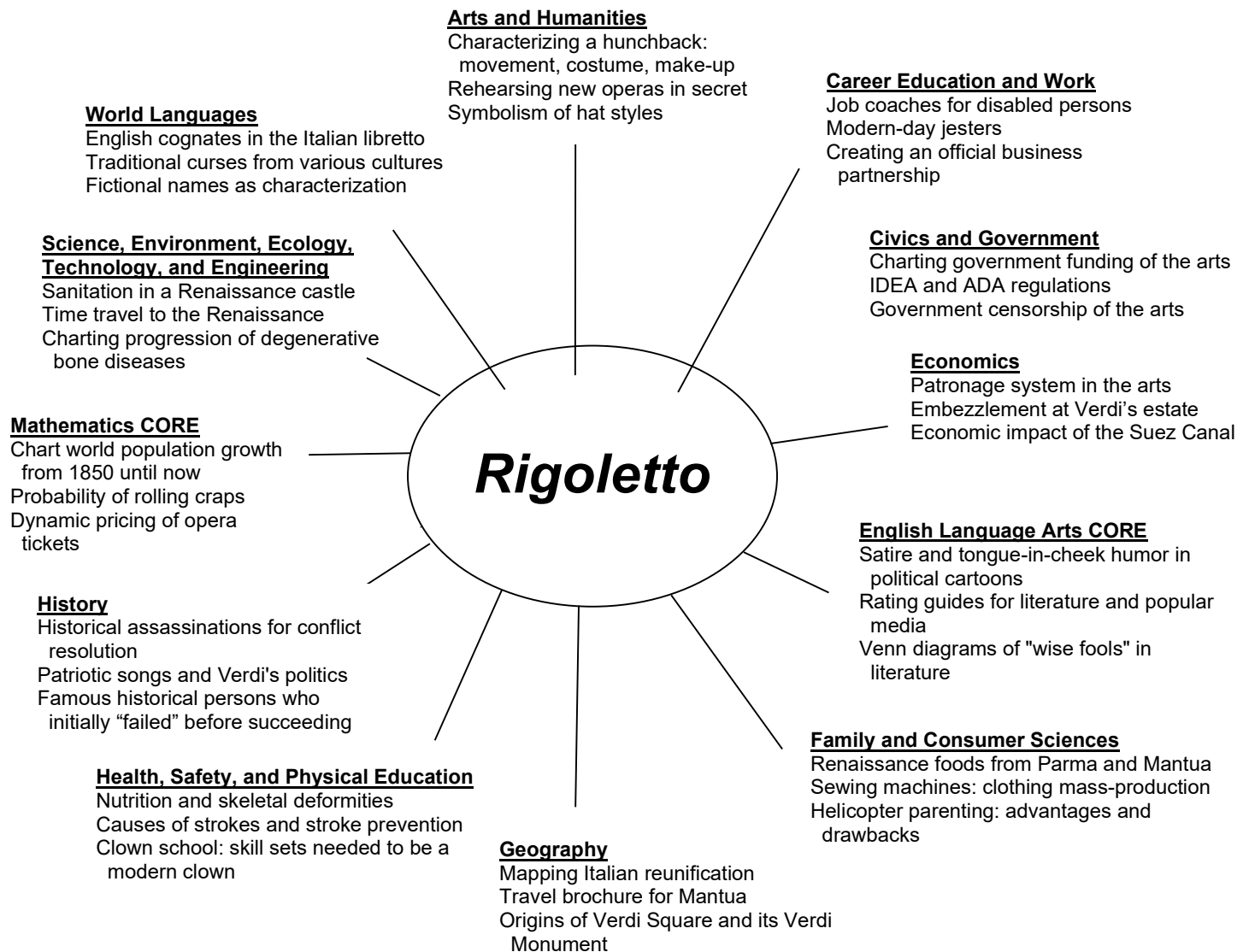


Curriculum Circle for *Rigoletto*

How does *Rigoletto* by Giuseppe Verdi and Francesco Maria Piave intersect with all academic content areas?

Begin with the opera and brainstorm connections to all curricula.





Lesson Plan Stems for 2026–2027

Developed by Opera on TAP:

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Lesson Plan Stems for *Rigoletto*

How does *Rigoletto* by Giuseppe Verdi and Francesco Maria Piave 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

Listen to “La Donna è Mobile” from Act III. Can you tap along with the beats or rhythm of this song? The beats of a song are also called its meter. How many beats do you feel in this song’s meter? PreK

Tap out the beat (also called meter) for $\frac{3}{4}$ time. Demonstrate the meter by moving to it in your own unique way, such as using scarves to “wave to” the rhythm. Which song from *Rigoletto* uses $\frac{3}{4}$ time? PreK

What is a jester? Do you think a jester is different from a clown, and if so, in what ways? PreK

“La donna è mobile” is a song about how women change their minds. Create new lyrics for “La donna è mobile.” What will your lyrics discuss? Make sure that your lyrics use the same rhythm and musical accentuation as Verdi’s. PreK

Rigoletto has a famous quartet: “Bella figlia dell’amore.” In a quartet, how many people are singing together? In a trio? In a duet? Listen to the quartet in this opera. Can you understand what the four singers are singing? If there were a quartet in a play, could you understand what everyone was saying? PreK

Write a memory about a time when you were in a disguise. How did other people respond to your costume? How did being in disguise feel? PreK/ES

Imagine you have a hunchback like Rigoletto. How would a person with this physical problem move? How would you express this disability in a dance? PreK/ES

Listen to the Act III quartet in *Rigoletto*. As you listen, show how many people are singing simultaneously by holding up one, two, three, or four fingers. When are all four characters singing together? PreK/ES

- Listen to excerpts from the opera. Can you distinguish between different types of ensemble singing, such as quartets, duets, and trios? ES
- Quartets in opera often include each character introducing a solo line before all four joining together. Why might quartets begin with the solo lines? Can you understand what each character is singing and expressing? Could you understand what four characters were saying simultaneously in a spoken play? ES
- The *Rigoletto* full orchestral score calls for a cimbasso. What is a cimbasso, and how is it played? In modern orchestras, a tuba is often used instead. What kind of sound does a tuba make? Compare the cimbasso to a modern tuba. What might a cimbasso have sounded like? Do cimbassos still exist? ES
- Compare images of the hunchback in *Rigoletto* to the images of *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. Create your own drawing of how you believe the character should look. Why do you think the hunchback should look the way you've drawn the character? ES
- The *Rigoletto* chorus has at least 16 singers—tenors and baritones. Why did Verdi only include men in the chorus? ES
- Verdi's operas are frequently staged around the world. Explore how many of his operas are currently being produced in theaters around the world. Why are Verdi's operas so popular? ES
- The music of *Rigoletto* has been used in Grand Theft Auto soundtracks and Doritos commercials. What other popular uses for the music can you find? ES
- In 1813, the year Verdi was born, the waltz dominated European ballrooms. What is the time signature of a waltz? How does it compare to other common time signatures? Tap out the waltz meter (STRONG-weak-weak) with your hands or another instrument. Learn the basic steps to a waltz. ES
- The bicentenary of Verdi's birth in 2013 was celebrated around the world, both in performances and broadcasts. What other artists have been celebrated for their 100th, 150th, or 200th birthdays? In what other ways have famous artists been celebrated historically? ES
- In 2011, Anthony Tommasini ranked Verdi eighth on his list of the ten greatest composers of classical music. Who would be in your top ten list of composers? Why? Which artists do you think will still be known or performed 200 years from now? ES
- Look up the words "prelude" and "overture" in the dictionary. Compare the two terms. Why do you think Verdi used "prelude" in *Rigoletto* rather than "overture"? ES/MS
- Listen to several parts of the prelude that demonstrate certain themes or motifs in the opera. Given a summary of each act, explain which part of the prelude might signal or match which event or idea in the story. ES/MS

There is a very important storm that occurs in *Rigoletto* Act III. How would you stage a storm? Consider that the storm has emotional symbolism, too. How would you convey those ideas to your audience? ES/MS

The third act of *Rigoletto* has a very famous quartet, “Bella figlia dell'amore.” What is a quartet? What other musical ensembles exist? What determines these groupings? How do these groupings help shape the opera’s composition? ES/MS

Research the clothing that would have been worn in Italy during Renaissance in the 1500s. Which characters in the opera would have worn what types and colors of clothes? Why? Design your own Renaissance costumes for the characters in this opera. Consider the class level of each character when you create your designs. ES/MS

In this opera, the assassin Sparafucile carries a dagger as the instrument of his profession. What is the difference between a dagger and a knife? As a prop master, how would you select the right kind of props to convey this difference? ES/MS

