

VERDI'S OPERA "AIDA"

DESIGN A POSTER INSPIRED BY VERDI'S OPERA "AIDA" AND EGYPTIAN ART
ART AND MUSIC

GRADES: 6-8

BASED ON



*Tomb Relief : Female Attendants
Clapping Hands*

Thebes/Egypt, Circa 2049 BCE-1998 BCE
Limestone with polychrome decoration
Gift of Joan L. Stark in memory of Louise J. Roth
1998.54



*Round-Topped Funerary Stele
of Ta-Khaa-En-Bastet*

Prob. Abydos/Egypt, 700 BCE-600 BCE
Limestone with polychrome decoration
Gift of Millard F. and Edna F. Shelt
1947.392

OBJECTIVES

- Students will examine the museum's *Tomb Relief: Female Attendants Clapping Hands* and *Round-Topped Funerary Stele of Ta-Khaa-En-Bastet* to initiate a discussion about Egyptian art and music.
- Students will learn about the history and Egyptian connections of one of the world's most famous operas, Giuseppe Verdi's "Aida."
- Students will watch and listen to an excerpt from Act III of "Aida," the Egyptian Triumphal March.
- Students will identify the musicians and artisans who contribute to an opera production.
- Students will learn operatic and graphic art terminology.
- Students will create a promotional poster for the opera "Aida," incorporating themes from the opera, Egyptian images, hieroglyphs and/or the Elements and Principles of Design.

CONCEPT

Giuseppe Verdi was commissioned to write the score for the Egyptian themed opera "Aida" in 1871 for the opening of the Cairo Opera House. Students will learn about Egyptian artifacts from the Cincinnati Art Museum and then watch the Triumphal March from Act III of "Aida." They will design a hand-drawn or digital poster for the Cincinnati Opera's 2020 performance of "Aida."

MATERIALS

- 12 x 18 heavy paper or poster board
- Markers, Pencils
- Rulers, T-squares
- Colored Pencils
- Sharpie markers
- Chromebook (or other electronic device)
- Lunapic or other free on-line editor

VOCABULARY

Operatic Terms

Act- a section or division of a play or opera- "Aida" has four acts.

Aria- an operatic song for one singer.

Chorus- a group of singers.

Composer- the person who writes the music or score of an opera.

Designer- the creator of costumes, sets, lighting or graphics.

Libretto- the written words of an opera.

Maestro- the leader or conductor of the orchestra.

Orchestra- instrumental musicians, including strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion.

Opera- a theatrical play told through singing, music and movement, but little or no dialogue.

Spinto- a heavy voice able to project over the orchestra (In this opera, "Aida" is a spinto soprano and Radames is a spinto tenor).

Voice types- vocalists include the soprano (highest female voice), mezzo-soprano (female voice lower in range than a soprano), contralto or alto (lowest female voice), tenor (highest adult male voice), baritone (mid-range male voice between a tenor and a bass) and bass (lowest male voice).

Visual Art Terms

Intaglio relief- a design carved into the surface of a sculpture.

Hieroglyphics- a system of writing based on pictographs or pictures.

Graphic design- visual communication through text and images.

Typography- refers to the font (lettering) and type (family of fonts) used in graphic design.

Layout- the arrangement of type and images.

Thumbnail Sketches- small pencil drawings used to pre-plan ideas.

Elements of Design- the ingredients used to make art (line, shape, form, color, texture, space and value).

Principles of Design- the way the elements are combined (balance, unity, movement, pattern, emphasis, rhythm and contrast).

PROCEDURE

- 1) The teacher will introduce the lesson with a discussion about the Cincinnati Art Museum's *Tomb Relief: Female Attendants Clapping Hands and Round-Topped Funerary Stele of Ta-Khaa-En-Bastet*. Ask students:
 - a) Based on the cultures you have studied, who do you believe made these artifacts?
 - b) When do you think they were made?
 - c) What materials were used to make the artifacts?
 - d) What do you think is happening in each artifact?
 - e) What type of writing is shown at the bottom of the funerary stele?
- 2) The teacher will provide background information about the CAM artifacts and Egyptian music. Music and dance played an important role in ancient Egypt. Instrumental and vocal music were intricate parts of religious and public ceremonies and even burial rituals. The museum's *Tomb Relief: Female Attendants Clapping Hands* was discovered in Thebes in the tomb of Neferu. It depicts "a row of women with their arms raised and clapping their hands probably belonged to

