

THE OUTSIDERS

A NEW MUSICAL

INSIDE *THE OUTSIDERS*
AN EDUCATIONAL STUDY GUIDE

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DEAR EDUCATORS,

When you step out into the bright sunlight from the darkness of the Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre after attending **THE OUTSIDERS** with your students, we hope there will be two things on your mind. No, not Paul Newman; nor hopefully, your bus/subway ride home. But rather how you can make the most of your students' experience of **THE OUTSIDERS** on Broadway and how you can use the show to further inspire them to explore and embrace **S.E. Hinton's** timeless themes as well as the powerful impact of theatre and the many career possibilities it holds.

This study guide is designed to bring you inside the world of **THE OUTSIDERS** by giving you and your students a behind-the-scenes look at the making of this musical from those who created it. It will also provide you with various discussion prompts, writing exercises, and other classroom activities following your attendance of the show. We recognize that students of all ages will be attending the show. This study guide is a resource for you, and we hope you will feel free to pick and choose the sections that are most relevant to your classroom and tailor them to your curriculum as you see fit.

THE OUTSIDERS was written by a teenager about teenagers for teenagers. We hope that seeing this beloved story live on stage will further kindle their creativity, ignite their passions, and encourage their compassion, tolerance, acceptance, and empathy, so that hopefully they can “stay gold” just a bit longer.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU TO THE SHOW!

THE OUTSIDERS BASED ON THE NOVEL BY **S.E. HINTON** AND **FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA'S** MOTION PICTURE
BOOK BY **ADAM RAPP** WITH **JUSTIN LEVINE**
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY **JAMESTOWN REVIVAL (JONATHAN CLAY & ZACH CHANCE)** AND **JUSTIN LEVINE**
MUSIC SUPERVISION, ARRANGEMENTS, AND ORCHESTRATIONS BY **JUSTIN LEVINE**
CHOREOGRAPHY BY **RICK KUPERMAN & JEFF KUPERMAN** DIRECTED BY **DANYA TAYMOR**

ABOUT THE SHOW



THE STORY THAT DEFINED A GENERATION HAS BEEN REIMAGINED AS A GROUNDBREAKING MUSICAL.

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1967, the hardened hearts and aching souls of Ponyboy Curtis, Johnny Cade, and their chosen family of “outsiders” are in a fight for survival and a quest for purpose in a world that may never accept them. A story of the bonds that brothers share and the hopes we all hold on to, this gripping new musical reinvigorates the timeless tale of “haves and have-nots,” of protecting what’s yours, and fighting for what could be.

Adapted from **S.E. Hinton**’s seminal novel and **Francis Ford Coppola**’s iconic film, **THE OUTSIDERS** features a book by **Adam Rapp** with **Justin Levine**, music and lyrics by **Jamestown Revival (Jonathan Clay & Zach Chance)** and **Justin Levine**, music supervision, arrangements & orchestrations by **Justin Levine**, choreography by **Rick Kuperman & Jeff Kuperman**, and directed by **Danya Taymor**.

IN CONVERSATION

WITH

DIRECTOR DANYA TAYMOR



Broadway musicals, even those that are being adapted from existing stories, can take years to create. At what point did you get involved and what has been your role in the development process?

The development process for *The Outsiders* began about 8 years ago, but I didn't join the team until 2021, when Adam Rapp, the book writer, saw a show that I directed on Broadway called *Pass Over*, that also examines the pressures our society puts on young men and the ways it limits their ability to express their fullness. Adam asked if I had any interest in directing a musical and I told him that it would depend on what it was. He told me about the project, about Jamestown Revival and Justin Levine who he had been collaborating with. And he told me it was based on a young adult novel called *The Outsiders*, and that the music moved him to tears every time he listened to it. That certainly got my attention. I had definitely heard of the book, but somehow, I had never read it. So, my first exposure to the story was through their incredible music and script. Then I read S.E. Hinton's breathtaking book, which I was completely stunned by. I started immersing myself with the writers, asking them a lot of questions, developing the script and score. We did a developmental lab in New York in the summer of 2022, where we had a chance to stage a stripped-down version of this show. Even though it was a bare-bones staging, the result of the lab was powerful, and we were able to perform it in front of an audience and experience their reactions. After the lab, we continued our work developing the script and then we took it to La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego, where we did an out-of-town production,

which was invaluable. We were able to truly see what we had created and hone it throughout the preview process in front of live audiences. We learned what worked and what didn't, and now we are taking that information and entering a movement and design workshop as well as a script and score workshop, getting ready for Broadway.

