

PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

Everyday Degradations

One of the most distinctive aspects of *Wozzeck* is its vivid depiction of poverty. Unlike earlier operas that featured upper-class characters, Berg’s opera does not shy away from depicting the squalid living conditions of its characters. Instead, *Wozzeck* and Marie’s poverty is an integral part of the story—and a core component of *Wozzeck*’s demise.

As you watch *Wozzeck*, pay attention to the ways that characters discuss their poverty. The composer has provided a signal for you in the repeated text “*Wir arme Leut*” (“we poor people”), which is paired with a melodic motive. Each time this text appears, fill out the chart below.

“*Wir arme Leut*” #1:

“*Wir arme Leut*” #2:

“*Wir arme Leut*” #3:

Character speaking:

Character speaking:

Character speaking:

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What do they say about their situation?

What do they say about their situation?

What do they say about their situation?

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How is their poverty depicted visually?

How is their poverty depicted visually?

How is their poverty depicted visually?

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