

A PRETTY, FUN-LOVING TEENAGE GIRL IS SENT BY HER FAMILY TO LIVE IN a convent. At a country crossroads, fate intervenes and she is swept off to true love, then to an existence of luxury and indulgence in upper-class Paris—only to end her life, ill and imprisoned for theft, back in the arms of her lover. Jules Massenet’s opera, based on Abbé Prévost’s 1731 novel *L’Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*, is a work full of elegance and spirit, highly emotional yet never lapsing into melodrama, and firmly focused on its two protagonists.

For Laurent Pelly, director of the Met’s new production, *Manon* is the quintessential tale of a free woman navigating a world of powerful, avaricious men—men who grab whatever they want, whatever the consequences, with a stunning lack of self-awareness or empathy. Pelly decided to move the action from its original early 18th-century setting to an era some 150 years later. “If I had to define my approach,” he says, “it would be to take a man’s view of women at the end of the 19th century. What interested me was to place the opera in its historical context, the time when Massenet wrote the music. And then to sort of draw a parallel to Carmen and Violetta in *La Traviata*, famous heroines who are sacrificed. A free woman is dangerous. That is what the story is about.”

With sets by Chantal Thomas and costumes designed by Pelly himself, *Manon*’s world is a stylized urban jungle, with smooth surfaces, top hats, tails, and beautiful gowns, “very much inspired by the beginnings of Impressionism,” as the director points out—a place at once glamorous and visibly laden with risk. It’s an exquisite setting for the talents of star soprano Anna Netrebko, who sings the title role. Though the manners of this world may seem formal and remote to young viewers, the characters’ emotions and the social games of *Manon* should feel familiar today.

This educator’s guide encourages students to meet Manon on her own terms—as a character both naïve and knowing; manipulative and a creature of impulse. The main Classroom Activity invites students to consider Manon’s life through the psychology of memory. Other activities introduce the treacherous world she steps into, as well as the dazzling music with which Massenet brings it to life. By acquainting students with *Manon*’s characters, their relationships, and the romance of its music, this guide can help generate anticipation and enjoyment of their *The Met: Live in HD* experience.



NETREBKO



BE CZALA



SZOT



PITTSINGER

THE WORK MANON

Opera in five acts, sung in French

Music by Jules Massenet (1842–1912)

Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Philippe Gille, based on the novel *L’Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* by Abbé Prévost

First performed on January 19, 1884, at the Opéra Comique, Paris, France

PRODUCTION

Fabio Luisi, Conductor

Laurent Pelly, Production

Chantal Thomas, Set Designer

Laurent Pelly, Costume Designer

Joël Adam, Lighting Designer

Lionel Hoche, Choreographer

Agathe Mélinand, Dramaturg

STARRING

(in order of appearance)

Paulo Szot

LESCAUT (Baritone)

Anna Netrebko

MANON LESCAUT (soprano)

Piotr Beczala

CHEVALIER DES GRIEUX (Tenor)

David Pittsinger

COUNT DES GRIEUX (Bass Baritone)

Production a gift of by The Sybil B. Harrington Endowment Fund

Co-production of the Metropolitan Opera, New York; Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London; Teatro alla Scala, Milan; and Théâtre du Capitole, Toulouse

The guide includes four types of activities. Reproducible student resources for the activities are available at the back of this guide.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

a full-length activity, designed to support your ongoing curriculum

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS

opportunities to focus on excerpts from *Manon* to enhance familiarity with the work

PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, calling attention to specific aspects of this production

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

a wrap-up activity, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into students' views of the performing arts and humanities

The activities in this guide address several aspects of *Manon*:

- the personality of the title character
- the opera's subtle use of the psychology of memory
- the roguish men and women who populate the story
- Manon Lescaut as a recurring figure in the history of opera
- Massenet's decision to create a new version of an established literary property
- the production as a unified work of art, involving creative decisions by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera

The guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Manon* whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds, seeking to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts in general—as a medium of entertainment and as creative expression.



ACT I: *An inn at Amiens, France.* The noblemen Guillot and de Brétigny and their companions Pousette, Rosette, and Javotte have been waiting a long time for dinner to be served. At last the innkeeper arrives with a sumptuous feast. Outside, a young man named Lescaut awaits the arrival of a coach carrying his teenage cousin. He is to help her make her way to a convent, though he really would prefer to join his friends for a glass of wine.

A crowd of townspeople gathers to meet the coach. Manon descends and tells her cousin how excited she is by this, her first journey. Lescaut goes off to fetch her luggage. Guillot, instantly attracted to Manon, offers her a ride in his coach, which is soon to arrive, despite teasing from his dinner partners. Lescaut returns and chases Guillot away, then goes off to join his friends at the tavern. Alone, Manon is admiring the other girls' clothing and jewelry, lamenting her future at the convent, when a handsome young nobleman, the Chevalier des Grieux, appears. He, too, immediately falls for her. Manon convinces des Grieux to escape with her to Paris in Guillot's coach. Lescaut and Guillot come looking for Manon, and Lescaut accuses the older man of having abducted his cousin. Guillot vows revenge on Manon and her lover.

ACT II: *A Paris apartment, home to des Grieux and Manon.* Des Grieux is writing to his father, seeking permission to marry Manon. When he sees a vase with flowers he asks Manon where they have come from. She claims ignorance. The maid announces two visitors, Lescaut and, she tells Manon quietly, de Brétigny.

Lescaut demands that des Grieux marry his cousin. The two men step aside to discuss the matter. It becomes clear that Manon knows de Brétigny, who warns her that des Grieux's father intends to have his son kidnapped that night, to separate the two. De Brétigny proposes Manon come with him instead, promising her riches and freedom. Lescaut and de Brétigny depart, and Manon sends des Grieux off to mail his letter to his father without mentioning de Brétigny's warning. She intends to accept the rich man's offer. Des Grieux returns. There's a knock on the door. Before des Grieux can answer, Manon surprises him by bidding him farewell, then telling him not to open. Des Grieux goes anyway, a scuffle is heard, and he is abducted, offstage. Manon cries "My poor Chevalier!"

ACT III: *Scene 1: The Cours-la-Reine, a park in central Paris.* Pousette, Rosette, and Javotte have come to the park on a public holiday, unknown to their patrons, to rendezvous with lovers. Lescaut shows up, clowning a while with the park's vendors, then departs. The elegantly dressed Manon arrives with de Brétigny. Guillot appears, spots the other girls, and complains to de Brétigny of their infidelity. He teases de Brétigny for denying Manon her whim of bringing the grand opera's ballet to their home, then hurries off to arrange his own ballet performance, hoping to steal Manon from his friend.

VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

SOPRANO

the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian “mezzo” = middle, medium)

CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS

the lowest male voice

Manon, now the toast of Paris, praises the pleasures of her luxurious existence. Des Grieux’s father, the Count, arrives, and Manon overhears him telling de Brétigny that des Grieux is entering the priesthood. Manon presses the Count to learn whether or not his son still loves her. Unsatisfied with his response that des Grieux has forgotten her, she heads off to find him at the church of St. Sulpice.

Scene 2: The church of St. Sulpice. Several women praise the eloquent new young priest, who has just delivered a sermon. The Count arrives and tries to convince his son not to take religious vows. Alone, des Grieux contemplates his reason for turning to God: disappointment in love. Manon sneaks into the chapel. When des Grieux tries to chase her away, Manon admits her guilt and cruelty and vows repentance. She finally succeeds in winning back des Grieux—though he cries out that heaven might crush him for it.

ACT IV: *The gambling rooms at the Hôtel de Transylvanie.* Lescaut, Pousette, Javotte, Rosette, and Guillot are at the gaming tables. Manon and des Grieux enter. She convinces her reluctant lover, who has run out of money, to gamble against Guillot, and des Grieux keeps winning. Guillot insinuates that he is cheating and, again vowing vengeance, storms out. Manon begs des Grieux to leave too, but he insists on staying to defend his honor. Guillot returns with the police, followed by the Count des Grieux. Des Grieux is arrested, together with Manon, whom Guillot names as the cheater’s accomplice. The Count promises to arrange for his son’s release from prison, but not Manon’s.

ACT V: *The road to Le Havre.* Des Grieux and Lescaut have come to the port where female prisoners are shipped off to America. They intend to help Manon escape, but their efforts are unsuccessful. The guards accept a bribe to allow the couple a moment alone. Manon, ill and exhausted, begs forgiveness, and des Grieux clings to hopes of the future. As they affirm their love, Manon dies in his arms.

WHO'S WHO IN MANON

CHARACTER		PRONUNCIATION GUIDE	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Manon Lescaut	A country girl who rises in Parisian high society	ma-NOHN leh-SKO	Soprano	Sent by her parents to live in a convent, Manon is seduced by the luxuries of Paris, which proves to be her undoing
Chevalier des Grioux	The young nobleman who loves her	sheuh-vahl-YAY day gree-UH	Tenor	An idealistic, honest, and goodhearted young man
Count des Grioux	Father of the Chevalier	day gree-UH	Bass	A man of reason who tries to moderate his son's idealism
Lescaut	Manon's older male cousin	leh-SKO	Baritone	Not always a friend to his cousin, he keeps his eye on the material side of things
Guillot	An older nobleman who falls for Manon—unsuccessfully	ghee-YO	Tenor	A rich man and suitor to Manon who wants to get even for having been tricked by her and des Grioux
de Brétigny	An older nobleman who has an affair with Manon	duh bray-teen-YEE	Baritone	The patron who puts Manon in the public eye
Poussette, Javotte, and Rosette	Three young consorts of Guillot and de Bértigny	poo-SETT, zha-VOTT, ro-ZETT	Soprano, Mezzo-soprano, Mezzo-soprano	Three beautiful young women, always ready for fun

“And That’s the Story of Manon Lescaut”: A Close Look at Manon and the Psychology of Memory

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide.

