



# STUDY GUIDE

## ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE

*Amadeus – Peter Shaffer*

# Amadeus – Peter Shaffer

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# Background of the author

- He was born in Liverpool, England, on May 15, 1926.
- His family moved to London when he was 10.
- He attended St Paul's School where he developed a deep interest in music.
- This would be a catalyst for his later treatment of the story of Mozart and Salieri in Amadeus.
- He has been heralded for his successful work in a variety of dramatic genres, including comedy and historical drama, and for his compelling exploration of psychological themes.

*The play explores the rivalry between Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Antonio Salieri, the court composer for the Emperor of Austria in the late eighteenth century.*

- Shaffer became interested in the relationship between the two composers after learning about Mozart's mysterious death.
- Although failing to find evidence that Salieri murdered Mozart, Shaffer admits, in an interview with Roland Gelatt, that "by then the cold eyes of Salieri were staring at me.....The conflict between virtuous mediocrity and feckless genius took hold of my imagination, and it would not leave me alone."
- Critics have praised the play's craftsmanship and its penetrating psychological study of the effects of success and failure and the search for spirituality.



# The Plot

- ✚ The play opens with “savage whispers” that fill the theatre.
- ✚ The citizens of Vienna in 1823 hiss the name ‘Salieri’ and ‘assassin.’
- ✚ Antonio Salieri, an old man, appears in a wheelchair, with his back to the audience.
- ✚ Two venticelli (purveyors of fact, rumour and gossip throughout the play) hurry in, speaking rapidly about “the whole city.... talking day and night.”
- ✚ Salieri cries out, “Mozart! Pardon your assassin.... have mercy.”
- ✚ The venticelli explain that when Mozart died 32 years ago, there was some talk about him being poisoned by Salieri – they wonder why Salieri would do such a thing and why he would confess it now.
- ✚ Salieri asks the audience to be his confessors.
- ✚ He admits his lifelong desire for fame – “yet only in one especial way, Music! absolute music..... Music is God’s art.”
- ✚ He longed “to join all the composers who had celebrated his glory through the long Italian past.”
- ✚ As a result, he implored God, “let me be a composer ....and in return, I will live with virtue.... and I will honour You with much music all the days of my life.”
- ✚ When God responded to him, “Go forth, Antonio. Serve Me and mankind, and you will be blessed.”
- ✚ Salieri thanked him and promised, “I am your servant for life.”
- ✚ The very next day, a family friend suddenly appeared and took him to Vienna, where he studied music and soon became the court composer, Salieri decided, “Clearly my bargain had been accepted.”
- ✚ The same year the young prodigy Mozart was touring Europe.
- ✚ Salieri tells the audience, “I present to you – for one performance only – my last composition, entitled “**The Death of Mozart, or, Did I Do It?**” dedicated to posterity on this, the last night of my life.”
- ✚ He then takes off his dressing gown and becomes a young man wearing the elegant clothes of a successful composer in the 1780s.
- ✚ The scene shifts to 1781 and Emperor Joseph II and his court in Vienna.
- ✚ Salieri is 31, “a prolific” composer to the Hapsburg court, and married to a “respectable” wife, Teresa.
- ✚ The venticelli, Salieri’s “Little Winds”, announce that Mozart will be giving a concert for the court.
- ✚ While Salieri sits in a chair eating sweets in the library at the Palace of Schoonbrunn, Constance Weber, daughter of Mozart’s landlady, runs into the room squeaking like a mouse.
- ✚ Mozart follows her meowing like a cat.
- ✚ Mozart teases Constanze (Stanzi) with sexual innuendos and bathroom humour and frequently emits “an unforgettable giggle-piercing and infantile.”
- ✚ His demeanour appals Salieri.
- ✚ Later, when Mozart begins playing one of his compositions, Salieri responds with such delight that it makes him tremble.
- ✚ He runs out into the street, “gasping for life”.

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- ✚ Addressing the audience, he explains, “It seemed to me that I had heard a Voice of God .... and it was the voice of an obscene child!”
- ✚ After the concert, Salieri buries his fear in work and prays to God, asking Him, “let your voice enter me!”
- ✚ Mozart is 25 when Salieri meets him.
- ✚ The stage directions introduce him as “ a small, pallid, large-eyed man in a showy wig and a showy set of clothes”.
- ✚ Mozart is “an extremely restless man, his hands and feet in almost continuous motion, his voice is light and high, and he is possessed of an unforgettable giggle-piercing and infantile.”
- ✚ He enjoys ribald jokes and bathroom humour, a quality which disgusts and angers Salieri, who insists his own virtuous nature deserves to be blessed by God.
- ✚ Mozart has a love/hate relationship with his father, whom he fears but also respects.
- ✚ He desperately needs his father’s approval and so reincarnates him in his compositions.
- ✚ The Venticelli tell Salieri that Mozart is “wildly extravagant” and lives beyond his means.
- ✚ His outbursts in public have become “embarrassing”.
- ✚ He makes scenes and thus often makes enemies.
- ✚ Yet, Salieri insists that God has chosen him as His voice, as evident in his exquisite music.
- ✚ Mozart comments on his role as artist and his goal to make a sound entirely new.
- ✚ By the end of the play, we see how circumstances broke Mozart and he soon dies.

# Characters

- Antonio Salieri



- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



- Constanze Weber (Mozart's wife)
- Joseph II (Emperor of Austria)
- Count Johann Kilian von Strack (Groom of the Imperial Chamber)
- Count Franz Orsini-Rosenberg (Director of the Imperial Opera)
- Baron Gottfried van Swieten (Prefect of the Imperial Library)
- Two Venticelli ('Little Winds' – purveyors of information, gossip and rumours)
- Major-Domo
- Salieri's valet
- Salieri's cook
- Teresa Salieri (Salieri's wife)
- Katherina Cavalieri (Salieri's pupil)
- Kapellmeister Bonno
- Citizens of Vienna

# Summary and discussion

## Act 1, Part 1

- ✚ As the play begins, whispers fill the theatre.
- ✚ At first, individual words can't be made out, but after a few moments, two words stand out: '*Salieri*' and '*assassin*'.
- ✚ As a chorus of nineteenth century 'Citizen of Vienna' fill the stage, we become able to see an old man, sitting in a wheel chair with his back to us.
- ✚ Two men hurry on.
- ✚ The men are the Venticelli (an Italian word meaning "little winds"). Characters that both narrate, and participate in the action.
- ✚ Speaking loudly enough to be heard over the whispers, they discuss the subject of the gossip: the old and reclusive composer Salieri, who is thought to be dying and who apparently cries out at night that he killed Mozart, the famous composer.
- ✚ The Venticelli identify Salieri's two servants as the source of the rumour, and ask them repeatedly to confirm it and add more details.
- ✚ The Venticelli become more insistent, the whispers become louder, the servants say nothing, and just when both whispers and the Venticelli's curiosity are at their most intense, Salieri suddenly shouts out Mozart's name!
- ✚ Everything is silent for a moment, but then the whispering begins again, the Venticelli continue to gossip, and Salieri speaks in Italian, asking for mercy.
- ✚ The Venticelli mention that there had been rumours when Mozart died that he had been poisoned, wonder if it's possible that those rumours are true, and whether it's even believable that Salieri was behind it.
- ✚ When Salieri cries out again, asking for pardon for his sins from Mozart, the noises climaxes in the loudly whispered name of Salieri.
- ✚ The 'Citizens of Vienna' leave, the Venticelli quickly follow, and Salieri is left alone.
- ✚ Salieri wheels his chair around and addresses the audience in Italian, introducing himself and placing himself "at our service".
- ✚ Switching to English, he addresses the audience as "Ghosts of the Future" and his "confessors".
- ✚ The man invites the audience to keep him company through this last night of his life.
- ✚ Salieri sits at a piano and plays an Invocation in order to make the "ghosts" appear.
- ✚ Lights come up and make us (the ghosts) visible to him.
- ✚ Salieri continues to address us, explaining that he was taught the art of Invocation by the composer Gluck, "who was a true Master."
- ✚ Then he goes to a display of sweets, and tells us that the first sin he must confess to is the sin of gluttony (loving food and drink too much).
- ✚ As he munches on some of the sweets, he tells us about the sweets he remembers from his childhood, which leads him to reminisce about the town he grew up: the "tiny town of Legnago" in Italy "which he could not wait to leave."
- ✚ Salieri tells us his idea of how the people of Legnago viewed God: "all they asked ... of God was to keep them forever unnoticed – preserved in mediocrity, "and that from



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the time he was a child he knew he was different: he knew he wanted more than to be noticed, he wanted fame.”

