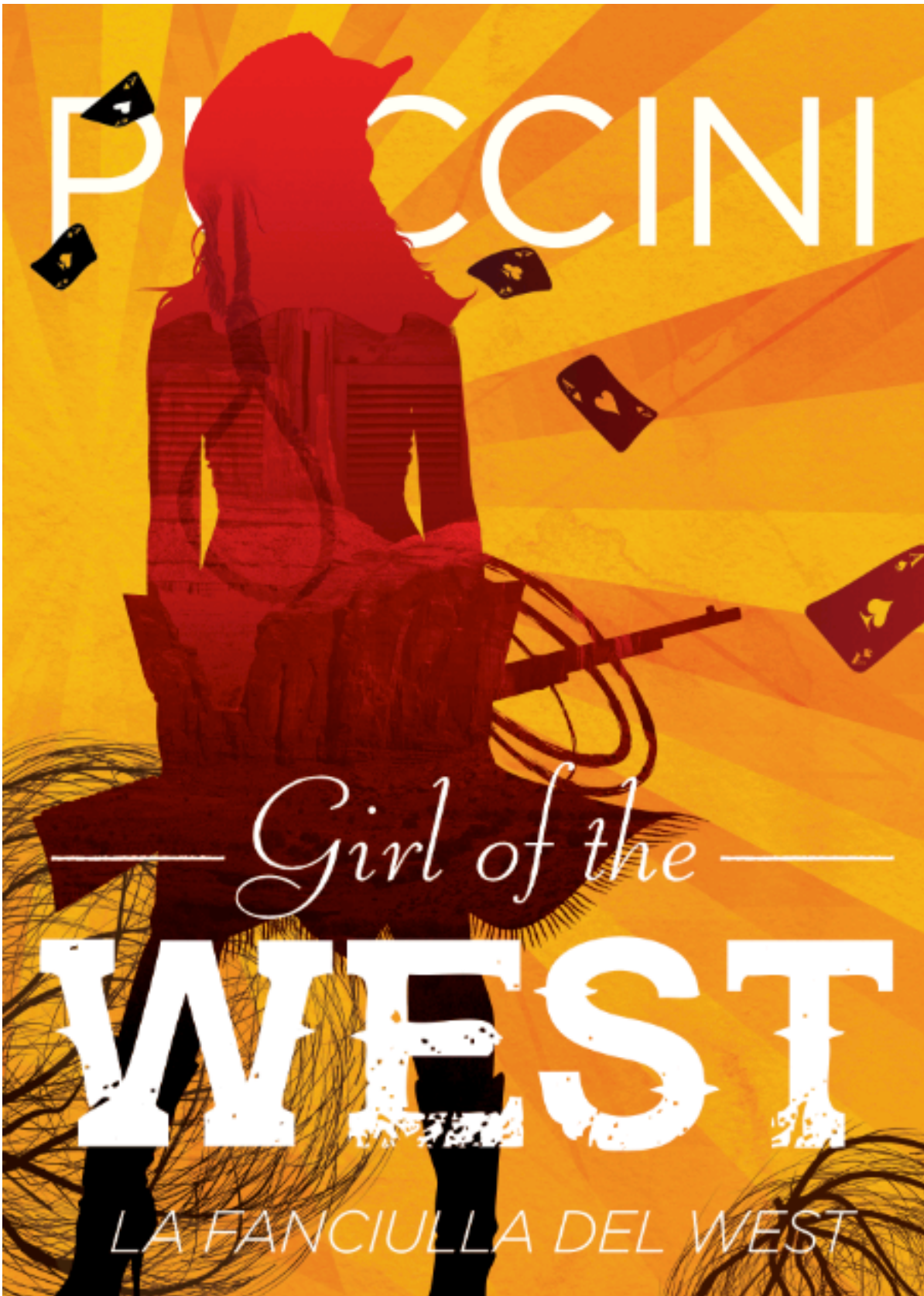




Puccini

— Girl of the —
WEST

LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST

STUDENT+FAMILY GUIDE

TOC

Table of Contents

General Information	pg. 2-4
•About The Belk Theater	
•About Opera Carolina	
•Puccini: The Music Man	
Pre-Performance Activities	pg. 5-8
•Introducing the Opera	
•Synopsis of the Opera	
•What to Listen For	
Performance-Day Activities	pg. 9
•About the Opera & Expectations	
Post-Performance Activities	pg. 10-11
• Reflection Questions	
•Comparative History Project	
• Research Project	
Who's Who in the Opera Worksheet	pg. 12
Rubrics for Projects	pg. 13-14
Curriculum Standards Connections	pg. 15



Get There

Visiting Center City doesn't have to be a tough trip.

Blumenthal
Performing Arts
Center

130 N. Tryon St
Charlotte, NC 28202

Ride. Hop on the
Lynx Lightrail.
Check out the
options [here](#).

Drive. Directions
from door to door
[here](#).

Park. Participating
garages are just \$5.
Find details [here](#).

The Belk Theater

Make any seat in the house the best one

Attending an opera in the Belk Theater is an experience not to be forgotten. The performance you are attending is the **final dress rehearsal** in which the cast performs one last full run through of the opera before opening night. Just like a regular performance, there will be an intermission(s) between acts.

Upon entering the theater, notice the production crew's station in the orchestra level seating (the lowest level of seating). The crew is set up with computers and headsets to allow them to communicate with people backstage to ensure that the performance runs smoothly. During this final rehearsal they will be making sure all cues and technical features of the performance are in place. Also notice the supertitles (English translations of the lyrics

being sung) that are projected onto a screen above the stage.

Please remember that this is a **working performance** and the performers on stage are very aware of their audience, especially a distracting audience. The polite audience member should always refrain from talking and stay seated during a performance. Nothing shows more respect and appreciation for the performers on stage than giving them your full attention.

