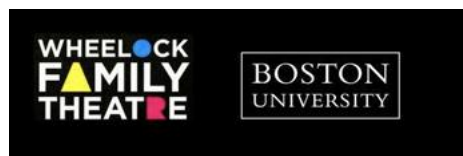


Ragtime

a Wheelock Family Theatre at Boston University Study Guide
prepared by Marianne Adams



A kaleidoscopic musical journey through the
turn of the 20th century,
based on the novel by E.L. Doctorow
January 25 - February 17, 2019



Student Matinee Series supported by the Yawkey Foundation

200 Riverway Boston, MA 02215-4176 | 617.353.2994 | www.wheelockfamilytheatre.org

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A Note About Wheelock Family Theatre at Boston University

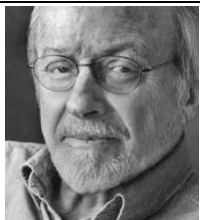
WFT@BU has been on the forefront of inclusion and nontraditional casting since 1981, offering enhancements for audience members with physical and developmental disabilities and fulfilling our mission to have every child (and grown up) see themselves on stage. This production of *Ragtime* is no exception.

Casting. This production continues WFT's long tradition of multicultural and intergenerational casting, featuring actors in lead roles from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds and of all ages.

Access for All.

- You will notice rectangular screens on either side of the stage- that is our open captioning system. All the words the actors say are put up on the screens so that audience members who are Deaf or hard of hearing can enjoy the performance.
- Our entire theatre facility is fully wheelchair accessible.
- Braille and large format programs are available upon request.
- Sound enhancement devices are available upon request.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS THE NOVEL AND THE MUSICAL



E.L. Doctorow (Author of the Novel)

The musical *Ragtime* is an adaptation of the novel of the same name, written by E.L. Doctorow and published in 1975. The novel received much critical acclaim, Time and the Modern Library listed it as one of the top 100 English-language novels of the 20th century. Doctorow is known for his historical fiction, his unique and sometimes experimental literary style, and his ability to incorporate contemporary values and ideas into his discussions of past events. Some of his other notable works include *The Book of Daniel* (1971), *Billy Bathgate* (1989), and *City of God* (2000).



Terrence McNally (Book)

Terrence McNally is an accomplished writer of television, plays, and books for musicals. McNally has won four Tony awards for his writing of the book for *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1993), and for his adaptation

of Doctorow's novel *Ragtime* (1997), as well as for his plays *Love! Valor! Compassion!* (1995), and *Master Class* (1996).

Other notable works include: *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*, *Andre's Mother* (television mini-series), and the controversial play, *Corpus Christi*. McNally's newest play, *Mothers and Sons*, premiered this June at Bucks County Playhouse.



Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty (Music and Lyrics)

Ahrens and Flaherty have worked together since the early 1980s, and their first musical, *Lucky Stiff*, premiered Off-Broadway in 1988.

Their work on *Ragtime* garnered the attention of audiences and critics alike, and they went on to win the Tony Award

for Best Score, a Drama Desk award, and two Grammy nominations for the show. Other notable collaborations include: *Seussical*, *Once on this Island*, and the songs for the animated film, *Anastasia*.

Milwaukee Repertory Theater

The Making of Ragtime- an interview with the creative team that adapted the novel and wrote the songs and music. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRpR0mbjczk>

INTERVIEWS

LISA YUEN (MOTHER)



What is your history with this play? In 2003 I was a working actor in New York City. I was cast in the ensemble of *Ragtime* at Sacramento Music Circus. It was one of a small handful of regional theatres that had a reputation for non-traditional casting. Yet, upon getting the job, I remember questioning the decision and jokingly saying something like “Are you sure you called the right person?” Fast forward to 2018 and now I’m playing “Mother” with no doubt or question in my mind. I get a little emotional thinking of how much times have changed from seeing that one Asian girl in the chorus to the actual possibility of playing a leading role.

How does the show speak to modern audiences? *Ragtime* is about America in the early 1900’s and makes the audience think about America today. At its heart, our production features local actors and tells the story about us and our America. I’m a local Brookline “Mother”, PTO room mom to first grade twins at Heath Elementary School. The original 1998 Broadway production of *Ragtime* focuses on three races and 20 years later, while the script still focuses on those three races, it also includes what America looks like today. It makes you reexamine the script and what it means to us.

How does non-traditional casting work in this production? I was struck by one of Mother’s lines in Act One. Upon seeing Tateh, the Jewish immigrant, holding a rope that is tied around his daughter’s waist, Mother says to her son, “Immigrants are terrified of losing their children. So are we, just not so conspicuously.” Again, I found myself in the mindset of me in 2003 and questioning my existence in this musical. Can I, an Asian woman playing Mother, really refer to Tateh as an immigrant? But really the greater question is what allows Mother, a nonindigenous person to America, to believe she’s not an immigrant, too? In many ways, my questioning this line solidifies my belief in the “contemporary casting”. Unless we are the indigenous people of America, we are all immigrants. I’m fifth generation Chinese American. My family’s American history started around the same time as *Ragtime* but they were laborers on the west coast building the transcontinental railroads. How wonderful to tell this beautiful American story of *Ragtime* and I am thankful to WFT for allowing me to be and feel included.

