

Social Studies: Historical Settings for Opera

Students Will

- Read the *Don Carlo Synopsis*
- Read **The Characters** for character analysis
- Research a civilization, landmarks, or literary work with which to set a story
- Write a brief setting and story as the basis for an opera

Copies for Each Student

- *Don Carlo Synopsis* and **The Characters**
- Social Studies Activity Worksheet

Getting Ready

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

Introduction

Have your students read the *Don Carlo Synopsis* and **The Characters**. Give each student a copy of the **Social Studies Activity Worksheet** or display it on a 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 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 as an outside assignment. Have students fill in their research information, characters, and write a short summary of their dramatic plot. 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) Culture. The student understands that all societies have basic institutions in common even though the characteristics of these institutions may differ.
- (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 technology.

Grade 7 | 113.19.C

- (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 technology.

Grade 8 | 113.20.C

- (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.
- (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 technology.

United States History Studies Since 1877 | 113.41.D.25

- (25) Culture. The student understands how people from various groups contribute to our national identity.
- (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.

World History Studies | 113.42.D

- (24) Culture. The student understands how the development of ideas has influenced institutions and societies.
- (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.

TEKS: Language Arts

Grade 6 | 110.22.B

- (7) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to analyze how the characters' internal and external responses develop the plot. (B)

Grade 7 | 110.23.B

- (7) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to analyze how characters' qualities influence events and resolution of the conflict. (B)

Grade 8 | 110.24.B

- (7) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to analyze how characters' motivations and behaviors influence events and resolution of the conflict. (B)

English Language Arts and Reading, English I | 110.36.C

- (6) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters in works of fiction through a range of literary devices, including character foils. (B)

English Language Arts and Reading, English II | 110.37.C

- (6) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters, including archetypes, through historical and cultural settings and events. (B)

English Language Arts and Reading, English III | 110.38.C

- (6) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to analyze how characters' behaviors and underlying motivations contribute to moral dilemmas that influence the plot and theme. (B)

English Language Arts and Reading, English IV | 110.39.C

- (6) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to analyze how characters' behaviors and underlying motivations contribute to moral dilemmas that influence the plot and theme. (B)

Correlates: Language Arts, Drama

Don Carlo

Gardner's Intelligences: Verbal-Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical

Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Synthesis, Evaluation

Bibliography

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Goulding, Phil G., Ticket to the Opera, Fawcett Columbine, 1996.

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Don Carlo
Don Carlo Synopsis

ACT ONE

In the monastery of San Juste, monks pray at the tomb of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Don Carlo comes to lament his ill-starred love for Elisabeth de Valois, who, for reasons of state, has been married to Carlo's father, King Philip II. He is joined by his friend Rodrigo, Marquis of Posa, who urges Carlo to forget his private grief and join him in Flanders to aid the Protestant population there, oppressed by Philip's Catholic regime.

Awaiting the queen, Princess Eboli amuses the ladies of the court by singing the Veil Song, about a Moorish king and a veiled beauty who turns out to be his neglected queen. When Elisabeth joins them, Rodrigo brings the queen a letter from her mother. He also gives her another note, a request from Don Carlo for a private audience, and distracts Eboli (who thinks Carlo is in love with her) while Elisabeth reads it. She agrees to see Carlo and dismisses her ladies.

Carlo asks Elisabeth to help him gain Philip's consent to leave for Flanders. He cannot refrain from speaking also of their past love. Alarmed by the dangerous change in subject, Elisabeth tells him that, as queen, she must remain aloof, but admits that to live beside him would seem like paradise. Overwhelmed, Carlo sinks to the ground. When he regains consciousness and attempts to embrace her, she breaks away. Carlo flees in despair.

Philip arrives to find his queen unattended, and angrily banishes her lady-in-waiting, the Countess of Aremburg, for neglecting her duty. The queen bids her friend a somber farewell. Rodrigo lingers behind with the king and begs him to adopt a more tolerant policy toward his Flemish subjects. Philip refuses and warns Rodrigo to beware of the Grand Inquisitor. Nevertheless, he is impressed with this young man who seeks nothing for himself; he confides to Rodrigo his jealous suspicions about Don Carlo and the queen.

