Stage Line/Time Line (A Musical Adventure)

Guide for Curriculum Unit 85.02.07
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The American Musical Theater Unit presented here is an interdisciplinary approach to learning, combining literature, history, music and dance. Too often as educators we either fail to see the value of collaboration between subject areas and teachers or find that there are too little time to plan such activities. Hopefully, our unit provides an opportunity to combine English, history and the arts.

The unit is designed for middle-school students, but could easily be adapted for children of any age. Activities presented would last for one semester and would culminate in a musical production. The choice of materials presented may vary according to the subject area and interest. Teachers should feel free to add or subtract as necessary.

Projects are included which lead the students to investigate specific periods in history. Five musicals have been chosen and are explored as to adaptation, use of dialogue, plot structure, and musicality. These five are: "Oklahoma!", "Music Man," "1776," "South Pacific," and "West Side Story." Activities are provided which enable students to strengthen decoding skills as well as comprehension.

Students are encouraged to develop a time line which will grow as the investigation continues. Attention will be given to costuming and setting of the times. As a culminating activity, information is provided in this unit which will enable the teacher to organize and present a musical presentation. A general timetable is given as well as the organization of various committees.

(Recommended for History and English classes, grades 6-12)

Key Words

Drama Elements Literary Sources Musical Theater Performances