

# StageNOTES<sup>TM</sup>

A FIELD GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



A tool for using the theater  
across the curriculum to meet  
National Standards for Education

- Production Overview
- Lesson Guides
- Student Activities
- At-Home Projects
- Reproducibles

RENT

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# using the FIELD GUIDE

Camp Broadway® is pleased to bring you this *Rent* edition of StageNOTES®, the 30th in our series. We are proud to be affiliated with this popular musical that originally debuted on Broadway during the 1996 Season. This guide has been developed as a teaching tool to assist educators in the classroom who are introducing the story in conjunction with the stage production.

By using StageNOTES®, you will understand how *Rent* incorporates the evolution of HIV/AIDS in the United States (History), expands our vocabulary (Language Arts), illuminates the human condition (Behavioral Studies), aids in our own self-exploration (Life Skills) and encourages creative thinking and expression (The Arts).

The Camp Broadway creative team, consisting of theater educators, scholars, researchers and theater professionals, has developed a series of lesson plans that, although inspired by and based on the musical *Rent* can also accompany class study. To assist you in preparing your presentation of each lesson, we have included: an objective; excerpts taken directly from the script of *Rent*; a discussion topic; a writing assignment; and an interactive class activity. The reproducible lessons (handouts) accompany each lesson unit, which contains: an essay question; a creative exercise; and an “after hours activity” that encourages students to interact with family, friends, or the community at large.

The curriculum categories offered in the *Rent* study guide have been informed by the basic standards of education detailed in Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education, 2nd Edition, written by John S. Kendall and Robert J. Marzano (1997). This definitive compilation was published by Mid-Continent Regional Education Laboratory, Inc. (McREL) and the Association for Supervision and Curricular Development (ASCD) after a systematic collection, review and analysis of noteworthy national and state curricular documents in all subjects.

The *Rent* study guide is for you, the educator, in response to your need for a standards-compliant curriculum. We truly hope this study guide will help you incorporate the themes and content of *Rent* into your classroom lessons.



Philip Katz  
Producing Director



# using the LESSONS

**RENT** HISTORY  
**after hours**

**TEACHING TIPS**  
How has your neighborhood changed since you were young? If it has, do you like the changes or not? Do you think the changes were inevitable? Why? Why not?

**CHALLENGE #1**  
**Digging up the Past**

The face of the Lower East Side has changed drastically over the years. Its history is fascinating. A mecca for newly arriving immigrants from the late 17th Century, it, like many urban areas, has gone through its share of social and economic changes. First a hive of a multi-language busting immigrant population, it has evolved into a "hip" center of counter culture mixed with professionals with good jobs.

While some of you may never visit the Lower East Side, a great number of films set there provide a good sense of its changing flavor throughout the years. Get a feel for its changing history. Watch the following three films. Isn't it interesting how things have changed?

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**RENT** HISTORY  
**experiential**

**EXPERIENTIAL OBJECTIVE**  
Living with AIDS.

**TEACHING TIPS**  
"Walk a mile in my shoes" is a famous expression meant to convey that no one really knows what it's like to live that person's life unless you've "been there done that."  
We can feel some people with AIDS but do we really understand what go through? Probably not.

**FROM THE SCORE**

The stage direction below is a testament to the author's commitment to bring audiences as close as possible to the tragedy that is AIDS. The players themselves have a history in dealing with friends who have died. How many of us can say the same?

ANGEL and COLLINS attend an AIDS Life Support group.  
PAUL, the support leader, sits on the downstage railing above.  
GORDON, one of the members of the group, is standing downstage left, facing the audience. As the members enter, they introduce themselves and form a semicircle.

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**RENT** HISTORY  
**writing**

**WRITING OBJECTIVE**  
Trace the chronology of the AIDS epidemic in the U.S.

**TEACHING TIPS**  
How much do you know about the onset of AIDS in the U.S.? What was it like at the end of the millennium? Was enough being done? What are we currently taking to prevent its spread? Is it enough? More is needed? Do people talk as seriously about it? Why?

**FROM THE SCORE**

**From What You Own**

Roger and Mark  
Dying in America  
At the end of the millennium  
We're dying in America  
To come into our own  
And when you're dying in America  
At the end of the millennium  
You're not alone

---

**RENT** HISTORY  
**discussion**

**DISCUSSION OBJECTIVE**  
Private interest versus public good.

**TEACHING TIPS**  
Should landlords be allowed to charge whatever they want to rent their property? Should laws restrict what they can charge in the interests of ensuring that everyone can afford a place to live? What kind of landlord would you be?

**FROM THE SCORE**

**Mark**  
How do you document real life  
When real life is getting more  
Like fiction each day  
Headlines -- bread-lines  
Blow my mind  
And now this deadline  
"Eviction -- or pay"  
Rent!

**EXERCISE**

Benny used to be Mark and Roger's roommate and friend. Now he is part of a group that owns the building they live in and tells them to pay the rent or get out. Things have not gone well for Mark and Roger financially and they do not have the money to pay their rent. Perhaps they could come up with some of it, but certainly not all. Generally, the audience might feel compassion for Mark and Roger and think Benny is wrong for threatening them with eviction. Others, those who perhaps own rental property, might understand Benny's position and his right to make money on the property.

New York City is famous, or infamous for its high rents. A small one-bedroom apartment in the lower East Side, where Rent takes place, can cost up to \$1500 or more. New York Rent Control Laws place restrictions on landlords, the rents they can charge along with other stipulations.

Students go online and research Rent Control laws in New York. Conduct an open class discussion. Guide the discussion toward the following issues: fair housing for all residents; private property rights; social responsibility; state's responsibility toward its citizens; Rent Control versus free enterprise.

## Featured Lesson Units

- 1 History
- 2 Language Arts
- 3 Behavioral Studies
- 4 Life Skills
- 5 The arts

**EACH LESSON UNIT (HISTORY, LANGUAGE ARTS, ETC.) CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING LESSONS:**

**Discussion:** The focus is on facilitating an in-depth class dialogue.

**Writing:** The focus is on the expression of thoughts in written form.

**Experiential:** The focus is on understanding social dynamics as well as collaboration and teamwork in small and large groups.

A take-home "After Hours" lesson

**EACH STAGENOTES™ LESSON GENERALLY INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING COMPONENTS:**

**Objective:**  
An overall note to the teacher outlining the goals of the lesson to follow.

**From the script:**  
An excerpt or situation from the script of Rent to help "set the stage" for the activity that follows.

**Exercise:**  
A detailed description and instructions for the activity to be facilitated in class.

**Teaching Tips:**  
Direct questions teachers may use to help guide the students through the activity.

*The Standards listed throughout the StageNOTES™ Field Guide are excerpted from Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education (2nd Edition) by John S. Kendall and Robert J. Marzano, published by Mid-Century Regional Educational Laboratory, Inc. (McREL) and the Association for Supervision and Curricular Development (ASCD), 1997.*

# the <sup>CAMP</sup>*Broadway* guide to THEATRE ETIQUETTE

In the early nineteenth century, theatrical performances usually began at 6 p.m. An evening would last four or five hours, beginning with a short “curtain raiser,” followed by a five-act play, with other short pieces presented during the intermissions.

Similar to the block of time presented during today’s prime-time television, the theater was a place to find companionship, light and entertainment in the evening during a time without television or radio.

As the century progressed, the theater audience reflected the changing social climate. More well-to-do patrons still arrived at 6 p.m. for the full program of the evening, while half-price admission was offered at 8 or 8:30 p.m. to the working class, because of their longer workday and tighter budgets. Still, the theaters were always full, allowing people to escape the drudgery of their daily lives and enjoy themselves.

Because of this popularity, theaters began to be built larger and larger. New progress in construction allowed balconies to be built overhanging the seats below—in contrast to the earlier style of receding tiers.

This change meant the audience on the main floor (the section called “the orchestra”) were out of the line of sight of the spectators in the galleries. This resulted in crowds becoming less busy people watching and gossiping among themselves, and more interested in watching the performance.

The theater managers began the practice of dimming the lights in the seating area (called the “house lights”), focusing the attention of the audience on the stage. The advent of gas lighting and the “limelight” (the earliest spotlights) made the elaborate settings even more attractive to the eye, gaining the audience’s attention.

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## BEING A GOOD AUDIENCE

There are some different rules to keep in mind when you’re at a live performance. Believe it or not, the actors can actually hear you: talking, unwrapping candy, cell phones ringing. That’s why, when you’re at a show, there is **no food or drink** at your seats and **no talking** (even if you’re just explaining the plot to the person next to you).

Always keep **cell phones and beepers turned off** (This even means no texting your friends during the show to tell them how great it is...).

Go ahead and laugh at the funny parts, clap for the songs, and save your biggest cheers and applause for your favorite actors at the curtain call. That’s their proof of a job well done.

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By the 1850s, the wealthier audiences were no longer looking for a full evenings entertainment. Curtain time was pushed back to 8 p.m. (for the convenience of patrons arriving from dinner) and only one play would be presented, instead of four or five, freeing the audience post-show social activities. Matinee (afternoon) performances were not given regularly until the 1870s, allowing society ladies, who would not have ventured out late at night, the opportunity to attend the theater.

Now in a new millennium, many of these traditions are still with us. The theater is still a place to “see and be seen”; eight o’clock is still the standard curtain time; and the excited chatter of the audience falls to a hush when the house lights dim and the stage lights go up, and another night on Broadway begins. You can make sure everyone you know has the very best experience at the theater by sharing this theater etiquette with them to enjoy the show.



# list of CHARACTERS

**ROGER DAVIS**

a struggling musician who's HIV+. Roger hopes to write one last meaningful song before he dies.

**MARK COHEN**

a filmmaker and video artist, and Roger's roommate.

**TOM COLLINS**

an HIV+ computer genius who's back in New York after being away.

**BENJAMIN COFFIN III**

landlord of Mark and Roger's building. Benny wants to start a multimedia studio.

Mark's mom, Roger's mom, Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson, Mr. Grey, Alexi Darling, Steve, Paul, a Christmas caroler, a woman with bags, a pastor, man with squeegee, a cop, a waiter, and others.

**JOANNE JEFFERSON**

a public interest lawyer, and Maureen's lover.

**ANGEL SHUNARD**

a transvestite street drummer also infected with HIV.

**MIMI MARQUEZ**

a dancer with AIDS and a drug problem.

**MAUREEN JOHNSON**

a performance artist and Mark's ex-girlfriend.

# SYNOPSIS

Based loosely on Puccini's *La Bohème*, *Rent* tells the story of a group of friends struggling with love, drugs and AIDS. Among the group are the narrator – nerdy filmmaker Mark; his former lover, Maureen; Maureen's public interest lawyer lesbian lover Joanne; Mark's roommate HIV+ former drug addict, Roger; Roger's lover the HIV+ drug addicted exotic dancer, Mimi; their former roommate HIV+ computer genius

Tom Collins; Collins' HIV+ drag queen street musician lover Angel; and Benjamin Coffin III a former member of the group who, after marrying a wealthy woman, has since

become their landlord and the opposite of the group's Bohemian values. The second act is filled with tragedy as Angel dies and couples break up. But at the very

end, when Mimi is about to die, Roger is able to sing one song that brings her back to life and leaves the audience with a sense of hope.



