

EXPERIENCE WHERE DREAMS BEGIN.

# HELL'S KITCHEN

BROADWAY'S HIT MUSICAL FROM  
**ALICIA KEYS**

**BEFORE THE SHOW**



**STUDY GUIDE**

# HELL'S KITCHEN

## BEFORE THE SHOW

### WELCOME TO THE THEATER

"I'm from New York! Concrete jungle where dreams are made of, there's nothing you can't do!"

Whether it's bucket drumming, creating choreopoems, or learning to play the piano from the apartment building matriarch, Ali's journey in *HELL'S KITCHEN* is a coming-of-age slice of New York City life set to the rhythm of the 1990s. This study guide will explore all aspects of this show, from the storytelling to the creative team, and give you a chance to get up on your feet and experience the magic of musical theatre.

Never been to a Broadway show before? This guide has everything you need to know about attending a theatrical production. You'll learn about the different types of theatre and how to be a good audience member, and you'll receive information and perform activities designed specifically for *HELL'S KITCHEN*.

### WHAT IS THEATRE?

"Theatre" is defined as "a dramatic art form that uses live performers to present a story in front of an audience." For the purposes of this guide, we'll use "theatre" to

indicate the art form and "theater" to indicate the physical performance space. *HELL'S KITCHEN*, currently running on Broadway at the Shubert Theatre and across the country for the First North American tour, is one of the lucky productions to join the ranks of Broadway. But what is Broadway, exactly? "Broadway" refers to 41 theaters in New York City's Theater District, each with more than 500 seats. If you look at a map, you'll see the street named Broadway cuts diagonally through the district itself. Many productions begin their journeys Off-Broadway, in theaters with 99–499 seats. *HELL'S KITCHEN* was originally produced in 2023 by the Public Theater, an arts organization in New York City, where it premiered at the Newman Theater, one of the Public's Off-Broadway spaces. From there, it transferred to Broadway, joining a long tradition of shows that evolve from nonprofit or regional theaters into the larger Broadway theaters. Now, as *HELL'S KITCHEN* expands beyond New York, the first North American tour will bring the production to audiences across the country, continuing its journey and widening its impact. Once the tour is finished, the show will be available to license, meaning that regional theaters and community theaters will have the opportunity to perform the show for audiences.



HELL'S KITCHEN at the Public Theater

But none of this would have been possible without 17-time Grammy® Award–winner Alicia Keys, whose songs and experiences growing up in New York inspired a story made for Broadway. The musical features new songs and some of Keys’ greatest hits, so get ready to sing along!

### WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE THEATER

Theatre has roles both onstage and behind the scenes, but did you know that you play an important role too? The audience is an essential part of a theatrical production—without people watching the performance, even if a story is being told, it’s not being heard! While it sounds very simple to sit and watch a musical, there are some “dos” and “don’ts” to being a good audience member.



### AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

Seeing a theatrical production is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Unlike a movie or a television show, you’re at the theater with audience members, performers, musicians, technicians, house staff, and more, sharing this story in real time. By working together to be good audience members, we make sure that we’re putting everyone in the theater in a position to have the best experience possible!

### WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT THE THEATER

The theater is a magical place, and Broadway theaters are famous worldwide! Whether you’re in New York City or seeing a touring production at a regional theater, it’s always a good idea to **look up the theater ahead of time**. Map out routes, find nearby restaurants, check out the parking situation, and make sure you know where you’re going.

It’s a good idea to **arrive at the theater at least fifteen minutes before showtime**. That way, you have time to wait in the ticket line, get your program, check out the show’s merchandise, use the restroom, and find your seats before the show. Remember to expect lots of other people!

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR BEING A GOOD AUDIENCE MEMBER:

### 1. KEEP YOUR PHONE TUCKED AWAY

so you can stay in the moment.

### 2. VISIT THE RESTROOM BEFORE THE SHOW AND AT INTERMISSION

to enjoy the performance without interruptions.

### 3. ENJOY THE SHOW LIVE—

Let the actors’ performances live in your memory, and not in your cell phone.

Recordings are prohibited...

### 4. CLAP, CHEER, AND SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION—

the performers love your energy!

### 5. HAVE FUN AND SOAK IN THE MAGIC OF LIVE THEATRE!



**A show's program is a great resource** for learning about the production you're seeing. The program will list the show's creative team, crew, musicians, actors, and company biographies, so you can read about everyone. The show's running time and list of songs—and whether or not to expect an intermission—will also be listed in the program.

You'll see lots of people at the theater who help make the whole experience happen. The **box office staff** will be available to answer questions and give out tickets to patrons who opted to pick up their tickets rather than have them mailed or receive them digitally.

