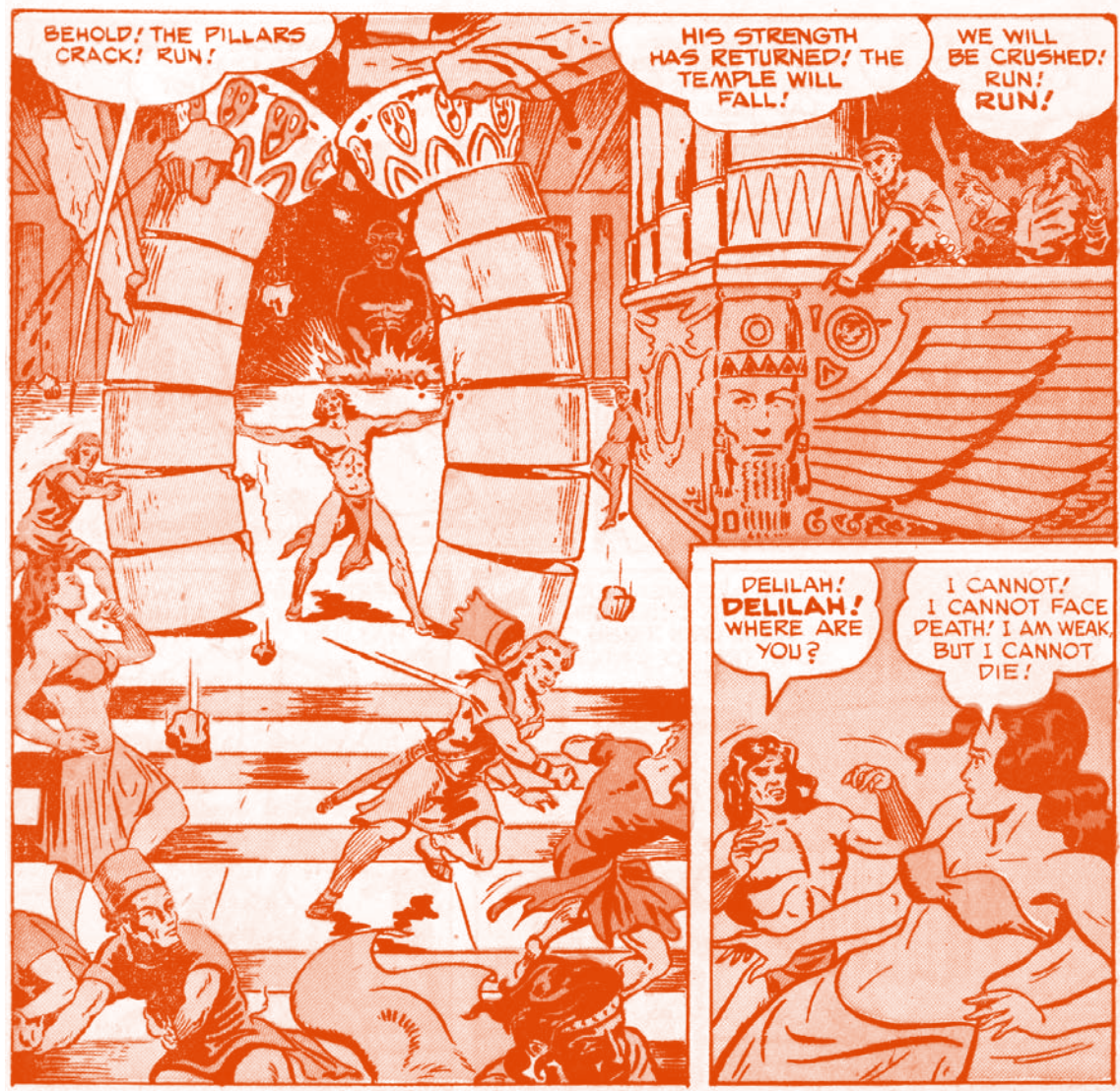
Samson started an affair with the unknown woman. Soon thereafter, Delilah's manipulation began. Over and over, she told Samson that if he truly loved her, he would tell her the secret of his great strength. First, Samson told Delilah that he would lose his power if bound with seven fresh bowstrings. That night, Delilah called the Philistines to bind Samson with fresh bowstrings; waking up the next morning, Samson simply flexed his muscles and the bowstrings snapped. Delilah was furious that Samson had lied to her. Again, she demanded to know the secret of Samson's strength, and again Samson lied. Finally, however, beguiled by Delilah's charms (or, in some versions of the story, simply worn down by Delilah's nagging), Samson told Delilah the truth: If his hair were cut, he would be as weak as any other man. The next morning, he awoke to find himself shorn, blinded, and imprisoned by the Philistines.

The Philistines congratulated themselves on their defeat of the great warrior. Samson, meanwhile, was left to languish in prison. One night, the Philistine elders threw a great banquet. They called for Samson to be brought to the banquet hall, where he was tied to a pillar and forced to listen to the laughs and jeers of the crowd. During the long weeks of Samson's captivity, however, his hair had inevitably begun to grow back, and his lost strength had slowly returned. Now, in the midst of the reveling Philistines, Samson realized that his opportunity for revenge had come. He leaned forward and, pulling with all his might, broke the stone pillar in two. The roof of the building came crashing down, crushing everyone below.



Caspar Luyken's 1712 etching, *Samson Kills the Lion* (above). Philips Galle's 16th-century depiction of Samson destroying the temple (right).

COURTESY RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM (LUYKENS) AND HARVARD ART MUSEUMS/FOGG MUSEUM (GALLE)



COURTESY DIGITAL
COMICS MUSEUM

going on. For example, if they were to include a panel that depicts Samson meeting Dalila at her home, the dialogue may read simply:

SAMSON: "I love you!"

DALILA: "Then you must prove it: Tell me the secret of your strength!"

STEP 5: As a final preliminary step before your students illustrate their comic books, have them create designs for the main characters, their costumes, and the backdrops. In the next page of the reproducible handouts entitled *Superhero Stories: The Characters*, space has been provided for your students to sketch a costume for each of the four main characters. Using both this handout and the previous page, students will also

need to think about the backgrounds and settings that each panel of their comic book will include. For instance: does one panel need to include Dalila's house? Does one panel need to include the Temple of Dagon? If so, what will they look like? Students can also refer to the synopsis and its details on the locations for each act.

