Hairspray

a Wheelock Family Theatre Study Guide

prepared by Annie Gauger and WFT Staff

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Wheelock Family Theatre's production of *Hairspray* is dedicated to the memory of
Dr. Joeritta Jones de Almeida
educator, inspiration, and friend
1944-2013

Joeritta Jones de Almeida started defying convention as a child growing up in segregated South Carolina in the 1950s. A local children's television show offered tickets to the first 10 callers. Told the show probably would not allow a black child in the studio with whites, she called anyway.

On live television, she told the announcer she was a "negro" and asked if she could attend… The surprised announcer said yes, and with that children's television in her town was integrated.

from *The Boston Globe* obituary by J.M. Lawrence, *Globe* Correspondent, 9/6/13

Hairspray: The Setting and Historical Context

***"In Baltimore, hair is politics."* — John Waters**

John Waters, who wrote and directed the original film version of *Hairspray* in 1988, based the story on his own experiences of growing up in Baltimore in the 50s and 60s. Baltimore's unique character comes from its many paradoxical qualities: it is an urban center with a rural sensibility, a city on the border between the North and the South, a blue-collar town that is home to world-class institutions of science and culture. In *Hairspray* — as in all his films — John Waters captures the sometimes tacky, always exuberant, unself-conscious quality of Baltimore and its citizens.

In the early 1960s, the time when *Hairspray* takes place, more than half of the population of Baltimore was African-American. The city had voluntarily decided to desegregate the school system, rather than be forced to do so by court order. However, "white flight" (affluent white families moving to the suburbs) meant that the increasingly overcrowded schools had a much higher percentage of black students than white. Despite the efforts to integrate schools, Baltimore remained heavily segregated, as it had been from its earliest days. (North Avenue, the location of Motormouth Maybelle's record shop in the show, was originally the northern boundary of the city. Blacks were not allowed to cross this boundary after dark).

Baltimore, sometimes described as "an outpost of the North in a Southern state," found itself in a strategic position in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The proximity of the city to the nation's capital made it a popular place for civil rights activists to stage protests and rallies. The city's central position between the North and the South, the very location that made it an economic center, put Baltimore in the midst of the social struggle that divided the entire country.

Key Dates in the Civil Rights Movement in Baltimore

1954

- Baltimore becomes the first Southern city to integrate its schools after the Supreme Court issues its decision in Brown vs. Board of Education: students must be admitted to public schools without regard to race.
- Public housing is integrated.

1955

- 7 percent of black students attend integrated schools.
- Department stores allow blacks to try on clothes.

1956

- 14 percent of black students attend integrated schools.

1957

- 26 percent of black students attend integrated schools.
- "The Buddy Deane Show" first airs on WJZ-TV.

1960

- Sit-ins start to happen all over Baltimore.

1963

- A protest against a local amusement park that excludes black patrons, organized by black and white ministers, results in mass arrests.

1964

- "The Buddy Dean Show," is taken off the air because the television station does not want to integrate black and white dancers.

"'The Buddy Deane Show,' a local Baltimore teen dance show memorialized in *Hairspray* revolves around the successful attempt by white and black Baltimore teens in 1962 to integrate a teen dance show, 'The Corny Collins Show.' The truth is starker…The rise of teen dance shows in the late '50s and early '60s signaled a dramatic cultural shift in musical taste for teens from the Big Band sound of the 1940s so popular with their parents, to rock and roll. More importantly, teen dance shows introduced black music, musicians, and singers to a white audience who were living in an increasingly integrated world. Modified forms of dances popular with black teens also slipped into these shows. Some die-hard segregationists were so distressed at this development that they circulated flyers warning parents about saving the white youth of America by not buying or even listening to race music—negro records.

--retrieved from *Hairspray in Context: Race, Rock 'n Roll and Baltimore* by Professor Taunya Lovell Banks, Jacob A. France Professor of Equality Jurisprudence, University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law

Privilege and Status

Have students engage in a discussion of the following questions.

