



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

California Content Standards
Kindergarten through Grade 12

LANGUAGE ARTS

WORD ANALYSIS, FLUENCY, AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Phonics and Phonemic Awareness:

Letter Recognition: Name the letters in a word. Ex. **Don Carlo = C-a-r-l-o.**

Letter/Sound Association: Name the letters and the beginning and ending sound in a word. **C-ar-l-o**

Match and list words with the same beginning or ending sounds. Ex. **Carlo** and **Countess** have the same beginning letter "c" and sound /c/; but end with different ending sounds. Additional examples: Carlo, Rodrigo, Tebaldo.

Syllables: Count the syllables in a word. Ex.: Prin-cess E-Bo-li

Match and list words with the same number of syllables. Clap out syllables as beats. Ex.: 1 syllable 2 syllables 3 syllables **bass = bass tenor = ten-or soprano = so-pra-no**

Phoneme Substitution: Play with the beginning sounds to make silly words. What would a "boprano" sound like? (Also substitute middle and ending sounds.) Ex. **soprano, boprano, toprano, koprano.**

Phoneme Counting: How many sounds in a word? Ex. **bell = 3**

Phoneme Segmentation: Which sounds do you hear in a word? Ex. **sing = s/i/n/g.**

Reading Skills: Build skills using the subtitles on the video and related educator documents.

Examine vocabulary in source material texts: *Don Carlo* libretto.

Examine the different names in the story; what would you name your characters or places?

Define words and expressions in the story that are unfamiliar: auto-de-fe, cloister; "choose between the veil and exile"

Concepts of Print: Sentence structure, punctuation, directionality.

Opera vocabulary: soprano, mezzo-soprano, bass, trouser role.

Examine contrasting vocabulary.

Find words in *Don Carlo* that are unfamiliar and find definitions and roots.

Find analogies in *Don Carlo*.

Metaphors

Parts of speech: Noun, verb, adjective, adverb, prepositions.

Vocabulary Lists: Ex. *Don Carlo* Opera glossary, Music and Composition terms



Reading Comprehension:

Story Development (What's the beginning, middle and end?): Character desires and motivation; Cause and effect: What made this happen?

The sequencing of events, climax, and resolution.

Read:

Opera source material: Source material for *Don Carlo*, *Don Carlo* libretto, biographies, etc.

Watch different versions of the opera on DVD; how do they differ and why?

Examine the history of *Don Carlo* in literature. Compare to the opera.

How did the tragedy evolve?

Compare and contrast the opera libretto with the source material – Schiller's play – that Verdi used to create *Don Carlo*.

Find characters in literature who've experience unrequited love.

Read sections of the English translation of the libretto. Write a brief synopsis based on the libretto.

Reflect on your viewing of the opera by sharing your questions about it with the other students.

Creative writing:

Interpret the story and create a new version. Create your own characters or change the opera's time period and setting.

Explore different genres of writing: poetry, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, autobiography, short story, historical novel, etc.

Explore literary devices such as the use of point of view, internal/external conflict, repetition of phrases and foreshadowing.

CREATIVE WRITING

Reinterpret the story by creating a new version using your own characters, time period and setting.

Explore different genres of writing: poetry, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, autobiography, short story, historical novel, etc.

Explore literary devices such as the use of point of view, internal/external conflict, repetition of phrases and foreshadowing.

Analysis and Interpretation: Expository writing, critiques/reviews.

Persuasive Writing: Letter writing, copywriting: advertising, fundraising, press release.

Write about what would happen to the characters if the story continued.

Set the story in a different time and place. Update the dialogue.

Read published letters by famous people; try to reconstruct their lives from the letters.

LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS

Elements of a Story:

Character, plot, setting, conflict.

Chart out the elements of the plot.

Play segments of the opera; students' journal after listing the segments.

Compare the format of the libretto to the format of the original book.

Students respond to a letter from Don Carlo or Elisabetta asking them for advice.

