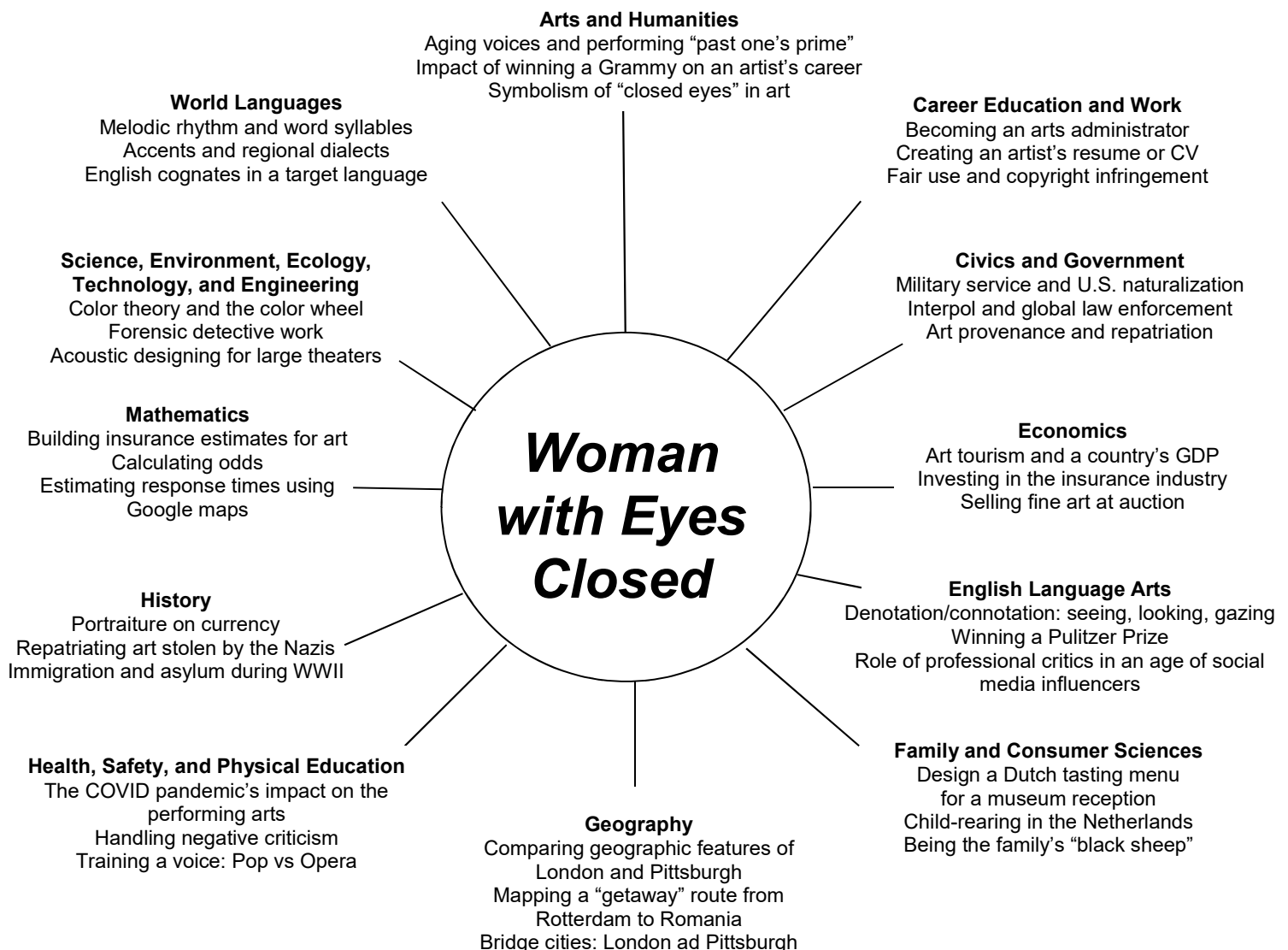


Curriculum Circle for *Woman with Eyes Closed*

How does the opera *Woman with Eyes Closed* by Jennifer Higdon intersect with all academic content areas? Begin with the opera and brainstorm connections to all curricula.





Lesson Plan Stems for 2024–2025

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Lesson Plan Stems for *Woman with Eyes Closed*

How does the opera *Woman with Eyes Closed* by Jennifer Higdon intersect with all academic content areas? Begin with a lesson plan stem and connect the opera to classroom curricula.

NOTES:

Suggested grade levels are listed to the right of each lesson plan stem.

PreK = Pre-Kindergarten, ES = elementary school, MS = middle school, HS = high school

Lesson Plan Stems in the English Language Arts and Mathematics sections are *Common Core Friendly*, and are marked:



Arts and Humanities

State Standards: 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4

What do you see in your mind when you close your eyes? What do you think the woman in the painting, *Woman with Eyes Closed*, is seeing? Draw what you imagine she is seeing in her mind.

PreK

Opera orchestras usually include flute, clarinet, horn, trumpet, trombone, violin, viola, cello, and string bass. Learn the names of the orchestra instruments and match them to photos of the instruments. What do you think an orchestra would sound like if it included a bongo, slapstick, guiro, or sizzle cymbal?

PreK

Draw a picture of a friend with his/her eyes closed and then another picture with his/her eyes open. What details have you included? Which do you like better—eyes open or closed? Why?

PreK

How does a composer decide to write an opera? What comes first? The story or the music? *Woman with Eyes Closed* is an opera about a stolen painting. What kinds of stories do you think would make a good opera? What experiences, ideas, stories, or objects inspire you to create?

PreK/ES

Woman with Eyes Closed is an opera in eleven scenes. How are operas with no intermissions different from grand operas with overtures, acts, and pauses?

ES

Jennifer Higdon wrote the opera *Woman with Eyes Closed* for a chamber orchestra, but she wrote her opera *Cold Mountain* for a full orchestra. What are the differences? What instruments are usually included in operas?

