



1846: PORTRAIT OF AMERICA IN THE TIME OF *DON PASQUALE*

An Historic Look at American Life During the 1840's

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GRADES

Upper Elementary and Intermediate Grades

LEARNING GOALS

- To discover events in America during 1846 the year when *Don Pasquale* premiered in New York
- To acquaint students with historical, literary, and geographic information about America during the 1840's
- To make connections between American cultural life during the 1840's and that of today
- To compare and contrast the forces that shaped America during the 1840's with those of today

LESSON PREVIEW

The lesson will explore events that occurred in the United States and New York City during the 1840's, the time when the opera *Don Pasquale* premiered in New York. It will make interdisciplinary connections to provide some context on the diversity of life in the America of the 1840's.

MATERIALS AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Timeline of events
- Internet resources
- Textbooks, atlases, and trade books
- Field trips to the New York Historical Society and the Museum of the City of New York

TIME ALLOWANCE

Three 45-60 minute classroom sessions

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MacDonald, Fiona. *A Child's Eye View of History*. Simon & Schuster, 1999.
Stanley, Jerry. *Hurry Freedom: African-Americans in Gold Rush California*. Crown, 2001.
Thoreau, Henry David., Ed. Stephen Schnur. Illustrated by Ralph Fiore. *Henry David's House*, Charlesbridge, 2002
Whelan, Gloria. *Louisa May Alcott Made Perfect*. HarperCollins Children's Books. 2002.
<http://www.nycopera.com>
<http://www.sdopera.com/pages/education/edusourcebook/ArPasProd.htm>
http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mayors_of_New_York_City
http://www.azopera.com/learn/synopsis/Don_Pasquale_Guide.pdf
<http://www.npg.si.edu/exh/1846/index.htm>
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amhome.html>



<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/dsc/nycguidertf.html>
<http://www.ny.com/histfacts/>

NATIONAL AND/OR STATE STANDARDS

NCSS Standards-<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/teachers/vol1/home.shtm>

II. Time, Continuity, and Change

New York State Standard- <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/>

Standard 1: History of the United States and New York

- Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York. Important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions from New York State and United States history illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time and from a variety of perspectives.

INTERDISCIPLINARY AREAS

English Language Arts
Fine and Performing Arts
Social Studies
Technology

PREPARING THE STUDENTS

Review some interesting facts about *Don Pasquale*: SCRIPT/SYNOPSIS

- *Don Pasquale* was composed in approximately 2 weeks (minus orchestrations) by Donizetti
- *Don Pasquale* was the 64th of Donizetti's operas
- *Don Pasquale* was first performed at La Scala, an opera house in Milan, on April 17, 1843
- *Don Pasquale* premiered in New York City three years later on March 9, 1846.

THE LESSON PLAN

1. Have students note the date *Don Pasquale* premiered here in New York. Explain that New York and America were very different places during that time period.
2. Co-construct an historical timeline with students using either an overhead, the chalkboard, or with a PowerPoint presentation beginning in 1840 and extending to 1850. Keeping this compact period of time on the graphic will help students tightly organize their thinking to understand the chronology of people, places, and events that occurred during this decade. Create timelines for both the US and New York City.
(See, as an example: <http://www.npg.si.edu/exh/1846/index.htm>)
3. Place categories including: *People-Events-Places* and begin to list pertinent information.
For example:
 - a. **People:** Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Edgar



Allan Poe, Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, Herman Melville, William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, James K. Polk, Horace Greeley, Samuel Morse, Matthew Brady

- b. **Events:** The Mexican War, The Annexation of Texas, “Manifest Destiny”, The Gold Rush, Age of Inventions, The Rise of Industry, Irish immigration to New York, New York Police Department founded, *New York Tribune* begins publishing, New York Life Insurance Co. founded, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* founded with Walt Whitman as one of its early editors, First American Women’s Rights Convention
 - c. **Places:** Oregon, California, Mexico, Texas, New York State, New York City
4. After categories are listed, devote time to discussions of various people, places, and events of the 1840s. Explain how many of the people made lasting contributions to American society and why and how these still influence us. Work with the class to develop an “*Illustrated Timeline*” of the 1840s. Have students select significant people, places, and events for the timeline and have them identified by use of a “symbol.” Have students also create a key to identify the meaning of each of the symbols.

EXTENDING THE LESSON

1. Take a “virtual” field trip of New York City using this website: <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/finearts/nyc/>
Have students look at the architectural history of New York City, for example the Counting Houses of lower Manhattan, during that time. Have students create a “cityscape” of a neighborhood in New York City during the 1840s.
2. Have students recreate the day of *Don Pasquale*’s premiere in New York, March 9, 1846. What might New York have looked like then? Who was the mayor? What do you think they thought of the opera? What might the reviews have been like? How did they travel to the opera house? What did they wear? Make a “mock diary” of someone living in New York at the time and who attended the performance.
3. Have the students work on “Don Pasquale’s Geography.” Using this website, <http://opera.stanford.edu/Donizetti/DonPasquale/history.html>, have students note the premiere performance of *Don Pasquale* in a variety of cities around the world. Have maps and atlases ready so students can match each city with their geographic location. Discuss why this opera has so much universal appeal.

EVALUATING THE LESSON

1. Have students either individually or in groups give presentations on their own portraits of New York City and America during the 1840s.
2. Encourage students to discuss the cultural life of New York City during the 1840s and what contributions opera may have made to this. Have them chart this information and draw inferences about New York’s cultural life from the information.
3. Have students keep a Project Portfolio to reflect on their experiences during this learning unit.



DEEPER-THINKING QUESTIONS

- Identify ways America changed during the 1840s.
- How might opera have influenced American lifestyles during the 1840s.
- Analyze life in America during the 1840s. Why would you have liked/ not liked to live during that time?
- Summarize how events of the 1840s shaped America and help it progress.

CURRICULUM TIE-INS

English Language Arts

- Read excerpts from famous authors and poets of the 1840s, *e.g.* Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Dickinson, Poe

Fine and Performing Arts

- Listen to music of the 1840s; Discuss musical events that occurred during the decade; Identify some important American composers and American musical styles and events of the decade *e.g.*, Stephen Foster, Jenny Lind, founding of the Philharmonic Society of New York
- Explore art and artists on the decade including Thomas Cole, William Sidney Mount, George Caleb Bingham; Hudson River School Painters

Social Studies

- Explore the various Utopian movements that were beginning to develop in America, *e.g.* Brook Farm; Discuss why utopian movements became popular during this time in America; The 1840s was a time of American expansionism. Discuss this concept and its meaning in contemporary events

Technology

- Use websites to enhance instruction; create PowerPoint presentations to present lessons; Train students to create individual and group PowerPoint presentations

VOCABULARY

Decade
expansionism
manifest destiny
utopia