

Disney

# NEWSIES

THE BROADWAY MUSICAL

PRODUCTION HANDBOOK



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The *Newsies* Production Handbook is here to guide you through all aspects of production: from casting to design to rehearsal exercises and beyond. Disney Theatrical Productions took what we learned from the Paper Mill Playhouse, Broadway, and touring productions, as well as various high school pilots, to craft a guidebook for creating your own vision of the show. To help you organize your approach to this material and your staging and rehearsal processes, we have divided this handbook into three sections:

- **Before You Begin** includes information you'll want to start thinking about before you jump into rehearsals.
- **In Rehearsal** consists of material that will assist you in working with your performers.
- **Beyond the Stage** contains information that will help to craft an engaging and rewarding production for actors and audiences alike (consider referencing this section both before and during your rehearsal process).

Incorporate the material in these pages as you see fit, and above all: Enjoy!

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the wonderful world of *Newsies*! Inspired by the Newsboys Strike of 1899 and adapted from the 1992 Disney film, *Newsies* became an unlikely Broadway hit in 2012. Now, we're thrilled to share this celebrated musical with theater groups around the world to create their own beloved productions.

Although *Newsies* is ultimately a work of fiction, the historical strike that took place in New York in July 1899 was every bit as dramatic. It lasted over two weeks and was well documented by dozens of newspapers, which relished a bunch of kids bringing down their goliath competition: the *New York World*. Joseph Pulitzer wasn't actually in New York City during the strike (he was home in Maine), and Governor Theodore Roosevelt didn't intervene (although he certainly disliked Pulitzer), but these two titans make for terrific drama onstage! Other characters in the musical are also rooted in historical figures: newsies leaders Kid Blink and Morris Cohen were the inspiration for Jack Kelly; Katherine Plumber reveals traces of investigative journalist Nellie Bly; and vaudeville performer and producer Aida Overton Walker inspired a new take on Medda Larkin. Tracing these roots and exploring the relationship between history and drama (and fact vs. fiction) will enliven your rehearsal process and help you engage your audiences as they grapple with the challenges of today's world.

In this Production Handbook, you'll find resources that you can draw from as needed. Whether *Newsies* marks your first or 100th production, we hope this guide inspires you to take risks, to explore new methods of storytelling, and to empower your cast to discuss and explore the rich mosaic of characters and themes within the musical. May your production of *Newsies* inspire your cast and community to feel empowered to keep the arc of history bending toward justice. Seize the day!



Buster (6 years old) & Eldridge (11 years old) in Newark, NJ  
photo by Lewis Wickes Hine (1912)



Newsies selling papers in the Bowery.  
photo by Lewis Wickes Hine (1910)

## A Note from the Editor

Disney Theatrical Productions is committed to making our titles accessible to, and inclusive of, everyone. Throughout this Production Handbook, you will find casting, costuming, and dramaturgical tips that offer non-traditional and gender-flexible approaches to *Newsies* and its characters. Similarly, we realize that traditional English grammar has not yet adapted to the gender inclusivity that DTP – and increasingly, our most notable publications and authors – strives for. With that in mind, we have decided to embrace the singular “they” – for reasons of both inclusivity and efficiency – and we hope these efforts inspire you to approach this material, and the casting of your production, with an open mind and heart.

# STRIKE TO STAGE

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

The history of *Newsies* can be traced to long before the musical opened on Broadway. The 2012 stage musical is an adaptation of the 1992 movie, which itself traces its roots all the way back to 1899 when a group of newsies banded together to fight for their rights.

### Based on a True Story

*Newsies* is based on the real-life Newsboys Strike of 1899. The New York newsies – boys and girls who sold newspapers on the street – went up against two newspaper publishers, Joseph Pulitzer of the *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst of the *New York Journal*, to fight for the chance to earn a livable wage. (For more information on the strike and other relevant history, refer to the Dramaturgy chapter of this handbook.)

The Spanish-American War made New Yorkers hungry for headlines, and circulation boomed as a result. Once the war ended, people were less inclined to buy newspapers – war was bad for the world, but great for the newspaper business. The strike was the result of the newspaper publishers refusing to lower the newsies' cost-per-paper back down to the pre-war prices. The newsies were not willing to pay more for their papers to make up for a lack of headlines, so they decided to strike – their goal was to make the newspaper tycoons treat them as legitimate members of the business.

The strike lasted two weeks, from July 20 to August 2, 1899. The newsies eventually came to a compromise with the publishers: The price would stay the same, but the publishers would buy back any papers that the newsies couldn't sell. The newsies' strike is a significant moment in history: It is one of the first strikes that was carried out by children and it ended in compromise. The kids succeeded!



*Newsies sell their papers.  
Photo by Alice Austen (1896)*



1992 *Newsies* film  
© Disney

## Turning a Movement into a Movie

In 1985, actor and aspiring screenwriter Bob Tzudiker was reading *The New York Times* and came across a review of David Nasaw's *Children of the City*. The book centers on the lives of urban American children at the turn of the 20th century, and the review mentioned that the newsies' strike in 1899 might be film-worthy. Tzudiker was struck by that notion and wrote it down on a list of ideas. When he mentioned it to Noni White, his wife and writing partner, she said, "That's the quintessential David-and-Goliath story." A few years later, they passionately discussed the idea with their agent while acknowledging a number of things they felt would hold the idea back.

With their agent's encouragement, White and Tzudiker embarked on intensive research. One of the first questions they grappled with was whether to assign Hearst or Pulitzer as the antagonist of the story; they ultimately chose Pulitzer partly because Hearst had already been "taken" by *Citizen Kane*. Other decisions quickly followed, such as creating Jack as an amalgam of a number of newsie leaders that had been accused of betraying their cause, including one named Kid Blink.

When Tzudiker and White pitched their idea of a film about the newsies' strike (not yet a musical at this point) to Marianne Sweeny at Finnell/Dante Productions, she swore to make it happen. Sure enough, she set up a meeting with Disney executives in mid-1990, and by the next day the studio had agreed to produce a movie about the strike.

Inspired by the success and promise of the animated musicals the Walt Disney Studios had already released (beginning with *The Little Mermaid* in 1989) and was continuing to create at that time, Disney felt it was time for the live-action musical to make a return and that *Newsies* was a perfect project to launch that return. In making the decision to turn the newsies' strike into a musical, the studio turned to Alan Menken. Menken had written the music for *The Little Mermaid*, and also had almost completed his work on *Beauty and the Beast* by the time he started on *Newsies*. Howard Ashman, his writing partner on those two projects, was too sick to work on *Newsies* (Ashman died in March of 1991 from complications from AIDS), so Jack Feldman, a lyricist Menken had admired since they met at the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop in the 1970s, was brought on to write the lyrics. Kenny Ortega was tapped to direct his first film, largely due to his significant choreography experience, and Christian Bale, still fresh off his breakout role in *Empire of the Sun* (1987), starred as Jack Kelly.

*Newsies* was released on April 10, 1992, and was considered a critical and financial flop (it grossed only \$2.8 million). However, due to a changing media landscape, *Newsies* was able to find an avid audience through its reruns on the Disney Channel and its home video release. Chris Montan, the movie (and stage) production's executive music producer theorizes that, "There was

a certain stigma attached to musicals and so, if you were a teenager, it wasn't cool to go to the movie theater to see one. But it was fine to watch it at home!" Those teenagers who were viewing the movie at home were watching it over and over again, and over time it became a cult classic.

### Seizing the Demand

By the mid-2000s, it had become clear to executives at Disney Theatrical Productions that there was demand for a stage adaptation of *Newsies*. Year after year, it topped the list of titles most requested by theaters and schools that license Disney shows, and people were constantly producing unauthorized productions featuring scripts crafted from the film dialogue. At that time, Disney Theatrical Productions began embarking on a new model for developing shows in which they were no longer created solely for Broadway or the West End, but for direct inclusion in the company's expanding licensing catalog. Given the demand from professional and amateur theaters as well as schools and community groups, it made perfect sense to look into creating a *Newsies* stage musical under this model.

Thomas Schumacher, president of Disney Theatrical Productions, called Alan Menken and mentioned the notion of creating a licensed version of *Newsies*. Menken recalls, "I was told that there was no need for me to do any additional work on it. Some writers would adapt the movie script and adjust our songs appropriately. But there was no way I would let my baby be reworked by anyone else but Jack Feldman and me."

With Menken and Feldman on board to adapt the show themselves, work commenced on bringing *Newsies* to the stage. Harvey Fierstein, who had won Tony Awards® for his book for the musical *La Cage aux Folles* and his play, *Torch Song Trilogy*, harnessed his love for the film, agreeing to try crafting a book that could solve some of the issues inherent in bringing *Newsies* to the stage.

—◆◆—  
"We're doing  
something that  
has never been  
done before."  
—◆◆—

—Davey

The biggest changes made in translating the film to the stage were deepening Jack's motivations and creating the character of Katherine. In the film, Bill Pullman plays an adult reporter named Bryan Denton who publicized the strike, and Jack falls in love with Sarah, Davey and Les's sister. Fierstein took elements of both of these characters and created Katherine, a complex and progressive female character. In the process of adapting the material, the writers also made a number of other changes, both big and small: Medda's songs from the film were cut and replaced with "That's Rich;" Pulitzer and Crutchie were further fleshed out, with Crutchie becoming Jack's closest confidant; and Jack was no longer sent to The Refuge after the rally, among other adjustments. Additionally, Menken and Feldman fleshed out their score, composing seven new songs for the musical (plus "Letter from The Refuge," which was added to the show at the start of the North American tour).

This new adaptation premiered at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, New Jersey in a production directed by Jeff Calhoun with choreography by Christopher Gattelli, musical direction by Mark Hummel, vocal arrangements by Michael Kosarin, orchestrations by Danny Troob, scenery by Tobin Ost, costumes by Jess Goldstein, lighting by Jeff Croiter, sound by Ken Travis, and projections by Sven Ortel. This production ran for four weeks in the fall of 2011, and was designed to test out the material and give it some exposure before being added directly to the licensing catalog. However, the show received a response far greater than anyone on the Disney team could have imagined. "Fansies" (as die-hard *Newsies* fans came to be known) came from far and wide to see the musical, while those unfamiliar with the material quickly became fans. The critics agreed, heaping praise on this production that had no further plans beyond its short run in New Jersey.

### Broadway and Beyond

The Paper Mill production proved so popular that Thomas Schumacher quickly arranged a 12-week limited engagement at the Nederlander Theatre on Broadway, beginning performances in March of 2012. Those 12 weeks turned into two-and-a-half years, followed by an additional two years touring the U.S. The Broadway production was nominated for eight Tony Awards® and won two: Alan Menken and Jack Feldman's new work received the award for Best Original Score and Christopher Gattelli's energetic and inventive choreography received the award for Best Choreography.

As the touring production came to a close, *Newsies* proved that yet again it would, against unlikely odds, extend its legacy. During one of the final tour stops at the Pantages Theatre in Hollywood, *Newsies* was recorded as a live capture featuring the touring cast and members of the original Broadway cast, including Jeremy Jordan as Jack, Ben Fankhauser as Davey, Kara Lindsay as Katherine, and Andrew Keenan-Bolger as Crutchie. The live capture was released in movie theaters in February of 2017 and has since enjoyed encore screenings and become available digitally.

Over a century in the making, the story of the New York newsies and their struggle for justice finally made it to the Great White Way and beyond! The stage production is now able to fulfill its original intentions of being available for licensing to countless schools, community groups, and amateur and professional theaters.

## CREATIVE TEAM

**JACK FELDMAN** (Lyrics) Broadway and Off-Broadway: *The Madwoman of Central Park West*; *Isn't It Romantic* and *Miami* by Wendy Wasserstein; *Beyond Therapy* by Christopher Durang; and *Coming Attractions* by Ted Tally. Regional: Music for *Idiots Karamazov* by Christopher Durang and Albert Innaurato at the Yale Repertory Theatre. Film: *Oliver & Company*, *Tribute*, *Thumbelina*, *Newsies*, *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York*, *Used People*, *Life with Mikey*, *A Goofy Movie*, *The Lion King II: Simba's Pride*, and *102 Dalmatians*. TV: Music and lyrics for the PBS Theatre in America production of Eve Merriam's *Out of Our Father's House*, *The Magic Hat*, *The Little Mermaid* (TV special), *Polly*, *Sesame Street*, *Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss*, and *Out of the Box*. Many pop songs, including the GRAMMY® Award-winning "Copacabana," the Top-10 hit "I Made It Through the Rain," and songs and special material for Sarah Vaughan, Carmen McRae, Liza Minnelli, Lily Tomlin, Dionne Warwick, and the Muppets.

**HARVEY FIERSTEIN** (Book) Broadway and Off-Broadway: *Kinky Boots* (Tony Award® for Best Musical), *Casa Valentina* (Tony Award® nomination), *Newsies* (Tony Award® nomination), *Torch Song Trilogy* (Tony®, Drama Desk, and Obie Awards), *La Cage aux Folles* (Tony® and Drama Desk Awards), *A Catered Affair* (12 Drama Desk nominations), *Safe Sex* (Ace Award), *Legs Diamond*, *Spookhouse*, *Flatbush Tosca*, and more. His political editorials have been published in *The New York Times*, *TV Guide*, and the *Huffington Post* and broadcast on PBS's *In the Life*. His children's book, *The Sissy Duckling*, was turned into an animated HBO special, which received the HUMANITAS Prize. As an actor, Fierstein is known worldwide for his performances in films including *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *Independence Day*, and *Bullets Over Broadway*; onstage in *Hairspray* (Tony Award®), *Fiddler on the Roof*, *La Cage aux Folles*, and *Torch Song Trilogy* (Tony Award®); and on TV shows such as *Smash*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Good Wife*, *Cheers* (Emmy® Award nomination), *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy*, and *Nurse Jackie*.

**ALAN MENKEN** (Music) Theater: *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*; *Little Shop of Horrors*; *Real Life Funnies*; *Atina*, *Evil Queen of The Galaxy*; *Kicks*; *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*; *Beauty and the Beast*; *A Christmas Carol*; *Weird Romance*; *King David*; *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*; *The Little Mermaid*; *Sister Act*; *Leap of Faith*; *Aladdin*; *A Bronx Tale*; and *Newsies*. Film: *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Newsies*, *Aladdin*, *Pocahontas*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Hercules*, *Life With Mikey*, *Lincoln*, *Home on the Range*, *Noel*, *Enchanted*, *Shaggy Dog*, *Tangled*, *Sausage Party*, and *Mirror Mirror*. Songs: *Rocky V*, *Home Alone 2*, and *Captain America*. Awards: eight Academy Awards® (19 nominations), 11 GRAMMY® Awards (including Song of the Year), seven Golden Globes, and Tony®, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, New York Drama Critics, Olivier, and London's Evening Standard Awards. Honors: Songwriters Hall of Fame and doctorates from New York University and University of North Carolina School of the Arts.



Jeremy Jordan as Jack with the original Broadway cast of *Newsies*.  
© Disney

## PLOT SYNOPSIS

## ACT ONE

As Jack Kelly is savoring the last few moments of quiet before the sun rises, he shares with his best friend Crutchie his rooftop view of the city and his dream for a better life out West (*Santa Fe – Prologue*). At dawn, the newsies sing about their life and their work (*Carrying the Banner*), introducing this ramshackle group of young friends. They make their way to the distribution window for the *World*, where they pick up their daily stacks of papers to sell from Wiesel, who runs the window, and Morris and Oscar Delancey, goons who work for the *World*. Davey and Les, brothers trying to earn money for their family, meet the newsies and try to learn the ropes. Jack agrees to partner with the boys since Les's young age will help him sell more papers, although Davey is skeptical.

Meanwhile, Joseph Pulitzer, publisher of the *World*, expresses displeasure at the declining sales of his newspaper and vows to increase profits (*The Bottom Line*), even if it is at the expense of the newsies.

At the end of the day, it's clear that Les is a natural newsie. Before Jack and the brothers can part ways, a man appears and chases Jack. Davey and Les follow Jack's lead, running through the alleys of New York and finding safety in Medda's Theater. Jack introduces them to Medda Larkin, one of the Bowery's most famous performers. Jack explains that the man chasing them is named Snyder; he runs The Refuge, an orphanage that he keeps in squalid conditions and embezzles from. He's had it out for Jack ever since he escaped. Medda offers her theater as a safe haven, and they stay to watch her perform (*That's Rich*).

During Medda's performance, Jack notices Katherine, a bright young reporter he had seen earlier that day. A smitten Jack makes several attempts to flirt with her, but Katherine, quick-witted and ever-professional, cleverly rebuffs him. While the Bowery Beauties perform their routine, Jack resorts to sketching a portrait of Katherine (*I Never Planned on You / Don't Come a-Knockin'*), and leaves it for her to find.

The next day, as the newsies gather at the distribution window, the boys are outraged to learn that Pulitzer has increased their price for newspapers – they can barely afford to eat as it is! Prompted by Davey, the newsies decide to form a union and strike (*The World Will Know*).

After a successful first day of striking, newly elected union leader Jack Kelly assigns some kids to spread the word to newsies in other boroughs. Katherine arrives, hoping that the newsies will give her an exclusive for the *Sun*. Jack tells her to be at the distribution window the next morning; not only will the newsies prevent others from selling papers, but they plan to stop the delivery carts as well. He tells her that they all have a lot riding on her reporting skills, and Katherine gets to work writing her breakout article (*Watch What Happens*).

The next day, Jack arrives to find that only a few kids have assembled to strike. He urges Davey to convince the small group not to back down. When scabs arrive to take the newsies' place, Jack asks them to stand in solidarity with all the city's exploited working children. The scabs throw down their papers, just in time for Katherine and her photographer to snap a victorious photo (*Seize the Day*). But soon the newsies engage in a fierce fight with the Delanceys, Wiesel, and the police. Snyder scares Jack away, but not before he watches the Delanceys take down Crutchie and carry him off to The Refuge. Reaching the temporary safety of his rooftop, Jack paces, feeling guilty about leading the kids into danger. He looks out over the city and longs to escape (*Santa Fe*).

“The  
things we  
do today  
will be  
tomorrow’s  
news!”

—Crutchie

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## ACT TWO

Battered and bruised, the newsies lament the previous day's events at Jacobi's Deli. Amid rumors that Jack was captured, several newsies wonder where he is. Katherine arrives with a copy of the story she published in the *Sun*, complete with a front-page picture of the newsies. Ecstatically, they thank her and celebrate their – and Katherine's – fame (**King of New York**). Meanwhile, Crutchie writes a letter to Jack from The Refuge expressing that he feels no ill will toward Jack and urging the newsies to stick together (**Letter from The Refuge**).

Davey, Les, and Katherine find Jack back at Medda's Theater and try to convince him to come back to the fight. Jack refuses, saying that they can't win against a man as powerful as Pulitzer. The three convince Jack that theirs is a fight worth fighting (**Watch What Happens – Reprise**); Jack finally agrees, and the kids plan a rally.

Discovering Katherine's story, Pulitzer furiously resolves to take down Jack. Just then, a cocky Jack arrives to announce the newsies' rally. Pulitzer assures Jack that no paper will cover it – and if it's not in the press, it never happened. He then reveals Katherine, exposing her as his daughter, and Snyder, who emerges from the shadows. Pulitzer offers Jack a choice: get sent to The Refuge or renounce the strike and leave New York with pockets full of cash. The Delanceys escort Jack to the cellar, where an old printing press rests, to ponder his decision (**The Bottom Line – Reprise**).

That evening, Brooklyn newsies cross the bridge with Spot Conlon, their leader, to join newsies from every borough at Medda's theater for the rally (**Brooklyn's Here**). Davey gives an inspiring speech, riling up the newsies about their progress. However, Jack appears and tells them to go back to work because they are no match for Pulitzer. Jack accepts his payoff money at the door and exits quickly.

On his rooftop, Jack finds Katherine looking through his drawings of The Refuge's bleak conditions. He snatches them from her and they argue fiercely until she kisses him. Katherine shares her plan to have the newsies distribute an article which quotes Jack on the exploitation of working kids and calls for a citywide strike. Before heading to the old printing press Jack recently discovered, they share their hope in each other (**Something to Believe In**).

With the help of Katherine and her well-connected friends, Darcy and Bill, the newsies sneak into Pulitzer's cellar to print their paper (**Once and for All**). The kids distribute the pamphlet all over the city.

Pulitzer's office is flooded with angry calls from every corner of New York. Having read the *Newsies Banner*, Pulitzer is furious at the kids' attempt to thwart him. Jack, Davey, and Spot show up (**Seize the Day – Reprise**) to personally deliver the news and say that the kids are willing to make a compromise. Pulitzer refuses to back down until Governor Roosevelt appears with Katherine and Jack's drawings of The Refuge. Alone, Jack and Pulitzer come to an agreement they can both live with – the price increase is reduced by half, and publishers will buy back any unsold papers. The strike is over!

Outside, Jack announces the end of the strike. Crutchie appears amid the jubilation, followed by a handcuffed Snyder. Despite his dreams for Santa Fe, Jack realizes that the newsies are his family and Katherine gives him something to believe in – so he's staying put for now (**Finale Ultimo**).

“Tomorrow  
they'll see what  
we are, and sure  
as a star, we  
ain't come this  
far to lose!”

—Davey, Jack, & Katherine

# DRAMATURGY

There's a lot more to *Newsies* than what you see onstage each night. This chapter offers some insight into the world of the show, such as contextual information on New York and the newspaper business in 1899, as well as historical figures that may be unfamiliar to you and your cast (refer to the Script Glossary on pp. 81-83 for even more information) and an essay on "Performing Disability" that offers insight into Crutchie's role in the show and into the history of disability.

While some professional theaters have dramaturgs on staff to explain foreign words or details in a script, actors who do their own character, time period, and text research are always one step ahead; and such cultural explorations can be very helpful to an actor's creative process. Perhaps there is one cast or production member who wants to take on the role of dramaturg – making a more comprehensive glossary complete with places (e.g., the *World Building*) and historical information about turn-of-the-century New York. (How would citizens of New York have dressed? What would they be eating and drinking in a deli? What were the streets of New York like – how did people get around? What types of jobs did other working kids have?) They could also create and moderate an online forum for the cast and designers to share their own relevant research. The more your cast and creative team understand their characters and the world of the play, the better their portrayals and designs will be!

## NEWSBOYS STRIKE OF 1899

The strike depicted in *Newsies* is one of ten newsies' strikes that took place in New York City between 1886 and 1948. However, the strike that occurred during the summer of 1899 was the most significant in terms of duration and outcome.

The Spanish-American War in 1898 set the scene for the strike. In February of 1898, a battleship named the U.S.S. *Maine* was sunk off the coast of Cuba, killing 266 crewmen onboard. Although the cause of the explosion was still unclear, two New York newspapers claimed that the Spanish Empire sank the ship. Spain soon declared war on the U.S., and, although he wanted to avoid conflict, President William McKinley quickly followed suit by declaring war on Spain. Battles were fought in the Spanish colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. Over 2,000 Americans died in the war, many from infectious diseases. A ceasefire began in August of 1898, but the war was not officially over until a treaty was signed and ratified in February of 1899. Called the Treaty of Paris, this document gave control of almost all Spanish colonies to the U.S.

The Spanish-American War had sparked a boom in the newspaper business. Circulations exploded as customers snatched up papers as fast as they could, eager for news from the front. Newspapers did everything they could to outdo one another and spent exorbitant amounts of money on eye-catching front pages and eyewitness accounts. To make

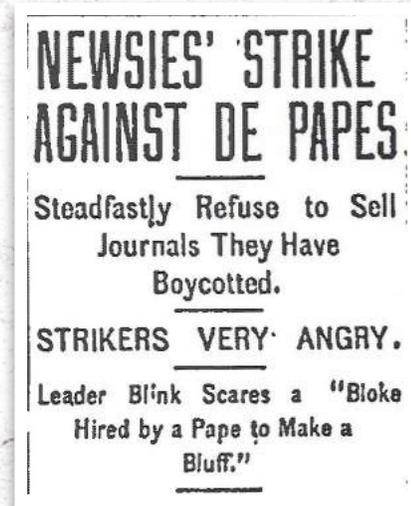


*New York newsies selling their papers.  
photo by Lewis Wickes Hine (1910)*

up some of the money, they raised the wholesale price for the newsies from 50 to 60 cents per hundred. The newsies didn't feel the pinch as much because they were enjoying a rise in their profits from the additional demand. But by the summer of 1899, the war had long ended and circulation

declined. Almost all of the papers rolled their wholesale price back to 50 cents, except Joseph Pulitzer's *World* and William Randolph Hearst's *Journal*; as the two largest publishers, Hearst and Pulitzer figured that they would be able to maintain their prices and that the newsies would continue to buy from them.

As the newsies sold fewer papers each week, the cost difference became harder to manage, and a strike commenced against these two papers beginning on July 20, 1899 and ending on August 2, 1899. During that time, the kids drew support from newsies all over the Northeast, as well as other young workers. Though the kids banded together, at times things became violent – scabs (people hired by the publishers to deliver papers despite the strike) were attacked on the streets, their papers ripped from their hands and destroyed to prevent their sale. The publishers did not take the strike seriously until advertisers started making requests to get their bills adjusted. The newsies eventually came to a compromise with the publishers: They would purchase their papers at the higher price, but the publishers would buy back any papers that the newsies couldn't sell. This was more valuable to the newsies than a lower price would have been, as it allowed them to buy papers without the risk of losing money for any that went unsold.



A headline from the July 24, 1899 evening edition of the Pawtucket Times

After the successful resolution of the newsies' strike nearly two weeks after it began, two other children's strikes quickly followed in New York City: The shoe-shine boys wanted a wage increase, and messengers were opposed to the 50-cent "tax" they were being charged every week for their uniforms. An irreversible revolution of child laborers had begun.

## Timeline of the Strike

**April 25, 1898** – The Spanish-American War begins.

**July 19, 1899** – Dissent among the newsies due to a price hike builds to a head and word spreads of a strike commencing the following day.

**July 22, 1899** – Newsie leader Kid Blink meets Hearst outside of his office to share the newsies' demands. Hearst invites him, David Simons, and two other boys inside and promises them an answer by Monday, July 24.

**July 25, 1899** – Pulitzer and Hearst agree to lower the cost from 60 cents per hundred to 55 cents per hundred. The newsies decline the offer, deciding to hold out.

**August 1, 1899** – Pulitzer and Hearst agree to buy back unsold papers from the newsies. Satisfied with this historic compromise, the newsies call off the strike.

**August 12, 1898** – The Spanish-American War ends.

**July 20, 1899** – The newsies refuse to sell the *World* and the *Journal*. Jersey City, NJ newsies join with their New York brethren in a strike against the papers.

**July 24, 1899** – Pulitzer and Hearst do not give in to the newsies' demands. The publishers hire men to sell their papers, paying them as much as \$2 per day to do so.

**July 24, 1899** – A mass meeting of newsies is held at New Irving Hall. 2,000 kids are inside the theater and another 3,000 observe from the street.

**July 27, 1899** – Kid Blink leaves the newsies' union. Rumors spread that he accepted a bribe from the publishers.

**August 2, 1899** – The newsies of New York return to work, carrying the banner.

# INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The Industrial Revolution took place in the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe and America. During this period, industrialization changed the landscape of society. Factories and mass production enabled the large-scale development of goods and encouraged urban development. The second half of the 19th century is often referred to as the American Industrial Revolution due to a massive increase in the pace of industrialization in the U.S.; many factors contributed to this, such as the expansion of the country in the early-1800s, completion of the first transcontinental railroad, and an influx of immigrant labor.

Before the Industrial Revolution, people often worked for themselves or in small shops, usually performing agricultural or craft-based work. However, once people began working in factories, conditions were often dangerous, work was repetitive, wages were low, and hours were long. All of these factors led to the rise of labor unions in the mid-1800s. Cities rapidly expanded due to the glut of opportunity, but housing stock was not able to keep pace, causing a rise in urban slums and dangerous living conditions. For more information on the impact of the Industrial Revolution, see "Performing Disability" on pp. 18-21 of this handbook.

## CHILD LABOR

In the U.S., the idea that kids should go to school to prepare for their future is relatively new. Throughout most of American history, it was normal for children to work long hours at difficult and dangerous jobs. Child labor in the U.S. is as old as the country itself: In the early 1600s, it was believed that crime and poverty were a result of idleness, not a lack of education. As a result, poor children were shipped by the thousands from England to the American colonies to become apprentices. This arrangement helped England manage its most helpless citizens and also provided a cheap solution to the labor shortage in the colonies. Colonists' children were also apprentices or did grueling work on family farms.