ES

Sometimes painters create art that looks so real it could be a photograph, and other times painters capture their “feelings” (impressions) on canvas. Look at some paintings to determine if they represent *realism* or *impressionism*. ES

The lead character in *Woman with Eyes Closed* is the mother, Mona Lack, whose part was written for a contralto. How does that voice range compare to other operatic voice ranges? How would you describe how a contralto voice sounds? ES/MS

In this opera, the museum curator is described as intelligent, dedicated to her work, and an aesthete—a person with a special appreciation of art and beauty. How would this character express those qualities on stage? How should she be costumed to reflect these qualities? Design a costume and make-up for this character that projects these characteristics. ES/MS

Look over this instrumentation for *Woman with Eyes Closed*, which includes some unusual percussion instruments. ES/MS

- **Perc. 1:** Glockenspiel, Vibraphone, Bundle Sticks, Small Suspended Cymbal, Brake Drum, Police Whistle, Sandpaper Blocks, Cowbell, 5 Temple Blocks, Tambourine, Bass Drum, Mark Tree, Low Bongo, Slapstick or Whip, 2 Metal Thimbles
- **Perc. 2:** 2 Timpani (26-25” & 32-30”), Police Whistle, Concert Snare Drum, Guiro, Bundle Sticks, Thunder Tube, Sizzle Cymbal, Bottle, Can, Castanet, Chinese Suspended Cymbal, Small Woodblock, Fine Crystal Glass (which is pitched in D when water is added), 2 Desk Bells (pitched in Ab & Bb)

How can two players play all these instruments? How can they pre-set the instruments so all are within reach when needed?

What happens to people’s voices as we age? Do opera singers’ voices drop to lower ranges as they age? Do rock singers’ voices drop to lower ranges as they age? Name some popular singers whose voices have changed over time—how would you describe what their voices sound like now? Can opera singers continue to perform? If they are “past their prime” as singers, what other careers can they pursue in the arts? ES/MS

Jennifer Higdon, the composer of *Woman with Eyes Closed*, is a female opera composer. What other female composers are creating new work today? What female composers wrote opera or classical music in the past? ES/MS

Jennifer Higdon has won three Grammy Awards for her compositions. These awards are regarded as the most prestigious and significant awards in the music industry worldwide. What categories are included? What are the six standard awards? What are the 11 genre-specific fields? What other opera or classical composers have also won Grammy awards? ES/MS

Woman with Eyes Closed is an opera about visual art. Explore the artistic styles and periods of the artists whose paintings were stolen in 2012 alongside the actual painting that inspired this opera: Picasso, Monet, Matisse, Gauguin, and Lucian Freud. What modernist art styles do each represent? Why might someone want to steal famous paintings? ES/MS

What does depicting someone with closed eyes symbolize in art? How does depicting a subject with eyes closed (as opposed to eyes open) affect how an audience might receive and interpret a painting?	ES/MS
In 1987, Lucian Freud was invited to choose 29 paintings for “The Artist’s Eye” exhibition series at the National Gallery in London. He chose some Old Masters and wrote in the catalogue that he expects a painting to “astonish, disturb, seduce, and convince” its audience. Which paintings did he choose for this show? In your opinion, does Freud’s own work meet what he asks of painting? Which paintings would YOU choose for such an exhibition?	ES/MS
Drawing with your eyes closed, also known as blind drawing, is an intriguing art activity that allows you to tap into your intuition and subconscious mind. Create several drawings with your eyes closed. What have you discovered about yourself?	ES/MS
What is an opera premiere? Why is a premiere important? Who commissions operas for a premiere, and what’s involved in commissioning an opera? Opera Philadelphia commissioned <i>Woman with Eyes Closed</i> while David Devan was the company’s leader. What new operas premiered at Opera Philadelphia during General Director David Devan’s leadership? Why was the premiere of <i>Woman with Eyes Closed</i> delayed, allowing this opera’s premiere to be scheduled at Pittsburgh Opera?	ES/MS
Jennifer Higdon uses unusual instrumental colors in her compositions, such as alto flute, as well as using unusual percussion instruments. Listen to some of her music and identify some unusual colors, or timbres. Could you say that her compositional techniques and sound colors are unique?	MS/HS
Art theft as the basis for stories is not uncommon: <i>Woman in Gold</i> is a 2015 biographical drama film based on the true story of Maria Altmann, whose aunt, Adele Bloch-Bauer, was painted by Gustav Klimt. The painting was stolen from Altmann’s relatives by the Nazis just before World War II began. How was Klimt’s painting style different from Picasso, Monet, Matisse, Gauguin, and Lucian Freud?	MS/HS
How are musicians influenced by their own cultural environments? Jennifer Higdon commented that her musical style grew out of exposure to popular music such as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and Simon & Garfunkel, rather than to classical music. As a result, she describes her compositional process as “intuitive” and “instinctive,” rather than adhering to classical forms and structures. Analyze and compare the form and style of her compositions to other opera composers, such as Mozart, Puccini, and Verdi. How might these classical composers themselves have been influenced by the music of their own cultures?	MS/HS
Why do contemporary arts organizations, such as symphonies and operas, need support beyond ticket sales? What percentage of a performing arts organization’s budget is supported by ticket sales?	MS/HS

Composer Jennifer Higdon was struck by the original art heist in 2012, and its aftermath wherein police captured the thieves, but learned that the paintings themselves may have been destroyed by a relative in an effort to protect the thieves. In this opera, she asks: *What is the value of art to an individual? Does that value supersede the value of family, even if that family is criminal?* What do YOU think? MS/HS

In *Woman with Eyes Closed*, Higdon uses extended techniques, which push the musicians to play their instruments in nontraditional ways. Explain what the composer means when she says, “The pianist reaches inside the piano and puts their hand on the strings. It’s a more contemporary feel and gives me a wider color palette.” How can playing an instrument in a new way create a novel sound? What other contemporary musicians are known for playing their instruments differently from how most musicians would play the same instrument? MS/HS

The instrumentation for *Woman with Eyes Closed* includes a C Flute doubling on Alto Flute in G. How are the instruments different? How can one instrumentalist play both parts? How common is Alto Flute in opera? HS

Many of Jennifer Higdon's pieces are considered neoromantic, but her music also includes non-traditional harmonic progressions and intricate rhythms. What is meant by the term “neoromantic”? Listen to her music from *Woman with Eyes Closed*. Why might it be called neoromantic? In the score for *Woman with Eyes Closed*, find some examples of parallel fifths, rhythmic ostinato, minimalism, and motivic ambiguity. HS

Pulitzer Prize and three-time Grammy-winning composer Jennifer Higdon taught herself to play flute at the age of 15 and began formal musical studies at 18, with an even later start in composition at the age of 21. Why are these ages considered unusual? If someone already knows how to read music, is it easier to learn additional instruments? HS

Career Education and Work

State Standards: 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.4

What kind of music do you like? If you could be a professional musician, what instrument would you play, or would you want to sing? How do you learn to play an instrument or to sing? Do you know anyone who takes private lessons? Can you name some famous musicians or singers? PreK

Grownups write resumes to list their skills when they are applying for a job. Share with your classmates the things you’re good at doing. What skills do you have in common with your classmates? What skills do you have that are different? PreK