Read a synopsis of Act I; how would you complete this story?

Examine the relationship between Art and politics – How do they drive and influence each other? A topic for debate, "Should the arts be political?" <http://www.houstonpress.com/arts/the-personal-is-political-6562239>

What are the King and Queen's motivations for the people?

Vocabulary:

Reading for understanding using the subtitles on videos and related educator documents.

Genres:

Historical, political dramas and compare to current day examples, featuring historical dynasties, mini-series (Wolf Hall, The Tudors, GoT, Masterpiece Theatre) and soap operas.

Themes: Tragedy - Duty vs. Liberty (Nationhood, independence) love, friendship & loyalty, trust, fate. Status & Power – Maintain the status quo (social class and wealth), punishment, forgiveness, mercy (for Protestants); jealousy, deceit, sacrifice, and the battle of the sexes - magnanimity (Elisabeth marrying King Philip despite her love for Don Carlo), adultery (Eboli and King, lust between Queen and Don Carlo), family ties, legacy.

Character Actions and Motives:

Examine the character of Don Carlo. What do you think about Don Carlo? Do you like him? What are his motivations? What are his principles? Are you sympathetic to his plight?

Discuss Don Carlo's motivations. Do you think he makes the right decisions throughout the opera?

Think of five adjectives that describe Don Carlo. Support your choices with evidence.

Analyze the characters in the opera. What motivates their actions? What are their main traits? Do they change over the course of the opera?

Who are the characters that drive the action in this opera?

What are some emotions or feelings the characters exhibit in the story? How do you feel about how they act upon or express their emotions?

Examine each character's appetite. What are they hungry for?

Examine the relationships in the opera, i.e. between Don Carlo and Elisabetta, between Don Carlo and Princess Eboli. The relationship between Don Carlo and Phillip II, compared to Don Carlo and Rodrigo. How do they interact? How do the characters feel about each other?

Examine the male characters and their particular political attitudes. What do the characters in *Don Carlo* stand for? How are characters like current day politicians?

Tebaldo, the young page to Elisabetta, is one of Verdi's only trouser roles. Why?

Archetypes: What are stock characters (The King, The prince, his faithful friend)? Examine the family dynamic of the characters in *Don Carlo*. Do any of characters behave differently from what is expected?

Character Development: Examine character development: do the characters grow beyond their expected roles?

List some transformations or changes that the characters experience in the story. How do they respond to the changes? How do their characters change?

Compare the characters in *Don Carlo* to characters in stories that you know. Can you find any similarities?

Pick your favorite character in the opera and describe him/her. Write a letter from his/her point of view to another character.

Examine the use of subtext in the opera. Are people always saying what they mean, or is their language intended to mask something?

Examine character development: do the characters grow beyond their expected roles?

Compare and contrast the behavior of the different characters in the opera.

How do the different characters speak? What does that say about their social status?

Explore the nuances of the characters in the opera.

How do the characters go about getting what they want in the opera?

Are the female characters in the opera two-dimensional or three-dimensional?

Create a map of the characters. Who are the primary characters? Who are the secondary?

Alliteration: Recognize the similarities of sounds and rhythmic patterns in the libretto.

Figurative Language: Simile, Metaphor, Hyperbole, Personification, Allegory:

Language style and music reflects emotion of characters, and instrumental sounds or musical phrases can be used symbolize character.

WRITING STRATEGIES

Analysis and Interpretation:

Don Carlo production materials: artist biographies, program and program notes, synopsis, expository writing, critiques/reviews, etc.

Persuasive Writing:

Write a “me” poem for each of the characters: begin the poem with “I am” and list the characteristics of each person in separate phrases.

Write parrot poems from the point of view of the characters. Parrot poems are conversational poems in which partners write each line in turn.

Persuasive writing: create posters, advertisements for one of the characters.

Write dialogue for two of the characters in the opera. Each character only says one line, but uses different inflections each time he/she says it.