The **ushers** will take your ticket, give you a program, and help you find your seat. The **house manager** coordinates the ushers and helps to solve any problems with getting everyone seated for the show. There may also be a **merchandise area** where you can purchase *HELL'S KITCHEN* items to help you remember your experience.

Once you've settled in and the show begins, enjoy the magic of musical theatre!



## CASTING PROCESS

Musical theatre actors, known as the “cast,” are unique because they are multidisciplinary artists—they can sing, dance, and act simultaneously to tell the story! However, becoming a cast member in a show is more difficult than just being able to sing, dance, and act. Certain roles require specific skills for the storytelling, like being able to sing a precise note, perform acrobatics, or play an instrument. Therefore, actors participate in a casting process to find the right performers for the job.

**Auditions** are the first step for performers hoping to be cast in a production. Auditions are an opportunity for actors to showcase their skills as a singer, dancer, and actor to the creative team producing the show. Actors typically prepare material in advance to share during auditions. Following auditions, the creative team may hold “callbacks.” A **callback** is an opportunity for the actor to perform again in front of the creative team.

This time, actors may be given scenes and songs from the show to perform with other actors. The creative team may observe how the actors take direction, how they work with the other actors being called back, and even

their personal behavior during the process. Remember, talent may get you the callback, but character will get you cast. Be kind if you are ever in this position!

Following callbacks, only a few of the many wonderful actors who auditioned will be cast in the production. Within this cast, each actor plays an important role, whether it's a leading character or ensemble member.

**Ensemble actors** play supporting roles in addition to forming a chorus of singers, dancers, and actors. Ensemble members can also serve as understudies, which means they step into the leading roles when the regular actor is unable to perform. But what happens if the understudy is also unavailable? Swings save the day! Perhaps the most challenging role in all of musical theatre, “**swings**” are performers that can “swing” into any role during the performance.

The show is cast, so we're done, right? Wrong! If a show like *HELL'S KITCHEN* is remounted in new cities, or has a very long run, the show may need to recast roles multiple times. To view the current cast in a production, you can visit the show's website or take a look through the show's program.





## HELL'S KITCHEN CAST LIST

### ALI

A spirited and curious teenager finding her voice while navigating family, friendship, and the streets of *HELL'S KITCHEN*.

### JERSEY

Ali's fiercely protective single mother, balancing tough love with vulnerability as she guides her daughter toward a brighter future.

### MISS LIZA JANE

A no-nonsense piano teacher who mentors Ali with discipline, wisdom, and heart.

### KNUCK

A charismatic, streetwise young man who draws Ali into first love and new possibilities.

### DAVIS

Ali's musician father who drifts in and out of her life, inspiring her with music but leaving emotional gaps.

### RAY

The building's doorman and protector, whose presence looms large in the neighborhood and the lives of its residents.

### TINY

One of Ali's loyal sidekicks and best friends, full of humor and energy.

### Q

A smooth and confident member of Knuck's circle.

### JESSICA

Ali's outspoken, fearless friend who pushes boundaries with wit and boldness.

### MILLIE

Jersey's supportive friend and neighbor, offering warmth and guidance in the building community.

### 'RIQ

A member of Knuck's crew, keeping the energy high with music and humor.

### CRYSTAL

Jersey's vibrant friend and neighbor, whose bold personality energizes the building and those around her.

### ENSEMBLE



## TECHNICAL THEATRE STEAM ACTIVITY: CREATE A SET DESIGN

A show's designers should collaborate seamlessly with the cast and production team to bring the storytelling to life. Each technical design area has its unique attributes, demands, and value, but the integration of all these elements truly brings the production together. In this activity, students will work with scenic design. Scenic design plays a critical role in shaping the storytelling visually. Set designers work closely with the director to align the set with the creative goals of the production, ensuring it supports the narrative. Additionally, set designers must consider how their work interacts with other design elements, such as lighting and costumes, to maintain visual and thematic harmony.

**Explore scenic design by having students design and construct a blueprint, a 3D model, and a miniature stage set for Act One: Scene One from *HELL'S KITCHEN*.**

This activity will teach students the principles of stage design and spatial awareness, how to apply scaling techniques, ways to develop engineering and problem-solving skills by incorporating mechanical elements, and how to utilize technology to visualize and refine their designs.

Before beginning their design, guide students through a discussion on set design using the tips below.