STEP 6: Students are now ready to illustrate the entire comic book as they have envisioned it, using the templates on the next page of the reproducible handouts. (Alternatively, you may have them continue to work in groups, with the illustrations divided between the members: each student may draw two or three panels, to be collated when complete.) If desired, you may have students make their illustrations on cardstock or art paper, with two or three panels per page. Finally, have each student or group present their work to the class, explaining their creative choices on which events to portray and how they developed the accompanying text to form a cohesive whole.

FOLLOW-UP: If your students would like to make their comic book look more polished, there are many computer programs that help students draw and design comics. One fun option is to use "Bitmoji" characters, which can be designed to match your students' conceptions of the characters and varied to express a variety of emotions. For a more professional look, the comic-book design website <http://plasq.com/apps/comiclfe/macwin/> offers a free trial version. If your students have easy access to computers, invite them to refine their comic book and present the final version to the class.



FUN FACT: Saint-Saëns loved using strange or unusual instruments to evoke particular characters, places, or ideas. For instance, Abimélech's entrance is accompanied by a rare low brass instrument called an "ophicleide" (pronounced "OFF-i-clyde").

Musical Archaeology: *Samson et Dalila*

Music

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide entitled *Musical Archaeology*, as well as the audio selections from *Samson et Dalila* available online or on the accompanying CD. You will also need copies of the opera's synopsis.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Music, Composition, Music History, Ethnomusicology, Poetry, Comparative Literature, Literary Analysis

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To increase familiarity with *Samson et Dalila*'s story and Saint-Saëns's music
- To practice careful and creative listening
- To develop new musical vocabulary

Analyzing a new piece of music is a lot like excavation during an archaeological dig: After collecting and cataloging new artifacts, the musical archaeologist must learn about the context and content of these works by comparing them to other known pieces of music. In this activity, students will work in the role of musical archaeologists tasked with deciphering several key excerpts from *Samson et Dalila*. In the course of the activity, students will learn about two other genres of music evoked by the opera's score and consider why Saint-Saëns used these musical genres to tell Samson and Dalila's story. Students will:

- listen to and analyze several musical excerpts from *Samson et Dalila*
- learn about traditional Middle Eastern instruments
- explore three types of choral music
- discuss what Saint-Saëns's musical choices tell listeners about the opera's characters and plot

STEPS

Students will begin by listening to five excerpts from *Samson et Dalila*. Next, they will listen to two examples of Middle Eastern folk music and three examples of choral music, and learn new vocabulary to help them discuss what they are hearing. Finally, students will return to the opera excerpts. Armed with their newly acquired musical knowledge, students will analyze how the excerpts' musical characteristics help tell the opera's story, drawing conclusions about Saint-Saëns's musical choices.

Several of the musical terms referenced in this activity are included in the *Ten Essential Musical Terms* in this guide. You may want to review them as a class at the start, using your voice or musical instruments as necessary. Alternatively, you may prefer to review the terms as they occur in the course of the activity.

STEP 1: Begin by ensuring that students understand the opera's plot. Distribute copies of the synopsis or the brief summary found in this guide for students to read, either silently or aloud. Students should understand the characters and fundamental relationships of *Samson et Dalila*. Ask for volunteers to explain what the opera is about in their own words.



STEP 2: Next, distribute the reproducible handouts at the back of this guide entitled *Musical Archaeology: Artifacts from the Opera*. Explain to your students that they will listen to five musical excerpts from *Samson et Dalila*. As students listen to each example, they should jot down some impressions about what they hear, using the space provided on the handout. At this stage, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers, and students need not use specialized musical terminology. Rather, they should listen carefully and find a descriptive way to express what they hear. It may be helpful for your students to hear each excerpt twice before moving on.

Three of the five excerpts have lyrics; original texts and side-by-side English translations are provided on the handout. Before playing these excerpts, ask your students to read over the translations quickly. Invite them to take the lyrics into account as they listen to the excerpt, and to observe how the music reflects the meaning of the words. (Note that these excerpts are not presented in the order in which they appear in the opera.)

TRACK	ARTIFACT	CONTEXT
1	1: “Dieu d’Israël”	The opening lines of the opera: the Israelites pray to God to deliver them from slavery.
2	2: Dance of the Priestesses of Dagon	Dalila and her fellow priestesses emerge from the Temple of Dagon.
3	3: “Hymne de joie”	The Israelites celebrate Samson’s defeat of Abimélech and the success of their rebellion.
4	4: “Nous avons vu”	Another Israelite prayer, remembering the miracles God has performed.
5	5: Dance: Bacchanale	The Philistines, gathered in the Temple of Dagon, celebrate Samson’s defeat.

Once you have made your way through all the excerpts, take a moment for a class-wide conversation, inviting your students to share their impressions. The following questions may facilitate your discussion:

- Which was your favorite excerpt?
- Did any of the music sound familiar? What did it remind you of?
- Did any of it sound strange? How so?

STEP 3: If this were an archaeological dig, in which your students had to analyze physical artifacts, the next step in the process would be to head to a museum. There,

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND SAMSON ET DALILA

This activity directly supports the following ELA-Literacy Common Core Strands:

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.9-10.9

Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.4.d

Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

FUN FACT: Saint-Saëns was the first major composer to write film music, with his 1908 score for the French silent film *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise*.

your students could look for objects similar to those they had just unearthed; this would help them identify and understand the newly excavated items. Thus, the next steps of this activity will take your students to two metaphorical museums, each one focusing on a different kind of music. The first will be the Museum of Middle Eastern Music.

Distribute the next section of the reproducible handouts entitled *Musical Archaeology: Museum of Middle Eastern Music*. In this step, students will begin by examining three “exhibits” (i.e., listening to three short excerpts) that will introduce them to a variety of traditional Middle Eastern musical instruments. (More information about these and other instruments can be found in the sidebar *An Introduction to Middle Eastern Musical Instruments*.) Play each excerpt several times for your students and talk through the particular tonal quality (or “timbre”) of the instruments they hear.

