A KIND YOUNG WOMAN FORCED TO SWEEP THE FIREPLACE, A LUDICROUS pair of stepsisters hoping to marry a prince, and a happily-ever-after ending enabled by a certain iconic accessory: the opera *La Cenerentola* is instantly recognizable as the fairy tale "Cinderella." Yet Gioachino Rossini's intricate, hilarious, and heartfelt take on the story is no mere bedtime fable. Magical elements go out the window, while the stately archetypes of fairy-tale narratives give way to real, flesh-and-blood characters. Cinderella falls in love at first sight, but she also feels the pain of familial rejection, the sting of bullying, and the ache of self-doubt, which make her profound joy at the end of the opera all the more gratifying. And amid the farcical sequences of bickering relatives, disguised royalty, and mistaken identities, Cinderella's commitment to honesty and forgiveness brings the opera firmly down to earth.

When Rossini—barely 25, but already an international superstar—wrote *La Cenerentola* in 1817, he gave the 17th-century tale a shot of realism by setting it in his present day. At the Met, Cesare Lievi's charming production updates the setting to the 1920s. Peeling wallpaper and ratty feather boas convey the faded glamor of destitute aristocracy, while at the end, Cinderella and her Prince Charming ascend to the upper echelons of society. But the truth is that *La Cenerentola* could take place in any era. Its warmth, sincerity, and good humor make its characters both relatable and timeless, while Rossini's score, replete with unforgettable tunes and his signature bel canto style, gives the singers a chance to truly shine.

This guide presents *La Cenerentola* as a case study in adaptation, demonstrating how opera can enrich and embellish even the most familiar stories. At the same time, it invites students to think more broadly about the art of storytelling. How might certain changes impact the way a story develops or is understood? How have other cultures approached similar themes? And how have oral and literary traditions impacted the stories we tell? The materials on the following pages include an introduction to the opera's fairy-tale source, an overview of Rossini's life and work, and classroom activities that will bring the opera to life. By delving into *La Cenerentola*'s music, drama, and design, this guide will forge interdisciplinary classroom connections, inspire critical thinking, and invite students to make this Cinderella their own.


GARANČA


BROWNLEE


ALBERGHINI


CORBELLI


DURKIN


RISLEY


RELYEA

THE WORK

An opera in two acts, sung in Italian

Music by Gioachino Rossini

Libretto by Jacopo Ferretti

Based on the fairy tale "Cendrillon" by Charles Perrault

PRODUCTION

Cesare Lievi Production

Maurizio Balò Set and Costume Designer

Gigi Saccomandi Lighting Designer

Daniela Schiavone Choreographer

Sharon Thomas Stage Director

Gary Halvorson TV Director

PERFORMANCE

The Met: Live in HD
Broadcast May 9, 2009

Elīna Garanča Angelina

Lawrence Brownlee Don Ramiro

Simone Alberghini Dandini

Alessandro Corbelli Don Magnifico

Rachelle Durkin Clorinda

Patricia Risley Tisbe

John Relyea Alidoro

Maurizio Benini Conductor

Production a gift of Alberto Vilar

The Metropolitan Opera Educator Guides offer a creative, interdisciplinary introduction to opera. Designed to complement existing classroom curricula in music, the humanities, STEM fields, and the arts, these guides will help young viewers confidently engage with opera regardless of their prior experience with the art form.

On the following pages, you'll find an array of materials designed to encourage critical thinking, deepen background knowledge, and empower students to engage with the opera. These materials can be used in classrooms and/or via remote-learning platforms, and they can be mixed and matched to suit your students' individual academic needs.

Above all, this guide is intended to help students explore *La Cenerentola* through their own experiences and ideas. The diverse perspectives that your students bring to opera make the art form infinitely richer, and we hope that they will experience opera as a space where their confidence can grow and their curiosity can flourish.

CONTENTS

WHO'S WHO IN *LA CENERENTOLA*

CHARACTER	PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Angelina, known as Cenerentola (Cinderella) An orphan	ahn-jeh-LEE-nah / cheh-neh-REHN-toh-lah	mezzo-soprano	Kind Cenerentola is cruelly mistreated by her stepfamily, but she ultimately finds happiness with Don Ramiro. Like the English "Cinderella," Cenerentola's nickname is derived from the Italian word for cinders, "Cenere."
Don Ramiro The Prince of Salerno	don rah-MEE-roh	tenor	The local prince, whose father has declared that he must marry if he is to inherit the throne. Ramiro wants to marry for love, not for power.
Don Magnifico Angelina's stepfather	don ma-NYEE-fee-koh	bass	A hard-up baron, the foolish Don Magnifico hopes to marry his daughters to royalty in order to restore his family's fortune.
Clorinda Magnifico's elder daughter	cloh-REEN-dah	soprano	Rude and self-centered, Cenerentola's stepsister is cruel to the heroine and entitled in her dealings with the Prince.
Tisbe Magnifico's younger daughter	TEES-beh	mezzo-soprano	Cenerentola's other stepsister is as despicable as the first.
Dandini Don Ramiro's valet	dahn-DEE-nee	baritone	Dandini switches clothes with the Prince so that he can inspect the prospective brides and report back to Ramiro.
Alidoro Don Ramiro's tutor	ah-lee-DOH-roh	bass	A court employee (and maybe also an angel), Alidoro makes sure Cenerentola and Ramiro get the happy ending they deserve. His name means "Golden Wings" in Italian.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I: *Don Magnifico's mansion.* Don Magnifico lives in a tumbledown castle with his daughters, Clorinda and Tisbe, and his stepdaughter Angelina, referred to callously as "Cenerentola" ("Cinderella") because she is forced to work as their maid. The stepsisters squabble constantly over who is more beautiful, while Cenerentola is dressed in rags. Nevertheless, Cenerentola dreams of a better life. To cheer herself up (and, perhaps, to needle Clorinda and Tisbe), she sings a sad folk song about a king who chose a bride not for her wealth or status but for her goodness of heart. When a beggar knocks at the door asking for charity, the difference between the generous Cenerentola and her hard-hearted stepsisters becomes clear: The stepsisters tell the beggar to leave, while Cenerentola offers him breakfast. Suddenly, emissaries from the court appear and announce that Prince Ramiro is paying a visit to the household. He is looking for the most beautiful girl in all the land and will hold a ball that evening to choose his bride. The stepsisters cannot wait to tell their father the news, and they wake him from an odd dream featuring a flying donkey landing on a bell tower. Interpreting the dream as a good omen, Magnifico fantasizes about marrying one of his daughters to the Prince and restoring his family's fortune.

Prince Ramiro enters alone, disguised as his own servant so he can freely observe the prospective brides. He runs into Cenerentola, and the two are immediately attracted to each other. He asks her who she is, and Cenerentola, suddenly bashful, runs away. Soon, the "Prince" himself arrives (he is actually Ramiro's valet Dandini, dressed in the Prince's clothes). Magnifico, Clorinda, and Tisbe go to absurd lengths to flatter him, and he invites them to the ball, hamming up his princely role outrageously. Cenerentola

Clorinda, Alidoro, Cenerentola, Tisbe, and Don Ramiro's emissaries
KEN HOWARD / MET OPERA

Clorinda, Dandini, and Tisbe
KEN HOWARD / MET OPERA

begs her stepfather to let her attend the ball, even if only for an hour, but he rudely refuses. Ramiro is shocked by the way she is treated.

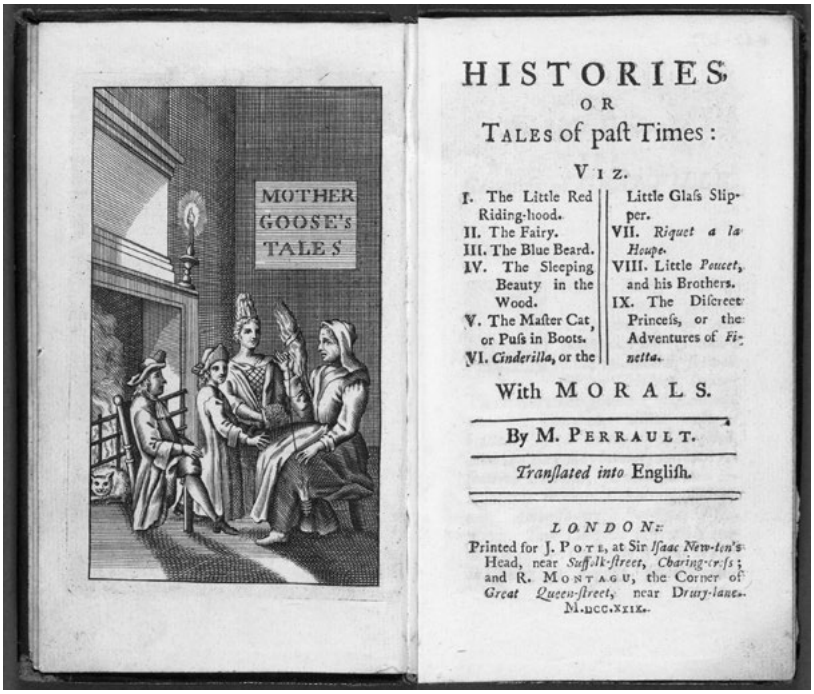
The arrival of the Prince's tutor, Alidoro, interrupts the argument. He announces that, according to the local records, there should be a third daughter in the Magnifico household. Magnifico lies through his teeth and claims that this third daughter is dead—to Cenerentola's dismay. Everyone departs for the palace except Cenerentola, who is left alone and upset. But she is comforted by the mysterious beggar, who reveals himself to be none other than Alidoro in disguise. Alidoro tells her that he will take her to the ball and explains that one day soon she will be rewarded for her good heart.

Prince Ramiro's palace. Dandini, still disguised as the Prince, is fending off Clorinda and Tisbe. He has cleverly distracted their father by making him master of the wine cellar, where Magnifico is now demonstrating how much he can imbibe without falling over drunk. Dandini manages to sneak off to share his negative opinion of the two sisters with Ramiro. Both men are confused, however, since Alidoro is certain that the Prince's bride will come from Don Magnifico's household. Clorinda and Tisbe appear again, each desperate to be the chosen one. In an attempt to placate them, Dandini offers Ramiro (still disguised as a valet) to whichever sister the Prince does not marry, but the stepsisters are outraged at the idea of marrying a servant. Suddenly, Alidoro enters with a mysterious stranger, a beautiful, veiled lady. Dandini and Ramiro are both smitten. When the company prevails upon her to remove her veil, everyone is astonished: Surely, they say, she looks rather familiar! Unable to make sense of the situation, they all sit down to supper, feeling like they are in a dream.

