Based on a conception of Jerome Robbins
Book by Arthur Laurents
Music by Leonard Bernstein
Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim
Choreography Inspired by Jerome Robbins
Originally Produced on Broadway by Robert E. Griffith and Harold S. Prince by arrangement with Roger L. Stevens
Directed by Max Reimer
Choreographed by Lisa Stevens
Music Direction by Mark Camilleri
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ABOUT DRAYTON ENTERTAINMENT

An award-winning, not-for-profit charitable organization, Drayton Entertainment produces the finest in live theatre at seven venues in southwestern Ontario. Each theatre maintains its distinct identity, but at the same time, combines the strengths and energy of all to provide an entertainment experience that is unparalleled.

The stage for success was first set in 1991, with the launch of the Drayton Festival Theatre. Under the leadership of founding and current Artistic Director, Alex Mustakas, the theatre was an immediate success. Since then, Drayton Entertainment has added the St. Jacobs Schoolhouse Theatre, King's Wharf Theatre (in Penetanguishene), Huron Country Playhouse (with two stages in Grand Bend), St. Jacobs Country Playhouse and the Hamilton Family Theatre Cambridge (formerly Dunfield Theatre Cambridge).

Drayton Entertainment’s distinctive business model provides protection from the inherent fragility of the theatre industry, while providing an outlet for growth and prosperity. This has positive implications for artists and audiences – all of whom enjoy enhanced opportunities both on and off the stage.

By successfully balancing the competing demands of quality productions, fiscal responsibility, and community integrity, Drayton Entertainment has emerged as a true innovator and leader for arts and culture in Canada.

SYNOPSIS

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, is transported to modern-day New York City, as two young idealistic lovers find themselves caught between warring street gangs. Their struggle to survive in a world of hate, violence and prejudice is one of the most innovative, heart-wrenching and relevant musical dramas of our time.

Two gangs, the Jets and the Sharks, are fighting over territory on Manhattan's West Side when Tony, a member of the Jets, falls in love with Maria, the younger sister of the Sharks' leader Bernardo. Unfortunately for the young couple, they happen to fall in love on the very night the two gangs decide to end their feud in one final battle. Tony manages to persuade the two gangs to reduce it to a one-on-one “fair fight”, but when Maria tells Tony to stop the fight altogether, his attempt to intervene results in the leader of the Jets, his best friend Riff, getting knifed to death by Bernardo. In a fit of rage, Tony then kills Bernardo in return.

Act Two begins with Maria finding out about Bernardo's death from her arranged fiancé, Chino, who then vows to kill Tony. Tony turns up and they spend the night together. After we find out what happened to the Jets, we meet up with the lovers. Bernardo's girlfriend Anita shows up, and Tony escapes, with a plan to escape to the country. Anita, despite hating Tony for killing Bernardo, agrees to tell Tony to stay at the drugstore he works at until Maria arrives. When she gets to the store, she is harassed by the Jets who have gathered there. In a fit of rage, she says that Maria is dead, killed by Chino. Tony's boss tells Tony this, and he runs out into the street, calling for Chino to 'kill him, too.' Maria and Tony meet each other in the street, but before they can embrace, Chino steps from the shadows and kills Tony. Maria denounces both sides of the conflict for their part in Tony's death, and for how "we all killed him," not with guns, not with knives, but with hate.
### ABOUT

#### THE CHARACTERS

**THE JETS**

- **Tony**
  - Former Jet leader but has turned to an honest life.

- **Riff**
  - The new leader of the Jets.

- **Diesel**
  - The Jet's biggest and best fighter.

- **Action**
  - Hot-headed.

- **Baby John**
  - The youngest Jet.

- **A-Rab**

- **Snowboy**

- **Big Deal**

- **Anybody's**
  - A tomboy who desperately wants to be accepted by the members of the Jets.

**THE SHARKS**

- **Bernardo**
  - Maria's older brother, leader of the Sharks.

- **Chino**
  - Maria's angry suitor that she rejects for Tony.

- **Anita**
  - Bernardo's smart, gorgeous girl.