TRACK	EXHIBIT	WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:
6	1: Sawaya Quartet: <i>Gamil, gamil</i> , beginning	Oud: Do you hear something that sounds like a “twangy” guitar? This is an oud, a plucked string instrument that is similar to a lute.
7	2: Sawaya Quartet: <i>Gamil, gamil</i> , continued	Violin and Darbuka: In contrast to the plucked oud you just heard, this excerpt features a violin played with a bow, much like the violins you may know from playing in orchestra or going to classical music concerts. Violins are common in Middle Eastern folk music. You will also hear a low-pitched drum: This is a darbuka, one of the standard percussion instruments in Middle Eastern music.
8	3: George Abdo: <i>Raks Araby</i> , beginning	Finger Cymbals, Darbuka, and Tambourine: Listen to the three different kinds of percussion in this excerpt. First, you will hear a high-pitched clinking, which is the sound of tiny cymbals held at the tips of the fingers. Next, you will hear a low-pitched drum; this is another example of the darbuka. Finally, you will hear a soft jangling sound; this is a tambourine. <i>Teachers: Invite your students to tap along on their desks as they listen to the rhythms of this excerpt.</i>
9	4: <i>Gamil, gamil</i>	Exhibits 4 and 5 are longer excerpts of the pieces your students just heard. Ask your students to listen for the instruments they have learned to identify (oud, violin, darbuka, finger cymbals, and tambourine) and think about how those instruments work together to create a particular sound.
10	5: <i>Raks Araby</i>	

An Introduction to Middle Eastern Musical Instruments

DARBUKA: A drum, one of the standard instruments in Middle Eastern folk bands. This percussion instrument is easily identified by its goblet-like shape: A skin is stretched across the top of the "goblet" to create a sounding membrane. The darbuka can be held under an arm or on a lap while playing, and is struck with a bare hand. When hit with the base of the hand, it produces a low, resonant tone; when hit with the fingertips, it produces a sharper tone.

FINGER CYMBALS: Tiny metal plates that are attached with pieces of elastic or string to the thumb and middle- or forefinger. When struck against each other, finger cymbals produce a clear, high-pitched sound. Since they are easy to hold and very light, finger cymbals are often worn by dancers, who can thus participate in creating the music that accompanies their dance steps.

MIZMAR: A double-reed wind instrument that produces a characteristic "buzzing" sound, caused by the two reeds vibrating against each other. In the Western orchestra, a similar sound is produced by the oboe or English horn.

NEY: A wind instrument similar to the Western flute. It can be played "transverse" (i.e., held parallel to the ground, as with the flute) or vertically. Sometimes, performers even play two vertically held neys simultaneously.

OD: A plucked string instrument, held and played like a lute or guitar, with a flat front and a steeply domed back. In fact, the Arabic word "el-oud" ("the oud") is the source of the English word "lute."

QANUN: A flat, triangular stringed instrument. The qanun looks like a dulcimer, with numerous parallel strings across the top of the sounding board. Unlike a dulcimer, however, the strings of the qanun are not struck with hammers; rather, they are plucked with a pick or fingertips.

TAMBOURINE ("RIK" IN ARABIC): A type of percussion instrument with a hollow circular frame into which are set small cymbals that clang against one another when the frame is shaken or hit. Optionally, a piece of skin or fabric may be stretched across the frame to be hit with the hand. Tambourines are often used by Western composers to make music sound exotic.

VIOLIN: The Arabic violin is just like its Western counterpart, except the strings are usually tuned in fourths instead of in fifths. It is a common element of small traditional ensembles.

1. Darbuka 2. Oud 3. Man playing a ney 4. Mizmar 5. Tambourine
6. Finger cymbals 7. Oud, side view 8. Man playing a qanun

Before moving on, ask your students to write down a few general impressions about the Middle Eastern music they have listened to. How might they recognize Middle Eastern music in the future?

STEP 4: Our next stop will be at the “Museum of Choral Music.” All of the musical excerpts in this portion of the activity feature a chorus, and the next four mini-exercises will introduce your students to important vocabulary by having them sing together. (As you go through each of the following steps, be sure to remind your students that it’s permissible to laugh: music can—and should—be fun!)

Have the whole class sing “Row, row, row your boat” together. Everyone should all start at the same time (and on the same note).

As a next step, divide your students into two groups. Have one group sing “Row, row, row your boat” while the other sings “Twinkle, twinkle little star” or “Take me out to the ballgame.” How does it sound?

As a third step, both groups will sing “Row, row, row your boat”; instead of starting at the same time, however, Group 1 should start singing before Group 2. When Group 1 gets to the line “Gently down the stream,” Group 2 should start singing from the beginning of the song, while Group 1 continues. The lyrics should overlap as notated below.

Row, row, row your boat	Gently down the stream	Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily	Life is but a dream.
Row, row, row your boat	Gently down the stream	Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily ...	

How do the overlapping voices sound this time?

Let’s make things even more complex. Divide your students into four groups. Again, they will sing “Row, row, row your boat,” and Group 2 will begin when Group 1 gets to “Gently down the stream.” Group 3 will begin when Group 2 gets to “Gently down the stream” (and Group 1 gets to “Merrily, merrily”); when Group 3 gets to “Gently down the stream,” Group 4 will begin. When each group gets to the end of the song, they should go back and start again from the beginning. (If your students enjoyed this portion of the exercise, the songs “Frère Jacques” and “Three Blind Mice” also work when sung this way.) The lyrics should overlap as notated on the following page.

Row, row, row your boat	Gently down the stream	Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily	Life is but a dream.
	Row, row, row your boat	Gently down the stream	Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily ...
		Row, row, row your boat	Gently down the stream ...
			Row, row, row your boat...

When your students have finished singing, ask them to describe the different steps in their own words. Then introduce them to two new vocabulary words: monophonic and polyphonic.

- The first step, when all the students sang “Row, row, row your boat” in unison, is an example of “monophonic” singing. It may help your students if you explain that the term comes from the Greek words **mono** (meaning “one” or “single”), and **phonos** (meaning “sound”); thus, “monophonic music” is music with a single, unified sound.
- The second step, in which one group sang “Row, row, row” and the other group sang “Twinkle, twinkle,” is an example of polyphonic music (from the Greek **poly**, meaning “many,” and **phonos**). Polyphonic music features multiple voices or instruments singing/playing different music at the same time.
- What about steps 3 and 4, when all the students were singing the same tune, but starting at different times? This is a special kind of polyphonic music, called imitative polyphony, because each voice imitates what came before. (For teachers and students who wish to learn more about imitative polyphony, see the sidebar *Chasing Each Other in Circles: Two Types of Musical Polyphony*.)