During the Industrial Revolution, as the number of factories increased, so did the number of jobs. Factory owners needed more workers and turned to children to help do everything from operating dangerous machinery to mining coal. It was expected that children as young as 10 years old work 12 or more hours per day for six days per week. According to the U.S. Census of 1880, one in six American children were employed, and this number does not account for the number of children under 10 years old working illegally in sweatshops or on the streets. Estimates indicate that those illegal workers include as many as one in six children between the ages of five and 10 who were employed in some sense. In 1881, only seven states had education laws requiring kids to attend school, but even in these states, many people found ways to get around the law.

By the turn of the 20th century, at the time when *Newsies* is set, the child workforce hit its peak with almost two million legal and countless undocumented working children. During this period, reformers began to take action and created child labor laws, fought to end the abuse of kids in the workplace, and worked to make sure that all children had the opportunity to better themselves through education.

It was not until 1938 that Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, a law that prohibited the employment of kids younger than 16, and placed limits on the employment of kids between 16 and 18 years old. Many people argued that child labor helped children by teaching them a trade. In reality, their jobs kept them from going to school and improving their futures.



*Bootblacks*  
photo by Alice Austen (1896)

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# NEWSIES

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Selling newspapers was a lucrative and freeing enterprise for young children at the turn of the 20th century. The newsies of New York City were popularly admired as “little merchants;” for unlike children working in factories, the newsies were free to set their own hours and determine how many papers they would sell each day. However, the newspaper controlled the wholesale price and kids commonly worked up to 14 hours per day to make enough money to survive. It wasn’t unusual for newsies to exaggerate the headlines or make up sad stories about themselves to sell more papers. They would often fumble and stall while making change in the hopes that the customer would get impatient and let them keep the difference.

While there were newsgirls as well as newsboys, they were less common. One reason for this is that localities that had age limits for labor often required that working girls be older than working boys. In some states, girls had to be 16 to sell newspapers but boys only had to be 10. Newsies were most frequently between 11 and 15 years old, and a large portion of urban children worked as newsies at some point, even if just temporarily. Newsies came from nearly every ethnic group, so it was class that most defined them; the vast majority came from working class families that did not control their own businesses.

Newsies were so commonplace in 19th-century cities that they became symbols of carefree adventurers for writers such as Horatio Alger and examples of the ills of child labor for reformers like Lewis Wickes Hine and Jacob Riis. Both Hine and Riis photographed newsies on the streets and in their lodgings to draw public attention to the poor and harsh conditions in which they lived.



*New York newsies get their afternoon papers.  
photo by Lewis Wickes Hine (1910)*

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## THE POWER OF THE PRESS

### NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALISM AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY

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Newspapers played an important role in public life in the 19th century. Neither broadcast radio nor television had been invented by the end of the century, so newspapers were one of the only means available for the distribution of news. By the mid-1800s, newspapers were somewhat complex operations, utilizing the telegraph to receive news reports from far and wide and prominently featuring the voices of their editors. In fact, newspapers played a major political role through both reporting and editorials. In the 1890s, metropolitan newspapers began including advertisements, creating a strong desire to increase circulation as much as possible.

“Yellow journalism” was coined in the 1890s to describe sensational and often inaccurate reporting designed to increase the circulation of newspapers. Joseph Pulitzer of the *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst of

the *New York Journal* notoriously exaggerated and invented headlines to outsell each other’s publications. Hearst and Pulitzer’s newspapers fueled the U.S. interest in the Spanish-American War – often described as the first “media war” – and business boomed.

Also developed in the 1890s were “muckrakers;” these were journalists who investigated and exposed corruption in the public and private sector. Nellie Bly was a prominent example of a muckraker for her work exposing the brutality and neglect at the Women’s Lunatic Asylum on assignment for the *World*. (For more information on Bly, see p. 16.) Both Hearst and Pulitzer displayed Democratic views sympathetic to labor and immigrants in their publications; thus, there was a level of hypocrisy in the *World* and *Journal*’s refusal to give their newsies the opportunity to earn a living wage.

# LIFE IN NEW YORK AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY

*Newsies* is set in 1899 – the end of the 19th century and a time of great change around the world. Advances in technology, like the invention of the film camera, the commercial automobile, and successful prototypes of the airplane meant people were more mobile and informed than ever before. Around the world, colonized nations fought to gain their independence and workers went on strike to improve their working conditions. Farmers in South Africa fought for their independence against their British colonizers in battles later known as the Boer Wars. The Spanish colonies of Cuba and the Philippines also wished to govern their own countries and the struggle led to an international conflict.

In New York City, Mayor Robert Van Wyck presided over a newly incorporated metropolis. (For more info on Van Wyck, see p. 16.) The boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Richmond (later known as Staten Island) were brought together on January 1, 1898, making New York City the second largest city in the world (after London). The city was speeding forward into the new century with several new improvements. Construction for a public library at 42nd Street and 5th Avenue in Manhattan began in the spring of 1899. The Bronx Zoo also opened in 1899 with 843 animals in 22 exhibits. With the expansion of the boroughs, the city had to make it possible for people to get around town. In addition to the already completed Brooklyn Bridge, the city began laying tracks for a subway that would connect Manhattan and Brooklyn. The subway would open to passengers five years later, in 1904.



A Jacob Riis photograph of a typical tenement, c. 1910

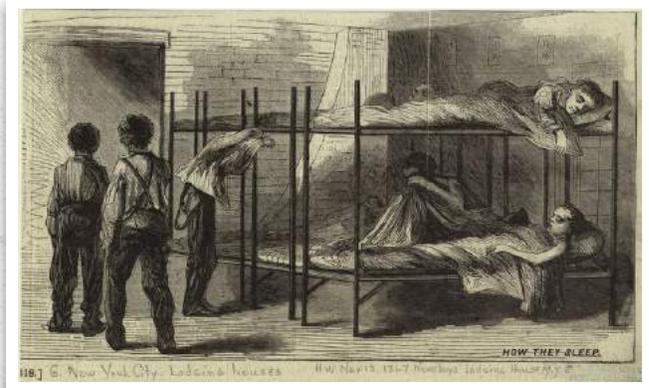
At Ellis Island, immigrants from all over the world continued to surge into the city. An estimated 330,000 people came through New York Harbor that year, primarily from Italy and Russia. Many of these new Americans settled on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, making the already dense neighborhoods even tighter.

## Tenement Houses

Tenements were cramped and unsafe homes, often occupied by multiple families. In New York, most tenement occupants were poor, immigrant families. At the time, New York was the most densely populated city in the world; the Lower East Side was home to over 800 residents per acre. The public became aware of the deplorable conditions in 1890 when Jacob Riis published *How the Other Half Lives*, which used shocking photographs and vivid descriptions to illustrate life in New York's slums. The book led to the Tenement Act of 1901, which reformed housing standards across the city.

## Newsboys' Lodging House

If newsies did not have families to go home to at night, the Newsboys' Lodging House provided them with a place to stay. The lodging house was located at 9 Duane Street in downtown New York City and provided shelter for up to 600 newsboys per night; female newsies would have slept at the nearby Elizabeth Home for Girls. The Newsboys' Lodging House was operated by the Children's Aid Society of Manhattan and opened in 1874. Each kid paid about 6 cents per night for the accommodations and an additional 6 cents for dinner. If there was a slow news day, the newsies might have to choose between the two. The kids who couldn't afford to stay at the lodging house usually slept in alleys.



An 1867 illustration of a Children's Aid Society lodging house



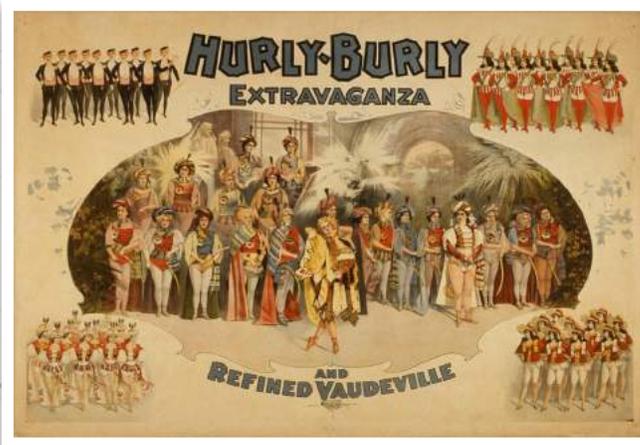
A Harper's Weekly series of illustrations of the New York House of Refuge sketch by W.H. Davenport (1868)

## New York House of Refuge

Inspiring *Newsies's* The Refuge, the New York House of Refuge opened in 1825 in Manhattan and was the first juvenile reformatory in the nation. It moved to Randall's Island in 1854, where it existed until it closed in 1935. The House of Refuge was operated by the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents in the City of New York, a private philanthropic organization, in close collaboration with the state government. It received approximately 300 boys and girls annually (until 1901, when a separate reformatory for women opened), all under the age of 16 when they were taken in. Most had committed petty crimes. Before the 1880s, inmates performed a significant amount of labor and there was a culture of corporal punishment. However, beginning in the 1880s, the manual labor was replaced with industrial education and the corporal punishment was reduced. Despite these changes, criticism of the House of Refuge continued through the early 1900s, focusing on complaints about vocational training and discipline procedures, as well as the institution's outdated buildings, urban location, and concentrated facilities.

## Burlesque and Vaudeville

Burlesque, a type of stage entertainment, was first introduced in the U.S. in 1868 by Lydia Thompson's British Blondes, an English troupe of chorus girls. Modeled after the minstrel show (which – now, rightly, deemed offensive – was based on the comic performance of racial stereotypes), burlesque was designed for male audience members and combined slapstick sketches, dirty jokes, and performances featuring female nudity. Burlesque performances were not considered respectable, but were very popular. By the early 20th century, there were two national circuits of burlesque



An 1899 poster for the Hurly-Burly Extravaganza and Refined Vaudeville

shows and resident companies in New York City. Censorship beginning in the 1930s put into motion a decline of burlesque, and by the 1970s the existence of strip clubs had all but eradicated burlesque in the U.S. (although it has since seen somewhat of a resurgence since the 1990s through a form called neo-burlesque).

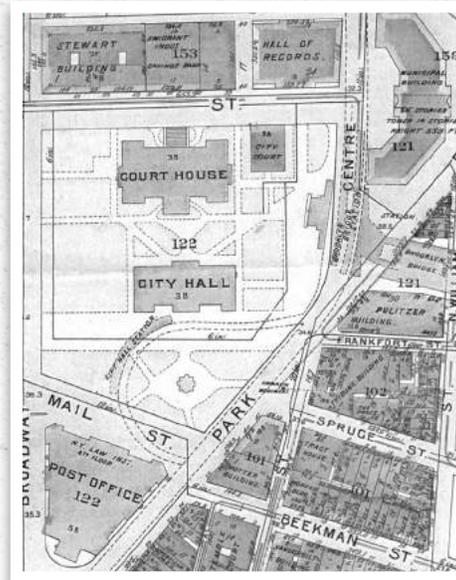
Vaudeville, adapted from burlesque, achieved popularity in the U.S. from the 1880s through the early 1930s. Shows consisted of a series of short acts from a variety of disciplines: singing, comedy, circus, dance, ventriloquism, and more. It developed from adult-oriented burlesque shows popular in the 1850s and 1860s; in 1881, Tony Pastor staged the first "clean" vaudeville at the Fourteenth Street Theater in New York City, and other managers soon followed suit. Vaudeville performances could last for hours and performers would travel the country doing their signature act. Vaudeville was symbolic of the cultural diversity of America at the time and it democratized entertainment given the ways in which it crossed racial and class boundaries.



# GEOGRAPHY OF MANHATTAN

The action of *Newsies* takes place primarily in lower Manhattan. Before the 19th century, the bulk of New York City was consolidated into the southernmost tip of Manhattan. However, during the 1800s, the city began to expand both north through Manhattan and into the other boroughs. By 1899, New York City consisted of five boroughs and the street grid extended north throughout Manhattan. However, much of the city's business life still took place downtown.

In 1883, the Brooklyn Bridge was completed, and in 1890, Joseph Pulitzer built his 349-foot *World* Building at the base of the bridge, which became the tallest building on earth and cast a huge shadow over City Hall Park. That park is the historical equivalent of the fictional Newsie Square, and the Newsboys' Lodging House stood just one block to the north of the park. The New Irving Hall, site of the July 24, 1899 rally, was located on Broome Street on the Lower East Side, about a mile and a half from City Hall Park.



Map of Lower Manhattan c. 1900

## NOTABLE PEOPLE

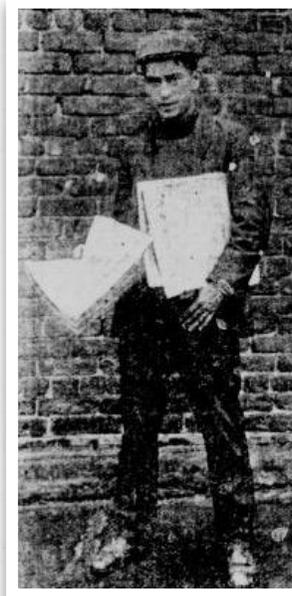
Given that *Newsies* is based on an actual event, many of the characters have ties to historical figures. Some characters, such as Pulitzer, Hearst, Roosevelt, Seitz, and the Mayor, are fictionalized portrayals of real people. Others are original creations, yet still are inspired by historical figures: Jack Kelly is inspired by Kid Blink and Morris Cohen, Davey by David Simons, Katherine by Nellie Bly, and Medda by Aida Overton Walker.

**Kid Blink (Louis Ballatt)**, a newsies' union leader, was blind in one eye and named for his signature eye patch. A ragamuffin who led the New York newsies in their fight for justice during the summer of 1899, Kid Blink was an inspiration for the character of Jack Kelly. He was often quoted in newspapers covering the strike. Writers sometimes used the phonetic spelling of his speeches (e.g., "Dat's de feller wot made de fight yistiddy.") in an effort to keep his dialect intact for the entertainment of readers. He and the other newsies allegedly found this style of reporting condescending.

**David Simons**, one-time president of the newsies' union and an inspiration for the character of Davey, was 21 during the 1899 strike. Born on Ludlow Street, he sold papers from the age of eight, although he also attended school. He hawked papers from City Hall Park, and by the time of the strike, he employed several newsies to help him sell there.

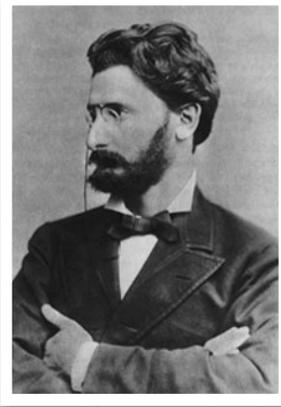
He was elected president of the union due to his ability to inspire others, but the newsies grew skeptical of him and Kid Blink. Simons and Kid Blink were seemingly both bought out by the newspapers, and when the newsies discovered Simons selling papers, they mobbed him and his friends and destroyed 6,000 newspapers. Morris Cohen replaced him as union president.

**Morris Cohen**, a newsies' union leader, sold about 300 copies of the *World* per day in City Hall Park. He was one of the original organizers of the strike and was on the initial executive committee of the newsies' union. He also helped to lead the rally at New Irving Hall. After David Simons was accused of being bribed by the newspapers, Cohen was elected the new union president. In *Newsies*, Jack Kelly is based on both Kid Blink and Morris Cohen.



David Simons (1899)

**Joseph Pulitzer** (1847–1911), owner and publisher of the *New York World*, was born in Hungary in 1847. At the age of 17, after the death of his father, Pulitzer immigrated to the U.S. to enlist in the Union Army. At the end of the Civil War, he traveled from New York City to St. Louis to find a job. After three years of working as a fireman, dockworker, waiter, and gravedigger, Pulitzer was offered a job writing for the *Westliche Post*, a German newspaper.



Joseph Pulitzer  
(date unknown)

Despite his poor eyesight, he was so successful that he was named managing editor and eventually purchased the *St. Louis Dispatch*, one of the major newspapers in the city. Pulitzer purchased the *New York World* in 1883 and turned the failing paper into one of the most widely read publications in the city. The *World's* articles about the sinking of the U.S.S. *Maine* battleship largely contributed to the start of the Spanish-American War. Although Pulitzer was not physically present during the newsies' strike in 1899 (due to poor health, he lived in Maine and ran his paper from there), his character in *Newsies* is an antagonist who represents the excesses of capitalism. Pulitzer married American Kate Davis in 1878, and by the time of the strike, he had become the rather distant father of seven children – the oldest of which, Ralph, took over the *World* in 1911 upon his father's death at age 64. As part of his legacy, Pulitzer left enough money to Columbia University to start a journalism school. The Pulitzer Prize, an award for excellence in journalism, literature, and music, was named in his honor.

**Don Seitz** (1862-1935), journalist and author, worked for several publications over the course of his lifetime. After college, he started his career at the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* where he worked from 1889 until 1891, first as the Albany correspondent and then as its city editor. After that, he was an assistant publisher of the *New York Recorder* before joining the *New York World*. He held a number of positions, including managing editor of the *Brooklyn World* and eventually business manager of the *New York World*, a position he held from 1898 until 1923. Seitz sent Pulitzer daily reports on all topics. During the 1899 strike,



Don Seitz  
(date unknown)

Seitz was managing the newspaper's relationship with the newsies on the ground, and his letters to Pulitzer convey the newspaper's side of the story.

**William Randolph Hearst** (1863–1951), owner and publisher of the *New York Journal*, was born into a wealthy family in San Francisco. After attending Harvard University, Hearst became the manager of a paper his father owned, the *San Francisco Examiner*. At the *Examiner*, he published stories by some of the best writers of the time, including Mark Twain and Jack London. In 1895, he decided to purchase the *New York Morning Journal*, becoming a fierce competitor for Joseph Pulitzer and the *New York World*. Hearst became so successful in the newspaper business that at the peak of his career, he owned over 20 newspapers across the U.S. Hearst died at the age of 88 in 1951. Although Hearst is not a character in *Newsies*, his son makes a cameo appearance.



William Randolph Hearst  
(1906)

**Theodore Roosevelt** (1858–1919), 33rd governor of New York, previously served as a New York State Assembly member, U.S. Civil Service commissioner, president of the New York Board of Police Commissioners, and assistant secretary of the U.S. Navy. As the leader of the "Rough Riders" (the nickname of a small but notable volunteer cavalry regiment that fought in Cuba) during the Spanish-American War in 1898, Roosevelt became a national hero and was elected governor of New York later that year. As governor, he improved labor laws, outlawed racial segregation in New York public schools, and advanced park and forestry programs. Although Roosevelt and Pulitzer were often on opposite political sides, their interaction over the strike in *Newsies* is fictional. However, some of Roosevelt's lines in *Newsies* are directly adapted from real things he said, such as "Keep your eyes on the stars, and your feet on the ground," and "There's only one thing worse than a hard heart, and that's a soft head." In 1900, Roosevelt became vice president under William McKinley and assumed the presidency after McKinley's assassination in 1901. Roosevelt was reelected as the Republican nominee three years later.



Theodore Roosevelt  
photo by Harris and Ewing  
(c. 1901-1908)

**Robert Van Wyck** (1849–1918), 91st mayor of New York, began his public career as a judge and later rose to chief justice of the City Court of New York, working closely with Tammany Hall, the city’s powerful Democratic Party political machine. In 1898, he became mayor of New York, and the first to preside over the newly incorporated five boroughs. Mayor Van Wyck also awarded the city’s first subway contract, valued at \$35 million. In 1900, he was implicated in an Ice Trust scandal by owning a large sum of shares in the American Ice Company before it planned to double the price of ice from 30 to 60 cents per 100 pounds. The American Ice Company was the sole ice provider for the city, and therefore an illegal monopoly. An investigation was conducted by Governor Roosevelt. Although the mayor was found to be not guilty, the scandal cost him the election in 1901. Van Wyck continued to work as a lawyer and in 1906 moved to Paris, where he lived until his death in 1918.



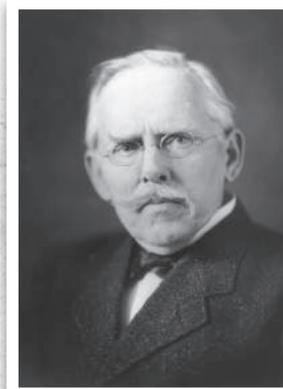
Robert Van Wyck  
photo by William Kurtz (1897)

**Nellie Bly** (1864–1922) was the pen name of journalist Elizabeth Jane Cochrane. In a time when female reporters did not cover much beyond the society pages, Bly made a name for herself as a legitimate journalist. She reported on her record-breaking trip around the world and even faked a mental illness to report on the experience of a patient in a mental institution. *Newsies*’s Katherine Plumber was inspired by Bly.



Nellie Bly  
photo by H.J. Myers (1890)

**Jacob Riis** (1849-1914), photojournalist, was born in Denmark in 1849 and immigrated to the U.S. in 1870. He began work as a police reporter for the *New York Tribune* in 1877 and soon after was employed as a photojournalist for the *New York Evening Sun*. Sometimes referred to as one of the fathers of photography, Riis published a photo-account of poverty in the



Jacob Riis  
Photo by Pirie MacDonald (1906)

city, *How the Other Half Lives*, in 1890. His work later caught the eye of President Theodore Roosevelt, and the two became lifelong friends. Riis spent much of his professional life documenting impoverished children and laborers in the nation’s urban centers. Riis’s work was an inspiration for Jack’s illustrations in *Newsies* of the horrors of The Refuge which lead to its closure and the arrest of its warden, Snyder.

**Mother Jones** (Mary Harris Jones, 1837–1930), a social reformer in support of labor rights, visited the Kensington Textile Mills near Philadelphia in 1903 and was horrified when she saw what had happened to the child workers. Most of them were only 9 or 10 years old and many had lost fingers or crushed bones from working with dangerous machines. Mother Jones organized the children and took them on a cross-country “Children’s Crusade” that led them to the home of President Theodore Roosevelt. Although the president refused to see them, Mother Jones brought the issue of child labor to a much wider audience. In *Newsies*, Katherine’s article for the *Newsies Banner* is called “The Children’s Crusade” in honor of Mother Jones.



Mother Jones  
photo by Bertha Howell (1902)

**Aida Overton Walker** (1880–1914), performer, was one of the premiere African-American artists at the turn of the 20th century, known for her original dance routines and refusal to conform to the stereotype of traditional Black female performers. Overton had a successful career as a star of the Bowery and beyond. She married fellow performer George Walker in 1898, and the pair became one of the most revered African-American couples on the stage. Before her death in 1914, Walker worked hard to aid young Black women striving to make a name for themselves. She organized benefits in honor of the Industrial Home for Colored Working Girls and played an active role in the development of young Black women as stage performers. The *Newsies* character of Medda Larkin was reconceived between the Paper Mill and Broadway productions, with Walker serving as new inspiration.



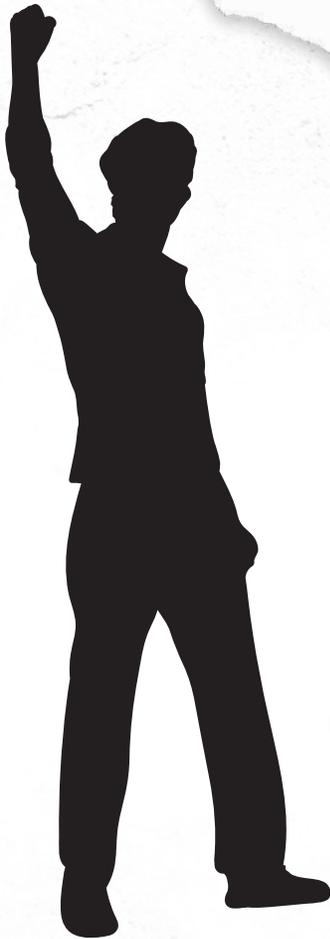
Aida Overton Walker (1907)

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# HISTORICAL NEWSIES OF 1899

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Although thousands of newsies – boys and girls – participated in the strike, these names were listed in newspaper articles covering the events:



David Simons\*  
Jack Harney\*\*  
Kid Blink

Racetrack Higgins  
Crutch Morris  
Henry Butler

Barney Peanuts  
Morris Cohen\*  
Blind Diamond

Bob Indian  
Crazy Arborn  
Edward Fitzgerald

Jim Gaiety  
Little Mike  
Nick Myers

Scabutch  
Young Monix  
Annie Kelly\*\*\*

\* president of the newsies' union

\*\* offered \$600 to call off the strike and charged with extortion and blackmail

\*\*\* ran a newspaper stand; was a huge adult supporter of the kids in their strike and spoke during the rally at New Irving Hall



to play a leading role on Broadway; and Deaf West's 2015 revival of *Spring Awakening* featured actors from the deaf and disabled communities. In 2017, an Off-Broadway production of *Othello* featured Anthony Michael Lopez, an amputee; and a new play by Martyna Majok, *Cost of Living*, featured two roles – and two actors – with physical disabilities.

It may not be an option for you to cast an actor with a disability, and that's okay! If you do have a performer or performers who identify as disabled, don't assume that they should, or would even want, to play Crutchie. That's okay too. If necessary, these questions can be addressed with individual conversations on a case-by-case basis.

## Performing Disability: A Personal Story

I played the role of John in the previously mentioned *Cost of Living*. I'd like to share some of my experiences playing him in the hope that it might assist you in approaching the role of Crutchie. The fact that the character of John and I both have cerebral palsy is where our similarities end. He is a wheelchair user – I am not – and unlike me, he has a pronounced speech impediment as a result of his cerebral palsy. I initially approached the role from a purely experiential, physical level. In my own life, I have encountered several individuals with John's particular physicality. Knowing the level of tension in my body, and how that might manifest in someone like John, I began by attempting to fully embody what I perceived as John's reality. This meant "amping up" my own disability, resulting in an incredible amount of additional stress on my body.

I will never forget the eerie hush that fell over the audience the first time I rolled myself onstage as John. A wheelchair – like a crutch – is a powerful symbol; for many it is a key signifier of disability. I used this to my advantage, letting the wheelchair do a lot of the literal and metaphorical work for me. Instead of severely contorting my body, I adopted a posture suggestive of a physical alignment that is characteristic of someone with severe cerebral palsy.

My eventual approach to playing John was really no different than what I imagine any actor would do. Initially, I fell into the trap of playing the constraint or, in other words, showing how "disabled" John is. With the benefit of time, I began doing less physically, and as a result could devote more time to focusing on playing the reality of the scene and expressing John's essential humanity.

## Performing Crutchie's Disability

Like John's wheelchair, a crutch is a powerful totem that will do a lot of the "work" of visually representing disability to the audience. When approaching the role and the character's physicality, it's important to remember that the crutch is an

“It's important to remember that the crutch is an extension of one's body.”

—Gregg Mozgala

extension of one's body. Rather than a hindrance, it provides Crutchie with a freedom and mobility to participate in the vibrant and lively world of the play.

It's also important to remember that Crutchie, like the rest of the newsies, is not a character of the 21st century. The time Crutchie lives in is very different from our own. In particular, with a physically disabled character like Crutchie, cultural and historical forces of the era would have had a major influence on his day-to-day reality.



*Newsies prepare for their day.*  
photo by Lewis Wickes Hine (1910)

## Disability in Late 19th-Century America

To better understand Crutchie and his place in the world of the play, it's helpful to understand the historical context around physical disability in the second half of the 19th century. Many disability studies scholars believe that societal views and the social construction of laws and policy for disabled people during this era were a precursor to the Disability Rights Movement of the 20th century and the eventual creation of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

The American Civil War (1861-1865) saw more Americans killed or wounded than any other war in the history of our nation, and so it became necessary to create legislation to

provide for disabled veterans and reintegrate them into society. During the war, the U.S. Sanitary Commission was created to support sick and wounded soldiers in the Union Army, and it outlined a plan of action for how disabled veterans should be integrated into society:

*As far as possible, invalids should be restored to their original homes, and the communities to which they belong should absorb them, by assigning to them, by conventional agreement, the lighter occupations; and no provision separating them from their families, or diminishing their domestic responsibilities should be encouraged. . . . Home is generally the best hospital, even as repose is often the best remedy.*

Traditionally, an agrarian society could provide work and support at home, or on the farm, for people with disabilities of many kinds, but the social structures that shaped the lives of disabled people were rapidly changing. Also known as the “Technological Revolution,” this period (1870-1914) saw an unprecedented, radical acceleration in the U.S. from a rural to an urban society where home separated from the workplace. As more opportunity for employment presented itself, young people began leaving the farm for cities in record numbers. The expanding urban and largely immigrant labor force (between 1860-1900, 14 million immigrants entered the U.S.) often lacked family resources, such as the assistance of parents and the extended family unit. The issues associated with caring for people with disabilities grew larger and more complicated than ever before. Without any form of modern social safety net, those who found themselves unemployed or lacking family support were often left to beg in the streets.