- ✚ Salieri also knew that he wanted it through music, which he describes as “God’s art.”
- ✚ In vivid, poetic language he describes how ecstatic music makes him feel, and how he promised that if God made him a famous composer, he would be virtuous, chaste, work to improve the lives of his fellow men, and worship God through music.
- ✚ The man recounts how he heard God speak to him and agree to the bargain, and how the next day “a family friend suddenly appeared .... took him off to Vienna and paid for him to study music.”
- ✚ Then he tells how he rose quickly to power in the court of the Emperor of Austria, and that at the same time, an immensely talented child musician named Mozart was touring Europe.
- ✚ Salieri then smiles at the audience and announces “for one performance only – his last composition, entitled *The Death of Mozart, or Did he Do It?*”
- ✚ Then he transforms into the younger Salieri, and the set transforms into the Viennese Court.

*This play is based on actual historical events and people: there was a Mozart and a Salieri, and in reality, they had a relationship similar to the one explored in the play. It's not necessarily true that Salieri actually acted to destroy Mozart in the way that he does in the play. This is an example of dramatic licence, or using imagination to build on historical facts to tell a story and illustrate a theme.*

*This scene serves as a prologue to the main story, laying the groundwork for several key aspects to the play. It sets up Salieri as the central character, and the play is going to be a story told by him about his relationship with Mozart; it introduces us to language being used in a more poetic way than in everyday speech; and it introduces several conventions, or ways in which the story is going to be told.*

*These conventions include narration by both the Venticelli and Salieri; a chorus similar to the chorus in Ancient Greek plays, which was made up of several actors sharing the reactions of a single character and illuminates it; the chorus comments and offers opinions on both the story and the central character of Salieri; and transitions move fluidly from scene to scene, meaning that there are no breaks or blackouts between scenes.*

*Most importantly, the prologue sets up the play’s central question, its conflicts and its theme. The question is, as Salieri suggests, whether he destroyed Mozart. The conflicts are between Salieri, Mozart (who’s the better composer?), Salieri and God (will they both live up to their sides of their bargain?). The theme has several facets related to Salieri’s relationship with God: what is the voice of God? How do we hear it? How do we know the difference between the voice of God and our own human desires? How do we act on what the voice of God asks us to do? Themes such as these, relating to the relationship between God and humanity, are often described as epic in nature, in that they deal with larger questions of human existence.*

*Finally, the prologue foreshadows the play’s conclusion. By saying that this is the last night of his life, Salieri indicates that at some point, his death is going to become part of the action.*



## Act 1, Part 2

- ✚ Salieri, now with the clothes and energy of a much younger man, tells us we're now in Vienna in 1781, and introduces several other characters.
- ✚ Starting with the women in his life, he introduces his calm and supporting wife Teresa (who is in the play as a non-speaking presence) and his student Katherina (also non-speaking).
- ✚ Salieri then speaks of being tempted by Katherina's sensuality, but tells us his vow to God kept him from breaking his vows of fidelity to his wife.
- ✚ He also tells us that at time, his prime ambition was to become "First Royal Kapellmeister," or music master, but the Kapellmeister of the time (Kapellmeister Bonno) was seventy years old and "apparently immortal."
- ✚ Salieri speaks at length about how composers treated their work and their music at the time, saying that the idea was to immortalize and "celebrate men's average lives" and "mediocrity," that he was good at it, and wonders who will immortalize the audience's mediocrity.
- ✚ The Venticelli rush on (in their role as Salieri's spies) and give him the news that Mozart is in Vienna, comment on how much he composed as a child, mention that he is twenty five, and that he is in Vienna "to stay".
- ✚ This blends into the next scene, a conversation between Salieri and several high officials of the Court of Vienna whom Salieri introduces to us: Von Struck, the Court Chamberlain (or Chief Administrator); Count Orsini-Rosenberg, Director of the Opera; and Baron Van Swieten, head of the Imperial Library.
- ✚ As the men discuss a new opera to be written in German for the Emperor, they also discuss Mozart, whom Salieri says must write the new opera.
- ✚ Rosenberg dislikes the idea intensely, describing Mozart's music as having "too many notes," calling him "hateful" and predicting they will have trouble with him.
- ✚ As Rosenberg and Von Struck leave, Van Swieten and Salieri have a conversation in which Van Swieten invites Salieri to join the Masons.
- ✚ Salieri expresses his gratitude, and when Van Swieten leaves, turns to the audience and explains that "every man of influence in Vienna was a Mason."
- ✚ Salieri also says that he was worried by Mozart's arrival, saying that Mozart "was praised altogether too much."
- ✚ The Venticelli rush back on with exactly the words of praise that Salieri was talking about, saying that Mozart lodges with a Madame Weber, was involved with one of the daughters, dumped her and became engaged to another daughter.
- ✚ Salieri tells the Venticelli he wants to meet Mozart, and they tell him he will be at the home of a Baroness the following evening, where he will play some of his music.
- ✚ Salieri tells us that he went to the Baroness's, and that "That night changed his life."

*In this brief scene, several elements that later become essential to the plot are introduced.*

*The three court officials each play important roles in the various advancements and downturns in the careers of both Mozart and Salieri; Salieri's interest in Katherina later plays an important role both in his relationships with Mozart and Mozart's wife and in Salieri's own*

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*moral downfall; the mention of the Masons foreshadows Mozart's invitation to join and his use of some of their traditions in his compositions.*

*The Masons were, and are, a men-only organization that publicly put a lot of time and energy into bettering society. In private, they practice rituals and ceremonies that have been in place for hundreds of years and which remain both practised and secret today. At the time of the play, it was a social advantage to be known as a member of the Masons, which makes Mozart's use of their rituals as a basis for some of the action in *The Magic Flute* even more of a betrayal. The mention of the Masons at this point is also the first step in the set-up for Salieri's final act of destruction against Mozart in the last part of the play.*

*Salieri's reference to immortalizing mediocrity is the first stage of his journey of transformation. It's an archetypal or fundamental journey in both dramatic and literary storytelling: a character starts out from a place of certainty, finds that certainty challenged, and makes discoveries, which lead him to change. In the case of Salieri, at this point Salieri is certain what music is for (immortalizing mediocrity); starting in the next scene (when he hears Mozart's music for the first time), that certainty is challenged, and Salieri begins to wonder what music is for, whether it's the voice of God or the voice of man. When Salieri discovers that his music is not the voice of God but Mozart's music is, Salieri changes: his love of God and his vows to serve Him become hatred of God and vows to destroy Him. This makes Salieri's journey of transformation a complete dramatization of the play's theme.*



## Act 1, Part 3

- ✚ This scene introduces us to Mozart and his wife-to-be, Constanze.
- ✚ At the home of the Baroness, Salieri tells us that the Baroness always kept sweets for him, and as he sat concealed in a chair eating his favourite, Mozart and Constanze rush in and play out a scene as introduced by Salieri.
- ✚ The couple plays a game of tag, making cat-and-mouse noises telling crude jokes.
- ✚ When Mozart mentions marriage, Constanze says that Mozart's father will never agree to it.
- ✚ Mozart suddenly becomes angry and defiant.
- ✚ When Constanze imitates his father's voice and judgements, Mozart asks her to marry him and makes a crude comment about defying his father.
- ✚ At that moment one of the Baroness's servants comes in and tells Mozart the Baroness is ready for music.
- ✚ Embarrassed at being discovered on the floor, Mozart and Constanze go in to the Baroness, leaving Salieri alone in his chair.
- ✚ Salieri narrates what happens to him as a small orchestra plays a Mozart composition.
- ✚ Salieri feels the beauty of the music physically, and describes his sensations in poetic language, until he feels it as an intense pain and has to rush out of the room.
- ✚ Then he runs through the streets, shouting out to God "What? What is this? .... What is this pain?"
- ✚ Salieri tells us that he began to believe that he had heard the voice of God, "and that it issued from a creature with the voice of an obscene child!"
- ✚ Salieri tells of how he immediately buried himself in work: more pupils, more committee work, more compositions praising God, praying all the while for God to allow His voice to speak through him and not Mozart.
- ✚ Then Salieri tells how he sent the Venticelli out to collect as many Mozart's scores as they could, and when the Venticelli come back with compositions that Salieri describes as "conventional", "empty", and "boring", Salieri tells us he was relieved and even "cheered".
- ✚ Salieri comes to believe that the beauty of that first composition was an accident "which might visit any composer on a lucky day."

