LEONARD BERNSTEIN
THE POWER OF MUSIC

CLASSROOM LESSON

Grades 6 and up
**BIG IDEA**

“In the beginning was the Note, and the Note was with God; and whosoever can reach for that Note, reach high, and bring it back to us on earth, to our earthly ears—he is a composer.”

Leonard Bernstein, 1963

Leonard Bernstein was the face of classical music for a generation of Americans. Those who watched him lead the New York Philharmonic in the 1950s and ’60s remember him as a flamboyant, larger-than-life personality: a charismatic conductor, devoted educator, and skilled musician who popularized classical music in the concert hall and through the television screen. Bernstein was also a gifted composer and a powerful political voice who blended art and politics while spending his life reaching for that “Note.” How did Bernstein’s aspiration for the “Note” inspire him to create and share his love of music? How did he infuse meaning into Broadway musicals, symphonies, choral music, operas, songs, and ballets?

This lesson explores the role of music in Bernstein’s life and in our lives today and highlights the different ways that Bernstein used music to express religious identity and political ideals, respond to current events, heal himself and others, educate, and give hope. Through formative moments in Bernstein’s career — including challenging racial segregation in casting decisions for *On the Town* (1944), creating *West Side Story* (1957), and educating millions of children through the Young People’s Concerts (1958-1972) — the lesson invites students to engage in discussions about musical thinking, choices in music-making and the power of music.

**LESSON ORGANIZATION**

This curriculum uses short lessons, or Modules, to explore the different ways Leonard Bernstein used and related to music. We recommend starting with the Introduction and then following with any or all of the Modules. You may choose to combine several modules into one class period, or stretch a single module to fill one entire class period. Either way, this flexibility allows you and your students the freedom to engage with music in a variety of ways.
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this set of lessons, students will be able to:

- Explain that music is an artistic medium through which one can respond to, support, and convey a message.
- Identify examples from Bernstein’s compositions that served as expressions of Jewish identity.
- Understand how Bernstein, the child of immigrants, explored what it meant to be an American.
- Describe how Leonard Bernstein conveyed a commitment to social justice through the performing arts.
- Identify ways to respond creatively to social issues that are important to them.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Projector and computer with audio and internet capability
- Introduction
  » Worksheets with photos of Bernstein
  » Worksheets with quotations about music
- Module A: Young People’s Concert
  » Video of Young People’s Concert
- Module B: Jeremiah
  » Recording of Jeremiah
  » Musical instruments (optional)
- Module C: On the Town
  » Worksheets with photos of On the Town
  » Worksheets with the article “On the Town Proves the Point...”
  » Video of the song “New York, New York”
- Module D: West Side Story
  » Worksheets with West Side Story notes
  » Worksheets with “Somewhere” lyrics
  » Video of the song “Somewhere”
INTRODUCTION

1. **Introduce Leonard Bernstein** and emphasize his belief in the power of music to promote social change for individuals and society (see the **Historical Background** section).

2. **Ask:** What kinds of music do you listen to? What do you like about that music? How does music make you feel?

3. **Distribute Worksheet 1: Leonard Bernstein photos,** and ask students to **copy the poses in each photo. Ask:**
   - What do you experience, physically and emotionally, when you listen to music?
   - What “uses” can music have?

4. **Distribute Worksheet 2: Quotations** and ask students to pick one that best describes the power of music. **Have students offer interpretations of their quote. Ask:**
   - What is the power of music for you?
   - Try to think of all the different reasons why one might want to listen to music.

5. **Have students share their thoughts and summarize** the “uses” or “powers” of music. The list may include the following:
   - a) Music can inspire and educate.
   - b) Music can be used to express one’s religious identity.
   - c) Music is a political act and a form of activism.
   - d) Music can address social issues and express hope for a just society.

   Welcome other “uses” of music and add them to this list.

6. **Explain how the rest of the lesson will proceed:**
   - Transition to whichever module(s) you have chosen to explore with your students. Begin each module with an introduction based on the **Historical Background** information (following page).
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

WHO IS LEONARD BERNSTEIN?

Leonard Bernstein was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts, on August 25, 1918, to Ukrainian Jewish immigrants Jennie and Samuel Bernstein. While Sam pursued the American dream, founding a company that furnished beauty products and equipment to Boston salons, Leonard began taking piano lessons at age 10. The Bernsteins attended Conservative congregation Mishkan Tefila (Sanctuary of Prayer), a synagogue that featured organ music and a mixed-gender choir. In the early 20th-century, these were still uncommon, progressive practices in America’s Conservative congregations. From a young age, Bernstein heard music in his synagogue that pushed boundaries.

