



SUMMER

THE DONNA SUMMER MUSICAL

STUDY GUIDE



WELCOME!

Teachers are encouraged to use this guide to elicit student discussion before the show, guide them through aspects of the production, and engage them in activities once they return to the classroom.

Our goal is to help teachers utilize the production as a catalyst for student education, collaboration, and inspiration, incorporating these essential concepts:

- Following a passion to fulfill one's dreams
- Challenging established norms in industry and society
- Exploring artistic styles, mediums, and collaboration to produce new creations
- Utilizing performance and production techniques for storytelling
- Understanding characters' situations, actions, words, and points of view
- Contemplating characters' journeys in concert with personal experience

SUMMER: THE DONNA SUMMER MUSICAL illuminates the incredible and fascinating life of a musical legend, from her humble beginnings through a meteoric rise to queen of disco, while celebrating family bonds, challenging industry norms, and channeling artistic inspiration.

We hope that your students, inspired by the production, can learn from you and from each other through these activities.

Please feel free to copy the materials in this guide to aid you in energizing classroom interest and discussion before and after the performance. These activities may be used separately or together as part of a cross-curricular exploration of the production.

Enjoy the show!



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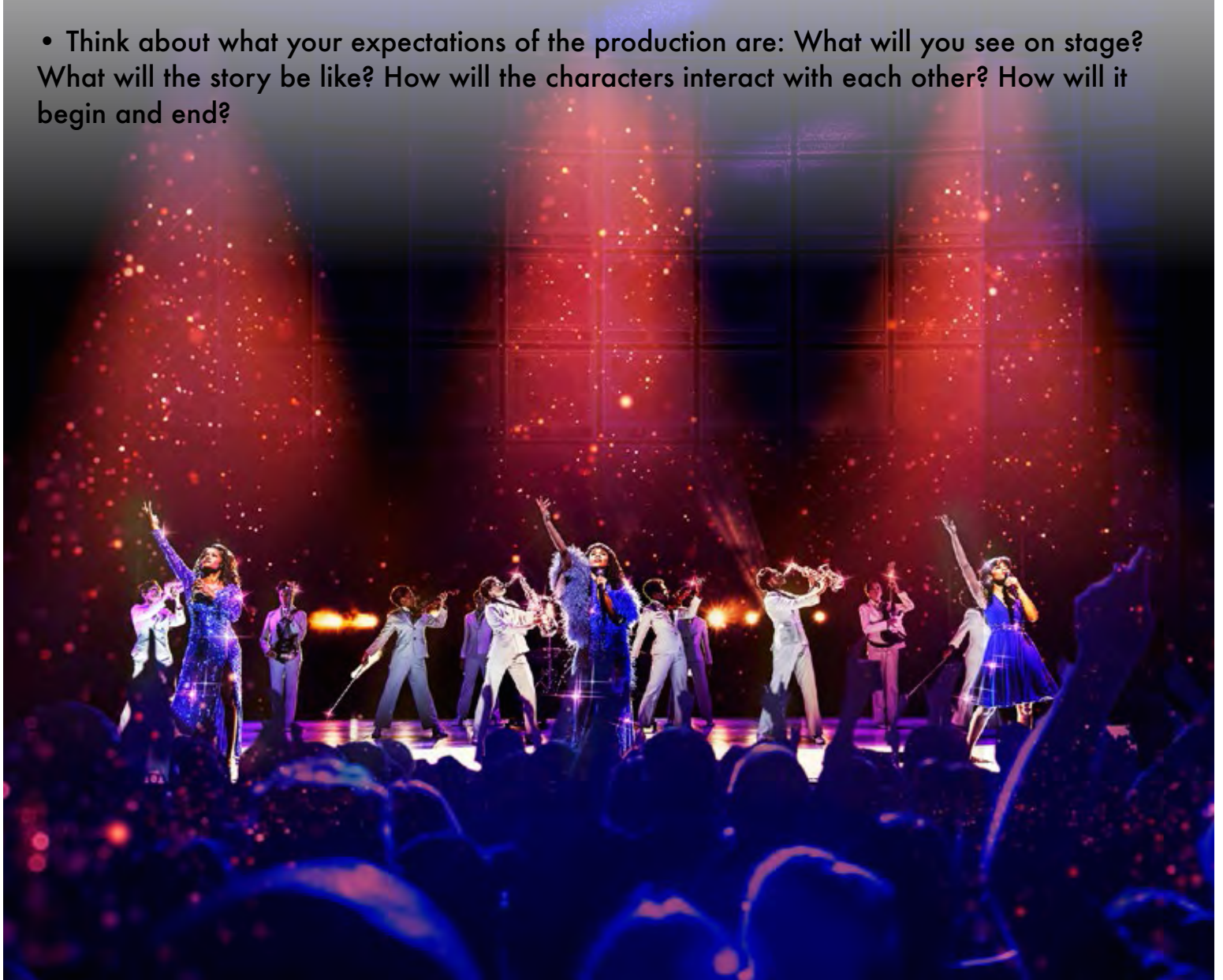
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CONTENT STANDARDS
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WRITTEN, EDITED AND DESIGNED
BY TIMOTHY REID FOR:
WWW.SHOWSTUDIES.COM



