

Kids On Broadway: Musicals About Kids.

Study Guide



From left, Diana Barrows, Robyn Finn, Donna Graham, Danielle Brisebois, Shelley Bruce and Janine Ruane as orphans in the original Broadway production of "Annie." Credit: Photofest



THE JOHNNY MERCER
FOUNDATION



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Welcome

Musical theater is one of the great, native art forms to flourish in the United States. From the twenties, when songwriters like the Gershwin brothers, Cole Porter and Johnny Mercer virtually invented the Great American Songbook, through the Rodgers & Hammerstein era of the 1940s and 50s, and on to the Sondheim era, the rise of the rock musical, and the arrival of *Hamilton*, American musical theater is one of our country's greatest treasures.

But it's a treasure that too few Americans share. Musicals are best enjoyed live, and too few families have the means to see a Broadway show. So, the Johnny Mercer Foundation and Kaufman Music Center have teamed up in an effort to introduce school children throughout the country to this unique art form, and to show them that it has not only a rich history, but also an ongoing and dynamic future, which can include them.

In this 4-part series, children will learn about four great American musicals, and they will also learn a little bit about themselves, and isn't that the ultimate purpose of any art form? We hope that these lessons will give rise to some big questions, and to a lifelong passion for musical theater.

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Overview

This four-episode video series will introduce elementary school students to classic Broadway musicals that illuminate the problems of young people. Students will learn about the writers of the musical, the circumstances of its creation, and a brief summary of the story. Songs from each musical will be heard, in order to highlight the problems faced by the leading characters, and their ways of solving them. This curriculum guide will offer suggestions of follow-up activities, as well as questions for further discussion.

Episode One: *Annie*

So much of our sense of identity comes from our family. What would it be like not to know who your family is? Episode One focuses on Annie's search for her parents, and her feelings about creating her own family with Daddy Warbucks. Songs featured include "Maybe" and "Tomorrow."

Episode Two: *Oliver!*

In our search for belonging, we sometimes make bad choices. When Oliver runs away from the orphanage, he is adopted by a new group of friends who teach him to be a thief. But is that who Oliver really is? This question will be addressed through the songs "Where Is Love?", "Consider Yourself" and "You've Got To Pick A Pocket Or Two."

Episode Three: *Peter Pan*

What child, being told "Act your age," hasn't secretly thought "I won't grow up!" Peter Pan, the eternal little boy, makes a perfect hero for discussing the process of maturity. Why do Wendy, her brothers and the Lost Boys find Peter an appealing leader, but ultimately decide to return to the "real world?" The songs "Never Never Land" and "I Won't Grow Up" illustrate aspects of the story, and the episode will also summarize the various incarnations of this story, from J.M. Barrie's original book through the many film and stage adaptations, to try to understand its timeless appeal.

Episode Four: *Dear Evan Hansen*

Having explored some of the dilemmas of childhood, we now move on to the teen years. Evan Hansen, who feels invisible at his high school, tells a lie to avoid embarrassment and suddenly he's a hero. Now, does he have the courage to tell the truth? The songs "Waving Through A Window," "For Forever," and "You Will Be Found" illustrate his story, which touches on the issues of teen depression and suicide.

Episode One

Annie

by Charles Strouse & Martin Charnin

Charles Strouse is one of the most beloved and popular composers writing for the American musical theater today. Three of his musicals have won the Tony Award for Best Musical.

Strouse's Broadway debut came in 1960, with *Bye, Bye, Birdie*, a musical about an Elvis Presley-like rock singer who is drafted into the army. The musical won Strouse's first Tony, was made into a film starring Dick Van Dyke, and continues to be one of the most produced musicals. Strouse's lyricist in *Birdie* was Lee Adams, and the team wrote several more musicals, including their second Tony-winning musical, *Applause*, which was based on the movie *All About Eve* and which starred the late Lauren Bacall.

In 1977, Strouse collaborated with a new lyricist, Martin Charnin, on what has come to be his best known and most popular musical, *Annie*. *Annie* is based on the comic strip *Little Orphan Annie*, and was made into a film and been several times on Broadway.



Charles Strouse, left, with Martin Charnin in 2013. (WENN Rights Ltd./Alamy)

Martin Charnin was an American Tony- and Emmy-winning writer, lyricist and director, most famous for turning the comic strip *Little Orphan Annie* into the musical *Annie*. He began his career as a Broadway performer appearing in *West Side Story* and wrote the lyrics and music for numerous off-Broadway and cabaret productions such as *Fallout* and Julius Monk's night club revues, and the Broadway show *The Girls Against the Boys*.