STEP 5: Armed with their new musical vocabulary, students can now explore the musical excerpts from the “Museum of Choral Music.” Distribute the pages from the reproducible handouts entitled *Musical Archaeology: Museum of Choral Music* and play the three musical excerpts. In each case, ask your students to consider:

- Is the example monophonic or polyphonic? If polyphonic, is it an example of imitative polyphony?
- Does the melody reflect the meaning of the text?
- Where applicable: How does the instrumental accompaniment add to the expressiveness of the excerpt?

FUN FACT: Saint-Saëns wasn't just interested in music; he loved literature and science as well, and he used the proceeds from his very first music publication to buy a telescope.

TRACK	EXHIBIT	ABOUT THE EXCERPT:
11	1: Anonymous: <i>Sanctus</i>	This is an example of Gregorian chant, a kind of singing used by nuns and monks since the early middle ages as part of their daily religious services. (Fun fact: This tune is at least 800 years old!)
12	2: George Frideric Handel: <i>Messiah</i> , "He Trusted in God"	This excerpt comes from an oratorio, a work for vocal soloists, choir, and orchestra based on a religious theme. Oratorios often incorporate biblical texts into their lyrics; the text in this example comes from one of the Psalms. The musical structure of this excerpt is a special type of imitative counterpoint known as a fugue.
13	3: Michel-Richard de Lalande: <i>De profundis</i>	This is an example of a motet, another type of music featuring a choir and religious texts. Motets may also include instruments. Listen to the use of very low-pitched instruments, which are used to illustrate the "depths" from which the singers are calling.

Ask your students for general impressions about this music. How might they describe to a friend what they've heard?

STEP 6: Students are now ready to return to the musical "artifacts" from *Samson et Dalila*, analyzing them for their similarities to the "exhibits" in the previous steps. Begin by playing each of the excerpts, provided on **Tracks 1–5**, for your students again. Have them revise or add to their original notes using the new musical vocabulary and knowledge they have acquired.

Divide your students into small groups and have them work to find which Middle Eastern or choral "exhibits" most closely resemble each operatic "artifact." Where applicable, they should think about the lyrics as well as music itself. (Note that there may be more than one Middle Eastern or choral example that corresponds to a single operatic artifact, or vice-versa.)

Ask your students, still working in their groups, to develop a hypothesis about why Saint-Saëns chose to imitate both Middle Eastern sounds and religious choral music. How does it improve their understanding of the story to know that Saint-Saëns mimicked both Gregorian chant and imitative polyphony for the music of the Israelite slaves? What do students think about Saint-Saëns's choice to imitate Middle Eastern music for the Philistine dance scenes?

STEP 7: Finally, have students share their conclusions in a class-wide discussion.

FOLLOW-UP: Your students may have come into contact with the phrase “cultural appropriation,” an idea which has recently appeared in many articles, documentaries, and news reports. “Cultural appropriation” is a sociological concept that examines the use or “appropriation” of art, fashion, activities, or other items from a minority culture. When presented outside of their original context, these borrowed ideas or items are often displayed as “exotic” or “different”; unfortunately, this can reinforce the perception of the minority culture as foreign and/or inferior.

After completing this exercise, it may be instructive to engage in a discussion about the depiction of foreign cultures in Western artworks. Consider the following questions:

- Do you think Saint-Saëns’s use of Middle Eastern music counts as “cultural appropriation”? Why or why not?
- What about his use of choral/religious music? Why or why not?
- If you answered “yes” to one, but not to the other, why?
- Can you think of other works of art that use “exotic” elements derived from other cultures? Do you think that is appropriate? Why or why not?

CHASING EACH OTHER IN CIRCLES:

Two Types of Musical Polyphony

This guide's musical activity, "Musical Archaeology," offers a basic introduction to imitative polyphony. For teachers and students who wish to know more about this fascinating compositional tool, the following discussion delves into two forms of imitative counterpoint: "canons" and "fugues."

A canon consists of only a single line of music and a "rule" explaining how different voices should sing it (in fact, the term "canon" comes from the Latin word for "rule"). In "Row, row, row your boat," for example, the rule is that each voice sings the same melody at the same speed, with each new voice beginning four beats after the previous one. This is the simplest kind of canon. Composers can also write canons in which the second voice sings the tune backwards (called "retrograde" motion) or upside-down ("inversion"); a "crab" canon features the melody sung both upside down and backwards! Alternatively, the second voice may sing the tune at a faster pace than the first (a technique known as "diminution," because it involves decreasing the length of the notes), or the second voice may sing the tune more slowly ("augmentation"). Finally, there are so-called "puzzle canons," in which a single line of music is presented with no instructions at all, and performers must figure out the rule before they can successfully sing or play the piece.

The concept of fugue is rather more complex. It can refer both to a compositional technique as well as a type of composition, and it has meant different things over the history of its usage, beginning in the 14th century. Fugues are based on a brief theme, or "subject," and its imitation throughout multiple voices of a composition. The term derives from two Latin words meaning "to flee" and "to chase," reflecting the way that fugal subjects (i.e. repeated musical ideas) figuratively chase one another in repetition. The art of fugal composition reached its pinnacle in the works of Johann Sebastian Bach in the 18th century, but fugues can be found in the works of many later composers, both in orchestral music and in opera, including Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Act II finale), Verdi's *Falstaff* (Act III finale), and the prelude to Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

In its textbook format as exemplified in the works of Bach, fugues utilize a very specific imitative pattern. Each fugue starts with a basic musical theme, called the "subject," which is presented by a single voice (or instrumental musical line). Once the subject has been played or sung in its entirety, a second voice enters, imitating the first but with slight variations. For example, this second voice might present the

subject a perfect fifth above (or a perfect fourth below) the first theme, thus featuring the dominant (the fifth degree of the scale) as opposed to the tonic (the first scale degree). This variation is called an “answer.”



Ex: The subject of Johann Sebastian Bach’s “Fugue in A Minor,” from *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I* (mm. 1–3).



Ex: The answer, in the right hand (beginning on E), as the first voice continues in the left hand (mm. 4–6).

When the answer is completed, the third voice enters with the subject, then the fourth voice sings/plays the answer, and so on, until all the voices have joined the musical texture. This phased entry of voices, alternating between subject and answer, is called the “exposition” of the fugue.



Ex: The next entry of the subject, in the second measure of the excerpt, in the lowest register of the piano; the right hand has now taken over the other two voices (mm. 7–9).

