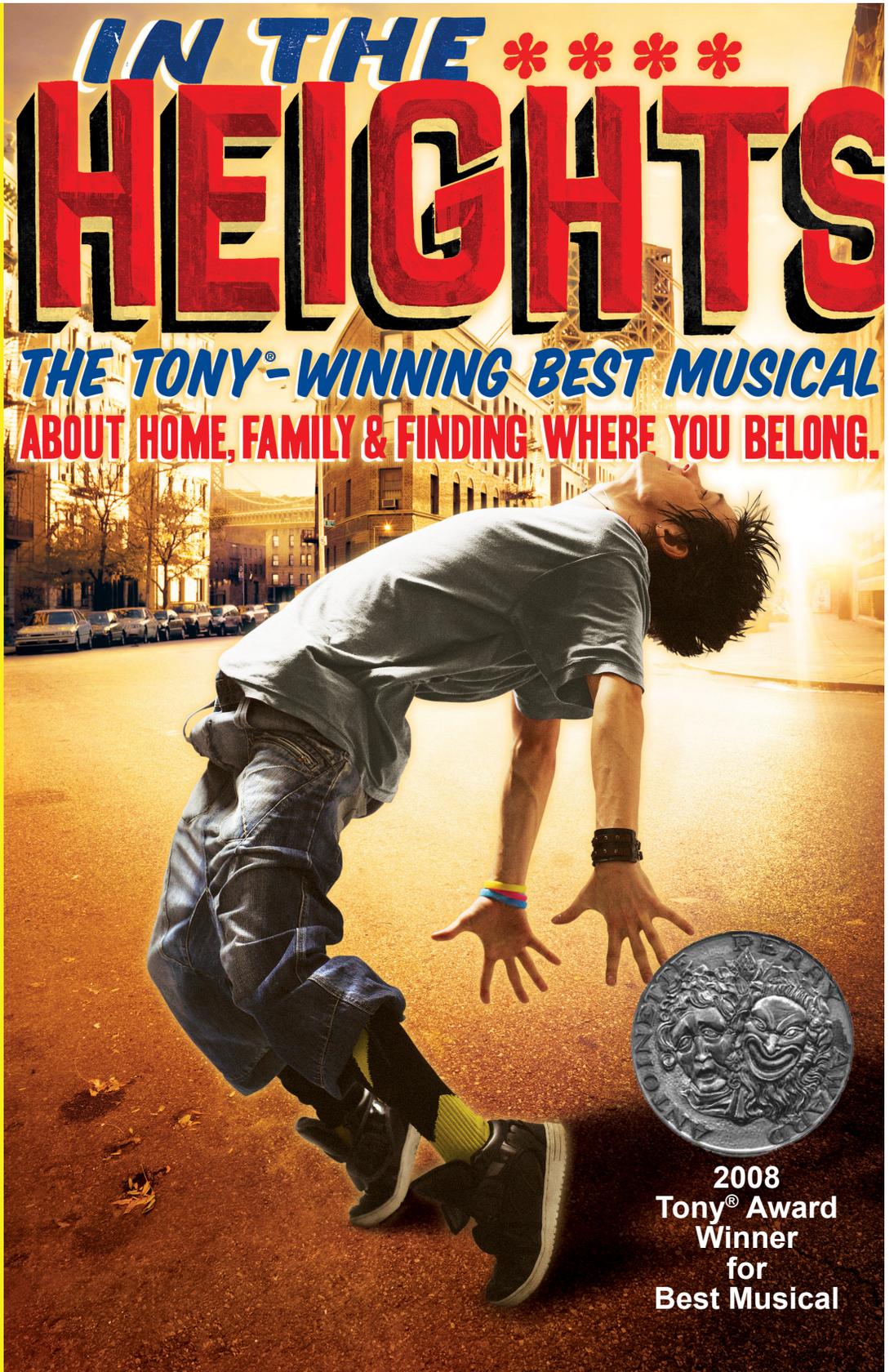


NOTESTM Stage

A FIELD GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

IN THE HEIGHTS



2008
Tony® Award
Winner
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Best Musical

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

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Using the FIELD GUIDE AND LESSONS



Camp Broadway is pleased to bring you the *In The Heights* edition of StageNOTES®,

the 22nd in our series. We are proud to be affiliated with this exciting and innovative new musical celebrating the rich and diverse Latin community. This guide has been developed as a teaching tool to assist educators in the classroom who are introducing the story in conjunction with the Broadway production.

By using StageNOTES®, you will understand how *In The Heights* explores Latin immigration (**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 *In The Heights*, can also accompany class study. To assist you in preparing your presentation of each lesson, we have included: an objective; an excerpt from the script of *In The Heights*; 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 *In The Heights* 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 *In The Heights* 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 *In The Heights* into your classroom lessons.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Katz'.

Philip Katz
Producing Director

Author's NOTE

This is my umpteenth draft of the introduction to this study guide. I'm having trouble writing it, probably because I cannot believe that it actually exists.

In The Heights began as a scribble in the margins of my astronomy notebook during my sophomore year of college. As our professor droned on about the size of the universe and the mass of objects in space, I doodled those three words, *In The Heights*, over and over again, spinning my thoughts into a universe of my own. Perhaps that's why it's so difficult for me to write the introduction to a study guide: *In The Heights* was conceived when I should have been studying.

I was born and raised in New York City. My parents were both born in Puerto Rico. And every summer, my sister and I were sent back to my dad's hometown of Vega Alta, Puerto Rico, to get spoiled by my grandparents and learn Spanish the old fashioned way, sink or swim. Even at the age of five, my Spanish accent was bad enough for the kids in Vega Alta to call me "Gringo" and "Americano," and exclude me from stickball games. So I stayed close to the Abuelos and Abuelas of Puerto Rico, my grandparents and their friends, who didn't mind having a little American kid scribbling on their front porch, who could understand my Spanish through its tortured conjugations and verb-tense agreements. I would spend hours on those porches, imagining what my life would be like if I had been born here. Would they let me play stickball? Would I be more Puerto Rican?

When I started going to Hunter College Elementary School, on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, I quickly became aware of how Puerto Rican I was. Most of my school friends were white, Jewish, and lived on the Upper West and East sides of Manhattan. When I told them I lived on Dyckman-200th street, they howled with laughter and said, "Is that in the Bronx?" And yet I knew, even then, that my neighborhood was special. While my contemporaries lived within their rigid Manhattan grid, I spent hours roaming the wilds of Inwood Hill Park. I indulged medieval fantasies around the Cloisters, imagining it as my own private castle. I marveled that my grandparents could visit and make themselves understood, because everyone spoke Spanish. They played salsa and merengue at my local McDonald's. We played dominoes on the curb and spent our nickels on Now & Laters and Quarter Waters from the local bodega. In the absence of Puerto Rico, this pan-Latin neighborhood, where everyone was from everywhere, became my home.

And now you hold this remarkable study guide in your hands. This study guide, which shines a light on the history of our neighborhood. It illuminates the Latino leaders I never learned about in school. It discusses the universal themes of home and community, and figuring out who you are in a world where that isn't always so easy. I am very proud of what the good people at Camp Broadway have put together, and hope you use it well in your classrooms to enrich the lives of your students.

And keep an eye out for that kid in the back of your classroom, scribbling in the margins. He or she is dreaming of worlds we haven't yet imagined, scribbling toward a place we haven't yet seen. Engage those kids, get them out of the margins, and there's no telling where they may lead you.

Siempre,
Lin-Manuel Miranda

Synopsis and Character BREAKDOWN

In The Heights is an award-winning musical about life in Washington Heights, a tight-knit community where the coffee from the corner bodega is light and sweet, the windows are always open, and the breeze carries the rhythm of three generations of music.

During its acclaimed Off-Broadway run, *In The Heights* quickly became an audience phenomenon and a critical success. It's easy to see why: with an amazing cast, a gripping story and incredible dancing, *In The Heights* is an authentic and exhilarating journey into one of Manhattan's most vibrant communities. And with its universal themes of family, community and self discovery, *In The Heights* can be enjoyed by people of all ages and backgrounds.

Broadway audiences will soon find out what it takes to make a living, what it costs to have a dream and what it means to be home. . .*In The Heights*.

USNAVI DE LA VEGA

24 year old owner of De La Vega's Bodega, his parents emigrated from the Dominican Republic and have since passed away. He lives with Abuela Claudia (Grandmother Claudia), who isn't actually his grandmother but they are as close as family. Usnavi is in love with Vanessa and remains the eyes and ears of his Washington Heights neighborhood.

NINA ROSARIO

19 year old Nina has just finished her freshman year at Stanford University. She is the daughter of Kevin and Camilia Rosario. Nina is the only member of her family and friends who made it to college. She is best friends with Vanessa and a beacon of hope and inspiration to all who know her; she represents the opportunity outside of "the Heights."

KEVIN ROSARIO

In his forties and owner of Rosario Car and Limousine, Kevin is a husband to Camila and father to Nina. While Kevin was born and raised in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, he immigrated to New York City with Camila. Kevin immediately started working to provide a better life for his newly-arrived family. He is stubborn, hot tempered at times and can be quick to act without thoughts of repercussions.

CAMILIA ROSARIO

Also in her forties, she is the co-owner of Rosario Car and Limousine with her husband Kevin. Also from Arecibo, Puerto Rico, she fell in love with Kevin at 19 and immigrated with him to New York City. She is cool-headed yet keeps a subtle but strong leash on Kevin. Her daughter Nina has just returned for the summer from her first year at Stanford.

BENNY

Now a 24 year old cab driver for Rosario Car and Limousine, he once was a street punk and hoodlum, often finding himself in trouble. Kevin saw promise in Benny and helped shape him into a responsible, hard-working young man. Benny has enormous respect for Kevin and sees him as a father figure. Eventually falling in love with Nina, Benny sees a future for them by becoming a businessman. He and Usnavi are best friends.

VANESSA

A 19 year old shampoo girl at Daniela's Salon, Vanessa is strong, intelligent and grew up with Benny and Usnavi. Though Usnavi would like to be something more than Vanessa's "friend", he has never made any attempt. Vanessa dreams of leaving to create her own life away from her alcoholic mother.

SONNY

15 years old and Usnavi's cousin, Sonny is spending the summer working for Usnavi at the bodega. He usually hangs out on the street with his friend Graffiti Pete but avoids trouble. He is an extremely intelligent young man who strives to emulate Usnavi. Passionate to solve the social and economic problems of the city, he is someone that needs guidance or risks ending up a street punk.

ABUELA CLAUDIA

In her late 60's, she raised Usnavi after his parents passed away and continues to live with him. She emigrated from Cuba when she was very young. Of all the characters, Abuela Claudia has been in "The Heights" the longest. She struggled to learn English, struggled to find work and in turn has helped others who have followed in her path. She is clearly the matriarch of the neighborhood.

DANIELA

In her thirties, she is the owner of Daniela's Salon. Savvy to say the least, she is quick witted, brassy and outspoken. While she retains a motherly relationship with Vanessa, she remains the gossip queen of the neighborhood. No-nonsense, she has built a successful business but is being forced out the neighborhood because of the rent hikes.

CARLA

In her mid-twenties, she is a hairdresser at Daniela's salon. Born and raised in Queens, she is a pure, sweet, innocent and loving young woman who is devoted to her family and friends though she is easily taken advantage of because of her naivety. She and Daniela are best friends.

GRAFFITI PETE

An 18-year old graffiti artist and the nemesis of Usnavi, he is always hanging out on the streets, dancing to his boom box music, spraying any surface he can. Usnavi is unhappy that Sonny and Graffiti Pete are friends because Graffiti Pete epitomizes everything that Usnavi hopes that Sonny will not grow up to be.

PIRAGUA GUY

In his mid-thirties, he walks the hot and humid streets of Washington Heights selling piraguas (flavored ice shavings) to earn a living. He represents a rhythm of the islands in the big city.

Overture to HISTORY

Immigration: The Key to the City

In The Heights is set in the vibrant upper Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Heights; a neighborhood characterized by its predominantly Hispanic population and a lively mix of cultural traditions as they take shape in the context of life in New York City.



More than any other city in America, Manhattan and New York's other four boroughs are defined by a varied immigrant population. In fact, thirty-six percent of the city's population is foreign born. The sights, sounds and smells that draw visitors from all over the world emanate from distinct neighborhood communities created by others who came in waves from around the world and settled here.



On the Lower East Side, best known as the home of New York's Jewish ghetto, you can still visit Katz's delicatessen. Uptown in the Inwood section, you'll still find several of the old Irish pubs as

well as the "Dyckman Farmhouse Museum," a little known repository of Manhattan history dedicated to the original Dutch settlers of the area. Though these "old immigrant" neighborhoods retain some of their original character and culture, much has been subverted over time by assimilation, new immigrant groups moving in and economic change in which small neighborhood businesses give way to corporate entities when the rents become too high.



Summary of Standard for Historical Understanding

1. Understanding and analyzing 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?

2. Understanding the 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

Washington Heights spans 35 blocks at the northern end of Manhattan and was originally settled by “old immigrant” populations, primarily of European descent. A large Jewish community with roots in an earlier immigrant influx still inhabits the Hudson Heights area. The dominant population in the neighborhood today is Hispanic, comprised largely of Dominicans, but also of other Spanish speaking populations including Puerto Ricans and Cubans. The ethnic atmosphere they create here is still very much alive with the sounds of Merengue, Salsa and conversations in rapid Spanish mixed with English; the aromas of empanadas and sweet plantains; and the colorful storefronts of small family-run businesses that line the streets.

Today, the neighborhood is clearly “home” to its Hispanic community but this wasn’t always the case. Once, these people were strangers in a strange place. So what were the forces that drove them from their homes and family and all that was familiar to face the dangers and hardships of a journey to an unknown country? It takes powerful motivation to drive people from their ancestral homelands and the history of emigration is the history of people driven to uproot themselves by oppression of one sort or another: economic, political or religious. Beginning in the 1600’s waves of Europeans set out for the American continent for all of these and other reasons. The Dutch were the first to come to New York, expanding their commercial empire. They were soon followed by the English who sought political and religious freedom and the Irish and Scottish driven from home by the potato famine. Later the Jews of Eastern Europe came seeking refuge from the pogroms. In the early 20th century, southern



Europeans left their countries and came here seeking jobs and opportunity. After WWII, it seemed the whole world was on our doorstep, hoping to escape the post-war economic hardships at home and to share in the burgeoning economic opportunities here, the gateway to the land of opportunity and asylum.

It was in this mid-century wave that Latino populations began to arrive in large numbers. Since that time these “new immigrants” have increasingly become a significant part of the textured and colorful fabric of New York City.

Technically, most Puerto Ricans migrated rather than immigrated to the US. The Jones Act, passed in 1917, conferred US citizenship on Puerto Ricans and revised their form of government to closely emulate that of a US state. Previously, while under the oppression of Spanish rule, relatively few Puerto Ricans were able to immigrate to the US as the passage by steamship was prohibitively expensive.

It wasn't until the mid-twentieth century “Great Migration” that they began to arrive and settle in New York City in large numbers, particularly in East

Harlem, which later became known as Spanish Harlem or El Barrio. Driven initially by the economic hardship of the Great Depression, which was even worse on the “mainland,” and later by the post World War II search for opportunity known as “the great

wave,” they were now aided by the advent of the more affordable air travel. This influx continued until the 1970's when a reverse-migration occurred

in which many Puerto Ricans returned to the island to buy homes and invest in local businesses there. In the interim, the presence of this significant new population in New York City had resulted in the first widespread recognition of a Latino community in the

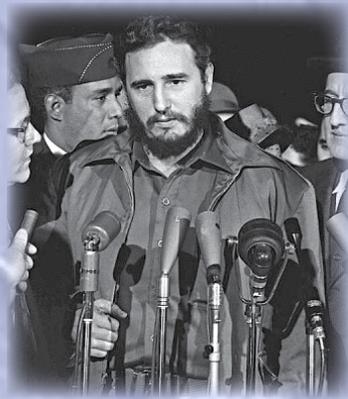
political and cultural landscape of the city. The first Puerto Rican Day parade was held in 1958. Today, there are roughly 1 million Puerto Ricans living in New York City.