You will also need the audio selections from *Manon* available online or on the accompanying CD.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Science (Neuroscience and biology)

Psychology (Personality and the social psychology of memory)

Language Arts (Point of view; plot and dialogue as factors in character development)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To learn about current scientific understandings of memory
- To explore the representation of memory in the performing and literary arts
- To identify correspondences across curricular areas, a key component of critical thinking
- To become familiar with the structure, characters, and musical expression of Massenet’s *Manon*

Toward the end of *Manon*, Massenet and his librettists wrote a striking bit of music and text for their title character. In a few short lines, as her life is drawing to a close, Manon recalls past events. As it happens, the audience has witnessed these events, though they may not recall them in the same happy way Manon does. In this activity, students will use the juxtaposition of witnessing and remembering an event as a springboard for reflection on the imperfections in memory—a topic of great interest to psychologists and neuroscientists. They will:

- become acquainted with key events in the story of *Manon*
- compare a character’s memories with his or her actual behavior
- participate in a class discussion, expressing personal points of view and citing evidence
- assess the correspondences between the depiction of memory in *Manon* and contemporary scientific concepts of it
- propose alternative memories that Massenet, Meilhac, and Gille might have attributed to characters in the opera

STEPS

Manon’s last words—and the last words of the opera—are “Et c’est là l’histoire de Manon Lescaut”—“and that’s the story of Manon Lescaut.” It’s a statement that sounds definitive. But how well does Manon know herself? What sorts of clues do Massenet, Meilhac, and Gille provide to help the viewer assess her self-image? In this activity, students will start at the end, with Manon’s version of “the story of Manon Lescaut,” then compare it with the events mentioned as they unfolded in “real time”—that is, earlier in the opera. They will imagine how other characters might recall the same series of events. They will also consider the opera’s depiction of memory in light of recent scientific research.



A scene from the final act
COVENT GARDEN PRODUCTION PHOTO:
BILL COOPER/ROYAL OPERA

STEP 1: Offer a general introduction to Massenet’s *Manon*—an opera about a poor girl who finds her way to wealth and glamour in the big city. Explain that Manon dies at the end of the story—by no means an unusual occurrence in 19th-century opera—but that before she does, she looks back at her life. Then distribute the reproducible *Manon’s Recollection*, and play **Track 1** as students read along.

STEP 2: Give students an opportunity to speculate on the meaning of Manon’s recollections.

- Why is she saying “we”? To whom might she be talking?
- What letter might she be talking about?
- What kind of place does “St. Sulpice” sound like? (It’s a real church in Paris.)
- Who might be wearing robes there?
- How do Manon’s recollections make her feel?
- What clues are in her words? In the fact that she talks through her memories? In the music playing beneath her words? In her line of song at the end?

Students’ thoughts on these matters will provide context for their discoveries in Step 4.

STEP 3: Let the class know that, as it turns out, all the events Manon remembers have been seen by the audience earlier in the opera. In a few moments, students will examine each of those scenes and compare them with Manon’s memories. First, however, probe students’ thinking about memory and have them discuss what it means.

Explain that psychologists and neuroscientists who study memory generally describe it as having several components, outlined on the reproducible *The Tree of Memory*. Distribute and review the reproducible. Have students think of examples for each kind of memory and record them on the reproducible. For instance, the action of throwing a baseball or singing a song involve *procedural memory*. These are behaviors you know how to perform, but you might have trouble explaining them.

Memories that you can talk about involve *declarative memory*, which has two sub-types: *semantic* and *autobiographical memory*.

The knowledge that George Washington was the first president of the United States involves *semantic memory*. So does knowing that your birthday is next week.

Your memory of your last birthday—what you did, how you felt—involves *autobiographical memory*. It’s also called “episodic” memory because it is the first-person record of an *episode* in your life.

COMMON CORE ELA

College and Career Readiness
Anchor Standards for Reading:
Grades 6–12

Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

College and Career Readiness
Anchor Standards for Speaking and
Listening: Grades 6-12

Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Variations on a Theme

The character of Manon Lescaut was created in 1731 by the French author and cleric Antoine François Prévost (pictured below), usually known as Abbé (“pastor”) Prévost. Manon’s story has been adapted in many genres, including at least three operas: by composer Daniel-François-Esprit Auber and librettist Eugène Scribe (1856); by Massenet, Meilhac, and Gille (1884); and by Giacomo Puccini (1893). While the main plot remained the same in most versions, many details vary from one to the other, and the personalities of the protagonists change. Here are some examples.



The character of des Grieux

- In Prévost’s 1731 novel, des Grieux meets Manon as a 17-year-old schoolboy. In Auber’s opera, he’s a soldier; in Puccini’s, a college-age student.
- In the novel, he learns to cheat and even kill in order to support his beloved Manon. In Auber’s opera, he kills her wealthy lover. Massenet and Puccini portray him as ethical, innocent, and pure.
- Only in Massenet’s opera does he consider entering the priesthood as a way to forget Manon. In the other works, it never occurs to him to give her up.

The relationship between Manon and Des Grieux

- In Prévost’s novel, the lovers sneak away from Manon’s elderly guardian in broad daylight and are common-law man and wife well before they reach Paris. In the operas, they leave under cover of night and go straight to the city.
- In the novel, Manon and des Grieux live together whenever possible. She keeps moving out when he runs out of money. In Massenet’s opera, they are forced apart by the machinations of des Grieux’s father, Lescaut, and de Brétigny. In Puccini’s opera, they’re never seen living together, although they intend to: Manon is about to leave her wealthy lover and return to des Grieux when she is arrested for theft.
- In the novel, Manon leaves des Grieux to move in with a rich patron three times. In Auber’s opera, she only has one patron, the Marquis d’Herigny (who des Grieux murders). Massenet and Puccini also give her only one wealthy lover—de Brétigny in the first case, Geronte in the second—although Massenet adds the jealous aspiring lover Guillot, whose vengeance is the couple’s doom. (Students may want to think about why each librettist changed the rich man’s name.)
- In the novel, Manon and des Grieux move to New Orleans and live happily together until des Grieux is forced to duel a rival for Manon’s affection. They are then exiled to the desert, where Manon dies. Des Grieux returns to Paris and becomes a priest. In Auber’s opera, both die in the Louisiana desert. In Puccini’s opera, only Manon dies there. In Massenet’s opera, they don’t make even make it to the port of Le Havre before Manon dies.

The characters’ families

- Manon’s brother Lescaut doesn’t turn up until the middle of Prévost’s novel. He’s a swindler who gets murdered before long. Massenet turned him from a brother to a ne’er-do-well cousin, giving him a central role in directing Manon away from des Grieux and toward wealth. Puccini restored him as a brother, had him direct Manon toward Geronte, then had him see the error of his ways and bring des Grieux back into her life.
- Des Grieux’s father never supports his son’s relationship with Manon. But while he simply disinherits him in the novel, in Massenet’s opera he first has des Grieux abducted, then arranges for his release from prison.

Roughly, you can think of the differences as:

- Procedural memory involves remembering **how**: I remember how to tie my shoes.
- Semantic memory involves remembering **that**: I remember that shoes are made of leather and rubber.
- Autobiographical memory is simply **“remembering”**: I remember buying these shoes.

With these categories established, ask:

- Where do Manon’s memories fit on the memory tree? (They’re autobiographical.)

Then probe students’ thinking about autobiographical memory before returning to *Manon*. At this point, students’ responses will be speculative. The point is to frame their thinking about memory before examining Manon’s recollections in detail.

- Are autobiographical memories always accurate?
- Can memories change?
- Why do different people sometimes have different memories of the same event?

STEP 4: In this step, students will “witness” the events Manon remembers at the end of the opera. The events take place in the three scenes described below. There is a reproducible worksheet for each scene, called *Research Psychologist’s Guides*. Scene A is presented on Tracks 2–8, Scene B on Tracks 9–18, and Scene C on Tracks 19–23.

If your students have access to the Met’s education website (metopera.org/education), they can form three groups. Each group can listen independently to a different scene’s audio selections, following along and responding to the questions on the worksheet. Then the three groups can come back to share their findings.

If you are using the CD and playing selections for the entire class, the lesson will work equally well with the three scenes presented sequentially. Simply distribute the worksheets one at a time for each of the scenes.

As suggested on the worksheets, students will act as research psychologists, comparing Manon’s autobiographical memories to their notes on the witnessed events. The reproducibles include a brief introduction providing story context, the original French text, an English translation, and discussion/check-in questions for each audio selection. Some of these questions direct attention to music and text by asking students to identify supporting evidence. Please note that there are no specific “right” or “wrong” answers to these evidence questions. Students are encouraged to listen closely, then defend their interpretations.

When your students have finished listening and filling out their worksheets, bring the class back together for Step 5.

SCENE A: THE INN, THE COACH, AND THE SHADOWY ROAD (TRACKS 2–8)

This scene takes place near the end of Act I, shortly after des Grieux meets Manon outside *the inn* at Amiens. Only moments before, Manon had rebuffed the advances of Guillot. She and des Grieux decide to commandeer *the coach* in which Guillot had hoped to lure Manon to his home. They will ride all night—*the shadowy road*—to Paris.

Des Grieux's emotions here are easy to read. He's head over heels in love with Manon. The moment she suggests running away with him to Paris, he signs on. When she hesitates, des Grieux convinces her.