ANTHONY PIRES JR (COALHOUSE)



What is your history with *Ragtime*? Did you read it in school or have you performed anything from it? If so, how has your relationship with it changed over time?

Since I was in middle school, I fell in love with E.L. Doctorow’s book *Ragtime*. I also fell in love with the musical because of its amazing score and storytelling. I was introduced to this musical and book in 8th grade. The first time I performed a number from the show was in 9th grade for my musical theater 101 class. We had to find a song that connected with our individual self and what we think of our society compared to what was happening in the early 1900’s. I chose to sing Coalhouse’s song, *Make Them Hear You*. The song meant a lot at the time because in Florida, I dealt with a lot of prejudice and racism, being one of the few people of color in my school and how I was living an unfair world and that even if it doesn’t treat me well I

want to be sure to tell the story to others and hopefully make their experiences in the future better. My relationship with the musical has not changed. I think it’s grown stronger. Ever since I was in high school, I told my teachers and friends that someday I will play this role either on a regional production or on Broadway. And look at me now.... My vision/dream came true.

What is one thing that excites you about the story of Ragtime?

The one thing that excites me about the story of *Ragtime* is the story telling of three individual communities, sharing their pros and cons, and how in order to move forward to reach unity is to the driving factor of either, love, death or hope.

What is one characteristic of your character that you love, and one that you are interested to explore?

One of the characteristics that I would love to explore is Coalhouse’s jovialness (Joy). His joy for music, his joy for entertaining others, his joy that drives him to collaborate and connect with others easily. Also explore to see how Coalhouse can still show that jovialness in moments in the show when his spirit is crushed with the death of his loved one and the destruction of one of his proudest possession (a Model T)

The music means so much in this story, can you talk about what your favorite song is and why?

It’s hard to pick my favorite song in the show. All of the music is fantastic and has meaning behind each lyric. If I had to choose a song, it would be “Till We Reach That Day”, which is the finale of act 1. The reason why I love this song is because this is the first moment where you see the full ensemble come together on a stage to see a mixture of sadness, pain, struggle and thinking about what the future will become since an innocent woman died through the motivation of love. I love this song because it represents the climax of the musical. It shows the inequality of an innocent person of color getting shot because someone thought they had a gun. This is currently happening in our society. People are advocating for themselves and having a voice, but sometimes having a voice in our society can lead to bad consequences. I feel that we no longer have peace in our country or if we do, it is lowering each day.

What are some of the messages that we as a contemporary audience can pull from this story set in 1906?

- Inequity
- Social Injustice
- Passion for music, love and acceptance.
- Living the American Dream
- How protesting and advocating for a community can be effective but dangerous at moments. Sometimes it can turn to a negative experience and it will lead to bad consequences.

PEOPLE OF NEW ROCHELLE
And there was distant music
Simple and somehow sublime
Giving the nation
A new syncopation
The people called it Ragtime

MOTHER, TATEH, COALHOUSE, SARAH:
Well, when he is old enough
I will show him America.
And he will ride...
Our son will ride...
On the wheels of a dream.

TATEH
One afternoon, watching his children play,
Tateh had an idea for a movie: a bunch of
children, white, black Christian, Jew, rich, poor--
all kinds-- a gang, a crazy gang getting into
trouble, getting out of trouble, but together
despite their differences.
He was sure it would make a wonderful movie--
a dream of what this country could be.
He would be first in line to see it.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

<https://www.thesmithcenter.com/blog/the-progressive-era-the-world-of-ragtime/>



The Progressive Era was an extremely important time for America's women. During this time women gained greater access to education and began to assert their equality in the home. At the end of the 19th century women were seen as the "moral guardians" and protectors of the home. Many activists used this ideology as a justification for women to take a more active role in the political arena. During the Progressive Era women became more civically engaged and played a major role in the labor and temperance movements. Settlement houses founded by women became important community centers in urban areas; they provided education, health services, arts activities, and helped immigrants adapt to American culture. Women's rights advanced significantly during this time period as women worked on many issues related to sexuality, marriage, and childbirth; including divorce rights and

birth control. Thanks to the hard work of prominent women activists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony the 19th amendment to the constitution was ratified in 1920, giving women the right to vote.