Shout it Out

Give a shout out to the cast after a beautiful aria or at the end of the evening – literally! Shout **"Bravi!"** for a job well done to the whole cast, **"Brava!"** to the diva who aced it, or **"Bravo!"** to the guy who left it all on the stage.

Opera Carolina

Invested in our community and its life.



Then, now, & years from now

Let's take a journey back to 1948: the Charlotte Music Club is formed by a handful of arts enthusiasts who realize that Charlotte's artistic landscape -but more importantly, cultural community- would be enhanced by opera performances. Fast forward to today: Opera Carolina is a 67 year-old company that's still blossoming, hitting new highs with each season of glorious music, drama, and all that encompasses the operatic art form. Your resident Opera continues to bring high-quality standards of the operatic repertoire to stages near you, but is also continually striving to perform lesser-known gems.

What does our future hold? A rich commitment to our community -which we take seriously- to continue enriching the lives of citizens from all walks of life; a continual quest to produce excellent opera from all eras on our stage; and, most importantly, to connect our community.

The people

In the early days of Opera Carolina, volunteers designed the sets, built costumes, sang in the chorus, filled leading roles and, of course, sold tickets and held fundraisers to support the company.

Now a fully professional company that not only produces Opera performances on a big scale but also travels programs into local schools and community venues, we never forget the legacy of the original volunteers who made this company the what it is today. Opera Carolina is rooted in the Carolinas; 90%

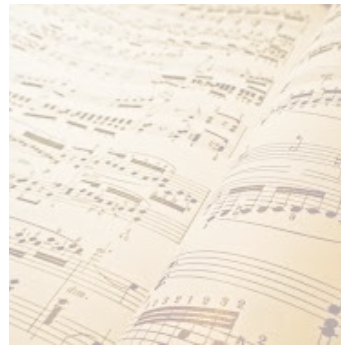
of our company live and work right here in our region, complimenting the international artists who join the resident company to perform on our mainstage. We guess you can say we've got Carolina on our mind.