Create new lyrics for “La donna è mobile” that truly represent the rhythm and musical accentuation—also known as the melodic rhythm. Is it difficult to set different lyrics to this tune? Why or why not? ES/MS

Rigoletto includes a large cast, with three Leading roles, three Featured roles, two Supporting roles, four Bit roles, and a Chorus Bit role. Compare the balance of voice types and roles. Does any one type dominate? Why or why not? ES/MS

Role	Voice Part	Classification
The Duke of Mantua	Tenor	L
Rigoletto	Baritone	L
Gilda	Soprano	L
Count Monterone	Baritone	F
Sparafucile	Bass	F
Maddalena	Contralto	F
Marullo	Baritone	S
Matteo Borsa	Tenor	S
Count Ceprano	Bass	B
Giovanna	Mezzo-Soprano	B
Countess Ceprano	Mezzo-Soprano/ Soprano	B
A Page	Soprano	B
Usher	Baritone	CB

In 1869, Verdi had been asked to compose a section for a *Requiem* mass in memory of Rossini. Verdi conducted his *Requiem* in Paris, London, and Vienna in 1875 and in Cologne in 1876. It seemed that it would be his last work. What is a *Requiem* and what other music is often used at funerals? ES/MS

Excerpts from Verdi's *Requiem* were featured at the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales in 1997. When else has the *Requiem* been performed at significant events? ES/MS

The opera *Rigoletto* is often mentioned or featured in other pop culture entertainments, such as in the 1959 comedy *Some Like it Hot*. Brainstorm other movies, shows, cartoons, and commercials that either refer to *Rigoletto* or use music from *Rigoletto*. Why would one form of entertainment include something from another? What does this type of borrowing, referencing, or homage accomplish? ES/MS

Verdi worked with the librettist Piave on his 1844 *I due Foscari*, as well as *Rigoletto*. How are the roles of composer and librettist divided? How do they work together? Should the librettist get equal credit as the composer? ES/MS

After learning to play the organ, Verdi showed so much interest in music that his parents finally provided him with a spinet. What is a spinet? Would learning to play the organ be different from learning to play a spinet? ES/MS

The character of Rigoletto suffers from a severe spinal deformity that also impacts his ability to walk. What costume devices or make-up might be needed to accurately portray Rigoletto's physical issues? How might these physical traits influence the singer's portrayal? MS

Aware that the melody he wrote for the Duke's aria "La donna è mobile" ("Woman is fickle") would become a popular hit, Verdi excluded it from orchestral rehearsals for the opera and rehearsed the song with the tenor separately. Do opera premieres require secrecy today? Why or why not? What might be the advantage of such a tactic? Are there any drawbacks to this kind of secrecy? What other performers tend to keep their new shows "under wraps" while rehearsing? What does this do for a new performance? What are some Broadway musical melodies that were kept secret until openings and have since become "ear worms"? MS

The prelude to *Rigoletto* is a kind of synopsis of the opera's dramatic essentials. The brass, led by solo trumpet and trombone, play a motif associated with the curse placed on Rigoletto. This movement builds in intensity and eventually explodes into a passionate sobbing figure for full orchestra; the figure peters out, the brass motif returns, and simple cadences bring the prelude to a solemn close. Listen carefully to the prelude for these elements and mark each of these sections in the score. MS

If an opera company chooses to update *Rigoletto* and use contemporary costumes, how does that impact the audience's understanding of the story? Could this be a modern story? Without traditional costumes, is any meaning lost? MS

Since *Rigoletto*'s premiere, the opera has never left its place in the standard repertory of opera houses worldwide. Is that typical? Why has *Rigoletto* remained popular? MS/HS

Listen to several excerpts from <i>Rigoletto</i> to demonstrate the different voice classifications and characters portrayed by those classifications. Match the voice type excerpt to each character, based on your understanding of the plot and characterization of the voice type.	MS/HS
Hat styles often are modeled to be symbolic representations of something, such as a jester's three-pointed cap has become a symbolic representation of the asses' ears and tails that jesters once wore. What other hats from the Renaissance were also symbols? Do modern-style hats represent anything today? Design a hat to symbolize a character in <i>Rigoletto</i> . What does your hat represent?	MS/HS
Verdi came to dominate the Italian opera scene after the era of Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, and Gaetano Donizetti, whose works significantly influenced him. How did the <i>bel canto</i> composers influence Verdi?	MS/HS
In the winter of 1851–1852, Verdi went to Paris with Strepponi, where the couple attended a performance of Alexander Dumas <i>filis'</i> play <i>The Lady of the Camellias</i> . Verdi was so inspired by this play that he immediately began to compose music for what would later become his opera <i>La traviata</i> . How do various art forms influence other works? Brainstorm works that have been inspired by other, perhaps earlier, works or art forms.	MS/HS
Find examples of paintings and sculpture from the Italian Renaissance. Who were some of the most noteworthy artists of that time? What religious symbols or symbolism can be found in this art? Why would those symbols have been part of the artists' designs and compositions?	MS/HS
<i>Rigoletto</i> uses women in disguise as a plot device. What other operas or stories also use disguise as a narrative device? How many use disguise to further comedy? How many use disguise to fuel a tragedy? Does disguise figure more prominently in stories or operas set in any particular era or is it used universally?	HS
Some musicologists describe the pacing of <i>Rigoletto</i> as impeccable and the musical characterization more consistent than <i>Verdi's</i> earlier operas. How did Verdi create musical portraits of Rigoletto and Gilda? How did their characters' music change during the opera?	HS
What are impediments today for composers to successfully get an opera written? Are the challenges mostly financial? How does audience perception and tolerance impact the creation of new work?	HS
Verdi has also had an impact on the fashion world. In 2014, the pop singer Katy Perry appeared at the Grammy Awards wearing a dress designed by Valentino, embroidered with the music of "Dell'invito trascorsa è già l'ora" from the start of <i>La traviata</i> . What do the lyrics of this song mean? What kind of fashion and historical statement was she making?	HS

Verdi's 1879 *Autobiographical Sketch* remains the leading source of information about his early life and career. Verdi stated: "From the ages of 13 to 18 I wrote a motley assortment of pieces: marches for band by the hundred; perhaps as many little *sinfonie* that were used in church, in the theatre and at concerts; five or six concertos and sets of variations for pianoforte, which I played myself at concerts; many serenades, cantatas (arias, duets, very many trios) and various pieces of church music, of which I remember only a *Stabat Mater*." Why would scholars want to study Verdi's early compositions? HS

Career Education and Work

State Standards: 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.4

Jesters such as Rigoletto entertained the court through singing, dancing, juggling, tricks, poems, satire, or repartee. How can you make your classmates laugh? PreK

A jester was a person whose purpose was to entertain royal or noble families. Often jesters had some kind of physical disability that affected their appearance: they may have been dwarves, albinos, or crippled in some way, such as Rigoletto was crippled by his hunchback. How can we describe someone with a physical challenge using kind words? PreK

Verdi said he worked hard for sixteen years on composing operas and never had one hour of peace. How do people take breaks from work? PreK

Verdi was a composer, politician, and teacher. What do people who work in those jobs do? Do you know any composers or politicians? How did your teacher learn to be a teacher? PreK/ES

Verdi was a composer, politician, farmer, and teacher. In which career did he excel? For which is he best remembered, and why? ES

Though the librettist Francesco Piave originally studied to be a priest, when his family's glassmaking business failed he left the seminary to work as a writer, translator, and proofreader. Explore Piave's career. How did he become a librettist? What other types of professional writing did he do? ES

The Pittsburgh Opera *Rigoletto* chorus only engages 22 men. Are there opera companies who employ full-time chorus members? Do male singers get more work and make more money than female singers? ES/MS

In Rigoletto's time, a person with a disability would have had difficulty finding a job. Explore the occupation of a job coach. How could hiring a job coach help someone with a physical disability find a good job? What kinds of jobs would be appropriate for someone with Rigoletto's disability? ES/MS

Verdi had a very long career as a composer. Compare the length of his training and career to other opera composers. ES/MS