Don Ramiro and Cenerentola enjoying a meal together.
KEN HOWARD / MET OPERA

ACT II: *Prince Ramiro's palace.* Magnifico fears that the arrival of the stranger could ruin his daughters' chances of marrying the Prince, but he soon begins daydreaming again about the riches he will possess once he becomes a member of the royal family. Cenerentola, tired of being pursued by Dandini, tells him that she is in love with his servant. Overhearing this, Ramiro is overjoyed and steps forward. Cenerentola, however, says that she is returning home and does not want him to follow her. She gives him one of two matching bracelets, keeping the other for herself. If he truly cares for her, she declares, he will find her. She also adds that she will only consent to marry him if he loves her for who she really is. Cenerentola leaves, and the besotted Prince resolves to find the mysterious girl and win her hand. Meanwhile Magnifico, who still thinks that Dandini is the Prince, confronts him, insisting that he decide which of his daughters he will marry. When Dandini reveals that he is in fact the Prince's servant, Magnifico is furious.

Don Magnifico's mansion. Magnifico and the sisters return home in a terrible mood and order Cenerentola, once again dressed in rags, to prepare supper. A thunderstorm breaks out, and Alidoro cleverly arranges for Ramiro's carriage to break down in front of Magnifico's mansion so the Prince has an excuse to take refuge inside. Cenerentola and Ramiro, now no longer disguised, recognize each other immediately by their matching bracelets: They are overjoyed, but everyone else is utterly confused by this apparent romance between a prince and a maid. When Ramiro asks to marry Cenerentola, Magnifico and his daughters respond with cruelty and scorn. Ramiro threatens to have them punished, but Cenerentola asks the indignant Prince to forgive them. The Prince and Cenerentola reappear in wedding finery, and Cenerentola joyfully reflects on how suddenly her fortunes have changed: She was born into hardship and misery, but her days of sitting by the fire are finally over.



THE FAIRY TALE "CENDRILLON" BY CHARLES PERRAULT

Charles Perrault (1628–1703), was a civil servant and writer during the long reign of Louis XIV of France, yet he is best known today for one of his retirement projects. In 1697, just a few years before his death, Perrault published the *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé (Stories or Tales from Times Past)*—and sealed his reputation for posterity.

The *Histoires*, which soon became known by their unofficial title of *Les Contes de ma mère l'Oye* (*Tales of Mother Goose*), were a collection of literary fairy tales, including such modern favorites as "Puss and Boots," "Sleeping Beauty," and of course "Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper." Perrault's stories had little to do with the folk tales on which they were distantly based. Written in a polished, sophisticated style, they were intended to appeal to aristocratic audiences, who enjoyed hearing them read at gatherings of intellectuals and fashionable society events. Because the readers were primarily adults, Perrault attached cynical rhyming morals to each story.

Despite his intended readership, however, Perrault's "Cendrillon" is essentially the classic version of the Cinderella story children know and love today—wicked stepmother, enchanted pumpkin, glass slippers, and all. (Walt Disney's animated film from 1950, for instance, follows Perrault quite faithfully.) Yet the story underwent some major modifications on its way to becoming the libretto for *La Cenerentola*, most notably losing many of its supernatural elements and substituting a foolish stepfather for a wicked stepmother. In fact, Jacopo Ferretti, the librettist for *La Cenerentola*, wasn't working directly from Perrault's text. Under extreme time pressure, Ferretti borrowed liberally from the libretti to two then-recent operas based on "Cendrillon," one French and one Italian. By doing so, he was able to write the text in just 22 days—and craft a libretto perfectly in tune with the opera buffa style for which Rossini was already famous.

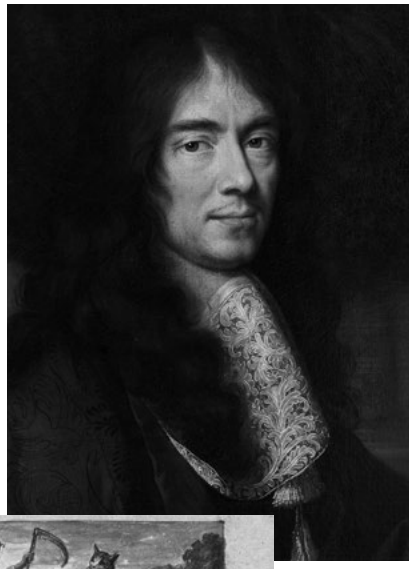
CRITICAL INQUIRY

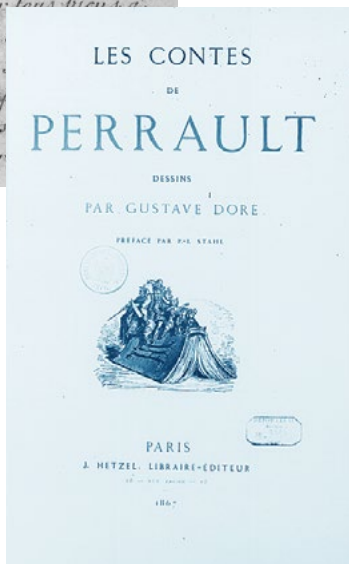
Perrault attached two tongue-in-cheek morals to the end of "Cendrillon," one of which reads:

It is undoubtedly a great advantage,
To have spirit, courage,
A noble birth, good sense,
And other similar attributes
Bestowed on you by heaven;
But though you may have these aplenty,
If you want to enjoy real privilege
Such things are meaningless—if you don't have
A fairy godfather or godmother.

If you were to write a moral (either serious or humorous) for "Cinderella," what would it be?

THE COMPOSITION OF *LA CENERENTOLA*





1628 Charles Perrault is born in Paris to a well-to-do family. He will spend much of his life as a civil servant and member of the Académie Française, an organization dedicated to the promotion and preservation of the French language.

1697 In his retirement, Perrault publishes a collection of literary fairy tales for aristocratic audiences. Generally known by the nickname *Les Contes de Ma Mère l'Oye* (*Tales of Mother Goose*), the collection includes such classics as "Little Red Riding Hood," "Puss in Boots," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Cinderella."

1792 Gioachino Rossini is born on February 29 in Pesaro, a town on the Adriatic coast of Italy. Both of his parents are musicians, his father a trumpet and horn player and his mother an opera singer.

1804 The Rossini family moves to Bologna. Young Gioachino, a talented musician who already enjoys an active career as a performer, begins formal studies in composition.

1813 Rossini's first major success, *Tancredi*, premieres in February at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice. Overnight, Rossini's reputation as Italy's foremost composer is made.

1816 On February 20, Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (*The Barber of Seville*) premieres at the Teatro Argentina in Rome. The opening night performance is a flop, but in August, following slight revisions, the opera is revived in Bologna, this time to thunderous acclaim.

In December, Rossini agrees to write an opera for the Teatro Valle in Rome. After considering more than a dozen possible subjects (including one rejected by the city's censors), Rossini and the librettist Jacopo Ferretti finally settle on "Cinderella." Ferretti bases his libretto on Perrault's story, but he also borrows liberally from two recent operas on the same subject. Rossini completes the opera in less than a month, borrowing the overture and other bits and pieces from his own prior works.

1817 *La Cenerentola, ossia la Bontà in Trionfo* (*Cinderella, or Goodness Triumphant*) premieres on January 25 at the Teatro Valle. History repeats itself: As with *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, the opera is initially given a frosty reception but soon becomes one of Rossini's most beloved works.

1823 Rossini's last Italian opera, *Semiramide*, premieres in Venice.

1824 By the age of 32, Rossini has written 34 operas and enjoys international acclaim of staggering proportions. In a biography of the composer published the following year, the French novelist Stendhal writes that "Napoleon is dead, but a new conqueror [Rossini] is now spoken of from Moscow to Naples, from London to Vienna, from Paris to Calcutta." Rossini officially relocates to Paris.


LA CENERENTOLA
OSSIA
LA BONTA' IN TRIONFO
DRAMMA GIOCOSO PER MUSICA
IN DUE ATTI
DA RAPPRESENTARSI
AL TEATRO DA S. AGOSTINO
NELLA PRIMAVERA DELL'ANNO 1817.
GENOVA,
STAMPERIA PAGANO,
Piazza nuova N.° 43.
Con Permissione.

1829 Rossini's final opera, *Guillaume Tell* (*William Tell*), premieres in Paris, following which he retires from composing for the stage; for the remaining four decades of his life, he will never write another large-scale opera. Instead, he turns his attention and accumulated wealth to cooking and exchanging recipes with famous chefs—and to hosting a glittering musical salon at his home in Paris.

1868 After a short illness, Rossini dies at the age of 76. His last years have been marked by an emergence from his self-imposed musical silence: He has written more than 150 short pieces of music, mostly in a humorous vein, under the general title *Péchés de Vieillesse* (*Sins of Old Age*).

1887 Two decades after Rossini's death, his widow, Olympe, transports his remains to Italy. In May, they are reinterred at the church of Santa Croce in Florence, where his final resting place may still be visited today.


Gioachino Rossini

A TALE AS OLD AS TIME?

CRITICAL INQUIRY

Can you think of any other stories that feature elements similar to those found in "Persecuted Heroine" stories? Where do these stories come from? If you were to write your own story using some of these elements, what would it be?

Rossini's *La Cenerentola* is based on Charles Perrault's "Cendrillon," but what about "Cendrillon" itself? Going back far enough, the answer ultimately lies outside the world of literature, in folk culture. Long before they were first written down, folk tales circulated orally, passed from one generation of storytellers to another; in this form, they doubtless predate the invention of writing itself.

While some modern fairy tales were invented relatively recently, the Cinderella story is very old indeed. The earliest extant written version, recorded by an ancient Greek geographer named Strabo in the first century BCE, is set in Egypt. A young woman named Rhodopis is bathing by the Nile when an eagle swoops down from the heavens and carries away one of her sandals. Upon reaching the city of Memphis, the eagle drops the sandal into the lap of the Egyptian king, who is so taken by the shapely form of the shoe that he orders his soldiers to search the entire kingdom for the maiden from whose foot it came. Rhodopis is found and brought before the king, and they are married.