Bernstein later called the music that was created in his synagogue, “the first real music I ever heard.” Sam hoped Leonard would one day run the family business, but the piano became his passion.

Bernstein expressed his passion for music in 1961, stating, “Everything to do with music excites me. And music is my world — that’s where I live.”[“Conversation with Bernstein,” by Henry Brandon. As We Are 1961, pg. 58]

Leonard Bernstein composed for Broadway, conducted major orchestras, starred on TV, and became during the 1950s and 1960s the best known of all American conductors, “almost as famous as Elvis Presley or Marilyn Monroe.” (Allen Shawn, Leonard Bernstein: An American Musician, pg. 7). He used his prominence, his talents, and his larger-than-life personality to make classical music and music theory accessible for people of all ages — and to advocate for social change, both on and off the stage. He infused his commitment to social justice into his music, and the rest of his life, demonstrating the power and importance of music in bringing social change.

MODULE A: HOW CAN MUSIC INSPIRE AND EDUCATE?

Young People’s Concerts

From 1958-1969 Bernstein served as the principal conductor of the New York Philharmonic and conducted the orchestra for CBS television’s Young People’s Concerts. Bernstein loved all types of music, and strove to make Beethoven, Bach, and even the Beatles accessible for “students” ages 8 to 80 through these programs, which were nationally televised from 1958 to 1972. Years later, Bernstein referred to his Young People’s Concerts as “among my favorite” and the most fulfilling activities of his life.

In 1958, when Bernstein became music director of the NY Philharmonic, the orchestra consisted only of white men. Young People’s Concerts gave Bernstein, who spoke and wrote about discrimination in classical music, an opportunity to promote racial equality by inviting and featuring African-American musicians. He recognized that the lack of diversity in professional orchestras, including the absence of women, resulted not only from prejudice but also by the lack of access to professional training opportunities for minority communities. Bernstein hoped that, by making classical music more accessible, more young people of color would become interested in playing classical music. In 1961 he appointed Sanford Allen as the orchestra’s first full-time African-American member. Many classical musicians, including Allen, pointed to the Young People’s Concerts as their introduction to classical music.
MODULE B: HOW CAN MUSIC BE USED TO EXPRESS ONE'S RELIGIOUS IDENTITY?

Symphony No. 1: Jeremiah (1942)

Leonard Bernstein's first large-scale work for a symphony orchestra was Symphony No. 1: *Jeremiah* (composed in 1942) which received the 1944 New York Music Critics Award.

Bernstein was raised in a close-knit Boston Jewish community and learned the Torah and Talmud from his father, Samuel. The family belonged to Congregation Mishkan Tefila (Dwelling of Prayer), a Conservative synagogue. “I used to weep just listening to the choir, cantor, and organ thundering out,” Bernstein recalled in 1990. Profoundly influenced by the liturgical Jewish music heard in synagogue, Bernstein wrote that he “may have heard greater masterpieces performed since then, and under more impressive circumstances; but I have never been more deeply moved.” (Leonard Bernstein to Cantor Samuel Rosenbaum, March 20, 1946)

Leonard Bernstein drew from Jewish life, scripture, and tradition when composing his three symphonic works. In particular, *Jeremiah* and *Kaddish* reveal a composer exploring Jewish tradition and the relationship between God and human beings. He even introduced Jewish themes and music into compositions without explicitly Jewish content. He particularly liked including the sound of the shofar (a ram’s horn blown during Jewish rituals including services for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year). In Symphony No. 1: *Jeremiah*, the shofar represents God's voice speaking through his prophet, and in *West Side Story*, Bernstein used the sound of the shofar as the way the Jets signal to each other to rally together.

Leonard Bernstein often referred to his first symphony, *Jeremiah*, as his “Hebrew song.” The symphony is based on the story of prophet Jeremiah and includes texts from the Book of Lamentations, a collection of grief-filled poems mourning the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. First performed in 1944, Bernstein's *Jeremiah* mourns the destruction of Eastern European Jewry, still in process at the time. “How can I be blind to the problems of my own people?” Bernstein told the press regarding the symphony, “I’d give everything I have to be able to strike a death blow at Fascism.”