Once the exposition is complete, composers may alternate between full statements of the subject and looser sections in which only portions of the subject appear. The subject may also be transformed by all the techniques and variations that one might encounter in a canon: augmentation, diminution, inversion, and retrograde motion. Composers can also present the subject in different keys (“transposition”). After this developmental section, a classic fugue will close with a statement of the subject in the home key.

Ten Essential Musical Terms

The following list of terms provides basic vocabulary to help your students engage more deeply with the music of *Samson et Dalila*.

Aria: A self-contained number for solo voice, typically with orchestral accompaniment. Arias form a major part of larger works, such as operas, oratorios, or cantatas.

Chorus: A group of performers singing together. The chorus's music can range from simple unison melodies to complex, multi-part singing with a high degree of rhythmic independence. In opera, the composer may use a chorus to represent large groups of characters, such as townspeople, soldiers, or guests at a party.

Fugue: A type of polyphonic composition based on a brief theme, or "subject," and its imitation throughout multiple voices of a composition. The term derives from two Latin words meaning "to flee" and "to chase," reflecting the way that fugal subjects (i.e., repeated musical ideas) figuratively chase one another across different voices or instruments. Fugues can be performed by singers, instruments, or a combination of the two. Choral fugues are often associated with religious music, especially the work of 17th- and 18th-century composers such as J.S. Bach. Considered one of the most complex forms of polyphonic writing, fugues have often been used by composers to show off their compositional skills.

Gregorian Chant: A type of "monophonic" (see definition below) music employed by medieval Christian communities when singing holy texts. According to legend, these chants were first written down by the sixth-century pope Gregory the Great; this is why the genre is referred to as "Gregorian."

Maqam: The Arabic term for a collection of musical pitches, equivalent to the "tonality" or "key" of a piece of Western music. Different *maqamat* (the plural of "maqam," which literally means "location") are associated with different moods or ideas. Unlike much of the music from the Western tradition, which is built on the two tonal principals of "major" and "minor," there are dozens of *maqamat* in Middle Eastern music.

Monophony: A musical texture in which a single melody is sung or played by one or more voices or instruments in unison. One of the most common examples of monophonic music is Gregorian chant. Contrast with "polyphonic" music, defined below.

Motet: A choral work that features a religious text. In the medieval period, motets often used multiple texts, in both Latin and French; the French text was meant to provide commentary on the Latin text being sung at the same time. From the Renaissance period on, however, composers would only use a single text, usually in Latin, for these compositions. Motets have been composed throughout Western music history, and are still being written today.

Oratorio: A large-scale work for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, usually based on religious themes. Like an opera, oratorios feature arias and choruses, and oratorios are often performed by opera singers, since the two genres require similar types of singing. Unlike opera, however, oratorios never feature acting, costumes, or stage sets; they are always performed as concerts without any staging. One of the best-known oratorios is *Messiah* by George Frideric Handel, an 18th-century composer whose work Saint-Saëns greatly admired.

Polyphony: A musical texture in which multiple instruments or voices play or sing different melodies at the same time. Most music for orchestra or chorus is polyphonic. Since polyphonic music was first discussed in a choral context, each individual line of music is referred to as a "voice," even if it is played by an instrument. Anything with two or more contrasting voices is considered "polyphony"; three- to six-voice textures are most common in choral music. Sometimes, however, composers write for much larger choral groups: The 16th-century English composer Thomas Tallis once wrote a motet, "Spem in alium," for 40 individual voices!

Timbre: A French word that means "sound color," *timbre* (pronounced TAM-bur) refers to the complex combination of characteristics that give each instrument or voice its unique sound. Just as we can recognize each other by the differences in our speaking voices, singing voices and instruments are distinguishable by their unique timbres. Creatively combining different timbres can result in an astonishingly wide array of sounds and is one of the most important aspects of orchestration.

Supporting the Student Experience during *The Met: Live in HD* Transmission

Watching and listening to a performance is a unique experience that takes students beyond the printed page to an immersion in images, sound, interpretation, technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities help students analyze different aspects of the experience and engage critically with the performance. They will consider the creative choices that have been made for the particular production they are watching and examine different aspects of the performance.

Each Performance Activity incorporates a reproducible sheet. Students should bring this activity sheet to the *Live in HD* transmission and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to details of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed.

For *Samson et Dalila*, the first activity sheet, *Seeing Shapes*, will encourage your students to pay close attention to the visual aspects of the performance. Before the *Live in HD* transmission, you may wish to explain to your students that the director Darko Tresnjak uses abstract geometric shapes throughout his stage designs, noting that geometric figures are found in the design and architecture of both the ancient Middle East and the modern world. The reproducible sheet lists six different shapes: circle, half-circle, rectangle, triangle, line, and grid. During the *Live in HD* performance, students should look for these shapes in the stage design, and list one or more places where the shape appears (e.g., a balcony, a window, a detail on a character's costume, etc.) After the performance, invite your students to compare their notes and count how many uses of each shape the class has identified.

The second, basic activity sheet is called *My Highs & Lows*. It is meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season. This sheet serves to guide students toward a consistent set of objective observations, as well as to help them articulate their own opinions. It is designed to enrich the students' understanding of the art form as a whole. The ratings system encourages students to express their critique: Use these ratings to spark discussions that require careful, critical thinking.

The Performance Activity reproducible handouts can be found in the back of this guide. On the next page, you'll find an activity created specifically for follow-up after the *Live in HD* transmission.

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the Performance Activity reproducible handouts found in the back of this guide.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND SAMSON ET DALILA

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.3

Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Samson and Dalila in Memoriam: Remembering the Flawed

IN PREPARATION

This activity requires no preparation other than attendance at the *Live in HD* transmission of *Samson et Dalila*.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To review students' understanding of *Samson et Dalila*
- To foster students' creative responses to *Samson et Dalila*
- To invite students to compare the opera's story to historical or contemporary events with which they may be familiar