*This short scene is extremely important to the play for two reasons: First, it introduces us to Mozart, and although he's on stage for a relatively short amount of time at this point, his character is immediately revealed: he is immature, playful, childlike, and emotionally extreme. This sets him up in vivid contrast to Salieri, who is mature, sedate, very adult, and emotionally quite controlled.*

*Secondly, the action of the scene begins the dramatic and thematic conflict. Salieri hears what he calls "the voice of God" in Mozart's music for the first time, which makes him question everything he believed about himself, his work, and his relationship with God. This is the first scene of challenge and wondering in Salieri's journey towards transformation, initiating both the conflict between Mozart and Salieri, and Salieri and God. Salieri's relief that some of Mozart's other compositions aren't as good as the one he heard at the home of*

*the Baroness is ironic, in that we know Mozart's work is only to get better and that Salieri is fooling himself.*

## Act 1, Part 4

- ✚ This scene changes to the Austrian Imperial Palace, where the Emperor excitedly awaits Mozart's arrival.
- ✚ Salieri tells him he's composed "a little march in Mozart's honour," and asks permission to play it when Mozart comes in.
- ✚ The Emperor happily agrees, and sends Von Strack to bring Mozart in at once.
- ✚ While he is waiting, the Emperor wonders about the possibility of having a competition: "Mozart against some other virtuoso."
- ✚ When Mozart appears, Salieri plays his March of Welcome, and Mozart greets the Emperor with an extravagant bow and excessive hand kissing.
- ✚ Embarrassed, the Emperor tells him to get up, recalling the last time he and Mozart met.
- ✚ Mozart was six years old and also on the floor.
- ✚ Mozart giggles (he has a unique, almost irritating laugh), and to cover his embarrassment, the Emperor introduces him to Von Strack, Van Swieten, Rosenberg, and finally Salieri, who greets Mozart in Italian and presents him with a copy of the March of Welcome.
- ✚ The Emperor asks Mozart whether he has received the commission for the opera.
- ✚ Mozart surprises him and the others with the news that not only has he received it, he has already found a libretto (script and lyrics for the songs).
- ✚ Rosenberg protests that as the director of the opera he should have been informed, but Mozart says, "it didn't seem very important" to him to do so, and tells them that the opera will be set in a harem.
- ✚ When Rosenberg protests that it's not an appropriate subject for a National Theatre, Mozart says there is nothing offensive about it but rather it's a story of love, real "manly love ... not male sopranos screeching or stupid couples rolling their eyes."
- ✚ Unaware that the other men are quite bothered by the idea, the Emperor asks when Mozart will be finished.
- ✚ Mozart says the first act is already finished, and when the Emperor comments that it can't be more than two weeks since he started, Mozart replies that "Composing is not hard when you have the right audience to please."
- ✚ The Emperor, very impressed, bids Mozart farewell in French, which Mozart answers with a flood of French of his own.
- ✚ The Emperor, Von Strack, Van Swieten and Rosenberg all leave.
- ✚ Salieri wishes Mozart luck with the opera.
- ✚ Mozart tells him that he's already found an excellent soprano for the lead – Salieri's student Katherina.
- ✚ Salieri has an aside to the audience, where he explains that even though he had "kept his hands off Katherina" he couldn't stand the thought of anyone else touching her, especially Mozart.
- ✚ When he goes back to the conversation, Mozart calls the March of Welcome a "jolly little thing", and tries to play it from memory.

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- ✚ Mozart does, perfectly, and then starts changing it, making it better and turning it into a famous piece of music from the opera *The Marriage of Figaro*.
- ✚ As Salieri watches, Mozart's playing and revisions of the March become more extravagant until he finishes with "triumphant flourishes and chords!"
- ✚ In the silence that follows, Salieri excuses himself.
- ✚ When Mozart asks him to try a variation, Salieri tells him that he must go attend to the Emperor.
- ✚ Mozart picks up the score for the March and leaves.
- ✚ Salieri addresses the audience, wondering if it was that moment when he began to contemplate killing Mozart.
- ✚ Salieri answers himself that he did not want to kill him in life, but he did decide to kill him in art, and contemplates an opera about a Greek hero, chained forever to a rock and repeatedly struck by lightning.
- ✚ Salieri imagines Mozart in that position, but says that he was in no real danger ... "not yet."
- ✚ This scene blends in with the first night performance of *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, the opera set in a harem.
- ✚ Mozart appears in a flashy coat and "conducts" from the piano as Salieri comments on the music, describing it as "showy".
- ✚ Salieri refers particularly to the aria that Mozart composed for Katherina, saying it was all scales and fancy singing, exactly "what might be demanded by a foolish young soprano", and adds that he knows exactly what Mozart asked for in return – sex.
- ✚ As the performance finishes, Katherina and Constanze rush on, excited and happy.
- ✚ Mozart presents Constanze to the Emperor, who calls the opera "a good effort" and "interesting".
- ✚ Rosenberg puts in that there are too many notes, and the Emperor agrees.
- ✚ Mozart protests, but when the Emperor asks Salieri for his opinion, Salieri reluctantly agrees.
- ✚ Mozart protests that there are exactly as many notes as is needed.
- ✚ The Emperor suddenly leaves, followed by Rosenberg, Von Strack and the others.
- ✚ Mozart asks Salieri if he thinks the Emperor is angry.
- ✚ Salieri tells him no, and that the Emperor respects his views.
- ✚ Mozart asks for Salieri's opinion, and Salieri describes the opera as charming but occasionally excessive and goes on to refer to a piece of advice given to him by his teacher, Gluck, about being careful of creating music that puts too much attention on the cleverness of the composer rather than on the music itself.
- ✚ Mozart makes an extreme crude comment about Gluck's work, and when Constanze tries to keep him quiet, he goes on and indirectly insults Salieri.
- ✚ When Salieri comments on the insult, Mozart immediately apologizes.
- ✚ Salieri appears to let the insult go, and asks to be introduced to Constanze.
- ✚ Mozart and Constanze tell him the difficulties they face in getting married, in particular, resistance from Mozart's domineering father.
- ✚ When Salieri tells them that because Mozart is twenty-six he no longer has to obey his father.
- ✚ Constanze is delighted – but Mozart is still concerned.
- ✚ Salieri advises them to "marry and be happy" and bids them good night.



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- ✚ As Mozart and Constanze leave, Salieri tells the audience that at that moment he thought about seducing Constanze in revenge for Mozart seducing Katherina, but decided that to do so would be an “abomination.”
- ✚ After another transition, the Venticelli appear and announce that Mozart and Constanze have married and set up house but are struggling financially.
- ✚ Mozart is having difficulty getting pupils because of his emotional unpredictability and because he makes enemies.
- ✚ Another transition moves into a scene that illustrates this point: Mozart, drunk on wine, complains loudly, crudely and viciously to Von Strack about his lack of pupils, the influence of the aged Kapellmeister Bonno and Salieri, and the lack of adventure or innovation in the music at court.
- ✚ Rosenberg appears, and suggests it’s time for Mozart to retire for the night, but Mozart ignores him, going on to make a rude comment about the Emperor.
- ✚ Mozart immediately apologizes, but it’s too late.
- ✚ Von Strack is offended and leaves.
- ✚ Rosenberg turns to go as well, but Mozart grabs him and begs for his help.
- ✚ One of the Emperor’s daughters needs a music instructor, and Mozart both needs and wants the job.
- ✚ Mozart begs Rosenberg to put in a good word for him, but Rosenberg says that the decision is up to Salieri and leaves.
- ✚ Mozart defiantly calls after him: “Do you know I am better than any musician in Vienna?”
- ✚ Mozart complains about the way the small group of advisors to the Emperor run everything in the court, sings a very crude song, and leaves.
- ✚ Salieri, who has been watching the whole scene, tells us that “barely one month later, that thought of revenge became more than a thought.”

*This scene is full of demonstrations of just how extraordinary a human being Mozart is, contrasting positive and negative aspects of his character. Mozart shows that he can speak several languages fluently at the same time while being embarrassingly flattering; he shows that he’s willing to look at music and opera in new ways, while being completely unaware that he’s offending the very people who can advance his career the most and most importantly for the plot, he displays what a brilliant musician he is.*

*This scene also contains the first incident leading to Salieri’s eventual destruction of Mozart, even though Salieri doesn’t necessarily do it deliberately by advising Mozart and Constanze to marry without the agreement of Mozart’s father. Mozart’s concerns about how his father will react foreshadow three later aspects of the play – the intensity of grief Mozart experiences when he hears about his father’s death, the appearance of the father figure/ghost as Mozart composes Don Giovanni later in the play, and the way in which Salieri becomes a father figure to Mozart, dominating him in the same way as his real father. Another piece of foreshadowing comes when Salieri thinks about seducing Constanze, an idea he rejects in this scene but embraces later in the play.*

*The Emperor’s idea of a competition, and the way the idea is immediately dismissed, are ironic because there already is a competition between Mozart and Salieri. It’s just that we know it and they don’t.*

*Another theatrical conversation appears in this scene with the use of an aside, a term for when a character breaks out of a scene to make a comment to the audience then goes back into the scene. In this case, Salieri breaks out of his scene with Mozart to tell us his reaction to Mozart's relationship with Katherina.*

*The final moments of this scene, with Mozart begging Rosenberg to put in a good word to the Emperor, move the plot closer to the next point of change along Salieri's journey of transformation – his attempted seduction of Constanze.*