*Jeremiah* is composed of three movements. Bernstein intended the first two instrumental movements, “Prophecy” and “Profanation” to evoke the emotional trauma that occurs when faith is in crisis. The third movement, “Lamentation,” features a mezzo soprano as well as Hebrew text from the Book of Lamentations mourning the loss of Jerusalem. In “Profanation” Bernstein referred to specific melodies (trope) used when chanting the haftorah (text from the Prophets that follows the reading of the Torah during synagogue services). Bernstein also used a minor key, often featured in Jewish liturgical music, to enhance the sense of chaos and destruction. Bernstein described “Lamentation” as “the cry of Jeremiah, as he mourns his beloved Jerusalem, ruined, pillaged, and dishonored after his desperate efforts to save it.”

Some, including Bernstein’s father, urged Leonard to add a fourth and brighter movement, but he refused, preferring to maintain the focus on grief. With this narrow range of emotions, the symphony communicates Bernstein's anguish over the destruction of Eastern European Jewry. Nevertheless, lines from the Book of Lamentations like “Wherefore dost thou forget us forever, and forsake us so long time? Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord...” (5:20-21) still offer a glimpse of hope that faith and the Jewish people can eventually be restored.
On The Town (1944)

The arts have always been a means for addressing political issues. Leonard Bernstein used his prominence and his talents to advocate for social justice, both on and off the stage. For example, he advocated for nuclear disarmament by asking his admirers to celebrate his 65th birthday by wearing blue armbands to signify their opposition to the nuclear arms buildup, supported Amnesty International, and strove to improve relations between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War.

Bernstein maintained a lifelong commitment to racial equality. His 1939 Harvard thesis, entitled “The Absorption of Race Elements into American Music,” called for an “organic” music that drew on the many musical traditions brought to this country by immigrant communities and developed in the African-American community, notably jazz. During the 1940s, he became involved with the National Negro Congress (NNC), an interracial organization founded in 1935 with a mission to “secure the rights of the Negro people to be free from Jim Crowism, segregation, discrimination, lynching, and mob violence.” As a student at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Leonard Bernstein wrote to his childhood piano teacher, Helen Coates, about the possibility of leading “an all-Negro Symphony Orchestral… I’ll be only too glad to work with them [NNC]. It’s a great social triumph, too, if it succeeds; conquering the latest suspicion of whites among the Negroes (and how justified that suspicion is!) is a large step forward.” By conducting an orchestra of all black musicians, Bernstein also hoped to show white audiences that the only barrier stopping people of color from becoming professional musicians was the lack of education and training enforced by prejudice and segregation.

Bernstein recognized the discrimination in arts education as well as segregation’s impact on the opportunities for people of color to enter the great orchestra halls and theaters of the time. In 1947 he published an article in the New York Times titled “The Negro in Music: Problems He Has to Face in Getting a Start,” criticizing the lack of resources available to African-Americans. Nora Holt, classical music critic for the Amsterdam News, an African-American newspaper, commented that writing this editorial “took more than ordinary courage for Leonard Bernstein…he measures a human being according to his qualities without odious reference to race or creed.”

Bernstein continued to be an outspoken advocate for civil rights throughout his life, including participating in the historic 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama and featuring African-American musicians in his popular Young People’s Concerts.

On the Town (1944)

The Broadway musical On the Town, written and premiered during World War II, was one of Bernstein’s earliest works for the stage. The musical tells the story of three sailors, Chip, Ozzie, and Gabey, enjoying one day of shore leave in New York City. In the musical, each of the sailors courts a woman. Central to the plot is Gabey’s pursuit of Ivy Smith. Ivy had just been selected as “Miss Turnstiles” — beauty queen of the subway — and Gabey fell in love with her image on a poster inside a subway train. He vowed to find her.

The show premiered in 1944, at the height of WWII. At that time, the American armed forces were still segregated and a mixed-race Broadway cast was a rarity. Look at the first photo on Worksheet 3. In it African-American serviceman and women dance hand in hand with white sailors. The African-American sailor in the back, Flash Riley, appears to be holding hands with a white female dancer. This was striking given that public touching or dancing between men and women of different races could be very
dangerous in the Jim Crow South and stage practices reinforced segregation on and off stage. *On The Town*’s choreographer, Jerome Robbins, explained that “for the first time they [black dancers] danced with the whites, not separately, in social dancing. We had some trouble with that in some of the cities we went to [on tour].”