Disabled veterans seeking protection under the law were often portrayed as shirkers, malingerers, and free-loaders. Additionally, legislation known as “ugly laws” actively sought

**“Any person who is diseased, maimed, mutilated, or in any way deformed so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object, or an improper person to be allowed in or on the streets, highways, thoroughfares, or public places in this city shall not therein or thereon expose himself or herself to public view under penalty of one dollar for each offense.”**

**—Chicago ordinance of 1881**

## Language Surrounding Disability

The discussion over disability’s definition arose out of disability activism in the U.S. and U.K. in the 1970s, which challenged how the medical concept of disability dominated perception and discourse about disabilities. Debates about proper terminology and their implied politics continue to this day.

Words like “invalid” and “cripple” were the most common terms to refer to disability at the turn of the 20th century. “Crippled” and “crip” are used throughout *Newsies*: Morris, one of the Delancey brothers, uses “crip” as a slur several times; Jack comes to Crutchie’s defense, but even he refers to his friend in this way out of anger and disappointment after the failed protest; and Pulitzer references Crutchie as “crippled” when trying to manipulate Jack into ending the strike. Though historically accurate and effective in *Newsies*, today these terms are considered outdated and offensive to most in the disabled community.

to remove the poor from sight and ban people deemed “unsightly” or “unseemly” from public spaces. The first of these laws was passed in San Francisco in 1867 and the last was not repealed until the early 1970s.

### Crutchie & Disability Representation in *Newsies*

*Newsies* is set in 1899, at the height of the Second Industrial Revolution when workplace injuries resulting in physical maiming or other forms of impairment were incredibly common and a source of great fear and anxiety. Decades of poor workplace conditions and mistreatment of workers led to a massive labor movement in the U.S. This movement and the creation of labor unions, like the newsboys’ union, resulted in many of the laws and workplace protections we have today. Before such legislation was fought for and enacted, however, factory workers who became disabled on the job were often left with little recourse. Davey and his younger brother Les, for example, join the newsies because their father is out of work and disabled due to a work-related accident.

**“Our dad tangled  
with a delivery  
truck on the job.  
Messed up his leg  
bad, so they  
laid him off.”**

**—Davey**

Disability is incredibly prevalent in *Newsies*, both in the stage musical and its history. Kid Blink, the newsies' union leader in 1899, who wears an eye patch as a result of a visual impairment, is featured in the film as a minor supporting character, while the role of strike leader is given to the fictional Jack Kelly. Blink and another real-life newsie, Morris Cohen, were the initial inspiration for Kelly (for more information on Kid and Morris, see p. 14 of this handbook). And, of course, there's Crutchie.

In the libretto's character list, he is described as the “newsie with a bum leg;” Crutchie's specific disability is never named. While this is not essential to the overall action of the play, it would be good practice for the actor playing the role to be clear on what the issue is. Described in the opening stage directions as a “slight and sickly boy of 15” and based on his initial conversation with Jack, it seems that Crutchie's disability may be something he has acquired rather than something he was born with.

Polio, an infectious viral disease that affects the central nervous system and can cause temporary or permanent paralysis, is a reasonable cause for Crutchie's disability; epidemics of the disease were fairly common at the time, with the last epidemic striking North America in 1950. Another malady one could consider is rickets, a childhood disease caused by vitamin D deficiency, characterized by imperfect calcification, softening, and distortion of the bones and typically resulting in bow legs.

Despite Crutchie's physical issues however, he makes clear to the other characters (and the audience), that like most in his situation, he is more than his disability. From the top, we hear how Crutchie is the envy of Jack and other newsies because his disability gives him an almost preternatural advantage in his profession. Crutchie's pride and optimism sets the tone for the rest of the production.

It is Crutchie who becomes the standard bearer for the movement when he fashions his crutch into the fledgling union's first make-shift picket sign. In the show's opening, Crutchie and Jack's relationship sets up the thematic thread of fraternity, friendship, and family that is at the core of this musical. His capture by the bulls and the nefarious Delancey brothers that lands him in The Refuge is an inciting incident that gives Jack's character his greatest moral dilemma, while his “Letter from The Refuge” is one of the most endearing, heart-wrenching numbers in the score. It is Crutchie's “big moment,” and it propels Jack on his course to become the true hero of the story.

**“I don't  
need the  
limp to sell  
papes. I got  
personality.”**

**—Crutchie**

Crutchie is fascinating because he could have easily been written as a one-dimensional “magical other” who serves as a symbol of pity and inspiration – but he is incredibly three-dimensional. His songs are infectious! His action is thrilling! These types of finely drawn characters – especially ones with disabilities – don't come along that often. Use this to your advantage.

Have fun. Good luck. Break legs! “Soak 'em for Crutchie!”



# CASTING

**K**nown for its athletic choreography and invigorating score, *Newsies* requires a strong ensemble of actor-dancers who excel at creating characters through movement. All newsies, from ensemble to leads Jack and Davey, require dancing, so look for performers with endurance and the ability to maintain strong vocals while dancing. Beyond these movement- and vocals-heavy roles, *Newsies* offers a large cast of characters with plenty of opportunities for non-dancers to shine! Many are based on real people (see pp. 14-16 for more information). Below is a description of each character along with recommended audition material and vocal ranges. For ideas on how to double/understudy roles, see p. iii of the libretto.

## CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

### THE KIDS

All of these roles require dancing and solo singing except for Darcy and Bill (unless doubled as newsies). While, historically, as many as one in six newsies were between the ages of 5 and 10 years old, this musical generally presents them as teenagers and young adults.

**JACK KELLY**, the charismatic leader of the Manhattan newsies, is an orphaned dreamer and artist who yearns to get out of the crowded streets of New York and make a better life for himself out West. Fiercely protective of his best friend, Crutchie, and strongly loyal, Jack isn't afraid to use his voice to attain better conditions for the working kids of New York City. Though living on the streets has given him a tough-guy exterior, Jack has a big heart and can demonstrate a sweet vulnerability – especially when it comes to bantering with a certain female reporter. Must have a great pop tenor voice and sense of physicality.

**KATHERINE PLUMBER**, an ambitious young reporter, works hard to make a name for herself as a legitimate journalist in a time when women aren't taken seriously. Quick, funny, and resourceful, she boldly captures the voice of a new generation rising in her coverage of the newsies' strike. While she generally has no time for cocky, streetwise young men, she makes an exception for Jack Kelly. Though she only has a brief dance solo in "King of New York," Katherine should have a great contemporary pop voice with a high belt – diction is key.

**CRUTCHIE** is a dedicated newsie with a bum leg that's painful, but helps sell more papers. Though he walks with the assistance of a crutch, Crutchie doesn't let it define him; when in a jam, Jack Kelly's best friend relies on a goofy-sweet sense of humor and optimistic resilience. Crutchie is the heart of the resistance. Though his movement will suggest his bum leg, Crutchie should still be included in the dance numbers.

**DAVEY**, Les's straight-laced, bright big brother starts selling newspapers to help his family earn a living, but becomes swept up in the fervor of the strike. A leader in his own right who is learning to use his voice to uplift others, Davey is the brains of the resistance.

**LES**, Davey's cheeky younger brother, is inspired by the freedom of the newsies and loves their independent lifestyle. A precocious and natural newsie, Les is an intuitive salesboy and a pint-sized charmer. He should present as younger than the other newsies.

**SPOT CONLON**, the proud leader of the Brooklyn newsies, boasts an intimidating reputation and a short singing solo in "Brooklyn's Here."

**NEWSIES**, including **ALBERT, BUTTONS, ELMER, FINCH, HENRY, IKE, JO JO, MIKE, MUSH, RACE, ROMEO, SPECS, SPLASHER,** and **TOMMY BOY**, are some of the hard-working kids of New York City who go on strike for a livable wage.

**SCABS** are three newsies who are hesitant to join the strike.

**DARCY**, who can double as a newsie, is the upper-class kid of a publisher who sides with the newsies.

**BILL**, who can double as a newsie, is the son of William Randolph Hearst who joins the newsies' cause.

**PHOTOGRAPHER** takes the triumphant photo of the newsies at the end of "Seize the Day."

## PULITZER & HIS STAFF

All of the below are non-dancing roles, and with the exception of Nunzio and the Guard, all sing in “The Bottom Line.”

**JOSEPH PULITZER**, a pompous businessman through and through, owns the *World* and is concerned solely with the bottom line. Katherine’s no-nonsense father, Pulitzer doesn’t sympathize with the strikers, but he does eventually – and grudgingly – respect Jack.

**SEITZ**, editor, advises Pulitzer, but ultimately admires the kids’ newspaper.

**BUNSEN**, Pulitzer’s bookkeeper, comes up with the idea to raise the newsies’ price per paper.

**HANNAH** is Pulitzer’s practical and insightful secretary.

**NUNZIO** is Pulitzer’s barber.

The **GUARD** removes the newsies from Pulitzer’s building.

## NEWSPAPER DISTRIBUTORS & HEAVIES

Unless otherwise doubled with the newsies ensemble, these are all non-singing, non-dancing roles.

**WIESEL**, or “Weasel,” runs the distribution window for the *World* and knows most of the newsies by name. Assisted by the intimidating Delancey brothers, who keep order by any means necessary, Wiesel is Pulitzer’s disgruntled paper-pusher.

**OSCAR & MORRIS DELANCEY**, toughs who work at the distribution window for the *World*, take the side of the publishers in the strike and are known to use their fists to make a point.

**GOONS** assist the Delanceys in roughing up the newsies at the end of Act One.



## MEDDA & THEATER EMPLOYEES

With the exception of the stage manager, these are singing and dancing roles.

**MEDDA LARKIN**, inspired by vaudeville performer Aida Overton Walker, this big-voiced saloon singer and star of the Bowery offers her theater as a safe haven for the newsies. An astute entertainer with great comic delivery, she’s a good friend to Jack and stands firmly behind the newsies in their fight for justice.

**BOWERY BEAUTIES** are female performers at Medda’s Theater.

**STAGE MANAGER** introduces Medda’s act.

## OTHER ROLES

While the nuns sing, the others are all non-singing, non-dancing roles.

**NUNS** (3) offer breakfast to the hungry newsies. Feel free to cast additional nuns.

**WOMAN** is a newspaper customer.

**MR. JACOBI** allows the newsies to congregate in his restaurant to plan their strike – when he doesn’t have any paying customers, that is.

**SNYDER**, the crooked and sinister warden of The Refuge, a filthy and horrible orphanage, is concerned only with catching enough kids to keep his government checks coming.

**POLICEMEN** assist Snyder and turn against the newsies in the fight that concludes Act One.

The **MAYOR** of New York City rebuffs Pulitzer’s attempts to shut down the newsies’ strike.

**GOVERNOR TEDDY ROOSEVELT**, a well-respected lifelong public servant, inspires Jack to stand up to Pulitzer.

# CASTING & AUDITION CHART

The following charts are quick reference guides to use while casting your production. Characters with "\*" next to their names are not gender-flexible in the script, but have approved line alterations should you wish to present them as female characters. See pp. 26-27 for more information.

Principal Characters						
Character	Female	Male	Gender Flexible	Vocal Range	Suggested Vocal Audition	Suggested Acting Audition
Jack Kelly		✓			"Santa Fe" "Something to Believe In" "I Never Planned on You"	pp. 1-4, 29-30, 59, 90-93
Katherine Plumber	✓				"Watch What Happens" "Something to Believe In"	pp. 29-30, 46-48, 90-93
Crutchie*			✓		"Letter from The Refuge"	pp. 1-4
Davey		✓			"The World Will Know" "Seize the Day" "Watch What Happens (Reprise)"	pp. 14-17, 37-40, 74-77
Les		✓			"The World Will Know" "Watch What Happens (Reprise)"	pp. 22-24, 26-27
Joseph Pulitzer		✓			"The Bottom Line"	pp. 82-83
Medda Larkin	✓				"That's Rich"	pp. 25-27, 73

Featured Characters						
Character	Female	Male	Gender Flexible	Suggested Audition (Songs / Libretto Page #s)	Solo or Group Singing	Speaking Solo
Spot Conlon*			✓	"Brooklyn's Here"	✓	✓
Seitz			✓	"The Bottom Line" pp. 18-20	✓	✓
Bunsen			✓	"The Bottom Line" pp. 18-20	✓	✓
Hannah	✓			"The Bottom Line" pp. 18-20	✓	✓
Wiesel		✓		pp. 13-15		✓
Oscar & Morris Delancey		✓		pp. 11-12, 56		✓

Featured Characters						
Character	Female	Male	Gender Flexible	Suggested Audition (Songs / Libretto Page #s)	Solo or Group Singing	Speaking Solo
Bowery Beauties	✓			"Don't Come a-Knocking"	✓	
Snyder*			✓	pp. 80-81		✓
Mayor		✓		pp. 80-81		✓
Governor Teddy Roosevelt		✓		pp. 104-105, 108		✓

Cameo Characters				
Character	Female	Male	Gender Flexible	Speaking Solo
Nunzio		✓		✓
Guard			✓	✓
Scabs			✓	✓
Goons		✓		
Stage Manager			✓	✓
Nuns	✓			
Woman	✓			✓
Mr. Jacobi*			✓	✓
Policemen		✓		
Photographer			✓	
Darcy*			✓	✓
Bill		✓		✓

**Note**

These "Cameo Characters" are mostly non-singing roles (with the exceptions of the Nuns, who sing as a group in "Carrying the Banner;" the Scabs, who may join their fellow newsies in singing "Seize the Day;" and Darcy and Bill, who may sing along in "Once and For All"). All other roles are either speaking-only or non-speaking.

## Accents & Dialects

The dialects in *Newsies* are products of a collective imagination more than historical accuracy. Out of concerns that using the actual dialect of newsies would render the characters unintelligible, the kids instead speak with an exaggerated New York accent (think the cast of *Seinfeld* or *My Cousin Vinny*, taken to an extreme). This accent sets the newsies apart as authentic and proletarian. Thus, Davey and Les might speak with less extreme accents than the rest of the newsies as a marker that they come from a different world, even if they do still come from a working-class family. The Delanceys and Wiesel should also speak with a New York accent.

As a Hungarian immigrant who did not move to America until he was 17, Pulitzer would have had a Hungarian accent. However, in *Newsies* he should speak with no accent (beyond standard modern-day East Coast pronunciation) to set him apart from the kids. Katherine, Darcy, and Bill similarly should not have accents. In the original production, Bunsen and Seitz did not have accents whereas Hannah did have an exaggerated New York accent; feel free to investigate those choices in your production.

As immigrants, Jacobi should speak with an Eastern European accent and Nunzio with an Italian accent. Medda and the Stage Manager can speak in various accents depending on how they are cast, and audio recordings exist of Theodore Roosevelt's voice, should an actor wish to imitate it.

The easiest way to learn an accent is to listen to it over and over again. YouTube clips are excellent resources to get started. Additionally, a dialect coach could be used during rehearsals. If that is not possible, check out the online options listed in the Resources section of this handbook on p. 78.

It is also extremely useful when learning an accent to stay in character during the length of rehearsal. For the Broadway and touring companies of *Newsies*, the longer everyone maintained their accents, the more solid they became.

## GENDER-FLEXIBLE CASTING

With the exceptions of Katherine and Medda, *Newsies* is heavy on male-designated roles. To create more opportunities for female performers, approach the material and your auditions with an open mind. For high school and community theater productions, the following approved options and alterations can be considered for female performers:

- **Buttons, Specs, Finch, Splasher, Jo Jo, Stage Manager, Bunsen, & Seitz:** As written, these roles are already gender flexible and can be presented as male or female.
- **Crutchie:**
  - p. 7 – FINCH: They oughta bottle this **guy kid**.
  - p. 7 – CRUTCHIE: THE KIND WHAT TURNS A LADY'S **PERSON'S** HEAD
  - p. 63 – SNYDER: It's off to The Refuge with you, ~~little man~~. Take **him her** away.
  - p. 72 – CRUTCHIE: YOUR BROTHER **FAM'LY**...

- **Spot:** (These approved changes will also keep her gender a fun surprise until the audience sees her.)
  - p. 55 – RACE: Youse seen Spot Conlon, right? ~~What'd he say?~~ **What's the word?**  
 JACK: Sure we seen him **Spot**.  
 DAVEY: Him **And** about twenty of his **Spot's** gang.  
 LES: And them Brooklyn ~~boys kids~~ is big.  
 JACK: And I gotta say, Spot was very impressed. ~~Wasn't he?~~
- **Darcy:**
  - p. 97 – KATHERINE: Here she is, ~~boys~~. Just think...  
 KATHERINE: Jack, this is Darcy. He **She** knows just about everything...
- **Snyder:** You are free to present this role as female; simply change any associated pronouns to she/her and any titles ("Mr.") to "Miss."
- **Jacobi:** While this role doesn't require any approved script alterations to be presented as female, feel free to replace the "Mr." with "Ms." in your playbill's cast list.

Your larger ensemble of newsies can also be played by boys and girls – which is historically accurate! There were quite a few female newsies fighting the good fight; check out pp. 11 and 34 of this handbook for more information and for ideas on how to costume these newsgirls. Additionally, if you have a co-ed ensemble and wish to make the dialogue more inclusive of your female performers, consider deleting the words "boys" and "fellas" whenever you see them in the dialogue (or replacing them with "kids" or "newsies" when it makes sense (e.g., Katherine's "You stole to feed those ~~boys kids~~").

These are approved alterations for amateur high school and community theater productions only; any additional requested changes must be submitted in writing and be approved by your licensing representative at Music Theatre International. Professional productions should consult with MTI before making any alterations to the libretto as written.



*Jack & Crutchie  
 Staples High School; Westport, CT*

**T**hough *Newsies* takes place in turn-of-the-20th century New York City, this is not your typical period piece. Rather than an elaborately detailed design, this highly energetic musical requires fluidity to keep your audience's attention on the newsies' passionate mission and to ensure that the playing space is open and malleable for all those fantastic dance numbers! When designing your production, always keep in mind that the spirit of *Newsies* – rather than an exhaustive attention to historical detail – is the key to success.

## SETS

*Newsies* takes place across various locations in New York City in 1899, from Newsie Square to Medda's Theater and Pulitzer's office. While there are many ways to approach the scenic design of this show, be sure that all set pieces are selected or designed to move quickly into position. This is especially helpful for *Newsies*, which requires fluid transitions from location to location in order to support the high-energy storytelling and increasing stakes. (For tips on how to create thoughtful and seamless transitions, refer to the Staging & Choreography chapter of this handbook.)

### UNIT SET

Because *Newsies* covers so many places so quickly, consider economizing by creating a unit set with multiple levels, which can be supported with additional roll-on set pieces, platforms, and drop-in units as needed to indicate more specific locations. This structure can be as simple – basic wooden or metal scaffolding and stairs that offer a story theater feel – or as specific as you'd like, taking inspiration from 1899 New York architecture and where the newsies spend most of their time in Lower Manhattan. If your unit is largely see-through, you may consider utilizing one or more backdrops to further specify the location(s).

### ROOFTOP

No need to construct a detailed rooftop here! If using a unit set, you can take advantage of its height and block the rooftop scenes in one section of it. Alternatively, construct a simple rolling platform (which can double as Medda's theater balcony) that can be quickly moved on- and offstage. Your roof needn't be elevated – hang some laundry behind it and your audience will have no trouble recognizing where Jack and Crutchie are!

## From the Director...

For *Newsies*, set designer Tobin Ost and I decided that at times the set would need to be Goliath to the newsies' David – a vertical cityscape meant to dwarf and intimidate – and at other times it would represent the city's obstacles that the kids must scale and traverse to escape trouble, all while creating cinematic scene changes.

Jeff Calhoun

director, original Broadway production



*Crutchie and Jack dream of Santa Fe from a New York rooftop.  
Staples High School; Westport, CT*



*The newsies prepare to carry the banner.  
George Washington High School; Cedar Rapids, IA*

## NEWSBOYS' LODGING HOUSE

The newsies are only here for a couple minutes at the top of "Carrying the Banner," so there's no need to create an extra set piece. See p. 54 for tips on how to indicate this location through your newsies' movement.

## NEWSIE SQUARE

Much of the show takes place in Newsie Square, which requires open space for the large dance numbers, as well as four specific set pieces:

- **Distribution Window:** Consider using a corner of your unit set if available; use a table or construct a simple wooden booth that gives Wiesel a small area from which to conduct business.
- **Newspaper Wagons:** Construct a basic wooden cart and fill it with bundles of newspapers (see p. 31 of this handbook for prop tips).
- **Headlines:** There are a few ways to create the newspaper headlines that the newsies reference throughout. While the original Broadway production utilized projections, another option is to drop in a large chalkboard from the fly space, or have two of your newsies reveal or lower it (with headlines already scribed in chalk) as the headlines are read aloud. If the latter, be sure that the height and location of the chalkboard is easily accessible for your Jack to write "STRIKE" across. Create a lightweight chalkboard using gator board, and consider making it two-sided so that it can have two headlines already written and at the ready.
- **The World Gate:** To construct the imposing entrance to Pulitzer's building, use a wood frame and PVC pipe to create a double-door gate that can be rolled on or dropped in from your fly system.

## PULITZER'S OFFICE

All you need for the newspaper behemoth's private office is a wood or antique desk and at least two chairs – one of which should swivel for Katherine's reveal in Act Two. Keep this location simple, as your newsies can transition these pieces on and off during musical tags.

## MEDDA'S THEATER

For Medda's performance, consider bringing in a false proscenium with a curtain. Alternatively, the burlesque star and her Bowery Beauties can perform in front of your true stage curtain, if available. Just be sure that Jack and Katherine are



*The newsies pick up their papers in Newsie Square.  
St. Joseph's Preparatory School; Philadelphia, PA*



*The Delanceys reveal the day's headline.  
Staples High School; Westport, CT*



*The newsies gather outside of the World.  
Archbishop Stepinac High School; White Plains, NY*



*Pulitzer sits furiously at his desk.  
St. Joseph's Preparatory School; Philadelphia, PA*

## DESIGN

visible in their box seats throughout. They can be blocked above, on a rolling platform (that perhaps doubles as your rooftop), or simply place them, seated and cordoned off from Medda's performing space, far stage right or left to create the same effect. In Act Two, this location will need a large backdrop on a rolling platform with Jack's painting of the Taos Mountains on one side and his political cartoon on the other.

### JACOBI'S DELI

Enough tables and chairs for all your newsies will set the scene just fine for this local New York eatery.

### KATHERINE'S OFFICE

For "Watch What Happens," keep the focus on the newsies' favorite journalist with a bare stage excepting her small desk and chair. (For typewriter tips, see p. 32 of this handbook.)

### THE REFUGE

Crutchie's "Letter from The Refuge" can be sung anywhere on a bare stage; consider blocking your actor on a platform or cramped corner of your unit set to convey the dismal conditions of The Refuge (for more tips, see p. 60 of this handbook).

### CELLAR

Pulitzer's cellar houses an old printing press that the kids use to print their *Newsies Banner*. Try renting an old press from another theater or stage shop. If this is not available to you, get crafty! Research printing presses of the time period to find a design (hint: "jobbing press") and create a template to construct your own; use a CNC machine to cut pieces of wood, paint the assembled parts black to resemble steel, and add hardware to create a rotating mechanism. Other ideas: Use a large pizza pan for the ink disk and a wooden pastry roller for the ink fountain; fashion an old car belt and pressed-wood cutouts to look like gears that simulate the workings of the press; and attach all movable parts using pivot bearings so that they move when the foot treadle is pushed.

### BROOKLYN BRIDGE

For this short scene, Spot and your other Brooklyn newsies can gather on an elevated platform of your unit set or downstage for "Brooklyn's Here." For staging ideas, see p. 61 of this handbook.



*Jack and Katherine watch the Bowery Beauties perform.  
Floyd Central High School; Floyds Knobs, IN*



*Jack paints the Taos Mountains at Medda's Theater.  
Floyd Central High School; Floyds Knobs, IN*



*Newsies declare "The World Will Know" at Jacobi's Deli.  
Staples High School; Westport, CT*



*Jack meets Bill Hearst as Darcy (left) oils the press.  
Staples High School; Westport, CT*

# PROPS

Props should be realistic and look like they belong in 1899; however, there are still plenty of opportunities to have fun with this design element. Below are the props, listed in order of appearance, that are essential, along with the page number(s) on which they appear in the script to help guide you in your design.

## ESSENTIAL PROPS

- **Crutch** (1, etc.) – A crutch that looks period-appropriate can be purchased or constructed; if you are constructing it, be sure it is sturdy enough to withstand any choreography in which it is used (it is recommended that you have an identical crutch to use throughout rehearsals). This crutch can be made from a hardwood broom/rake handle with a tapered end that can easily accommodate a rubber leg tip for your actor's comfort.
- **Cigar** (5, etc.) – A fake cigar can be created by cutting up a toilet paper tube, rolling the thin cardboard into the correct shape, and covering that with paper.
- **Doughnuts & coffee** (8) – Keep in mind that paper cups weren't in use in the U.S. until after 1899; the nuns can hand out empty tin mugs that the newsies mime drinking coffee out of.
- **Money** (13, etc.) – Consider using coins for the money used to buy newspapers throughout the show, or simply have your actors mime payment.
- **Newspapers** (13, etc.) – Consider creating show-specific newspapers. A local or school newspaper might be able to print these on actual newsprint. Make sure to keep in mind the various types and configurations of newspapers required throughout the show, including individual papers (that the newsies purchase) and bundles (to fill the wagon). A simple way to make lightweight yet sturdy bundles of newspapers is to wrap a core of Styrofoam in accordion-folded newspaper. If you have a dramaturg, they (or another dramaturgically inclined production member) can collaborate with the props master to source images and write text for these newspapers, especially the *Newsies Banner*.
- **Scissors, razor, shaving cream, cape** (18-21) – To ensure your performers' safety, never use a real razor onstage. Instead, purchase or create a stage razor for Nunzio to use on Pulitzer in "The Bottom Line."
- **Notebook & pencil** (29-32, 46-48, etc.): A reporter should never be without her pencil and pad! Ensure Katherine is always prepared whenever she is covering the strike.



Crutchie walks with his crutch.  
Floyd Central High School; Floyd's Knobs, IN



A bundle of newspapers  
Staples High School; Westport, CT



Katherine types her article.  
Staples High School; Westport, CT

- **Newsprint & pencil** (30-32) – Jack will need a piece of newsprint and pencil in the theater box in order to draw Katherine during “I Never Planned on You.”
- **Tray of glasses** (45, 66) – Consider using clear plastic glassware in Jacobi’s Deli to avoid the potential for broken glass.
- **Jack’s drawing of Katherine** (49) – This should be the newsprint that Jack drew on; there’s no real need to make the drawing visible to the audience.
- **Typewriter & paper** (52-54) – A working vintage typewriter (which can be rented from a prop shop or purchased at a vintage store or online) creates a very appealing visual onstage, and audiences will be forgiving if it is not absolutely period-appropriate.
- **“Strike” rag** (57)
- **Satchel** (60, etc.) – The scabs require these, but all newsies would likely have totes to carry their papers. A simple satchel can be created from a pattern, or can be purchased; just make sure that they are durable enough to survive any choreography (consider making/buying an extra set as rehearsal props). For a nice touch, distress the satchels so they look well-used.
- **Camera** (61) – Work with your dramaturg to make sure your camera is period-appropriate. You can purchase or rent a vintage prop camera, or create your own: Using foam core, construct a box around all sides of an older-model camera, attach the camera to a tripod (which you can paint brown to add to the effect), and glue a run of red fabric off of the foam core box for the photographer to duck under.
- **Whistle** (62, 108)
- **Handcuffs** (62, 109) – Make sure to purchase stage handcuffs that don’t require a key to open them.
- **Pencil and paper** (71-72)
- **Paintbrush and paint** (73) – Jack can mime painting with a dry brush (which can have a splash of colorful, dried paint on it for added effect) rather than using actual paint. Consider providing a caddy for Jack’s paints and brushes as well.
- **Envelope** (73) – Filling the envelope with a stack of paper can ensure that it doesn’t appear empty.
- **Tarp** (84, 96) – This should be old-looking and “dust-covered.”
- **Banners & placards** (87, 107): If working on a high school production, signs for the rally and the end of the strike, as well as Crutchie’s “strike” rag, can be a great project to assign to an art class.



*A proud Crutchie reveals his decorated crutch.  
St. Joseph's Preparatory School; Philadelphia, PA*



*Les, Davey, and Jack carry their papers in satchels.  
George Washington High School; Cedar Rapids, IA*



*A photographer documents the strike.  
George Washington High School; Cedar Rapids, IA*

- **Wad of cash** (89, 102): You can print out period-appropriate bills using images from the internet to create the wad of cash.
- **Drawings** (90, 101, 104)
- **Piece of paper** (92)
- **Ring of keys** (96)
- **Typesetting supplies** (99) – The letters used for a printing press would traditionally be stored in a wooden box; feel free to be as detailed as you want with this prop, but Bill can also mime working with the letters just as effectively. An alternate, yet also effective piece of stage business, is for Bill to apply oil to the printing press.
- **Phones** (102) – There should always be a phone in Pulitzer’s office, but it can be humorous to include multiple period-appropriate phones in the second act.

## OPTIONAL PROPS

- **Towel, shaving cream, etc.** (5) – Work with your performers to explore the morning rituals that the newsies might perform as the day breaks during “Carrying the Banner.”
- **Cash box** (13, etc.) – Consider how Wiesel and the Delancey brothers might collect payment for the newspapers; they could use a cash box, coffee tin, their pockets, or some other method.
- **Cups, brooms, spoons, etc.** (69-70) – Have fun deciding which items from the deli to incorporate into your choreography during “King of New York”! Just make sure not to use any real glassware or knives for the safety of your performers.
- **Lanterns** (96) – Consider using flameless lanterns for the newsies to carry as they spread news of the strike.



*Jack gathers his painting supplies.  
Floyd Central High School; Floyds Knobs, IN*



*Newsies wave signs outside Pulitzer’s window.  
St. Joseph’s Preparatory School; Philadelphia, PA*



*Hannah and Bunsen answer the phones.  
Floyd Central High School; Floyds Knobs, IN*

# COSTUMES

Depending on your vision for *Newsies*, your costumes can be as simple or as historically detailed as you desire. Keep in mind, though, that your newsies – those involved with extensive dancing – will need great freedom of movement. When designing, consider how you can accommodate this and still reflect turn-of-the-20th century New York fashion. Costume design reveals when and where the play takes place, but it also serves to visually distinguish both the economic and social class of the characters. Use color, texture, and fabric to distinguish the working class kids from the wealthy Pulitzer and his staff and to emphasize the stark difference between the two in regards to power and access.

## NEWSIES

Including other named newsies like **Finch** and **Mush**, as well as the **scabs**, this hard-working, ragtag group of boys and girls would generally wear hand-me-downs and other well-worn, and perhaps ill-fitted, scavenged garments. Because these kids work – and even live – on the streets, employ a palette of earthy, neutral colors to compliment their environment and consider distressing these costumes for a more frayed and unkempt look.

### Newsboys

Dress these scrappy kids in pants cut off just below the knee paired with knee-high socks and lace-up boots. On top, they can sport long-sleeved Henleys or t-shirts. Collared shirts work too – just be sure they're not stiffly starched or properly buttoned up all the way. To further identify them as "little merchants," add a pair of suspenders or an unbuttoned vest – and don't forget their newsie caps!

### Newsgirls

In 1899, these resourceful peddlers of papes would be dressed in below-the-knee, loose-fitting dresses (known as a shifts) with a pinafore, stockings, and lace-up boots. Alternatively, they might don a skirt and buttoned blouse or sweater with an apron. Newsgirls didn't wear caps (though they would have worn warm hats in the winter), so consider pulling their hair back into braids or half-pony tails.

### Jack Kelly

The newsies' appealing union president can be dressed similarly to the other newsboys, but with full-length pants and a buttoned shirt and vest – as their leader, he makes some effort to look the part. To further set him apart from the rest, consider giving him a shirt of a different color from the other newsies.



*Jack & Newsies*  
Dos Pueblos High School; Goleta, CA



*Crutchie (center) chats with other newsies.*  
Archbishop Stepinac High School; White Plains, NY



*Les & Davey*  
Floyd Central High School; Floyds Knobs, IN

## Crutchie

You needn't costume this newsie any differently than the rest – just add a crutch! (For prop tips, see p. 31 of this handbook). If you have cast Crutchie as female, consider how you envision this role as a girl. Would she be a tomboy like Anybodys from *West Side Story* and dress like her male friends, or would she dress like the other female newsies? If the latter – and though her crutch will certainly signify her disability – consider how to ensure that her skirt or dress does not cover or hinder the actor's movement.

## Davey & Les

These two newsies are lucky – they have parents who can afford to keep them in clean and pressed clothes, even if they are hand-me-downs. Like Jack, Davey would wear full-length pants and perhaps a tie and vest to reflect his serious nature. Little Les, on the other hand, would fully embrace the newsie look: Give him pants cut off below the knee, patterned socks, a t-shirt, and for a playful touch, some suspenders and a cap.

## Spot Conlon & Brooklyn Newsies

These tough newsies are a bit rough around the edges; add a dash of red to their costumes for a bolder look.

### OTHER KIDS

## Katherine Plumber

Give this determined reporter a smart look to match her ambition: a long skirt with a buttoned-up blouse paired with stockings and lace-up boots. Consider adding a tie, vest, or jacket to complete her professional wardrobe (or to give the appearance of a different outfit – she should have four in total).

## Darcy & Bill

These two are children of wealthy parents, so dress them in smart suits, replete with vests and ties. If you cast Darcy as female, costume her similarly to Katherine – these are two young women who know their stuff and intend to be taken seriously.

### PULITZER & HIS STAFF

## Joseph Pulitzer

This wealthy newspaper titan should be dressed sharply in an all-black suit with perhaps an ascot and a gold pocket watch or cufflinks to denote his higher class.



*Spot & Brooklyn Newsies*  
Archbishop Stepinac High School; White Plains, NY



*Katherine & Jack*  
Floyd Central High School; Floys Knobs, IN



*Bunsen, Hannah, Seitz, and Pulitzer*  
Archbishop Stepinac High School; White Plains, NY

### Hannah, Seitz, and Bunsen

Like their employer, these *World* staffers should be dressed in sober blacks and grays – sharp and business-like – in stark contrast to the simple, casually costumed newsies. If Bunsen and Seitz are cast as female, they can be dressed similarly to Hannah in a smart vest and buttoned blouse and skirt.

### Nunzio

Pulitzer's Italian barber should match the sophistication of his client in a sharp suit and bow tie, with perhaps some added color for flair.

### Guard

The *World's* guard can be uniformed similarly to the policemen, in a buttoned-up shirt and necktie with slacks and a long military-style coat. Top it off with a custodian helmet.

## NEWSPAPER DISTRIBUTORS & HEAVIES

### Wiesel

Consider how you can set this newspaper distributor apart from Jack and the kids. Costume him in slacks paired with a colored shirt and vest, topped off with a bowler hat. Have fun with this one – either a patterned tie or plaid pants can help to distinguish “Weasel” as part of another generation.

### Oscar & Morris Delancey

Like Wiesel, the intimidating Delanceys should have a more professional look. Roll up their shirtsleeves and give each of the brothers some suspenders and perhaps a tie, and finish their older look with bowler hats.

### Goons

Dress these heavies similarly to the Delanceys.

## MEDDA & THEATER EMPLOYEES

### Medda Larkin

Costume this vaudeville star in a brightly colored, off-the-shoulder, floor-length show dress. To give her some sparkle and flair, consider adding some strings of pearls, a boa, or a feathered headpiece for her performance. When backstage, cover her in a robe so that her full costume is not revealed until she hits the stage. For the final scene, dress this local celebrity in a smart skirt and matching jacket – add a fashionable hat to top off the look!



*Nunzio gives Pulitzer a trim.  
Floyd Central High School; Floyds Knobs, IN*



*Wiesel distributes papes to the newsies.  
Staples High School; Westport, CT*



*Medda  
Archbishop Stepinac High School; White Plains, NY*

## Bowery Beauties

Start with a traditional showgirl corseted top paired with a skirt or train. These burlesque stars can don tights with lace-up boots or character shoes, and for some added flair, complete the look with a feathered headpiece.

## Stage Manager

For this practical role, dress your stage manager in a collared shirt, vest, and either pants or a skirt, depending on your casting.

## OTHER ROLES

### Nuns

Costume each of your sisters in a long black dress (a graduation gown works great!) with a rope tied around her waist as a belt. To make the habits, cut strips of poster board to fit around each of their heads; cut a piece of black fabric into a large square so that the veil is the length you desire; and hot glue the fabric to the poster board ring to complete the veil. For added effect, accessorize with a crucifix or rosary beads.

### Woman

She has just one quick scene, so don't feel you have to construct an entirely new costume. Consider throwing a long coat onto one of your Bowery Beauties who, already dressed in her showgirl costume, can purchase a paper on her way to work!

### Mr. Jacobi

Dress this weary deli owner in a collared shirt and tie with pants and an apron. If female, dress Jacobi in a skirt and apron instead.

### Snyder

For an intimidating look, dress the warden in a black suit or long coat and hat. If female, switch out the pants for a long black skirt.

### Policemen

See "Guard" under Pulitzer & the *World* Staff for ideas on how to costume these characters.

### Mayor

Dress this New York City bureaucrat in a polished suit and hat.

### Governor Teddy Roosevelt

Costume the Governor in a dark suit and vest, and top off the ensemble with a wide-brimmed hat. To create the fully iconic look, give him a pair of spectacles, a cane, and a walrus mustache.



*The Bowery Beauties prep for performance.  
Floyd Central High School; Floyd's Knobs, IN*



*Nuns offer breakfast to the newsies.  
St. Joseph's Preparatory School; Philadelphia, PA*



*Medda & Governor Teddy Roosevelt  
St. Joseph's Preparatory School; Philadelphia, PA*

## LIGHTING

*Newsies* tracks the historic and passionate progress of a kids' strike through the streets and various interiors of New York City in 1899. Due to its many locations and rapid transitions, lighting will be a tremendous help in establishing scene changes and passage of time. Treating the transitions between scenes as parts of your storytelling is key to these fluid transformations, and intelligent lighting can assist with that, creating texture and color that are specific to each location.

For the large dance numbers, consider using specials – both to complement the choreography and to help guide the audience's focus amidst all the dancing – and low side light to give definition to your dancers' movement. While the many day scenes in Newsie Square may largely be bright with a general wash, think about how to distinguish the interior locations, specifically Pulitzer's office. While these scenes also take place during the day, consider how lighting can help to establish a more foreboding atmosphere, and contrast this with the warmer, earthier feel of Jacobi's Deli and the backstage area of Medda's Theater. To characterize scenes that take place at night, think about lower-intensity blues and whites so that the time of day is clear to your audience. However you choose to design these locations, lighting can be a great tool to help your audience follow the story and keep the show moving.

### From the Director...

There is only one scripted blackout (after "Watch What Happens"); we went out of our way to make *Newsies* as cinematic as possible so that it never stops moving.

Jeff Calhoun

director, original Broadway production



*Jack and Crutchie enjoy the quiet of an early morning in New York.  
Floyd Central High School; Floyds Knobs, IN*

## SOUND

While strong lighting choices will create distinctions between your interior and exterior locations and help with the fluidity of transitions, your sound design will help fill in the details of those locations. Work with your designer to create moments that can support the atmosphere of New York City while not competing with the storytelling. Use sound to enhance scene transitions and to punctuate key dramatic moments such as: the church bell that ends Jack and Crutchie's early-morning reverie, a door closing heavily when the boys are thrown out of the *World* building, multiple phones ringing in Pulitzer's office, and the sound of a press printing during "Once and for All." To maintain clarity of storytelling, settle on just a few key moments for effects, and keep in mind that some can be created by your actors: Wiesel can ring a hand bell when newspapers are ready to be distributed, and, if wearing a microphone, Katherine's typing on a working typewriter will be amplified to some degree.

Decide early on if you will use body microphones for your production. Take into account the acoustics of your space, the vocal projection of your actors, and the design of your costumes. Many of your newsies will be wearing hats, which may affect placement of mics, and your ensemble or key dancers will need to be able to move freely with very secure and well-placed body mics. It is important that audience members are able to properly hear and understand the song lyrics, particularly during the large dance numbers where diction and supportive breath will be a challenge. If you choose to outfit your actors with body mics, do some research before renting. Ensure the rental package you choose can fit into your budget while giving you the quality you need. No one wants audible cracking and popping sounds to spoil the performances of the actors! Also, consider putting a monitor onstage – a standard feature of most sound rental packages – so actors can hear themselves.

Take care when choosing where the orchestra will be in relationship to the stage. Ask the orchestra members to join you for an early rehearsal with your actors to inform your decision. If you decide to use MTI's Performance Accompaniment Recording instead of musicians, use monitors or try putting the speakers at the back of the stage so the actors can hear the tracks clearly.



*Katherine types her article.  
George Washington High School; Cedar Rapids, IA*

# MUSIC DIRECTION

## OVERVIEW

In many ways, the 1992 film version of *Newsies* gave a generation its anthems. Alan Menken and Jack Feldman's rousing score encouraged many to stand up for what they believed in. That passion helped fuel the show to its 2012 production on Broadway and ultimately to two Tony® Awards, including one for Best Original Score.

As you begin rehearsals, you may find that your performers are quite familiar with the material. This can be a challenge as actors may be required to sing harmonies or lyrics that are slightly different than they remember. Encourage their enthusiasm, but help them delve deeper into what's on the page. Spend time talking through the lyrics and how they propel the story of the strike. How do the newsies change between "Carrying the Banner" and "Once and for All"? Does that change the intensity of intention and vocal quality? And are they achieving that intensity without strain or vocal damage? As there are so many strong, anthem-like numbers, these early conversations about the differences between them will help give your audience a much richer performance.

Performing *Newsies* is like running a marathon: an incredibly gratifying experience, but one that will require your performers to be physically up to the task. The secret to both is pacing. The newsies are often asked to sing very high notes for long stretches of time, often directly after a dance break. If you have a large cast, you may want to consider breaking up some of the songs so that every newsie does not have to sing every moment of each song. You can offer more opportunities for your ensemble by casting featured singers separate from featured dancers. In the Broadway and national touring productions, other actors sang from offstage. Whatever you choose to do for your production, put the story and the health of your actors' voices at the forefront. All of the rest will fall into place.

Depending on your cast, you may have the opportunity to add female or treble voices to your ensemble. There were certainly female newsies who participated in the strike of 1899 (for more information, see p. 11 of this handbook), and this can be a great way to bring vibrancy and historical accuracy to your stage. Allow these actors to play girls onstage and sing in their own register. If a note ever gets too low, sing it up the octave. Play around with the assignments to see if you can get a mix of changed and treble voices on each harmony. This score is for everyone to sing and enjoy and can be modified to suit the needs of your particular production.

## VOCAL WARM-UPS

In order to stay healthy while singing this material, it is vital that performers incorporate both a vocal and physical warm-up into their routine. Use passages from the score or simple scale exercises. Try singing certain sections while doing jumping jacks to improve breath support. While in rehearsal, encourage students to "mark" or sing at half-voice when they are learning notes and rhythms. This will help them preserve those high notes for when they're needed most and alleviate vocal strain.

## SINGING WITH A TRACK

If using the Performance Accompaniment Recording, as many licensees do, try to approach the music as if the singer is leading the orchestra rather than following a recording. There are several helpful cues in the orchestration pointing to where a singer should enter. MTI offers a Reference Recording that can be utilized with your cast to get a sense of tempo and tone. Once the pitches and rhythms have been taught, move toward using the accompaniment tracks so your cast can work on creating their own approach to the characters. Lastly, allow for time during tech rehearsals to figure out an acceptable balance so audiences can hear both the track and live performers, and the singers are always able to determine what their next notes should be.

# PERFORMING WITH AN ORCHESTRA

The standard orchestration for *Newsies* requires 11 players, plus conductor, as follows:

Bass	Keyboard 1	Reed
Cello	Keyboard 2	Trombone
Drums	Percussion	Trumpet
Guitar		Violin

Just like the vocal music, the orchestral parts can be very demanding, particularly for the drummer and percussionist. If you are working with student performers, you may need to make slight modifications to the more intricate passages. The drummer provides the heartbeat and the backbone of the score, so consider playing a groove in tempo to avoid a mishap in the middle of a flourish.

Once you have your orchestra in place, make sure you've set aside time during tech rehearsals to check that everyone can hear one another and see the conductor. Those first rehearsals may feel exhausting, but they are necessary to make it all fit together.

## NOTES ON THE SCORE

Now on to the specifics of the *Newsies* score. The notes below are broken down by song and then measure numbers.

### #2 – Santa Fe (Prologue)

*Newsies* is unusual in that it does not begin with a big, rousing opening number. This gives your actors playing Jack and Crutchie an extra responsibility to draw the audience into the world of New York in 1899. Spend a little time talking through the meaning of the lyrics and what life would have been like for these characters (see the Dramaturgy chapter of this handbook for more information). The rest of the story depends on the audience understanding (and empathizing with) Jack's fascination with Santa Fe, so diction will be key.

- m. 4 – The underscored passages throughout the show have been crafted to time out with the dialogue. If you are performing with a live orchestra, resist the urge to place too many ritards or conduct out of time when not indicated in the score. If your performers are consistently behind the orchestra, work with your director to look for ways you can adjust the pacing of the dialogue – the entire scene will benefit from the extra lift.
- m. 99 – If Crutchie is being played by a female performer, feel free to adjust the octaves as needed.
- m. 99-103 – Just as described in the score, the vocal arrangement is intended for Jack to sing the top note beginning in m. 99, and then switch to the bottom note in m. 103.
- m. 120 – This is a great acting moment for Jack. Work with your performer to make sure his vocal quality reflects the added importance of this relationship.

### #3 – Carrying the Banner

Once the newsies step onstage, they will bring an explosion of energy. It's okay if this song sounds a little sloppy. Conveying the world of the musical is more important than staying sacrosanct to the page.

- m. 1 – The solo assignments listed in the score reflect the way the show was cast on Broadway. It's fine to change these around if necessary for your production, as long as they don't confuse the storytelling.

## MUSIC DIRECTION

- m. 140 – These sections require very good diction. Pay close attention to the syncopation, particularly in the top staff. Also, keep your performers at a steady *mezzo forte* volume. If this section is too loud, they'll have nowhere to go later.
- m. 149 – Gentle reminder that the lyric is, in fact, “a earthquake.”
- m. 213 – Just as your performers are starting to show the first signs of fatigue, they have a long string of high notes. It's okay for some of them to sing down the octave, or to invite other performers (such as Davey or even Katherine) to sing from offstage. Either way, everyone will need tons of breath support.

### From the Lyricist...

I like “a earthquake” because it sounds wrong in the right way: It's unexpected without sacrificing clarity, and it tells us something about the kids' social class.

Jack Feldman  
lyricist

### #3A – Carrying the Banner (Tag)

- m. 4 – The notes are the same as they were at the end of the last song, but there is a surprising key change happening just before they begin. Run this section a few times to make sure everyone is comfortable with their first note.

### #6 – That's Rich

Everything about this number is a performance, so lean into the theatricality of it. Medda should own it; if she wants to backphrase a little, or add a riff at the end, great. She should have the audience hanging on every note.

### #6A – I Never Planned on You / Don't Come a-Knocking

- m. 92 – If you have several Bowery Beauties singing this section, check the balance between the two parts. Jack's lyrics are the more important ones, while the Bowery Beauties fill in the background. Even with just a few singers, they should never get louder than *mezzo forte*.

### #7 – The World Will Know

Spend some time thinking about how the atmosphere changes with this song. The newsies are still a bit disorganized, but this should feel fundamentally different than the fun of “Carrying the Banner.”

- m. 1 – If you are performing with a live orchestra, make sure your violinist is staying in tempo with the conductor. This part is extremely challenging to sustain and will require a lot of skill and practice.
- m. 63 – It's okay for some of your actors to sing this down the octave.
- m. 80 – This moment should feel like a seismic shift. It's the first time the newsies show signs of becoming a cohesive unit. If possible, try not to cut these harmonies, and work to create a perfectly centered sound. It should almost sound like choral singing.
- m. 189 – As angry as Jack needs to sound, make sure he is not straining to shout these lyrics. He has a whole lot of singing still to do!
- m. 214 – This last chorus is a half-step higher than previous iterations. Beyond pitch and dynamics, find ways to differentiate the intention so the audience knows you're nearing the end of the number. Also, check in with your singers to make sure no one is shouting or causing vocal strain. If the chord is out of range, adjust as needed to keep everyone healthy.

### #9 – Watch What Happens

This number will be incredibly gratifying to sing, but also a formidable challenge even for professional singers. Before you sing a single note, talk through the lyrics like a monologue and map out breaths. These breaths will be crucial to not only delineate the changing story beats, but also to keep your performer from keeling over. You can encourage your actor to speak-sing various sections as Katherine works through her stream of consciousness.

- m. 18, 86 – If you are performing with the Performance Accompaniment Recording, there are subtle clues in the orchestration to help your performer get out of the vamps. Listen through several times to make sure your actor has internalized the entrances. Also, be careful not to rush as it will be difficult to get back in sync before the chorus.
- m. 70 – These accidentals are likely different than what your performer expects them to be. Halfway through the rehearsal process, come back to the page and make sure they're still intact.

## #10 – Seize the Day

- m. 8 – Davey is convincing himself as much as the rest of the newsies. Work with your performer to convey his hesitation, while staying true to the music on the page.
- m. 17 – If you are performing with a live orchestra, it is the reed player's turn to pull off a difficult and repetitive passage. Make sure this stays in tune and in tempo.
- m. 40 – Trust the vocal assignments in the score. While you can substitute different characters for the ones listed, it should feel as if they are joining the cause one at a time.
- m. 87 – The moment the first scab joins, it's like the flip of a switch. A strike that looked impossible on paper might just work. Davey (and the newsies that echo him) should be charged with a new sense of determination. They are becoming a formidable army.
- m. 147 – Make the most of this *sforzando*. It may help to add a physical gesture to keep everyone together.
- m. 159 – If the dance breaks are longer than your production can adequately perform, an alternate version has been provided on the Performance Accompaniment Recording. This version makes the following cuts: m. 163-170, m. 187-198, m. 216-233, and m. 271-306. This is the same cut that was used for the Original Broadway Cast Recording.
- m. 327 – This is another great opportunity to include "singer newsies" or offstage singers to support the ones who have been dancing their hearts out for the past several minutes.
- m. 345 – Encourage strong breath support and rely on all of the exercises and warm-ups you've been giving the cast. They're so close to the finish!

## #12 – Santa Fe

If at all possible, work with your director and choreographer to limit the amount of running Jack does at the end of the fight. You do not want him winded at the beginning of his big solo. In the Broadway and national touring productions, Jack got out of sight of the audience for a quick moment and took a drink of water before he came back onstage. If you are performing with a live orchestra, you can play through the vamp a few more times to make sure your actor is in place physically and mentally to start the song. Just make sure it does not affect the storytelling of the moment.

- m. 1 – If this key is too high for your actor, sheet music for a lower version is available. Contact your MTI representative for more information.
- m. 17 – This moment has a different feel than the previous section. Jack should sound like a scared little kid. Throughout the songs, you can rely on the lyrics to tell the story simply and earnestly.

## #13 – King of New York

- m. 1 – If you are performing with a live orchestra, spend a little rehearsal time on finding the right groove. Rely on MTI's Reference Recording or the Original Broadway Cast Recording for reference.
- m. 5 – Other than Race's sections, these solos can be reassigned as needed for your production; each can be sung up or down the octave.
- m. 53 – Try dropping all the way down to a *piano* dynamic so you have somewhere to build to.

## MUSIC DIRECTION

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- m. 61 – As with “Seize the Day,” a shorter version of the dance break is available as an alternate track on the Performance Accompaniment Recording. It cuts the following: m. 91-116, m. 135-136, and m. 155-158. This is the cut that was used for the Original Broadway Cast Recording.
- m. 175 – Cue those “singer newsies” and offstage singers if your core group is winded from dancing.
- m. 195 – Feel free to simplify these harmonies and instruct everyone to sing the melody if need be.

### #14 – Letter from The Refuge

The majority of the song can feel almost like recitative; deliver the lyrics simply. If you have a female performer playing Crutchie, sections can be sung up the octave.

- m. 21 – Map out the song so your actor knows when Crutchie is writing versus thinking. The two parts of the song should have a different vocal quality and it will be really effective if your performer can switch back and forth between the two.

### #15 – Watch What Happens (Reprise)

- m. 27 – This high A is a stretch for Davey. Try not to switch into falsetto if possible, but use exercises and visualization to ensure this note is always in tune and not strained.
- m. 37 – Work with your performers to achieve a good blend – they are now a unit!

### #17 – Brooklyn’s Here

When the Brooklyn newsies arrive on the scene, they should feel like very different characters (even if they are being played by the same actors). This group is tough as nails and there should be a gruffness to their voices.

- m. 37 – If Spot Conlon is being played by a female performer, feel free to adjust the octave.

### #19 – Seize the Day (Reprise)

This reprise should have twice the intensity and a fraction of the volume as the original song. If your actors are having difficulty landing their first pitch, find a way for them to hear the very end of the previous song (“Something to Believe In”). Their starting note is the same as Katherine’s last note and the last chord in the orchestra.

### #20 – Once and for All

The mood and intensity of this song is very different from those that have come before. The fight has become personal, desperate, and necessary for not only the newsies, but every other working child in the city. It should feel like the newsies have grown up a little.

- m. 17 – Rehearse the trio until it is completely solid. Their blend should match the unbreakable bond that has formed between these three characters.
- m. 31 – As stated in the score, this should be sung in intense and hushed tones. Use more consonants than vowels and keep everything *mezzo forte* or quieter.
- m. 141 – The entire show has been leading up to this moment. Build the dissonance beginning in m. 129 with small *crescendos* on each phrase. Keep the tension building through m. 139-140 until it explodes into the bridge. If possible, work with your director to simplify staging so that your singers can produce the best sound possible.

### #20B – Seize the Day (Reprise 2)

Place a pitch pipe backstage so your actors will be able to get their first note.

# REHEARSAL EXERCISES

**A**s director, your job is not only to helm the vision of the show, but also to assist your actors in developing a bond as an ensemble, introduce them to the world of the play, and guide them to join you in the storytelling process. Below you will find a wide variety of exercises that will help you do just that. Each of the activities is designed to help your actors build their identity as an ensemble, understand the historical context for *Newsies*, and assist them in developing rich characters. Once you've done a full read-through, it is recommended that you begin your rehearsal process with these exercises before diving into the script as they will help you approach the themes of the play.

The activities in the **BUILDING ENSEMBLE** and **CONNECTING TO THE STORY** sections can be facilitated before the show is cast and rehearsals begin; those outlined in the **CREATING CHARACTER** and **TELLING THE STORY** are designed to be facilitated during the rehearsal process once the show is cast. By referencing the "use this to" notes, pick and choose from the suggestions below, selecting the activities that best suit your cast's needs.

## BUILDING ENSEMBLE

These exercises are designed to unify your cast and build a foundation on which you can work toward cohesive storytelling. Beginning your process with several of these activities will set the tone for your rehearsals and develop a strong ensemble. You can also use them as warm-ups once rehearsals have begun.

### PASS THE PAPES



**Use this to:** focus the cast and learn names.

Invite actors into a standing circle. Holding crumpled or rolled newspaper, make eye contact with an actor in the circle and underhand-toss the paper while saying that person's name. The receiver should then pass the paper to another actor, making eye contact and saying the person's name. Repeat until everyone has received the paper once (no repeats). Next, challenge the actors to repeat the activity in the same order. Repeat again, picking up the pace. Once your cast masters the pattern, consider the following extensions: repeat the pattern without names; repeat the pattern after everyone finds a new place in the circle; add a second paper that repeats the same pattern after the first has started (it's helpful if the second paper looks different from the first); and add a second paper that repeats the same pattern but instead of saying the person's name, they should say their character name.