### **Act 1, Part 4**

- ✚ Back in the home of the Baroness at another musical evening, Salieri sits in his usual chair eating his usual sweets as Constanze and the Venticelli play a sexy game.
- ✚ As part of the game, the Venticelli ask to measure Constanze's calves.
- ✚ Constanze pretends to protest, but the Venticelli insist, and finally Constanze gets up on a table so they can measure.
- ✚ As Salieri excitedly watches, one Venticelli holds her ankles while the other gets out a ruler and starts measuring, then sticks his head under her skirts.
- ✚ At this moment, Mozart comes in and reacts with outrage, demanding that the Venticelli leave and telling Constanze she has just ruined both their reputations.
- ✚ Constanze tells him that he's done more to ruin his reputation by having sex with every female pupil he's had than she has.
- ✚ Constanze compares his number of pupils to Salieri's, saying that Salieri has more because he doesn't sleep with them.
- ✚ Mozart says that that's because he can't have sex with them, and that Salieri's music is the music of someone unable to have sex at all.
- ✚ Constanze bursts into tears. Mozart apologizes, and tries to tease her into not being angry again.
- ✚ Mozart starts to play a rhyming game with her and begs her to beat him with the ruler as punishment for making her cry.
- ✚ Constanze remains angry for a long time, but the rhyming game wins her over and she starts spanking him playfully.
- ✚ As their laughter gets louder and louder, Salieri can't take it anymore and cries out from his chair.
- ✚ As Mozart and Constanze calm themselves down, Salieri pretends that his cry was the result of a nightmare and that he's just woken up.
- ✚ When Constanze tells him that she and Mozart have been quarrelling, Salieri sends Mozart into the next room to fetch sweets for them all as an apology.
- ✚ Mozart bows and leaves.
- ✚ Constanze takes the opportunity of being alone with Salieri to ask him for help in getting a position at court for Mozart specifically, the job of music teacher to the princess.
- ✚ Salieri invites her to discuss the issue at his home the next day.
- ✚ Concerned about her reputation, Constanze at first refuses, but Salieri tells her that it's "in his interests"
- ✚ Constanze doesn't answer, but smiles and runs off.



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- ✚ Salieri turns to us and wonders whether she'll turn up, and what it means to his vows of chastity and compassion for his fellow man if she does.
- ✚ As Salieri continues the scene changes to his home.
- ✚ Salieri tells us that the next afternoon he waited anxiously for Constanze to arrive and she does, at exactly the time Salieri proposed, saying that she's nervous about what would happen if Mozart found out because "he's a very jealous man".
- ✚ Salieri asks her to sit, and tells her to sit, and tells her she's looking very pretty.
- ✚ Constanze shows him some of Mozart's manuscripts which she has brought to prove he's worthy of a job at court.
- ✚ Salieri offers her sweets with a suggestive name, and as she eats them and enjoys them, Salieri tells her that his wife is away visiting her mother.
- ✚ As Constanze realizes what Salieri is doing, he tells her that one word to the Emperor would get Mozart the job, suggests that "service of that sort deserves a little recompense in return", and starts by proposing a kiss.
- ✚ Constanze kisses him; he hints another would help even more; she kisses him again but when he tries to kiss her, she tells him that's enough.
- ✚ Salieri tells her it's "small pay to secure a post every musician in Vienna is hoping for".
- ✚ It finally becomes clear to Constanze just what Salieri wants, and she gets up to go.
- ✚ Salieri hurriedly explains that he's a "clumsy man", and that she is so pretty and so charming that he hoped she "might spare him one coin of tenderness her rich husband does not need."
- ✚ Constanze tries the same crude playfulness on him as she uses on Mozart and actually goes to smack his bottom, but he yells at her furiously, calling her a "silly, common girl".
- ✚ In the silence that follows, Salieri becomes coldly calm, and tells Constanze that the princess needs a teacher in vocal music as well as piano and he's not convinced Mozart is the right man for the job, but that he'll look at the music she brought to make sure.
- ✚ Constanze leaves, and Salieri turns to the audience, angry with himself for participating in something so low, and shouting that it's all Mozart's fault.
- ✚ Then he rips open the scores to study them, and music begins to fill the theatre (the music that Salieri is reading)
- ✚ As he reads the scores, he tells us that the scores and the music are both perfect and he realizes the beauty of Mozart's earlier composition wasn't an accident at all, that he is looking at absolute beauty.
- ✚ The music fills the theatre and builds up to an explosive climax as Salieri falls to the floor.
- ✚ As he slowly climbs to his feet, Salieri calls out to God his feelings of betrayal, frustration, and resentment that Mozart, "a giggling child," can transcribe the voice of God while he, Salieri, who has been given "perception of the incomparable, which most men never know, would know himself mediocre".
- ✚ Salieri's anger builds and his language gets cruder and more intense until finally he vows that he will look upon God as his enemy, and that "to his last breath he shall block God on earth as far as he is able."
- ✚ Suddenly, his anger released, Salieri becomes the old man he was at the beginning of the play.

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- ✚ Salieri tells us that before he reveals what happened next, he must take care of the need of his bladder.
- ✚ Then he promises to reveal the truth about the war he fought with God: “in the waging of which, of course, Mozart had to be destroyed.”

*The rules of society and fashion of the time restricted the amount of skin that a woman could show in public. As a result, the game that Constanze plays with the Venticelli is extremely daring, and Mozart's reaction is valid. It's also ironic, in that Mozart appears more concerned with Constanze's behaviour and its effect on his reputation than he is about his own behaviour.*

*On one level, Salieri's shout that breaks up the game between Mozart and Constanze may be the result of genuine moral anger. On the other hand, given that Salieri's moral decline has already begun, it's perhaps more likely a cry of frustration that he is unable to be as playful as Mozart. He is jealous of Mozart's free-spiritedness. Is this free-spiritedness part of the reason that Mozart's music is “the voice of God?”*

*When she reveals that she knows about Mozart's affairs with his pupils, Constanze reveals herself to be wiser and worldlier than we thought. Up to now, she's come across as playful and sexy, but not much more. Now, though, we understand that she understands a lot more than she's let on. This means that when Salieri invites her to his house, she knows exactly what he wants from her – sex. Again, because of the rules of society she has to pretend that she doesn't, but there's very little doubt that she goes to Salieri's house with her eyes open. Constanze's eyes are not open enough, though, for her to realize that she can't treat Salieri in the same way that she treats Mozart. When she makes the mistake of trying to do exactly that, it triggers a release of Salieri's rage, not just at Mozart for being better than he is but at himself for being a failure, and at God for not making him a success. This is the point on Salieri's journey of transformation that he changes.*

*After Constanze leaves, and as Salieri reads the manuscripts, the music illuminates his feelings and frustration. Music is used this way often in the play, which makes it another convention. In its volume and intensity, the music also foreshadows Salieri's moral death. Mozart's physical death and the anguish they both go through just before their deaths. The moment of Salieri's collapse to the floor, and his vow to take revenge on God, is the climax of the first act. This is the most significant point of change on his journey of transformation and dramatizes the play's theme of questioning the relationship between Man and God.*

## Act 2, Part 1

- ✚ The act begins with Salieri again an old man, addressing the audience as he leads us into “the very last hour of his life.”
- ✚ Salieri describes what happened on “the dreadful night of the manuscripts” as giving him “a terrible and thrilling purpose” – to block God “in one of his purest manifestations” meaning Mozart.
- ✚ Then he speaks of being glad that in having the opportunity to obstructing a rival, and asks us how many of us would turn down such a chance.
- ✚ As he transforms back into his younger self, he tells us that he wondered how God would respond, and that he got the first part of the answer an hour later.
- ✚ Constanze returns, fully prepared to let Salieri have sex with her in exchange for giving Mozart the job at court.
- ✚ When Salieri returns the manuscripts and tells her to go, she swears and attacks him.
- ✚ Salieri throws her to the floor, telling us in an aside that he realized that he didn’t want anything “petty” and that his quarrel wasn’t with Mozart, it was with God and would be fought through Mozart.
- ✚ At this point Constanze runs from the room.
- ✚ Salieri calms himself with a sweet, and tells us that instead of seducing Constanze he seduced Katherina, and kept her as a mistress for several years, erasing both her memory of Mozart’s body and his own vow of sexual virtue.
- ✚ Then he tells how he also resigned from all his committees for good works – “so much for his vow of social virtue.”
- ✚ He then recommended a man “of no talent whatever” for the position of music teacher to the princess, a scene that blends with the Emperor receiving the news of Salieri’s recommendation with puzzled surprise.
- ✚ When the Emperor wonders why he isn’t recommending Mozart, Salieri suggests that Mozart can’t be trusted with young women.
- ✚ The Emperor accepts that explanation and gives the job to the man Salieri recommended.
- ✚ Salieri tells us that Mozart had no suspicions about his plotting, and Mozart blames himself, saying he’ll get “sixteen lectures” from his father.
- ✚ Salieri comments to us that it was a “most serious loss,” and the Venticelli rush on with comments that Mozart has hardly any pupils.
- ✚ Salieri tells us that in contrast, he became more successful in spite of the fact that over the next two years Mozart wrote some of his best music.
- ✚ Salieri says the public at large enjoyed it then forgot it, even though they were in fact “the most perfect things made by man in the whole of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.”