- Student designers should focus on key elements of the story to create a visually compelling and functional set that supports the production. Understanding the script is essential. The set must reflect the play's themes, mood, and context while addressing the needs of the characters, staging, and storytelling.
- Functionality is critical, ensuring the set is practical, safe, and adaptable for scene transitions or stage movements.
- Design aesthetics, including color, texture, and materials, contribute to a cohesive look that aligns with the director's vision.
- Attention to scale and perspective ensures the set fits the space and provides clear sightlines for the audience.
- Collaboration with other designers, such as those in charge of lighting, costume, and sound, helps integrate all production elements seamlessly.
- Consider budgetary constraints and use creative and sustainable solutions where possible.
- Choosing a conceptual style, like whether a set will be realistic or abstract, helps define the design's aesthetic approach.



# HELL'S KITCHEN

BROADWAY'S HIT MUSICAL FROM  
ALICIA KEYS

## ACT ONE: SCENE ONE

Ali and Jersey, in the apartment.

JERSEY

Because I am your mother, that's why.

ALI

(to audience)

Me and my mother -- yeah, that's my mother -- live on the forty-second floor of a forty-four story building on Forty-Third Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, right in the heart of the neighborhood some people know as Hell's Kitchen.

JERSEY

You have no idea how dangerous this city is.

ALI

(under her breath)

Okay, Ma. Fine.

JERSEY

Home straight after school...

ALI

And stay out of the streets. I know.

JERSEY

You're lucky you've got me here to keep you safe.

Jersey exits.

Ali -- angry, alone -- realizes we're watching, toughens up.

ALI

(to us)

I'm safe. And I'm suffocating.

ALI (CONT.)

We live in Manhattan Plaza, which is cheap housing for artists. Which means almost everyone who lives here is an artist, which means you never know what you're going to hear when these elevator doors open up.

(Elevator doors open.

TRUMPET.)

That's Mr. Gordone, 32nd floor, forever on his trumpet.

(Doors close.)

And watch, it's gonna open on 27...

(Doors open. BOSSA.)

Piñero sisters are always having their dance class, I swear, like somehow every hour of the day.

(Doors close.)

I kinda hope it's gonna open on 17. I mean, I do always like 17.

(Doors open. OPERA.)

Yeah, I got no idea who that is or what they're saying, but I think they're in love.

(Doors close.)

And then 9 is the poets, 8 is the painters, we got a whole string section, right? On 7, 6, 5, and 4. And when you hit that ground floor...

(Doors open. MISS LIZA JANE, playing classical piano. We don't get a good look at her; we may not see her at all.)

Piano. Always piano.

MUSIC: THE GOSPEL piano intro.

CRYSTAL and MILLIE pass by.

CRYSTAL

Hey, Ali! How you doing, girl?

ALI

(to audience)

Millie and Crystal are my mom's best friends. I got nothing to say to them.

MILLIE

Girl gets more like her mother everyday.

JESSICA and TINY race over to Ali.

TINY

Ali! Where you been?

JESSICA

Look! Those drummers are back!

ALI

(to audience)

Jessica and Tiny are my homegirls.

TINY

Why are you two always sweating those drummers?

JESSICA

You better get on out there before they fall in love with someone else. Like me.

- Research into historical, cultural, or artistic references can add authenticity and depth to the design.
- Most importantly, the set should enhance the audience's emotional experience while balancing creativity, functionality, and artistry.
- Encourage your students to research shows that are familiar to them for further inspiration.

### SET DESIGN ACTIVITY: MATERIALS NEEDED

#### For Planning and Modeling:

- Scene One *HELL'S KITCHEN* selection (listed at the end)
- Paper, pencils, rulers, and grid/graph paper for sketching
- Computers with access to Tinkercad for designing the 3D model

#### For Physical Construction:

- Cardboard and foam board
- Craft supplies (hot glue guns, scissors, paint, markers)
- LEGO Technic pieces for moving parts

### ACTIVITY STEPS FOR STUDENTS:

#### 1. Read and Mine the Scene:

- Have students read the selection from Scene One from *HELL'S KITCHEN*.
- While reading, they should make a list of the necessary scenic design elements.
- Document the period, setting, and tone of the scene.

#### 2. Research and Sketch:

- Have students research the period and setting to begin creating initial designs and sketches. Ask students to label scenic elements like walls, platforms, and props.
- Encourage students to design and build one or more interactive elements in their initial design, for example, incorporating a moving element like a pulley or lever.

#### 3. Scale and Dimension:

- Have students create a scaled blueprint of their stage set.

- For this step, teach students how to scale down real-life dimensions (e.g., 1 grid square = 1 foot). It is helpful to create this blueprint on grid/graph paper.