Folk tales, then, are truly ancient, and also highly unstable. As they are embellished in each new telling, and as they hop from village to village and culture to culture, individual stories accumulate countless variations, some small, some more significant. We can recognize in the Egyptian sandal the glass slipper it later became, but what happened to the eagle? For a story as popular as "Cinderella," in fact, thousands of variations have been recorded. Thus, if we wish to trace the story across time, it can be helpful to focus our attention on just the essential components of the story.

Fortunately, 20th-century folklorists have already done much of this work for us. In the Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index, a vast catalog of folk tales from across the globe (named after the scholars who invented and refined it), Cinderella is categorized as a "Type 510" (or "Persecuted Heroine") story. Tales in this category can be boiled down to five essential components: 1) a mistreated heroine, who 2) receives supernatural assistance, 3) meets a prince, 4) must prove her identity, and 5) marries the prince at the end. Even so, it's the variations that make any given version memorable. "Aschenputtel," a German version of the Cinderella story, features a particularly gruesome twist: The stepsisters cut off parts of their feet in their attempts to fit the fateful glass slipper. This version was made famous by the Brothers Grimm, folktale collectors who included it in the first edition of their *Children's and Household Tales* in 1812.

From top to bottom:
16th-century engraving of Strabo
THE DIBNER LIBRARY OF THE HISTORY AND SCIENCE OF TECHNOLOGY

The frontispiece of the first volume of
"Children and Family Fairy Tales" by the Grimm brothers

RECEIVING ROSSINI

This deep dive essay is an example of "reception history," a research method that uses primary sources to decipher how people evaluated (or "received") works of art when they were first created. By considering such contemporary commentary, we can learn much about the priorities and aesthetic ideals of the time and place that produced the art we consume today.

In 1824, the French novelist Stendahl published *La Vie de Rossini* (*The Life of Rossini*), a biography of the Italian composer. While the writer had once staunchly criticized Rossini's music for lacking passion, in the biography his attitude shifted: Stendahl now acknowledged that the Italian master's brilliant music was "full of celestial fire." But even in this seemingly favorable analysis, Rossini was overshadowed by the supposedly superior Mozart. In Stendahl's opinion, Mozart's work was marked by true passion and "sweet melancholy," while Rossini's operas presented merely dazzling humor. To a modern reader, dazzling humor might seem like high praise indeed, but to 19th-century critics, passion and melancholy were far more desirable sentiments because they induced a reflective state of mind. Humor, on the other hand, merely provoked immediate bodily pleasure, similar (in Stendahl's memorable formulation) to the joy that "three ogres find in eating twenty beefsteaks a day." This juxtaposition between reason and feeling—or between moral judgment and bodily sensation—offered a neat binary that critics like Stendahl could use to evaluate music.

One of Stendahl's main complaints about Rossini's operas was his use of tongue-in-cheek musical phrases that contemporary critics dismissed as mere "noise." One such critic, a Mrs. Lattanzi, wrote in 1816 in the Italian magazine *Il Corriere delle Dame* that the "overburdened, confused, and noisy" music of Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* "tyrannized" and "corrupted the good taste" of audiences. Stendahl connected this "noisy" music with a particularly visceral effect. After he first heard *La Cenerentola*, Stendhal wrote that the moment when the stepsisters disgracefully mocked and caricatured Cinderella's melancholy singing in Act I made him "nauseous."

In fact, it was not merely *La Cenerentola*'s nauseating noise that offended Stendhal, who boldly claimed furthermore that the opera lacked "some essential quality of *ideal beauty*." But what was this "ideal beauty" that Stendhal missed? Stendhal's take on the lack of magic in the libretto offers an interesting clue. Because Rossini and Ferretti chose to discard fantastical elements of Perrault's fairy tale—such as the supernatural appearance of the godmother, the magical transformation of a pumpkin into a coach, and Cinderella's unique ability to fit her foot into a tiny glass shoe—their version of the story, Stendhal felt, was too mundane to induce in the viewer any honorable sentiments. "The music clutches at my imagination," Stendahl wrote, "and willy-nilly drags it down to its own petty level."

CRITICAL INQUIRY

Do you think that today's listeners seek answers to moral questions in music and other art forms? If yes, can you think of an example? If not, what other resources or media serve this purpose?

Rossini biographer Stendhal, whose other works included most prominently one of the greatest novels in 19th-century French literature, *Le Rouge et le Noir* (*The Red and the Black*). Portrait by Olof Johan Södermark (1840).
PALACE OF VERSAILLES

Yet despite himself, Stendahl was not always opposed to physical sensations provoked by music. For instance, he enjoyed the Act II sextet "Questo è un nodo avviluppato" and specifically lauded the "musical fireworks" of the Act I finale, which "bombards the listener with a rich, glittering, spontaneous, and original succession of new and tantalizing sensations." In other words, even Stendahl was not immune to Rossini's musical wit—or to the sense of joy that these "noisy" effects could provoke in both body and mind.

FUN FACT

The names Clorinda and Tisbe both have roots in other literary works. Clorinda comes from Torquato Tasso's epic poem *Jerusalem Liberated* (1581). The knight Tancred falls in love with Clorinda, but he is a member of the opposing army—and during a battle, he fails to recognize her and kills her. Tisbe (Thisbe in English) appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8 CE). One night, a lion, whose mouth still drips blood from a recent kill, threatens Thisbe, but she escapes unharmed. When her lover Pyramus finds her blood-stained scarf, he believes she is dead—and kills himself. When Thisbe finds his body, she follows him in death.

Illustration in *The fairy tales of Charles Perrault* by Harry Clarke (1922)
THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

ROSSINI'S PARISIAN SALON

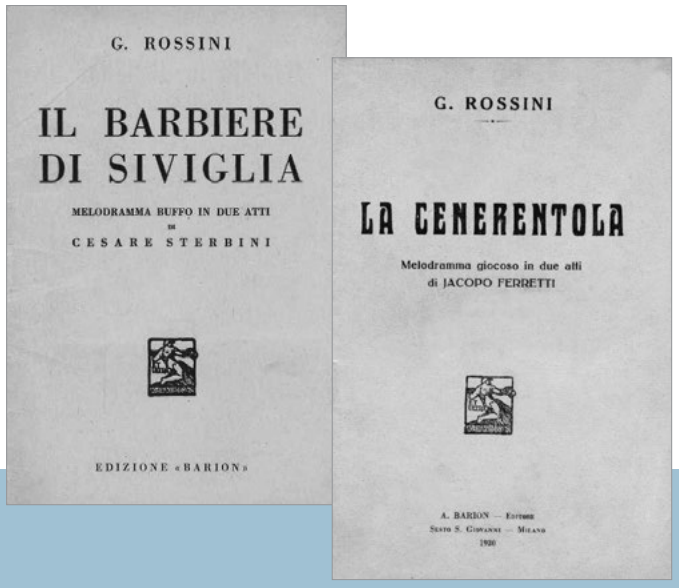
In 1855, after taking an early retirement and enjoying a lengthy sojourn in Italy, Rossini returned to Paris. Here, he rented space on the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin to establish what would become one of the most prominent and sophisticated artistic salons in the French capital. In the 19th century, "salons" were small artistic gatherings hosted in a person's home, a creative, intimate environment for close-knit groups of composers, writers, and other artists to socialize, entertain wealthy patrons, and share their work with each other. In addition to hosting artists in his own salon, Rossini also offered his services to wealthy aristocrats who wanted to throw an artistic party in their own house. The French writer and historian countess Marie d'Agoult (who was also mistress of the pianist and composer Franz Liszt) recalled that, for a fee of 1,500 francs, Rossini would arrange all of an evening's entertainment, booking virtuosos like Liszt, the harpist François-Joseph Naderman, or the flutist Jean-Louis Tulou, and even accompanying singers on the piano himself.

CRITICAL INQUIRY

Have you ever encountered any of the writers or musicians in this painting? What do you think is the modern-day equivalent of the salon?

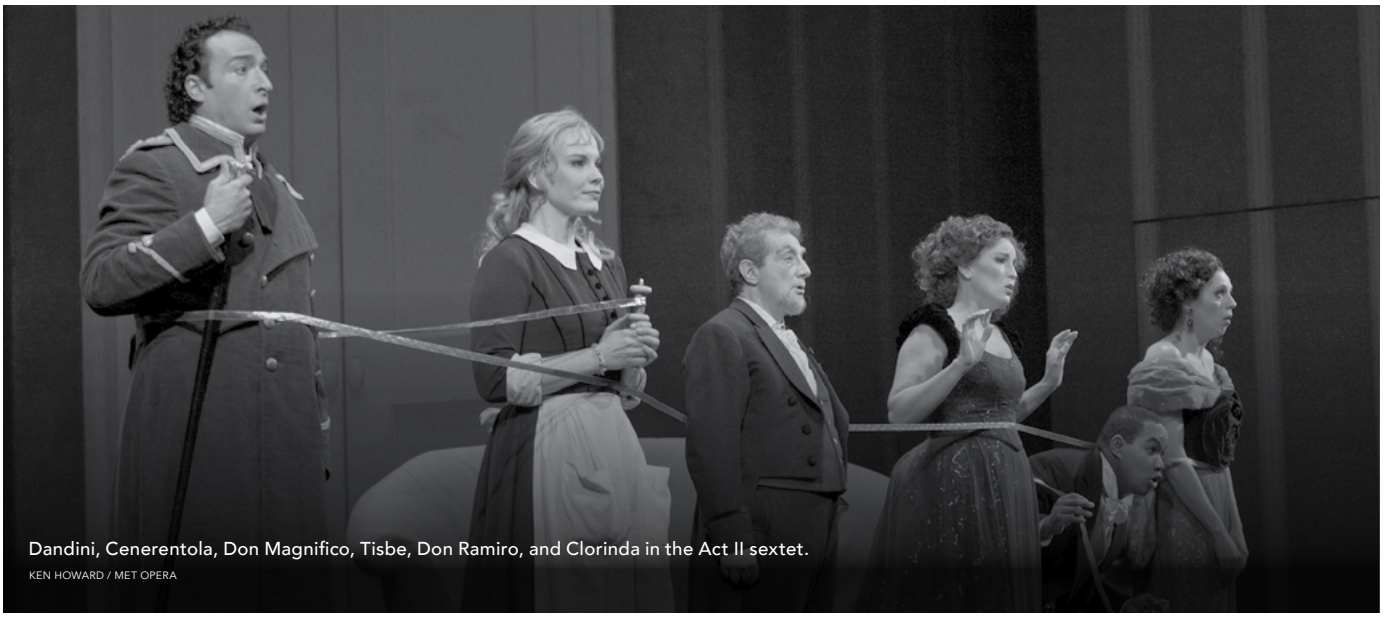
Josef Danhauser, *Franz Liszt Fantasizing at the Piano* (1840), Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Stiffung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Alte Nationalgalerie F.V. 42.

