

THE ELIXIR OF LOVE

The Elixir of Love: Social Studies (Planning An Opera)

GAETANO DONIZETTI

Students Will

- Read for information
- Research a civilization, landmarks, or literary work in which to set a story
- Write a brief setting and story as the basis for an opera

Copies for Each Student

- "Our Composer, Gaetano Donizetti"
- "Our Librettist, Felice Romani"
- **Activity Worksheet:** "Planning Your Opera"

Getting Ready

Prepare internet access for possible research, guided practice, or group work. Gather pens, pencils, and additional writing paper as needed for your group.

Introduction

Have your students read "Our Composer, Gaetano Donizetti" and "Our Librettist, Felice Romani". Give each student a copy of the **Activity Worksheet** or display it on screen. Give an overview of the assignment, and point out the information your students are expected to research and write about. To align with Texas TEKS, it is recommended that research topics be tailored according to grade level:

Grade 3: Contributions to the cultural heritage of communities, including literary works.

Grade 4: Contributions by various ethnic groups to Texas, including literary works.

Grade 5: Contributions by various groups to the United States, including literary works.

Grade 6: Societies of the contemporary world.

Grade 7: Texas history, from natural Texas to present.

Grade 8: United States history from the early colonial period through Reconstruction.

U.S. History Studies since 1877: U.S. History from Reconstruction to the present day.

World History Studies: Societies of ancient Greece, Rome, India, Persia, China, and Medieval to Renaissance Europe.

Guided/Independent Practice

Depending on your grade level, the ability of your students, and time constraints, you may choose to have students work as a whole class, in small groups, with a partner, or individually. Read the directions on the **Activity Worksheet**. Have students select topics and begin research. This can be done in class or individually as an outside assignment. Have students fill in their research information, characters, and write a short summary of their dramatic plot. If students are working with a partner or in small groups, give them time to discuss their answers before writing them down. Have students share their answers individually or by groups and tell why they chose their settings and story elements.

Evaluation

Have students present their ideas to the class for discussion and evaluation. The teacher may want to guide the discussion.

For Further Study

Students may want to do additional research on civilizations and landmarks in which to stage a drama or other related topics online or in their school library. Their findings can be shared with the class at the beginning of a later lesson.

TEKS: Social Studies

Grade 6 (113.18.C.14.A) and (113.18.C.19.A)

(14) Culture. The student understands that all societies have basic institutions in common even though the characteristics of these institutions may differ. (A) identify institutions basic to all societies, including government, economic, educational, and religious institutions

(19) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. (A) differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as oral, print, and visual material and artifacts to acquire information about various world cultures

Grade 7 (113.19.C.20.A)

(20) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. (A) differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas

Grade 8 (113.20.C.23.C) and (113.20.C.29.A)

(23) Culture. The student understands the relationships between and among people from various groups, including racial, ethnic, and religious groups, during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

(C) identify ways conflicts between people from various racial, ethnic, and religious groups were addressed

(29) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. (A) differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about the United States

United States History Studies Since 1877: (113.41.D.25.C)

(25) Culture. The student understands how people from various groups contribute to our national identity. (C) explain how the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, gender, and religious groups shape American culture

United States History Studies Since 1877, continued: (113.41.D.28.A)

(28) Social studies skills. The student understands how historians use historiography to interpret the past and applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including technology. (A) analyze primary and secondary sources such as maps, graphs, speeches, political cartoons, and artifacts to acquire information to answer historical questions

World History Studies: (113.42.D.24.A/B) and (113.42.D.28.F)

(24) Culture. The student understands how the development of ideas has influenced institutions and societies. (A and B) (A) summarize the fundamental ideas and institutions of Eastern civilizations that originated in China and India; (B) summarize the fundamental ideas and institutions of Western civilizations that originated in Greece and Rome

(28) Social studies skills. The student understands how historians use historiography to interpret the past and applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including technology. (F) formulate and communicate visually, orally, or in writing a claim supported by evidence and reasoning for an intended audience and purpose

TEKS: Language Arts**Grade 6** (110.22.B.12.F)

