

Trailblazers in Opera: Grace Bumbry

LESSON PLANS

MATERIALS

- Biography from GraceBumbry.com
- Video: [Grace Bumbry sings the “Habanera from Carmen](#)
- [Edpuzzle account](#)
- Dry-erase board and markers
- Paper and writing utensils

CONTENT VOCABULARY

- Trailblazer
- Mezzo-soprano
- Oratorio
- Dramatic soprano
- Coloratura
- Diva

PRE-LESSON STEPS

1. Please write these Essential Questions on the board or display them in your online meeting space.
 - a. What does it mean to be a trailblazer?
 - b. What characteristics does a “trailblazer” possess?
 - c. What makes Grace Bumbry a “trailblazer”?
 - d. How did racial politics impact the careers of artists in the 20th century?
2. Write the following “bell ringer” up on the board: “What is one word you would use to describe a trailblazer?”

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. What is a “trailblazer”?

1. As students enter, play the YouTube video [Grace Bumbry sings the “Habanera” from Carmen](#)
 - a. Invite a few students to share their impressions of the audio and ask them for one word to describe a “trailblazer.”
2. Share the idea with students that one reason a person is labeled as a “trailblazer” is because they are the first to accomplish something of note. Ask students to name people they know-famous or personally- who were the first to complete or accomplish something. Then, ask students why their accomplishments made such an impact or hold importance.
3. Ask students to name people they believe are trailblazers and why (using the characteristics they identified).

II. Who is Grace Bumbry?

1. Explain that we will learn about a singer named Grace Bumbry to determine if she would be considered a trailblazer and why her career made such an impact.
2. Provide the biography from [GraceBumbry.com](#) and ask students to consider the Essential Questions as they read.
3. After the students have read, provide time for students to write their answers to the following questions:
 - a. What experiences changed the direction of Grace Bumbry’s music path and career?
 - b. What firsts and feats did Ms. Bumbry accomplish in her career?
 - c. What were specific challenges Ms. Bumbry faced throughout her career?
 - d. What titles or labels were given to Ms. Bumbry for her accomplishments?
4. Use the following Edpuzzle as either an in class activity or homework assignment to review the life and accomplishments of Grace Bumbry.
 - a. [The Bumbry Way: A career conversation with Grace Bumbry](#)

ACTIVITY STEPS CONT'D

Choice Board Assignment

Have the students choose one of the following assignments to showcase their learning about Grace Bumbry:

Choice One:

Write a Journal Entry: Imagine you are Grace Bumbry writing a letter to your family about your success at the Bayreuth Festival. What were you thinking about knowing that the audience was not initially supportive of you? How did it feel to change their minds and earn their admiration? What lessons did this experience teach you?

Choice Two:

Research Project: Grace Bumbry's alma mater, Sumner High School, is an important institution. This school was located in a thriving African-American community and produced dozens of famous alumni. Read this [article](#) to learn more about Sumner High School's history. Choose one alumni to study further and write a short report on his or her accomplishments.

Choice Three:

Create a children's book: Write a book for young children that tells the story of Grace Bumbry. You may include whatever details you want, but be sure to include some of her accomplishments as a trailblazer. You can print pictures from the internet or do your own illustrations.

Choice Four:

Write a speech: Imagine you are working at an opera company and want to hire Grace Bumbry to be the first African-American to appear on your company's stage. What would you say to convince everyone that she deserves to be hired? Be sure to reference some of her past accomplishments as you make your case.

Choice Five:

Write an article: Imagine you are a reporter for a local newspaper and are in charge of reviewing one of Grace Bumbry's performances. Write an article that describes your experience. What was your initial impression? What stood out to you? Was there anything unexpected? Would you recommend this performance to others?

STANDARDS

Missouri Fine Arts GLEs

MU: Re7B.8b (pg. 11)

Identify and compare the context of programs of music from a variety of genres, cultures, and historical periods.

FA 3, 5

MU: Cn10A.8a (pg. 14)

Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

FA 1, 4, 5

MU: Cn11A.8a (pg. 15)

Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

FA 1, 3, 4, 5

Missouri Social Studies GLEs

9-12.AH.1.CC.D

Using an inquiry lens, develop compelling questions about United States history post 1870 to determine helpful resources and consider multiple points of view.

9-12.AH.2.Gov.A

Analyze laws, policies and processes to determine how governmental systems affect individuals and groups in society in United States History C. 1870 to 2010.

6-8. AH.5.PGC.1.A

Using an American history lens, describe how people's perspectives shaped the sources/ artifacts they created.

6-8. AH.5.PGC.1.B

Using an American history lens, examine the origins and impact of social structures and stratifications on societies and relationships between peoples.

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