America saw tremendous industrial growth during the late 19th century and early 20th century, resulting in corporations of unprecedented size like Standard Oil and U.S. Steel Corp. Big business leaders, often called robber barons, enjoyed unprecedented power by taking advantage of minimal government regulation and exploitative labor practices. Worker strikes were common and often violent affairs. Activist journalists, called muckrakers, published numerous exposés of big business, including Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle" about unsanitary and unfair practices in the Chicago meat packing industry and Jacob Riis' "How the Other Half Lives" exposing the conditions of tenement slums. President Teddy Roosevelt broke with many of his Republican colleagues when he supported stronger government regulation of business and took the side of labor in the settlement of the Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902. As a result of these efforts the Progressive Era saw significant reforms in the regulation of working conditions and numerous antitrust suits.

New Rochelle is a suburb of New York City located in Westchester County, New York. The town was settled by refugee Huguenots (French Protestants) in 1688 who were fleeing Catholic pogroms in France. In 1900 its population was 14,720. During the Progressive Era, New Rochelle became the site of one of the first planned communities in the United States. Rochelle Park, completed in 1904, was the precursor to today's ubiquitous suburban subdivisions.

From 1891 to 1900, 4 million immigrants entered the United States, from 1901 to 1910 that number increased to 8.8 million. In 1910, three-fourths of New York City's population was either immigrants or first generation Americans. Unlike earlier immigrants, the immigrant populations of the progressive era came primarily from non-English speaking European countries. Large numbers came from Italy, Russia and Poland and often had a difficult time adjusting to American life. Many faced extreme poverty and discrimination. Most settled in urban centers where jobs were available and ended up taking work that other Americans would not. They became a cheap source of labor for the country's wealthy robber barons and played a key role in the labor movement. Settlement houses founded by a new generation of educated women became important education and community centers for many poor urban immigrants.





Despite the advances in Women’s rights and labor, the rights of African Americans actually regressed after the progress made during the [Reconstruction Era](#). Post [emancipation](#), the [13th](#), [14th](#) and [15th](#) amendments, as well as the [Civil Rights Act](#) of 1875, provided many new freedoms. However, rights began to diminish after Reconstruction ended in 1877. The end of the 19th century saw the rise of [Jim Crow laws](#) in the South, where 90 percent of African Americans lived at the time. Supreme Court rulings like [Plessy v. Ferguson](#) in 1896, which upheld a Louisiana law segregating train cars, paved the way for legal discrimination throughout the South. Lynching was a common practice and “progressive” reforms made it easier to deny African American’s voting rights. It was not until 1815 with [Guinn v. United States](#) when the Supreme Court began to strike down some of the laws, although Plessy v. Ferguson would have to wait until 1954’s [Brown v. Board of Education](#) to be overturned. Still, the era was not without its victories, the [Niagara Movement](#) led by [W.E.B. DuBois](#) and [William Monroe Trotter](#) resulted in the formation of the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#) (NAACP) in 1909. [Booker T. Washington](#), one of Ragtime’s characters, became a prominent and influential African American leader and founded the [Tuskegee Institute](#), which became Tuskegee University, in 1881 to educate blacks. The onset of [World War II](#) saw the beginning of the [Great Migration](#), as many southern Blacks headed north to find industrial jobs and escape the violent racial oppression in the South.



[Ragtime music](#) was an important element of the Progressive Era soundtrack. The African American piano style originated in the Midwest and South sometime in the late 1880s or early 1890s. One of its defining characteristics is heavily syncopated or “ragged” rhythms. The style grew out of the Cakewalk, a popular African American dance competition of the time named for the prize commonly given to the winner. Composer [Scott Joplin](#) popularized ragtime in 1899 with the release of his classic “[Maple Leaf Rag](#).”



LISTEN TO SCOTT JOPLIN’S “MAPLE LEAF RAG”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMAtL7n_-rc&feature=youtu.be

This is not the America he came here for. None of us did. None of us! (EMMA GOLDMAN)

**And say to those who blame us for the way we chose to fight
That sometimes there are battles that are more than black or white
And I could not put down my sword when justice was my right.** (COALHOUSE WALKER)

**There was a time -Our happiness seemed never-ending
I was so sure -That where we were heading was right** (MOTHER)

**He wanted to say, I am sick of the injustices. He wanted to say, give me something to believe! In my soul
I am your brother, we are bound to one another, angered by the darkness in light, and the lies we
perceive.** (YOUNGER BROTHER)

PREPARING TO SEE THE SHOW

Ragtime is a show set in the early 20th century with strong themes and language. As you prepare to attend the performance we suggest that you introduce students to the history of the period, (see the **Progressive Era**). Discuss the social themes and civil rights issues of the times. Make a T chart or use another graphic organizer to list the social issues being dealt with during the period (see #3 under activities).

If time allows explore Ragtime music using one of the links below. See activities #7-10 below for before or after explorations of Ragtime and Jazz.

