

# Huntington

THEATRE COMPANY

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THEATRE COMPANY

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# Limelight

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# TEACHER LITERARY AND CURRICULUM GUIDE

## Marty

**Book by Rupert Holmes Music by Charles Strouse Lyrics by Lee Adams**  
**Based on the screenplay by Paddy Chayefsky**  
**and on the United Artists film**

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# THE STORY OF *Marty*

**M**arty is a world-premiere musical based on the classic 1955 film. In the Bronx, a middle-aged butcher named Marty Piletti spends all day working in a shop, which he dreams of buying and remodeling. After ten years of overtime, he has paid off the mortgage on the house he shares with his widowed mother. His cousin Thomas wants Marty's aunt to move in with Marty in order to end her constant feuding with Thomas' wife. Marty's social life consists of hanging out with his buddies Angie, Ralph, Joe, and Leo, four childhood friends who spend their Saturday nights trying desperately to meet women, and the rest of the week lying about how well they made out. In spite of his modest, solitary life, Marty is grateful that he survived the war to come home to his family and friends and considers himself a lucky guy.

Across town in Brooklyn, Clara Ryan lives an equally quiet existence. She teaches sixth grade during the day and tends to her ailing father at night. Her roommate Mary is escorted around the town by several men, while Clara prefers to "run a hot bath and read *East of Eden*." Like Marty, she has learned to be quietly content with a life that has promised much and delivered little.

She and Marty meet by chance, dragged to a dance neither of them wants to attend. After her blind date pays someone to take Clara off his hands, Marty steps in and asks Clara to dance. There is an immediate connection and they spend much of the night sharing their most important wishes. During their next two dates they fumble tentatively toward a deeper understanding and affection.

The remarkable effect that Marty and Clara have on each other is so evident that their families and friends begin to disapprove of the changes. Despite all the years that Mrs. Piletti has tried to convince her son to get married, she's afraid that a daughter-in-law will force her to leave the house in which she's spent her entire life. Marty's friends, threatened at the loss of one of their drinking buddies, disparage Clara's appearance and warn Marty that lowering his standards makes him look desperate. Through misunderstandings, Clara's father and roommate also become convinced that Marty's intentions are no good and that Marty is, in Mary's words, "a creep."

After years of pressuring these lonely misfits to get married, it seems that everyone in their lives is trying to prevent them from being with someone who is perfectly suited to them. Ultimately, Marty and Clara must choose whether they should risk heartache or accept the advice of their families and friends, knowing that this may be their only chance at love. 🎬

# THE CREATIVE Team

**P**addy Chayefsky (1923-1981) wrote *Marty* in 1953 for a television broadcast and then adapted his script for the 1955 Oscar-winning film. Chayefsky first gained recognition during the “Golden Age of Television” in the early 1950s by using the medium as a vehicle for “minutely detailed studies of small moments of life.” His early naturalistic dramas for both TV and film demonstrated an informed respect for common people and their everyday problems.

Dividing his work between Hollywood and Broadway over the next two decades, Chayefsky penned a series of smart, acerbic films distinguished by complex characterizations and social commentary, including the films *The Catered Affair* (1956) with Bette Davis and Ernest Borgnine, *The Bachelor Party* (1957), and the Marilyn Monroe-inspired *The Goddess* (1958); as well as the plays *The Tenth Man*, *Gideon*, and *The Latent Heterosexual*. His later satirical work, such as the Oscar-winning films *The Hospital* (1971) and *Network* (1976), exhibited a bitter, critical intelligence unparalleled in American cinema. Chayefsky was the recipient of three Academy Awards, three New York Film Critics Awards, and the British Academy Award.

Like his most famous character, Chayefsky was born in the Bronx.



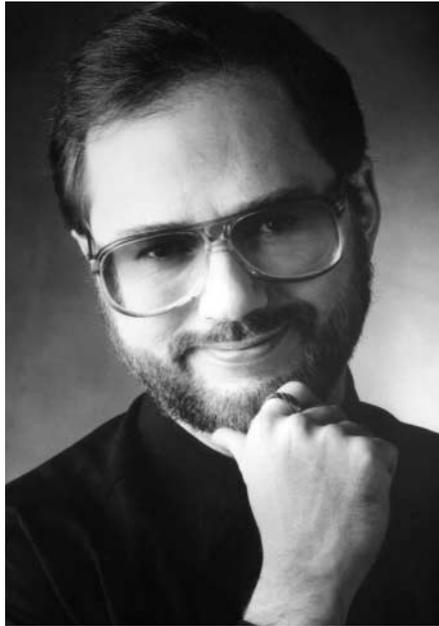
Paddy Chayefsky

Courtesy of Harvard Theatre Collection, The Houghton Library

During location filming in 1955, he explained, “Marty was a personal thing in a way. I wanted to get the neighborhood down, the people. They’re real people here too. My wife and I have this friend — this lonely bachelor, a nice guy, he’s not so young. He’s a good bit

of Marty. When I wrote it, I expected at best a cute little show, at worst to end up way out in left field. I even thought it might make a good movie someday.” Now, his story of “two plain people who fall in love” will find new life as a musical.