World-famous paintings are often sold at auction. What jobs do auction houses support? Who works at auction houses? How does one train to work as an auctioneer? ES/MS

In the opera <i>Woman with Eyes Closed</i> , the museum curator is described as intelligent, dedicated to her work, and an aesthete—a person with a special appreciation of art and beauty. What is a curator? How does a person become a museum curator? What kind of schooling and experience would you need for this job?	ES/MS
In <i>Woman with Eyes Closed</i> , the police investigator is described as a shrewd, no-nonsense veteran of the police force. Does this description fit well with the actual career investigator for this art heist? Do investigators specialize in different kinds of crimes? How does a person become a police investigator; what education, training, and experience are needed for this job?	ES/MS
What is a composer? What skills do you think composers need to have? What education, experience, and job training are needed to become a full-time composer? Is being a composer a full-time job? How do today's composers find funding to support themselves?	ES/MS
Composer Jennifer Higdon studied flute performance at Bowling Green State University with Judith Bentley, who encouraged her to explore composition. How important is a mentor to helping a young person follow a promising career path? Do all professional musicians have mentors?	ES/MS
What type of craftspeople might be involved in producing an opera? Consider the elements involved in making an opera: designing and constructing sets, building costumes, playing music, singing, dancing, lighting, and so forth. What training or professional development and certifications would these craftspeople need to be hired for this opera's production?	ES/MS
What is an arts administrator? What are some paths to becoming an arts administrator? List some positions at Pittsburgh Opera that would be considered arts administrators.	ES/MS
Librettist Jerre Dye includes a wide range of skills on the Grossman & Jack Talent website: Puppeteer, Canoeing, Roller Skating, Trampoline, Weight Lifting, Clowning, Host, Licensed Driver, Mime, American – Minnesota Accent, American - New York Accent, American – Southern Accent, Australian Accent, British - Cockney Accent, British – Geordie Accent, French Accent, Irish Accent, South African Accent What is your reaction to his list? Why would a librettist and playwright list so many skills?	ES/MS
Jennifer Higdon earned Bachelors', Masters', and PhD degrees. How long does it take to earn college degrees? How can students find money for the tuition and other costs?	ES/MS
Composer Jennifer Higdon studied with George Crumb, another well-known composer. Is apprenticing with an established artist as good as earning college degrees? Create a graphic organizer to show the pros and cons of apprenticeship vs. college for professional success.	ES/MS

Jennifer Higdon has won three Grammys for Best Contemporary Classical Composition in her career: first for her <i>Percussion Concerto</i> in 2010, in 2018 for her <i>Viola Concerto</i> , and in 2020 for her <i>Harp Concerto</i> . How important are these awards for a composer's career? Does winning an award help a composer get more commissions? Jennifer Higdon's record label is Pentatone. Is that important? Why?	ES/MS
Composer Jennifer Higdon's biography lists numerous accomplishments and awards, including Grammy Awards and a Pulitzer Prize. How important is it to list awards on a resume? Discuss how to balance being a self-promoter and listing actual skills in writing a resume.	MS/HS
After the art heist, a Romanian forensic expert was called in to examine ashes in the fireplace of the mother who claimed to have burned the stolen paintings. What is a forensic expert? What do forensic scientists do? How does a person build a career in forensics?	MS/HS
Jennifer Higdon lacked formal music training as a child, so in college she struggled to catch up with students who were far more advanced, acknowledging that she didn't know any of the basics: no music theory, no understanding of chords, intervals, and no keyboard skills. Despite these challenges, she established herself as hard working and resilient, even when faced with discouragement from some professors. How important is it to learn skills for an intended career before college? What does it mean to be a hard worker and resilient student?	MS/HS
Opera Philadelphia commissioned <i>Woman with Eyes Closed</i> while David Devan was the company's leader. David Devan began his career as a figure skater. How did he become the General Director of an opera company? What skills and education are needed to direct a large arts organization? David Devan's successor at Opera Philadelphia as General Director is Anthony Roth Costanzo, who has been a performing countertenor and producer. Investigate some other opera companies' leadership teams to find other examples of arts administrators who were formerly performing artists.	MS/HS
Investigate the career trajectory for a theater design student. What training and skill sets are needed to enter this profession? What experiences would help to secure contracts? What are some real-world lessons to learn that might not be taught in the classroom? How can this experience be gained?	MS/HS
Jennifer Higdon has been named a composer in residence at several arts organizations. What is a composer in residence? How does one become one? Is that a paid position? What is expected of the position?	MS/HS
Composer Jennifer Higdon's list of commissioners is extensive. She has received funding from Opera America's Opera Grants for Female Composers program and from the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation. How do commissions come about? Does an artist also need to be an excellent grant writer? Are commissions the equivalent today to the patronage system in Haydn's time?	MS/HS

Civics and Government

State Standards: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4

Does your family ever hang your artwork in a place where others can see it? Why do you think they do that? What does that tell you about what things are important to you and your family? What do you think the word “value” means? PreK

The painter Lucian Freud was born in Germany but became a citizen of Great Britain when he moved. Do you know anybody who was born in a different country who has become a United States citizen? PreK

If someone steals something from a museum, the police try to find out the location of the art and the identity of the thief. What is a thief? Is stealing good? How should someone who steals something be punished? Should the item’s value influence the punishment? PreK/ES

Lucian Freud, the grandson of Sigmund Freud, was born in Berlin. However, in 1933 Lucian fled the rise of the Nazi party and escaped to England, becoming a naturalized British citizen in 1939 and serving with the British Merchant Navy during World War II. How would someone become a United States naturalized citizen? What are the requirements of and timeframe for naturalization? Does serving in the U.S. military impact the U.S. naturalization process? ES/MS

When a crime (such as an art heist) involves more than one country, an organization called Interpol becomes involved. What is Interpol? How does Interpol work? How does it coordinate with local law enforcement agencies? What countries does Interpol serve? What jobs in Interpol are available for someone interested in a law enforcement career? ES/MS

In 2013, *Art Nexus* reported that the stolen paintings from the art heist central to this opera may have been burned by one of the thieves’ mothers. Does burning art erase the evidence? Could the thieves be tried and convicted without evidence? How do prosecutors build a case when tangible evidence may no longer exist? What has actually happened to the paintings? ES/MS

When an arts institution needs to use an image, such as an image of Freud’s painting *Woman with Eyes Closed*, they might pull a copy of it off the internet. Is that image protected under copyright law? Would the arts institution have to pay royalties to the artist or his estate? What does the legal term “fair use” mean? What are the conditions for fair use when considering images found online? When might borrowing an online image cross the line of fair use? What are licensed images” ES/MS