Summary

Annie is an orphan living in New York City during the Great Depression. Even though she has been living in an orphanage managed by a mean lady called Miss Hannigan all her life, Annie is still hopeful her parents are alive somewhere and will come find her. One day, she meets a billionaire named Oliver “Daddy” Warbucks and they become best friends. When Warbucks offers \$50,000 to the couple who can prove they are Annie’s parents, Miss Hannigan's younger brother, Rooster, and his girlfriend Lily pretend to be Annie’s parents, in order to get the money. But the FBI learns that Annie’s parents passed away some time ago and arrests the imposters. Warbucks finally adopts Annie.



Picture from: <https://www.intofilm.org/films/3565>

Historical Background

The Musical *Annie* is set in 1930s New York during The Great Depression.

The Great Depression is a period of harsh economic conditions in the 1930s when many people were out of work, hungry, and/or homeless. Stocks crashed and banks were failing. Although this phenomenon started in the United States, it quickly spread throughout the world.

Franklin D. Roosevelt became president in 1933, and he launched a program called the New Deal aiming to put some people back to work right away. It also changed the financial system to prevent the same problems from happening in the future.



Unemployed men outside a soup kitchen in Depression-era Chicago, Illinois, the US, 1931. Photo: National archives and Records Administration



Franklin D. Roosevelt
Photo: Hulton Archive/Getty Images

OPTIMISM

What is optimism? Optimism is a belief that everything will turn out well in the end. For Annie, it was the belief that her parents were still alive that gave her strength and optimism. Look at the two songs that Annie sings in the show and discuss how she expresses her optimism.

Tomorrow

*Music by Charles Strouse
& Lyrics by Martin Charnin, 1977*

*The sun'll come out
Tomorrow
Bet your bottom dollar
That tomorrow
There'll be sun!
Just thinkin' about
Tomorrow
Clears away the cobwebs
And the sorrow
'Til there's none!
When I'm stuck a day
That's gray
And lonely
I just stick out my chin
And grin
And say
Oh
The sun'll come out
Tomorrow
So you gotta hang on
'Til tomorrow
Come what may
Tomorrow!
Tomorrow!
I love ya
Tomorrow!
You're always
A day
Away!*

Maybe

Music by Charles Strouse & Lyrics by Martin Charnin, 1977

*Maybe far away
Or maybe real nearby
He may be pouring her coffee
She may be straightening his tie
Maybe in a house
All hidden by a hill
She's sitting playing piano
He's sitting paying a bill
Betcha they're young
Betcha they're smart
Bet they collect things
Like ashtrays and art
Betcha they're good
(Why shouldn't they be?)
Their one mistake
Was giving up me
So maybe now it's time
And maybe when I wake
They'll be there calling me "baby"
Maybe
Betcha he reads
Betcha she sews
Maybe she's made me a closet of clothes
Maybe they're strict
As straight as a line
Don't really care
As long as they're mine
So maybe now this prayer's
The last one of it's kind
Won't you please come get your "baby"
Maybe*



STUDENT WORKSHEET

‘Tell Your Own Story’



Don't forget Sean's Homework!

“Think of that word **Maybe**. Write it down on a page. And then imagine. What’s something really good that could happen to you? Maybe it happens when you’re walking down the street tomorrow. Or maybe it happens years from now, when you’re grown up. Whatever it is, write it down. Write a story about it, or maybe a song. And remember: be optimistic! And maybe your dreams really *can* come true. “

Episode Two

Oliver! by Lionel Bart

(Based on *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens)



Photo: Paulene Stone & Laurence Harvey

Lionel Bart was a British writer, lyricist and composer who created the musical *Oliver!*

Born as the son of a Jewish tailor in London, young Lionel had no formal musical education, but his music teacher at school was certain he was a musical prodigy. Also talented in the visual arts, Bart worked as a set painter in a theater until he saw a notice in the theater asking for songwriters.

His first success as a songwriter came after writing songs for rock and roll singers Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard. But it was really the musical *Oliver!* that established his reputation. He won the 1963 Tony Award for Best Original Score of a musical. In 1968, *Oliver!* was made into a motion picture that won several Oscars including Best Picture. Lionel's other notable works include *Blitz!* and *Maggie May*.

Charles Dickens (1812 –1870) was one of the greatest and most influential storytellers of all time. He created some of the world's best-known fictional characters such as Scrooge, *Oliver Twist*, and *David Copperfield* and his works are still widely read and admired. Writing in the Victorian era, he was also a passionate social reformer.



<https://cdn.britannica.com/17/82717-050-5D9C010D/Charles-Dickens.jpg>

Oliver!