Playwright, composer, lyricist, and musician **Rupert Holmes** has adapted Chayefsky's original story for the stage. With his playwriting debut, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Mr. Holmes became the first-ever sole winner of the Tony Awards for Best Book, Music, and Lyrics. Since then he has had two more plays produced on Broadway: the comedy-thrillers *Accomplice* (1990) and *Solitary Confinement* (1992). Born in England, at age three he moved with his family to upstate New York. By age of 20, he was working as an arranger and songwriter for recording artists such as Gene Pitney, The Drifters, The Platters, and the Partridge Family. In the 1970s, he launched a concert career and began recording his own "story songs" which attracted the notice of Barbra Streisand for whom he has written, arranged, and produced multi-platinum albums including the soundtrack for *A Star Is Born*. Mr. Holmes'



Rupert Holmes

— a one-man show based on the life of George Burns — premiered in 2000. In addition to *Marty*, current projects include a musical adaptation of Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

*Marty*'s composer **Charles Strouse** is one of America's most celebrated and popular theatre artists, whose musicals are known all over the world. His lyricists have includ-

**"When I wrote it, I expected at best a cute little show ... I even thought it might make a good movie someday." Now, his story will find new life as a musical.**

own 1979 album, *Partners in Crime*, yielded the ten top hit "Escape" (The Piña Colada Song). His songs have been recorded by such stars as Patti LuPone, Barry Manilow, Dionne Warwick, and Britney Spears. From 1996-99, he was the creator and writer of the television series, "Remember WENN," on American Movie Classics cable network. His most recent play, *Say Goodnight, Gracie*

ed Lee Adams, Alan Jay Lerner, Martin Charnin, and Sammy Cahn. Mr. Strouse's first big success, *Bye, Bye, Birdie*, won him the Tony Award on Broadway and subsequently the London Critics' Best Foreign Musical Award for the London production. In 1970, *Applause*, starring Lauren Bacall, achieved the same honors, while *Annie* not only won the Tony, but two Grammy Awards, as well. Mr.

Strouse's other musicals include *Charlie and Algernon* (Tony nomination); *All American*, written with Mel Brooks; *Golden Boy* (adapted from the classic Clifford Odets play), starring Sammy Davis Jr.; and *It's A Bird, It's A Plane, It's Superman* directed by Hal Prince. More recent musicals by Mr. Strouse include *Mayor*, *Dance a Little Closer*, *Nick and Nora*, *Annie Warbucks*, and *Rags*. He has written the scores for many films, most notably, *Bonnie & Clyde* and *The Night They Raided Minsky's*. A revue consisting of his songs entitled *By Strouse* has been playing all over the country.

*Marty*'s lyricist **Lee Adams** won his first Tony Award for his very first Broadway musical, *Bye Bye Birdie* (1960), which has gone on to become a classic. It remains one of America's most-performed musicals, and its 1991-92 national tour starring Tommy Tune broke house records from coast to coast. Adams and Strouse went on to write six other Broadway musicals. Among his catalogue of songs, a number have become standards: "Put On A Happy Face," "Kids," "A Lot Of Livin' To Do," "Applause," "Once Upon A Time," "I Want To Be With You," and "You've Got Possibilities." The theme song for the television comedy "All in the Family," sung by Archie and Edith at the beginning of each episode, was written by Mr. Adams with Charles Strouse. Mr. Adams is an adjunct faculty member of New York University, and has taught musical theatre at Yale University and Columbia University. In 1989 he was elected to the Songwriters Hall of Fame. He is currently working on a musical version of Theodore Dreiser's landmark novel, *An American Tragedy*. ●

## Film Reviews

"*Marty* is a warm and winning story, full of candid comment on some of the socially awkward folkways of the great urban middle class ... The script is loaded with accurate and vivid dialogue, so blunt and insensitive in places that it makes the listener's heart bleed while striking a chord of humor with its candor and colorfulness."

Bosley Crowther,  
*The New York Times*

"Hollywood has long had the notion that the only New Yorkers who fall in love are people who live in mirrored penthouses, drive shiny Cadillacs, and visit the Stork Club every night. But the fact is that every year several million people, neither wealthy nor handsome, but gentle and shy and agonizingly lonely, grope for love in the most unsophisticated places and somehow find it. *Marty* is the story of a boy and girl of this kind and it is one of the most true and touching stories of New York ever told."

William Zinssner,  
*New York Herald Tribune*

"*Marty* is a work of genuine emotional impact, displaying a rare ability to build characters through spare dialogue and small, revealing situations ... There must be millions of Martys. What makes this *Marty* exceptional is the fact that he has such warmth and humor and affection."

Arthur Knight,  
*Saturday Review*

# THE PRODUCTION History



Ernest Borgnine as Marty (still from United Artists film)

**M***arty* began life in 1953 as a "tele-play," starring Rod Steiger and Nancy Marchand, broadcast on NBC's Goodyear Television Playhouse. The program caught the attention of actor Burt Lancaster, who at the time was a partner in a film production company and decided to turn *Marty* into a feature film. Paddy Chayefsky was enlisted to adapt his own screenplay, while Delbert Mann returned as director. The script underwent several revisions (notably, *Marty* the Jewish butcher was turned into an Italian), and Ernest Borgnine, who had a memorable supporting role with Lancaster in the film *From Here to Eternity*, was cast in the title role. The film was nominated for a total of eight Academy Awards, and received five including Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Director, and Best Screenplay.

The Huntington's world premiere musical stage adaptation of *Marty* is directed by Mark Brokaw and features actor John C. Reilly in the title role. The script received its initial reading in July 2001 in New York City, followed by a second reading in February 2002. The Huntington production of *Marty* is the first full professional production of the new musical. ●

# THE ADAPTABLE TALENTS OF John C. Reilly

Bringing the beloved character of Marty Pilette to life on the Huntington stage will be John C. Reilly, one of the finest character actors to have emerged in the past decade. From his debut opposite Sean Penn in Brian DePalma's Vietnam drama *Casualties of War* Mr. Reilly has excelled in playing ordinary men confronted by extraordinary circumstances. But in a musical? "John sings incredibly well," *Marty* producer John Weissenbach recently told *Playbill*. "[But] the show's going to be less musical comedy, more realistic. The actors we're looking at are actors who can sing, as opposed to singers who can act."