Manon's feelings are harder to specify. Certainly it is she who conceives of stealing away in Guillot's coach. Coquettishly, she even challenges des Grieux's manly honor to prod him to come ("Vengez-vous"—"get back the old man who sought to steal me, even if that did happen before you ever laid eyes on me!"). But she expresses second thoughts at least twice. Her rising excitement at exchanging the convent for Paris can be heard in the duet "Nous vivrons à Paris"—"We will live in Paris." Her yearning to live the high life can be discerned from her comments on the giggly, but well-appointed, consorts, Pousette, Javotte and Rosette.

Students are likely to assess this as a happy moment in Manon's life, entirely consistent with her memory several years later.

SCENE B: DES GRIEUX'S LETTER AND THE LITTLE TABLE (TRACKS 9–18)

This scene has three sections. First, Manon and des Grieux read the letter he has written to his father, asking permission to marry Manon. Des Grieux then notices a suspicious vase of flowers. Manon claims some unknown person tossed them in through the window.

Next, Manon's cousin Lescaut arrives, together with the nobleman de Brétigny (in disguise). As Lescaut and des Grieux discuss des Grieux's intention to marry Manon, she talks with de Brétigny. It's obvious that they know each other, and it's equally obvious that des Grieux knows nothing about it. (She twice tells de Brétigny, "Parlez plus bas"—"speak more quietly.") De Brétigny tells Manon that des Grieux's father has arranged to have his son abducted. He insists there is nothing she can do about it—and he invites her to move in with him for a life of luxury. Manon seems torn.

The third section finds Manon alone. All three men have left, des Grieux to mail the letter to his father. Manon has made up her mind: She must leave des Grieux "for his own good," although the temptation of de Brétigny's offer is strong in itself. "I am nothing but weakness and fragility," she sings, then bids farewell to the little table around which her life with des Grieux had been organized—the table she will recall at the end of her life.

Students may find this scene more difficult to assess than Scene A. Again, des Grieux's feelings are apparent. He loves Manon and looks forward to their marriage.



Anna Netrebko as Manon
COVENT GARDEN PRODUCTION PHOTO:
BILL COOPER/ROYAL OPERA

But Manon's emotions are more complex. Massenet, Meilhac, and Gille hint at the following questions, but they offer no explicit answers:

- What is Manon's relationship with de Brétigny?
- Has she been faithful to des Grieux?
- If she loves him as deeply as she says, why does she choose not to warn him of the ensuing danger?
- Are her feelings toward des Grieux and toward luxury consistent with those she expressed at the end of Scene A?

SCENE C: DES GRIEUX AT ST. SULPICE (TRACKS 19–23)

In this scene, Manon surprises des Grieux in the church where he is about to take his priestly vows, impulsively determined to win him back. In a word, she succeeds—but not after a struggle and the deployment of several different means of persuasion. The simple teenager who arrived at the inn at Amiens has evidently learned quite a bit about the effect she can have on men.

This is the only one of the three scenes in which des Grieux's feelings are hard to read. He speaks decisively, but ultimately gives in to Manon's relentless attentions.



Act III, Scene 1
COVENT GARDEN PRODUCTION PHOTO:
BILL COOPER/ROYAL OPERA

But was he, as he says, “fighting himself” all along, or does Manon genuinely change his mind?

By the same token, Manon’s motivations are nowhere as clear as her words and actions. Has she truly loved des Grieux all along, or is she simply jealous of his new “mistress,” the church?

Students may assess this scene as an unpleasant experience, or they may decide that “all’s well that ends well.” But either way, it’s not likely to provide a pleasant topic of discussion as Manon’s life comes to an end.

STEP 5: After students have had an opportunity to share their findings on the three scenes with one another, distribute the reproducible *Memory Assessment Inventory* (p.40), on which they can compare Manon’s memories with their own understanding of her actual experiences. The form includes spaces for students to record the emotional tone of each scene, to evaluate the accuracy of Manon’s memory, and to make notes on the music. When they’re done, students can share their conclusions:

- Are Manon's recollections accurate?
- Might they reflect her viewpoint, but not someone else's?
- If there are distortions, what do students think might have caused them?

STEP 6: The psychologist Daniel Schacter has identified seven different ways our memories can fail us. Distribute the reproducible *The Seven Sins of Memory* (p. 41). Also distribute the reproducible *The Bugs and Ariel Experiment* (p.42), which provides an example of memory distortion through suggestibility.

On the reproducible *The Seven Sins of Memory*, students will try to match the names of the "sins" with their definitions (which are accompanied by examples). Then they'll turn to the central cross-curricular questions in this activity:

- Are any of these sins reflected in Manon's recollection?
- Did Massenet, Meilhac, and Gille present a realistic picture of the way memory works?

Students may enjoy a class discussion on these topics, either before or after they complete this section of the reproducible.

Schacter's sins are:



Great Manons who have sung at the Met include, clockwise from top left, Sybil Sanderson, Geraldine Farrar, Lucrezia Bori, Grace Moore, Jarmila Novotna, and Bidú Sayão.

FUN FACT: Ten years after the premiere of *Manon*, Massenet produced a sequel, *Le Portrait de Manon* (“Manon’s Portrait”), with a much older des Grieux as its main character. His nephew marries Lescaut’s daughter, Manon’s niece.

- **ABSENT-MINDEDNESS:** failure to remember something because too little attention was paid at the time of the event
- **BIAS:** unintentionally revising a memory to match one’s current feelings
- **BLOCKING:** inability to retrieve a memory that might be available under other circumstances
- **MISATTRIBUTION:** remembering information correctly, but mistaking who or where the information came from
- **PERSISTENCE:** spontaneously experiencing a disturbing or unpleasant unwanted memory
- **SUGGESTIBILITY:** when new information or experience actually changes the way something is remembered
- **TRANSIENCE:** when a memory fades over time

FOLLOW-UP: Even if Manon’s final memories of key moments in her relationship with des Grieux are considered to be accurate from her point of view, it’s unlikely that des Grieux—or Lescaut or de Brétigny—would agree with them on all scores. For homework, students can write brief essays describing how one of these characters might recall the same events and explaining why their views might be different. If they think a character might experience one or more of Schacter’s sins, they should explain why, as well. (It may help to distribute a full synopsis of *Manon* before making this assignment, so students have more material to think about: See *The Story*, pages 3 and 4.)

Memory and its fallibility are topics common in literary fiction. William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* is told in four voices, representing the memories of four different people. Painful memories and how characters deal with them are a major theme in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. (Morrison has also written an essay, “The Site of Memory,” available online at public.wsu.edu/~hughesc/morrison_memory.htm). Many other famous works, from *The Great Gatsby* to *The Catcher in the Rye*, are framed as narrators’ recollections of events they witnessed or participated in.

Students interested in memory might enjoy reading one of these novels and considering it in light of Schacter’s “seven sins.” Why might an author find it useful to have characters misremember events? What might memories, whether accurate or distorted, tell about a character’s personality, relationship to other characters, or sense of self?

The Ravenous Rich: A Close Look at *Manon's* Opening Scene

Following the orchestral introduction, *Manon* begins with music that has a tremendous sense of urgency (**Track 24**). As we find out in **Track 25**, an aristocrat named Guillot is tired of waiting for his dinner.

Slightly silly as it seems, his exclamation and the elaborate ensemble that follows subtly set the scene for a story about members of the upper class with boundless, ruthless appetites. In **Track 26**, Guillot and his friend de Brétigny complain and trade nasty quips about the innkeeper. The women in their company counsel action over anger in **Track 27**. Finally the entire party comes together in a chorus on the ridiculous theme, “Save us from famine or we’ll exterminate you!” (**Track 28**).

Track 29 records the party’s astonishment that this tasteless plea has not resulted in immediate service. They redouble their effort, which adds to Guillot’s plight: The sound of their singing may double his appetite. In **Track 30**, another chorus brings on the innkeeper with an ominous flourish of strings. He proclaims that dinner is served.

This parody of a crisis resolved, the savage mob turns to ooh-ing and ah-ing over the delicacies on offer (**Track 31**). In **Track 32**, the innkeeper guides them masterfully through the menu; they fall right in line, ecstatic and just as ridiculous at his mention of each dish as when they were hungry. At last, unable to control their excitement, they again burst into choral song (**Track 33**), rising to the climactic declaration, “A table!”—literally, to the table; figuratively, “Let’s eat!”

At this point, students may wonder why an opera about the loves and losses of a Parisian beauty should begin with a comic set piece about a bunch of ill-mannered, spoiled socialites. As they discuss the question, they may recognize that the answer lies within the question itself: While keeping the audience in stitches, Massenet and his librettists introduce precisely the self-indulgent, obsessively carnal society in which *Manon*—whom the audience has yet to meet—is about to rise and fall.

The scene can be heard without interruption on **Track 34**.

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS ARE BRIEF OPPORTUNITIES TO

- help students make sense of opera
- whet their interest in upcoming transmissions of *The Met: Live in HD*

Each focuses on audio selections from *Manon* available online at metopera.org/education or the accompanying CD. Texts and translations are available in the back of this guide.

These “mini-lessons” will in practice take up no more than a few minutes of class time. They’re designed to help you bring opera into your classroom while minimizing interruption of your ongoing curriculum. Feel free to use as many as you like.