Why is art stolen? Is it to erase history? Is it to gain power? What is done with stolen art? Research the underground world of stolen art and how governments get involved. How are official investigations of art theft handled? How often is the stolen art destroyed, and does that happen intentionally or unintentionally? MS/HS

Art is often moved across countries' borders for legitimate reasons, such as traveling exhibitions. What organizations make the rules for the safe transfer or conduct of art or national treasures? How do different governments and private institutions cooperate to guarantee safe transport? When people travel from one country to another, they need a government-issued passport; what papers are needed to move art internationally? What government agencies are involved in this process? MS/HS

What is copyright, and how does it apply to music? What protections are available to protect musicians from theft of their intellectual property? Explore the rules for copyright and the protections they provide. When does a copyrighted piece become part of public domain, and what does that status mean? MS/HS

Provenance is the term used to trace an artwork's history and ownership, and an established provenance is critical for determining who the rightful owner may be, especially when an artwork may have been illegally acquired. Returning a piece to its rightful owner is known as *repatriation*. How should different governments cooperate when an artwork's rightful ownership is disputed, and art repatriation is needed? Research the history of Klimt's *Woman in Gold*, a painting that was stolen by the Nazis, and the legal fight to repatriate this painting to its owner Maria Altmann. How did an Austrian dispute become a U.S. Supreme Court matter? Is there a separate world court for hearing property issues, especially those related to wartime actions? How did the film *Woman in Gold*, based on Altmann's story, depict the value of the art in her life? MS/HS

Economics

State Standards: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5

Have you ever visited an art museum that contained valuable artworks? How were the artworks protected? Does it cost money to protect art? PreK

Woman with Eyes Closed was supposed to be performed in Philadelphia in 2020, but was postponed. What does "postpone" mean? Give an example of an event that was scheduled but had to be postponed. Does postponing an event cost money? PreK

What do you think makes an artwork valuable? Is the value of an artwork more if it is displayed in a museum, sold, purchased, or stolen? PreK/ES

Are some paintings too famous to sell after being stolen? What are the difficulties involved in storing, selling, or disposing of well-known artworks after they have been stolen? How does notoriety impact the monetary value of an artwork? If it can't be sold, then what is it really worth? Could an argument be made that once stolen it ceases to have value? Explore the pros and cons of possessing an unsellable artwork. ES/MS

Tourists often plan vacations around seeing famous artworks. Brainstorm some famous paintings that draw tourists from around the world, and research which museums in which cities house these paintings for display. Pick one city and explore the impact of art tourism on that country's economy. What portion of that country's GDP is generated by tourism? How much does the museum spend on security and protection for the artwork? Is the expense of protecting that painting justified by the return on investment (ROI) of tourist dollars generated?	ES/MS
The stolen paintings were insured for the € (euro) equivalent of 18.7 million U.S. dollars. What is insurance? Why do people buy it? What kinds of insurance does an adult living in the United States need to have? Do you have anything valuable that should be insured? Which insurance companies are famous for insuring high value objects?	ES/MS
Consider this statement: "Art theft is that rare game where everyone loses." How might this statement also apply to retail theft and shoplifting? In 2021, Pennsylvania reported a retail theft rate of 2.41%, which was higher than the national average for that year. How does retail theft and shoplifting impact both the local and the state economies? What are the hidden costs of this kind of theft?	MS/HS
World-famous paintings are often sold at auction. How do auction houses determine the value of an art piece to be sold, as well as the range of bids for each piece? What protections and rules or laws are in place to prevent stolen goods from being sold at auction? In situations where the art being sold is the property of a national museum, what permissions are needed to sell what might be considered public art, or art belonging to a government body?	MS/HS
The seven stolen paintings were insured for €18m. How does insurance work? How do insurance companies determine financial value on a painting? Who do insurance companies reimburse for stolen goods? How many insurance companies are publicly traded on the stock market? Are insurance company stocks a good place to invest? How would the need to reimburse the museum this large amount of money impact the value of the insurer's stock?	MS/HS
Many people who have never seen an opera are familiar with operatic music because these pieces are frequently used in other media: movies, cartoons, and commercials. Explore the concept of royalties: monies that are paid to performers, distributors, or estates. To what extent do royalties affect a performer's income? Who owns the music from operas? Do royalty laws differ from country to country?	MS/HS

English Language Arts CORE

State Standards: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5

Lesson Plan Stems in the English Language Arts section are *Common Core Friendly*:

Tell a story that you know well. Create a new and different ending. Which ending do you like better? Tell a story about yourself but change the characters. How does changing the characters change your story?

PreK

Sit still while looking at a photo of a famous painting for three minutes. Tell what you noticed and remember. Now, make up a story about the painting. Use some of the details you remember seeing to help tell your story.

PreK

“Steal” and “steel” are homophones: two words that sound alike but have different spellings and meanings. What does each word mean? Pittsburgh’s nickname is the Steel city; what does that nickname mean? What other homophones can you name?

PreK/ES

Though the idea for this opera was inspired by an actual art theft, do you think the story of *Woman with Eyes Closed* is a true story? Why or why not? How can you tell the difference between fantasy (things that are imagined) and reality (things that are factual or true)? Do operas tell real stories? Sing a story that you know is true.

PreK/ES

Learn some vocabulary from the opera:

ES/MS

Administrator	Aftermath	Auction	Authenticity	Chamber opera
Commission	Contralto	Criticism	Embodiment	Evidence
Exhibition	Foothills	Grammy Award	Heist	Inanimate
Insurance	Intuitive	Lax	Mentor	Minimalism
Naturalized	Orchestra	Perpetrator	Portraitist	Postpone
Prediction	Premiere	Provenance	Pulitzer Prize	Recanted
Restoration	Resume	Self-promotion	Sitting	Steal
Surveillance	Symbol	Thief	Underground	Value

Create a character chart for *Woman with Eyes Closed*, including character traits. Show the relationships among the characters.

ES/MS

In *Woman with Eyes Closed*, one of the characters IS the painting itself. How can an inanimate object be a character? Consider what the nature of a character is: how might an object qualify as a character? What other art forms include inanimate objects as characters?

ES/MS

Woman with Eyes Closed has three endings, one to be used in each performance:

ES/MS

1. She returns all the paintings except the Freud
2. She returns all the paintings
3. She leaves with a suitcase (does it have the paintings?), but we see her burning the Freud.