When African-Americans were cast, they generally received small, stereotypical roles such as household helpers, laborers, and criminals. *On the Town* featured African-American dancers and actors playing the same character-types as their white colleagues — all together, part of the same street scene, and living equal lives. Sono Osato, who played Ivy Smith, remarked that the musical “depicts just people, any people, the people of New York as they live and dance and ride in subways, all intermingled.” Theophilus Lewis, a theater critic, wrote in Baltimore’s *Afro-American* that “the colored characters...are not highlighted or emphasized in any way. They are just there, a part of the human scene as they are in life.”

It was especially significant that *On The Town* featured Sono Osato, a Japanese-American ballet dancer in the role of Ivy Smith. Osato’s father, Shoji Osato, had been arrested by the FBI one day after the attack on Pearl Harbor as an “enemy alien.” He became one of 120,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry who were held in internment camps throughout the American west. He was held for six months and was not given permission to travel to New York to see his daughter perform until April 1945. Yet, here, on the Broadway stage, audiences saw a Japanese-American woman in a role onstage that was off-limits to her in real life, representing a remarkable moment on Broadway during World War II.

**MODULE D: HOW CAN MUSIC EXPRESS HOPE FOR A JUST SOCIETY?**

*West Side Story* (1957)

The Broadway musical *West Side Story* (1957) is one of Leonard Bernstein’s most memorable mash-ups of his musical genius and his activist impulse. The musical premiered during the early years of the Civil Rights Movement and at a time of heated anxieties around immigration, American identity, and global political tensions.

The musical’s Jewish creators — Leonard Bernstein (music), Jerome Robbins (choreography), Stephen Sondheim (lyrics), and Arthur Laurents (book) — sought to reimagine Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* as a contemporary story of impossible love, family rivalry, violence, and tragedy. Bernstein and Robbins initially imagined a story of ethnic competition, racial discrimination, poverty, and violence set on New York’s Lower East Side during the convergence of Passover and Easter. As they began to transform Shakespeare’s classic, Bernstein and Robbins jotted notes and scene sketches into a copy of *Romeo and Juliet*. Above the prologue, Bernstein wrote: “an out and out plea for racial tolerance.” Later Bernstein wrote, “*West Side Story* is one long protest against racial discrimination... that is why we wrote it.”

Initially pitting Jews against Catholics, Bernstein and Robbins soon decided to reworked their project to be more contemporary, choosing instead to focus on Puerto Rican Sharks seeking recognition as full Americans by the Jets. Puerto Ricans had been granted US citizenship in 1917 when President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones-Shafroth Act. In spite of this, they continued to suffer from discrimination. By the 1950s, around 600,000 Puerto Ricans had migrated to New York seeking economic opportunities, spurring anti-immigrant sentiments as well as discussions of what it meant to be American.

“America”

This tension is the theme of the song “America.” The performers sing, “Life is all right in America,”
which is immediately followed by, “If you’re all white in America.” The song deals with the idea of the “American Dream,” and through brilliant lyrics, music, and choreography, raises the question, “Is America a land of opportunity or discrimination? Both?”

“Somewhere”

In *West Side Story*, “Somewhere” can be interpreted as a reaction to current events. WWII had ended but the world was still coming to grips with the horrors of the Holocaust. The United States had entered the Korean War, which ended in stalemate, and was just entering the Vietnam War and the Cold War. Here at home, Jim Crow and segregation laws plagued the South and spurred thousands of African Americans to move from the South into the North and West. Our nation’s leaders raised public fear of suspected Communists, the gay community, immigrants, and anyone considered to be “un-American.” The world was filled with uncertainty and fear, and so people might have been dreaming about going “Somewhere.”
MODULE A: HOW CAN MUSIC INSPIRE AND EDUCATE?

YOUNG PEOPLE’S CONCERTS AND
BERNSTEIN’S COMMITMENT TO POPULARIZE CLASSICAL MUSIC

First class period:

1. Begin with an introduction, based on the Historical Background.

2. Pick one Young People’s Concert topic and watch it* with your students:
   You can find the list of topics with full scripts in the following link:
   https://leonardbernstein.com/lectures/television-scripts/young-peoples-concerts
   
   The concert titled, ‘What Does Music Mean?’ can be viewed here:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxwWIQNGeKE
   
   *The concerts are typically one hour long, and you can choose to watch the whole concert or part of one.

3. Use the following prompts to generate a conversation about the “What Does Music Mean?” concert:
   Share one new idea that you just heard. What makes it special?
   What is music about, according to Bernstein? What is “the real musical meaning”? What is the purpose of music?
   Bernstein said that music has its own meanings and that you find out the meanings for yourselves, just by listening to it. Do you agree? Why or why not?
   What examples does Bernstein use to convey his idea about the meaning of music? Can you add an example?