So, this is your first musical?

Yes! It's amazing and unbelievable. I am so grateful for this opportunity.

What do you think makes *THE OUTSIDERS* so timeless?

The Outsiders is so powerful because it was written for teenagers by a teenager. Susie Hinton was 16 years old when she wrote the book, and she didn't hold back on telling the truth, and people respond to her honesty. We were all teenagers at some point, and for many of us those were the most tumultuous years of our lives, full of visceral experiences that shape who we will become forever. The authenticity of Susie's voice and the story she tells is why *The Outsiders* continues to resonate—it is a no-holds-barred account of what it feels like to be a teenager. Sure, the technology changes, what clothes are cool changes, but the feelings don't change. I think that unadulterated voice is what makes *The Outsiders* so special and what we seek to bring to audiences in our adaptation.

What to you as a director is the most exciting part of developing a new musical and what do you find most challenging?

IN CONVERSATION

WITH

DIRECTOR DANYA TAYMOR



The most exciting part to me is collaboration. That's true with plays, but with a musical it's a million times more. There are so many more people involved, so many more departments and modes of storytelling. You've got the music, book, choreography, scenic design, lights, projections, actors. The thrill of directing a musical is coordinating all these different departments and people to create one shared vision, one shared language, and I love that so much. Bringing out the best in people and harnessing the energy of a group towards a shared vision is what inspires me as a director. The most challenging part is the same as the most exciting part: It's a lot of work! I also relish that; it is a privilege and an honor to do it, but it's not for the faint of heart. There are a lot of moving pieces that all must be united to achieve something that ultimately feels effortless, inevitable, and undeniable.

In the development of new work, how do you know when a scene, or a song, or a moment isn't working? How can you distinguish if it's something that needs to be reworked in the script or if it's a performance that needs to be redirected?

It's such a good question. Playing around. Trying the scene in different ways. Asking questions. And I think through that exploration, hopefully the piece will tell you what it is, rather than the other way around. There have been times when we adjusted a performance or attacked a scene in a different way, we found what it was meant to be. There are other times when you realize that a scene can be cut or needs to change. There's no magic answer. It's really just about experimenting and not being

afraid to try something in a totally different way. For instance, maybe a song is orchestrated for the piano, but if you change it to the guitar, it might crack something wide open. I think trying to be innovative and coming at it from a lot of different perspectives can reveal what needs to shift.

Did you always know you wanted to be a director? What was your path to this career?

I didn't always know I wanted to be a director, but I was exposed to theater at an early age. When I was about 6 years old, my mom took me to the children's theater in my town and encouraged me to audition for the musical, which was *The Wizard of Oz*. I was cast as a Munchkin. I just loved the whole atmosphere. Later on, my high school theater teacher, Kristen Lo, introduced me to directing. She announced that the spring show would be a series of one-acts created by the students. She told us, "Everybody is going to write, direct, build the sets, stage manage, and act, and every job is as important as every other job. There is no one job that is better or more prestigious. They are all important." And I think her love of theater and her belief that we could do anything was when I first started to feel that feeling of, "Ooh, I like directing. I feel more free doing this than I feel when I'm on stage." She really championed that exploration for all of us, no matter which department we took an interest in, and her influence had such an impact on me.

Then I went to Duke, which is not known as a theater school, but which has some great theater professors and a lot of resources. I auditioned for the play my first year, and I remember when the

IN CONVERSATION

WITH

DIRECTOR DANYA TAYMOR



cast list came back, I was listed as the assistant director. And I was like, “Huh?” I wanted to be in the play, but the director must have noticed something in me. I think if I had been at a more traditionally competitive theater school, I might not have had all the opportunities to try and fail that I did at Duke. While I was there, I also had the chance to work with a lot of people who had never ever been in a play before and certainly didn’t plan to be in the theater for their careers, and that in a way was the best training for me. You don’t necessarily need formal training to be a great actor, director, or theatermaker. Theater and storytelling are primal.

Ultimately, I think working in many different aspects of the theater makes you better at the thing you want to do. If you do want to be an actor, directing will give you a different appreciation of that craft. One of my first jobs out of school was working as the administrative assistant to an artistic director at a non-profit and it made me appreciate what all of the people who work in administration do, and how that is an art in and of itself.

What is your advice for young, aspiring directors?