Mr. Reilly began his career with featured roles as Tom Cruise's pit crew chief in *Days of Thunder* (1990), a cop in Woody Allen's *Shadow and Fog* (1991), and a supporter of Jack Nicholson's *Hoffa*. He earned critical praise for playing Johnny Depp's friend in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape?* (1993), and a malicious thug who torments Meryl Streep in *The River Wild* (1994). In 1995, he made two films with his friend Jennifer Jason Leigh: *Dolores Claiborne* and *Georgia*. In 1997, he lured Mark Wahlberg into the porn world in *Boogie Nights*, directed by his frequent collaborator Paul Thomas Anderson. Mr. Reilly returned to the battlefield in Terrence Malick's acclaimed war drama *The Thin Red Line* (1998), and was hailed for his break though performances in the Oscar-



nominated *Magnolia* (1999) and *The Perfect Storm* (2000).

Despite his success as a film actor, Mr. Reilly's first love remains the stage, and he returns to the theatre as often as possible. His numerous stage credits include playing Mitch in a revival of *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Chicago's famed Steppenwolf Theatre, as well as performing in their Tony-winning *The Grapes of Wrath*. He has appeared frequently with The Actor's Gang, a Los Angeles repertory group founded by actor Tim Robbins. In 2000, he performed on Broadway in Sam Shepard's play *True West*, in which he and co-star Philip Seymour Hoffman alternated roles every few days.

In a recent interview, Mr. Reilly stated: "I'm a very adaptable per-

son. I mean, a lot of people don't really know the scope of my work. They don't put together all the different things that I've done. Most people know me from one or two movies, depending on the kind of audience member they are. Mechanics know me from *Days of Thunder* — which is real embarrassing, going into a gas station with a flat tire after playing this hotshot mechanic in the movie. But to my credit or my fault, I try to stay focused on the work. I feel that as an actor your suspension of disbelief is the same, whether it's in a theatre or on film, and the internal work that I'm doing is really the same. When I choose roles, the first priority is finding a part that is going to challenge me in some way, that will be different." ●



# BECOMING *Marty*

by Ernest Borgnine

*Actor Ernest Borgnine has performed on stage, acted in more than 200 live television broadcasts, made nearly 100 films, starred in five TV series, and made numerous guest appearances on television. Early in his career, Mr. Borgnine was predominantly cast as the heavy, typified by his roles in From Here to Eternity, and Bad Day at Black Rock. But all that changed with Marty. His performance as the lonely Bronx butcher earned him an Academy Award as Best Actor, as well as top honors from the New York Film Critics, the Cannes Film Festival, and the British Academy Awards. Subsequent films include The Catered Affair, The Wild Bunch, and The Poseidon Adventure. In an interview at the British National Film Institute, he recalled how he won his most famous role.*

In 1954, Hollywood Producer Harold Hecht contacted me and said, "We have a picture called *Marty* and we want you to play a part in it." I said, "Any part you want me to play, I'll be happy to do it."

"No, no, no," he says, "We want you to play the lead."

"Do you trust me?"

"I wouldn't ask you if I didn't."

"That's all I wanna know. I'll give you 110%."

And that was that. So I went off to make *Bad Day at Black Rock* in California with Spencer Tracy. One day, up flew Delbert Mann, the

director, and Paddy Chayefsky, the writer. They had come to have me read for them. So I asked for time off, and as I was leaving Spencer said, "Hang on a minute. If anyone leaves early, it's me. I'm the star here!" He was kidding of course. Well, to make a long story short he wanted to know what it was all about and I told him, and he said, "Don't worry about it, be yourself. You'll make it."

So I went to the reading. No sooner had I opened the door and there was Paddy Chayefsky seated in the chair and he was a little airsick

from flying up over the mountains. I looked at him and you could just see the wheels turning as he looked at me and said, "This is *Marty*?"

So I turned to my friend Delbert Mann with whom I had worked with in live television. I said, "Sir. If you feel that I'm not right for the part I'll help you find somebody else because I feel this is a wonderful script."

With a three-day growth of beard, a cowboy hat, and everything else, I just looked awful, but I started reading. Paddy Chayefsky was reading all the other parts and I was reading the part of Marty and I immediately forgot all that an actor should know. You know the old Stanislavski things that you learn in school.

Delbert said, "Wait a minute. You're doing this with a western twang!" So I kicked off the boots and I threw out the cowboys' hat and everything else, waited a moment, and we got started again.

One thing led to another and we kept on reading and it got better and better. We finally got to the part where my mother says, "Put on your blue suit and go down and you know, there's a lot of tomatoes." And I said, "Mum don't you understand? I'm just an ugly, ugly man." And I turned away and I just started to bawl. I turned back and I looked at Paddy Chayefsky and tears were rolling down his cheeks. I glanced over at Delbert and I thought, "GOD, I'VE GOT THE PART."

