



# THE OLD GLOBE

Presents

## Brighton Beach Memoirs



## Broadway Bound

Two Plays by Neil Simon

Directed by Scott Schwartz

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This Study Guide was prepared by The Old Globe Education Department with research and activity designs by Teaching Artist, Radhika Rao.

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The program for *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Broadway Bound* can be found online at [http://www.theoldglobe.org/upload/productions/pdf/Brighton\\_broadway\\_program.pdf](http://www.theoldglobe.org/upload/productions/pdf/Brighton_broadway_program.pdf)

## Welcome to The Old Globe

### About the Plays

We are pleased to welcome San Diego students and teachers to The Old Globe and to Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Broadway Bound*, directed by Scott Schwartz. *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and

*Broadway Bound* are among Neil Simon's most popular, most acclaimed, and one of the most produced plays in the last 25 years. They are part of his humorous and moving trilogy of semi-autobiographical plays. The two plays feature Eugene Jerome and his family, living in a lower-middle class neighborhood in Brighton Beach, New York. Simon based *Brighton Beach Memoirs* on his memories of growing up in New York City in the years just before World War II. *Broadway Bound* is the third play in the trilogy and is set in 1949 shortly after the end of World War II. Both plays are marked by deft characterizations and endearing humor, which are hallmarks of Simon's writing. *Brighton Beach Memoirs* debuted on Broadway on March 27, 1983, at the Alvin Theatre, with Matthew Broderick playing the lead role of Eugene. Like many of Simon's successes, *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Broadway Bound* enjoyed a lengthy run and financial success. *Brighton Beach Memoirs* won Simon the New York Drama Critics Circle Prize for Best Play.

#### OTHER NEIL SIMON PLAYS PRODUCED BY THE OLD GLOBE:

*Rumors* (1988)  
*Jake's Women* (1990)  
*Lost in Yonkers* (2010)

Our Teaching Artists will visit your classrooms to assist in preparing students for their visit to the theatre. This Study Guide has been created to further the students' exploration of the play and its themes. The guide is meant to stimulate discussion, not to present a definitive voice or the "right answer." In the Study Guide, *Brighton Beach Memoir* and *Broadway Bound*

are analyzed from three different perspectives: *Historical*, *Theatrical*, and *Life-Skills*. In the process of using the Study Guide, attending our pre-performance workshop and watching these plays we hope that students will gain an enriched, intimate view into the experience of working class families during the period of the Great Depression and in the years preceding World War II (*Brighton Beach Memoirs*), as well as the period following the war, in New York City (*Broadway Bound*). Students will also consider certain styles in the theatre (e.g., the running narration by the character of Eugene Jerome) that are particular to these two plays. In addition, especially since the plays deal with myriad social issues, individual life choices, and complex interpersonal relationships, we have designed a life-skills section in this Study Guide that teachers can use to facilitate critical discussion pertaining to life-skills such as empathy, communication, critical thinking, and courage.

We hope that you will find the information and activities useful. Some suggested activities are provided to help connect students to the play(s) but please feel free to improvise and create your own activities.

## The Old Globe

The internationally-acclaimed, Tony® Award-winning Old Globe is one of the most renowned regional theatres in the country, and has stood as San Diego's flagship arts institution for 75 years.

The Old Globe produces a year-round season of 15 plays and musicals on its three stages including its highly-regarded Shakespeare festival. The Globe has become a gathering place for leading theatre artists from around the world, such as Tom Stoppard, Daniel Sullivan, and Chita Rivera, among many others. Numerous Broadway-bound premieres and revivals, such as *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *The Full Monty*, and *Damn Yankees* have been developed at The Old Globe and have gone on to enjoy highly successful runs in New York and at regional theatres across the country. Under the leadership of CEO/Executive Producer Louis G. Spisto, the Globe is at the forefront of the nation's leading performing arts organizations, setting a standard for excellence in American Theatre.

## About the Playwright: Neil Simon



“Neil Simon has for almost forty years invigorated the stage with touching stories and zany characters, but possibly his greatest contribution has been the ability to create humor from the lives and troubles of everyday people.” -- *American Masters*, from pbs.org<sup>1</sup>

Neil Simon (born Marvin Neil Simon in 1927) was raised in New York City. He is the author of numerous plays, most of which enjoyed critical and financial success and are amongst the most produced plays in the world. Throughout his four-decade career, Simon drew extensively on his own life and experience for materials for his plays. *Come Blow Your Horn* was about two brothers who moved away from home and shared an apartment (just as Simon and his brother had); *Barefoot in the Park* was the story of newlyweds adjusting to married life (similar to his own married life experiences). Many of his works take place in the working-class New York neighborhoods that he spent his foundational years in. With his autobiographical trilogy, “*Brighton Beach Memoirs*” (1983), “*Biloxi Blues*” (1985), and “*Broadway Bound*” (1986), Simon found his greatest critical acclaim, and for his 1991 follow-up, “*Lost in Yonkers*,” Simon was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Drama. Many of his plays were adapted into films, and Simon himself,

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/neil-simon/about-neil-simon/704/>

wrote more than twenty screenplays.<sup>2</sup> These include adaptations of his own plays and original work too, including *The Out-of-Towners*, *Murder by Death* and *The Goodbye Girl*. Simon is the recipient of multiple awards including multiple Tony Awards, Drama Desk Awards, Writers Guild of America Awards, and the Golden Globe Award. In 1983, he was inducted into the American Theatre Hall of Fame.

### WORDS FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

“Everyone thinks they can write a play;  
You just write down what happened to you.  
But the art of it is drawing from all the moments of your life”.