In 2011, Anthony Tommasini noted that “Though Verdi had an ornery side, he was a decent man, an Italian patriot, and the founder of a retirement home for musicians still in operation in Milan.” Why might such a home be needed? What sort of retirement plans are available to professional musicians as part of their benefits?	ES/MS
How do people like Rigoletto, who get paid by performance rather than full-time employment, create a budget? What work-related expenses do they need to include in their fees for their performances?	ES/MS
In this opera, Sparafucile works as an assassin for hire. Create a job description for an assassin. What qualifications, background, training, skills, and/or tools would someone need to fill this job? Where might they have received their training? What salary or benefits will be offered to qualified candidates? Who might employ an assassin?	ES/MS
From age four Verdi was given private lessons in Latin and Italian by the village schoolmaster, and at six he attended the local school. What do children of those ages learn in school today? Is it unusual for a young child to be given Latin lessons? Why or why not? How might those early lessons have impacted Verdi’s future career?	ES/MS
Who would be considered modern day “jesters” in our society? Brainstorm some names of modern-day jesters. Who employs them? What economic or social status do they hold? How do modern day “jesters” train for their careers?	MS
In the opera, Gilda has a governess. What are the duties of a governess? Write a job description for a governess. What other operas or stories use governesses? Do people still work as governesses today? What is the modern equivalent of this job?	MS
In March 1843, Verdi visited Vienna to oversee a production of <i>Nabucco</i> , where Gaetano Donizetti was musical director. The older composer recognized Verdi's talent, and wrote in a letter: "I am very, very happy to give way to people of talent like Verdi . . . Nothing will prevent the good Verdi from soon reaching one of the most honorable positions in the cohort of composers." How significant is praise from one composer to another? What might that public praise do for someone’s career?	MS
Verdi's gift for music was already apparent by 1820–1821 when he began his association with the local church, serving in the choir, acting as an altar boy for a while, and taking organ lessons. After his music teacher’s death, Verdi, at the age of eight, became the official paid organist. Is this unusual? Would he have been paid? How old do you have to be in Pennsylvania to hold a part-time job? Why are there rules about how old a person must be before being allowed to work?	MS

Verdi set his sights on Milan, then the cultural capital of northern Italy, where he applied unsuccessfully to study at the Conservatory. How did Verdi handle this disappointment? Did it hamper his career? How important is it for a professional musician to attend the “right” schools? What would be the American equivalent of the Milan Conservatory? MS/HS

Entertainment by jesters took the form of singing, dancing, juggling, tricks, poems, satire, or repartee. A jester was usually free to use his wit to criticize or comment on the court or the royals and nobles, as long as he was entertaining in his delivery. What care would a jester have needed to take to not “cross the line”? Does this idea still hold true for modern day comedians? What happens if a modern comedian “crosses the line” nowadays? MS/HS

In 1851, the year *Rigoletto* premiered, landscape architects Andrew Jackson Downing and Calvert Vaux designed the grounds of the United States Capital. What do “grounds” of important structures represent or are meant to convey? Research and compare some other famous landscape architects of that era and today. What grounds have they created? Plan and design the grounds for the Duke’s palace. MS/HS

Piave, the librettist for *Rigoletto*, was an Italian opera librettist, journalist, and translator whose career spanned more than twenty years working with the most significant composers of his day. Piave is best known for his long-standing association with Verdi, with whom he collaborated on ten operas, including *Rigoletto* and *La traviata*. What other kinds of careers are built around partnerships? How does a business partnership work? How is a business partnership defined legally and interpersonally? Outline the steps needed to create a legal business partnership. How does it differ from a corporation? HS

Civics and Government

State Standards: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4

Verdi was a politician and a composer. Do you know anyone who is a politician? What are some names for political jobs? PreK

The Duke of Mantua in this opera holds a position that is similar to a king, but he uses his power for his own enjoyment. What would you do if you were king for a day? What do you think a king should do?

In *Rigoletto*’s time, Italy was not yet one whole country, but instead was a collection of regions called city-states. What is a city? Can you name some cities in our state? How is a city different from a state? How could a city also be a state? PreK

Italy was not one unified country in Verdi’s life, but he helped the different regions of Italy come together. How many states are there in the U.S.A. and how did they come together? PreK/ES

In modern culture, the hunchback <i>Rigoletto</i> would be recognized as a person with a physical disability. What are the “Americans with Disabilities” (ADA) and the “Individuals with Disabilities Education” (IDEA) acts? When and why were these laws passed? Would someone with a hunchback qualify for assistance under these laws?	ES/MS
Although the United States government is not ruled by noble families, some of the positions in the government might be similar to the roles nobles would have had in the Renaissance. Which U.S. government positions correspond most closely to the roles of a duke, duchess, count, or other noble titles?	ES/MS
Verdi had to work with censors to get the libretto for <i>Rigoletto</i> approved. What does it mean to be censored? What forms of censorship still exist? What censorship standards exist today? How are films and TV shows monitored and rated? Do operas have a rating system? Are there rating systems for social media? What should be censored? Why? What is cancel culture? Who should establish rules for censoring art and performance?	ES/MS
Victor Hugo, the author whose play inspired Verdi’s <i>Rigoletto</i> , worked to improve social situations, such as the abolition of capital punishment and slavery. What is capital punishment? What is slavery? Do they exist today?	ES/MS
This opera is set in the Renaissance-era Duchy of Mantua, which is located in the Lombardy region of Italy. Map the ruling families of Renaissance Italy’s city-states and describe the system of government each city-state employed.	ES/MS
When Victor Hugo died at the age of 83, he was given a state funeral in the Panthéon of Paris, which was attended by over two million people, the largest in French history. What other large funerals have taken place in the world? Categorize them by what the people were known for—royalty, celebrity, artistry, etc. How do governments decide who gets a state funeral?	MS
In 1851, the year <i>Rigoletto</i> premiered, the U.S. reduced postage rates. What is the history of the development of the U.S. postal service (USPS)? How does this agency serve communities? What role does this agency play in our lives?	MS
Though education was not compulsory in Italy until 1859, at age 11 Verdi received schooling in Italian, Latin, the humanities, and rhetoric. Compare those subjects to school curricula for 11-year-olds (the 5 th or 6 th grade) today. What subjects do most 11-year-olds in the United States have to learn? Do you think Verdi receive a well-rounded education? Why or why not?	MS
While it is unlikely that a high school music or theater department would want to perform an opera, they do usually have musicals and plays performed by students. How do high school musical directors choose a show and how do they get approval from the school to produce the show? Is every school district different in what could be performed?	MS

On March 12, 2011, during a performance of <i>Nabucco</i> staged to celebrate 150 years of Italian unification, the conductor Riccardo Muti paused after "Va, pensiero" and addressed the audience—which included the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi—to complain about cuts in state funding of culture; the audience then joined in singing a repeat of the chorus. How much does the government of Italy support the arts? How much does the United States government support the arts? Create a chart that compares proportionally how much money different governments around the world spend to support the arts. Where does the United States fall in your chart? Why do some governments fund the arts more than others?	MS
Victor Hugo, the author whose play inspired Verdi's <i>Rigoletto</i> , campaigned for social causes such as the abolition of capital punishment and slavery. Explore some leaders who work today to work to improve social issues. What are the important social issues of our time? How can students get involved?	MS/HS
Research how Verdi stipulated in his will how his estate would be used. What does it mean to "bequeath future royalties from his operas to fund the <i>Casa di Riposo per Musicisti</i> (Rest Home for Musicians) in Milan." Did Verdi have any heirs?	MS/HS
Modern day jesters are political commentators and political cartoonists who deliver their messages with satire and tongue-in-cheek humor. Find some examples of modern-day jesters and explain the meaning of their types of satirical statements. How important are these commentators to our society and our government? What laws exist to protect these commentators from political reprisal if a politician doesn't like what they are saying?	MS/HS
In his early operas, Verdi demonstrated sympathy with the <i>Risorgimento</i> movement, which sought the unification of Italy. He even served as an elected politician. What political positions did Verdi hold? What parallel political positions would he have held had he been elected in the United States?	MS/HS
In his last years, Verdi undertook a number of philanthropic ventures: in 1894 he published a song for the benefit of earthquake victims in Sicily, in 1895 he began planning, building, and endowing the <i>Casa di Riposo per Musicisti</i> , a rest-home for retired musicians in Milan, and he built a hospital at Villanova sull'Arda. Do philanthropists benefit from their largesse? Are there tax benefits in the United States for charitable giving?	HS
In <i>Rigoletto</i> 's (as well as in Verdi's) time, the nobility had enough power to do whatever they wanted, as we see with the Duke of Mantua's behavior and his lack of accountability for his actions. Draw parallels to today. Where does real power lie? Who seems to be in control? To what extent do wealth, celebrity or influence lead to power? How do we hold government officials accountable, or are they not beholden to rules and laws?	HS

Verdi based *Rigoletto* on a controversial Victor Hugo play that had been banned in France, and he had to change several aspects of the story to avoid trouble with his own government's censors. Government censorship was a concern faced by many theatrical companies in the 19th century. What is censorship? Investigate incidents of government censorship in modern times. How has technology affected censorship—both a government's ability to censor and others' ability to oppose censorship? Chart comparative instances of censorship, opposition to censorship, and the technology used to further both purposes.