Actually I was playing myself because I too had been a wallflower at one time. I didn't know how to dance. I didn't know how to approach another person to say, "Would you mind if we have a dance?" I was always the shy one. I was more of a boy scout than I was a man about town. So when the time came I just played myself and it was the easiest thing in the world. ●

# DID YOU Know...?



Betsy Blair and Ernest Borgnine in *Marty*

Courtesy of Springer/Bearman Film Archive

- *Marty* was named the 64th most romantic film of all time in a 2002 American Film Institute poll.
- Betsy Blair, who played the dance-phobic Clara in the film, was actually married to dancer Gene Kelly.
- Clara espouses "a hot bath to soak in while I finish [the 1952 John Steinbeck novel] *East of Eden*." In 1955, *Marty* beat *East of Eden* in the Academy Award for the Best Adapted Screenplay.
- Ernest Borgnine turned down \$25,000 a week to appear on stage in Las Vegas performing excerpts from *Marty*.
- In 1959, *Marty* became the first American film shown in Russia after World War II. *The New York Times* reported: "The audience was noticeably sympathetic to the problems of love and loneliness, and alert for the signs of the way Americans live ... When Marty's girlfriend told his mother that in-laws should not live with their married children, the entire audience roared and joined in the applause. Russians, inhibited by housing problems, know the problem well."
- Mel Brooks' *The Producers* had its genesis in the 1962 Strouse-Adams musical *All American*, for which he wrote the book. Despite high expectations, *All American* closed after just 80 performances. Brooks wondered: What would happen if someone tried to produce an intentionally bad musical for profit? *The Producers* was the result.

## Themes

Post-war America  
Working class heroes  
Courtship and loneliness  
Social misfits and peer pressure

## Related Works

### Drama

*Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*  
by Terrance McNalley (1988)

*Italian American Reconciliation*  
by John Patrick Shanley (1998)

*Lobby Hero*  
by Kenneth Lonergan (2001)

### Non- Fiction

*The Bronx Lost, Found, and Remembered*  
by Stephen M. Samtur (1999)

*Bronx Accent: A Literary and Pictorial History*  
by Lloyd Ultan (2000)

### Films by

#### Paddy Chayefsky

*The Catered Affair* (1956)  
directed by Richard Brooks

*The Bachelor Party* (1957)  
directed by Delbert Mann

*The Americanization of Emily* (1964)  
directed by Arthur Hiller

*The Hospital* (1971)  
directed by Arthur Hiller

*Network* (1976)  
directed by Sidney Lumet

## Audience Etiquette

Because many students have not had the opportunity to view live theatre, we are including an audience etiquette section with each literary/curriculum guide. Teachers, please spend time on this subject since it will greatly enhance your students' experience at the theatre.

1. How does one respond to a live performance of a play, as opposed to when seeing a film at a local cinema? What is the best way to approach viewing a live performance of a play? What things should you look and listen for?
2. What is the audience's role during a live performance? How do you think audience behavior can affect an actor's performance?
3. What do you know about the theatrical rehearsal process? Have you ever participated in one as an actor, singer, director, or technical person?
4. How do costumes, set, lights, sound and props enhance a theatre production?



## BACKGROUND & Objectives

**M***arty* is the touching and hopeful story of a regular guy from the Bronx of New York in search of love following World War II. In his pursuit of the "American dream," Marty meets the practical Clara at the Stardust Ball one Saturday night and happiness seems to be within his grasp, if only he can keep his friends and family from interfering. Marty and Clara have a choice which may be one of the most important decisions of their lives — should they accept the advice of family and friends or risk heartache to take a chance on love.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Identify central themes in *Marty*, including:
  - the pursuit of the American dream
  - the shifting of family responsibilities
  - the adventures of courtship, romance and love
  - the confrontation of the realities of peer pressure and identity
2. Relate the themes and issues of *Marty* to their own lives.
3. Identify conflicts and struggles in interpersonal relationships of their own while coming to understand those of the characters in *Marty*.
4. Analyze the play's themes and issues within the characters' generational, gender and cultural contexts.
5. Participate in hands-on activities to enhance understanding of the play, including acting, creating visual art, and music and movement.
6. Examine the elements of musical theatre, such as book, lyrics, and score.
7. Evaluate the Huntington Theatre Company's production of *Marty*.

# PREPARATION FOR Marty

## Postwar America

In the 1950s – the time period in which Marty takes place – America, victorious in World War II, offered its citizens, especially the working class, hope and opportunity for achievement beyond any expectations. Optimism, youthful energy, national pride, and a country at peace were the key elements propelling a decade of baby boomers searching for collective prosperity and personal confidence. Divide your students into research groups to investigate the history and impact of the 1950s on its citizens, both present and future. Suggested topics might include:

- Politics
- Economics
- Popular Culture
- Technology
- Women’s roles
- Music, movies, theatre, visual arts, dance

## New York City in the 50s

Have a 50s day. Have students use the research from the exercise above, as well as interviews of parents, grandparents, relatives and/or teachers to create characters from the 50s. Have students bring their 50s characters to life by wearing clothing of the period and by inviting other classes to share in a living history presentation.

Create a time line tracking the important historical events from 1945 to 1959. Or have the class check out the websites [www.historychannel.com](http://www.historychannel.com), or [www.fifties.com](http://www.fifties.com).

Have students find out if there are any small businesses in their

neighborhoods that have been open since the 1950's? Pick one to research. How did it get started? What was business like back then? How has the business, and business environment changed over time? (Have any of the small business grown into large chains? Were any neighborhood business replaced by chain stores?) Students could do research or interview the business owner.

How do students graduating in the early 50's compare/contrast with students graduating today? What type of world were they entering? What opportunities were available to them?

Interview someone who graduated from high school in the 1950's. What do they remember most about that time? What did they like best? Least? In what ways has America changed the most?

How was life different in 1950s New York City from life in Boston today? Examine the impact of setting on this piece; does it make a difference? To what extent are the setting and characterization in Marty universal? Explain your findings.