**BOHEMIAN****[BOH-HEE-MEE-UHN]**

A person with artistic or literary interests who disregards conventional standards of behavior. Generally living in a colony with others of the same thought.

Every era in history has had its bohemian counter culture. The word first crept into use during the latter part of the 19th Century as a description of artists, authors, painters and musicians who lived life on the fringes of society. Rather than conform to mainstream ideals, bohemians tended to suffer for the sake of their art.

Much like the characters in *Rent*, bohemians did without many of the basic comforts of life in an effort to use their resources to further their artistic goals. Bohemians generally gathered in groups or communes largely to save money that could be used towards furthering their artistic endeavors. Consisting of free thinkers, bohemian societies held viewpoints that were radically different and were looked at by the wealthy as devoid of morals.

*Rent* is set in a part of New York City called the East Village. Making up the East Village is the neighborhood of Alphabet City consisting of Avenues A, B, C and D which through the middle of the 1900s established itself as a bohemian society that would influence culture throughout the United States.

Bohemian communities have existed throughout the world. These communities have helped to foster culture and ultimately define societies. In the United States, New York's East Village was one such area. By the end of the 19th Century, the East Village was populated by an immigrant working class.

The characters of *Rent* echo this idea.

**SUMMARY OF STANDARDS****Writing**

- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process
- Demonstrates competence in rewriting, drafting and revising, editing and publishing
- Demonstrates competence in the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing
- Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions
- Gathers and uses information for research purposes

**Reading**

- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the reading process
- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of literary texts
- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of informational texts

**Listening and Speaking**

- Demonstrates competence in speaking and listening as tools for learning

Mark and Roger are typical bohemians. Mark is a young filmmaker who searches for visual images to practice his craft. He watches the world around him, content to film its progress. Roger is a composer and lyricist striving to create the perfect song before he dies of AIDS. Neither have steady jobs nor do they care to. Financial stability is unimportant to them. The only thing of any consequence is furthering their artistic endeavors. These characteristics were typical of the bohemians living in the East Village.

St. Mark's Place, a street known for its bohemian shops became the center of culture in the East Village. Bohemians roamed the sidewalks performing songs and reciting poetry to anyone who would listen. Experimental theatre gained prominence during the time with theatre groups performing in any space available. Small productions were being performed in church basements and vacant buildings, anywhere



## MUSICAL ARTISTS WHO GOT THEIR START IN THE EAST VILLAGE



MADONNA



THE BEASTIE BOYS



THE STROKES



TALKING HEADS

Known as gentrification, real estate developers were quick to adopt an artistically driven phase of redevelopment but the East Village would ultimately lose some of its charm and force the displacement of the lower income people who had already been residing there.

The streets are still lined with cafés and shops and although the creative souls who helped to form the neighborhood are no longer able to afford to live in it, the vibe and energy they helped to establish still exists to this day.



Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997), voice of the Beat Generation, is being interviewed by fellow poet Lawrence Ferlingetti on the steps of the Albert Memorial in London. (Photo by M J Stroud / Getty Images)

© JOAN MARCUS





# LANGUAGE ARTS

## writing

### WRITING OBJECTIVE

The power of words in creating character.

### TEACHING TIPS

You can create an image of yourself with others by what you say. The kind of image you project is up to you. What kind of image do you convey? Is it the real you, or the person you want people to think you are?

### FROM THE SCORES

#### Mi Chiamano Mimi

from *La Bohème*

#### Mimi

Yes, they call me Mimi,  
But my name is Lucia  
My history is brief  
To linen or to silk  
I embroider at home or outside ...  
I am contented and happy  
And it is my pastime  
To make lilies and roses  
I like these things  
That have such sweet enchantment,  
That speak of love, of springtime,  
That speak of dreams and of visions  
Those things that are called poetic...  
Do you understand me?

#### Out Tonight

from *Rent*

#### Mimi

What's the time?  
Well it's gotta be close to midnight  
My body's talking to me  
It says, "Time for danger"  
It says "I wanna commit a crime  
Wanna be the cause of a fight  
Wanna put on a tight skirt and flirt  
With a stranger"  
I've had a knack from way back  
At breaking the rules once I learn the  
games  
Get up - life's too quick  
I know someplace sick  
Where this chick'll dance in the flames  
We don't need any money  
I always get in for free  
You can get in too  
If you get in with me

### EXERCISE

*Rent*, a rock musical (opera), was inspired by Giacomo Puccini's classic opera, *La Bohème*. As evidenced in the two score excerpts above, Jonathan Larson, author of *Rent*'s music and lyrics, conveys the character of Mimi quite differently than Puccini's. While Puccini's Mimi seems a gentle poetic soul, the Mimi of *Rent* is wild, desperate to "burn the candle at both ends," as they say; she wants to live the nightlife of the City to the fullest. Of course we discover later that much of her desperation stems from the fact that she has AIDS and wants to get the most out of life, while she can.

Use what you've learned about *La Bohème* in the Discussion Lesson as a basis for this Writing Lesson. Visit Web sites featuring lyrics from both *Rent* and *La Bohème*. Find those that indicate the personalities of corresponding characters. Write them down beside each other in a notebook or create a two column computer file. Beneath the lyrics write an analysis of how the character presentations differ or are similar in both works.



# LANGUAGE ARTS

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## discussion

### DISCUSSION OBJECTIVE

Adapting classic works for modern audiences.

### TEACHING TIPS

The musical *West Side Story* has been called an updated version of *Romeo and Juliet*. Many other modern works have drawn from classics. It is not uncommon.

A famous quote states: "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." Adaptations, however, are far from imitation. In many ways they can be more difficult to create than creating an original.

### REVIEW

#### Baz Luhrmann's *La Bohème*

"This unabashedly exuberant but intricately wrought staging of Puccini's masterpiece adds a cinematic immediacy to the emotional intensity that only opera can afford," says *Daily Variety*. "It succeeds spectacularly in its ultimate goal—to put the pop back in opera—and a lusty critical reception might just help turn a century-old operatic warhorse into Broadway's next hot ticket."

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### EXERCISE

*Rent* is not the first attempt to adapt the classic opera, *La Bohème*, for modern audiences. In 2002, Australian director, screen writer and producer, Baz Luhrmann's Tony Award-winning Broadway staging opened to rave reviews. His approach, like *Rent*, was unique.

Review of Baz Luhrmann's *La Bohème*:

...moving the action to 1957 Paris, Luhrmann the showman seduces with downtown-style stagecraft—the stagehands are visible, manipulating snow and other *Fantasticks*-style effects.

*Surface Aria*, by Lisa Schwartzbaum

There are many versions of *La Bohème* on film. Have students watch one of them. Now show both adaptations also on film: *Rent* and the Baz Luhrmann version (not in the same day, please). Have students take notes. Tell them to focus on creative devices used to modernize the work, including language. What were they? Take a vote: which version did students like best. Why? What did Schwartzbaum mean by "*Fantasticks*-style."



# LANGUAGE ARTS

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## experiential

### EXPERIENTIAL OBJECTIVE

Read and understand bohemian poetry.

### TEACHING TIPS

There's reading just words; then there's reading with feeling. Everyone knows the difference. A famous English actor reading lines of Shakespeare has a more dramatic effect than someone reading them with no classical training or interest in or understanding of the genre.

### FROM THE SCORE

#### From *La Vie Bohème* B . .

##### Mark

Adventure, tedium, no family, boring locations,  
Dark rooms, perfect faces, egos, money, Hollywood and sleaze!

##### All

Music!

##### Angel

Food of love, emotion, mathematics, isolation,  
Rhythm, feeling, power, harmony, and heavy competition!

##### All

Anarchy!

##### Collins & Maureen

Revolution, justice, screaming for solutions,  
Forcing changes, risk, and danger  
Making noise and making pleas!

---

### EXERCISE

*Non-conformist; unorthodox; beat; hippie; unconventional.*

All of these describe the more modern definition and understanding of what it means to be "bohemian." They also describe the characters of *Rent*, who live the bohemian lifestyle to the fullest. When they speak (sing), (see above) the lyrics reflect it. In listening to the opera one knows these are hardly the sentiments of the "fellow next door."

The flowering of bohemian culture on the lower east side in the 40s and 50s was optimized by the Beat poets — Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Lawrence Ferlinghetti; William Burroughs, Peter Orlovsky to name a few.

This experiential exercise will require several steps. First have students research the personalities of the beat poets to get a feeling for who they were. Have them find several works on the internet. They then research the ambiance of clubs on the Lower East Side where the poets read their work in the 40s and 50s. Set up the classroom to look like a club.

## after hours

### TEACHING TIPS

Where words come from, their roots, is a fascinating study. In the classic novel, *A Clockwork Orange*, the great linguist Anthony Burgess created his own Nadsat language from various roots, doing the same in the film, *Quest for Fire*.

### CHALLENGE #1

#### Be An Etymologist

##### etymology [et-uh-mol-uh-jee]

1. the derivation of a word.
2. an account of the history of a particular word or element of a word.
3. the study of historical linguistic change, esp. as manifested in individual words

##### bohemian

(noun)

1. a native or inhabitant of Bohemia
2. (usually lower case) a person, as an artist or writer, who lives and acts free of regard for conventional rules and practices
3. the Czech language, esp. as spoken in Bohemia
4. a Gypsy

(adjective)

5. of or pertaining to Bohemia, its people, or their language
6. (usually lower case) pertaining to or characteristic of the unconventional life of a bohemian
7. living a wandering or vagabond life, as a Gypsy

Make a chart tracing the etymological history of the term bohemian from its Czechoslovakian roots.

Visit a Web site featuring Nadsat and practice it on your friends.

### CHALLENGE #2

#### Bohemians in The Grove

“They secretly meet for seventeen days each July in a remote “sacred grove” of ancient redwood trees in the deep forests surrounding San Francisco. Some 1,500 in number, their membership roll is kept secret, but includes the super-rich, blood dynasty member families of the Illuminati; heavy-hitting corporate chieftains and high government officials. Mingling among them are a number of Hollywood movie stars, Broadway producers, famous entertainers, musicians, authors, painters and poets. Great statesmen and – so we’re told – gentlemen.”

*Excerpt from the Bohemian Grove: Cult of Conspiracy by Mike Hanson*

The above book provides a whole new definition of the term, bohemian. Read the book.

Why do you think this group calls itself, bohemian? Pass the book on to three friends. When everyone has read it, get together and discuss it.