The House

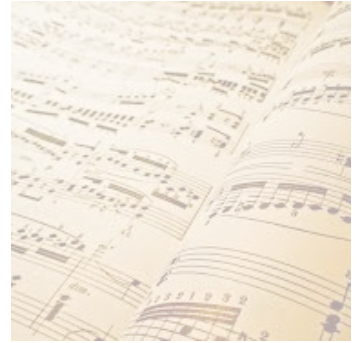
If the paragraphs before didn't sell you on our commitment to our community, maybe information on the Opera Center will. We may be 67 years old, but we've just moved out on our own. Opera Carolina now resides in the historic Biberstein house, in the Elizabeth neighborhood. The last remaining historic home in the Uptown radius, Opera Carolina's new digs are as much a part of the community as is the company.

Built in 1906, the Biberstein House was designed and lived in by R. C. Biberstein, one of the noted mill architects of the Southeast. Mr. Biberstein is credited with building many of the mills in the Charlotte region, including the Highland Park #3 mill. Mr. Biberstein eventually moved his business into this house, his talents and self-designed home playing a role in the New South Industrial movement. Today, the home is registered as a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmark.

The house has since been adapted into offices and is now the proud home of Opera Carolina. The Opera Center hosts the company's administrative offices but also serves as space for auditions, recitals, and more. **Our doors are always open.**



Puccini, who had an avid interest in technology, became good friend and regular correspondent with famous inventor **Thomas Edison**.



Giacomo *Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria* **Puccini** (1858-1924)

THE MUSIC MAN

What a name! He may have a long name but Giacomo Puccini is one of the first names that comes to mind when you talk about opera. Our composer was born in Lucca, in the Tuscan region of Italy, to a family five generations deep in music, after all of whom he is named. Like many famous composers, Puccini began studying music at an early age; when he was five years old his father died and Puccini was made to continue his studies with his uncle Fortunato, who thought he was a poor student. It wasn't until he saw Verdi's opera *Aida* (1876) at age 20 that he decided to dedicate his life to composing opera.

Puccini set off to school in Milan at the Conservatory (*the* Milan Conservatory, a big deal) and there wrote his first opera, *Le Villi*, which earned him enough notice to get a second opera commissioned. This second

work, *Edgar*, had a lousy story and mediocre **libretto** (the text of the opera), which taught Puccini a valuable lesson about choosing librettists wisely. He went on to write new, successful operas, including his most successful works: *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*. He was considered the head of the table among the *giovane scuola* (the young school of Italian composers) after completing such international hits. He was even commissioned to write an opera for the Metropolitan Opera: *La Fanciulla del West*.

Puccini was working on his twelfth opera, *Turandot*, at the time of his death from complications of throat cancer. Franco Alfano finished the opera shortly following Puccini's death, and a new ending was composed in recent history (2002) by Italian composer Luciano Berio.

INTRODUCING THE OPERA

CONSIDER THIS

Answer the following questions as you prepare to see the opera:

- Have you ever witnessed or experienced an example of falling in love with the wrong person?
 - Why do you think this happens?
 - Can this kind of love ever be worked out?
- What are the norms of storytelling when it comes to men and women?
 - Have the norms changed at all in modern storytelling? Think of a few examples to support your position.
 - Are there any norms in storytelling that you feel should or shouldn't change? Why or why not?

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE SETTING

The California Gold Rush brought some **300,000** people from all around the region, the country, and the world to California to try their luck at finding gold. It was a time of **emerging rule of law** and rapidly changing social norms as people populated an area that had been previously occupied by Native American tribes. The mass migration led many men and women far away from their homes and families, leaving many **nostalgic for home**. Both of these themes emerge in Puccini's *The Girl of the West*.

Pre-Performance SYNOPSIS OF THE OPERA

THE STORY IN SHORT

Minnie, a beloved saloon owner in California during the gold rush era, falls in love with an outlaw in disguise. They try to ride off into the sunset together, despite the concern and outrage from the men who love her.