*Constanze’s quick return and acceptance of Salieri’s proposal is unexpected, but not completely surprising. Once again she reveals herself to be a woman of the world, knowledgeable in the way things work. Constanze also reveals herself as being willing to make sacrifices for her husband, which indicates to us that she is very much in love with him, believes strongly in his work, or just needs him to be paid so that they can actually eat. In actuality, her motivation is made up in equal parts of all the above, as indicated by her rage when Salieri turns her down.*

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*Salieri's seduction of Katherina and his resignation from his committees represent the destruction of his relationship with God. Salieri had vowed to be faithful and he had vowed to contribute to public life as part of his deal with God that he should become famous through music. Now that he feels that God has broken the bargain, Salieri feels that he must do the same. In short, he's continuing his journey of transformation, abandoning all his morals in order to free himself to pursue his war with God.*

*Mozart's comment about being lectured by his father again foreshadows the menacing presence of the father figures later in the play – Salieri himself, the mysterious ghost, and the father figure in Don Giovanni.*

*Salieri's success in the face of Mozart's failure is extremely ironic, which Salieri knows and he wonders briefly whether this is God's challenge, but prefers to believe that it isn't God's answer because he wants to destroy Mozart completely.*



## Act 2, Part 2

- ✚ As the scene changes to Salieri's home, now more richly furnished, Salieri and the Venticelli discuss Salieri's successes – in particular, his latest opera, how Mozart completely dismisses it, and how Mozart has asked permission to write an Italian opera based on *The Marriage of Figaro*, a play by a French playwright that Van Swieten describes as “a vulgar farce.”
- ✚ Mozart enters, continuing his argument with Van Swieten, saying he wants to set opera in “a real place” because he wants “life in opera, not boring legends.”
- ✚ Mozart continues with a long, extravagant, blunt speech about why he prefers stories of real people over stories of “gods” and “heroes”, and why music is the perfect way to represent life and all the complications of “this second in time”.
- ✚ Mozart wonders if that's how “God hears the world. Millions of sounds ascending at once and mixing in His ear to become an unending music.”
- ✚ Van Swieten says that he's sure Mozart will make a fine “brother Mason”, urges Mozart to be more serious with his gifts, and leaves.
- ✚ As he goes, Mozart announces that the opera is finished – in his head, “the rest's just scribbling.”
- ✚ As Salieri reacts in disbelief, Mozart bows his elaborate bow and goes off.
- ✚ Salieri tells us that he struggled to find ways to block the production of *Figaro*, and that Mozart finished it in six weeks.
- ✚ Rosenberg appears with the news that the first performance is approaching, and says there's no way to stop it.
- ✚ Salieri has an idea, however, and explains it to him in Italian.
- ✚ Rosenberg is pleased with the idea and runs off to make it a reality.
- ✚ The story transitions to a meeting between Rosenberg and Mozart, in which Rosenberg reminds Mozart of a rule against having ballets in opera and tells him that a piece of music in the third act of *Figaro* is a ballet and must be removed.
- ✚ Mozart protests that it's a dance at a wedding and is essential to the story, but Rosenberg rips out the pages of music with the dance and tells Mozart to obey imperial commands in the future.
- ✚ Mozart suddenly cries out that this was Salieri's idea.
- ✚ In an aside to us, Salieri wonders how Mozart could have suspected, and whether God put the idea into Mozart's head.
- ✚ Mozart tells Rosenberg that he can't rewrite the music, not when the first performance is two days away and not when the music is already perfect.
- ✚ Rosenberg promises to get the Emperor to attend a rehearsal and make a ruling on whether the music should be allowed.
- ✚ Mozart swears at Rosenberg, throws the music to the ground and storms away.
- ✚ Then he meets Salieri, who promises to talk to the Emperor.
- ✚ Mozart goes away, much calmer.
- ✚ Salieri tells us he didn't talk to the Emperor, but the Emperor showed up at rehearsal anyway.
- ✚ Salieri recounts what happened at the rehearsal.
- ✚ The opera went along normally until the point when the music for the dance was supposed to be played.
- ✚ Then the action continued in silence, without the music.

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- ✚ When the Emperor asks why, Mozart tells him that Rosenberg told him to remove it because it was a ballet.
- ✚ Under protest from Rosenberg, the Emperor decrees that the music be put back in.
- ✚ Salieri then tells us what happened at the first performance of Figaro.
- ✚ As other characters “watch” the opera – the Emperor, the three courtiers, Constanze, Katherina, the Venticelli, and the Chorus of Citizens – Salieri tells us that Mozart took the improvisations he did on the March of Welcome and incorporated them into the opera.
- ✚ Salieri calls the music “astounding”, and says he watched the final scenes in tears.
- ✚ The Emperor, however, responds more calmly, and says only that encores must be eliminated – they make things far too long.
- ✚ When the Emperor, the courtiers, and the others leave, Mozart asks Salieri what he thought.
- ✚ Salieri describes the piece as “marvellous”, but Mozart says it’s the best opera ever and “no-one else living” could have done it.
- ✚ The Venticelli rush back with the news that Rosenberg is furious and will do anything to get back at Mozart.
- ✚ Salieri tells us that he worked with Rosenberg to get the opera cancelled.
- ✚ When Mozart complains, Salieri tells him “if the Public does not like one’s work, one has to accept the fact gracefully.
- ✚ Salieri tells us that he didn’t have to worry about destroying Mozart professionally anymore because the Viennese audiences would take care of it for him.
- ✚ Then he resolves to destroy Mozart as a man.

*This scene is a fairly straightforward plot. The action moves quickly and directly as Salieri plots to destroy Mozart and deny God. Salieri’s lie about going to see the Emperor is another step on his journey of transformation. Before making his vow to block God, Salieri’s morals would have never permitted him to lie and play the kind of politics he plays now. However, even though he manages to get Figaro cancelled, he feels frustration and he feels he’s getting no indication from God that his efforts at blocking Him are being felt. In other words, he’s experiencing no punishment, which leads him to wonder if God is taking any notice of him at all. This makes him more determined than ever to destroy Mozart and get God’s attention.*

*Mozart’s long speech looks at thematic questions about the Voice of God from the opposite angle. What does God hear? Is the noise of humanity, in all its confusion and desire and joy and anger, music to Him? It suggests that Mozart believes that with his work he is praising God. This is the opposite of what Salieri believes, which is that Mozart is in effect speaking for God.*

*When Van Swieten invites Mozart to join the Masons, it is the final stage of the set up of Salieri’s destruction of Mozart and the turning of the Masons against him in the final part of the play.*

*The contrast between Mozart and Salieri is vivid in this scene. Where Mozart reacts to setbacks with hysterics and a lot of emotion, Salieri reacts calmly and thoughtfully. This dramatizes another aspect of the way in which Mozart and Salieri are complete opposites.*



## Act 2, Part 3

- ✚ The setting moves back to the home of the Baroness, Salieri is back in his chair and back eating his favourite dessert, and Mozart is pacing, saying he'll go to England, where they love music and love him.
- ✚ When Salieri encourages him to go, Mozart changes his mind and says he can't because he has a wife and a family.
- ✚ Mozart says that he wrote his father to take care of the family for a while so a trip to England would be possible, but he refused.
- ✚ Then he complains that his father is bitter, jealous, and "dried up"
- ✚ During the transition, the Venticelli arrive with the news that Leopold Mozart (Mozart's father) is dead.
- ✚ The Venticelli leave, the transition ends, and Mozart is instantly hysterical with grief and confusion, saying his father always looked out for him and protected him from the wickedness in the world.
- ✚ Mozart accuses himself of betraying his father by marrying, when his father said he shouldn't and by talking badly about him.
- ✚ Salieri comforts him and opens his arms to him.
- ✚ Mozart almost embraces Salieri but instead falls to his knees and breaks down.
- ✚ Salieri turns to us and says this moment is the origins of "the Ghost Father in Mozart's opera Don Giovanni".
- ✚ As music from the opera plays, Salieri tells us that all he could do was stand by and watch as Mozart created art from his "ordinary life" and comments that while they were both "ordinary men .....he from the ordinary created legends – and Salieri from legends created only the ordinary."
- ✚ Salieri asks himself, and us, whether he could have shown any pity and then answers that he could if only God had shown pity on him.
- ✚ Salieri tells us that even in the midst of his plotting he still prayed for his compositions to sound good, but every day his compositions continued to lack spirit at the same time he heard spirit soaring through Mozart's work.
- ✚ Then he describes Mozart's giggle as "the laughter of God" and resolves that the only way to defeat Mozart is to send him into poverty.
- ✚ The Emperor expresses concern about Mozart, and plans to offer him the job of Chamber Composer, which had been held until his death by Salieri's old master, Gluck.
- ✚ Salieri resists at first, but when the Emperor insists he gives in, suggesting that Mozart receive a much reduced salary.
- ✚ Mozart calls the salary an insult, but when Salieri mentions that getting the post in the first place was his idea, Mozart immediately becomes grateful, but suddenly "doubles over" from an attack of stomach cramps, telling Salieri it's nothing, that it happens all the time now.
- ✚ When he leaves, Salieri says that he waited again for God to crush him, but instead he received his dearest wish, Kapellmeister Bonno died and Salieri was appointed "First Royal and Imperial Kapellmeister to our Court".
- ✚ Salieri tells us he was now truly alarmed, and wonders how long he'd go unpunished.
- ✚ The Venticelli arrive to congratulate him, and bring the news that Mozart is unwell, and that he and Constanze are expecting another baby.