a larger scene of ritual that included singing and dancing. Music played an important role in ancient Egypt, not just for enjoyment but as part of religious life. Ceremonies performed for Hathor, the goddess most closely connected with music and dance, often featured hand-clapping or the use of clappers." (Quote from Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom) The museum's *Round-Topped Funerary Stele of Ta-Khaa-En-Bastet* shows the gods Horus and Thoth playing instruments. Beneath them is an inscription praying for the deceased *Ta-Khaa-En-Bastet*. For more about music and dance in ancient Egypt, see resources.

3) The teacher will introduce the opera "Aida" to the class. The Khedive of Egypt commissioned Giuseppe Verdi to compose an opera for the opening of the Cairo Opera House in Egypt in 1871. The libretto (story and words) was written by Antonio Ghislanzoni but the concept was written by the French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette, based on writing found on ancient papyrus. Through the power of Verdi's music, the Italian composer changed opera from focusing solely on vocalists to the telling of a story through music, dance and drama. Maestro Verdi wrote 30 operas in his lifetime and one of his most famous features the love triangle between Radames (tenor), the Egyptian general, Amneris (mezzo-soprano), the daughter of the Egyptian King and "Aida" (soprano), the Ethiopian princess and slave to Amneris. In Act III of "Aida," Radames defeats the Ethiopians in battle, and returns to Egypt as the conquering hero in the theatrical Triumphal March scene. Have students view an excerpt of the scene from the Metropolitan Opera Company (1989).

4) After viewing the video, have students talk about the Egyptian images they saw in Act III. They can also watch a thorough introduction to "Aida" for students at San Diego Opera Kids Vidz - "Aida."

5) Discuss the types of talented musicians and artisans needed to produce an opera, including the composer, librettist, maestro, orchestra musicians, designers- costume, set, lighting and graphic, choreographer and dancers.

6) Students will now design a promotional poster for the opera "Aida." They may create the poster with traditional art supplies or digital resources.

7) For a hand-drawn poster, students will research Egyptian art and symbols and then sketch at least 3 ideas in their sketchbooks. These might include music and dance related images such as the museum's *Tomb Relief: Female Attendants Clapping Hands*, other Egyptian images from the CAM's website or Egyptian symbols from books.

8) They will also write words or phrases about the opera "Aida," such as "Radames loves Aida" and then translate them into hieroglyphs using an online translator like Hieroglyphics Typewriter.

8) They will also sketch the word "Aida" in several fonts and sizes.

9) Next, they will create small thumbnail sketches to pre-plan the layout for the poster.

10) The final design will be sketched very lightly with pencil on a 12 x 18 poster board. A t-square can be used to draw parallel guidelines for the word "Aida."

11) Students should consider the Elements and Principles of Design as they design their posters, especially color (schemes), shape, space, balance and emphasis. Once the final design is sketched, students can use colored pencils, sharpie markers or paint to add color.

12) If students decide to make a digital poster, they will follow the planning ideas above. Next, hand-drawn sketches can be photographed or scanned, downloaded to their chromebook or computer and then uploaded to Google Slides or a free on-line graphic design tool website, such as Canva.

13) Students can also use the "Create a Digital Poster" worksheet and a free on-line editor to alter Egyptian images from the CAM's website to use on their poster. They must provide a credit line at the bottom of the poster stating the name of the art, location, credit line and accession number.

14) Students will use the provided rubric to assess their posters.

ASSESSMENT

Students will participate in discussions about the *Tomb Relief: Female Attendants Clapping Hands*, Egyptian music, Verdi and his opera "Aida" and careers in opera. They will self-assess their completed poster using a four scale rubric based on the following criteria: type (lettering), Egyptian drawings or images, Elements of Design, Principles of Design, graphic communication and overall visual appeal.

NATIONAL STANDARDS

MUSIC

Level III (Grade 6-8)

Standard 7: Understands the relationship between music and history and culture.

Benchmark 2 Understands characteristics that cause various musical works (e.g., from different genres, styles, historical periods, composers) to be considered exemplary.

