

THE ADDAMS FAMILY

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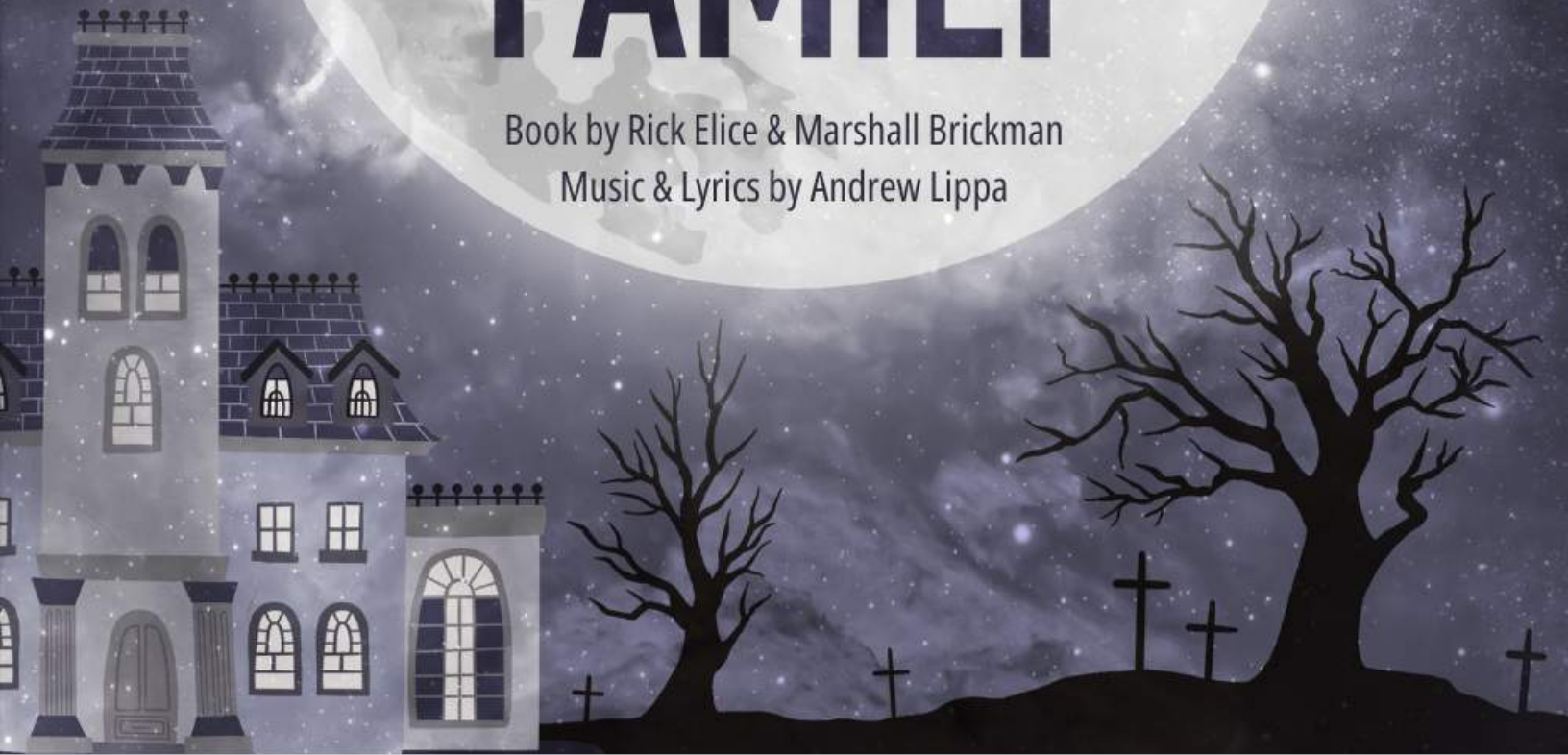


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How To Use This Guide

The Addams Family has a history in American popular culture as a wacky, kooky group of individuals obsessed with everything macabre and unusual. They have had many iterations since their original debut in comics in 19-something, but throughout these different versions, their core personalities and eccentricities have remained tried and true. The Addams Family Musical is no different. As described by Theatrical Rights Worldwide, the Addams Family musical is a comical feast that embraces the wackiness in every family. As you watch the characters we know and love experience a new, original adventure of a story, allow the activities in this guide to celebrate the uniqueness of you and your own family. Here, at WFT, we embrace families of all varieties. We encourage you to gather everyone who fits your definition of “family” and engage with themes of love, growth & change, and personal history.