What other works of literature have multiple endings? Is this a novel idea? Why would composer Jennifer Higdon and librettist Jerre Dye have chosen multiple endings?

The crux of *Woman with Eyes Closed* is the art heist—the stealing of paintings from a museum. What is the etymology of the word “steal”? What is the etymology of the word “steel”? List some phrases that use one of these words, such as “stole my heart”, “steal a base”, “steal away to heaven”, and “Steel City”.

ES/MS

Woman with Eyes Closed is based on an actual historical event, though the opera is historical fiction. In addition to *Tosca*, *We Shall Not Be Moved*, and *Dark Sisters*, what other operas are based on historical events? Why would a composer use an historical event for an opera story? Choose a current news event that you think might make an interesting opera, and write your own fictionalized story based on this event. Explain why you believe this particular historical event would make good opera material.

ES/MS

When painting portraits of real people, Lucian Freud required his models to have extended sittings, which means they were holding poses for very long periods of time. Write a “diary entry” of the model’s thoughts and feelings experienced during extended sittings for the painting *Woman with Eyes Closed*.

ES/MS

Artists are trained to observe, to try to really “see” their subjects. Lucian Freud once said, “The longer you look at an object, the more abstract it becomes, and, ironically, the more real.” What do you think he meant? What is the difference between seeing, gazing, and looking; what do each of these terms connote? How does this idea of abstraction work with creative writing?

ES/MS

Librettist Jerre Dye is both a playwright and an opera librettist. What do both plays and operas have in common, and where do they differ? How do these differences inform how plays and librettos are written? Investigate the elements needed to write both. Pick a scene from your favorite book or movie and rewrite it as both a scene from a play and a scene from an opera.

ES/MS

Following the robbery on which *Woman with Eyes Closed* is based, the Kunsthall Museum was criticized for its allegedly lax security measures. Consider both the denotation and connotation of the word “lax”: what does the term “lax” mean, and what does it imply? If a museum’s security system is publicly called lax, what might be the consequences of this label for the museum and all those who work for it and on its behalf?

ES/MS

When commenting on her opera *Woman with Eyes Closed*, Jennifer Higdon has stated: “Opera is interesting if it is about people. It’s not about the pieces of art . . . it’s about the people and how they react to art, what they value and what they don’t value.” What has value to you and your family? Consider some classic conflicts that are at the heart of literature: man in conflict with himself, another person, society, technology, nature, and fate. Which do you think apply to *Woman with Eyes Closed*? How do these conflicts help us understand the characters’ actions? How would you decide if the painting was more valuable than your own son?

MS/HS

In creative texts, closed or open eyes are considered symbols. What is a symbol? What does each position—closed and opened—mean in different forms of texts, such as literature, art, photography, and film? Of what are the closed eyes symbolic in this opera? What are some other literary works that use closed or opened eyes as important symbols or plot points?

MS/HS

In our era of digital media, what is the difference between objective journalism and opinion journalism? How does each type of journalism understand the idea of bias? How do journalists check and/or control for bias? How do artists understand bias? How might an artist express bias in his/her work? How can bias be detected? Do you detect a bias in *Woman with Eyes Closed*? If so, what is it?

MS/HS

In 2010, Jennifer Higdon was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music for her *Violin Concerto*. What are Pulitzer Prizes, who established them and why, and in which categories are they awarded? What are the criteria for being awarded a Pulitzer Prize? Is this a prestigious award, and if so, why? What other Pulitzer winners can you name? Have you read any books or articles by Pulitzer Prize winners?

MS/HS

Jennifer Higdon's music has been described in the London *Times* as having "the distinction of being at once complex, sophisticated but readily accessible emotionally" and "traditionally rooted, yet imbued with integrity and freshness." Yet her composition *blue cathedral* has been described in *The Guardian* as "pure new-age fluff; undemanding, unadventurous tonality dressed up as a quasi-mystical experience by the addition of bells and chimes." What does each critique mean? How can critiques be so different for the same music? What role do critics play in performance? In this age of social media and influencers, do audiences still pay attention to professional critics? Why might professional critics still be an important source of information?

MS/HS

Pablo Picasso once said, "Every act of creation is first an act of destruction." How do you explain this seemingly conflicting statement? How might this statement apply to writing and composition?

HS

Lucian Freud was Sigmund Freud's grandson. Who was Sigmund Freud, and what is meant by calling something "Freudian"? Would you consider the painting *Woman with Eyes Closed* to be a "Freudian" painting? Why or why not? What is the effect of having a painting as a character? What artistic options did that decision allow? Does it take on anthropomorphic qualities?

HS

Family and Consumer Sciences

State Standards: 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4

Painter Lucian Freud was the grandson of Sigmund Freud. What does the term grandson or granddaughter mean? What are grandparents? Are there grandparents in your family? PreK

Composer Jennifer Higdon was born in New York but moved with her family to Georgia, and then to Tennessee. Has your family moved to a new place? What decisions are involved with moving a family from one place to another? PreK

Jennifer Higdon listened to little classical music in her home. What kind of music does your family listen to at home? Do you listen to different music than your parents listen to? PreK

Jennifer Higdon's father was a painter and exposed his children to different types of art. How have you been exposed to art? What ideas about art exist in your family? Has your family ever bought an artwork to display? If so, where do they have it on display? PreK/ES

Museums display art that they think has something valuable to share and that people would like to see. What art or pictures do you have on display in your home? Who likes to look at it and why? What artworks are displayed in your school? Why does your school have these items on display? Why might people want to see them? PreK/ES

The theft of *Woman with Eyes Closed* took place in 2012, so historically accurate costume design would be similar to what people would wear now. If you were staging a production of this opera on a limited budget, where could you find inexpensive, ready-made clothes from which to build costumes for the cast? What is thrifting? Design what each character should wear, keeping in mind that costumes are visual cues for characterization. Where would you shop to find the items you need? Based on your design, how much money would outfitting one of the character's cost? ES/MS

Composer Jennifer Higdon said that her family "thought I was the odd kid out as a teenager when I started getting interested in classical music. I was the black sheep." What does it mean to be the black sheep in the family? Does that always mean something bad? What is the origin of the term? ES/MS

The Kunsthal Museum, the location of the art heist, is located in Rotterdam, in the Netherlands. If you were hosting a reception at this museum, what local foods would you serve? What kinds of foods do the Dutch typically eat? What local specialties might impress your guests? Create a tasting menu for this reception that features local foods and beverages. ES/MS

Jennifer Higdon earned an Artist's Diploma from the Curtis Institute of Music, where she studied with David Loeb and Ned Rorem and taught the future virtuoso Hilary Hahn. How would you feel about teaching someone who later became famous? Would you feel a familial tie? ES/MS

Composer Jennifer Higdon lived in Brooklyn, New York, Atlanta, Georgia, and Seymour, Tennessee. How would you describe each of these places? What is it like to grow up in a large, urban area as compared to a small, rural area? What are some differences for families to consider when they live in big cities with big populations and then move to more remote areas with much smaller populations?