### TALLEST BUILDING IN NEW YORK



**Use this to:** encourage creative thinking and teamwork amongst your cast.

Divide your cast into small groups. If you've already cast the show, consider grouping actors by role (Adults, Bowery Beauties, Manhattan Newsies, Brooklyn Newsies, etc.). Provide each group with a stack of newspaper and some tape. Instruct the members of each group to work together to create the tallest standing structure in two minutes. After two minutes, stop the groups and assess who has the "tallest building in New York." Consider repeating the activity in different groups to allow actors the opportunity to implement knowledge gained from the first round and to work with others in the cast.

## REHEARSAL EXERCISES

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### YOU HEARD IT RIGHT HERE!



**Use this to:** develop ensemble and teamwork amongst your cast.

Divide your cast into small groups. If you've already cast the show, consider grouping actors by role (Adults, Bowery Beauties, Manhattan Newsies, Brooklyn Newsies, etc.). Provide each group with a headline you might have heard in 1899 (e.g., "Halligan's Vast Fortune" or "Burglars in West Virginia"). Allow them one minute to create a tableau (or frozen picture) to represent the photo that might accompany the headline. As groups share, invite the cast to guess the headline.

Next, provide groups with a boring headline (e.g., "Trolley Strike Drones On," "The Astoria Gas Bill," or "Long Session in the Senate"). As a group, they must determine how to "sell" the headline. Provide the groups time to practice and then invite them to perform how they would sell their paper to passersby. Discuss effective tactics after everyone has shared.

### THIS IS A...



**Use this to:** encourage creative thinking and develop teamwork amongst your cast.

Divide your actors into two groups and line them up in two lines facing each other. Give each group a newspaper. Structured like a relay race, charge the actors with thinking of as many possibilities of what the object could be other than a newspaper. Toss a coin to see which team will begin. The actor who begins will say, "This is a..." and fill in the blank while demonstrating what the object has become. For example, the actor might hold the newspaper and mime rowing, saying, "This is an oar." The other team would then take a turn and both actors would head to the back of the line. Once an idea has been shared it may not be repeated. The game continues until one team runs out of ideas.

### YES, AND... STORY



**Use this to:** build a foundation for collaboration.

Gather the actors in a circle. Establish the foundational rule of improvisation: Always says "yes" and build upon what you're given by your fellow actor(s). Invite your actors to tell a story as a group, with each contributing one sentence at a time. To begin, invite actors to pick an object and an emotion and kick off the story (e.g., "Once upon a time, there was a sad toaster.") or select a prompt tied to the show. When an actor finishes a sentence, the person to the right will pick up the story by saying "Yes, and..." before continuing. If necessary, remind your actors to build directly off of the previous sentence. The story should continue around the circle until it finishes.

### NEWSIE CODE



**Use this to:** develop ideas for a newsie code and develop agreements for rehearsal.

Remind the cast of the job of the newsies and what their challenges may be. As a group, discuss what the newsie code might have been based on what they know of the show (e.g., newsies never snitch, we respect boundaries, we don't take another newsie's block, etc.). Ask why a code of conduct is useful for a group of people working together. Next, create a list of agreements for your "cast code." Side coach as needed with questions such as: What do we need to do in order to have a successful rehearsal process? How can we create a safe environment for taking risks? Post the established agreements in a visible place during rehearsal.

# CREATING CHARACTER

The exercises in this section will help actors refine their physical, vocal, and imaginative skills to create defined characters.

## DEVELOPING CHARACTER VOICE



**Use this to:** explore vocal expression.

In a standing circle, invite actors to say a neutral line from the show (such as “Papes for the newsies!”) in their natural speaking voice one at time. Then, ask them to adjust their voice using a different pitch, volume, inflection, accent, etc. Next, invite each of your actors to say the line as their character from the show; actors playing multiple characters can choose whichever they prefer. When they say the line again, they should consider the elements of vocal expression for that character. Continue repeating the line around the circle, encouraging the actors to try something new each time.

**Apply to rehearsal:** by instructing actors to pick their favorite choice from the activity to start building from for their character in the play.

## DEVELOPING CHARACTER MOVEMENT



**Use this to:** explore actors’ ranges of motion in space and how environment and character affect movement.

Invite your actors to move freely about the space, encouraging them to walk as they typically would. After the group has settled, ask them to take note of how they move, how the floor feels beneath their feet, how their bodies move through space, what part or area of their bodies seems to lead them, etc. Then, encourage them to move through the space in a new way. First, coach them through leading with different body parts (head, heart, hips, knees, toes), and then return to neutral. Then, have them experiment with moving on different levels (high, medium, low) or at different speeds (fast, medium, slow), while you side coach them to notice how this feels and how it impacts their emotions or thoughts. You may also have them experiment moving through the space as if they are in different environments (snowstorm, crowded street, etc.) or as if they are swimming, flying, etc. Next, repeat the activity, this time inviting them to move through the space as their characters, experimenting with leading from different parts of the body, moving on various levels, etc.

**Apply to rehearsal:** by adding scenarios related to the story and directing them to settle into a movement that feels right for their character.

## GALLERY WALK



**Use this to:** develop characters using images from the turn of the 20th century.

Place the provided historical photographs (see pp. 85-97 of this handbook) around your rehearsal space. Depending on the size of your cast, you may consider providing multiple copies of each image. Give Post-it notes to the actors and invite them to walk about your “gallery,” noticing the photographs. Ask open-ended questions to encourage deep observation: What do the subjects’ clothes look like? What time period might this be? What do you notice in the background? What do their facial expressions tell you? Invite students to write the observations on the Post-it notes and stick them to the images.

Next, invite actors to select an image that reminds them most of their character. Ask them to stand by that image or, if you have enough copies, invite them to take the photo for further study. Provide actors with the “Character Creation” activity sheet (see p. 98 of this handbook) and instruct them to create a backstory for their character using the prompts and the image as inspiration.

**Apply to rehearsal:** by referring back to this activity during staging or encouraging actors to keep their chosen photo and character creation with their script to refer to and add to throughout the rehearsal process.

### CHARACTER REACTIONS



**Use this to:** further develop character by imagining how they might respond to various scenarios.

Building off the ideas generated in the Gallery Walk and Developing Character Movement activities, invite actors to silently walk about the space as their characters. Once a quiet and steady pace has been established, provide actors with scenarios to respond to (e.g., your favorite newsie was put in The Refuge, it's a slow news day, you get to meet Teddy Roosevelt, your picture is in the paper). When you share a prompt, actors should change their movement to reflect that prompt. Consider extending the activity by inviting actors to form a group with others who respond similarly to them and discuss why their characters would respond that way. Another possible extension would be to assign actors to groups and invite them to react together, thus establishing how varied characters would interact with one another.

**Apply to rehearsal:** by using prompts specific to a scene and encouraging actors to make different choices from their neighbors to create character responses and dynamic stage pictures.

### A DAY IN THE LIFE



**Use this to:** further develop characters by imagining their daily routines.

Guide your cast through imagining a day in the life of their characters. Begin by inviting everyone to walk around the space, settling into a natural gait. Then, invite everyone to find their own space in the room. Ask them to find a space on the floor or furniture as if their characters have not yet woken up for the day. Through prompts and questions, guide them through their day. Actors should physicalize their characters in response to the prompts (e.g., Where do you sleep? How do you wake up? What is the first thing you do? What do you eat? Where do you go? etc.). Guide your actors until they've reached the end of the day. Side coach the actors playing adult characters to provide additional context for how their days might be spent (e.g., going to work, buying a newspaper, etc.). For an optional extension, invite your actor playing Katherine to "interview" the characters.

**Apply to rehearsal:** by asking the newsies to refine their morning routine and apply it to the blocking at the top of the show.



*Newsies prepare for their day.  
Floyd Central High School; Floyds Knobs, IN*

## CONNECTING TO THE STORY

Facilitate these activities at the beginning of your rehearsal process to introduce your cast to the world of the play. Use them to bring dramaturgy to life in your rehearsals and to help actors understand and connect to the historical context of the show.

### BOROUGH PRIDE



**Use this to:** research New York City and its boroughs in 1899.

Divide your newsies by the borough that their characters are from in the rally scene (Manhattan, Brooklyn, Richmond/Staten Island, Queens, or the Bronx). If you'd like to include all members of your cast, add the adult characters to the Manhattan group. Explain that on January 1, 1898, the five boroughs were brought together, making New York City the second largest city in the world. In their groups, task your actors with researching their borough in 1899. You could assign this as a task to be completed outside of rehearsal or you could provide time and materials for their research. (Refer to the Dramaturgy and Resources chapters of this handbook for some inspiration.) Once the groups have completed their research, task them with creating a commercial for their borough that shares key facts about it at that time (population size, what it looked like, transportation options, etc.). Have each group share their commercials so all can benefit from each group's research.

### CHILD LABOR



**Use this to:** assist your newsies with understanding the context for the child labor movement.

Divide your cast into small groups. Provide each group with the "Child Labor" handout (see p. 99 of this handbook), and invite them to read the handout and highlight passages that stand out to them along the way. Next, each group should review what they highlighted and select one line from the handout to focus on (e.g., "It was expected that children as young as 10 years old work 12 or more hours per day for six days per week."). Using the line as inspiration, invite the groups to create a tableau (or frozen picture) that communicates that idea. Have the groups share their tableaus and facilitate a brief reflection: What did you read that surprised you? How would you feel working 60+ hours per week now? How about when you were 10?

### NEWSIE ON A BUDGET



**Use this to:** provide context for the high stakes of the newspaper price hike.

Divide your cast into small groups. Provide them with the "Newsie on a Budget" activity sheet (see p. 100 of this handbook) to help them determine how much newsies would make in a week and what they might spend their money on. Once groups have worked out their budget, share that there's been a price hike and they'll now have to pay 60 cents per hundred. Invite groups to discuss how this will impact their budget. Facilitate a brief share-out and reflection: What impact did the price hike have on your budget? What was important to you when you were 12? How good were/are you at budgeting your money to make it last?

### STRIKE!



**Use this to:** develop a connection to the newsies' urge to protest.

You will present a fictional scenario for your actors to rally against: Explain that the theater unexpectedly must close and the show will not continue. Provide them with five minutes to come up with a plan to protest the show closure. Next, facilitate an add-on scene in which actors can enact their plan. Begin with one actor establishing the idea. As actors feel moved to do so, they can join the scene. They can choose to be for or against the plan, and they can also choose to be the theater owner or other authority figure. Continue until all actors have joined, side coaching as necessary. Facilitate a brief reflection: Who took on leadership roles like Jack and Davey? What similarities/differences were there between our plan and the newsies'? What connections did you see to the characters in the play? How might you react in such a conflict? How did it feel for those who were taking on roles in opposition to the protesters?

# TELLING THE STORY

The following activities are designed to build upon the foundation of your actors' skills and character work to help them effectively tell the story through music, dance, and dialogue.

## DYNAMIC STORYTELLING



**Use this to:** explore energy dynamics to assist with effectively building energy throughout the show.

As a group, work together to determine the five main plot points of *Newsies* that build toward the newsies' success. Scribe the five points on chart paper so everyone can refer to them. Explain that in order to tell an engaging story, the energy has to build throughout the show. The job of the director and actors is to take the audience on a journey, ensuring they remain emotionally connected throughout. Divide the cast into groups and task them with creating a tableau for each of the five plot points. Explain that their task is to clearly communicate the energy level for each point without any two being at the same energy level. After allowing time for the groups to rehearse, invite them to share their tableaus. Consider extending the task to include transitions between each tableau that support the storytelling and energy shift, or facilitating "thought-tracking" in which an actor shares what their character is thinking when you tap them on the shoulder. Once all groups have shared, facilitate a brief discussion: How were the energy shifts communicated? What choices did you see that you really liked? Why are energy shifts important in storytelling?

**Apply to rehearsal:** by incorporating the energy levels into your staging or modifying the activity to focus on just one scene and its energy shifts.

## VOCALIZING ENERGY



**Use this to:** explore how energy can be communicated through vocal dynamics.

Using call and response, teach the cast a simple tongue twister such as "Unique New York, unique New York, you know you need unique New York," or create one using a line from the show such as "The *World* will know." Instruct the cast to repeat the phrase while you conduct dynamic shifts (tempo, volume, etc.). Experiment with low volume but high intensity. Discuss with the cast when they felt the energy was highest.

**Apply to rehearsal:** by immediately applying the ideas to a number that requires distinct energy shifts such as "Seize the Day."

## VOCALIZING EMOTIONS



**Use this to:** explore how emotions can be vocally communicated with varying dynamics.

Share a neutral line from the show, such as "Extra! Extra!" and instruct each actor to find a partner. Explain that their objective will be to communicate emotions at varying levels to their partner using only that line. Supply actors with an emotion (e.g., angry) and coach them to say their line with that emotion three times, each with a different energy level: low, medium, and high. Allow the partners to experiment with several emotions and then bring them back together for a brief reflection: What changed when the levels shifted? When might lower levels be appropriate for a scene or song? What about higher?

**Apply to rehearsal:** by encouraging actors to try different levels of energy (low, medium, and high) to find the right balance in a scene.

## NEWSIES DANCE PARTY



**Use this to:** explore actor-devised choreography and discover special skills.

Gather your cast in a standing circle. Turn on music that is easy to dance to (either from your personal collection or accompaniment from the show). Invite the cast to dance freely. Once the group has warmed up, encourage actors to enter the center of the circle to share a dance move. It can be something simple or a special skill (such as turns, jumps, etc.). The rest of the cast should support the actor in the circle by imitating the dance move in a way that is achievable and safe for them (e.g., untrained dancers should not attempt *fouetté* turns but could make the leg motions with their arms). Allow many or all actors to have a chance in the center. Consider extending the activity by dividing the cast into groups. Each cast member should share their favorite move with their group (either one they created or one they saw). Next, assign each group an emotion such as pride, anger, defiance, etc. Each group should use the shared movements to choreograph a 16-count dance piece. Allow each group to share their pieces and then facilitate a brief reflection: What emotions did you see? Which movements clearly communicated the emotions? How can dance communicate emotion?

**Apply to rehearsal:** by incorporating the devised movements into your choreography or using this technique with a specific song and emotion from the show.

## DANCING TRANSITIONS



**Use this to:** explore how scene transitions can be enhanced with dance.

Divide the cast into small groups. Provide each group with a “dance obstacle course” using items that can be safely moved like chairs or rehearsal blocks. You could give each group the same obstacle or provide different scenarios for each group. As a group, it is their task to move the necessary furniture theatrically, using dance. Explain they will have just four counts of eight to accomplish their task. Consider providing actual transition music from the show for inspiration. Allow each group time to rehearse and then perform their pieces. Facilitate a brief reflection: What choices did you see that were most interesting to watch? Why might a theatrical transition be useful? How can the music influence the choices?

**Apply to rehearsal:** by selecting a specific transition and allowing groups to come up with creative ideas that you can pull from.

## FOCUS



**Use this to:** ensure characters receive focus when speaking/singing.

Assign each actor a number and invite actors into the playing space, which is now the streets of New York City. When you call an actor's number, that actor must dramatically “faint” as you count backward from 10. Ask the actors to dramatize their faint without actually falling backward (e.g., they should bend their knees and slowly make their way to the ground). The ensemble must rush to the actor's rescue and prevent the actor from reaching the ground by the time you reach “one.” Once you do, they should all return to walking about the space. Continue until everyone's number has been called. Be sure to review standard safety parameters with this type of theatrical convention and ensure your cast can responsibly participate in the activity. Next, ask everyone to participate in character and to determine what their character might be doing (selling papers, buying papers, playing cards, policing the street, etc.). This time when a number is called, the assigned actor should say a line from the show. The rest of the ensemble should turn down their physical volume so that focus can remain on the actor speaking.

**Apply to rehearsal:** by applying the techniques to the scenes in which there are solos or dialogue by multiple newsies in a row, ensuring that the cast assists the audience in knowing where to focus.

# STAGING & CHOREOGRAPHY

**N**ewsies is a show built on a through-line of youthful energy and dynamic movement and music. Because of this, it is important that the blend of the staging and choreography is seamless and cohesive. Keep in mind, though, that your production should authentically communicate your own artistic vision rather than create one that looks similar to Disney's original production. Specific choreography, staging, and even design of the original Broadway production is all intellectual property that should not be replicated. However, the spirit of those now-iconic artistic choices should be present in every production of *Newsies*. Use the tips below to keep the story and talents of your performers at the forefront of your production, and to help you find the momentum and drive that embodies the spirit of this show.

## PRE-AUDITION TRAINING

*Newsies* features a lot of high-energy, athletic movement. If accessible to you and your potential performers – especially if you are helming a non-professional production – consider offering additional dance, flexibility, and/or strength training sessions in the months leading up to production. Not only will this help to prepare your performers physically for this dance-heavy show, it will also improve their confidence in tackling any vigorous choreography. This is also an opportunity to workshop potential choreography, and it will give you a better idea of the skills of your soon-to-be performers. Learning their strengths early can help you shape your choreography before you dive into rehearsals.

## CHOREOGRAPHY

Dance is the connective tissue that is present from the beginning to the end of this show, tying together each scene and song. In the Broadway production, the choreography and staging were carefully crafted to keep the focus on the strengths of each individual performer. If your ensemble includes performers at a variety of levels, consider breaking them into groups which can be featured in each musical number, but that don't necessarily require everyone to learn each number in its entirety. When approaching your own production, find out what special skills and talents lie within your cast and let that help shape your show. For example, if you do not have strong tap dancers, you do not need to choreograph "King of New York" as a tap number! Consider what the number needs to accomplish and how that can be achieved through different kinds of movement. Focusing on the joyous celebration and percussive nature of the song can help bring to light other ways you might choreograph this piece.

Additionally, consider the overall dramatic arc that *Newsies* follows. Although this is a high-energy story, not every number should be at full intensity. Challenge your cast to depict energy and purpose in different ways to authentically match each moment in the story. Because of the repetitive nature of the score (reprises, tags), it may be helpful to build a movement vocabulary specific to the newsies that you can refer to or reuse when musical motifs are repeated. To start, consider how the characteristics of these scrappy, tough, resourceful kids might translate into choreographed movement. Think grounded, strong, and athletic as you bring these characters to life through dance. Incorporate the world around them – their newspapers, hats, satchels, fellow newsies, the surrounding set pieces, etc. All of these elements can play a part in their movements.

### From the Choreographer...

My audition combination had a range of movement so that I could tell where a dancer's skill set fell. *Newsies* requires a lot of technique to be able to sing, dance, and act and still maintain your strength. It was very important to me that they didn't have to think about the dancing – only act it.

Christopher Gattelli

choreographer, original Broadway production

Pull from each performer's strengths, highlighting their abilities while also making sure you aren't forcing them do anything that is beyond their abilities – and most importantly, keep them safe.

Christopher Gattelli

## STAGING

The focus of *Newsies* should be on the characters and the story, as opposed to extensive, elaborate set changes or costumes. When approaching the staging of each scene, consider how the design and use of space can keep the focus on the actors and the story. Embrace a more conceptual use of space and consider how you might use your playing area to imaginatively construct different locations within the story. Ensure that the audience is able to focus on and track each plot point throughout.

## TRANSITIONS

At the root of *Newsies* are hard-working, passionate kids fighting to make a difference in the world. Carrying this concept throughout the show by having your actors become active and integral parts of each moment, especially throughout transitions, will help bring your production to the next level. Carefully stage each transition in the same way you would a full musical number. Use the provided transition music as a guide for the length of the transitions as well as the tone they should take. Some are intended to be a continuation of the prior scene, others establish a new mood and energy in the story, and some help move the action to another location. For the latter, consider using stagehands dressed as newsies to move any necessary set pieces, while your ensemble continues the storytelling and covers the change; or incorporate any set changes into your choreography, having your newsies bring set pieces on and offstage as part of the storytelling.

Alternatively, each tag and reprise can act as an opportunity to feature a different, smaller group of newsies, while the rest make their way offstage. Keep in mind that some of these choreographed transitions will require just as much rehearsal time as full dance numbers, so plan your rehearsal time accordingly. *Newsies* should flow smoothly from scene to scene, so avoid blackouts and keep the story – and energy! – moving.

## PRODUCTION TEAM

Due to the nature of this musical, the director and choreographer need to work symbiotically and share a common vision in order for this show to be a success. Because of this, productions of *Newsies* often use a single director-choreographer. If that is not the case with your production, be sure that these team members work together closely and clearly identify where their worlds overlap. Talk through each transition and identify who will be taking the lead on what moments. It's recommended to have all hands on deck for the larger numbers that incorporate many plot shifts within a song. Specifically, consider the fight sequence and how each member of the production team might help stage that complex moment of the show.

### From the Director...

Remember what Bob Fosse said: All you really need is a black box, shafts of light, and imagination. You could stage *Newsies* on an empty stage with just chairs, tables, and stacks of newspaper, and it would be just as fulfilling.

Jeff Calhoun

director, original Broadway production

Every step in our production was choreographer Chris Gattelli's, but we would sit at my kitchen table talking about the storytelling that needed to take place during each song and each musical transition – that was the real work, and most of that happened months before we even entered the rehearsal room.

Jeff Calhoun

## SCENES &amp; MUSICAL NUMBERS

## ACT ONE

**Prologue: Rooftop, Dawn**

While this scene introduces Jack and Crutchie's close relationship, it also establishes Crutchie's "bum leg." Encourage your actor to research possible causes for Crutchie's disability, such as polio, and identify how this might affect the newsie's movement. (Share "Performing Disability" on pp. 18-21 with your actor for more inspiration.) Empower your actor to develop a consistent movement vocabulary for Crutchie – including modifications for any dance moves – that can be maintained comfortably throughout the course of your production's run. Remember, Crutchie is a tough, proactive kid who won't let anything – including a bum leg! – hold him back.

- **#2 – Santa Fe (Prologue):** Keeping this number – which establishes Jack and Crutchie's close friendship – simple and honest will give the show somewhere to build from and allow the energy to grow into the next scene.
- **#2A – Prologue (Playoff):** This playoff should transition into the newsies' lodging house, where we see them waking to start their day. If you are using a mobile rooftop set piece, consider having newsies – or stagehands costumed as newsies – remove this piece as "Carrying the Banner" begins downstage of the change.

**Newsboys' Lodging House & Newsie Square**

- **#3 – Carrying the Banner:** This first ensemble number should embody the good-natured spirit of the newsies. To help indicate the location (Newsboys' Lodging House) and time of day (morning), they can pull on shirts or suspenders, yawn and stretch, shave, or comb their hair, etc. Play to the strengths of the performers and establish a strong movement vocabulary for them. Let this song build slowly over time, culminating at the final chorus. Though "Carrying the Banner" has a lively energy, it should not be as intense as later numbers that occur once the stakes – and the strike – have been raised.

For the chase that occurs in the middle of this number (see p. 12 of the libretto), check in with your actor playing Crutchie. Make sure that all actors – including those playing Crutchie and the Delanceys – are comfortable and safe with this throw to the ground and the ensuing chase. (See Stage Combat Tips on p. 59.)

- **#3A – Carrying the Banner (Tag):** This transition number should be a fully choreographed scene change. Use this as an opportunity to establish the newsies' personalities as they eagerly head out to the streets at the top of the day, ready to sell papers. The final note should land them offstage as Pulitzer's office – and the "adults" – are established onstage.

Newsies were kids who wanted to be taken seriously, have their own voice, and have integrity – try to pull out these same qualities in their movements.

Christopher Gattelli



*Newsies in "Carrying the Banner"*  
George Washington High School; Cedar Rapids, IA

## Scene 2: Pulitzer's Office, Afternoon

- **#4 – The Bottom Line:** This number reveals what motivates Pulitzer. His smart but tough business strategies may hurt the poor (the newsies), but they help the rich and powerful like him become even more rich and powerful. (For more information on Joseph Pulitzer, refer to p. 15 of this handbook.) His is the type of personality that sucks all of the air out of the room, so don't be afraid to highlight his (at times comical) arrogance and overbearing nature. Hannah, Bunsen, and Seitz know their job is to act as a good audience to their boss – even if they don't necessarily agree with what he's saying.
- **#4A – Carrying the Banner (Reprise):** Choreograph this transition back to the streets for the next scene as if it is another continuation of the first appearance of "Carrying the Banner;" base the choreography around the movement vocabulary established in that number. The playful energy of the newsies in the scene change should offer a stark contrast to the somber adults in the previous scene. By blocking featured dancers downstage while the scene is moved upstage, you can pick up the momentum once again. Also, consider how your dancers might interact with the set – jumping off chairs, or even dancing on Pulitzer's desk. To develop some transition ideas with your cast, see the "Dancing Transitions" rehearsal exercise on p. 51 of this handbook.



*Newsies dance through the transition from office to street.  
Floyd Central High School; Floyd's Knobs, IN*

## Scene 3: A Street Corner

- **#5 – Chase:** This chase should transition into Medda's Theater. Consider using all of your playing space – including any levels offered by your set and perhaps even the house – for this sequence, carefully timing it with the music. Rehearse the chase slowly at first and then pick up the speed, ensuring that everyone remains safe. If an intricate chase sequence is not possible due to space or set restrictions, simply have Jack, Davey, and Les run offstage with Snyder and the policeman close on their heels.

## Scene 4: Medda's Theater

- **#6 – That's Rich:** The focus of this number should be on Medda and how confidently she owns the stage. Inspired by the famous African-American vaudeville performer Aida Overton Walker (see p. 16 of this handbook for more information), Medda is a self-made star and owner of her own theater – an enormous accomplishment for any woman at the time. Be sure she takes up space – "You're with Medda now!" – making large, sweeping gestures to give the impression that her theater is vast. She should also address the audience (both onstage and off!) with an easy and charming familiarity.

## STAGING & CHOREOGRAPHY

Your audience should also be able to see Davey, Les, and Jack enjoying the show; and, by the end of the number, Jack should become aware of Katherine's presence in the theater. To offer more opportunities for your female performers, consider incorporating the Bowery Beauties into this number's choreography. Alternatively, if you have an all-male ensemble, consider having some participate here in a fun twist on the usual female backup dancers. Think: *Chicago's* "Roxie."



*Medda performs "That's Rich" as Katherine looks on.  
St. Joseph's Preparatory School; Philadelphia, PA*

- **#6A – I Never Planned on You / Don't Come a-Knocking:** This number should focus on Jack as he becomes enamored with Katherine. Keep the Bowery Beauties' choreography simple and clean, so that it does not pull focus from the scene going on in the box. Using slow motion during the cut time section of this number can help achieve that goal; this "gesture-ography" performed in creative, shifting stage pictures can also give a nod to the unison movements of classic vaudeville chorus girl choreography. If your set does not allow for you to have Jack and Katherine on a higher level, consider blocking them off to one side of the stage, separate from other actors portraying audience members. Lighting can help draw focus to them, as can a scrim in front of the dimly lit dancers. If you're not using a projection for Jack's drawing, be sure Jack's body language and focus on Katherine makes it very clear that he's sketching her.
- **#6B – To the Distribution Window:** This switch back to Newsie Square is quick. Have the other audience members at Medda's Theater assist in this transition.



*Jack and Katherine flirt as the Bowery Beauties perform.  
Floyd Central High School; Floyd's Knobs, IN*

## Scene 5: Newsie Square, Next Morning

- **#7 – The World Will Know:** What drives this number is seeing the kids – in all their raw, rebellious energy – unite. Focus on this coming together of energy and ideals – rather than on complex choreography – and let the movement build to match the intense determination that finally leads them to push back against Pulitzer. Be sure that the passion and anger are evident in the strength of the choreography, incorporating defiant gestures such as punching, stomping, or kicking. Choose a focal point in the space to act as Pulitzer’s office, and have your dancers direct their anger up toward that point. Your performers moving in unison will reinforce the idea that the newsies have united, and their confidence should build as they approach the *World’s* gate. Once they’ve been ejected from Pulitzer’s building, remove the gate and begin to set up Jacobi’s Deli; their final phrase should be sung here before immediately starting the next scene.



*“The World Will Know”  
St. Joseph’s Preparatory School; Philadelphia, PA*

## Scene 6: Jacobi’s Deli & Street, Afternoon

- **#8 – The World Will Know (Reprise):** This reprise is filled with determination as the newsies head out to the streets with renewed purpose. Consider bringing your performers downstage in order to cover the set change behind them.

