

Lesson Plan Stems for 2025–2026

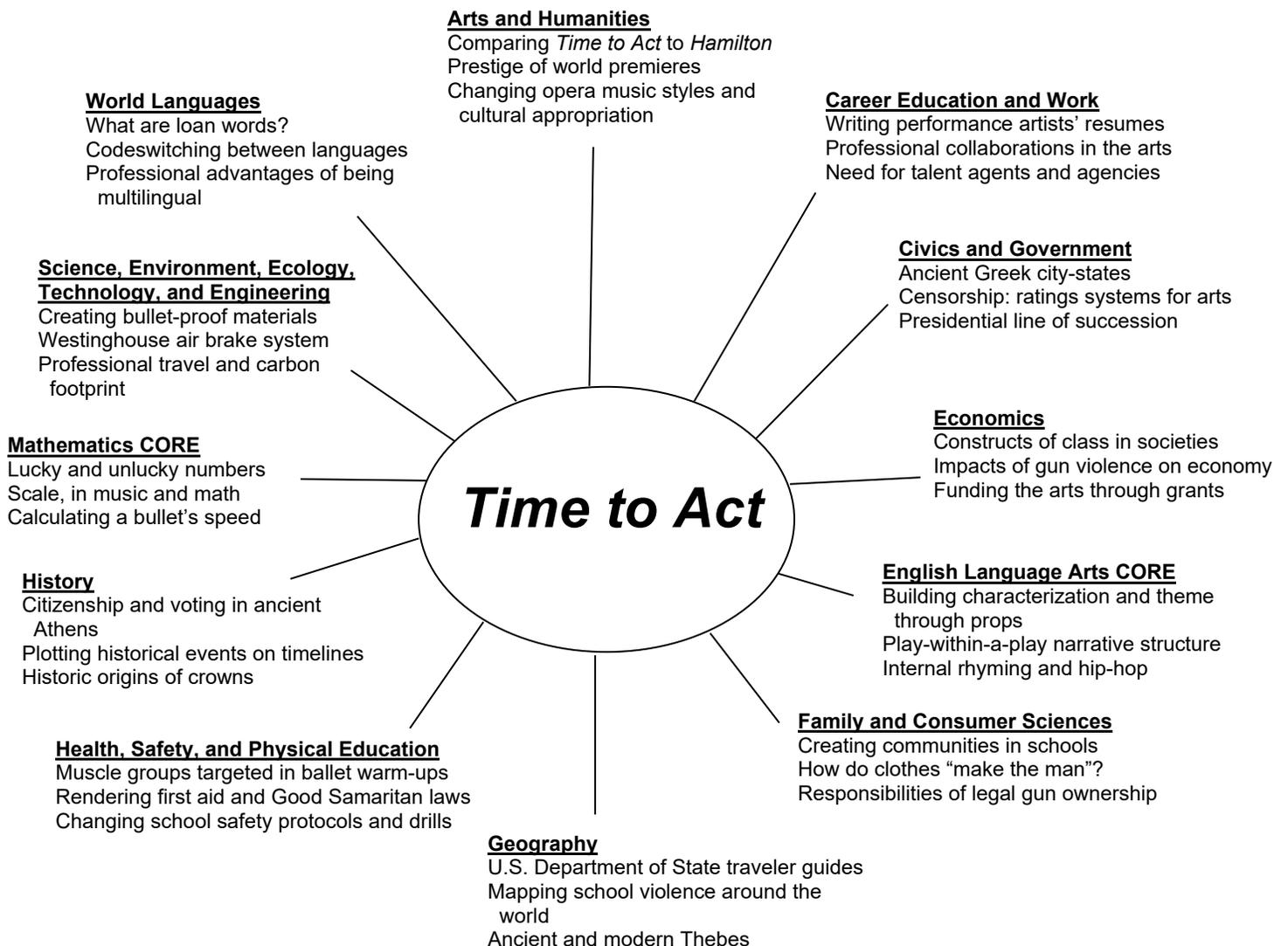
Developed by Opera on TAP:

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Curriculum Circle for *Time to Act*

How does *Time to Act* by Laura Kaminsky and Crystal Manich intersect with all academic content areas?

Begin with the opera and brainstorm connections to all curricula.





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Lesson Plan Stems for *Time to Act*

How does *Time to Act* by Laura Kaminsky and Crystal Manich 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

Arts and Humanities

State Standards: 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4

Time to Act is set in a school. What do we expect to see in a school or a classroom? What makes a school recognizable as a school to everyone in an audience? PreK

A librettist is someone who writes words to sing in an opera. Write some words about something that happened at your school and sing them to tell the story. PreK

Some operas, like *Time to Act*, have spoken lines, but most are sung. Practice saying the same sentence in your whispering voice, your talking voice, and your singing voice. PreK

At the beginning of *Time to Act*, Tyson shakes hands with a drummer. What are some percussion instruments? Can you name some different kinds of drums and instruments that are played with mallets? PreK

At the end of an opera, the performers appear together for a “curtain call,” which is when the audience shows its appreciation for the show. How do audiences show appreciation for performers? How do artists thank audiences during a curtain call? How would you organize a curtain call for this opera? Which characters will go first? Last? Why? Practice giving a curtain call with your classmates. PreK/ES

Conductors lead musicians by showing them when and how to play the music together. How does a conductor show the musicians what tempo to play? Imagine you are conducting an orchestra for an opera. How would you keep the orchestra on tempo? Show how you might guide an orchestra to change from one tempo to another. PreK/ES