MS/HS

In *Woman with Eyes Closed*, the leading character is Mona, a single mother. She must make decisions about her son, Thomas, and the art he stole. What does the word “familial” mean? Consider all three endings for this opera: what familial factors come into play in each of her decisions?

MS/HS

The Netherlands, home to the Kunsthall Museum where the art heist took place, is consistently named by UNICEF child well-being studies as the best country for children’s health, safety, well-being, and happiness. Research child rearing in the Netherlands. Compare the Netherlands’ ranking to the United States’ ranking. How does the Dutch government and society support children and families? What policies, programs, medical care, education, social expectations, and financial supports are provided? How does this differ from the United States’ policies, programs, medical care, education, social expectations, and financial supports for children and families?

MS/HS

Geography

State Standards: 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4

Some of the stolen art works were by Matisse, Monet, and Gauguin, artists who often painted nature. What kinds of plants and animals live around your home? Is there a park with natural woods near your home or school?

PreK

Two of the stolen paintings were of bridges in London. What is a bridge? What do bridges look like? Why are bridges important? Like London, Pittsburgh also has a lot of bridges. Look at some photos of Pittsburgh bridges. Which ones do you think would make good subjects for paintings?

PreK

As a child, Jennifer Higdon lived in big cities and rural towns: Brooklyn, New York, Atlanta, Georgia, and Seymour, Tennessee. What do big cities look like? How is living in a city different from living in the country?

PreK/ES

Jennifer Higdon once lived in Seymour, Tennessee. This town is located in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. What are foothills and mountains?

PreK/ES

Several of the paintings that were stolen were images of London bridges. Locate London on a map. Name some important geographical features of London and its surrounding area. In what country did you find London? What geographical features does London share with Pittsburgh? How could you travel to London from Pittsburgh?

ES/MS

In 2012, the year of the art heist that inspired *Woman with Eyes Closed*, the Summer Olympics took place in London. Locate the major bridges in London. Are any of the bridges depicted in the paintings that were stolen in the Netherlands? What is the most famous bridge in London? What makes this bridge so famous? Compare it to the most famous bridge in the United States.

ES/MS

As a child, Jennifer Higdon lived in the borough of Brooklyn (NY), the city of Atlanta (GA) and the town of Seymour (TN). What are the differences between a borough, a city, and a town? What does each term mean? How significant are these designations?

ES/MS

How far apart are Rotterdam and Romania? How could the art thieves have transported stolen paintings from one country to another? Research roadways and transportation systems in Europe. Plan a couple “getaway” routes the thieves could take. Which routes are the fastest? Which routes are the most remote? Which routes will most likely avoid other travelers and law enforcement, but still allow access to necessary services, such as gas and food? How many border crossings will the thieves need to navigate?

MS/HS

Composer Jennifer Higdon’s musical style was influenced by popular and folk music, but also by the mountains and wide-open spaces of her Tennessee home. Describe the geography, flora, and fauna near Seymour, Tennessee and the Great Smoky Mountains and compare it to the geography, flora and fauna native to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the Laurel Highlands.

MS/HS

Health, Safety, and Physical Education

State Standards: 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 10.5

Composer Jennifer Higdon played the flute. A flute is a wind instrument. Look at a flute or a picture of one. How does a flute make sounds? What parts of your body are needed to play the flute? How can wind players keep their lungs strong?

PreK

Opera singers need to stay healthy to sing, as a cold or sore throat will keep them from performing. How do you stay healthy in the winter? What are some things a singer can do to avoid catching a cold?

PreK

In one of the opera’s three endings, Mona burns the paintings. What does it take to build a fire? What do you know about fire safety? How can you protect yourself from getting burned? What do we practice in school to keep ourselves safe if a fire occurs?

PreK/ES

Professional critics have both praised and denigrated composer Jennifer Higdon’s music. How should we deal with negative criticism? How should we deal with disappointment? What are some strategies for coping with negatives in our lives?

ES/MS

Woman with Eyes Closed was supposed to premiere in 2020, but the COVID pandemic caused the opera's postponement until this year. How did the pandemic impact the performing arts world? Research the creative measures some performing arts companies took to keep performing safely; how did some companies engage with their members and audiences remotely or in-person? How did the pandemic affect your life? What are ways to avoid getting sick? ES/MS

Opera singing artists must care for their bodies to maintain peak performance. This includes exercise, good nutrition, and general physical wellbeing. Design an eating and exercise plan for an opera singer that will keep his/her "instrument" (voice) in its best shape. Keep in mind that singing professionally is an active profession and may require a different caloric intake than someone who works in an office setting. Focus on oral health, too; can an opera artist sing well without a full set of teeth? How important is dental health? MS/HS

What are the physical differences between how opera and pop singers sing? What parts of their voice and bodies do opera singers need to train to sing opera, and how does that compare to a pop singer's voice and body training? Create vocal training charts to help someone understand the physical differences in producing these different styles of singing. MS/HS

History

State Standards: 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4

The painting *Woman with Eyes Closed* is a portrait, meaning that it is a picture of someone real. Look at some U.S. money. Can you spot a portrait on our money? If so, who is the portrait of? Why do you think our government puts portraits on U.S. currency? PreK/ES

In 2012, the year of the art heist that inspired *Woman with Eyes Closed*, the United States held a presidential election. What is an election? How does an election work? PreK/ES

Woman with Eyes Closed is based on something that really happened. Find some books that are based on something that really happened, such as *The Dog Who Sang at the Opera*. How do books help us learn about history? PreK/ES

Woman with Eyes Closed is based on an actual 2012 art theft from the Kunsthall Museum in Rotterdam. Investigate the reporting on this heist. Trace the history of this theft across different news reporting sites. Create a timeline of events up to this current date. What has happened to the people involved? What has become of the paintings? What have been the repercussions—if any—of the theft on the museum and people associated with these events? ES/MS