■ Neil Simon

(New York Times, March 24, 1985)

### READ ABOUT NEIL SIMON’S LIFE AND WORKS

*Rewrites* (1996) by Neil Simon

*The Play Goes On* (1999) by Neil Simon; or

*Neil Simon: A Biography* by R. Johnson (1985)

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<sup>2</sup> Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th Edition, 10/1/2009

## The Artistic Team

## STAFF

Director.....	Scott Schwartz
Scenic Design.....	Ralph Funicello <sup>+</sup>
Costume Design.....	Alejo Vietti
Lighting Design.....	Matthew McCarthy
Sound Design.....	Paul Peterson
Original Music Composition.....	Michael Holland
Studio Teacher .....	Judy Ridgeway
Vocal and Dialect Coach.....	Jan Gist
Assistant to the Director.....	Krysti Litt
Stage Manager.....	Diana Moser*
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Erin Gioia Albrecht*
Assistant Scenic Design.....	Sean Fanning
Assistant Scenic Design.....	Christopher Ward
Assistant Lighting Design.....	Michelle Caron
Assistant Costume Design.....	Charlotte Deveaux
Production Interns.....	David Mancini, Amy Ramsdell

## CAST

(in order of appearance)

### ***Brighton Beach Memoirs***

Eugene.....	Brandon
Uranowitz*	
Stan Jerome.....	Joseph Parks*
Eugene Jerome.....	Austyn Myers*
Kate Jerome.....	Karen Ziemba*
Blanche Morton.....	Bonnie Black*
Laurie Morton.....	Julia Vanderwiell
Nora Morton.....	Allie Trimm*
Stanley Jerome.....	Sloan Grenz*
Jack.....	David Bishins*

**Broadway Bound**

Kate Jerome.....	Karen Ziemba*
Ben Epstein.....	Howard Green*
Eugene Jerome.....	Brandon Uranowitz*
Stan Jerome.....	Joseph Parks*
Blanche Morton.....	Bonnie Black*
Jack Jerome.....	David Bishins*

**UNDERSTUDIES#**

for adult *Stan Jerome* — Grayson DeJesus; for *Jack Jerome* — Ben Diskant;  
for adult *Eugene Jerome* — Christian Durso; for *Ben Epstein* — Andrew Hutcheson;  
for young *Eugene Jerome* and young *Stanley Jerome* — Josh Pinkowski; for *Kate Jerome* — Ryman Sneed; for *Blanche Morton* — Bree Welch; for *Laurie Morton* and *Nora Morton* — Miriam White

\*Members of Actors'Equity Association  
+Associate Artist of The Old Globe Theatre

#Understudies are substitute actors who learn the role of another actor in order to be able to act as a replacement if necessary, e.g., if the actor is sick or has an accident, which leaves him/her unable to do the role on a particular day of the show.

## HISTORY & CONTEXT

“What I’m telling you are my secret memoirs... It’s called, ‘The Unbelievable, Fantastic and Completely Private Thoughts of I, Eugene Morris Jerome, in this, the fifteenth year of his life, in the year nineteen hundred and thirty seven, in the community of Brighton Beach, Borough of Brooklyn, Kings County, City of New York, Empire State of the American Nation’—” Eugene in *Brighton Beach Memoirs*.

### BRIGHTON BEACH

Brighton Beach is the backdrop of Neil Simon’s plays *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Broadway Bound*. This diverse neighborhood of New York City is located in the borough of Brooklyn “Brighton Beach inspires sympathetic nostalgia for regions its current residents left behind—whether last century’s immigrants branching out from Manhattan; Ukrainian

and Russian Jews escaping anti-Semitism in their home countries; more recent post-Soviet Russian immigrants; or Chinese, Vietnamese, Mexicans, and Pakistanis staking their own place in New York” (McEvers, 2005)<sup>3</sup>.



Brighton Beach is bounded by Coney Island at Ocean Parkway to the west, affluent, but non-gated Manhattan Beach at Corbin Place to the east, Gravesend at Neptune Avenue to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. Brighton Beach was dubbed "Little Odessa" by the local populace long ago, due to many of its residents

having come from Odessa, Russia.

Brighton Beach is home to many other ethnic groups. The community is replete with restaurants, food stores, cafes, boutiques, banks, etc., located primarily along Brighton Beach Avenue and its cross streets. The neighborhood, with an estimated population of 350,000 (mostly from Russia and Ukraine), has a distinctively ethnic feel – akin to Manhattan's Chinatown. The proximity of Brighton Beach to the city's beaches (Brighton Beach Avenue runs parallel to the Coney Island beach area and the Boardwalk) and the fact that the neighborhood is directly served by the Brighton Beach Avenue



<sup>3</sup> <http://www.villagevoice.com/2005-05-03/nyc-life/close-up-on-brighton-beach/>



subway station, makes it a popular summer weekend destination for thousands of New York City residents<sup>4</sup>.

*New York Vintage: Brooklyn: Brighton Beach 1905*  
© The United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs Division

**1937:**

## **THE GREAT DEPRESSION**



*Brighton Beach Memoirs* is set in 1937, a year that is documented as being part of the period of the 'Great Depression'<sup>5</sup>. The Great Depression was an economic slump in North America, Europe, and other industrialized areas of the world that began in 1929 and lasted until about 1939. It was the longest and most severe depression ever experienced by the industrialized Western world. As you will see in the play, the Jerome family

deals with severe economic struggles, typical of the Great Depression, which underline and heighten the conflicts occurring within the family.

The Great Depression<sup>6</sup> may be said to have begun with a catastrophic collapse of stock-market prices on the New York Stock Exchange in October 1929. During the next three years stock prices in the United States continued to fall, until by late 1932 they had dropped to only about 20 percent of their 1929 value. Besides ruining many thousands of individual investors, this precipitous decline in the value of assets greatly strained banks. The failure of so many banks, combined with a general and nationwide loss of confidence in the economy, led to much-reduced levels of spending and demand and hence of production, thus aggravating the downward spiral. The result was drastically falling output and drastically rising unemployment; by 1932, U.S. manufacturing output had fallen to 54 percent of its 1929 level, and unemployment had risen to between 12 and 15 million workers, or 25-30 percent of the work force.