- What do you think a fair society would look like?
- Do you think it is possible for groups to treat each other with fairness?
- Do you feel as if you are part of a group that is mostly privileged, not privileged, or very much in a neutral position?
- How do you identify yourself within this group?

It is difficult to imagine what it feels like to be in either a high or low-status group, unless you have experienced it firsthand. The following is a class exercise that can provide this experience.

Over the next two days, as a class, choose a privileged group based on gender. For example, on the first day, females will make-up the high-status group. They will be called upon first when class members raise their hands to volunteer answers. They will receive praise for their answers and in general they will be the subject of attention. The other students will mostly be ignored except for points of criticism. The class can come up with tasks for the male students to perform for the others, such as sharpening pencils upon request, carrying books to class, opening doors, etc. On the second day, change the status of these gender groups and repeat this exercise.

Finally, as a class, discuss the impact this exercise had on individual students and on the group of which they were a part. Develop this into a discussion about the ways in which status distinctions can be eradicated and groups can be equalized.

An alternative role-playing exercise could involve students acting out stories based on newspaper headlines that suggest status relationships. In these improvisations, students can be stopped and asked to reflect on their roles of privilege or lack of privilege. Students can then switch roles and replay these improvisations.

The Evolution of *Hairspray*: From Waters to WFT

John Waters

John Waters wrote and directed the first film, *Hairspray,* in 1988. Though he addresses de-segregation, he is also addressing differences. To the Nicest Kids in Town—a group of people who look like clones of each other—Tracy Turnblad is a nightmare. The last thing anyone is prepared for is seeing a fat girl who steals the spotlight, and then invites a menagerie of friends to the stage where they then get to share the spotlight permanently. To top it off the handsome Prince turns a blind eye and becomes her man. “Perfect!” says anyone in the audience who has ever felt like they were not popular. John Waters, WE LOVE YOU!

The language of HAIRSPRAY constantly calls African Americans "Negroes" and reveals a past where blacks were not allowed to share the stage with whites, especially in a dance show where people are meant to dance together. In a recent interview Waters said,

> "…in real life, people in Baltimore did call 'Negro Day' a different name by using the n-word, but I think not saying it in the movie was better. I think that saying the n-word would take away from the spirit of *Hairspray*- it was kind of like a sneak attack to get you to accept everything that I talked about in *Hairspray*. Two men singing a love song to each other; your white daughter dating a black guy - and, none of it was threatening. And, it worked and people embraced it like maybe they wouldn't in real life."

http://www.broadwayworld.com/article/InDepth-InterView-John-Waters-Talks-HAIRSPRAY-IN-CONCERT-HAIRSPRAY-2-Favorite-Movie-Musicals-More-20130119

Broadway Musical

With music by Marc Shaiman, lyrics by Scott Wittman and Shaiman, and a book by Mark O'Donnell and Thomas Meehan, the musical version opened on Broadway in August 2002. The production ran for over six years and closed in January 2009 after 2,642 performances. Nominated for Tony Awards in twelve categories, *Hairspray* won eight—including for best musical, book, score, and direction.

Adam Shankman's Movie

The movie musical, directed and choreographed by Adam Shankman five years later (2007), took a step further into the mainstream by casting former teen heart throb John Travolta as Edna Turnblad. Unlike Divine, a close friend of John Waters who originated the role of Edna (and who was naturally padded), Travolta put on a fat suit for the role.

WFT's Production

Traditionally, the role of Edna Turnblad has been played by a man and Tracy has had a mother and a father. In WFT's production, Edna is also played by a man, but Tracy has two fathers—one of whom dresses as a woman. And in WFT's interpretation Eddie and Wilbur adopted a baby girl from Asia. Such is the world we live in—families, like individuals, come in all shapes and sizes.

