



BROWARD
CENTER
— *for the* —
PERFORMING ARTS



STUDY GUIDE

HIGH SCHOOL



slow burn
THEATRE CO.

Study Guides are produced in partnership with Broward County Public Schools.

Background Information

Act 1

Ragtime follows the story of three families as their lives intertwine in Ragtime era New York City with historical figures helping to drive the narrative. Father, Mother, Younger Brother, Little Boy and Grandfather are a typical White Anglo Saxon Protestant family living in suburban New Rochelle. After finding an African American baby in the garden, Mother invites the child's mother, Sarah, into the Family's home. Eventually Coalhouse Walker, the child's father and Ragtime musician, comes to call on Sarah. She initially refuses to see him but gradually warms to his advances and eventually agrees to be his wife. The two families enjoy a warm relationship despite Father's skepticism. Meanwhile Tateh and his daughter the Little Girl arrive in America on a boat from Eastern Europe. Despite Tateh's optimism they find life in America hard. They live in poverty while Tateh attempts to earn a living selling silhouettes on the street. Harmony in New Rochelle is shattered when Coalhouse gets into an altercation with the fire department. Unable to accept a confident and proud Black man constantly visiting the town, fire chief Willie Conklin confronts Coalhouse and has his men vandalize the musician's new Ford Model T. Coalhouse exhausts all available legal avenues in a search for justice, in his anger he declares that there will be no wedding until his car is restored. Distraught over this development Sarah decides to appeal to the Vice-Presidential candidate for help. When she approaches him she is mistaken for an assassin and killed. Tateh and the Little Girl leave for Massachusetts to find work where Tateh becomes involved in a mill strike that turns violent when the mill's owners decide to crush it once and for all. In the commotion they are able to hop a train to Philadelphia. On the train an opportunity presents itself to Tateh when the conductor asks to purchase a flipbook he has made for his daughter. Act 1 closes as Sarah is laid to rest.

Act 2

Coalhouse has turned to violence. New Rochelle is gripped by terror when he blows up the firehouse and demands that his car be restored and the fire chief be turned over to his justice. The family is soon surrounded by reporters eager to gather information about their relationship with Coalhouse. After a dramatic argument with Younger Brother, Father decides that they should escape to Atlantic City for a while. Mother meets Tateh on the beach, the once impoverished immigrant is now a successful film director thanks to his flip book. He is going by the name Baron Ashkenazy. Little Boy and Little Girl become fast friends. When word comes from New York that Coalhouse and his gang have taken the J.P. Morgan Library hostage, Father goes back to the city to help with negotiations. When he arrives he is shocked to find Younger Brother among Coalhouse's followers. Booker T. Washington also arrives to help resolve the situation. The entire city is watching as the stage is set for the final confrontation.

Who's Who

Henry Ford July 30, 1863 – April 7, 1947 was the American founder of the Ford Motor Company and father of modern assembly lines used in mass production. His introduction of the Model T automobile revolutionized transportation and American industry. He was a prolific inventor and was awarded 161 U.S. patents.

Emma Goldman June 27, 1869- May 14, 1940 was an anarchist political activist and writer. She played a pivotal role in the development of anarchist political philosophy in North America and Europe in the first half of the 20th century. Born in Kovno, Russian Empire to a Jewish family, Goldman emigrated to the United States in 1885.

Matthew Henson August 6, 1866 – March 9, 1955 was an African American explorer and associate of Robert Peary during various expeditions, the most famous being a 1909 expedition which claimed to be the first to reach the Geographic North Pole.

Harry Houdini March 24, 1874 – October 31, 1926, was born Ehrich Weiss, a Jewish-Hungarian-American magician and escapologist, stunt performer, actor and film producer, as well as a skeptic and investigator of spiritualists.

J.P. Morgan April 17, 1837 – March 31, 1913 was an American financier, banker and art collector who dominated corporate finance and industrial consolidation during his time. He is widely credited with having saved or rescued the U.S. national economy in general—and the federal government in particular—on two separate occasions. He bequeathed much of his large art collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and to the Wadsworth Atheneum of Hartford, Connecticut.

Evelyn Nesbit December 25, 1884 – January 17, 1967 was a chorus girl and model for American artists, noted for her entanglement in the murder of her ex-lover, architect Stanford White, by her first husband, Harry Kendall Thaw.

Booker T. Washington ~ 1856 – November 14, 1915 was an American educator, author, orator, and advisor to presidents of the United States. Between 1890 and 1915, Washington was the dominant leader in the African American community.

Stanford White November 9, 1853 – June 25, 1906 was an American architect and partner in the architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White, the frontrunner among Beaux-Arts firms. He designed a long series of houses for the rich and the very rich, and various public, institutional, and religious buildings, some of which can be found to this day in places like Sea Gate, Brooklyn. His design principles embodied the “American Renaissance.” In 1906, White was murdered by millionaire Harry Kendall Thaw over their mutual relationship with Evelyn Nesbit.