HS

Economics

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

Verdi was a generous person who paid to take care of his friends and other musicians. That is called philanthropy. What does that mean? How can young people take care of others?

PreK

What kind of money is used in Italy? Is it the same or different from the United States? What is our currency called? What is our money made from? What does it look like? Find a picture of money used in Italy and compare it to United States money. What is similar and different between the two?

PreK

Verdi grew up in a family of moderate income. What do you think that means?

PreK

What is a role/company debut? Do singers get paid more to make a role debut? Do principal singers get paid more than resident artists?

ES

Pittsburgh Opera's production of *Rigoletto* will include six singers making Pittsburgh Opera debuts, two resident artist alumni singers, six current resident artist singers, and two current resident artist production personnel. How much does each category get paid, and who determines the amount?

ES

Verdi was a shrewd businessman who managed his finances well. In one instance, he caught a steward embezzling money from his estate at Busseto. What does it mean to embezzle money? How is embezzlement handled today?

ES

Verdi was born near Busseto, a small town in the province of Parma, to a family of moderate means, and received a musical education with the help of a local patron, Antonio Barezzi. What is a patron? How does the patronage system work? Do musicians and other artists still have patrons? Would Verdi have had a career as a composer without the help of a patron?

ES/MS

Rigoletto premiered in Venice. What were the major industries for export and import in Venice during the Renaissance and the 19th century? What are they in modern-day Venice? How does this compare to the industries of Mantua and Verona?

ES/MS

Verdi spent the first six weeks of 1851 busy with his *Rigoletto* score. How long does it take to compose an opera, and how do composers support themselves before they have income from a finished opera? ES/MS

In 1813, the year Verdi was born, the long-held trade monopoly of the East India Trade Company in India was abolished, but the company retained its monopoly in China. What is a monopoly? What laws regarding monopolies exist in the United States, and when were these laws enacted? Play the game “Monopoly”. What strategies can you devise to win the game and create your own monopoly? MS

Verdi’s *Casa di Riposo per Musicisti*, a retirement home for musicians, was a gesture on his part to prepare a place for retired musicians to live. What steps would need to be taken to prepare a retirement home and finance it in perpetuity? What needs and supports would retirees need? MS

The *Rigoletto* premiere was an enormous success, and the opera immediately became part of the basic repertory, being performed more than 250 times in its first ten years. *Rigoletto* has never lost this position and remains one of the most frequently performed operas in the international repertory. Does Verdi’s estate still make money when *Rigoletto* is performed? Why or why not? MS/HS

Modern day comedians might be called the jesters of our modern era, and are thus part of the entertainment industry. What part of the American economy comprises the entertainment industry? Chart the importance of the entertainment industry in the United States’ GDP across several decades. MS/HS

Verdi was commissioned to write an opera—*Aida*—to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. What is the Suez Canal, and why was it built? Who owns and maintains it? How is the canal’s maintenance supported? How has the Suez Canal impacted worldwide trade? What other canals have had an equally significant impact on trade? HS

English Language Arts

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

In this opera, the Duke disguises himself as a poor student to spend time with Gilda. What does it mean to be in disguise? Have you ever worn a disguise? If so, tell your classmates how it felt to pretend to be someone else. Why might someone want to wear a disguise? PreK

Rigoletto contains a famous quartet, where four singers sing about their own thoughts all at once. In a group of four, experiment with talking about a topic all at once, like the *Rigoletto* Quartet. How difficult would it be to understand what is being said? How should we take turns while talking, so everyone is understood? PreK

Verdi said that as a teenager he wrote a motley assortment of musical pieces: band marches, *sinfonie*, concertos, serenades, cantatas, and even some church music. Most of these early pieces are lost. What makes something worth keeping? Collect your school assignments and decide what you would keep until you grow up. PreK

During the Reunification of Italy, Verdi's last name became part of a popular slogan: "Viva V.E.R.D.I.!" This slogan is an acronym. What is an acronym? Use your name to create a new acronym that describes you. PreK/ES

Rigoletto ridicules Count Monterone in order to please his employer, the Duke. What are the consequences of his ridicule? What is the etymology of the word "ridicule"? Name some synonyms. ES

In *Rigoletto*, Count Monterone issues a curse on the Duke of Mantua after he seduces Count Monterone's daughter. What is a curse? How did it backfire in the opera? How does a curse get power? What are curse words? ES

In this opera, Rigoletto is duped into wearing a blindfold and placing a ladder against his own garden wall. What does it mean to be "duped"? Write about a time when you were duped; what was the result? How did you feel when you realized you were duped? ES

The Duke of Mantua likes to gloat about his female conquests. Locate the word "gloat" in a dictionary. What does the word mean, and what words might be synonymous with it? If you have access to an Oxford English Dictionary (OED), find the word's etymology and its history. Has the word's meaning changed over time? ES

Learn some vocabulary from the opera: ES

Assassin	Civilizing	Distraught	Jealousy	Ridicule
Assurance	Consolation	Duenna	Libertine	Sharp-witted
Avenge	Curse	Fickle	Licentious	Shun
Betrayal	Denunciation	Impressario	Melodrama	Vendetta
Buffoon	Dishonor	Instinctively	Notorious	Wretched

In the final version of *Rigoletto*, to avoid trouble with the government censors, Verdi substituted the character of the Duke for that of the King in Hugo's play, and subsequent success of the opera all over Italy and Europe fully vindicated the composer. What does it mean to be vindicated? What are synonyms for vindicated? ES

Verdi rewrote *Rigoletto* several times. Is it typical for a composer to do multiple drafts and rewrites of an opera? How is this process similar to writing a story or an essay? Should everyone develop skills in rewriting their work to improve it? ES/MS

Rigoletto is a melodrama. What does that mean? What other terms are used to describe opera genres? ES/MS

The tragic plot of <i>Rigoletto</i> hinges upon mistaken identities. What other stories use the idea of mistaken identity to move the plot forward? What are the consequences of mistaken identity in both comedies and tragedies?	ES/MS
Brainstorm other stories, plays, or operas in which jesters, fools, or foolish sidekicks are important characters. Create a Venn diagram to explore the purposes and connotations of having such characters present in these stories. Is <i>Rigoletto</i> typical of these characters, or is he unique?	ES/MS
Modern day jesters are political commentators and cartoonists, such as John Oliver and Gary Trudeau, who deliver their messages with satire and tongue-in-cheek humor. What is meant by the term satire? What is meant by “tongue-in-cheek” humor? Find some examples of modern-day jesters and their work, and explain the meaning of their satirical statements.	ES/MS
Gilda sings an aria in <i>Rigoletto</i> about how the Duke’s (fictitious) name touches her heart: “ <i>Caro nome che il mio cor</i> ” (Sweet name that made my heart.) What meaning is sometimes implied in names?	MS
<i>Rigoletto</i> is a tragedy. What is the literary definition of tragedy? What is the literary definition of a drama? Of a comedy? How could <i>Rigoletto</i> be changed into a comedy or drama? What in the story would you change to shift its genre? Rewrite one scene from <i>Rigoletto</i> into either a drama or comedy.	MS
Verdi’s initial version of this opera was rejected by the Venetian censors as demonstrating “disgusting immorality”. If you were making a movie of this opera, what rating would it receive and why? How are rating labels for movies, videos, comics, and television programs determined? What is considered censorable material today? How has that changed since the “Golden Age” of movies, in the 1940s and 1950s?	MS
The political slogan “Viva V.E.R.D.I.” is an acronym for V ittorio E manuele R e D 'Italia, which means “Long live Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy!” The slogan was used in the mid-1800s when Italy was divided, and much of the north was ruled by the Austrian Empire. Italian patriots leading the unification movement (<i>Risorgimento</i>) used the composer Giuseppe Verdi's name as a covert acronym to show their support for their cause. Investigate other uses of acronyms that have been used to signal a “secret” message.	MS
Create a list of characters from literature, theater, and popular culture entertainments that, like <i>Rigoletto</i> , have some form of disability or different physicality. Are these characters generally appealing or despicable? Why do you think physical “differentness” plays such a prominent role in Western storytelling?	MS
Compare various hunchbacks in literature. Does Victor Hugo have an underlying theme about physical disability in his writings? How do the physical limitations affect the characters in <i>Les Misérables</i> , <i>Le roi s’amuse</i> , and <i>The Hunchback of Notre-Dame</i> ?	MS/HS

