

THEATRE UNDER THE STARS

2017-2018 SEASON TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS DOCUMENT

Show Dates: February 20 – March 4

Written by: Joe DiPietro

Music by: David Bryan

Curricular tie-ins provided for grades : 7 – 12

The Following Selected Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills are addressed by seeing the show and discussing the questions below:

TEKS:

Fine Arts: Theatre Grade 7 8 High School

[Fine Arts – Middle School](#)

[Fine Arts – High School](#)

English Language Arts: Grade 7 8 High School

[ELA Middle School](#)

[ELA High School](#)

Social Studies: High School

[Social Studies High School](#)

The highlighted TEKS can be met by seeing the show, completing discussions, creating art-work and participating in the activities.

ABOUT THE SHOW

MEMPHIS is a musical by David Bryan (music and lyrics) and Joe DiPietro (lyrics and book). It is loosely based on Memphis disc jockey Dewey Phillips, one of the first white DJs to play black music in the 1950s. It ran on Broadway from October 19, 2009 to August 5, 2012. This production won four 2010 Tony Awards®, including Best Musical. The show was previously staged at the North Shore Music Theatre in Beverly, Massachusetts and TheatreWorks in Mountain View, California during the 2003-04 season, as well as the 5th Avenue Theatre in Seattle during the 2008-2009 season.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Below are some general discussion questions that will get students thinking about the production they've just seen!

1 Although this musical is set in Memphis, during this time period there were similar events happening all around the country. Ask your class to do research (personal interviews, public records, etc.) on what life was like in the early 1950s in your neighborhood, city, county, state. What did things look like? How did people treat each other? How is it different from the world of the musical and how is it the same? How is it different from your world and how is it the same?

2 A main character of MEMPHIS is the music. As a class, discuss how the music adds to, and often drives, the story. How would this story be different if it were a play and not a musical? Identify examples of music driving the story along in other musicals, plays, movies, tv shows, life events, etc. How does the use of music affect/contribute to/drive our everyday lives and our own stories?

3 The character of Huey is based on Memphis disc jockey Dewey Phillips. Describe Huey's personality (determined, passionate, persuasive). How do you think these traits helped him throughout the story? You can also discuss other characters in this same format by looking at each character and their unique talents and interests.

In our everyday lives, our words are wrapped around every thought, movement, emotion, whether we realize it or not. Many will say we are defined by that which we speak. As we know, in the world of theatre, language is purposeful; the author most likely had good reason for the specific language and words chosen. Words are chosen with care; the meaning behind those words is the key to understanding what a character is truly trying to say.

When training young actors, the conversation often revolves around the idea of intention – why we say and do what we say and do. It is important, therefore, when creating a piece such as *Memphis* everyone involved in the production understands the why behind each and every word.

In your classroom, challenge your students to focus on both intention and subtext in their communication. The activity below can be a guide to better understanding these theatrical tools. How can focusing on intention and subtext help to guide them in their own paths? How does discussion of language affect how we communicate? *How can you use language to express who you are?*

Words are not easy, but if you know the path from which they came, you can better know the individual who speaks them.

Simmons says, “You shouldn’t say words you don’t know the meaning of, people think they’re dirty!” (In reference to Huey using the word “Hockadoo”)

THE LANGUAGE OF MEMPHIS

Hell	25
Damn	5
Shit	4
Nigger	2
Hockadoo	19
Darn	1
Heck	1
Pee	1
Cracker	1
Son-of-a-Bitch	5
Redneck	3
Jesus	4
Hocka-fuckin’-do	1
Shitload	1
Hick	1
Negro	5
Helluva	1
Hocka-damn-doo	1