## Working-Class Heroes

Marty has been described as a “working-class hero.” What characteristics make someone a hero? Have students list words that reflect heroism and use them to lead a discussion on characters and stories of heroism. Do heroes always inspire others positively? How might a so-called hero affect another person in a negative manner? Does a working-class hero need to do great things? What small things are heroic?

## KEY ISSUES

### The Pursuit of The American Dream

Have students find photographs, pictures, and/or draw their own to create a collage entitled The American Dream. Content for the collage should include material from the history of immigration in this country, especially immigration to New York City. Some of the characters in Marty are first-born Americans so their American dreams may differ from those whose ancestors can be traced back for many generations. Hang the collages up in the classroom. Have students write brief stories, using the images as inspiration. Students can describe a scene, take on the voice of a person in a photograph, imagine what happens next, etc.

### The Shifting of Family Responsibilities

Have each student list the members of his or her family along with what he/she perceives each family member's role is within the familial structure.

Responsibilities to consider are:

who provides financially for the family?

who takes care of the family's living arrangements and upkeep of the household who determines the range and scope of responsibilities in the household is there a head of the family?

Have the students share their lists with their classmates. Compare the similarities found among the students' families. Next, discuss what might happen to a family when a person holding important responsibilities suddenly dies or moves away? What if someone is added to the family? What would happen in your

family if someone new moved into your home? How might the family dynamics change in these situations?

### The Adventures and Challenges of Love

In a ten-minute free-writing exercise, ask students to list as many examples as possible of different kinds of love. Encourage them to include crushes and physical attractions, which are sometimes confused with true love. Next have students compose a list of obstacles that could stand in the way of a love relationship. Then ask students to write a paragraph that illustrates their personal view of the power of love.

### The Confrontation of the Realities of Peer Pressure

*There's a Monday kinda girl who  
cooks & sews  
When it's time for me I'll marry one  
of those  
You can keep your meat loaf and  
your tuna melt  
I'm hungry for a dish in a garter belt!  
We gotta get movin' and get us  
A Saturday Night Girl!  
We don't need a delicate, innocent,  
mousy, uptight girl  
The hour is late and she's waiting'  
My Saturday Night Girl!*

Have students read the lyrics to "Saturday Night Girl." During this song we learn how Marty's guy friends regard women. What do these attitudes toward women reveal about Marty's friends? How is Marty different from his friends? Keep in mind the final scene where he confronts each of them about this issue. Marty has remained quiet for a long time due in part to peer pressure. Have you ever been in a situation where peer pressure has kept you from speaking out? What might cause you to break the silence?

## FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

1. If you were assigned to be the dramaturg for a production of *Marty*, what research material would you provide for the director and actors at the first rehearsal (e.g. information on the political, cultural and economic climate of the 1950s, etc.) What images, photographic or otherwise, would you display at rehearsal? Bring in some of these pictures and hang them around the classroom.
2. What is a coming-of-age story? We often think of a coming-of-age story taking place during adolescence. However, Marty and Clara are adults still living at home, obeying their aging parents. How is *Marty* a coming-of-age story for both Marty and Clara? Compare Marty and Clara to characters in another book, short story, or play that revolves around this issue. (for example: Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!*)
3. Huntington Theatre Company director Mark Brokaw told the cast and crew that *Marty* is "about hope, about a changing world and finding your place in it." Describe a time period in American, past or present, in which people were uncertain about themselves because of a changing world. What were the catalysts for and influences of these changes? How did people respond to the changes? How did they discover where their places were in this new world? What role did hope play in their search?
4. Paddy Chayefsky wrote *Marty* in 1953 for the Sunday evening hour-long dramatic TV series, the Philco-Goodyear Playhouse. Commenting on *Marty* as representing "the sort of material that does best on television," Chayefsky wrote, "the main characters are typical, rather than exceptional; the situations are easily identifiable by the audience and the relationships are as common as people... I tried to write the dialogue as if it had been wire-tapped. I tried to envision the scenes as if a camera had been focused upon the unsuspecting characters and had caught them in an untouched moment of life." In 1955, Chayefsky adapted his script for the Oscar-winning film. Read his tele-script, watch the film, and compare both to the Huntington's musical adaptation. Describe the similarities and differences between the three versions. Do the film and musical abide by Mr. Chayefsky's description of his original work? Why or why not?
5. Obtain and read the original tele-script of *Marty*, view the movie and compare scenes from each of these with the Huntington's musical adaptation. How faithfully did the adaptors Rupert Holmes, (book) Charles Strouse (music) and Lee Adams (lyrics) capture the feeling of the original.
6. Research the lives and theatrical background of actor John C. Reilly, writers, Rupert Holmes and Charles Strouse, lyricist Lee Adams, and director Mark Brokaw. As lead members of the creative team for the musical adaptation of *Marty*, how are the experiences of these artists complementary? Other than their specific job function, what influence do you imagine that they each bring to the collaborative process of adapting and creating a new musical?