Compare the concept of “love” as it presents across several operas. What is romantic love? Platonic love? Familial love? How does love differ from lust? Discuss the love relationships in <i>Rigoletto</i> (Rigoletto for Gilda, Gilda for the Duke), <i>La Traviata</i> (Alfredo for Violetta, Violetta for Alfredo), <i>The Marriage of Figaro</i> (Figaro for Susanna, Countess for the Count), <i>Faust</i> (Faust for Marguérite), and <i>Fidelio</i> (Leonore for Florestan).	MS/HS
Hugo’s most famous works are the novels <i>The Hunchback of Notre-Dame</i> (1831) and <i>Les Misérables</i> (1862). How have they been adapted for different media, such as films, cartoons, plays, musicals, etc.? In each adaptation, how has the story been changed? Why might adaptation necessitate changing the story?	MS/HS
Verdi’s 1879 <i>Autobiographical Sketch</i> was written with the benefit of hindsight, as are all autobiographies. What is an autobiography? How does it differ from a biography? Should we trust an autobiography as a completely factual account? Why or why not? Would a biographer be able to describe Verdi’s life more accurately?	MS/HS
Victor Hugo is known for his own works as well as inspiring the libretto for <i>Rigoletto</i> . Explore his career as Romantic author, poet, essayist, playwright, journalist, human rights activist, and politician. Compare his creative output to Verdi’s. What does the literary term “Romantic” mean? Explore Hugo’s complete name: Victor-Marie Hugo, Vicomte Hugo.	MS/HS
John Rosselli, Verdi’s biographer, wrote that not all of Verdi’s personal qualities were amiable. The author concluded that “I do not very much like the man Verdi, in particular the autocratic . . . estate owner, part-time composer, and seemingly full-time grumbler and reactionary critic . . .”, yet admitted that like other writers, he must “admire [Verdi], warts and all . . . [for] a deep integrity runs beneath his life and can be felt even when he is being unreasonable or wrong.” Should biographers strive to tell all the truth, even when it is not flattering? Why or why not?	HS
Hugo’s character of Triboulet the Jester that inspired Verdi’s <i>Rigoletto</i> was in fact an amalgamation of three famous, historical jesters: Triboulet I, Triboulet II, and Triboulet III. Research each of these people, and what made them so memorable. What aspects of their characters would have inspired Hugo to create his version of Triboulet? What other famous literary characters have also been created by combining different facets of actual people? Why would an author want to base a character on various historical people?	HS
<i>Quartet</i> is a 2012 British comedy-drama film based on the play <i>Quartet</i> by Ronald Harwood that ran in London’s West End from September 1999 until January 2000. It was filmed in late 2011 at Hedsor House, Buckinghamshire. The film was actor Dustin Hoffman’s directorial debut. The <i>Rigoletto</i> quartet plays a prominent role. How did the play and film depart from the opera plot?	HS

Family and Consumer Sciences

State Standards: 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4

Design an outlandish jester hat for Rigoletto. What materials and colors will you use? What should an audience member be able to understand about Rigoletto's character from seeing him wearing your hat?	PreK
The jester often used his wit to defend others who were abused or humiliated. How can you use humor to change tense situations?	PreK
A jester was a kind of stand-up comedian. Take turns delivering a joke or telling a funny story to your classmates. How would you describe what it's like to try to be funny?	PreK
The librettist Piave became Verdi's life-long friend and collaborator. What friends have you had your whole life?	PreK
Sometimes overprotective parents are called "helicopter" parents. What is a helicopter? What makes it different from an airplane? How can a parent be like a helicopter? In what ways might Rigoletto be labeled a helicopter parent to his daughter Gilda? Do you think his parenting style hurt or helped Gilda?	PreK
The jester's costume was usually varicolored tights and jacket with bells attached to the hat and coat. Were jesters always men? How would you design a costume for a female jester? Why do you think bells were attached to the costume?	ES
What kinds of foods were served to noble or wealthy Renaissance families? How was Renaissance food prepared and stored? From where did it come? What was available locally and what had to be brought from somewhere else? Calculate the cost of preparing an authentic Renaissance meal for your class, including the cost of energy to cook the food.	ES
After a stroke, librettist Piave was incapacitated for nine years. His friend and collaborator Verdi took care of him and his family. What kinds of care do stroke victims require? Can this kind of care be given at home?	ES
A traditional jester outfit, known historically as motley, features bright, mismatched colors and a highly distinctive silhouette. The core elements include a dagged (jagged-edged) tunic and pants, a spiked <i>cap-and-bells</i> hood, a ruffled neck collar, and curled-toe shoes. Sew a jester costume with traditional diamond-shaped color swatches. Compare the costs of building a costume and purchasing one ready-made.	ES/MS
Piave was the resident poet and stage manager at <i>La Fenice</i> in Venice, and later at <i>La Scala</i> in Milan. His expertise as a stage manager and tact as a negotiator served Verdi well over the years. Because Piave was more tactful than Verdi, he was able to help him in negotiations with censors and opera companies. What is tact? How important is tact as a life skill? How does one develop skills in using tact?	ES/MS

In the opera, Rigoletto and Gilda visit Sparafucile's inn. What is an inn? Investigate how inns were used in the Renaissance. Is an inn the same as a hotel or motel? What are the differences? Compare spending an evening at a Renaissance inn to an evening in a modern hotel or a bed and breakfast. What does it cost? What are the services you receive at each?	ES/MS
The family life cycle is comprised of six different stages that mark a family's emotional and structural changes over time. What are those six stages? What stages of the family life cycle do we see develop in <i>Rigoletto</i> ? How do the family members in the opera communicate with one another?	ES/MS
Verdi was born at home in Le Roncole, a village near Busseto. The baptismal register, prepared on October 11, 1813, lists Verdi as being "born yesterday," but since days were often considered to begin at sunset, this could have meant either October 9 or 10. Following his mother's custom, Verdi always celebrated his birthday on October 9, the day he himself believed he was born. Are babies born at home today? Where are babies born? What does a modern birth certificate look like, and what information is recorded on it? Who prepares a birth certificate? How are birth records kept? How do people know their exact birthdays?	ES/MS
In 1851, the year <i>Rigoletto</i> premiered, Isaac Merritt Singer created the first practical and commercially successful sewing machine. Describe the evolution of handmade clothing to mass produced clothing of today. Compare the price of handmade clothing to "off the rack" clothing today. What is the origin of the word "manufacture"?	ES/MS
Design a jester hat that is outlandish, yet could still be worn during New York fashion week. Select/list materials, costs, and construction plans for the hat.	MS
What is Rigoletto's parenting style? Was he overprotective or realistic in trying to protect Gilda from how men acted at that time? Consider both sides of this question: was his style hurtful or helpful, and why? Create arguments to both support his actions as a "helicopter" parent, and to refute his approach.	MS
Verdi married his first wife Margherita in May 1836, and by March 1837, she had given birth to their first child, Virginia Maria Luigia. Icilio Romano followed in July 1838. However, both the children died within one year of their births. What was the infant mortality rate in the 1800s in the United States? What is the current rate of infant mortality the United States? Compare life expectancy in the 1800s to today. Has life expectancy changed since then, and if so, what might account for that change?	MS
Verdi and Strepponi decided to marry after living together for a time. The couple were married in Collonges-sous-Salève, with only the coachman who had driven them there and the church bell ringer as witnesses. How much more common is it for people to live together before marrying then and now? Who witnesses marriages today?	MS

Research the different textiles used to make clothing for Renaissance people of noble birth or wealth. From where did these textiles come? Design clothing for a wealthy or noble character in *Rigoletto*. MS

Research authentic Renaissance recipes for foods from Parma and Mantua. What ingredients are needed for these recipes? Are these ingredients readily available from a local grocery store or do they need to be specially ordered? Calculate the cost of preparing an authentic Renaissance meal nowadays. How does this compare to the cost of a typical modern meal? MS/HS

Rigoletto keeps his daughter, Gilda, hidden from society. Why does he do this? How would you describe an over-protective parent today? What are the developmental ramifications of limiting a child's socialization? Are there any laws permitting or preventing this today? HS

An intensely private person, Verdi did not seek to ingratiate himself with popular movements, yet followers of the *Risorgimento* made him their hero. How can famous people today avoid social media and popular movements? Would avoiding these platforms harm a celebrity's career or help it? How important is privacy? HS

Geography

State Standards: 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4

Look at a photo of the Verdi monument located in Verdi Square, in New York City. Describe the statues and what the people are doing. Why do you think there is a monument to Verdi, who was Italian, in New York City? PreK