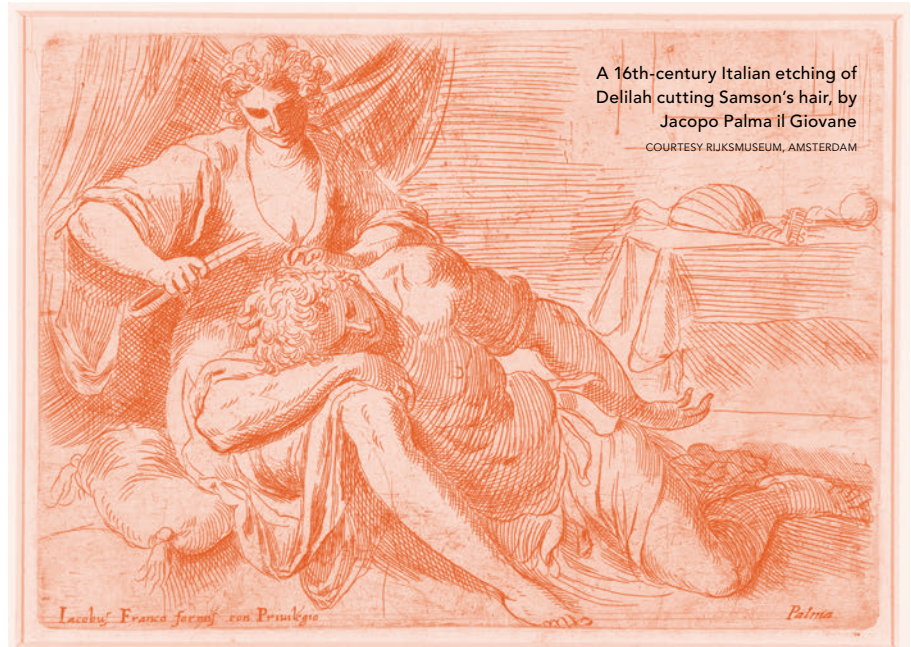
COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *SAMSON ET DALILA*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1d

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.



Start the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did students like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? The discussion offers an opportunity to apply the notes on students' *My Highs & Lows* sheet, as well as their thoughts about the visual design of the Met production—in short, to see themselves as *Samson et Dalila* experts.

Next, ask your students to imagine they are building a memorial for the events depicted in *Samson et Dalila*. To do so, they will have to imagine themselves not only as architects and designers (in deciding what the memorial will portray and its style), but also as historians, deciding how to explain *Samson et Dalila*'s tragedy to future generations.

Begin by asking students to think of other memorials they have visited, and consider how the architecture and information presented in the memorial changed the way they thought about the events being memorialized. Next, return to *Samson et Dalila*, and ask your students:

- Which events will you memorialize? The slavery of the Israelites? The collapse of the temple? The deaths of the Philistines and Dalila? Samson's death?
- Whom will you memorialize? Are there any particular characters you'd like to include in your monument? Exclude?
- What will your memorial look like? Would you incorporate any elements of the Met's stage design? Why or why not?
- Consider the events at the close of the opera and how they color your decisions on what to memorialize. Do you think Samson's action at the end of the opera was justified? Why or why not? Would you consider him a murderer? Can the answer to both be "yes"?
- What about Dalila: Were her actions justified, and/or would you call her a murderer? Will you incorporate her into the memorial? How?

FUN FACT: Dalila's aria of seduction, "Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix," has been sung by some of the most famous sopranos and mezzo-sopranos of the 20th century—including Marilyn Horne, Maria Callas, Christa Ludwig, and even Julie Andrews, who sang an English version of the aria on her TV show *The Julie Andrews Hour* in 1972.

Finally, remember that opera is a multi-media art form: Any and all aspects of the performance your students have just seen—including the act of seeing it live—are important factors contributing to the overall experience. Ask them for any final thoughts and impressions. What did they find most memorable?

**Excerpts taken from the
Metropolitan Opera broadcast of
February 28, 1998**

SAMSON

Plácido Domingo

DALILA

Denyce Graves

HIGH PRIEST

Sergei Leiferkus

ABIMÉLECH

Alan Held

OLD HEBREW

Franz Hawlata

PHILISTINE

Bernard Fitch

PHILISTINE

Yanni Yannissis

MESSENGER

Matthew Polenzani

Conducted by

Leonard Slatkin

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

and Chorus

- 1 Camille Saint-Saëns, *Samson et Dalila*, "Dieu d'Israël"
- 2 Camille Saint-Saëns, *Samson et Dalila*, Dance of the Priestesses of Dagon
- 3 Camille Saint-Saëns, *Samson et Dalila*, "Hymne de joie"
- 4 Camille Saint-Saëns, *Samson et Dalila*, "Nous avons vu"
- 5 Camille Saint-Saëns, *Samson et Dalila*, Dance: Bacchanale
- 6 Sawaya Quartet: *Gamil, gamil*, beginning
- 7 Sawaya Quartet: *Gamil, gamil*, continued
- 8 George Abdo: *Raks Araby*, beginning
- 9 *Gamil, gamil*, longer excerpt
- 10 *Raks Araby*, longer excerpt
- 11 Anonymous: *Sanctus*
- 12 George Frideric Handel: *Messiah*, "He Trusted in God"
- 13 Michel-Richard de Lalande: *De profundis*

"Gamil, Gamil" by Sawaya Quartet and Chorus from the recording entitled *Love Songs of Lebanon*, FW08815, courtesy of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. © © 1957. Used by permission.

"Raks Araby (Arabic Dance)" by George Abdo from the recording entitled *Belly Dance!: The Best of George Abdo and His Flames of Araby Orchestra*, SFW40458, courtesy of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. © © 2002. Used by permission.

"Sanctus XI" by Edmundite Novices from the recording entitled *Gregorian Chants*, FW08954, courtesy of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. © © 1961. Used by permission.

Chorus: "He Trusted in God" performed by The Monteverdi Choir, the English Baroque Soloists, and John Eliot Gardiner. Courtesy of Decca Music Group Ltd. under license from Universal Music Enterprises. © © 1982. Used by permission.