Benchmark 3 Understands the functions music serves, roles of musicians (e.g., lead guitarist in a rock band, composer of jingles for commercials, singer in Peking opera), and the conditions under which music is typically performed in various cultures of the world.

ART

Level III (Grade 5-8)

Standard 1 Understands and applies media, techniques and processes related to the visual arts.

Benchmark 1 Understands what makes different media, techniques and processes effective (or ineffective) in communicating various ideas.

Standard 2 Knows how to use structures and functions of art.

Benchmark 1 Knows some of the effects of some of the visual structures (e.g., design elements such as line, color, shape; principles such as repetition, rhythm, balance) and functions of art).

Standard 4 Understand the visual arts in relation to history and culture.

Benchmark 2 Understand the historical and cultural contexts of a variety of art objects.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

HISTORY

The museum's *Round-Topped Funerary Stele of Ta-Khaa-En-Bastet* contains figures playing instruments and beneath them is written hieroglyphics. During the Napoleonic wars, French Captain Pierre Bouchard discovered the Rosetta Stone, later leading Thomas Young and Jean-Francois Champollion to translate hieroglyphic texts. Have students research how they were able to accomplish this task.

MUSIC

Hieroglyphics also reveal that ancient Egyptians made stringed, wind and percussion instruments, including a hand-held instrument called a sistrum, hand-held drums, bells and rattles. Have students make their own instruments and then create music with them.

VISUAL ART

Introduce set and costume design to your students as they listen to fashion designer Zandra Rhodes speak about her research and experiences designing sets and costumes for "Aida."

RESOURCES

Ancient Egyptian Music <https://www.historyforkids.net/egyptian-music.html>

Behind the Scenes of San Diego Opera's "Aida." (Designer Zandra Rhoses speaks)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNau6PCsbI4>

English Translation for "Aida"

[http://www.murashev.com/opera/Aida libretto English Italian](http://www.murashev.com/opera/Aida_libretto_English_Italian)

Giuseppe Verdi Facts for Kids https://kids.kiddle.co/Giuseppe_Verdi

Hieroglyphic Typewriter

<https://discoveringegypt.com/egyptian-hieroglyphic-writing/hieroglyphic-typewriter/>

Historical Perspective and Background

<https://www.opera-online.com/en/articles/aida-an-underrated-masterpiece>

Music and Dance in Ancient Egypt

<https://www.ancient.eu/article/1075/music--dance-in-ancient-egypt/>

Opera Terms <https://www.operaphila.org/your-visit/attending-a-performance/opera-101/>

Oppenheim, Adela, Dorothea Arnold, Dieter Arnold, and Kei Yamamoto. Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom. 2015, pg. 98

Synopsis of the Opera Aida <https://www.liveabout.com/verdis-aida-synopsis-723733>

Triumphal March from Aida by Giuseppe Verdi; Metropolitan Opera House (1989)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3w4I-KEIxQ>

San Diego Opera Kids Vidz - Aida. - (Intro to Opera for Students)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFG0J8M1IWw>

Zandra Rhodes Interview about Aida costumes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j1WsoplxBU>