You Can't Stop the Beat: The Artistic Team and WFT's Production of *Hairspray*

Staging a theatrical production calls for close collaboration among the members of the entire artistic team. Musical theatre, in particular, calls for a particularly intense level of collaboration among director, musical director, and choreographer since they use songs and dances, as well as dialogue and monologue, to tell the story.

Hairspray director Susan Kosoff writes:

> *Hairspray* resonates with the values that undergird the Wheelock Family Theatre: everyone deserves and needs to be appreciated for who they are and given opportunities to become who they might be. The explicit and implicit message of *Hairspray* is that it is okay to be different, and—moreover—that claiming our unique selves and appreciating the differences of others is what makes it possible for us to celebrate our humanity. One of the many wonderful aspects of this show is that it explores serious subjects with broad humor, rocking music, and joyful dance. It is the hope of the fabulous artistic team and talented cast that I've had the good fortune to collaborate with that your experience with *Hairspray* will leave you with a smile on your face and a residue of meaning in your heart.

Hairspray musical director Matthew Stern and choreographer Laurel Conrad reflect on the challenges of bringing *Hairspray* to the stage.

LC: Every scene has at least one and most often more choreographed pieces. While the choreography needs to look interesting and fun (we use a huge number of 60s dance styles, from the Monkey to the Mashed Potato), it's crucial to telling the story. It needs to build the character, create the relationship, and move the story line.

MS: The music in *Hairspray* is really exciting. The score is basically musical theatre meets 60s pop. It requires a lot of great vocalists, and the music is full of opportunities for singers to make it their own stylistically. I think my favorite song is *I Know Where I've Been.* It so powerfully captures the message of equality that the play contains. The song also reminds me how amazing it is that such a fun and high-energy musical can be so emotionally powerful at the same time. On that note, a close second favorite song is *Welcome to the 60s*, which is such a great celebration of the individuality that the characters find in the show.

LC: Matt and I work extremely closely together.

MS: Our team works very closely together all the time. The dance is dependent on the music and vice versa. Laurel and I often work together to determine lengths of dance music and to make the score and the choreography work together. I usually play the music as it is in the score for Laurel and she designs the choreography based on that.

LC: In auditions, I looked for energy, technique, personality—and dance ability, of course.

MS: The show really requires lots of talent amongst our actors. They all had to be strong singers and dancers. For such a huge show, there wasn't really room for any weak links. Our youngest actors are 16, and we needed them to be as strong as the rest of our ensemble.

LC: What I love about this work is the creation and seeing everything come together. The energy. The sense of accomplishment.

MS: In rehearsing a play, we build community with our fellow performers. Each cast becomes a kind of family, and it's nice to create such wonderful connections with so many people.

LC: In my work on this show, I've been most inspired by the music, the dances of the time, and the cast.

MS: I think *Hairspray* is all about being yourself and celebrating it. I'm inspired by people everywhere who are living up to the beautiful message of this piece.

Movement Activity: Milling and Seething

Hairspray has a huge cast—the show ends with all 36 people onstage dancing and singing *You Can't Stop the Beat.* So many actors and dancers move so quickly in what seems like a traffic jam of bodies—yet collisions or other accidents rarely happen.

Try this improv to sharpen students' spatial awareness.

At the teacher's signal "GO!" everyone (or half of the students, depending on space) moves constantly within a defined space (marked off with tape or furniture) without touching anyone else.

Tell students they don't need to go quickly all the time, but they can't stop moving. No voices. Concentrate. They should try to explore the entire space rather than stay in one part of the room.

Listen at all times for the word "FREEZE," at which point they should be in enough control of their bodies to stop and be absolutely frozen like a statue, not even moving their eyes. (Freezes are a technique used frequently in WFT's production of *Hairspray.*)

Breathe, but be still and quiet. When students' hear the teacher's "GO" again, they should repeat as before, with one addition: next time they freeze they should be sure to freeze in an interesting shape somehow.

Reflect: What did you notice that was interesting or surprising? Was it difficult or easy? Did you have a strategy for succeeding at the improv?