Be Careful What You Wish For: A Close Look at Dreams and Reality in Manon's Arias

Not long after the teenage Manon arrives in Amiens on her way to a convent at the beginning of Act I, she notices three finely dressed young women—the giggling consorts Pousette, Javotte, and Rosette. She has never seen such creatures, and they prompt a song of deep longing—the aria “Voyons, Manon, plus de chimères”—“Look, Manon, no more fantasies,” the beginning of which is heard in **Track 35**. Her words slip out in short, syncopated spurts, as if she were emitting bits of explanation between spates of tears. The word “chimères”—fantasies—repeats three times, but without elaboration. She’s trying to force these fantasies away, not to indulge them. But the dream is powerful, and as **Track 36** begins, it bursts forth with her “Et cependant”—“and yet.” Almost fiercely, Manon expresses how attractive she finds these women, how merry she imagines their lives to be. She catches herself in **Track 37**, hopeless once more, resigned to her fate.

“Voyons, Manon, plus de chimères” can be heard without interruption on **Track 38**.

When Manon makes her entrance in Act III, she has become exactly the sort of Parisian socialite she dreamed about earlier—although, characteristically, she doesn’t look back. Her aria, “Je marche sur tous les chemins”—“I walk on every street”—is worded proudly in the present tense, a statement of fact, not achievement. It begins in long, commanding lines (**Track 39**). Manon’s pauses here no longer express her despair, but rather grab the listener’s attention. Massenet embellishes them with powerful splashes from the orchestra.

As Manon continues, as heard in **Track 40**, she lists the respectful gestures with which she is now greeted. She has hardened as a person. She knows she is attractive. Tellingly, she places more emphasis on her beauty than on her happiness.

By the music heard in **Track 41**, Manon is claiming power even over nature: Everything flowers around her. She concludes with a passage that brings rousing applause both from opera audiences and from the characters on stage, who call “Bravo, Manon!” It is highly intricate not only in sound but in sense:

- Why, at this peak moment, do Manon’s thoughts turn to dying?
- Why does she frame them in the peculiar form “*should* Manon ever have to die”?
- Can she truly imagine she might be immortal, or does her phrasing mask real and present fear?

“Je marche sur tous les chemins” ends with an ironic double meaning. Your students may enjoy discussing its lingering mystery: Exactly who will burst out laughing when Manon dies? Does Massenet’s music make Manon sound like a person laughing at death? Or might she be referring to the corrupt, covetous society that, for the moment, is in the palm of her hand?

“Je marche sur tous les chemins” can be heard without interruption on **Track 42**.

A Plea for Peace of Mind: A Close Look at des Grieux's Aria

Over the course of the opera, the Chevalier des Grieux is seen unaccompanied by Manon only once: during the first part of Act III, Scene 2, in the church of St. Sulpice, as he is preparing to take his religious vows. **Track 43** begins with the words “Je suis seul, enfin!”—“I am finally alone.” Des Grieux describes this state of “sacred rest” as the foundation of his faith.

But he is not entirely alone. He is haunted by “a sweet vision, too dear to my soul”—the image of Manon. This is the theme of his aria, “Ah! Fuyez, douce image” (“Flee, sweet vision”) which begins in **Track 44**. This first part of the aria is a cry in every sense of the word, a calling-out through tears. Addressing Manon in his imagination, des Grieux pleads with her to do what the real Manon never could—to “respect a cruelly won rest,” the sacred rest mentioned before. From the passion with which he calls upon her image to leave him alone, it is evident that he is incapable of forgetting Manon.

As the second part of the aria begins (**Track 45**), des Grieux forces himself to sound decisive—ready to move into the bosom of the church, no longer interested in life, in transitory glory. But he can't maintain the fib that it's life and glory he longs to escape. As **Track 46** reveals, it is the cursed name in the depths of his memory. Pain fills his voice as the aria drifts into bleak recitative, until, in **Track 47**, all des Grieux has left to say about the storm inside him is “Why?”

In **Track 48**, the church organist begins to play. The porter announces the beginning of the service. “I'm going,” says des Grieux, suffused with resignation.

This conclusion makes “Ah! Fuyez, douce image” particularly interesting. Unlike most arias, it wanders, musically dissipated, to a single, heartbroken question—a question suiting the lack of musical resolution: “Why?” It remains unanswered.

Students may be interested in discussing not only the aria's structure but also its context.

- Does des Grieux really have no other alternatives beside the priesthood and Manon—or, rejected by Manon, no alternative at all?
- Is he a prisoner of the society he lives in, or of his personality? Does it make a difference?
- Can they imagine a des Grieux in our time?
- What would he do?



Manon in the church of
St. Sulpice, Act III, Scene 2.
COVENT GARDEN PRODUCTION PHOTO:
BILL COOPER/ROYAL OPERA



Supporting Students During *The Met: Live in HD* Transmission

Thanks to print and audio recording, much about opera can be enjoyed long before a performance. But performance itself brings vital layers of sound and color, pageantry and technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities are designed to help students tease apart different aspects of the experience, consider creative choices that have been made, and sharpen their own critical faculties.

Each Performance Activity incorporates a reproducible activity sheet. Students bring the activity sheet to the transmission to fill out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to characteristics of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed. Ratings matrices invite students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark discussions that call upon careful, critical thinking.

The basic activity sheet is called *My Highs & Lows*. Meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season, this sheet points students toward a consistent set of objects of observation. Its purposes are not only to help students articulate and express their opinions, but to support comparison and contrast, enriching understanding of the art form as a whole.

For *Manon*, the other activity sheet, *Tools of the Diva*, directs students' attention to the performance of Anna Netrebko, who sings the title role in this *Live in HD* production.

The Performance Activity reproducibles can be found in the back of this guide. Either activity can provide the basis for class discussion after the transmission. On the next page, you'll find an activity created specifically for follow-up *after* the *Live in HD* transmission.

Multiple Manons: A Discussion of Operas Rebooted and Revived

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? This discussion will offer students an opportunity to review the notes on their *My Highs & Lows* sheet—in short, to see themselves as *Manon* experts.

Some of your students may be aware that the story of Manon Lescaut holds two places in the standard operatic repertoire: the Massenet opera they have just seen and another, in Italian, Giacomo Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*. Puccini's opera premiered nine years after Massenet's. When asked why he wanted to adapt an 18th-century novel already successfully translated into opera, Puccini told his publisher, "Why shouldn't there be two operas about Manon? A woman like Manon can have more than one lover. Massenet feels it as a Frenchman, with powder and minuets. I shall feel it as an Italian, with a desperate passion."

Puccini's statement actually isn't quite accurate. His was the third Manon Lescaut opera. Twenty-eight years before Massenet, the French composer Daniel-François-Esprit Auber and his librettist, Eugène Scribe, mounted their *Manon Lescaut* at the Paris Opera.

Many other stories from stage and literature have been recreated again and again in other media. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was reborn as an opera by Verdi, and *Romeo and Juliet* inspired many operatic adaptations, most famously Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. On the musical theater stage, it became Bernstein and Sondheim's *West Side Story*. Puccini's *La Bohème* was rewritten by Jonathan Larson as *Rent*, and Elton John transformed Verdi's *Aida* into a musical.

Some of the changes made in the different versions of *Manon Lescaut* can be found in the sidebar, *Variations on a Theme*, on page 8. A fun way to engage students in the issue of literary revision is to play "True or False":

- Divide the class into teams.
- Give each team six slips of paper. On three slips, write one of the actual variant "true facts" from these four versions of *Manon Lescaut*. Leave the other three blank.
- Have each team make up their own "false" variants, based on their three facts as well as their experience at the *Live in HD* transmission of *Manon*.
- Teams then take turns. One team presents a factoid. The others need to decide whether it's true or false. Teams get a point for identifying the facts correctly and lose a point for guessing wrong.

IN PREPARATION:

This activity requires no preparation other than attendance at the *Live in HD* transmission of *Manon*.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

Language Arts/History/Performing Arts/Critical Thinking

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explore the resilience of a literary theme
- To compare and contrast corresponding elements of similar works
- To consider the influence of historical periods and different cultures on artistic decisions
- To investigate the process of making artistic choices

COMMON CORE ELA

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading: Grades 6–12

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR HISTORY IN THE SCHOOLS

Historical Thinking Standards for Grades 5–12

STANDARD 2: Historical Comprehension

F. Appreciate historical perspectives.

Students may also enjoy discussing such changes made to Manon's story more systematically:

- Why do they think these variations were introduced in the three operas?
- What other works have they seen, read, or heard in multiple versions?
- What were some of the differences?
- What kinds of changes do they think are legitimate? Which go too far?
- What kinds of changes does an writer or composer have to make if the new work is to be more than a mere copy?
- What kinds of changes make the core story unrecognizable?

Students interested in learning more about Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* can refer to the Educator Guide available at metopera.org/education. Prévost's original novel is available, both in French and in English translation, at the Project Gutenberg public-domain literature website, gutenberg.org.