Early Puerto Rican immigrants



Puerto Rican Day Parade - 1966



Fidel Castro

Though US troops occupied Cuba as part of the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, Cubans did not begin immigrating to the US in significant numbers until 1959 when Fidel Castro assumed power.

The largest part of the expatriate masses that left Cuba, settled in Miami, Florida but many made their way to New York City. As Castro's revolution took hold and his ideologies and alliances moved further and further in the direction of communism, his new government seized private property, nationalized companies and sent many more Cubans, many of whom were middle class, from the island in exile.

In 1980, unrest due to a suddenly declining economy prompted

Castro to announce that anyone who wished to leave could do so. The result came to be known as the Mariel Boatlift, a chaotic, impromptu exodus in which 125,000 people left the island during a six month period. Since 1994, emigration to the US has been regulated by mutual US-Cuba agreement. Over 1 million Cubans have emigrated from the island since 1959. While many more have made it safely to our shores, it is estimated that 30-40,000 may have died in the attempt. Most Cuban residents of New York City can be found in the area just south of



Mariel Boatlift

Washington Heights.

In 1961, Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo was assassinated resulting in a loosening of emigration policy. Fearing political backlash at home and seeing opportunity in America, large

numbers of Dominicans began to immigrate to the US from their native Santo Domingo. Another surge came a few years later facilitated by the US Military occupation of the Dominican Republic

beginning in 1965 and bolstered by favorable employment conditions here in the States. During the 1960's roughly 93,000 Dominicans immigrated to the US compared with less than 10,000 in the 1950's.



Rafael Trujillo

Timeline of Hispanic Immigration to New York City

1898 – The Treaty of Paris ends the Spanish-American War and assigns ownership of Puerto Rico to the US.

1917 – Puerto Ricans are granted US citizenship through the passage of the Jones Act.

1945 – The “great wave” of Puerto Ricans (and other populations) begins as immigrants seek economic opportunity after WWII.

1958 – 1st Puerto Rican Day Parade

1959 – Castro assumes power; Cubans flee to the US in large numbers.

1961 – Dominicans begin to arrive after the assassination of dictator Trujillo.

1965 – Second wave of Dominicans arrive with occupation of US troops.

1968 – President Lyndon Johnson designates a week in September as Hispanic-American week.

1974 – The United States Congress passed the Equal Educational Opportunity Act to create equality in public schools by making bilingual education available to Hispanic youth.

1980 – Mariel Boatlift brings over 100,000 Cubans from the island to the US.

1998 – Puerto Rican week established by Mayor Guiliani.

Today, the Dominican Republic sends the fourth largest Latino immigrant population to the US (after Mexico, Puerto Rico and Cuba) with half of all Dominican immigrants settling in New York City, forming the city's largest immigrant group. In fact, Washington Heights is home to the largest concentration of Dominicans outside of the Dominican Republic and is affectionately known in the community as Quisqueya Heights. Quisqueya is a colloquial term, which, among other things, refers to the Dominican Republic.

Every immigrant group brings its culture along with it. Many have arrived on the shores of the US with nothing more than the shirts on their backs but inside themselves they have always carried with them the richness of their traditions. The language, the music, the food, the art, the beliefs and the pride in their native countries are responsible for the many vibrant and varied neighborhoods around the city, in some cases neglected neighborhoods that have



found new life.

But that new life can be a complex one. In some ways the immigrant's journey really begins after he arrives. That journey is finding a way of going forward, negotiating the tension between the need to assimilate and the equally powerful need to

preserve cultural identity.

Nowhere is this more in evidence than in

Washington Heights where Dominican flags fly alongside the stars and stripes and where a mix of Spanish and English is spoken on every street corner. The



entrepreneurial spirit of America is reflected in the ubiquitous small businesses that line the streets labeled with Spanish names.

This intersection of cultures is both a celebration and a source of conflict with which every immigrant community must contend and with which every individual within that community must come to terms. It is a rite of passage. This is the celebration and the conflict at the core of *In the Heights*.

Hispanic Voices of Change

In *In the Heights* Nina has returned to the neighborhood from her first year at Stanford University. She's devoted to her family and community and feels deeply conflicted. Ultimately, it becomes clear that her future must begin with embracing the educational opportunity she's been given. Then, perhaps, she can become an agent of change for her people.

Arriving in the largest numbers beginning in 1945 with several major surges coming in the 1960's, the Hispanic population in the US had rapidly grown to significant numbers by the era of the civil rights movement. Discrimination made manifest in lower wages, poor education and other issues affecting opportunity and quality of life inspired Latinos to add their voices to the call for change. Important figures in the civil rights movement emerged from their ranks and since that time, Hispanics have had an increasingly influential voice in American politics and policy.



Dr. Antonia Pantoja Educator, Social Worker, Civil Rights Leader and Feminist

Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1922, Dr. Antonia Pantoja was a pioneer in the advancement of US Puerto Rican causes and conditions. Thanks to the support of wealthy neighbors, she was able to attend the University of Puerto Rico where she obtained a teaching certificate. In 1944, with World War II still in full swing, Pantoja came to New York and, like so many at the time, found a job working in a factory as a welder.



She later won a scholarship to Hunter College where she obtained a BA and by 1954 she had earned her Master's from Columbia University.

In 1957 she founded the Puerto Rican Forum, dedicated to the fostering of economic self-sufficiency. Well aware, from her own experience, of the difference opportunity and education can make, Pantoja founded *Aspira* ("to aspire" in Spanish) in 1961. *Aspira*, a non-profit organization servicing Latino youth in New York City and committed to promoting community, education and a positive self-image, was to become perhaps her most significant and lasting contribution. Over the years *Aspira* has offered career counseling to over 50,000 Latino students. Graduates of the program include: Fernando Ferrer (former Bronx President and NYC Mayoral candidate), Anthony Romero (Exec. Dir. Of the American Civil Liberties Union), Jimmy Smits (successful Puerto Rican actor) and Ninfa Segarra (former President of the Board of Education of New York).



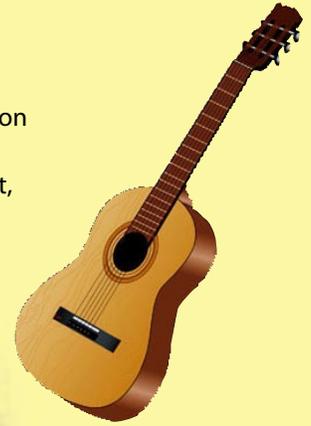
The focus of Pantoja's later work shifted to place more emphasis on education reform. She was responsible for major strides in the institution of bi-lingual education intended to assist native Spanish-speaking students in transitioning through the language barrier.



Joan Baez Singer-Songwriter

Known as the “Queen of Folk Music,” Baez was born on Staten Island the daughter of a Mexican-American physicist. An icon of the 1960s civil-rights movement, she was one of the leading voices of social consciousness and the civil and human rights struggle of the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, her political activism eventually eclipsed her

musical successes. Her rendition of “We Shall Overcome” sung at concerts and protests defined the era.



The Legacy

Today, Hispanic leaders are prominent in government, social organizations, business and the arts.

Ida Castro Lawyer and Public Official

Ida Castro was born in 1953 in New York City of Puerto Rican descent. Inspired by the bigotry and racism she witnessed as a first-grader in the Bronx, Castro has made it the focus of her career to do what she can to defend the rights of the disenfranchised.

She spent much of her childhood in Puerto Rico and received her BA degree from the University of Puerto Rico. She later attended Rutgers University in New Jersey, where she earned both an M.A. in labor studies and a J.D. In 1976 she joined the faculty of Rutgers Labor Education Center at the Institute for Management and Labor Relations. Among her many career “firsts” was becoming the first Hispanic woman to be tenured as an associate professor at the Institute.



Castro also served in various positions as an employment and labor law attorney. Then in 1989 she aided David Dinkins in winning his bid for Mayor as the first Hispanic woman to serve as deputy campaign manager of a successful mayoral campaign in New York City.

Beginning in 1994, Castro joined the U.S. Department of Labor becoming the Acting Director of the Women’s Bureau in 1996. Upon entering the office, Castro reaffirmed her commitment to promoting the rights of wage-earning women, focusing increased attention on older and very young women and women of color. Her most significant “first” came in 1998, when President Bill Clinton appointed her to Chair the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. She was the first Latina to hold that office. The EEOC was created by Congress in 1964 as a result of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The Commission’s primary role is to promote and enforce equal employment opportunities regardless of race, color, age, sex, religious faith, national origin, or disability. During her three years as the agency’s leader, Castro was responsible for many improvements affecting the overall quality of service to the public. Beginning in 2002, she became Senior Advisor and Director of the Democratic National Committee’s Women’s Vote Center.



Francisco J. Nuñez
Composer, Conductor, and Founder of the Young People's Chorus of New York City

Born in New York City of Dominican descent, Nuñez is a composer, conductor, and visionary. His innovative ideas have made him a leading figure in music education. The Young People's Chorus of New York City, which he founded, has been enormously successful, reaching children from all over the city.

For his exemplary work with children, Mr. Nuñez has been presented with numerous awards, such as the Child Champion award from Child magazine, a Liberty Award from the New York Post, and a Luminary Award from Casita Maria. He was named one of the 100 Most Influential Hispanics of 2005 by Hispanic Business magazine.



Anthony Romero
Executive Director
American Civil Liberties Union

Romero has devoted his career to the advancement and protection of civil rights and liberties and was given the ideal opportunity to show this commitment when he assumed leadership of the ACLU. This came at an auspicious time: in September of 2001, a week before the terrorist attacks. Since then, through its national Safe and Free campaign, the organization has made it a priority to fight for policies and practices that maintain civil liberties without compromising the heightened security we now live with. On this subject, Romero has co-authored: *In Defense of Our America: The Fight for Civil Liberties in the Age of Terror*, just published in 2007.



In addition to his strong leadership during difficult times, Mr. Romero has led the most successful membership drive in the ACLU's 85-year history, with 75,000 new members during his tenure. This unprecedented growth has allowed for the expansion of litigation and lobbying as well as new programs that address racial justice, religious freedom, privacy, reproductive freedom and lesbian and gay rights.

Born in New York City to parents who came here from Puerto Rico, he was the first in his family to graduate from High School. He went on to obtain degrees from Stanford University Law School and Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public Policy and International Affairs. Later, Romero was awarded an honorary Doctorate from the City University of New York School of Law and was named one of Time Magazine's 25 Most Influential Hispanics in America.

HISTORY

Discussion Exercise



Discussion Objective

Research and discuss the ethnic origins of families and the hardships of immigration.

Teaching Tips

We say, "I am an American." What does that mean to you? How would you define the term? Do people from countries historically considered part of "The Americas" fit your profile? Why? Why not?

From the Script Act 1, Scene 1

Usnavi, a main character, owns a bodega started by his parents. He uses a rap refrain to lament his longing for the Dominican Republic and the hardships and uncertainty of living on the fringes of society in a new country.

USNAVI
I AM USNAVI & YOU PROB'LY NEVER HEARD MY NAME
REPORTS OF MY FAME ARE GREATLY EXAGGERATED
EXACERBATED BY THE FACT
THAT MY SYNTAX
IS HIGHLY COMPLICATED CUZ I EMIGRATED FROM
THE SINGLE GREATEST LITTLE PLACE IN THE
CARIBBEAN
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
I LOVE IT
JESUS I'M JEALOUS OF IT
BUT BEYOND THAT,
EVER SINCE MY FOLKS PASSED ON,
I HAVEN'T GONE BACK
I GOTTA GET ON THAT...
THAT WAS ABUELA, SHE'S NOT REALLY MY
"ABUELA,"
BUT SHE PRACTICALLY RAISED ME, THIS CORNER IS
HER ESCUELA!
YOU'RE PROB'LY THINKIN, "I'M UP THE CREEK
I NEVER BEEN NORTH OF NINETY SIXTH STREET"
WELL YOU MUST TAKE THE A TRAIN
EVEN FARTHER THAN HARLEM TO NORTHERN
MANHATTAN AND MAINTAIN
GET OFF AT 181st, AND TAKE THE ESCALATOR
I HOPE YOU'RE WRITING THIS DOWN, I'M GONNA
TEST YA LATER
I'M GETTING TESTED TIMES ARE TOUGH ON THIS
BODEGA,
TWO MONTHS AGO SOMEBODY'S BOUGHT ORTEGA'S
OUR NEIGHBORS STARTED PACKIN UP AND PICKIN UP
AND EVER SINCE THE RENTS WENT UP
IT'S GOTTEN MAD EXPENSIVE
BUT WE LIVE WITH JUST ENOUGH
YEAH I'M A STREETLIGHT,
CHOKING ON THE HEAT
THE WORLD SPINS AROUND
WHILE I'M FROZEN IN MY SEAT
THE PEOPLE THAT I KNOW
ALL KEEP ON ROLLING DOWN THE STREET
BUT EVERY DAY IS DIFFERENT
SO I'M SWITCHIN UP THE BEAT
CUZ MY PARENTS CAME WITH NOTHING
AND THEY GOT A LITTLE MORE
AND SURE, WE'RE POOR, BUT YO,
AT LEAST I GOT THE STORE
AND IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LEGACY
THEY LEFT WITH ME, IT'S DESTINY
AND ONE DAY I'LL BE ON A BEACH
WITH SONNY WRITING CHECKS
TO ME

Exercise

Set aside a visitation day. Have students invite guests from the community who are immigrants to class. Invite them to tell their stories and share their experiences. Encourage students to ask questions. What made them decide to come here? Did they already have family here? Did they come alone, or with others? What anecdotes or stories can they share? What hardships did they endure? If recent immigrants can not be found, family members or friends of past immigrants who are familiar with their stories can be invited.

We often hear people say that "America is the best country in the world." In the script, Usnavi talks about returning to the Dominican Republic. Did any of the visitors ever consider returning to their countries? Why? Is it surprising that an immigrant might long for his or her old country? Why might that be? Go to the website: www.thelostys.com/immigrants_who_returned_home.html. Discuss the article and its implications.

HISTORY

Writing Exercise



Discussion Objective

Recognize and document the contributions of immigrants to the culture.

Teaching Tips

What jobs do immigrants perform that are considered menial? Is any job, if it serves the public interest, menial? Some educated immigrants take low-paying jobs. What do you think about an Egyptian lawyer who drives a limousine? A Latvian violinist who sells life insurance?

From the Script Act 1, Scene 8

Abuela (Grandmother) or Claudia reminisces about when she first came to America. A chorus of characters—two generations removed from Claudia's but obviously familiar with her story—fills in the details.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
FRESH OFF THE BOAT IN AMERICA
FREEZING IN EARLY DECEMBER
A CROWDED CITY IN NINETEEN FORTY THREE!
LEARNING THE ROPES IN AMERICA
IN ESPANOL, I REMEMBER
DANCING WITH MAYOR LAGUARDIA
ALL OF SOCIETY WELCOMING MAMI AND ME!
HA!

ENSEMBLE
YOU BETTER CLEAN THIS MESS!

ABUELA CLAUDIA
PACIENCIA Y FE . . .

ENSEMBLE
YOU BETTER LEARN INGLÉS!

ABUELA CLAUDIA
PACIENCIA Y FE . . .

ENSEMBLE
YOU BETTER NOT BE LATE . . .
YOU BETTER PULL YOUR WEIGHT . . .
ARE YOU BETTER OFF THAN YOU WERE WITH
THE BIRDS OF LA VIBORA?

ENSEMBLE
PACIENCIA Y FE . . .