Writing exercise in which feelings are expressed like those in *Don Carlo* arias.

Write a passage expressing several characters’ inner thoughts at the same time.

Rewrite libretto using today as a setting. Use contemporary characters: Who would be Don Carlo today? Elisabetta?

Create a storyboard of *Don Carlo* as a soap opera.

Scenes, letters, diary or blog pages can be written from a particular character's point of view; make sure to take relationships between characters into account. Diary pages could focus on how characters convince themselves to do something — internal debate.

Letter writing, copywriting: advertising, fundraising, press release.

Write a different ending for the opera.

Write a letter from one character to another.

Write or draw a deleted scene for the opera; a scene we hear about, but don't see.

Divide into small groups. Each group writes the story from the point of view of a different character.

Write a prequel to the opera, focusing on Don Carlo's young life.

Keep journals from the point of view of the characters during the events of the opera.

Write this story from the point of view of the women. What if Don Carlo was a woman?

Rewrite a scene from the opera, switching the genders of the characters. How does the scene change? Rewrite a scene, changing the ethnicities. How does it change?

WRITTEN AND ORAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Debates between characters. Deliver persuasive speeches, identify tactics used.

Write a monologue with two scenes based on the alternate points of view held by a single character.

Spelling: Spell the names of the characters in *Don Carlo*.

Facial cues, expressions, gestures can sometimes amplify message being delivered, or can sometimes run contrary to meaning of words (subtext).

What are the different types of drama? What kind of drama is *Don Carlo*? How does it compare to similar types today?

Watch different versions of the opera on DVD and write reviews. Read example reviews first.

What is a treaty? Write your own peace treaty.

Designate someone as Don Carlo and someone to interview him. Conduct an interview.

Examine the structure of *Don Carlo*; can you relate it to other stories you've read or seen that have the same character(s) in different stories?

Define climax. Define denouement. How are they used in *Don Carlo*?

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Oral Speaking: Connection between the written words and oral interpretation (recitative and sung), the phrasing and musicality of speech.

Act out main events of the story, in tableaux or longer scenes. Improvise. Give small groups different scenes, and then act out in succession.

Separate into small groups; each group researches and comes up with evidence for certain characters' motivations, then defends them in a classroom debate.

Tell the story of *Don Carlo* in your own words to other members of your class.

Write dialogue for two of the characters in the opera. Each character only says one line, but uses different inflections each time he/she says it.

Write two speeches about the same thing; write one to be delivered to a friend, and one to be delivered to a person of authority. How does your language differ?

Conduct a debate between two characters in the opera.

Reflection: What did you see, think, hear and feel? Ex. Verbal & written responses to *Don Carlo*.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Giuseppe Verdi (composer): biographies, timelines of work.

Joseph Méry and Camille du Locle (librettists): Biography, timeline of works.

ACTIVITIES

Create a character sketch.

Create Reader's Theater of *Don Carlo*.

Interview characters in *Don Carlo*; write a news story based on the interviews.

Create a news report about *Don Carlo* using HyperStudio.

Write a Dear Abby letter from one of the characters in the opera, and Abby's response.

Write a letter from one character to another, choosing a moment in the story to write about. Use the "Friendly Letter" format.

Using a letter from one character to another in the opera; edit the letter down to a tweet or Facebook post.

Write a blog post from the point of view of one character.

Write a fake twitter feed for Don Carlo or Elisabetta.

Write a scene of conflict between two people who start out as friends, then end up arguing. Compare it with a scene of conflict in the opera.

Play "Hot Seat": one student acts as one of the characters from the story, and the other students ask him or her questions based on that character.

Write a prequel for the opera about one of the characters' life.

Story writing: Adapt existing source material; create story/characters.

Libretto writing: Adapt *Don Carlo* (existing source material) or create a new story/characters.

Create written copy: program, poster design, advertising, biography, etc.

Read and report on feature articles from the opera program.