Summary

Oliver! begins in an orphanage in Victorian England, where orphans are poorly fed and have to work all day. Oliver, who has never felt loved or accepted, manages to escape from harsh workhouses and makes his way to London where he is for the first time welcomed into a group of young pickpockets led by a conniving man called Fagin. One of Fagin's associates is the violent Bill Sikes, whose girlfriend, Nancy, is devoted to him despite his ill treatment of her. Oliver develops a friendship with Nancy. One day, Oliver is rescued by wealthy Mr. Brownlow when he is accused of a theft he didn't commit on the streets. Mr. Brownlow offers Oliver a home to stay. Bill and Fagin plot to kidnap Oliver back and Nancy is killed while trying to help him escape. With the help of police, Oliver successfully escapes from Bill and reunites with Mr. Brownlow.

Historical Background

The musical *Oliver!* is set in the mid-19th century of Victorian London.

The Victorian era is named for Queen Victoria, who ruled Great Britain and Ireland from 1837 to 1901. While the wealthy enjoyed great prosperity and influence, many suffered from poverty due to the social injustice of the times. Children often worked long hours in workhouses that resembled prisons, and some turned to crime like these pickpockets in *Oliver Twist*.

Oliver Twist is considered Charles Dickens's first extended work of social criticism.



SONG SHEET

Here are the lyrics to the song *Where Is Love*, which Oliver sings in the musical. What emotions do you feel while listening to this song?



Where is love?

Music & Lyrics by Lionel Bart, 1963

Where is love?
Does it fall from skies above?
Is it underneath the willow tree
That I've been dreaming of?
Where is she
Who I close my eyes to see?
Will I ever know the sweet hello
That's meant for only me?
Who can say where she may hide?
Must I travel far and wide?
'Til I am beside the someone who
I can mean something to
Where, where is love?

STUDENT WORKSHEET

Oliver!

Class Discussions:

- *Robin Hood* is a well-known story about an outlaw who steals from the rich to give to the poor. Is it OK to take something that belongs to someone else even if you have good intentions like Robin Hood did?



© Photos.com/Thinkstock

- Have you ever had the courage to say “no” in a difficult situation? How did that make you feel, and did it change your relationship with others? If so, how?

STUDENT WORKSHEET

‘Tell Your Own Story’



Don't forget Sean's Homework!

“Invent a story about a child who has to make a choice. It could be a choice you had to make in your own life, or it could be something you completely make up. But make it a scene in which someone tries to convince the child to do something bad. Show why the child is torn, and show how they find the strength to say no. And if you feel like it, make it a musical, add a song.”

Episode Three

Peter Pan

Peter Pan is a stage musical based on J.M. Barrie's most famous work originally published both as a play and a novel in the early 1900s. The musical was premiered in 1954 on Broadway with music by Moose Charlap and Jule Styne, and lyrics by Carolyn Leigh, Betty Comden, and Adolph Green, and has been revived on Broadway many times since.



Cathy Rigby as Peter in the 2013 revival of *Peter Pan*.

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/ct-ent-0202-peter-pan-review-20130201-column.html>

STUDENT WORKSHEET

Peter Pan



Summary

Peter Pan is a boy who decides never to grow up. Although born in London, he flees as a baby to a far away Never Land, a place filled with fun and adventures. But he misses bedtime stories and often flies back to London to eavesdrop on mothers telling stories to their children.

One day, Peter sits on the nursery windowsill of three children, Wendy, John and Michael Darling, listening to their mother's bedtime story, but someone shuts the window before he manages to get his shadow out. He sneaks into the bedroom the next night to get his shadow back and meets Wendy. They soon become friends, and he invites her and her brothers to fly with him to Never Land.

In Never Land, the children meet the Lost Boys who live with Peter Pan, plus fairies, mermaids, and pirates including the notorious Captain Hook.

But before long, they begin to miss their old life in London. The Lost Boys also realize they can't be children forever. They fly back to London, while Peter Pan remains in the Never Land.

STUDENT WORKSHEET



In children's stories, we often see characters defined as heroes (protagonists) and villains (antagonists). In Peter Pan, both Peter and Wendy are protagonists.

An antagonist is a person or force who fights against the main character of a story, keeping the protagonist from getting what he or she wants. The antagonist of Peter Pan is Captain Hook, who wants to retaliate against Peter Pan for cutting off his hand and feeding it to a crocodile.

Even though an antagonist tends to be a bad guy in many stories, not all antagonists are bad. The antagonist is just whoever is against the protagonist (main character) of a story. The role of an antagonist is important because it provides the story's conflict and makes the story more interesting.