# unit HISTORY

## HIV/AIDS EVOLUTION IN THE UNITED STATES

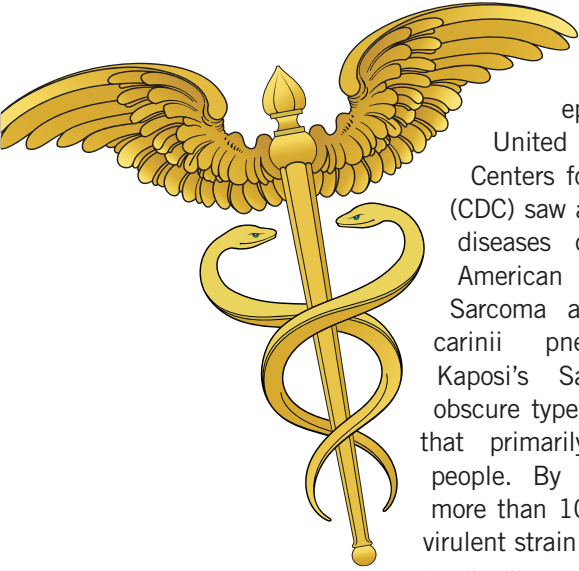
### WHAT IS HIV?

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is any of a group of viruses that infect and destroy cells of the immune system causing reduction in their numbers leading to a diagnosis of AIDS.

### WHAT IS AIDS?

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a set of symptoms and infections resulting from the damage to the human immune system by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). This condition progressively reduces the effectiveness of the immune system and leaves individuals susceptible to opportunistic infections and tumors.

**Four of the characters in *Rent* have been diagnosed with HIV.** It becomes a common practice for Angel, Collins, Roger and Mimi to try and stem the progression of the virus by taking azidothymidine or AZT. Some characters are successful in their fight while others are not. The growth and spread of HIV and AIDS in the United States occurred over a relatively short span of time.



The 1980s signified the “beginning” of the AIDS epidemic in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) saw an increase in two diseases occurring in the American public: Kaposi’s Sarcoma and Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP). Kaposi’s Sarcoma was an obscure type of benign cancer that primarily affected older people. By March of 1981, more than 10 cases of a more virulent strain were found in the young, gay male population of New York.

## SUMMARY OF STANDARDS

### Chronological Relationships and Patterns

- Analyze influence of specific beliefs on these times. How would events be different in the absence of these beliefs?
- Analyze the effects specific decisions had on history. How would things have been different in the absence of these specific decisions?

### Historical Perspective

- Understand that the consequences of human intentions are influenced by the means of carrying them out.
- Understand how the past affects our private lives and society in general.
- Perceive past events with historical empathy.
- Evaluate credibility and authenticity of historical sources.
- Evaluate the validity and credibility of different historical interpretations.

Simultaneously, an increase in the diagnosis of PCP, a rare lung infection, was on the increase in Los Angeles. Many theories were developed to explain the causes and spread of the two diseases but little was known about the transferal.

The major concern was whether the diseases could be transferred through unsuspecting carriers via the air. Initially, it was perceived that since these diseases were only evident in the homosexual population, those outside of that lifestyle were not in danger. This belief changed in late 1981 when it was clear that other people such as drug users were now becoming infected. Simultaneously the United Kingdom reported its first case of what would later be called AIDS.

Still a nameless disease that was showing no signs of staying within one specific population, the CDC recorded a total of 452 cases from 23 states by July of 1982. The populations affected were becoming more varied to include non-homosexuals, hemophiliacs and people who received blood transfusions. Theorists still believed it to be “gay” disease. However when children and adults became affected, after receiving

blood transfusions, it became clear that AIDS was not limited to the homosexual population and that a larger audience was soon to be afflicted.

In early 1983, the first females diagnosed with the disease surfaced. These women had no previously determined risk factors, which suggested that the disease could be passed on through heterosexual sex. Doctors began to isolate the AIDS virus to determine its cause. Progress in determining the causes of AIDS was on the rise but the hypotheticals surrounding the virus were increasing as well.

Speculation that AIDS transmission could occur like a “flu bug” permeated all of society. Law enforcement officials in San Francisco, when dealing with what they thought to be an AIDS patient, insisted on wearing masks and gloves on the job so as not to “bring the bug home” to their families.

The Social Security Administration interviewed patients via telephone rather than in person. The CDC determined that although the cause of AIDS was unknown, it seemed most likely to spread through intimate sexual contact, contaminated needles or infected blood products, not through the air. It was emphasized that casual contact with someone with AIDS posed no threat of infection. By the mid-1980s, it was announced that the virus that caused AIDS had been isolated and a test to detect infection was being created.

By December of 1984 reports of AIDS cases numbered 7,699 with 3,665 resulting in death. In January of 1985, the first blood test for AIDS went into

use and it was announced that anyone testing positive would not be allowed to donate blood in the future.

Positive results in AIDS testing soon gave way to issues of confidentiality. Often lack of anonymity affected a patient’s ability to hold health insurance, keep a job or go to school.

In 1985, a 13-year old hemophiliac name Ryan White was prevented from attending school after contracting AIDS through a blood transfusion. White became a poster child for the discrimination inflicted on those revealed to have AIDS. In October of that same year, actor Rock Hudson died of AIDS, becoming the first public figure known to have died from the disease.

Prejudice against those infected with AIDS and HIV was on the rise. The Ray family of Arcadia, Florida, experienced this hatred first hand when their three sons, all of whom were hemophiliacs and HIV positive were denied access to the local public school. The family moved to Alabama where the refusal to let the children attend school continued. Hatred of the Ray family became so intense that their house was doused with gasoline and set on fire.

1986 found the first reported case of the virus transmitted from mother to child through breast feeding. Around the same time, the first case of AIDS was reported in China. By September promising clinical testing on a drug called azidothymidine or AZT proved to slow the attack of HIV.

Two test groups were set up with one receiving AZT, the other a placebo. After six months, the group taking AZT resulted in fewer deaths than the placebo group. Testing was halted because it was deemed unethical to provide one group with a



Ryan White



Randy Ray, the only surviving son, holds a photo of his brothers.



potentially useful drug while the other group was denied access. AZT was approved as the first drug used in the treatment of AIDS in 1987.

By January 1995, a total of one million cases of AIDS had been reported worldwide. 18 million adults and 1.5 million children were estimated to be carrying the HIV virus since the discovery of the disease. The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a new group of anti-AIDS drugs called protease inhibitors.

This new class of drugs helped by blocking the protease enzyme that HIV needs in order to make new viruses. With the protease blocked, the HIV virus makes copies of itself that can't infect new cells. Overtime, these inhibitors can lower the amount of virus in the blood and increase the cells that help to protect the body against infection. With the advent of these powerful new drugs, it was soon discovered that resistance became a common occurrence.

May of 1996 saw the creation of the first home HIV test. Previously, the FDA made it mandatory that any testing for HIV was to be done under strict supervision of health professionals. With this new test, a patient could purchase a test from a shop or by

phone and return their blood sample to a laboratory for analysis. Results would be delivered by phone.

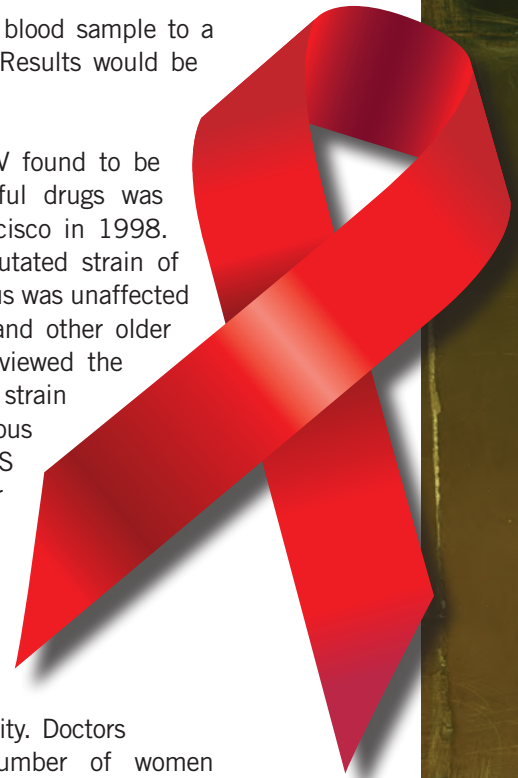
The first case of HIV found to be resistant to the powerful drugs was diagnosed in San Francisco in 1998. Determined to be a mutated strain of HIV, this form of the virus was unaffected by protease inhibitors and other older drugs. Health officials viewed the emergence of a resistant strain as a possible dangerous edge to the AIDS epidemic. Stronger drugs were needed.

By the new millennium, President Clinton declared HIV/AIDS a threat to the country's national security. Doctors saw an increasing number of women account for new AIDS cases. Young adults and teens also continued to be at risk. Despite declines in HIV infection among gay men, the gay population was still at high risk for contracting the disease accounting for approximately 42 percent of all new HIV infections. In 2003, the CDC created the Advancing HIV Prevention program (AHP).

Previously the CDC promoted its prevention efforts towards populations that were at risk of becoming infected. This new program was targeted at those already infected by making the recently patented home HIV test as the cornerstone of the initiative.

March of 2004 saw approval of the first oral fluid rapid HIV test. Research into and the development of new drugs continued. The FDA approved the new HIV drugs maraviroc and raltegravir, both of which proved to help those people with viral strains of AIDS that had become immune to the effects of older drugs.

Although there is currently no known cure for AIDS, what was once considered a death sentence is no longer. Through the use of AZT and combinations of other established super drugs, those infected can often recover from the AIDS disease and go on to live with HIV for years.



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# HISTORY

## discussion

### DISCUSSION OBJECTIVE

Private interest versus public good.

### TEACHING TIPS

Should landlords be allowed to charge whatever they want to rent their property? Should laws restrict what they can charge in the interests of insuring that everyone can afford a place to live?

What kind of landlord would you be?

### FROM THE SCORE

#### Mark

How do you document real life  
When real life is getting more  
Like fiction each day  
Headlines -- bread-lines  
Blow my mind  
And now this deadline  
"Eviction -- or pay"  
Rent!

### EXERCISE

Benny used to be Mark and Roger's roommate and friend. Now he is part of a group that owns the building they live in and tells them to pay the rent or get out. Things have not gone well for Mark and Roger financially and they do not have the money to pay their rent. Perhaps they could come up with some of it, but certainly not all. Generally, the audience might feel compassion for Mark and Roger and think Benny is wrong for threatening them with eviction. Others, those who perhaps own rental property, might understand Benny's position and his right to make money on the property.

New York City is famous, or infamous for its high rents. A small one-bedroom apartment in the lower East Side, where *Rent* takes place, can cost up to \$1500 or more. New York Rent Control Laws place restrictions on landlords, the rents they can charge along with other stipulations.

Students go online and research Rent Control laws in New York. Conduct an open class discussion. Guide the discussion toward the following issues: fair housing for all residents; private property rights; social responsibility; state's responsibility toward its citizens; Rent Control versus free enterprise.