The Great Depression began in the United States but quickly turned into a worldwide economic slump owing to the special and intimate relationships that had been forged between the United States and European economies after World War I.

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>5</sup> Department of English, University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign. Retrieved from <http://www.english.illinois.edu/Maps/depression/depression.htm>

<sup>6</sup> 11.6.3 History-Social Science Standards for California Public Schools: Students understand the human toll of the Great Depression.

The Great Depression had important consequences in the political sphere. In the United States, economic distress led to the election of the Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt to the presidency in late 1932. Roosevelt introduced a number of major changes in the structure of the American economy, using increased government regulation and massive public-works projects to promote a recovery. But despite this active intervention, mass unemployment and economic stagnation continued, though on a somewhat reduced scale, with about 15 percent of the work force still unemployed in 1939 at the outbreak of World War II. After that, unemployment dropped rapidly as American factories were flooded with orders from overseas for armaments and munitions. The depression ended soon after the United States' entry into World War II in 1941. In Europe, the Great Depression strengthened extremist forces and lowered the prestige of liberal democracy. In Germany, economic distress directly contributed to Adolf Hitler's rise to power in 1933. The Nazis' public-works projects and their rapid expansion of munitions production ended the Depression there by 1936.

**FURTHER REFERENCE ABOUT THE DEPRESSION**

**BOOKS WRITTEN DURING THE PERIOD OF, AND ABOUT, THE DEPRESSION**

<p><i>Grapes of Wrath</i> by John Steinbeck</p>	<p><i>Let Us Now Praise Famous Men</i> by James Agee and Walker Evans</p>	<p><i>Essays on the Great Depression</i> by Ben Bernanke</p>	<p><i>The Great Depression: America 1929-1941</i> by Robert S McElvaine</p>	<p><i>The Great Depression: America 1929-1941</i> by Robert S McElvaine</p>
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*The Grapes of Wrath* is a novel published in 1939 and written by John Steinbeck, who was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1940 and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962. Set during the Great Depression, the novel focuses on a poor family of sharecroppers, the Joads, driven from their Oklahoma home by drought, economic hardship, and changes in the agriculture industry. In a nearly hopeless situation, they set out for California along with thousands of other "Okies" in search of land, jobs and dignity.

Agee and Evans spent eight weeks in the summer of 1936 researching among three white sharecropping families mired in desperate poverty. They returned with Evans' portfolio of stark images—of families with gaunt faces, adults and children huddled in bare shacks before dusty yards in the Depression-era nowhere of the deep south—and Agee's detailed notes.

This book was written during the Great Depression and offers us an intimate perspective of a young immigrant boy growing up in the slums of New York.

1937:

## THE HOLOCAUST



*Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels urges a Berlin crowd to boycott Jewish businesses. (April 1933). © U.S. National Archives, William Blye Collection*

Brighton Beach Memoirs is set in 1937, under the backdrop of the Holocaust<sup>7</sup>, which Neil Simon's characters refer to in the play. The Holocaust<sup>8</sup> was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. "Holocaust" is a word of Greek origin meaning "sacrifice by fire." The Nazis, who came to power in Germany in January 1933, believed that Germans were "racially superior" and that the Jews, deemed "inferior," were an alien threat to the so-called German racial community.

During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived "racial inferiority": Roma (Gypsies), the disabled, and some of the Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, and others). Other groups were persecuted on political, ideological, and behavioral grounds, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and homosexuals.

In 1933, the Jewish population of Europe stood at over nine million. Most European Jews lived in countries that Nazi Germany would occupy or influence during World War II. By 1945, the Germans and their collaborators killed nearly two out of every three European Jews as part of the "Final Solution," the Nazi policy to murder the Jews of Europe.

In the early years of the Nazi regime, the National Socialist government established concentration camps to detain real and imagined political and ideological opponents. Increasingly in the years before the outbreak of war, SS and police officials incarcerated Jews, Roma, and other victims of ethnic and racial hatred in these camps. To concentrate and monitor the Jewish population as well as to facilitate later deportation of the Jews, the Germans and their collaborators created ghettos, transit camps, and forced-labor camps for Jews during the war years. The German authorities also

<sup>7</sup> 10.7. 3 & 10.8.5. History-Social Science Standards for California Public Schools: Students analyze incidents leading up to World War II, particularly the Holocaust and rise of totalitarian and fascist regime in Germany.

<sup>8</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Retrieved from <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005143>

established numerous forced-labor camps, both in the so-called Greater German Reich and in German-occupied territory, for non-Jews whose labor the Germans sought to exploit.

Between 1941 and 1944, Nazi German authorities deported millions of Jews from Germany, from occupied territories, and from the countries of many of its Axis allies to ghettos and to killing centers, often called extermination camps, where they were murdered in specially developed gassing facilities.

In the final months of the war, SS guards moved camp inmates by train or on forced marches, often called “death marches,” in an attempt to prevent the Allied liberation of large numbers of prisoners. As Allied forces moved across Europe in a series of offensives against Germany, they began to encounter and liberate concentration camp prisoners, as well as prisoners en route by forced march from one camp to another. The marches continued until May 7, 1945, the day the German armed forces surrendered unconditionally to the Allies. For the western Allies, World War II officially ended in Europe on the next day, May 8 (V-E Day), while Soviet forces announced their “Victory Day” on May 9, 1945.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, many of the survivors found shelter in displaced persons (DP) camps administered by the Allied powers. Between 1948 and 1951, almost 700,000 Jews emigrated to Israel, including 136,000 Jewish displaced persons from Europe. Other Jewish DPs emigrated to the United States and other nations. The last DP camp closed in 1957. The crimes committed during the Holocaust devastated most European Jewish communities and eliminated hundreds of Jewish communities in occupied Eastern Europe entirely.