Please note that this curriculum guide accompanies a performance of The Addams Family at the Wheelock Family Theater in Boston, MA. To purchase tickets, please visit <https://www.wheelockfamilytheatre.org/performances/2023-season/the-addams-family/>.

Accessibility

Wheelock Family Theatre was founded on a mission that is dedicated to providing accessible theatre for all. For more information on Wheelock Family Theatre’s access programs, [please visit our accessibility web page](#) or contact Audience Services Manager, Jamie Aznive at jaznive@bu.edu (617) 353 – 1451.

- ASL interpretation & Audio Description is offered on Sunday November 5th at 2pm, Thursday November 9th at 10:30am, and Saturday November 11th at 7:30pm.

Objectives

Users of this guide will. . .

- Become familiar with live theater
- Spend quality time with family (biological, chosen, or otherwise) and learn more about themselves
- Practice multi-sensory creativity through visual arts activities, creative writing exercises, and games
- Connect themes in *The Addams Family* with anecdotal experiences from their lives and the wider world around them

About The Musical

Act One



Nathan Lane, center left, as Gomez and Bebe Neuwirth, center right, as Morticia, with members of the cast of "The Addams Family" at the Lunt-Fontanne Theater in New York in 2010. Sara Krulwich/The New York Times

Hundreds of years ago, the Addams family ancestors came from the old country and settled on a plot of land in what is now New York's Central Park. This was, of course, long before it was a park, when it was still wilderness. The family flourished for many generations, and eventually, a huge house was built where a great Spanish oak, the Addams Family Tree, had been planted to protect the ancestral graves from such annoyances as sunlight and tourists.

As the curtain rises, the last dead leaf of autumn falls from the Family Tree, and all is right with the morbid, macabre world of Gomez, Morticia, Fester, Grandma, Wednesday, Pugsley and Lurch. They've gathered – where else? – in the family graveyard, to celebrate life and death in a yearly ritual to connect with their past

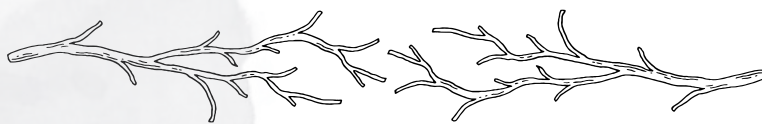
and ensure their future. They seem at peace, not just with each other and their inimitable, unchanging Addams-ness, but with their dead ancestors, too – who emerge from their graves on this night each year to join in this celebration of continuity. But, at the end of the ritual, Fester blocks the ancestors' return to their graves. Those unchanging Addams family values are about to be tested.

Fester enlists their help to set things right, just in case a new family secret goes terribly wrong. What's the secret? Wednesday Addams, that irresistible bundle of malice, has grown up and found love. So what's the problem? The young man, Lucas Beineke, is from Ohio, and his parents are coming to dinner to meet the family. Two different worlds are about to collide. Will love triumph, or will everyone go home vaguely depressed? Gomez and Morticia are understandably wary. Wednesday is their baby, even if she is eighteen. Their doubts bloom into actual terror when they eavesdrop on Wednesday, who, in the midst of her afternoon play-date with Pugsley, refuses to torture her brother and involuntarily bursts into song – extolling all things bright and beautiful as love pulls her in an entirely new, and cheerful, direction.

Like any parents faced with a child in terrible trouble, Gomez and Morticia wonder, "Where did we go wrong?" Wednesday begs her parents not to cancel the dinner, and exhorts the entire family to act as 'normal' as possible when Lucas and his parents arrive. She loves her family just the way they are, but they clearly fall outside the realm of what the Middle-American Beinekes are used to, and Wednesday's afraid that, if his parents don't approve of her, they'll take Lucas back to Ohio, and she'll never see him again. Like any unconditionally loving family, the Addams' promise to do their best to oblige, while, lost somewhere in Central Park, young Lucas asks his parents to resist any judgments and all catastrophic conflicts, so both families can enjoy one normal night.