ABUELA CLAUDIA
SHARING DOUBLE BEDS, TRYING TO CATCH A
BREAK, STRUGGLING WITH
ENGLISH
LISTENING TO FRIENDS, FINALLY GOT A JOB
WORKING AS A MAID
SO WE CLEANED SOME HOMES, POLISHING WITH
PRIDE, SCRUBBING THE
WHOLE OF THE UPPER EAST SIDE
THE DAYS INTO WEEKS, THE WEEKS INTO
YEARS, AND HERE I STAYED.

ENSEMBLE
PACIENCIA Y FE . . .

ABUELA CLAUDIA
AND AS I SAY THESE WORDS
MY HEART'S ABOUT TO BREAK

AND AY MAMA,
WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOUR DREAMS COME
TRUE?
I'VE SPENT MY LIFE INHERITING
DREAMS FROM YOU.

Exercises

Using an online Spanish/English dictionary, translate the expression *Paciencia y Fe* (Patience and Faith). Think about a time when you could have applied the expression to your own life. Write a short essay to share with the class.

Read *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*. How does his story, written by the child of Mexican immigrants, differ from those of the children, say, of Mexican migrant workers.

Pretend you've immigrated to Mexico. Collect samples of job applications in Spanish (many companies now have these available). Working in groups, once again using a Spanish/English dictionary, try to fill it out. Prepare a basic resume of skills, in Spanish.

HISTORY

Experiential



Experiential Objective

Sensitize students to the isolation felt by immigrants from the rest of society.

Teaching Tips

Define the term, "Melting Pot." Does it accurately describe American culture? Explain. How do you feel about bi-lingual education in schools? Early immigrants did not have this advantage. Neither do some students today. What must that be like? How do you think it affects their assimilation into the culture?

From the Script Act 2, Scene 5

The City experiences a blackout. People of the barrio ban together as a group united in their Latin American ethnicity. A carnival atmosphere ensues.

SONNY & PIRAGUA GUY
CARNAVAL!

DANIELA
DEL BARRIO...

WE DON'T NEED ELECTRICIDAD!
GET OFF YOUR BUTT, AVANZA!
SACA LA MARACA, BRING YOUR TAMBOURINE
COME AND JOIN THE PARRANDA!...

ENSEMBLE
CARNAVAL!
BARRIO!

CARLA
OOH, ME ME ME, DANI I HAVE A QUESTION.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE CANTANDO.

DANIELA
JUST MAKE IT UP AS YOU GO
WE ARE IMPROVISANDO
LAI LE LO LAI LO LE LO LAI
YOU CAN SING ANYTHING
CARLA WHATEVER POPS INTO YOUR HEAD
JUST SO LONG AS YOU SING

CARLA
MY MOM IS DOMINICAN-CUBAN, MY DAD IS
FROM CHILE AND P. R., WHICH MEANS:
I'M CHILE-DOMINI-CURICAN, BUT I ALWAYS
SAY I'M FROM QUEENS!

Exercises

Have a Spanish teacher teach part of an English lesson in Spanish, using an occasional English phrase as explanation. Quiz them on the lesson and see how they do.

During 9/11 people banded together. One poignant image shows a man, obviously Rastafarian, being helped through the smoke by another in a business suit. In the excerpt characters seek solace in each other. Their attempt to create a carnival atmosphere seems strained. There is a sense of isolation from the rest of the City.

Immigrants tend to stay within their own communities. Why? For private reflection, make a list of people in your immediate social group. List things you have in common and things you do not. Make the same list for people outside of your group. Would you befriend someone on the second list, or are they better off with "their own kind?" What do you mean by that?

Overture to LANGUAGE ARTS

The Art and Soul of Creating Language

Language, powerfully and immediately, defines cultural identity. Imagine walking down a street in New York, a city where 170 languages are spoken. Based on appearance, you might not even consider that the people walking in front of you or beside you are from anywhere but New York; but when a red traffic light brings you close enough to hear a snippet of their conversation, the language they are speaking may tell you that they have come from somewhere far away.

For the many Hispanic communities in New York City, cultural identity resides, more than anywhere else, in their language. It is a crucial link to the past, and more importantly, a means of preserving their culture for future generations. Historically, European immigrants have been eager to adopt English as their primary language in an effort to quickly assimilate, to essentially shift their cultural identity. Native Spanish-speakers living in America, on the other hand, hold on steadfastly to their native tongue. Though they learn English as they must, to survive and to thrive, the new language is never mistaken for the dominant one in their lives. Their children learn English in school and will speak a combination of the two languages among their peers on the playground. Even so, they will speak and be spoken to almost exclusively in Spanish at home and elsewhere in that community.

In Washington Heights, as in most Hispanic neighborhoods, that community is comprised of several different Spanish-speaking populations. It is, in fact, the common language and the desire to hear and speak it that brings Hispanics of various cultures together in one neighborhood. Within that common framework, however, there are many dialectical variations depending on the speaker's country of origin. Mexican Spanish is different from Dominican

Summary of Standard for Language Arts

Writing

- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process
- Prewriting, 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

Spanish which is different from Colombian Spanish, etc. Naturally, the various accents lend different sounds to the spoken language just as American English sounds different from British English. There are also differences in the meanings associated with certain words.

THE WORD IS. . .

GUAGUA



Puerto Rico = bus

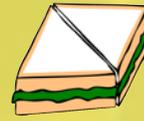


Mexico = the sound a dog makes

BOCADILLO



Colombia = tree



Spain = sandwich

CHINA / O



Puerto Rico = orange



Colombia = child

So for example, it would help to know if someone was from Colombia or Spain when ordering lunch. And you might not want to tell someone from Mexico that they can catch the guagua on the corner. Then, of course, there are any number of inadvertently profane faux pas that can prove embarrassing or even dangerous depending on the circumstances. To further complicate matters, different groups use different words for English equivalents.

Earrings

Dominican = ARETES

Puerto Rico = PANTALLAS

Car

Cuban = MAQUINA

Colombian = BERLINA

Dominican = CARRO

Sidewalk

Colombian = ANDEN

Cuban = ACERA

There are grammatical differences, too. For example, people from the Caribbean use more subject pronouns than those from Mexico or South America. Overall, however, these differences don't significantly hinder communication.

An interesting study of trends in Spanish dialects among New York's major Hispanic groups (Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Cubans and Colombians) sought to discover to what extent some of the dialectal variation will level out as one usage takes precedent over another. The answer turns out to be complex and takes into account several factors including comparative size of the populations, frequency of individual word usage and socio-economic status. The stigmatization of certain groups and the pride of others can overrule linguistic factors. Nevertheless, it seems clear that over time, word preferences will battle it out and some "leveling" will occur, moving toward the creation of a unique New York Spanish dialect.

English/Spanish Interplay: Necessity is the Mother of Invention

aficionado

Language purists sometimes associate linguistic “correctness” with old or original forms. While it’s important to be aware of current “accepted” forms in

order to use good grammar, the fact is that languages are not static. They evolve and change continuously as cultures come into contact with each other and cross-pollinate ideas and the vocabularies that express them.

Just as a new strain of the language arises from the inter-mingling of Spanish dialects, wherever Spanish and English-speaking communities co-exist or border each other an exchange of language components also occurs.

The power of the English language is due in large part to a rich vocabulary derived from many languages. In addition

adobe

many are names of food dishes not previously in the English culinary vocabulary.

More recently however, the reverse trend is dominating the linguistic landscape in the form of Spanglish, a colorful, informal hybrid that appears to be spreading at a pace

to match the fastest growing ethnic group in New York City.

incomunicado

to the Latin roots shared by both languages, many Spanish words have transferred into common English usage in their original form. Some of those words have come from the Caribbean cultures through trade associations. Others came by way of the Mexican and Spanish presence in what is now the Southwestern US. And

Puerto Rican linguist Salvado Tio is credited with coining the term “Spanglish” in the 1940’s. There is still no single, specific formula by which words combine to form new expressions but linguists have identified several ways in which it occurs, though it is always fluid and spontaneous,

patio

matador

The large words on these pages are a sample of Spanish words that are now part of our everyday English vocabulary. Others are: armadillo, machismo, albino, flotilla, barracuda, armada and burro.

Other common English vocabulary words adapted from Spanish

English Word	Spanish Word
Alcove	Alcoba
Canyon	Canon
Chaps	Chaparreras
Key	Cayo
Mustang	Mestengo
Tornado	Tronada

Some words adapt in meaning when they transfer into English

English/Spanish Word	Original Spanish Word
Bonanza	calm seas/fair weather
Canasta	basket
Macho	male
Sombrero	any kind of hat

In In the Heights, Kevin, the owner of the local Taxi and Limo company uses Code Switching or Word Substitution.

"All drivers, atencion! Bajen las ventanas, apaguen el aire. I got three cars overheated already."

Borrowing and phonetically adapting an English word (to make it sound more Spanish) is another example of Spanglish, as when Daniela offers Vanessa an advance on her paycheck:

"It's an estretch but I can do it."

Phonetic Translation, directly adapting a word to something invented based on the sound of the English word, is another method. For example using **quara** for **quarter** or **pantijos** for **panty hose**. This often occurs when invented words are needed to identify completely new ideas or experiences.

Direct Translation, of an English phrase or expression for example: *"Te llamo para atras."* ("I'll call you back.")

Spanglish Dictionary

Spanglish	English	Spanish Translation
aplication	application	solicitud
biper	beeper	localizador
cuitear	to quit	cesar, renunciar
insulacion	insulation	aislamiento
liberia	library	biblioteca
marqueta	market	mercado
rentar	to rent	alquilar
troca	truck	camion
yonque	junk yard	sitio de chatarra

The interesting question about the growing use of Spanglish among Hispanics is: does this represent a corruption or degradation of their native tongue or is it a way of holding on to their language and cultural identity which might otherwise be lost altogether through assimilation? Either way, some believe that Spanglish will eventually have a lasting impact on Spanish throughout the Spanish-speaking the world. We may even be witnessing the creation of a new and separate language.

RAP AND HIP HOP

The Created Language of the Disenfranchised

The narrator and central character of *In the Heights*, Usnavi, uses Rap to introduce himself, his world and the language of the show.

I AM USNAVI AND YOU PROB'LY NEVER HEARD MY NAME
REPORTS OF MY FAME ARE GREATLY EXAGGERATED
EXACERBATED BY THE FACT
THAT MY SYNTAX
IS HIGHLY COMPLICATED CUZ I EMIGRATED FROM THE
SINGLE
GREATEST LITTLE PLACE IN THE CARIBBEAN

With this introduction, we've already learned a lot about the world we're entering. Above all, we know that an intentional self-consciousness about language will be part of the journey. In a perfect marriage of form and content, the story about what happens on a Washington Heights street corner will be told in the forceful, poetic and sometimes brutal language of the street: Rap.

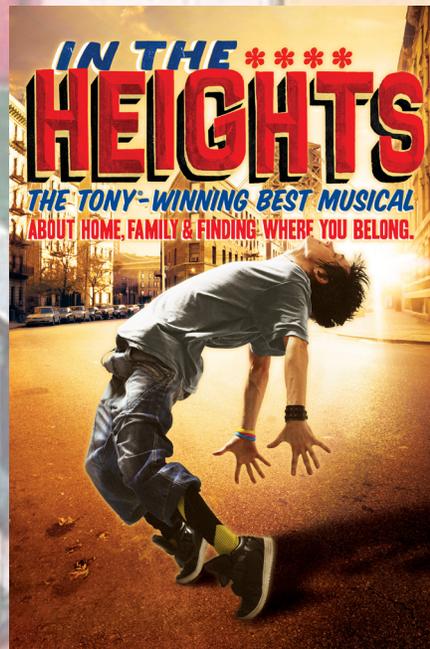
The phenomenon of Rap and Hip Hop music could be described as the creation of both a language and an art form. Born in the Bronx section of New York City in the mid-1970's, what was then called Disco Rap was the invention of the DJ's of the time who began isolating the percussion breaks of songs during which an emcee (MC) would talk to the dancers, infusing the atmosphere with excitement. The DJ's began to mix excerpts of music tracks with rhythmic scratching sounds and over this strong, driving background beat, the MC or "rapper" added extemporaneous rhyming spoken lines. These are the basic components of Hip Hop music today. Add break dancing and graffiti art and you have the cultural cocktail known as the Hip Hop movement.



By the early '80's the movement had a firm toehold in the popular music landscape. As an accessible outlet for artistic expression, the voice of inner city youth was being heard. Creatively, however, the form seemed to have run its course due to the limitations and similarities between songs of the disco and funk background beats. But new technology of the time allowed for more sophisticated musical accompaniment to develop including more complex layering of beats and sampling. At the same time, Rap lyrics became much more complex in their use of metaphor and inclusion of social messages. This watershed point in the evolution of the music was the end of "Old School" and the beginning of the "New School" music that gained huge mainstream success in the 80's.

Using the vocabulary and the syntax of the street combined with rhyme and rhythm, Rap and Hip Hop are elevated to unique forms of musical poetry that give voice to the previously voiceless and disenfranchised. And while the music has been criticized for the use of profane and violent language, at the same time it can accommodate profound emotion. Somehow, it is the contrast of his vulnerability expressed through this tough sounding street Rap that makes Benny's declaration of love near the end of the show so devastatingly romantic.

FOR REAL THOUGH
I THINK I MAYBE SORT OF LOVE YOU FOR REAL THOUGH
MY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS IS REAL LOW
BUT I'LL DO WHAT I MUST FOR YOUR TRUST THIS AIN'T
LUST THIS IS MUCH MUCH MORE!
AND I'M AT YOUR DOOR!



Throughout the life span of Rap and Hip Hop to date, there have been those who have claimed that this musical phenomenon is a passing fad. But at 30 years and going strong, Hip Hop has secured its place in popular music history.



LANGUAGE ARTS

Discussion Exercise



Discussion Objective

Recognize attitudes that psychologically differentiate the values, needs and aspirations of groups outside of your own.

Teaching Tips

People want different things from life. Give some examples. Do you think your life goals are superior to those of others? Why? Would you befriend a person whose aspirations are “lower” than your own, or do you discount that in selecting friends? If you would not, say why and provide reasons. If you would, assess what impact those associations might have on your own future—on their future.

From the Script Act 1, Scene 7

Usnavi suggests Benny buy a lottery ticket and a discussion ensues with several characters about how they would spend the money if they won it. Benny first says he'd spend it on education that would make him rich then says he'd throw a big block party for the neighborhood so everyone could “breathe” a bit and forget their cares and financial woes. Other characters have their own ideas, including Sonny who'd improve things in the barrio and Vanessa who'd use it as her vehicle out.