In 2012, the year of the art heist that inspired <i>Woman with Eyes Closed</i> , the United States held a presidential election. Research important events that happened both in the U.S. and worldwide in 2012. Create a graphic organizer to show your findings. Based on your research, is the heist something you would include on your organizer? Explain why or why not.	ES/MS
A painting's provenance (its history) is crucial to verifying an artwork's legal owner, because so much fine art was stolen by the Nazis during World War II. Why did the Nazis steal art? Where did they hide it? Consider monetary value, societal value, historical value, and familial value. How much of the stolen art has been found and restored to its owners? What pieces remain in dispute? Who/ What organization decides who is the rightful owner of disputed art?	MS/HS
Lucian Freud was Sigmund Freud's grandson. Who was Sigmund Freud and how did his discoveries impact the modern era? In what ways did both Freuds contributed to "new thinking" in the world?	MS/HS
Lucian Freud was born in Berlin in 1922, but with the rise of the Nazi party in Germany, he left for England in 1933 and became a British citizen in 1939. What were British immigration policies toward asylum seekers fleeing the Nazis? What were American immigration policies for seeking asylum prior to and during WWII? Under each country's policies, did Freud's identity as a Jewish man have any impact on his ability to immigrate? As a naturalized British citizen, Freud served with the British Merchant Navy during World War II. What percentage of naturalized citizens served in the U.S. military during WWII? Can someone who is not an American citizen serve in the U.S. military? Does military service aid the path to naturalization?	MS/HS
Art theft isn't limited to paintings. Theodore Roosevelt's historic pocket watch was stolen from the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site in 1987 while it was on loan from the Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, where it had been displayed since the president's death in 1919. When the watch resurfaced in 2023 at a Florida auction house, how was the authenticity of the watch confirmed? What is the historic significance of the inscriptions inside the watch? Why were the FBI Art Crime team and the National Park Service involved?	MS/HS
What is provenance and why is it important? How is the provenance of art confirmed? How is art authenticated? How would someone determine if art were forged? How does an art auction house prove the provenance of an artwork up for auction?	MS/HS
Composer Jennifer Higdon's first opera, <i>Cold Mountain</i> , was based on a 1997 historical novel by Charles Frazier, a story that shares similarities with Homer's <i>Odyssey</i> . What is the <i>Odyssey</i> ? Why is this ancient poem important? How much does history repeat itself? Consider George Santayana's quote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Do you agree with Santayana? Why or why not?	MS/HS

Mathematics CORE

State Standards: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

Lesson Plan Stems in the Mathematics section are *Common Core Friendly*:

Models sitting for a portrait must sit still for a long time. Watch the second hand of an analog clock for three minutes while sitting still. Does three minutes seem like a long time? PreK

When a painting is sold, auction houses try to guess the amount of money someone will be willing pay for the art. This guessing is called “predicting”. Try to guess how many items are in a jar or paper bag, then count them to find out how close your guess was. What clues helped make your guess? PreK

Look up the birth and death dates for each of the artists whose paintings were stolen in the 2012 Rotterdam heist: Henri Matisse, Claude Monet, Paul Gauguin, Pablo Picasso, and Lucian Freud. Create an organizer to show if any of their lifespans overlapped. Would any of the artists have known each other? ES

The estimated value of the seven paintings stolen in 2012 is as high as \$134 million. Create a data set to show what would be the mean (average) value, the median, and the mode. Research the estimated value of each of the seven paintings: ES/MS

- *Tête d’Arlequin* by Pablo Picasso
- *La Liseuse en Blanc et Jaune* by Henri Matisse
- *Waterloo Bridge* by Claude Monet
- *Charing Cross Bridge* by Claude Monet
- *Femme devant une fenêtre ouverte, dite la Fiancée* by Paul Gauguin
- *Autoportrait* by Meyer de Haan
- *Woman with Eyes Closed* by Lucian Freud

Connecting dots plotted on a graph can sometimes reveal hidden pictures. Using a photo of a character from this opera, create sets of plot points to be plotted on a graph that when connected, reveals a simple line representation of your photo. ES/MS

Create a budget for a production of *Woman with Eyes Closed*. Consider costs for artists, costumes, orchestra, sets, stage hands, technology, etc. What will you have to charge for tickets in order to make a profit? Are those prices reasonable? What are some ways to save money? ES/MS

Given the dimensions of the Benedum Center Stage (Stage size: 75’ X 142’, Gridiron Height: 81’ 11”), how many square yards are available on stage for the storing and use of sets? Compare your findings to the opera studio in the Bitz Opera Factory. How does the smaller size affect set design? ES/MS

How would one determine the value of an artwork and the amount of insurance to cover its loss? What percentage of the painting’s value is paid for recovery if the work was stolen? MS/HS

If you were to steal paintings, what would you steal and why? Calculate the odds of being able to steal a painting from a museum. What factors need to be included in your calculations? What would be your chances for success and chances for selling the art? MS/HS

According to a *USA Today* report about the 2012 art heist, police alerted by a surveillance alarm said they were on the scene within five minutes, but the thieves were already gone. What is a typical police response time for a crime? Look at a map of Rotterdam and locate the Kunsthall Museum. If it took police five minutes to arrive, from where in the city would they have come? (Consider length of surface streets, posted traffic signs and signals, speed limits, etc.) Draw a radius around the museum to indicate areas from where you've calculated the response time would have been five minutes to arrive at the museum. What is located within that radius that would allow the thieves time to escape in less than five minutes? MS/HS

Science, Environment, Ecology, Technology, and Engineering

State Standards: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9
(SEETE Standards to take effect on July 1, 2025)

Imagine you have a valuable piece of art you want to protect. With a classmate, create a device or a system that will let you know if someone gets too close to your art. What will your protection look like? What materials do you want to use? How does it work? PreK

Artists learn color theory by using a color wheel. Look at a color wheel. What colors do you see on the wheel? How are these colors grouped? Color wheels look like circular rainbows, and artists use the letters in the name ROY G BIV to help remember the colors' names. Using ROY G BIV, can you match the letters to each of the colors' names? PreK/ES

Art uses symbols to express concepts and feelings. A symbol is a picture, character, mark, or object that stands for something else. For example, what might a picture of a red heart stand for? When you see a number, such as "2", what does that character mean? What other symbols do you know? Consider letters and words, musical notes, numbers, signs, etc. PreK/ES

What is a security system? Who should have a security system? Why? How do security systems work? Does your school or house have a security system? If so, describe it. ES

Many people refer to online criminal transactions as happening on the "dark web." What is the dark web? How does it work? Who uses it and how do they gain access to it? How useful would the dark web be for selling the seven stolen paintings at the center of this opera? Is law enforcement able to track criminal usage on the dark web? ES/MS