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*Mozart's description of his father is ironic, in that it sounds to us as though he's also talking about Salieri. Does Salieri realize the similarities? It's a question for the actor playing Salieri and a director, but raises interesting possibilities if he does – particularly since, in the moments that follow this description of Mozart's father, Salieri begins to take the place of Mozart's father, as a creative and emotional mentor but also a force manipulating Mozart in the same way as his father did.*

*The playwright, through Salieri, offers us a definition of art in this scene – not just theatrical art, but art in general. The idea that artists make the ordinary legendary or the extraordinary ordinary is not new but has been proved to be true over and over again. The Italian Renaissance painter Caravaggio made the ordinary extraordinary by using prostitutes and street people as models for his paintings of saints. The Impressionist painter Monet made ordinary flowers and gardens into gauzy illuminations of heaven. The American playwright Arthur Miller used the life and death of an ordinary salesman to delve into the extraordinary trials faced by the human spirit in *Death of a Salesman*. Shakespeare used stories of extraordinary men and women, kings and great lovers, to explore thematically everyday vices like ambition and virtues like love. Any number of painters, writers, and poets have taken the extraordinary story of the life of Jesus Christ and found parallels in it of our day-to-day human existence.*

*Mozart's attack of cramps foreshadows his death at the end of the play.*

*When Salieri is appointed Kapellmeister, it is ironic to us that we see him being rewarded in some way for his awful behaviour towards Mozart. He seems to think it's a mistake, that he should be punished. This suggests to us that his goal of attention from God in the form of fame has changed. Now he wants to feel any kind of attention from God, which makes his actions as he destroys Mozart more desperate and extreme.*



## Act 2, Part 4

- ✚ Salieri (accompanied by the Venticelli) meets Mozart and Constanze on the street.
- ✚ The couple wear shabbier clothes and Constanze is pregnant.
- ✚ Mozart congratulates Salieri on his new position; Salieri congratulates Mozart on the new baby.
- ✚ When Salieri asks about Mozart's health, Mozart tells him the stomach pains are continuing and that he can't sleep at night because he has bad dreams of a figure "cloaked in grey" beckoning him.
- ✚ Constanze tells Salieri that she never dreams, "things are unpleasant enough .... awake", and suggests that if Mozart had "proper work" he might dream less".
- ✚ Mozart is embarrassed, and quickly hurries off with her.
- ✚ The Venticelli comment that Mozart is growing "freakish", tell Salieri that Mozart and Constanze have moved into an even more slummy section of Vienna, and reveal that not only is Mozart making no money at all apart from his small salary, but he's starting to beg from the Masons.
- ✚ It suddenly strikes Salieri that the Masons, with their commitment to social good, could stand in the way of Mozart's destruction.
- ✚ Salieri decides to destroy Mozart's reputation with the Masons, and sets about doing so.
- ✚ At the Masonic lodge, Van Swieten tells Mozart that the Masons are not a place for begging, but gives him some music to arrange which will pay him a small fee.
- ✚ When Mozart tells Salieri about the job, he also tells him that a new member of the lodge owns a small theatre and has asked Mozart to create a piece for "ordinary German people".
- ✚ Mozart says he's been thinking about writing about Brotherly Love, something that would be popular.
- ✚ Salieri suggests that since the Masons are all about "Brotherly Love", that the opera should be about the Masons.
- ✚ Mozart likes the idea, and when Salieri suggests that the Masons' rituals are secret, Mozart says he could "adapt them a little".
- ✚ Mozart goes off full of excitement about his new idea, and Salieri tells us "if that finish him off with the Masons, nothing would."
- ✚ A transition takes us into the setting that shows us both Salieri in his luxurious home eating sweets and Mozart and Constanze in their much poorer home, starving as Mozart composes his new opera.
- ✚ Constanze, still pregnant, complains about the cold and Mozart comments that his father was right.
- ✚ They did end up beggars, exactly as he said they would.
- ✚ Constanze tells him that his father is the reason they're beggars, that he kept Mozart a child all his life, and that she and Mozart's father hated each other.
- ✚ When Mozart protests, she tells him that the wonderful fire that had the other night was made up of his father's letters, and almost hysterically begins to dance to keep herself warm.
- ✚ Mozart is at first furious that she destroyed the letters, but can't help being drawn into her dance.

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- ✚ Soon they're dancing and playing together in their old way, but suddenly stop when Constanze goes into labour.
- ✚ The Venticelli rush on and tell Salieri that not only did Constanze give birth to another baby, but that she's taken both her children and left.
- ✚ Mozart tells Salieri she's gone to Germany, and that it will cost them the last money they have.
- ✚ He also tells Salieri that the cloaked figure has again been appearing in his dreams, and that the figure has been ordering him to write a Requiem (a composition played at a funeral).
- ✚ When Salieri asks whether he's still writing the opera, Mozart tells him it's finished and is about to be produced.
- ✚ Salieri tells him he'll come, and bring Katherina with him, saying she's no substitute for a wife but seeing her will cheer Mozart up.
- ✚ Mozart becomes excited and, as usual, over-enthusiastic in his gratitude.

*Mozart interprets the figure in grey as a representative of his father, calling him to die for betraying him and he writes Don Giovanni in an attempt to appease the figure, or make him change his mind. To us, however, the figure represents something different. Mozart's destruction as engineered by Salieri and Mozart's own crudeness and childishness. In either case, the appearance of the figure foreshadows Mozart's death.*

*Salieri's manipulation of the Masons and their belief in "Brotherly Love" in the destruction of Mozart is extremely ironic. It's doubtful that there would be less of an example of "brotherly love" than what Salieri is doing to Mozart.*

*The section in which we see both Salieri's home and Mozart's home is another theatrical convention to shape the action so we can see two realities, and how they reflect on and relate to each other, at the same time. In this case, the two realities present us with an ironic contrast – Mozart (the musical genius and "voice of God") lives in poverty, while Salieri (the musical mediocrity and "voice of destruction") lives in luxury. This, in turn, adds another layer to the central thematic question. What is the value of being the Voice of God, or hearing the Voice of God, if your reward is poverty, grief and destruction?*

## Act 2, Part 5

- ✚ The action of the previous scene flows smoothly into this one as Van Swieten sneaks in and watches a performance of *The Magic Flute* while Mozart, Katherina and Salieri sit with “the common people.”
- ✚ Salieri tells us that not only did Mozart include very specific references to the rituals of the Masons, he included a ghostly figure similar to the figure in gray, but one who gestured with welcome and love rather than beckoning.
- ✚ Salieri describes this figure as representing a newfound peace in Mozart, and calls Mozart himself the magic flute (which represents the ideal of brotherly love).
- ✚ At the conclusion of the opera, Van Swieten charges forward angrily.
- ✚ Mozart is surprised to see him, but Salieri tells us in an aside that he made sure he’d be there.
- ✚ Van Swieten accuses Mozart of betraying the Masons by including portrayals of their rituals in the opera, tells him that no Mason will ever help him again, and says that Mozart is never even to speak with him.
- ✚ Salieri pretends to protest, but Van Swieten is too angry and storms off.
- ✚ Salieri tells Mozart that it’s not over, but tells us that it was over, and that Mozart had nowhere else to turn.
- ✚ The Venticelli rush on and tell Salieri that Mozart sits all day and all night at a window, going back and forth between staring out the window as though he’s looking for something and urgently writing down music.
- ✚ Salieri tells us that he believed Mozart was looking for the figure in gray who would be bringing him some kind of message.
- ✚ Salieri tells us he realized that it would take one more thing to send Mozart over the edge, and that he decided he was going to be that thing and disguise himself as the figure in gray and visit Mozart.
- ✚ Salieri narrates the story of how he visited Mozart every night for a week, on every visit gesturing that Mozart had one day less to live.
- ✚ One the final day, Mozart calls out from his window and invites the figure up to his rooms.
- ✚ Salieri goes up, still in disguise.
- ✚ Mozart shows the “figure” his Requiem, begs for more time to make it really good and as he remembers how well things started out for him and his father, finally pleads for “the figure” to speak in his father’s place and tell him the requiem’s good.
- ✚ Salieri says it’s good, tears it up, eats a piece of the paper it was written on, and then reveals his identity.
- ✚ Mozart calls out to God for help, but Salieri turns on him viciously, saying that God does not help, he only uses, and confesses that “ten years of his hate have poisoned Mozart to death.”
- ✚ Salieri tells Mozart that God is finished with him and all he can do now is die.
- ✚ Mozart collapses, crying out for his father and imagines that Salieri is his father, holds out his arms to him, and starts to sing a song they sang together when Mozart was a child.
- ✚ Salieri sees this as his final victory, “the profoundest voice in the world reduced to a nursery tune” and he leaves, taking with him his mask and cloak.
- ✚ Mozart continues to sing.