# HISTORY

## writing

### WRITING OBJECTIVE

Trace the chronology of the AIDS epidemic in the U.S.

### TEACHING TIPS

How much do you know about the onset of AIDS in the U.S.? What was it like at the end of the millennium? Was enough being done? What measures are currently being taken to prevent its spread? Is there enough being done, or is more education needed? Do young people today take it as seriously as they should? Why? Why not?

### FROM THE SCORE

From *What You Own*

**Roger and Mark**

Dying in America  
At the end of the millennium  
We're dying in America  
To come into our own  
And when you're dying in America  
At the end of the millennium  
You're not alone  
I'm not alone  
I'm not alone

### EXERCISE

*Rent* traces a brief history of four people with AIDS through one year of their lives in the early 1990s. The epidemic, however, began ten years before, in 1981, bringing with it public misconception and a fear that gripped an entire nation. Initially assumed a disease limited to the gay community, it was soon established that the disease was not only passed through sexual contact among that segment of society, but through heterosexual contact as well. Fears widened with the discovery that the disease was also being passed through blood transfusions, needles shared by drug addicts and from infected mothers to their unborn children. By the year 2000 much had changed due to education and new treatments.

Trace the historical chronology of the epidemic through the year 2000. Use outline form.

Select one aspect, explore it in depth and write a report. In the end, take all reports prepared by the class and place them in a chronological binder titled: The History of AIDS Through the Millennium.



# HISTORY

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## experiential

### EXPERIENTIAL OBJECTIVE

Living with AIDS.

### TEACHING TIPS

“Walk a mile in my shoes” is a famous expression meant to convey that no one really knows what it’s like to live that person’s life unless you’ve “been there—done that.”

We can feel sorry for people with AIDS, but do we really understand what they go through? Probably not.

### FROM THE SCORE

*The stage direction below is a testament to the author’s commitment to bring audiences as close as possible to the tragedy that is AIDS. The players themselves have a history in dealing with friends who have died. How many of us can say the same?*

ANGEL and COLLINS attend an AIDS Life Support group. PAUL, the support leader, sits on the downstage railing above. GORDON, one of the members of the group, is standing downstage left, facing the audience. As the members enter, they introduce themselves and form a semicircle.

Note: The names of the support group members change every night to honor actual friends of the company who have died of AIDS.

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### EXERCISE

What is it like to live with AIDS? Divide the class into groups. Have each group research the personal accounts of an AIDS sufferer. Touch on topics from medical treatment, social attitudes and ostracism, affects on personal relationships, psychological trauma. The ideal would be to have AIDS patients from different eras to trace the history of how things have changed for patients since the disease first emerged. Have each group share what they’ve learned with class. The class analyzes each person’s experience within the historical context of their time.

Contact the HIV/AIDS Speakers Bureau. Have them suggest a speaker in your area willing to share his or her personal experiences. Invite the speaker to class.

# HISTORY

## after hours

### TEACHING TIPS

How has your neighborhood changed since you were young? If it has, do you like the changes or not? Do you think the changes were inevitable? Why? Why not?

### CHALLENGE #1

#### Digging up the Past

The face of the Lower East Side has changed drastically over the years. Its history is fascinating. A mecca for newly arriving immigrants from the late 17th Century, it, like many urban areas, has gone through its share of social and economic changes. First a hive of a multi-language bustling immigrant population, it has evolved into a “hip” center of counter culture mixed with professionals with good jobs.

While some of you may never visit the Lower East Side, a great number of films set there provide a good sense of its changing flavor throughout the years. Get a feel for its changing history. Watch the following three films. Isn't it interesting how things have changed?



Early 20th Century



1950s



2004

### CHALLENGE #2

#### Speak Your Mind

Several years ago pharmaceutical companies were challenged by AIDS advocates and other organizations to make new medicines available to poor third world countries. Find as much information as you can on the topic and decide whether you think the companies are doing enough.

Write a letter to one of the companies mentioned either commending or criticizing them for their efforts. If they should be doing more, say that. Do not be afraid to state your opinion and make suggestions.

# BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

## STIGMA [stig-muh]

A mark of disgrace or infamy; a stain or reproach, as on one's reputation.

The definition of stigma places a social label upon an individual that isn't necessarily a true one. These powerful labels have the ability to change how someone is viewed or how one views himself. HIV/AIDS is just one disease to be stigmatized fueling disastrous consequences on those infected. Throughout history many other diseases have carried a considerable stigma including leprosy, tuberculosis, cancer, and mental illness, to name a few. The stigma associated with some diseases has been reduced over time due to the development of drugs that cure, mask or delay symptoms.

Since the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic more than 25 years ago, the stigma associated with the disease has

## SUMMARY OF STANDARDS

- Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity, and behavior
- Understands various meanings of social group, general implications of group membership, and different ways that groups function
- Understands that interactions among learning, inheritance and physical development affect human behavior
- Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence

been a barrier to HIV prevention and care. The effect of stigma on a person's ability to access HIV testing, counseling, diagnosis and treatment varies, but when present, stigma can create an environment where people may avoid HIV-related services.

Silence and denial may be the most pervasive reactions to the stigma of any disease. The fear is that a lack of confidentiality will result in prejudice,

## YOU CAN STOP THE SPREAD OF HIV

### BE SAFE

The best way to prevent HIV is to abstain from having sex. If you do have sex, use a new latex condom every time. Do not share needles or syringes.

### TALK ABOUT IT

Talk about sex and HIV with your partners. Find out when they were last tested for HIV and what their status was. Be clear that you will be having safer sex or none at all.

### TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

If you are sexually active, you should get tested for HIV at least once. Do not assume your doctor will ask you to be tested for HIV.

### SPREAD THE WORD.

Thousands of Americans are getting HIV each year. Set an example by getting tested and spreading the word that others should do the same.



discrimination, loss of a job, social ostracism or violence. Emotional stress and anxiety can play into a patient's adoption of risk-reduction behaviors such as safer sex practices. Those at risk for developing AIDS may be less apt to seek counseling and further monitoring allowing the disease to spread.

## SUPPORT AND RESEARCH

The Life Support group depicted in *Rent* has proven to be one of the most effective ways to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS. For those faced with a sense of isolation, support groups assist in creating bonds between the afflicted allowing members to discuss ways to cope and share their experiences with treatments.

With the advent of the Internet, people suffering from HIV/AIDS now have the ability to discuss their situations online as well. Whether support is received in person or via the internet a key result is education. Support groups are not solely for those suffering from a disease.

Groups often exist to help families and friends of those living with disease. Through the sharing of personal experiences, family members are better able to cope with the diagnosis of HIV/AIDS in someone they love. To demonstrate how widespread the disease, HIV/AIDS support groups exist for all segments of the population. Groups that have been established include women with AIDS, parents of children and adults with AIDS and gays and lesbians with AIDS.

Ultimately, the goal of any support group is comfort and encouragement. Through empathy and acceptance, someone suffering from HIV/AIDS can boost their self-worth. Supportive discussions and honest communication can help to develop coping strategies. When someone suffering from the virus becomes connected to others facing the same hurdles, successful plans of action can be shared and alternative options can be discovered. The sense of fellowship and belief that "you are not alone" can go a long way in keeping the proper mind set to deal with the consequences of the disease.

HIV/AIDS research has increased dramatically over the past two decades due



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to organizations that have been created by corporate entities and private individuals.

Founded in 1985, amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research, is one of the world's leading nonprofit organizations dedicated to the support of AIDS research, HIV prevention, treatment, education and advocacy. Since its inception, amfAR has invested more than \$260 million and awarded grants to more than 2,000 research teams around the world.

The San Francisco AIDS Foundation, created in 1982 is one of the oldest AIDS organizations in the world. The agency focuses on public education, service provision for people living with HIV/AIDS, health promotion projects and public policy advocacy.

The Elton John AIDS Foundation, established by singer Elton John in 1992, is one of the world's leading nonprofit organizations supporting innovative HIV/AIDS prevention education programs and direct care and support services to people living with HIV/AIDS. Since its founding, EJAF has raised over \$125 million to support worthy programs in 55 countries around the globe.

# BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

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## discussion

### DISCUSSION OBJECTIVE

Stigmatizing AIDS patients.

### TEACHING TIPS

To be singled out in a group is perhaps the most uncomfortable thing that can happen to a person. Feeling as if you no longer belong creates a feeling of loneliness that can be unbearable. Being deserted by people who are supposed to be helping is the most devastating.

### FROM THE SCORE

*Members of the Life Support group band together, determined to live life without fear in spite of having AIDS.*

#### From *Life Support*

##### Gordon

Best I've felt all year

##### Paul

Then why choose fear?

##### Gordon

I'm a New Yorker!

Fear's my life!

Look - I find some of what you teach suspect

Because I'm used to relying on intellect

But I try to open up to what I don't know

##### Gordon and Roger (who sings from his loft)

Because reason says I should have died

Three years ago

##### All

There's only us

There's only this

Forget regret

Or life is yours to miss

---

### EXERCISE

People with AIDS, especially in the early years but even now, felt and feel like lepers. Often ostracized, they are avoided by friends and sometimes even their families. Relationships suffer and they can find themselves alone in their battle to survive.

Characters in *Rent* stick together. They are a support system for their friends and fellow AIDS sufferers. In the excerpt above they celebrate their unconditional love for each other despite the fact that three of them are HIV + and one suffers from AIDS.

Since the onset of the epidemic, health insurance companies have been accused of avoiding their responsibilities in paying medical bills of patients. Some have even tried to drop people who contract the disease, leaving them without financial resources to secure proper treatment. Many articles have been written on this topic.

Have students read as many articles as they can find. Tell them to take notes relevant to both sides of the argument. In a free and open forum, they discuss the issue and come to an overall conclusion about the responsibilities of health insurers to AIDS patients.

## writing

### WRITING OBJECTIVE

Explore the quest for material things and how it affects relationships.

### TEACHING TIPS

Must you have only the best—designer cloths, luxury cars, named-brand everything? Do you look down on those who can not afford such luxuries? Is your main goal in life to have them? Could you be happy if you do not acquire them?

### FROM THE SCORE

#### From *What You Own*

#### Mark

Don't breathe too deep  
Don't think all day  
Dive into work  
Drive the other way  
That drip of hurt  
That pint of shame  
Goes away  
Just play the game  
You're living in America  
At the end of the millennium  
You're living in America  
Leave your conscience at the tone  
And when you're living in America  
At the end of the millennium  
You're what you own

### EXERCISE

There's an ad on television these days that goes something like this:

The camera pans in close on the insignia of a luxury vehicle. A voice in the background reminds: "this (the insignia) says what the car is, not who you are."

It's a reminder by an unnamed organization that you are who you are based on your qualities, not how many expensive "toys" you own.