<p>USNAVI Take Five Lotto. Hold up, we sold a winner yesterday?</p> <p>BENNY Somebody won?</p> <p>SONNY Yo, I want a cut of your cut!...</p> <p>BENNY What's the payout? Don't tell me no five hundred dollars.</p> <p>"96,000"...</p> <p>GRAFFITI PETE THAT'S A LOT OF SPRAY CANS...</p> <p>BENNY YO. IF I WON THE LOTTO TOMORROW WELL I KNOW I WOULDN'T BOTHER GOIN ON NO SPENDIN SPREE I'D PICK A BUSINESS SCHOOL AND PAY THE ENTRANCE FEE! THEN MAYBE IF YOU'RE LUCKY, YOU'LL STAY FRIENDS WITH ME! I'LL BE A BUSINESSMAN, RICHER THAN NINA'S DADDY! DONALD TRUMP AND I ON THE LINKS AND HE'S MY CADDY! MY MONEY'S MAKIN MONEY, I'M GOIN FROM PO' TO MO' DOUGH! I WANT THE BRASS RING, LIKE FRODO!...</p> <p>FOR REAL, THOUGH, IMAGINE HOW IT WOULD FEEL GOIN REAL SLOW DOWN THE HIGHWAY OF LIFE WITH NO REGRETS AND NO BREAKIN YOUR NECK FOR RESPECT OR A PAYCHECK FOR REAL THOUGH, I'LL TAKE A BREAK FROM THE WHEEL AND WE'LL THROW THE BIGGEST BLOCK PARTY, EVERYBODY HERE...</p> <p>CARLA CHECK ONE TWO THREE WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH NINETY SIX G'S-</p> <p>DANIELA WHO ME?</p> <p>CARLA I MEAN IF IT'S JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME-</p>	<p>CARLA I MEAN IF IT'S JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME-</p> <p>DANIELA ESA PREGUNTA ES TRICKY!</p> <p>CARLA I KNOW</p> <p>DANIELA WITH NINETY SIX G'S I'D START MY LIFE WITH A BRAND NEW LEASE ATLANTIC CITY WITH A MALIBU BREEZE...</p> <p>USNAVI IT'S SILLY WHEN WE GET INTO THESE CRAZY HYPOTHETICALS YOU REALLY WANT SOME BREAD THEN GO AHEAD CREATE A SET OF GOALS AND CROSS THEM OFF THE LIST AS YOU PURSUE EM, AND WITH THOSE NINETY SIX I KNOW PRECISELY WHAT I'M DOIN...</p> <p>WHAT'M I DOIN? WHAT'M I DOIN? IT TAKES MOST OF THAT CASH JUST TO SAVE MY ASS FROM FINANCIAL RUIN SONNY CAN KEEP THE COFFEE BREWIN, AND I'LL SPEND A FEW ON YOU CUZ THE ONLY ROOM WITH A VIEW'S A ROOM WITH YOU IN IT. AND I COULD GIVE ABUELA CLAUDIA THE REST OF IT JUST FLY ME DOWN TO PUERTA PLATA, I'LL MAKE THE BEST OF IT YOU REALLY LOVE THIS BUSINESS?...</p> <p>SONNY Yo! WITH NINETY SIX THOUSAND, I'D FINALLY FIX HOUSIN, GIVE THE BARRIO COMPUTERS AND WIRELESS WEB BROWSIN, YOUR KIDS ARE LIVIN WITHOUT A GOOD EDUMACATION, CHANGE THE STATION, TEACH EM ABOUT GENTRIFICATION. THE RENT IS ESCALATIN'...</p> <p>VANESSA IF I WIN THE LOTTERY, YOU'LL NEVER SEE ME AGAIN... I'LL BE DOWNTOWN, GET A NICE STUDIO, GET OUT OF THE BARRIO</p>
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LANGUAGE ARTS

Writing Exercise



Writing Objective

Interpreting the motives of main characters and writing short scenes in brief natural dialogue expressing the emotions of each.

Teaching Tips

Most teens and their families disagree on occasion and Nina's situation will not be foreign to them. Many, with strong male figures will sense Kevin's dictatorial yet well-meaning character. Well-meaning aside, decisions made might not always coincide with the interests of the person or people involved? Where does legitimate authority end and an individual's personal right to choose a path begin. Is there room for consensus that might be in everyone's best interest?

From the Script

Act 1, Scene 11

Over dinner, Kevin says he's selling their business so Nina can go back to Stanford. Camila questions his dominance over family decisions. Nina insists she will not return to school, and she and her childhood friend, Benny, both leave in anger.

<p>KEVIN I sold Rosario's. You're going back to Stanford.</p> <p>CAMILA Kevin, this had better be a joke.</p> <p>KEVIN Uptown Investment takes over in two weeks.</p> <p>CAMILA Uptown? Ay dios mio, they offered us nothing!</p> <p>KEVIN It was enough, mi vida.</p> <p>NINA Wait. Dad, I'm finding a job. I have an appointment to visit CUNY on Monday!</p> <p>KEVIN What, so you end up just another girl stuck in el barrio?</p> <p>VANESSA Why you gotta look at me when you say that?</p> <p>BENNY Hold up, did I just lose my job?</p> <p>CAMILA No, you didn't. (To KEVIN.) I do the payroll, the banking, your chaotic paperwork. We worked twenty years to build this company. I worked!</p> <p>KEVIN For what, Cami? Twenty years for what?</p> <p>NINA What about your employees?</p> <p>BENNY You can't just kick us to the curb.</p> <p>USNAVI Your drivers are half my customers.</p> <p>KEVIN I'm not a welfare office! Family comes first, above everything.</p>	<p>BENNY The day you hired me you said I was family.</p> <p>KEVIN That's business. This is my daughter.</p> <p>CAMILA You are all my family, and you have my word: we are not selling Rosario's.</p> <p>KEVIN I'm making the damn deal!</p> <p>CAMILA This is our business.</p> <p>KEVIN It was in my name!</p> <p>CAMILA Dinner's over.</p> <p>(She exits.)</p> <p>NINA Mom!</p> <p>VANESSA Excuse me. I'm not good enough to sit with the bourgeoisie. (VANESSA exits.)</p> <p>CLAUDIA Con permiso. (USNAVI and CLAUDIA exit.)</p> <p>NINA (To BENNY.) Benny, I had no idea, I swear-</p> <p>KEVIN Nina, stay away from him!</p> <p>BENNY Good luck at college. (He exits.)</p> <p>(NINA and KEVIN are alone.)</p> <p>NINA You know I will never touch that money.</p> <p>KEVIN So help me god, you are flying back to California. (She exits.) Nina!</p>
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Exercise

The encounter leaves the situation unresolved and sends Nina and Benny fleeing into the New York night. Concern for her welfare brings Camila and Kevin together in common concern, but it is obvious that many obstacles exist to the family's unity. There's a strong sense of change in the air, for them and the community at large.

Have students conjecture as how their own family might handle this situation. How do they see Kevin and Camila as parents? Should all of the characters have behaved more maturely? In what way?

Using characters in the play, students rewrite the above scene with their own original dialogue. Tell them their words can change the outcome, if they wish.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Experiential



Experiential Objective

Recognize how others often make it possible to achieve a goal or make a dream come true.

Teaching Tips

Suggest to students how parents sacrifice to send their children to college. Discuss the realities of cost, and what they might have had for themselves instead. Are such sacrifices appreciated or expected? Why? What is the value of friendship in times of need? Think a moment about how things used to be when they were younger. Is it better or worse now? In what way? Do they sometimes long for another time, when they were younger, like Usnavi and his Abuela. Do you think they're crazy for giving up life in America and returning to the Dominican Republic? Ask how many students have ever moved, and if they miss the old place.

From the Script Act 2, Scene 3

The blackout is over and Usnavi checks on Abuela. She is sitting in her apartment with a bag on her lap, full of money. She tells him she is giving him a third and a third to Sonny.

ABUELA. ARE YOU OK?	USNAVI	USNAVI NO PARE SIGUE SIGUE!
PACIENCIA Y FE! PACIENCIA Y FE!	CLAUDIA/USNAVI	CLAUDIA THE REST FOR SONNY— AND WITH OUR SHARE OF THE MONEY AND WITH OUR SHARE OF THE MONEY—
LET ME SEE IT AGAIN!	USNAVI	DREAM OF THE SEASIDE AIR! SEE ME BESIDE YOU THERE! THINK OF THE HUNDREDS OF STORIES WE WILL SHARE! YOU AND I...
WE KEPT IT SAFE.	CLAUDIA	CLAUDIA AY, WE'LL FIND YOUR ISLAND—
USNAVI, PLEASE PROMISE ME YOU'LL GUARD THIS WITH YOUR LIFE.	CLAUDIA	USNAVI AY MY ISLAND SKY
ABUELA, I'VE NEVER SEEN—	USNAVI	CLAUDIA AY, FIND YOUR ISLAND—
A THIRD FOR YOU.	CLAUDIA	USNAVI AND WHATEVER WE DO IT'S—
UH HUH UH HUH. UH HUH UH HUH.	USNAVI	BOTH YOU AND I!
CLAUDIA A THIRD FOR ME!	CLAUDIA	

Exercises

Usnavi chooses to stay in "The Heights" and run his parents store. Nina decides to go back to Stanford. Benny says he will try to visit her in California but is staying and planning to start his own business. Things in the neighborhood are changing as are the lives of the characters, all of whom are in some way moving on in life.

Have students discuss how they felt going from kindergarten to first grade, and from grade to grade since they've been in school. Was it traumatic? Is it still? Why do they think people resist change? Why did it take the near break up of his marriage and loss of his daughter for Kevin to realize his machismo was ruining his family. Why did it take so long for Usnavi to return to the island of his birth; for Vanessa to seek a better job and move to a better area; for Sonny and the girls at the salon to get on with their lives as new Americans?

For a week, have students sit in a different seat each day when they come to class. Ask them how it feels. Ask them to sit at different lunch tables. In a diary, have them record their feelings and any difficulties that might result from the changes. Relate the feelings to what immigrants might experience. Have them list how many things might be very different here than on a Caribbean Island. What benefits did the residents of the barrio have in living here as opposed to living on an island? Why do you suppose it might be difficult for these people to adjust to life in a large bustling City like New York?

Overture to LIFE SKILLS

Paciencia y Fe

Summary of Standard for Life Skills

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

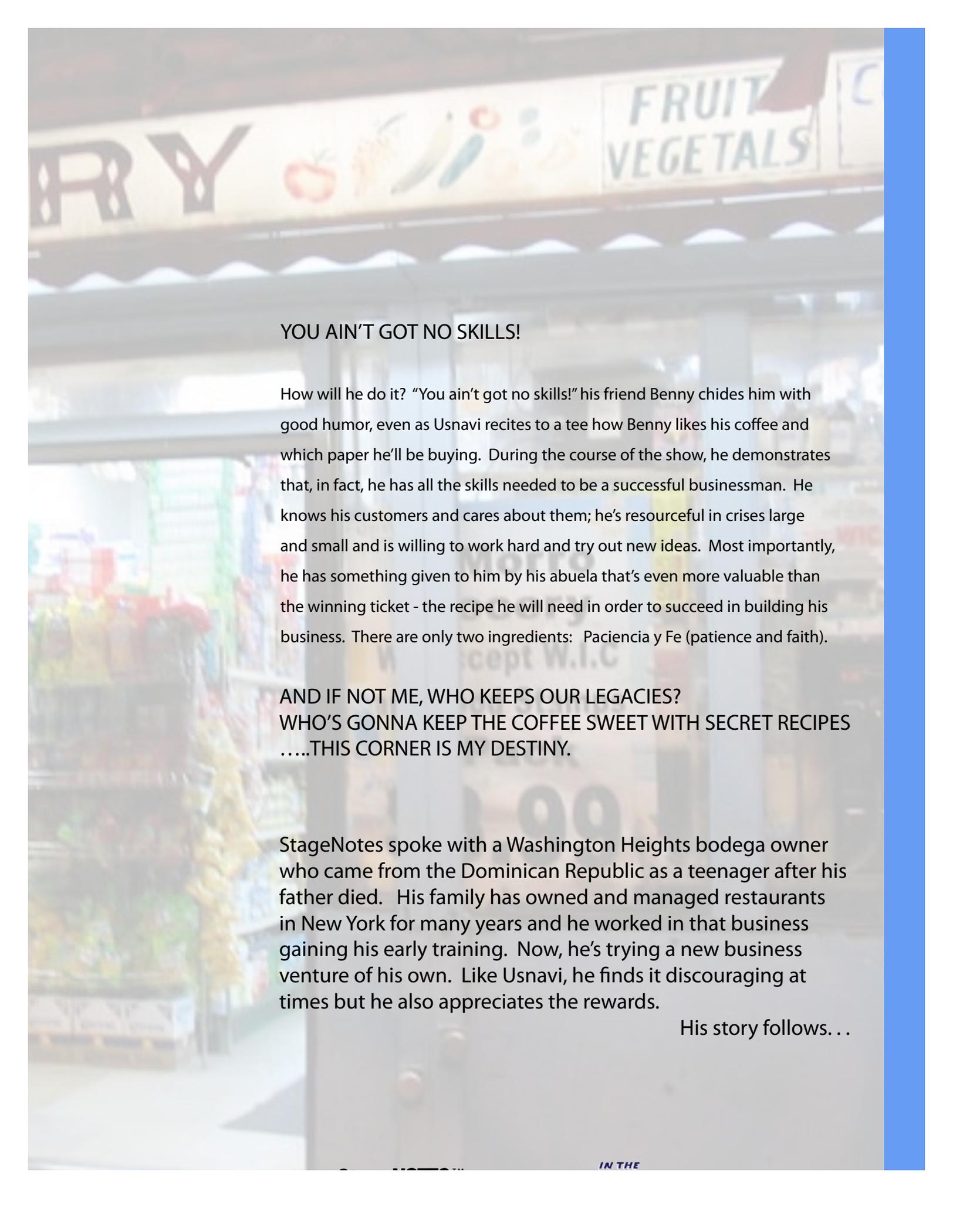
- Makes effective use of basic tools
- Uses various information sources, including those of a technical nature, to accomplish specific tasks
- Manages money effectively
- Pursues specific jobs
- Makes general preparation for entering the work force
- Makes effective use of basic life skills
- Displays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

In the Heights opens on the eve of the Fourth of July also known as Independence Day. On this day Americans celebrate with fireworks and barbeques the fact that we are no longer under British rule, but are instead, as a nation, and therefore as individuals, in control of our own destiny.

What does this Independence mean to those who have recently arrived on our shores? It is, in fact, the reason they have come. In America, they are free of political and religious persecution, free of economic oppression, free to pursue the American dream. For many, this means owning your own business. After all, until relatively recently, small, family-owned businesses were the backbone of the American economy and were esteemed by the communities they served and by the nation as a whole as icons of American success. Today, many small businesses are giving way to big businesses and the character of our neighborhoods, our towns and perhaps our dreams is changing.

Like the corner drugstore in a small town, Usnavi's Bodega is both the heart and nerve center of the community. It's where people come to socialize, to gather information and small necessities and to find comfort in times of crisis. Yet, it is a struggle to make a go of this small business left to him by his parents who came from the Dominican Republic with a dream of American success. He watches as other small businesses are driven out of the neighborhood or are forced by rising rents to close altogether.

The challenge of moving beyond this struggle, of realizing the dream of success in America seems too daunting at times and Usnavi dreams instead of a life of leisure back in the Dominican Republic. So, *In the Heights* gives us another, perhaps more common, version today of the American dream: winning the lottery; instant economic freedom. But with the winning ticket in his grasp and the island life at his fingertips, Usnavi decides instead to stay and build his business.



YOU AIN'T GOT NO SKILLS!

How will he do it? "You ain't got no skills!" his friend Benny chides him with good humor, even as Usnavi recites to a tee how Benny likes his coffee and which paper he'll be buying. During the course of the show, he demonstrates that, in fact, he has all the skills needed to be a successful businessman. He knows his customers and cares about them; he's resourceful in crises large and small and is willing to work hard and try out new ideas. Most importantly, he has something given to him by his abuela that's even more valuable than the winning ticket - the recipe he will need in order to succeed in building his business. There are only two ingredients: Paciencia y Fe (patience and faith).

AND IF NOT ME, WHO KEEPS OUR LEGACIES?
WHO'S GONNA KEEP THE COFFEE SWEET WITH SECRET RECIPES
.....THIS CORNER IS MY DESTINY.

StageNotes spoke with a Washington Heights bodega owner who came from the Dominican Republic as a teenager after his father died. His family has owned and managed restaurants in New York for many years and he worked in that business gaining his early training. Now, he's trying a new business venture of his own. Like Usnavi, he finds it discouraging at times but he also appreciates the rewards.

His story follows. . .

SN: You went to boarding school in the Dominican Republic?

Roberto: Yes. Then when I came here, I was told that I needed two more years of school – to study English. So I finished high school here and then I went to Community College for about two years. I didn't graduate though. I started getting to know about money, but, I wanted to help my mom. My mom was struggling and I was 19 years old. I was considered a man in my country. I needed to work and then there was the neighborhood and my friends... So, I dropped out. But I'm planning on going back.