- **Rosalia**
  - Misses Puerto Rico.

- **Consuelo**
  - Anita and Maria's friend.

- **Doc**
  - Owner of the Drug Store.

- **Lieutenant Schrank**
  - Harsh police officer.

- **Officer Krupke**
  - Works under Schrank.

- **Glad Hand**
  - The dance chaperone.

**THEIR GIRLS:**

- **Graziella**
  - Riff's girl.

- **Velma**
  - Action's girl.

**THE ADULTS**

- **Maria**
  - Beautiful, hopeless romantic and younger sister of Bernardo.

- **Tony**
  - Former Jet leader but has turned to an honest life.

**Language Arts**

### Questions, Thoughts and Reflections

1. A lot of people work behind the scenes on a musical to make everything come together. Can you guess all the components that are involved in the creation of a production? (Actors, Director, Music Director/Band, Choreographer, Costumes, Lights, Sound, Stage Managers, Props, Sets, Ushers, Marketing, Box Office, and more).

2. List some of the ways in which West Side Story is similar to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet? What are some significant differences in these two stories and why are they important?

3. Write a review for the musical. Tell us about what you enjoyed, what you disliked, as well as a brief synopsis.

4. Anybody's, a tomboy who is desperate to be accepted by the the Jets, fails to be taken seriously because she is a girl. Write about the significance of the character, and how her struggle relates to problems in society both in the 1950's and today.
**WEST SIDE STORY VS. ROMEO AND JULIET**

- *Romeo and Juliet* begins with a street fight between the Montagues and Capulets; the Jets and the Sharks have a similar fight.
- The beginning fight is broken up by Krupke and Schrank, just as Prince Escalus breaks up the Montague-Capulet fight.
- Tony has a reoccurring dream, similar to Romeo like the one he tells Mercutio about.
- Juliet is betrothed to Paris, and Maria has been set up with Chino.
- Some Montague men crash the Capulet party in which Romeo meets Juliet. In *West Side Story*, Maria and Tony see each other from opposite sides of the gym and are immediately attracted to each other.
- In the big fight scene, Bernardo kills Riff like Tybalt kills Mercutio; Tony avenges Riff’s death by killing Bernardo, just as Romeo kills Tybalt.
- The Capulet nurse is played around with and disgraced by Montague men, while Anita is taunted & harassed by the Jets.
- Both stories feature Maria/Juliet's false death and Tony/Romeo's response to his mistaken belief that his love is dead.
- An enraged Anita, deliberately tells the Jets that Chino has killed Maria, instead of conveying the original message of where Tony should meet with her. Juliet fakes her death, but an explanatory message sent to Romeo is delayed, causing him not to know her death is untrue. Tony seeks out Chino in misery, wishing to die also. Romeo wishes to visit Juliet's grave to take poison and die with her.

**CHARACTER COUNTERPARTS**

**Tony / Romeo:** Male lead. Modern-day Montague, from a rival gang instead of a rival family. Both characters are portrayed as growing out of youthful pastimes in favour of romantic pursuits. Both die in the end: Tony from an enemy's gunshot; Romeo from poisoning.

**Maria / Juliet:** Female lead. Modern-day Capulet. Both are forced into engagements with men they do not desire. Maria's survival at the end of the story (despite her threats to commit suicide with the same gun that killed her lover) departs from Shakespeare's ending wherein Juliet willingly commits suicide with Romeo's dagger.

**Chino / Paris:** The embittered fiancée. Both are engaged to the female lead. Paris dies from a duel with Romeo in Act V. However, Chino survives after having shot Tony to death in the final scene.

**Bernardo / Tybalt:** Ring-leader of the Sharks and Capulets, respectively. While Tybalt is Juliet's cousin, Bernardo was written as Maria's brother and protector, creating a closer familial bond. The male lead kills both.

**Riff / Mercutio:** Friend to Tony/Romeo. Both men are indifferent and dismissive to the male lead's new romance and/or life goals. Both men are killed by their enemy's ring-leader.