In 1840, the painter Josef Danhauser captured the atmosphere of the salon by depicting an imaginary gathering of some of the 19th century's most celebrated artistic figures. On the left side, sitting, is Alexandre Dumas, the author of *The Three Musketeers*. To his left, also seated, is the novelist Aurore Dudevant, the longtime lover of pianist and composer Frédéric Chopin. Since female writers at the time were afforded little respect, Dudevant took a male pen name, George Sand, and often dressed as a man and smoked cigars. Behind Dumas and Dudevant is the French novelist Victor Hugo, who authored *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Les Misérables*. Next to him are the virtuoso violinist Nicolò Paganini (left) and Rossini (right). At the piano is the magnificent Liszt, while leaning her head against the piano is the Countess d'Agoult. By placing a white bust of Ludwig van Beethoven against the background of a cloudy sky, Danhauser reminds everyone of the enormous influence the German composer had on the younger generation of musicians, who struggled to produce works that would compete with the scope and intensity of his music. The mysterious gazes of the artists in the painting seem to suggest that they are entranced: Liszt's playing has carried them into a transcendent realm.



FUN FACT

Audiences who are familiar with Rossini's earlier opera *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (*The Barber of Seville*) may recognize a number of melodies (and even lyrics) that Rossini reused in *La Cenerentola*. While recycling one's own work may strike modern audiences as strange (or even a violation of copyright), at the time it was common practice—especially since composers often had to write new operas phenomenally quickly. Singers could also demand that an aria that had offered them great success in a previous opera be incorporated into a new work.



Dandini, Cenerentola, Don Magnifico, Tisbe, Don Ramiro, and Clorinda in the Act II sextet.
KEN HOWARD / MET OPERA

ALL TANGLED UP

In Act II of *La Cenerentola*, a sudden thunderstorm causes Prince Ramiro to seek refuge in Don Magnifico's mansion. There, he spots the bracelet that the servant girl Cenerentola is wearing—and recognizes the mysterious woman from the ball. Cenerentola and Ramiro are thrilled to be reunited, but the other characters onstage (Dandini, Don Magnifico, Clorinda, and Tisbe) are genuinely perplexed: The Prince appears to be in love with a maid. For this moment in the drama, Rossini provides a humorous sextet (an ensemble of six singers) to capture the group's astonishment and provide a musical illustration for the events happening onstage.

One by one, the singers enter the musical fray. Each sings the same melody, resulting in a complex contrapuntal effect known as a canon. The singers articulate their words in short staccato bursts, while on several occasions, an embellished bel canto outburst in one singer's line brings a particular character to the fore. Yet for the most part, the sung melody is very simple, making this scene stand out from the opera's overall bel canto virtuosity. In the orchestra, too, the instruments provide a rhythmic foundation that punctuates and supports the vocal lines while avoiding the kind of lush accompaniment we find elsewhere in the score.

The stage direction also plays a role in the scene's comic effect. The singers' frozen facial expressions and abrupt hand gestures make them come across as lifeless robots. As the scene progresses, the singers become physically entangled by a ribbon—a staging element that echoes the "tangled knot" described by the libretto. Taken together, the music and staging create not only a humorous scene but also a sense of jaggedness and bewilderment, highlighting the group's inability to grasp an unconventional romantic union. And by making the singers come across as automata rather than living, breathing humans, Rossini caricatures a society in which social class determines expectations about who should fall in love with whom.

PHILOSOPHICAL CHAIRS

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Materials

Philosophical Chairs
Reproducible Sheet

COMMON CORE:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6–12.1
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7–12.1e
Seek to understand other perspectives and cultures and communicate effectively with audiences or individuals from varied backgrounds.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11–12.1d
Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

Philosophical Chairs is an activity designed to foster critical thinking, active inquiry, and respectful dialogue among students. To play, participants agree or disagree with a series of statements, but the game doesn't end there. The most crucial element is what happens next: Participants discuss their points of view and can switch sides if their opinions change during the discussion.

Each topic statement is deliberately open-ended yet ties into a number of the themes present in *La Cenerentola*—including the impact of bullying on family dynamics, the lure of burgeoning romance, and the notion that kindness will always triumph and forgiveness is its own reward. Set the stage for this conversation mindfully. Offer students a brief overview of the opera's plot, setting, and context, and remind them how to build a safe space for productive conversation. Some of the topics might be confusing or hard—that's okay! As you and your students explore and learn about *La Cenerentola*, you can return to these statements: What do they have to do with the opera's story? How might these questions help us explore the opera's story, history, and themes?

THE STATEMENTS

- Life is fair.
- All siblings argue.
- Goodness is always rewarded.
- If something is "too good to be true," then it probably is.
- Liars will always be punished.
- All problems have a solution.
- Money makes you happy.
- My love language is receiving gifts.
- It is easy to forgive others.
- Everyone has a soulmate.
- I believe in love at first sight.
- Happiness comes to those who are patient.
- Love is life's only true adventure.
- Every story has a moral.

A NOTE TO FACILITATORS: Between statements, provide some clarity as to why that particular statement was chosen. Explain to students where and how each particular theme shows up in the opera, or invite students to offer their own explanations.

STEP 1. INQUIRE

Invite students to read one of the statements—out loud as a class, to themselves, or in small groups. As they read, they should ask themselves:

- Do I understand the statement?
    - If not, what questions might clarify it for me?
- What immediately comes to mind when I read the statement?
    - What is my initial reaction: Do I agree or disagree?
- What led me to that decision?
    - What opinions do I hold with regards to this statement?
    - What life experiences may have led me to believe this way?

STEP 2. RESPOND

Ask students to commit to one side. They can agree or disagree, but there is no middle ground. (Many will not be completely comfortable committing to one side over the other—that's part of the game. It will help foster conversation and debate.)

STEP 3. DISCUSS

Share out! Use the following questions to guide discussion:

- Does anyone feel very strongly either way? Why or why not?
- Does anyone feel conflicted? Why or why not?
- Give voice to what you thought about in the first step:
    - What led me to make my decision?
    - What opinions do I hold with regards to this statement?
    - What life experience may have led me to believe this way?
- What might you have not considered that others are now bringing up in the discussion?
- Did any new questions arise during the discussion?

As the conversation continues, students are free to change their mind about whether or not they agree with the statement—or develop a more nuanced perspective.

Repeat steps 1 through 3 for each statement.

FROM RAGS TO RICHES

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Close Reading (including summarizing, sequencing, and identifying cause and effect), Critical Thinking, Creative Writing

Materials

- A copy of the opera's synopsis (either the written or illustrated version)
- Writing supplies

For optional Diving Deeper activities:

- Large construction paper
- Costumes/props
- Rulers
- Tape
- Index cards
- Other art supplies

Stories are similar to journeys: We have a starting point, a destination, and a variety of experiences along the way. This activity uses a change-based approach to narrative to explore the plot of *La Cenerentola*, deconstructing it, reconstructing it, and discovering the internal logic that makes it all fit together.

STEP 1. READ THE SYNOPSIS

Ask students to read the synopsis of *La Cenerentola* (either the written or illustrated synopsis will work). You might also invite them to take turns reading in small groups. Before moving on, check for understanding:

- Do students have any questions about the plot?
- Do they recognize the plot?
    - If so, did anything about the synopsis surprise them?

STEP 2. BOIL DOWN THE PLOT

PART 1: IDENTIFY THE BEGINNING AND END

Suggest to students that plots can be boiled down into three core components, which combine to make a "big change":

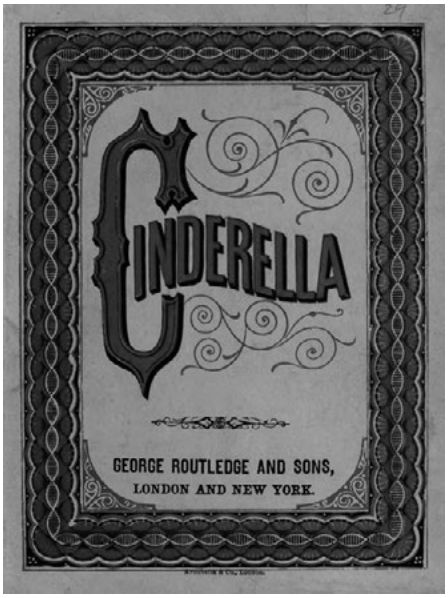
1. Beginning
2. Cause
3. End

To figure out what these three components are in a story, start with the first and last: the beginning and the end. These should be a *pair of opposites* that can be expressed in a two-part statement.

(Journey's Start)	At the beginning ……
(Destination)	By the end ……

Take a moment to practice articulating this beginning/end pair with simple, familiar stories. Here are two examples:

Charlotte's Web	At the beginning, Wilbur the pig was destined to be slaughtered. By the end, Wilbur was a valued companion.
The Wizard of Oz	At the beginning, Dorothy wanted to leave Kansas. By the end, Dorothy knew there was "no place like home."



PART 2: CONSTRUCT THE CAUSE

The final element of the three-part narrative structure is a concise statement that begins: "The change happened because …"

Here is an example that uses all three guide points:

The Boy Who Cried "Wolf"

At the beginning, people believed the boy.
By the end, no one believed him.
The change happened because the boy lied too often.

Again, practice identifying and articulating this "change happened" statement with your students using familiar stories.

STEP 3. ANALYZE *LA CENERENTOLA*

Now have students apply the above model to *La Cenerentola*: Ask students to name the three core components that summarize the opera's plot.

Example:

In the beginning, Cenerentola is an unloved servant.
By the end, Cenerentola finds true love by marrying Prince Ramiro.
The change happened because Alidoro gave Cenerentola the means to go to the Prince's ball.

Note that numerous "the change happened because" statements are possible. Some students may focus on love, others may focus on wealth. Encourage a variety of ideas and solutions.

COMMON CORE:

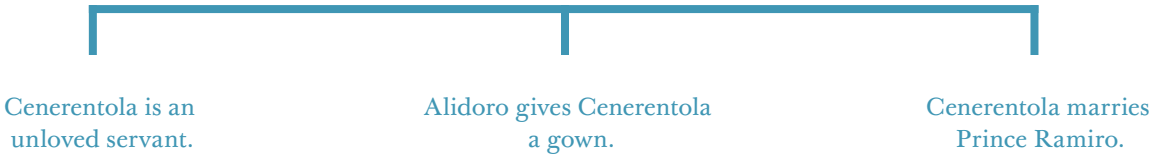
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.2
Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.5
Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.