ACT I

At the Polka Saloon

 **A saloon
is no
substitute
for home** 

A group of miners enter the "Polka" saloon after a day of work. Puccini sets the scene by giving insight to the kinds of characters who make up this group of men. One of the miners is homesick and the men raise money to help him get home. Another, Sid, is caught cheating at poker and the rest of the men go after him until Sheriff Jack Rance restores order. Ashby, a Wells Fargo agent announces that he and his posse have been tracking the bandit Ramerrez and his gang. He tells the sheriff that he's meeting with Ramerrez's jilted lover.

Sheriff Rance wants to marry Minnie, the Girl who owns the saloon. He toasts her as his future wife, making Sonora jealous and another fight breaks out between the two men. Rance draws his revolver but at that moment, a shot rings out and Minnie stands next to the bar with a rifle in her hands. After calming things down, Minnie gives the miners their weekly reading lesson from the Bible. Rance tells Minnie that he loves her, but Minnie puts him off -- she is waiting for the right man. A stranger enters the saloon and orders a whisky. He introduces himself as Dick Johnson from Sacramento. He is actually the outlaw Ramerrez, and he has come to the Polka to steal the miner's gold. He invites Minnie to dance with him and she accepts. Rance watches them, jealously.

Ashby returns with Jose Castro, a captured Ramerrez gang member. Unknown to Ashby, Castro's capture is part of their plan to rob the Polka of the gold the miners keep hidden in the saloon's barrels. When Castro sees his leader in the saloon, he agrees to lead Rance in a search for Ramirez. Before Castro leaves, he whispers to Ramerrez that somebody will whistle to confirm that the place is clear, and he should confirm with his own whistle. The group follows him in what turns out to be a wild goose chase. When the signal is given, Ramerrez fails to reply, as his attentions are now only fixed on Minnie.

 **Wanted:
poker
faces** 

Minnie shows him the keg of gold that she and the miners take turns guarding at night. He reassures her that the gold will be safe. Before he leaves the saloon, he promises to visit her at her cabin, telling her she has the face of an angel. Minnie begins to cry, and "Johnson" comforts her before he leaves.

ACT II

Minnie's cabin, later that evening



**It all
comes
down to a
game of
poker**



Wowkle, Minnie's Native American servant and her lover Billy Jackrabbit are in the house with their baby as Minnie comes home from the Polka. "Johnson" arrives at Minnie's and she tells him all about her life. They kiss and Minnie asks him to stay till morning. A posse looking for Ramerrez approaches the house. "Johnson" hides. The posse reveals to Minnie that Johnson is the bandit Ramerrez himself. When they leave, she orders Ramerrez to leave, which he does. Minnie hears a gunshot and she knows he has been shot. Ramerrez staggers in and Minnie helps him by hiding him up in the loft. The Sherriff Rance enters the cabin looking

for the bandit, and is about to give up searching when drops of blood fall on his hand. Rance forces Ramerrez to climb down. Minnie desperately makes Rance an offer: if she beats him at poker, he must let Ramerrez go free. If Rance wins, she will marry him. Hiding some cards in her stockings, Minnie cheats and wins. Rance honors the deal and Minnie throws herself on the unconscious Johnson on the floor.

ACT III

In the Great Californian Forest at dawn

Ramerrez is again on the run from Ashby and the miners. Nick and Rance wonder what Minnie sees in him, when Ashby arrives in triumph: Ramerrez has been captured. Rance and the miners all want him to be hanged. Ramerrez accepts the sentence and only asks the miners not to tell Minnie about his capture and his fate. Minnie arrives, armed with a pistol, just before the execution and throws herself in front of Ramerrez to protect him. She convinces the miners that they owe her too much to kill the man she loves, and asks them to free him. One by one the miners yield. Rance is not happy but finally gives in. The miners say farewell to Minnie as she and Johnson leave California to start a new life together.



**The
winning
hand**



WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The music in this opera would have sounded very exotic and modern to its original listeners. “Americanisms” are built into the music, including phrases such as “Hello, ragazzi (boys)!” and “Whiskey per tutti (for everyone),” as well a waltz similar to a folk song.