Try it all, and also take in as much theater and art as you can so that you can understand what you like. Discover your own taste and sense of aesthetics. I think as a director, one of the skills that you need is to be able to receive a lot of different input and keep your true north, keep your spine, keep your vision. Let what wants to come in influence it, but also know that ultimately you can only make something that you think is good. And in terms of getting your foothold, I think stage management is

a great way in. Early in my career, I had a residency at the Flea Theatre, and we had to stage manage for six months before we were allowed to direct, and it gave me an appreciation for rigor and how it all works. I think working backstage or front-of-house and all these other jobs can help you to become a director. Being around the thing you love, in whatever way you can, that’s the key.

What do you hope students will feel when they leave the show?

It’s hard for me to want to dictate what anyone “should” feel. I just hope that the story might be able to unlock pent-up *whatever* that needs to find a way out. I think for different people that’s going to be different things. Some people might not know how to express tenderness or love and hopefully this will unleash those feelings and the ability to express those feelings. For others, it might be how to process through grief—what to do when you are feeling low, and you are having scary thoughts—how to get through something like that and get to the other side of it. How could I prescribe what anyone should feel? All I hope is that you feel and feel deeply.

DISCUSSION



FROM PAGE TO PERFORMANCE

DISCUSS: How does the musical compare to S.E. Hinton's novel? Did the live performance mesh with what you imagined when you read the novel? Why or why not? What, if any, differences did you find? Did anything about the characters surprise you? How did the storytelling change?

Note to Educators: If you've also watched the film with your students, you can expand the conversation to a comparison of all three genres.

INSIDE THE MUSIC AND LYRICS

Beyond entertainment, songs having a dramatic function is an integral part of musical storytelling; they help to develop character, advance plot, explore themes, and share emotion.

Characters often break into song when the emotional stakes have become so high that they can no longer express themselves through ordinary speech. Through music, characters can reveal their innermost thoughts, fears, hopes, and dreams, as well as realizations about themselves and the world around them. Musical theatre lyrics use many poetic devices including rhythm, rhyme, repetition, figurative language, symbolism, and metaphor.

COMPARE: Read the lyrics from "Stay Gold," (*Appendix; A*) which Johnny sings to Ponyboy and compare it with Robert Frost's poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay." (*Appendix; B*) How do the lyricists weave references to the Robert Frost poem into the song? What poetic devices do they use?

DISCUSS: How does Johnny interpret Robert Frost's poem at the end of the story? Where does he find "gold?" How does this differ from Ponyboy's earlier interpretation? How has Johnny's attitude about life shifted? Why? Why is this pivotal moment shared through music?

CREATE: What does "stay gold" mean to you? What in your day-to-day life inspires you to "stay gold?" Using any medium you like, create a piece of art that reflects your inspiration. We invite you to draw, paint, sculpt, make a collage, shoot a film, take photographs, write a song, or surprise us with an original creation of your own.

DISCUSSION

BIAS

In the opening song of the show, Ponyboy sings about how hard it is to be Greasers, how they are judged for how much money they have, and how they look.

Ponyboy sings:

*THIS TOWN IT ONLY HOLDS YOU DOWN
THERE'S JUDGEMENT EVERYWHERE
AND PEOPLE THINK THEY KNOW YOU
BY THE WAY YOU WEAR YOUR HAIR...*

Many times, others judge us based on our appearance or a group that we belong to. Rather than seeing the things that make us similar, they focus on the things that make us different and hold those differences against us.

DISCUSS: What does it mean to have prejudice or bias? As a class, make a list of things for which people are judged.

IDENTITY

At the end of the show, Ponyboy says:

*I LOVE BEIN' A GREASER.
AND I LOVE GREASERS...
BUT I AIN'T JUST A GREASER.
I GOT A LOT MORE INSIDE ME THAN JUST GREASE.*

DISCUSS: What does Ponyboy mean that he has a lot more inside than just grease? In general, what makes up one's identity? Together as a class, make a list of the characteristics that make

us who we are. Can we have multiple identities? What does it mean to be an individual, but also be part of a group? Do these two identities ever conflict?

ACTIVITY: Explore with your students the intersection of their social identities using the exercise (*Appendix; C*) courtesy of the University of Michigan LSA Inclusive Teaching. Please note the different approaches to this activity and choose the one that works best for your classroom.

PERSPECTIVE

Our perception of any given situation is very much tied to our identity and how we move through the world. Each of us has our own truth, and sometimes that truth differs from those around us, creating conflict. This is especially important to remember when developing characters on stage and creating dramatic tension.