ACT TWO

Don Carlo comes to the garden in response to an unsigned note which he believes is from Elisabeth. However, the letter is from Eboli, who arrives dressed in a veil. Mistaking her for the queen, Carlo passionately declares his love. Enraptured, the princess uncovers her face; she quickly realizes, however, that his ardent speeches were not for her. Rodrigo enters and tries to undo Don Carlo's indiscretion. Eboli, furious, threatens to tell the king that Elisabeth and Carlo are lovers. Rodrigo tells the imperiled Don Carlo to entrust him with any sensitive political documents in his possession.

The Spanish populace and royal court assemble to witness an auto-da-fé, in which those condemned by the Inquisition are to be burned to death. Don Carlo approaches his father with a group of Flemish deputies who have come to plead for clemency. Philip is unmoved by their entreaty. Carlo infuriates his father by continuing the discussion, asking that the rule of Flanders be entrusted to him. Seeing that words are of no use, Carlo draws his sword. Philip calls for his guards and nobles to disarm the defiant prince, but no one moves to obey him. Finally, Rodrigo steps forward and asks Carlo for his sword, which he then gives to the king. Philip leads his wife to the auto-da-fé as guards remove Carlo to prison. In the distance, a heavenly voice is heard in prayer for the souls of the condemned.

Don Carlo
Don Carlo synopsis continued

ACT THREE

Philip has spent the entire night in his study in melancholy reverie. His queen, he realizes, never loved him. Don Carlo, whom he suspects of an illicit love for Elisabeth, has now committed open treason against him. The Count of Lerma announces the arrival of the Grand Inquisitor, whom Philip has summoned to discuss Carlo's punishment. The blind, aged man is led into the king's presence. Philip hesitates to invoke the death penalty against his son, but the Grand Inquisitor absolves Philip in advance of all guilt, pointing out that God sacrificed His own son for the redemption of the world. The Grand Inquisitor then denounces Rodrigo as a heretic for his efforts on behalf of Flanders; he demands Rodrigo's death. Philip defends Rodrigo, the only man in his court he can trust. The Inquisitor accuses the king himself of failing in his duty before the Holy Office. Philip's will collapses; he abandons Rodrigo's defense.

Elisabeth bursts in: a box containing her jewels and personal effects has been stolen. Philip points to the box, which is on his table, and asks her to open it. When she refuses, he breaks it open and finds a portrait of Carlo inside. Elisabeth defends her innocence in the face of Philip's fury, but faints when he accuses her of adultery. When Philip calls for help, Eboli and Rodrigo rush into the room. As Eboli looks after the queen, each is troubled by private thoughts. Philip realizes that he has not been betrayed; Eboli repents of her treachery now that she sees its results; Rodrigo resolves that he must sacrifice himself for Spain. When Elisabeth recovers, Philip and Rodrigo withdraw. Eboli confesses to the queen that it was she who gave the jewel box to Philip, in reprisal for being spurned by Carlo. Elisabeth forgives her. Eboli's contrition also forces her to admit that she herself has committed adultery with Philip. At that, Elisabeth commands Eboli to choose either exile or the cloister. Alone, Eboli resolves to save Don Carlo's life before she seeks peace in a convent.

Rodrigo comes to Don Carlo's prison cell to say farewell. He has obtained Carlo's freedom by claiming ownership of the incriminating papers Carlo gave him. Carlo protests, but Rodrigo is adamant. He is sacrificing himself so that Carlo may live, reign and save Flanders. Suddenly, a gunshot sounds and Rodrigo falls. Mortally wounded, he tells Carlo that Elisabeth knows everything and will meet Carlo the next day at the monastery of San Juste. As he dies, he enjoins Carlo once more to save Flanders. Philip enters to free Carlo, but Carlo turns on him, bitterly accusing him of complicity in Rodrigo's death. A courtier rushes in to tell Philip that an angry mob has gathered, demanding Carlo's freedom. Philip orders the gates thrown open, and the mob fills the room. In the confusion, Eboli, disguised, urges Carlo to flee. The Grand Inquisitor appears and invokes the power of God to quell the disturbance.

