



Teacher Resource Guide and Lesson Plan Activities

Tickets: thalian.org
910-251-1788

or

CAC box office 910-341-7860

Featuring general information about our production along with some creative activities to help you make connections to your classroom curriculum before and after the show.

The production and accompanying activities address North Carolina Essential Standards in Theatre Arts, Goal A.1: Analyze literary texts & performances.

Look for this symbol for other curriculum connections.



West Side Story

Book by: Arthur Laurents Music by: Leonard Bernstein Lyrics by: Stephen Sondheim
Based on Conception of: Jerome Robbins Based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

October 9-11 and 16-18

7:00 PM Thursday - Saturday and 3:00PM Saturday & Sunday

Hannah Block Historic USO / Community Arts Center
Second Street Stage 120 South 2nd Street (Corner of Orange)

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About this Teaching Resource

This Teaching Resource is designed to help build new partnerships that employ theatre and the arts to address some of today's pressing issues such as youth violence, bullying, gangs, interracial tensions, youth-police relations and cultural conflict. This guide provides a perfect opportunity to partner with law enforcement, schools, youth-based organizations, and community groups to develop new approaches to gang prevention.

About the Musical & Its Relevance for Today

Marking its 58th anniversary, *West Side Story* provides the backdrop to an exploration of youth gangs, youth-police relationships, prejudice and the romance of two young people caught in a violent cross-cultural struggle. The electrifying music of Leonard Bernstein and the prophetic lyrics of Stephen Sondheim hauntingly paint a picture as relevant today as it was more than 58 years ago. The themes and scenes of this quintessential story can serve as the catalyst for a series of community dialogues for youth and adult audiences about gang involvement and violence ("The Jet Song"), violence prevention ("Cool"), race, immigration, and discrimination ("America" and "A Boy Like That") and youth-police relations ("Gee, Officer Krupke").

About Thalian Association Community Theatre

Thalian Association Community Theatre was founded in 1788, to provide arts education & bring the excitement of the performing arts to Wilmington, North Carolina & produces five major productions annually on the Main Stage at historic Thalian Hall. In fact, Thalian Hall was proudly named for our organization in 1858. Our mission is to present quality live theatre that illuminates the human experience for the citizens of Wilmington, New Hanover County and beyond. We teach life skills through theatre education and provide an outlet for artists and technicians to develop and exercise their crafts. Established over 35 years ago Thalian Association Youth Theatre is an extension of Thalian Association Community Theatre non-profit organization & is dedicated to the enrichment of arts education for our community's youth. We offer academy classes (in drama, voice, playwriting, story telling & theatrical makeup) that are aligned with the National Standards for Arts Education. Through generous support from: PPD, Cape Fear Rotary, Wilmington East Rotary an affiliate of the North Carolina Community Foundation, Landfall Foundation and the Dan Cameron Family Foundation, we provide six ongoing Community Outreach Scholarship Classes to children in the Youth Enrichment Zone. We want to turn out great theatre artists as well as great doctors, lawyers, teachers and bankers. Thalian Youth Theatre is about developing collaborative & thoughtful members of our community.

Free Tickets for Teachers!

Teachers are welcome to attend our **Thursday, October 8th at 7:00 PM** preview performance. Additional tickets may be purchased for \$6.00 per person. Reservations are required. Contact: Mary Smith: reservations@thalian.org

"There's a place for us, a time and place for us. Hold my hand & we're halfway there.
Hold my hand & I'll take you there.
Somehow, someday, somewhere!"

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, is transported to modern-day New York City, as two young idealistic lovers find themselves caught between warring street gangs. Their struggle to survive in a world of hate, violence and prejudice is one of the most innovative, heart-wrenching and relevant musical dramas of our time.

Two gangs, the Jets and the Sharks, are fighting over territory on Manhattan's West Side when Tony, a member of the Jets, falls in love with Maria, the younger sister of the Sharks' leader Bernardo. Unfortunately for the young couple, they happen to fall in love on the very night the two gangs decide to end their feud in one final battle. Tony manages to persuade the two gangs to reduce it to a one-on-one "fair fight", but when Maria tells Tony to stop the fight altogether, his attempt to intervene results in the leader of the Jets, his best friend Riff, getting knifed to death by Bernardo. In a fit of rage, Tony then kills Bernardo in return.