In yet another part of the house, Pugsley, having witnessed Wednesday and Lucas making out, worries that he's lost his best friend to her new, disgustingly sunny disposition. Plotting to break up the happy couple, Pugsley steals a volatile potion from Grandma's private stash – Acrimonium – one swig of which is guaranteed to bring out the dark side in anyone who drinks it. After what is likely a less-than-normal meal, Wednesday hushes the table for Lucas' surprise announcement. But Gomez reminds Wednesday that, before anything else happens, it's time for the traditional Addams family game, "Full Disclosure" – during which everyone takes a sip from a sacred chalice and reveals something they've never told anyone. Gomez uses his Disclosure to try, again in vain, to calm Morticia. Fester announces that he's in the throes of a most unlikely love – with the moon.

When it's Wednesday's turn, Pugsley seizes his chance! He secretly pours the Acrimonium potion in the chalice and passes it to his sister. But his plan to awaken the dark side in Wednesday goes horribly wrong when Alice, coughing, intercepts the chalice and downs the potion instead. A whole new Alice, very dark and uninhibited, is born. The powerful poison prompts her to reveal the long-buried problems with her marriage, humiliating Mal, who, fed up with all the weird and creepy events of the evening, makes to leave, with Alice and Lucas in tow. Wednesday blurts out the news: "Lucas and I are getting married!" Chaos engulfs both families like a tidal wave, and Fester, ever-helpful, urges the Family Ancestors to work some magic – whipping up a sudden, terrible storm and trapping the Beinekes with the Addams family for the night.



Act Two

While the storm rages, Wednesday packs a bag, but Lucas has no appetite for running away and getting married without his parents' blessing. Wednesday, furious at everything it means to be normal, and furious at herself for trying so hard to become somebody his parents would accept, leaves alone. One more of Gomez' episodes prompts Morticia to throw him out of her boudoir. Her world is changing and she's not ready, and her only comfort is knowing that death is waiting for her, just around the corner. But it is very cold comfort indeed. In the guest room, Alice, under the influence of the darkness potion, can no longer rhyme. Neither can she tolerate her husband's cynical attacks on Lucas and love. She packs him off with a pillow and blanket to sleep somewhere else, as the storm inside her heart, and outside in the park, rumbles to a conclusion.

Once the rains have stopped, Fester heads outside for a couple of hours of moon-bathing, realizing – after observing the three couples fighting – the sheer luck of being in a long-distance relationship, with the distant silver orb in the sky that smiles down on him from the heavens. Sitting under the family tree, contemplating the twists and turns of this most unusual night, Gomez stops Wednesday on her way out of the park. He realizes the thing he was most resistant to – his baby girl's growing up – is inevitable, and proper. He sees that she's a young woman in love. And that makes him happy. And a tiny bit sad. With her father's blessing, Wednesday offers Lucas one test to prove that he's The One. The test involves her skills with a crossbow, an apple, and Lucas standing with said apple on his head in front of the family tree. The boy is afraid of death, but even more afraid of losing Wednesday. He chooses the possibility of death over the certainty of loss – and wins. Far below, in the grotto, Gomez and Mal, two displaced husbands, realize they have more in common than they would have dared imagine only a few hours earlier. While Mal is with Gomez, Lurch ushers Alice down to the grotto. She's a woman on a mission; she's going to lay down the law; changes must be made if the marriage is to survive.

Morticia packs a bag and is ready to leave. But the ancestors' spirits have led Gomez to find her. The other warring couples, Wednesday and Lucas, Alice and Mal, have made their peace. Now Gomez woos his wife, as he first did one night many years before, with the promise to "laugh and cry and dance until the very gods weep with envy." The mournful strains of a bandoneon waft up on the breeze, entwining with the tempting wail of a violin – and a tango begins – the Tango de Amor, the quintessence of Eros, the dance that makes men weep and women cry out in the night. The irresistible expression of love between husband and wife. And Morticia cannot resist. With all three couples reunited, Fester is emboldened to make his move, and launches himself to the moon. Landing safely, his face appears – the man in the moon – and, love having emphatically triumphed in heaven and on earth, the gate to the family crypt swings open, allowing the spirits of the ancestors to rest for another year. It's been a night of darkness. Everything's changed. And the new, extended family understands: The unknown may be frightening, the darkness overwhelming, but if we don't run from it, we may see our mysterious, miraculous lives finally illuminated. If we move toward the darkness, we might find love and acceptance. For when it is dark enough, we can see the stars.

Meet The Families!

The Addams

Gomez Addams: Faithful Husband
& Loving Father

Morticia Addams: The Matriarch

Wednesday Addams: Daughter of Woe



Pugsley Addams: Torture-seeking Brother



Fester Addams: Romantic Uncle



Grandma Addams: Morticia's (or
Gomez's?) Mother



Lurch: Dutiful Butler

Meet The Families!

The Beinekes

Mal Beineke - Strict
Midwestern Father

Alice Beineke - Well-
Composed Midwestern
Mother

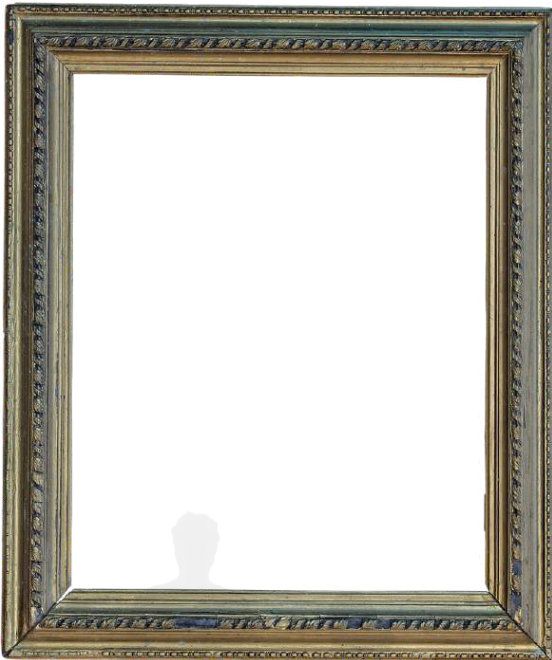
Lucas Beineke - Loyal
Son



Your Family

Now it's your turn! Create portraits of yourself and your family members and include them in the frames provided. Feel free to draw your own portraits, use real-life photos, create a comic, or experiment with abstract representations!

Name: _____

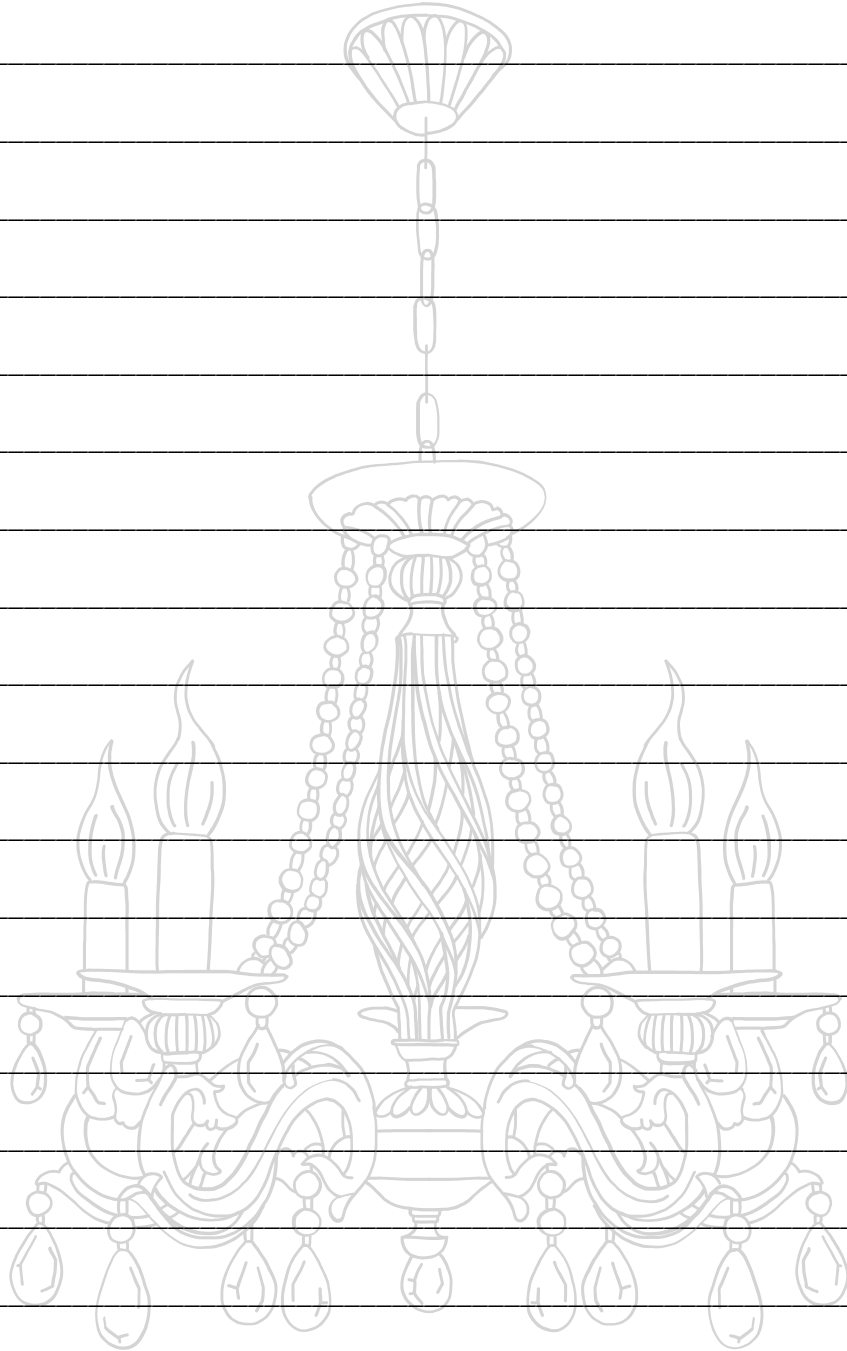


Bonus! Take turns writing and performing monologues from the perspectives of your family members.

Family Values

Although the Addams are a peculiar group, they operate much like any family you know or are a part of. They value trust, quality time, and ultimately want the best for each other. Take this opportunity to discuss what makes a group of people – family? In what ways is your family like any other? What makes your family unique? Then, use this page to outline your family values. Be as serious or as silly as you want!

Examples: create inside jokes, remembering birthdays, etc.



Themes for Writing & Discussion

Normal Is An Illusion

By our current society's standards, the Addams family is far from normal. As the musical depicts, they are very aware and even proud of their eccentricities. Although, when Wednesday prepares her family to meet the Beinekes, she is determined to prove they can be just as normal as everyone else. For just one night, the Addams dress differently, speak differently, and pretend to like certain hobbies. As Morticia says, however, "Normal is an illusion," and as the story progresses, we see this illusion slowly slip away.

Discussion Questions:

- Have you ever felt pressured to look or act differently than your authentic self? Why did you feel this was necessary? How did this make you feel?
- Does "normal" exist? If so, what does it look like and who fits this description?
 - Are the Beinekes normal? The Addams?
- Think of other families you've seen in the media or real life. Have they affected your opinion of what is "normal"?
 - Are there any families you admire? Why?

History Is All Around Us

From the musical's start, it is clear that the Addams value their family history. They constantly bring up their ancestors, who are also very real playmakers in the Lucas and Wednesday storyline. Gomez, in particular, revels at every opportunity to share his Latin heritage. The Addams also cherish their history by collecting and preserving family heirlooms, such as the Addams family photo album that Morticia shows Alice, the Chair of Persuasion that Gomez shows Mal, and the sacred family chalice used in the game of Full Disclosure. Through this, the Addams emphasizes that our family history often influences everything around us, including our behavior and values.

Discussion Questions:

- Does your family have any special heirlooms or traditions that have passed down through generations? If yes, what is your connection to these items/traditions?
- The Beinekes spend all night at the Addams so we don't see their family heirlooms. What do you think their home looks like? What special items do they have?
- Agree or disagree: Family heirlooms/traditions bring families closer.

Themes for Writing & Discussion

Love Conquers All

Family doesn't exist without some conflict. In the musical, we see the Addams and the Beinekes struggle against tensions between family members. Whether it's Pugsley getting mad at Wednesday for neglecting their bond for Lucas or Alice being frustrated with Mal for ignoring her needs, these conflicts remain centered around a stronger emotion – love. Love for his sister makes Pugsley angry when their bond is threatened by a new person. For Alice and Mal, the memory of their love makes it difficult to accept a different reality. Hope, however, is never lost because as we see, both families are able to resolve their conflicts. In the end, love does conquer all.

Discussion Questions:

- When was the last time you had a conflict with a friend or family member? What was the issue? How did you resolve it?
- In the musical, Pugsley resorted to some questionable solutions for his conflict with Wednesday. Is there another way he could have gone about this situation? If you were in a similar situation, what would you have done?
- Do you believe love can solve all problems? Why or why not?

Dealing With Change

Throughout the show, we see various family members struggle with significant changes in their normal routines. Morticia struggles with her husband keeping secrets, the Beinekes struggle to adapt to the Addams' culture, and Gomez bemoans Wednesday growing up. He even has a whole song about it! Although changes like these are common among friends and family, this does not make them any easier to handle. We can feel as if our life is turning upside down. The Addams and Beinekes show us different ways, positive and negative, of dealing with change. Eventually, everyone reaches a compromise, showing us that change is part of life, and learning to deal with this helps us all grow.

Discussion Questions:

- Which other characters in the show experience a change in their lives? How do they deal with this?
- How did the characters' actions influence their situation? Did they make the change better or worse?
- When did you experience a change in your life? How did this make you feel? How did you deal with this?

Suggested Activities

Mad Libs: Acrimonium Edition

Help! Alice Beineke just drank a glass of Acrimonium and lost the words to her poems! Fill in the blanks with the appropriate parts of speech to help her recover her rhyming power.

1) Be open to experience,

And _____ in the new.

[greeting]

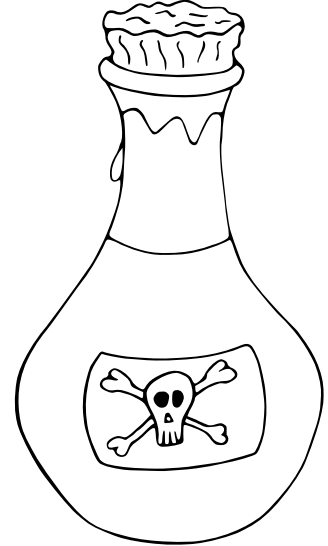
_____ deep in your surprise _____;

[verb]

[noun]

there might be a _____ for you.

[noun]



2) _____ is the color of the _____.

[color]

[adjective]

[noun]

_____ is the color of yumminess and _____.

[color]

[adjective]

Why not show the world the _____ in which we all believe?

[emotion]

Why not wear your heart for all to _____, right on your

[verb]

sleeve?

3) I feel so _____, I feel so _____.

[adjective]

[emotion]

All is black inside my _____.

[body part]

Optional: Use inspiration from the themes and/or objects in Alice's poems and write your own poem. Feel free to experiment with different rhyme schemes (e.g. ABAB, ABBA, ABCB, etc.).

Suggested Activities

Musical Activity

Recall the song “Happy/Sad”. This song comes in Act 2 when Gomez speaks to Wednesday about her feelings for Lucas. He finally accepts that Wednesday has grown up and needs to make her own decisions about life and love. Despite his pride for his daughter, Gomez also feels sad that his little girl isn’t so little anymore. Listen to the song, review the lyrics below, and complete the following activities.

Happy/Sad

I'm feeling happy, I'm feeling sad.

A little childish, a little Dad.

I think of all the days you've known.

All the ways you've grown.

See you on your own, and then

I'm feeling happy and sad again.

I think I'm rested, but then I'm tired.

Today requested, tomorrow fired.

And now a boy says he adores
she who once was yours.

How can I ignore such news?

I'm sad and happy, why should I choose?

Life is full of contradictions, every inch a mile.

And the moment we start weeping,
that's when we should smile.

In every Heaven, you'll find some Hell.

And there's a welcome in each farewell.

Life can be harsh, the future strict

Oh, what they'll predict.

And the boy you've picked, not bad.

So let's be happy

Forever happy

Completely happy

And a tiny bit

Sad.

Analyze

1. Analyze the musical composition of this song. Think about the melody, rhythm or cadence of the words, and the musical style. How is this song unique?
 - a. How do these musical components help amplify what Gomez is feeling in the moment?
2. Which song lyrics particularly stand out to you? Why?
3. How does Wednesday react to this song by her father? Why do you think she reacted this way? Which parts of the song support or encourage this reaction?
4. The lyrics of Happy / Sad are full of conflicting emotions (it's even there in the title!). Is it possible to feel two different emotions at once? Have you ever experienced this?

Suggested Activities

Songwriting Challenge

Now it's your turn! Write a song, rap, or musical poem inspired by the topics in Happy / Sad. Just as Gomez constantly invokes his Latin heritage, use aspects from your own culture to inspire lyrics and/or musical beats. *Optional: When you are finished writing, perform against your friends and/or family and choose a winner!*

Personal Narrative - Ballad Blues

Recall a moment in your life when you've either experienced a very difficult feeling or multiple different feelings at once. Using Happy / Sad as a template, write your own story into a song. Replace lyrics with specific feelings and events from this memory.