When you attend the show: pay particular attention to the crowd scenes, musical or not, to see how they work.

Creation and Adaptation

A conversation with *Hairspray* composer and co-lyricists Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman.
StageNOTES: How do you work together when you write?
MARC SHAIMAN: I beg Scott to come into the room with the piano. We think of the idea for a song, and I'll just sit at the piano and sort of … "Play, monkey, play!" (laughs)
SCOTT WITTMAN: Everything's done at the piano. We don't sit in separate rooms and write. We sit at the piano and figure out what the scene calls for and what the character wants.
MS: I start playing music — it comes pretty simply for me — and then we start carving away from the top. And as the lyrics start forming I amend the melody or chords.
SN: What kind of research did you do for Hairspray?
MS: Both as procrastination and as a very valuable tool, we'll go off and buy every possible reference book on the subject.
SW: Lots of research books. I also bought *Seventeen* magazines of the period on eBay.
MS: We found a great book called *Black Talk*, a fantastic book about the last century of black slang. We actually have a lot of books on slang, but none that were so particular to the black community.
SW: "The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice" was in there.
MS: When we saw it there on paper, we thought, "Hm, that's a great phrase."
SW: "Run and Tell That" came out of there as well. We make lists of the words that pop out at us, until we find the title or the hook.
SN: Were you inspired by particular '60s songs?
MS: For every song in the score, I could tell you two songs that were the inspiration for the musical groove. "You Can't Stop the Beat" is inspired by "River Deep, Mountain High." There's also a connection with "The Beat Goes On," which meant "life goes on." It sort of means the same thing here, but it's both figuratively and literally about "the beat." "Good Morning, Baltimore" certainly has the sound of "Be My Baby." "Heat Wave" has the basic groove for "Welcome to the Sixties." "Without Love" was inspired by "Your Love Keeps Lifting Me Higher" and "You're All I Need to Get By." I cheated a little there and went a little further into the '60s than the time period of *Hairspray*. My idea —and my excuse (laughs) — was that the kids are thinking ahead. The first time we wrote the song "Without Love," Seaweed started it, and we had the book writers give him lines into the song that said, "Somewhere out there there's a new world, new rhythms, new sounds."
SN: What song was the most difficult for you to write?
MS: Velma's song kept changing and changing.
SW: After Tracy sang "I Can Hear the Bells," the audience was so enamored of her they didn't want anyone onstage calling her fat or ugly.
MS: But in the story we had to immediately have her rejected because of the way she looks, and her principles.
SW: We wrote a song called "No One On My TV Show Will Ever Look Like That," and the audience wasn't having it.
MS: The audience hated Tracy being so poked fun of, even though it was by the villain and you obviously hate her for saying those things. Then we tried another song with the same melody,