- Use the information in this guide and the web resources as a starting point to get to know ***SUMMER: THE DONNA SUMMER MUSICAL***. Get your brain thinking about what you'll experience.
- How does theatre tell a story? How do the scenes work together? How do the technical aspects help? ***SUMMER: THE DONNA SUMMER MUSICAL*** flows from one scene to the next with a disco soundtrack of Donna Summer's hits. How do you think the story of this production will be told in songs and scenes?
- Take a peek at the discussion questions in the guide. Give yourself an idea of what issues, ideas, and situations the show deals with.
- Think about what your expectations of the production are: What will you see on stage? What will the story be like? How will the characters interact with each other? How will it begin and end?



Going to see a Broadway show is an incredibly exciting and entertaining experience. In order to enhance that experience, here are some things to keep in mind:

- **TAKE YOUR SEAT.** Be sure to get to your seat in time to ready yourself for the journey you'll take with this production.
- **TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE.** The messages and texts can wait until later - get into the world of the show completely!
- **GET READY TO WATCH CAREFULLY.** The wonderful thing about live theatre is that it's happening right there before you! Be sure to soak it all in.
- **LET THE ACTORS DO THE TALKING.** Feel free to laugh at the jokes and be moved by the drama, but save your commentary for the conversation with the class after the show.
- **SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION.** When the show is over, applaud for the actors and wait for the curtain call to be over before leaving your seat. To show them your highest praise, give them a standing ovation.



DIVA DONNA

Diva is the wise, intuitive and experienced narrator who greets the audience and offers perspective on events while offering life advice. The actress playing this role also portrays Mary Gaines.

MARY GAINES

Donna's caring and concerned mother who offers strong support and careful counsel as Donna grows up.

MARY ELLEN

Donna's younger sister and early confidant who provides her with much needed solace and support when life overwhelms.

DISCO DONNA

In her early career, Disco experiences a flood of success and stardom as she tries balancing her personal and professional lives.

ANDREW GAINES

Donna's stern and protective father who is moved by his daughter's talent.

DARA

Donna's youngest sister and, with Mary Ellen, childhood performance partner, who later helps to rekindle her faith.

DUCKLING DONNA

Struggling with confidence because she is seen as an "ugly duckling," Duckling discovers her talent and drive to sing. The actress playing this role also portrays Mimi.

MIMI

Donna's daughter with Helmuth. Mimi is cared for by Donna's parents as she starts her career but later joins Donna and Bruce.

HELMUTH SOMMER

Donna's first husband and Mimi's father whom Donna met in Germany. Donna changed the spelling of her name to "Summer."

BRUCE SUDANO

A bass player in the band Brooklyn Dreams who first played on her hit "Heaven Knows." Later, Bruce becomes Donna's husband and father to her children Brooklyn and Amanda.

BROOKLYN

Donna and Bruce's first daughter together, born in 1981.

AMANDA

Donna and Bruce's youngest daughter born in 1982.



GIORGIO MORODER

Influential Italian producer, songwriter, performer and DJ. Widely recognized as the founder of disco and an electronic music trailblazer.

PETE BELLOTTE

Producer and songwriter on a long string of Donna's hits with his partner Giorgio Moroder, beginning with "Love to Love You Baby."

NEIL BOGART

The head of Casablanca Records. Donna's mentor and who fosters her career success.

JOYCE BOGART

Neil's wife and Donna's manager who hones her early look.