SN: Did you learn from your uncle?

Roberto: The first day that I came here they took me from the airport to his restaurant. The first thing that he said to me was "You want to know why you came to this country? Start opening boxes." He put me to work right away, as soon as I got here! He said, "So you'll know why you came here: not to have fun; you came here to work." And he gave me about seventy-dollars. That was a lot of money in 1982 but he had put me to work first. He was saying, "Now that you did the work. It's here. You're going to get money but you've got to work."



Photo ©2010 Kevin Thomas Garcia

SN: How long have you owned your business?

Roberto: Less than a year. It's new. A friend of mine wanted to move on so I'm taking over his business. This is a person who's known me ever since I came here and he gave me a good deal. He's had the store for thirty years.

SN: Have you ever managed a store before?

Roberto: No. I worked with him for a month so he could teach me and now I'm learning as I go.

SN: How's business?

Roberto: You've got to put in a lot of effort but I have a lot of regular customers. There's a big co-op across the street and I'm in the middle of the block so I've got a good location, but it's a lot of hard work. There's always something missing. As soon as you come back from buying something, there's something else to replace.

SN: In the neighborhood at the time, did you find it hard to resist the temptation to get involved in things you shouldn't; things that would bring in a lot of money fast?

Roberto: Yes there was a lot of temptation, because you'd see guys... and girls...and you didn't want to be left out.

SN: Do you have help?

Roberto: With a store, you have to run it with your family or someone you really trust because things don't run as well without you there.

SN: So, how did you get started in business?

Roberto: My family used to own a lot of restaurants. They owned restaurants all their lives. (Several on the upper west side) and one way uptown on Dyckman Street that was my uncle's. He got killed there. He got shot. He was pretty well known politically because he was involved in everything; he was a good businessman and his family always had businesses. He was the rock of the family. He knew people and everybody knew him.

SN: What are the things a young person needs to consider in order to succeed if they want to work toward starting a business?

Roberto: You've got to set a goal. Work hard for it. Location is important but so is heart. You've got to put your heart into it. In the beginning you're not going to gain much, but you'll get recognition and if you're good it's going to work out. Sometimes things don't go as well as you planned but you've gotta keep on. If you start something, just try and do it to the end.

SN: Is it satisfying?

Roberto: Yes. The respect that you get from the community is worth it.

SN: You've said that it's hard work and a struggle. What do you do to help the business succeed?

Roberto: With a grocery store the main thing is that you can't be missing anything. I learned that from my aunt who owned the restaurants. She told me to never say that you don't have something. If you don't have something, tell the customers it will just take a couple of minutes and go buy it at the store or whatever. Because if you don't have it, that person may never come back. It's basically the same thing with the store. You've got to have everything. And now that the neighborhood is getting so diverse, they will come to you for all kinds of things. I tell my customers "If you don't see something here, let me know and next time you come, I'll try to have it." Also I try to get familiar with the neighborhood and everyone around there. Be friendly so people feel comfortable. If they don't feel comfortable in my store, they're going to go to another one.

SN: With big businesses pushing out smaller ones all over the city how are you managing?

Roberto: It's been a little bit easier for me because my rent did not go up when I took over the business. People in my neighborhood pay a lot more. On Broadway, the rent can be \$10,000. I've been lucky. Also, the neighborhood is changing so much that you have to be open to other cultures.

SN: The bodega on my corner is my lifeline. It's the place I know I can go and get something I need anytime of day or night.

Roberto: I have customers like you that live around my neighborhood so I just give them the phone number and whenever they need anything they can call me from home and I'll try to get it. If they can't get out of their house, I try to get it to them. I try to make it as easy as possible for them to use my store.

SN: That sounds like small-town America. That's got to feel good.

Roberto: Yes. Exactly. In the end – you see the results

SN: You've said that eventually you want to get back to your roots in the restaurant business – by owning your own. What have you learned from owning and running this bodega that you would take with you into your next venture?

Roberto: Be friendly with the people. You've got to gain the love and the trust of the people. So they'll love you and your place.

SN: If someone offered you a lot of money right now, if you won the lottery, would you stay and make a go of a business here or would you go back to the Dominican Republic where you'd be a very rich man?

Roberto: No. This is where I am. This is home now. This is home.



LIFE SKILLS

Discussion



Discussion Objective

Show how good life skills empower people in challenging situations.

Teaching Tips

How well do you manage conflict? When was the last time you had to do it? How well did you do? Maybe you're a natural at it. Maybe you find it uncomfortable. Why is it an important skill these days?

From the Script Act 1, Scene 11

When the dispatcher calls out at Rosario's Benny shows his competence by taking over and filling in.

```

                                KEVIN
The dispatcher called out.

                                BENNY
Hey, boss, I'll cover the radio.

                                KEVIN
You don't speak Spanish.

                                BENNY
Five years with these drivers?

                                KEVIN
You're not Latino.

                                CAMILA
How much English did you speak when you started
here? Benny is honorary Latino.

KEVIN hands BENNY the radio.)

                                BENNY
Ahem, there's a new voice riding the heat wave
today--

                                KEVIN
Just get them from point A to point B.

                                BENNY
I got your back.

                                "Benny's Dispatch."

CHECK ONE TWO THREE. CHECK ONE TWO THREE.
THIS IS BENNY ON THE DISPATCH. YO.
ATENCION, YO, ATTENTION,
IT'S BENNY, AND I'D LIKE TO MENTION
I'M ON THE MICROPHONE THIS MORNIN'
HONK YA HORN IF YOU WANT IT.

OKAY, WE GOT TRAFFIC ON THE WEST SIDE
GET OFF AT 79th, AND TAKE THE LEFT SIDE
OF RIVERSIDE DRIVE, AND YA MIGHT SLIDE
WEST END'S YA BEST FRIEND IF YOU CATCH THE
LIGHTS
AND DON'T TAKE THE DEEGAN
MANNY RAMIREZ IS IN TOWN THIS WEEKEND
SORRY DOMINICANS, TAKE ROUTE EIGHTY SEVEN, YOU
AIN'T GETTING BACK IN AGAIN . . .
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Exercises

Present a hypothetical: A family moves into your neighborhood from another country. Their customs are different. A tendency to gather in large groups on weekends and play loud music annoys the neighbors. One neighbor threatens the newcomers. Using role play with students playing various roles, allow different students to play mediator. The class votes on who was the best mediator. Why?

Some conflicts are interpersonal. Internal conflict can be every bit as complicated as those involving others. Divide students into groups. One student shares a personal conflict with the others, who then suggest solutions. The conflicted student chooses the best resolution and shares it with the class, along with the process which led him or her to choose it over the others.

Pretend you have not read the play script. Discuss how you would resolve the issues confronted in the above excerpt by the play's characters.

LIFE SKILLS

Writing



Writing Objective

Listening to and understanding others, and expressing that understanding.

Teaching Tips

What does “self absorbed” mean? How does thinking only of oneself affect relationships with others? with the world at large? Do you think people can learn to listen? What things keep people from wanting to listen?

From the Script

Act 2, Scene 2

It’s the morning after the blackout. Vanessa comes into the store looking for coffee. She intimates to Usnavi that she’s angry because she had to walk home alone from the club and because he didn’t call her. Usnavi explains that he had to check on Abuela who is elderly and not in the best of health.

```
USNAVI (To Vanessa)
I still got a gas range, can I make
you some coffee?

VANESSA
You got actual stuff to deal with.

USNAVI
Listen, about last night, Sonny was
calling, Abuela was alone...

VANESSA
My phone didn't ring once all night.
No one wanted to know if I was okay.

USNAVI
I meant to call.

VANESSA
Sorry about your bodega. (Exits.)

GRAFFITI PETE
Enters.) Yo, Sonny, come check out my
new wall! I painted it by candlelight!