4. Invite students to become educators! Watch 1-2 more programs of the Young People’s Concerts and pay attention to Leonard Bernstein’s style, as well as how he blends songs and storytelling.
   Divide the students into groups. Ask them to choose a topic they’re passionate about and prepare a 3-5 minute video about that topic. Encourage students to include relevant songs in their presentation and be prepared to explain how these songs were selected.

Second class period:

5. Invite students to present their films to the class.
   (Optional) Have students present their lesson to younger grades at school.
   Ask presenters:
   What happens when you share your passion with others?
   Describe your process of selecting music and why you chose to include it in your video.
6. Use the following prompts to conclude the lesson:

At the end of his “What Does Music Mean” Young People’s Concert, Bernstein said, “I want you to listen to a short piece without any explanation...you just all sit back and relax, and enjoy it, and listen to the notes, and feel them move around, jumping, and hopping, and bumping, and flashing, and sliding, and whatever they do, and just enjoy THAT.” He was talking about the experience.

How did you experience your friends’ lessons? What else did you enjoy in addition to the content itself?

Does anyone want to learn more about a topic your classmates presented about?

How do you think young people who have never been to a concert hall would react to Bernstein’s description? Do you think adults would react differently?

Throughout Bernstein’s musical career he believed teaching young students was one of the most important things to do. Why do you think he felt this way? How does his passion to educate show in this concert?
MODULE B: HOW CAN MUSIC BE USED TO EXPRESS ONE’S RELIGIOUS IDENTITY?

SYMPHONY NO. 1: JEREMIAH
Before you begin this lesson, tell students you will be making music together. If students play an instrument, give them the option of bringing it to school, but make clear that it’s optional.

Homework to prepare for lesson:

1. Ask students to freewrite about a meaningful element of their religion or cultural background, and what emotions they associate with that element. Options might include a favorite holiday, family tradition, childhood memory, food, or game.

2. Have students compose a short (30-60 sec) song to express that emotion or tell a story. Based on students’ abilities, the song could be played with a portable instrument, humming, drumming their fingers, etc.

Procedure for class:

1. Ask for one or two volunteers to share their composition. While they play, other students should listen with eyes closed and try to guess the emotion or story being expressed.

2. Give a brief introduction to Jeremiah, based on the Historical Background.

3. Ask students to think about what the following words might sound like: a) mess and disorder; b) grief and longing; or c) hope.
   Ask students to take turns and either bang on their desks, play their instruments, or hum to express the above words.

4. Have students close their eyes and listen to the second movement, “Profanation.” Ask them to listen for mood:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_URx8Pw_OJo
   Profanation from Jeremiah, Symphony No. 1

5. Use the following prompts to generate a conversation about the symphony:
   How did the music make you feel? How does the music make you want to move?
   How would you describe the mood? What story do you think this music is telling?
   Why do you think Bernstein chose to write a song based on Jewish texts?
   Why do you think Bernstein didn’t want to write a 4th uplifting movement?

6. Have students listen to the blessing before reading the haftorah. Ask them to listen for the similarities in tune between the prayer and the second movement:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rn5MAKUm0Us
7. Use the following prompts to discuss the blessing:

   Why do you think Bernstein took inspiration from this melody for his symphony?

   Do you think it matters that a Jewish composer write a symphony based on Jewish texts? Why or why not?

8. Conclusion: Depending on remaining time, invite other students — especially those whose compositions might express sorrow and/or hope — to perform.

   What is the value in writing about sadness, anger, or mourning? What is the value of connecting hope to these emotions?

   Do you feel different about the topic you chose to present after performing or after hearing your friends perform?

Optional Homework:

1. Ask students to choose an important song or melody from their religious or cultural background, or from their childhood.

2. Have them write why that song or melody is important to them. Then, have them write about how they might take inspiration from that song or melody to compose a new song. What would the new song be about and why?

3. (Optional) Students can compose a 30-60 second song inspired by their childhood song or melody.
MODULE C: HOW CAN MUSIC SERVE AS A POLITICAL ACT AND PROMOTE A SOCIAL AGENDA?

ON THE TOWN (1944)
This module focuses on one formative moment in a long life of activism and invites students to explore Bernstein’s belief in the power of art to promote social change and to explore his choices in music-making. The powerful statement that Bernstein and the musical’s creative team made with this show encourages students to identify and respond creatively to social issues that are important to them.