Whereas Verdi's Italy was organized by regions of city-states, the modern country of Italy is organized into 20 regions that represent three distinct geographic areas: Northern Italy, Central Italy, and Southern Italy and Islands. How is the United States organized? What do we call our "regions"? Do we also have larger geographical areas that we use to describe these regions' locales? PreK

Villa Verdi is the estate where the composer lived near his farm. What do you expect to see if you visit a farm? Look at some pictures of Villa Verdi and describe what you could see if you visited Verdi's farm in Italy. Does it look like what you think a farm should look like? Why or why not? What other famous people owned estates that were also working farms? PreK/ES

Rigoletto is set in Mantua. Design a vacation brochure for a travel agent in Mantua. What attractions are there? Why would a visitor want to see Mantua? Describe local sites, food, and customs. ES

Verdi also wrote *Aida*, an opera that was commissioned by the Egyptian government to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. What is a canal? How is it different from other bodies of water? Find the Suez Canal on a map. Find other canals in the United States. ES

Verdi was born near Busseto, a small town in the province of Parma. Mark on a European map: Verdi's birthplace, the opera houses where his operas premiered, and where he died.	ES
Verdi wrote his opera <i>Aida</i> for the opera house built by the Khedive Isma'il Pasha to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. In addition to Egypt, where else do Verdi operas take place?	ES
Where in the world is Mantua, the setting of <i>Rigoletto</i> ? Search various references such as an atlas or a globe to locate the city in Italy. Describe the cultural distinctions of this area. Construct a map of Mantua, to scale, considering the geography of the area.	ES/MS
How many Verdi memorials exist around the world? Notate their locations on a world map. Are many of them located close to Italy? Which memorial is the farthest from Italy?	ES/MS
Verdi paid close attention to his financial contracts, and early in his professional career he began to use his growing prosperity to invest in land near his birthplace. In 1844 he purchased "Il Pulgaro", 62 acres (23 hectares) of farmland with a farmhouse and outbuildings, providing a home for his parents from May 1844. What is an acre? How much would 62 acres cost in Pennsylvania? How many acres does the average farm in Pennsylvania have?	ES/MS
Mantua, the setting for <i>Rigoletto</i> , is near Parma. Research what local agricultural products came from that area in the Renaissance, and are still made today. Compare these to the products from Venice, the city where <i>Rigoletto</i> premiered.	MS
By the 1870s Italy was no longer a collection of city-states, but had become re-unified during the <i>Risorgimento</i> , a political movement in which Verdi was very active. Create a map overlay showing the provinces before unification. Which provinces were most powerful prior to reunification? Where was power located after reunification?	MS/HS
Verdi was based in Paris for almost two years. Within a week of returning to Paris in July 1847, he received his first commission from the Paris Opéra. Verdi agreed to adapt <i>I Lombardi</i> to a new French libretto; the result was <i>Jérusalem</i> , which contained significant changes to the music and structure of the work (including an extensive ballet scene) to meet Parisian expectations. How much do the locations of opera companies influence the kinds of operas they produce? Consider contemporary opera commissions. Does location play a role in modern commissions?	MS/HS
Explore all the operas that Verdi wrote and plot their locations on a world map. Did he favor European locations close to his home? Are any of Verdi's operas site-specific? Which of his operas could be relocated to another location without affecting the plot?	HS

On Columbus Day in 1906, a grand monument to Verdi was dedicated in Verdi Square, a New York City park that is named for the composer. HS
 Research the history of this square and its monument. Why would an Italian composer be memorialized in a New York public park? Who championed this project, and why? What was the significance of choosing Columbus Day as the dedication day? Who is responsible for maintaining the monument and the park now? Why would this organization want to be responsible for this maintenance?

Health, Safety, and Physical Education

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

Rigoletto mocks the Duke in the opera. What does it mean to mock someone? To bully someone? To make fun of someone? PreK

Imagine you are wearing a cast on your shoulder (like a hunchback). Show how you would need to adapt everyday actions. What would you have trouble doing? PreK

A jester, also known as joker, court jester, or fool, is a clownish character. What does a clown do? What does it mean to “clown around”? What type of physical activities would a jester do to entertain others? Learn to juggle. PreK

In *Rigoletto*, one scene takes place in the most deserted corner of a blind alley. Is it safe to walk in dark, deserted streets? How can you be safe walking outside at night? PreK

Verdi suffered a stroke before he died. Strokes can happen if a blood vessel in the brain is blocked or bursts, often from having too-high blood pressure. What healthy habits can we form to help to protect ourselves from strokes? PreK/ES

In *Rigoletto*, the lead character has a physical deformity. What causes a hunchback? What other kinds of deformities are possible? What are respectful ways to refer to people with deformities? ES

The character of Sparafucile uses a special type of knife called a dagger when he works as an assassin-for-hire. While knives can be dangerous, they are also important tools, especially in the kitchen. What knife safety habits do professional chefs follow? How can we use knives safely at home? ES

While staying at the Grand Hotel in Milan, Verdi suffered a stroke on January 21, 1901, and died on January 27 at the age of 87. Was this a long lifespan for that time? How does it compare to the average lifespan today? ES

Rigoletto's only joy in life is his daughter. Is this a healthy relationship? How do Rigoletto's behavior and decision-making skills affect his relationship with his daughter throughout the opera? ES/MS

Verdi and Piave both had strokes. How common were strokes as the cause of death in the 1800s? How common are they today? ES/MS

In 1851, the year *Rigoletto* premiered, the first chapter of the Y.M.C.A. was organized in Boston. What was the mission of the chapters then and now? How many chapters still exist in the U.S.? What type of services are provided and how are the chapters financially supported? Are they all equipped to provide for the disabled?

ES/MS

Poor nutrition can lead to physical disorders or diseases, including those that impede proper bone development. What kinds of foods or nutrients, if lacking from a person's diet, might cause skeletal deformities? Could this account for Rigoletto's hump? What else might have caused his deformity? Create a meal plan for young children that would provide the proper nutrients to promote healthy bone development.

MS

How might Rigoletto's deformity have affected his mobility? Would Rigoletto have been in physical pain from his deformity? If so, how would that pain have been treated in the Renaissance and in the 19th century? How would pain be managed today? Would physical therapy have helped his condition?

MS/HS

A court jester was essentially a clown, who could perform physical entertainments as well as tell witty jokes and offer clever commentary. Research modern clown schools. What kinds of courses do they offer? What skills do modern clowns need? What would you learn if you enrolled in a clown school?

MS

Verdi and Strepponi left Paris in July 1849 because of an outbreak of cholera. What is cholera and how can it be prevented and treated?

MS/HS

Verdi died of a stroke. Research the causes of a stroke and the effects it has on a person who is stricken with this condition. What are the different kinds of strokes. Compare how strokes were diagnosed and treated in Verdi's time to how they diagnosed and treated today. Devise a plan for a healthy lifestyle to prevent a stroke. Include diet, exercise, and research medications that might be prescribed.

MS/HS

In the final scene, Rigoletto intends to throw what he believes to be the Duke's corpse in the river, before he discovers the body is his daughter Gilda. What are the dangers created by corpses decomposing in a river? What kinds of diseases could flourish in that environment?

HS

History

State Standards: 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4

Censorship means to change stories or words to make them acceptable. Are there words that should not be used in public? Practice telling a story without using the word "and".

PreK

In *Rigoletto*, one scene takes place in the most deserted corner of a blind alley. Is it safe to walk in dark, deserted streets? Learn about historical stories that take place in alleys.

