



A Study Guide For

Grease

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Behind The Scenes

Synopsis

Grease tells the story of the senior class of Rydell High School in 1959. It follows the wrench-turning, burger munching, too cool for school “Burger Palace Boys” and the sweet and sassy, sleepover loving “Pink Ladies” as they navigate the all-American high school experience in the 50’s. At the heart of the story is a budding romance between Danny Zuko, the hot rod loving leader of the “Burger Palace Boys”, and Sandy Dumbrowski, the sweet and quiet new girl in town. Danny and Sandy had a secret romance over the summer, but when Sandy shows up at Rydell in the fall instead of heading back home, the pair and their relationship must navigate peer pressure, cliques, and high school politics. Will Danny be able to get the girl and still maintain his cool dude status? *Grease* started off with an eight year Broadway run and has become one of the most popular musicals in the world since. Featuring an abundance of Broadway classics such as “Summer Lovin” and “Grease Lightning” as well as music from Buddy Holly, Little Richard, and Elvis Prestley, *Grease* will have you rockin 'around the jukebox from start to finish!



Characters

Sandy Dumbrowski - The new girl in town and Danny's love interest.

Danny Zuko - The cool car obsessed leader of the "Burger Palace Boys".

Kenickie - Danny's best friend and the second in command of the "Burger Palace Boys"

Doody - The youngest of the "Burger Palace Boys", he looks up to the rest.

Sonny Latierri - The wise guy joker of the "Burger Palace Boys" and Marty Marachino's boyfriend.

Roger - The resident clown of "The Burger Palace Boys" and the boyfriend of Jan.

Betty Rizzo - The Sarcastic leader of the "Pink Ladies", and romantically involved with Kenickie.

Frenchy - Member of the "Pink Ladies" who leaves Rydell High to go to beauty school.

Marty - The most "mature" for her age and boy crazy member of the "Pink Ladies", also Sonny's girlfriend.

Jan - The loudest, quirkiest member of the "Pink Ladies", she is the girlfriend of Roger.

Vince Fontaine - The radio announcer and host of National Bandstand.

Miss Lynch - The strict, no nonsense English teacher who has seemingly been at Rydell forever.

Cha-Cha (Charlene Digregorio) - The self-proclaimed "best dancer" at her school, St. Bernadettes. She loves to cause trouble.

Patty Simcox - The perky, preppy head cheerleader at Rydell High.

Eugene Florczyk - The biggest nerd at Rydell High, he's a huge teacher's pet and people love to pick on him.

Johnny Casino (Clarence) - The leader of the band at the high school dance.

Teen Angel - Appears when Frenchie wishes she had a guardian angel to tell her what to do.

Setting

Grease takes place in 1959 at Rydell High, a fictional high school in Illinois.

What is a Greaser?



A Greaser is the term used to describe someone who was a working or lower class teenager in the United States during the 1950s and 60s. The term "Greaser" started out as a derogatory term for poor labourers or automotive mechanics but quickly evolved into a term characterised by slicked back hair, a love for hot rods and motorcycles, and a rebellious attitude.

Activity #1 - Grease Is The Word... Search

Words can be found in any direction (including diagonals) and can overlap each other. Use the word bank below.

P Z C Q Y G G A I W O L M P D B B K S H
J E H O L M R F N N P R P N B W V N M W
Q R E J L U A C C J X R Y Z G A V F Y T
U A E A A S D F A I L B B D Q A D C O S
X M R G B I U N V W P X H S E L L C G E
B Y L F T C A E S A E R G D D L J T E V
L H E S O A T U Q N W I A B M J L I E I
O T A V O L I K R M Z N T S X R D X Q T
D Q D S F U O Q M M C G S K N N V B A O
M Q E P A M N B P E Y N N A D P A J P M
S T R N Z N I B U R G E R J U G F V N O
C M S L R A D L N U B J U K E B O X I T
H T B F O A N Y K O H R E H T A E L C U
O L M V A Q D L E S C K L K N R L T J A
O H O Z O E D I E L H V X P H W F C A F
L Z C U B N V W O G P A Y K I F B Q G D
Z O F S M X L Z N N N D K B N U D M S E
P E F S H L X Y R M Z A W E U O H U C I
H F U O S A X G G N I N T H G I L N V Y
G Y W X F U D I B H D N A T S D N A B U

Word Bank

- | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. combs | 2. sandy | 3. angel | 4. automotive |
| 5. leather | 6. dance | 7. radio | 8. burger |
| 9. jukebox | 10. rydell | 11. danny | 12. grease |
| 13. school | 14. milkshake | 15. lightning | 16. graduation |
| 17. football | 18. cheerleader | 19. bandstand | 20. musical |

Activity #2 - Put On Your Dancing Shoes

Dance plays a huge part in the musical *Grease* and it was an even bigger cultural touchstone in the 50s. Teens loved to dance and created many of their own dances as well as reinventing some of the classics.