BRIAN

Donna's publicist and head of her fan club who offers advice.

GUNTHER

Donna's boyfriend. Hot headed German who follows Donna to the US and causes conflict.

MICHAEL

Donna's classmate. Donna witnesses his misdeeds, prompting her to leave Boston.

PASTOR

Pastor of Grant AME Church in Boston. Complicated figure in her early life.

NORMAN BROKAW

Donna's William Morris agent.

DON ENGEL

Donna's attorney who helps her negotiate a better record deal on her terms.

DAVID GEFFEN

The legendary head of Geffen Records who offers Donna a needed record label switch.



DONNA STYLE

SET THE MOOD

Prepare for your Donna journey with classics like "MacArthur Park," "Hot Stuff" and "Bad Girls!"



SEIZE THE MOMENT

December 31, 1948: Donna Adrian Gaines is born in Boston.

1959: The future superstar. At 10 years old, she sings in public for the first time when she steps in for a no-show singer at her church. She wows the congregation and later describes the moment as the start of her singing career.

1967: Opportunity knocks. Still a teenager, Donna moves to Germany to perform in the musical *Hair*. While there, she also records her first records.

1974: What's in a name? Donna marries Austrian actor Helmuth Sommer, and they have a daughter, Mimi. They later divorce, but Donna keeps his last name and changes the spelling to "Summer."



Donna and Giorgio

1975: The team makes good. After releasing a string of hits in Europe, Donna, Giorgio, and Pete write "Love to Love You Baby," which is their first American smash. Many of Donna's chart-toppers are created with Pete and Giorgio, and they quickly become synonymous with the music of the 70s.

FIND YOUR PEOPLE

1974: Legends meet. Donna signs a recording contract with producer-songwriters Giorgio Moroder and Pete Bellotte.

1978: A new collaborator. Donna records "Last Dance," written by superstar songwriter Paul Jabara. It wins an Academy Award®, and a few years later, Paul co-writes Donna's smash duet with Barbra Streisand, "No More Tears (Enough Is Enough)".



Paul Jabara and Donna on Oscar night

DID YOU KNOW? At the start of her career, Donna's singles were never quite as popular in Germany, where she lived, as they were in other European countries. She used to joke that she could board a train in Munich as a regular person, but by the time she got to Holland, she was a star.

1977: Love is in the air. Donna meets Bruce Sudano, whose band, Brooklyn Dreams, joins her on the hit "Heaven Knows." Donna and Bruce feel a connection, and they marry in 1980. They have two children: Brooklyn, born in 1981, and Amanda, born in 1982.



Donna and Bruce

DID YOU KNOW? Bruce was also like a father to Mimi. At Mimi's wedding, Helmuth walked her partway down the aisle, and Bruce accompanied her the rest of the way.

CHANGE THE SYSTEM

1977: It's a brand new sound. Donna releases the single "I Feel Love," a massive hit that is credited for inventing electronic dance music. (Yes. That's right. The entire genre started here.)

1975-1982: Dance is just one flavor. Though she is known as a queen of the dance floor, Donna's music covers multiple styles including rock ("Hot Stuff"), pop ("MacArthur Park"), new wave ("The Wanderer"), funk ("Love is in Control"), R&B ("Heaven Knows") and almost everything in between.



Onetta and Donna on the 'She Works Hard for the Money' album.

HEAR SOMEONE'S STORY

1979: What did you call her?

Many of Donna's songs are inspired by people she knew. "Bad Girls," her longest-running number-one hit, is

created after one of Donna's assistants is harassed by a police officer who mistakes her for a streetwalker. Donna co-writes the song with Bruce, and his Brooklyn Dreams bandmates, transforming that crude moment into a rebellious anthem.

1983: Inspiration strikes.

Donna's surprising encounter with Los Angeles restaurant attendant Onetta Johnson leads to the creation of "She Works Hard for the Money," one of her signature songs.

Onetta even appears on the back of the She Works Hard for the Money album.

DID YOU KNOW? "She Works Hard For the Money" was the first video by a black woman to be played in heavy rotation on MTV.

DID YOU KNOW? In 1980, the Grammys gave awards in Rock categories for the first time. "Hot Stuff" won Donna the award for Best Female Rock Vocal Performance, making her the first woman to win a Grammy in the Rock field.

KNOW WHAT MATTERS

1989: A new art form.

After years of writing songs and designing her own costumes, Donna pushes herself further when she begins exhibiting her paintings at galleries around the country.

She soon gains a reputation as a notable visual artist.

1980-2012:

Home life.

Because she doesn't want her family to live under the shadow of her stardom, Donna puts all of her awards in a box that she keeps in the barn on her California ranch.



L to R: Mimi, Brooklyn, Amanda, and Donna

1980-2012: Keep the faith.

Donna prays every night, no matter what. Bruce remembers that sometimes, as they were talking before going to sleep, she would forget if she'd prayed. She'd get out of bed and talk to God for a moment, just to be sure.

ACCEPT COMPLIMENTS



140
MILLION
RECORDS SOLD



5
GRAMMY
AWARDS



1
OSCAR
AWARD

THE GRAMMYS: She didn't display them in her home, but Donna still received plenty of industry awards. Donna was nominated for 18 Grammy Awards and won five. Impressively, these Grammys were awarded in four different genres: rock, dance, R&B and inspirational.

DID YOU KNOW? In 1998, almost 20 years after winning the first Grammy for Female Rock Vocal Performance, Donna also wins the first Grammy for Best Dance Recording. The winning song, "Carry On," is another collaboration with Giorgio.

THE AMERICAN MUSIC AWARDS: Donna wins three AMAs in 1980 - Favorite Pop/Rock Female Artist, Favorite Soul/R&B Female Artist and Favorite Pop/Rock Single for "Bad Girls." In her career, she wins six AMAs out of 12 nominations.

THE WALK OF FAME: In 1992, Donna is honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

TRUST IN YOUR LEGACY

THE ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME:

Donna passed away on May 17, 2012.

In 2013, she was finally inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame on her fifth nomination. Her induction ceremony featured appearances by Kelly Rowland, Jennifer Hudson as well as Donna's family: Bruce, Mimi, Brooklyn and Amanda.

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS: In 2012, the Library of Congress added "I Feel Love" to the National Recording Registry, signaling its position as a historically important work of art.

FROM DIVA TO DIVA: Upon her death, a vast number of artists paid tribute to Donna including Aretha Franklin, Dolly Parton and Barbra Streisand. Beyoncé has spoken publicly about how much her own music has been inspired by Donna's example, while musicians like Madonna, Rihanna and Janet Jackson still carry on her legacy of creating unapologetically powerful music by and about women.

1. What do you think Diva Donna means when she says “A person’s life should be like a fabulous mansion – all windows, portraits, mirrors”?
2. How did the 3 Donna narrators help you to see the full story? What perspective does each one add?
3. What happens when Donna sings at church that inspires her to be a singer? Why do you think this had such an impact?
4. Why did Donna make the tough choice to leave her family in Boston to travel to Germany. What would you have done?
5. How did Donna Summer shatter expectations and challenge gender roles throughout her career?
6. What toll does balancing her personal and private life take on Donna? How does she handle this?
7. Why does Donna enjoy being “the soundtrack of other people’s lives”? Which of her songs tell your story?



8. How does the unique combination of songs and shifting digital images help tell Donna Summer’s story?
9. Which character can you relate to the most? Why?
10. How does her family give her strength through her life and how does she support them in return?
11. Donna’s music spanned many styles and connected with many types of audiences. What about her music gives it such universal appeal?
12. What messages will you take from the story of Donna Summer’s life portrayed in this production?

YOUR TASK: In the song "Pandora's Box," Donna Summer utilizes an allusion to "Pandora's Box," from the famous Greek myth, to make a deeper point about the complexity of a relationship. This reference to another literary work is powerful because it infuses writing with the complex ideas surrounding the reference. Songs, like allusions, can also convey complex meanings as demonstrated by the way the creators of this production utilized a variety of Donna's songs to illustrate events in her life. Examine the selected lyrics below and use the prompts to explore the potency of allusions in songs and their shifting meanings.