**FURTHER REFERENCE ABOUT  
THE HOLOCAUST**

**THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM  
RECOMMENDS READING THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:**

<i>The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945</i>	<i>The Holocaust: The Fate of the European Jewry 1932-1945</i>	<i>War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust</i>
by	by	by
Lucy Dawidowicz	Leni Yahil	Doris Bergen

## AMERICA IN THE LATE 1940s

Before the period of the late forties, when *Broadway Bound* is set, there had been nearly 20 years of economic stagnation, thanks to the Depression and WWII. After the



war ended, and the veterans returned, Americans were finally ready to enjoy life. This period was marked by several characteristic changes<sup>9</sup>:

**Soldiers returned home** and started families. This period is marked by the advent of “**baby boom children**”—a population explosion of children in the USA. (photo courtesy of History.com)



- ✚ The emergence and growth of **suburban housing**, due to lack of adequate housing in the cities and consequent overflow out of the cities to the suburbs.
- ✚ The growth of the **automobile industry**: Suburban houses were far from jobs, schools, businesses, and so on. The trains couldn't be relied upon fully. People needed a way to get from one place to another reliably, and cars became the transportation mode of choice.
- ✚ The emergence of **Malls**: Stores and businesses began moving close to where people were living, and found that a location right off a highway made

<sup>9</sup> <http://intranet.dalton.org/ms/8th/students/decades99/Muffins1950/Pages/sc.html>

them very accessible. Stores would group together with a large parking lot, and these became known as shopping centers.

- ✚ **The Nuclear Family:** Within these new suburban houses, the American family structure developed and evolved from the pre-war years. Known as the “nuclear family”, families were marked by only a father, mother, and their children sharing living quarters.
- ✚ **Rebellious Teenagers:** By early 1956, there were 13 million teenagers in the country (Halberstam, 1994)<sup>10</sup>. These teens were the new generation, breaking away from their parents and defining itself in new ways (see Music). Now, as this new middle class emerged in America, it created a whole new group of consumers: the young. The teens had an average weekly income of \$10.55, about the same as a whole family’s disposable income 15 years before (Halberstam, 1994). Their purchases leaned towards the music-related industry, anything from records to radios. These teenagers affected the nation as well. They were the beginning of youth culture, the first young people to really have an impact on the nation as a whole.
- ✚ **Rock ‘n Roll Music:** Rock ‘n Roll brought about a revolution in music which simultaneously reflected the changes going on in the lives of the younger generation. Rock ‘n Roll was a new form of music that combined country-western, pop, jazz, and rhythm and blues, therefore appealing to audiences from all cultures. Elvis Presley, Bill Haley, and Chuck Berry pioneered the Rock ‘n Roll movement. Elvis Presley was known as the King of Rock ‘n Roll.
- ✚ **Radio & Television:**



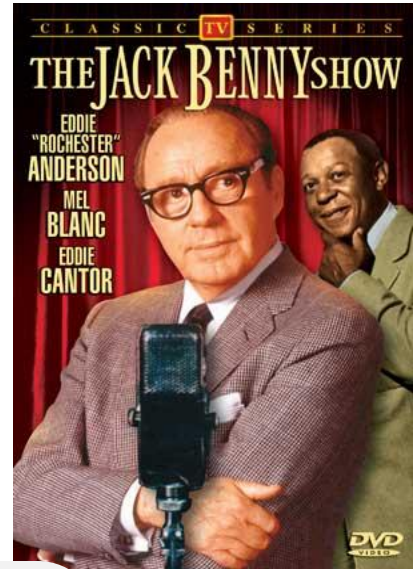
Photo courtesy of ioffer.com



Photo courtesy of monroelab.net

<sup>10</sup> Halberstam, D. (1994). *The Fifties*. New York: Ballantine Books.

In *Broadway Bound*, Eugene Jerome and his brother Stanley work together as comedy writers for Radio. Radio was the lifeline for Americans in the 1940's, providing news, music and entertainment, much like television today. Programming included soap operas, quiz shows, children's hours, mystery stories, fine drama, and sports. Kate Smith and Arthur Godfrey were popular radio hosts. The government relied heavily on radio for propaganda. Like the movies, radio faded in popularity as television became prominent. One of the major social changes of the 1950's was the "coming of age" of television and its effect on people's leisure habits and family life. While the first regular commercial broadcast had been in 1939, television broadcasting had been suspended during the war and did not take off until the 1950's. Many of the most popular radio shows continued on in television, including Red Skelton, Abbott and Costello, Jack Benny, Bob Hope, and *Truth or Consequences*.