"De Profundis, S. 23: "De Profundis Clamavi" (baritone, Chorus) [Arr. Sawkins]" Edward Higginbottom © © 1990 Erato Disques, a Warner Music UK Division. Produced under license from Erato Disques. ISRC: FRZ208808401

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Superhero Stories: Text Preparation

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Superhero Stories: The Characters

Samson

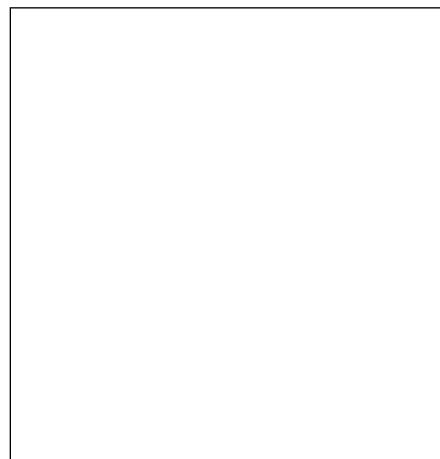
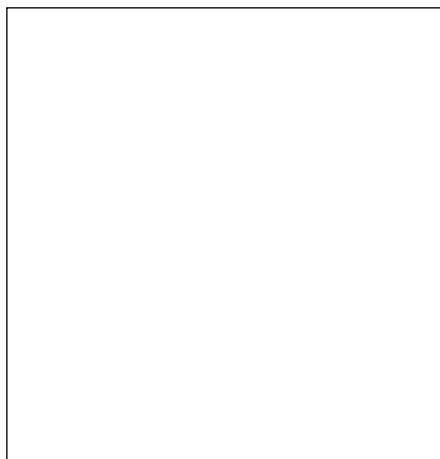
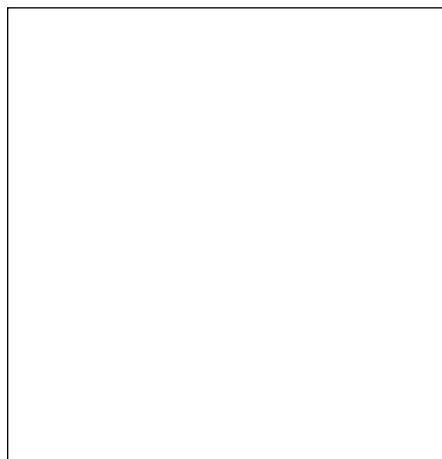
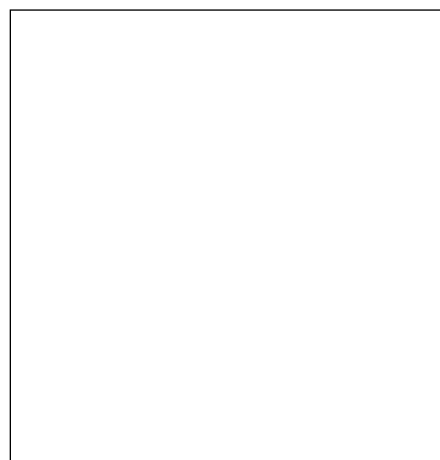
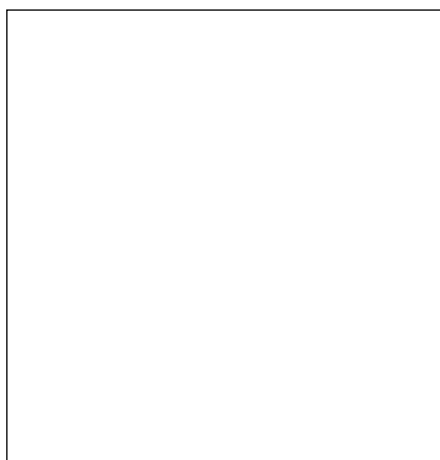
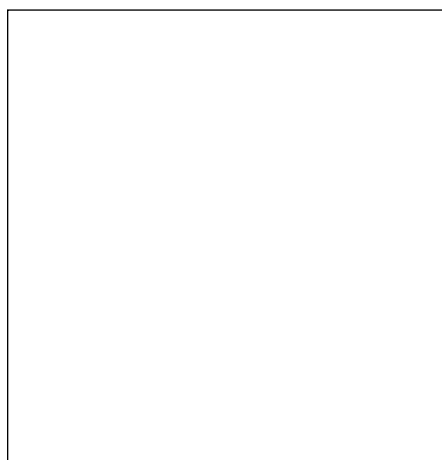
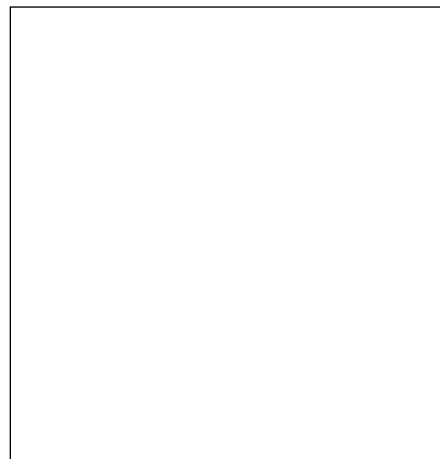
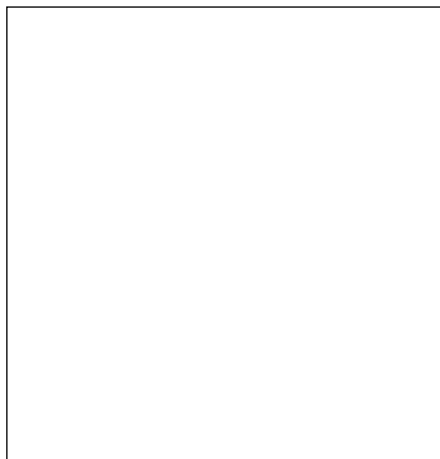
Dalila

Abimélech

The High Priest

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Superhero Stories: The Comic Book



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Musical Archaeology: Artifacts from the Opera

ARTIFACT 1: “Dieu d’Israël”

Context: The opening lines of the opera: the Israelites pray to God to deliver them from slavery.

TRACK 1

THE ISRAELITE SLAVES: Dieu!

Dieu d’Israël! Écoute la prière

de tes enfants t’implorant à genoux!

Prends en pitié ton peuple et sa misère!

Que sa douleur désarme ton courroux!

God!

God of Israel! Listen to the prayer

of your children begging on their knees!

Take pity on your people in their misery!

May their pain defuse your wrath!

My observations

ARTIFACT 2: Dance of the Priestesses of Dagon

Context: Dalila and the priestesses emerge from the Temple of Dagon.

My observations

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Musical Archaeology: Artifacts from the Opera (CONTINUED)

ARTIFACT 3: “Hymne de joie”

Context: The Israelites celebrate Samson’s defeat of Abimélech and the success of their rebellion.

TRACK 3

THE ISRAELITE SLAVES: Hymne de joie, hymne de délivrance,
montez vers l’Éternel!
Il a daigné dans sa toute puissance
secourir Israël!
Par lui le faible est devenu le maître,
du fort qui l’opprimait!
Il a vaincu l’orgueilleux et le traître
dont la voix l’insultait!

