

The Magic Flute: An Exploration of Character

THE PRINCE

Think of mythical princes and heroes (but not superheroes) that you've read about before: maybe Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*, or Aragorn in *Lord of the Rings*, or any of the princes in Disney movies. These princes share some common personality characteristics in many of these stories. With a partner, create a list of words that describe the personalities of these princes and heroes.

Below you will find two of Tamino's (the prince) arias (songs sung by an individual) from The Magic Flute. Each tells you a bit about his character, though what they tell may be different from one another. Read each set of lyrics carefully, and then answer the questions or comment on the lines below.

Tamino (on seeing the dragon):

Oh help me, oh help me, can anyone hear me?
Oh help me, oh help me, can anyone hear me?
Oh, hurry it up or he'll have me for supper.
Ye gods, are you out there?
There isn't much time, that jaw's dripping slime!
Oh rescue me, oh save me, get me out of here.
Won't someone get me out of here, oh get me out of here!



Tamino (on seeing a picture of Pamina):

A picture of a maiden's face,
Unearthly in its fragile grace.
I knew it, I knew it,
There's a God up there!
Her smile reveals a spirit rare.
Her glance invites a walk on air.
What delights, what fancies she inspires!
She fills me with unknown desires.
Is this the feeling I've heard about?
Could this be the magic they sing about?
Oh yes! At last I know it's love.
I love her, I love her, I love her. I alone!
Forever and ever she'll be mine.
Now forever she'll be mine.
Now forever she'll be mine.

1. What is your initial impression of Tamino based on his first aria?

2. What does the second aria tell you about his personality?

3. How do these two arias compare with what you and your partner decided made a good prince?

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THE SIDEKICK

Just as you did with the prince above, think of the sidekicks you've read about and seen on television or in the movies. What types of character traits do these sidekicks have in common? How might you describe them to a friend? Again, with a partner come up with a list of personality traits for sidekick.

Below you will find two songs that Papageno (the sidekick) sings. The first is to the audience and the second is to his soon-to-be wife. As with Tamino, each of these songs reveal something about Papageno. Read each set of lyrics carefully, and then answer the questions or comment on the lines below.

Papageno (on entering):

I catch the birds, oh yeah you bet.
Takes half a brain and one small net.
I'm self-employed, don't punch a clock.
An hour lunch, and that's no crock!
I've got the beer, the gear the bait
To snatch the birdies where they mate.
My traps are set I catch the scent.
Not *Wild Kingdom*, but it pays the rent!



Papageno (singing to his love, Papagena):

Be my wid-dow wubby-dubby.

Read: "little lovey-dovey"

My wubby-dubby.

My wubby-dubby.

Read: "lovey-dovey"

Gods who snoop on us as usual,
Try once doing something useful,
And send to us a wid-dow kid, wid-dow kid,
wid-dow kid

Read: "little kid, little kid, little kid"

Wild and wacky wid-dow kid,
A wild and wacky wid-dow kid,
A wild and wacky wid-dow kid.

1. What are the three things that Papageno cares most about, based on his first song?

2. What might be making him sing his words oddly in the second song?

3. How does Papageno, based on these two songs, compare to the characteristics you and your partner came up with for a sidekick?

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In the preceding pages, you have identified two **stock characters**, the PRINCE and the SIDEKICK, who often occur in myths, fairy tales, operas, plays, and other types of literature. There are many other similar types of stock characters that can be found, and a few who show up in the opera you are about to see.

Below are a list of stock characters who show up in the opera. For each, as you did with the prince and sidekick, list the basic personality characteristics and motivations for that type of character. While these may not match exactly to the characters in *The Magic Flute*, they will give you a basis for comparison.

THE EVIL QUEEN (QUEEN OF THE NIGHT)

THE GOOD KING (SARASTRO)

The Princess (Pamina)