- <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/interactives/harlem/>
- <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200035811/>
- <http://www.american-historama.org/1913-1928-ww1-prohibition-era/harlem-renaissance.htm>
- https://www.nps.gov/jazz/learn/historyculture/jazz_history.htm
- <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1917beyond/essays/jazz.htm>
- http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/bhistory/history_of_jazz.htm

Dehumanizing Language- Adapted from Facing History and Ourselves

Ragtime, like many literary works, includes both language and topics that require careful consideration from teachers and students. We believe the best way to prepare to encounter these topics is to create a class contract outlining guidelines for a respectful, reflective classroom discussion.

EL Doctorow used racial slurs such as “nigger”, “yid”, “cracker”, “kraut”, “stupid pollack”, “kike”, “mick” deliberately to illustrate the society he wrote about. The dehumanizing power of these terms and the ease with which some Americans have used it to describe their fellow human beings is central to understanding the themes of identity and human behavior at the heart of the book.

In particular is very difficult to use and discuss the term “nigger” in the classroom, but its presence in the play makes it necessary to acknowledge it and set guidelines for students about whether or not to pronounce it when reading aloud or quoting from the performance or text. Otherwise, this word’s presence might distract students from an open discussion about characters and themes.

THE PLAY INCLUDES STRONG LANGUAGE AND REFERENCES TO VIOLENCE, SEX AND DEATH.

Please prepare students for this and discuss how to respond in the theater. We suggest that you process these as part of your follow up at school. Below is a list of some of the language and events in the production and some suggested activities for preparing for the show and discussing it afterwards. .

References and Moments of Racism and Strong Language

- There are three distinct worlds that exist in *Ragtime*. New Rochelle, a historically Caucasian and upper class section of New York. Harlem, a historically African American and lower class neighborhood of New York City. Manhattan's Lower East Side, a lower class neighborhood where historically thousands of immigrants lived after arriving from Eastern Europe.
- Racial slurs and phrases used in the production include: "nigger", "yid", "cracker", "kraut", "stupid pollack", "kike", "mick".
- Other words or phrases used in the show include: "bastard", "sons o' bitches", "ass", "schmuck".

References and Moments of Violence, Death, & Sex

- Willie Conklin and the fireman destroy Coalhouse's car because Coalhouse is African American.
- Sarah, a new mother who is stricken with grief, buries her newborn son in the ground.
- Tateh attacks a man who tries to buy his daughter.
- Characters recount and describe an arsonist setting numerous fires throughout New York, which injure several fireman.
- Characters recount and describe a gunman shooting and killing three people.
- The song "What a Game" has violent tones.
- Coalhouse and Younger Brother plot to blow up J.P. Morgan's Library.
- Sarah is killed by policemen who mistakenly believe she has a gun.
- Characters describe the death of Evelyn Nesbit's lover, Stanford White, who was shot and killed by her husband Harry K. Thaw.
- Coalhouse is shot and killed by the police.
- Evelyn Nesbit's performance in "Crime of the Century" contains sexual undertones. She uses the phrase "ruined at the age of 15."

Activity- adapted from *Teaching the N-word, Rethinking Schools*

<https://www.rethinkingschools.org/articles/teaching-the-n-word>

This activity has students listen to media discussions on the use of the n-word. Those having the discussion range from politicians to celebrities to civic leaders.

Day One

1. Have students take a piece of paper and draw two columns to take some notes while they listen to a televised debate between an African American scholar, Michael Eric Dyson, and author and CNN reporter Roland Martin, over the use and ownership of the n-word. Write them one name at the top of each column and listen carefully to each side of their debate.”

Note: What points of view emerged from the discussion? (In the article the teacher notes that some kids thought it was OK to use the n-word; some thought it was never OK; some—the majority of the class, in fact—thought it was OK for some people to use the n-word, but maybe only some of the time.)

2. Watch the other videos and take notes on language, evidence, and point of view.

Day Two

1. Have students who shared the same opinions to get together in groups and stake out territories in different parts of the room. *“We are going to have a quick conversation about the n-word. To prepare, take five minutes to pool your notes and evidence, and discuss in your group where you stand on the use of the n-word in our society. Use the language and ideas you heard in the Angelou and Winfrey clips, the Sherman press conference, and the debate between Dyson and Martin.”*
2. After the groups talk among themselves, open it up to a larger discussion: *“I want everybody to speak but class norms still apply, so no interrupting, no put-downs, and, for now, please do not use the actual word.”*
3. Have students write a brief persuasive essay on the use of the n-word in modern U.S. culture. Having practiced using evidence to make persuasive arguments is helpful. Either way, before they begin, brainstormed a list of essay criteria on the board. Write for 40 minutes. Share hottest part of essay.

RESOURCES

“Funeral for the N-Word” (with Michael Eric Dyson and Roland Martin). 2008. *American Morning*, CNN. June. Available at [youtube.com/watch?v=T62PysJizXs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T62PysJizXs).

“Jay Z on the N-Word.” 2011. *Oprah Winfrey Show*. Jan. 17. Available at [oprah.com/oprahshow/Jay-Z-on-the-N-word-Video](https://www.oprah.com/oprahshow/Jay-Z-on-the-N-word-Video).