# MASTERY ASSESSMENT

1. How does Marty feel about his life in the Bronx? What are some of the reasons he considers himself a “lucky guy?”
2. In the first scene at the Butcher shop, Mrs. Fusari brings up marriage. What are some the reasons that Marty feels pressure to marry?
3. What is going to happen to the Butcher shop where Marty works?
4. Why does Marty hesitate to call the girl that he met with Angie the week before at the movies?
5. What do the guys mean when they sing about a “Saturday night girl?” What kind of girl is a “Saturday Night Girl?”
6. Why does Virginia want her mother-in-law to move in with Mrs. Pilletti?
7. What do we learn about Thomas in scene IV, where he asks Mrs. Pilletti to take his mother in?
8. Compare the characters of Clara and Marty. What do they have in common?
9. What do we learn about Clara’s attitude towards dating in her first song?
10. Why is it funny when Mrs. Pilletti uses the word “tomatoes” to describe the women at the stardust ballroom?
11. What reasons does Marty give to his mother for not wanting to go to the Stardust ballroom?
12. What does the “blue suit” represent to Marty? Why is the color blue important?
13. One of Marty’s friend’s says “I’m telling you, the Stardust is really slippin.’ There’s just no class here anymore. (sees tall girl) Chickie! Chickie Chickie!” Why is this line ironic?
14. What does Keegan do at the Stardust Ballroom?
15. What does Marty think about Keegan and Angie’s behavior?
16. As the band starts playing the song “Who can say what fate will bring,” Marty asks Clara Ryan to dance. Why is this song appropriate for this moment in the play?
17. How do Clara and Marty see their own physical appearance?
18. How does Mr. Ryan react to Marty when he first meets him?
19. How does Clara break 1950’s stereotypical gender roles when she asks Marty out?
20. On what level do Marty and Clara connect? Why is the chorus in the song “She likes who I am” important after Clara and Marty meet? What is different about Clara that Marty likes?
21. Why does Angie tell the guys that Clara looks like “Pluto?”
22. Why would Angie want to break up Clara and Marty?
23. How does Aunt Catherine feel about moving into Mrs. Pilletti’s house?
24. How does Mrs. Pilletti’s attitude about Clara and Marty change after Aunt Catherine moves in? Why?
25. How does Mrs. Pilletti treat Clara when she first meets her? Why?
25. How do Mrs. Pilletti and Mr. Ryan react to Marty and Clara dating? What are they afraid will happen?
27. When Mr. Ryan believes that Marty is “manhandling” his daughter he says: “Marty Pilletti — the name says it all.” What does Mr. Ryan mean? What stereotypes about Italians is he basing his judgment on?
28. What happens when Mary Feeney comes downstairs and sees Marty and Clara together?
29. Why does Thomas advise Marty not to buy the butcher shop? Are his intentions selfish?
30. When Clara sees Marty at the end of the play she says “Maybe that star of yours will make you lucky.” How has Clara replaced Marty’s special star? How is she like the special star?
31. What role does the raffle play when Marty and Clara reunite?



# QUESTIONS FOR AFTER Attending the Performance

*Note to teachers: After viewing A Month in the Country, ask the following questions:*

## 1. About the Play and Production

- A. What was your overall reaction? Were you moved? Shocked? Empathetic? Explain your reactions. How was the play structured? Did it build to a single climax? Was it episodic? Did this structure help or hinder your understanding of the play? Was the dialogue interesting? Appropriate? Were you aware of the imagery and symbolism during the course of the play? Would you have been aware of these devices without previous preparation?
- B. Was the pace and tempo of the production effective and appropriate?

## 2. About the Characters

- A. Did the characters touch you personally in some ways? Did you care about them?
- B. Were the characters three-dimensional and believable?

- C. Were the motivations of the characters clear?
- D. What qualities were revealed by the actions and speech of the characters?
- E. Did the characters change/develop/undergo transformation during the course of the play?
- F. In what ways did the characters reveal the themes of the play?

## 3. About the Set

- A. Was the set usable and workable?
- B. Was the set compatible with the production as a whole? Were there any features of the set that distracted from the action of the play?
- C. Did the design reflect the themes, type and style of play?
- D. Were the artistic qualities of unity, balance, line, texture, mass and color used effectively?
- E. Did the set provide appropriate environment and atmosphere?
- F. Was the set used to present any symbolic images or did it simply represent the space in which

the action of the play occurred? Did it contain elements of both a "realistic" and a "symbolic" approach?

## 4. About Lighting and Sound

- A. Did the lighting establish mood and atmosphere? Was the illumination sufficient? Did the lighting harmonize with, and contribute toward, the unity of the production?
- B. Were the music and sound effects appropriately conceived? Were they executed effectively?

## 5. About Costumes/Makeup/Hairstyles

- A. Were all of these elements correct in terms of the period fashion? Were they suitable in terms of character and storytelling for the production?
- B. Did the costumes and make-up use of color/design serve to illuminate the themes, type and style of the play, or any particular choices of interpretations in this production

# OPEN RESPONSE & Writing

## Open Response Assessment

*Instructions for students: Please answer the following as thoroughly as possible in one well planned and carefully written paragraph. Remember to use topic sentences and examples from the text.*

1. What is the musical *Marty* about? What does it have to say to young people today?
2. Many of the characters in *Marty* are conflicted about what their desires. Pick one of the following characters and discuss his/her internal conflict: Marty, Clara, Mrs. Pilletti, Thomas. How does the internal conflict inform their decision making?
3. The musical *Marty* is a romance, and Clara refers to Marty as a "romantic." How would you define romance? What characteristics make someone a romantic?
4. Some of the characters in the musical try to discourage Marty and Clara's relationship. Why? Choose one of the supporting characters and explain why he or she may not want the couple's romantic relationship to work. Have you personally ever attempted to dissuade someone from entering into or continuing a relationship.
5. Marty's "special star" is a metaphor. What do you think it stands for?
6. How do Marty's relationships change over time? Choose a relationship between Marty and one other character and describe it from the beginning to the end of the play.
7. What do you think happens to Marty and Clara after the play? Write a paragraph describing their lives one, five or ten years later.
8. In many ways popular music is a product of the place where and the time when it was written. Think of two songs from the musical *Marty*. What are two modern songs that would be the equivalent of these? Compare the central themes in the songs from *Marty* with those from today.
9. Mr. Ryan, when he thinks that his daughter is being "manhandled," says "Marty Pilletti, that says it all." Mr. Ryan is referring to stereotypes about Italian men as being brutes. What are some other stereotypes that people have of different ethnic groups? How are these stereotypes shown to be false in the play?