Manon Educator Guide Track List

Met Radio Recording
March 3, 2001

MANON

Ruth Ann Swenson

DES GRIEUX

Giuseppe Sabbatini

LESCAUT

Roberto de Candia

COUNT DES GRIEUX

Paul Plishka

GUILLOT

Bernard Fitch

BRÉTIGNY

Kim Josephson

POUSSETTE

Danielle de Niese

JAVOTTE

Jennifer Dudley

ROSETTE

Jossie Pérez

INNKEEPER

Patrick Carfizzi

GUARDS

Charles Castronovo

Jung-Hack Seo

MAID

Lee Hamilton

SERGEANT

Richard Holmes

PORTER

Donald Peck

CROUPIERS

David Lowe

Stephen Paynter

CONDUCTOR

Julius Rudel

Metropolitan Opera
Orchestra and Chorus

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: “And That’s the Story of Manon Lescaut”

1 ACT V: Manon alone, looking back at her life

SCENE A

2-7 ACT I: *The inn, the coach, and the shadowy road*

8 Tracks 2-7, continuous

SCENE B

9-17 ACT II: *Des Grieux’s letter and the little table*

18 Tracks 9-17, continuous

SCENE C

19-22 ACT III: *Des Grieux at St. Sulpice*

23 Tracks 19-22, continuous

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT: The Ravenous Rich

24 ACT I: Orchestra introduction

25-33 Manon’s opening scene

34 Tracks 25-32, continuous

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT: Be Careful What You Wish For

35-37 ACT I: Manon’s aria, “Voyons, Manon, plus de chimères”

38 Tracks 35-37, continuous

39-41 ACT III: Manon’s aria, “Je marche sur tous les chemins”

42 Track 39-41, continuous

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT: A Plea For Peace of Mind

43-48 ACT III: des Grieux’s aria, “Ah! Fuyez, douce image”

49 Tracks 43-48, continuous

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The Tree of Memory

ALL MEMORIES

Declarative Memory
Memories you can talk about

Procedural Memory
"How to" memories, often hard to put into words

Autobiographical Memory
Memories of your own experiences (also called "episodic")

Semantic Memory
Information you've heard, seen, read about, etc., such as facts, explanations, and stories, true or fictional

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Manon's Recollection

TRACK 1:

MANON: Nous reparlerons du passé.
Du l'auberge, du coche et de la route ombreuse.
Du billet par ta main tracé, de la petite table
Et de ta robe noire à Saint Sulpice.

Ah! j'ai bonne mémoire!

We will talk again about the past,
about the inn, the coach and the shadowy road,
about the letter you wrote by hand, about the little table,
and about your black robes in St. Sulpice.

Ah! I remember well!

MANON

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene A

The inn, the coach and the shadowy road

TRACK 2

Manon and des Grieux have just met outside a country inn.

MANON: À vous ma vie et mon âme!
À vous toute ma vie à jamais!

I give you my life and my soul!
I give you my whole life forever!

DES GRIEUX: Enchanteresse!
Manon, vous êtes la maîtresse de mon cœur.

Enchantress!
Manon, you are the mistress of my heart.

What are the characters' moods here?

What might the sound at the end of the track be?

What evidence do you hear of Manon's feelings in the music?

What evidence do you hear of des Grieux's feelings in the music?

Which of the words they sing provide evidence?

TRACK 3

Young Manon is supposed to go to a convent but decides to change her plans.

MANON: Par aventure, peut-être avons-nous mieux:
Une voiture, la chaise d'un Seigneur.
Il faisait les doux yeux à Manon. Vengez-vous!

By chance, we may have a better alternative:
A coach, owned by a nobleman.
He was making eyes at your Manon. Get back at him!

DES GRIEUX: Mais comment?

But how?

MANON: Tous les deux, prenons-là!

Both of us, let's take it!

DES GRIEUX: Soit, partons!

So be it, let's go!

How does Manon feel about her plan?

How does des Grieux respond?

What evidence do you hear in the voices?
In the music? In the words?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene A

TRACK 4

Manon and des Grieux discuss the plan.

MANON: Et quoi, partir ensemble?

What, leave together?

DES GRIEUX: Oui, Manon! Le ciel nous rassemble!

Yes, Manon! Heaven has brought us together!

What do you make of Manon's question?

Why is she asking, if this was her idea?

What evidence do you hear in her voice?

How does des Grieux respond?

How does the music des Grieux sings compare to the music Manon sings? What might this tell you about their feelings?

TRACK 5

Des Grieux imagines his future with Manon.

DES GRIEUX: Nous vivrons à Paris .

We will live in Paris.

MANON: Tous les deux!

Both of us, together!

DES GRIEUX: Tous les deux! Et nos cœurs amoureux

Both of us, together! And our loving hearts.

MANON: À Paris!

In Paris!

DES GRIEUX: L'un à l'autre enchaînés.

Connected to one another.

MANON: À Paris!

In Paris!

DES GRIEUX: Pour jamais réunis.

United forever.

MANON and DES GRIEUX: Nous n'aurons que des jours bénis! À Paris! À Paris! Tous les deux! Nous vivrons à Paris, tous les deux!

We will only have blessed days! In Paris! In Paris! Both of us, together! We will live in Paris, both of us, together.

DES GRIEUX: Et mon nom deviendra le vôtre! Ah! pardon!

And my name will become yours! Ah, excuse me!

How does Manon respond to des Grieux?

What does des Grieux feel?

What evidence do you hear in the music about their view of the future?

What evidence do you find in the words?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene A

TRACK 6

Manon's moment of reflection

MANON: Dans mes yeux
Vous devez bien voir
Que je ne puis vous en vouloir
Et cependant c'est mal!

You must be able
to see in my eyes
that I could never blame you.
Yet, this is wrong!

What do you make of Manon's "Yet...?"

What might she be thinking at this point?

What evidence of her mood do
you hear in the music? ?

What evidence do you find in the words?

TRACK 7

Des Grieux's response, continued

DES GRIEUX: Nous vivrons à Paris.

We will live in Paris.

MANON: Tous les deux!

Both of us, together!

DES GRIEUX: Tous les deux! Et nos cœurs amoureux.

Both of us, together! And our loving hearts.

MANON: à Paris.

In Paris.

DES GRIEUX: L'un à l'autre enchaînés.

Connected to one another.

MANON: à Paris.

In Paris.

DES GRIEUX: Pour jamais réunis.

United forever.

MANON and DES GRIEUX: Nous n'aurons que des jours bénis!
À Paris! À Paris! Tous les deux! Nous vivrons à Paris,
tous les deux!

We will only have blessed days!
In Paris! In Paris! Both of us, together! We will live in Paris,
both of us, together!

How do Manon and des Grieux feel now?

What evidence in the music supports your conclusion?

Is the same message conveyed in the words?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene A

TRACK 8

The Escape

MANON: Ce sont elles!

DES GRIEUX: Qu'avez-vous?

POUSETTE, JAVOTTE, and ROSETTE: Revenez, Guillot, revenez! Vous allez vous casser le nez! Revenez donc, Guillot! Ha ha ha!

LESCAUT: Ce soir, vous rendrez tout au cabaret voisin!

DES GRIEUX: Là?

MANON: C'est la voix de mon cousin!

DES GRIEUX: Viens! Partons!

POUSETTE, JAVOTTE, and ROSETTE: Revenez, Guillot, revenez, revenez! Ha ha ha!

MANON: Combien ce doit être amusant de s'amuser toute une vie!

MANON and DES GRIEUX: Ah! Partons!

That's them!

What's the matter?

Come back, Guillot, come back! You're going to get your nose bent! So come back, Guillot! Ha ha ha!

This evening, you'll give it all back to me at the inn!

There?

That's my cousin's voice!

Come on! Let's go!

Come back, Guillot, come back.
Ha ha ha!

How much fun it must be to have fun your whole life!

Let's go!

Why do the three women, Pousette, Javotte and Rosette, call out to Guillot?

Does Manon understand their motivation?

How would you describe their attitude, based on the music they sing?

What's on Manon's mind as she and des Grieux take off for Paris?

Do you think Manon and des Grieux will be thinking about the same things as they ride through the night to Paris?

What evidence in Manon's words supports your point of view?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene B

Des Grieux's letter and the little table

TRACK 9

Months after running off to Paris on the day Manon was to enter a convent, des Grieux and Manon are in their apartment.

MANON: Oui, je lisais sur votre épaule
Et j'ai souri, voyant passer mon nom!

DES GRIEUX: J'écris à mon père et je tremble
Que cette lettre, où j'ai mis tout mon cœur,
Ne l'irrite.

MANON: Vous avez peur?

DES GRIEUX: Oui, Manon, j'ai très peur!

MANON: Eh bien! Il faut relire ensemble!

DES GRIEUX: Oui, c'est cela, ensemble, relisons!

Yes, I was reading over your shoulder.
And I smiled, seeing my name.

I'm writing to my father, and I'm trembling,
hoping that this letter, which I've put my entire heart into,
won't annoy him.

You're afraid?

Yes, Manon, I'm very afraid!

Well, then we have to reread it together!

Yes, that's it, together, let's reread it!

Who sounds more confident about their situation, Manon or des Grieux?

What evidence of a difference do you hear in the music?

What evidence do you find in the words?

What consequence does des Grieux fear, if his letter irritates his father?

How does his mood change when Manon proposes they reread the letter?

What do you hear in the music to confirm your observation?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene B

TRACK 10

Des Grieux's letter

MANON: On l'appelle Manon, elle eut hier seize ans.
En elle tout séduit la beauté, la jeunesse,
La grâce; nulle voix n'a de plus doux accents,
Nul regard plus de charme avec plus de tendresse.

DES GRIEUX: Nul regard plus de charme avec plus de tendresse!

MANON: Est-ce vrai? Moi, je n'en sais rien;
Mais je sais que vous m'aimez bien!

DES GRIEUX: Vous aimez? Vous aimez? Manon! Je t'adore!

Her name is Manon. Yesterday she turned 16.
Everything about her is bewitching: her beauty, her youth,
her grace. No voice is sweeter,
no face is more charming or more tender.

No face is more charming or more tender!

Is that true? I didn't know you thought that—but I do know
you like me!

Like you? Like you? Manon! I adore you!

What do you think of des Grieux's letter?

How does it make Manon feel?

What evidence of her feelings do
you hear in the music?

How does des Grieux respond to her?

Would you say the music he sings
conforms with his words? Why?

TRACK 11:

MANON: Allons, Monsieur! lisons encore!

