

# Carmen

Georges Bizet

## Language Arts: Sensory Language & Imagery Interactive Word Wall

### Students will

- Read *Carmen Synopsis* and **The Characters**
- Listen and watch the online selections
- Work together to produce a sensory language & imagery interactive word wall using text from the opera.

### Copies for Each Student:

- **Synopsis**
- **The Characters**
- Provided Opera Text:

### Getting Ready

- Create space on a wall or chalkboard for the interactive word wall. Decide how you want students to add text examples to the word wall and gather necessary materials. (scissors, tape, index cards, glue sticks, butcher paper, markers, etc.)
- Prepare internet access for the online listening selections.
- Gather all supplies needed for your group.

### Introduction

Have your students read the **Synopsis**. Give each student a copy of **The Characters**. Read through the information, discussing each character and viewing the online selections as you go.

### Guided/Independent Practice

Depending on your grade level, the ability of your students and time constraints, you may choose to have students work as a whole class, in small groups, with a partner, or individually. Create a working word wall space with two categories: Sensory Language and Imagery. Have students analyze the opera text provided and put examples from the text into each category, providing more details about the specific sensory language or imagery found in the text. Students can cut the lines out directly from their handout, write the lines on the word wall or write them on index cards and glue or tape them in place.

### Evaluation

Have students share their finished product and explain their examples with a teacher-lead discussion.

### For Further Study

Students may want to do additional research on Georges Bizet, *Carmen*, or related topics online or in their school library. Their findings can be shared with the class at the beginning of a later lesson.

## **TEKs: Language Arts**

**6<sup>th</sup> Grade** 110.18.B.8 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain how authors create meaning through stylistic elements and figurative language emphasizing the use of personification, hyperbole, and refrains.

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade** 110.19.B.8 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to determine the figurative meaning of phrases and analyze how an author's use of language creates imagery, appeals to the senses, and suggests mood.

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade** 110.20.B.8 Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain the effect of similes and extended metaphors in literary text.

**English I** 110.31.B.7 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain the role of irony, sarcasm, and paradox in literary works.

**English II** 110.32.B.7 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain the function of symbolism, allegory, and allusions in literary works.

**English III** 110.33.B.7 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze the meaning of classical, mythological, and biblical allusions in words, phrases, passages, and literary works.

**English IV** 110.34.B.7 Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze how the author's patterns of imagery, literary allusions, and conceits reveal theme, set tone, and create meaning in metaphors, passages, and literary works.

**Correlates:** Music

**Gardner's Intelligences:** Verbal-Linguistic, Musical, Interpersonal

**Bloom's Taxonomy:** Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Evaluation, Synthesis

**Sources:**

*Carmen* Libretto

Strachan, Terry, Richard, Poetry: an introduction, Edinburgh University Press, 2000.

## Meilhac and Halévy, Librettists

**Henri Meilhac** (Librettist) (February 21, 1831 - July 6, 1897) As a young man in Paris, Meilhac began writing imaginative articles for newspapers and vaudeville shows. His vibrant writing style soon made him quite popular. In 1860, he met Ludovic Halévy on the steps outside a theater. Halévy had just lost his writing partner for a big project and offered Meilhac the job. They began writing scripts for plays and opera libretti together with much success. They continued their collaboration for twenty years, producing plays and opera libretti. Although they wrote more than a dozen libretti for the composer Jacques Offenbach, their most famous work is the libretto for Georges Bizet's *Carmen*. Meilhac also wrote the libretto for another famous opera, Jules Massenet's *Manon*, with a writer named Philippe Gille in 1884. Composer Johann Strauss used Halévy and Meilhac's play, *Le Réveillon*, as the basis for his famous operetta, *Die Fledermaus*. In 1888, Meilhac was elected to the Académie française. Henri Meilhac died in Paris, France in 1897.

**Ludovic Halévy** (Librettist) (January 1, 1834 – May 7, 1908) Halévy was an author and playwright born in Paris. His father, Léon Halévy (1802–1883), was a civil servant and a writer who never really achieved much success with his work. His uncle, Fromental Halévy, was an opera composer. As a young boy, Halévy spent a lot of time at the theater, playing in the parts of Paris that would later become the settings for most of his stories. After graduating from school, he worked for the French government but still continued to write plays and comic operas. In 1865, he resigned from his job and began writing full time. By this time, he had begun collaborating with Henri Meilhac. Their working relationship lasted twenty years and resulted in numerous successful plays and opera libretti. In 1882, their partnership came to an end, and each continued their own work. Halévy received the cross of commander of the Legion of Honor and became a member of the Académie française in 1884. Ludovic Halévy died in the spring of 1908 in Paris, France.

## ***Carmen Synopsis***

*The opera is set in and near Seville, Spain around 1820.*

Members of the military are serving as police in Seville. Several soldiers are standing around the guard house in the square. Micaëla, a simple, devoted country girl, arrives looking for Don José. He is a corporal in the army and her fiancé. Another soldier tells her that Don José will return soon. She leaves the square.

