



## San Francisco Opera's Verdi's *DON CARLO*

### Curriculum Connections

California Content Standards  
Kindergarten through Grade 12

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#### **SOCIAL STUDIES**

##### PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

Self-Identity.

Family: Immediate & Extended. Caring brother and sister relationship.

Roles of family members in your life and the choices you make.

Time: Past, Present, Future.

Place: Neighborhood, City, State, Continent, World, Universe.

What are the characters beliefs about death?

How do different ideologies tie in? political influence vs. religious influence.

Modern day witch-hunts. When does it become other nations responsibility to care for persecuted peoples?

How do the arts influence political, social and moral decision-making?

##### CIVICS

Social Hierarchy: Class, Status. Ex. officers, servants.

How is class indicated by the music, the costumes and other elements in *Don Carlo*?

Political events during Verdi's time. Nationalism, Symbolism - Verdi became disillusioned; Realpolitik

Learn about Flanders – What's the history of the formation of Belgium, challenges of bringing Belgium and Netherlands into union; Flanders was major trade hub and did not want to pay tribute to Spanish court. Sacrificing Flanders independence for the sake of the empire

What is the relationship between The Church vs. The State in *Don Carlo*? (The Church has more power than King at the end of *Don Carlo*, basically telling Don Carlo what to do)

Power dynamics - Rulers/people in power having empathy/compassion vs. power corrupts. What happens when people lose faith in their leadership? Where are there civil uprisings today?

Create a timeline for the Renaissance and the Reformation.

What is the relationship between Church and State in different countries today?

There is a biblical reference when the Grand Inquisitor demands sacrifice of son; what other stories have this same situation?

## GEOGRAPHY

The Opera's setting: Where is this place? What is this culture?

Map locations mentioned in the opera.

Location of Verdi's birth. Where else did he live?

Trace Verdi's travels and draw a map of the different places where he lived.

Map of Europe over different time periods, compare and contrast, how have borders changed?

Based on the story, pick a new setting for the opera. How would the story change, if at all?

Review the cast list for this production of the opera; where do the singers come from?

## HISTORY

Research when Verdi was born and the time period when Verdi lived. What are the differences and similarities between Verdi's Europe and Europe today?

Examine class system, government and politics during Verdi's time.

How is historical information reflected in the viewpoints of the characters?

Create a Venn diagram: what was true about the time of *Don Carlo*, what is true about our time, and what overlaps?

What would the audience during Verdi's time have known about these characters before seeing the opera? What would they be expecting from characters like King Philip II, Don Carlo and Elisabetta?

Research the story of *Don Carlo*; was the story based on a real story?

*Don Carlo* was written for International Exposition – how would that influence the piece? How quickly could the opera spread?

Research the reception of *Don Carlo* upon its premiere.

Assign different topics from the time of the opera to small groups, and have them present to each other: money and trade, social structures, military, the arts, etc.

Verdi saw something in this story to structure an opera around. What was happening in Europe when the opera was written? What were the social structures in Europe at the time?

Research the Spanish Inquisition.

Examine systems of royalty.

What toll does war have on people? What is the impact of war on people today? What similarities and differences do you see between then and now?

*Don Carlo* is an opera about different religions; written in a time when religions were being formed. Where might one set a new opera look to write about this theme?

How does *Don Carlo* explore the theme of the Individual vs. climate/economics/social forces to effect change?

History of Opera

- How Opera began, history of San Francisco Opera, history of the Adler Fellow Program.

## ACTIVITIES

Map settings in which play and opera take place.

How do people win in this opera? What do they think they have gained when they win? What is their own personal concept of winning? Create a board game or card game that would have been typical of the era involving the characters from *Don Carlo*.

Pick another time period in which to set *Don Carlo*. Research and design costumes and sets to reflect trends, society at that time.

Write a letter from one character to another using the writing materials used at the time of *Don Carlo* (quill pens, wax seals, parchment).

Create timelines of events in opera; Verdi's operas.

Create an organizational chart of the character relationships in *Don Carlo*.

Researching the backstory or the story that comes after *Don Carlo*.

Create a timeline of the story of *Don Carlo*; include events that were happening elsewhere in the world at the same time.

Examine the power relationships in the opera.

The story of *Don Carlo* could be set in a different time and place. Pick a different setting for the plot of this story.

Research the development of *Don Carlo*. Why would an artist be commissioned to write an opera? How do new operas get made today?