Act Two begins with Maria finding out about Bernardo's death from her arranged fiancé, Chino, who then vows to kill Tony. Tony turns up and they spend the night together. After we find out what happened to the Jets, we meet up with the lovers. Bernardo's girlfriend Anita shows up, and Tony escapes, with a plan to escape to the country. Anita, despite hating Tony for killing Bernardo, agrees to tell Tony to stay at the drugstore he works at until Maria arrives. When she gets to the store, she is harassed by the Jets who have gathered there. In a fit of rage, she says that Maria is dead, killed by Chino. Tony's boss tells Tony this, and he runs out into the street, calling for Chino to 'kill him, too.' Maria and Tony meet each other in the street, but before they can embrace, Chino steps from the shadows and kills Tony. Maria denounces both sides of the conflict for their part in Tony's death, and for how "we all killed him," not with guns, not with knives, but with hate.

***West Side Story* was created by one of the illustrious gathering of artists ever seen in the credits of a Broadway show:**

Arthur Laurents, Stephen Sondheim, Jerome Robbins and Leonard Bernstein.

Here is a brief look at one of the greatest quartets ever assembled for a Broadway show.

Arthur Laurents, (book) (1917-2011) was writing radio plays when he was approached to provide the book (or story) for *West Side Story*. He followed this first musical book with one for another Broadway classic: *Gypsy*, in 1959. His Hollywood credits were as impressive as those for Broadway. He provided the screenplays for Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), plus *The Way We Were* (1973) and *The Turning Point* (1977).

Stephen Sondheim, (lyrics) (born in 1930) Few composers of the American musical theatre are more universally respected than Stephen Sondheim. He is justly famous for complexly composed, cerebral musicals such as *Company*, *Sunday in the Park With George*, *A Little Night Music*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Into the Woods*. Mentored by Oscar Hammerstein II, Sondheim is often credited with having reinvented the Broadway musical.

Jerome Robbins, (direction and choreography) (1918-1998) Robbins' list of credits as a choreographer and director is staggering. He performed one or both of those roles on *West Side Story*, *The King and I*, *Gypsy*, *The Pajama Game* and *Fiddler on the Roof*. He collaborated with Leonard Bernstein on a number of shows, including the ballet *Fancy Free* (1944) and the musical *On the Town* (1944). Interestingly, he shared a Best Director Oscar with Robert Wise for *West Side Story*, despite being fired from the film because his rigorous approach (and the time it required) was threatening the budget.

Leonard Bernstein, (music) (1918-1990) The most widely recognized member of this quartet of musical theater titans, Bernstein is probably much better known for his enormous contributions to classical music in the 20th century, especially in his role as conductor of the New York Philharmonic from 1958 to 1971. He was a larger-than-life figure on and off the podium, and his long list of successes includes a few Broadway musicals.

The Setting:

1950s NYC

The Characters:

Detective Schrank - A detective

Officer Krupke - A cop

Glad Hand - A fidgety chaperone

Doc - A weary old candy store owner

The Jets:

Riff - Leader of the Jets

Tony - Riff's best friend and Maria's sweetheart

Snowboy - A Jet gang member

Big Deal - A Jet gang member

Anybody's - A Jet gang member

The Sharks:

Maria - Bernardo's sister & Tony's sweetheart

Anita - Bernardo's girl

Bernardo - Leader of the Sharks

Rosalina - A Shark girlfriend

Chino - A Shark gang member

Using the list of characters
from *West Side Story*,
list their counterparts in
Romeo & Juliet.