**Anita / Nurse:** Friend and confidante to the female lead. However, Anita is also Bernardo's girlfriend, which adds considerable interpersonal conflict. Both know about the romance between the leading characters, but choose not to subvert it. In fact, Nurse aids Juliet in her secret marriage to Romeo. Anita reluctantly chooses not to reveal Maria and Tony's relationship to Bernardo (her boyfriend), though she angrily denounces it to Maria a few scenes after Bernardo's death.

**Doc / Friar Laurence:** Confidante/father figure to the male lead. Friar Laurence blesses and officiates Romeo and Juliet’s private nuptials. Doc loans a considerable amount of money to Tony so that he may flee New York City with Maria. Keeping with a theme of tragic irony, both characters unwittingly send the male leads to their deaths by relating the tragic "news" that Maria/Juliet has died.
### THEATRE VOCABULARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actor/Actress</td>
<td>Someone who performs on stage or screen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blocking</td>
<td>The actor’s movements on the stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cast/Company</td>
<td>All of the actors in the entire show.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>A personality that an actor or script creates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choreography</td>
<td>The organized dance moves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>A work of theatre that is funny.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costume</td>
<td>The clothing or outfit worn on stage by performers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critique/Review</td>
<td>Opinions and comments that evaluate the actors or their performances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cue</td>
<td>A signal that indicates something else is about to happen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>The conversation between actors on stage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>The person who oversees the entire creative vision and staging of a production.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dress Rehearsal</td>
<td>The final rehearsal before the performance with costumes and makeup.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensemble</td>
<td>The group of performers on stage (usually with multiple roles) that support the story. In musicals, this group typically does large song and dance numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesture</td>
<td>An expressive body movement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Libretto</td>
<td>The book or text of a musical or opera.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monologue</td>
<td>A long speech by a single character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>A character’s reason for doing or saying something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Theatre</td>
<td>A type of play that contains music, singing and usually dancing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playwright</td>
<td>The person who writes a play or book of the musical (also called libretto).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Props</td>
<td>The items carried or used by actors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>The area where the characters perform – usually containing a set.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### SPANISH WORDS AND PHRASES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Querida, una poca</td>
<td>Dear (darling), a little.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Momentito</td>
<td>Momentarily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calladito</td>
<td>Quietly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sí, ya vengo</td>
<td>Yes, I’m coming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te adoro</td>
<td>I adore/love you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaminos, chicos, es tarde</td>
<td>Let’s go, boys, it’s late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruja</td>
<td>Witch (female).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brava</td>
<td>Bravo/well done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenas tardes</td>
<td>Good afternoon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WEST SIDE STORY PLAY LANGUAGE

Stool Pigeon: A person acting as a decoy or informer; especially, a spy sent into a group to report back to the police about the group’s activity.

Acemen: Highest ranking member of the group or gang; essentially the officers of the gang/group.

Rocketmen: The second highest ranking members of the gang.

Rank-and-file: The individuals who constitute the body of an armed force; regular, enlisted men, not officers or captains.

Casual: An enlisted persons awaiting assignment or transportation to a unit.

Fracas: A noisy disturbance or quarrel.

Gassin’: Talking, running your mouth.

Crabbin’: Complaining.

Clobbered: Heavily defeated or hit.

Daddy-O: Similar to “dude” or “man” but with much cooler connotations, a name of respect.

Cornball: Old-fashioned, corny.

Square: A person who is conventional or conservative in their way of life.

Ginger Peachy: Excellent, splendid.

Jazz: Liveliness or excitement; fighting; also: insincere or exaggerated talk.

Licked: Beaten or defeated.

Bust: To punch or hit; also, to break up and/or get caught (i.e. being busted by the cops).

Tin Horn: A person who acts strong and powerful, but is actually weak and unimportant.

SOCIAL STUDIES

QUESTIONS, THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

1. Immigration and discrimination are major themes in this musical. How do you think these themes might have been dealt with had this musical been written today? Which ethnic groups might be represented now? Where might this story take place?

2. What forces acted upon these young people to cause this tragedy?
   The power of love and hatred, A desire for revenge, Prejudice, Poverty, Police insensitivity.

