

The Spark of Inspiration: From Original Source Material to Musical Theatre

Arts Integrated Lesson Plan

Grade Level: Adaptable (6-12 with modifications)

Time Allotment: 2-3 class periods (45-50 minutes each)

Introduction:

- Have you ever seen a story burst onto stage in a whirlwind of song and dance? That's the magic of musicals! *Sister Act* – a fun movie becomes a *fantastic* musical, proving how catchy tunes and snappy choreography can elevate the storytelling. This lesson plan, "The Spark of Inspiration," is all about turning stories (books, plays, movies – you name it!) into musicals. Get ready to unleash your inner Broadway Musical show creator as we explore and brainstorm your very own musical masterpiece!

Curriculum Connections:

- Language Arts: Narrative Structure, Creative Writing, Reading Comprehension, Theme Analysis
- Music: Music Theory, Songwriting, Musical Analysis, Thematic Scoring
- Theatre/Drama: Dramatic Structure, Thematic Interpretation
- Social Studies/History (optional): Historical Context, Cultural Studies, Interdisciplinary Connections

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify storytelling themes.
- Students will be able to analyze how music can enhance and amplify storytelling.
- Students will be able to explore the process of adapting existing source material into a musical.
- Students will be able to creatively brainstorm and develop initial ideas for a musical adaptation.
- Students will be able to collaborate and share their creative work with peers.

Guiding Questions:

I. Source Material:

- What's the heart of the story? What themes will be explored in the musical?
- What is/ are the main conflict(s)? How was it resolved?
- What is the purpose behind this story?

II. Music's Power:

- How does music boost a story's tone and the character's emotions?
- How do lyrics become a part of the narrative storytelling?
- How does music style impact the story? How would the story change if you used another genre of music?

III. Stage Adaptation:

- Compare and contrast a musical that was adapted from another medium.
- Some stories take some artists liberties when they are created to help tell the story that the playwright wants, what liberties would you take, if any?

IV. Jukebox Musicals:

- How can popular songs be used to effectively tell a story on stage?
- How can the style and era of music contribute to setting the scene or establishing the mood of a musical? Can you think of specific examples?

Materials:

- Markers or pens
- Handouts with activity worksheets (provided below)
- Optional: Access to music streaming services or a selection of popular songs

Procedures:

- **Lesson Activity One: Setting the Stage & Musical Moments**
 - Students will be introduced to the concept of musical adaptation and explore how stories transform into musicals.
 - Students will analyze their chosen source material, identify key themes, and brainstorm musical ideas for significant moments.
- **Lesson Activity Two: Thematic Choices & Stage Adaptation**
 - Students will create thematic collages to visually represent key themes from their source material.
 - Students will analyze how musical choices (songs, casting) amplify these themes and begin visualizing the stage adaptation.
- **Lesson Activity Three (Optional): Presentations & Further Development**
 - Students will present their musical ideas to the class, including source material, musical selections, and dream cast.
 - Students will engage in further development of their musical ideas, with teacher guidance and feedback.

Day 1: Setting the Stage:

Ask your students if they have ever seen a musical and thought that the story sounded familiar? Chances are, it was adapted from somewhere else! Musical adaptation is taking a story – from a book, movie, play, or even history – and turning it into something new and exciting for the stage. Let’s brainstorm a list of musicals that were adapted from other sources.

1. Warm-up (10 minutes):

Creating any piece of art begins with inspiration. Sometimes what inspires us is something that someone else has already created. For example, Lion King is a recreation of Hamlet.

- **Think-Pair-Share:** Ask students to think of their favorite story (book, play, movie, etc.) and share what makes it special to them with a partner.

2. Introduction (15 minutes):

To introduce the concept of musical adaptation we will discuss examples of musicals adapted from other sources.

- *Ask your students if they have ever seen a musical and thought that the, that story sounded familiar? Chances are, it was adapted from somewhere else! Musical adaptation is taking a story – from a book, movie, play, or even history – and turning it into something new and exciting for the stage. Let's*

brainstorm a list of musicals you know that were adapted from other sources. (Write examples on the board as students suggest them.)

- Here are some to get you started:
 - Wicked- Wizard of Oz, (Movie Musical), Wicked: The Life and times of the Wicked Witch of the West (book), Wicked (Broadway musical), Wicked (Movie)
 - *Hamilton* (biography and primary source documents)
 - *Mamma Mia!* (song collection from an established band)
 - Sister Act, the musical- Sister Act (Movie)
 - The Color Purple, the musical- the Color Purple (book), the Color Purple musical (Broadway adaptation), the Color Purple (Movie Adaptation)
 - Lion King, the musical- Hamlet (Play), Lion King (movies)
- Some stories take some artistic liberties when they are created to help tell the story that the playwright wants. What changes to the story would you take, if any?
 - Examples:
 - Hamlet and Lion King
 - High School Musical and Romeo and Juliet
 - Hamilton and Original Sources
 - Little Mermaid and the book written by Hans Christian Anderson
 - Pocahontas and her real-life story
- Explain the difference between original musicals and jukebox musicals.
 - **Original Musicals:** *The music and lyrics are original and written specifically for that musical. The songs are created to advance the plot, develop characters, and express the specific themes of that particular story.*
 - **Jukebox Musicals:** *The music consists of pre-existing, popular songs, often from a specific artist or genre. The story is then constructed or adapted to incorporate existing songs.*
- Now, jukebox musicals aren't just about stringing together a bunch of hits. They aim to create a cohesive narrative that resonates with the audience.”