called “I Prefer the Status Quo,” which was a more veiled way for Velma to reject Tracy — to speak in a bigoted way without being found out. But finally we realized that we needed to write something funny.
SW: “Miss Baltimore Crabs” gave her a showier, “Disney villainess” – style number.
MS: Even with that song, we had to cut it down to the bare minimum. We just needed to make the point that Tracy’s not getting on the show, and that the villain is lost in her illusions.
SN: Were you interested in theatre when you were in high school?
SW: I grew up in Nanuet, New York. I was in every musical and in every play — I think we did three a year. But even if I didn’t get a part in the show, I would be on the stage crew — anything to be involved. This is terrible, but I cut school every Wednesday and I’d go into the city and buy standing room tickets to shows. I just saw as much as I could. All through high school in the summer I would apprentice in summer stock, for no money. I think at one point they wanted me to pay them (laughs). One week you’d be doing props, one week you’d be on the stage crew, one week you’d be a dresser. I learned a lot from watching those actors — how to put a show on in a week. I did anything I could to be around theater.
MS: I left high school with a G.E.D. I moved to New York less than a year later, and just had a fairy-tale entrance into the business. I met the people I dreamed about meeting, and I started working right away. It’s always tough when people ask how to do what I’ve been lucky enough to do. There’s no way to re-create what happened with me. All I can say is, you have to be out there doing it. Have courage and self confidence — you can’t do much if you don’t have that. But, there’s not a day that goes by that I don’t wish that I had a college education in music, and had a chance to further my musical knowledge. I’ve had to learn things by the skin of my teeth, and I can’t imagine anything more glorious than being spoon fed the rules of orchestration, and the history of it all. I wish I’d had that.
SN: Can you compare writing music for movies to writing a Broadway musical?
MS: Writing music for movies is very thrilling — you get a hundred-piece orchestra playing your music. Movies are just so huge. When you work on something, and you know that everyone in the country or the world knows about it, it’s almost surreal. But nothing can compare to human beings singing songs that you’ve written, and singing them so well. It’s amazing to see everything fall together the way it did on *Hairspray* – the sets costumes, direction, choreography. And then for it to be such a hit, to make an audience so joyous every night — that’s truly unspeakably satisfying, there are just no words to describe that satisfaction.

Creation and Adaptation: Activities

One of the creators of the musical version of *Hairspray,* Mark O’Donnell, states that he was very careful to shape John Waters’ original film into a piece that would hold its own dramatically on the stage. The first thing he did was heighten the initial obstacles and conflicts in the film in order to create a drama that was sustainable for the duration of the show. Playwrights also often begin to develop their scripts through improvisation and sometimes look to the news (or *Seventeen* magazine in the case of Scott Wittman, mentioned above) for inspiration.

Have students bring into class a human-interest story from a newspaper that captures their imagination. Ask each to circle and identify the conflict and the characters in their particular newspaper excerpt.

Divide the class into groups of three or four, and have students read their stories aloud to each other. Have them discuss the characters and the conflict contained in each story, which were identified in the first part of the exercise.

Using improvisation, have students create scenes to tell their stories.

Extend this activity by having students further research the characters, settings, and subject matter of their stories. This might involve observing people in everyday life, such as on buses or in shops, whose physical and vocal traits might help to build realistic characters for their scene. It might involve researching background information about the events of their story on the internet. Remember, the more research, observations, and factual material gathered, the more authentic the dramatization will be.

Once the research is complete, have students enact the stories again. Discuss differences observed in the new improvisations

Continue the activity, by having students write the improvised scenes as a piece of dramatic literature.

The Comedy in Musical Comedy

In *Hairspray*, many of the characters use humor as a way of coping with problems. For example, Edna makes jokes to take away the sting of Amber and Velma's insults in the record shop scene. When we go through painful moments, finding the funny side of the situation often helps us get through it.

As a class, brainstorm elements that make a situation funny. Often the funniest personal stories come from the awful things that happen to us. The comedy becomes apparent to us when the tragedy of the moment has passed.

Act 1, Scene 8
In this scene, Tracy and Penny meet Seaweed and his mother, Motormouth Maybelle on their turf in an "Afro-Fantastic" scene. Tracy has bounced back from the assault by Amber in the gym and she is in the company of her allies. Link has joined them in friendship, but he still isn't bold enough to protest against the prejudice that his new friends face every day. Tracy learns a life lesson about the generous nature of love and the need to believe that good can overcome bad choices.

Edna: Ooooooooohhhhh!!!!! Tracy, that was you!

(calling out the door)

Wilbur! It was the kids I saw.

Tracy: Mama, what are you doing here?

Edna: I had a sudden craving for chicken and waffles, so we drove up to Ruby's Take-Out across the street. Hello everyone. I'm Tracy's mom.

Velma: *(taking in EDNA)*

Oh! So, you're what spawned that!

Edna: Excuse me?

Velma: I guess you two are living proof that the watermelon doesn't fall very far from the vine.

Edna: Tracy, be a dear and hold mommy's waffles.

(EDNA takes a threatening step toward VELMA as WILBUR enters.)

.....

Link: I like these people. But whether or not they're on TV won't get me a recording contract.

(realizes that sounds too shallow)

That comes out all wrong. I've been singing and dancing and smiling on that show for three years waiting for it to lead to my break... I'm not gonna throw it away. C'mon, I'm leaving and you gotta too.

(He starts toward the door.)

Tracy: No! I want to do this, and so should you. It's what's right. Stay, Link. Please stay.

Link: Sorry...See ya, little darlin'. *(He exits.)*

In this scene, observe the use of different kinds of comedic lines:

- **Insult:** "The watermelon doesn't fall very far from the vine."
- **Understatement:** "Tracy, be a dear and hold mommy's waffles."

What is the effect of each of these lines? Velma's mean-spiritedness is made evident through her insults. Edna, by contrast, shows the most restraint, and gets the biggest laughs in performance. She says the least, but at the same time reveals to us that she is smarter than the others. When we see Edna respond to a vicious attack with a witty remark, we as an audience side with her, enjoying her victory over her petty opponents. Motormouth, Edna, Tracy and Seaweed all respond to racism and insults with wit.

As a class, discuss how you handle similar situations. Is it possible to respond to all situations with kindness and humor?

Working in pairs, have students think of and share a situation they have been in that has comic potential and that involved themselves and one other person. Was the situation funny initially or only in retrospect?

Next, have students stage their situations as short, prepared improvisations.

Present a selection of the prepared improvisations to the rest of the class, and discuss where the comedy lies in each scene when performed.

Movement Activity: The Comedy in Musical Comedy

One way to stylize character movement is to think in terms of small, medium, and large versions of the same movement or of the physical gestures as you speak.

Try this improv to get a sense of the modulation of gesture and movement demanded by comic performance:

RADIO DIAL

Make a circle, with a student volunteer or teacher in the middle. Choose any phrase—for example, "John, you're a genius!" Have students invent a gesture to go with that phrase. Then, ask them to:

- Repeat the phrase and gesture together, with both at a regular, medium, level.
- Slightly increase the size of your gesture (without otherwise changing it) and the volume of your voice.
- Continue to increase both until, after three or four times, your gesture has become HUGE and your voice has become LOUD!
- Quickly shift it down in one step, back to the regular, medium phrase and gesture and slightly soften the voice.
- Repeat both with a slightly smaller version of your gesture and slightly softer version of your voice.
- Do both three or four more times, getting smaller and softer, until your gesture is tiny and you only THINK the phrase along with it, staying silent.

Reflect:

- How did your emotions change as you got larger or smaller?

When you attend the show:

- Choose a character and watch his or her gestures and voice throughout the show to see what you learn about him or her. Do the actors manage to keep their characters' emotions real when all else is exaggerated?

Media and Personal Identity

Marissa Jaret Winokur, the original Tracy Turnblad, talks about confidence, body image, and self-acceptance.

Hefty. Plus-sized. Dimple-kneed. Those are all from articles about Hairspray. They never want to use the word "fat" so they find every other word there is. It's like nobody can talk about it, or even say it out loud. Why is that?

There are studies around that say girls who are five years old already have a bad self image. They feel bad when they look in the mirror, and they're five years old. That is really crazy!
Look at this — I still have my report card from kindergarten. It says "Marissa needs to learn to control and lower her voice." Well, I guess I didn't really pay attention to that. I know they probably meant well — "girls should be quiet and polite" — but through your whole life there are people who want to tell you what you should do and who you should be. I don't think you should always listen to them.
I've been lucky, I guess. I always had a lot of self-confidence — that's what got me into performing. And most of the time nobody gave me too much trouble about my size. I'm short — just five feet tall — and I'm not a skinny little stick. But I had a lot of friends, I was a cheerleader, I was in shows at school. I just ignored anyone who said I shouldn't do those things, I guess.
Of course I would love to lose 10 pounds. I would never lie and say I don't think about it, but I don't think about it every day. I love my body. I don't like wearing clothes that hide or cover it. I love wearing costumes that show it off.
Whenever I would go out and audition for parts, I always decided I wouldn't take the "poor fat girl" roles. That's not who I am. When I heard they were doing a musical of Hairspray I thought, yeah, that's for me. I know that some people see my weight first, but I don't think of Tracy as a role model for all the heavy girls out there — she's more than that. She's an individual. She doesn't fit the mold. This show says that you can be whoever you really are, and not only that, you can win.
John Waters always likes to say that what he loves most about Hairspray is that when they do it in high schools, there will finally be a part for "the fat girl and the drag queen." It's cool to be part of something like this, a show that really says something.
Playing Tracy — well, it's one of the hardest things I've ever done in my life just because of all the energy it takes, but it's also a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I'm doing my best to enjoy it — and trying not to lose too much weight.

Media and Personal Identity: Activity

To gain an awareness of how personal identity is affected by images in the media, and how the media's evaluation of personal qualities and attitudes, skills, and achievements affects self-esteem, review this scene. Then try the activities on the following page.

From the Script
Act 1, Scene 6
Prior to this scene, several elements have already conspired to begin a cultural revolution, which is reflected in Tracy's success both romantically and on TV. In this scene, the antagonists – Spritzer, the President of Ultra Clutch Hairspray, sponsor of The Corny Collins Show, and Velma, the show's producer - try to resist these changes.

Spritzer: Mrs. Von Tussle, Negro Day every day? That chubby Communist girl and kissing on the mouth with possibly parted lips... I assure you, controversy is not what Ultra Clutch wishes to promote.

Corny: Negroes and chubby girls buy hairspray, too, Mr. Spritzer.
Spritzer: Mrs. Von Tussle, how do you plan to handle this?
Velma: I plan to start by firing him!
Corny: You can't fire Corny Collins from *The Corny Collins Show.*
Velma: Why not? They do it all the time on Lassie!
Corny: Mr. Spritzer, to keep your audience, you got to keep up with the times.
Velma: This show's fine the way it is. .....

YOU CAN SAY I'M A BIGOT
BUT IT JUST ISN'T TRUE
LOOK, I LOVE SAMMY DAVIS
AND HE'S BLACK AND A JEW!
BUT THEY BETTER GET SET
FOR A FULL OUT ASSAULT
THEY SHOULD NEVER HAVE BOILED
MISS BALTIMORE CRABS

Look at examples of advertisements from magazines. As a class, discuss what the images mean.

Next, consider the issue of advertisers targeting audiences for the purpose of selling products.

- Why do advertisers target specific audiences?
- What are the benefits, challenges and consequences of targeting audiences in this way?
- How do you feel that advertisements targeted towards you affect your sense of identity?

Refer to the script at the opening of this section, where Mr. Spritzer, the sponsor of The *Corny Collins Show*, makes the statement "That chubby Communist girl and kissing on the mouth with possibly parted lips… I assure you, controversy is not what Ultra Clutch wishes to promote." In response, Corny Collins says, "Negroes and chubby girls buy hairspray, too, Mr. Spritzer." Discuss these two lines of dialogue as a class. What do the lines mean to you?

Continue the discussion by compiling a list of targeted audiences that you can identify from magazines, TV, public transport, and films today.

Have students brainstorm ideas for their own advertisements that focus on a particular target audience. Divide into groups and choose one of the ideas from the brainstorming exercise to work on. Have students discuss the nature of the target audience for the advertisement and how they could design the advertisement to promote a positive and honest sense of identity for the chosen audience.

Resources

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Films

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Credits

Material in this study guide was adapted from the UK National Curriculum version created by Sophie Watkiss, on behalf of Stage Entertainment, based on the original guide created by StageNOTES, Camp Broadway LLC, New York.

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