



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1985 Volume II: American Musical Theater

From Books to Broadway

Curriculum Unit 85.02.01
by Diana Doyle

Since I teach English at Conte Arts Magnet School, I am fortunate to have this chance to work with dance, theater, and music teachers on a loosely connected project. Our units will fit together, will in fact come together at a performance level, yet each is a separate entity, separately taught.

The students at Conte Arts Magnet School have a full load of academic and arts courses. Each student has classes in dance, theater, music and visual arts at least once a week, as well as English, science, math and social studies. Math Labs and Reading Labs are provided for students who need help in these areas, and Spanish and Humanities are offered to those students who are identified as being above average readers. By the time the students have reached the eighth grade, they should have achieved some degree of proficiency and ease in the arts areas, especially in the areas of individual choice. Some students have become quite skillful and are ready for more challenging material.

My colleagues and I will be working with the same musicals— *West Side Story*, *Fiddler on the Roof* , and perhaps *The Tap-Dance Kid* . The unit that I propose to develop will look at the literary sources of these American musicals first and then at the musicals themselves. I plan to use this unit with a group of eighth-grade students in a Humanities course. This course will meet once or twice a week for an hour. The class will be made up of students in the “choice” classes from music, theater and dance. Each student will therefore be connecting with the unit from one of these arts’ points of view. Because this is a Humanities class, and not an English class (these students have English classes as well), the emphasis in this unit will be on reading, discussing, writing, and listening to and viewing videotapes.

Although these students are bright and as interested in learning as young adolescents can be, I have found that their range of experience and exposure is limited. Broadway musicals are not part of the present musical horizon, and few young teens have an interest in them because they don’t know anything about them. Many teens can recognize, in just a few notes, any contemporary rock group or singer. They can distinguish sounds from the most indistinguishable (to me) moans and groans to name singer and song. Many have been to rock concerts and of course all watch the videos of MTV. Yet, except for possibly *Grease*, most young people are unfamiliar with musicals—whether in the movies or on stage. I hope to open their eyes to the possibilities, to the excitement and the magic of musicals.

I have found in teaching English that children respond well to watching a dramatization of a story after they have read it. Many students have watched with concentration and interest a movie or television program they

would never have watched otherwise, because they had read the story. In class discussions after viewing, they like to compare the original sources with the movie. They like to compare and contrast their perceptions of the characters with the images create by the actors. Most of all, however, the students come to a new appreciation and enjoyment of both the reading and the viewing. I feel that part of the appeal of the unit will be in the reading of the original sources, if not in total, at least in selected scenes and short stories, and then following the adaptation to another medium. Bringing the students to see one of the musicals we cover would be ideal, but at least the movie versions of *West Side Story* and *Fiddler on the Roof* are available. I will also try to locate and use the Franco Zeffirelli film of *Romeo and Juliet* . The culmination of the work in all the units will be a revue at the end of the year incorporating scenes from two of the musicals, and featuring the singing, dancing, acting and writing of the students.

The objectives of this unit are:.

1. To introduce students to a wider range of literature from Shakespeare to short stories.
2. To help the students to develop an understanding of and appreciation for this literature, and as a result, its offspring.
3. To reinforce knowledge of elements found in drama and short stories, character, plot development, setting, conflict, point of view, plot resolution, as well as varied writing styles.
4. To expose the students to the range of possibilities arising from the varied types of literature by the introduction of at least two musicals.
5. To foster an appreciation for the uniqueness and greatness of this particular art form.
6. To cut across academic/arts separations and work with colleagues towards a final goal.

A major goal of my unit is the creation by the class of a musical outline for the novel, *Nobody's Family Is Going to Change* . After looking at the adaptations from the originals which became the other two musicals, the class would try to write two or three scenes to be presented in the final revue. The musical, *The Tap-Dance Kid* is not as available as the other two. It is therefore a perfect opportunity for the students to try to write some original scenes.

The two musicals we are studying are considered by most critics to be major examples of outstanding exemplary musicals through the almost perfect fusion of music, lyric, story and dance, and the universality of the stories. All three stories deal with conflicts within a family setting. They are ideal to set before students as introductions to the world of musical theater.

I will begin the reading in my unit with *Romeo and Juliet* . Since I am teaching eighth-grade students, and since I will only meet with them once or twice a week, I do not propose that these students read the entire play. However, I feel that the students can read selected scenes, especially those which correspond with scenes from the musical *West Side Story* . They will also, of course, read a synopsis of the plot. There is one available from *Scholastic Scope* , which although very easy, would be fairly suitable.

These are scenes I would want to have the class read aloud at least twice, once for explanation, vocabulary and understanding, and once for feeling and meaning.

Act I.i. This sets the stage for the tragedy. The students can understand these young hot-blooded men who roam the street looking for a fight. (They will certainly recognize the opening later in *West Side Story*). This can be read to line 100. The Montague and Capulet retainers engage in a street brawl. The Montague and Capulet retainers engage in a street brawl. The vocabulary may be different and difficult, but the action is the same. The Prince of Verona enters, stops the fight, threatens death to anyone who starts brawling again. He wants peace on his streets.

Act I.v.43. to end of scene. Romeo and Juliet meet at the ball and fall instantly and hopelessly in love. This is certainly identifiable for young, romantically idealistic teens. Instant love is real! Romeo is masked, trespassing at the Capulet ball. Neither he nor Juliet wait for introductions. They do not realize they are “enemies” until it is too late. They are already in love.

Act II.ii. The balcony scene. The students should read it to enjoy poetic expressions of love, and to recognize its parallel scene in *West Side Story* .

Act V.iii.101 to end. The deaths of Romeo and Juliet and the realization by both sets of parents of what the feud has cost. The Capulets and the Montagues renounce their enmity. (In *West Side Story* the members of both gangs walk together to carry Tony’s body as they exit.)

Although the discussion will probably focus on the “star-crossed lovers” and their fate, other elements of the drama must also be noted. The language, especially between Romeo and Juliet, and the jesting, ironic, comic and finally bitter tone of Mercutio should be pointed out. Questions to be developed could include: Did Romeo and Juliet cause their own downfall? Were they helpless victims of an irrational feud? What was the role of Mercutio? Why was his death so important? What is Juliet’s family like? What is the role of the Prince? Even as the class begins to read *West Side Story* it will be necessary to continue to look for and discuss parallels in the two plays.

Before the class begins to look at *West Side Story*, I think a brief intro—to the musical as a special and specific art form would be important. The students should understand that the goal of the musical is to incorporate story, music and dance into a seamless whole. The music should explain the characters and the action, and the dance should do the same. There should be reasons for music, and these reasons should develop from the feelings and emotions expressed on the stage.

The adaptation of a book or a play for a musical is difficult for much has to be eliminated to allow time for the music and dance. The music should not merely repeat the feelings expressed in the spoken dialogue, but instead project the unspoken dialogue. A musical which functions as a total unity cannot have any part of it cut, any song eliminated, without disturbing the integrity and the movement of the play.

The students should understand the basic format of a two-act musical (in as much as it has a format) and be able to recognize some of the conventions of most musicals. The libretto and its components would be discussed, including plots, characters, subplots, scene and act endings, as well as some of the elements of the music, such as the opening, the romantic ballads, the comic songs and the eleven o’clock number.

The libretto is, of course, the book of the musical, and the most critical part. The music and dance, in order to

work, must fit around the characters and the action. It seems that most successful musicals have been based on other sources such as *Romeo and Juliet* and the short stories of Sholem Aleichem. Creating a musical from another source may appear at first to be fairly simple. Certainly the plot line and the dramatic concept are in place. However, the adapter “must reorganize the material to meet the special requirements of his genre. He must shape the plot so that it can include song and dance and distill the essence of his characters. Who, in the musical form, reveal themselves in new and different ways—and more succinctly; he may have to create some additional characters or delete others who make insufficient contribution to his new form, inject appropriate comedy material where there is none, and divide his story so as to provide a single workable ending for the mid-performance break.”¹

The characters in the best musical shows are three-dimensional human beings, not stereotypes of cardboard figures. The characters are lifelike, real, ordinary recognizable. Because the characters are so real and individual, they can therefore become universal. Maria and Tony, as two young lovers, separated because of blind bigotry, become two young people we can understand. They are specific people we can identify with them. The songs they sing fit their situation and yet the feeling they express is for every lover.

The characters must operate in a narrative or plot (the libretto). Usually in the opening scenes of a musical, the principal characters are introduced, the conflict or problem that moves the plot is introduced, and a need is set up in the audience to see a resolution of the conflict or problem.² In *West Side Story* for example, Tony and Maria meet and fall hopelessly in love. Their separation and ultimate downfall are brought about by opposing, hostile societies.

In *Fiddler on the Roof* the hero, Tevye, who introduces himself and the other characters, is fighting the generation gap, the war between the generations. The romance (usually found in musicals) is divided into three parts for Tevye’s three daughters.

Most musicals have a subplot—a subsidiary story in which conflicts is resolved side by side with the main conflict of the main story.

Subplots are important to add to the texture of a musical. Because the story line itself of a musical must be kept simple, correlating subplots will add interest, contrast, and in many cases, humor to the main story.

Romeo and Juliet, of course, does not have a subplot. Juliet’s cousin Tybalt, who killed Mercutio, and was killed by Romeo, was not involved in a subplot. He had no emotional entanglement. In *West Side Story* he becomes Bernardo, Maria’s brother, and has sharp contrast. Maria is innocent, Anita worldly. Tony is looking beyond the “gang” world, and Bernardo is angry, defensive, and like Riff (Mercutio) dependent on the gang.

Fiddler on the Roof, a musical that seemed to break some of the rules, has no subplot. Instead there is a subtle buildup of tension by the every present threat of the Russian presence as well as the continual war between Tevye and his daughters. These interweave until the end when Tevye is forced to leave his home with what is left of his family.

Most modern musicals are written in two acts with several scenes in each act. Ideally each of the scenes in each act becomes complete in itself, as well as pointing to the future.³ The script writer has only one major break in the action to contend with. The end of the Act I must be such that the audience wants to return.

West Side Story for example, ends Act I with Tony staring at Bernardo’s body, crying “Maria.” He knows, as Romeo knew after he had killed Tybalt, that he has killed his chance for happiness.

The first act is usually the longest and strongest, while the second act is about two-thirds as long. It contains the resolutions of the situations and usually less new music. ⁴

Of course, the music gives musical theater its unique quality. The music is all-important. It delineates character, defines and refines feelings, moves the plot and sets and changes a mood or tone. Although the music and musical style will differ, there are some elements common to most musicals.

The musical opening of a show defines its style and mood. Each show is unique and prepares the viewer for its characters and story. *West Side Story* opens with the tension, the anger, the hostility between the Jets and the Sharks as they dance a confrontation in the street. The dance reveals the mood. We need no words.

Comedy is an important element of musical theater. Even a serious study like *West Side Story*, essentially humorless, has two comedy songs. The humor of *Fiddler on the Roof* grows out of the story and situation, although it is not really a funny play. Warm rich humor seems to find its way to the surface.

An eleven o'clock number is a piece of special material written near the end of an evening to give a lift to the show. *West Side Story* has put its one really comedic song in this spot, "Gee, Officer Krupke." This relaxes the mood for a minute, as the rest of the evening drives intensely, strongly to its tragic ending.

To introduce *West Side Story*, the class would be asked to think about *Romeo and Juliet*. How could this story be modernized? Is the story valid for today? Could a story like this, without a happy ending, be made into a musical? What would the music be like? How could you add comedy and humor?

Students tend to generalize and globalize issues. They need to see the importance of being very specific, very particular as to the story and character. They may eventually understand the universality of such attention to individuals and to individual behavior.

Because *West Side Story* is a play, it should be read aloud. Paperback copies of *West Side Story* will be used in class. The students will read the story aloud and listen to the music. As the class reads, the discussion will center on the comparisons and contrasts. The students will look for comparisons of situation, of characters, of story and of the ending. They should read the scenes that parallel those in *Romeo and Juliet* with an eye to the changes and the additions of music which further the feeling and heighten the emotion. The poetic balcony scene becomes a blissful poetic dream of love with the music of "Tonight" and "Maria." The emphasis on names of "Tony" and "Maria" seems to echo the realization of Romeo and Juliet that each is speaking of a once hateful name, a name that is now beautiful.

A contrast that could be pointed out is that of Romeo's foreboding (act I.iv. 106-) to Tony's pleasant anticipation, "Something's Coming." Unlike Romeo, he has already put his childish pursuits behind him, and is waiting for something. He is ready. Romeo is not.

The opening of *West Side Story* can be compared with that *Romeo and Juliet*. With very few words, the tension is established. The Sharks and the Jets confront each other. They dance, a driving, angry dance to energetic, frenzied music. We see the same hot-blood, the same anger and pent-up energy in the Sharks and the Jets that we do in the young men of Verona.

The main characters can be compared and the substitutions and changes should be discussed. Anita and Bernardo (Tybalt) are necessary for a contrasting couple, the sub-plot. The characters of Riff and Mercutio can be discussed. What are major differences between the two? Was Mercutio involved in the feud? Why is it

necessary that Riff be a leader of the Jets?

To introduce the stories of Sholom Aleichem, I plan to begin with a few tales of Isaac Bashevis Singer. The tales I will use, such as “The Fools of Chelm and their History” and “Naftali the Storyteller and his Horse Sus” can be read aloud in a sitting and discussed. In fact, these can be easily acted out and improvised in a story theater format. Although these are light-hearted, semi-comic tales, the students can certainly sense the faith, the hard work, the problems of being poor and the acceptance of what is. The class can also try to combine a few tales which include the same characters. In small groups of five or six, they can also work on writing dialogues and monologues of these stories. What do they have to change? What do they have to add? Sharing their work, commenting and appreciating what a classmate has done will also give the students the idea of the collaborative effort.

The class will have to be given some background on Sholom Aleichem and the people he wrote about. The people in the stories are poor Jewish peasants, scratching out a living in Russia. The Jews in Russia around the turn of the century were persecuted, economically and socially, and sometimes literally, in bloody pogroms. The hero of the stories, and the hero of *Fiddler on the Roof*, is Tevye the Dairyman, who tries to keep the old traditions together. His daughters in turn, reject the old and look to the new. The belief in God, the belief in old, accepted customs and traditions keep the inhabitants of the village of Kasrilevka from giving up. A vocabulary list, containing the explanation of unusual or Yiddish words should also be prepared. A note must be made of the writing style of these stories. They are in form of informal letters or diaries, sometimes even conversationally addressed to Sholom Aleichem, written in the first person by Tevye.

The students will read the stories, “Modern Children,” “Hodel,” and “Chava.” in these stories, we meet Tevye the dairyman and his fine, healthy beautiful daughters. We see Tevye as a poor, hard-working man, given to conversations with God, always ready with a quote, trying to support his family. He agrees to the marriage of his oldest daughter Tzeitl to the butcher Lazer-Wolf, a rich man. However when Tzeitl tells him she doesn’t want to marry Lazer-Wolf, he is surprised but philosophic. He doesn’t really understand, she is not supposed to choose her mate, a poor tailor, but Tevye is a loving father, and allows the change. The problem will be his wife Golde who is very happy with the butcher and who will not be happy with her daughter’s choice. Tevye creates a nightmare, a dream of bad luck, so the superstitious Golde will insist on the change in husbands-to-be.

in “Hodel,” a similar story unfolds. Tevye is again not happy, not understanding, but must agree when his second daughter Hodel tells him of her marital choice, the young revolutionary. He gives in and allows the match, even though it means she will leave the village to join her husband who is being held in prison.

However, there are some things that Tevye cannot change. There are some traditions and feelings that are too strong for even a loving father. The Jews in Tsarist Russia were subject to quick, merciless pogroms. When Chava Tevye’s next daughter falling in love with a Russian Tevye cannot accept her marriage. He turns his back on her. It hurts him, but she is dead to him and his family.

Marriage of a Jew to a non-Jew was unthinkable, but marriage of a Jew to a Russian, an enemy, was unheard of. Tevye writes of his internal agony as he turns away from his daughter. She has betrayed him, has betrayed her family. He feels he cannot do otherwise.

These then are the stories the students will read and discuss. They should be able to follow some common elements and themes— the strong hold of traditions and traditional roles, the gradual break-down of some customs, the strength and weaknesses of family ties and the power of the religious roles and customs and

beliefs. As the awareness of the world beyond grow stronger, the conflicting pulls between generations widens and strains. The character of Tevye, struggling to keep his relationships clear emerges as he tries to maintain a balance showing his compassion, his love, his confusion, his real misery. He is not a funny character. His was of expressing himself can be comic, can be wry, but is never bitter.

In preparation for the play, the students can write monologues for the main characters. How could the daughters be individualized? Do they have any conflicts within themselves about their actions and their rejection of their father's values? What kind of songs would the daughters sing? What kind of monologue could students write for Tevye and Golde? Which could be more complete? How would students change Tevye? How could they create a more complete character for Golde? What about the suitors? How could monologues individualize the suitors?

Students will be asked to think about and discuss the kind of musical that could be made from characters and stories like these. The main characters are, of course, self-evident. Where would the conflict be? What would the real story be about? What could be added to give humor, color and interest? Could a musical be made from this? What kind of music would be found in this show? How would this show open? The students would be directed to think back to the openings of both *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*. These are lively, driving, intense. Ideally, I would like to show the students the opening scene from *Fiddler on the Roof* even before I read the play with them. I think then they would be able to understand and then to sense the flavor and quality of the musical more easily. They should also realize that the "Tradition" song which will appear over and over again as a tradition cracks, also explains to the audience something of the philosophy of the Jews.

From another story comes the philosophy of the song "Tradition", . . . "these little people. None of them are gloomy, none of them are worried little men of affairs, but on the contrary they are known everywhere as jesters, storytellers, a cheerful, light-hearted breed of men. Poor but cheerfulIf you ask them, 'How do you live?' they will answer, with a shrug and a laugh. 'How do we live? Who knows? We live!'Is it possible that there is a Jew who does not have fish for the Sabbath? If he has no fish, then he has meat. If he has no meat, then he has herring. If he has no herring, then he has white bread. If he has no white bread, then he has black bread and onions. If he has no black bread and onions, then he borrows some from his neighbor, Next week, the neighbor will borrow from him. 'The world is a wheel and its keeps turning.'" I think this passage from " The Town of the Little People" helps in understanding the feeling of the stories.

As a class, we would read the play and listen to the music. As they become more involved in the story, the students would be able to appreciate the work of the adapter in pulling together at least these three short stories into one cohesive whole. The character of Tevye has been expanded, strengthened, made more appealing. Golde has turned from a shrew or a nag into a more sympathetic albeit nagging wife.

One example of an original musical scene occurs when Tevye makes up the story of the dream-nightmare to persuade Golde to consent to their daughter's marriage to Motel the tailor. In the story the dream is vivid, but the stage version unfolds with dance, dialogue, song and even pantomime. It brings the whole vision to life.

The students may want to compare this mindless violence of the Russians at the wedding of Tevye's almost total rejection of Chava with the mindless irrational feuding of the Sharks and the Jets. What kind of impact does the wedding scene have? How does it compare with the scene when Tevye and Lazer-Wolf are toasting each other in "To Life, To Live, L'Chaim" and the Russians walk in? After the implied threat, the Russians join in toasting and congratulating. But the threat and its implication for the future are there. Why do the Russians break up the wedding? Is that an effective ending for Act I? Is there the same sense of lurking tragedy we find in *West Side Story* ?

Nobody's Family is Going to Change by Louise Fitzhugh is a novel written for teen-agers. It is a story of a Black middle-class family, a well written story dealing with complex issues of parental expectations, women's rights, children's rights and obesity. This may sound dreary, but the characters are likeable, their feelings are believable, and the book is funny.

The main characters are the members of the Sheridan family. Emma is a very fat, very bright, very angry fourteen-year-old who wants very badly to be a lawyer. Her brother Willis is a seven year old whose only desire in life is to dance. However, his father, who is a lawyer, plans that his son will be the second lawyer in the family. He wants no part of sissy-stuff dancing for his son, and he does not want his fat daughter to be a lawyer. His wife seems fated to try to keep peace and to keep everyone happy, and succeeds in keeping no one happy! She gradually emerges as a stronger and stronger character, as her brother Dipsy, Willie's mentor and teacher, presses her to allow her son a chance to do what he needs to do.

The conflict is apparent; the family relationships are exposed and explored. There are scenes between sister-brother, father-daughter, mother-daughter, father-son, uncle-mother (brother-sister), mother-son. Through these scenes we see the common thread, the need to be recognized, to be understood. There is some resolution in the story, but no a pat happy-ending.

This book is the basis for the musical *The Tap-Dance Kid*. The book of the musical may or may not be available to read. However, instead of trying to find it, I plan to have the class try to organize the novel into a two-act outline of a musical book.

The class as a whole and in smaller groups will have to make decisions on what part of the story it would cut and what part to keep. They will have to make decisions on how each scene would enhance or define a character or would further the plot. They will have to divide the play into two acts and decide what they would use as the end of Act I.

As they read the novel, they should be reading it with this project in mind. They should ask themselves questions about keeping or omitting material, keeping the conventions and elements of the musical in mind. If it becomes too difficult I can play the music to give them an idea of the sound of the musical.

For example, early in the novel, a family dinner scene established characterizations, relationships, and mood. Emma deliberately antagonizes her father and mother, both by her remarks and by eating everything in sight. Willie, nervous, thinking about his opportunity to dance, pushes food around. The conflict between parents and children becomes apparent and increases as the dinner continues.

The students can write monologues for the main characters from that character's point of view. What are his or her strong points? Why is "right" on his or her side? What does he or she want most? How can he best tell about what he or she wants? Using these monologues, the students can then act out the dinner scene. Who seems to take the lead—Emma or her father? How does each character assert him or herself? How can each character express feelings? Where could music fit into this scene? How much dialogue from the novel could be kept?

Where would dialogue be omitted and music brought in? Why would this scene be important?

A confrontation between Mrs. Sheridan and her brother Dipsy or the final showdown within the family are other important scenes which could be included in the outline.

When the students have outlined the suggested musical, the final project would be for them in small groups to actually write two or three scenes—those scenes which they felt were important. These scenes would then be acted out as part of the final revue. I think this could be a fitting conclusion to a very enjoyable unit.

Lesson Plan 1—

Comparison of West Side Story and Romeo and Juliet

Scene 9 WSS Act II.i. R & J

Students should be able to contrast elements in these two scenes. For example, both Romeo and Tony try to stop the fighting, neither one wants to fight, neither can explain himself to the others. Both end up inadvertently causing the death of their best friend, and therefore unleashing the seeds of their own destruction.

The atmosphere and mood in both scenes—Is it the same? Do the students sense the anger and hostility building to a climax?

In WSS the fight turns into a dance. Does this lessen the tension? Does the mood grow more violent? Does the dance take away from the realism? Which scene is more realistic? The students should also compare the visual, videotape versions. What does Romeo mean when he cries, “O I am fortunes fool!” What does Tony mean when he cries for “Maria?”

Is the doom that hangs over both pairs of lovers felt in both scenes as Romeo and ‘Tony run off?

The students should find more points to compare and contrast. They should be able to understand the points of comparisons in all the scenes and in all the characters in the scenes (four scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*).

Lesson Plan 2 (part 1)

After reading the three stories, discuss with class the creation of a musical. The discussion would first center around the common elements of the short stories.

Character : Tevye the Dairyman—What is he like? How strong is he? What share his characteristics? What are his weak points? Where does he get his strength? Is his rejection of his daughter a sign of strength or weakness? What could you change about him?

Secondary characters —What kind of picture do you get of the daughters? Do they seem to be alike? What about Golde? How could you strengthen her? Does she seem real?

Conflict —Is the conflict in the stories the same? How is it resolved? Is there any sense of loss in the resolution, a sense of loss for Tevye? Can the students understand the anguish in Tevye when he rejects his beloved Chava? I think the scene is a very difficult scene for young people to understand.

Plot —Is the structure the same? What moves the plot? What happens in the story?

Theme —What do the students think the underlying theme of these three stories is? It will be important for them to understand the break with tradition and the difficulty between generations before they can move on to the musical.

(Part 2)

Since these three stories were the basis for *Fiddler on the Roof*, the class should now discuss how they think these stories could be combined. Would they change Tevye? Would they make Golde more sympathetic? Would they add daughters or omit daughters? Would they have one major love story or keep somehow to three? Would they change the story with Chava? Could they change the ending with Chava and still have the meaning kept intact? What will the musical be about? How would they end the musical? What kind of music do they imagine would be right? Finally, how would they begin the musical?

Small groups would collaborate and create and outline or more of what they feel would be the opening of the play. They could have dialogue and act it out or narrate the outline of the beginning. After the presentations, the class would continue to:

Lesson plan 3

If possible, begin with the videotape of the opening, the prologue. Tevye enters and explains the way of life in his village, and then introduces the characters, many of whom have been added.

Does it make sense? Does it sound right? Does “Tradition” echo the paragraph from *the Town of Little People*? Why are characters being added? Do they make sense? Do they fit? Is there a slight hint of trouble? The class should pay attention to the entrance of the Russians. Does Tevye seem different? Is he the way you pictured him?

Class should try to explain the symbolism of the Fiddler on the Roof. After discussion, the class should read the beginning of the play together to more closely examine the words of the song.

Notes

1. Lehman Engel, *The American Musical Theater* (New York, The MacMillan Co., 1967) p. 62.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
3. *Ibid.* p. 71.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

5. Ibid., p. 112.

Teachers Bibliography

Altman, Richard, with Mervyn Kaufman. *The Making of a Musical* . New York, Crown Publisher, 1971.

An interesting history of the production of *Fiddler on the Roof* .

Bordman, Gerald. *American Musical Theatre* . New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

A useful discussion and history of American musical theater.

Engel, Lehman. *The American Musical Theater* . New York: The MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1975.

An extremely valuable overview of musicals and analysis of form.

Engel, Lehman. *Words With Music* . New York: The MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1972.

Another very valuable discussion of the forms and elements of musical theater.

Laufe, Abe. *Broadway's Greatest Musicals* . New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1974.

Discussion of modern musicals and their music.

Richards, Stanley, ed. *Great Musicals of the American Theatre*, Vol. one. Radmor Fenny." Chilton Book Co., 1973.

This book contains the musicals *West Side Story* and *Fiddler on the Roof* , along with others. Very useful as a text.

Student Reading

Aleichem, Sholom. *Tevye's Daughters* , tr. Frances Botwin. New York:

Crown Publishers, 1949.

This volume contains the three stories used for the musical. It is ideal for duplicating copies.

Fitzhugh, Louise. *Nobody's Family is Going to Change* . New York: Dell Yearling, 1974.

A novel written for young teens used as the basis for the musical *The Tap-Dance Kid* .

Shakespeare, William, *Romeo and Juliet* . Scholastic Scope, Vol, 33, No. 2. September 21, 1984.

Singer, Isaac Bashevis. *Naftali the Storyteller and his horse Sus* . New York: Farrar, Strauss, 1973.

Short tales written for children. Ideal for improvisation and play acting by students.

Classroom Materials

Video tapes of *West Side Store*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Romeo and Juliet* are available in most video rental stores. Tapes and records of the musicals are found in most libraries.

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>