“The Power of Words” (with Maya Angelou and Russell Mitchell). 2007. CBS News, April 15. [youtube.com/watch?v=On9Pq1LNLwM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=On9Pq1LNLwM).

Sherman, Richard. 2014. “Thug Is the Accepted Form of the N-Word.” Jan. 22. [youtube.com/watch?v=OXOsSko2AFQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXOsSko2AFQ).

For background on the origins of the n-word

Blackside. 1995. *Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Movement 1954–1985*. PBS Video. Available at [pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize).

HOW WE RESPOND SAYS A LOT

Productions of *Ragtime* have not been without controversy. In January 2017 Cherry Hill High School East, in Cherry Hill, New Jersey began to mount a production of *Ragtime*. People in the community objected to the language used. The school board held public meetings, the cast of the Broadway revival of the show heard about it and reached out to the school, and the playwrights published a response. The story is fascinating, and helps us as educators think about how to deal with texts that have racist and defamatory language, from classics such as *Huckleberry Finn* to *To Kill a Mockingbird*, to *Monster*.

Here is a link to the story and a letter from the Superintendent of Schools: <http://www.artsintegrity.org/with-curricular-context-added-ragtime-to-play-on-in-cherry-hill/>

Brian Stokes Mitchell, who created the role of Coalhouse Waker Jr. in the original production of *Ragtime*, responded: <http://www.artsintegrity.org/cherry-picking-the-words-of-ragtime-in-cherry-hill/>

Resources And Activities For Talking About Racist Language

1. let's talk! | discussing race, racism and other difficult topics with students

From Teaching Tolerance a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center

<http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/TT%20Difficult%20Conversations%20web.pdf>

A good resources for setting ground rules and checking on the comfort in the room.

[“Exploring the Controversy: The ‘N’ Word”](#) from *Huck Finn in Context: A Teaching Guide* (PBS)

Looks at language in Huck Finn and how to discuss the historic use of the language and the effect on contemporary students. Gives strategies for leading discussions and making connections to current use. Links to other literature and poems.

[“Straight Talk about the N-Word”](#) from Teaching Tolerance (Southern Poverty Law Center)

An interview with Neal A. Lester from Arizona State who teaches a course on the n-word.

[“In Defense of a Loaded Word”](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates (New York Times)

*An interview with the author of *Asphalt Sketches*, *The Beautiful Struggle: A Father, Two Sons, and an Unlikely Road to Manhood*, *Between the World and Me: Notes on the First 150 Years in America*, *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy*, and many articles and comics.*

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/video/teaching-the-n-word>

A teaching channel video of an 11th grade class in Mountain View, California, using the Socratic method to discuss charged articles.

<https://www.rethinkingschools.org/articles/teaching-the-n-word>

*A High School teacher talks about teaching August Wilson’s *Fences* and how she prepared her class for language in the play.*

Discussion Questions and Activities.

1. **MEDIA AND RACE:** Relate the events of the play “Ragtime” to events in the media today, then, compare and contrast. Make an argument for or against the idea of societal progression since the 1900s in the area of racial discrimination
2. **COMMON GROUND?:** America in the 1900s was a difficult landscape for both African Americans and immigrants- compare and contrast the experiences of these two groups. Was the mutual struggle the only reason for the friendship between the families in the play? Or was this a deeper level of human understanding?
3. **THEN AND NOW:** Make a T-Chart that lists the political and social events in the play. Make a list of current events. Discuss similarities, ways issues have been addressed, what has been effective, and what is has been adequately addressed. (Suggested to start this prior to attending performance)
4. **RELATIONSHIPS:** The bonds of family and friendship were tested and ultimately broken multiple times in this play- analyze the qualities that kept the friendships and families that were able to survive, together. Are there universal characteristics of strong friendships, or is it all dependent on the circumstances of the people’s lives?
5. **FRIENDSHIP:** The characters in this play risked a lot on friendship and lost in the end- describe a time you took a risk in forming a friendship, whether it ended for good.
6. **CREATIVE WRITTING:** Have students choose a historical character to incorporate into their own work of fiction. Discuss why they chose this person. What did they change about them? Why? What attributes remained true to life or historical accounts?
7. **PERPECTIVES:** In class, divide students into groups, according to learning styles (written, oral, visual, kinesthetic). Give groups the following tasks, based on learning styles:
 - a. **Written:** Write a campaign speech explaining how language can be used to unify society and what you will do to achieve this if elected into office.
 - b. **Oral:** Create a newscast, complete with anchors, reports, and guests that examines the events of the play.
 - c. **Visual:** Create a brochure promoting the use of language to unify a society.
 - d. **Kinesthetic:** Create and perform a skit(s) that explores the a scene from particular character’s perspective.
8. **MUSIC AND SOCIETY:** Listen to ragtime music with your class. Discuss how this style of music reflects the society in which it was created and the issues of the day. Then allow your students to choose a few contemporary songs. Discuss how they relate to these songs and how they reflect our society and our experiences. Examine style, rhythm and tempo, instrumentation, lyrics, etc. Examine some other examples of music which were more straightforward tools for social commentary or criticism such as folk music and protest songs of the 60s etc.

9. **MUSIC AND CREATIVE WRITING:** Choose music from three different genres. Have students listen to each piece and compose short pieces of fiction or poetry which relate to or interpret each piece of music. Discuss their interpretations and the various methods that each student used to accomplish this. How do the texts relate to the music? What do they share in common? Afterwards, you might look at some texts and show how their authors related to music through form or structure, rhythm, choice of punctuation, historical references, etc.
10. **MUSICAL FIGURES:** Research and write about important figures of the Ragtime and Jazz style. These can include Jelly Roll Morton, Scot Joplin, Fats Waller, Eubie Blake, Buddy Bolden, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, etc. Identify if their musician was a singer, bandleader, composer or what instrument they played, when they were born and when they died, and who their contemporaries were. Gather general information about their life experience. In addition, using a web search listen and critique two recordings by your chosen musician. Critiques will be included in your final biography papers.
11. **VISUAL REPORT:** After completing the biography projects make a collage about music/your musician/music and society. Make a clear connection between Ragtime and Jazz musicians and how they improvise and collaborate, and the process of an artist composing and rearranging materials and ideas.

Consider----

- What makes collage interesting?
- Why does one collage look messy when another, with the same amount of images, can feel focused?
- How can you improvise with your shapes?
- How can you create rhythm in your piece?

Use a 12x12 piece of paper to imitate an album cover. Choose images and textiles (newspapers, magazines, fabric, printed images, cardboard, etc) Try several arrangements. Try tearing up images, overlapping images, adding paint or ink or oil pastels. Improvise. DON'T GLUE UNTIL YOU HAVE TRIED SEVERAL ARRANGEMENTS.

Write an "Artist's Statement" about the work. This should be an explanation of the process. What materials did you use? What decisions did you have to make and how did you make them? How does the work represent your topic?

Some ideas taken/adapted from:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/highschool/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780812978186&view=tg>
<https://www.pcs.org/assets/uploads/resource-guides/ResourceGuide-Ragtime.pdf>

Anne Sheridan, Med, Lesley University.

MORE IDEAS - This classroom resource will help students understand and appreciate the music styles used in the classic American musical *Ragtime*, based on the novel by E.L. Doctorow.

<https://www.fords.org/performances/past-productions/ragtime/teacher-resources-events/a-history-of-ragtime/>

WEB SEARCH

Find out more about the people and events in RAGTIME

VOCABULARY

civil rights
feminism
radicalism
revisionism
immigration
industrialization
assembly line
socialism
ragtime
anarchism
progressive
Mexican Revolution
invention of the moving picture
Egyptology

FAMOUS PEOPLE

Emma Goldman
J. P. Morgan
Henry Ford and the Model T
Harry Houdini
Evelyn Nesbit
Teddy Roosevelt
Admiral Peary's
Archduke Franz Ferdinand
Lusitania
Henry Frick
Jacob Riis
Stanford White
William Howard Taft
Emiliano Zapata
Zapatista
Scott Joplin
Booker T. Washington

VIEW PHOTOS OF PEOPLE AND PLACES MENTIONED IN THE SHOW

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1VsT-GWf0VbPJx9POJW4Zhe4S8KnBF_R3Zeltg2eaeUg/edit?usp=sharing Links to book resources

LIST SOME OF THE WORLD EVENTS IN THE OTHER COLUMN.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS IN PLAY	TIMELINE OF EVENTS IN WORLD
Summer 1906 Houdini's car crashes outside the New Rochelle house.	.
Autumn 1906 Evelyn meets Tateh, The Little Girl, and Emma Goldman.	
Autumn 1906 Sarah and her baby come to live with Mother.	
Winter 1906 Father explores the Arctic with Peary.	
Autumn 1907 Evelyn breaks Younger Brother's heart.	
Winter 1908 Tateh sells his flipbooks in Philadelphia.	
Spring 1908 Chief Conklin attacks Coalhouse and his car.	
Summer 1908 The family travels to Atlantic City.	
Autumn 1908 Coalhouse is killed.	
Summer 1914 Archduke Ferdinand is assassinated.	

RAGTIME SYNOPSIS

Courtesy of Music Theatre International

Act One

We are introduced to the social and political climate of the United States in the early twentieth century by meeting a parade of characters – famous celebrities and private citizens of the time. First, we visit New Rochelle, New York, to meet a well-to-do white family: Mother, Father and their Little Boy, Mother's Younger Brother and Grandfather. Next, we go to Harlem to meet Coalhouse Walker, Jr., a ragtime pianist, and his admirers. Immigrants arrive at Ellis Island as we meet Tateh, an artist who makes silhouettes, and his Little Girl. The lives of these three American families are entwined with Booker T. Washington, Harry Houdini, J.P. Morgan, Henry Ford, Evelyn Nesbit and Emma Goldman. Whites, African Americans, immigrants and celebrities are set on a collision course in the opening number ("Ragtime").

Father is accompanying Admiral Peary on a trip to the North Pole. At the dock, he consoles Mother that everything will be the same upon his return, but Mother is not convinced ("Goodbye My Love"). On its way out of the harbor, Father's ship passes a rag ship filled with immigrants, arriving in New York. Tateh and the Little Girl are on board. Tateh and Father wave to one another; Father admires the immigrants for their naïve bravery in coming to a new land, and Tateh questions Father's reasons for leaving the place that he has worked so hard to find. Simultaneously, Mother wonders what this year without her husband will bring ("Journey On").



Admiral Peary at the North Pole: April 6th, 1909

Mother's Younger Brother is in love with Evelyn Nesbit. He is frustrated and lost, searching for meaning in his life and hoping to find it in her. Her show is a vaudeville act that tells the true story of her lover's murder by her famous husband ("Crime of the Century"). Younger Brother goes to all of her shows. One day, after the show, Younger Brother approaches her, but she dismisses him.

The scene shifts to Mother and the Little Boy in the garden. The Little Boy wants to see Houdini, as he has a cryptic message for him, "Warn the Duke." While he begins to read her Father's letter, mother makes a shocking discovery – there is a newborn African-American child buried in the flowerbed. The police arrive on the premises with Sarah, the mother of the child. Rather than let Sarah go to prison, Mother takes Sarah and the child into her own home ("What Kind of Woman").



Immigrants Arriving at Ellis Island, 1903

With many other immigrants, Tateh and The Little Girl disembark at Ellis Island, full of hope ("America"). Tateh sets up his business on the Lower East Side, selling paper silhouettes of celebrities for a nickel each. Emma Goldman chastises him for selling one of J.P. Morgan, the epitome of capitalism. J.P. Morgan enters the scene and metaphorically crushes the immigrants, but Harry Houdini magically swoops in as an emblem of immigrant triumph. Time passes, Tateh becomes less idealistic – he is still poor, and the Little Girl is sick. When a

man tries to buy the Little Girl, Tateh has reached rock bottom. He swears to make a better life for himself and his child ("Success").

In Harlem, the people celebrate the great musician, Coalhouse Walker, Jr. ("His Name Was Coalhouse Walker"). He tells his friends the story of how he loved and lost Sarah but reveals that he's just found out where she might be living and is determined to win her back ("Gettin' Ready Rag"). Henry Ford appears to tell us of his new method of mass production and his most famous product, the Model T ("Henry Ford"). A new car rolls off of the assembly line, and Coalhouse drives off in search of Sarah.



The first Model T Ford - April 12th, 1909

Back in New Rochelle, Mother and the Little Boy wait at the train station, on their way to New York City to take care of the family business while Father is away. Tateh and the Little Girl wait across the tracks for a train to Boston. Mother and Tateh greet one another, and Tateh is surprised to be treated with respect ("Nothing Like the City"). The Little Boy has a premonition that they will see Tateh and the Little Girl again, but Mother tells him that is absurd.

On his way to New Rochelle, Coalhouse encounters a group of hostile volunteer firemen who threaten him for being cocky by driving past them in his new car. Meanwhile, Sarah, living in Mother's attic, begs her infant's forgiveness for her desperation, trying to explain what drove her to such an unimaginable act ("Your Daddy's Son"). When Coalhouse arrives at Mother's home, Sarah will not see him.

Coalhouse returns every Sunday for weeks, wooing Sarah with his ragtime tunes and winning over Mother, Grandfather and the Little Boy ("The Courtship"). Father returns from the North Pole to find a very different household from the one he left. He cannot wrap his head around the facts that his wife is independent, his family is accepting of the African-American courtship happening in his living room and there is ragtime music coming from his piano ("New Music").

Finally, Sarah comes down to see Coalhouse, and they reunite. Coalhouse tells Sarah of his admiration for Booker T. Washington's achievements, and together, he and Sarah imagine a future for their child ("Wheels of a Dream"). Meanwhile, in Lawrence, Massachusetts, Tateh has lost sight of the American dream and now works at a mill 64 hours a week. In Union Square, Emma Goldman tries to generate a strike against the oppressive mill owners. Younger Brother happens to hear her speech and is energized to the cause of workers rights – he finally has something in which to believe ("The Night That Goldman Spoke in Union Square").



Lawrence Textile Workers' Strike, 1912.

A violent labor strike erupts in Lawrence. Tateh intends to put The Little Girl on a train to a safer place, with other children and a chaperone. However, she is so distraught that he jumps on the train with her. He soothes her terror with a flipbook of silhouettes that he has made ("Gliding"). The train conductor notices the book of moving silhouettes and buys it for his own child. Tateh sees this as a wonderful new business idea.