1. Begin with an introduction to On the Town, based on the Historical Background.

2. Distribute Worksheet 3: On the Town images and begin to visually analyze the first photo.
   - Ask students “What do you see?”
   - Use the following questions to encourage observation (for grades 6-8):
     - Describe the people that you see in the photo. Who do you think they are?
     - What do you think is happening?
     - What in this photograph do you think is significant for a musical opening in 1944?
     - Imagine you’re a journalist posting this photograph to Instagram. How would you caption and hashtag it?

3. Describe the plot of the musical and discuss the significance of the show’s casting.
   - The story of the three sailors, Chip, Ozzie, and Gabey, enjoying one day of shore leave in New York City can be found in the Historical Background section.
   - Why is diverse casting important?
   - Can you think of any other TV shows, movies, or plays that have had a similar impact with their casting?

   Explain that Bernstein continued the show’s commitment to integration when he hired Everett Lee as a violinist in the pit orchestra, and later appointed him conductor. Lee, likely the first African-American to lead a Broadway pit orchestra, later recalled, “Lenny was a wonderful person. Not only was he a great talent, he was a fine person...he said ‘Be what you are, Everett. Just be what you’re supposed to be.’”

   - Ask: How would you interpret the advice to “be what you are”?

   The scene and music show that On the Town is at its heart a love affair with New York and a tale about living life to its fullest. We can assure you that you will continue humming “New York, New York” after the lesson is over!

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7C1gWZTdgw (from the 1949 film)
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhqTveKZtE4 (Klezmer Company Orchestra)
5. Have students visually analyze the second photo from Worksheet 3: *On the Town Images*.

The text on the backdrop is Ivy Smith’s biography. Who do you think she is? What can you tell about her? Which specific qualities are described?

Underline every time the banner describes Ivy Smith. How many opposites can you find? Why do you think they describe her this way?

Do you think it’s surprising that a Japanese American woman would win this title? Why or why not?

Ivy Smith is “Miss Turnstiles” for the month, a beauty queen of the subway.

Explain that when this show opened, America was at war with Japan and Japanese Americans were being interned in camps across America.

Imagine you are a journalist reviewing the show, and you have to post this image to your newspaper’s Instagram. How would you caption and hashtag the it?

6. Have students read Worksheet 4: an excerpt from the article “*On the Town Proves the Point: Negroes Cast in Normal Roles*” by Joe Bostic, published in the *People’s Voice* on Feb 17, 1945, and answer the questions individually or in pairs.

Ask students to share their answers and conclude the conversation with the following discussion questions:

The mainstream white press of the day, with some exceptions, ignored the show’s integrated cast. However, the black press commented repeatedly on this. What do you think accounts for this difference?

Think of something unjust that you would want to change at school or in your neighborhood. What might stop you from fighting to change it? How can you “just go ahead and do it”?

Broadway musicals have dealt with race and ethnicity in a range of ways. Can you think of any recent movies, TV shows, or plays that have made similar contributions to expanding representation in popular media?

7. Conclusion: Put students in teams of 3-4 and present them with a challenge:

The artistic team of *On the Town* — Leonard Bernstein, Jerome Robbins, Betty Comden, and Adolph Green — made audacious choices in creating a musical that broke boundaries on and off stage. They used the Broadway stage as a platform for promoting equality, integration, and even women’s rights, as the women in *On the Town* are dominant, high-powered, competent, and outspoken.

This team used theater, what they did for living, as a platform for promoting social change. Think of a social change you would make in the world, like gender equality or eliminating poverty. Now, think of something that YOU do regularly, like an after-school activity, sports club, or family tradition. How can you incorporate social change into your regular activity? Write out an action plan or draw a comic strip to illustrate your idea.
MODULE D: HOW CAN MUSIC EXPRESS HOPE FOR A JUST SOCIETY?

WEST SIDE STORY (1957)

1. (Optional) Before starting this lesson, watch West Side Story together as a class.

2. Begin with an introduction to West Side Story, based on the Historical Background.

3. Distribute Worksheet 5: Romeo & Juliet Notes and explain how West Side Story is an adaptation of Shakespeare's play.

   (If needed) Explain the plot of Romeo & Juliet to students.

   Bernstein wrote that West Side Story was an “out and out plea for racial tolerance.”
   What do you think that means?
   How do you think Romeo & Juliet could be adapted into a “plea for racial tolerance”?
   Read this page from Romeo & Juliet. Underline any words or phrases that stand out to you when you think about Bernstein’s “plea for racial tolerance.” Explain your choices.