Many of the soldiers and other men are gathering to see the girls who work in the cigarette factory emerge for a break. When Carmen appears in the group, she is clearly the center of attention. Carmen is a gypsy girl, who sings of fleeting, changing love. She flirts with Don José, the only soldier nearby who is not staring and flirting with her. Once she has Don José's attention, she uses all her charm to keep it. She throws a red flower from the bodice of her dress at him before returning to work.

Micaëla finds Don José to deliver both a letter and a kiss from his mother. Seeing Micaëla makes Don José think of his mother and wonder how he could have been distracted by a woman like Carmen. Micaëla leaves him alone to read the letter. His mother has advised him to marry Micaëla. Don José agrees to do so.

Before Micaëla returns, there is a commotion in the cigarette factory. Carmen has argued with another girl inside the factory and attacked her with a knife. She refuses to answer any questions. Carmen is arrested, and Don José is left alone to guard her. Carmen continues to influence Don José and tells him that he will let her escape because he loves her. She convinces him that he will be her love, and that he must let her go. She tells him of an inn where she will wait for him to join her. When he is to lead Carmen to jail, Don José allows her to escape. Don José is thrown in jail for helping her.

## **ACT TWO**

Two months later, Carmen and her friends are at an inn socializing with officers of the military. She passes the time while waiting for Don José, as she promised him. Escamillo, a famous bullfighter, arrives to an adoring crowd at the inn. He notices Carmen, and immediately has his own intentions of winning her love. Carmen tries to ignore him, even though she is attracted to him.

As the inn closes, Carmen tells her friends that she cannot join their latest plans for smuggling, as she is in love. When Don José appears, her friends urge her to get him to join in their plans. Don José explains that he has been in jail for the past two months. When he hears the bugle call of the military, Carmen ridicules him for being so obedient. She accuses him of not really caring about her. He denies being indifferent, showing Carmen the dried flower that she threw at him. It is now dried, but kept by Don José as a precious memento. Carmen continues to try to convince Don José to leave the army and stay with her and her friends. One of the local officers arrives to see Carmen himself, and finds Don José. The officer orders Don José back to the barracks, but Don José refuses. He is now a deserter, and must flee while Carmen and her gypsy friends playfully distract the officer, singing of their free existence.

## ACT THREE

In the mountains, Don José and Carmen are with the band of smugglers. Don José looks to the valley where his mother lives, and regrets betraying his family and his mother's expectations. Carmen sees Don José's regret and tells him he might as well leave. She accuses him of not truly loving her. Carmen's indifference makes his temper flare, and Carmen realizes that he could be dangerous. Carmen reads tarot cards with her friends, repeatedly turning up the death card for herself and for Don José. Don José takes up guard duty for the evening, and the women leave him.

Micaëla wanders in, having found the smuggler's hideout. She is looking for Don José, hoping to win him back and bring him home. As she is calling out to Don José, he spots an intruder and fires a warning shot. The intruder turns out to be Escamillo, looking for Carmen. Micaëla hides as the two men face off, both realizing that they are competing for Carmen. Don José challenges Escamillo to a duel. They fight, but Carmen intervenes in time to prevent Don José from hurting Escamillo. The smugglers allow Escamillo to leave, and he invites them all to his next bullfight.

Micaëla is found in her hiding place, and Don José assures the band that she is not a spy. Micaëla pleads with Don José to come to see his mother, who is sick and possibly dying. At first he refuses to leave. Carmen tells him to go. He vows to return.

## ACT FOUR

In a square outside the bullring, the crowd waits to see the parade of bullfighters. The procession includes Escamillo. He is hailed as the hero of the day. He sees Carmen and pulls her aside. The two sing of their love for each other. Escamillo continues into the bullring. Carmen's friends warn her that they have seen Don José nearby. Now wanted for desertion, he is hunting for Carmen while staying out of sight of the authorities. Carmen insists that she is not afraid of him and will talk to him if he shows up.

Don José arrives and tries one last time to plead with Carmen to be his love. He has sacrificed everything for her. Carmen, however, tells him that there is nothing left between them. She is distracted by the cheers from the bullring for Escamillo. When she hears the crowd declare Escamillo's victory, she tries to enter the bullring. Don José blocks her way. Carmen shouts that he should either let her go or kill her. She throws away a ring he once gave her. In a jealous rage, Don José stabs Carmen then falls to his knees beside her body. As the cheering crowd leaves the bullring, they are met with the horrific sight of Don José crying over Carmen.