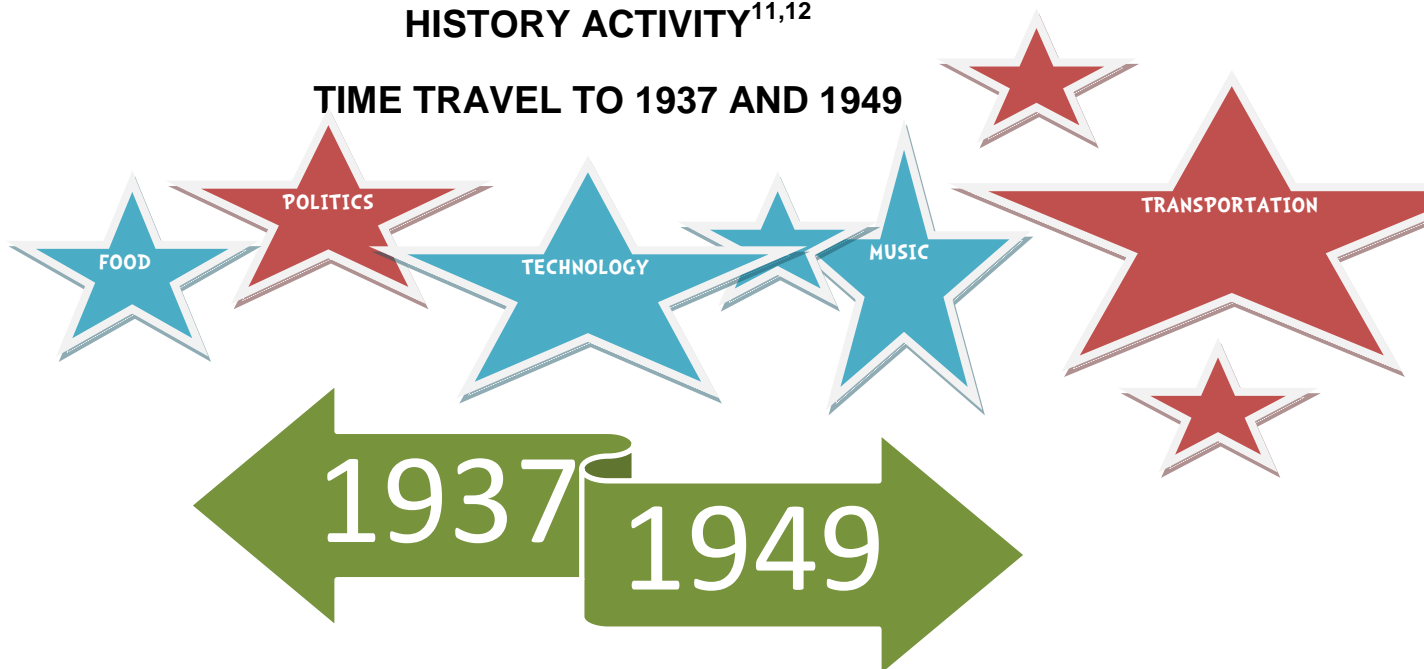


In *Broadway Bound*, Stan talks about Jack Benny as one of the "stars of CBS". To hear what Jack Benny's Radio Program was like in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, Click on or cut and paste this link to your internet browser to hear sound clips from this famous radio show by Jack Benny:

[http://www.freeotrshows.com/otr/j/Jack\\_Benny\\_Program.html](http://www.freeotrshows.com/otr/j/Jack_Benny_Program.html)

## HISTORY ACTIVITY<sup>11,12</sup>

### TIME TRAVEL TO 1937 AND 1949



In this activity, students will “travel back” in time. They will work in pairs to study what life was like during 1937 and 1949.

Each person in the pair will each choose to “travel back” to either 1937 or 1949. For instance, if one person in the pair chooses 1937, the other person will choose 1949.

You may choose, as we have here, to use the metaphor of “time travel” for this exercise. Through immersing themselves in facts about these two years using the resources of the library & the internet, students will “travel back in time”. Through research done at the library or on the internet, students will gain knowledge and understanding one of the two years and will thus become time-travelers who are able to gain a close picture of what life was like during these two years.

For the sake of simplicity, students can choose one thing that they will investigate during their time travel. They could use one of those provided above —e.g., music, technology, politics, food, modes of transportation, etc. Or they could choose their own.

Once students are done with your online and/or library research, ask your students: What did you learn about that time? Ask them to share their “time travel” adventures with their partner and compare and contrast their findings. For instance, how was the music in 1937 different from the music in 1949? How is it different from the music of today?

How is your life different from what it was like in 1937/1949? If given a choice, would you like to return to 1937/1949? Why? Why not?

<sup>11</sup> 11.8. History-Social Science Standards for California Public Schools: Students analyze the economic boom and social transformation of post–World War II America.

<sup>12</sup> VAPA 1.2. Visual and Performing Arts Standards for California Public Schools, Theatre Comprehension and Analysis of the Elements of Theatre: Research, analyze, or serve as a dramaturg for a play.

# The World of Theatre



In *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, Nora believes that she has a shot at being a Broadway show performer<sup>13</sup>.

Broadway is a famous street in New York City, where some of the best live theater is performed.<sup>14</sup> A Broadway show is a play or musical that is performed in one of the specially designated theaters along or very near this street. A show can also be called a Broadway show if it is a traveling show that has once been in one of these theaters or is bound for one of these theaters. For example, the play *Golda's Balcony* recently performed at The Old Globe was a Broadway show that started on Broadway. Some shows that premiere at non-Broadway based theaters such as The Old Globe are "Broadway Bound",

that is, they are scheduled to be performed on Broadway in New York City after they premiere in their local theaters. For example, the musical comedy, *Robin and the 7 Hoods* premiered at the Old Globe and is Broadway bound in the fall of 2010.

The most renowned Broadway performers can sing, dance, and act. Read brief online biographies of some famous Broadway performers on PBS's website, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/broadway/stars/performers.html>

<sup>13</sup> Visual and Performing Arts Standards for California Public Schools, Theatre VAPA 1.1. Development of Vocabulary of Theatre.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Schumacher's (2007) *How does the Show Go On? An Introduction to the Theater*, p.12.

## THE NARRATOR

In both *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Broadway Bound*, the character of Eugene Jerome (played by Austyn Myers shown below) acts as the **narrator**<sup>15</sup> in the play: the person who is a liason between the characters in the play and the audience. He speaks both to the characters in the play as well as to the audience members.

### AFTER YOU SEE THE PLAY

Think about why Neil Simon wrote Eugene's character as the narrator. What purpose does Eugene's narration serve in the play(s)?