SONNY
Shh, the man's having female troubles.
```

Exercises

Read a newspaper article. Listening without taking notes, students write summaries of the article. Have them read their summaries, while fellow students critique it for missing information. Ask how missing details might affect their understanding of the subject.

Think of a disagreement you’ve had with parents, a friend or someone else. Briefly describing the nature of the disagreement, write a dialogue between yourself and the other person. Have fellow students read the dialogues aloud. Class “listeners” pick out lines where one or the other does not appear to be listening.

Gender Exercise: Write the statement on the board: Do women or men think more about themselves than others? Employing role reversal, have a female student take Usnavi’s part and a male student Vanessa’s. Students take notes on how each reacts. Are their reactions different from the characters in the play? How so?

LIFE SKILLS

Experiential



Experiential Objective

Develop critical thinking skills relevant to decision-making.

Teaching Tips

People often hold views that have little basis in fact. Are you one of them? How apt are you to adopt the views of others because you like them, or because they are your friends, or have authority? Is this a good or bad thing?

From the Script

Act 1, Scene 4

Vanessa is on the phone at work with the electric company regarding a past due bill. The reality of her dysfunctional family life is revealed, and she sings about her hopes for the future.

VANESSA
Sorry, it's Con Edison. I gave my mom half my check to pay the bills...

DANIELA
Y que pasó, she drank it away? Vanessa, when are you going to get out of that toxic environment?...

VANESSA
THE ELEVATED TRAIN BY MY WINDOW DOESN'T FAZE ME ANYMORE
THE RATTLING SCREAMS DON'T DISRUPT MY DREAMS
IT'S A LULLABY, IN ITS WAY
THE ELEVATED TRAIN DRIVES EVERYONE INSANE BUT I DON'T MIND, OH NO

IF I BRING BACK BOYS, THEY CAN'T TOLERATE THE NOISE
THAT'S OKAY, CUZ I NEVER LET THEM STAY
AND ONE DAY, I'M HOPPIN THAT ELEVATED TRAIN AND I'M RIDING AWAY!
IT WON'T BE LONG NOW!

THE BOYS AROUND THE WAY HOLLER AT ME WHEN I'M WALKING DOWN THE STREET
THEIR MACHISMO PRIDE DOESN'T BREAK MY STRIDE—
IT'S A COMPLIMENT, SO THEY SAY
THE BOYS AROUND THE WAY HOLLER AT ME EVERY DAY BUT I DON'T MIND, OH NO

THE NEIGHBORHOOD SALON IS THE PLACE I'M WORKING FOR THE MOMENT
AS I CUT THEIR HAIR, LADIES TALK AND SHARE—
EVERY DAY, WHO'S DOING WHO AND WHY
THE NEIGHBORHOOD SALON DOESN'T PAY ME WHAT I WANNA BE MAKING
BUT I DON'T MIND
AS I SWEEP THE CURB I CAN HEAR THOSE TURBO
ENGINES BLAZING A TRAIL THROUGH THE SKY
I LOOK UP AND THINK ABOUT THE YEARS GONE BY
BUT ONE DAY—I'M WALKIN TO JFK AND I'M GONNA FLY!
IT WON'T BE LONG NOW!
ANY DAY

Exercises

The American Dream. Is it a cliché? Are immigrants and sons and daughters of immigrants shackled by a different set of rules for getting ahead? Do these same restrictions apply to all Americans? State your opinion and give reasons for your statement.

Think of one specific life goal you might like to attain. Say why you are likely to achieve it, or not achieve it. Using education, finances, and social status as criterion, how might your opportunities differ from those in "The Heights?" How do you think English as a second language effects the development of necessary skills.

Think of one class subject that gave you trouble. Did you give up on it, or stick to it? What life skills did you employ to get through, or might have employed if you gave up? What role did motivation, self esteem and positive thinking play? Discuss this as metaphor for the struggles of the barrio.

LIFE SKILLS

To Go



To Go Objective

Assess your life skills and how you can cultivate better ones.

Teaching Tips

Not “good with people?” A word to the wise says you’d better get good at it if you want to succeed in life. Does that mean a sudden morph into a “people person?” No. But you can get better at it. A person may not be naturally articulate but they can learn to communicate better. How willing are you to identify your skill weaknesses and work on them?

From the Script

Act 2, Scene 8

Nina has decided to return to Stanford and finish her education. Kevin, despite previous tendencies toward being dictatorial, seems to have learned a thing or two and is willing to change.

NINA
...I want to go back to Stanford and finish what I started.

KEVIN
Camila?

CAMILA
Yes?

KEVIN
I'm asking for your support on this.

CAMILA
So then ask.

KEVIN
Señora Rosario, are we ready to sell the business?

CAMILA
I'll never be ready. But I know it's the right time.

KEVIN
Okay. Then I'll be a mechanic again if that's what it takes.

NINA
How can I pay you back?

KEVIN
When I was nine I took some pieces of wood and made a box. I took a rag from the kitchen and an old coffee can. I walked to the plaza in Arecibo, and shined shoes for a nickel. At the end of the day there was thirty five cents in the can. Did I spend it on candy? Did I buy toys?

CAMILA
You bought shoe polish.

KEVIN
I always had a mind for investments. Nina Rosario, Bachelor of Arts. When that day comes, we'll call it even.

NINA
I love you, Dad.

Exercises

The people of The Heights would not allow themselves to be defeated by their circumstances, suggesting that adversity somehow strengthens rather than weakens resolve—a life skill in and of itself.

How is your determination? On your browser, search for “UNICEF life skill list.” Go to the UNICEF list: Which life skills are life skills? There you will find an extensive compilation of attributes internationally considered skills important to an individual's successful development. Which ones apply to residents of the heights?

Make a chart of the skills and hang it in your room. Highlight skills in which you are weak. For one month, at the end of each day, put a checkmark next to a skill you have worked on. Your goal should be as close to thirty checks as possible by the end of the month. Make a new chart the next month and repeat the checkmarks. At the end of six months count the checkmarks to see which skills you have worked on most, and which still need attention. Have you improved in any areas?

Overture to BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

What's in the Melting Pot Anyway?

The past looms large in *In the Heights*. Every character has a heightened awareness of where they came from and the journey, theirs or their family's, that brought them to the present. All are driven by that past to take charge of the future.

Assimilation or Acculturation?

According to a study conducted by The Washington Post, the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation and Harvard University, almost 9 out of 10 Hispanics believe that they must maintain their own culture. The same study showed that almost 9 out of 10 feel it is essential for them to assimilate into American society. Is this a conundrum or just a matter of finding a balance?

Without a doubt, there is ample evidence of assimilation in second, third, fourth and fifth generation Hispanics. With each successive generation, there is a higher incidence of inter-marriage, English fluency and home ownership – a sure indication of permanent attachment. At the same time, there is among Hispanics, perhaps more than any other immigrant group, a desire to hold on to cultural traditions.

Does assimilation mean obliteration of cultural identity? What's inside the "melting pot" of America today? Does it look and taste of one homogenous substance? Or is it a concoction more like a stew or even a salad with distinct tastes and colors which compliment each other? Does E Pluribus Unum still translate into "from the many, one," or is "in diversity, unity" a more apt interpretation today? It's quite possible that the rapidly growing Hispanic population in the US, with its strong attachment to a wide variety of cultural roots, is redefining the "melting pot."

Who is Hispanic?

The term "Hispanic" was created by the US Census Bureau as a means of categorizing a large group of people living in the US who have come from any one of 20 different countries of the Spanish speaking world. It does not refer to a race or nationality and Hispanics are self-designated as such. While the Spanish language they share is the primary unifier of this diverse group, other shared Spanish influences such as the Catholic religion can also be important common cultural ground. When you ask a Latino to identify cultural/behavioral characteristics that distinguish Hispanics, they will usually answer, "It depends..." on upbringing, country of origin, ethnicity etc. Nevertheless, most people agree that first generation Hispanics:

Summary of Standard for Behaviorial Studies

- 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 among individuals, groups and institutions

- share a more relaxed relationship to time than Americans typically do. Whereas we say that our clock "runs," Hispanics believe that "el reloj anda," (the clock "walks").

- share a desire to associate themselves with groups. More and more readily, they will identify themselves with the overall group called "Hispanic," a large and politically powerful demographic. At the same time, they are eager to proclaim their country of origin as when Puerto Ricans proudly fly their flag.

- share a sense of pride in their appearance.

- share the lasting influence of Catholicism. The church is a more important focal point in the family and social life of the community on a daily basis than it is for most Americans.

- share a more spiritual nature and may more readily believe in the supernatural.

- share traditional/conservative social values, especially regarding gender roles. Most consider financial matters to be the man's domain while women are responsible for the home.

- share a custom of standing in closer proximity to a conversational partner than most Americans who tend to keep more distance between themselves and others. Latin people also tend to be more animated in conversation, using hand gestures and more volume.

- share a very strong commitment and sense of responsibility to family both immediate and extended. Social activity centers on the family with children being particularly honored and protected. Often, each child will have two sets of godparents. The Quinceanera is an important coming of age celebration for 15 year old girls.

- share a nostalgia and sometimes a longing for their country of origin. This is made manifest in the "home away from home" communities they create within big cities where they can be immersed in their language, food, music and social customs.

- share a great love of the fiesta including the music and dance that also infuse everyday life. The popular "block party" is a perfect way to celebrate community.



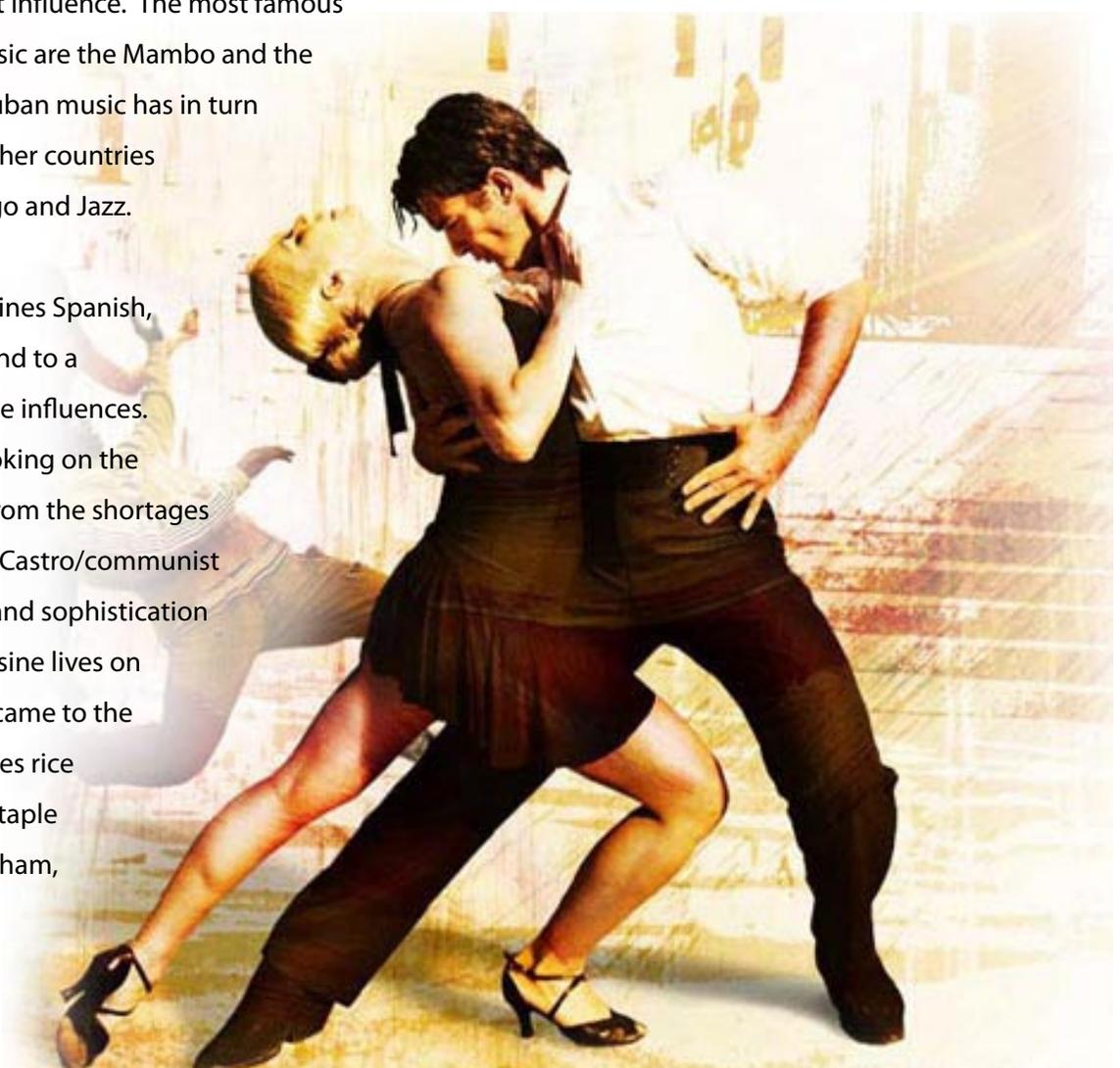
This is a lot of sharing for a diverse group of people represented by many races and racial mixtures, coming from locales as disparate as the Caribbean islands, Central and South America. Not surprisingly, there are also distinct differences between the cultures of individual nationalities: foods, holidays, music and customs derived from the geography and the unique and complex histories of each. Those cultures, as they transfer to Hispanic communities in the US, are in turn influenced by the reasons behind the immigration.

Because of its location in the Caribbean, the island country of Cuba has been a crossroads of Amerindian, European, African and continental North American cultures. Cuban music, for example, developed from Spanish and West African roots. The “cabildos” or social clubs of the African slaves were important in this development. Santeria, a Caribbean religion which combines traditional Nigerian beliefs with some features of Catholicism and which prominently featured the use of percussion, was also a significant influence. The most famous genres of Cuban music are the Mambo and the Rumba. This Afro-Cuban music has in turn influenced that of other countries including Salsa, Tango and Jazz.

Cuban cuisine combines Spanish, Caribbean, African and to a lesser degree Chinese influences. Although Cuban cooking on the island has suffered from the shortages and rationing of the Castro/communist era, the rich variety and sophistication of the traditional cuisine lives on through those who came to the US in exile. It includes rice and black beans as staple ingredients but also ham, roast pork, chicken, beef, plantains, calabaza

(Caribbean pumpkin) and tropical tubers such as malangas and boniato. Some favorite dishes are sweet fritters and vegetable and meat stews.

Statistically, Cubans living in the US are the most educated and highest paid among all Hispanic groups. This is generally attributed to the fact that the great percentage of Cubans to immigrate to this country did so as political exiles; educated professionals who left in order to escape the



radical change in their standard of living that the communist government demanded.



Tambora

Like Cuba, the Dominican Republic's musical genres also have European and African roots. But the popular sound that emerged from the D.R. is called Merengue, a

lively dance music played

in 2/2 and 2/4 time.

Instrumentation is usually a tambora (double-headed drum), a melodeon (an accordion-like instrument) and a guira



Guira

(a native instrument made from a hollowed out gourd). Bachata, a derivation of Bolero and the other major musical style associated with the Dominican Republic, is more melancholy. Played with amplified guitar, bass and rhythm guitars, the guira and bongo, the songs generally tell of heartache.

Dominican cuisine is influenced by the indigenous Taino culture as well as Spanish and African influences and includes white rice, habichuelas (beans), yuca, plantains, mangu, beef, chicken, pork or fish and sancocho de gallina, a kind of stew made with chicken and other native ingredients. Like most other Latin countries, lunch is the main meal of the day and typically consists of a meat dish served with beans and rice. The most popular version of this is called "La Bandera," and is made with broiled chicken. Sofrito, a sautéed mixture of local herbs and spices is often used as seasoning.

In contrast to the Cubans, Dominicans are among the lowest wage earners in the US, most of them having come here seeking better economic opportunity than their home country could provide. Research has shown, however, that originally most Dominicans emigrating to the US came with better educations than those who stayed behind on the island. More recently, this trend has changed as economic conditions have worsened in the D.R. Nevertheless, statistics show that a higher percentage of 2nd generation Dominicans have college educations than do 2nd generation Puerto Ricans or Mexicans.

Puerto Rican culture has much in common with that of other Caribbean countries in particular the Dominican Republic. The music and food are also influenced by the traditions of the indigenous Traina tribes as well as the European Spanish and African cultures via the imported slaves. Yet somehow, on this island, those influences converged to create unique forms of cuisine and music.

Several adaptations of the six-string classical Spanish guitar, the guira of the Taina tribes and a variety of percussion instruments of African derivation are commonly used in Puerto Rican music. Bomba Y Plena are Puerto Rico's most popular forms of dance music. Though they are often referred to together, they are actually two distinct musical genres.



Plena Drum

Bomba comes from purely African roots, introduced



Bomba

to Puerto Rico by the slaves who were brought there to work on the sugar plantations. This highly rhythmic music can be a kind of duel or dialogue with the dancer. Plena is the product of several of Puerto Rico's cultural influences including oral storytelling. Singers and dancers of plena recount and sometimes satirize current events.

Salsa, the most famous music associated with Puerto Rico, actually developed in the Puerto Rican community in New York City. The name means

"sauce" and it is an amalgam of styles significantly influenced by Cuban and Afro-Caribbean music. It also provides the spice for any dance party with large, elaborate percussion instrumentation.

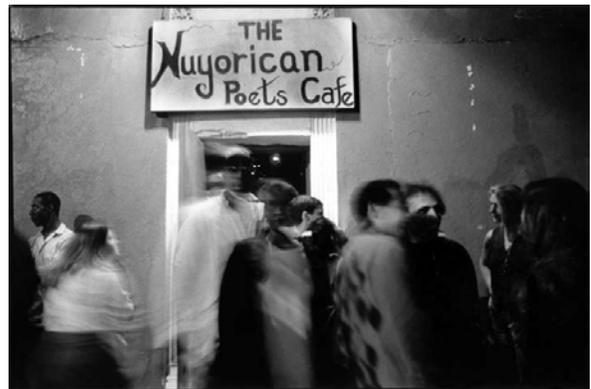


Empanadillas

The cuisine, like its Caribbean cousins, is also spicy and exotic. Puerto Rican meals often begin with hot appetizers such as bacalaitos (crunchy cod fritters), empanadillas (small fried meat pies) or soups such as black bean, chicken with rice and sopen de pescado (fish soup). The most traditional main dish is asopo, a kind of gumbo usually made from a foundation of seafood or chicken along with sausages (chorizo), peppers, tomatoes, pork, spices and cilantro; and there are countless variations. Puerto Ricans can also be adventurous. They enjoy breaded calf's brains (sesos empanados) and stuffed beef tongue (lengua rellena).

While these three Caribbean peoples share many of the same racial roots and cultural influences, each nationality has distinct traditions. These cultures have then been molded by the circumstances of migration.

Puerto Rico's status as a commonwealth of the US and that of its inhabitants as US citizens, impacts their experience in traveling and living here. They are not immigrants and enjoy certain privileges of citizenship that Cubans and Dominicans don't share upon arrival. But does this make theirs an easier journey? In some ways it complicates the matter of cultural identity – particularly when they have been met with discrimination as people of color. This confusion and frustration found an outlet for some in the formation of The Nuyorican Poet's Café in New



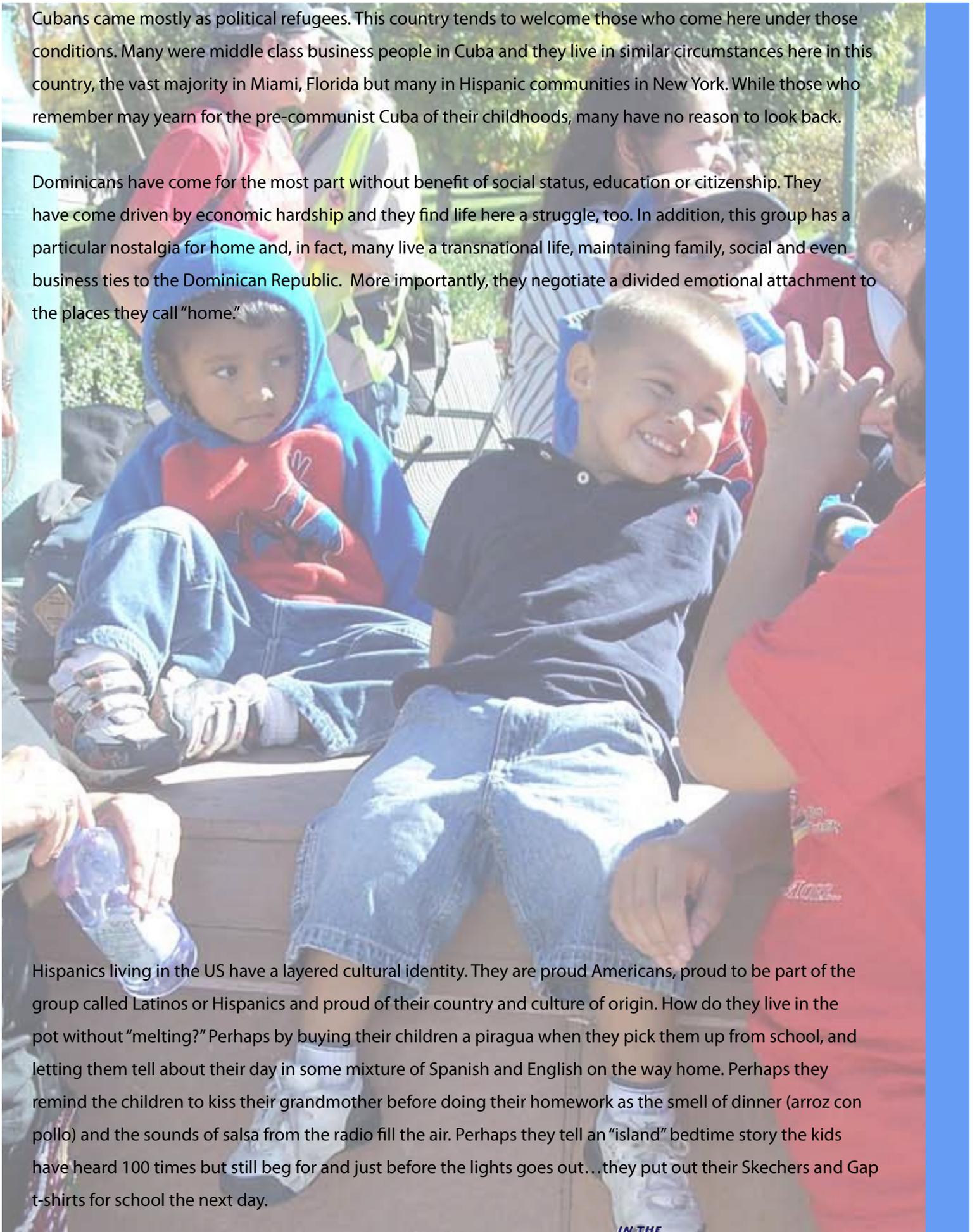
The Nuyorican Poet's Café

York during the beat era. Using the oral, storytelling traditions of Puerto Rico, they created a new art form here in the US and that New York City institution is still going strong. That frustration among Puerto Ricans also found outlets in ghetto gangs as well as in the voices of the political leaders that emerged from their ranks during the Civil Rights Movement. Today, Puerto Ricans, the only US citizens among Hispanic "immigrants," still struggle with poverty and racism. Yet they continue to pass on a strong sense of pride in their nationality.

Cubans came mostly as political refugees. This country tends to welcome those who come here under those conditions. Many were middle class business people in Cuba and they live in similar circumstances here in this country, the vast majority in Miami, Florida but many in Hispanic communities in New York. While those who remember may yearn for the pre-communist Cuba of their childhoods, many have no reason to look back.

Dominicans have come for the most part without benefit of social status, education or citizenship. They have come driven by economic hardship and they find life here a struggle, too. In addition, this group has a particular nostalgia for home and, in fact, many live a transnational life, maintaining family, social and even business ties to the Dominican Republic. More importantly, they negotiate a divided emotional attachment to the places they call "home."

Hispanics living in the US have a layered cultural identity. They are proud Americans, proud to be part of the group called Latinos or Hispanics and proud of their country and culture of origin. How do they live in the pot without "melting?" Perhaps by buying their children a piragua when they pick them up from school, and letting them tell about their day in some mixture of Spanish and English on the way home. Perhaps they remind the children to kiss their grandmother before doing their homework as the smell of dinner (arroz con pollo) and the sounds of salsa from the radio fill the air. Perhaps they tell an "island" bedtime story the kids have heard 100 times but still beg for and just before the lights goes out...they put out their Skechers and Gap t-shirts for school the next day.



BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

Discussion



Discussion Objective

Show how cooperation contributes to the overall good of, and at times, to the survival of the group.

Teaching Tips

Americans pride themselves on their individuality. How do you think this helps us or hurts us as a nation? Does “every man for himself” always produce the best result?

From the Script Act 1, Scene 12

THE POWER GOES OUT IN WASHINGTON HEIGHTS.

<p>PIRAGUA GUY OYE QUE PASO?</p> <p>USNAVI BLACKOUT, BLACKOUT!</p> <p>PIRAGUA GUY VINO EL APAGON AY DIOS!</p> <p>ENSEMBLE OH, NO!...</p> <p>USNAVI BLACKOUT, BLACKOUT!</p> <p>ENSEMBLE OH, NO! VINO EL APAGON AY DIOS!</p> <p>BENNY HOLD UP, WAIT, HOLD UP, WAIT!...</p> <p>USNAVI YO! I! CAN'T SEE! QUIT SHOVIN IT'S AN OVEN AND WE GOTTA BACK OUT THIS IS A BLACK OUT! CHILL, FOR REAL, OR WE'RE GONNA GET KILLED!...</p> <p>KEVIN CALLING ALL TAXIS!</p> <p>KEV/USNAVI EVERYONE RELAX PLEASE.</p> <p>SONNY WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT'S GOING ON? SUDDENLY I FIND THE ELECTRICITY IS GONE...</p>	<p>KEVIN CALLING ALL TAXIS!</p> <p>KEV/USNAVI EVERYONE RELAX PLEASE...</p> <p>BENNY NINA WHERE'D YOU GO...</p> <p>KEVIN PLEASE FIND NINA! FIND CAMILA! IF YOU SEE MY FAMILY BRING THEM HOME!</p> <p>SONNY WE ARE POWERLESS WE ARE POWERLESS...</p> <p>GRAFFITI PETE YO! YO! THEY THROWIN BOTTLES IN THE STREET! PEOPLE LOOTIN AND SHOOTIN. SONNY, THEY WANNA SEE A ROBBERY WE GOTTA KEEP MOVIN!</p> <p>SONNY NAW, MAN, I CAN'T LEAVE, WE GOTTA GUARD THE STORE!</p> <p>GRAFFITI PETE THEY GONNA BOMBARD THE STORE UNTIL YOU AIN'T GOT A STORE NO MORE!</p> <p>SONNY I GOT A BASEBALL BAT ON A RACK IN THE BACK.</p> <p>GRAFFITI PETE I GOT A COUPLE ROMAN CANDLES, WE CAN DISTRACT THE VANDALS!</p> <p>SONNY HEY YO I SEE SOME THUGS COMIN, MAN, WE GONNA GET JACKED UP!</p>
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Exercises

New York City survived the attacks of September 11 with a grace and determination admired by the rest of the country. Stories emerged of people helping others who might not otherwise have thought of banning together in common cause.

Ask students why they think immigrants tend to live in the same neighborhoods, like Washington Heights. Ask them to define community and think of the numbers of communities to which they might belong—family, friends, locales (towns, cities) other groups. In what ways do these communities support their members?

Suggest the class as a sub-community of the school. Have the “community” think of a common goal they wish to achieve that will benefit the larger community (the school). After a discussion of individual skills, etc., various responsibilities for achieving the goal are delegated to individual members. After (if) the goal is achieved, the class, as a community, discusses what problems arose, why, and to what degree the group functioned as a community.

BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

Writing



Writing Objective

Explore nuances in behavior generally viewed as commonplace among groups.

Teaching Tips

The study of cultural behavior is interesting. But can it be applied too rigidly? Are Latin men always dominant, or is this an observation dependent upon situation? What role does cultural evolution play in changing customs?

From the Script

Act 2, Scene 8

One generation to another, Nina reminisces about Abuela and her influence on her education.

NINA
IF IT HAPPENED ON THIS BLOCK, ABUELA WAS THERE.
EVERY AFTERNOON I CAME
SHE'D MAKE SURE I DID MY HOMEWORK
SHE COULD BARELY WRITE HER NAME,
BUT EVEN SO . . .
SHE WOULD STARE AT THE PAPER AND TELL ME,

NINA/USNAVI
"BUENO, LET'S REVIEW

NINA
WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW...

WHAT DO I KNOW?...

NINA
IN THIS FOLDER THERE'S A PICTURE OF MY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION WITH THE PROGRAM, MINT CONDITION AND A STAR BESIDE MY NAME.
AS I LEFT FOR CALIFORNIA.
SHE SAVED EVERYTHING WE GAVE HER, EVERY LITTLE SCRAP OF PAPER.
AND OUR LIVES ARE IN THESE BOXES WHILE THE WOMAN WHO HELD US IS GONE BUT WE MOVE ON, WE GROW, SO...
HOLD TIGHT, ABUELA, IF YOU'RE UP THERE I'LL MAKE YOU PROUD OF EVERYTHING I KNOW! THANK YOU, FOR EVERYTHING I KNOW.

Act 2, Scene 11

Camila reminds Kevin that they're equal partners in marriage.

CAMILA
Of course you didn't. (To KEVIN.) I do the payroll, the banking, your chaotic papers. We worked twenty years to build this company. I worked!

KEVIN
For what, Cami? Twenty years for what?

NINA
What about your employees?...

KEVIN
I'm not a welfare office! Family comes first, above everything.

BENNY
The day you hired me you said I was family...

CAMILA
You are all my family, and you have my word: we are not selling Rosario's.

KEVIN
I'm making the damn deal.

CAMILA
This is our business!

KEVIN
It was in my name!

CAMILA
Dinner's over.

Exercises

The foundations of prejudice often arise from generalizations concerning groups. Hispanics are Catholic is somewhat true, but not completely. Other religions, including Evangelical movements, have made their mark. In "The Heights," there is no mention of religious practice. Also, Catholicism in Latin America and Caribbean comes liberally peppered with traditional, Pre-Columbian rites. The Mexican Day of the Dead is a good example of those melding traditions.

An abundance of websites describe this event. Have students research the holiday or another and write a paper on it. Compare and contrast the holiday's traditional roots with Catholic aspects.

Present a brief lecture on Guatemalan human rights activist and Nobel Prize recipient, Rigoberta Menchu. While speaking, have students list ways in which Menchu's life counters assumptions about the role of women in Latin American.

BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

Experiential



Experiential Objective

“Put yourself in another’s shoes” and see how you like them.

Teaching Tips

Do you blame others when things go wrong? Be honest. When was the last time you ridiculed someone for something they did or said? Have you gotten into the habit of mocking, even in jest?

From the Script Act 1, Scene 5

Kevin is despondent about Nina’s decision not to return to school. As the head of the family, he sees himself as *inutil* (useless), because he can not afford the tuition. He compares himself to his father, a farmer, whom in his frustration he mocks as “useless” as well.

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                                KEVIN
THIS ISN'T HAPPENING.
INUTIL. USELESS.
JUST LIKE MY FATHER WAS BEFORE ME.
INUTIL. USELESS.
AND EVERY DAY.
HE CUT THE CANE.
HE CAME HOME LATE AND PRAYED FOR RAIN.
PRAYED FOR RAIN.

AND ON THE DAYS
WHEN NOTHING CAME
MY FATHER'S FACE WAS LINED WITH SHAME.
HE'D SIT ME DOWN BESIDE HIM AND HE'D SAY,
"MY FATHER WAS A FARMER.
HIS FATHER WAS A FARMER,
AND YOU WILL BE A FARMER."
BUT I TOLD HIM, "PAPI, I'M SORRY, I'M
GOING FARTHER.
I'M GETTING ON A PLANE.
AND I AM GONNA CHANGE THE WORLD SOMEDAY."
AND HE SLAPPED MY FACE.
HE STOOD THERE, STARING AT ME, USELESS.
TODAY MY DAUGHTER'S HOME AND I AM USELESS.

AND AS A BABY SHE AMAZED ME WITH
THE THINGS SHE LEARNED EACH DAY.
SHE USED TO STAY ON THE FIRE ESCAPE
WHILE ALL THE OTHER KIDS WOULD PLAY.
AND I WOULD STAND BESIDE HER AND I'D SAY:

"I'M PROUD TO BE YOUR FATHER,
CUZ YOU WORK SO MUCH HARDER
AND YOU ARE SO MUCH SMARTER
THAN I WAS AT YOUR AGE."
AND I ALWAYS KNEW THAT SHE WOULD FLY AWAY.
THAT SHE WAS GONNA CHANGE THE WORLD
SOMEDAY.

I WILL NOT BE THE REASON
THAT MY FAMILY CAN'T SUCCEED
I WILL DO WHAT IT TAKES,
THEY'LL HAVE EVERYTHING THEY NEED
OR ALL MY WORK, ALL MY LIFE
EVERYTHING WE'VE SACRIFICED WILL HAVE BEEN
USELESS.
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Exercises

As established members of American society, we forget that once, our stories, too, began somewhere else. Nevertheless our judgments on newcomers can be harsh.

Kevin judges his father harshly, but does he really mean it? Is he blaming him, or is he simply frustrated with himself for not succeeding? When was the last time you were frustrated with yourself? Did you blame someone else--your family, perhaps? Pretend you could not afford to send your child to college. How would you feel? Did Kevin have options other than selling his business? How might you deal with the same situation? What advantages, if any, do you think you might have over Kevin? As an immigrant, might he view borrowing more money than he already has as a negative option? Why?

Find out from an adult what it means to borrow money; to pay it back. Put what you’ve learned into context in terms of the immigrant community of Washington Heights.

BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

To Go



To Go Objective

Examine hip hop and its influence on American culture.

Teaching Tips

What do you think of the hip hop lifestyle? How much do you really know about it? Is it a positive or negative influence on mainstream culture? Neither?

From the Script

Act 1, Scene 7

In this scene Sonny not only makes a hip hop declaration about what he would do with money if he were lucky enough to win it, but he also provides some interesting insight into the man and his values.