#### 4. 3D Modeling:

- Use Tinkercad to create a digital 3D model of the set.
- Encourage students to play with Tinkercad before beginning to design. There are so many different features to explore.
- Students can refine designs, test layouts, and experiment with moving parts virtually.
- Tips for success with Tinkercad:
  1. Please encourage students to use the top left corner to adjust the view throughout their design process. The options include top, front, right, back, left, and bottom. For the initial design, it is best to work in the home view (home circular icon top left), as it gives an excellent perspective view of the workplace.
  2. If the “structures and scenery” section does not have an item that students need to include, build the item with a “basic shapes” option.
  3. When working with the “basic shapes” additions, adjust from “hole” to “solid” unless the item you insert is like the scaffolding used in the Broadway production that someone can see through.
  4. Remind students that once their design is complete, they should click “Send To” to download and save their 3D design.

#### 5. Build the Physical Model:

- Based on their scaled blueprint and 3D model using Tinkercad, have students build a physical model.
- Use cardboard, foam board, or other materials to construct the miniature stage.
- Paint and decorate the model to reflect the scene's mood and setting.

#### 6. Incorporate Moving Parts:

- Teach basic mechanics (e.g. using a pulley to move a curtain or a gear to rotate a platform).
- Encourage students to design and build one or more interactive elements.

## 7. Review and Prepare for Presentation:

- Before students present their designs, encourage them to assess their design to ensure they have met the design goals. Ask them these questions:
  1. How did you do with your proportions and scaling?
  2. Do you feel your set is creative and meets the needs of the story?
  3. Did you integrate at least one moving part?
  4. How do you plan to present and explain your design choices to the group?

Once completed, have students share their designs with the full group. Students should present their blueprints, 3D model, and physical model, explaining their creative choices, scaling calculations, and how the moving parts function.

### **Classroom Connections - National Arts Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and Common Core State Standards**

#### **Classroom Connections – National Arts Standards:**

Grades 6-HS Proficient: Theatre at a Glance: Responding  
TH:Re8.1.6.- TH:Re8.1.1.

- Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists' interpretations of drama/theatre work are influenced by personal experiences and aesthetics.
- Essential Question: How can the same work of art communicate different messages to different people?

Grades 6-HS Proficient: Theatre at a Glance: Responding  
TH:Re9.1.6.- TH:Re9.1.1.

- Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.
- Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists apply criteria to investigate, explore, and assess drama and theatre work.
- Essential Question: How are the theatre artist's processes and the audience's perspectives impacted by analysis and synthesis?

#### **Classroom Connections – Next Generation Science Standards:**

MS-ETS1-4: Develop a model to generate data for iterative testing and modification of a proposed object, tool, or process to achieve an optimal design.

#### **Classroom Connections Common Core Standards Initiative: High School: Geometry » Modeling with Geometry » Apply geometric concepts in modeling situations**

- CCSS.Math.Content.HSG.MG.A.1
- CCSS.Math.Content.HSG.MG.A.3

# HELL'S KITCHEN

## CREATIVE TEAM

Musical theatre is a multidisciplinary art form that brings together music, language, dance, visual, and digital arts to tell a story, so it only makes sense that a career in musical theatre is also collaborative, requiring many different people to come together for the purpose of the musical. In addition to the cast, musicians, technicians, and technical designers, other creative team members include producers, directors, book writers, composers, lyricists, and choreographers. By working as a team, responsibilities are divided, allowing individuals to focus on making their contribution to the production the best it can be, all while building upon one another's ideas.



**ALICIA KEYS**  
MUSIC & LYRICS/  
PRODUCER

### READ, DISCUSS, REFLECT



### MEDIA ANALYSIS ACTIVITY: EXPLORE ALICIA KEYS' IMPACT ON MUSIC AND POP CULTURE

Alicia Keys is responsible for the music and lyrics in *HELL'S KITCHEN*, and also for producing the show. Producers wear many hats, from the very beginning of the process to the very end. Essentially, a producer is the person who decides to put on the show, builds the team to develop the show, and oversees that work. In addition to being the show's producer, the score incorporates Alicia Keys' popular hits, lesser-known songs, and new material, including unreleased tracks "The River" and "Kaleidoscope" (previously written but unreleased), and "Seventeen" (written specifically for the musical). While the musical is not autobiographical, the characters reflect the city and the people she has encountered, which adds depth to the story. Keys believes that art imitates life by capturing complex emotions, behaviors, and connections. These elements resonate deeply with audiences, whether in a song or onstage.

In this activity, students will conduct a media analysis to learn more about Alicia Keys' impact on music and pop culture. Have students read independently, discuss in



pairs, and then reflect as a whole group before creating a data report of their analysis. This activity, through various forms of media, helps student develop critical thinking skills by analyzing Keys' contributions and their influences on broader cultural trends.