(12) Inquiry and research: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student engages in both short-term and sustained recursive inquiry processes for a variety of purposes. (F) synthesize information from a variety of sources

Grade 7 (110.23.B.12.F)

(12) Inquiry and research: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student engages in both short-term and sustained recursive inquiry processes for a variety of purposes. (F) synthesize information from a variety of sources

Grade 8 (110.24.B.12.F)

(12) Inquiry and research: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student engages in both short-term and sustained recursive inquiry processes for a variety of purposes. (F) synthesize information from a variety of sources

English Language Arts and Reading, English I (110.36.C.5.B)

(5) Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student responds to an increasingly challenging variety of sources that are read, heard, or viewed. (B) write responses that demonstrate understanding of texts, including comparing texts within and across genres

English Language Arts and Reading, English II (110.37.C.5.B)

(5) Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student responds to an increasingly challenging variety of sources that are read, heard, or viewed. (B) write responses that demonstrate understanding of texts, including comparing texts within and across genres

English Language Arts and Reading, English III (110.38.C.5.B)

(5) Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student responds to an increasingly challenging variety of sources that are read, heard, or viewed. (B) write responses that demonstrate analysis of texts, including comparing texts within and across genres

English Language Arts and Reading, English III (110.38.C.5.B)

(5) Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student responds to an increasingly challenging variety of sources that are read, heard, or viewed. (B) write responses that demonstrate analysis of texts, including comparing texts within and across genres

English Language Arts and Reading, English IV (110.39.C.5.B)

(5) Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student responds to an increasingly challenging variety of sources that are read, heard, or viewed (B) write responses that demonstrate analysis of texts, including comparing texts within and across genres

Gardner's Intelligences

Verbal-Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical

Bloom's Taxonomy

Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Synthesis, Evaluation

Bibliography

Warrack, John and West, Ewan, The Oxford Dictionary of Opera, Oxford University Press, 1992.

Online Resources

www.oxfordmusiconline.com

The Elixir of Love

Our Composer, Gaetano Donizetti

Gaetano Donizetti was born in Bergamo, Italy on November 29, 1797. His father was the caretaker of the town pawnshop and his family was very poor. Although there was no tradition of music in the family, Donizetti showed talent for music at an early age. He was able to study music thanks to the help of Simone Mayr, a priest and teacher at the Saint Maria Maggiore church. In 1806, Mayr provided Donizetti with a full scholarship to attend a new school created to train musicians and choristers for the church's services.

Donizetti did not have a beautiful singing voice, but still proved himself by composing chamber and religious works. In 1814, Mayr helped Donizetti travel to Bologna, Italy to study with Padre Mattei. By 1822, Donizetti had moved to Naples, Italy to compose for the theatre.

During the next 12 years, Donizetti composed 31 operas for theatres in Naples, Rome, and Milan. In 1830, he premiered his 33rd opera, *Anna Bolena*, in Milan, Italy. This opera brought Donizetti great fame both in Italy and in countries around the world. He followed this success with *L'elisir d'amore*, a masterpiece in comic opera, in 1832. In 1835, Donizetti composed two bel canto operas: *Lucia di Lammermoor*, his most famous opera, and *Maria Stuarda*.

Donizetti was known for working at a frenzied pace. It was still the early days of composers working without wealthy patrons. His only financial security was the money he could earn for each opera. Donizetti sometimes found himself working with bad libretti rather than not working at all. *L'elisir d'amore*, however, was a remarkable libretto, and provided Donizetti with the story for one of his most enduring operas. He wrote the music for the entire opera in only 14 days.

Gaetano Donizetti suffered many tragedies. His parents died within weeks of each other in 1836. Donizetti and his wife had three children all of whom died in infancy. On July 30, 1837 Donizetti's

beloved wife, Virginia, also passed away. It was during this tragic time that Donizetti had signed a contract to write the opera, *Roberto Devereux*.

In 1840, Donizetti moved to Paris, France. While there, he wrote most of his operas in French. In 1842, Donizetti became the main conductor of the Austrian court in Vienna, Austria, but kept his association with the Paris theaters. In all his dealings with the theaters, librettists, and singers, his colleagues described him as kind and respectful. Donizetti wrote *Don Pasquale*, his brilliant comic opera, in 1843. It was during rehearsals for *Don Pasquale* in Paris, France that Donizetti began to show signs of ill health. By 1845, he had a stroke, his health worsened, and he was admitted to an insane asylum.