Prelude

The music in this piece is exemplary of the modern sound that Puccini achieves in this opera. Think about how the music sounds like something in between traditional opera music and a classic movie score.

Che faranno i vecchi

This is an **aria**, or opera solo, for a **baritone** singer. A baritone is a male singer with a low voice. This song about missing home, sung by the balladeer (singer/songwriter) of the group, sends all the miners into tears of homesickness. This kind of nostalgia was common among the migrant populations who came to California looking for gold.

Hello, Minnie!

This song is sung by a **chorus**, or group of singers, and by Minnie, a **soprano**. A soprano is the highest female opera voice. Listen for the modern sound and the “Americanisms” in this piece.

Ch’ella mi credi libero

This is an **aria**, or opera solo, for a tenor. A tenor is a male singer with a high voice. Dick Johnson/The Bandit Ramerrez sings this song in the final act of the opera as the miners prepare to hang him. The aria bears a striking resemblance to The Music of the Night theme in Phantom of the Opera.

Listen to this melody from The Girl of the West compared with a melody from Phantom of the Opera [here](#). Sound similar?

ABOUT THE OPERA & EXPECTATIONS

Things to Remember About Opera

- *Opera is a drama (play) - that is sung!*
- *Opera uses many different art forms to tell stories.*

Ways to Get Ready to Enjoy the Show

- How could each of these art forms help to tell the story in an opera?

music • lyrics • dialogue • costumes • sets

Look out for each of the above elements in the performance.

Review the following terms from the WHAT TO LISTEN FOR section:

libretto • aria • baritone • soprano • tenor • chorus

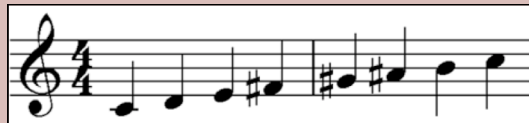
Remember to read up on Puccini on page 4!

Performance Expectations

Discuss the following question as a whole group:

- What does being a respectful audience member look like?

What to listen for: Music Theory/Music History Bonus!



An example of the C whole-tone scale.

This opera presents opportunities to explore the whole-tone system and the shift into modern music occurring at the turn of the 20th century.

Get a quick overview of the whole-tone system and Puccini's new push into modern music here:

- The whole-tone scale has only 6 notes; the diatonic (regular) scale has 8 notes. Learn more about the whole-tone system [here](#).
- The whole-tone system was not new to the world of Western music when Puccini used it – Impressionist composers such as Debussy used the whole-tone system.
- It has been used in Eastern countries long before Puccini put it to work (ex., Rimsky-Korsakov's music, Indian ragas, etc.).
- Why do you think Puccini would use a foreign sound?

Be sure to listen for the whole-tone sounds at the very beginning of the opera's prelude!

REFLECTION, RESEARCH & COMPARISON

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- In what ways does this opera adhere to the traditional gender stereotypes of romantic stories? In what ways does it depart? Use specific scenes from the opera to **support your position**. (If students participated in the Introductory Discussion, question 2, they may wish to recall their conversation.)
- **Describe** your experience of seeing the opera. What were your observations of the music? The costumes? The casting? The sets? What was most memorable to you?

COMPARATIVE HISTORY PROJECT: A Tale of Two Gold Rushes

English Language Arts, American History, NC History; Grading rubrics included (pg.XX)

Close to 50 years before California Gold rush, there was a gold rush not far from Charlotte, NC, known as the Carolina Gold Rush.

- Compare two Gold Rushes and their impact on their locations. How were they similar? How were they different? What accounts for the differences in their respective impacts?
- Create a digital presentation or write a short paper comparing the gold rushes.

You may also wish to visit the *Wells Fargo History Museum* in uptown Charlotte, which has a variety of resources on the Carolina Gold Rush and the history of Wells Fargo:

Wells Fargo History Museum
401 South Tryon Street
Charlotte, North Carolina 28202
(704) 715-1866

Visit the website [here](#).



One of Wells Fargo's remaining 11 original Abbot & Downing stagecoaches.