Selection from "Pandora's Box" by Pete Bellotte, Giorgio Moroder, and Donna Summer

IF I HAD KNOWN OF WHAT WOULD COME
I MIGHT HAVE WALKED OUTTA HERE A LOT LESS HARMED
BUT I'M NO LADY OF THE GLASS
AND I CAN'T FORETELL WHAT WILL PASS
AND I WENT WITH MY DEFENSES DOWN
AS YOUR LOVE SENT ME SPINNING SPINNING 'ROUND
OH YOU TOOK ME TO THE VERY TOP
AND THEN I TOOK A BAD (AND) LONG LONG DROP

OH PROMISES ARE MADE TO BE BROKEN
THAT'S ALL I EVER LEARNED FROM LOVING YOU
AND OH

WHEN YOU OPENED UP YOUR LOVE TO ME
YOU OPENED UP PANDORA'S BOX



- Frederick Stuart Church via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

What is the original story surrounding "Pandora's Box"? _____

How does that meaning help illustrate how the creators of the musical have used the song in the production? _____

What other classic allusions do you know or can you find? _____

In your notebook, select one other allusion and explain how it would connect to another incident from Donna Summer's life as illustrated in the production. Share your work with your classmates.

CCSS Utilized [Grades 9-12 Reading: 1, 4, 7 • Writing: 3, 4, 5, 9, 10 • Speaking & Listening 1, 4]

YOUR TASK: Part of the beauty of *SUMMER: THE DONNA SUMMER MUSICAL*, is the way the creative team wove together the fascinating details of Donna Summer's life with the wonderful range of her songs. The character of Diva Donna says in the show that she hopes "to be part of the soundtrack of other people's lives." Review the story of your life so far and pick 3 important points to pair with a Donna Summer song of your choice that embodies feelings, ideas, or moods that relate to you. Share with your classmates!

MOMENT ONE: _____

Describe the moment from your life story: _____

DONNA SUMMER SONG CHOICE: _____

Describe how this song could be a soundtrack for this part of your life: _____

MOMENT TWO: _____

Describe the moment from your life story: _____

DONNA SUMMER SONG CHOICE: _____

Describe how this song could be a soundtrack for this part of your life: _____

MOMENT THREE: _____

Describe the moment from your life story: _____

DONNA SUMMER SONG CHOICE: _____

Describe how this song could be a soundtrack for this part of your life: _____

CCSS Utilized [Grades 9-12 • Writing: 3, 4, 5, 7, 10 • Speaking & Listening 1, 4]

YOUR TASK: The 1970s were a time of intense historical, social and political activity. In order to give context for the era in which Donna Summer was crowned "Queen of Disco," refer to your textbook, your teacher, and appropriate Internet resources to research the items below and summarize your findings. Discuss these findings with your class and imagine how those events and activities provide a historical backdrop for Donna Summer's music.

PRESIDENT NIXON RESIGNS

Important details and significance: _____



By Ollie Atkins; cropped by Beyond My Ken - [Wikimedia](#)



National Archives at College Park
[Public domain] - [Wikimedia](#)

OIL CRISIS

Important details and significance: _____

IRANIAN REVOLUTION

Important details and significance: _____



[Wikimedia](#)



[Wikimedia](#)

DISCO

Important details and significance: _____

CCSS Utilized [*Literacy in History/Social Studies • Writing 9-12: 1, 2, 4, 7*]

YOUR TASK: Donna Summer was a strong, independent woman who overcame many challenges in her life. While the “Queen of Disco” charted her course through a male dominated music industry, many women were making waves organizing nationally for equal rights. Complete the questions below and use your further research to create a historical context for the events that take place in *SUMMER: THE DONNA SUMMER MUSICAL*.

What were the goals of the Women’s Liberation Movement? _____

What is the history of the Equal Rights Amendment (E.R.A.)? _____

How might these events from the 1970s provide a deeper understanding of the characters and situations you encountered in *SUMMER: THE DONNA SUMMER MUSICAL*?

What is the legacy of the Women’s Liberation Movement today? _____



Image: Leffler, Warren K. -[Wikimedia](#)

CCSS Utilized [Literacy in History/Social Studies • Writing 9-12: 1, 2, 3, 4, 9]

YOUR TASK: In this production, the casting choice is a commentary on, as Diva Donna mentions, gender roles changing and the androgyny of the 1970s. Sara Holden of [New York Magazine](#) notes that it's "A CELEBRATION OF WOMEN, NOT JUST ONE WOMAN. A pretty damn good time. The greatest pleasure of *SUMMER* is listening to its leads make the walls quake. The inexhaustible ensemble- made up, excitingly, almost entirely of women- do everything. Not only are they a remarkable dance corps, tearing it up to Sergio Trujillo's jet-fueled choreography, they also play all manner of characters, strutting and kicking their way across the stage." Cross gender casting is an ancient theatre practice that can have a profound effect on the audience's perception of a play and can help theatre artists introduce a unique take on a character. Think of several traditionally male roles and examine how casting a woman would affect the characterization and impact the role would have in the production.