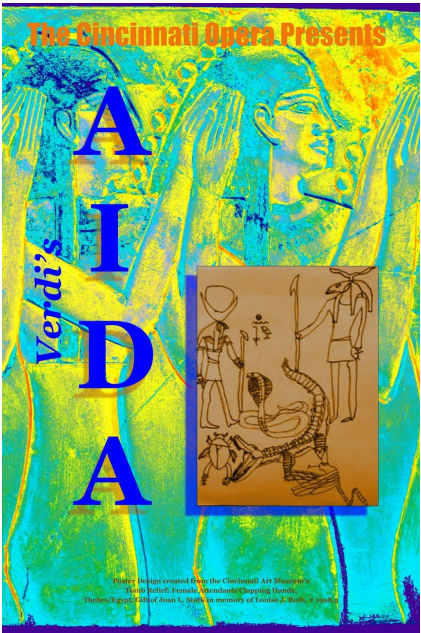
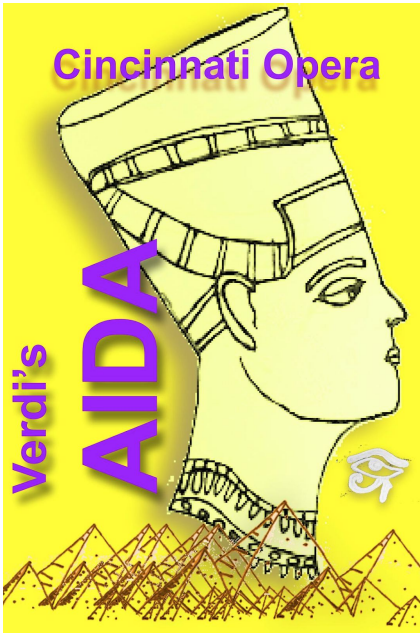
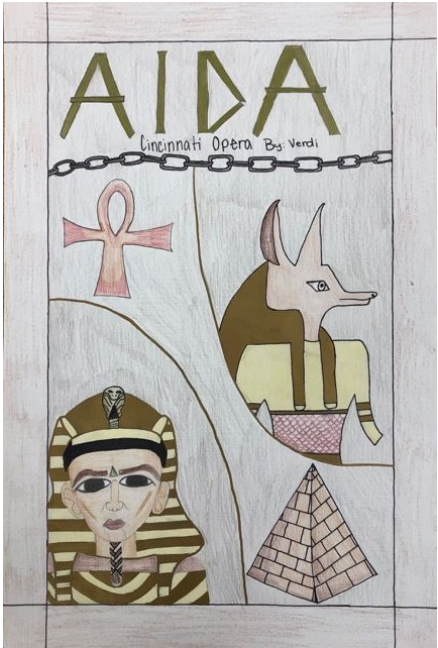
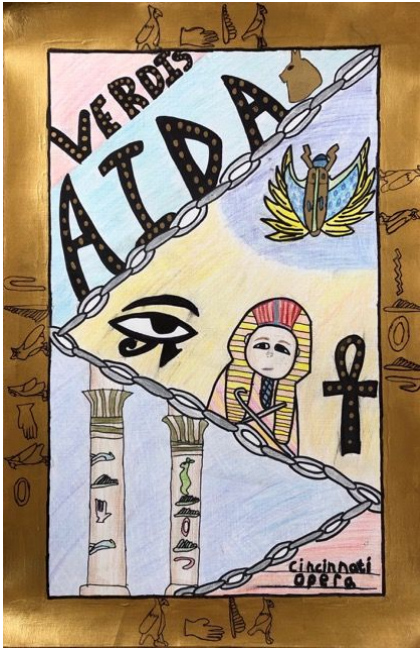


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EXAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK



Name_____ Period:_____

Create an Egyptian themed POSTER to advertise Verdi's opera "AIDA"

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Type (lettering)	The font (and title) for "AIDA" is large and bold. The words Verdi and Cincinnati Opera can also be seen easily.	The title "AIDA" is large and bold. The words Verdi and Cincinnati Opera are included but are small.	The words "AIDA," Verdi and Cincinnati Opera are somewhat difficult to view.	One of the 3 required words or phrases is missing.
Egyptian drawings/sketches and images	Student drew 3 or more detailed sketches plus hieroglyphics that relate to "AIDA."	Student drew 3 or more sketches plus hieroglyphics that relate to "AIDA."	Student drew 2 or more sketches plus hieroglyphics that relate to "AIDA."	Drawings and images do not convey an Egyptian theme.
Elements of Design (line, color, shape, form, space, texture, value)	Used color schemes, line, shape, space and textures to create an eye-catching poster.	Used color schemes, line, shape, space and textures to create a good poster.	Used color schemes, shapes, line, space and textures to create an acceptable poster.	The poor use of color schemes, line, shape, space and textures creates a weak poster.
Principles of Design (balance, unity, movement, proportion, emphasis, rhythm and contrast)	Poster is balanced, well proportioned, and has a focal point to create an overall harmonious work.	Poster is balanced, well proportioned, and has a focal point to create a good work of art.	Poster is somewhat balanced, proportioned, and has a focal point.	Poster is not balanced, proportioned, and lacks a focal point.
Graphic Communication	The poster successfully conveys the story and Egyptian theme of the opera "AIDA.."	The poster conveys the story or Egyptian theme of the opera "AIDA."	The poster has an Egyptian theme but does not represent the "AIDA" story.	The poster does not show the "AIDA" theme and uses just one Egyptian reference.
Visual Appeal (Overall)	The poster is outstanding in terms of design, layout, and neatness.	The poster is appealing in terms of design, layout, and neatness.	The poster design is acceptable but a bit messy.	The poster is distractingly messy and not appealing to the viewer.