The above score excerpt speaks to the materialistic side of American culture—the culture of consumerism and conspicuous consumption. Look up the meaning of these two terms. Write an essay on materialism and how it affects our relationships with others.



# BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

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## experiential

### EXPERIENTIAL OBJECTIVE

Attend an AIDS support group session.

### TEACHING TIPS

It's easy to say you sympathize with those suffering from AIDS, but can you really sympathize with what they're going through? Probably not. How willing are you to actually sit and speak with an AIDS sufferer?

### FROM THE SCORE

*Mark arrives late as a guest of Collins and Angel's Life Support group. He is feeling uncomfortable and doesn't quite know how to behave or what to say.*

#### From *Life Support*

**Mark**

Sorry ... Excuse me ... oops

**Paul**

And you are?

**Mark**

Oh -- I'm not --  
I'm just here to --  
I don't have --  
I'm here with --  
Um -- Mark  
Mark -- I'm Mark  
Well -- this is quite an operation

**Paul**

Sit down Mark  
We'll continue the affirmation

---

### EXERCISE

AIDS sufferers not only need the support of others suffering from the disease but also the kindness and empathy of those close to them. They need to know they understand what they are going through. In *Rent*, everyone sticks together; the characters with AIDS know they have the complete physical and emotional support of their friends. They not only care about them, but they prove it by attending the Life Support Group and by contributing to the comments. Their attendance with their friends who have AIDS is hands on proof of their commitment to the friendship and to helping their friends live their lives as happily and productively as possible.

How willing are you to extend yourself and to prove your concern to those with AIDS? Life Support groups such as the one in *Rent* exist in every community. Find the one nearest you and attend a meeting. Afterwards, give a verbal report to your class on your experience.



# BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

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## after hours

### TEACHING TIPS

How are you at standing up for yourself? Does it depend upon who you are standing up to? If someone has an aggressive personality, do you tend to back down? Would you like to get better at standing up and not backing down, no matter who it is?

### CHALLENGE #1

#### Express Yourself!

Look at the lyrics to the song from *Rent* titled, *Tango: Maureen*, printed on the following page. Mark, Maureen's former boyfriend, and Joanne, her new partner meet when Mark comes to help set up the audio for Maureen's public performance. They sing the song and commiserate about Maureen's behavior.

Read the song over several times. What are the various Maureen behaviors Mark and Joanne sing about? Do the terms selfish, self-centered and manipulative come to mind? What weaknesses on their part make them tolerate this behavior from Maureen. If you had a boyfriend or girlfriend like Maureen, would you tolerate this behavior? Why do you think they do?

A diatribe is a sharp denunciation or criticism of another. Pretend you are in Mark or Joanne's place. Prepare a short diatribe confronting Maureen on her behavior. What would you say? Begin the diatribe with: Now you listen here, Maureen...

# TANGO: MAUREEN

Mark comes to help set up the sound for Maureen's public performance. Her new love, Joanne, is already there. They commiserate about Maureen and her behavior.

**Joanne**

I told her not to call you

**Mark**

That's Maureen  
But can I help since I'm here...

**Joanne**

I'm so mad  
That I don't know what to do  
Fighting with microphones  
Freezing down to my bones  
And to top it all off  
I'm with you

**Mark**

Feel like going insane?  
Got a fire in your brain?  
And you're thinking of drinking  
gasoline?

**Joanne**

As a matter of fact --

**Mark**

Honey, I know this act  
It's called the 'Tango Maureen'  
The Tango Maureen  
It's a dark, dizzy merry-go-round  
As she keeps you dangling

**Joanne**

You're wrong

**Mark**

Your heart she is mangling

**Joanne**

It's different with me

**Mark**

And you toss and you turn  
'Cause her cold eyes can burn  
Yet you yearn and you churn and  
rebound

**Joanne**

I think I know what you mean

**Both**

The Tango Maureen

**Mark**

Has she ever pouted her lips  
And called you 'Pookie'

**Joanne**

Never

**Mark**

Have you ever doubted a kiss or  
two?

**Joanne**

This is spooky  
Did you swoon when she walked  
through the door?

**Mark**

Every time -- so be cautious

**Joanne**

Did she moon over other boys --?

**Mark**

More than moon --

**Joanne**

I'm getting nauseous  
(They begin to dance, with MARK  
leading.)

**Mark**

Where'd you learn to tango?

**Joanne**

With the French Ambassador's  
daughter in her dorm room at Miss  
Porter's.  
And you?

**Mark**

With Nanette Himmelfarb.  
The Rabbi's daughter at the  
Scarsdale Jewish Community  
Center. (They switch, and JOANNE  
leads.)  
It's hard to do this backwards.

**Joanne**

You should try it in heels!  
She cheated

**Mark**

She cheated

**Joanne**

Maureen cheated

**Mark**

cheated

**Joanne**

I'm defeated  
I should give up right now

**Mark**

Gotta look on the bright side  
With all of your might

**Joanne**

I'd fall for her still anyhow

**Both**

When you're dancing her dance  
You don't stand a chance  
Her grip of romance  
Makes you fall

**Mark**

So you think, 'Might as well'

**Joanne**

"Dance a tango to hell"

**Both**

'At least I'll have tangoed at all'  
The Tango Maureen  
Gotta dance till your diva is  
through  
You pretend to believe her  
Cause in the end -- you can't leave  
her  
But the end it will come  
Still you have to play dumb  
Till you're glum and you bum  
And turn blue

**Mark**

Why do we love when she's mean?

**Joanne**

And she can be so obscene

**Mark**

Try the mike

**Joanne**

My Maureen (reverb: een, een,  
een...)

**Mark**

Patched

**Joanne**

Thanks

**Mark**

You know -- I feel great now!

**Joanne**

I feel lousy  
(The pay phone rings. MARK  
hands it to JOANNE.)  
Honey, we're... (pause) Pookie?!  
You never call me Pookie...  
Forget it, we're patched.  
(She hangs up, looks at MARK.)

**Both**

The Tango Maureen!

# unit LIFE SKILLS

## LIVING WITH ILLNESS

It takes an amazingly strong individual to live with a life threatening disease.

Follow up care and treatment can often be grueling leaving the patient exhausted and feeling hopeless. Everyone faces their own battle when learning of illness. Some win their fight while others lose. Many of the toughest diagnosed with illness, especially those with celebrity attached to their name, have been able to raise awareness about the disease they suffer from and raise money for further research.



### MARY TYLER MOORE

Television audiences have embraced actress Mary Tyler Moore and the characters she has portrayed since she first came to national prominence for her role as Dick Van Dyke's wife Laura on "The Dick Van Dyke Show". She later went on to star in her own series, "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." While in her 20s, Moore was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, a disease that stops the pancreas from producing insulin causing the body to use fat as an energy source. Like many who suffer from the disease, Moore has experienced problems with her vision and nerve damage. A tireless advocate for diabetes education, for over 20 years Mary Tyler Moore has served as the international chairman of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.



### MAGIC JOHNSON

Known for his 13 year career in the NBA, Earvin (Magic) Johnson Jr. created the Magic Johnson Foundation in 1991. Dedicated to HIV/AIDS education and prevention, the Foundation has awarded over \$1 million to community-based organizations throughout the country. His efforts have been especially targeted towards

## SUMMARY OF STANDARDS

### Thinking and reasoning

- Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument
- Understands and applies basic principles of logic and reasoning
- Effectively uses mental processes that are based in identifying similarities and differences (compares, contrasts, classifies)
- Understands and applies basic principles of hypothesis testing and scientific inquiry
- Applies basic trouble-shooting and problem-solving techniques
- Applies decision-making techniques

### Working with others

- Contributes to the overall effort of a group
- Uses conflict-resolution techniques
- Works well with diverse individuals and in diverse situations
- Displays effective interpersonal communication skills
- Demonstrates leadership skills

### Self Regulation

- Sets and manages goals
- Performs self-appraisal
- Considers risks
- Demonstrates perseverance
- Maintains a healthy self-concept
- Restrains impulsivity

### Life Work

- Makes effective use of basic tools
- Uses various information sources, including those of a technical nature, to accomplish specific tasks
- Manages money effectively
- Pursues specific jobs
- Makes general preparation for entering the work force
- Makes effective use of basic life skills
- Displays reliability and a basic work ethic
- Operates effectively within organizations

the African-American community. It was during a physical examination prior to the 1991-1992 NBA season that Johnson had contracted HIV due to unprotected sex outside of his marriage. In spite of his HIV status, Johnson has continued to live a productive life through a strict drug regimen that has enabled him to keep the virus from developing into AIDS.



### **MICHAEL J. FOX**

Actor Michael J. Fox became one of the America's most popular and accomplished young performers when he burst on to the scene in the 1980s sitcom, "Family Ties". His role of Alex P. Keaton garnered him three Emmy Awards and a Golden Globe Award. He went on to star in another series, "Spin City". It was while he was playing Michael Flaherty on that comedy, that he learned he had young-onset Parkinson's disease, a disorder of the central nervous system that affects motor skills, speech and other functions. Fox completed a fourth season of "Spin City" and announced his retirement in January 2000. He created the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research dedicated to research, funding and awareness of Parkinson's disease. Fox still suffers the effects of the disease but continues to be in demand as an actor. Now semi-retired from acting, he has appeared on such series as "Boston Legal" and "Scrubs" and penned a successful memoir entitled, Lucky Man.



### **COLLEEN ZENK PINTER**

Daytime television audiences know Colleen Zenk Pinter as the character of Barbara Ryan on the CBS daytime drama, "As The World Turns". In March of 2007, Zenk Pinter discovered what she thought to be a canker sore in her mouth. After a series of treatments that ultimately proved ineffective, it was determined that she had developed oral cancer. After three surgeries, with half of her tongue being reconstructed and radioactive seeds implanted, Zenk Pinter was pronounced cancer free. Although smoking and alcohol consumption are primary factors in the development of the disease, they weren't the cause of Zenk Pinter's illness. She was found to be a carrier of the human papilloma virus (HPV), a cause of cervical cancer in women. Doctors now link HPV to oral cancer. Zenk Pinter joined with the Oral Cancer Foundation to raise public awareness for the disease and its prevention through early detection. Today, Zenk Pinter continues her efforts through numerous public service announcements and television interviews emphasizing that oral cancer can be easily detected in its early stages through a simple test at the dentist office.



### **ELIZABETH GLASER**

The wife of television actor and director, Paul Michael Glaser, Elizabeth Glaser contracted the AIDS virus through a blood transfusion she received while giving birth to her daughter Ariel in 1981. It was later discovered that Elizabeth had passed the virus along to her daughter while breast feeding. In addition, while carrying another child, Jake, the virus was passed on to him prior to birth. At a time when children rarely were diagnosed with the disease, the Glasers found that there were no established treatments for the infection other than those being used on adults. Ariel lost her battle with AIDS in 1988 and Elizabeth realized that something had to be done so that her son wouldn't suffer the same fate. Elizabeth, along with two friends, established the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation. The foundation quickly became a global leader in research, prevention and eradication of pediatric AIDS and the mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Although Elizabeth Glaser succumbed to the disease in December of 1994, her foundation continues on with her husband Paul and her son Jake still actively involved.