DES GRIEUX: Comme l'oiseau qui suit en tous lieux le printemps,
Sa jeune âme à la vie. Sa jeune âme est ouverte sans cesse;
Sa lèvre en fleur sourit et parle au zéphyr parfumé qui passe
et la caresse!

MANON and DES GRIEUX: Au zéphyr parfumé qui passe et la caresse!

MANON: Il ne te suffit pas alors de nous aimer?

Let's go, Sir! Let's read more!

Like the birds that seek out the springtime,
her young soul faces the world. Her young soul is endlessly
open. Her lips smile and speak like flowers that the perfumed
breeze passes and caresses!

That the perfumed breeze passes and caresses!

But isn't it enough for us to love each other?

What are Manon's feelings after reading the letter?

What evidence do you hear in the music?

Do her words add any evidence? How?

What might des Grieux feel, hearing her last comment?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene B

TRACK 12

Des Grieux responds to Manon's last comment

MANON: Il ne te suffit pas alors de nous aimer?

But isn't it enough for us to love each other?

DES GRIEUX: Non! Je veux que tu sois ma femme!

No! I want you to be my wife!

MANON: Tu le veux?

You want that?

DES GRIEUX: Je le veux, et de toute mon âme!

I want it with all my heart!

MANON: Embrasse-moi donc, chevalier! Et va porter ta lettre!

Kiss me, then, Sir! And go mail your letter!

DES GRIEUX: Oui, je cours la porter!

Yes, I'm running to mail it!

Why does Manon tell des Grieux to go mail the letter?

How do they feel now?

What evidence do you hear in the music Manon sings?

In the music des Grieux sings?

TRACK 13

As des Grieux is about to leave, he sees something and stops.

DES GRIEUX: Voilà des fleurs qui sont fort belles; d'où te vient ce bouquet, Manon?

Those are some very beautiful flowers there— where did you get that bouquet, Manon?

MANON: Je ne sais pas.

I don't know.

DES GRIEUX: Comment, tu ne sais pas?

What do you mean you don't know?

MANON: Beau motif de querelles! Par la fenêtre, on l'a lancé d'en bas.

Nice way to start a quarrel! Someone threw them through the window from down below.

Do you believe Manon? Why or why not?

Do you hear evidence in the music she sings?

What evidence do you find in her words?

What evidence do des Grieux's words provide?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene B

TRACK 14

Several minutes later, Manon's cousin has arrived, together with the wealthy de Brétigny—in disguise. Cousin Lescaut and des Grieux are off discussing des Grieux's intention to marry Manon. Manon talks with de Brétigny.

MANON: Venir ici sous un déguisement!

To come here in disguise!

DE BRÉTIGNY: Vous m'en voulez?

Are you mad at me?

MANON: Certainement. Vous savez que c'est lui que j'aime.

Certainly. You know it's him that I love.

DE BRÉTIGNY: J'ai voulu vous avertir, moi-même, Que ce soir de chez vous on compte l'enlever.

I wanted to warn you myself that this evening, they're planning to take him out of your home.

MANON: Ce soir?

This evening?

DE BRÉTIGNY: Par ordre de son père!

By his father's order!

MANON: Par ordre de son père!

By his father's order!

DE BRÉTIGNY: Oui. Ce soir ici-même on viendra l'arracher.

Yes. This very evening they're coming to snatch him.

Do you get the sense that Manon knows de Brétigny? Why?

Why might de Brétigny have come in disguise?

How might his news make Manon feel?

What does the music tell you about their relationship?

Do the words provide any evidence that Manon is surprised? How?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene B

TRACK 15

What de Brétigny has in mind

MANON: Ah! Je saurai bien empêcher!

DE BRÉTIGNY: Prévenez-le, c'est la misère

Pour lui, pour vous.

Ne le prévenez pas,

Et c'est la fortune, au contraire,

Qui vous attend.

MANON: Parlez plus bas!

Ah! I know exactly how to prevent that!

Warn him and it's going to be misery
for him, for you.

Don't warn him

and, to the contrary, fortune awaits you.

Speak more softly!

What do you think it is that de Brétigny is suggesting?

Does the music provide supporting evidence?

Why does Manon ask him to speak more softly?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene B

TRACK 16

Moments later. Notice that Lescaut and des Grieux are talking on one side of the apartment, Manon and de Brétigny on the other.

DE BRÉTIGNY: Manon! Manon!

Manon! Manon!

MANON: Parlez plus bas!

Speak more softly!

DE BRÉTIGNY: Voici l'heure prochaine de votre liberté!

The hour of your freedom is here.

MANON: Parlez plus bas!

Speak more softly!

DE BRÉTIGNY: Manon! Voici l'heure prochaine de votre liberté!

Manon! The hour of your freedom is here.

DES GRIEUX: *(on the other side of the room)* C'est que je l'adore!

It's that I adore her!

MANON: Quel doute étrange et quel tourment!

What strange doubt and what torment.

LESCAUT: *(to des Grieux)* Vous l'épousez?

Are you going to marry her?

DE BRÉTIGNY: Manon! Manon! Bientôt vous serez reine, reine par la beauté!

Manon! Manon! Soon you are going to be queen, queen, thanks to your beauty.

MANON: Dans mon cœur troublé quel délire!

What delirium in my troubled heart!

DES GRIEUX: *(to Lescaut)* Laissez-moi vous le dire encore! C'est que je l'adore!

Let me tell you again: I adore her!

DE BRÉTIGNY: *(to Manon)* C'est la fortune!

It's fortune!

How would you describe Manon's state of mind?

How do you think des Grieux feels right now?

What do you think Manon will decide to do?

What evidence of her mood do you hear in the music?

In her words?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene B

TRACK 17

Lescaut and de Brétigny have left. Des Grieux has finally gone to mail his letter. Manon is alone in the apartment. (Listen to both tracks before answering the questions.)

MANON: Allons!... il le faut! pour lui-même!
Mon pauvre chevalier! Oh! Oui, c'est lui que j'aime!
Et pourtant, j'hésite aujourd'hui!
Non! non! je ne suis plus digne de lui!

J'entends cette voix qui m'entraîne contre ma volonté:
"Manon, tu seras reine, reine par la beauté!"
Je ne suis que faiblesse et que fragilité.

Ah! malgré moi je sens couler mes larmes
Devant ces rêves effacés!
L'avenir aura-t-il les charmes
De ces beaux jours déjà passés?

Adieu, notre petite table,
Qui nous réunit si souvent!
Adieu, notre petite table,
Si grande pour nous cependant!
Ou tient, c'est inimaginable,
Si peu de place en se serrant.

Un même verre était le nôtre,
Chacun de nous, quand il buvait,
Y cherchait les lèvres de l'autre.
Ah! Pauvre ami, comme il m'aimait!
Adieu, notre petite table, adieu!

Let's go! It must be, for him!
My poor knight. Oh! Yes, it's him I love!
And yet, I hesitate today!
No! No! I don't deserve him!

I hear this voice pulling me against my will:
"Manon, you will be queen—queen, thanks to your beauty!"
I am nothing but weakness and fragility.

Ah, in spite of myself I feel my tears flowing,
in front of these erased dreams!
Will the future have the charm
of these beautiful days already gone?

Farewell, our little table,
who brought us together so often!
Farewell, our little table,
yet big enough for us.
We needed so little space,
holding each other—it's unimaginable.

We shared the same glass.
Each of us, when we drank,
looked for the lips of the other there.
Ah, poor friend, how he loved me!
Farewell, our little table, farewell!

TRACK 18

C'est lui! Que ma pâleur ne me trahisse pas!

That's him! My pallor had better not betray me!

What do you think Manon has decided?

What might be her reasoning?

Do you think she will tell des Grieux
what is about to happen?

How might she feel about the
letter he has gone to mail?

Why might she remember the little table years later?

Does the music she sings express her feelings? How?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene C

Des Grieux at St. Sulpice

TRACK 19

Months after Scene B, Manon has risen to the top of Paris society. She flaunts her beauty, her expensive clothes, her jewelry. But when she hears that des Grieux has decided to enter the priesthood, she hurries to his church, St. Sulpice.

DES GRIEUX: Toi! Vous!

You! You!

MANON: Oui, c'est moi! Moi!

Yes, it's me! Me!

DES GRIEUX: Que viens tu faire ici? Va-t-en!

What did you come here to do? Go away!

Though it's hard to translate into English, des Grieux's first line here is significant. "Toi" and "tu" are words a French speaker uses when addressing someone he's close with. "Vous" is used to address strangers or more distant acquaintances.

Why might des Grieux go from "toi" to "vous"?

Why might he return to "tu"?

What evidence do you hear in the music about his feelings?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene C

TRACK 20

The confrontation continues

DES GRIEUX: Va-t-en! Éloigne-toi!

Go away! Get out!

MANON: Oui! Je fis cruelle et coupable!
Mais rappelez-vous tant d'amour!
Ah! Dans ce regard qui m'accable,
Lirai-je mon pardon, un jour?

Yes! I was cruel and guilty!
But you remember so much love!
Ah, in the face that condemns me,
might I read my pardon one day?

DES GRIEUX: Éloigne-toi!

Get out!

MANON: Ah! Dans ce regard qui m'accable,
Lirai-je mon pardon, un jour?

Ah, in the face that condemns me,
might I read my pardon one day?

DES GRIEUX: Non! J'avais écrit sur le sable
Ce rêve insensé d'un amour.
Que le ciel n'avait fait durable,
Que pour un instant, pour un jour!

No! This mad dream of a love
that was written in the sand,
a love that heaven made last
but for an instant, for a day!