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- ✚ Constanze returns and comforts him.
- ✚ As she talks about how she and the children both need him, Mozart goes back and forth between recognising her and his situation and listening to the music in his mind.
- ✚ It's the same music filling the theatre – Mozart's requiem.
- ✚ We see him hearing it, and composing it, in his mind as he dies.
- ✚ Constanze chatters about how he needs her as much as she needs him, but soon realizes he is dead.
- ✚ The Chorus of the Citizens comes on, dressed in black. Salieri tells us that Mozart was buried in a mass grave for the poor, "twenty other corpses. An unmarked ....pit."
- ✚ Van Swieten offers Constanze some money for the children, rather than spending it on a fancy funeral.
- ✚ As Mozart's body is carried off, followed by Van Swieten, Salieri tells us that his main emotion at the time was relief – and a little pity for the man he helped destroy.
- ✚ Salieri tells us that Constanze married again, a dull Danish diplomat.
- ✚ Constanze tells us that she sells manuscripts "by the ink: so many notes, so many schillings. That seems ... the simplest way."
- ✚ Finally, Salieri tells us that Mozart didn't imagine the initial appearance of the figure in gray telling him to write a requiem.
- ✚ Apparently, an eccentric nobleman showed up one day and asked Mozart to do exactly that.
- ✚ Salieri says that after Mozart's death the requiem was performed – and that he conducted it.
- ✚ As he transforms once again to his older self, Salieri tells us that he stayed in Vienna for thirty-two more years and became more and more famous, but then suddenly God finally took his revenge.
- ✚ Mozart's music suddenly became famous, and Salieri's virtually disappeared.
- ✚ Then he also tells us that he started the rumours about how he killed Mozart himself in order to achieve the fame he always sought.
- ✚ "As Mozart's name grows in the world so will mine! I'm going to be immortal after all."
- ✚ Salieri goes on to say that God is powerless to prevent it.
- ✚ Salieri pulls out a razor and tells us that he could only know that God existed through hearing music, that the only way he could worship was through writing music, and if he can't be Mozart then he didn't wish to be anything.
- ✚ Then he tells us he goes "to become a ghost himself," and describes himself as "Antonio Salieri, Patron Saint of Mediocrities."
- ✚ Salieri then slits his throat and falls into the wheelchair.
- ✚ The Venticelli hurry on with comments on his death taken from musical journals and other sources, which refuse to accept the idea that Salieri was responsible in any way for Mozart's death.
- ✚ The Venticelli say that they themselves do not believe it, and that "no-one believes it in the world."
- ✚ Salieri looks up one more time.... raises his arms as though to embrace the audience... then folds his hands across his chest as "the last four chords of the Masonic Funeral Music of Amadeus Mozart sound throughout the theatre".



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*The action of this section the play builds up in theatrical and emotional intensity to the dramatic climax of Mozart's death, which is also the climax of Salieri's journey of transformation. As Mozart dies, Salieri is at his most changed. Now he's a killer, at least in his own mind and possibly in our minds, something he couldn't imagine himself being before he started his journey.*

*If we haven't before, we feel pity for Mozart in this scene. Mozart is being manipulated, and so trustingly childlike when it comes to his faith in Salieri, that we can't help but feel sorry for him even if he is crude and over-excitabile.*

*The sequence in which the disguised Salieri visits the dying Mozart has two significant pieces of religious imagery. When Salieri eats a piece of the score of the Requiem, it symbolizes the act of taking communion found in many Christian churches. The act of communion symbolizes a person taking Christ's body into him, and therefore living a more Godly life. By eating a piece of the score, Salieri is saying two things: That Mozart's music is of God in the same way that Christ is of God and that by symbolically taking the score into him, he is taking a piece of Mozart, and therefore God, into him. This reinforces the idea earlier that Mozart is a martyr who is killed in the service of God.*

*Another religious reference is Mozart's final cry for his father. At this moment of his life, and death, Mozart feels forsaken by both his father and God in the same way that Christ did on the Cross. Mozart cries out to his father in the same way as Christ cried out to God and they are essentially asking the same thing, "where are you?" and "why have you left me?" The irony in this moment is that throughout the play, Salieri has been asking exactly the same question, with the significant difference that Salieri has become bitter and evil, giving in to the darkness instead of continuing to fight it and stay connected to God as Christ and Mozart did.*

*Constanze's comment that she sells Mozart's manuscripts by the note is ironic, in that one of the criticisms of Mozart's work throughout the play is that it has too many notes. In other words, it's because Mozart's music has so many notes that Constanze is able to make some money. Mozart's burial in a mass grave is also ironic and quite sad. If ever anyone stood alone, and deserved a grave that marked the resting place of a unique, very individual genius, it was him.*

*At the end of the play, Salieri remains unredeemed. Even though he says that he finally does feel pity for Mozart, his continued pursuit of fame (by starting the rumour that he killed Mozart) shows us that he has not gone back to where his journey of transformation began. At this moment, we realize that his journey didn't end with Mozart's death, but that it ends now with his continued quest for fame at any price. Salieri's transformation is complete, and eternal.*

*At the end of the play, its thematic question remains. The conclusion of Salieri's story leaves with no clear answers about the nature of the voice of God, except perhaps the idea that attempting to obstruct God only results in destruction.*

# Themes

## Beauty

- Salieri finds absolute beauty in music and so asks God to grant him the gift of artistic inspiration in his compositions.
- He came to appreciate the beauty of music at a young age, noting “when I was ten, a spray of sounded notes would make me dizzy almost to falling.”
- Unfortunately, he finds this absolute beauty only in Mozart’s compositions.
- When Mozart plays, he confesses that he hears the “voice of God”, and he responds with such delight that it makes him tremble.

## God and Religion

- Connected with Salieri’s pursuit of absolute beauty in his search for spiritual meaning, for a supreme logic in the universe.
- Salieri makes an ironic Faustian bargain in the play (Faust, a magician and alchemist in German legend, sells his soul to the devil in exchange for power and knowledge).
- Instead of constructing a bargain with the devil to attain an ideal, he forms one with God.
- He longs “to join all the composers who had celebrated His glory through the long Italian past” and so implores God, “let me be a composer.... in return, I will live with virtue... and I will honour you with much music all the days of my life.”
- When he decides that God has accepted his bargain, Salieri promises to be His servant for life.
- Salieri explains, “I was born a pair of ears and nothing else. It is only through hearing music that I know that God exists. Only through writing music that I could worship.”

## Creativity and Imagination

- Salieri searches for a supreme logic in the granting of the gifts of creativity and imagination.
- He is sure that artistic inspiration and talent are gifts given by God only to those who are worthy of them

## Duty and Responsibility

- Salieri tries to prove his worthiness through a devotion to duty and responsibility.
- Although he has been tempted to commit adultery, especially with his pupil Katherina Cavalier, he restrains himself and redoubles his commitment to the celebration of God through music.
- Salieri also shows his devotion through his philanthropic activities, as in his support of young, impoverished composers.



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- However, he turns his back on his noble commitments when he feels that God has favoured Mozart over him.
- In response, he determines that no longer will he deny himself his desires and so takes Katherina as his mistress.
- Seeing no tangible reward, he also drops his philanthropic activities.
- Finally, he determines to take revenge by destroying Mozart.

### Betrayal

- When Salieri decides that God has granted the gift of inspiration to Mozart, whom he deems unworthy, he feels betrayed, claiming that God has been actively toying with Salieri's devotion and desires.
- He concludes that God has been taunting him by giving him the desire to serve and praise God, and the ability to recognize true art, only after ensuring his own mediocrity.
- Salieri's God cruelly flaunts the "spiteful, sniggering, conceited, infantine" Mozart in front of Salieri as one of His chosen to point out Salieri's inferiority and thus humiliate him.
- Salieri is convinced that Mozart has become God's incarnation.
- The final irony, one that Salieri uses to help him destroy Mozart, is that Salieri is the only person at that time who can recognize Mozart's greatness.