What Egyptian symbols and images did you use on your poster?
How do they convey the story of "AIDA?"

Create a Digital Poster

Based on an Egyptian Artifact from the Cincinnati Art Museum

To find Egyptian Art for your Poster Design:

- 1) Go to "Explore the Collection" on the Cincinnati Art Museum's website.
<https://www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org/art/explore-the-collection/>
- 2) On the left hand side, click on South Asian Art, Islamic Art and Antiquities Collection.
- 3) Click on the red lettering that says "View South Asian Art, Islamic Art and Antiquities Collection."
- 4) Scroll down the page to find an image from Egypt that you find interesting. To go to the next page, you will click the black button that says "load more." Be sure that the image says it is from Egypt. Is the image you selected appropriate for a school project?
- 5) Once you find an image, click on it. Scroll below the image and click "download." This will save the image to your chromebook or computer.
- 6) Copy the name of the art, the place, the credit line and the accession number to a Google Doc. You will add this information to the bottom of your poster later.

Alter the Egyptian Image

- 7) Go to LUNAPIC or another free online photo editor or if available, use Adobe Photoshop.
- 8) Click on TRANSPARENT to erase the background around the artifact. Click on CHOOSE FILE to upload the Cincinnati Art Museum artifact that you previously saved. Click on any space outside the image. Click on APPLY. If the entire background appears checkered, you can save the new image. If you still have spots of background left, click outside the image until more of the background becomes checkered. Use the eraser tool to erase any small remaining pieces.
- 9) Save the new image by clicking on the SAVE button on the upper left. Now, save the revised image as a GIF.
- 10) Explore different categories to alter the image you made. Click on FILTERS (such as Equalize, Emboss or Thermal Irradiance Effect; EFFECTS (such as Christmas Effects, Needlepoint or Cartoon) and ART (Picasso, Space or Kandinsky). If you make a change you do not like, click on "Undo this Effect." Save at least 3 altered images on your chromebook. (SAVE as a GIF)

Make a Poster with the Altered Image

11) Go to Google Slides. Go to FILE, then Page Setup. Click on drop down and "custom" then change the dimensions to 12 x 18 inches.

12) You will now go to Google Slides to make a poster for "AIDA" which incorporates one of the altered Egyptian images that you saved.

13) You can make the entire background the altered image, or you can make the image smaller, then duplicate it to create the impression of rhythm or repetition. As you work, go to PRESENT to see how a larger version of the poster will appear.

14) Add the word "AIDA" somewhere on the poster- the font size should be at least 200 pts. Above or near the word "AIDA," add Verdi's, to recognize the composer of the opera, Giuseppe Verdi. Include the phrase Cincinnati Opera in a smaller font (about 80-90 pts.). You can also add the phrase 100th Anniversary in small type, if you wish. You can also add shapes and banners to accent words. Include some of the sketches that you made in your sketchbook, too. Take a photo of them and download them to your chromebook. You may need to make these sketches transparent (eliminate backgrounds) too. Think about how you are using the Elements and Principles of Design- especially color, space, balance, and emphasis.

15) You are required to acknowledge that the artifact you used in your design originated in the collection of the Cincinnati Art Museum. You will go back to the Google Doc where you saved the name of the art, the place, the credit line and the accession number. This information should appear about 18 pts. on the bottom or side your poster.

16) Once you have all of the required information on the poster, experiment with the font styles. Click on the word or phrase or image then format options to add shadows, reflections, recolor images or adjust font sizes. Don't be afraid to be creative and experiment!

17) Remember that your poster should convey an Egyptian theme, boldly state the name of the opera "AIDA" and cite the use of the image from the Cincinnati Art Museum at the bottom. (See teacher's sample)

18) Use the "AIDA" Poster Rubric to evaluate your final design.