### **CHRISTOPHER REEVE**

Actor Christopher Reeve became known to the world for his portrayal of Superman on the silver screen. A lover of the outdoors, Reeve was an avid horseback rider who regularly competed in events including cross-country jumping. On May 27, 1995, during a cross-country event, Reeve suffered a severe spinal cord injury that left him paralyzed from the neck down and unable to breathe on his own. Intense rehabilitation enabled Reeve to eventually go home and although he spent the rest of his life in a wheelchair, he did manage to regain some sensation in parts of his body. In response to dealing with his injuries, Christopher along with his wife Dana, formed the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation. The organization's goal is to provide information services to people nationwide who are newly paralyzed, have been living with paralysis or are family members or caregivers in need of assistance. The Foundation also promotes stem cell research and the scientific and medical benefits that are likely to result. Reeve died in October 2004 but his Foundation continues its work even today.



# LIFE SKILLS

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## discussion

### DISCUSSION OBJECTIVE

Dealing with tough choices.

### TEACHING TIPS

It's easy to judge the choices of others but not so to make them yourself. Our judgments are often harsh. Yet if we were in the same situation we might do the same. Point being, one never knows.

### FROM THE SCORE

#### **From *Voice Mail 3***

*Alexi Darling from Buzzline*

#### **Mark**

Oh, that show's so sleazy.

#### **Alexi Darling**

Your footage on the riots: A-one  
Feature segment -- network -- dealtime  
I'm sending you a contract  
Ker-ching ker-ching  
Marky give us a call 970-4301  
Or at home try 863-6754  
Or -- my cell phone at 919-763-0090  
Or -- you can e-mail me  
At Darling Alexi Newscom dot net  
Or -- you can page me at --  
(Beeeeeep!)

#### **From *Happy New Year B***

**Maureen:** I think we need an agent!

**Mark:** We?

**Joanne:** That's selling out.

**Mark:** But it's nice to dream!...

**Maureen:** We can plan another protest.

**Joanne:** We?

**Maureen:** (to Mark): This time you can shoot from the start  
You'll direct, starring me!

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### EXERCISE

Mark lives the bohemian life with his friends in the Village. Yet he seems to also have a sense of what he needs to do to survive and to help his friends survive. Some might say his acceptance of the "real" job is a sell out of his bohemian lifestyle and values. Others may see it as a practical, well-thought out choice that benefits everyone. If he takes the TV contract he can get Maureen's next protest on the nightly news.

What do you think about Mark's choice? Divide the class into two groups. One argues against his choice to take the job; the other argues for it.

Volunteers discuss times in their lives when they had to choose between sticking to principals, or doing what's expedient. Which choice did they make? Why? The class comments on the choice. As the person willing to discuss the personal choice, and the only one in a position to make it, the volunteer gets to have the last word.

# LIFE SKILLS

## writing

### WRITING OBJECTIVE

Write an inspirational piece.

### TEACHING TIPS

Some people with terminal illness seem to get stronger the closer they get to death? They live their lives with grace and determination. It is an inspiration to all of us.

### FROM THE SCORE

#### From *One Song Glory*

*Roger, who has AIDS, sings about life*

#### Roger

Glory

In a song that rings true

Truth like a blazing fire

An eternal flame

Find

One song

A song about love

Glory

From the soul of a young man

A young man

Find

The one song

Before the virus takes hold

Glory

Like a sunset

One song

To redeem this empty life

### EXERCISE

Many people live with severe chronic or terminal illness. One of the most well-known is Michael J. Fox, who lives with Parkinson's disease. He continues to perform. His advocacy for Parkinson's patients has been well publicized. Numerous others live with various ailments— chronic or terminal. Perhaps you know a person with cancer, AIDS or another serious illness they are living with. Does this person inspire those around them with their courage and determination?

Select a celebrity or someone you know and write a piece describing their illness, how they deal with it and how they provide inspiration to the rest of us. Read the pieces in class. Each member of a panel of classmates decides which story is the most inspirational and explains why.



# LIFE SKILLS

## experiential

### EXPERIENTIAL OBJECTIVE

Making the choice of where to live.

### TEACHING TIPS

As the child of parents you live where they live. As an adult you will have a choice about where you will live. Would you consider living somewhere else? On what basis will you make that decision?

### FROM THE SCORE

#### From *Santa Fe*

##### Angel

It's a comfort to know  
When you're singing the hit-the-road blues  
That anywhere else you could possibly go  
After New York would be a pleasure cruise

##### Collins

Now you're talking  
Well, I'm thwarted by a metaphysic puzzle  
And I'm sick of grading papers -- that I know  
And I'm shouting in my sleep, I need a muzzle  
All this misery pays no salary, so  
Let's open up a restaurant in Santa Fe  
Oh sunny Santa Fe would be nice  
Let's open up a restaurant in Santa Fe  
And leave this to the roaches and mice

### EXERCISE

Collins and Angel have dreams of leaving New York City and going to live in Santa Fe where life, as they see it, will be easier—where they will be happier. Some people say moving elsewhere is not an answer, and that you take your problems with you. However as adults we do have choices in life when it comes to where we live. Sometimes, depending on our goals, it is wise to consider living somewhere other than the place where we were raised. Sometimes it's not.

Think of a place you might like to live as an adult. Research the place. Place yourself there and describe to the class how your life might be. Why do you think it will be better than where you are? What is it about where you live that does not fit your planned lifestyle? If where you live suits your future plans, say why, and why you will likely stay there.

Display a map in the classroom. The teacher puts pins in the map where students say they might live. Are there any patterns showing where most of the class might end up?

# LIFE SKILLS

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## after hours

### CHALLENGE #1

#### Here's to You!

#### Benny

I would like to propose a toast  
To Maureen's noble try  
It went well

In the above excerpt Benny proposes a brief toast to Maureen and her protest. While the protest was broken up by the police, he toasts her for her effort—"noble try."

There will be times in your life when you will be expected to propose a toast. Go online and read some famous toasts. Select an occasion from the list below or another occasion you can think of and prepare a toast. While the toast above is brief, yours should be at least a paragraph long or longer, depending on your eloquence.

#### Situations where one could propose a toast. . .

- The wedding of a friend
- Your parent's wedding anniversary
- The graduation of a son or daughter
- To a friend or colleague who has won an award, or accomplished something

### CHALLENGE #2

#### Camera! Action!

Like Mark you too can make film documentaries.

Put a creative team together. You will need someone to perform administrative/secretarial duties, a good writer, director, film editor and cameraman or camerawoman. Chose your team based on skills. Think of a topic on which to make your film.

The film should have social significance and/or cover a topic important to your school or community. This project will take a good deal of organization. You must set up interviews and plan scenes. All of this must be set before you begin shooting. Begin shooting. The writer writes descriptive dialogue spoken by an unseen narrator to be edited in later. When the film is finished, schedule a showing for a private or public audience.

# unit THE ARTS

## THE CREATION OF THE PHENOMENON THAT IS *RENT*

### JONATHAN LARSON ON *RENT*:

*Rent* is about a community celebrating life, in the face of death and AIDS, at the turn of the century.



Jonathan Larson

*Rent* author and composer Jonathan Larson became fully immersed in the Bohemian way of life in New York's Lower Manhattan after his graduation from college. The shabby loft apartment he rented was paid for like many struggling artists, by working as a waiter during the week and writing and composing music during his free time.

In 1989, playwright Billy Aronson approached Larson with an idea. Aronson wanted to create an updated version of *La Bohème*, the classic musical by Puccini, and focus on artists striving to create new works under poor conditions in New York City. Larson thought of the show's title: *Rent*. The two swapped ideas but were divided on the setting that the musical would take place in. Aronson wanted to set the story in New York's Upper West Side while Larson wanted the setting to be closer to his current lifestyle downtown. Collaborating on an early draft of the title song "Rent" as well as the songs

"Santa Fe" and "I Should Tell You", they ended up parting ways with the project uncompleted.

Although the two were no longer officially working on the project together, Larson continued with the idea. Interweaving situations he had experienced in his own life, the structure of *Rent* became almost autobiographical in nature. Larson had spent years in New York as a starving artist, sacrificing a secure existence for his love of art. His living conditions were poor and

## SUMMARY OF STANDARDS

### Arts Connections

- Understands connections among the various art forms and other disciplines

### Music

- Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Performs on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Improvises melodies, variations, and accompaniments
- Composes and arranges music within specified guidelines
- Reads and notates music
- Knows and applies appropriate criteria to music and music performances
- Understands the relationship between music history and culture

### Theater

- Demonstrates competence in writing scripts
- Uses acting skills
- Designs and produces informal and formal productions
- Directs scenes and productions
- Understands how informal and formal theater, film, television, and electronic media productions create and communicate meaning
- Understands the context in which theater, film, television, and electronic media are performed today as well as in the past

### Visual Arts

- Understands and applies media, techniques and processes related to the visual arts
- Knows how to use the structures (e.g., sensory qualities, organizational principles, expressive features) and functions of art
- Knows a range of subject matter, symbols, and potential ideas in the visual arts
- Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
- Understands the characteristics and merits of one's own artwork and the artwork of others

experiences such as keeping an illegal wood burning stove in his loft and a continually broken door buzzer made it into the show. Participants of the Life Support meetings that take place during the show were named after real life friends of Larson who lost their battle with AIDS. When Larson realized he had a fully developed concept,



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he wrote Aronson to ask if he could make *Rent* his own. Aronson gave his blessing. The New York Theatre Workshop arranged a staged reading of *Rent* in 1993. Early audiences were approving of the material but many felt that there were problems with the show structurally. The show's length was considered too long and the plot overly complex. Larson worked with director Michael Greif to help make the overall musical more cohesive. Larson's original concept was considered to be somewhat optimistic and sentimental considering the heavy topics that were being dealt with (AIDS, homelessness, drug addiction). Together Larson and Greif fine tuned lyrics and plot giving even the background characters relevance to the overall theme. The partnership produced most of the show that is seen today. By 1994 the Workshop version of *Rent* contained many songs that never made it into the version we see today. Included in the Workshop cast were Anthony Rapp (Mark) and Daphne Rubin-Vega (Mimi) who remained with the show through

its eventual Broadway opening. Shelley Dickenson (Joanne in the workshop) and Mark Setlock (Angel in the workshop) went on to understudy the same roles during the Broadway run.

During the second week of the 1994 Workshop version, *Rent* received financial backing from three men who attended the production. With finances in place it was decided to stage a full production of the musical. Larson continued with rewrites and more workshops moving towards an off-Broadway opening in 1996. The New York press was gearing up for the opening of *Rent*. Unbeknownst to those involved with the musical, the 100th Anniversary of the original *La Bohème* was taking place simultaneously. This event only enhanced the media coverage given to the fledgling musical.