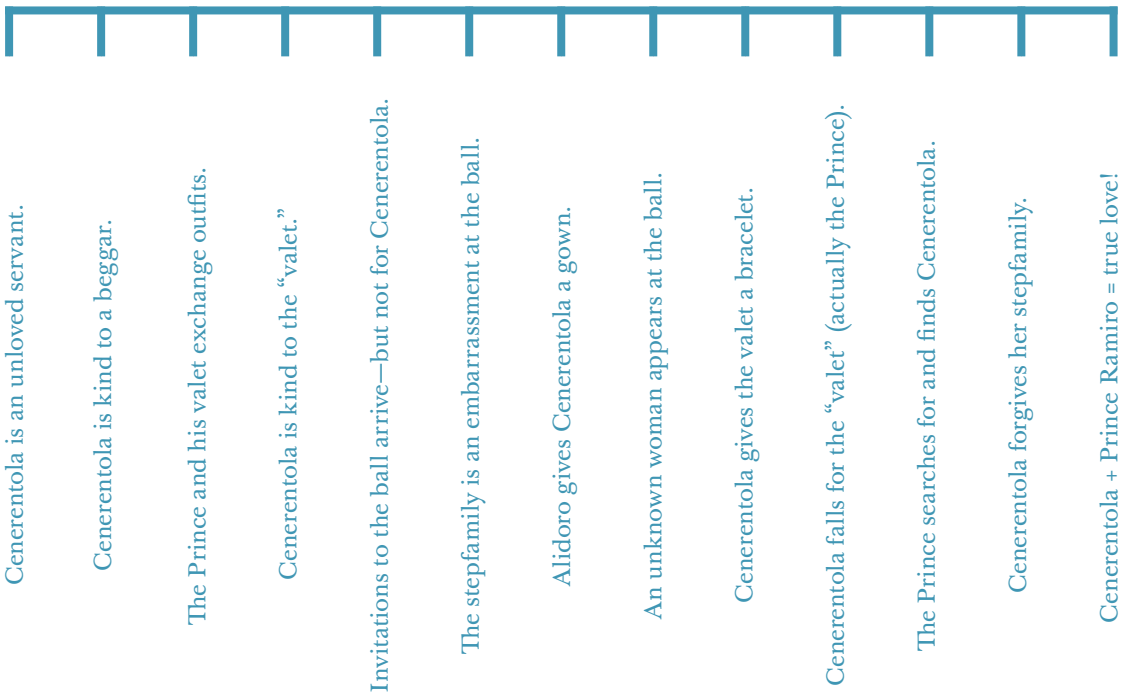
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3a
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

STEP 4. VISUALIZE THE PLOT

Arrange the three elements students identified above as a graphic timeline. Leave plenty of room in between, as other events will fill in the blank space. (Note that a three-element timeline may suffice to develop younger students' story sense.)



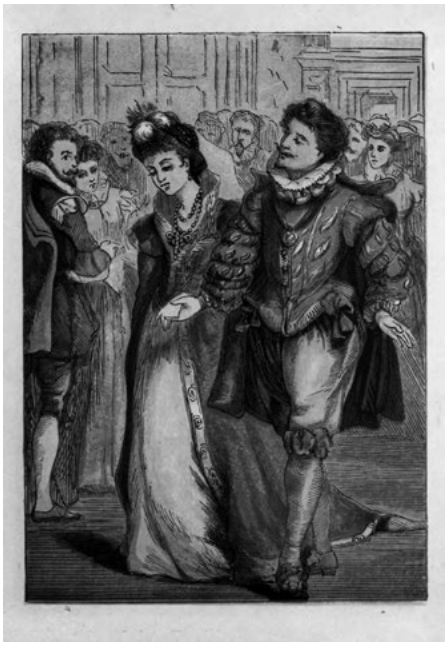
Have students use cause-and-effect strategy to fill in major events (but not minor details) to connect the three big elements. They should list, not explain—less is more. (Students are free to add more than one event between the three core events, but these events should occur in order. By working toward these landmarks, the events become goal-directed.) Establish that these interior events are essential to realizing the landmarks they lead to.



STEP 5. TRANSFORM THE TIMELINE

Invite students to transform the finished timeline into a summary of *La Cenerentola* by turning the brief notes about each event into full sentences. For instance, the above timeline might be rendered thus:

> Cenerentola is an unloved servant. When a beggar comes to the house, she is kind to him. Little does she know that the beggar is really Alidoro!
>
> Then, Cenerentola's stepfamily receives an invitation to the Prince's ball. The Prince and his valet change places so they can see through the inevitable flattery. Cenerentola is kind to the valet (who is secretly the Prince).
>
> Cenerentola wants to attend the ball, but her stepfather forbids it. Just then, the beggar reveals to Cenerentola that he is a magical being who can make sure she can attend the ball.



Illustrations from the 1865 edition of *Cinderella* by the Dalziel brothers
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARIES

At the palace, the stepfamily behaves very badly. They are aghast when a mysterious, elegant woman appears at the ball. It is really Cenerentola! Despite all the trappings of wealth, Cenerentola still favors the Prince's valet. She leaves the ball, giving the valet one of her bracelets. She invites him to use it to find her later.

The Prince searches far and wide to find the bracelet's owner. When he does, he proposes marriage. The Prince and Cenerentola have found true love.

DIVING DEEPER

More advanced students can use the change-based model to create original plots:

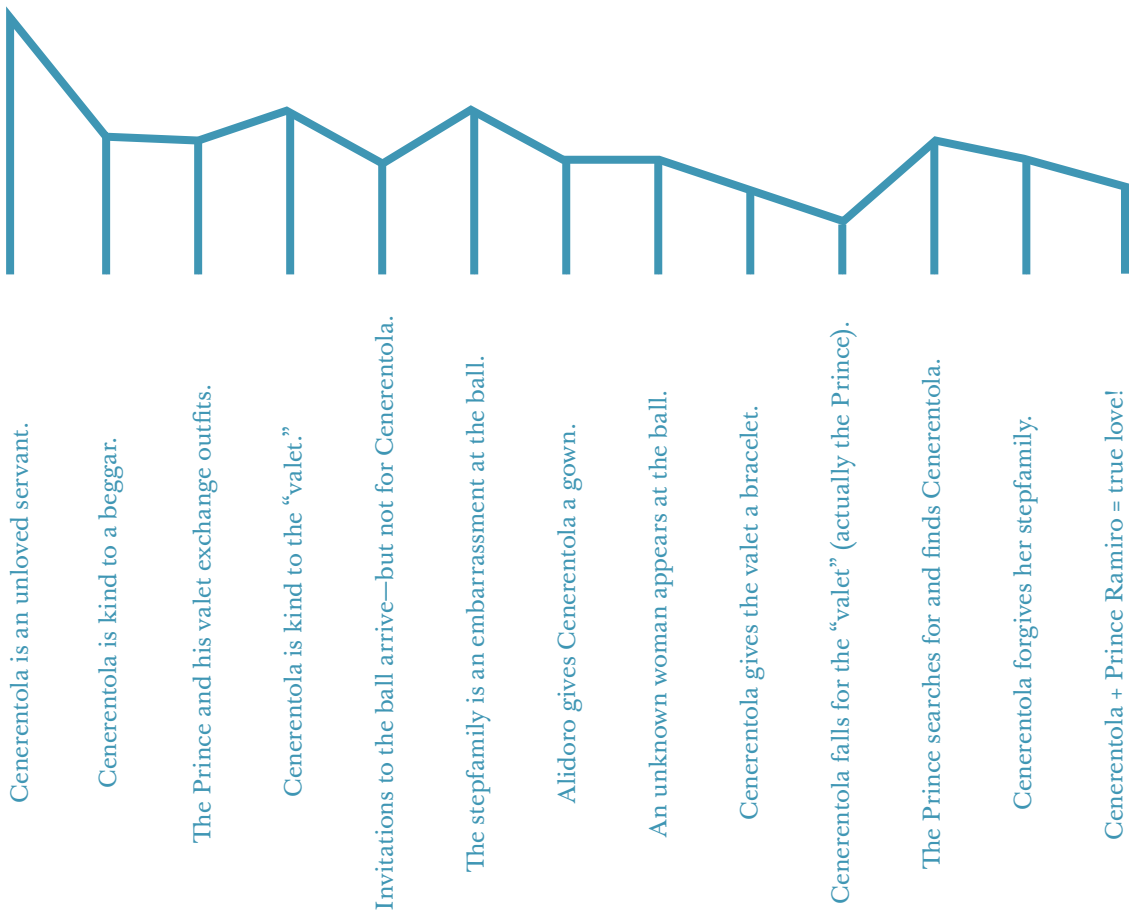
1. Begin by imagining the beginning and ending.
2. Next, devise a cause to explain the change.
3. Arrange these as a timeline, allowing ample space between events.
4. Fill in goal-directed events to explain how and why things changed.
5. Review the sequence of events for focus and logic.
6. Between events, reserve spaces for description, explanation, and/or dialogue.
7. To transform the annotated timeline into a story, follow the plan from beginning to end, expanding each item into sentences and paragraphs.

In groups, students can transform their timelines into *La Cenerentola: The Silent Movie.*

1. Copy each plot point onto a large paper to form an intertitle (the filmed, static text that appears between scenes of a silent movie to clarify the action).
2. Ask students to assign roles within their groups. One role will be to hold up each intertitle card between scenes and display it to the audience; other students will play the characters.
3. Direct students to pantomime each scene melodramatically, with the goal of reaching the next intertitle. (Optional: Play music from *La Cenerentola* to accompany the action.)

Create a dynamic plot development chart as a concrete organizer.

1. Convert the straight line connecting all timeline events to a line that angles up for positive events and downward for negative events. Here is an example, using the example timeline for *La Cenerentola* .



2. Alternatively, write each event on an index card, and use rulers or other sticks as line segments to connect them with tape, tracing the story contour. You can decorate your bridge, and possibly have figurines representing the characters cross the bridge, from the beginning to the end of the story.

Create a metaphorical map of Cenerentola's journey.

- Students can represent the opera's narrative journey as a fanciful metaphorical map, tracing milestone events from their timeline. Rather than charted line, the map uses landform obstacles to represent negative events, such as a mountain or an alligator-filled river. It can also represent advantages (such as bridges, magical tokens, or even conveniently placed vines). Have students annotate the map by labeling each plot event along the way.