ROLE: _____

Describe the traditional characterization: _____

How would switching the gender affect the characterization? _____

ROLE: _____

Describe the traditional characterization: _____

How would switching the gender affect the characterization? _____

What roles have you seen with cross gender casting? Describe the impact: _____

What are some historical and cultural instances of cross gender casting? _____

YOUR TASK: This fast-paced production sails through Donna Summer's life with the deft assistance of quick lighting, digital screens, and set changes that suggest the myriad places we visit as the story smartly shifts in time and space. Consider the variety of settings created and utilize the prompts below to analyze how the production elements worked together to bring two moments to theatrical life.

SKETCH SCENIC LOOK ONE HERE

Scene Synopsis: _____

Describe how the 3 scenic elements were utilized:

SCENERY _____

LED SCREENS _____

LIGHTING _____

How did the production elements help tell this part of the story? _____

SKETCH SCENIC LOOK TWO HERE

Scene Synopsis: _____

Describe how the 3 scenic elements were utilized:

SCENERY _____

LED SCREENS _____

LIGHTING _____

How did the production elements help tell this part of the story? _____

YOUR TASK: In the song “Stamp Your Feet,” Donna’s family and then the cast utilize some specialized footwork to harness their positive energy as they ready themselves to fight Donna’s illness. Many forms of dance utilize specialized movements of the feet as a major component. Explore the dance forms below and describe how each utilizes footwork as a major part of the form.

DISCO

How this form of dance utilizes footwork: _____

STEP TEAM

How this form of dance utilizes footwork: _____

HIP HOP

How this form of dance utilizes footwork: _____

TAP

How this form of dance utilizes footwork: _____

BALLET

How this form of dance utilizes footwork: _____

- YOUR TASK:** Choreographer Sergio Trujillo utilized the pulse and allure of Donna Summer's songs, 1970's culture, and his own imagination to create the electric dances for the production. Select a Donna Summer song for your own choreographic study and combine your talents, research, and inspiration to create a choreographed sequence that brings the music to life.

STEP ONE

SELECT A SONG: _____

YOU CAN FIND SONGS AND RELATED MEDIA ON THE PRODUCTION WEBSITE
HERE: [HTTP://THEDONNASUMMERMUSICAL.COM/MEDIA/](http://thedonnasummermusical.com/media/)

What inspired you to select this song? _____

What initial ideas do you have? _____

STEP TWO

MAP OUT YOUR TIMING: Work through the changes in the beat(s), musical shifts, and themes of the song to chart a course for your choreography. In your notes, break down the measures and counts you'll use to create your steps and moves using marks you'll understand.

STEP THREE

ENVISION THE DANCE AS A WHOLE: Visualize how you'll utilize the space. Work on incorporating transitions. Mix up movements and techniques.

STEP FOUR

CHOOSE YOUR STEPS AND MOVES: Review the videos and other visual media from the production website to grab inspiration. Work on your own moves. Do what feels right! Feel the love!

STEP FIVE

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER & PRACTICE: Work your plans and put in the moves that correlate with your artistic vision. Practice the movements to work the tempos and flow. Work on your own, or add in your peers!

Process excerpted from <https://dancesportplace.com/designing-dances-how-to-choreograph/>

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS - DANCE: Creating, Performing, Responding, Connecting

THROUGHOUT THIS GUIDE, THE ACTIVITIES WERE DEVELOPED UTILIZING THE FOLLOWING NATIONAL STANDARDS:

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

THEATRE

CREATING

- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- Refine new work through play, drama processes and theatre experiences using critical analysis and experimentation.
- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

PERFORMING

- Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
- Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

RESPONDING

- Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

CONNECTING

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

SOURCE: <http://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>

DANCE

CREATING

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- Refine and complete artistic work.

PERFORMING

- Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
- Develop and refine artistic technique and work for presentation.
- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

RESPONDING

- Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

CONNECTING

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.



Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History, Social Studies, Science & Technical Subjects

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ANCHOR STANDARDS

CCSS WRITING 6-12

- Text Types & Purposes
- Production and Distribution of Writing
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge
- Range of Writing

CCSS SPEAKING & LISTENING 6-12

- Comprehension & Collaboration
- Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas

CCSS LANGUAGE 6-12

- Conventions of Standard English
- Knowledge of Language
- Vocabulary Acquisition & Use

LITERACY IN HISTORY, SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE & TECHNICAL SUBJECTS ANCHOR STANDARDS

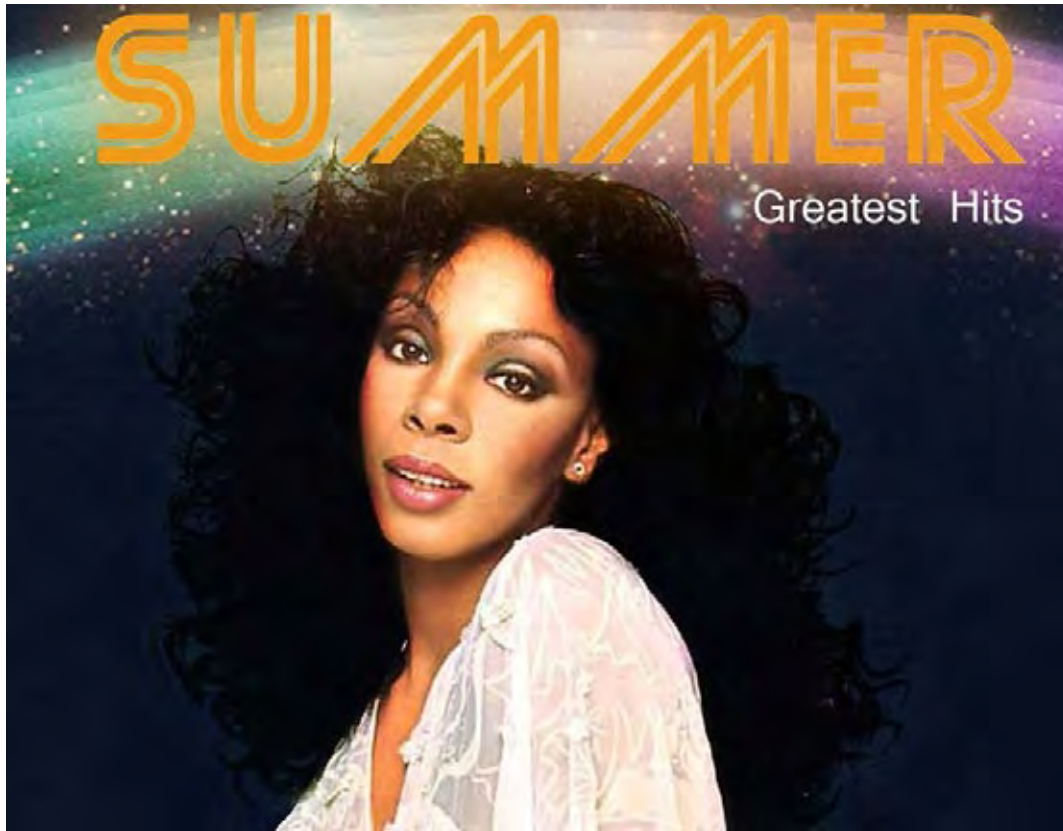
CCSS READING 6-12

- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
- Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

CCSS WRITING 6-12

- Text Types & Purposes
- Production and Distribution of Writing
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge
- Range of Writing

SOURCE: <http://www.corestandards.org/>



FOR FURTHER STUDY

DONNA SUMMER: <http://donnasummer.com/>

DONNA SUMMER - ROCK & ROLL HALL OF FAME:
<https://www.rockhall.com/inductees/donna-summer>

DONNA SUMMER - ROCK & ROLL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY:
http://library.rockhall.com/donna_summer

PLAYBILL: "SEVEN THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT DONNA SUMMER"
<http://www.playbill.com/article/7-thing-you-might-not-know-about-donna-summer>



WEB

OFFICIAL BROADWAY SITE: <http://thedonnasummermusical.com/>

SOCIAL MEDIA

TWITTER: <https://twitter.com/DonnaSummerBway>

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/DonnaSummerBway/>

INSTAGRAM: <https://www.instagram.com/donnasummerbway/>

YOUTUBE: <https://tinyurl.com/donnasummer-youtube>

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