- In many operas important action occurs offstage. What important actions have occurred off-stage in *Time to Act*? How and when does the audience know what happened? ES
- In *Time to Act*, the sound effects include an Intercom Voice and Safety Drill Alarms. Who prepares the sound effects, and how are they controlled during a performance? ES
- The cast for *Time to Act* includes: ES
- Alona, Mezzo, the new girl
 - Tyson, Baritone, an injured football player
 - Bailey, Soprano, a responsible and sweet spirit
 - José, Tenor, an actor and Alona's defender
 - Robin Grace, Mezzo or Baritone, the drama teacher
 - Chorus of 8, the other Playmakers
- Is having a cast of 13 considered a small number for operas? Is writing an opera that depicts high school students unusual?
- Some of the libretto lines in *Time to Act* are to be spoken and some are meant to be sung. What markings appear in the libretto to indicate which is which? How do artists project spoken lines? ES/MS
- In *Time to Act*, there are times when multiple characters sing/speak at the same time. How are those sections of the libretto marked? How are they rehearsed? ES/MS
- Professional opera singers are usually at least in their twenties, yet the artists in *Time to Act* are cast as high school students. How would a stage director ensure that the characters come across as their ages should be? ES/MS
- The set for *Time to Act* features a “typical” linoleum floor that might be found in a school setting. The linoleum floor for this opera is actually just painted to look like linoleum. Study some linoleum patterns and make samples for a set design. ES/MS
- Crystal Manich, the *Time to Act* librettist, has spent much of her career as a stage director. How is an opera stage director different from a musical director? ES/MS
- Time to Act* is a brand-new opera. Who chooses the composer and librettist when a new opera is created? Do some creators decide to write an opera on their own? Do some operas have an *impresario* and that person chooses who will create the work? ES/MS
- Listen to some selections from *Time to Act* and *Hamilton*. What are some musical elements in *Time to Act* that are similar to those in the musical *Hamilton*? Are the definitions of musical theater and opera blurring? ES/MS
- The *Time to Act* chorus includes two sopranos, two mezzos, two tenors, and two baritones. Do the singers need to blend or should individual voices be heard? Compare this chorus to one of a larger opera, such as *Falstaff*. MS/HS

Time to Act includes elements of musical styles other than classical opera, such as jazz and hip-hop. In the opening scene, a drummer plays a bee-bop riff. What is bee-bop? Additionally, some characters improvise lines—“riff” or “scat”—to demonstrate free-flowing ideas. What does it mean to scat sing? What is a riff? Practice scatting over a rhythmic line. Listen to some jazz singers (like Louis Armstrong) who scat. What other jazz artists used scat singing? MS/HS

Operas often contain small parts for characters that may be necessary for only little pieces of the story, such as the role of Bailey and the Chorus in *Time to Act*. How would you prepare if you were hired to play a “bit part” in a professional production as opposed to a school production? Debate the saying: “There are no small parts, only small actors.” MS/HS

Four of the principal singers in *Time to Act* perform some of their lines as characters from the Greek play *Antigone*: MS/HS

Alona as Antigone

Tyson as Creon

Bailey as Ismene

José as Haemon

How would the principals change their delivery to indicate when they are performing their roles as high schoolers and when they are performing their roles as actors in *Antigone*?

Pittsburgh Opera’s production of *Time to Act* will be a world premiere. How prestigious is that? Does an American premiere have as much importance? Why or why not? MS/HS

Time to Act uses a lot of percussion instruments. Does that mirror the instrumentation in musical theater? Compare a typical Mozart opera orchestra to those of Verdi or Puccini. Does any composer write for those kinds of orchestras today? MS/HS

Creating a new opera involves “workshopping” the libretto and the music, i.e. trying them out with live artists to solicit feedback and suggestions. Some opera composers, like Puccini, wrote multiple versions of operas, even after the premieres. Does having a live audience help with changes? How do creators decide when a new work is “done”? HS

Laura Kaminsky, *Time to Act*’s composer, was trained classically. Discuss how her music would be accepted by classically trained musicians and hip-hop artists. Would using hip-hop style be considered cultural misappropriation? HS

Career Education and Work

State Standards: 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.4

- A stage director decides what actors should do and how they move on stage. Stage direct a scene from a children’s book, such as *The Gingerbread Man*. How should the character move? PreK
- In *Time to Act*, an intercom is heard directing students for a drill. What is an intercom? What kinds of announcements are made? Is it important to listen to those messages? PreK
- Crystal Manich, the *Time to Act* librettist, has also directed a circus. What is a circus? What do characters do in a circus? What safety hazards might performers in a circus encounter? How can circus performers rehearse so they are safe? PreK
- In *Time to Act*, the Intercom Voice calls someone to the office. Who has the job of speaking on the Intercom in this opera? Who makes the intercom announcements at your school? How can someone learn to speak clearly on a microphone? What jobs require the use of microphones? ES
- The character of José believes a lead role in his school’s play might help him get into Carnegie Mellon University. What is Carnegie Mellon? Why would José want to go there if he wants to be an actor? What other schools might help José realize his dream of acting? ES/MS
- Laura Kaminsky and Crystal Manich created *Time to Act* through professional collaboration. What does it mean to collaborate? What other professions rely on collaboration? What other professions—both on- and off-stage—collaborate to make an opera performance? Select one of those professions and research what requirements are needed to work in that job. ES/MS
- Crystal Manich, the *Time to Act* librettist, has spent much of her career as a stage director. Is it unusual for someone to do both? What other career paths do other opera librettists follow? ES/MS
- Investigate one of the following professions in opera: the stage manager, the conductor, or a principal artist. How does someone qualify to work at this profession? What education and experience are needed to land this job? What are your responsibilities? What are the benefits and drawbacks of working in this position? For the position you’ve chosen, create a bulleted list of “To Dos” for the day before a performance. ES/MS
- Think about how often you hear music as part of another experience, such as when you see an advertisement, or watch a movie, or enter a business. What types of companies need someone to compose music for their products or productions? What other opportunities exist for professional composers? Do you think people who write music for a living are in demand? Why or why not? ES/MS

As *Time to Act* was being created, the composer and librettist got help from a dramaturgist, Amy Hutchison. What is dramaturgy and how does someone train to become a dramaturgist? ES/MS

Does having a World Premiere listed on a resume help someone gain notoriety or more opportunities? Why or why not? Do performers have resumes, or do they use something else? Who in an opera company is responsible for hiring performers? What are some items on a performer's resume that must be included? If someone is new to professional performance, what items would be expected for their resume, as opposed to someone who has been performing professionally for many years? ES/MS

One of Laura Kaminsky's operas, *As One*, is among the most produced contemporary operas since its 2014 premiere, with 60+ productions to date across the U.S., Europe, Canada, South America, and Australia. Why would she choose to list this information in her bio and resume? MS

Sophocles, the author of the play the students in *Time to Act* are rehearsing, was very wealthy, both through inheritance and his highly successful career as a playwright and public official in Athens. He wrote 123 plays, and most of them won first prizes in dramatic competitions. What are some lucrative competitions today? In the age of the internet, is prestige worth as much as prize money? MS/HS