Think of a story or a movie and identify the protagonist(s) and antagonist(s).

SONG SHEET

Peter Pan

Peter sings *I Won't Grow Up* in the musical *Peter Pan* and gets the Lost Boys to sing along. Why do you think he doesn't want to grow up? Have you ever felt that way?

Music by Moose Charlap & Lyrics by Carolyn Leigh, 1954

I won't grow up
I don't wanna go to school
Just to learn to be a parrot
And recite a silly rule

If growing up means it would be beneath my dignity to climb a tree
I'll never grow up, never grow up, never grow up... Not me
Not I
Not me

I won't grow up
I don't wanna wear a tie
Or a serious expression
In the middle of July

And if it means I must prepare to shoulder burdens with a worried air
I'll never grow up, never grow up, never grow up... Not me
Not I
Not me... so there

Never gunna be a man (I won't)
Like to see somebody try (and make me)
Anyone who wants to try and make me turn me into a man...
Well catch me if you can

I won't grow up
Not a penny will I pinch
I will never grow a moustache
Or a fraction of an inch

Cause growing up is awfuller than all the awful things that ever were
I'll never grow up, never grow up, never grow up... no sir
Not I, not me, so there
Never grow up,
Never grow up,
Never grow up, never grow up,
Never grow up, never grow up,
Never grow up, not me, not me, not me, not me, not me

STUDENT WORKSHEET

‘Tell Your Own Story’



Don't forget Sean's Homework!

“What would happen if Peter Pan came in your window tonight and asked you to go to Never Land with him? I want you to imagine it, and then I want you to write a story or a play about it. What adventures would you have with Peter? It doesn't have to be **Pirates or Mermaids**, you can play with **unicorns or dinosaurs** or whatever you want. It's your story. But when Peter asks you to stay with him in Never Land forever, what will you say? Will you do it? Or will you come back to your home and your family? And if so, why?”

Episode Four

Dear Evan Hansen



PHOTO BY MATTHEW MURPHY

Dear Evan Hansen is a musical with a script by Steven Levenson and songs by the composing team Benj Pasek and Justin Paul. Since it was premiered in 2015, *Dear Evan Hansen* has become a huge success earning a cumulative gross revenue of about \$226 million. Despite its dark subject matter, it won six Tony Awards and is currently being made into a movie by Universal Pictures.



Photo from <https://pasekandpaul.com>

Benj Pasek and Justin Paul are a young American songwriting duo in their 30s who have won numerous awards including Tony Awards, the Golden Globes and Academy Awards. Some of their notable musicals are *A Christmas Story*, *Edges*, *Dear Evan Hansen*, and *Dogfight*. They also wrote lyrics for the film *La La Land* and music and lyrics for the film *The Greatest Showman*.

Episode Four

Dear Evan Hansen

Summary

Evan Hansen is a shy high school senior. Due to his severe social anxiety, he is unable to make friends at school. His therapist recommends that he write letters to himself to sort out his feelings. One of these letters is taken from him by Connor Murphy, a school bully. A few days later, Connor kills himself, and Evan's letter is found.

Connor's parents assume Connor wrote the letter to Evan and that they were close friends. When Evan goes along with the story to comfort the family, including Connor's sister Zoe who Evan has feelings for, he is drawn deeper and deeper into the lie about his "friendship" with Connor.

When news circulates that Evan and Connor were "friends," he suddenly finds himself popular. He helps launch "the Connor Project" to spread awareness of mental health and suicide prevention. The Connor Project gains nationwide attention, and it raises enough money to reopen the abandoned apple orchard where Evan and Connor supposedly spent time.

Evan struggles to maintain the lie, but Connor's family eventually finds out the truth. Evan finally accepts himself and apologizes to Connor's family, who ultimately forgive him. The orchard is now fully funded in Connor's memory and becomes a symbol of hope and acceptance for all who see themselves in Connor's story.

STUDENT WORKSHEET

‘Tell Your Own Story’

- *Dear Evan Hansen* raises questions about how to channel bad feelings. Evan did it through lying to make himself feel good, but what are some positive things he could have done instead? What do you do when you have bad feelings?



Broadway promotional poster

Don't forget Sean's
Homework!



- “Write a letter to Evan. Pretend he’s a boy at your school who you don’t know very well, but you want to help. Start with “Dear Evan Hansen,” and then give him some suggestions for things he can do when he’s feeling bad. Tell him who he can talk to. Tell him what you do when you’re feeling sad. Or maybe just tell him you understand how he feels. You can make it a funny letter if you want. Sometimes making someone laugh is all they need to get through a sad time.”