Underline the Story Parallels

- *Romeo and Juliet* starts out with a street fight between the Montagues and Capulets; the Jets and the Sharks have a similar fight.
- The beginning fight is broken up by Krupke and Schrank, just as Prince Escalus breaks up the Montague-Capulet fight.
- Tony has a reoccurring dream, similar to Romeo like the one he tells Mercutio about.
- Juliet is betrothed to Paris, and Maria has been set up with Chino.
- Some Montague men crash the Capulet party in which Romeo meets Juliet. In *West Side Story*, Maria and Tony see each other from opposite sides of the gym and are immediately attracted to each other.
- Romeo searches for Juliet & finds her at her balcony. After the dance, Tony finds Maria & uses the fire escape.
- Romeo and Juliet go to a Friar to get married; Maria and Tony role-play a wedding in the bridal shop.
- In the big fight scene, Bernardo kills Riff like Tybalt kills Mercutio; Tony avenges Riff's death by killing Bernardo, just as Romeo kills Tybalt.
- The Capulet nurse is played around with and disgraced by Montague men, while Anita is taunted & harassed by the Jets.
- Both stories feature Maria/Juliet's false death and Tony/Romeo's response to his mistaken belief that his love is dead.
- An enraged Anita, deliberately tells the Jets that Chino has killed Maria, instead of conveying the original message of where Tony should meet with her. Juliet fakes her death, but an explanatory message sent to Romeo is delayed, causing him not to know her death is untrue. Tony seeks out Chino in misery, wishing to die also. Romeo wishes to visit Juliet's grave to take poison and die with her.



N.C. Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy R.L.1.2: Retell stories, including key details, & demonstrate understanding of their central message and lesson. **SL.2:** Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. **L1.4a:** Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. **RL.9-10.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges & is shaped & refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Listening for Lines

When you attend *West Side Story*, listen for these lines; how they are delivered (sang/sung) and observe what that tells you about the different characters and how they feel.

“Ai! Bernardo! One month have I been in this country-do I ever even touch excitement? I sew all day, I sit all night. For what did my fine brother bring me here?”

“White is for babies. I will be the only one there in a white”

“When you was my age; when my old man was my age; when my brother was my age! You was never my age, none a you! The sooner you creeps get hip to that, the sooner you’ll dig us.”

Fact or Fiction?

1. A National Youth Gang survey of all cities, suburban areas, towns, and rural counties states that approximately 850,000 gang members and 30,700 gangs were active in the United States, throughout 3,100 jurisdictions with gang problems (down from 3,300 in 2011). The number of reported gang-related homicides increased 20 percent from 1,824 in 2011 to 2,363 in 2012 about 16% of of all homicides in the United States that year.
2. Many communities across America are plagued with the threat of gangs.

Answer using Complete Sentences

1. What are the two gangs fighting over? Have you ever known people who hate each other without knowing each other? What do you know?
2. In your opinion, why do you think Action does not want Tony involved in the war council?
3. What is Tony doing when Riff is trying to convince him not to come to the dance?

Vocabulary Enrichment

1. The following sentences are drawn directly from the musical, *West Side Story*. Assist students to learn meanings of the highlighted words by hearing them in context.
3. “Didn’t nobody tell you the difference in being a **stool pigeon** and cooperatin’ with the law?” - Schrank
4. “Cut the **frabbajabba**. Which one of the Sharks did it?” - Riff
5. “Now **protocality** calls for a war council to decide on weapons. - Riff
6. “You have your big **War Council**. The Council or me?” - Anita
7. “I wear a jacket like my buddies, so my teacher calls me a **hoodlum!**” - Baby John

Word Jumble

The story contains many examples of the following words. Unscramble the letters & then research to find the meanings of the new words and how they are related to the story.

LACACTINDNE (Murder)

(Moral) YPAIMO

(A tragedy of) SISMEPINUVLIS

RETCU ENZO

(Double) ENREDTME

(Cycle of) GNAEEENN



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Discussion Questions for Particular Scenes:

Social questions of assimilation, racism and juvenile delinquency are explored with unexpected subtlety throughout *West Side Story*.

The song “Gee Officer Krupke” highlights how modern institutions dedicated to “social welfare” criminalize typical youth behaviors & allows us to consider how social identities are constructed and contested. In “Gee, Officer Krupke” we see the language of social scientists’ told through the words & dance of the very people categorized as delinquent by the state.