Librettist Crystal Manich is an Emmy Award nominated, internationally-renowned creative director and writer whose works for stage, film, and circus have been seen across the United States, Europe, Argentina, and Australia. She has held several Artistic Director positions, and served as adjunct faculty at UCLA and Rider University. She is represented by United Talent Agency. How does someone choose what to include in a bio? How important is it for a professional creative to have an agent or agency? MS/HS

How did composer Laura Kaminsky and librettist Crystal Manich apply for and receive commissions to develop *Time to Act*? Must contemporary creators seek out funding? From where does funding come for writing contemporary pieces? HS

Civics and Government

State Standards: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4

One of the props used in this opera is a crown. What is a crown? Who wears it, and why? What should it look like? PreK

Sophocles, the ancient Greek author who wrote *Antigone*, was a citizen of ancient Athens, and as such, would have been allowed to vote. What is voting? Why is it done? Practice voting on an issue in your class so that everyone's vote is included. PreK

Some schools practice fire drills to make sure students know what to do in case there ever is a real fire. Who decides when fire drills happen?	PreK
In <i>Time to Act</i> , students are rehearsing a play from Ancient Greece. Ancient Greece had city-states with various kinds of governments. What kind of government does the United States have? Who is the head of the United States government, and what do we call that role? Who is the head of your state's government, and what is that position called?	PreK/ES
In <i>Time to Act</i> , the characters say that "Creon makes the law to serve himself." What kind of government would that be called, where the ruler makes laws that suit the ruler?	ES
In the <i>Time to Act</i> libretto, "Robin claps to get the attention of the room. Things start to quiet down as the Playmakers pile their phones into a basket." Why would students need to put their cell phones in a basket? Do schools allow students to use cell phones during class? Do students comply with this rule?	ES/MS
In the <i>Time to Act</i> libretto, an Intercom Voice says, "This is an active shooter drill, prepare for lockdown." Should the government require schools to practice active shooter drills? Should schools teach students how to react to emergencies? What does "Code Red" mean? Does your school practice these drills? What differences did you notice between the staged drill and the ones you practice at school?	ES/MS
In <i>Time to Act</i> , José says: <i>Can a drill prevent a crime? Like Creon's law, reality isn't reflected When tragedy strikes, they tell us to fight: Fight back with a weapon, stay alive, find blame... But they never say fight for what's right: Policy, prevention, peace For what's right.</i>	ES/MS
Who is the "they" in José's speech? Should a government intervene in tragic events?	
One of the opera's characters plays the role of a king. What is a king? Over what kind or kinds of government do kings preside? How does a king compare to a president or a prime minister?	ES/MS
Sophocles, the author of <i>Antigone</i> , lived in the ancient Greek city-state of Athens. What is a city-state? How were ancient Greek city-states governed? What were the other ancient Greek city-states? Do any modern countries have city-states nowadays? Why or why not?	ES/MS

Would *Time to Act* be appropriate for a student matinee? What grades? MS/HS
How could teachers prepare students for attending an opera about school violence? Should students and audience members be prepared and/or pre-warned about the content of the opera? If so, who would be responsible for that warning? Should operas have a rating system similar to movies and television shows?

This opera explores some of the impacts of gun violence, especially in schools. MS/HS
What are the current statistics connected to school shootings and gun violence in the United States? How do these statistics compare to other countries? How can regional, state, and federal governments work to prevent school shootings?

The civil war that led to Sophocles' play *Antigone* arose from a dispute MS/HS
between brothers over succession: which brother would rule Thebes in the absence of their father. What rules does the United States' government have to avoid a fight over succession, if the elected President can no longer serve? What is the order of succession? Are all those positions elected positions? If the President is incapacitated, what rules are in place for that situation?

Though Sophocles' *Antigone* is thousands of years old, the play can still HS
resonate with today's issues. Find news articles that parallel issues of this Greek tragedy. What is meant by the phrase "Greek tragedy"? How do governments create laws to prevent tragedies?

Gun violence and school shootings are a uniquely American epidemic. HS
Why? Compare laws in other countries with lower gun violence to those in the United States. What is the responsibility of the government to prevent gun violence? Explore this website: [17 Facts About Gun Violence And School Shootings — Sandy Hook Promise](#) How can citizens participate in making change?

Economics

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

In *Time to Act*, some school desks are used in the scenery. How much does PreK
a school desk cost?

Sophocles, the man who wrote *Antigone*, a Greek play from long ago, made PreK
a lot of money writing plays. How can a writer earn money today?

Sophocles was raised in an upper-class environment in ancient Greece. ES
What is this idea of class? What is it based on? What does it mean to be raised in lower-class, middle-class, and upper-class environments?

Time to Act is a new opera. Does it cost more to perform a new or a ES
traditional opera? Make a checklist of costs to put on a play. Would an opera's costs be the same as a play's? If not, explain why.

Pittsburgh Public Schools donated six school desks to the <i>Time to Act</i> production, and they will be part of the production “package” when it travels elsewhere. What does it mean to have “in-kind” donations? How do these donations differ from other kinds of donations given to Pittsburgh Opera?	ES/MS
Pittsburgh Opera has produced several world premieres; <i>Time to Act</i> is the first to be co-commissioned with three other organizations. Compare the costs of mounting the other world premieres to <i>Time to Act</i> : <i>The Summer King–The Josh Gibson Story</i> (2016–2017) <i>Savage Winter</i> (2017–2018) <i>In a Grove</i> (2021–2022) <i>Woman with Eyes Closed</i> (2024–2025)	ES/MS
Opera companies often need to rent a theater or other performance space, but Pittsburgh Opera owns the Bitz Opera Factory space where <i>Time to Act</i> will be performed. What does it mean to rent a space? What does it mean to own a space, such as a home? What does it cost Pittsburgh Opera to rent the Benedum Theater for its larger productions? How much does Pittsburgh Opera charge other parties for renting the Bitz Opera Factory space?	ES/MS
Pittsburgh Opera received an OPERA America grant to support the <i>Time to Act</i> commission as part of OPERA America’s Opera Grants for Women Composers program. What is a grant? How are grants funded? How do they differ from earning a salary, or payment for a product? Why would grants be earmarked for women?	ES/MS
How are the arts funded in the United States? Is there a national organization that supports performing arts, such as the opera? What percentage of the U.S. GDP comes from the arts? How is this contribution measured and reported? How do arts events, such as opera performances, contribute to both the local and national economies?	MS/HS
<i>Time to Act</i> was commissioned by Pittsburgh Opera. What is a commission and what is it worth? Why would Pittsburgh Opera provide funds to produce a new opera? How do new operas usually get produced?	MS/HS
What is the cost of gun violence in the United States? How much does gun violence affect the overall economy?	MS/HS
The composer of <i>Time to Act</i> , Laura Kaminsky, has seen her first opera <i>As One</i> produced more than 60 times since she wrote it in 2014. How much does an opera with “legs”—staying power—like <i>As One</i> , financially benefit the creators? Do modern opera composers “get rich” from their work if it’s popular?	HS

English Language Arts CORE

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

Choose several of your favorite stories. Which stories tell about real people? Which ones tell stories about made-up people? Is *Time to Act* a story about real people? Why or why not? PreK

Some of the words in *Time to Act* rhyme. What does it mean to rhyme? What words rhyme with act? What words rhyme with time? PreK

To paraphrase means to say somebody else's writing in your own words. Paraphrase "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America." PreK

What is a spoiler alert? Consider what each word means separately, first: "spoil" and "alert". Do you like to know how a story ends before it actually ends or do you like surprise endings? PreK/ES

In the *Time to Act* libretto, the scene is set in "A high school space that functions as a stage in Anywhere, USA. It is also a classroom: theatre props, a ballet bar, unhung lights, a couch, chairs, a few desks, a chalkboard." Can you picture the space from this description? Draw what you think the setting should look like, based on this description. What details are not included in this description that you needed to add to your drawing? ES

Librettist Crystal Manich provides a pronunciation guide in the *Time to Act* libretto: ES

Antigone (an-TI-goh-nee)

Ismene (iz-MEH-nee)

Haemon (HAY-men)

Creon (KREE-on)

Rosalind (ROH-za-lind)

Is the guide helpful and why was it included?

Tyson, the football player in *Time to Act*, does a "secret handshake" with his friend, the drummer. How can handshakes communicate information silently? What are other ways to communicate information without speaking? ES

Tyson dons a crown when he acts as Creon. Rope is also used as a simple prop to show when one of the students becomes the character of Antigone. Why are the crown and rope props so effective? How do simple props help show deeper meanings as well as characterization? What simple prop would you choose to represent another character from the opera? What prop would you choose to represent yourself? ES

The *Time to Act* libretto has a copyright date of 2024, but it will premiere in 2026. How long did it take to write and revise the libretto? How long does it usually take to write an opera? ES

When writing a new opera, which do you think comes first: the libretto or the music? Why? Why do you think composer Laura Kaminsky and librettist Crystal Manich chose *Antigone* to retell as a contemporary opera? Which came first, the libretto or the music? ES/MS

Learn some vocabulary related to *Time to Act*: ES/MS

Adieu	Ego	Latiné	Reinterpret
Barricade	Empathy	Lockdown	Resonate
Captain	Entomb	Mourn	Tetralogy
Catharsis	Fray	Nonchalant	Traitor
Comedy	Grace	Outcast	Tyrant
Commission	Greek tragedy	Oversized	Verdant
Counsel	Hesitant	Patriot	Violence
Decree	Impresario	Piteously	Vulnerable
Defy	Injustice	Pliable	
Dramaturgy	Intervene	Prey	

Time to Act uses the common narrative structure of “a-play-within-a-play,” where the students in this performance are themselves acting in another performance. How many other stories, movies, or shows do you know that use this same play-within-a-play structure? Why is this so common? How does that structure help an audience understand a story? ES/MS

Alona’s jacket is an important symbol in this opera. What is a symbol? What does her jacket symbolize to her? To the other students before they know her secret? Who else wears a jacket in this opera? What does that jacket symbolize? What does it mean when the characters switch jackets towards the end of the opera? ES/MS

During the students’ warm-ups for rehearsal, the teacher Robin Grace keeps calling out that it’s “time to act”. What does “act” mean here in this context? What other connotations does the word “act” have in this scene, as well as in other contexts? How do those connotations impact the meaning of this warm-up chant? ES/MS

In *Time to Act*, the students are rehearsing *Antigone*, a famous Greek tragedy. What is the difference between a Greek tragedy and a Greek comedy? What is the difference between a Greek tragedy and a Greek comedy? How do modern audiences recognize tragedy and comedy nowadays? Are the expectations the same now as when Sophocles was writing his plays in Ancient Greece? Why or why not? ES/MS

In *Time to Act*, the students’ noise level becomes a “cacophony of teenage chaos by way of artistic expression.” Describe times when your school fits this description. What is happening in that space when you feel this description fits your school? ES/MS

The new girl, Alona, explodes in one scene when the other students want to change the sad ending of *Antigone*. Should sad endings be changed in operas, movies, plays, and stories? Why or why not? ES/MS

What is a Greek tragedy? Do people use the phrase accurately? How is Sophocles' *Antigone* a true Greek tragedy? If so, why? Does *Time to Act* fit the definition of a Greek tragedy? Why or why not? ES/MS

In *Time to Act*, the scenes are described: ES/MS
Scene 1 EREMOS Loneliness
Scene 2 ALETHIA Truth
Scene 3 CATHARSIS The Purge

Investigate the etymology of the Greek terms, and create a list of English synonyms.

Stage directions can communicate important information about MS
 characterization. Read these stage directions from *Time to Act's* libretto:
Everyone horses around as Tyson is pushed to center stage.
Robin enters again. Behind them a long way away is ALONA, a
16-year-old who whose clothing covers every inch of her body.
She drowns in an oversized rain jacket. Her stringy hair falls to
cover most of her face. She wears a backpack, phone in hand. She
stops short of following Robin all the way into the space.

What do these stage directions tell us about the character of Alona?

Should an opera company provide spoiler alerts when there are sensitive MS/HS
 issues addressed in an opera? Should an opera company provide the story/synopsis in advance for every opera? How would knowing the plot and outcome of an opera's story before seeing it impact how an audience understands, reacts to, or appreciates the story?

Paraphrasing is an important skill to learn. What does it mean to MS/HS
 paraphrase? What should a good paraphrase convey? React to and paraphrase these comments from reviews about the music of Laura Kaminsky:

Possessing "an ear for the new and interesting" (The New York Times), Laura Kaminsky frequently addresses critical social and political issues in her work with a distinct musical language that is "full of fire as well as ice, contrasting dissonance and violence with tonal beauty and meditative reflection. It is strong stuff." (American Record Guide). Her first opera, As One, (2014; co-librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed) is among the most produced contemporary operas since its 2014 premiere with 60+ productions to date across the U.S., Europe, Canada, South America and Australia.

In *Time to Act*, Robin asks students: “How does *Antigone* relate to today?” MS/HS
 Why do you think the librettist chose this Greek tragedy to be *Time to Act*’s play-within-a-play? How does the story of *Antigone* connect with the students in this opera? How might it connect to our lives, too?

One reason why the Greek tragedy *Antigone* endures may be its MS/HS
 exploration of universal themes. What is meant by the term “universal theme”? What are some of the themes present in *Time to Act* that could be called “universal”? Brainstorm other themes present in popular literary works (such as novels, shows, movies, etc.) to determine some common themes. How many of these common themes are also present in *Time to Act*?

Authors sometimes write backstories for their characters. What is a MS/HS
 backstory? What does it tell a reader? How might having backstories help a writer create a story? Choose a character from *Time to Act* and create a backstory for that person or write diary entries for each character that take place after the action of the opera.

Some of the libretto sections in *Time to Act* have internal rhyming MS/HS
 schemes, similar to hip-hop music. What is an internal rhyme scheme? Identify some hip-hop pieces with internal rhymes and compare them to the opera.

Consider these lines from *Time to Act*: MS/HS
Antigone’s brothers die on opposing sides
One is called the patriot, the other the traitor
Who decides who is right?

What do you think they mean? How significant is it that the lines are discussing two brothers? How does knowing their relationship impact how you interpret these lines?

Time is a running theme in *Time to Act*. What does José mean when he MS/HS
 says these lines:
“I have an eternity to love him in sleep,
Because on earth time doesn’t keep.”

Composer Arthur Honegger also wrote an opera on the *Antigone* story, HS
 which premiered in 1927 at Théâtre de la Monnaie in Bruxelles. What similarities are there in Honegger’s opera to *Time to Act*?

Composer Arthur Honegger wrote an opera named *Antigone* in 1927, and HS
 composer Carl Orff wrote *Antigonae* in 1949, but these works are rarely performed. Yet Sophocles’ *Antigone* is often performed, especially on college campuses. Why?

Family and Consumer Sciences

State Standards: 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4

- Tyson and the drummer exchange a secret handshake at the beginning of this opera. What does the word “secret” mean? Can you keep a secret? Do you have a secret sign to give a message to somebody you know? PreK
- This opera takes place in a high school. What do schools serve students for breakfast and lunch? Do you have a favorite food you eat at school? PreK
- In this opera, Alona is having trouble working through her emotions about a violent event that happened before she came to this school. How do we know Alona is sad? When you feel sad, how do you cope with your feelings? If someone you know is sad, how can you help that person? PreK
- One of the first things the students do in this opera is place their cellphones in a basket. Why do they do that? What are some other classroom rules students need to follow? Why do classrooms have rules? Do you agree with all your school’s classroom rules? Why or why not? ES
- Two students exchange a secret handshake at beginning of the opera. What is a handshake, and how is it performed? What does it mean, and why is it done? Does every society use a handshake? If not, what do they use instead? Why might someone have a secret handshake? ES
- In *Time to Act*, the student group becomes a “community”. What is a community? What communities are you part of? How can schools help create community among their students? ES/MS
- The play the students are rehearsing is *Antigone*, an ancient Greek drama. Have you ever had Greek food? What kinds of foods do modern Greek people eat? What would someone from Greece have for breakfast, lunch, and dinner? Create a graphic organizer to compare typical foods from Greece to typical foods from your family background. ES/MS
- Many Americans are legal owners of guns. What are the responsibilities required of gun owners for handling and securing their weapons? How are guns supposed to be stored in a home? What are some precautions that gun owners take to store their weapons safely? MS/HS
- Sophocles’ *Antigone* follows the attempts of Antigone to bury the body of her brother Polynices who died fighting in a civil war. In doing so, she defies the decision of King Creon that Polynices remain unburied, and places her obligation to honor her brother above the king’s law, despite the fact that her disobedience to Creon will result in her execution. Should people follow their own moral principles, even if they conflict with the law? Why or why not? MS/HS

Consider the expression: “Clothes make the man.” What do you think it means? Consider how characters in this opera use clothing—specifically jackets—to define themselves. How do students in your class use clothing to define themselves? MS/HS

How could teachers present the *Time to Act* content and story to students? Students are familiar with drills such as the one presented in the opera, but not all students have been close to traumatic events. Consider this language in the *Time to Act* marketing materials: HS

“The opera aims to demonstrate how the arts can empower victims of trauma and give voice to young people affected by school violence. The opera tackles the sensitive topic of gun violence in America, focusing on its long-term emotional consequences.”

Do you think many students know someone who has been a victim of violence? Can live performances such as an opera be a trigger to remember negative events? How can such triggering be minimized, if at all? Discuss the long process of healing or moving past a traumatic event.

Geography

State Standards: 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4

Carnegie Mellon University is mentioned in this opera, and it is located in the Oakland neighborhood. What’s a neighborhood? Can you name any other neighborhoods in Pittsburgh? What’s the name of your neighborhood? PreK

In *Time to Act*, the classroom could be Anywhere, USA. Have you visited classrooms in other schools? In other states? If so, how are they alike and different from your classroom? PreK

Both the librettist and the composer of *Time to Act* have traveled extensively throughout the world. What are some places you have visited? What did you enjoy most about your travel?

Time to Act will have its world premiere in Pittsburgh. Locate Pittsburgh on a world map. What do you think the term “world premiere” means? PreK

Composer Laura Kaminsky’s music has been performed in the United States, Europe, Canada, South America, and Australia. Locate these countries on a world map. If she attended the performances in all those locations, how would she have travelled to get there? PreK

Do opera lovers travel far and wide to see world premieres? If someone were to travel to see 2026 opera world premieres, where would they need to travel? ES

Time to Act’s composer Laura Kaminsky has lived and worked in Ghana, Poland, and the United States. Locate each of these countries on a globe. On which continents are they located? In which time zones are each of these countries located? ES

José wants to attend Carnegie Mellon University. Locate CMU on a map. Where is it? Plot a route to Carnegie Mellon from your home. How can you get there? ES

Sophocles, the *Antigone* playwright, lived in ancient Greece. What is Greece known for today? What is its topography like? ES

Antigone is set in ancient Thebes, which is considered one of the oldest continuously-occupied cities in the world. What does that designation mean? Find Thebes on a modern map. In what part of Greece is it located? Discuss its climate, topography, resources, industries, and culture. What has Thebes been famous for? How has Thebes' significance changed throughout the centuries? Is Thebes an important place to visit? Why or why not? ES/MS

Though librettist Crystal Manich grew up in Pittsburgh, she has worked in the United States, Europe, South America, and Australia. When she worked for Cirque du Soleil, she worked in Brazil, North America, and the Middle East. Visit the U.S. Department of State website for travel. What documents would she need to travel to so many places in her professional capacity? Do any of these places have traveler advisories issued by the Department of State? What other suggestions and requirements does the U.S. Department of State list for work travel outside the United States? What would she need if she were just visiting as a tourist? Plan a trip for Ms. Manich to a place not listed here; choose whether this trip will be for work or for vacation. What documents will she need and what other preparations will she have to make in order to travel to this place and return safely? ES/MS

The [17 Facts About Gun Violence And School Shootings — Sandy Hook Promise](#) website states that gun violence and school shootings are a uniquely American epidemic. On a world map, plot the locations of mass shootings involving students in the United States, as well as in other countries. Include relevant facts and statistics about each event with your plot points. What do you notice about your map? MS/HS

Health, Safety, and Physical Education

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

Tyson and the drummer exchange a secret handshake at the beginning of this opera. With your classmates, devise a special handshake just for your class. PreK

Why do schools have emergency drills? How do you know when a drill will take place? What should students do to stay safe and obedient during an emergency drill? Practice a fire drill in your classroom. PreK

At the beginning of *Time to Act*, the audience sees ballet dancers do a warm-up routine. How do ballet dancers warm up for a rehearsal? Try some ballet warm-ups in your classroom; what muscle groups do they target? PreK/ES

In this opera, the students' rehearsal is interrupted by an active shooter drill. What does it mean to have a drill? Why are drills held? Are all drills the same? If not, what makes them different? What other kinds of drills do students practice at school? ES

Tyson has his arm in a sling from a football injury. What are some common injuries that young football players might sustain? How do football players protect themselves from serious injuries? ES/MS

What someone has seen can be an important aspect of memory, but studies have shown that scent can be even more evocative of memories. Have you ever smelled something that brought back a powerful memory? If so, what was the scent, and was that memory something pleasant, or something upsetting? If it was upsetting, how can you process that memory safely? ES/MS

Singing opera is physically demanding. On the day of a full-length performance, what are the nutritional needs of an opera singer? Plan a healthy menu for that entire day, one that provides the singer with the nutrients and energy he or she needs for the performance. ES/MS

School safety drills such as the one that happens in *Time to Act* have become commonplace. What different kinds of drills do you practice at your school? When are they practiced, and how do you know when a drill is coming? How do these drills compare to drills your parents or grandparents may have had to practice? Are the procedures for school emergency drills all the same, or do different kinds of drills require different preparations? Today's students have been impacted by school violence. How can schools better prepare students for potential emergency situations? ES/MS

Opera singers' physical appearance is often a topic of concern and jokes. Do others sometimes pressure artists about their physical appearance? If so, why? What is body shaming? How should we talk to people about their physical appearance? ES/MS

In any circumstance, it is a good idea for people to be trained in first aid. What practices are considered first aid? What does someone trained in first aid learn to do? Can someone be certified to give first aid? If a person renders first aid in good faith but something goes wrong, is that person protected by any laws, or are they vulnerable to a lawsuit? MS/HS

The 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado fundamentally altered school safety protocols. Brainstorm some changes that have been made to school safety protocols since 1999. What are some current standard safety practices in schools that would have been unusual in 1999? What are lockdown drills, such as the one that happens in *Time to Act*? What are active shooter drills? Are these drills practiced the same way everywhere? Why or why not? MS/HS

Survivors of violence may move on, but some may never completely recover. What is post-traumatic stress, and who is at risk for developing it? How does this condition manifest? How is it diagnosed and treated? What are some triggers for remembering a violent episode? If that violence happens to students, how do schools provide counseling, and how long does that counseling last? How can people learn to process uncertainty?

HS

History

State Standards: 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4

Sophocles, a playwright who lived in Ancient Greece, was born to a wealthy manufacturer of armor. What is armor and do we still use armor today?

PreK

Time to Act is a modern opera that uses an ancient play in its story. What does it mean if we call something “ancient”? What does “modern” mean? Brainstorm with your classmates a list of things you think are ancient and things you think are modern. Be ready to explain your choices.

PreK

Tyson describes a student he’s never met as an “outcast” and a “loser”. What do those words mean? Are those kind words? How can we include everybody in our school groups?

PreK

The play the students are rehearsing in *Time to Act* was written by a man named Sophocles. Do you think that is his first name or his last name? Do you know of any other performers or artists or public figures that only go by one name? If so, brainstorm a list with your classmates. Does having only one name lead to confusion? Why or why not?

PreK/ES

To help organize our understanding of history, we often plot historical events on a timeline, using the concept of calendar years. Sometimes these timelines use the terminology BC and AD to differentiate eras, and sometimes they use BCE and CE. What does each pair of terms mean? How are they used? Is there a year 0 when making a timeline? Why or why not? One which part of the timeline would you list *Time to Act*? On which would you place Sophocles’ *Antigone*?

ES/MS

Sophocles’ *Antigone* premiered c. 441 BC in ancient Greece; the abbreviation “c.” stands for the word “circa” which means “around”. Why don’t we know the exact year? How do historians know anything about Sophocles and his plays that are thousands of years old? Did Sophocles write about real people?

ES/MS

Sophocles’ plays often won competitions at the City Dionysia, an important annual festival for the dramatic arts in ancient Athens. Is this festival still celebrated? What other important festivals for theater happen each year worldwide? Do these festivals still hold competitions for the best works?

ES/MS

One of the props used in this opera is a crown. Investigate the origins of crowns. In what cultures are they found? What is the earliest known crown? Why are crowns worn? MS

Sophocles, the author of *Antigone*, was a citizen of the Athenian city-state, and as a citizen, he was eligible to vote. How was voting in ancient Athens done? Who was eligible? How does our modern system of voting and eligibility differ from voting in an ancient Greek city state? MS

The opera refers to a character as a tyrant king. What did the term “tyrant king” mean in ancient Greece? What does it mean nowadays? Is it only used to describe a king? What other rulers have been considered tyrants or tyrant kings? MS/HS

Sophocles wrote more than 120 plays, and many of those won prizes:
“In dramatic competitions at the City Dionysia, he was incredibly successful, winning first prize at least 18 to 24 times and never placing lower than second in his career. While the exact monetary value of these wins is not recorded, they brought immense prestige and likely significant prize money.”
 How do historians research and verify this information? MS/HS

In Sophocles’ *Antigone*, a civil war pits family members against each other. What cause divided Antigone’s family? What is meant by the term civil war? How can war be considered “civil”? Draw parallels to the political climate in the United States during the American Civil War of 1861–1865, and to that of today. MS/HS

In *Time to Act*, Tyson says: HS
*You can’t say all tragedies are the same
 Last year at Gates,
 That kid was an outcast
 I’ll never forget that day...
 Gun in hand
 How many in cold blood?
 Then he shot himself
 Gun in hand
 They said no warning signs?
 A high school dropout
 Loser
 Killer*

Does Tyson’s attitude reflect current culture? Does history repeat itself?

Time to Act reflects the uniquely American epidemic of gun violence. Why is gun violence considered “uniquely American”? Explore how and why the United States came to have this reputation—is it a recent characterization, or is it something that taps into this country’s past? Could this opera be set in other countries, and if so, what—if anything—would need to change, and why? HS

Mathematics CORE

State Standards: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

Time to Act isn't about an exact time on a clock. What are some other ways we use the word "time" that are not about clock time? PreK

The *Time to Act* chorus has a total of eight singers: two sopranos, two mezzos, two tenors, and two baritones. Show how to group eight items into groups of two. What other groupings can you make with this same number of singers? PreK

Laura Kaminsky, the composer of *Time to Act*, has also written piano four-hands pieces, which are songs written for two players playing at the same time on one piano. How many fingers are playing a piano four-hands piece? PreK

Time to Act has a cast of 13 people. What is special about the number 13? What comes to mind when you hear that number? Are there other numbers that seem to have special meanings—lucky, unlucky, etc. If so, what are they? Why do you think these numbers have these meanings? PreK/ES

The word "scale" can be used in many contexts, including math and music. Picture a scale. What does it do? In music, singers usually warm up their voices by singing scales. With your teacher's help, sing a simple scale. How many notes did you sing? Try another scale in a different key. How many notes did you count in that scale? What conclusions can you draw about musical scales? PreK/ES

In 2023 through the support of the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, OPERA America awarded \$100,000 to five opera companies. Pittsburgh Opera's commission of *Time to Act* was part of those awards. Divide the dollar amount between the awardees. How much did Pittsburgh Opera receive from this grant? ES

Time to Act is performed in one act of about 95 minutes, with no intermission. Examine the score to determine how long each character is on stage. Create a chart to show your findings. If performers were paid by the amount of time they were on stage, which character has the most stage time in this opera? ES

How are years represented on a timeline, from ancient to modern times? Sophocles, the author of the play the students in *Time to Act* are rehearsing, was born in 496 BCE, and lived until he was 90. In what year would he have died? Where would his birth and death be indicated on a timeline? ES

In *Time to Act*, both Alona and Tyson have experienced gun violence. Each day, 12 children die from gun violence in America, and another 32 are shot and injured. Create a chart that extrapolates those figures to represent the numbers that will have died and will have been injured within a month, a year, and a decade. ES/MS

The term “scale” is also used in math. What is the definition of “scale” in mathematics? Find the dimensions of the Bitz Opera Factory, where *Time to Act* will be performed. Create a diagram of the stage drawn to different scales. What does it mean to draw a stage set groundplan to scale? Using the same scale as stage set designers use, create a scaled “stage set” draft for a room in your home. Compare the dimensions of the Bitz Opera Factory to those of the Benedum Theater stage, where other operas have been performed. How would you describe their relative sizes in terms of scale? Write it as a ratio. ES/MS

In the 27 years since the Columbine High School massacre, school shootings are a factor that American schools confront. What are the current statistics connected to school shootings in the United States? Research statistics on school shootings, using the Columbine High School massacre in 1999 as a starting point. How do these statistics compare to other countries? Create a graphic organizer to illustrate this comparison. What type of organizer will best highlight your findings? MS/HS

How is mathematics integral to music, such as how pitch relates to sound waves? What other mathematical relationships exist in music? MS/HS

What is the role that mathematical ratios play in musical harmony? What is the mathematical difference between a just-toned scale and an equal-tempered scale? What are the harmony effects of using each method for tuning a piano? HS

Both the characters of Alona and Tyson have first-hand experience with gun fire. How fast do bullets travel? How can the speed of a bullet be calculated? What mathematic formulas would apply to this question? What facts does someone need to know before the speed of a bullet can be determined? HS

Science, Environment, Ecology, Technology and Engineering

State Standards: Earth and Space Science, Life Science, Physical Science, Environmental Literacy and Sustainability, Engineering, Technology, and Applications of Science

The set for *Time to Act* features a “typical” floor that might be found in a school setting. What kind of floor material is in your classroom? Is it the same as the hallway? How are floor sections at doorways connected? PreK

Time to Act’s set uses student desks as some of the props for the setting. Measure how much space is needed for a student sitting at a desk. How much space is needed for a teacher’s desk? PreK/ES