## Scene 7: Katherine’s Office

- **#9 – Watch What Happens:** The music begins in the previous scene and quickly brings Katherine to her writing desk. Keep this transition quick and seamless so the focus can remain on her delivery of the song; the typewriter should be in place and she should be seated by no later than her declaration of “Let’s go.” Though the original production projected Katherine’s headlines and newspaper copy behind her, this is not necessary, as the success of this number lies with your actor. This is Katherine’s moment to shine as a bright young woman really coming into her own as a reporter, so let her own the stage – and watch what happens!
- **#9A – Watch What Happens (Playoff):** In the one scripted blackout, your stagehands can quickly move Katherine’s desk offstage in time for lights up on Newsie Square, as the newsies begin to assemble.

### Scene 8: Newsie Square, Next Morning

- **#10 – Seize the Day:** This number is a battle cry – a call to action – as the newsies shift from feeling defeated to empowered. Once they decide to strike, they should move in celebration and defiance, and there should be an evident increase in explosive energy, with each movement becoming more percussive, bigger, and bolder than before. Having small groups doing dance passes, then building to a larger group dance, can help drive the energy of this number. Find ways for the newsies to show their defiance by destroying the papers and taunting the Delanceys. When they overtake the Delanceys, the celebration intensifies, ending in a triumphant photo finish. This moment of victory is brief, but it's one that they – and the audience – should cherish.

Talk to your cast about how they feel about the show and let them express themselves within the movement. Let them put themselves and their personalities into the characters and choreography. It will help color the show in ways you can't imagine.

Christopher Gattelli



*"Seize the Day"*  
Staples High School; Westport, CT

- **#10A – Seize the Day (Tag):** Relishing their victory, the newsies are blindsided by the return of the Delanceys – this time with reinforcements.
- **#11 – The Fight:** Stage this fight scene strategically to ensure that the audience tracks each dramatic beat. First, the men and the newsies dive into battle, where neither emerges a winner and damage is done to both sides. Once the policemen enter, the newsies should assume they are there to help, before quickly realizing their mistake. As newsies begin to flee and Jack tries to do the same, ensure that he sees that Crutchie is overtaken by the Delanceys and handed over to Snyder. Unable to help, Jack should run for cover.

To ensure the safety of your performers, choreograph each moment precisely, timing it to the score. This sequence will need to be practiced quite a bit, so be sure to set aside plenty of rehearsal time. Start slowly, and pick up the pace as rehearsals commence and your cast becomes comfortable with their blocking and movement. (See Stage Combat Tips on p. 59.)

If you are working with a large ensemble, make sure that your newsies are outnumbered (or at least equal) to the number of goons and policemen. To achieve this, consider having some frightened newsies flee as soon as the Delanceys approach; others can swiftly exit when they realize the policemen are not there to help them. Fewer bodies onstage will also help to keep the dramatic action clear.

If you have chosen to cast Crutchie as a girl, carefully consider how to stage the moment when she is knocked down by Morris and beaten by Snyder. While, historically, poor young female newsies likely would have been treated in the same rough ways as their male counterparts, violence against women and girls on a contemporary stage will have very different connotations for your audience. You may find that simply pushing her down and handcuffing her is enough to signify her mistreatment by adults in authority. However you decide to stage this moment, work closely with all three actors to ensure that they each feel safe and comfortable at all times during this sequence, and be sure to repeat it at a fight call before every performance. (See Stage Combat Tips below for more information.)

## Scene 9: Rooftop

- **#12 – Santa Fe:** Jack's anger, desperation, and defeat in this final number is what closes out Act One. Make sure this song begins immediately after Snyder disappears offstage.

# Stage Combat Tips

In *Newsies*, the fight at the end of Act One, which includes Crutchie's violent capture, requires meticulous and well-timed choreography. While you can hire a professional fight choreographer to assist you, below are some tips on devising your own stage combat for your production that is both safe and specific.

- Stage combat is also referred to as fight choreography because it needs to be as specific in movement as a choreographed dance would be. Traffic patterns (or tracks) must be replicable in order to keep your cast safe.
- When blocking, walk through the movements in slow-motion first. While this can be an opportunity for actors to help devise the fight choreography, it is also the time to set very clear parameters using rehearsal props.
- When underscoring is involved, consider how you can choreograph the fight to align with the music, just like a dance number.
- Start small and add on to the action – i.e., begin with two people, slowly adding in any others. Start with key beats, layering in details once your actors become comfortable and confident.
- Both parties should be in control at all times, but the reactor, or receiver of an action, should be dictating the movement. The instigator of the action initiates the contact, but the reactor performs the follow through.
- The parameters of each rehearsal should be clarified before you begin (e.g., tempo – slow motion or real time – use of props, etc.). Always make sure everyone is on the same page.
- Schedule a fight call before every performance during which your actors can practice their specific fight choreography. Remind them that the adrenaline produced during live performance brings with it the possibility of mistakes, so it is important to work through these moments over and over directly before curtain.

## ACT TWO

**Scene 1: Jacobi's Deli, Next Morning**

- **#13 – King of New York:** Unaware of the gravity of Crutchie's situation and Jack's feeling of defeat, the newsies and Katherine celebrate their new-found fame. Find ways to tap into the percussive and rhythmic nature of this song using objects found in a café (cups, spoons, brooms, trays, etc.), tap dancing, or actors' bodies to create complementary rhythmic patterns in this dance break. If you only have a few very talented tap dancers, consider featuring them briefly as a group (or individually) in the number, while finding other opportunities to spotlight the unique skills of your other newsies.
- **#13A – King of New York (Tag):** The newsies carry the energy of the last number through this transition as they cover the scene change into The Refuge.



*Newsies play spoons on tap shoes in "King of New York."  
Floyd Central High School; Floyds Knobs, IN*

**Scene 2: The Refuge**

- **#14 – Letter from The Refuge:** Crutchie's solo showcases this young person's optimistic view of a world that is stacked against poor young kids and further reveals the close bond between Crutchie and Jack. Focus on projecting this sincerity through simple, quiet staging and lighting; this is the moment the audience really falls in love with Crutchie.

It's also a moment for the audience to glimpse into the horrible world of The Refuge. Whether you have actual beds or are simply blocking the action on the downstage floor, use other actors to show the cramped spaces and awful conditions.

If The Refuge is blocked downstage, any set changes that you require can begin at the end of this number – when Crutchie blows out the candle – allowing Jack and his painting to be in place for the top of the next scene.

- **#14A – Letter from The Refuge (Playoff):** This playoff continues the transition into Medda's Theater.

**Scene 3: Medda's Theater**

- **#14B – Jack's Painting:** Time this music with the dramatic reveal of Jack's painting of Newsie Square.
- **#15A – Back to Pulitzer's Office:** Have the newsies exit hopefully; Katherine can remain onstage as the set changes to Pulitzer's office and the adults enter.

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## Scene 4: Pulitzer's Office & Cellar, Afternoon

- **#16 – The Bottom Line (Reprise):** Your stagehands can bring the printing press on as Pulitzer begins this reprise. By the time he sings his final line, the Delanceys should be depositing Jack in the cellar.
- **#17 – Brooklyn's Here:** This entire song acts as a transition. Consider how you can shift the audience's focus to Spot and the Brooklyn newsies as the action transitions back to Medda's theater. How would the Brooklyn newsies cross the Brooklyn Bridge to arrive in the Bowery? This is a terrific opportunity to get creative with your staging!



*Brooklyn newsies race their bikes across the Brooklyn Bridge.  
St. Joseph's Preparatory School; Philadelphia, PA*

## Scene 5: Brooklyn Bridge & Medda's Theater, Evening

- **#17 – Brooklyn's Here (cont'd):** The end of this number should feel like a full and raucous rally as the other newsies join in.

## Scene 6: Rooftop, Night

- **#17A – To the Rooftop:** As Jack receives his payment and flees the theater, the newsies boo and become increasingly agitated. This momentum of anger and frustration should carry through this transition to Jack's rooftop.
- **#18 – Something to Believe In:** As the lights fade on Jack and Katherine, newsies should begin to cross the stage in the near darkness, conspiring to continue the strike.

## Scene 7: Pulitzer's Cellar

- **#19 – Seize the Day (Reprise):** Use this song to track the move to the cellar as Jack and Katherine gather the support they need and incite their plan.
- **#20 – Once and for All:** This number's goal is to show the paper's process from printing to distribution. Consider how you might position your cast throughout the theater, with each actor handing off a paper to the next and even passing pamphlets out to the audience. While most of your actors will portray newsies delivering the message, consider having some portray the other working kids in New York who are being encouraged to join the crusade. Though it doesn't feature much movement, this song should still build in energy, culminating in a powerful finish that shows a united front of not only newsies, but all child workers in New York.
- **#20A – Once and for All (Playoff):** As the newsies make their way offstage to the strike, the action transitions to Pulitzer's office.

### Scene 8: Pulitzer's Office, Next Morning

- **#20B – Seize the Day (Reprise 2):** In this song, the audience needs to not only see the discussion in the office, but they should also hear and perhaps even see the newsies in the square singing in protest. Block the newsies in a separate area of the stage or throughout the house – where they can still see the conductor – to achieve this effect.

### Scene 9: Newsie Square

- **#21 – Finale Ultimo (Part 1):** As the newsies assemble, they shift the set to the final scene in Newsie Square. With the entire cast onstage at once, consider ways to draw focus to the various speakers, whether through lighting or by using levels. It will also take some practice to time the underscoring correctly to the dialogue, so set aside enough rehearsal time to really work on this sequence.
- **#21A – Finale Ultimo (Part 2):** They did it! The kids' strike was successful! This final number should reflect the pure joy and celebration of the moment.
- **#22 – Bows:** Find a way to feature each individual performer as they take their bow.



*Jack and Katherine pose for the finale.  
Staples High School; Westport, CT*

# AUDIENCE & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

**P**roducing a musical is an excellent opportunity to deepen your connection with your community. Whether you're affiliated with a high school, college, community, or professional theater, presenting *Newsies* offers a myriad of rich opportunities for audience engagement, including the five methods below.

## TALKBACKS: FOR ALL AUDIENCES

Post-show talkbacks are an excellent platform for audiences to forge deeper connections to your production. They offer audience members an opportunity to connect with one another, the cast, and/or the creative team in a discussion about what the show means to them. The Talkbacks section offers tips for facilitating talkbacks following your performances.

## PRE- & POST-SHOW WORKSHOPS: FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

Attending the theater can be a transformative experience. When the theatergoing experience is extended to exploration of the show's themes before and after attending the production, the impact is even greater. The lesson plans in the Pre- and Post-Show Workshops section offer student audiences the opportunity to go deeper by exploring the themes of the show and how they connect to their lives. Arrange pre- and post-show workshops at your school or theater and facilitate with attending students. Alternatively, if you're performing the show at a high school, offer the lesson plans to your fellow teachers or facilitate with attending students. Feel free to modify the lessons to suit your needs.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS: FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Staging *Newsies* will provide your high school cast and crew with a valuable education in the art of theater-making. Additionally, this show provides rich opportunities for cross-curricular investigation and can be a springboard for learning beyond rehearsal. The Curriculum Connections section offers lesson plans that use arts integration techniques that allow students to explore varied subjects through an engaging and accessible forum. Share these lesson plans with English and social studies teachers, or use them to enrich your exploration of the play in rehearsals. Feel free to modify the lessons to suit your needs.

## PERFORMANCE GUIDE: FOR ALL AUDIENCES

*Newsies* is rich with history and relevant today. Providing your audiences with a tool to explore the show's themes and background allows them to engage deeply with the material on their own time. A sample Performance Guide for this show, which you are welcome to distribute to your audiences, can be downloaded for free from MTI: [www.mtishows.com/newsies](http://www.mtishows.com/newsies).

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: FOR ALL AUDIENCES

Engagement with the show doesn't have to begin and end with the performance. The Community Engagement section offers suggestions for connecting audiences and your community to the world of *Newsies* and to your theater.

## MATERIALS

Additional materials referenced in this chapter, such as activity sheets and historical photographs, can be found at the end of the Resources section (pp. 84-111) of this handbook.

# TALKBACKS

## FORMAT CONSIDERATIONS

The most traditional form of a talkback is a simple question and answer session with the cast and/or creative team, offered to specific groups attending the show or to the audience at large. This format of talkback is always an engaging and exciting opportunity for audiences to enjoy an insider look at your production. Some theaters also offer thematic talkbacks, sometimes with local experts or scholars, that are designed to unpack the play's themes or historical context with the audience. Tips and tools for both formats are provided below, along with specific discussion starter ideas.

## BEST PRACTICES

- The talkback facilitator should be well-versed in the production's history and dramaturgical information.
- At the end of the show, the facilitator should invite the group or audience to move to the front of the house so that the cast or talkback attendees can see and hear the participants.
- Engage the group in a discussion while you await the cast or creative team. Ask questions such as: What did you like about the show? What did you notice? What surprised you? This could also be a moment to share any relevant dramaturgical information.
- When the cast or other talkback attendees arrive, invite them to introduce themselves and the role they played in the production. Tailor the conversation to the talkback participants; if the guest is the director or designer of the show, prompt questions about vision and process.
- When facilitating questions from the audience, consider the following:
  - Use audience members' clothing to identify them when you call on them rather than making assumptions about gender, etc.
  - Repeat questions out loud and, if needed, direct the question to a specific cast member.
  - Catch any awkward questions to the cast by answering them generically or rephrasing the question.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

When facilitating a discussion that focuses on the themes of the show, ease into the discussion (see examples below) before posing more challenging questions. If the discussion becomes unproductive or unnecessarily charged, bring the discussion back to the world of the play and its inhabitants.

- Conduct a silent poll: Invite the audience to raise their hand if they think the themes of the show are relevant today. Continue by acknowledging what the consensus is and asking for specific examples.
- Ask a targeted question: Invite the audience to consider the ways in which they saw the central theme of "creating change" represented in the play. Ask them to discuss with a neighbor if and how they came to support the newsies' cause throughout the play.

Once the audience is warmed up and engaged, continue on with additional questions such as:

- What other times in history was change made when a group of people came together? What similarities are there to the 1899 newsies' strike?
- What was the role of negotiation in the show? Did everyone benefit from the outcome?
- What parallels can you draw between the characters' experiences and your own?
- What questions did the show raise for you?

# PRE-SHOW WORKSHOP

## THE LIFE OF A NEWSIE

### Use this lesson to:

prepare audiences to see *Newsies*; explore the history of the Newsboys Strike of 1899; and explore storytelling through movement and dance.

### Objectives: Participants will...

- learn historical information about the 1899 newsies' strike;
- explore what life was like as a newsie and what motivated the strike in the story of *Newsies*;
- work in groups to make artistic choices;
- make personal connections to the show's characters and themes.

### Materials:

- Historical Photographs (see pp. 85-97)
- "Newsies Historical Facts" handout (see p. 101)
- Copies of "Seize the Day Lyric Sheet" handout (see p. 102)

**Time:** 45 minutes

### Introduction (3 minutes):

*Newsies* is a musical adaptation of a live-action film which is based on a true story that took place in 1899. At that time, many states didn't require children to attend school, nor were there laws that kept them from working. Children worked a variety of jobs such as shoe shiners, factory workers, and news carriers; many had to work to support themselves or their families.

Today, we'll further examine the life of a newsie and analyze how music and movement are used to tell the story of the newsies' strike.

### Warm-Up (7 minutes): The History of the Newsboys Strike of 1899

1. Post the historical photographs and "Newsies Historical Facts" around the room. Depending on your space and the number of participants, consider printing two or three copies of each.
2. Invite the participants to move around the room and silently view the photographs and facts.
3. Ask the participants to join you in a standing circle and facilitate a brief discussion about their reactions to the images and facts using the following questions: What surprised you? What did you connect with? Did the facts and photographs tell the same story? What challenges might a newsie have faced daily?

### Hook (5 minutes): Set the Street Scene

1. Invite participants to imagine that they are newsies in 1899 and guide them using these prompts:
  - Invite participants to walk around the space as if they are trying to sell newspapers. As they walk, have them consider different tactics to make a sale: Do they work in pairs? Do they look for sympathy? Do they charm their customers?
  - Next, share that it just started raining! Not only are they getting wet, but so are their newspapers. Prompt them to walk as if they are seeking cover but still trying to sell papers.
  - Share that the sun is setting and it is time to head back home. As they prepare for bed, ask them to imagine where their character may sleep.

## AUDIENCE & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

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- Guide the newsies to select a place in the room and fall asleep. Ask them to consider their sleeping conditions: Are they hungry or full? What are they sleeping on? Are they comfortable or do they share their bed?
- Wake your participants from their slumber and let them know they overslept and now have to rush to pick up their papers before they are all gone!
- Establish where the newsstand is (preferably in the center of the room) and prompt them to gather in a group to receive their papers.
- Call out “freeze!” and announce that the price of newspapers has gone up overnight.
- Facilitate a brief discussion: How do you feel about this news? Would you consider striking for a fair wage?

### Main Activity (25 minutes): Moving the World

1. Share with participants that in the musical, the newsies decide to strike against the price hike, and they are now going to step into role as newsies who have agreed to strike.
2. Ask the participants to create a pose that represents how important this strike is to them. Remind them that the strike meant that the newsies were willing to starve and fight, and that their bodies and facial expressions should show that intention.
3. Call out the word “strike” several times, prompting participants to explore different poses each time. Ask the participants to select three of their favorite poses for later in the lesson.
4. Invite your participants into a circle and share that the song “Seize the Day” is sung to convince other newsies to join their strike.
5. Teach the lyrics to the provided section of “Seize the Day” using call and response and the “Seize the Day” handout.  
**Note:** You can choose to speak these lines OR teach the melody depending on your comfort level with singing.
6. Explain that the newsies use these words combined with movement to showcase solidarity throughout their strike.
7. Divide the participants into groups of four or five and instruct them to devise their own movement to inspire change. Share the following goals:
  - The staging should feature the entire group (they can consider levels, formations, etc.).
  - The plot and characters’ intentions should be clear.
  - The piece should end with each group chanting “strike” three times, utilizing their poses.
8. After allowing time for rehearsal, invite groups to share their final piece with the rest of the participants.

### Optional Extension

If your workshop is longer than 45 minutes, consider using these activities to lead into teaching your participants a specific section of music and/or dance from your production of *Newsies*.

### Reflection (5 minutes):

Facilitate a discussion using the following prompts:

- How did it feel to strike?
- Did movement help make the purpose and intention of the strike clearer? Why or why not?
- Do you think groups of people can make change in their community? Explain.

# POST-SHOW WORKSHOP

THERE'S CHANGE COMING ONCE AND FOR ALL

## Use this lesson to:

guide student audience members to reflect on their experience seeing *Newsies* and connect the show's characters and themes to their lives.

## Materials:

- None required

**Time:** 45 minutes

## Objectives: Participants will...

- reflect on their experience seeing the musical;
- work in groups to make artistic choices;
- make personal connections with the show's themes;
- come together to explore how they can contribute to change in their communities.

## Introduction (1 minute):

We all saw *Newsies* and observed the show's themes. Today we're going to reflect on our experience and draw connections between the show and our own lives.

## Warm-Up (9 minutes): Performance and Character Reflection

1. Invite participants to join you in a standing circle.
2. Facilitate a brief reflection on the show: What did you enjoy? What questions did it raise? What are the themes of the story?
3. Next, ask participants to recap the conflict that the newsies faced.
4. Share that each character in *Newsies* is unique and contributed to the success of the strike in different ways. Facilitate a brief discussion with your participants by naming a character and having them discuss how that character contributed to the strike: Jack Kelly, Katherine Plumber, Crutchie, Medda, Davey, Les, or Teddy Roosevelt.
5. Share with participants that all of these characters represent the idea that no matter who you are or where you come from, you can contribute to change individually and as a group.

## Hook (10 minutes): Owing Your Superpower

1. Prompt your participants to silently reflect on moments in their lives when they contributed to a change.
2. Once everyone has thought of an example, prompt participants to consider how they did so: Was it your idea? Did you write a letter of complaint or support? Did you donate time, space, or materials? Did you stand by a friend? Did you simply speak up when you saw something happen?
3. Ask participants to consider the various ways they have contributed to change and to imagine them as superpowers. For example, if you contributed to change by shifting your ideals to new ones, your superpower could be shapeshifting.
4. Now that they have defined their superpowers, prompt participants to select a superhero name. Consider providing examples such as: The Leader, Silent Supporter, Giver Girl, Motivation Motion.

## AUDIENCE & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

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5. Ask participants to create an official superhero pose. Allow them time to explore different options.
6. Invite one volunteer to step into the center of the circle and silently strike their pose. Ask four or five other volunteers to add on to the image by striking their poses in relation to the group.
7. Share with the participants that this frozen image is called a “tableau.” Ask the participants in the circle to reflect on the image and what powers they think are represented in the image.
8. Have each participant in the tableau share their superhero name when you tap their shoulder.
9. Once the powers in the image have been revealed, ask participants the following questions: Do you think these represented superpowers can work together to make change? What other superpowers may make this team even stronger?

### **Main Activity (20 minutes): Representing Change Together**

1. Divide participants into groups of five or six. Prompt them to share their superhero name and power with their group.
2. Ask participants to identify the character trait at the heart of each of their superpowers. Have participants select a character from the show (primary, secondary, or ensemble) that they believe has similar character traits to their own.
3. Once they have selected their characters, ask them to imagine that it is the end of the show and it was just announced that they have succeeded in lowering the price by half and that Pulitzer will buy back papers that aren’t sold. Prompt them to create Tableau A, a frozen image that communicates how their characters feel during the moment of celebration.
4. Next, have participants imagine that the newsies didn’t succeed; Pulitzer won’t budge on the price and if they don’t start working again soon, they may be facing serious consequences. Prompt them to create Tableau B, a frozen image that shares how they would feel if the strike did not succeed.
5. Share with the participants that it is now their task to brainstorm other strategies and actions they can take to further their goal. Encourage them to harness the superpowers and traits of their characters when developing their ideas and to think creatively! They can build upon the plan from the show or they can come up with a completely new plan.
6. After allowing some time to develop their ideas, share with the groups that they will create a transition to take them from Tableau B to Tableau A. This transition should be less than 30 seconds and clearly communicate their plan for success by incorporating words or lines, sound-scaping, or movement.
7. Have groups share their work with the rest of the participants.

### **Reflection (5 minutes): Dialogue**

Facilitate a discussion using the following prompts:

- What other strategies or actions did the newsies implement to achieve the goal of changing the price and having more ownership of their job stability?
- How can we use our superpowers to implement change in our communities today?

# CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

## CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

**English Language Arts:** Persuasive Writing

### Use this lesson to:

teach rhetoric and means of persuasion.

### Objectives: Participants will...

- identify and evaluate both sides of the Newsboys Strike of 1899;
- explore effective methods of persuasion;
- write a persuasive essay from a character's point of view.

### Materials:

- "Newsies' Strike Timeline" handout (see p. 103 of this handbook)

**Time:** 45 minutes

### Introduction (1 minute):

The Newsboys Strike of 1899 was a pivotal moment for child labor issues and, in some ways, labor relations in general. In *Newsies*, we see the competing desires and priorities of the newsies and the publishers come to head in a strike. We also see both groups trying to persuade others to agree with them and join their side. Today, we will look at the historical strike through multiple perspectives, step into role as a character, and write persuasively from that character's point of view.

### Warm-Up (10 minutes): Multiple Perspectives

1. Distribute the "Newsies' Strike Timeline" handout and read it aloud (including the timeline) as a class.
2. Ask students to summarize the 1899 newsies' strike to ensure comprehension.
3. Create two columns on the board; label one "Newsies" and the other "Publishers." Ask students to offer items, ideas, or principles that both sides of the strike were fighting for and record them in the appropriate columns.
4. Ask students to offer thoughts about what each side had to gain and lose from the strike; record those too.

### Hook (15 minutes): Methods of Persuasion

1. Ask students to stand up, and then split them into two groups. Each group should gather in a line on opposite sides of the room. Assign one group as the newsies and the other as the publishers.
2. Inform your students that they will try to persuade students from the other side to cross the room and join their group. When students have an idea for a persuasive point to make, they can step forward to make that point.
3. Continue this activity until multiple students from each side have had a chance to persuade the other group, encouraging students to use succinct arguments. Each student should only make one point. Then, have your students return to their desks.
4. Have your students quickly share persuasive methods they saw their peers use. Which tactics seemed the most persuasive? Why?
5. Use this brainstorm as a segue to introduce the three modes of persuasion set forth by Aristotle in *The Art of Rhetoric*.

**Note:** Encourage students to take notes here, as this information will be referenced later in the lesson.

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- **Ethos:** The appeal to the speaker's or writer's character or reputation. This method purports that your audience is more likely to side with you if you can establish credibility and authority. You should appear knowledgeable about your topic, include your related credentials and experiences that make you an authority on the matter, and build trust by trying to connect to your audience – even if they don't yet side with you.
- **Pathos:** The appeal to emotion. This method involves eliciting a desired emotion from your audience, as humans are easily swayed by their emotions. You can use metaphors, similes, personal stories, etc. to add emotion to your argument. You can also appeal to the audience's hopes and dreams.
- **Logos:** The appeal to reason. This method uses logic to enhance an argument. You can use facts and figures as data to support your argument and/or make inferences using deductive reasoning. The more logical your argument is, the more likely it is that it will persuade.

### Main Activity (15 minutes): Persuasive Essay

1. Instruct students to return to their characters from the warm-up (newsies or a publishers). Now they will write a short persuasive essay from their character's point of view, arguing their side of the issues at the heart of the strike.
2. First, have each student brainstorm at least one argument or piece of information for each mode of persuasion. Encourage students to use what they know of the strike from the handout and to supplement their argument with historically inspired fiction from their own imagination.
3. Next, have students gather the points they've brainstormed into cohesive persuasive essays. They can be as short as two paragraphs, but must include at least one use of each of Aristotle's three modes of persuasion.

### Optional Extension

If time allows, have volunteers read their pieces aloud as if they were in a city square trying to rally others to their side.

### Reflection (4 minutes):

Review the outcome of the strike and ask your "winning" students why this is a genuine compromise. Then, facilitate a class discussion using the following prompts:

- Which of the three modes of persuasion do you find most effective?
- How do the three modes of persuasion work together effectively?
- Is there a fourth mode Aristotle left out?

## POWER OF THE PRESS

### English Language Arts: Surveying Sensationalism

#### Use this lesson to:

teach the difference between facts and sensationalized information in journalism.

#### Objectives: Participants will...

- identify the differences between sensationalized news and balanced journalism;
- critically analyze a news story to determine if it is fair, misleading, or unbalanced;
- work in small groups to create content for a viral news story.

#### Materials:

- "Power of the Press" activity sheet (see p. 104 of this handbook)
- Current events articles (teacher selected)

**Time:** 45 minutes

### Introduction (1 minute):

The term "yellow journalism" was coined in the 1890s to describe sensational and often inaccurate reporting designed to increase circulation of newspapers. Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, two competing titans of journalism, notoriously exaggerated and invented headlines to outsell the other's publication. Today, we will explore the difference between facts and sensationalized information in journalism and reflect on how this topic continues to be relevant.

### Warm-Up (10 minutes): Sensationalized Headlines

1. Distribute the "Power of the Press" activity sheet to your students and draw their attention to the two pictures of newspaper front pages.
2. Have a student volunteer read the introduction: The Spanish-American War is often described as the first "media war;" Hearst and Pulitzer's newspapers fueled the U.S. interest in the conflict, and business boomed. In this instance, the *World* and the *Journal* were reporting an incident in February of 1898 when a battleship named the U.S.S. *Maine* was sunk off the coast of Cuba, killing 266 crewmen onboard. When these articles were published, the cause of the explosion was still unclear; it could have been an attack or a mechanical accident on the ship.
3. Looking at the newspaper headlines in this context, lead your class in a discussion using the following prompts:
  - Why do you think the *World* and the *Journal* published these headlines and images?
  - Why might a newspaper publish and promote a large cash reward?
  - Is it ethical to sensationalize news? What are the benefits of sensationalized reporting? What are the consequences?
  - How can this analysis of sensationalized headlines extend to the articles? In what ways can an article include facts but also be biased or sensationalized?
  - Is it possible to report without bias?