Here are ideas and a few articles to jump-start students' independent reading and paired discussion:

- Identify any of Alicia Keys' major achievements, influential moments, social or cultural movements she influenced, controversies or challenges, and any of her collaborations with other influential figures.
- In what ways did her youth impact her artistry and musicianship?
- How has her musical style and storytelling evolved over time?
- What has the public and music industry's reactions been to her work through the years?
- How has her influence extended beyond her primary work as a musician (e.g., beauty industry, fashion, politics, activism, social media)?
- Connect Keys' influence to broader cultural shifts (i.e., how her work reflected or influenced societal changes).

#### **Suggested Articles:**

- <https://www.newyorktheatreguide.com/theatre-news/news/everything-you-need-to-know-about-alicia-keys-musical-hells-kitchen>
- <https://www.vibe.com/features/editorial/alicia-keys-hells-kitchen-musical-interview-1234813075/>
- <https://www.nbc.com/nbc-insider/alicia-keys-songs-films-books-broadway-show>

After reading and discussing with a partner, facilitate a group discussion on common themes and how different figures contribute to pop culture in unique ways. Use discussion questions like the following:

- How does the media shape our understanding of a person's impact?
- What makes someone a lasting cultural icon?
- Can one person truly change pop culture, or is it a cumulative process achieved by many people over time?

Following the group discussion, have students collect all their findings from their reading, discussion, and group reflection to develop their report. This report should explain Keys' impact on pop culture and how she shaped trends, attitudes, or cultural movements. Encourage students to use multimedia (clips, images, music, etc.) to support their findings.

#### **Classroom Connections Common Core Standards Initiative: Grade 9-12 English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text**

- Grade 9-10: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7
- Grade 11-12: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7

#### **Classroom Connections Common Core State Standards Initiative: Grades 9-12 English Language Arts Standards » Writing**

- Grade 9-10: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2.b
- Grade 11-12: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.b



**KRISTOFFER  
DÍAZ**  
BOOK

**READ, DISCUSS, REFLECT**

 **WRITE YOUR OWN FICTIONAL NARRATIVE**

“No one’s real life perfectly fits into a model story arc. I would imagine not being beholden to someone’s biography lends itself better to storytelling in a lot of ways.” —Kristoffer Díaz

Have students read an article by *Broadway Buzz* interviewing Kristoffer Díaz, the book writer of *HELL’S KITCHEN* and Keys’ longtime collaborator, either independently, in small groups, or as a full class. After reading the article, have students reflect on the article’s title: “*HELL’S KITCHEN* Scribe Kristoffer Diaz[sic] on Finding Emotional Truth in Fiction: ‘This Is Not the Alicia Keys Story.’” After reading the article, ask students: What does this title mean? Discuss the key idea that, from the start of the project, Keys knew the show would not cover her entire life. However, she did want to focus on a period from her teenage years when she lived at Manhattan Plaza, artistic housing in New York City, with her mom. She felt that time was significant and full of emotional depth. Instead of making a show about her rise to fame, Keys wanted to explore the personal truths and emotional connections that shaped who she became.

For this activity, ask students to reflect on their own lives. Is there a moment that lends itself to creating a strong narrative? Have students brainstorm and list three moments that come to mind. Once students have a brainstorm list, have them expand on one of their ideas by writing a short proposal to pitch the story for development.

The proposal should include the following:

- **Title** – Create a working title for the story. It should be catchy and memorable, and the title should reflect the essence of the project.

- **Logline** – A logline is one- or two-sentence summary of your story that captures the main conflict and theme. It should hook the reader’s interest.
- **Target Audience** – What specific demographic or genre does the project appeal to? Identify who will connect with the story.
- **Project Summary** – The summary should cover the central premise, the setting, and the tone of the narrative. It is important to capture the feel of the project and its uniqueness in order to help the story proposal stand out.
  - **Themes** – Outline the central themes, which might include topics like love, identity, family, or resilience.
  - **Characters** – Introduce the key characters in the narrative. Describe their personalities, motivations, and any personal growth they will experience. Briefly introduce secondary characters who may play important roles in the story and how they contribute to the overall plot.
  - **Tone** – Help give a sense of how the audience will feel while experiencing the narrative by explaining the emotional tone of the story (e.g., whether the story is tragic, comedic, or inspirational).
  - **Writing Style** – Briefly discuss the style or voice of the piece. Is it poetic, straightforward, experimental, or fast-paced? Is it contemporary or historical?
  - **Why this Story** – Wrap up the summary with a final note on why this story will resonate with audiences or readers?

Once students have created and written their proposals, they should present them to the class. Following the presentations, have students participate in an internal reflection. Ask students to think about if one pitch stood out over the others. Why did this narrative stand out?