Sometimes during drills teachers and students are instructed to barricade the door to prevent someone from entering the room. What items in your classroom could be used to keep the door from opening? How easily can these items be moved? How many people will it take to move these items? Which ones can be moved quickly?	PreK/ES
The set for <i>Time to Act</i> features a “typical” linoleum floor that might be found in a school setting. Use a computer to research what linoleum is and how it is made. Why is linoleum a popular choice for school flooring? Can a flooring company provide samples?	ES
In Sophocles’ play, the character of Antigone defies King Creon and buries her dead brother. Why is it important to bury a body soon after death? What happens if a body is not buried? What are the health consequences of leaving corpses unburied? Are there environmental consequences?	ES/MS
In <i>Time to Act</i> the students learn of the lockdown drill via the school’s intercom system. What is an intercom? How do intercom systems work? How are they different from classroom telephones? When were they invented and how have they changed throughout the years?	ES/MS
The pit plot for <i>Time to Act</i> must be carefully measured and designed to include six instrumentalists: Violin, Cello, Bass, Clarinet & Saxophone, Percussion, and Piano. The percussion footprint must include Drums, Congas, Vibraphone, Bongos, Tam-tam, Gongs, and Drum Set. Determine how much space is needed to play each instrument and lay out the pit plot.	ES/MS
Tyson tells a story about when he was very young and accidentally fired a handgun. How do guns work? Explain the basic design and mechanics of a handgun. What safety mechanisms do handguns have? How do those mechanisms work? What might cause a gun to fire accidentally?	MS/HS
In <i>Time to Act</i> , characters talk about throwing books to stop a bullet and Alona says, “A book can’t stop a gun.” What materials could actually stop a bullet? What kinds of materials are used to develop bullet-proof clothing (vests), glass (vehicles, buildings), and doors? How are these materials made?	MS/HS
The Bitz Opera Factory building where <i>Time to Act</i> will premiere, was originally the Westinghouse Air Brake Company, where George Westinghouse invented the railway airbrake in 1869. What was an air brake, and how did it work? What was the difference between manual braking systems and Westinghouse’s new invention? Are air brakes still in use on railroad cars today? If so, how have the mechanisms changed since 1893, when their use was mandated on all railcars by the Railroad Safety Appliance Act?	MS/HS

Positions in the performing arts can require a professional to travel extensively to work in many different cities around the world in any given year. What is the carbon footprint of having to travel for a living? What is meant by the term carbon footprint, how is it measured, and why might it be important to know? How can someone who travels professionally improve his or her carbon footprint? MS/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)

In *Time to Act*, one character is named José, which is a Spanish name. What are some other Spanish names? PreK

Learn how to say some Greek character names: PreK
 Antigone (an-TI-goh-nee)
 Ismene (iz-MEH-nee)
 Haemon (HAY-men)
 Creon (KREE-on)
 Rosalind (ROH-za-lind)

Sometimes in an opera, singers are directed to sing *sotto voce*, which means in a quiet voice, as if not to be overheard. Practice speaking *sotto voce*. When is it appropriate to speak *sotto voce*? PreK

José speaks in both Spanish and English, sometimes mixing the two languages in one thought. What is the term for when someone switches from one language to another in the same speaking moment? Have you met anyone who does this, too? ES

In the *Time to Act* score, there are tempo markings and also indications about how to produce and vary vocal sounds written in Italian. What do these Italian words indicate for performers: *parlando*, *sotto voce*, *niente*? ES

Librettist Crystal Manich is described as an Emmy Award nominated, versatile Latiné international creative director, and writer-librettist. What does the term Latiné mean? How is this term different from Hispanic, Latina, or Latinx? ES/MS

In Pittsburgh Opera programs, cast members sometimes have symbols next to their names to indicate special relationships to the company, such as ** Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist Alumnus. What does “alumnus” mean? What does “alumna” mean? What does “alumni” mean? What is the derivation of those terms? ES/MS

Scenes in *Time to Act* are named using Greek terms: Eremos, Alethia, Catharsis. What does each term mean? Which word has become a common part of the English language? What is the English term for words that come into common English usage from other languages? What other English words have been borrowed from other languages? ES/MS

In *Time to Act*, the character José sometimes speaks in Spanish: MS
Estoy presente
I feel the flow
La conexión creciente
Es tiempo que te presentes...

What does he say?

Time to Act is sung in English. Explore other languages used in operas. Do some companies translate foreign languages into English to perform in the United States? Do other countries translate English operas into their own languages? What are the advantages and disadvantages of translating songs into other languages? Try translating an English language pop song into another target language. What were the challenges you faced with translation? Does the song still have the same effect in a target language as it did before the translation? Why or why not? MS/HS

Crystal Manich is fluent in Spanish and Italian. She has a working knowledge of German, French, Portuguese (Brazil); and knowledge of Serbian, Czech, and the Cyrillic alphabet. Why would she list these skills in her bio? Do those skills serve her well in the opera world? How would she have gained those skills? MS/HS

In the *Time to Act* libretto, librettist Crystal Manich provides a pronunciation guide. Did she use dictionary pronunciation protocols or an individual approach for everyone to be able to understand? MS/HS
 Antigone (an-TI-goh-nee)
 Ismene (iz-MEH-nee)
 Haemon (HAY-men)
 Creon (KREE-on)
 Rosalind (ROH-za-lind)

How would various dictionaries have indicated pronunciations for the characters?

Character Themes for *Time to Act*

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 respect—after reading the synopsis of *Time to Act*.

1. Is there such a thing as being too loyal? Consider the far-reaching consequences of these characters' actions to themselves, their families, and the people they love: Antigone, Creon, Alona, and Alona's brother. To what extent do these characters owe loyalty to their family members? Social groups? Do they owe loyalty to their ideals? Do either Antigone or Alona take their loyalties too far?

2. One element of developing respect is to have empathy, the ability to step into someone's shoes to understand that person's perspective. Why does Jose's comment about Creon: "*Is a broken heart the only way he can understand someone's pain?*" catch Alona's attention? Is it possible to develop empathy for the families of people who commit violent acts? Why might it be important to have that sense of empathy? How does Alona's revealing her secret impact the students' respect for her? How does it impact their understanding of *Antigone*?

3. How is facing death a measure of loyalty and respect in both *Antigone* and *Time to Act*? At one point in the opera, Alona questions if her brother would have shot her had he known she was there, yet she wears his coat; is this an act of remembrance, an attempt at empathy, or a measure of loyalty? How is Antigone's acceptance of her own death her measure of loyalty and respect for her brother? In each case, is loyalty and respect simply owed, or should it be earned?