SONG SHEET

Waving Through a Window is a song Evan sings in the beginning of the musical. Read the verses and imagine what Evan is going through. Have you ever felt that you were invisible to others and/or not heard by others? Have you ever reached out to a friend who might have felt this way?

Waving Through A Window

Music & Lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, 2015

I've learned to slam on the brake Before I even turn the key
Before I make the mistake
Before I lead with the worst of me
Give them no reason to stare No slipping up if you slip away So I got nothing to share
No, I got nothing to say
Step out, step out of the sun
If you keep getting burned
Step out, step out of the sun
Because you've learned, because you've learned
On the outside, always looking in
Will I ever be more than I've always been?
'Cause I'm tap, tap, tapping on the glass
I'm waving through a window
I try to speak, but nobody can hear
So I wait around for an answer to appear
While I'm watch, watch, watching people pass I'm waving through a window, oh
Can anybody see, is anybody waving back at me?
We start with stars in our eyes
We start believing that we belong
But every sun doesn't rise
And no one tells you where you went wrong
Step out, step out of the sun
If you keep getting burned
Step out, step out of the sun
Because you've learned, because you've learned
On the outside, always looking in
Will I ever be more than I've always been? 'Cause I'm tap, tap, tapping on the glass Waving
through a window
I try to speak, but nobody can hear
So I wait around for an answer to appear While I'm watch, watch, watching people pass Waving
through a window, oh
Can anybody see, is anybody waving?
When you're falling in a forest and there's nobody around Do you ever really crash, or even
make a sound?

Student “YES” and...

This simple and enjoyable game will enable your students to work on teamwork and cooperation. It will also help to sharpen their ability to read (or listen) for details.

SET UP

If possible, have the children sit or stand in a circle. If it's preferable to have them seated at desks, make sure they know the order in which they will add to the story.

PROCESS

STEP 1: The first child begins with a statement, which starts the story. (Example: “One day, I was walking down the street.”)

STEP 2: The next child adds a sentence to the story beginning with the words “Yes, and...” (Example: “Yes, and it suddenly started to rain.”)

Step 3: The last child in succession has the responsibility of ending the story.

GUIDELINES

In making up a story as a group, children have the tendency to think of their own contribution ahead of time, while ignoring each other's additions. Starting each sentence with “yes and” encourages the children to understand that their addition must be responsive to the previously established addition.

Teacher Guideline:

The teacher should stop any child who doesn't begin with “yes and,” or anyone whose sentence contradicts what has gone before, and ask them to try again.

This is a game children should play a few times over a period of weeks. They will learn several things from this game's repetition, including: (1) You can't always be the star, but if you work together, you can create a satisfying whole; (2) Everyone's contribution is important; (3) It's important to listen carefully, especially to details.

Sources & Resources

Kaufman Music Center

<https://www.kaufmanmusiccenter.org>

The Johnny Mercer Foundation

<http://www.johnnymercerfoundation.org>

Vala

<https://valamusicals.com/about/>

The Great Depression

<https://greatdepression.mrdonn.org>

Victorian Age

<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Victorian-Age/476331>

Charles Dickens

https://kids.kiddle.co/Charles_Dickens

Benj Pasek and Justin Paul

<https://pasekandpaul.com>

Dear Evan Hansen brings the issues of teen's mental health. If discussion ever comes up in class, please refer to:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

800-273-8255 (TALK)

Children Ages 12 and Younger Suicide Prevention Resources

<https://www.sprc.org/populations/children>

Children's Mental Health

<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/index.html>

Befrienders Worldwide | Volunteer Action to Prevent Suicide

<https://www.befrienders.org>

Appendix

Common Core Literacy Standards for Grade 4:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1.a](#)

Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2](#)

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.b](#)

Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

National Core Arts Standards – Theater:

[Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.](#)

- Imagines a mental image or concept.
- Investigates and studies through exploration or examination.

[Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.](#)

- Constructs a product by combining or arranging a series of elements.

[Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.](#)

- Reflects and thinks deeply about his or her work.

[Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.](#)

- Relate character experiences to personal experiences in a guided drama experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).

In learning to communicate through the arts in a standards-based curriculum, students learn to:

- Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts.
- Use communication for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate, and persuade).

The arts have always provided an essential means for individuals and communities to generate experiences, construct knowledge and express their ideas, feelings, and beliefs. Each arts discipline shares common goals, but approaches them through distinct media, practices and techniques. Due to the highly process-oriented and reflective nature of arts making, arts education naturally encourages creative thinking, logical reasoning and meta-cognition. Active engagement in the artistic process allows individuals to develop and realize their creative potential(s).