**Classroom Connections Common Core Standards Initiative: Grade 9-12 English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text**

- Grade 9-10: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2
- Grade 11-12: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.6

**Classroom Connections Common Core State Standards Initiative: Grades 9-12 English Language Arts Standards » Writing**

- Grade 9-10: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3
- Grade 11-12: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3



**MICHAEL GREIF**  
DIRECTOR

### READ, DISCUSS, REFLECT

To introduce *HELL'S KITCHEN* director Michael Greif, have students read his interview with [Time Out USA](#). After reading, ask students to identify key points that stood out to them or that they'd like to explore further. For example, the article reveals that when Greif first discussed the project with Alicia Keys and Kristoffer Díaz, Díaz humorously remarked that Greif “got the job because I quickly pointed out to them that they were writing a love story between a mother and a daughter, not a conventional love story between two young people—and that’s exactly where they wanted to go.” After reading the interview, give students time to research and reflect on the points in the article that

caught their attention. Once they’ve had time to explore, have them pair up to share their findings and insights.

Next, discuss the role of the director in musical theatre. A director is responsible for managing the artistic elements that appear onstage. They collaborate closely with designers, actors, musicians, and technicians to ensure that all elements come together to tell a cohesive story. The director’s main responsibility is to stage the show and lead rehearsals with the support of stage management.

But what does it mean to “stage” a show? “Staging,” or “blocking,” refers to the physical placement and movement of actors onstage throughout each scene. This process is essential for nonverbal storytelling, helping the audience understand relationships, themes, and the emotional landscape of the show through physical action. As Greif explains in the interview, his role also involves “editing and shaping.” He adds, “What those young people bring—their interpretive skills, their unique way of looking at dramatic situations—was very inspiring to me.” This insight highlights the director’s role in guiding the creative process, shaping the vision of the show while nurturing the unique contributions of the cast and collaborators.



# HELL'S KITCHEN DESIGNERS



**ROBERT BRILL**  
SET DESIGN

Broadway: *How to Dance in Ohio*, *Dancin*, *Ain't Too Proud*, *Thoughts of a Colored Man*, *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical*, *Assassins*, *Cabaret*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Design for Living*, *Buried Child* and others. Three-time Tony nominee and member of design faculty at University of California San Diego. robertbrilldesign.com.



**DEDE AYITE**  
COSTUME DESIGN

Dede Ayite is a two-time Tony Award-nominated costume designer working in theatre, opera and film. Select Broadway: *Jaja's African Hair Braiding*, *Topdog/Underdog*, *Ohio State Murders*, *American Buffalo* and *Slave Play*. Select Off-Broadway: *Merry Wives* (The Public Theater); *Days of Wine and Roses* (Atlantic). Regional: Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Steppenwolf, Arena Stage and more. Television: Netflix and Comedy Central. Education: MFA Yale School of Drama.



**NATASHA KATZ**  
LIGHTING DESIGN

Recent Broadway and Off-Broadway: *Sweeney Todd*, *Here We Are*, *Grey House*, *MJ*, *Some Like It Hot*, *Springsteen on Broadway*, *Aladdin*, and *Hello, Dolly!* Recent dance: *Like Water for Chocolate* at the Met. She is a TDF Wendy Wasserstein Project Mentor and was recently inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame.



**GARETH OWEN**  
SOUND DESIGN

*Back to the Future* (Olivier nom.), *Tommy*, & *Juliet* (Tony nom.), *MJ* (Tony win), *Bad Cinderella*, *Come From Away* (Olivier win), *A Bronx Tale*, *End of the Rainbow* (Tony nom.), *A Little Night Music* (Tony nom.), *Diana*, *Bat out of Hell* (Olivier nom.), *Memphis* (Olivier win), *Summer*, *Top Hat* (Olivier nom.), *Merrily We Roll Along* (Olivier win). @garethowensound



## DELVE INTO DIRECTING ACTIVITY: EDIT AND SHAPE

Delve into directing like Greif in a brief activity using neutral scenes. Neutral scenes are short scenes used for training in which the story, characters, settings, style, and genre are all left up to the performance group or director to determine. To begin, have students divide into groups of three. The students will rotate three times: once as the director, once as Actor A, and once as Actor B.

Use the neutral scene provided, and have the first director in the group create and share the given circumstances for the scene with the actors. In a typical script, the “given circumstances” are established by the playwright. “Given circumstances” are the facts of the scene; they are tools an actor might use to determine the greater context of a scene or character. When looking for given circumstances, think about the who, what, where, when, and why of the scene. Then, have the actors interpret and present the scene. Following the actor’s interpretation, the director will give edits to shape the scene. Following the edits, have actors perform the scene again. Repeat this step giving each student in the group the opportunity to explore directing. Before students begin, review the tips below.