### Hook (10 minutes): Current Event Facts

1. Divide your class into groups of four or five and distribute a balanced news article reporting on a current event. Be sure to select articles that are age-appropriate and do not single out individuals or groups of people. Articles exploring environmental issues, community development, and technological innovations can be used for this activity. You can choose to have each group work on the same article or distribute unique articles to each group.

## AUDIENCE & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

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2. Instruct students to read the article individually and underline facts as they read.
3. Working in their small groups, have the students share what they underlined and then determine the four or five key facts of the article. The number of key facts they identify should match the number of students in the group.
4. Instruct students to write these facts in the provided space on the “Power of the Press” activity sheet.

### Main Activity (20 minutes): Sensationalized Tableaus

1. Staying with the same groups, have each student select one of the key facts the group identified.
2. Instruct each student to write a short paragraph sensationalizing that selected fact. Remind students that they cannot alter the fact itself.
3. Once each member of the group has finished writing, instruct students to create a tableau (or frozen picture) of each sensationalized fact. Encourage them to think of this tableau as a photo that could accompany the article. If a group has extra time, encourage them to devise creative transitions between the tableaus to make them flow naturally in presentation.
4. Bring the class back together and choose a few volunteers to share. Volunteers should state their basic facts, read their sensationalized paragraphs, and then present their corresponding tableaus.

### Optional Extension

If you have more time, you can extend the sharing portion of this activity to have each group present all of their facts/sensationalized tableaus.

### Reflection: (4 minutes)

Facilitate a class discussion using the following prompts:

- Which version of the story was more interesting – the balanced or the sensationalized?
- How can news articles be factual and yet biased?
- How should we critically analyze facts in journalism?
- How has the way we consume news changed, and how has that impacted sensationalism?

## HISTORY OF RESISTANCE

**Social Studies:** Historical Resistance

### Use this lesson to:

creatively engage students with historic moments of American resistance.

### Objectives: Participants will...

- learn about resistance in American history;
- learn about unions and labor relations;
- work in small groups to theatricalize history.

### Materials:

- “Newsies’ Strike Timeline” handout (see p. 103 of this handbook)
- “Resistance” activity sheet (three versions, one per group; see pp. 105-110)

**Time:** 45 minutes

### Introduction (2 minutes):

*Newsies* centers on the Newsboys Strike of 1899, which was a pivotal moment for child labor issues in our country. However, it wasn't the first resistance of its kind; strikes have occurred throughout history since people have worked (or been forced to work) for others. There is even evidence of strikes during the construction of the pyramids of Egypt thousands of years ago.

Throughout the 1800s in the U.S., as factories became more common, so did groups of workers banding together in protest of unfair treatment. A group of organized workers is called a union. Unions are formed to protect the interests of employees.

Union workers striking to protest work conditions, pay, or other issues continues today and is a part of a larger history of resistance in our country. Today, we will learn more about the newsies' strike and explore other important examples of historical resistance.

### Warm-Up/Hook (10 minutes): Activated Timeline

1. Distribute the “Newsies’ Strike Timeline” handout to each student.
2. Divide students into small groups and assign each group a section of the timeline.
3. Instruct each group to create a tableau (or frozen picture) representing the information in their section.
4. Bring the class back together and have each group present their tableau in order while you (or a student volunteer) read the timeline aloud.
5. Have the students summarize the strike to ensure comprehension, being sure to review the outcome.

### Main Activity (30 minutes): Theatrical Pitch

1. With students still in their small groups, explain that the newsies' strike was theatricalized in the Broadway musical *Newsies*. To successfully stage the musical, the creators had to determine how best to tell this specific story onstage. For example, they chose to communicate the newsies' passion through dance, positioning choreography as a key artistic element of the production.
2. Next, assign each group one of the three primary moments of resistance that the class will focus on today (Women's Rights Movement, Civil Rights Movement, American Revolution) and distribute the corresponding activity sheet.
3. Guide students through the activity, where they will read about their assigned resistance movement and develop a pitch to a theatrical producer to bring the story of that resistance to life onstage.
4. Bring the groups back together and have one group volunteer to share out their pitch to the rest of the class.

### Optional Extension

If time allows, each group should share with the class. You could even consider having the class vote on which one they would finance as a producer.

### Reflection (3 minutes):

Facilitate a group discussion using the following prompts:

- What were the benefits and challenges of telling the story of your resistance onstage?
- What did your group's resistance have in common with the newsies' strike?
- What are modern examples of resistance you are familiar with?

## TURN OF THE CENTURY

### Social Studies/English Language Arts:

Adapting History/Creative Writing

### Use this lesson to:

provide students with first-hand experience in adapting historical events for the stage.

### Objectives: Participants will...

- identify the reasons history is recorded;
- identify the components of a compelling story;
- learn historical facts about New York City in 1899;
- write an original scene based on historical events.

### Materials:

- “Turn of the Century” activity sheet (see p. 111 of this handbook)

**Time:** 45 minutes

### Introduction (1 minute):

The 1992 film *Newsies*, on which *Newsies* the stage musical is based, has gained a cult following. But neither film nor stage play would exist if real kids hadn't stood up for their rights in 1899. It is important for us to understand the process of the authors as they adapt historical source material for the stage. By trying the art of playwriting for ourselves, we will gain a new perspective on historically-based novels, TV shows, movies, and plays.

### Warm-Up (10 minutes): Dramatic Moments in History

Facilitate a discussion about historically-based fiction using the following prompts:

- What kinds of historical events do people record? What is it about the events that make it into history textbooks that make them worth studying? Who records that history? Which voices are left out?
- Can you think of any historical moments that have been made into a novel? What about a TV show or movie? A stage play or musical?
- Does an author always replicate a historical event exactly the way it happened? Why might an author change something, create new characters, or speculate about an under-documented piece of history?
- What makes a book, movie, TV show, or play engaging? Do any of those traits exist in historical events? Is history good inspiration for drama?

### Hook: (6 minutes) Turn-of-the-Century Historical Facts

1. Distribute the “Turn of the Century” activity sheet to each student.
2. Read the article aloud as a class. Then ask the class to determine the five primary events described in the second and third paragraphs. These are: five boroughs brought together, construction of the public library, opening of the Bronx Zoo, building of the Brooklyn Bridge/expansion of the subway, and immigrants continuing to arrive at Ellis Island.

### Main Activity (25 minutes): Playwriting

1. Divide students into small groups to complete the main activity, and then review the directions on the “Turn of the Century” activity sheet. Students will work together to write a scene dramatizing one of the key events of the article identified above.
2. As the groups brainstorm and begin to write, walk around the classroom and field any questions.

### Optional Extension

If you have extra time, have each group rehearse their scene and then present it to the rest of the class. You could also repeat this activity using a historical event the class is currently studying.

### Reflection: (3 minutes)

Facilitate a group reflection using the following prompts:

- What made your group's event interesting subject matter for a play?
- What are the pros and cons of learning about history through adaptations?
- What other historical events would you want to dramatize and why?

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## LOBBY EXPERIENCE

Invite audiences to engage deeply with the story of *Newsies* by transforming your lobby into an informational and interactive environment. For more information on all topics and individuals listed below, refer to this handbook's Dramaturgy chapter.

- Create an exhibition that displays original articles covering the Newsboys Strike of 1899 and photographs from that time period that include both male and female newsies. Consider creating profiles on the historical figures who exist in *Newsies* (Pulitzer, Roosevelt, Robert Van Wyck, and Don Seitz) or those who inspired *Newsies* characters such as:
  - Kid Blink and Morris Cohen, the inspirations for Jack Kelly
  - David Simons, the inspiration for Davey
  - Nellie Bly, the inspiration for Katherine
  - Aida Overton Walker, the inspiration for Medda
- Provide a historical timeline of the actual events of the newsies' strike (see p. 103 of this handbook).
- Invite your audience members to capture their excitement with a *Newsies*-themed photo booth. Provide some props such as newspapers, newsies' caps and messenger bags, and mini-chalkboards and chalk. Construct a sign that instructs participants to create their own headlines about the story or production of *Newsies* and to "strike" their best pose.
- Assign different areas of the lobby and theater to represent the different boroughs of New York City in 1899: Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Richmond (Staten Island). In each area, provide historical information about the borough and New York lifestyle. Some things you can include are information on clothing, tenement housing, leisure and entertainment (burlesque and vaudeville), and commonly used phrases and their definitions.

## "SEIZE THE DAY" CHALLENGE

*Newsies* tells the inspiring story of a band of underdogs who become unlikely heroes when they stand up for what's right and create the change they want to see in the world. The "Seize the Day" Challenge is a movement in which theater organizations that license *Newsies* are invited to activate a community service project in the spirit of *Newsies*. If you would like to accept the challenge with your cast, follow the steps below!

1. Start by challenging your group to answer this question: How can we create positive change in our community?
2. Gather your group together and brainstorm ideas on how you could activate a community service project. To widen your reach and maximize your impact, consider partnering with other organizations, such as:
  - **Local Facilities:** libraries, health centers, housing associations, support groups
  - **Youth Groups:** youth clubs, YMCA, YWCA, etc.
  - **Senior Groups:** community centers, nursing homes, residential communities
  - **Cultural Groups:** other arts and theater groups; dance, opera, or symphony groups
  - **Clubs:** sports, school leadership, service groups
  - **Charities:** food banks, environmental charities
3. Document the process. Compile photos and short videos of your project's various steps and its results. Edit them together into a short video spotlighting the positive impact your project inspires. Share the video during a pre-show speech or on your group's official website.
4. Be part of the *Newsies* legacy! Post your video to Twitter using the official hashtags: #SeizeTheDayChallenge and #NewsiesChallenge. Be sure to tag @DisneyMusicals to share your inspiring stories with our network of theater lovers around the globe!

# RESOURCES

Below is a list of resources to get you and your cast started in exploring the world of *Newsies*. Consider encouraging your actors and designers to do further research on the topics they are most interested in or that best relate to their characters or roles in the production. Following this list, you'll find a script and handbook glossary as well as all of the materials that correlate with the Audience & Student Engagement and Rehearsal Exercises chapters of this handbook.

## BURLESQUE & VAUDEVILLE

**[“About Vaudeville”](#)**: This article on PBS.com traces the history and impact of vaudeville.

**[“Ada Overton Walker”](#)**: A biography, from the Library of Congress, of Aida (born Ada) Overton Walker, the historical basis of Medda in *Newsies*. For additional information on Walker, see p. 16 of this handbook.

**[“Burlesque Show”](#)**: Encyclopedia Britannica's entry on burlesque.

## DIALECTS

When learning a dialect, the Internet provides a wealth of material. How-to videos for just about any accent can be found on YouTube. Listed below are some helpful websites.

**[British Library Sound Archive](#)**: Contains audio clips and oral histories from eleven different archives. Scroll down to “View by” for access to hundreds of recordings sorted by county, date, or as clickable options on a sound map.

**[IDEA \(International Dialects of English Archive\)](#)**: Created by a dialect coach in 1997, this website contains dozens of samples of dialects from all over the globe.

## DISABILITY

**[Beyond Affliction: “Civil War Veterans”](#)**: This section of the online companion to NPR's 1998 four-hour documentary radio series *Beyond Affliction* examines disability among Civil War veterans.

**[“Civil War Pensions and Disability”](#)**: This article by Peter Blanck, published in 2001 in volume 62 of the *Ohio State Law Journal*, explores the social and political forces influencing disability civil rights following the Civil War and in modern times.

**[Everybody Belongs: Changing Negative Attitudes Toward Classmates with Disabilities](#)**: Arthur Shapiro's book, published by Routledge in 2000, explains how familiar childhood characters like Captain Hook and Porky Pig shape attitudes toward disability. He offers practical guidance to schools that are wrestling with how to integrate children with disabilities.

**[Disability Language Style Guide](#)**: The National Center on Disability and Journalism's style guide will lead you to the appropriate language to use when discussing disability with your cast.

**[The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public](#)**: Susan M. Schweik's 2010 book, published by New York University Press, is an examination of the “ugly laws” of late-19th and early-20th century that criminalized disability in the U.S.

## INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

**[“The Industrial Revolution in the United States”](#)**: A study guide provided by the Library of Congress as a primer on the Industrial Revolution.

**[“Industrial Revolution”](#)**: An article on History.com about the Industrial Revolution.

## NEW YORK CITY HISTORY

***Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*** and ***Greater Gotham: A History of New York City from 1898 to 1919***: These books by Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, published in 2000 and 2017 respectively by Oxford University Press, serve as a comprehensive history of New York City.

***The Greatest Reform School in the World: A Guide to the Records of the New York House of Refuge***: A 1989 publication from the New York State Archives and Records Administration providing a short history of the New York House of Refuge and a guide to its records.

***How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York***: Jacob Riis's groundbreaking work of photojournalism, first published in book form in 1890, documents the squalid living conditions in the slums of New York City. For more information on Riis, see p. 16 of this handbook.

***No. 9 Duane Street***: An amateur historian's compendium of information about the Newsboys' Lodging House and other New York City lodging houses.

## NEWSIES & CHILD LABOR

For additional information on the 1899 newsies' strike and its key players, see the Dramaturgy chapter of this handbook.

***Child Labor in America***: This book, edited by Juliet H. Mofford and published by Discovery Enterprises in 1997, tells the story of child labor from the Industrial Revolution to the 1990s, including the newsies, using period photographs and text.

***Children of the City: At Work & At Play***: David Nasaw's book, published by Oxford University Press in 1985, served as the initial inspiration for *Newsies*, the film. Nasaw recreates what it was like to be a child in an urban environment between 1900 and 1920, and offers the first comprehensive recounting of the 1899 newsies' strike.

***City Hall Park 1899***: This website is a compilation of newspaper articles about the newsies' strike from publications such as *The New York Times*, the *New York Tribune*, and *The Sun*.

***"Extra! Extra! Read All About the Newsboys Strike of 1899"***: A resource from the New York Public Library, offering some background on the strike of 1899 as well as links to news articles from the time and other helpful sources.

***Kid Blink Beats the World***: This illustrated biography by Don Brown, published in 2004 by Roaring Brook Press, tells Kid Blink's story and chronicles his involvement in the strike.

***Kids at Work: Lewis Hine and the Crusade Against Child Labor***: Russel Freedman compiles photographs by Lewis Hine of working children and explains his significance in the fight against child labor in this 1994 young adult book published by Clarion Books.

***Kids on Strike!*** Susan Campbell Bartoletti's book (written for young adults but useful for all), published Houghton Mifflin in 1999, chronicles a number of strikes led by children in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

***"Read All About It: The Story of the Newsies' Two-Week Strike Against Publishers Pulitzer, Hearst"***: An article in the *New York Daily News* by David Nasaw chronicling the 1899 newsies' strike.

### NEWSIES ON STAGE & SCREEN

**"The Cult of Newsies"**: Grady Smith's 2012 *Entertainment Weekly* article traces the path of *Newsies* from screen to stage.

**Disney's Newsies: The Broadway Musical**: Filmed live onstage in 2017 at the Pantages Theatre in Hollywood, this live capture features performances by members of the original Broadway cast alongside the tour cast.

***Newsies: Stories of the Unlikely Broadway Hit***: Edited by Ken Cerniglia and published by Disney Editions in 2014, this book features more than one hundred first-person accounts of the creation and impact of *Newsies* – from historical research, film production, and stage development through the musical's first anniversary on Broadway.

**"Read All About It! Kids Vex Titans!"**: A 2012 *New York Times* article by Dan Barry, written in anticipation of *Newsies* starting performances on Broadway, that discusses the historical basis of the musical.

### RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS

**"American Revolution History"**: This History.com article provides a primer on the American Revolution.

**"Civil Rights Movement"**: This History.com article provides a primer on the Civil Rights Movement.

**"The Fight for Women's Suffrage"**: This History.com article provides a primer on the Women's Suffrage Movement.

### PULITZER, HEARST & JOURNALISM

***The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst***: A biography of William Randolph Hearst by David Nasaw, published in 2000 by Houghton Mifflin. For more information on Hearst, see p. 15 of this handbook.

***Pulitzer: A Life in Politics, Print, and Power***: James Morris's biography of Joseph Pulitzer, published by Harper Perennial in 2011. For more information on Pulitzer, see p. 15 of this handbook.

***Ten Days in a Mad-House***: This book by Nellie Bly, originally published as a series of articles in the *New York World* in 1887 and later compiled into a book, is the culmination of her undercover assignment in which she investigated reports of brutality and neglect at the Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell Island. For more information on Bly, an inspiration for Katherine Plumber, see p. 16 of this handbook.

**"U.S. Diplomacy and Yellow Journalism, 1895-1898"**: Published by the Office of the Historian of the U.S. State Department, this is a primer on yellow journalism and its place in the Spanish-American War.

### ROOSEVELT

***The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt***: This Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Theodore Roosevelt by Edmund Morris, published in 2010 by Random House, chronicles Roosevelt's life before he became president in 1901, focusing extensively on his time as governor of New York. For more information on Roosevelt, refer to p. 15 of this handbook.

### STAGE COMBAT

**Society of American Fight Directors**: The Society of American Fight Directors is an internationally recognized organization dedicated to promoting safety and excellence in the craft of stage combat. Contact your SAFD region representative for training opportunities or consider hiring one of their certified teachers to help design your combat sequences.

# SCRIPT & PRODUCTION HANDBOOK GLOSSARY

The glossary below includes explanations of many of the less common words and expressions found throughout the libretto and this handbook. Page numbers indicate libretto page(s) they can be found on, unless preceded with "PH," which indicates a page in this handbook.

**abject** (83): Miserable or humiliating.

**above the fold** (74): The prominent placement of an article in a newspaper; if a headline is above the middle fold, it is the first thing a reader will see when buying the paper.

**angle** (9, 36): Viewpoint or slant.

**aptitude** (27): Innate or acquired ability or talent.

**auspicious** (45): Promising success.

**battalion** (58): A large group of troops ready for battle.

**blowhard** (50): An exceptionally boastful person.

**borough** (86, 87): A district or municipality within a city; New York's boroughs are Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island (known as Richmond in 1899).

**Bottle Alley** (5): An alley that was part of Mulberry Bend, an area in the Five Points neighborhood of lower Manhattan that had particularly poor living conditions.

**The Bowery** (25, 29, etc.): A neighborhood in lower Manhattan; in 1899, the Bowery was an immigrant neighborhood famous for its vaudeville-style plays and musicals.

**Brighton Beach** (86): An ocean-side neighborhood in the southern portion of Brooklyn.

**bulls** (62, 64): Slang for "police officers."

**burlesque** (24, 25, 80; PH 13): Performances in a variety show format often featuring bawdy comedy and striptease.

**cavalry** (85, 86): A group of mounted soldiers.

**chancey** (8): Uncertain.

**cheese it** (62): Slang for "run away."

**chinchilla** (28): A small South American rodent whose fur is highly coveted.

**commie** (18): Short for "communist;" a more extreme form of socialism, communism is both an economic system that seeks equality and a political ideology that advocates a classless society.

**Coney Island** (10): An ocean-side neighborhood in the southern portion of Brooklyn; rose to prominence as a resort escape from Manhattan, and in the late 1800s reinvented itself through the construction of three major amusement parks, becoming the largest amusement area in the U.S. at the time.

**constituent** (106): A person who authorizes someone to act on their behalf.

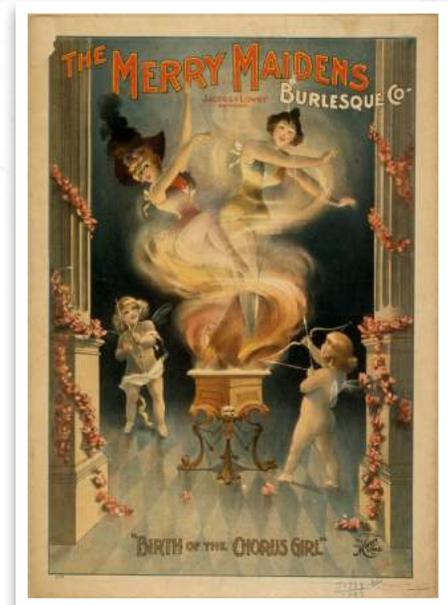
**corona** (33): A particular shape of cigar.

**crip** (12, 62, 64; PH 20): An offensive term used to refer to someone who is unable to use one or more limbs.

**curdled** (8): Spoiled.

**David and Goliath** (47, 53, 54): Biblical figures commonly referred to in an underdog situation, in which a smaller and weaker opponent faces a bigger and stronger adversary.

**Delancey Street** (8): One of the main streets in Manhattan's Lower East Side.



Advertisement for *The Merry Maidens*  
Burlesque Co., 1897

## RESOURCES

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**depraved** (8): Corrupt or perverted.

**distribution window** (13, 32, etc.): The location at which newsies would purchase their papers for the day; each newspaper publisher had its own distribution window.

**ermine** (28): The fur of the white winter coat of the stoat, a type of weasel.

**fish-eye** (56): A suspicious or unfriendly look.

**flash pot** (70): Refers to the flash of antique camera; created with magnesium powder, a puff of smoke is created with each flash.

**flies** (24, 73): The hoist system used in a theater to raise and lower curtains, lights, and other production elements.

**Flushing** (87): A neighborhood in Queens.

**gam** (12): Slang for "leg."

**"Go west, young man"** (75): A phrase credited to Horace Greeley, an author and newspaper editor; the phrase symbolizes the idea that westward expansion could solve problems such as poverty.

**gratis** (67): French for "free."

**hawk** (22, 41, 49): To sell by calling aloud in public.

**highfalutin'** (70): Pompous or bombastic.

**hoi polloi** (30): An Ancient Greek expression meaning "the many" and which refers to the masses; Race uses this phrase incorrectly, referring to the elite.

**Horace Greeley** (75): The founder and editor of the *New York Tribune* who was a large proponent of America's westward expansion; in 1859 he traveled across the continent to see the West for himself.

**Houston Street** (61): One of the main streets in lower Manhattan; pronounced "HOW-stun."

**impudence** (81): Disrespect or audacity.

**Joseph Pulitzer** (11, 18, etc.; PH 15): Publisher of the *New York World*.

**kingmaker** (47): A person who brings leaders to power through political influence.

**"lie down with dogs"** (53): Part of a proverb which reads in full, "If you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas," meaning that spending time with undesirable people will cause their traits to rub off on you.

**Long Island Sound** (28): A body of water that sits between Long Island and Connecticut.

**magical other** (PH 21): Usually a minority character (person of color and/or with a disability, etc.) that steps into the life of a much more privileged central character and, in some way, enriches that central character's life.

**muckety-mucks** (68): Slang referring to someone in a position of authority or status.

**Navy Yard** (86): The U.S. Navy Yard, also known as the Brooklyn Navy Yard; a shipyard located in Brooklyn on the East River, built in 1801 and in use until 1966.

**Newsboys' Lodging House** (5; PH 12): A rooming house run by the Children's Aid Society; newsies and other child workers could purchase beds to sleep in and meals on a daily basis.

**newsies** (5, 6, etc.; PH 11): Young newspaper vendors who purchased their goods from the publisher and re-sold them for a profit; some newsies were as young as six years old, and worked long hours on the streets of American cities.

**nobbin'** (68): Slang for "hobnobbing," or mixing socially.

**nom de plume** (82): French for "pen name," or a fake name used when publishing written work.

**non-partisan** (75): Not biased toward a particular party.

**palaver** (75, 97): Prolonged and aimless discussion.

**palomino** (3, 72): A type of horse with a yellow or gold coat, originally bred in the southwestern U.S.



Horace Greeley

**Pied Piper** (84): A legendary character who played his magic pipe to lure rats.

**pontiff** (28): The Pope.

**“Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”** (53): A remark contained in a letter from John Dalberg-Acton, an English Catholic historian, to an Anglican bishop regarding limits on power within the Catholic Church.

**proprietor** (45): The owner of a business establishment.

**Prospect Park** (86): A large public park in Brooklyn.

**puss** (16, 68): Slang for “face.”

**Richmond** (87): One of New York’s five boroughs; now known as Staten Island.

**Sante Fe** (1, 2, etc.): The capital city of New Mexico; it attracted a number of artists and writers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries due to its cultural richness and natural beauty.

**scab** (40, 58, etc.): A slang term for an individual who takes work when the regular employees are on strike.

**señor** (31): Spanish for “sir.”

**Sheepshead Races** (68): The Sheepshead Bay Race Track, a horse racing facility in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn; opened in 1880, it was converted to an automobile racetrack after a 1908 bill effectively banned racetrack betting in New York State.

**skunk** (12): Slang term referring to defeating an opponent badly.

**soak** (10, 12): To beat or punish severely.

**socialist** (18): A proponent of an economic system that seeks equality among members of society.

**splitting rails** (2): Splitting the wood used to construct a split-rail fence.

**Taos Mountains** (73): A part of the Rocky Mountains located in New Mexico, not far from Santa Fe.

**Theodore Roosevelt** (15, 18, etc.; PH 15): A progressive reformer who was governor of New York from 1899-1900 and president of the U.S. from 1901-1909.

**took it on the lam** (67): Slang for “ran off into hiding” or “fled.”

**trafficking** (81): Trading or dealing in.

**union** (37, 38, etc.): An association of employees that collectively bargains with employers to protect the interests of the workers.

**vagrancy** (80): The state of being a person who wanders idly without visible means of financial support.

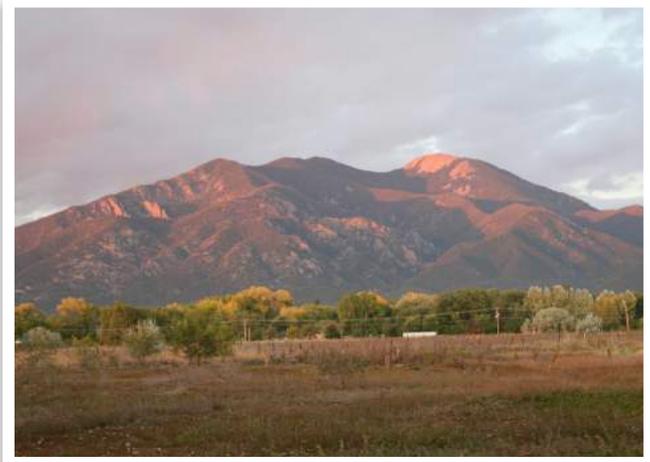
**vaudeville** (52; PH 13): A theatrical genre popular between the 1880s and 1930s that involved performances made up of a series of separate, unrelated acts of varying types.

**William Randolph Hearst** (39, 40, 97; PH 15): The founder of Hearst Communications, which published the *New York Journal*.

**Woodside** (87): A neighborhood in western Queens.



*Santa Fe, c. 1910-1912*



*Taos Mountains at Sunset  
by Kimberly Gordon is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0*

# MATERIALS

The following pages (pp. 85-111) contain materials that accompany various activities featured in this handbook's Rehearsal Exercises and Student & Audience Engagement chapters. Materials used in multiple activities are only included once.

## HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS

This section provides historical photos to use in conjunction with the "Gallery Walk" Rehearsal Exercise on p. 47 and "The Life of a Newsie" pre-show workshop on p. 65.

## HANDOUTS & ACTIVITY SHEETS

These materials accompany the Rehearsal Exercises, Pre- and Post-Show Workshops, and Curriculum Connections lesson plans. Refer to the page numbers listed in Rehearsal Exercises and Audience & Student Engagement chapters to find the appropriate accompanying resource.