Coalhouse once again encounters the volunteer firemen, and this time, they do more than threaten him. As Booker T. Washington gives a speech about rising above and holding fast, the men destroy Coalhouse's car. Coalhouse moves through the legal channels, looking for justice for this crime against him, but he is denied at every avenue ("Justice"). He postpones his marriage to Sarah until the matter is resolved. Sarah, out of desperation and naïveté, tries to seek help from a visiting Vice Presidential candidate but is clubbed to death by police who suspect her of having a gun ("President"). Act One closes with the anger and grief of Sarah's funeral ("Till We Reach That Day").

Act Two

Coalhouse mourns the loss of Sarah ("Coalhouse's Soliloquy"). Seeking vengeance, he shoots three of the firemen who trashed his car, burns their firehouse and demands that the fire chief, Willy Conklin, be brought to justice ("Coalhouse Demands").

A group of young men joins Coalhouse as he strikes out against the system. Booker T. Washington publicly condemns Coalhouse's actions. Father goes to the police to tell them what he knows about Coalhouse. Younger Brother, who is moved by the plight of the oppressed and angry about the injustice done to Coalhouse, erupts at Father for working against Coalhouse. He storms out of the house in anger, and Mother, who is still caring for Sarah and Coalhouse's baby, is deeply upset. In reaction, Father takes the Little Boy to a baseball game, but even this has changed and is now a game, not just for upper-class whites, but for immigrants, too ("What a Game"). Meanwhile, Coalhouse's band of men sets fires around the city. Reporters besiege the family in New Rochelle. Father, thinking that it is time to get away, takes the family to Atlantic City, where Evelyn Nesbit and Houdini both happen to be starring attractions ("Let's Run Away to Atlantic City").



Steel Pier, Atlantic City, 1910.

In Atlantic City, we discover that Tateh is now a famous film director and has recreated himself as Baron Ashkenazy. His daughter, healthy and beautifully dressed, is by his side. Once again, Tateh meets Mother and tells her the story of his success ("Buffalo Nickel Photoplay, Inc.").

Later, the Little Boy asks Houdini for his autograph and gives him the message, "Warn the Duke." Houdini is confused and intrigued, but the Little Boy runs off. The Little Girl and Little Boy play together as Tateh and Mother watch from the boardwalk ("Our Children"). Tateh reveals his humble origins to Mother, who is moved by his honesty.

In Harlem, Younger Brother searches for Coalhouse, and although the residents are distrustful of him, one of Coalhouse's men takes him to Coalhouse's hideout. Meanwhile, drawn by laughter and dancing in a club, Coalhouse thinks of the first time that he met Sarah ("Sarah Brown Eyes"). A blindfolded Younger Brother is brought to Coalhouse's den. Younger Brother wants to express his sympathy for Coalhouse's actions, but all he can manage to do is offer his knowledge of explosives ("He Wanted to Say"). Coalhouse focuses his rage by taking over J.P. Morgan's Library. He threatens to blow up the library and all of its treasures, as well as himself and all of his men – one of whom is now Younger Brother. Father tells Mother that he has volunteered to act as a negotiator, and Mother realizes that this experience has irrevocably changed their relationship ("Back to Before").



Morgan Library, built in 1906.

Coalhouse and his men barricade themselves inside of the library. Emma Goldman applauds this, but Booker T. Washington deplors these actions. Father tells the authorities that Booker T. Washington is the only man to whom Coalhouse will listen. Booker T. is sent into the library to speak with Coalhouse. He chides Coalhouse, both for risking the lives of the young men around him while leaving his own son to be raised by white men and for endangering the position of all African Americans, by making them seem

hot-headed and violent ("Look What You've Done"). He assures Coalhouse that if he surrenders, he will have a fair trial and a forum for his opinions. Coalhouse negotiates the safe passage of his men, including Younger Brother, while Father remains behind in the library. The men protest his decision, but he explains to them that the only way to win the fight is to go out into the world and tell their story ("Make Them Hear You"). When Coalhouse is left alone with Father, he asks about his son. Father promises a safe end to the standoff, but when Coalhouse exits the building to surrender, he is shot dead by authorities.

The era of ragtime ends. The characters come forward, one by one, to tell us the end of their stories: Younger Brother joins the revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, Emma Goldman is deported, Booker T. Washington establishes the Tuskegee Institute, Evelyn Nesbit fades into obscurity, Houdini has the one true mystical experience of his life when he is performing in Sarajevo and the Duke is shot, Grandfather dies, and Father is killed during wartime. Finally, Mother and Tateh marry and move to California with their children.

As the curtain falls, Little Coalhouse runs into Mother's arms, and men and women of all nationalities – and race – join Mother on the stage ("Epilogue").