Post-Performance **RESEARCH PROJECT —** **THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH: MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES**

English Language Arts, American History; Grading rubrics included

Research the Gold Rush from various perspectives: migrants (Chinese, Latin American, European, American), Native Americans, and women. Student groups, if applicable, will work together to present these perspectives to the whole group.

Part 1

- Pick one of the following perspectives from which they will research the California Gold Rush:

Chinese • Latin American • European • American • Native American • Women

- Answer the following questions as a minimum in your research:
 - How did this group hear about the Gold Rush?
 - How did this group get to the mountains of California OR if they were already there, how did the arrival of so many people effect them?
 - What did this group do to support themselves while they were looking for gold OR if they were not looking for gold, what were they doing instead?
 - What were the particular challenges of this group during the gold rush?
 - Are there any other interesting things you learned in your research?

**Remember to keep a record of your sources for the information that you find.*

- Student groups (if applicable) should meet together at the end of their research to report to each other about their findings in the following way:

Sit in a circle. Each member of the group answers the first research question from the perspective of their chosen group. Then move on to the next question, etc.

- Group members may ask each other clarification questions as they share their findings.
- *Collect a record of each team member's research findings for Assessment 1.*

Part 2

- Write a short script for what one or more characters from your people group would say if they were being interviewed for a documentary about the California Gold Rush. Create a way to present these "interviews" (ex., video montage, skit, blog).

Worksheet

WHO'S WHO IN *THE GIRL OF THE WEST*

As you read the synopsis, draw and label lines between the characters to illustrate the characteristics and relationships between them. (Example: draw a line between Minnie and Johnson and write "in love" to indicate their relationship.)

Minnie



**Johnson/The
Bandit Ramerrez**



Sheriff Jack Rance



Ashby



Post-Performance **RUBRIC FOR COMPARATIVE HISTORY PROJECT**

A Tale of Two Gold Rushes

English Language Arts		Excel- lent	Good	Fair	Poor	Does Not Pass
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.1	Student uses valid reasoning and evidence to support comparisons of the two Gold Rushes.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.7	Student demonstrates research-based understanding of each Gold Rush.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.8	Student uses multiple credible sources and avoids plagiarism.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.4	Student presents information, findings, and supporting evidence in an organized, appropriate way.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.5	(optional) Student strategically uses digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
Writing: History		Excel- lent	Good	Fair	Poor	Does Not Pass
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.2	Student successfully analyzes the similarities and differences of the Carolina and California Gold Rushes.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6	(optional) Student uses technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.7	Student demonstrates focused research to compare the two gold rushes, synthesizing multiple sources on the subject and demonstrating understanding of the subject.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.8	Student uses relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources and integrates information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points

Post-Performance **RUBRIC FOR GROUP RESEARCH PROJECT**

The California Gold Rush: Multiple Perspectives

Assessment 1		Excel-lent	Good	Fair	Poor	Does Not Pass
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.2	Student effectively selects and analyzes information found in research.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.7	Student notes demonstrate understanding of his/her people group.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.8	Student kept a record of the sources of his/her information, and those sources were credible.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.9	Student uses specific evidence from literary or informational texts to support his/her analysis of the topic.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.3	Student effectively and accurately analyzes the point of view of his/her people group	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
Assessment 2		Excel-lent	Good	Fair	Poor	Does Not Pass
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.3	Script is structured well, uses effective technique and well-chosen details.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.4	Script is clear, coherent and organized. Writing style is appropriate to the task.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.4	Script presents information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.5	(optional) Student makes strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentation.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1	Student participated effectively in group-work, building on others' ideas and expressing his/her own clearly and persuasively.	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points
CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.8	Student included a Works Cited page in an appropriate style	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	0 points

Connect the Curricular Dots **COMMON CORE STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THE GUIDE**

The following Anchor Standards provide a basis for all our Educator's Guide activities:

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audience.

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Literacy in Writing

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Literacy in Speaking & Listening

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.5 Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

WRITING IN HISTORY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGICAL STUDIES

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.2.B Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.