

GUYS & DOLLS

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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A Musical Fable of Broadway | Based on a story and characters of Damon Runyon
Music & Lyrics by **Frank Loesser** | Book by **Jo Swerling** and **Abe Burrows**
September 19 - October 29, 2017 | **Quadracci Powerhouse**

SUGGESTED TEACHING & LEARNING TOPICS

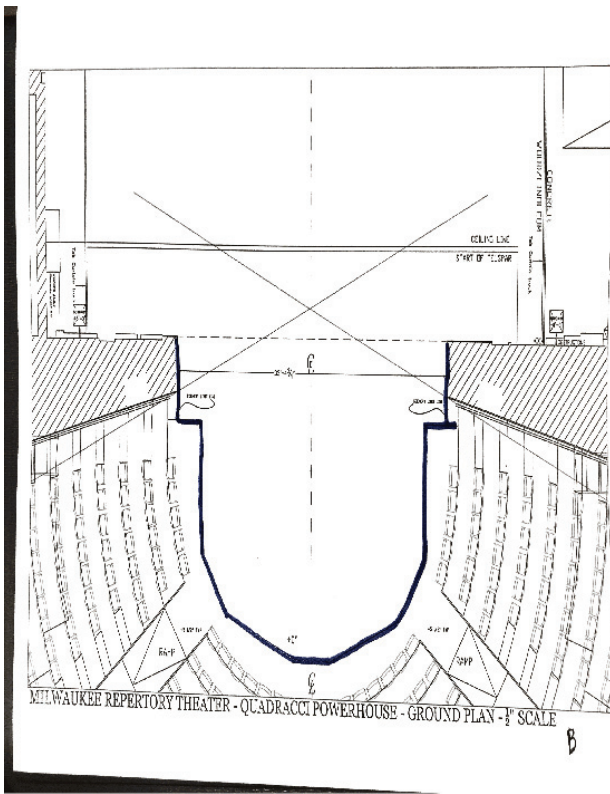
Classroom activity topics include:

- 1.) Storytelling Elements in Musical Theatre
- 2.) Morality--Good vs. Evil
- 3.) Gender Stereotypes

This Teacher's Guide is designed to be used in the classroom along with The Rep's Play Guide for *Guys & Dolls*. These are some suggested activities for your classroom. The Play Guide is available online at milwaukeeep.com/Tickets--Events/201718-Season/Guys-And-Dolls/Guys-And-Dolls-PlayGuide/

Guys and Dolls the film: To fully experience the magic of *Guys and Dolls* onstage at *The Rep*, we recommend waiting until after you have seen our live production to view the film with your students.

STORYTELLING ELEMENTS IN MUSICAL THEATRE



Pictured: QPH ground plan, bird's eye elevation, Milwaukee Rep 2017

PRE-SHOW

DESIGN: Every musical or play has its own unique design needs. Some plays are set in one or two locations – a kitchen, an office, or a living room. The set designer's challenge for *Guys and Dolls* was to design a set that can become ten different locations very quickly and easily, but is also safe for sixteen actors to use while dancing and singing. Designers use various lighting, sound, and construction elements to create the illusion of various places and times - paint, wood and metal frames, scenery on wheels (wagons), scenery painted on backdrops, spotlights, and lighting to create day and night or rain. Designs can be literal interpretations, or can be figurative/metaphorical.

ACTIVITY: Divide the class into groups. Using the attached ground plan for the Quadracci Powerhouse stage, have each group draft a design for a set that can be converted into six different locations: a NYC sidewalk, mission interior and exterior, indoor restaurant with a stage, Cuban restaurant, and an underground city tunnel. Have students label the different aspects of their design, detailing its use and the group's decision-making process. Justify every design decision. Research previous productions of *Guys and Dolls*, or other well-known musicals for inspiration.

CHALLENGE: The cost to produce a musical is usually much higher than a play. Have each group research production costs for and create an expense report in conjunction with their set design. Their expense report should include attention to set construction costs, including paint, lumber, hourly labor costs, etc. Students should also estimate or account for additional expenses, including musician salaries, sound and lighting equipment, etc. Have students format their designs and expense report into a visual presentation to share with the class. Encourage students to be as creative as possible.

DISCUSSION: What information was necessary to create an effective design? What would have made the design process easier? Do students prefer collaborating on a design or working alone? Why? What was the most challenging aspect? Were there surprises in researching production costs?

POST SHOW

DISCUSS: Discuss the *Guys and Dolls* set and compare it to the class designs. How was your design similar to the *Guys and Dolls* set? What design element was most memorable? How were transitions and locations created on stage? In what department- set, props, lighting and sound, costumes- would students choose to work? What theater job seems most interesting? (Reference Playbill for designer and production crew bios.)

DISCUSS: Musical theater as a genre is unique in the sense that it uses music to build character development. The Rep's Literary Associate, Deanie Vallone, writes "Songs are what the characters are thinking internally, what they want to say but can't find the words or courage to express... works at an even deeper level to establish personalities and relationship development."

LISTEN: Listen to these songs from *Guys and Dolls*, both of which feature character Sarah Brown: "I'll Know" and "Marry the Man Today."

- Compare and contrast these songs. Consider the mood, tempo, and character motivations. Print full lyrics for reference.
- The same character, Sarah, sings both songs. One is sung at the beginning, the other closer to the end. How has she changed, if at all?
- How does the style of music change the song's meaning?

MORALITY--GOOD VS. EVIL

PRE-SHOW

DEFINE: Discuss the meaning of morality, belief system, repentance.

"Coffee is so good I can't understand why it isn't a sin." -Arvide

PLAY: CROSS THE LINE

The following statements reflect themes discussed in *Guys and Dolls*. To begin the discussion, split the class into two lines, and have each line face each other. Establish a middle line in the center of the room. When the students hear a statement they agree with, they will take a step towards the middle line. When they feel indifferent about a statement, they will remain in place. When they disagree with a statement, they will take a step back into their line. Try the practice round with: "Pineapple is an acceptable topping for pizza." Feel free to create your own statements or adjust the activity to fit the needs of your group.

Note to Moderator – be conscious of remaining neutral during any discussion created with this activity, unless there is bullying behavior, so that student responses are authentic. This activity is most successful when students observe each other's responses and discuss them using their own experiences. But encourage active listening when there is disagreement.

Statements:

- People are innately (born) good. People are innately evil.
- As a result of life experiences, a person is taught what behaviors are right and wrong.
- Every good deed is rooted in unselfishness.
- A person's faith or belief system directs their actions and behavior.
- Women and men are currently given the same opportunities to be successful.
- Stereotypes are learned beliefs.
- A man's success is defined by his skills at his job.
- A woman's success is defined by her skills as a mother/wife.
- A man's success is defined by how much money he earns.
- A woman's happiness relies on a successful relationship or marriage.
- Women are more nurturing than men.
- There are gender roles in today's society.

POST SHOW

DISCUSS:

- The publishers of *Guys and Dolls* call it "A Musical Fable of Broadway." What is a fable? Why would the publishers mention this in the script?
- Who are the two "teams" in *Guys and Dolls*? What divides them?
- What changes for the characters?
- What characters in this musical would you categorize as good-natured? Which ones would you categorize as evil, or bad natured? Why? Share examples.
- How is Arvide's, Sarah's grandfather, morality different than the other characters?
- What does repentance look like in this musical? Who needs to repent?
- What other movies, TV, or theatre productions do you know that follow the same trope of two people dating because of a bet in place, but then eventually, they fall in love? (*How To Lose A Guy In 10 Days*, *She's All That*, *The Proposal*, *The Ugly Truth*, *Dogfight*) Why is this kind of love story so popular?

LISTEN: Listen to the following songs from *Guys and Dolls*. The characters are singing to each other.

"Sit Down, You're Rockin' the Boat" Sung by Nicely Nicely Johnson - Gambler, his repentance song

*... Beware, you'll scuttle the ship.
And the devil will drag you under
By the fancy tie 'round your wicked throat
Sit down, sit down, sit down, sit down
Sit down, you're rockin' the boat.*

"Follow the Fold"- Sarah Brown and the Save a Soul Mission band

*Follow the fold and stray no more,
stray no more, stray no more,
tear up your poker deck and play no more,
follow, follow the fold.*

- Compare and contrast these songs. Consider the mood, tempo, and character motivations. Print full lyrics for reference.
- Discuss the significance of the metaphors and symbolism the lyricist created in these songs. “Follow the Fold” versus “Don’t Rock the Boat.” What do these phrases mean?
- Given what you know of these characters, what is the message of each song? What does it reflect about their character?
- Is Nicely being genuine in “Sit Down, You’re Rockin’ the Boat,” or is this song a form of sarcasm, or satirical? How do they compare? How does that choice change its meaning?

EXPLORE: Choose a popular satirical song. Listen to the song as a class while reading the lyrics. Perhaps challenge students to find their own song. Perform a close reading of the lyrics. What is the song’s message? Is the message effective? Are there any famous events or persons associated with the song?

SELF REFLECT:

- Can a person’s sense of morality change? Is there such a thing as a “moral gray area”? Why or why not?
- How does your own belief system affect your relationships? What situations make you question your idea of right and wrong?
- Did your views of certain characters change? How? Did you they gain or lose your respect? Why?
- If a person’s belief system changes, do you gain or lose respect for that person? How?

GENDER STEREOTYPES

PRE-SHOW

DISCUSS: *Guys and Dolls* is a musical about just that – guys and dolls.

- Women are referenced as “dolls” and “tomatoes” in the musical. Where do these nicknames come from? What nicknames for men and women are common culture today? Are they appropriate?
- What behaviors were expected of women in the ‘50s? What behaviors were expected of men? Why? Give examples.
- How do you define the term, “gender roles”? Do we have gender roles in today’s modern society? What has changed between the ‘50s and now? Discuss why or why not.

DISCUSS: The following are direct quotes from the musical *Guys and Dolls*. Using the Play Guide synopsis as reference, discuss the characters based on their descriptions. Write the following quotes out on pieces of paper. Have students draw a quote, read it aloud, keeping the character name a secret. Discuss the quotes, having students guess the character and their gender. Do the students agree with the statement? Disagree? How do these quotes compare to modern views of men and women?



Cast of Guys and Dolls, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, 2017

- o “Change, change. Why is it the minute you dolls get a guy that you like, you take him right in for alterations?” – Sky
- o “What about you men? Why can’t you marry people like other people do and live normal like people? Have a home, with – wallpaper, and book ends.” – Adelaide
- o “. . . All dolls are the same.” – Sky
- o “I’m going to love being in the kitchen – I’ve tried all the other rooms.” – Adelaide
- o “And a guy without a doll- well, if a guy does not have a doll – who would holler at him?” – Nathan
- o “Nathan, this is the psychology that tells you why girls do certain kinds of things. Nathan, no matter how terrible a fellow seems, you can never be sure that some girl won’t go for him. . .” – Adelaide.
- o “Marry the man today rather than sigh and sorrow. . . Marry the man today and change his ways tomorrow.” – Adelaide and Sarah
- o “I got to think what’s best for you.” – Sky

PREDICT: Based on the quotes above, what will be a main theme of the production? What do you expect to see and hear about relationships? What characters are you most interested in? Why?

POST SHOW

DISCUSS:

- Describe the gender roles you saw in the production. Did these characters “follow the fold” with gender roles, or did they refute or fight them? What characters changed the most? Give examples.
- This show emphasizes the importance of finding a significant other, and how love can make you do crazy and irrational actions (“Guys and Dolls” song). In today’s society, does the same emphasis exist? Does that need to change? Discuss your opinions.
- How do modern society’s gender roles compare to gender roles shown in *Guys and Dolls*?

PLAY: Couples Therapy Role Play

Have one student take on the character of Adelaide, a second student as Nathan, her fiancé. A third student will act as their couple’s therapist. Ask them to have an improvised conversation about their relationship using what they know of the character motivations and personalities. What is the problem? What is needed to solve it? Then have students switch roles / genders to invite a new dynamic based on new perspectives.

Other group options: Have a student mediate between Sarah and Sky, Sarah and Adelaide, Sky and Nathan, or have Adelaide act as therapist for Sky and Sarah.

Consider: Explore how a therapist or a doctor in the 1950s might respond versus a therapist or doctor today. How do the males respond differently than females?

Writing Extension: Have students write scripts based on the dialogue’s created in the improv scenes. Perform them for the class.

WRITE: Have students read and/or listen to “Adelaide’s Lament” from *Guys and Dolls*.

Ask students to write a “Dear Adelaide” letter, mimicking an advice column, responding to Adelaide’s situation. Students can give direct advice, “diagnosing” her illness. Use a video to help contextualize the song.

“Adelaide’s Lament”

*The average unmarried female
Basically insecure
Due to some long frustration may react. . . . React?*

*With psychosomatic symptoms
Difficult to endure
Affecting the upper respiratory tract. . . . Achoo!
In other words
Just from waiting around
For that little band of gold
A person can develop a cold.*



Kelley Faulkner as “Miss Adelaide” sings “Adelaide’s Lament,” Milwaukee Repertory Theater, 2017. Photo by Michael Brosilow.



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The Education Department offers backstage tours, pre- and post-show workshops and classroom residencies.

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Common Core State Standards

RL.6-12.3 Analyze Dialogue

SL.8-12.1 Collaborative Discussion

SL.8-12.3 Point of View

National Core Arts Standards

R.7-8 Perceive, Analyze, Interpret

C.10-11 Relate Culturally and Personally

CASEL Competencies

Social Awareness

Relationship Skills

Responsible Decision-Making

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