MANON: Oui! Je fus cruelle!
Oui! Je fus coupable!

Yes! I was cruel!
Yes! I was guilty!

DES GRIEUX: Que le ciel n'avait fait durable,
Que pour un instant, pour un jour!
Ah! Perfide Manon!

A love that heaven made last
but for an instant, for a day!
Ah! Deceitful Manon!

MANON: Si je me repentais?

And if I have repented?

DES GRIEUX: Ah! Perfide! Perfide!

Ah! Deceitful! Deceitful!

MANON: Est-ce que tu n'aurais pas de pitié?

Would you have no pity?

DES GRIEUX: Je ne veux pas vous croire.
Non! Vous êtes sortie enfin de ma mémoire,
Ainsi que de mon cœur!

I don't want to believe you.
No! You are finally out of my memory,
and therefore out of my heart!

What do you make of Manon's
confession of cruelty and guilt?

What might be going through des Grieux's mind
as he insists he has forgotten Manon?

How do you hear their feelings expressed
in the music of their duet?

How does the music communicate Manon's viewpoint?

How does it express des Grieux's viewpoint?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene C

TRACK 21

Manon fights on.

MANON: Hélas! L'oiseau qui fuit
ce qu'il croit l'esclavage,
le plus souvent la nuit,
d'un vol désespéré
revient battre au vitrage!
Pardonne moi!

DES GRIEUX: Non!

MANON: Je meurs à tes genoux!

Ah! Rends moi ton amour, si tu veux que je vive!

DES GRIEUX: Non! il est mort pour vous!

MANON: L'est il donc à ce point que rien ne le ravive?

Alas! The bird that flees
what it believes to be slavery,
more often than not,
comes back at night in desperate flight,
beating against the window!
Forgive me!

No!

I am dying at your feet!

Ah! Give me back your love, if you want me to live!

No! Our love is dead!

So it is at the point where nothing can revive it?

What might Des Grieux make of Manon's
metaphor of a bird that believes it is in prison?

What might he make of her talk about dying?

Does the music Manon sings suggest that she
is trying a different approach? How?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene C

TRACK 22

MANON: Écoute-moi! Rappelle-moi!
N'est-ce plus ma main que cette main presse?
N'est-ce plus ma voix?
N'est-elle pour toi plus une caresse,
Tout comme autrefois?
Et ces yeux, jadis pour toi pleins de charmes,
Ne brillent-ils plus à travers mes larmes?
Ne suis-je plus moi? N'ai je plus mon nom?
Ah! regarde-moi! Regarde-moi! N'est-ce plus Manon?

DES GRIEUX: O Dieu! Soutenez moi dans cet instant supreme!

MANON: Je t'aime!

DES GRIEUX: Ah! Tais-toi! Ne parle pas d'amour ici,
c'est un blasphème!

MANON: Je t'aime!

DES GRIEUX: Ah! Tais-toi! Ne parle pas d'amour!

MANON: Je t'aime!

DES GRIEUX: C'est l'heure de prier!

MANON: Non, je ne te quitte pas!

DES GRIEUX: On m'appelle là-bas!

MANON: Non, je ne te quitte pas!

Listen to me! Tell me!
Is this no longer my hand that presses against yours?
Is this no longer my voice?
Is this no longer a caress for you, just as before?
And these eyes,
once full of charm for you,
do they no longer shine through my tears?
Am I no longer me? Is my name no longer the same?
Ah! Look at me! Look at me! Is this no longer Manon?

O Lord! Support me at this decisive moment!

I love you!

Ah! Be quiet! Don't speak of love here—
it's blasphemy!

I love you!

Ah! Be quiet! Don't speak of love here!

I love you!

It's time to go pray!

No, I will not leave you!

They're calling me!

No, I will not leave you!

Has Manon changed her approach?

Does she feel confident in herself?

What evidence do you hear in the music she sings?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Psychologist's Guide to Scene C

TRACK 23

MANON: Viens! N'est-ce plus ma main que cette main presse, tout comme autrefois?

DES GRIEUX: Tout comme autrefois!

MANON: Et ces yeux, jadis pour toi pleins de charmes, N'est-ce plus Manon?

DES GRIEUX: Tout comme autrefois!

MANON: Ah! regarde-moi! Ne suis-je plus moi? N'est-ce plus Manon?

DES GRIEUX: Ah! Manon! Je ne veux plus lutter contre moi même!

MANON: Enfin!

DES GRIEUX: Et dussè-je sur moi faire crouler les cieux.

Ma vie est dans ton cœur!

Ma vie est dans tes yeux!

Ah! viens! Manon, je t'aime!

MANON and DES GRIEUX: Je t'aime!

Come on! Is this no longer my hand that presses against yours, just as before?

Just as before!

And these eyes, once full of charm for you, Is this no longer Manon?

Just as before!

Ah! Look at me! Am I no longer me? Is this no longer Manon?

Ah! Manon! I don't want to struggle against myself anymore!

Finally!

And even if it means I will bring the heavens crashing down on me,

My life is in your heart!

My life is in your eyes!

Ah, come here, Manon—I love you!

I love you!

How would you describe the scene you have just witnessed? A happy ending?

How do you think Manon feels?

How do you think des Grieux feels?

How does the music represent the change in his state of mind?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Memory Assessment Inventory

Research Psychologist

Research Participant: **Ms. Manon Lescaut**

Ms. Lescaut's memories

Researcher's notes on the actual events (scenes from *Manon*)

The inn

Mood of the participants during the scene

Accuracy of Ms. Lescaut's memory

Evidence from music

Evidence from lyrics

The coach and the shadowy road

Mood of the participants during the scene

Accuracy of Ms. Lescaut's memory

Evidence from music

Evidence from lyrics

Des Grieux's letter

Mood of the participants during the scene

Accuracy of Ms. Lescaut's memory

Evidence from music

Evidence from lyrics

The little table

Mood of the participants during the scene

Accuracy of Ms. Lescaut's memory

Evidence from music

Evidence from lyrics

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The Seven Sins of Memory

Draw a line between the "sin" and its definition & example

MEMORY SIN	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
Absent-mindedness	a memory fades over time	"I can't remember the color of the house I used to live in"
Bias	inability to retrieve a memory that might be available under other circumstances	"Wait, I know that. It's on the tip of my tongue."
Blocking	having unintended, unwanted, unpleasant memories	Sometimes follows a very bad experience like an accident, a terrible fire, a war.
Misattribution	remembering information correctly, but mistaking where/who the information came from	"Joe told me that." – "What?! I told you that!"
Persistence	new information or experiences change the way something is remembered	[see "The Bugs and Ariel Experiment"]
Suggestibility	failure to remember something because too little attention was paid at the time of the event	"Where did I put my keys?"
Transience	unintentionally revising a memory based on one's current feelings	"Sure we were poor, but we were happy!"

Do you think Manon's recollection indicates any of these problems? Which one(s)? Why?

Did Massenet, Meilhac, and Gille convey a realistic picture of the way memory works? Why?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The Bugs and Ariel Experiment

In 2002, psychology researchers ran an experiment to explore how memories change through “suggestibility.” They wanted to see if people could be influenced to remember something that never could have happened.

They gathered a group of college students who said it was “relatively unlikely” that, as children, they had ever shaken hands with a costumed character at a theme park. Then they divided the group in three. Each subgroup reads a different advertisement:

- an advertisement using autobiographical language (“Go back to your childhood and remember the magic. Remember when...”): This ad suggests that every child who goes to Disneyland gets to meet Ariel, from *The Little Mermaid*—even though the movie had not yet been made when these college students were kids.
- a different “autobiographical” ad: This ad suggests that they had shaken hands with Bugs Bunny during a visit to Disneyland—even though Bugs Bunny is not a Disney character.
- an advertisement for Disneyland that mentions a new ride, but did not use autobiographical language

Remember: All of these students began the study saying it was “relatively unlikely” that they had ever shaken hands with a costumed character at a theme park.

Remember: None of these students could possibly have met either Bugs or Ariel as a child visiting Disneyland.

Even so, in a follow-up survey,

- 16% of the people who read the Bugs Bunny ad said they specifically remembered shaking hands with Bugs at Disneyland
- 7% of the people who read the Ariel ad said they specifically remembered meeting Ariel at Disneyland

The researchers concluded that the autobiographical language (“Remember when you...”) in the advertisements caused some of these college students to believe they had experienced something that never could have happened. The ads changed their memories of their own pasts. That’s suggestibility!

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

The Ravenous Rich: *Manon's* Opening Scene

TRACK 24 Instrumental

TRACK 25

GUILLOT: Holà! Hé! Monsieur l'hôtelier! Combien de temps faut-il crier avant que vous daigniez entendre?

Yo! Hey! Mr. Innkeeper! How long do we have to yell before you'll deign to hear?

TRACK 26

DE BRÉTIGNY: Nous avons soif!

We're thirsty!

GUILLOT: Nous avons faim! Holà! Hé!

We're hungry! Yo! Hey!

DE BRÉTIGNY: Vous moquez-vous de faire attendre?

Are you making fun of us by making us wait?

GUILLOT and DE BRÉTIGNY: Morbleu! Viendrez-vous à la fin!

For heaven's sake, will you come at last?

GUILLOT: Foi de Guillot Morfontaine!
C'est par trop de cruauté pour des gens de qualité!

Guillot Morfontaine bears witness!
this cruelty is too great for people of quality!

DE BRÉTIGNY: Il est mort, la chose est certaine!

He's dead—that's for certain!

GUILLOT: Il est mort! Il est mort!

He's dead! He's dead!