3. Examine the Social Issues: West Side Story was one of the first musicals to take on the tough issues of the day, including gun violence, gang violence, immigration, social inequality, and sexism. How would social media be an influencer on these issues in today’s society? Would the awareness be heightened and possibly change the ending?

4. Gun violence and youth are a big part of West Side Story. Discuss the connections between the two and how they incredibly prevalent in today's society.
HISTORICAL CONTEXT: IMMIGRATION

The musical highlights the suspicions and racial tensions occurring between different ethnic groups in 1940's and 1950's America. During this time, many Hispanic immigrants were coming to the country, both legally and illegally. The largest group during this time, however, were the Puerto Ricans, who were actually American citizens. Most immigrants moved to New York City, which still contains the largest Puerto Rican community in the world.

Puerto Rico was originally a Spanish colony but was lost to the United States during the Spanish-American War in 1898. Later, in 1917, the U.S. congress gave Puerto Ricans American citizenship, creating no barriers for immigration. But they were now also eligible for the draft during World War I. 1917 also paved the way for new immigration laws, which stated that people must be able to read and write at least one language. During the years of the depression, Puerto Rico was hit especially hard because it had grown dependent on one crop, namely sugar. The collapse of its price value produced widespread economic and hunger problems. Many influential leaders then advocated for the separation of Puerto Rico from American control.

The years between 1940 and 1960 saw the largest increases of Puerto Rican movement, as many as 545,000 came in search of jobs and new opportunities that America was known for having. Many immigrants who moved to the United States came with dreams of a new life, filled with opportunity and riches. However, their hopes were often smashed as they met a hostile environment of prejudice and hard times, finding poverty here, as well as, in their home land. The juxtaposition of their idealistic dreams and the harsh reality of the situation is found throughout the musical.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: GANGS IN AMERICA

Inspired by news articles about real youth gang violence happening in major cities across America, West Side Story was an incredibly timely piece. Gang members were rarely older than twenty; some were as young as eight. Like the Sharks and the Jets, they had creative, evocative names such as the Beavers, the Egyptian Kings, and the Jokers. A large influx of immigrants post WWII brought people of different ethnic backgrounds into the city. They lived and worked together, and for social support, they formed gangs segregated by race. These youth gangs were also defined by territory, established boundaries cut from the city, usually demarcated by city blocks. Having a group with which to associate, and a territory to call your own, was extremely important for these young gang members. Not only did it offer protection, purpose, and community, but it gave these young men a sense of self-identity.

The violence depicted in West Side Story is not an exaggeration. They fought over territory and girls, fought because of racial and linguistic differences. Mostly, though, these boys fought to prove themselves, both to their fellow gang members and their rivals. Terminology such as “rumbles” and “war councils” are real phrases used by youth gangs during this time. The unique lingo was representative of youth of both their age and standing as gang members, and allowed them to have their own secret language that adult figures— such as police officers—wouldn’t catch onto. Many words derive either from jazz/beat lingo or military terminology—appropriate considering the aesthetic and organizational influences at work in their culture.
WEST SIDE STORY STUDY GUIDE

WEST SIDE WORD SEARCH

Y I S T T J M B O E Q W R E D
R H Q O E H R A C E O X I R Y
K M P T M O G I R M O Z V A S
S Y S A A E D I S I T M A E A
K I F D R U W K N S A I L P G
G K W Y J G R H R O Y N N S X
U A R E J A O O E S T O S E L
Y H R Z H T U E B R O R U K U
T P M S A I U M R W E I L A G
A C I R E M A V I O S T A H V
R U M B L E Y P K V H Y C S Z
I M M I G R A N T Q G C I P Z
Y N O T Z H K F U Q C B S Q H
B N J A I Q P Q W L D G U J Z
T H B P B F W O A U V Y M J O

AMERICA MINORITY SHARKS
BROADWAY MUSICAL SOMEWHERE
CHOREOGRAPHY PREJUDICE TONIGHT
IMMIGRANT RIVAL TONY
JETS RUMBLE
MARIA SHAKESPEARE