## The Characters

**Carmen** (*soprano or mezzo-soprano*): A nomadic woman. She does not hold to the conventions of society. Carmen lives her life from moment to moment. She seems to enjoy making men fall in love with her, but is not faithful to any one man. When Don José is the only man in the square not to notice her, her pride makes her flirt with him and do her best to make him fall in love with her. When he later shows any sign of weakness or wavering, she casts him aside, saying that he does not truly love her. She quickly moves on to another man, not worried about what Don José is likely to do. Her tragic end is foretold in the cards, but she seems to rush toward the bitter end on her own terms rather than try to avoid the outcome. Watch and listen as Carmen sings “*L'amour est un oiseau rebelle*,” also known as “*The Habanera*.” She sings of love as being fleeting and untamable. A force that nothing can hold – much like herself.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2snTkaD64U>

**Don José** (*tenor*): A corporal of the Dragoons, the military officers in charge of Seville. Don José is from a small town near Seville. He is a handsome, honest man, from a good family. His mother is counting on him to marry Micaëla and lead a respectable life. When he meets Carmen, however, José finds excitement and passion. He makes several life-changing choices to be with Carmen and please her. Carmen, however, only sees his hesitation at each momentous decision, and casts him aside. Don José’s infatuation for Carmen turns to jealousy and murderous rage, resulting in the tragic ending to the story. Watch and listen to “*La fleur que tu m’avais jetée*,” as Don José shows Carmen the dried flower that she gave him the day they met and tells her of his undying love for her. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0tUnqvRanM>

**Escamillo** (*baritone*): A Toreador, or bull fighter. Escamillo enjoys the status of a great hero in Spain. Crowds of people gather around him wherever he goes, and they celebrate his great victories in the bullring. Escamillo also wants Carmen from the first time he sees her. He doesn’t know that Don José is also in love with her until later. Carmen seems to want him, as she finds herself attracted to his great success and fame. Escamillo seems confident that Don José is now a part of her past, and that she will be faithful to him. Watch and listen to “*Votre toast, je peux vous le rendre*,” also known as “The Toreador Song,” as Escamillo and the chorus sing of fighting in the bullring while love is waiting for him. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_tIemwS024I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tIemwS024I)

**Micaëla** (*soprano*): A village maiden. Micaëla is a young woman of good virtue. She is honest and truly seems to love Don José. She does not give up on him even after he spends two months in jail and deserts from the military. She makes one last ditch attempt to get him to come home to their village, but he is completely focused on Carmen. In many ways, Micaëla is the complete opposite of Carmen. Her attempts to save Don José from himself are not enough to sway him. Watch and listen as Micaëla sings “*Je dis que rien ne me épouvante*,” as she is searching for Don José in the mountains to bring him home to his ailing mother and his life in their village. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNMDcyNUvZM>

## Text from the Opera for Word Wall Project

### Habanera – ACT I

#### CARMEN

Love is a rebellious bird  
that no one can tame,  
and it's quite useless to call him  
if it suits him refuse.  
Nothing moves him, neither threat nor plea,  
one man speaks freely, the other keeps mum;  
and it's the other one I prefer:  
he's said nothing, but I like him.  
Love! *etc.*

#### CHORUS

Love is a rebellious bird, *etc.*

#### CARMEN

Love is a gypsy child,  
he has never heard of law.  
If you don't love me, I love you;  
if I love you, look out for yourself! *etc.*

#### CHORUS

Look out for yourself! *etc.*

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Love is a gypsy child *etc.*

#### CARMEN

The bird you thought to catch unawares  
beats its wings and away it flew -  
love's far away, and you can wait for it:  
you wait for it no longer - and there it is.  
All around you, quickly, quickly,  
it comes, it goes, then it returns -  
you think you can hold it, it evades you,  
you think to evade it, it holds you fast.  
Love! *etc.*

#### CHORUS

All around you, *etc.*

#### CARMEN

Love is a gypsy child,  
he has never heard of law.  
If you don't love me, I love you;  
if I love you, look out for yourself!  
If you don't love me, I love you, *etc.*

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## José's Aria – ACT II

Yes, you shall hear me!

I insist, Carmen!

You shall hear me!

(*He reaches inside his tunic and takes out  
the cassia flower Carmen threw him in Act  
One.*)

The flower that you threw to me  
stayed with me in my prison.

Withered and dried up, that flower  
always kept its sweet perfume;  
and for hours at a time,  
with my eyes closed,  
I became drunk with its smell  
and in the night I used to see you!

I took to cursing you,  
detesting you, asking myself  
why did destiny  
have to throw her across my path?  
Then I accused myself of blasphemy,  
and felt within myself,  
I felt but one desire,  
one desire, one hope:  
to see you again, Carmen, to see you again!  
For you had only to appear,  
only to throw a glance my way,  
to take possession of my whole being,  
O my Carmen,  
and I was your chattel!  
Carmen, I love you!

## Sensory Language & Imagery Examples in *Carmen*

Sensory Language contributes to the image the author is trying to convey. Look for examples in the text that appeal to the 5 senses: sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound. Explain how the words help the author achieve his or her goal.

- “Love is a rebellious bird that no one can tame” | image of a wild bird you cannot catch – it does what it wants
- “The bird you thought to catch unawares beats its wings and away it flew” | image of a flying bird, feeling that you cannot hold it
- “Withered and dried up, that flower always kept its sweet perfume” | comparing their love to a flower that was dead and no longer beautiful, but retained its sweetness

# **Sample Word Walls**

(for teacher reference)