In *The Outsiders*, Ponyboy keeps a journal in which he shares his innermost thoughts and feelings. As the narrator of the story, he also shapes how we experience the events unfolding on stage.

JOURNAL: Choose any character from *The Outsiders* and write a journal entry in their voice about any of the events that take place in the story. Try writing from the perspective of one of the supporting characters—like one of Ponyboy's brothers, or maybe one of the Socs like Cherry or Bob. How does your perception of that event change when looking at it from another point of view?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT



TULSA IN 1960

According to the 1960 census, Tulsa was the second largest city in the state of Oklahoma with a population of 261,685 (about 4 times the capacity of an average professional football stadium).

The city's growth began at the turn of 20th century with the discovery of oil in the state, which brought a flood of laborers, speculators, and financiers to the area. After three decades of prosperity, Oklahoma's oil industry collapsed at the same time that the Great Depression hit. During WWII, the city's industry shifted to defense; Tulsa became the leading manufacturer of military aircraft and a training ground for American, British, and Canadian pilots. This aeronautical industry led to great prosperity.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Tulsa, like other American cities, experienced suburban sprawl, in which real estate developments—housing tracts and shopping centers—quickly spread into more rural areas, creating new suburbs. This suburbanization happened largely as a result of the flight of wealthier whites to the south and east, creating a segregated Tulsa: North Tulsa was predominantly African American, West Tulsa stayed primarily working class, East Tulsa grew with an expanding middle class, and South Tulsa was predominantly upper class.

These divisions resulted in the rise of gangs and class conflicts.

APPENDIX

A

STAY GOLD

Lyrics by JAMESTOWN REVIVAL (JONATHAN CLAY & ZACH CHANCE) and JUSTIN LEVINE

I HAVE HAD
SOME TIME FOR THINKIN'
SWORE I WASN'T READY TO DIE
TURNS OUT I WAS WRONG.
IT MIGHT SOUND CRAZY,
BUT HEAR ME OUT.
IT MAY TAKE ME TO THE GRAVE
BUT I KNOW WHAT
YOUR POEM'S ABOUT

I HAVE SEEN THE POOL OF BLOOD
RUN CRIMSOM RED.
AND I'VE SEEN THE SUNRISE
COMING OVERHEAD

FINDING BEAUTY IN THE FOLD
IT'S THE ONLY WAY
TO KEEP FROM GROWING OLD
MY FRIEND, STAY GOLD

LOOKING BACK
AT THE LIFE I'VE HAD
I HOLD ON TO THE GOOD
CAUSE I MADE MY PEACE
WITH ALL THE BAD

SIXTEEN YEARS
LOOK AT ALL WE'VE DONE
WOULDN'T TRADE IT FOR THE WORLD
CAN'T YOU SEE THAT
WE'RE THE LUCKY ONES

I HAVE KNOWN A LOVE
THAT MANY NEVER KNOW
AND THAT LOVE LIVES ON
NO MATTER WHERE I GO
WE ALL WILL MEET OUR END
NO MATTER IF WE MEET IT
YOUNG OR OLD
MY FRIENDS, STAY GOLD
MY FRIENDS, STAY GOLD

WHEN YOU'RE YOUNG
AND THE WORLD IS NEW
IT'S EASY TO FORGET
WHEN YOU'RE TRYING
JUST TO MAKE IT THROUGH

LIKE THE MORNING LIGHT
AND THE DAWN IT BRINGS
YOU SEE THE WORLD

FINDING BEAUTY
IN THE SIMPLE THINGS

I HAVE LOOKED INTO
A THANKFUL FATHER'S EYES
TELLING ME I SAVED
HIS DAUGHTER'S LIFE
I'D DO IT ALL AGAIN
'CAUSE I HAVE FOUND
THE BEAUTY IN THE FOLD
MY FRIEND, STAY GOLD

FINDING BEAUTY IN THE FOLD
IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP
FROM GROWING OLD
MY FRIEND, STAY GOLD
MY FRIEND, STAY GOLD

B

NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY

Written by ROBERT FROST

NATURE'S FIRST GREEN IS GOLD,
HER HARDEST HUE TO HOLD.
HER EARLY LEAF'S A FLOWER;
BUT ONLY SO AN HOUR.
THEN LEAF SUBSIDES TO LEAF.

SO EDEN SANK TO GRIEF,
SO DAWN GOES DOWN TO DAY.
NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY.

C

EXERCISE

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The Outsiders Broadway official study guide was compiled by Rachel Weinstein.