TRACK 27

POUSSETTE: Allons, messieurs, point de couroux!

Come on, gentlemen—anger isn't going to help!

GUILLOT: Que faut-il faire?

What must one do?

DE BRÉTIGNY: Que faut-il faire?

What must one do?

GUILLOT: Il n'entends pas.

He's not listening.

JAVOTTE, POUSSETTE, and ROSETTE: On le rappelle! On le harcèle!

We call him again! We harass him!

TRACK 28

THE FIVE DINERS: Voyons, monsieur l'hôtelier,
Montrez-vous hospitalier!
Sauvez-nous de la famine,
Si non l'on vous extermine!

Look here, Mr. Innkeeper,
show some hospitality!
Save us from famine!
Or else we'll exterminate you!

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

The Ravenous Rich: *Manon's* Opening Scene (continued)

TRACK 29

DE BRÉTIGNY: Eh bien! Eh quoi! Pas de réponse?

Well! What! No answer?

JAVOTTE, POUSSETTE, and ROSETTE: Pas de réponse?

No answer?

GUILLOT: Pas de réponse?

No answer?

DE BRÉTIGNY: Il est sourd à notre sermonce!

He is deaf to our reprimands!

JAVOTTE, POUSSETTE, and ROSETTE: Re commençons!

Let's start again!

GUILLOT: Pas trop de bruit!

Not too much noise!

Cela redouble l'appétit!

It doubles the appetite!

TRACK 30

THE FIVE DINERS: Voyons, monsieur l'hôtelier,
Montrez-vous hospitalier!

Look here, Mr. Innkeeper,
show some hospitality!

DE BRÉTIGNY: Ah! Voilà le coupable!

Ah! Here's the guilty one!

GUILLOT: Réponds-nous, miserable!

Answer us, you miserable thing!

INNKEEPER: Moi, vous abandonnez?

Me, abandon you?

Je ne dirai qu'un mot: Qu'on serve le diner!

I will only say one word: Dinner is served.

TRACK 31 Instrumental fragment

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

The Ravenous Rich: *Manon's* Opening Scene (continued)

TRACK 32

INNKEEPER: Hors d'œuvres de choix!

THE FIVE DINERS: Bien!

INNKEEPER: Et diverses épices, poisson, poulet!

THE FIVE DINERS: Parfait!

JAVOTTE: Du poisson!

GUILLOT: Chicken!

POUSSETTE: Ô douce providence!

THE FIVE DINERS: On vient nous servir!

INNKEEPER: Un buisson d'écrevisses!

THE FIVE DINERS: Des écrevisses!

INNKEEPER: Et pour arroser le repas, de vieux vins!

GUILLOT: Ne les troublez pas!

INNKEEPER: Et pour compléter les services, le pâté de canard!

THE FIVE DINERS: Un pâté!

INNKEEPER: Non pas, messieurs. Un objet d'art!

Choice appetizers!

Fine!

And a variety of flavors, fish, chicken!

Perfect!

Fish!

Du poulet!

O sweet providence!

They're coming to serve us!

A platter of crawfish!

Crawfish!

And to wash the meal down, vintage wines!

Don't shake them!

And to complete the service, duck pâté!

A pâté!

No, ladies and gentlemen—a work of art!

TRACK 33

GUILLOT: Vraiment!

DE BRÉTIGNY: Parfait!

THE FIVE DINERS: Ô douce providence,
Voilà qu'en cadence,
On vient nous servir!
Ô sort delectable,
Lorsque l'on a faim,
De se mettre enfin,
À table!

INNKEEPER: Voyez! On vient vous servir!
Il est préférable
Et même très sain
D'attendre la faim.
Mettez vous à table!

Truly!

Perfect!

O sweet providence,
here at a quick pace,
they're coming to serve us!
O delectable fate,
when one is hungry
to finally sit down
at the table!

Look! They're coming to serve you!
It is preferable
and also very healthy
to wait until you are hungry.
Sit down at the table!

TRACK 34 is a continuous version of Tracks 24–33.

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

Be Careful What You Wish For: Manon's Arias

TRACKS 35 AND 37

MANON: Voyons, Manon, plus de chimères!
Où va ton esprit en rêvant?
Laisse ces désirs éphémères à la porte de ton couvent!
Voyons, Manon! Voyons, Manon!
Plus de desirs, plus de chimères.

Look, Manon, no more fantasies!
Where does your soul go, dreaming?
Leave these passing desires at the door of your convent!
Look, Manon! Look, Manon!
No more desires, no more fantasies.

TRACK 36

MANON: Et cependant pour mon âme ravie
En elles tout est séduisant!
Combien ce doit être amusant
De s'amuser toute une vie!

And yet for my delighted soul,
everything about them is seductive!
How much fun it must be to have
fun for your whole life!

TRACK 38 is a continuous version of tracks 35–37.

TRACK 39

MANON: Je marche sur tous les chemins
Aussi bien qu'une souveraine
On s'incline, on baise ma main,
Car par la beauté je suis reine!

I walk on every street
just like a sovereign.
They bow to me, they kiss my hand,
because thanks to my beauty, I am queen!

TRACK 40

MANON: Mes chevaux courent à grands pas.
Devant ma vie aventureuse,
Les grands s'avancent chapeau bas
Je suis belle, je suis heureuse!
Je suis belle!

My horses run fast.
The powerful approach, hat in hand,
before my thrilling life.
I am beautiful, I am happy!
I am beautiful!

TRACK 41

MANON: Autour de moi tout doit fleurir!
Je vais à tout ce qui m'attire!
Et, si Manon devait jamais mourir,
Ce serait, mes amis, dans un éclat de rire!

Everything around me must flower!
I go to whatever attracts me!
And should Manon ever have to die,
It will be, my friends, in a burst of laughter!

THE NOBILITY: Bravo, Manon!

Bravo, Manon!

TRACK 42 is a continuous version of tracks 38–41.

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

A Plea for Peace of Mind: Des Grieux's Aria

TRACK 43

DES GRIEUX: Je suis seul, enfin! C'est le moment suprême!
Il n'est plus rien que j'aime,
que le repos sacré que m'apporte la foi!
Oui, j'ai voulu mettre Dieu même
entre le monde et moi!

I am finally alone! This is the decisive moment!
I don't love anything anymore
except the sacred rest that faith brings me!
Yes, I wanted to put God himself
between the world and me!

TRACK 44

DES GRIEUX: Ah! Fuyez, douce image,
à mon âme trop chère.
Respectez un repos cruellement gagné,
Et songez, si j'ai bu dans une coupe amère,
Que mon cœur l'emplit de ce qu'il a saigné.
Ah! fuyez! fuyez! loin de moi!

Ah! Flee, sweet vision,
too dear to my soul.
Respect a cruelly won rest,
and consider, if I have drunk from a bitter cup,
that my heart will fill it with the blood it has spilled.
Ah, flee! flee! far from me!

TRACK 45

DES GRIEUX: Que m'importe la vie et ce semblant de gloire?

What do life and this seeming glory matter to me?

TRACK 46

DES GRIEUX: Je ne veux que chasser du fond de ma mémoire,
Un nom maudit! ce nom... qui m'obsède.

I only want to rid the depths of my memory of a cursed name,
this name with which I am obsessed.

TRACK 47

DES GRIEUX: Et pourquoi?

And why?

TRACK 48

THE PORTER: C'est l'office.

That's the worship service.

DES GRIEUX: J'y vais.

I'm going.

TRACK 49 is a continuous version of tracks 43–48.

MANON

APRIL 7, 2012

Performance Activity: Tools of the Diva

Name

Class

Teacher

Date

The Associated Press has called Anna Netrebko, who plays Manon in this Metropolitan Opera *Live in HD* presentation, “the reigning new diva of the 21st century.” Asked about her character, here’s what Ms. Netrebko had to say:

“Even at the start of the opera, Manon is not naïve. She already knows her power and is using it to get what she wants. That’s in Massenet’s music: It’s very clear from the opera who Manon is. Her music is very sensual, passionate, sometimes harsh. She’s a real woman. And I think it’s possible to make her quite... bad.”

As you watch today’s performance, it won’t be hard to keep your eyes on Anna Netrebko. But think about exactly how she makes Manon “bad.” What can you observe about the tools of a diva’s trade?

Facial expression
Appearance and stance
Movement
Interaction with other performers
Singing
Something special you noticed

Manon: My Highs & Lows

APRIL 7, 2012

CONDUCTED BY FABIO LUISI

REVIEWED BY _____

THE STARS	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
ANNA NETREBKO AS MANON	* * * * *	
PIOTR BECZALA AS DES GRIEUX	* * * * *	
PAULO SZOT AS LESCAUT	* * * * *	
DAVID PITTSINGER AS COUNT DES GRIEUX	* * * * *	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
DINNER AT THE INN MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MANON ARRIVES AT AMIENS MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MANON MEETS GUILLOT MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MANON MEETS DES GRIEUX MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MANON AND DES GRIEUX ESCAPE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
DES GRIEUX WRITES A LETTER MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
DE BRÉTIGNY TIPS MANON OFF MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MANON FEELS REGRET MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5

Manon: My Highs & Lows

(CONTINUED)

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
DES GRIEUX IS KIDNAPPED MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MANON SINGS IN THE PARK MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-
MANON QUIZZES COUNT DES GRIEUX MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MANON CONFRONTS DES GRIEUX AT ST. SULPICE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE GAMBLING ROOMS MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
DES GRIEUX'S GOOD LUCK MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
GUILLOT'S REVENGE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MANON AND DES GRIEUX AT LE HAVRE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE DEATH OF MANON MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5