Just after the final dress rehearsal, Jonathan Larson conducted a prearranged interview with New York Times theater critic Anthony Tommasini. Previously that evening, Larson complained of a sore chest and had been suffering from fever. He conducted the interview and left the theatre promising that he would go home and rest up for the opening scheduled for the following evening. Jonathan Larson died an hour later of an undiagnosed aortic aneurysm.

The cast and crew of *Rent* were unsure how to proceed with the opening of the production. The first inclination was to cancel the preview scheduled for that evening but

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# WHO WAS PUCCINI?

Composer Giacomo Puccini was born in Lucca, Italy, in 1858 of a musical family. His father, a church organist and choirmaster as well as professor of music at Collegio Pontiano, died when Puccini was only 5 years old. It was assumed that the young Puccini would follow in his father's legacy by taking over his father's jobs however after experiencing his first opera, those plans would never materialize.



With schooling at a Milan conservatory financed by Queen Margherita of Italy and a wealthy great uncle, Puccini studied under composers Antonio Bazzini and Amilcare Ponchielli while becoming involved with a group of Milanese artists who lived the bohemian lifestyle. Puccini's first successful opera, *Le Villi* centered on the East-European legend of vampire witches and played for over a year. His second opera proved less popular but a third titled *Manon Lescaut* was favorably received and established his reputation in the international operatic arena. It wasn't until *La Bohème* that his true brilliance was realized.

*La Bohème* is considered one of the most popular operas ever created. Its plot centers on a community of artists in Paris, particularly between the romantic relationship of poet Rodolfo and working class girl Mimi. Like the parallel relationship of Rodolfo's roommate Marcello and the beautiful Musetta, Mimi and Rodolfo's love is not without conflict. At the end of the opera, they are united tragically when Mimi returns to the loft and dies there, surrounded by her friends.

Puccini's successes proved to help him acquire substantial wealth. He established a reputation for collecting the finer things of life with motorboats and cars just some of his prized possessions. His life was not without scandal. His romantic life was considered by some to be improper. Much like the paparazzi of today, Puccini's actions were scrutinized by the social columnists of the time and evoked an unnatural interest from his fans.

His relationships with other artistic greats of the era were often stormy. During one Christmas holiday, Puccini forgot that he was currently feuding with conductor Arturo Toscanini. Puccini sent Toscanini a Italian fruit cake called a *pannetone*. Realizing his error, Puccini sent a follow up message explaining:

*Pannetone sent by mistake, Puccini*

Toscanini quickly replied:

*Pannetone eaten by mistake, Toscanini.*

In 1924, Puccini complained of a throat condition that was later diagnosed as cancer. It was after a difficult operation that he suffered a heart attack and died. Prior to his death, he predicted the end of opera and he wasn't necessarily wrong. His final opera *Turandot*, was the last operatic piece to be internationally accepted. No operatic composer since has achieved such success.

instead it would serve as a tribute to Larson with only family, friends and colleagues in attendance. The scheduled off-Broadway premiere went on as planned with the show becoming extremely successful. In April of 1996, the decision was made to move *Rent* to the larger Nederlander Theatre to accommodate growing audiences. *Rent* has received numerous honors.

Jonathan Larson posthumously received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. During the 1996 Tony Award season, *Rent* received awards for Best Musical, Best Book, Best Original Score and Best Featured Actor in a Musical (Wilson Jermaine Heredia, Angel). It also received the 1996 Drama Desk Awards for Outstanding Musical, Outstanding Book, Outstanding Featured Actor in a Musical (Wilson Jermaine Heredia, Angel), Outstanding Orchestrations, Outstanding Lyrics and Outstanding Music.



# original cast member INTERVIEW

DISCUSSION WITH  
ANTHONY RAPP  
“MARK COHEN”

Anthony Rapp is best known for his creation of the character of Mark Cohen in *Rent*. In addition to being an original cast member, Anthony had the privilege of being part of the production from its inception as a workshop piece to its debut on Broadway as well as the subsequent film version. StageNOTES sat down with Anthony to hear his earliest impressions of the musical, its creator Jonathan Larson and his thoughts on why the show has become the success that it has.

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Anthony Rapp as “Mark Cohen” in *Rent: The Broadway Tour*.

**StageNOTES:** As an original cast member of *Rent*, you were involved with the workshop that created what we experience today. What was that like to be in it from the beginning?

**Anthony Rapp:** By the time I got to the workshop, on a very personal level, I was just needing a job so I was happy to have the work. That was the first thing. Second level up was that I knew Michael Greif and I was really a fan of his so it was exciting to get to work with him. Another level for me was that I hadn't done a musical professionally since I was in my early teens so that was fun for me too to get to show people that I could sing again. The first thing that we did on day one was learn “Seasons of Love” and before that I had to learn the song “Rent” for my audition but that was all I knew.

**SN:** Was that the first time you had done a workshop for a show?

**AR:** I had done readings of plays but it was the first workshop of a musical that I had done.

**SN:** In your initial meeting with author and composer Jonathan Larson what was your first impression?

**AR:** We were on stage at the New York Theatre Workshop and Jonathan was sitting in the audience. He was a pretty gangly, tall guy and sort of hunched up in one of the seats chewing on a pencil. He had that curly hair and big ears and I thought he seemed a little young to have written a show by himself. He was youthful in all of the best meanings of that word. In getting to know him he was very open, very collaborative. Really driven and committed.

**SN:** Was he set on the book and music

the way he wrote it or did he allow you, as actors, any creative input in terms of defining the characters?

**AR:** Certain parts of certain songs he was open to slight changes in phrasing or a little melodic turn if we had an idea. He wrote “Take Me or Leave Me” for Idina [Menzel, the original Maureen] and Fredi [Walker, the original Joanne] to run with it. The reprise for “I’ll Cover You”, by design, gives Collins [originally played by Jesse L. Martin] the chances to ad lib and do things with it to make it his own. There were other things that he was pretty strict about so it was a mixture. He definitely wrote with voices in mind. Once I had done the workshop, he wrote “Halloween” for me with my voice in mind. A lot of composers start to do that when they work with people developing a piece. They start to know who’s going to sing it so it influences how they write it.

**SN:** Did you see yourself playing any character other than Mark?

**AR:** No. It was the part that fit. I get asked a lot about what kind of roles I love to play. My answer is that I never would have said “I want to play a documentary filmmaker in a rock opera based on La Bohème. And yet, it turned out to be the most incredible experience of my life. It changed my life in every respect.

**SN:** From the initial workshop to what is seen on stage today, are there any significant differences in the score?

**AR:** Lots of things changed. It was part of the process as the show moved on. A lot of the big numbers like “Seasons of Love”, “I’ll Cover You”, “Light My Candle”, “Out Tonight” and “Without You” were in both versions. But then there were whole songs that were entirely new like “What You Own” and “Tango: Maureen”. The lyrics of “Rent” were entirely new.

**SN:** So it was a very fluid piece until it got to Broadway?



Anthony Rapp, Lexi Lawson and Adam Pascal in *Rent: The Broadway Tour*.

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**AR:** Yes. Even when it went from off-Broadway to Broadway we changed some things. Everyone knew that the musical wasn't finished when Jonathan died. Part of what you do when you start previews is that you get feedback from the audience and you see what's working and not working and you make changes. We kept working on it but with the added task of trying to figure out what we could change and still fit with Jonathan's vision since he wasn't there to tell us. It was hard.

**SN:** Who was Jonathan's target audience for *Rent*?

**AR:** When Jonathan wrote *Rent* he had young people in mind. He wanted theater to matter to young people beyond just the spectacle. He didn't want young people to just say "ooh. . .aah. . .look at that chandelier falling." He wanted them to connect to the story and the characters.

**SN:** At the time, did you think that *Rent* would become such a phenomenon and have the longevity that it has?

**AR:** You just never know when you go into that situation whether it's going to be any good or interesting. The first thing we did on day one of the workshop was learn "Seasons of Love" and then I knew within seconds that this was very special but because of the subject matter, it seemed pretty unlikely that it would become a mainstream smash.

The words that I kept using when I would describe it to my friends after I began the '94 workshop was that it was going to be an event and make a splash. I thought it would be a "downtown" event, a cool thing that had the chance to develop a following but I didn't think it would become a mainstream smash. One of the genius choices that Jonathan Larson made in creating this piece was to make the music very accessible. The score is very melodic and catchy. It's filled with hooks. It says to the audience "Welcome". This music will let you into this world." They are good rock songs but they are also good theater songs. Your ears open up, your heart opens



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Michael McElroy, Anthony Rapp and Jacques C. Smith in *Rent: The Broadway Tour*.

up to these people that you may not ordinarily open up to. Michael's approach to the aesthetics of the show was very barebones. It was like "here we are". There were no trappings. All of that and the way we approached our performances created an integrity and an authenticity that people really responded to. At the same time, as a new show that was unknown, we still needed the embrace of the critics and we were lucky in that sense because most of them loved our show and that really helped us. After that it was the awards and everything built off of that.

**SN:** Considering much of the show's subject matter, were you surprised at its acceptance by the public, many of whom could have been thought of as conservative?

**AR:** Yes. We did the New York Theatre Workshop and that was for 10 performances and they were just done for people in the know. It didn't get any reviews but we did sell out. The word spread through the community and most of the people who came were young artists who were impressed and very moved by it. So I knew it was something special then. You never know what's communicating until you start getting the feedback and the feedback was really strong. But even then even once we knew we were going to do a real production a little more than a year later I never would have predicted a kind of mainstream embrace. In the mid 90s it was still pretty rare for anything in the

mainstream to deal with AIDS and HIV let alone gay and lesbian relationships, drag queens or interracial romance. The Tom Hanks movie Philadelphia had come out and Angels in America had happened on Broadway but for the most part it was still pretty rare. When word of the show spread it was really surprising but in looking back, it seems to me that we filled a void. Whenever there's a void and you start to feel it, energy rushes in. It seems like that's what happened to us. We were reflecting a part of life, stories of people whose lives hadn't been told and stories that audiences wanted to talk about. In theatre, people want to want to feel something real - to them and for them and with them and with the people on stage.

**SN:** Did you enjoy making the film version of *Rent*?

**AR:** I loved getting back together with the cast but it was different. Being in the Broadway show was amazing and exhausting and intense. We had lost Jonathan. We were so busy with publicity and awards and recording the cast album and traveling.

On a personal note, it was a time when my mother was very ill so on my days off, I was going back to visit her in Illinois. Going back for the movie and when Adam and I got back together to do the show last summer allowed us to just do the story.

The external pressures weren't there so it was a great pleasure.

**SN:** You're reprising your role of Mark in the national tour of *Rent* beginning in January 2009. Is it bittersweet to see the show close on Broadway?

