

"The Tree, the Stone, & the Bird"

Suggested Response Topics



1. In what ways are the 4 characters in this opera different from each other? What do they have in common?
2. Each of the 4 characters has a separate solo section. How would you describe the character of the music for each of them? Does the character of the music fit each character well?
3. There is a tradition in opera of mezzo-sopranos (altos) performing the roles of younger men or boys, because their range is about the same, and also because young men's voices might not be strong or stable enough for singing opera. What do you think of the composer's choice to have the young man Billy sung by a mezzo-soprano? What does that choice add or make possible, musically?
4. Do you like the repeated words and musical phrases in this opera? What does the repetition accomplish, in your opinion?
5. What do you interpret as the theme of this opera? Do you personally agree with that message?
6. Think about a time in your life when you completed a major project or reached a milestone. Were your feelings about closing a chapter similar to any of those of the characters in the opera?