### Justice and Injustice

- As a result of what he considers to be God's injustice, Salieri decides to exact his own form of justice regarding Mozart, even though he risks damnation.
- A bitter Salieri warns God that he now considers him an enemy, and so with his "last breath" he will try to block God's plan for Mozart's "worldly advancement".
- After reading Mozart's manuscripts and appreciating the exquisite beauty of his work, Salieri confesses that his life then required this "terrible and thrilling purpose".
- He hints at his plan to destroy Mozart when he insists that he will now engage in "a battle to the end" with God and that Mozart will be the "battleground".
- Ironically though, according to Salieri, God exacted His own justice, perhaps in response to Salieri's treatment of Mozart.
- Salieri concludes that God constructed an intricate and cruel plan to punish him: first, God ensured that Salieri would enjoy the recognition and appreciation of the public who was not capable of recognizing true art. Then, that recognition would be taken away from him and replaced with the public's growing appreciation for Mozart's music.
- Gradually, as "Mozart's music sounded louder and louder through the world," his would "fade completely, till no one played it at all."

# Style

## Narration

- The play is structured like a deathbed confession.
- The play opens after the main events have occurred and with one of the main characters, Antonio Salieri, speaking to the audience as an old man.
- Salieri frequently addresses the audience directly, sometimes in an aside, during the course of the play to gain support and understanding.
- This self-conscious, expressionistic device not only provides the audience with useful information; it also allows them a glimpse of Salieri's inner thoughts and emotions.
- When Salieri speaks to the audience, the other characters often "freeze" and the soundtrack stops.
- The Venticelli, or the "Little Winds", sometimes speak directly to the audience as they relate important information about the events surrounding Salieri's relationship with Mozart.
- They also provide Salieri with useful information about Mozart's activities and the public's response to both composers.
- Salieri's narration frames the play, which opens and closes with a focus on Salieri as a bitter old man, lamenting the loss of his fame and the overwhelming appreciation of Mozart's work.
- The older Salieri also appears in the middle of the play to offer commentary on the main plot details surrounding his relationship with Mozart.

## Point of view

- Shaffer tells the story of the relationship between Mozart and Salieri from Salieri's subjective point of view.
- While other characters in the play often substantiate Salieri's opinion of Mozart's character, especially when he challenges the composer's petulance and immaturity, they do not validate his portrayal of God's motives and behaviour.
- Salieri's God is "an old-candle-smoked God in a mulberry robe, staring at the world with dealer's eyes" – a vision he takes from a painting he saw as a child.
- Salieri cannot admit any responsibility for his artistic shortcomings and so must blame God for them.
- He insists that when he was young, God promised to grant him the gift of music.
- When He does not live up to this promise, He becomes Salieri's "cunning Enemy", whom Salieri continually tries to block.
- Salieri's God proves unjust to him after, he claims, God gave Salieri the desire to serve Him through music, but then "saw to it the service was shameful in the ears of the server" and gave him the ability to recognize greatness while acknowledging his own mediocrity.
- Salieri's God is also pitiless, insisting that He (God) does not need Salieri because He has Mozart.

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- When Salieri decides God has also turned his back on Mozart, Salieri tells the artist that God will not help or love him, for “God does not love. He can only use... He cares nothing for whom He uses; nothing for whom He denies.”

### Symbol

- The title of the play, Amadeus, translates into “God’s love” and thus becomes ironically symbolic in the play.
- Salieri continually tries to gain recognition of God’s love for him, especially since his “one desire was to join all the composers who had celebrated His glory through the long Italian past.”
- He sees an expression of God’s love only in Mozart’s music, which baffles him and drives him to the verge of madness.
- When he hears one of Mozart’s compositions, Salieri confesses, “it seemed to me that I had heard a voice of God –and that it issued from a creature whose own voice I had also heard – and it was the voice of an obscene child!”
- Shaffer also uses music symbolically in the play.
- His inclusion of Mozart’s most lyrical and stirring passages illustrates “God’s voice” in the music, especially when juxtaposed with Salieri’s more pedestrian pieces.
- Shaffer also uses the music to allow the audience to glimpse Salieri’s inner turmoil.
- For example, when Salieri reads the manuscripts Constanze brings him, he hears Mozart’s swelling music and “staggers” forward “like a man caught in a tumbling and violent sea.”
- When the drums “crash”, Salieri echoes the emotion of the piece as he drops the manuscripts and “falls senseless to the ground.”
- Shaffer directs, “At the same second the music explodes into a long, echoing, distorted boom, signifying some dreadful annihilation”
- At this climatic point, Salieri’s dream of becoming God’s chosen has been shattered.



# Historical Context

## Mozart

- In the twentieth century, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's reputation grew considerably.
- His works, which include a variety of forms from chamber music to symphonies and operas, have been heralded for their classical grace, technical perfection, and melodic beauty.
- Shaffer's play, *Amadeus*, records several details of Mozart's life.
- Mozart was a child prodigy who started composing before he was five.
- A year later, his father began taking him and his talented sister to play for the aristocracy in Europe.
- In 1781, he relocated to Vienna and married Constanze Weber against his father's wishes.
- The newlyweds had financial difficulties when Mozart could not find suitable employment.
- While his work was often applauded during his lifetime, audiences were sometimes critical of the demands his innovations placed on them.
- He also clashed with the emperor's court over issues of artistic freedom.
- Eventually, he was appointed chamber musician and court composer to Joseph II, but the paltry salary that he earned did not ease his financial troubles.
- He gained public acclaim for *The Magic Flute*, but the work's references to the secret rituals of the Freemasons lost him the support of one of its most ardent defenders, Baron Van Swieten.
- Mozart worked on his final piece, the *Requiem Mass*, with the sense that it would be played at his own funeral.
- He died, however, before he could complete it and was buried, unceremoniously, in an unmarked, mass grave.

# The Literary Essay

- Use the question / statement of the essay to write your introduction.
- Write in the present tense.
- Use the SIR principle ( Statement / Illustration/ Relate to the topic)
- Use each statement as a new paragraph.
- Indicate the amount of words used.
- Provide a title for your essay
- Link your conclusion to your introduction

**In an essay of 400 – 450 words, critically examine the conflict between genius and mediocrity in Shaffer’s play.**

## SIR Principle

Statement	Illustration (evidence / example / quotes)	Relate to the topic
Salieri praises God through his music	Salieri finds absolute beauty in music and so asks God to grant him the gift of artistic inspiration in his compositions	Before he hears the genius play he is content and believes that his bargain with God has made him a musical genius
	“when I was ten, a spray of sounded notes would make me dizzy almost to falling.”	
Salieri finds this absolute beauty only in Mozart’s compositions	When Mozart plays, he confesses that he hears the “voice of God”, and he responds with such delight that it makes him tremble	The conflict between Mozart and Salieri exists only in Salieri’s mind because he recognizes Mozart’s musical genius
Salieri turns his back on his noble commitments when he feels that God has favoured Mozart over him.	When Salieri decides that God has granted the gift of inspiration to Mozart, whom he deems unworthy, he feels betrayed, claiming that God has been actively toying with Salieri’s devotion and desires.	He concludes that God has been taunting him by giving him the desire to serve and praise God, and the ability to recognize true art, only after ensuring his own mediocrity.
Salieri’s God cruelly flaunts the “spiteful, sniggering, conceited, infantine” Mozart in front of Salieri as one of His chosen to point out Salieri’s inferiority and thus humiliate him.	Salieri is convinced that Mozart has become God’s incarnation	The final irony, one that Salieri uses to help him destroy Mozart, is that Salieri is the only person at that time who can recognize Mozart’s greatness.

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As a result of what he considers to be God's injustice, Salieri decides to exact his own form of justice regarding Mozart, even though he risks damnation.	A bitter Salieri warns God that he now considers him an enemy, and so with his "last breath" he will try to block God's plan for Mozart's "worldly advancement".	After reading Mozart's manuscripts and appreciating the exquisite beauty of his work, Salieri confesses that his life then required this "terrible and thrilling purpose".
Salieri hints at his plan to destroy Mozart when he insists that he will now engage in "a battle to the end" with God and that Mozart will be the "battleground".	Ironically though, according to Salieri, God exacted His own justice, perhaps in response to Salieri's treatment of Mozart.	Salieri concludes that God constructed an intricate and cruel plan to punish him: first, God ensured that Salieri would enjoy the recognition and appreciation of the public who was not capable of recognizing true art. Then, that recognition would be taken away from him and replaced with the public's growing appreciation for Mozart's music.
Salieri succeeds in destroying Mozart	Mozart is penniless, out of favour with the Masons and desperate.	Mozart dies and Salieri becomes more famous – then Mozart's music becomes famous while Salieri's fades away – a clear indication that genius has conquered mediocrity.

## Sources

[http://www.bookrags.com/Wolfgang\\_Amadeus\\_Mozart/](http://www.bookrags.com/Wolfgang_Amadeus_Mozart/)

<http://www.gradesaver.com/study-guides/>