Rock N Roll

This was a blanket term for all the dancing done to rock n roll music in the 50s.

The Jitterbug

A simplified version of the lindy hop dating back to the 30s.

Boogie Woogie

Also has its roots in swing music and the lindy hop, but Boogie Woogie focuses more on an energetic, up tempo, piano rhythm.

Chalypso

A term given by National Bandstand to a simplified version of the Cha Cha that was popular among teens.

The Bunny Hop

A novelty party dance, dancers formed a line and jumped forward and backwards following the instructions in the song.

The Hand Jive

A repetitive series of claps and pats that can be performed in large groups in small spaces.

The Twist

A simple dance based on swivelling the hips and ankles into the floor while the torso stays still and the arms are mimicking the hips.

The Stroll

This dance emerged in the late 50's and consisted of a line of women facing a line of men which formed a passageway that the couples could stroll down to the music before rejoining their lines again

The Maddison

A line dance from the late 50s, it is danced without a partner in lines on the floor as steps are called from the music.

The Hully Gully

This dance dates back to the 1920's as a mostly unstructured group dance that features shaking the shoulders and wiggling the knees

Exercise

Have your class break into groups and research a popular style of dance from the 50's.

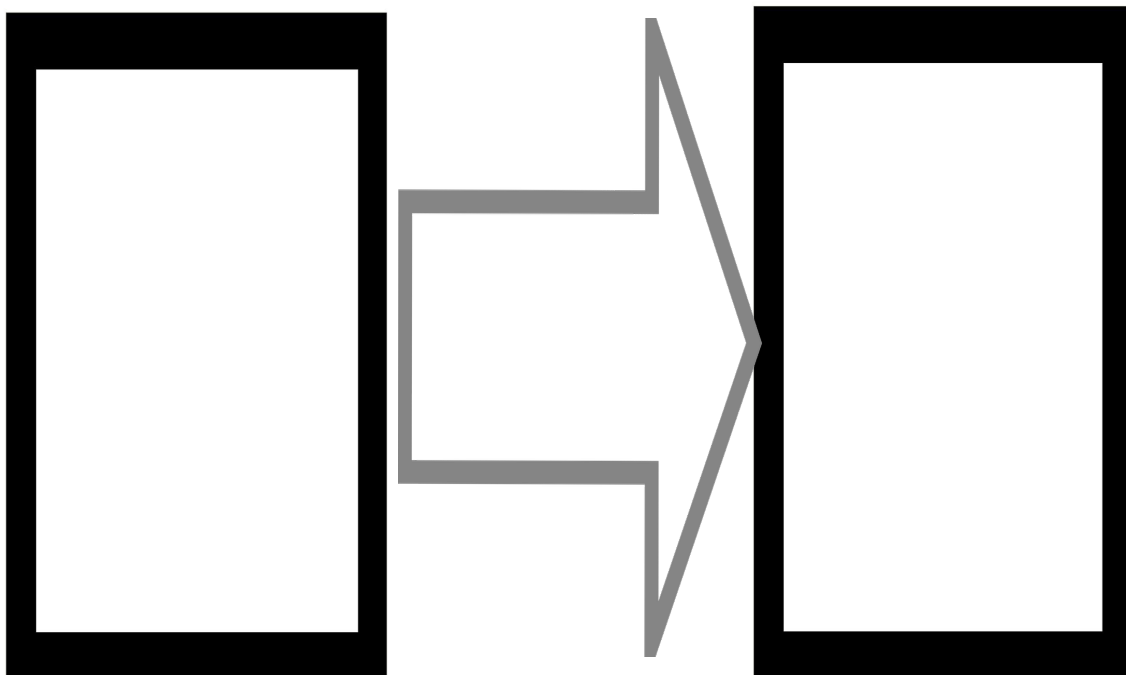
Where was it popular? What popular songs were used? Is it a group, partner, or solo dance? How did it rise to popularity?

After breaking up into groups, have everyone come back and give a small demo of their dances.