When thinking about music, here are some concepts to think about:

- **Style:** *“What genre of music are we talking about? Is it classical, jazz, rock and roll, pop, folk, or something else? Each style carries its own cultural baggage and emotional associations.”*
 - Hamilton: *The influence of Hip Hop and R&B on the portrayal of the founding fathers in 'Hamilton' challenges traditional historical narratives and creates a sense of immediacy.*
- **Era:** *“When is the musical set? Is it in the roaring twenties, the swinging sixties, or a futuristic dystopia? The musical era informs the style of music and the social context of the story.”*
 - Grease: *1950s rock and roll and doo-wop music influence*

- **Setting the scene:** “How does the music establish the physical location, the time period, and the social environment of the musical?”
 - Little Mermaid: Caribbean sounds with a combination of traditional musical theater
- **Establishing the mood:** “How does the music create the emotional atmosphere of the musical? Is it joyful, melancholic, suspenseful, or something else?”
 - Dreamgirls: rise of Motown, the evolution of R&B, and the emergence of Disco.

3. Musical Moments (20 minutes):

- Discuss the role of music in storytelling and how it can create mood, enhance emotions, and drive the narrative.
- Guide students through brainstorming popular songs that could represent key moments (beginning, climax, finale) in their chosen story. Encourage them to consider lyrics, melody, and style.
 - Imagine a scene in a play or movie that does not have any music. Now, for the same scene imagine two different types of music underscoring the action. How does that change the way you perceive the characters and the events? Let’s take Jurassic Park for instance. (This is a video repeating 1 scene in Jurassic Park with different music backgrounds) [How Does Music Change a Movie?](#) What are the immediate feelings and thoughts you may get while listening to the music? Does the music match the scene?”

4. From Source to Stage Title (5 minutes):

- Distribute the activity worksheet (provided below).

5. Wrap-up (5 minutes):

- Assign students to think further about their chosen source material, musical choices, *and especially the core themes they want to explore* for homework.

You've started thinking about turning stories into musicals, focusing on the themes that give them meaning. For homework, dive deeper into your chosen story – really explore those themes and start brainstorming some musical moments that capture them!”

Day 2: Thematic Choices & Stage Adaptation

Day 2 explores thematic development, guiding students in creating thematic collages to visually represent key themes. Students will then analyze how musical choices (songs, casting) amplify these themes and begin visualizing the stage adaptation.

1. Review & Introduction to Thematic Development (5 minutes):

- Review the concepts discussed on Day 1 as needed
- Invite a few students to share their chosen source material, music selections, and the themes they are prioritizing.
- . Explain how themes are the underlying messages or ideas explored in a narrative. Themes can be explicit or implicit and can evolve throughout a story. Provide examples of common literary themes (e.g., love, loss, good vs. evil, identity, social justice).
 - *Let's talk about the heart of a story. We're not just talking plot, like who did what and when. We're talking about the big ideas, the underlying messages, the themes. Think of themes as the story's soul. Sometimes these themes are obvious — the author spells them out for you. Other times, they're hidden, like buried treasure, and you have to dig to find them. And here's the cool part: themes aren't static. Think about common themes like love, loss, good versus evil, finding yourself, fighting for what's right—these are the kinds of big ideas that stories explore."*

2. Activity: Thematic Collage/Mood Board:(20 minutes):

- For a more visual and expressive approach, students can create thematic collages or mood boards. Instruct them to collect images, colors, textures, and even song snippets that represent different themes. This is less analytical and more intuitive, allowing students to explore the **emotional** and **sensory aspects** of the themes.
- Discuss how a musical adaptation can *amplify* certain themes and potentially introduce *new* thematic layers. How can music, lyrics, and staging be used to emphasize or explore specific themes?
 - *Let's say you're adapting a story about courage. How could music help make that theme shine? A powerful melody, soaring vocals, maybe even a specific musical motif could represent courage. That's a type of thematic amplification. So, how do we do this in practice? We'll be looking at how music, lyrics, and staging can be used to emphasize and explore themes, both old and new, in our musical adaptations."*

3. From Idea to Stage Discussion: Thematic Resonance in Song Choice (15 minutes):

- Discuss key elements to consider when choosing songs for a jukebox musical (e.g., thematic relevance, emotional impact, audience familiarity).
- Encourage students to think about how they could further develop their musical ideas and if they are making any minor or significant changes from the source material to the musical. (e.g., plot changes, character development, additional musical numbers) *specifically related to their chosen themes.*

4. Wrap-up (5 minutes):

- Assign students to continue thinking about their Thematic collages and consider how their musical choices will reflect and amplify the chosen themes for homework.

Day 3 (Optional): Presentations & Further Development

1. Presentations (20-30 minutes):

- Allow students to present their musical ideas to the class, including their chosen source material, musical selections, and dream cast.

2. Further Development (15-25 minutes):

- Provide students with time to work on developing their musical ideas further.
- Offer guidance and feedback as needed.

Differentiation:

- **For younger students:** Simplify the song selection process by providing a list of pre-selected songs or focusing on familiar musicals.
- **For older students:** Encourage more in-depth analysis of the source material and the chosen songs. Challenge them to consider more complex themes and narrative structures.
- **For all students:** Allow for flexibility in the choice of source material and musical style.

Extension Activities:

- Students can write short scenes or songs for their musical adaptation.
- Students can research the history of musical theatre and explore different styles of musical adaptation.
- Students can create a poster or program for their musical.