A narrator offers commentary, a point of view about a story. We've all been narrators of stories at some point in our life. Whenever we retell a story or make up a story, we are acting as narrators. Haven't you ever shared a story with your friends or family about something interesting that happened at school or in your neighborhood? But in theatre, narrators have a special role of communicating with the audience members. Sometimes narrators will communicate both with the other characters on stage and with the audience (such as Eugene in *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Broadway Bound* or the Stage Manager in *Our Town* or Tom, the narrator in *The Glass Menagerie*) and sometimes they will not be part of the main action and instead serve as witnesses and interpreters of the action happening on stage. Some narrators sing (such as the Narrator in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*). Sometimes there are multiple narrators in a play (such as in German playwright, Bertolt Brecht's plays: e.g., *The Good Woman of Szechuan*) who offer multiple perspectives to the audience.

### PRACTICE BEING A NARRATOR

Think of something interesting (exciting, shocking, exhilarating, horrifying, etc) that you have witnessed or that has happened to you recently. Pick two different individuals to narrate the story to separately: for example, an older family member and a close friend. Tell the first person your story and then the next. Notice how you tell the story in the two different situations. Did you omit certain elements of the story? Did you emphasize different things? Did you have a strong point of view about the events and outcomes? Did you try to recreate the sounds and voices of the characters as you tell the story?

<sup>15</sup> Visual and Performing Arts Standards for California Public Schools, Theatre VAPA 1.1. Development of Vocabulary of Theatre.

## BASIC THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Your students are representatives for your school when you are at the theatre. The pointers below will help you prepare your students for their visit to The Old Globe. Please take the time to educate your students on appropriate behavior at the theatre.

- 1. Arrive on time**  
The time posted is the time the show actually starts... unlike at the movies, there are no commercials or previews! If you have arrived after the performance has begun you may be asked to wait to take your seats until it is appropriate to do so. Since parking can be a challenge, we suggest you plan on arriving in Balboa Park one hour prior to the scheduled start time.
- 2. Keep the theatre clean**  
We allow no food or drinks in the theatre. However, after the show you may picnic on the plaza or eat at the tables in front of Lady Carolyn's Pub.
- 3. Be considerate of other audience members**  
Talking, whispering, shuffling about in your seats or rattling candy wrappers during a live performance is disruptive to other audience members who are trying to enjoy the show.
- 4. Do not distract the actors**  
The actors can see and hear what goes on in the audience. While our actors appreciate your enthusiasm for their performance, please do not attempt to interact with, talk to or touch them while they are on stage or entering/exiting via the aisle. If you need to take notes for your class, please make sure you are not seated in the first three rows as it can be extremely distracting to the actors. Your comments to one another (both good and bad) can be heard by the actors. Please do not talk about their performances while the show is going on.
- 5. Turn off electronic devices**  
Pagers, cell phones and electronic watches are disruptive and may interfere with the theatre sound system. The lights from text messaging are distracting to the actors. Turn electronic devices off completely during the show.
- 6. Remain seated during the performance** (except for emergencies)  
Actors frequently enter and exit via the aisles and so for safety reasons the aisles need to remain clear during the show. Be sure to use the washroom before the show or during intermission.
- 7. No photographs or recording devices**  
For the safety of cast members, stage crew and the enjoyment of other patrons, no photography (flash or no flash) or recording devices are permitted during the performance. It is also illegal, since we are bound to the copyright rules of several labor and artists' unions. Avoid a situation in which the house manager might be forced to confiscate photographic equipment.

With your cooperation in preparing your students to follow theatre etiquette, rules and guidelines, we are sure you and your students will have an enjoyable and entertaining theatre experience!

## ---- DRAMA ACTIVITY ----

### CONFLICT & OBSTACLES<sup>16</sup>

“The ingredient in every good sketch we’ve ever seen—is conflict!” – Stan in *Broadway Bound*

Theatre always involves conflict and obstacles for characters in the play. In both *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Broadway Bound*, there are numerous obstacles which the different characters face. For example, in *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, Nora wants to drop out of school to become a Broadway performer but her mother, Blanche and uncle, Jack do not let her. In *Broadway Bound*, Eugene wants to go on a date with a girl he likes, but his brother Stan wants him to stay home and focus on writing a comedy sketch for a radio show audition. Theatre usually involves resolution of the conflict, wherein the characters either overcome the obstacles or give in or are defeated by it. Through the following activities, we will experiment with facing and challenging these obstacles as actors.

#### WARM UP- MIME AN OBSTACLE<sup>17</sup>

The goal of this warm up is to simulate the physical experience of what it feels like to face an obstacle, an important aspect of the plot in both of Neil Simon’s plays. This group can be played by up to ten players. The rest of the students in class will be observers. In this game, one person A is chosen to start the game and go to the back of the classroom. The goal of the exercise is for that person to get from the back of the classroom to the classroom door, while avoiding obstacles that may come her/his way. The rest of the classroom act as “obstructers” and will stand in different spaces in the classroom. Their goal is to distract person A with an obstacle that they will mime. For example, a player can mime throwing water at the actor, or throwing marbles on the floor to trip the actor. At a higher level of abstract thinking, a player may play the actor’s mother who is begging (through mime) for her daughter/son not to complete the journey from the back of the classroom to the door. Another may pretend to tempt person A with a candy bar. Whenever person A faces an obstacle they must react to this obstacle and try to overcome this obstacle (also through mime). For example, the actor could shield their face from the “water” or if they are “splashed”, they can wipe their face and continue walking. If they are offered a candy bar, they can refuse to take it and walk on. It is not important that the player know what obstacle is being hurled at them it is important for them to guess and then react appropriately to what they think is being thrown at them.

After a few rounds, where different students get to take on the role of person A, the players can switch places with the observers and another group of 10 students can play the game, while the students who were playing the game previously will now observe. This game is a great physical and imagination warm up, and it gives the actors a sense

**TRY THIS ACTIVITY  
BEFORE WATCHING THE  
PLAY**

<sup>16</sup> Visual and Performing Arts Standards for California Public Schools, Theatre VAPA 2.1, 2.2, 2.3: Development of Theatrical Skills, Creation/Invention in Theatre.