Theatre Etiquette

(Before the Show)

It is often helpful to remind students of appropriate audience etiquette by explaining and discussing **why** these rules of behavior are important.

Audience members should:

- listen carefully to the ushers, your teachers – this gets everyone to their seats quickly and ensures a pleasant experience
- walk single-file and hold hand-rails as you use steps – this also keeps everyone safe
- listen carefully to the performers – they are working hard to entertain and inform you with lots of clues about the story
- refrain from talking – this allows everyone to enjoy the performance without being distracted
- laugh if something is funny, but not too loudly – you don't want to miss any dialogue
- pay attention to the lighting, scenery, costumes, and music – all of these elements help provide more details to tell the story in an interesting way
- applaud at the end – this shows the performers that you respect and appreciate their work

Teacher Instructions (After the Show) – *Choose from the activities listed on the following pages to extend student learning.*

ELA and Social Studies Connections

Name: _____

Ragtime addresses a number of social and political issues through song, dance, and theatre performance. Below are some issues that are addressed. Reflect briefly on what you learned about these important elements and comment on how you think they remain issues today. Use your notes for small group discussions in class.

(SS.912.A.5) (LAFS.910.SL.1.1) (LAFS.910.L.3.5)

Racism in the era of <i>Ragtime</i>	Racism in the 21 st century

Women's Rights in the era of <i>Ragtime</i>	Women's Rights in the 21 st century

Immigration in the era of <i>Ragtime</i>	Immigration in the 21 st century

Economic Inequality in the era of <i>Ragtime</i>	Economic Inequality in the 21 st century

Name: _____

Write a Review

In the space below give future audience members a sense of what to expect. Explain aspects that were effective and Identify areas of improvement. In addition to the performers and their work, consider the production elements (lighting, scenery, props, music, ...) (LAFS.910.SL.1.2) (LAFS.910.RL.1.2) (LAFS.910.W.1.3) (TH.912.C.1.3) (TH.912.C.1.8)

Name: _____

Vocabulary

- **Innovations at the Turn of the Century** – the age of Ragtime brought Henry Ford’s Model T for and the assembly line.
- **Anarchy** - absence of government and absolute freedom of the individual, regarded as a political ideal
- **Production Elements** – costumes, lighting, props, scenery, and sound that contribute to a production
- **Review** – writing that gives the audience a sense of what to expect at the performance – may include positive and negative feedback
- **Retribution** - punishment inflicted on someone as vengeance for a wrong or criminal act.
- **Social and Political Issues in the Progressive Era (1895-1925)** –
 - Women’s Movement to improve working conditions and the right to vote
 - Labor Movement – overcrowding, child labor, poor working conditions, and long work hours
 - Race relations and the Immigrant experience – racism towards African-American continued after the abolition of slavery. In 1896 the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case legitimized the idea of “separate but equal” leading to restrictive and discriminatory Jim Crow laws.
 - New Political Forces – The Progressive and Socialist Movements sought change in the form of reforming education, improving public works, supporting workers and generally finding ways to help the common people.

Standards Alignment: The activities in this study guide are aligned with the standards listed below. When teachers incorporate the arts, they increase student engagement, offer multiple points for students to access the curriculum, and provide alternative means for students to demonstrate what they know.

Language Arts Florida Standards	
Grade 9-10	
Speaking and Listening	
LAFS.910.SL.1.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
LAFS.910.SL.1.2	Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.
Language	
LAFS.910.L.3.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
Writing	
LAFS.910.W.1.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
Reading Literature	
LAFS.910.RL.1.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Florida Social Studies Standards	
Grade 9-12	
American History	
SS.912.A.5.in.g	Identify the effects of freedom movements that advocated for civil rights for African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and women, such as a feeling of unity and a sense of community.
SS.912.A.5.In.h	Identify the major view of a leader relating to the African American experience, such as Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, or Marcus Garvey.
SS.912.A.5.In.i	Identify that support of the Ku Klux Klan changed during the 1920s with respect to groups, such as immigrants, African Americans, Catholics, Jews, women, and unions.

Florida Theater Standards	
Grades 9-12	
Critical Thinking and Reflection	
TH.912.C.1.3	Justify a response to a theatrical experience through oral or written analysis, using correct theatre terminology.
TH.912.C.1.8	Apply the components of aesthetics and criticism to a theatrical performance or design.

Cover Sheet

Please collect student work samples and attach it to this cover sheet. Pony all work samples to:

KCW – 3rd floor.

Attention: Lauri Foster

School Name: _____

SEAS Show: Ragtime

Grade: _____