### TIPS FOR STAGING:

- Use stage directions to facilitate clear instructions for the actors.
  - Stage directions describe actors’ movements onstage. The stage is divided into nine areas: center stage, downstage center, upstage center, stage right, downstage right, upstage right, stage left, downstage left, and upstage left. Refer to the diagram on this page to review these positions. Remember, the terms always use the actor’s perspective as they stand onstage, so “stage right” is the actor’s right.
- Use directing tools, like levels, planes, proximity, and focus, to create dynamic stage pictures.
  - “Levels” refer to the vertical physical relationship of the actors. You can simply use actors’ bodies to create levels or incorporate props like chairs to create a stage picture. For example, if one actor is sitting in a chair and one actor is standing, the audience will perceive the person standing as more powerful than the person sitting.

- “Planes” refer to how near or far away an actor is from the audience. Typically, an actor placed downstage, closer to the audience, will draw focus, whereas an actor placed farther away upstage will draw less focus.
- “Proximity” is the physical relationship of the actors to each other. Actors who are far away from each other could be perceived by the audience as strangers, while actors who are embracing would be seen as knowing each other.
- “Focus” refers to where the audience and actors onstage are giving their attention for storytelling purposes.

### TIPS FOR EDITS AND SHAPING:

- Give action-based adjustments.
- Use clear, concise language.
- Adjust based on timing and pacing.
- Be specific.

### NEUTRAL SCENE

A: Oh hey!  
B: Hi.  
A: Are you okay?  
B: I mean sure.  
A: Sure?  
B: Yup, sure.

Once students rotate through all three directors, have students reflect on the activity: What did they notice with this exercise? What did they find challenging? Did they learn anything about their own personal directing style? If they could give their original instructions again, would they change anything about their acting or directing?

#### Classroom Connections Common Core Standards Initiative: Grade 9-12 English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text

- Grade 9-10: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2
- Grade 11-12: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.3

#### Classroom Connections – National Arts Standards:

- Grades HS Proficient: Theatre at a Glance: Creating TH:Cr3.1.1.a
- Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.
- Enduring Understanding: Theatre artists refine their work and practice their craft through rehearsal.
- Essential Question: How do theatre artists transform and edit their initial ideas?



**CAMILLE A. BROWN**  
CHOREOGRAPHY

### READ, DISCUSS, REFLECT

#### GET TO KNOW CAMILLE A. BROWN

In this reading and writing activity, students will explore an interview and article from *The Observer* featuring *HELL'S KITCHEN* choreographer Camille A. Brown. Ask students to determine the central idea of the text, focusing on how Brown's artistic vision and career are presented and developed throughout the piece. As they read, students should pay attention to the specific

details, such as quotes, anecdotes, and examples that shape and refine the central idea of the interview. Then, analyze how the author uses these details to highlight Brown's approach to choreography and her contributions to the world of dance. After identifying the central theme, students will summarize the text objectively, focusing on the main points without adding personal opinions or interpretations. This activity will help students practice their skills in identifying a text's main idea and analyzing its progression while refining their ability to summarize key information concisely.

**Classroom Connections Common Core Standards Initiative: Grade 9-12 English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text**

- Grade 9-10: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2
- Grade 11-12: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.2

**Classroom Connections Common Core Standards Initiative: Grade 9-12 English Language Arts Standards » Writing**

- Grade 9-10: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2
- Grade 11-12: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2





## INVESTIGATE THE CHOREOGRAPHIC APPROACH OF THE GREAT BLACK BROADWAY CHOREOGRAPHERS

In *The Observer's* interview with Camille A. Brown, she discusses in detail her choreographic approach to *HELL'S KITCHEN*, focusing on how she used movement to foreshadow the plot and enhance storytelling. For example, she references “Gramercy Park” and talks about working with the actors’ personal experiences, as well as drawing inspiration from the feelings evoked by the music. This approach led her to create a piece where movement is not just about entertainment; it is also a means of elevating the story, using literary techniques to deepen the narrative. Brown’s choreography reveals that dance is a powerful tool for storytelling. It uses movement to reveal deeper emotional truths and foreshadow plot developments.

In this activity, have students explore the choreographic approaches of other influential Black women mentioned in the article who have also been nominated for Tony Awards in choreography, all of whom have made significant contributions to the art of dance.

Students will then create a presentation to share their findings with the group. Before beginning research, students should select one of the following choreographers to research and investigate their unique choreographic style and how they approach storytelling through movement.

Choreographers to Choose From:

- Katherine Dunham
- Mabel Robinson
- Debbie Allen
- Dianne McIntyre
- Hope Clarke
- Marlies Yearby

Then, students will begin researching their selected choreographer. Encourage students to look for interviews, articles, photographs, and videos of their work. Pay special attention to descriptions of their choreographic process, how they integrate movement with narrative, and the themes they explore through dance.



Remind students to focus on storytelling. As they read about the choreographer's work, think about how their choreography serves the storytelling in a production. Does their work focus on social or cultural themes? How do they use movement to convey emotion or foreshadow plot developments? What kinds of music, personal experiences, or historical context influence their work?

Once students have gathered enough information, compare their choreographer's approach to that of Camille A. Brown. How is their choreography similar or different in terms of using movement to enhance the story? Do they share the same focus on personal experiences and emotional depth, or do they emphasize other elements like cultural history, rhythm, or narrative structure?

Following the research and comparison steps, have students create a presentation (written and visual) summarizing the findings. Give time for students to share their presentations with their peers.

The presentation should include the following:

- A brief biography of the choreographer
- The production or productions for which they received a Tony® nomination
- An explanation of their choreographic approach
- A photograph or video of their choreography
- Specific examples of how their choreography reflects the themes and emotions of the stories they are telling
- A comparison to Camille A. Brown's approach (highlighting similarities and differences)

After all the presentations, ask students to write a short reflection on exploring the legacy of Black women in choreography, and the impact Black women have had in shaping the art of choreography.

**Classroom Connections Common Core Standards Initiative: Grade 9-12 English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text**

- Grade 9-10: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2
- Grade 11-12: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7

**Classroom Connections – National Arts Standards:**

- Grades HS Proficient- HS Advanced: Dance at a Glance: Responding DA:Re.7.1.I- DA:Re.7.1.III
- Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- Enduring Understanding: Dance is perceived and analyzed to comprehend its meaning.
- Essential Question: How is a dance understood?

**Classroom Connections – National Arts Standards:**

- Grades HS Proficient: Dance at a Glance: Connecting DA:Cn10.1.1.a
- Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- Enduring Understanding: As dance is experienced, all personal experiences, knowledge, and contexts are integrated and synthesized to interpret meaning.
- Essential Question: How does dance deepen our understanding of ourselves, other knowledge, and events around us?
  - Analyze a dance to determine the ideas expressed by the choreographer. Explain how the perspectives expressed by the choreographer may impact one's own interpretation. Provide evidence to support one's analysis.

Founded in 2006 by educator and author Timothy Allen McDonald, and headquartered in New York City, iTheatrics is the world's leading authority on educational musical theatre.

iTheatrics adapts musicals for young performers and creates support materials that make the process of putting on a show achievable and accessible for all. iTheatrics shows are licensed worldwide by Music Theatre International (Broadway Junior titles) and Concord Theatricals (Youth Edition and Young Actors Edition titles). In North America alone, 36 million people see a musical adapted by iTheatrics each year, which is three times the number of people who attend a Broadway show annually. In fact, the majority of people who see a live production in North America are attending a show adapted by iTheatrics.

iTheatrics is committed to ensuring young people everywhere have the same access to the arts as they do athletics. iTheatrics is making impressive progress in achieving this mission through partnerships with the Shubert Foundation/MTI Broadway Junior Middle School Musical Theater Program, the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, Turnaround Arts, and the Educational Theatre Foundation (ETF). Each of these partnerships builds sustainable musical theatre programs in underserved schools. iTheatrics's proprietary approach provides teachers, with or without an arts background, the skills required to present a musical. iTheatrics measures success based on whether the school continues to present a musical after five years, and the efforts boast a sustainability rate of 92%.

Additionally, iTheatrics is proud to have partnered with former First Lady Michelle Obama to produce the first-ever White House Talent Show.

In 2017, iTheatrics published *The iTheatrics Method: The Quintessential Guide to Creating Quality Musical Theatre Programs*, the first textbook dedicated to creating sustainable and quality educational theatre programs in schools and after-school settings.

The book is available for purchase on Amazon.

In addition, iTheatrics creates study guides and student-focused engagement initiatives for Broadway and West End shows, as well as the The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, The White House, The Jim Henson Company, NBC Universal, and more.

iTheatrics also produces Junior Theater Festivals and Celebrations in the USA, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand with an annual attendance of 15,000.

[iTheatrics.com](http://iTheatrics.com)

Hell's Kitchen Study Guide content based on  
The iTheatrics Method © 2024 iTheatrics.

Content Created by iTheatrics.



Written by Marianne Phelps and Laura Jo Schuster  
Contributing Writers Mary-Catherine Chambliss and Jiana J. Odland  
Senior Managing Editor Susan Fuller

Production Photography by Marc J. Franklin