CENERENTOLA CHECKERS

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

English Language Arts, Visual-Spatial Skills, collaboration, social-emotional learning

Materials

- The "Cenerentola Checkers" reproducibles (checkerboard, events grid, and checklist)
- One checker or other game token for each player
- Dice, one for each group
- Scissors
- Clear tape or glue stick

COMMON CORE:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.5
Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3–5.1.b
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3–5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.

The plots of Rossini's comic operas can be tricky and difficult to follow, even when they parallel a familiar story like "Cinderella." This activity is designed to teach your students the plot of the opera—through a board game as fun and intricate as a Rossinian comedy!

STEP 1. PREPARE TO PLAY

Divide your class into groups of two to four players, and distribute materials as follows.

For each group:
One copy of the Events Grid
One copy of the Checkerboard
One die

For each player:
One copy of the Checklist
One checker or game token

Next, direct students to:

1. Separate each event on the Events Grid. (If you have younger students, you may wish to have the squares pre-cut.)
2. Stick each event onto a random square on the checkerboard. (Students can place the events wherever they wish, but they should be distributed evenly across the board.)

STEP 2. EXPLAIN THE RULES

The rules of Cenerentola Checkers are straightforward—but that doesn't mean the game isn't full of twists and turns! The rules are as follows:

1. Each player places their game token at one corner of the checkerboard.
2. Players roll the die to see who goes first. The lowest number will move first, and then play will move clockwise.
3. On their turn, players will roll the die and then move that number of spaces. Tokens may move horizontally, vertically, or diagonally along consecutive spaces. Players can combine directions during a turn, but may not use the same space more than once on any single turn.
4. The goal is to "collect" all the events on the board in sequence (as indicated by the numbers on the events and on the checklist). When players lands on an event, they can check it off the checklist. (But remember: Events MUST be collected in order!)
5. The first player to collect all 12 events in sequence wins the game.

STEP 3. PLAY THE GAME!

As students play, the game will familiarize them with *La Cenerentola's* plot, whet their appetite for the opera, and engage their own creative storytelling ideas.

DIVING DEEPER

- After playing the game, you can explore why each of the events is essential to the plot: How would the logic of the plot suffer if a) any event was omitted, or b) any event appeared out of the original sequence?
- You can modify this game to suit any opera or narrative text. Students may enjoy writing an "events grid" for their own favorite operas, books, or other narrative works.
- Play selections from the opera and ask students to guess which event from the gameboard they depict. The following table connects specific tracks from MOoD to the game's events.

TRACK		
4	Una volta c'era un re	Cenerentola is poor and unloved.
5	Un tantin di carità	Cenerentola is kind to a beggar.
6	O figlie amabili di Don Magnifico … Cenerentola, presto prepara i nastri	An invitation to the royal ball arrives. Prince Ramiro and his valet exchange clothes.
10 11	Una volta c'era … Una soave non so che Del Baron le figlie io cerco	Cenerentola is kind to the "valet" (really Prince Ramiro in disguise).
15	Signor, una parola	Cenerentola is not allowed to go to the ball.

TRACK		
19 20	Là del ciel nell'arcano profondo Un crescente mormorio	The beggar turns out to be Alidoro, who gives Cenerentola jewelry and a dress and takes her to the ball.
21 22	Ma bravo, bravo, bravo; Conciosiacosacchè – Intendente? Direttor? … Noi Don Magnifico …	Cenerentola's stepfamily behaves badly at the palace.
25	Ah! Se velata ancor … Sprezzo quei don che versa … Parlar, pensar vorrei	An elegant woman appears at the ball. It's Cenerentola, but no one recognizes her.
25 26	Ah! Se velata ancor … Sprezzo quei don che versa … Parlar, pensar vorrei Signora … Altezza è in tavola … Mi par d'esser	Everyone expresses their astonishment when the lady removes her veil.
29	Ah! Questa bella incognita	Cenerentola leaves the ball, giving the "valet" her bracelet.
36 37	Scusate, amici Siete voi? … Questo è un nodo avviluppato … Donna sciocca	Prince Ramiro searches for the bracelet's owner—and discovers it's Cenerentola.
40 41 42	La Pillola è un po' dura…Della fortuna instabile Nacqui all'affanno e al pianto Non più mesta	Cenerentola and Prince Ramiro get married.

THE OPERATIC SONGBIRDS' NEST

When birds weave their nests, they incorporate found materials—bits of string, cloth, or paper—into their architecture with fascinating and beautiful results. Similarly, opera composers weave the words, musical themes, and personalities of their characters into ensembles. This activity will help you explore the process of crafting an ensemble through a project that combines the visual arts and sciences.

STEP 1. WATCH AND LEARN

Invite your students to watch or listen to *La Cenerentola*'s Act II ensemble, "Questo è un nodo avviluppato" (MOoD Track 37). Older students may enjoy watching it in small groups, while younger students will likely enjoy watching it as a class.

Ask for initial impressions: Was this scene funny? Was it confusing? Can students tell what is going on and how these characters relate to each other? Direct their thinking with the following questions, and then play the scene again.

- How many characters are singing at the same time?
- Are they all singing the same text? Do they seem to be singing different texts?
- Are they talking to each other as they sing? Are they talking to themselves? Both?

(Note that MOoD includes English subtitles. You can either distribute the reproducible text and translation now, or you can wait until the next step.)

STEP 2. SEPARATE THE STRANDS

If you haven't done so already, distribute the ensemble's text and translation. Next, distribute pieces of construction paper, origami paper, computer paper, or the reproducible, and have students cut the paper into six long, one-inch-wide strips. (The reproducible at the end of this guide has guide-lines for cutting the paper. For younger students, you may wish to have the paper pre-cut.)

Now have students write each character's text on an individual strip of paper. (For instance, if you have six colors, you will use six strips of paper.)

Note:

- The strands should all be about the same length. If the text is too short, repeat the text multiple times. If the text is too long, tape another strip too the end of the first and keep going.
- The strips may have some or many words in common—excavating this textual relationship is part of the point of this activity.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Natural science, zoology, biology, visual arts, sculpture, poetry, literary analysis

Materials

- Reproducible handouts for this activity
- Construction paper of various colors, origami paper, or computer paper
- Index cards
- Pencils or pens
- Scissors
- Scotch tape
- Optional materials for decorating (glitter, feathers, etc.)

COMMON CORE:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.5
Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-4.11
Create and present a poem, narrative, play, art work, or literary review in response to a particular author or theme studied in class.

Finally, invite students to decorate the strips in a way that expresses each character's personality.

STEP 3. CONSTRUCT THE NEST

Teach students to weave the strips of paper together to form a multi-strand braid. (Instructional videos for six-strand braids are readily available on YouTube, as are instructions for braids of three, four, and five strands.)

When students' braids are complete, have them tape the ends together to make the circular nest shape, and then tape the nest onto a piece of construction paper to form a sturdy base.

Finally, have students write a brief description of the ensemble scene on their index card. Attach it to the construction paper base.

DIVING DEEPER

- Fold simple origami birds of different sizes and colors to represent the characters and place them in the next. (Instructional videos for various origami birds are available on YouTube.) Spend some time researching the birds—are any of them native to your area? Are any of them native to Italy (where *La Cenerentola* premiered) or France (where Charles Perrault lived)?
- Consider the interplay of the characters as you weave their texts (and their fates) together. Invite students to write a short scene describing what happens next in the story.
- Use this same activity to explore other operatic ensembles. Some good examples include:
    - "Fredda ed immobile," from *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*
    - "Buona sera," from *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*
    - "Chi mi frena in tal momento," from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*
    - "Soave sia il vento," from Mozart's *Così fan tutte*
    - "Bella figlia dell'amore," from Verdi's *Rigoletto*
    - "Voi signor, che giusto siete," from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*
    - "Don Giovanni, a cenar teco," from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*
    - "Via, da brava," from Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*

CENERENTOLA CHARM BRACELET

In *La Cenerentola*, Cenerentola gives the Prince an accessory that will help him find her again after she leaves the ball—but in Rossini's opera, it's not a glass slipper. It's a bracelet! In this activity, students will create their own charm bracelets featuring scenes from the opera.

This activity will work best after students have already seen the opera, since it will invite them to review and reflect on what they've seen.

STEP 1. REVIEW AND BRAINSTORM

Invite students to spend a few minutes selecting five favorite scenes from the opera. (The "Opera Review" Reproducible might be useful here, if students filled it out while watching the opera.) Ask them to think about why they enjoyed these scenes and remember what these scenes looked like.

STEP 2. ILLUSTRATE

Distribute the "Cenerentola Charm Bracelet" handout and ask students to draw each of their favorite scenes in the five "charm" circles provided. They can also decorate the wristband.

STEP 2. MAKE THE BRACELET

Distribute the "Cenerentola Charm Bracelet" handout and ask students to draw each of their favorite scenes in the five "charm" circles provided. They can also decorate the wristband.

FUN FACT

Rossini reportedly composed the music for *La Cenerentola* in just 24 days.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Visual Arts, Costume Design

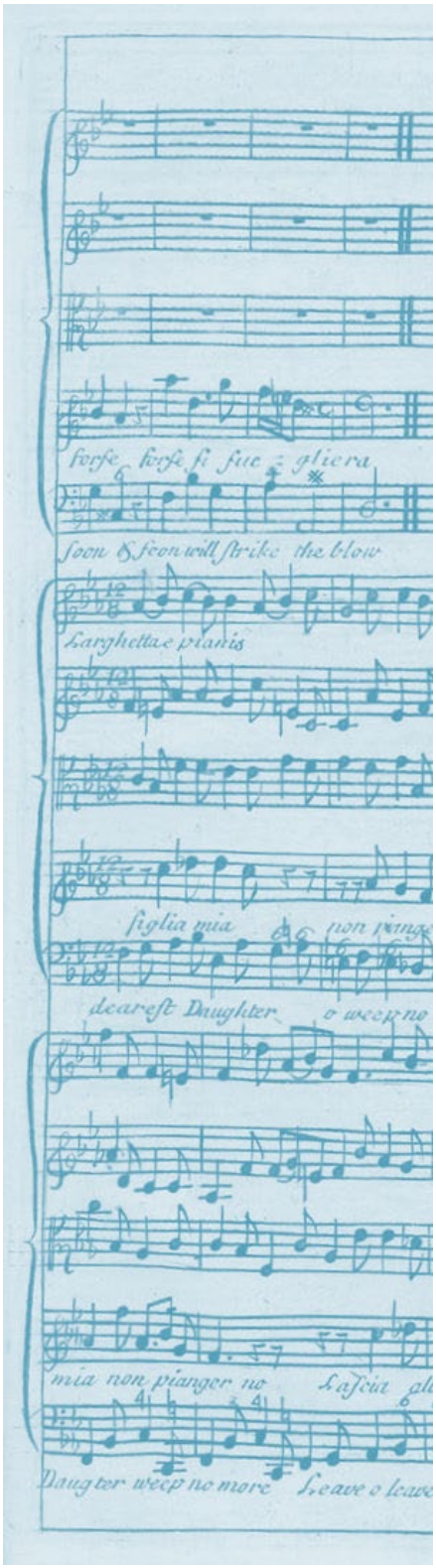
Materials

- The reproducible handout for this activity
- Scissors
- Tape or glue
- Colored pencils/pens
- Glitter/feathers/other art supplies

COMMON CORE:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-4.11
Create and present a poem, narrative, play, art work, or literary review in response to a particular author or theme studied in class.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.



Aria

A number for solo voice accompanied by orchestra. In opera, arias mostly appear during a pause in dramatic action when a character is reflecting musically on his or her emotions. Most arias are lyrical, with a tune that can be hummed, and many arias include musical repetition. For example, the earliest operatic arias consist of music that repeats with each new stanza of text (strophic arias). Another type of aria, the "da capo aria," became common by the 18th century and features the return of the opening music and text after a contrasting middle section. Rossini's arias often fall into multiple sections, including a declamatory beginning, a slower, more lyrical middle portion, and a fast, virtuosic conclusion. 19th-century Italian arias often feature a two-part form that showcases an intensification of emotion from the lyrical first section (the cavatina) to the showier second section (the cabaletta).

Bel canto

Referring to a predominantly Italian vocal style of the late 18th and 19th centuries, bel canto (literally, "beautiful singing") emphasizes lyricism and ornamentation in order to showcase the beauty of the singer's voice. Its focus on lyrical embellishment directly contrasts with a contemporary Germanic focus on a weighty, dramatic style. Bel canto singing is most closely associated with the music of Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, and Gaetano Donizetti.

Ensemble number

A section of an opera written for multiple voices, typically labeled according to how many people are involved in the scene (e.g., "quartet" for four voices, "quintet" for five voices, "sextet" for six voices, "septet" for seven voices, "octet" for eight voices, "nonet" for nine voices, etc.).

Canon

A musical structure consisting of only a single melody and a "rule" explaining how different voices should sing it ("canon" means "rule" in Latin). The simplest form of canon, also called a "round," involves each voice singing the melody on the same pitch and at the same speed but beginning a certain number of beats after the previous singer, as in "Row, row, row your boat." Composers can also write canons in which the second voice sings the tune backwards ("retrograde"), upside down ("inversion"), or upside down *and* backwards (a so-called "crab canon"); the second voice may sing the tune at a faster pace than the first ("diminution"), or more slowly ("augmentation"). Finally, there are so-called "puzzle canons," in which a single line of music is presented with no instructions at all, and performers must figure out the rule before they can successfully sing or play the piece.

Mezzo-soprano

A voice range lying below the soprano but above the contralto. A mezzo-soprano's voice is slightly deeper than that of a soprano, so mezzo-sopranos are often cast in supporting roles as older women, including nurses, confidantes, or maids. But in Rossini's operas, the mezzo-soprano is usually the star of the show—especially in comic works like *La Cenerentola*. In his tragedies, on the other hand, the character with a "mezzo" range is more likely to be the (male) hero: In the early 1800s, heroic male roles were associated with very high voices, a relic of the 18th-century tradition of the *castrato* (a male singer who had undergone castration as a boy, and who therefore retained a powerful high voice as an adult). By Rossini's time, these high parts were typically sung by women dressed as men, and they are called "trouser roles" as a result.

Final scene of Rossini's *Le comte Ory*, engraving by Dubois (1828)
BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE

Legato and Staccato

Two opposite types of articulation. A melody that is "legato" (literally "connected" in Italian) is played without any spaces or gaps between the notes, thereby creating a smooth line. By contrast, the notes in a "staccato" ("detached") melody are short, with noticeable space between them. Both legato and staccato articulations are associated with vocal virtuosity: While the clarity of a staccato line can help very fast melodies with lots of leaps sparkle, legato lines take a great deal of control over both the voice and the breath.

Coloratura

A rapid and elaborate ornamentation by a solo singer, particularly common in operas of the 18th and 19th centuries. Requiring vocal agility and a wide and high range, coloratura showcases the virtuosity of a singer by featuring intricate melodic figures, rapid scales, trills, and other embellishments. At the time Rossini was writing *La Cenerentola*, singers were expected to be able to improvise such ornaments on the spot, especially when singing repeated sections within an aria; as a result, composers often didn't bother to fully write out the ornaments in the score.

Opera buffa

A term applied to Italian comic operas from the mid-18th through mid-19th centuries. The plot of an opera buffa often features scenes and characters from everyday life, addresses a light or sentimental subject, and concludes with a happy ending. *Opera buffa* had its last hurrah with Rossini, whose comedies are much better known today than his serious works. The generation after Rossini, however, was much more taken with tragedy, or a hybrid "semi-serious" genre that was more sentimental in outlook. *Opera buffa* declined considerably in popularity as a result, and hardly any opere buffe were written after around 1850.

Rossini crescendo

A crescendo is a gradual raising of volume in music achieved by increasing the dynamic level. When music "crescendos," the performers begin at a softer dynamic level and get incrementally louder. One of the most famous types of crescendos in opera, closely associated with Rossini, is appropriately known as the "Rossini crescendo": It involves pairing an increase in volume with repeating melodic and rhythmic phrases, higher instrumental registers, and the gradual addition of instruments to create a particularly dramatic or comedic effect.

Recitative

A type of vocal writing between speech and song that imitates the accents and inflections of natural speech. Composers often employ recitative for passages of text that involve quick dialogue and the advancement of plot, since the style allows singers to move rapidly through a large amount of text. Recitative may be accompanied either by a single instrument (such as a harpsichord or fortepiano), a small ensemble, or the whole orchestra. Because recitative is so formulaic, it was often the last part of an opera to be written; in fact, Rossini contracted out the writing of *La Cenerentola*'s recitatives to another composer, Luca Agolini, who also contributed a showy aria for Clorinda.

PHILOSOPHICAL CHAIRS

Active listening, critical thinking, and respectful dialogue are learned skills: Everyone can acquire them, and no one can perfect them without practice. Philosophical Chairs is designed to help us develop these skills while also learning about opera.

You might find these statements challenging—and you might find it challenging to talk with someone whose views differ from your own. That's the point! Take your time with each statement, embrace uncertainty, and know that changing your mind as you acquire new information is a sign of strength (not weakness). Before you begin your discussion, take some time to review the rules of engagement:

Be sure you understand the statement. If something is unclear, ask!
Face each other. Body language helps show that you're listening.
Only one speaker at a time. Everyone will get their turn to speak.
Think before you speak. Be sure that what you're going to say is what you really mean, and remember that we can disagree while still being kind.
Summarize the previous person's comments before adding your own. This will show that you have heard their thoughts and are responding thoughtfully to what they said. It will also help avoid misunderstandings and faulty assumptions.
Address ideas, not the person. Challenging ideas or statements is great—but only if we respect the individuality and inherent value of the person who expressed them.
Three before me. After you've spoken, you may not make another comment until three others have shared their thoughts.

THE STATEMENTS

- Life is fair.
- All siblings argue.
- Goodness is always rewarded.
- If something is "too good to be true," then it probably is.
- Liars will always be punished.
- All problems have a solution.
- Money makes you happy.
- My love language is receiving gifts.
- It is easy to forgive others.
- Everyone has a soulmate.
- I believe in love at first sight.
- Happiness comes to those who are patient.
- Love is life's only true adventure.
- Every story has a moral.

LA CENERENTOLA WORD SEARCH

Below is a list of words related to *La Cenerentola*. Can you find them hidden in the word search below? Look carefully: The words can be printed horizontally, vertically, diagonally, or even backwards.

M	F	L	O	P	E	R	A	E	M	V	C	M	C	O
S	C	A	T	E	R	O	T	N	A	B	U	S	F	P
C	V	B	N	A	V	R	C	L	G	E	B	I	I	C
X	R	O	S	S	I	N	I	C	I	E	E	U	L	M
I	Y	C	P	E	N	V	E	O	C	B	L	R	A	S
E	B	R	A	C	E	L	E	T	S	F	C	I	G	E
H	D	C	I	N	D	E	R	E	L	L	A	L	N	L
R	Q	E	R	A	M	A	Y	U	N	C	N	D	L	A
C	P	N	L	I	H	G	P	D	P	B	T	T	N	T
D	O	N	M	A	G	N	I	F	I	C	O	N	W	Y
F	T	H	U	U	C	I	A	O	O	N	M	E	B	R
E	W	A	G	M	S	F	B	L	H	T	S	C	A	I
A	O	I	O	I	R	I	E	T	V	D	C	O	T	A
R	R	A	F	S	U	M	C	S	E	N	H	P	N	F
K	C	O	L	O	R	A	T	U	R	A	J	L	P	T

MAGIC

ROSSINI

OPERA

MUSIC

BEL CANTO

ANGELINA

DUET

COLORATURA

BRACELET

DON MAGNIFICO

CINDERELLA

FAIRY TALE

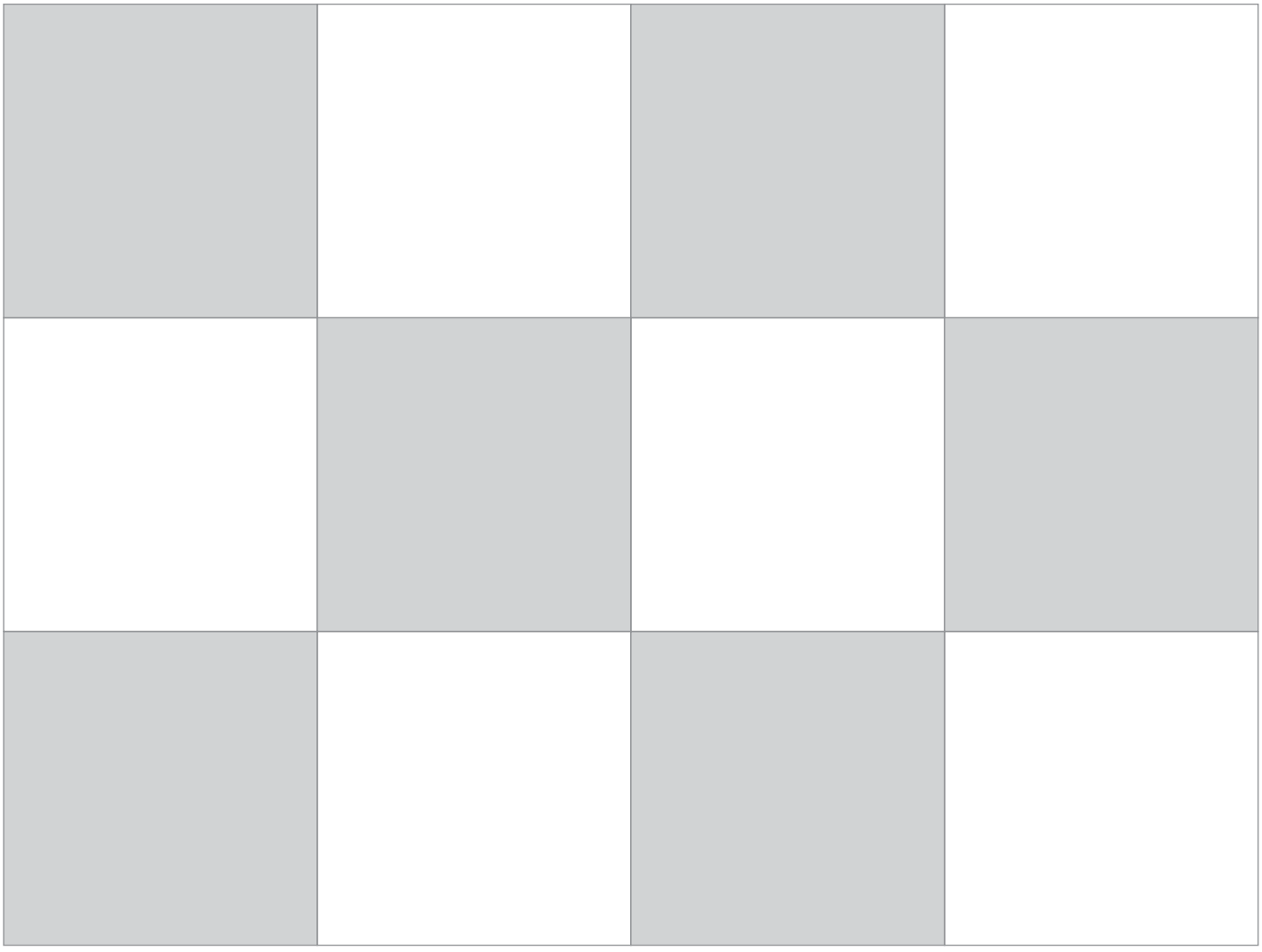
THE OPERATIC SONGBIRD'S NEST | TEXT & TRANSLATION

Questo è un nodo avviluppato,
Questo è un gruppo rintrecciato.
Chi sviluppa, più inviluppa,
Chi più sgruppa, più raggruppa;
Ed intanto la mia testa
Vola, vola, e poi s' arresta,
Vo' tenton per l' aria oscura,
E comincio a delirar.

This is a tangled situation,
A very gnarly knot.
Try to untie it, and it just gets more twisted,
Try to loosen it, and it just gets tighter.
And through it all my head
Is spinning, spinning, and then suddenly stops
I'm grasping my way through the dark,
And I'm starting to lose my mind.

THE OPERATIC SONGBIRD'S NEST | WEAVING THE NEST

CENERENTOLA CHECKERS | CHECKERBOARD



CENERENTOLA CHECKERS | EVENTS GRID

1 Cenerentola is poor and unloved.	2 Cenerentola is kind to a beggar.	3 An invitation to the royal ball arrives Prince Ramiro and his valet exchange clothes.	4 Cenerentola is kind to the "valet" (really Prince Ramiro in disguise).
5 Cenerentola is not allowed to go to the ball.	6 The beggar turns out to be Alidoro, who gives Cenerentola jewelry and a dress and takes her to the ball.	7 Cenerentola's stepfamily behaves badly at the palace.	8 An elegant woman appears at the ball. It's Cenerentola, but no one recognizes her.
9 Cenerentola falls in love with the "valet" (who is really the prince).	10 Cenerentola leaves the ball, giving the "valet" her bracelet.	11 Prince Ramiro searches for the bracelet's owner—and discovers it's Cenerentola.	12 Cenerentola and Prince Ramiro get married.

CENERENTOLA CHECKERS | CENERENTOLA CHECKLIST

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☐ Cenerentola is kind to a beggar.

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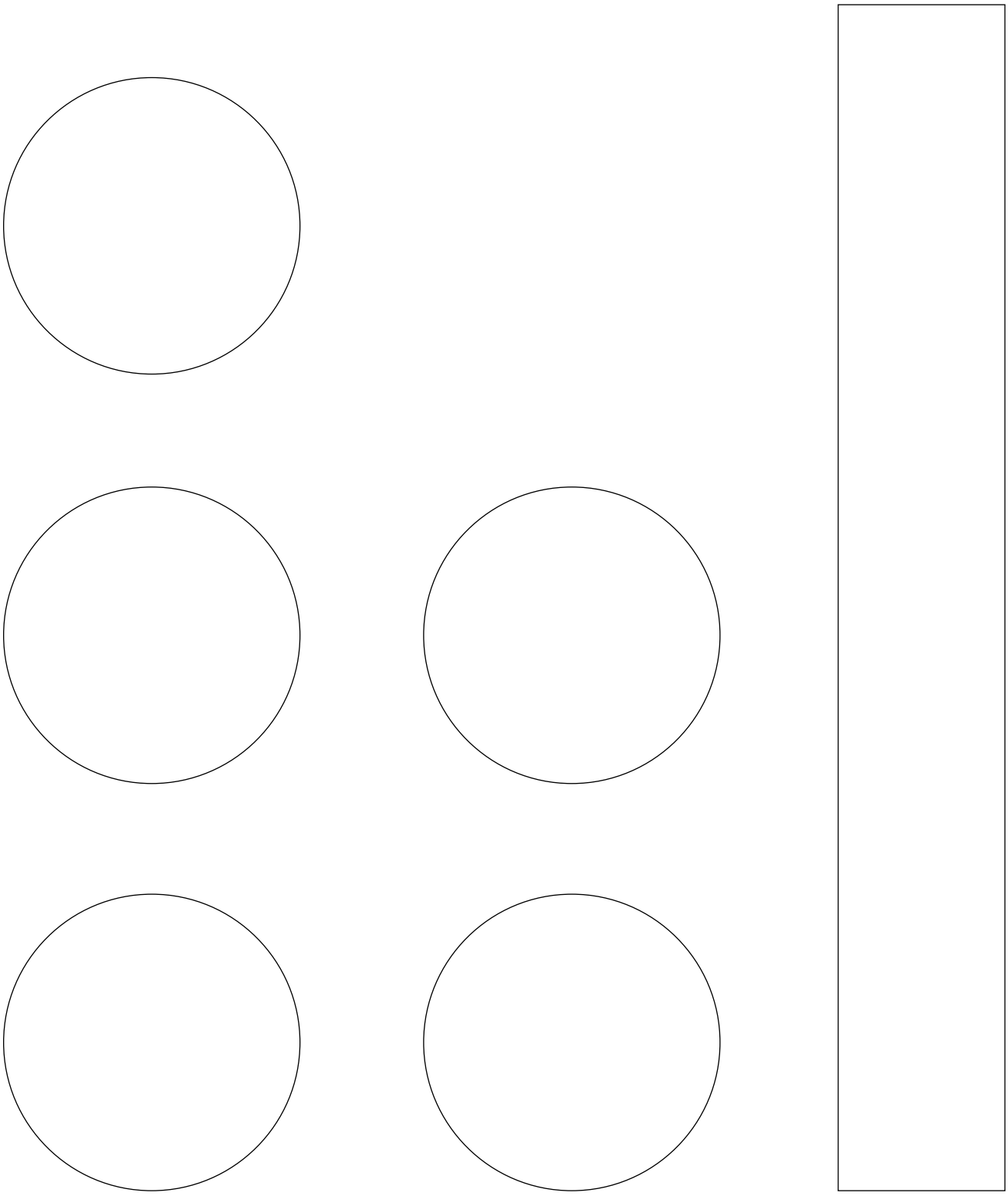
☐ Prince Ramiro searches for the bracelet's owner—
and discovers it's Cenerentola.

☐ Cenerentola and Prince Ramiro get married.

CENERENTOLA CHARM BRACELET



OPERA REVIEW *La Cenerentola*

Performance date: _____

Reviewed by: _____

Have you ever wanted to be a music and theater critic? Now's your chance!

As you watch *La Cenerentola*, use the space below to keep track of your thoughts and opinions. What did you like about the performance? What didn't you like? If you were in charge, what might you have done differently? Think carefully about the action, music, and stage design, and rate each of the star singers. Then, after the opera, share your opinions with your friends, classmates, and anyone else who wants to learn more about Rossini's opera and this performance at the Met!

THE PERFORMANCE, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
Clorinda and Tisbe admire themselves while Cenerentola sings her favorite song. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
A beggar knocks at the door, and messengers announce Prince Ramiro's ball that evening. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Don Magnifico interprets his dream. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Don Ramiro (disguised as a servant) meets Cenerentola. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Dandini arrives, disguised as the Prince. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cenerentola begs Don Magnifico to go to the ball. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Alidoro comforts Cenerentola. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Don Magnifico takes advantage of the wine cellar. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

THE PERFORMANCE, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
Dandini and Ramiro exchange notes on the stepsisters. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
A mysterious veiled woman appears at the ball. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Magnifico and his daughters worry about the mystery woman. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cenerentola leaves the ball but gives the Prince a bracelet so he can find her. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Ramiro is determined to find Cenerentola. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Dandini reveals his true identity to Don Magnifico. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Magnifico and the stepsisters return home, and a thunderstorm breaks out. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Prince Ramiro arrives at Don Magnifico's household and asks to marry Cenerentola; everyone is confused. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cenerentola sings joyfully about her sudden reversal of fortune and brings the house down! MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

Use this space to write a short review of the opera as a whole: