

# RAGTIME

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Teacher guide written by Amanda Garrigan, Education Intern.

Book by Terrence McNally  
Music by Stephen Flaherty | Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens  
Based on the novel Ragtime by E.L. Doctorow  
Directed by Mark Clements  
September 17 – October 27 • Quadracci Powerhouse

This Teacher's Guide is designed to be used in the classroom along with The Rep's Study Guide for *Ragtime*. These are some suggested activities for your classroom. The Study Guide is available online at <http://www.milwaukeerep.com/season/ragtime-studyguide.html>

## ACTIVITIES

### Listen to Ragtime Music

Ragtime music was the most popular genre at the turn of the 20th century. This music originated from an African-American piano style in the Midwest and South during the late 1880s and early 1890s. Consisting of heavily syncopated or "ragged" rhythms, the music typically reflected the society and societal issues of the time. Listen to ragtime music as a class, such as music by Scott Joplin or music from the *Ragtime* soundtrack such as "Ragtime" or "Gettin' Ready Rag." Ask students what this music reveals about society at the time it was created. Break into groups and choose a few contemporary songs. Examine their style, rhythm, tempo, lyrics, and instrumentation and discuss how they reflect society today.



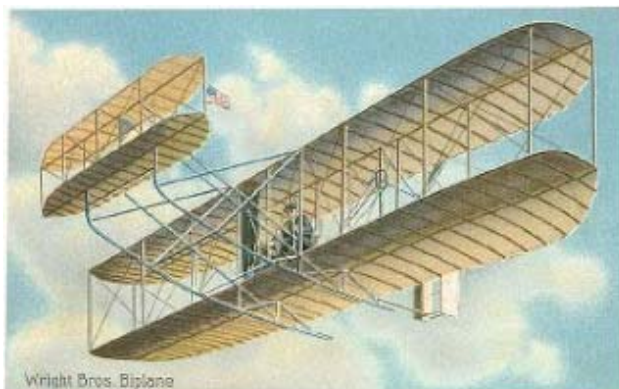
Sheet music for "Maple Leaf Rag" by Scott Joplin.

### Technological Advances

Make a note of all the mechanical devices that you can find in the school or classroom (i.e. phones, computers, electric pencil sharpeners, etc.). Research the dates of when each of these devices were invented, and determine how many were invented in the early 1900s. Discuss which of these technological advances had the greatest impact on Americans' lives individually. How did these impact the country as a whole? How did they impact specific groups of people, such as immigrants, African-Americans and women?



Ford Model T.



Wright Brothers' Biplane.

## CREATE A FLIPBOOK

In Ragtime, Tateh creates a flipbook for his daughter, which triggers the invention of the movie and jump starts his career. **CREATE** your own flip book, keeping the image simple, but creative.

### How to Make Your Own Flipbook

Instructions:

1. Measure and cut out 10 - 20 pieces of paper for your flipbook. A comfortable working size is 2in x 4in, but sizes can vary. "Post-It" notepads can also be used for this activity. If you are using "Post-Its", divide the pad in half or in quarters to total 10 – 20 pieces of paper (depending on how long your flip book will be). Neatly stack the pages on top of each other when using either loose pieces of paper or "Post-Its".
2. Select a subject for your flipbook keeping in mind that each page is considered a "cell", just like in real animation. It is the flipping through of all the cells, or pages, that makes the animation.
3. Using a pencil, draw the first picture on the first page of your flipbook. All drawing must be done on one side of each page so that when you flip through your book, the animation is visible. Remember, you want to show action, so keep the idea of movement in mind when deciding what to draw, e.g. A person running or a butterfly flying.
4. Go to the second page and show the next step of your drawing. This second image should be slightly different than the first drawing. Keep moving from one page to the next, making sure that each page is a slightly different action. Throughout this process, flip through your book, erasing and making changes to any pages that do not flow well with the animation.
5. When your book is complete, make a cover page for your flipbook. Don't forget to give your flip book a title and write "directed by" or "produced by" with your name. You can go now go back and add color to your drawings using markers and colored pencils.
6. Once your flip book drawings and title page are complete, neatly stack the pages on top of each other in their proper order. Tap the stack on a hard surface a few times to make sure the edges line up evenly.
7. Staple the narrow end of your flipbook (opposite side from your drawings) so that the pages will stay together when flipped. Staple the stack so that staples are vertical and close to the edge. Make sure all the pages are stapled together or your book could fall apart.