<sup>17</sup> From improvencyclopedia.org.

of what it feels like to face obstacles on the path to achieving one's goals and what one needs to do to keep motivated and work to finally achieve a goal. After the game is over, the facilitator could explain that the play(s) that they are about to see also involve situations, where characters are faced with obstacles and they have to rack their brains and come up with a way to overcome those obstacles. Ask them how they felt when they faced an obstacle? Did they feel energized or discouraged? Were they excited or fearful?

**Note:** For this game, the teacher will have to ensure that her/his students know what 'mime' is, that it involves no words and only gesticulation, physical movement, and facial expressions.

### **TRY OUT MORE IMPROVISATION & ROLE PLAY**

Everyone finds a partner (or is assigned a partner by the teacher). Each person writes down on a piece of paper three things that they absolutely dislike doing and hand it to their partner. For example: a list could involve: bungee jumping, grocery shopping, and listening to a Miley Cyrus song. The partner then chooses one thing from the list, let's say, grocery shopping. Now their task is to convince the other actor to do this activity even though they do not want to. The actors are free to use any strategy they like as long as they don't touch the other actor (the teacher/ facilitator could set behavior guidelines beforehand). The job of the actor who wrote the initial list is to respond truthfully and give in ONLY if they have been fully convinced that it is a good idea to engage in the disliked activity. After a few minutes, the teacher/facilitator can stop the activity and ask the following questions: Were you able to succeed in your mission to convince the other actor? How hard/easy was it to convince the other actor? What were some of the obstacles? How did you overcome them? After one round, the partners can switch roles, and the actor who was doing the convincing can now write down their list and their partner can choose one item and try to convince them to do that activity.

**ADVANCED, TEXT-BASED:** After watching the play(s), the pair of actors takes on roles from the play that are in opposition during particular scenes. For example, one actor could play Eugene and the other, Stan in *Broadway Bound*. The actors choose a particular conflict from the play, and take opposing sides. Continuing from the earlier improve exercise, one character must convince the other actor to do what they want. For example, Stan must convince Eugene not to go on his date and stay home to write the comedy sketch with him.

**TRY THIS ACTIVITY AFTER  
WATCHING THE PLAY**

## A LifeSkills Perspective

“If you give in when you’re eighteen and a half, you’ll give in for the rest of your life, don’t you think?” – Stan in *Brighton Beach Memoirs*

In this section we will explore two ideas that stem from the play(s): dreams and life changing events.<sup>18</sup> Both the plays involve a dream or a vision for the future that different characters hold out at different moments—in some cases the dreams are fulfilled and in others they are not. For example, Nora is not able to fulfill her dream to become a Broadway star but Eugene and Stan are able to break into the comedy writing network. Blanche is able to financially provide for herself and her family but Kate is not able to achieve a happy relationship with her husband, Jack. *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Broadway Bound* both deal with potentially lifechanging events that certain characters go through at different moments in the play(s). For instance, in *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, Blanche and her two daughters come to live with the Jerome family after the untimely passing of her husband, putting tremendous financial pressure on the Jerome family. Nora has to make the potentially life changing decision to either give up on her dreams to go to Broadway or drop out of school. In *Broadway Bound*, Kate and Jack are on the brink of separation; Eugene and Stan have only one night to prove their worth as comedy writers in a once-in-a-lifetime audition opportunity.

### Critical Reflection Activity 1: Map Out Your Dream

Students will start by identifying a dream that they have for themselves and work backwards to map out their future path toward their dream. Their map could take a variety of forms: a timeline, a drawing, a recording of their voice, a poem carving out their path. Once they are done with this activity, students should be asked to share their dream with another classmate and have a discussion. Do they think their partner’s dreams are realistic? What challenges do they need to overcome to pursue our dreams? Ask your students: how important is it to dream and pursue what others may think is impossible? Why? (Note for Teacher/Facilitator: After these dream maps are written/drawn up, and if the students feel comfortable, these “dream maps” could be displayed for the whole class to view).

<sup>18</sup> Visual and Performing Arts Standards for California Public Schools, Theatre VAPA 5.1. Connecting and Applying what is learned in Theatre to Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers.

## Critical Reflection Activity 2: The Event that Changed Your Life

This exercise could be done with a partner as well and takes the form of an interview. One person can interview the other and ask them: “Could you share an event, something that happened to you that you think changed your life?” This could be a happy or sad event. The goal of this exercise is for the participants to experience listening to another person’s story with empathy. The interviewer can take notes or choose to listen and then write up the story after the interviewee has finished speaking. The teachers/facilitators should encourage interviewers to ask relevant, appropriate, follow up questions to understand how the person was impacted by that incident—positively and/or negatively. Once the interview is complete, the interviewee can now take on the role of the interviewer and the whole process repeats.

**Note for Teacher/Facilitator:** Since these exercises involve the exchange of personal information, you may want to do some trust building exercises (see <http://wilderdom.com/games/TrustActivities.html> or <http://improvcyclopedia.org/categories//Trust.html> for examples) to prepare the class for this activity. In addition, you could share some tips about good listening practices and lay out some ground rules, such as the information exchanged during the interview should remain confidential between interviewee and interviewer, the interviewer will not judge the interviewee’s story/dreams but focus on understanding the interviewee’s perspective.

## Glossary of Selected Words, People's names, or Phrases Used

### *Brighton Beach Memoirs*

**Amos 'n Andy** was a situation comedy set in the African-American community. It was very popular in the United States from the 1920s through the 1950s on both radio and television.

**Carol Lombard (1908-1942)** was one of the most famous American actresses in the 1920s and 30s. She was tragically killed at the age of 33 in a plane crash.

**Clarence Darrow (1857-1938)** was one of the most famous American lawyers and leading member of the American Civil Liberties Union, known for his wit and agnosticism.