Donizetti was almost completely paralyzed by the time his friends brought him home to Bergamo, Italy. Here, they looked after him until his death on April 8, 1848. He was first buried in a cemetery in the borough of Valtesse in Bergamo. Donizetti's remains were later transferred to the church cemetery of Saint Maria Maggiore in Bergamo. There, he was buried near the grave of his teacher, Simone Mayr.

The Elixir of Love

Our Librettist, Felice Romani

Felice Romani (Librettist), (January 31, 1788 - January 28, 1865) was born in 1788 in Moneglia, Italy. He was born to a poor family and often sick as a child, but he worked hard and grew up to study law and literature in Pisa. He eventually became a literature professor at the University of Genoa. Romani spent some time traveling through Europe and then moved to Milan where he met the Bavarian composer, Simon Mayr. He wrote two librettos for Mayr, and other composers in Milan were very impressed with his work. Romani was hired as a librettist for La Scala, the most famous opera house in Italy.

The excellence of Romani's writing style, noted for the spare use of poetry and lack of pretense, made him extremely popular with composers. He worked with all of the most important Italian composers of his day and wrote works in almost every operatic genre. Some of the operas are still performed today and include Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*, *Anna Bolena*, and *Lucrezia Borgia*. He never created original plots or subjects, but preferred to adapt his librettos from already existing works. *The Elixir of Love*, for example was based on a French opera.

***The Elixir of Love* Social Studies Activity**

The creative genius of Gaetano Donizetti and Felice Romani created the *The Elixir of Love*. The opera was originally set in an Italian town around 1830. It has been presented in other times and locations such as the American West of the late 1800's. The Dallas Opera production places it specifically in Texas. The characters and plot could possibly be set in any time period in any society on earth. A confident young woman, a simple, but devoted young man, a handsome army officer convinced that he can make any woman love him—all could be easily reinterpreted to other settings and eras you have studied. Or maybe a different story is in order. After all, the human animal is the same in all cultures and all times in history.

You will plan a new opera of your own. You will select a time period, society, or culture that you may have previously read about in social studies. You may plan your characters and their story. You might also select a famous work of literature to present. Be sure to select a place for the action to happen. It may be a real place, like the acropolis in Athens, the Forbidden City of China, Machu Picchu in Peru, the Alamo, or even Stonehenge. You will need to do a little research on your topics, obtain information and possibly images, write out your idea, and present your plan to the class.

Your Plan

Your plan for a new dramatic opera should contain the following:

1. What era, civilization, or society would be the basis for your opera?
2. What characters would you use? Names are not necessary, but tell us who these people are.
3. What place would be the setting? Would you use a landmark that still exists or something generic, like a Native American village in Texas?
4. Briefly tell the story you would like to portray. What is the main conflict, or problem of the story?
5. Tell why you chose the time and place that you selected, and share your research on the topic, either from the library or web based.

All of this information can be as brief or as detailed as your teacher requests. The basic facts would probably fit on a single sheet of notebook paper. You may use the planning form below. Your research may yield much more information.

Name _____ Date _____

***The Elixir of Love* Social Studies
Planning Your Opera Activity Worksheet**

1. What era, civilization, or society would be the basis for your opera?

2. Briefly tell about two or three main characters in your opera.

3. What place would be the setting?

4. What is the main conflict or problem of the story?

5. Tell why you chose the time and place that you selected, and share your research on the topic, either from the library or web based.

ANSWER KEY *The Elixir of Love* Social Studies: Planning Your Opera

1. What era, civilization, or society would be the basis for your opera?

All answers will be unique and individual.

2. Briefly tell about two or three main characters in your opera.

All answers will be unique and individual

3. What place would be the setting? _

All answers will be unique and individual

4. What is the main conflict or problem of the story?

All answers will be unique and individual

5. Tell why you chose the time and place that you selected, and share your research on the topic, either from the library or web based.

All answers will be unique and individual