### Flipbook topic ideas:

#### Diver, gymnast, dancer or other athlete

(e.g. hockey player or basketball player making a shot)

#### Life cycle flip books in science

(e.g. illustrating the growth and change of a plant or animal as it goes through its life cycle – i.e. egg hatching into a chick, caterpillar into a butterfly, a flower growing)



## **RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THE MEDIA**

Have students **COLLECT** examples of how different ethnic groups are portrayed in today's media from newspapers, magazines or from commercials and sitcoms. What messages do these images send?

Have students **SELECT** an image of an ethnic or racial minority from contemporary culture and **WRITE** a personal essay about what the image conveys—positive or negative. Were any images hard to find? What would students like to see depicted? Was it different than what they found?

How do modern images of African-Americans in popular culture compare to the images from America in 1900? Has there been an improvement in this depiction? Why or why not?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

#### **Pre-Show:**

When you think of technological advancement, what technologies first come to mind? How do you think technology affects our society?

The characters in this play risk a lot for friendship. Think of a time you took a risk in forming a friendship, and whether it ended for good or bad. Was this risk worth it in the end? Why?

For many characters in the show, their struggles relate to or are caused by their values. How do your values affect your life? How do your values fit in with the notion of personal identity or societal identity?

#### **Post-Show:**

How did the characters' names affect how you and/or other audience members relate to the characters? What larger meanings may the names of the characters have? Why do you think the author named the characters this way?

How do the inventions and technological advancements mentioned in the show impact the characters? Compare and contrast the characters in the different races and classes. What struggles do they have in common? What struggles are different?

What do each of the characters value most throughout the play? How do their values affect the choices they make? How do you see people's actions reflecting their values in society today? For Coalhouse Walker, Jr., justice is one of these important values. What does he sacrifice in order to obtain justice? Does he obtain justice? What are important values in your life that you would sacrifice for?

*Ragtime* raises timeless questions, meaning the questions will always remain, such as: Is peace possible? Are freedom, justice and equality possible? If so, is there a cost? If yes, what is it? What do you believe are the answers to these questions?

*Ragtime* is an adaptation of a novel of the same name. Read the novel and discuss how the adapters made the book into a musical. What things did they keep the same? What did they change? Why do you think they made those decisions? What would you have done differently? Why do you think they chose this particular book to adapt into a musical?



# COMMON CORE AND WISCONSIN MODEL EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

## Common Core State Standards For English Language Arts

### **Reading: Literature**

**8.3:** Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

**11-12.2:** Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

**11-12.7:** Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

### **Literacy in History/Social Studies**

**11-12.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

## Wisconsin Model Academic Standards

### **History**

**B.12.2:** Analyze primary and secondary sources related to a historical question to evaluate their relevance, make comparisons, integrate new information with prior knowledge, and come to a reasoned conclusion.

**B. 12.8:** Recall, select, and explain the significance of important people, their work, and their ideas in the areas of political and intellectual leadership, inventions, discoveries, and the arts, within each major era of Wisconsin, United States, and world history

### **Theater**

**A.12.1:** Attend a live theatrical performance and be able to explain the personal meaning derived from the experience, and also be able to analyze, evaluate, and create meaning in a broader social and cultural context in either written or oral form

- articulate with increased understanding what they liked and didn't like and why
- explain what happened in the play and why they think the playwright made particular choices
- explain what happened in the play and why they think the director and actors made particular choices
- explain how the technical aspects of the play supported the choices of the playwright, director and actors
- describe how the audience appeared to respond to the play
- explain the message of the play and its meaning to individuals and to society

## **MILWAUKEE REP EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

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

### **Contact Us:**

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