**AR:** Yes it is. It's a touchstone. It's a part of my life that will be gone. There are a lot of things that happened at the Nederlander Theatre that were meaningful that will be gone.

**SN:** When audiences see *Rent*, what is the one thing you'd like to know that they walked away with?

**AR:** Jonathan very intentionally wanted to tell the story of people living with HIV/AIDS, people struggling with drug use and gay and lesbian relationships in a way that wasn't ordinarily dealt with in mainstream culture. He didn't want to comment on it but simply present it as the lives that these people live and the loves, heartbreak and loss that they share. He wanted to present it and then basically wanted the audience to talk amongst themselves afterwards. I think it's great if people can walk away from the show asking themselves the questions that the show asks. How do you measure your life? What do you do with the time you have? Who are you to the people in your life? What do you spend your life doing? In our lives, we don't know how much time we have so how are we going to spend that time. Hopefully audiences will walk away from the show realizing that you should try to live every moment in your life as fully as possible.





# THE ARTS

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## discussion

### DISCUSSION OBJECTIVE

Examine art aimed at specific audiences

### TEACHING TIPS

Like music, theatre too can be geared toward certain audiences. Do you think art created for you denotes a sign of respect on the part of the author? Should more serious theatre be aimed at youthful audiences, or should the intention of all art be to appeal to everyone?

### FROM THE STAGENOTES INTERVIEW WITH ANTHONY RAPP

**StageNOTES:** Who was Jonathan's target audience for *Rent*?

**Anthony Rapp:** When Jonathan wrote *Rent* he had young people in mind. He wanted theater to matter to young people beyond just the spectacle. He didn't want young people to just say "ooh. . .aah. . .look at that chandelier falling." He wanted them to connect to the story and the characters.

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### EXERCISE

*Rent*, according to Rapp, was written with young people in mind. Millions have seen it. Hold an in-class discussion on this topic: Do students think Jonathan Larson succeeded in creating a work that especially appeals to young people?

Now that students have seen the play they should be able to discuss it intelligently. Ask one student to begin the conversation then allow it to flow freely from topic to topic. Don't intervene unless the discussion stalls. At the end of the period ask students if they realize how unstructured the class was that day. Did they like the lack of structure? Did they enjoy being able to express themselves freely. Connect those feelings with the free spirits in *Rent*, who have little problem speaking their minds about almost everything.

Food for thought:

Might Larson have chosen this story, these characters and this setting because he knew young people would relate to the free-spirited nature of the characters and their lifestyle?

# THE ARTS

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## writing

### WRITING OBJECTIVE

Examine libretto as an art form.

### TEACHING TIPS

Writing poetry can be tricky enough. Writing verse to go with a musical score has driven the best librettists to virtual distraction.

“I confess to you that of all this incessant rewriting, retouching, adding, correcting, taking away and sticking on again, puffing it out on the right side to thin it down on the left, I am sick to death. Curse the libretto!”

...*Giacomo Puccini on La Bohème*

### FROM THE SCORE

#### From *Rent*

##### *Take Me or Leave Me*

*Maureen tries to assuage Joanne's jealousy*

#### Maureen

Every single day,  
I walk down the street  
I hear people say 'baby so sweet'  
Ever since puberty,  
Everybody stares at me  
Boys, girls, I can't help it baby  
so be kind, and don't lose your mind  
just remember that I'm your baby

#### From *La Bohème*

##### *When I Walk or Musetta's Waltz*

*Musetta attempts to attract the attention of her ex Marcello to make him jealous*

#### Musetta

When I walk alone in the street  
People stop and stare at me  
And everyone looks at my beauty,  
Looks at me,  
From head to foot...  
And then I relish the sly yearning  
which escapes from their eyes  
and which is able to perceive  
my most hidden beauties.  
Thus the scent of desire is all around me,  
and it makes me happy, makes me happy!  
And you who know, who remember and yearn  
you shrink from me?  
I know it very well:  
you do not want to express your anguish,  
I know so well that you do not want to express it  
but you feel as if you are dying!

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### EXERCISE

Jonathan Larson's libretto for *Rent* is an interesting combination of short repartee and direct conversational "speech." In Puccini's *La Bohème* the speech is more stylized, as was the artistic tradition of the period. So we must conclude that the art of libretto has evolved over time.

Write a document titled the History of Libretto from the 17th Century. Include five famous librettists from different periods. Include comments, if you can, on their perspectives regarding the art form. When possible provide short examples of individual librettos. End your history with *Rent*.

Put your History in a binder. Share it with your school's music department.

# THE ARTS

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## experiential

### DISCUSSION OBJECTIVE

The art of public performance.

### TEACHING TIPS

Are you shy? Maureen in *Rent* certainly isn't. She enjoys getting up and expressing herself in front of people—as many people as possible, apparently. Public performance art has become quite the trend these days.

### EXERCISE

The complete lyrics for the libretto, *Over the Moon*, appear on the following page. Maureen's execution of the piece before a crowd of people is a good example of public performance art. Research as much as you can about public performance art. YouTube might be a good place to start. Using what you've learned and the example above, get together with a few friends and think of something you can do as a group that would be considered public performance art. Decide where you will perform. Get permission to do it, and become public performing artists!

**Maureen (in front of a microphone)**

Last night I had a dream. I found myself in a desert called Cyberland.

It was hot. My canteen had sprung a leak and I was thirsty.

Out of the abyss walked a cow -- Elsie.

I asked if she had anything to drink.

She said, "I'm forbidden to produce milk.

In Cyberland, we only drink Diet Coke."

She said, "Only thing to do is jump over the moon"

"They've closed everything real down ... like barns, troughs, performance spaces ...

And replaced it all with lies and rules and virtual life.

But there is a way out ...

**Backups**

Leap of faith, leap of faith

Leap of faith, leap of faith

**Maureen**

"Only thing to do is jump over the moon"

I gotta get out of here! It's like I'm being tied

to the hood of a yellow rental truck, being packed

in with fertilizer and fuel oil, pushed over a cliff

by a suicidal Mickey Mouse! -- I've gotta find a way

**Maureen**

"To jump over the moon

Only thing to do is jump over the moon"

**Backups**

Leap of faith, etc.

**Maureen**

Then a little bulldog entered. His name (we have learned) was Benny.

And although he once had principles,

He abandoned them to live as a lap dog to a wealthy daughter of the revolution.

"That's bull," he said.

"Ever since the cat took up the fiddle, that cow's been jumpy.

And the dish and the spoon were evicted from the table -- and eloped ...

She's had trouble with that milk and the moon ever since.

Maybe it's a female thing.

'Cause who'd want to leave Cyberland anyway?...

Walls ain't so bad.

The dish and the spoon for instance.

They were down on their luck - knocked on my doghouse door.

I said, "Not in my backyard, utensils! Go back to China!"

"The only way out is up," Elsie whispered to me.

"A leap of faith. Still thirsty?" she asked.

Parched. "Have some milk."

I lowered myself beneath her and held my mouth to her swollen udder

And sucked the sweetest milk I'd ever tasted."

(MAUREEN makes a slurping, sucking sound.)

"Climb on board," she said.

And as a harvest moon rose over Cyberland,

We reared back and sprang into a gallop.

Leaping out of orbit!!!

I awoke singing

**Backups**

Leap of faith, etc.

**Maureen**

Only thing to do

Only thing to do is jump

Only thing to do is jump over the moon

Only thing to do is jump over the moon

Over the moon -- over the

Mooooooooo

Mooooooooo

Mooooooooo

Mooooooooo

Moo with me.

(MAUREEN encourages the audience to moo with her.

She says, "C'mon, sir, moo with me," etc. The audience responds. When the "moos" reach a crescendo, she cuts them off with a big sweep of her arms.)

Thank you.

# THE ARTS

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## after hours

### TEACHING TIPS

The AIDS epidemic sparked many artistic endeavors in drama, film, painting and dance.

### CHALLENGE #1

#### Art and AIDS

Paintings and other works in all of the media arts have been created by AIDS artists and other artists sensitive to the issue. Many appear online. Study some of the works then create your own piece of art reflecting your feelings on the AIDS crisis. Explain the piece in words. Include explanations of symbolism, color, style and choice of medium. Paste the explanation on the back of your work. Bring it to class for others to see.

### CHALLENGE #2

#### Discovering Lost Genius

Alvin Ailey is the founder of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre renowned for its innovative modern dance performances. Have you ever heard of Alvin Ailey, who died of AIDS in 1989?

Research the life of Ailey and his accomplishments. Share what you've learned with a family member or friend.

Rent the "Great Performances" video, Dance in America: A Hymn for Alvin Ailey. Watch the video with the same family member or friend. As you watch, discuss the AIDS symbolism incorporated in the dance.



# RESOURCES

## WEB SITES:

[www.siteforrent.com](http://www.siteforrent.com)

The official Web site for *Rent*

[www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/r/rent/](http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/r/rent/)

Lyrics to the songs of *Rent*

[www.siteforrent.com/abouttheshow/the-history-of-rent.html](http://www.siteforrent.com/abouttheshow/the-history-of-rent.html)

History of *Rent*

[www.mtishows.com](http://www.mtishows.com)

Music Theatre International

[www.avert.org](http://www.avert.org)

The official Web site for AVERT, an international AIDS charity

[www.upress.umn.edu/sles/chapter5/ch5-1.html](http://www.upress.umn.edu/sles/chapter5/ch5-1.html)

Selling the Lower East Side - 1960s Counterculture and the invention of the "East Village"

[www.jdrf.org](http://www.jdrf.org)

The official Web site for the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation

[www.magicjohnson.org](http://www.magicjohnson.org)

The official Web site for the Magic Johnson Foundation

[www.michaeljfox.org](http://www.michaeljfox.org)

The official Web site for The Michael J. Fox Foundation

[www.sfaf.org](http://www.sfaf.org)

The official Web site for The San Francisco AIDS Foundation

[www.pedaids.org](http://www.pedaids.org)

The official Web site for the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation

[www.oralcancerfoundation.org](http://www.oralcancerfoundation.org)

The official Web site for The Oral Cancer Foundation

[www.christopherreeve.org](http://www.christopherreeve.org)

The official Web site for The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation

[www.aegis.com/factshts/network/simple/protease.html](http://www.aegis.com/factshts/network/simple/protease.html)

Protease Inhibitor fact sheet

[www.hivtest.org](http://www.hivtest.org)

National HIV and STD Testing Resources

## BOOKS:

*AIDS in America* by Susan Hunter

*Love in the Time of HIV: A Gay Man's Guide to Sex, Dating and Relationships* by Michael Mancilla and Lisa Troshinsky

*Teenagers, HIV and AIDS: Insights from Youths Living with the Virus* by Maureen by E. Lyon and Lawrence J. D'Angelo

*Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* by Roseless Goldberg

*East Village Scene* by Janet Kardon and Carlo McCormick

## StageNOTES™

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