ACT FOUR

Waiting in the monastery, Elisabeth kneels and unburdens her heart in prayer. Don Carlo arrives for their last meeting. Rodrigo hovers in their thoughts as they speak of Don Carlo's mission to Flanders. They formally renounce their love and dedicate themselves to their respective duties in a solemn, platonic farewell. Philip enters with the Grand Inquisitor, ready to deliver his son to the Inquisition. From the tomb of Charles V, the figure of a spectral monk emerges leading Don Carlo away into the darkness of the tomb and death.

Synopsis courtesy of Lyric Opera of Chicago

The Characters

King Philip II: (bass) The King of Spain, Don Carlo's father. He is married to Elisabeth who was previously engaged to Don Carlo and is still in love with him.

Don Carlo: (tenor) Infante of Spain, son and heir to the King. He is torn between his love for Elisabeth and his duty to his country during the dark times of the Inquisition.

Rodrigo: (baritone) Marquis of Posa, Don Carlo's friend and the only person King Philip feels he can trust. Rodrigo sacrifices himself for his country and his friend.

The Grand Inquisitor: (bass) The head of the Church during the Spanish Inquisition. He gives counsel to the King.

Elisabeth of Valois: (soprano) The Queen of Spain, married to King Philip. She is still in love with Don Carlo and struggles between her love for him and her duty as Queen.

Princess Eboli: (mezzo-soprano) A Spanish aristocrat, she is in love with Don Carlo and learns of his love for the Queen. Feeling rejected, she tells King Philip.

A monk: (bass) The apparition of the deceased Emperor Charles V.

Listening Examples

Act II: "Dio, che nell' alma infondere" | Don Carlo and Rodrigo share their troubles and swear eternal friendship.

<https://www.metopera.org/discover/video/?videoName=don-carlo-dio-che-nell-alma-infondere-alagna-keenlyside&videoId=686124999001>

Act IV: "Ella giammai m'amò" | Philip realizes that his wife has never loved him and will never love him. He wishes that he could read the minds of others. Alas, though, the crown does not allow him this power and he will only be at peace when he dies.

<https://www.metopera.org/discover/video/?videoName=don-carlo-ella-giammai-mamo-ferruccio-furlanetto&videoId=1472947180001>

Act V: "Tu, che le vanità" | While waiting for Don Carlo to meet her, Elisabeth asks for strength to see him leave her forever for his own safety. Her thoughts then turn to her beloved France where her love for Carlo began.

<https://www.metopera.org/discover/video/?videoName=don-carlo-tu-che-le-vanita-marina-poplavskaya&videoId=686124997001>

Social Studies Activity Worksheet

The creative genius of Giuseppe Verdi created *Don Carlo*. The characters and main plot could possibly be set in any time-period in any society on earth. A lovers torn between love and loyalty, a devoted friend and citizen desperate for change, and a merciless ruler who oppresses in the name of religion - all could be reinterpreted to other settings and eras you have studied. Or maybe a different story is in order.

Assignment

Your assignment is to plan an opera of your own. You may choose to use the story of *Don Carlo* or you can create an entirely new opera of your own. Select a time period, society, or culture that you may have previously read about in social studies as research for your characters and main plot. 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 the Civil War South. 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 Opera

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. Briefly write about two or three main characters in your opera. 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. Explain why you chose the time and place that you selected, and share your research on the topic, either from the library or web.

All of this information can be as brief or as detailed as your teacher requests. The basic facts would likely fit on a single sheet of notebook paper or you may use the **Planning Your Opera** sheet. Your research may yield much more information.

Name _____

Date _____

Social Studies Activity Worksheet: Planning Your Opera

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

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

3. What place would be the setting?

4. Briefly tell the story you would like to portray. What is the main conflict or problem of the story?

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