Hymn of joy, hymn of deliverance,
rise up to eternity!
He has deigned in his everlasting power
to rescue Israel!
Through him the weak one has become the master
of the strong ones who oppressed him!
He has vanquished the proud and the traitorous
whose voices insulted him!

My observations

ARTIFACT 4: “Nous avons vu”

Context: Another Israelite prayer, remembering the miracles God has performed.

TRACK 4

THE ISRAELITE SLAVES: Nous avons vu nos cités renversées,
Et les Gentils profanant ton autel;
et sous leur joug nos tribus dispersées
ont tout perdu, jusqu’au nom d’Israël!

We have seen our cities overturned
and your altar profaned by Gentiles;
under their yoke, our scattered tribes
have lost everything, even the name of Israel!

My observations

ARTIFACT 5: Dance: Bacchanale

Context: The Philistines, gathered in the Temple of Dagon, celebrate Samson’s defeat.

My observations

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Musical Archaeology: Museum of Middle Eastern Music

EXHIBIT 1: Sawaya Quartet: *Gamil, gamil*, beginning

Instruments to listen for: Oud

Do you hear something that sounds like a “twangy” guitar? This is an *oud*, a plucked string instrument that is similar to a lute.

My observations:

EXHIBIT 2: Sawaya Quartet: *Gamil, gamil*, continued

Instruments to listen for: Violin and Darbuka

In contrast to the plucked oud you just heard, this excerpt features a violin played with a bow, much like the violins you may know from playing in orchestra or going to classical music concerts. Violins are common in Middle Eastern folk music. You will also hear a low-pitched drum: This is a darbuka, one of the standard percussion instruments in Middle Eastern music.

My observations:

EXHIBIT 3: George Abdo: *Raks Araby*, beginning

Instruments to listen for: Finger Cymbals, Darbuka, and Tambourine

Listen to the three different kinds of percussion in this excerpt. First, you will hear a high-pitched clinking, which is the sound of tiny cymbals held at the tips of the fingers. Next, you will hear a low-pitched drum; this is another example of the darbuka. Finally, you will hear a soft jangling sound; this is a tambourine.

My observations:

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Musical Archaeology: Museum of Middle Eastern Music (CONTINUED)

EXHIBIT 4: Sawaya Quartet: *Gamil, gamil*

This is a longer portion of the piece featured in Exhibits 1 and 2, which is a Lebanese folk song. Listen for all the instruments you have learned about.

LANGUAGE: ARABIC

Leh-donya gamila w'holwa, wanta ma 'ya
Leh bitkally-l 'alb bnashwa, wanta assaya
eh-donya gamila w'holwa, wanta ma 'ya
Leh bitkally-l 'alb bnashwa, wanta assaya

Life is beautiful and sweet while you're with me,
my heart is intoxicated when you comfort me.
Life is beautiful and sweet while you're with me,
my heart is intoxicated when you comfort me.

My observations:

EXHIBIT 5: George Abdo: *Raks Araby*

This is a longer portion of the piece featured in Exhibit 3, which is meant to accompany dancing.

My observations:

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Musical Archaeology: Museum of Choral Music

EXHIBIT 1: Gregorian chant: *Sanctus*

This is an example of Gregorian chant, a kind of singing used by church choirs, monks, and nuns since the early Middle Ages as part of their daily religious services. (Fun fact: This tune is at least 800 years old!)

LANGUAGE: LATIN; SOURCE: HYMN

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt cæli et terra gloria tua.

Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord our God.
The heavens and earth are filled with your glory.

My observations:

EXHIBIT 2: George Frideric Handel: *Messiah*, “He Trusted in God”

This excerpt comes from an oratorio, a work for vocal soloists, choir, and orchestra based on a religious theme. Oratorios often incorporate biblical texts into their lyrics; the text in this example comes from one of the Psalms.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH; SOURCE: PSALM 22

He trusted in God that He would deliver him;
let Him deliver him, if He delight in him.

My observations:

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Musical Archaeology: Museum of Choral Music (CONTINUED)

EXHIBIT 3: Michel-Richard de Lalande: *De profundis*

This is an example of a motet, another type of music featuring a choir and religious texts. Motets may also include instruments. Listen to the use of very low-pitched instruments, which are used to illustrate the “depths” from which the singers are calling.

LANGUAGE: LATIN; SOURCE: PSALM 130

De profundis clamavi ad te Domine.
Domine exaudi vocem meam.

I called to you from the depths, oh Lord.
Lord, hear my voice.

My observations:

At the Met: *Seeing Shapes*

As you watch the *Live in HD* broadcast of *Samson et Dalila*, look for each of the following shapes or patterns in the stage design and costumes, and write down one or more places where each shape appears. After the opera, compare your notes with your classmates; how many examples of each shape did the class find?

THE SHAPE:

WHERE I SAW IT:

Circle

Half-Circle

Rectangle

Triangle

Line

Grid

Samson et Dalila: My Highs & Lows

OCTOBER 20, 2018

CONDUCTED BY SIR MARK ELDER

REVIEWED BY _____

THE STARS	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
ROBERTO ALAGNA AS SAMSON	☆☆☆☆☆	
ELĀNA GARANČA AS DALILA	☆☆☆☆☆	
LAURENT NAOURI AS THE HIGH PRIEST	☆☆☆☆☆	
ELCHIN AZIZOV AS ABIMÉLECH	☆☆☆☆☆	
DMITRY BELOSSELSKIY AS THE OLD HEBREW	☆☆☆☆☆	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
THE ISRAELITES PRAY MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
ABIMÉLECH TAUNTS THE ISRAELITES AND SAMSON KILLS HIM MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
THE HIGH PRIEST SWEARS REVENGE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
THE PRIESTESSES OF DAGON DANCE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
DALILA SINGS OF THE WINTER IN HER HEART MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
DALILA DREAMS OF REVENGE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
THE HIGH PRIEST AND DALILA PLAN SAMSON'S DOWNFALL MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

SAMSON TRIES TO LEAVE DALILA MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
DALILA TELLS SAMSON SHE LOVES HIM MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
THE PHILISTINES CAPTURE SAMSON MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
SAMSON IN PRISON MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
DANCING IN THE TEMPLE OF DAGON MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
THE HIGH PRIEST AND DALILA TAUNT SAMSON MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
SAMSON'S REDEMPTION MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5