As a class listen to the song (or re-watch that section of the movie) and have students list how the characters represent themselves through the eyes of the various state institutions dedicated to their “care.”

This is perfect time to talk about any experiences they might have had with the juvenile justice system or how they feel they are perceived by others and by society.

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, In 2011:

- Juvenile courts in the United States handled more than 1.2 million delinquency cases involving youth charged with criminal law violations.
- 53% of all delinquency cases handled were by youth under the age of 16.
- Juvenile court judges waived jurisdiction in less than 1 percent of all formally handled delinquency cases, sending them to criminal court.

*“Gee, Officer Krupke, we’re very upset;
We never had the love that ev’ry child oughta get.
We ain’t no delinquents,
We’re misunderstood.
Deep down inside us there is good!”*

“When you’re a Jet you’re a Jet all the way, from your first cigarette to you’re last dying day!”

In the “Jet Song”, (that Riff sings) ask students what they noticed in the scene & record their observations on the board or a flip chart. Ask what they noticed about the Jets, their graffiti and the territory they “own.”

- What are the Jets and Sharks fighting over and why?
- What does it mean “once a Jet, always a Jet”?
- Why do they say they want to be in the gang?

Ask the students what constitutes a “gang,” and then read and briefly discuss the following definition. The basic definition is: A group with three or more members, juvenile and/or adult, who associate on a continuous basis, form an allegiance for a common purpose and are involved in delinquent or criminal activity (graffiti, drug dealing, bullying, vandalism, physical violence).

- How many of you ever thought you might want to be in a gang?
- Do any of you have family members or relatives in a gang?
- How many of you have you ever been recruited by a gang or know someone who has?

Show the scene **“Something’s Coming”** where Tony tells Riff he wants out of the gang. Then show the scene from **“Rumble”** to show the danger & consequences of joining a gang, to show how hard it is to get out of a gang, and to emphasize the need for prevention. Discuss these scenes using the following questions:

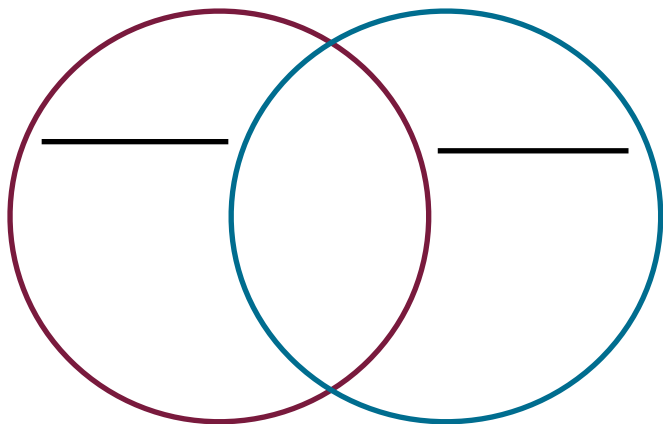
- What does Riff want Tony to do?
- What does Tony tell Riff? Why does he want to stay out of the gang?
- What does Riff say in response to Tony?
- What is Tony’s attitude toward life?
- Why does Tony agree to go to the dance? Why does he go to the Rumble?
- What happens to Tony at the Rumble?



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Compare and Contrast *West Side Story* & *Romeo & Juliet*

Pick two characters from *West Side Story* and *Romeo & Juliet*, to compare and contrast. What do they have in common? What makes them different?



Comparative Art

Based on the themes of *West Side Story*, *Romeo & Juliet*, or your own internal conflicts & conflicts with others, use recycled materials create an art piece that conveys your message about how it makes you feel. (Ideas: draw, paint, write a poem or a song, choreograph a dance with props or create beat) Make your own creative art masterpiece, using recycled materials such as: cardboard, paper, old socks, trash can lids, drums, broom handles, etc.