PreK

What was the role of the court jester, such as Rigoletto? Is there a modern equivalent today? If so, what and whom, and why? ES

When Victor Hugo's French five-act play, *Le roi s'amuse* (*The King Amuses Himself* or *The King Has Fun*) was first performed on November 22, 1832, it was banned by the government after one evening. Verdi based *Rigoletto* on the play. Was Verdi tempting fate by using such a story? Did Italy have a king at the time the opera was performed? ES

The *Risorgimento* was an important movement in Italy that unified the country. Examine a map of the city-states before and after Italy was unified. Is Italy all still one country today? ES

Verdi's hometown of Busseto displays Luigi Secchi's statue of a seated Verdi in 1913, next to the Teatro Verdi built in his honor in the 1850s. It is one of many statues of the composer in Italy. The Giuseppe Verdi Monument, a 1906 marble memorial, sculpted by Pasquale Civiletti, is located in Verdi Square in New York City. The monument includes a statue of Verdi himself and life-sized statues of four characters from his operas. List the creation of all Verdi statues on a timeline. ES

Locate a plan of a typical Renaissance castle. What are the names of each type of room, and what is each room used for? Is there a difference between a palace and a castle? If so, what are the differences? ES

In 1859, Verdi was elected to the new provincial council, and then was appointed to head a group to meet with King Vittorio Emanuele II. However, he later declined the office of provincial council member to which he had been elected *in absentia*. Again, in 1874, Verdi was appointed a member of the Italian Senate but did not participate in its activities. What does elected *in absentia* mean? Could someone in the United States be appointed to an elected office, or elected *in absentia*? ES/MS

A jester, also known as joker, court jester, or fool, was a member of the household of a nobleman or a monarch who entertained guests at the royal court. Jesters were also travelling performers who entertained common folk at fairs and town markets, and the discipline continues into the modern day, where jesters perform at historical-themed events. Where could you see a jester perform in the Pittsburgh area? ES/MS

What titles are used in different cultures to denote royalty? Which titles denote the most significant or powerful nobles? Choose one culture and create a chart to show which titles indicate the different ranks, from the most to the least significant. What are the duties of each different rank? ES/MS

Rigoletto's location and timeframe are listed as Mantua in the 16th century. Several scenes take place in "the most deserted corner of a blind alley" and "a deserted bank of the river Mincio". Mantua is located in what is today northern Italy. Can those locations still be found on a map of the city? ES/MS

Research the role of a “town square” in the 1500s. Compare the function of a town square then to its function now. Do we still have town squares? Are they important? Why or why not? Have they been replaced by anything else? If so, then by what? Why?	ES/MS
When Verdi died in 1901, the entire country went into mourning. Brainstorm other famous persons’ deaths, both modern and historical, that have resulted in periods of national mourning. Compare funeral rites accorded to national or famous people to private funerals.	ES/MS
Create a gender role board game, based on your research into gender roles in the Renaissance time period. What are the stereotypes that inform your game and how it is to be played?	MS
When Verdi was composing <i>Rigoletto</i> , Venetian police censors almost immediately intervened on account of the “disgusting immorality and obscene triviality” of the libretto. Trace censorship efforts in history. What other governments have tried to censor the arts? Why would a government want to exercise censorship? How successful were these attempts at censorship? What was the public’s reaction to these efforts?	MS
As a young man, Verdi did not pass the admission examinations for the conservatory in Milan. Research other famous historical figures that initially “failed” at something but later succeeded. What steps did they take to succeed? What personal qualities might be needed for someone to succeed?	MS
Who were some notable jesters throughout history? Who were fictional jesters throughout history?	MS/HS
Rigoletto hires an assassin to solve his problem with the Duke. Where else in history have assassins been used to “resolve” conflicts?	MS/HS
Despite serious initial problems with the Austrian censors who had control over northern Italian theaters at the time, <i>Rigoletto</i> had a triumphant premiere at <i>La Fenice</i> in Venice on March 11, 1851. Who controls productions at American theaters? How involved is the federal government in theatrical productions? Are local governments involved?	MS/HS
Explore the concept of sanctuary and the Catholic church. In many stories, secret trysts take place in churches. Are there corresponding historical examples, too? Why might this take place? Is this sacrilegious? How does this relate to the concept of sanctuary? Can a person still claim sanctuary within a church today? What is the modern, secular equivalent of sanctuary, and how is it evoked?	HS
Research the political ties that Verdi had, and the political movements he supported. Explore if and how Verdi’s politics are expressed through the songs he wrote, such as <i>Sull’ Ali D’oro</i> (On the Wings of Gold.) Compare Verdi’s ideas to other ideas expressed in patriotic songs and spirituals.	HS

In what other times, places, or political structures have men held absolute power over women, as they seem to do in this opera? Do these conditions still exist today? Explore the topic of women's rights. Create a timeline or chart showing when countries have adopted policies that acknowledge women's rights, such as permitting women to vote. HS

Mathematics

State Standards: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

Verdi lived until he was 87. Is that a long life? Who do you know who has lived 80 years? PreK

Look at a picture of a jester's costume that has geometric shapes printed on the fabric. What kinds of shapes do you see? How many sides does each shape have? What are the different names for each of these shapes? PreK

Verdi's 200th birthday on October 10, 2013, was an occasion for a big celebration in Italy. When is your birthday? When are your classmates' birthdays? Group your classmates' birthdays by month. What do you notice about these groupings? Which months have the most birthdays? The least? What kind of visual could you use to represent your class's birthday data? PreK/ES

The bicentenary of Verdi's birth in 2013 was celebrated around the world with television and radio broadcasts and live performances. What number does a bicentenary represent? What other bicentenaries can you name? What other significant milestones are celebrated and what are they called? ES

What will a ticket, purchased in Pittsburgh, for *Rigoletto* cost? Using an exchange rate website, convert that ticket price from U.S. dollars to commonly used world currencies such as the euro, Canadian dollar, English pound, or Japanese yen. ES

Rigoletto was performed more than 250 times in 10 years. Create a chart graphing this performance statistic against other performance statistics for Verdi's other operas, or the most commonly performed operas in modern times. ES

Giuseppe Verdi was born on October 9 or 10, 1813, in the town of Roncole, and died January 27, 1901. How old was he when he died? Was that a long-life expectancy then? Is that a long-life expectancy today? ES

Verdi's "galley years" were a period of hard work when he created twenty operas, and as a result he sometimes felt demoralized. Trace the premiere dates for all of Verdi's operas on a timeline, and then add his travels to compare times of work and relaxation. ES

Research the population of the world in the 1850s, during Verdi's lifetime. Chart and grid the numbers, comparing them to today's population figures. Brainstorm the ramifications of the dramatic increase in population from then to now. ES/MS

As part of a joke, Rigoletto is blindfolded in one scene. If you were blindfolded, how would you estimate distances to navigate your classroom? What do you have available to help you estimate distances, without using your sense of sight, from one end of the room to another? Create a non-visual spatial relations map of your classroom designed to help a blindfolded person navigate this space.

ES/MS

Joseph Lagrange, a French mathematician, died in 1813, the year that Verdi was born. What contributions did Lagrange make to mathematics? Would Verdi have studied math?

ES/MS

On a timeline, chart each work that Verdi composed throughout his lifetime. Convert this timeline to a graph, plotting the number of works produced at each point in his lifetime. At which point in Verdi's life does your graph demonstrate Verdi's most prolific period?

ES/MS

In the months following the success of *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Verdi was approached by several opera companies seeking new works or making offers to stage one of his existing ones, but he refused them all. However, when the Saint Petersburg's Imperial Theatre offered him 60,000 francs plus all expenses for his services, Verdi came up with the idea of adapting the 1835 Spanish play *Don Alvaro o la fuerza del sino* by Angel Saavedra, which became *La forza del destino*. What is today's equivalent to 60,000 francs? Discuss the idea that "everyone has their price".

ES/MS

The librettist Piave became Verdi's life-long friend and collaborator. When Piave suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed and unable to speak, Verdi helped to support his family, and paid for his funeral nine years later. If a generous person chose to support a friend's family for nine years today, how much money would be needed?

MS

The last gold guinea coins were issued in England in 1813, the same year of Verdi's birth. How much did a gold guinea weigh? How is gold measured? What was its value in 1813, and what would a gold guinea be worth today, considering the price of gold per troy ounce. Calculate that current value in U.S. dollars, euros, and English pounds.

MS

In 1813, the year Verdi was born, the dice game "craps" was introduced in New Orleans, which is played by betting and rolling two dice,. Calculate the probabilities of rolling each of the three values of "craps": 2, 3, or 12.

MS

The first performance of Verdi's *Falstaff* took place at *La Scala* on February 9, 1893. For the first night, official ticket prices were thirty times higher than usual, because all the nobility and celebrities desired tickets. Calculate the price of a ticket for Pittsburgh Opera's opening night of *Rigoletto*. If Pittsburgh Opera also used this kind of "dynamic pricing" and charged 30 times more for opening night than for the other performances, how much money would be brought in if this performance were sold out? Would that performance alone be enough to support the cost of staging this opera?