**Cossaks** were originally members of military communities in Ukraine and southern Russia. During the Second World War Cossacks fought for both the Soviet Union and for Nazi Germany, a choice which led to what has been called the 'Betrayal of Cossacks' by the Allied forces after the war, as the Soviet Union executed 'repatriated' Cossacks and again engaged in repressory policies against their group. After the Collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cossack lifestyle and its ideas have made a return in Russia. Special Cossack units exist in the Russian Military, while Cossacks also have a parallel civil administration and police duties in their home territories that have become an integral part of contemporary society. There are Cossack organizations in Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and other countries.

**Foreign Legion** is a title which has been used by a small number of units of military units composed of foreign volunteers. It usually refers to the French Foreign Legion, part of the French Army established in 1831.

**JoJo Moore, Mel Ott, Sid Luckman of Columbia University, Lou Gehrig:** These were all baseball players active in the 1930s.

**Kaiser Wilhelm** was the last German Emperor and King of Prussia, ruling both the German Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia (included parts of present day Germany, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Denmark, Belgium, Czech Republic, and Netherlands) from 15 June 1888 to 18 November 1918.

**New York Yankees, Cubs, Red Sox, Tigers, St. Louis Browns** are all U.S. baseball teams.

**President Roosevelt (1882-1945):** Franklin D. Roosevelt (also known as FDR) was the 32<sup>nd</sup> President of the United States, famous for leading the U.S. during the time of the Great Depression.

**Ring Lardner (1885-1933)** was an American sports columnist and short story writer famous for his satirical take on the sports world, marriage, and the theatre.

**World Series** has been the annual championship **series** of the highest level of professional baseball in the United States and Canada since 1903

### ***Broadway Bound***

**Abe Burrows (1910-1985)** was a famous humorist, author, and director of radio and the stage.

**Bar Mitzvah** According to Jewish law, when Jewish children reach 13 years old for boys and 12 years old for girls they become responsible for their actions, and "become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah" This also coincides with physical puberty. To mark this occasion, rituals and services are performed around the time that the child reaches Bar Mitzvah age.

**Bach, Beethoven, Rachmaninoff** were all famous classical composers. Bach was active in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Beethoven was active in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, whereas Rachmaninoff worked in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bach and Beethoven were German and Rachmaninoff was Russian.

**Capitalism** Capitalism is an economic system in which the means of production are privately owned; supply, demand, price, distribution, and investments are determined mainly by private decisions in the free market, rather than through a planned economy; and profit is distributed to owners who invest in businesses. There is no consensus on the precise definition of capitalism, nor how the term should be used as an analytical category. There is, however, little controversy that private ownership of the means of production, creation of goods or services for profit in a market, and prices and wages are elements of capitalism.

**CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System)** is a major American television network that started as a radio network.

**Charles Lindbergh (1902-1974)** was an American aviator, author, inventor, explorer, and social activist. He was famous for his solo non-stop flight on May 20–21, 1927, from Roosevelt Field located in Garden City on New York's Long Island to Le Bourget Field in

Paris, France, a distance of nearly 3,600 statute miles in the single-seat, single-engine monoplane *Spirit of St. Louis*.

**Chubby Waters Show** was a prerecorded radio variety show.

**George Raft (1901-1980)** was a famous American actor known for his portrayals of gangsters in crime movies. He is famous for his roles in *Some Like it Hot* (1959) and *Scarface* (1932).

**Harry Truman (1884-1972)** was the 33<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States. He became President after President Roosevelt's sudden death in 1945 and is (in)famous for authorizing the atomic bombing of Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

**Heathcliff** is a fictional character in the novel *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte. This character is often regarded as an archetype of the tortured, dark, Romantic hero whose all-consuming passions destroy both himself and those around him.

**Jack Benny, Ed Sullivan, Arthur Godfrey, Edward R. Murrow** were famous personalities who had programs on CBS. Jack Benny had a comedy show. Ed Sullivan, a variety/music show, Arthur Godfrey was a broadcaster and entertainer and Edward Murrows was a broadcast journalist/news anchor.

**Joe DiMaggio (1914-1999)** was a famous American baseball player who played with the New York Yankees.

**John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937)** was an American oil magnate. Rockefeller revolutionized the petroleum industry and defined the structure of modern philanthropy. He is often regarded as the richest person in history. Rockefeller spent the last 40 years of his life in retirement. His fortune was mainly used to create the modern systematic approach of targeted philanthropy with foundations that had a major effect on medicine, education, and scientific research.

**Miami Beach** is located in Miami Dade County in Florida and is one of America's most famous beach resorts.

**Mount Holyoke** Mount Holyoke College is one of the oldest women's colleges in the United States. It is a liberal arts college for women, located in South Hadley, Massachusetts.

**Park Avenue** is a wide boulevard, running parallel to Madison Avenue on the west and Lexington Avenue on the west. It carries north and southbound traffic in New York City borough of Manhattan. It is one of the wealthiest neighborhoods of the United States, with some of the most expensive real estate.

**Rudolph Valentino (1895-1926)** was an Italian actor, sex symbol, and early pop icon. Known as the "Latin Lover", he was one of the most popular stars of the 1920s, and one of the most recognized stars from the silent film era.

**Sam Perrin, Nate Monnister, Milt Josephsberg** were famous, award-winning television screenwriters of the active in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s.

**Socialism** is an economic and political theory based on public or common ownership and cooperative management of the means of production and allocation of resources. There is little consensus on the current meaning and application of socialism. Some socialists advocate complete nationalization of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, while others advocate state control of capital within the framework of a market economy. Contemporary social democrats propose selective nationalization of key national industries in mixed economies, while maintaining private ownership of capital and private business enterprise.

**Three Stooges** were an American comedy act of the early to mid-20th century best known for their numerous short subject films. Their hallmark was physical farce and extreme slapstick. In films, the stooges were commonly known by their first names: "Moe, Larry, and Curly".

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