4. Distribute Worksheet 6: “America” Lyrics. Have students use the lyrics to fill out the Pros/Cons chart with descriptions of America used in the song. Use the chart to discuss the song with students.

   What do these recent migrants like about America? What do they not like?
   How do they feel they are being treated by non-Puerto Ricans?
   Do you think they are glad that they migrated to New York City? Why or why not?

5. Distribute Worksheet 7: “Somewhere” Lyrics and discuss the song with students.

   Why do you think the creators wrote “Somewhere”? Who do you think they envision going there?
   How might the song be connected to racial discrimination in the 1950s?

   As a gay Jewish man who was passionate about social justice, Bernstein attracted the attention of the FBI, who were concerned Bernstein might be a Communist. He was also criticized by homophobes and antisemites. This was a time when America was in a Cold War with the Soviet Union and the government used fears that Communists would take over America to justify following, spying on, and publicly humiliating many public figures.

   What do you think “Somewhere” might have personally meant to Bernstein?
   What does this song mean to you? What would be that “Somewhere” in your life?

6. Listen to “Somewhere” at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BQMgCy-n6U

   Instruct students to listen for the mood of “Somewhere” and make a list of adjectives to describe the song.

   What elements of the music contributed to you choosing those adjectives? How does the music make you want to move?
Does the music change your response to the question ‘What would be that “Somewhere” in your life”? If so, how?

Can you think of a “place for us” for your school or community?

If you could add an additional verse that would describe your “Somewhere,” what would you write?

5. Collect students’ verses and create a word cloud based on students’ new verse for “Somewhere”

Use websites like voyant-tools.org or wordle.net to build a visual word-cloud from students’ texts. Word clouds reflect the number of times a word appears in a text, with each word’s size reflecting its frequency.

Show the word cloud to students and discuss:

- Which words appear more frequently in the new verses?
- What does that mean about what we long for?
- What surprised you?

6. Conclude by asking:

Leonard Bernstein believed in the power of music to bring peace to turbulent times. How can music inspire peace and hope for a better tomorrow?

- Can you think of other examples of songs that give you hope and strength?

You may use John Lennon’s song “Imagine” (1971) as well as other songs that students suggest to discuss the power of music to be healing in turbulent times.

CONCLUSION

1. As a young conductor, Leonard Bernstein once told his orchestra during rehearsal: “Give it all you’ve got and then crescendo*!”

* a gradual increase in volume of a musical passage

- What do you think Bernstein meant by these words? What do they mean for you personally?

- What cause would you “give all you’ve got”? How? How would you perform a crescendo?

2. Think back to the different functions of music you’ve discussed today. Which stood out to you the most? If you were a composer, how would you hope that your music would change the world? (Heal, educate, call to action, etc.)

Make a playlist of 5-10 songs that would achieve that action. Why did you choose the songs that you did? What emotions would you want the listener to feel when listening to your playlist?

Think of who would need to listen to your playlist in order for the action to be achieved. Make a plan to have the necessary person/people listen to your playlist.
WORKSHEET 1: LEONARD BERNSTEIN PHOTOS
"In the beginning was the Note, and the Note was with God; and whosoever can reach for that Note, reach high, and bring it back to us on earth, to our earthly ears—he is a composer."

Leonard Bernstein, 1963

"Please, God, leave us this one mystery, unsolved: why man creates. The minute that one is solved, I fear art will cease to be. And in that artless and unmysterious world, I would also preferably cease to be."

Leonard Bernstein, 1964

"Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness."

Maya Angelou, 1974

"If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music."

Albert Einstein, 1929

"To send light into the darkness of men's hearts - such is the duty of the artist."

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

"Mi alone is only me. But mi with sol — Me with Soul — means a song is beginning to grow, Take wing, and rise up singing from me and my soul...."

Leonard Bernstein's MASS (1971)

"On the first day of the seventh month hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. It is a day for you to sound the trumpets / when the horn is sounded."

Numbers 29:1

"People haven't always been there for me but music always has."

Taylor Swift

"Ah, music," [Dumbledore] said, wiping his eyes. "A magic beyond all we do here!"

J. K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone
WORKSHEET 3: ON THE TOWN IMAGES

Photograph from the souvenir program for *On the Town*, 1944

What do you see?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Describe the people that you see in the photo. Who do you think they are? What do you think is happening?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

What in this photograph do you think is significant for a musical opening in 1944?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Imagine you’re a journalist posting this photograph to Instagram. How would you caption and hashtag it?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
“Exotic Ivy Smith” is introduced as Miss Turnstiles, the New York Subway’s Beauty Queen of the Month. Ivy Smith is played by Sono Osato in the Broadway premiere of On The Town.