## Writing Assignments

1. Write a journal entry for one of the characters mid-way through the play. How does he or she feel about the changes that are occurring in his or her life? What are his or her other fears? What conflicted feelings does he/she have? (For example, Mrs. Pilletti wants her son to settle down and be happy, but at the same time she is afraid that Marty will abandon her, as Thomas abandoned his mother.)
2. Marty closely reflects the period of the 1950s, an era that is often idealized as being simple and uncomplicated. This is particularly true in the final scene of the musical. How might the ending be different if *Marty* took place today? Your assignment is to rewrite the ending of *Marty* for 2002.
3. Pretend you are one of the characters from the musical. Write a letter to a friend about what is happening to you or write to one of the characters that you do not speak to on stage.
4. Write an essay in which you explore the function of the supporting character in *Marty*.
5. Although Aunt Catherine and Mrs. Pilletti sometimes serve as comic relief, at times their scenes are quite serious. Examine the scene in which Aunt Catherine moves in. What fears and issues are illuminated, particularly in the song "Niente Da Fare"?
6. Clara remarks that it's "difficult for a parent to let go, and perhaps just as difficult for the son or daughter. Hard for either to move on." Do you agree or disagree with these statements? Why? Do you think letting go is harder for the parent or the child? Write an essay answering these questions as Marty, Clara, Mrs. Pilletti, or Mr. Ryan. OR Write an essay answering these questions from either the child's or parent's point of view.
7. How have the economics, mores, and values of society changed the nature and needs of families? Marty's Aunt Catherine moves in because she has nowhere else to

# MEDIA Assessment

*These questions and hands-on exercises are interactive challenges in Drama, Music, Dance, Visual Arts and Design that inspire further consideration or understanding of the play.*

## Creating Characterization

Have each of your students choose a character from *Marty* that he/she would like to portray. As though they were preparing for the role in rehearsal, have them ask the following questions about their characters:

- What do I want in the play? What is my overall objective?
- What is in the way of what I want in the play? What are my obstacles? Who is/are my obstacles? Does what gets in the way of what I want change throughout the course of the play? How?
- Does my character change during the course of the play? What is my character's journey, or plot of transformations?
- What are the contradictions inherent in my character?

## Role Playing/Improvisation

- Tableaux:** Divide students into groups of five. Ask them to create a tableau showing someone who is lonely. Other students in the class try to identify the situation. Class discussion should follow. (Have you ever known someone who was in a situation like this? How do you think he/she felt?) After the discussion, have the first group recre-

ate the tableau. This time, ask the other students to change the tableau so it no longer reflects loneliness. Volunteers may come forward to move the participants into other positions.

- Tableaux:** How do group dynamics and peer pressure change as people age? Divide the class into groups and have each group present a series of 5 snapshots showing the relationship of 3 friends from childhood through adulthood.
- Status:** How do people reveal their social status and feelings in nonverbal ways? Engage students in movement exercises on body language and how it indicates status.

## Acting

Have students act out a scene from *Marty*. They should use props and elements of costumes. Have them consider who stands where, who moves when and where, gestures, tone of voice, music, and intended emotional impact.

## Visual Art

What is the texture and feel of the musical? What colors come to mind as you read/view it? How might such visual elements (color and texture) provide you with an insight into the musical? the main and supporting characters? the world of *Marty* and Clara? Have students create a collage using various colors and textures to represent the moods of the scenes and the feelings of the characters.



## Music/Dance

In many ways popular music is a product of the place where and the time when it was written. Think of two or three songs from the play *Marty*. What are modern popular songs that would be the equivalent of these? Find the lyrics to these songs and compare them to one of the songs in *Marty*. How is the central theme the same in each of these songs?

## The Design Process

The set designers for *Marty* were heavily influenced by the work of Edward Hopper, particularly his oil paintings of New York brownstones. Have students visit [www.artchive.com/ftp\\_site.htm](http://www.artchive.com/ftp_site.htm) to look at some examples of Hopper's work and discuss their reactions to it.



# LESSON PLANS

**ONE-DAY LESSON PLAN** introduces students to the plot, character, author, and themes of the play.

## **DAY ONE - Introducing the Play**

1. Distribute Mastery Assessment questions (page 3) for *Marty* for students to read before and to review after attending the performance.
2. Read the synopsis of *Marty* (page 3). Write the objectives for the play (page 10) on the board and discuss other works the students have studied that have similar themes and issues.
3. Copy and distribute the information about the creative team, Holmes, Strouse and Adams (page 4). In groups or individually, have students underline the highlights in their lives and report to the class.

*Optional: To save time, narrate highlights to students.*

4. Ernest Borgnine remarked on playing *Marty*, "When the time came I just played myself and it was the easiest thing in the world." John C. Reilly, who originates the role in the musical, commented, "When I choose roles, the first priority is finding a part that is going to challenge me in some way, that will be different." Discuss how two actors may approach the same role differently.
5. Show selected scenes from another Paddy Chayefsky's film and discuss how themes relate to those presented in *Marty*.

**FOUR-DAY LESSON PLAN** introduces students to the play and then, after viewing the performance, asks them to think more critically about it. Includes time for class discussion and individual assessment.