During the 15 th century, the term “Renaissance man” represented an idea of someone who embraced all kinds of knowledge and had a seemingly unlimited ability for developing new ideas or seeing things in a new way. Explore the biographies of Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci, who were painters, architects, engineers, and humanists. In today’s world, what would be the equivalent skills or disciplines of a modern “Renaissance man” (or woman)? Can you name some modern people who might fit the term “Renaissance man/woman”? Explain why and how you believe these people are good representatives of that idea.	ES/MS
The men who stole art from a museum in the Netherlands tried to hide the paintings in a garage. What is a garage? What are garages typically like? Are they a good place to store fragile and valuable paintings? Why or why not? What would happen over time if valuable art was kept in a garage?	ES/MS
The <i>Mona Lisa</i> is arguably the most famous painting in the world, and many people have tried to steal or damage it. Research the security systems the Louvre Museum has put in place to protect this painting. How do they work? How do these systems compare to security in other famous museums? Consider the systems in place to protect the original copies of the Declaration of Independence. What are the costs associated with this level of security? How do these systems impact the public’s ability to view these works?	MS/HS
People who can use symbolic language, such as music, can often easily learn other symbolic languages, such as computer coding. In what ways might coding be similar to music? Find some articles about how IBM recruited musicians in the early days of computers, before few people were trained in computer programming. What majors does IBM recruit from now? What skills are computer companies seeking?	MS/HS
Romanian forensic experts examined the ashes in the fireplace of the mother who claimed to have burned the stolen paintings. What is a forensic expert? If 100+ year-old paintings had been burned, what would you expect to find in the ashes? Research what was actually found when the experts examined the debris; how well did your prediction match the actual evidence? How can those experts tell if that burnt debris was from those seven stolen paintings and not just any painting? What kind of tests would forensics experts do to determine what had been burned?	MS/HS
How do theater designers use frequency, wavelength, and speed of sound to create theaters that can accommodate large audiences and are also effective in carrying vocal and instrumental sounds? What are the best construction materials for achieving good quality sound in a theater?	HS

World Languages

ACTFL Standards: 1 Communication, 2 Cultures, 3 Connections, 4 Comparison, 5 Communities
(National Standards from American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages)

If someone in your class does not speak English, how can you introduce yourself? Imagine you are somewhere where you don't speak the language. How might you ask someone a simple question, such as "what time is it?" Do you need to use words, or can you use gestures to help make yourself understood? Practice a wordless conversation with a classmate. How well did your conversation go?

PreK

What language is spoken in the Netherlands? Why is the language called Dutch? Where is the Netherlands located?

PreK/ES

Learn some Dutch words:

hello	hallo
goodbye	vaarwel
thank you	bedankt

What language is spoken in Romania? Why is the language called Romanian? Where is Romania located?

PreK/ES

Learn some Romanian words:

hello	buna ziua
goodbye	la revedere
thank you	mulțumesc

Sing "Happy Birthday" out loud, and then sing it inside your head only. Clap the sound of the words without singing. (This is called the melodic rhythm.) Where did you find yourself clapping? Did every word only get one clap, or did some words have more than one clap? What are those rhythmic parts of words called?

PreK/ES

When an opera singer does a terrific job with a song, the audience might shout one of three terms: brava, bravo, or bravi. Each of these terms applies to a different situation. Which term do you think is used for a woman? Which one for a man? Which if more than one person is singing? Which part of the word helped you choose when it should be used? Do you know any other words that follow a similar pattern?

PreK/ES

Cognates are words in two or more languages that share similar spellings, pronunciations and meanings. For example, "pizza" in English looks, sounds, and means the same as "pizza" in Italian. What are some words you know in another language that have English cognates?

ES/MS

What languages did Lucian Freud, Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse, Claude Monet, and Pablo Picasso speak? Did any of these men speak more than one language? Could any of them be described as a "polyglot"? Why or why not?

ES/MS

People who live in different parts of the U.S. often sound different because of regional dialects. What is the difference between speaking with an accent and speaking a dialect? Can you tell where someone has lived, based on their speech? What is “Pittsburghese”—an accent or a dialect? What are some of the hallmarks of “Pittsburghese”? Composer Jennifer Higdon was born in New York but moved with her family to Georgia and then Tennessee. Listen to her voice in a video and describe how she speaks English. Are you hearing a regional accent or a dialect? How can someone “get rid of” their regional dialect?

MS/HS

Composer Jennifer Higdon works to emulate speech patterns in her vocal and choral works. How would sung speech patterns be different in English than another language? Can operas be translated word-for-word into another language? How might word-for-word translations impact the rhythm of a song? Try this with your favorite pop song: translate it verbatim from English to a target language, and then sing your translation. What did you discover?

MS/HS

Character Themes for *Woman with Eyes Closed*

Eleanore N. Childs, a Pittsburgh attorney and child advocate, worked with teachers for more than a decade to research character education and develop the Heartwood Ethics Curriculum for Children. Heartwood's life lessons through literature promote understanding and practice of seven universal character attributes, which constitute the foundation of community among all people.

The Heartwood Institute defined seven universal character attributes:

- **Courage** is not only mastering fear; it is the ability to face difficulty or risk with integrity and honor.
- **Loyalty** is being faithful to a person, group, or ideal based on understanding that we are all part of something greater than ourselves.
- **Justice** is being guided by a balance of truth, reason, and fairness to all.
- **Respect** is regard for all life on earth. It calls us to value all people and their contributions, viewpoints, and differences, such as culture, religion, age, race, and ability.
- **Hope** guides our future through faith and aspiration, helping us to rise above selfishness and despair.
- **Honesty** is being truthful and honorable, the foundation for friendship and community.
- **Love** is deep care and concern for others, encompassing all the attributes. The more love we give, the richer we become.

Discuss two attributes—LOYALTY and COURAGE—after reading the synopsis of *Woman with Eyes Closed*.

1. When the Inspector questions Mona, she lies to him to buy her son Thomas some time, even though she knows Thomas is guilty of theft. Is Mona's act of lying to protect a loved one a form of loyalty, or is it something else? Consider who Mona may be protecting with her lies: her son? Herself? Her mother's memory?
2. In Mona's case, does her ability to face the truth of her son's actions and *still* attempt to protect Thomas—knowing he is guilty—translate into a kind of courage, or do her subsequent actions indicate that she lacks courage?
3. Three different endings allow the audience to experience different aspects of Mona's character. Which ending might speak to loyalty? Which to courage? Why?
4. The three different endings also allow the audience to consider different aspects of courage, in that each requires a sacrifice of some sort. Is the willingness to give up something—the idea of a price to be paid—a necessary element of courage? Which ending requires the most courage? Why?