```
SONNY
Yo!
WITH NINETY SIX THOUSAND, I'D FINALLY FIX
HOUSIN,
GIVE THE BARRIO COMPUTERS AND WIRELESS WEB
BROWSIN,
YOUR KIDS ARE LIVIN WITHOUT A GOOD
EDUMACATION,
CHANGE THE STATION, TEACH EM ABOUT
GENTRIFICATION.
THE RENT IS ESCALATIN'

GRAFFITI PETE
WHAT?

SONNY
THE RICH ARE PENETRATIN'

GRAFFITI PETE
WHAT?

SONNY
WE PAY OUR CORPORATIONS WHEN WE SHOULD BE
DEMONSTRATIN'...

SONNY
WHAT ABOUT IMMIGRATION?...

SONNY
POLITICIANS BE HATIN'...

SONNY
RACISM IN THIS NATION'S GONE FROM LATENT TO
BLATANT!...

SONNY
I'LL CASH MY TICKET AND PICKET, INVEST IN
PROTEST,
NEVER LOSE MY FOCUS TILL THE CITY TAKES NOTICE
AND YOU KNOW THIS MAN! I'LL NEVER SLEEP
BECAUSE THE GHETTO HAS A MILLION PROMISES FOR
ME TO KEEP!
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Act 1, Scene 12

Usnavi charms Yolanda with a verse in hip hop machismo.

```
USNAVI
BARTENDER!
LET ME GET AN AMARETTO SOUR FOR THIS GHETTO FLOWER
HOW ARE YOU SO PRETTY?
YOU COMPLETE ME
YOU HAD ME AT HELLO, YOU KNOW YOU NEED ME
TRULY, MADLY, DEEPLY, LET'S GET FREAKY.
OH I GET IT YOU'RE THE STRONG AND SILENT TYPE
WELL, I'M THE CARIBBEAN ISLAND TYPE
AND I CAN DRIVE YOU WILD ALL NIGHT
BUT I DIGRESS
SAY SOMETHING SO I DON'T STRESS

YOLANDA
NO HABLO INGLES.

USNAVI
YES!
```

Exercises

The author incorporates a good deal of hip hop language in the play. To some, the words suggest other cultural behaviors: (lots of jewelry), boom boxes, baggy clothes, perhaps even "gangster" behavior.

Master P Building Youth Centers

Hip-Hop mogul Percy "Master P" Miller continues his charitable efforts, revealing that he will be building and expanding P. Miller Youth Centers in impoverished cities in the United States...

North Carolina Professor Teaches History & Social Relevance of Hip-Hop

Welcome to English 209: The History, Literary Connections and Social Relevance of Hip-Hop, an unconventional English course taught by Statesville native Bryon Turman at N.C. A&T ...

Both articles are from the website: hiphoplinguistics.com. Both are examples of hip hop's influence on mainstream culture. Write your own news article on a hip hop topic of your choice. Use language you are comfortable with; use hip hop style if you dare.

Overture to THE ARTS

Making the Scene

“Yo, I finally get Michelangelo’s style. Tagging by candlelight, detailing by the moon’s glow.”
- Graffiti Pete

Summary of Standard for The Arts

Art Connections

■ Understands connections among the various art forms and other disciplines

Music

■ Sings, 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

Throughout most of the show, Usnavi considers Graffiti Pete a bum and a menace. But in the end, it is this artist’s work that speaks to Usnavi, offering him hope and pointing the way to the future. This is what art can do. Whether the form is music, dance, painting or drama, art reaches us in unique, profound and sometimes unexpected ways.

The scenic designer of a musical is an artist whose discipline combines some knowledge of all these art forms to create a setting in which a story can come to life on the stage. The designer’s vision has to be able to accommodate the choreography and the direction. It must reflect the style and mood of the music and the writing. It will need to be executed using artistic and technical skills from the field of fine arts. Above all, it has to be a creative, physical representation of the inner life of the drama.

Anna Louizos is the scenic designer of *In the Heights*.

Her design for the show was nominated for both Lucille Lortel and Drama Desk Awards in its off-Broadway incarnation. Anna’s other Broadway credits include *Avenue Q*, *High Fidelity*, for which she received a Tony nomination, *Curtains* which received a Drama Desk nomination, *Golda’s Balcony* and *Steel Magnolias*. Meanwhile her work can be seen in the very successful *Altar Boyz*, still enjoying a long off-Broadway run. It’s been a long road to becoming one of a handful of women scenic designers working on Broadway. She has paid her dues and talked to us about that and about the joys and challenges of working on *In the Heights*.



StageNOTES: How did you first get involved with the production?

Anna Louizos: Two of the three producers I worked with before. They were involved with Avenue Q. And one of the producers was involved with White Christmas which we did. So I had a relationship with the producers. I didn't know the composer or the director but I was invited to see a workshop of the show up at the O'Neill Center and I fell in love with it. I was very excited about it and I said to the producer that I would really love to be involved with the show because it resonates with me; because it's about immigrants. My family comes from an immigrant background. My grandmother was an immigrant. My father was an immigrant...and the struggles that these people go through are universal. It's a uniquely American experience in that they come here with dreams and hopes of a better life and they ultimately form a community, a common bond because they all have a similar desire to come here. They also want their children to have a better life and I feel like I'm the by-product of that.