MS

Jesters' costumes often use brightly colored geometric patterns. Create a jester's tunic using tessellations or geometric shapes. Use a classmate's measurements to make a life-sized tunic with tessellations that match seamlessly at the sides and shoulders. MS/HS

Jester's costumes often include cloth triangles. Analyze the types of triangles used in ready-made jester costumes and calculate the least amount of fabric that would be needed for each color. 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

Verdi used irrigation for his crops. How do farmers water crops today? How would you water a small backyard garden? PreK

Look at some photos of people dressed in Renaissance costumes. Pretend that you could time travel to the Renaissance, when *Rigoletto* takes place. What costume pieces would you wear? How do these clothes differ from what you wear to school? PreK

Verdi's first wife died of encephalitis at the age 26. We know today that encephalitis may be caused by a viral infection. What is an infection? How should it be treated? PreK/ES

Verdi wrote a comic, two-act opera called *A King for a Day* (originally titled *Un giorno di regno*). If someone were named "technology king or queen for a day," what could happen? What would be possible? ES

Attending Renaissance fairs and reenactments is a popular modern entertainment, but what if you could travel back in time to live in that era? Create a personal argument for time travel back to the Renaissance. List the pros and cons for all elements of living. ES

Francesco Maria Piave (1810–1876) was a prominent Italian opera librettist best known for his collaborations with Verdi. Born in Murano—the famous glassmaking island in the Venetian lagoon—he was the eldest son of a relatively well-off family that owned a glass factory. How is glass made? Is it made differently today from the 1800s? ES

What tools would have been available for Verdi to use to actually compose *Rigoletto*? What tools would he be able to use nowadays? How might the availability of modern technology impact the creation of an opera? ES/MS

During the 1860s and 1870s, Verdi paid great attention to his estate around Busseto, purchasing additional land, installing irrigation, and coping with variable harvests and economic slumps. What challenges do farmers face today? How does climate change affect farmers? ES/MS

When did Isaac Singer invent the continuous stitch sewing machine? How did his invention impact clothing production? What benefits would arise from this new piece of technology? How might this impact an opera production?	ES/MS
<i>Rigoletto</i> premiered in 1851. What technology would have been used in theaters then as opposed to now? What technology would Verdi have had at his estate? Discuss: How did we get along without technology like electricity and computers?	ES/MS
In <i>Rigoletto</i> Act III, a thunderstorm approaches during the night and the Duke decides to spend the rest of the night indoors. What are the causes of a storm? How do they form? What makes a thunderstorm dangerous? How do we protect ourselves and our property from storms nowadays? Write a weather forecast for the opera.	MS
While Verdi was working on his second opera <i>Un giorno di regno</i> , his wife Margherita died of encephalitis at the age of 26. What is encephalitis? What treatments are available today to treat encephalitis?	MS
Research the kinds of weapons used during the 1500s. How did weapon technology of the time impact the plot of the opera?	MS
Rigoletto is referred to as a “hump-back” or “hunchback”. What is the correct term for his condition today? Research the cause and progression of degenerative bone diseases such as osteoporosis, arthritis, scoliosis, rickets, spinal tuberculosis, etc. Draw or generate an image of a healthy spine and create a visual timeline of the physical progression these or other diseases have to create a hump. What modern technology exists for identifying, curing or mitigating these conditions, if any?	MS/HS
Compare the sanitation practices in the Renaissance of life in a castle, life in a town, and life on a farm. Which environment would be considered more “healthy” for human habitation by today's standards?	MS/HS
Verdi had to change parts of <i>Rigoletto</i> to satisfy government censors. Does technology make it easier or more difficult for censors to control published electronic or hard copy material or content today? Create a debate for your classroom discussing the pros and cons of censoring content on popular websites and search engines. To what extent is content already censored in your home, school, library? Who should be responsible (if anyone) for monitoring and censoring information? What role should governments play in censorship? Find examples from current news to support your point of view.	MS/HS
Verdi and Strepponi left Paris in July 1849 to avoid an outbreak of cholera. Cholera is an acute intestinal infection caused by the bacterium <i>Vibrio cholerae</i> . It spreads primarily through contaminated food and water. How is water treated to prevent cholera outbreaks? Is cholera still a problem today? Where are current cholera outbreaks? How can travelers protect themselves?	MS/HS

Lots of industries tout that they are “green”. What does that term mean? How is it used in different industries? Craft an authentic action plan to create a “green” theater environment. MS/HS

In 1851, the year *Rigoletto* premiered, the first double-decker “bus” was introduced. Although the buses of Verdi’s time were pulled by animals, compare the environmental impacts of using double-decker fossil-fueled buses to single-deck buses, including fuel consumption, number of passengers served, and so forth. Which model has less negative environmental impact? Does this hold true for the horse-drawn variety, too? HS

In 1813, the year Verdi was born, David Cox’s “Treatise on Landscape Painting and Effect in Water Colours” greatly influenced landscaping of that era. What kind of landscaping was in vogue in the early 19th century? Compare that to today’s trends in landscaping or landscape architecture. Consider plant availability, shipping, climate, materials, and personnel needed to create and maintain landscapes. Describe how different kinds of landscaping, both public and private, impact the environment. HS

In 1851, the year *Rigoletto* premiered, William Thomson began publishing a series of papers on the laws of conservation and dissipation of energy. What effects did Thomson’s laws have on current environmental conservation practices? 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 this opera, the Count pronounces a curse on Rigoletto. A curse is a wish that something bad will happen to somebody else. Why is a curse bad? PreK

There are music conservatories, or schools, named for Verdi. Is there a school or street near you that was named for someone? PreK

Verdi wrote an opera, *Un giorno di regno*, which means *A King for a Day*. Pretend that you are a king or queen for a day. What changes would you make in your life? PreK

Verdi means “green.” Sparafucile means “shoot the gun.” Develop a dozen names for classmates who represent certain group “roles” in your classroom. PreK/ES

Study the libretto for *Rigoletto* and find Italian words that are cognates—words that look or sound similar in English. How many are in one aria? ES

After Verdi’s “galley period,” wherein he worked hard to create twenty operas, he wrote that when he had finished six more operas, then he would say “*addio* to everything”. How does one say “goodbye” in many languages? ES

Create a vocabulary list of traditional royal titles in the target language. Are any of these titles still used today? ES

Verdi's opera <i>Un giorno di regno</i> (<i>A King for a Day</i>) includes "king" and "day". Translate those words into multiple languages. What cognates are evident?	ES
In the <i>Rigoletto</i> Quartet, four singers are ultimately singing simultaneously. Who creates the supertitles and how would they handle multiple singers singing different words at the same time? What translation and artistic choices must be made to create supertitles?	ES/MS
The character Sparafucile's name means "shoot the gun." In your target language, develop other fictitious names that refer to a character's personality or profession. Compare your names to those of other cultures, such as Native American names. Are yours intended to be descriptive or humorous?	ES/MS
Count Monterone pronounces a curse on two of the other characters. Research the culture of the countries where your target language is spoken to discover what types of curses might be typical to those cultures.	ES/MS
Explore the concept of gendered words, such as <i>La donna è mobile</i> . Practice gender agreement with articles and nouns.	ES/MS
Compare key Italian words from the opera's libretto to those words in the target language and English. Draw comparisons about Latin etymologies.	MS
The Duke in <i>Rigoletto</i> is a libertine. Translate the word libertine into French, Spanish, Italian, German, and Russian. What nuances and overlapping meanings become apparent in languages other than English?	MS
At the outset of the opera, Rigoletto makes fun of Count Ceprano. In your target language, write and perform a short piece of friendly, lighthearted mockery to demonstrate how people tease each other for fun.	MS/HS
The name Gilda is of Old English and Germanic origin, primarily meaning "golden" or "covered with gold". Depending on its linguistic roots, it can also translate to "immense tribute," "sacrifice," or "serves God". Do you think Verdi intentionally chose the name for the soprano who sacrificed herself? Would his audience have understood how her name adds to her characterization?	MS/HS
In <i>Rigoletto</i> , "La Maledizione" (curse) is an important plot point. While English profanity often targets bodily functions or sexual acts, other cultures lean heavily into historical religion, animals, or elaborate, dramatic insults. Explore how "curse words" in other languages explore unique cultural taboos.	MS/HS
Read Victor Hugo's play <i>Le roi s'amuse</i> in French and compare the original play to the Italian libretto. What did Verdi and Piave change from Hugo's original script? Is there anything that's lost in the transition from play to opera?	HS

Character Themes for *Rigoletto*

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—**Justice** and **Love**—after reading the synopsis of *Rigoletto*.

1. In the opera, how does Rigoletto show his affection for Gilda? Does Rigoletto truly love his daughter? Does she love him in return? Explain your conclusions.
2. By the end of the opera, Monterone's curse has been fulfilled. What kind of justice has been served, if any? Do Gilda and Rigoletto deserve their fates? What should happen at the end of this opera to truly serve justice?
3. What do the following characters from the opera imagine love to be: the Duke of Mantua, Countess Ceprano, Rigoletto, Gilda, and Maddalena. Which character's concept of love comes closest to the Heartwood Institute definition of love?
4. Why does Gilda die for the Duke? Do you think she does this to demonstrate her love or is it her concept of justice that prompts her to enter the inn when she does?