The text on the backdrop is Ivy Smith’s biography. What can you tell about her?

*Underline every time the banner describes Ivy Smith. How many opposites can you find? Why do you think they describe her this way?*

_ Ivy Smith is “Miss Turnstiles” for the month, a beauty queen of the subway.  
_Do you think it’s surprising that a Japanese American woman would win this title? Why or why not?_

*Imagine you’re a journalist posting this photograph to Instagram. How would you caption and hashtag it?*_
WORKSHEET 4: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

“On the Town Proves the Point; Negroes Cast in Normal Roles,” by Joe Bostic, Feb 17, 1945

“For the first time in the history of the big street a mixed cast is completely integrated in a thoroughly normal presentation of people living their lives — and having loads of fun doing it — in New York. It’s the biggest, most important, thing that has ever happened to Negroes in the American theatre.

Six Negroes are in the cast...not as Negro characters but as New Yorkers. Whom you’d never know were Negroes except for the color of their skin. To give you an idea, Lenny Jackson plays the role of a cop...and takes a sailor into custody.

Best of all, the producer didn’t make a lot of fuss about the departure from the customary policy, which we’ve resented for years...he just went ahead and did it. For God’s sake, see it.”

**Historical context:** The article quoted above appeared in the *People’s Voice*, a weekly newspaper circulated in Harlem, about six weeks after the show opened. Its African-American author, Joe Bostic, recognized *On the Town’s* efforts toward integration and encouraged his readers to see the show. Later he became an outspoken advocate for the integration of baseball, which took place in 1947.

**What words and phrases stand out to you? Underline them.**

What do you think Joe Bostic means by “customary policy”?

Why does he consider the show “the biggest, most important thing” that has ever happened to African-Americans in the American theater?

How can a largely white show, with a relatively small number of African-American (6 out of 54), make a difference?
Annotated notes by Leonard Bernstein on a copy of Romeo & Juliet

Read this page from Romeo & Juliet. Underline any words or phrases that stand out to you when you think about Bernstein’s “plea for racial tolerance.” Explain your choices.

Bernstein wrote that *West Side Story* was an “out and out plea for racial tolerance.”

*What do you think that means?*

How do you think Romeo & Juliet could be adapted into a “plea for racial tolerance”?
**WORKSHEET 6: “AMERICA” LYRICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Pros</strong></th>
<th><strong>Cons</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>Twelve in a room in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My heart’s devotion</td>
<td>Lots of new housing with more space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let it sink back in the ocean</td>
<td>Lots of doors slamming in our face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always the hurricanes blowing</td>
<td>I’ll get a terrace apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always the population growing</td>
<td>Better get rid of your accent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the money owing</td>
<td>Life can be bright in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the sunlight streaming</td>
<td>If you can fight in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the natives steaming</td>
<td>Life is all right in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the island Manhattan</td>
<td>If you’re all white in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoke on your pipe</td>
<td>Here you are free and you have pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And put that in!</td>
<td>Long as you stay on your own side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to be in America</td>
<td>Free to be anything you choose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay by me in America</td>
<td>Free to wait tables and shine shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything free in America</td>
<td>Everywhere grime in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For a small fee in America</td>
<td>Organized crime in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying on credit is so nice</td>
<td>Terrible time in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One look at us and they charge twice</td>
<td>You forget I’m in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have my own washing machine</td>
<td>I think I’ll go back to San Juan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What will you have though to keep clean?</td>
<td>I know a boat you can get on (Bye Bye!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skyscrapers bloom in America</td>
<td>Everyone there will give big cheer!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadillacs zoom in America</td>
<td>Everyone there will have moved here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry boom in America</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WORKSHEET 7: “SOMEWHERE” LYRICS

There’s a place for us
Somewhere a place for us
Peace and quiet and open air
Wait for us
Somewhere

There’s a time for us
Some day a time for us
Time together with time spare
Time to learn, time to care
Some day!

Somewhere
We’ll find a new way of living
We’ll find a way of forgiving
Somewhere...

There’s a place for us,
A time and place for us.
Hold my hand and we’re halfway there.
Hold my hand and I’ll take you there
Somehow,
Someday,
Somewhere!

My verse: