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MEMPHIS

A NEW MUSICAL

.....
*Educational
Guide*

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Introduction

How to Use This Guide

Dear Teachers,

Welcome to the *Memphis* Educational Guide! These materials have been generated to serve as a catalyst for educational enrichment beyond the performance.

Inside this resource you'll find a wide variety of research, questions, activities and worksheets that may either stand alone or work in sequence as a unit of study. Feel free to photocopy pages from this guide to distribute to your students. For easy navigation of these materials, we have structured the guide into four sections: **Before the Show**, **After the Show**, **The Memphis Project**, and **Resources**.

The first section, **Before the Show**, provides information about the production and historical background along with corresponding suggested extension activities. Here, you'll find the Plot Synopsis, Character Descriptions, and the Writers' Biographies. Additionally, articles shaping the historical context of Memphis have been produced to give your students an understanding of the social and political landscape.

The second section, **After the Show**, features a theme-based approach to exploring Memphis' content in your classroom. These activities and discussion prompts are designed to stimulate critical thinking and experiential learning.

The third section, **The Memphis Project**, is a class project focusing on community explorations in oral tradition and performance. This initiative is intended to culminate in an original interview theatre performance written by your students.

The **Resources** section provides information for delving deeper into the world of Memphis with texts, videos, websites and more.

We hope that this guide and the dynamic performances will inspire your students to further explore issues of segregation, musical identity and cultural celebration.

Enjoy the Show!



Breaking Down the Standards for Learning

The *Memphis* Educational Guide supports learning in the following areas:

National Standards for Learning

English Language Arts
United States History
Life Skills
Technology
Fine Arts

New York City Department of Education's Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts: Theater

- I. Theater Making: Acting, Playwriting/Play Making, Design and Technical Theater, and Directing
- II. Developing Theater Literacy
- III. Making Connections
- IV. Working With Community and Cultural Resources
- V. Exploring Careers and Lifelong Learning

New York City Department of Education's Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts: Music

- I. Music Making
- II. Music Literacy
- III. Making Connections
- IV. Community and Cultural Resources
- V. Careers and Lifelong Learning



Plot Synopsis

Act One

Huey, a young white man, visits the underground Beale Street Club to listen to rhythm and blues (*Down, Down Underground*). When confronted by the owner, Delray Farrell, about his attendance at a black club, he explains his passion and connection to the music being created there (*The Music of My Soul*).

A couple of weeks later, Huey's infatuation and excitement for this music grows. While working at Collins Department Store, he completes tasks poorly and begs Mr. Collins to be reassigned to the record department where he guarantees results. Reassigned, at first he appeases Mr. Collins with his musical selections (*Summer Heart*), but eventually Huey gives into his temptation to play black music in the store (*Scratch My Itch*). Despite the popularity and record sales he generates, Huey is immediately fired for selling "race records."

Now a regular at the Beale Street Club, Huey takes a liking to Felicia Farrell, a young black singer. Even though there are no prospects in sight, Huey promises that he'll get her music on a mainstream, middle of the dial radio station (*Ain't Nothin' But A Kiss*). Delray, who is also Felicia's brother, expresses his distrust of Huey.

The next day, Huey solicits himself to a variety of radio stations, but is continually met with rejection (*Hello, My Name Is Huey, Sir*). Eventually, one of the radio station owners, Mr. Simmons, recognizes Huey from the ruckus at Collins Department Store and invites him into the studio to observe a "real" rhythm and blues disc jockey (*Little Ol' Doggie Named Dougie*). However, when the DJ leaves the booth for a break, Huey seizes the opportunity and locks himself inside. Giving himself a big introduction, he plays a race record on the mainstream radio station (*Everybody Wants To Be Black on Saturday Night*). Just as Mr. Simmons is about to have Huey arrested, the radio station phones begin ringing off the hook with requests by young white teenagers to play more Huey (*That's Not Possible*). Mr. Simmons concedes and gives Huey a two-week tryout without pay, which he ecstatically accepts.

As things appear to turn around for Huey, his mother, Gladys, informs him that a brick with an angry note attached was thrown at her through their window. Huey acknowledges the adversity challenging him because of his new job, but emphasizes the positive changes he has been able to stimulate (*Make Me Stronger*).



ment and announces that he hopes she'll kiss him (*Someday*). Not only does the comment alarm Mr. Simmons, but Felicia's brother Delray becomes extremely concerned and tries to explain to Huey that he is a danger to Felicia (*She's My Sister*). Shortly after Delray leaves, Felicia secretly returns and kisses Huey (*Ain't Nothin' but A Kiss - Reprise*).

Now a local celebrity (and paid), Huey boasts of his radio success and presents his mother with a brand new house (*Radio*). Completely elated, she rushes into the house that she would otherwise never be able to afford. Later that evening, Huey and Felicia meet up in public before attending a party in their honor at the Beale Street Club. As they begin to ruminate about their future, Huey proposes to Felicia. She hesitates at first due to the segregation laws, but comes around and agrees to marry him. Filled with emotion, they kiss on the street just as a gang of white men intervene. They tear them apart, hold Huey down and severely beat Felicia. As Delray begins to kick-off the party at the club, Huey enters carrying Felicia and desperately crying for help. A frenzied Delray directly blames Huey for the incident and repetitively attempts to attack him. Gator then smashes a bottle causing everyone to stop. A silent Gator speaks for the first time giving a prayer for change (*Say a Prayer*).



Later that month, Felicia surprises Huey at his home with a copy of her first record for him to play on the radio. Amidst their excitement, Gladys enters. As Huey begins to defend Felicia, Gladys hurls the record to the floor causing it to break in two. Felicia apologizes for causing trouble and rushes out of the house. Huey catches up to Felicia, promising her that everything will come together and that she should still come to the radio station the next day (*Colored Woman*).

At the radio station, Huey surprises Felicia by inviting the musicians and back-up singers from the Beale Street Club to perform with her live on the air. Completely enthused about the idea, he has everything set up and gives her a grand introduction. However, as she sings, Huey gets caught up in the mo-

Act Two

Two years later, Huey's professional success continues to grow as Mr. Simmons expands from radio to TV, making Huey the host of an afternoon all negro show for teenagers (*Crazy Little Huey*). With Huey's developing clout, he is able to put more of his friends from the Beale Street Club on mainstream programming (*Big Love*). At the peak of his local success, Felicia introduces and romanticizes about the idea of moving North; where segregation isn't legal. Huey remains adamant about remaining in Memphis, where he feels like he is king of the world.

Due to her brother's connections, Felicia is able to audition in a studio for a producer from RCA Records (*Love Will Stand When All Else Falls*). Feeling threatened, Huey crashes the audition in an attempt to keep Felicia in Memphis. However, the producer is

amused by Huey's antics and offers to have his television show checked out for national broadcasting. Delray, Felicia and Huey are overjoyed by the opportunities awaiting them and the prospect of making it big (*Stand Up*).

As everyone at the TV studio is frantically making final preparations for the producer from New York, Huey refuses to cooperate with any changes the network has recommended. Huey's mother encourages him to seize this opportunity and embrace leaving Memphis for his personal happiness (*Change Don't Come Easy*). Huey appears to understand and begins the show having given in to the network's recommendations (*Scratch My Itch - Reprise*). During a commercial break, the network representative expresses his interest in Huey's show, but with the stipulation that all the performers must be white. The show comes back from break, and Huey, in a rage, does a striptease while singing (*Tear Down the House*) to the horror of the network representative.

Huey breaks the news to Felicia and refuses to move to New York (*Love Will Stand When All Else Falls—Reprise*). The next day, she makes a guest appearance on his show and performs live. After her performance, Huey declares his love for her and kisses her on-camera causing uproar on the set. A furious Mr. Simmons immediately fires and denigrates him. Felicia makes one final offer for Huey to join her, but unable to leave Memphis to live in her shadow, he helplessly refuses and lets her go (*Memphis Lives in Me*).

Years later, a chastened Huey disc jockeys for a radio station at the end of the radio dial with only one listener. In the middle of his broadcast, Felicia drops in and discovers that he's still living in the past. She informs him of her concert in Memphis featuring white and black back-up dancers, and acknowledges that she thinks it's in part due to Huey. Hoping that she can get Huey public recognition again, Felicia invites him to join her onstage. Although he is apprehensive at first, Felicia helps Huey to rediscover his passion for music by having him recount his journey in the face of adversity while following the music of his soul. (*Steal Your Rock 'n' Roll*).



Extension Activity: *What Am I Seeing?*

In preparation for your visit to see *Memphis*, have your students use the internet to check out the official website for the Broadway production (www.memphisthemusical.com). Once on this resource, have your students peruse production pictures, videos and more. Before attending the show, discuss what they expect to see at the performance. Have students create a list of predictions, and hold onto them. After the show, revisit these lists and see what comparisons emerge.

National Standards for Learning:

NL-ENG.K-12.7: Evaluating Data, NL-ENG.

K-12.8: Developing Research Skills, NT.K-12.5:
Technology Research Tools

New York City Department of Education's Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the

Arts: BP-T.9-12.4: Working With Community
and Cultural Resources



Character Descriptions

Huey Calhoun—Young white man determined to bring “race music” into mainstream culture, and break a segregated society’s racial barriers. He is a cock-eyed optimist who impulsively acts upon his beliefs.

Felicia Farnell—Young black singer at the Beale Street Club that dreams of taking her music beyond the local constraints of Memphis, Tennessee. She is passionate and tenacious.

Debray Farnell—Owner of the Beale Street Club and Felicia’s overly protective older brother. He yearns to make his sister a national success.

Mladys Calhoun—Huey’s hard-working mother. She has great difficulty supporting Huey’s personal and professional affiliations with the black community.

Mr. Simmons—Owner of the WHDZ Memphis radio station and, eventually, Huey’s boss. While he is not comfortable with Huey’s actions, his financial gains through Huey outweigh his distaste.

Tator—The bartender at the Beale Street Club. He is very attentive, but does not speak.

Bobby—Beale Street Club frequenter that works in the day as a janitor for Mr. Simmons’ radio station.

Jordan Trant—A record producer from RCA Records interested in signing Felicia to the label.

Martin Holton—A network representative from the American Broadcasting Company interested in bringing Huey’s show to a national audience.

Reverend Calvin Hobson—The spiritual leader of the First Baptist Church. He is both passionate and inspiring.

Buck Wiley—A conservative white man who is the host of “Boppin’ with the Blues” on Mr. Simmons’ radio station.

Mr. Collins—Owner of Collins Department Store who fires Huey for playing race music in his place of business.

Clara—Mr. Collins’ store employee.

Frank Dryer—An advertising client of Mr. Simmons who loves Huey’s ability to sell his products.


Myrna—A Beale Street Club frequenter who becomes Bobby’s fiancé.

About the Writers



David Bryan (Music & Lyrics) As the keyboard player, songwriter and founding member of Bon Jovi, David Bryan has seen and learned a lot about music and the music business in the past 20 years. The journey includes selling 100 million albums, traveling the world and playing to millions of people in 50 countries, circling the globe 15 times and living

through the rock and roll years, the grunge years, the rap years and everything in between. As the band celebrates its 20th year together with the release of the box set, "100,000,000 BON JOVI FANS CAN'T BE WRONG," David is enjoying the schedule being a member of such a successful band allows. In his time off from recording and touring with Jon, Richie and Tico, David began a career as a composer and lyricist of musicals. Aside from *Memphis*, David also collaborated with Joe DiPietro on a musical version of *The Toxic Avenger*, which began previews Off -Broadway on March 18, 2009. David has also written and released a solo record, *Lunar Eclipse* (Rounder/Universal) an instrumental collection with a single vocal bonus track highlighting all of the aspects of his training and influences - blues, classical, jazz and of course, rock and roll. In addition to writing songs for Bon Jovi, David continues to write with and for other artists. The most successful cover of a Bryan song may be Curtis Steiger's rendition of "This Time," which was a major international hit for him. David has also dedicated his time to become a national spokesperson for VH1's Save The Music Program, traveling across the country to many of the 43 cities which participated in the program in 2001. He is also an Honorary Board Member of "Only Make Believe," a program dedicated to the principle that freeing a child's creative spirit is a valuable part of the healing process.



Joe DiPietro (Book & Lyrics) Broadway and national tour: "Memphis," "All Shook Up." Off-Broadway, "The Toxic Avenger" (written with David Bryan,) "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change," "The Thing About Men," and "Over the River and Through the Woods." Future shows include his reworking of "Babes in Arms" and the new Gershwin musical, "Nice

Work If You Can Get It." Upcoming regional productions include the comedy, "The Last Romance," and the one-woman musical, "Ernest Shackleton Loves Me." His work has had thousands of productions across the country and around the world.

Extension Activity: Instant Playwrights

What makes playwrights unique from other forms of writers is their ability to use written dialogue to express an idea. Have your students take a crash course in playwriting by writing on a blank piece of paper the number "1" followed by a colon. Ask them to skip a couple of lines and label a number "2" followed by a colon. Have them continue to write the "1:", "2:", "1:" sequence until they reach to bottom of the page. Let them know that these numbers represent nameless characters in a play they will have one-minute to write. Have your students write down the first line for number 1: "I told you not to do that!" Then on your signal, give them sixty seconds to fill up the page. (Note: the emphasis for this activity should be speed and filling up the page rather than what the characters are saying.) Once the minute is up, have students pair up and volunteer to read their scenes aloud for the rest of the class. Ask the class to listen for character, relationship, conflict and action. After each scene is read, see how much the audience is able to piece together by just one-page of dialogue.

National Standards for Learning: NA-T.9-12.1: Script Writing, NA-T.9-12.7: Analyzing, Critiquing, and Constructing Meaning, NL-ENG.K-12.4: Communication Skills, NL-ENG.K-12.11: Participating in Society

New York City Department of Education's Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts: BP-T.9-12.1: Theater Making, BP-T.9-12.2: Theater Literacy, BP-T.9-12.3: Making Connections