Enter your masterpiece in our art contest (details on last page) & you could win: two free tickets to our special preview night of *West Side Story*, 7:00 PM Thursday October 8th and one free theatre arts class **for your entire classroom!**

<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>West Side Story</i>	NOTES
Act 1 fight in the streets of Verona	Opening sequence of gang fight on the streets of Upper West Side NYC	
Prince Escalus breaking up the fight	Lt. Schrank breaking up the fight	
Capulet Ball	Dance at the Gym	
Juliet's Balcony	Maria's Fire Escape	
Romeo and Juliet eloping with the help of Friar Laurence	Tony and Maria's dream wedding in the dress shop	
Death of Mercutio and Tybalt	Death of Riff and Bernardo	
Montague men disgracing the Nurse	Jets taunting and attacking Anita	
Romeo's Death	Tony's Death	
Juliet's final scene	Maria's final scene	



North Carolina Essential Standards in Visual Art: 2.V.2.3: Create art from real & imaginary sources of inspiration. **3.V.1.2.** Understand that artists use their art to express personal ideas. **4.V.1.2.** Apply personal choices while creating art. **5.V.3.3.:** Create art using the processes of drawing, painting, weaving, printing, stitchery, collage, mixed media, sculpture, ceramics, and current technology. **Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy RL.9.** Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

Understanding Stereotypes

What stereotypes do you see and hear in *West Side Story*? In “America”? What negative stereotypes about the Puerto Ricans? The Polish (the Jets)? The police? America itself? Are there any positive stereotypes about the Puerto Ricans? The Polish? The police? America?

The below “Icebreaker Activity” will show that we all have similar experiences and have much in common:

Cross The Line Activity: Count off by 2’s and then have students stand in 2 lines facing each other. A student facilitator asks a series of questions and after each question students answering “yes” to the question take a step forward and cross the imaginary centerline to the other side and turn and face the new group across the line. Students will observe that both groups will be completely jumbled by the end of the series of questions because we all have similar experiences. You can get as deep as you want with these questions—the more honest the participants have to be, the better the results. After you get folks warmed up, if you feel comfortable enough, have the students throw out a few statements. Teachers should be part of the two groups crossing the line.

Example questions (you can make up your own):

- If you are wearing black, cross the line.
- If you have a younger brother, cross the line.
- If you have ever told a lie, cross the line.
- If you have a parent or grandparent born in another country, cross the line.
- If you have ever felt stereotyped, cross the line.
- If you have ever been a victim of hate, any form of hate, cross the line.
- If you speak a language other than English at home, cross the line.

Self-identification

Stand-up Activity is particularly useful with teens & youth when dealing with sensitive issues such as peer pressure, substance use, and bullying. Participants are always surprised at who stands up to claim the statements as their own, and a sense of solidarity is quickly established.

Everyone sits in chairs in a circle. One person stands in the center (there is no chair for the middle person). The middle person says something that is true about him or herself, for example, “I have blue eyes.” Everyone in the circle who has blue eyes then must stand up and find an empty chair. The one person who is without a seat is now the middle person, who must say something true about himself: “I have a cat.” All cat owners then stand up and try to find a new chair.

The longer you let the game go, the more interesting it becomes. The initial statements will likely be silly and shallow, but after several minutes, people have to start thinking harder about what to say. You can also direct the group to focus on a specific topic. For example “communication”, students can say things like, “I told a lie this week,” “I call my mother every day,” or “I’m afraid of speaking in public.” Other possible statements that would reflect the scenes in *West Side Story*:

- I have hit someone in anger.
- I have intimidated someone to make them do what I want.
- I have beat up someone to defend someone else.
- I have run away from a fight.



Essential Standards Theatre Arts A.CU.1 Analyze theatre in terms of the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which it was created.

Study Guide References: MTI, Wikipedia, ncpublicschools.org, playbill.com, commoncore.org, essential standards, kennedy center, Beal, Pamela, and Liza Comtois, The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, The National Gang Center’s National Youth Gang Survey, National Gang Center, Ed Reform Anonymous, West Side Story Project Toolkit: Crime Prevention on a New Stage, Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, City of Wilmington, Trinity University Digital Commons @ Trinity