*The newsies get ready to begin their day.  
Archbishop Stepinac High School; White Plains, NY*



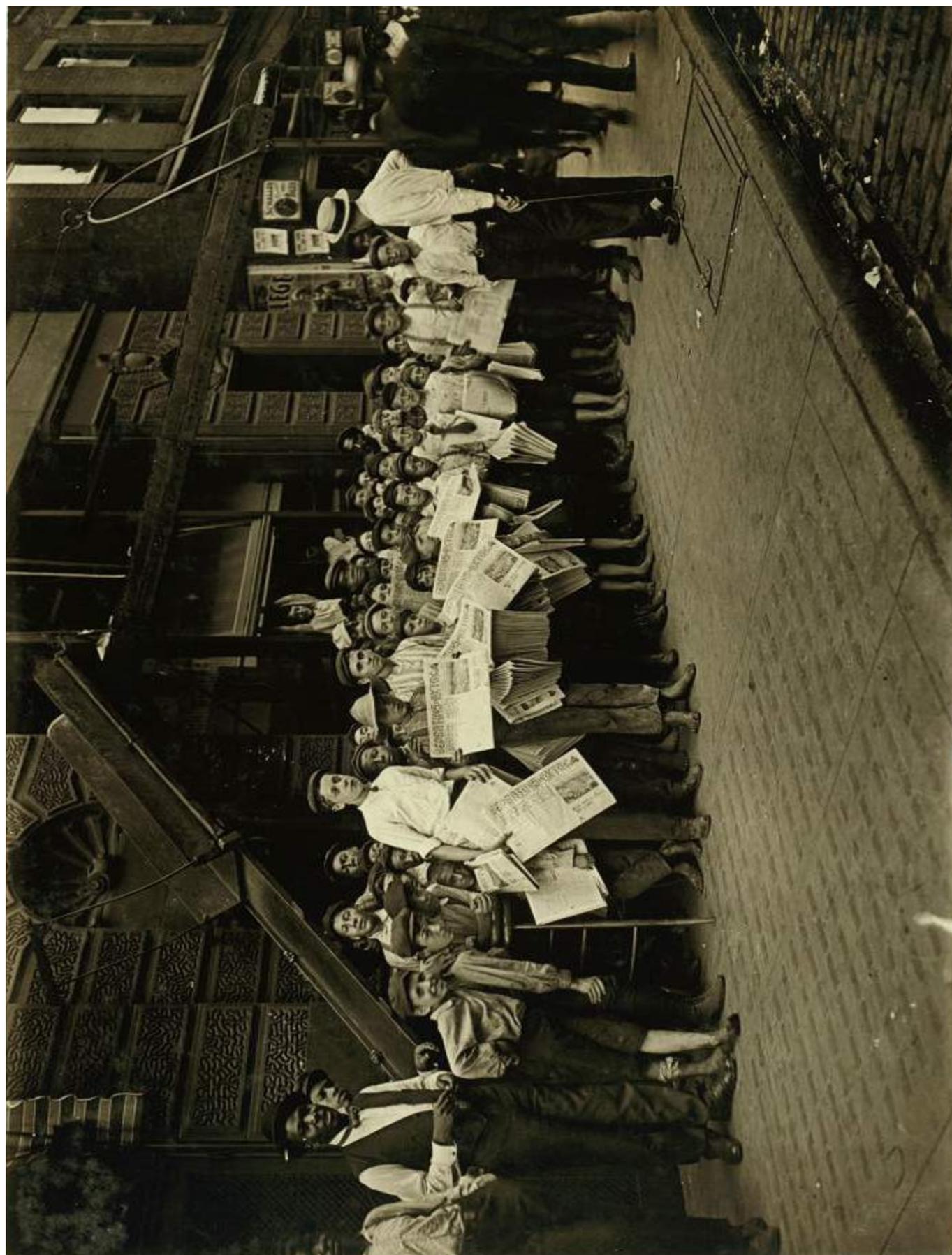
Historical Photographs: "Gallery Walk" and "Life of a Newsie"



*Historical Photographs: "Gallery Walk" and "Life of a Newsie"*



*Historical Photographs: "Gallery Walk" and "Life of a Newsie"*



*Historical Photographs: "Gallery Walk" and "Life of a Newsie"*



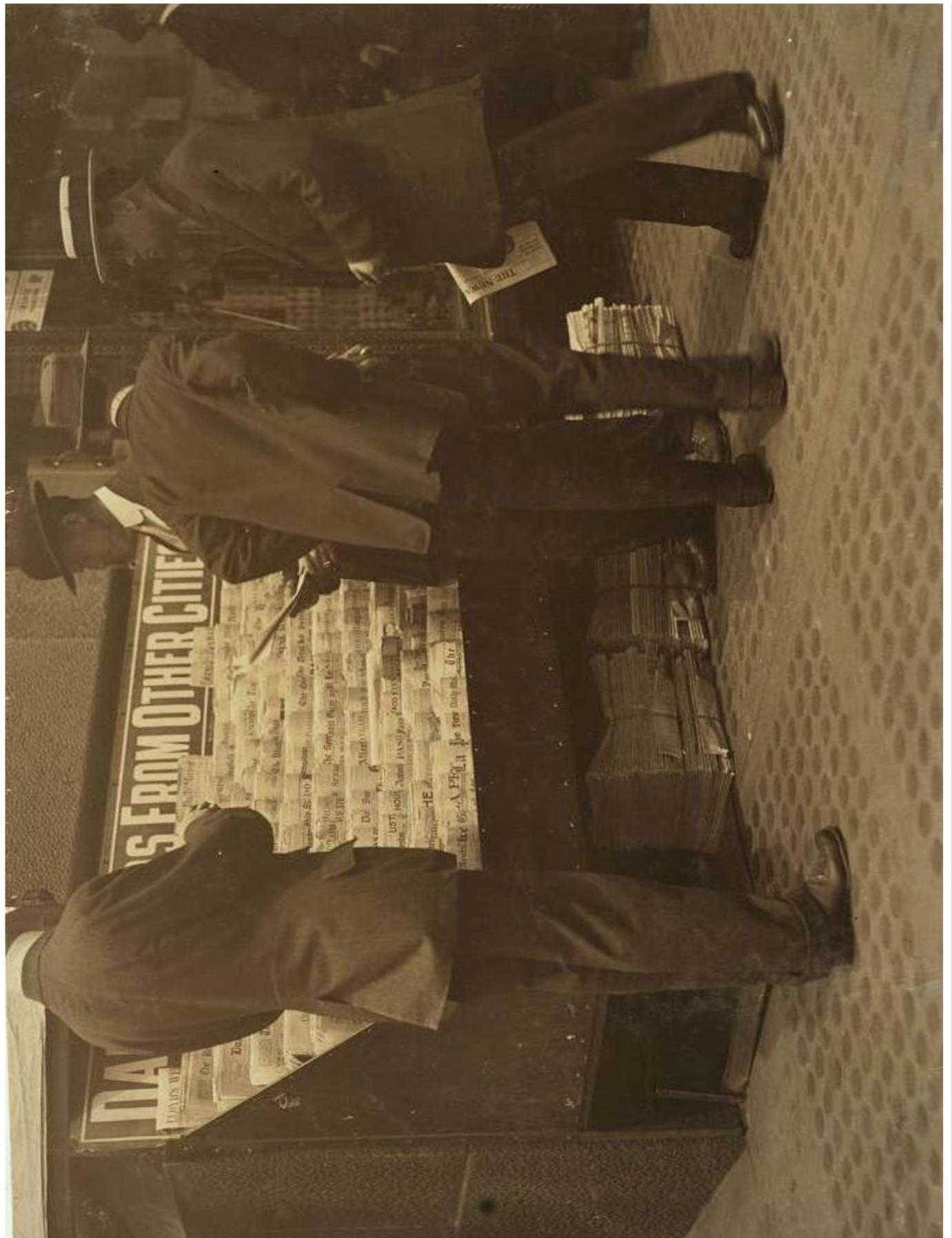
*Historical Photographs: "Gallery Walk" and "Life of a Newsie"*



Historical Photographs: "Gallery Walk" and "Life of a Newsie"



*Historical Photographs: "Gallery Walk" and "Life of a Newsie"*



Historical Photographs: "Gallery Walk" and "Life of a Newsie"



*Historical Photographs: "Gallery Walk" and "Life of a Newsie"*



*Historical Photographs: "Gallery Walk" and "Life of a Newsie"*



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*Historical Photographs: "Gallery Walk" and "Life of a Newsie"*



Historical Photographs: "Gallery Walk" and "Life of a Newsie"

# CHARACTER CREATION

**Name (First, Middle, Last):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Occupation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Education:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Physical Characteristics:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Family Members:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Best Friend:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Wish:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Proudest Moment:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Biggest Fear:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**In an emergency, this character's first response would be to:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**In their spare time, this character would most likely:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

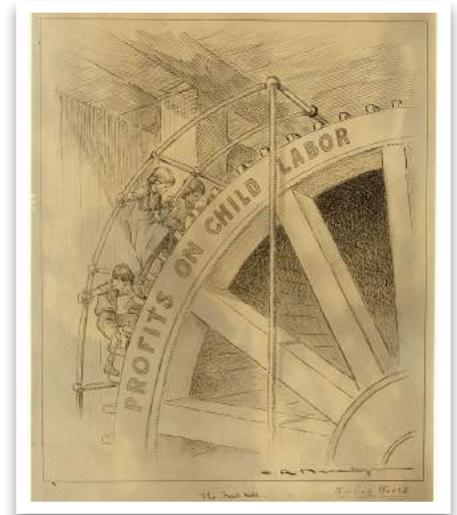
\_\_\_\_\_

# CHILD LABOR

In America, the idea that a kid's job is to attend school and prepare for the future is a relatively new one. While many kids today are expected to complete chores, such as setting the table or helping with dishes or laundry, this is not what is meant by child labor. Throughout most of American history it was normal for children to work long hours at difficult and dangerous jobs.

Child labor in America is as old as the country itself. In the early 1600s, it was believed that crime and poverty were results of idleness, not a lack of education. As a result, poor children were shipped by the thousands from England to the American colonies to become apprentices. This arrangement helped England manage its most helpless citizens and also provided a cheap solution to the labor shortage in the colonies. Colonists' children were also apprentices or did grueling work on their family's farms.

During the Industrial Revolution, as the number of factories increased, so did the number of jobs. Factory owners needed more workers and turned to children to help do everything from operating dangerous machinery to mining coal. It was expected that children as young as 10 years old work 12 or more hours per day for six days per week. According to the U.S. Census of 1880, one in six American children was employed. This number does not account for the number of children under 10 years old working illegally in sweatshops or on the streets. In 1881, only seven states had education laws requiring kids to attend school, but even in these states, many people found ways to get around the law.



*A political cartoon protesting child labor.*



*photo provided by the Children's Aid Society*



*photo by Lewis Wickes Hine*

By the turn of the 20th century, the time when *Newsies* is set, the child workforce hit its peak with almost 2 million legal and countless undocumented working children. While many argued that child labor helped children by teaching them a trade, in reality, their jobs kept them from attending school regularly to learn and gain skills that might improve their futures. Because of this, reformers began to take action: They created child labor laws, fought to end the abuse of kids in the workplace, and worked to make sure that all children had the opportunity to better themselves through education.

"Newsie" is a term for a child who sold newspapers on the streets at the turn of the 20th century. The newsies of New York City were popularly admired as "little merchants" for, unlike children working in factories, these kids were seen as business people. Even though they were their own bosses, the newspaper owners controlled the prices and the newsies sometimes had to choose between food and a bed to sleep in for the night.

It was not until 1938 that Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, a law that prohibited the employment of kids younger than 16 and placed limits on the employment of kids between 16 and 18 years old.

*Rehearsal Exercise: "Child Labor"*

# NEWSIE ON A BUDGET

**Cost of 100 Newspapers: 50 cents**  
**Selling Price per Newspaper: 1 cent**

**Newsie Profit per 100 Newspapers: 50 cents**

How many newspapers does your character sell each week (average 250-1000)? \_\_\_\_\_

Using the numbers above, determine how much profit your character makes from selling newspapers each week: \_\_\_\_\_

Consider the weekly living costs of your character using the figures below. Create a weekly budget for your newsie – what would your character choose to spend their money on? Using previous character development, keep in mind other cost considerations such as whether or not your character needs somewhere to sleep at night and/or if they need to bring money home. Remember that you can't budget more than the profit you calculated above.

**Bunk at Newsboys' Lodging House: 6 cents**  
**Private Bed at Newsboys' Lodging House: 10 cents**  
**Breakfast: 6 cents**  
**Lunch: 6 cents**

**Supper: 20 cents**  
**Candy: 1 cent**  
**Bowery Theater Ticket: 20 cents**

## Budget:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Meals							
Housing							
Entertainment							
Savings							
Other							
TOTALS:							

**Cost of 100 Newspapers: 60 cents**  
**Selling Price per Newspaper: 1 cent**

**Newsie Profit per 100 Newspapers: \_\_\_\_\_**  
**Adjusted Weekly Profit: \_\_\_\_\_**

## Budget After Price Hike:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Meals							
Housing							
Entertainment							
Savings							
Other							
TOTALS:							

# **NEWSIES HISTORICAL FACTS**

**The Newsboys Strike of 1899 (not the first of its kind, but the most successful) against Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* began on Thursday, July 20, and ended on Tuesday, August 1, with the newsies back to work on August 2.**

**The musical's heroes – Davey and Jack Kelly – are based on the historical newsies' leaders, David Simons, and Kid Blink and Morris Cohen, respectively.**

**After the Spanish-American War ended and circulation dropped, all newspapers lowered the cost of 100 papers from 60 cents back to 50 cents – except for the *World* and the *Journal*. When the newsies refused to sell these two papers, the others, including *The Times* and the *Sun*, had a field day covering the strike.**

**The newsies were touted for being savvy and resourceful independent contractors – “little merchants.” This strike marked an important turning point in labor history because it was carried out by children and ended in compromise.**

# **“SEIZE THE DAY” LYRIC SHEET**

**NOW IS THE TIME TO SEIZE THE DAY!  
ANSWER THE CALL AND DON'T DELAY!  
WRONGS WILL BE RIGHTED  
IF WE'RE UNITED!  
LET US SEIZE THE DAY!**

# NEWSBOYS STRIKE TIMELINE

The Spanish-American War (1898) sparked a boom in the newspaper business. Circulations exploded as customers snatched up papers as fast as they could, eager for news from the front. Newspapers did everything they could to outdo one another and spent exorbitant amounts of money in eye-catching front pages and eyewitness accounts. To make up some of the money, they raised the wholesale price for the newsies from 50 to 60 cents per hundred. The newsies didn't feel the pinch as much because they were enjoying a rise in their profits from the additional demand. But by the summer of 1899, the war had long ended and circulation declined. Almost all of the papers rolled their wholesale price back to 50 cents, except Joseph Pulitzer's *World* and William Randolph Hearst's *Journal*; as the two largest publishers, Hearst and Pulitzer figured that they would be able to maintain their prices and that the newsies would continue to buy from them.

As the newsies sold fewer papers each week, the cost difference became harder to manage, and a strike commenced against these two papers beginning on July 20, 1899. The strike lasted two weeks, from July 19 to August 2, 1899. During that time, the kids drew support from newsies all over the Northeast, as well as other young workers. Though the kids banded together, at times things became violent – scabs (people hired by the publishers to deliver papers despite the strike) were attacked on the streets, their papers ripped from their hands and destroyed to prevent their sale. The publishers did not take the strike seriously until advertisers started making requests to get their bills adjusted. The newsies eventually came to a compromise with the publishers: They would purchase their papers at the higher price, but the publishers would buy back any papers that the newsies couldn't sell; this was more valuable to the newsies than a lower price would have been, as it allowed them to buy papers without the risk of losing money for any that went unsold.

## Timeline of the Strike

**April 25, 1898** – The Spanish-American War begins.

**July 19, 1899** – Dissent among the newsies due to a price hike builds to a head and word spreads of a strike commencing the following day.

**July 22, 1899** – Newsie leader Kid Blink meets Hearst outside of his office to share the newsies' demands. Hearst invites him, David Simons, and two other boys inside and promises them an answer by Monday, July 24.

**July 25, 1899** – Pulitzer and Hearst agree to lower the cost from 60 cents per hundred to 55 cents per hundred. The newsies decline the offer, deciding to hold out.

**August 1, 1899** – Pulitzer and Hearst agree to buy back unsold papers from the newsies. Satisfied with this historic compromise, the newsies call off the strike.

**August 12, 1898** – The Spanish-American War ends.

**July 20, 1899** – The newsies refuse to sell the *World* and the *Journal*. Jersey City, NJ newsies join with their New York brethren in a strike against the papers.

**July 24, 1899** – Pulitzer and Hearst do not give in to the newsies' demands. The publishers hire men to sell their papers, paying them as much as \$2 per day to do so.

**July 24, 1899** – A mass meeting of newsies is held at New Irving Hall. 2,000 kids are inside the theater and another 3,000 observe from the street.

**July 27, 1899** – Kid Blink leaves the newsies' union. Rumors spread that he accepted a bribe from the publishers.

**August 2, 1899** – The newsies of New York return to work, carrying the banner.

# POWER OF THE PRESS

## Introduction

The Spanish-American War is often described as the first “media war;” Hearst and Pulitzer’s newspapers fueled the U.S. interest in the conflict and business boomed. In this instance, the *World* and the *Journal* were reporting an incident In February of 1898 when a battleship named the U.S.S. *Maine* was sunk off the coast of Cuba, killing 266 crewmen onboard. When these articles were published, the cause of the explosion was still unclear; it could have been an attack or a mechanical accident on the ship.

**Current Events Article Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Key Facts:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Sensationalized Paragraph:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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# RESISTANCE

## AMERICAN REVOLUTION

During the American Revolution, which lasted from 1775 until 1783, the 13 North American colonies fought for their independence from British rule under King George III and the British Parliament. In the years leading up to 1775, there were many tensions between the colonists and the British. Notably, the colonists were upset about attempts by the British to tax the colonies, such as in the Stamp Act of 1765 and the Tea Act of 1773. Colonists rejected the idea of paying these taxes without being provided a say in British Parliament, adopting the slogan, "No taxation without representation." After clashes between the British authorities and the colonial resistance (including the Boston Tea Party, a notable act of protest in which demonstrators snuck onto a ship and dumped an entire shipment of British tea overboard), the British government attempted to intensify their rule over the colonies.

In response, a group of colonial delegates met in what was the First Continental Congress in September 1774 to discuss matters pertaining to British rule; they condemned taxation without representation, issued a declaration of the rights due every citizen, and stated that the British army should only be stationed in the colonies with colonial consent. The following summer, a Second Continental Congress met, this time including notable members Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, in addition to members such as George Washington who had been delegates to the first Congress. The Continental Congress voted to form a Continental Army with Washington serving as commander in chief.

Clashes between the colonies and the British continued, both through acts of protest and military battles. By June of 1776, the Revolutionary War was being actively waged, and most colonists favored independence from the British. On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress voted to adopt the Declaration of Independence, drafted primarily by Thomas Jefferson in concert with a group that included Franklin and John Adams. As an argument for independence, Jefferson methodically lists the "injuries and usurpations" of King George.

Battles continued between the American army, led by Washington, and the British army, led by William Howe, Henry Clinton, and Charles Cornwallis at various points. In 1777, the French began supporting the American side, and they officially declared war on Britain in June 1778, turning a civil conflict into an international war. The Revolutionary War drew to a close after the Battle of Yorktown in 1781, although a peace treaty was not signed until 1783. The Americans, having rejected British rule, were now free to create their own government. This new government was informed by many of the grievances against the British. In 1789, America's new constitution was ratified and George Washington became the country's first president.

## Directions

Now that you have read about your assigned protest, work together as a group to imagine how you would best bring the story of that resistance to life onstage. Use the following prompts to guide your brainstorm.

- **Who are the stakeholders in the protest? Which could be main characters of your story?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **What went well in the protest? What didn't go well?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **What was the outcome of the protest?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **Who is the "Pulitzer" of the protest? In other words, who is the antagonist?** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Who is the "Jack" of the protest? In other words, who is the protagonist?** \_\_\_\_\_
- **What is the general plot of your musical (the beginning, middle, and end)?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **Would the story be more effective as a play or a musical? Why? What are the benefits/drawbacks of each type of theatrical production?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **What creative element could you focus on to tell your story (e.g., *Newsies* focused on dance)?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **What are some artistic influences you could draw from for this production?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **What art and music already exist that you could use in your production?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Next, imagine you want to bring your production to Broadway; you have an meeting with a producer whom you need to convince to provide the necessary funding. Work together to come up with a pitch (approximately 2-3 minutes) explaining your production (including the plot and your artistic vision) and convincing the producer to join you in bringing it to the stage.

**Write your pitch here:**

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# RESISTANCE

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The Women's Rights Movement in America is long and complicated. One key portion of the movement is the fight for women's suffrage, or the right for women to vote. Throughout history, women have often been afforded less power than men, both socially and politically. The ability to vote is a key component of political power which has slowly expanded over time in the U.S. However, by the 1820s and 1830s, most states had extended the right to vote to all white men. Meanwhile, women were rethinking what it meant to be a citizen as their influence in civil society grew, even if their political power did not.

In 1848, reformers Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott invited a group of abolitionist activists (activists that believed in ending slavery) to Seneca Falls, New York. The delegates produced a document called the Declaration of Sentiments, which, referencing the Declaration of Independence, stated that, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men and women are created equal."

However, the movement for women's suffrage lost momentum during the Civil War in the 1860s. The 15th Amendment to the Constitution guaranteed the rights of Black men to vote, but there would be no provisions guaranteeing the same right to women of any race. Because of this, some women's suffrage advocates including Stanton and Susan B. Anthony resisted the 15th Amendment; this group of women went on to become a group called the National Woman Suffrage Association. Meanwhile, the American Woman Suffrage Association fought for the right for women to vote while still supporting the 15th Amendment. By 1890 (the 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870), the two groups came together as the National American Woman Suffrage Association, led by Stanton. The split in the women's suffrage movement caused by the 15th Amendment illustrates the ways in which it was primarily a white movement that did not consider the interests of women of color equally; while most suffragists considered themselves abolitionists, racist viewpoints and language still abounded for the duration of the movement.

Stanton, Anthony, and members of NAWSA continued to fight for women's suffrage for many years. In a major act of protest, Susan B. Anthony and other women voted in the presidential election of 1872. The U.S. sued Anthony in a federal trial during which she presented the most famous speech of the suffrage movement, declaring that, "Your denial of my citizen's right to vote, is the denial of my right of consent as one of the governed, the denial of my right of representation as one of the taxed, the denial of my right to a trial by a jury of my peers as an offender against law, therefore, the denial of my sacred rights to life, liberty, [and] property." Despite her impassioned speech, Anthony lost the case.

Roadblocks to women's suffrage continued for a number of years, including the resistance of a large group of women. Almost four decades after Anthony attempted to vote, Josephine Dodge founded the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, which organized events and distributed publications in opposition to suffrage. Anti-suffragists believed that giving women the right to vote would overburden them and undermine their role in the private sphere.

Beginning in 1910, white women began to gain the right to vote in a number of states, with congressmen from those states starting to support the idea of a national suffrage amendment. As men went to fight in World War I beginning in 1917, women took over many jobs that they had previously been denied access to. This shift caused a change in the national perception of women, and the 19th Amendment was passed in 1919 and ratified in 1920, finally providing the national right for women to vote. However, it would take another 45 years for the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to pass, securing Black women's right to vote. Voting rights were far from the only issue in the Women's Rights Movement, though, and women continue to fight for equal rights to this day.

## Directions

Now that you have read about your assigned protest, work together as a group to imagine how you would best bring the story of that resistance to life onstage. Use the following prompts to guide your brainstorm.

- **Who are the stakeholders in the protest? Which could be main characters of your story?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **What went well in the protest? What didn't go well?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **What was the outcome of the protest?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **Who is the "Pulitzer" of the protest? In other words, who is the antagonist?** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Who is the "Jack" of the protest? In other words, who is the protagonist?** \_\_\_\_\_
- **What is the general plot of your musical (the beginning, middle, and end)?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **Would the story be more effective as a play or a musical? Why? What are the benefits/drawbacks of each type of theatrical production?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **What creative element could you focus on to tell your story (e.g., *Newsies* focused on dance)?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **What are some artistic influences you could draw from for this production?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **What art and music already exist that you could use in your production?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Next, imagine you want to bring your production to Broadway; you have an meeting with a producer whom you need to convince to provide the necessary funding. Work together to come up with a pitch (approximately 2-3 minutes) explaining your production (including the plot and your artistic vision) and convincing the producer to join you in bringing it to the stage.

**Write your pitch here:**

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# RESISTANCE

## CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The Civil Rights Movement took place primarily during the 1950s and 1960s as Black Americans fought for equal rights under the law. Although slavery was officially abolished during the Civil War in the 1860s, African Americans faced significant discrimination – some of it enforced by law – for decades.

While the 14th and 15th Amendments gave Black people protections under the law and the right to vote, other laws almost immediately arose to marginalize them. These were called “Jim Crow” laws and were established in the South beginning in the late 19th century. They resulted in discrimination, segregation, and disenfranchisement, and while the laws weren’t adopted in the North, many of their effects were still felt there as well. The Supreme Court officially legalized southern segregation in 1896 in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, deciding that facilities for white people and Black people could be “separate but equal.”

These conditions continued for many decades, and African Americans were consistently repressed. Black men fought heroically during World War II in the 1940s and were dismayed to return home to prejudice and racism. In 1948, President Harry Truman issued an executive order to end discrimination in the military.

A number of specific protests stand out during the civil rights movement. One such protest took place in 1955, when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama and was arrested. Parks’s act of protest inspired a group led by Martin Luther King, Jr. to boycott the Montgomery bus system for over a year until the Supreme Court declared that segregated seating was unconstitutional. Parks became the “mother of the modern day civil rights movement.”

In 1957, President Eisenhower pressured Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1957, which provided greater federal protections against disenfranchisement of Black people. Despite this progressive instance, racism flourished.

On August 28, 1963, more than 200,000 people participated in a peaceful March on Washington, led by civil rights leaders including Martin Luther King, Jr. It was during this march that King gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech advocating equality and freedom.

The Civil Rights Movement continued throughout the 1960s with successes (such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965) and setbacks. This period saw significant violence, including the bombing of a Black church in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963; the “Bloody Sunday” attacks on a march in Selma, Alabama in 1965; and the assassination of civil rights leaders, including King. Much of this violence was carried out by the Ku Klux Klan, a hate group that focused on using violence to oppose the Civil Rights Movement.

While the Civil Rights Movement is commonly described as ending in 1968 with the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, systemic injustices remain for African Americans and other minority groups who strive for equal protection under the law and for equal standing in society.

## Directions

Now that you have read about your assigned protest, work together as a group to imagine how you would best bring the story of that resistance to life onstage. Use the following prompts to guide your brainstorm.

- **Who are the stakeholders in the protest? Which could be main characters of your story?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- **What went well in the protest? What didn't go well?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
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\_\_\_\_\_
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
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**Write your pitch here:**

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# TURN OF THE CENTURY

*Newsies* is set in 1899 – the end of the 19th century and a time of great change around the world. Advances in technology, like the invention of the film camera, the commercial automobile, and successful prototypes of the airplane meant people were more mobile and informed than ever before. Around the world, colonized nations fought to gain their independence and workers went on strike to improve their working conditions. Farmers in South Africa fought for their independence against their British colonizers in battles later known as the Boer Wars. The Spanish colonies of Cuba and the Philippines also wished to govern their own countries and the struggle led to an international conflict.

In New York City, Mayor Robert Van Wyck presided over a newly incorporated metropolis. The boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Richmond (later known as Staten Island) were brought together on January 1, 1898, making New York City the second largest city in the world. The city was speeding forward into the new century with several new improvements. Construction for a public library at 42nd Street and 5th Avenue in Manhattan began in the spring of 1899. The Bronx Zoo also opened in 1899 with 843 animals in 22 exhibits. With the expansion of the boroughs, the city had to make it possible for people to get around town. In addition to the already completed Brooklyn Bridge, the city began laying tracks for a subway that would connect Manhattan and Brooklyn. The subway would open to passengers five years later, in 1904.

At Ellis Island, immigrants from all over the world continued to surge into the city. An estimated 330,000 people came through New York Harbor that year, primarily from Italy and Russia. Many of these new Americans settled on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, making the cramped neighborhoods even tighter.

## Directions:

Working in small groups, select an event described in the second or third paragraph of the article. Work with your group to write a scene from a play based on the event you selected; your scene should include at least three characters and 15 lines of dialogue and follow these guidelines:

- Each character must have a name.
- You must communicate your setting using dialogue or stage directions. Stage directions are unspoken words that describe the setting, and tell us where the actors go and what they do onstage. You can put your stage directions in parentheses.
- Your scene must have a beginning (exposition), middle (conflict), and an end (resolution).
- Incorporate historical facts from the article as you write your scene, but also use your imagination to create characters and fill in the gaps of your story.



**Music by**  
Alan Menken

**Lyrics by**  
Jack Feldman

**Book by**  
Harvey Fierstein

**President and Producer, Disney Theatrical Productions**  
Thomas Schumacher

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Dos Pueblos High School; Goleta, CA  
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George Washington High School; Cedar Rapids, IA  
St. Joseph's Preparatory School; Philadelphia, PA  
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