## **DAY ONE - Introducing the Play**

Same as Day One above; completed before seeing the play.

## **DAY TWO - The Play**

Attend performance at Huntington Theatre Company.

### **DAY THREE - Follow-up Discussion**

Discuss Mastery Assessment answers in class.

### **DAY FOUR - Test**

Individual Assessment: Choose either several questions from the Open Response Assessment or one question from Writing Assignments (page 15) for students to answer in a one-period in-class writing.

*Optional: Students may choose one of the For Further Exploration or Media Assessment tasks to complete.*

**SEVEN-DAY LESSON PLAN** completely integrates *Marty* into your schedule. Within seven school days, you can introduce the play, assign reading, teach the musical theatre form, and assess your students on both a group and individual level. Students will ideally view the play after completing all assigned work.

### **DAY ONE - Introducing the Play**

Introducing the Play: Same as Day One above

**Homework:** Read Act One of *Marty* and answer corresponding Mastery Assessment Questions.

### **DAY TWO - The Play**

Discuss Act One and answers to questions

**Homework:** read Act Two of *Marty* and answer corresponding Mastery Assessment Questions.

### **DAY THREE - Act Two**

Discuss Act Two and Questions

**Homework:** Handout on "Analyzing The Elements of Musical Theatre"

### **DAY FOUR - Analyzing The Elements of Musical Theatre**

Discuss the many forms of musical with the class.

Discuss question #3 of the handout in class.

**Homework:** Prepare work from Preparation, Key Issues, For Further Exploration or Media Assessment sections.

### **DAY FIVE - Group Work**

Meet in groups to prepare presentations; schedule media center for this period if necessary.

**Homework:** none

### **DAY SIX - Presentations**

Group Assessment: Students present their findings to class.

**Homework:** Complete sample questions from Open Response or Writing Assignments to study for test

### **DAY SEVEN - Test**

Individual Assessment: Choose either several questions from the Open Response Assessment or one question from Writing Assignments for students to answer in a one-period in-class writing.

*Optional: Students may choose one of the For Further Exploration or Media Assessment tasks to complete for extra credit.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# ANALYZING THE ELEMENTS OF Musical Theatre

Musical theatre, like theatre itself, is frequently universal and often life-affirming; most importantly, America has embraced the form and made many of its most distinctive artistic contributions to world theatre in different types of musicals.

1. **Ask students to work in groups to research and define each of the following musical theatre forms, citing examples of the influence of earlier forms.** Students should be encouraged to present recorded examples that will allow the class to appreciate the variety of music, songs, artists and musical facts that represent their findings. Assign teams one or more of the following categories:

Opera	Operetta	Ballad Opera
Minstrelsy	Vaudeville	Burlesque
Revue	Follies	Oratorio
Musical Comedy	Concept Musical	Rock Musical/Rock Opera

2. **Director-choreographer Bob Fosse once described an evening of musical theatre as “when everybody has a good time – even in the crying scenes.”** Create student teams and assign one of the following musicals as the subject for reports.

*Show Boat* – Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, 1927

*Porgy and Bess* – George and Ira Gershwin, 1935

*South Pacific* – Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, 1949

*West Side Story* – Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim, 1957

*Hair* – MacDermott, Ragni and Rado, 1968

*Jesus Christ Superstar* – Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Weber, 1971

Questions to consider include:

What themes are prevalent in these musicals?

What historical relationships do these musicals have with their themes?

What social impacts did these musicals have on their first audiences?

Why were these musicals considered to be controversial during the decades in which they were first presented?

3. **Encourage your students to become familiar with the elements of the musical: book, lyrics and score.**

**The Book** (sometimes called the libretto) generates the “theatre” in musical theatre. It is the glue which binds the other elements of the musical together. The book encompasses the necessary components of dramatic form:

**character** – the people we remember in the story

**plot** – the sequence of actions which drives the characters, idea or situations

**situation** – any moment within the plot that generates drama, sustains audience attention, and begs for resolution

**dialogue** – speech; generally a companion in tone and style to the lyrics of the musical theme — the main idea (or ideas) of the musical

In a traditional musical book the following dramatic elements are generally established within the first five minutes of the performance, either through action or exposition:

**time** – morning, afternoon or night

**place** – geographical setting

**characters** – social identity, status, relationships

**theme** – a hint of the message or purpose of the story is introduced

**conflict** – obstacles that the characters must endeavor to overcome

**tone** – mood of the musical (serious, comedic)

**The Lyrics** share stage time with dialogue, dance, scenery changes and instrumental music. Theatre lyrics must be compact, dense with word meaning and delivered with dramatic power. Song lyrics are an integral part of the story and are created to develop character and move along the plot of the musical.

**The Score** is the music. Music expresses and reinforces the emotion in drama as well as serves to underscore dramatic action. It establishes the tone and sets the mood of a piece. Its component parts are melody which represents an aural image of the lyric, harmony which creates tones that color the aural image, and rhythm which contrasts the dramatic values of character and action.

4. **Ask students to observe the staging and listen to the opening song in the first scene of *Marty*.** From watching and listening to “Look At A Lucky Guy” ask students do discuss which of the essential dramatic elements are introduced to the audience.

Run over text from open Response and Writing. Not enough to add a page, can some questions be edited?

go. How has life for older Americans changed over the years? Has society's perception of the elderly changed, particularly as the "Baby Boomer" generation ages? What options do older Americans now have for living arrangements as well as for work, activity, and social interactions?

8. Write a critical review of the Huntington Theatre Company's production of *Marty* and submit it for publication in your school newspaper. Be sure to send us a copy.