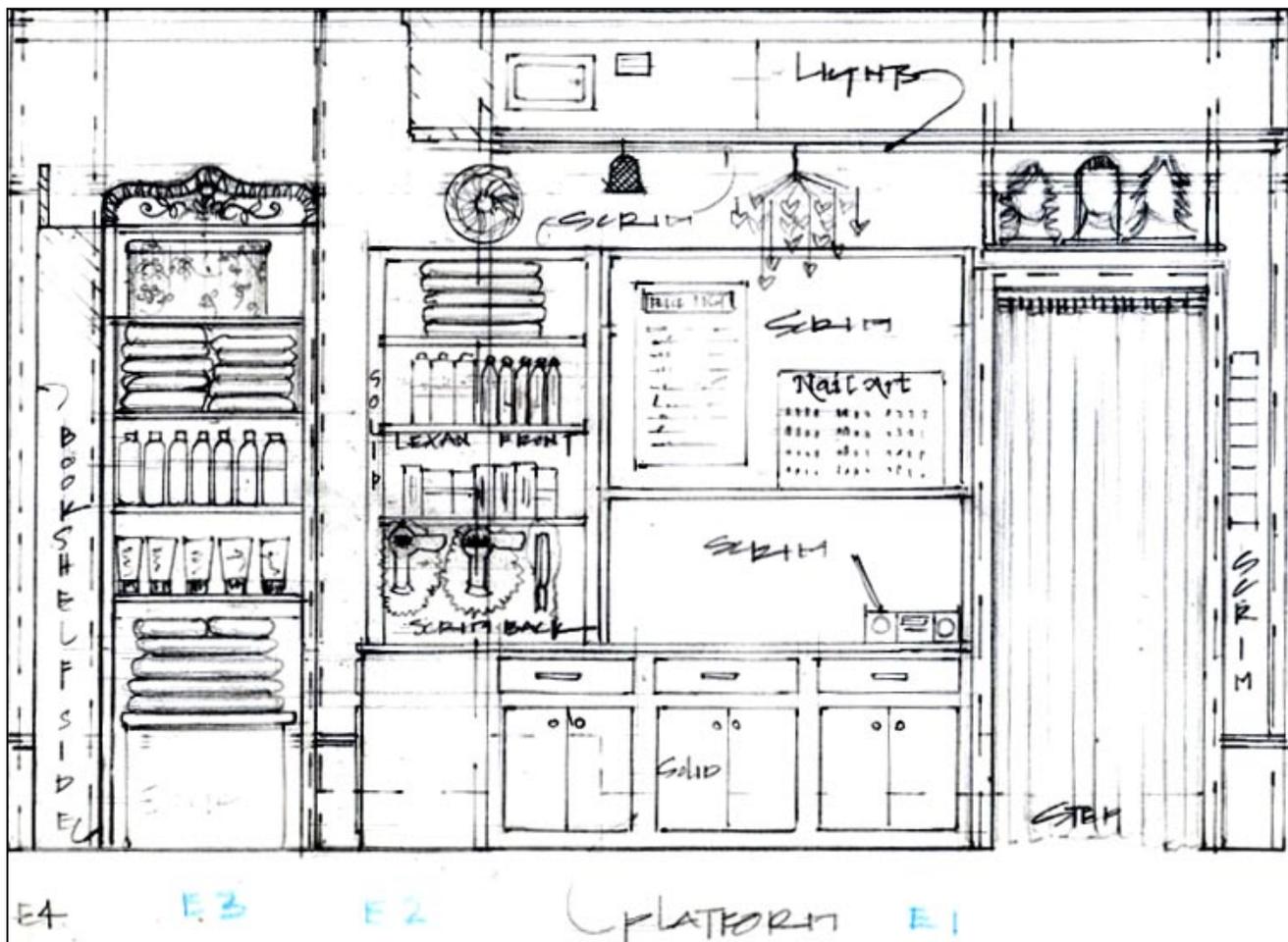
SN: Your family were immigrants from Greece and this helped you in finding your way inside the play. You must have also done a lot of research.

AL: Yes, absolutely. We took a lot of photographs of the neighborhood. I've lived in New York for 30 years

and I love a lot of the city. I like exploring. It's very easy for me to find a way into this piece. I struggled as a young person coming here. I'm always looking around and I'm very observant about what makes the city unique and I love the architecture of the city. So for me it was just finding a way of capturing the feeling of the neighborhood --- in transition. I lived in the East Village from the late '70's until now so I've seen it happen. I've seen what the transformation looks like when it's happening. It's just in me. I feel like I know the details, the little signposts that tell you what's changing. And I just try to capture that on stage. And that's what we do with the model. By building the model we can actually see what's effective in capturing the essence of the neighborhood.

SN: So several of the aspects of the world of this play are familiar to you through your own experiences living in New York City.

AL: I also try to observe what it is about a neighborhood that distinguishes it. There are certain things, when you live in the city, that you see every day that become just part of the fabric of the neighborhood. Until you have to put it on stage when suddenly you realize that those things are very important because they tell you what makes this neighborhood distinctive.

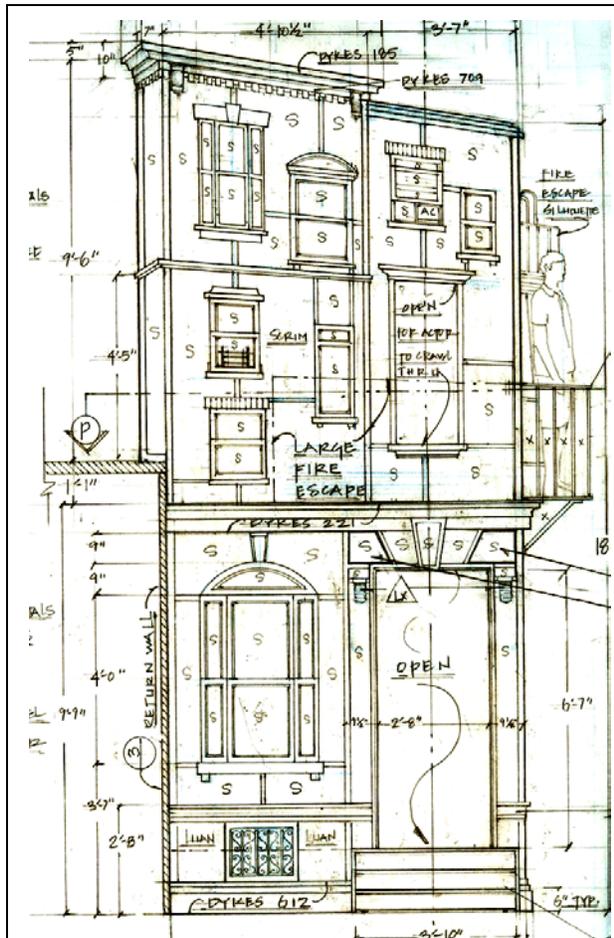


SN: What were the things about Washington Heights that jumped out at you as defining elements?

AL: The businesses. The awnings tell you a lot about the kinds of businesses that are there. There are lots of hair salons and car services. And those factor into the storytelling of the show. And if you go to Washington Heights, you see that there are lots of those kinds businesses...and delis, the corner bodegas. The ethnic makeup of the neighborhood is telegraphed a lot in the signage that's there.

SN: What are the qualities and skills that are required to be a successful scenic designer?

AL: Being able to capture the essence of an environment is important so you have to be very observant. And having as much material as you can, background material and visual material to be able to support your choices. But also I think you have a responsibility to know how to execute the design in a way that provides enough information for the set to get built the way you want it. I think the better understanding you have of how things are put together, the more control you have over the result. So it's a combination of both. And also knowing what the actors need is important, knowing what the choreographer needs spatially and where the director sees people located in the space. Sometimes we feed off of each other when we first start talking about it.



SN: How did this process work with *In the Heights*?

AL: I spent a lot of time talking with the Director and the Choreographer in this case because there's a lot of dancing in the show. We'd try to figure out where Usnavi's bodega was going to be on the stage; who lives upstairs from the bodega...trying to create a background for these people's lives. Where's abuela's stoop? Is she next door to the bodega? Is she next door to the car service? The hair salon? How important is the hair salon? How many scenes happen in there? So we had to deduce and prioritize where we want these places to be located. And then I have to figure out a map of where all this stuff can be on stage. When we played Off-Broadway we had a very shallow theatre space with one layer of buildings and some perspective flats behind that. Then we had this huge image of the bridge which is very much an important factor in the show because it locates the neighborhood. It's also symbolic. It's the bridge; the bridge to the rest of the country.

SN: What impact does the move uptown to Broadway have on the design?

AL: It's interesting. It presents us with a couple of advantages and some disadvantages. In the old theatre space we had it was extremely wide but very shallow, so we decided to spread the set from wall to wall and create an environment of the neighborhood. There was no masking. So if you were sitting in the theatre, you could see all the buildings. But there was not enough depth so we had one sidewalk across the back then there was the wall and the bridge. In this case, with our move to Broadway, we actually have less width, so we have to squeeze everything in within the proscenium now. But because we have more depth, we can create more layers. Now the challenge is to create enough layers that you can actually see through. So we're playing with seeing the architecture in a more skeletal way; so you'll still be able to see people engaged in various activities. So you might have a scene taking place downstage but you'll see someone doing some business upstage...folding laundry or on the phone. We've also added height to the back so you get the sense that there are levels in Washington Heights, that make that neighborhood different from the rest of Manhattan since you're high on this rocky terrain up there, and that the streets are not all on the same level.

SN: Scenic design is really a combination of art and craft. What kind of education and training do you have?

AL: I have an undergraduate degree in theatre but not in design. I studied acting. But I was always interested in what took place backstage. I had multiple interests so of course I chose something other than acting because it's just too hard anyway – not that design is easy! But I always wanted to

participate in a bigger way so I took some courses and learned to draft and build models. I assisted for five years, a lot of designers, and then went back to school and got a Masters in design at NYC - at Tisch. Then continued to work as an assistant for several years after that and occasionally would get to do little Off-Broadway shows. I joined the union right after I graduated so that allowed me to work at a higher pay scale and work on television shows and movies. And then one little Off-Broadway show became very successful and that was Avenue Q. It was a long haul but it was worth it. All those years of working for other people on a huge range of projects from little Off-Broadway plays where you find your own scenery and pull your own props off the street to big multi-million dollar musicals and television and movies – all those experiences contribute.

SN: And the technical training and skills that you've gained are an important part of that too?

AL: Absolutely. I think it's essential. You don't have to be an engineer. That's the job of the scenic shops. They figure out how to make this stuff stand up. But it's important, not only for your own control over the piece but also, because you depend on so many other people to execute this stuff, it's important that they have faith in you, in your ability to envision

something. Also, I think they respect you when you know what you're talking about. And I think you have more support. These people are working for you and for the producer and there's a lot of money at stake.

SN: Have you ever been in the position of having to defend your design?

AL: In some cases I've had to argue in favor of something that cost more money. Usually, what happens is the producer will say: "We have a budget of so much money..." So, in the case of *In the Heights*, one of the things that was said to me was, "When we move to Broadway, we still don't want moving scenery. We don't want to have automation in the show." That was one of the dictates, because it costs more money. Whenever you have automation in a show you have mechanics, winches, machinery that needs to be maintained and rental fees because the machinery is rented. When I first read the play I thought "Oh, this set has to move," and I was worried that this was going to be a problem. But we've kind of stripped it to a more abstracted, bare bones version of the neighborhood. It gives us the flexibility to invite the audience to use their imagination.



***In The Heights*
Finished Set Model
November 27, 2007**

Discussion Objective

The appreciation of various art forms.

Teaching Tips

What is your opinion of graffiti? Think of some comments you have made, and some you've heard. Are they positive or negative? With whom do you associate the art of graffiti?

From the Script

The city is in blackout. Graffiti Pete offers help in protecting Usnavi's store from looters. At sunrise he tries to get the group to look at the art he's done by candlelight during the blackout. Only later do the residents of the Heights recognize his talent when, commissioned by Sonny, he paints a portrait of the late Abuela on Usnavi's storefront.

Act 1, Scene 12

GRAFFITI PETE
THEY GONNA BOMBARD THE STORE UNTIL YOU AIN'T GOT
A STORE NO MORE!

SONNY
I GOT A BASEBALL BAT ON A RACK IN THE BACK.

GRAFFITI PETE
I GOT A COUPLE ROMAN CANDLES, WE CAN DISTRACT
THE VANDALS!

SONNY
HEY YO I SEE SOME THUGS COMIN, MAN, WE GONNA GET
JACKED UP!

GRAFFITI PETE
GIMME A LIGHT, I'LL BE RIGHT BACK. BACK UP—

Act 2, Scene 2

At daybreak...

GRAFFITI PETE
Yo, Sonny, come check out my new wall! I
painted it by candlelight!...

USNAVI
You got a new canvas. Tag up the whole store,
have a blast.

Exercises

Why do you think Usnavi has such a negative opinion of Pete's work? Or is it the work?

Public art projects are accepted as valid art forms throughout the world. Work by such artists as Christo have gained wide acceptance and garnered praise from the art community and public at large.

Have students research Christo's work. Prepare slides on the projects and show them to the class, allowing students to comment. Do the same with slides of graffiti. Allow student comments. Afterwards, have students discuss why they did or did not like the various projects. Have them explain. Do they think Christo's and Graffiti Pete's are the same or different? Explain.

Writing Objective

The importance of art and creativity to a person's development.

Teaching Tips

What constitutes art? Does everyone have a creative side? Do you think Americans sacrifice their artistic sides to making money? How damaging might this be to a person's personality? to the culture at large?

From the Script Act 2, Scene 14

Sonny hires Graffiti Pete to paint a mural of Abuelo on Usnavi's store security gate. The mural has such a powerful effect on Usnavi that he decides to stay in the Heights. Graffiti Pete, the artist, has had his first commissioned work and will be from that day forward viewed in the neighborhood as a true artist.

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                                GRAFFITI PETE
What it do? Great sunlight this morning.

                                SONNY
Yo cuz! We fixed the grate!

                                USNAVI
(To SONNY.) What did I tell you about this punk?

                                SONNY
You have to commission an artist while his rate is
still good.

                                GRAFFITI PETE
The first work in my new series.

(GRAFFITI PETE rolls down the gate. There is a
huge graffiti mural of ABUELA CLAUDIA that says
PACIENCIA Y FE.

                                GRAFFITI PETE
He hates it.

                                SONNY
Shh. He's forming an artistic opinion.

                                USNAVI
YOU DID THIS LAST NIGHT?

                                GRAFFITI PETE
YEAH.

                                USNAVI
THERE GOES MY FLIGHT.
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Exercises

Clearly, not everyone can be a Picasso, Beethoven or Shakespeare. But how important is technical proficiency to the act of creating? A Mexican man comes home from work and in the evening sits before his modest home, painting a clay pot. Why do you think he does this? Is it art? Can you imagine the adults in your life doing this? Why? Why not?

What is the emotional impact of Pete's mural on Usnavi when he sees Abuela's face on his store gate? Think about it then write an essay expressing how you might feel in his position. Include personal insights into how you think Pete feels and the artistic satisfaction he's received from doing the work. In your conclusion explain why you think this particular work of art did it's job when it came to touching those who created it, as well as those who viewed it. Isn't this the true purpose of art? State your opinion.



RESOURCES

StageNOTES™

A FIELD GUIDE FOR TEACHERS
A Camp Broadway, LLC Publication

WEBSITES

The official website for *In The Heights*
www.intheheightsontour.com

Official website, US government-operated
<http://www.washington-heights.us/>

Dominican Immigration to the United States
<http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?id=259>

Puerto Rican Immigration
<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/immig/cuban3.html>

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