Activity #3 - Character Development

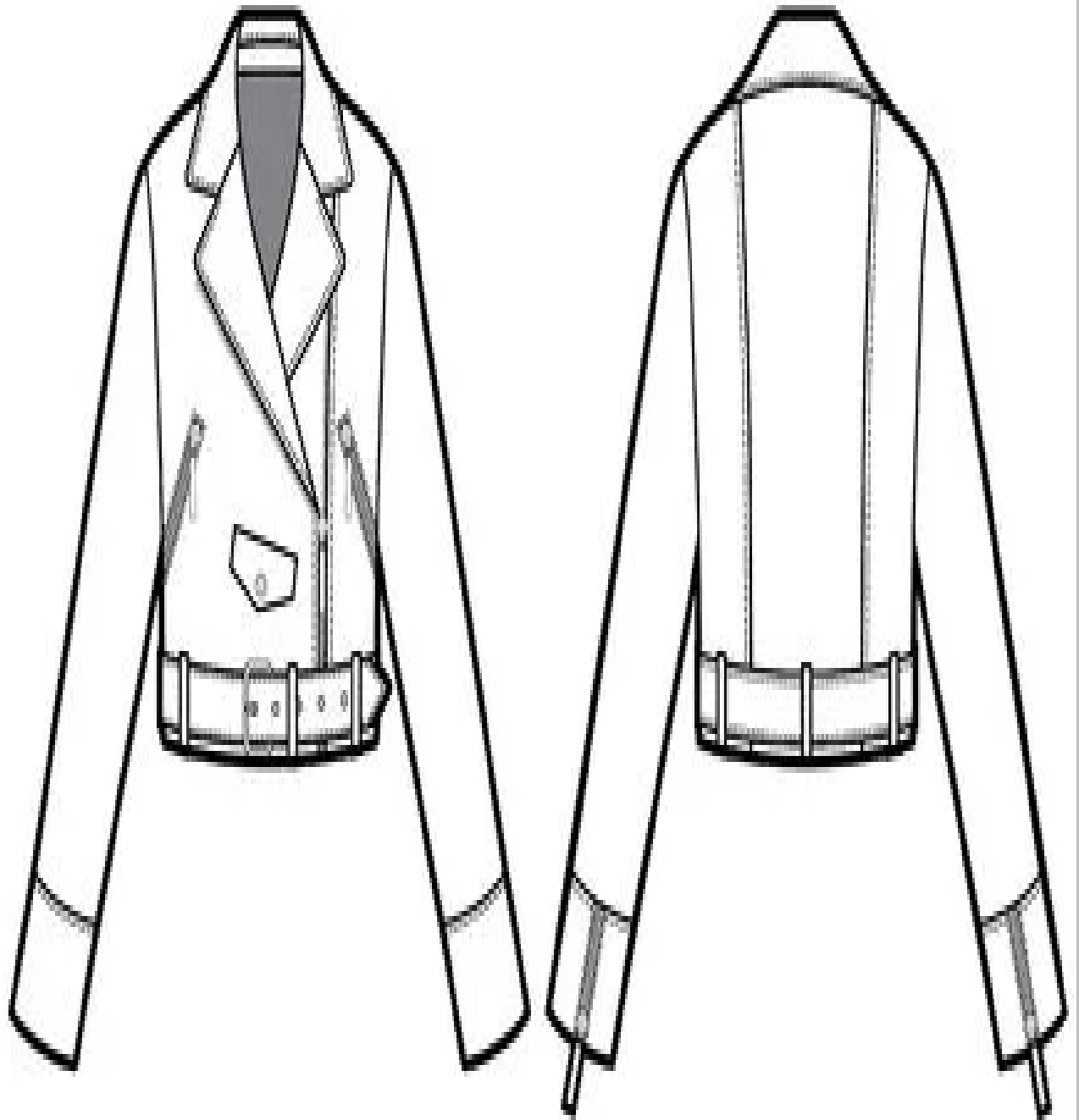
Character development is the changes in that character's behaviour from the start of the play to the end of the play. These changes take place because of the events and situations that the character is put in as the plot of the story unfolds.

- 1) Pick a character from the play *Grease* to focus on for this activity. In the first box list their characteristics at the start of the play.
- 2) In the second box, list that character's traits at the end of the play. The differences could be in their attitude towards themselves or others, or how they act physically.
- 3) In the middle arrow write down what you think may have caused this change.
- 4) List any other characters, events, or factors that you think could have caused this change.



Activity #4 - Design Your Own Leather Jacket

A leather jacket is a staple of any Greaser dress code. They are a way of looking like a part of the group while also being able to express your individuality. Leather jackets would be adorned with patches, labels, and graphics to show off individual interests. What would be on your greaser jacket?



Activity #5 - Group Discussion

- 1) What was your favourite part of the production? Why?
- 2) Who was your favourite character in the play? Why? How did you connect with the character?
- 3) Had you seen the movie "Grease" before watching the play? What were the differences? How did you feel about the differences? What are the advantages to watching the movie? What are the advantages to live theatre?
- 4) Is this the first live play you have ever seen? How did you feel about the experience?

Fun Facts

- ★ *Grease* is named after the 1950's working class youth subculture known as Greasers.
- ★ In 1957 filmmaker Ken Russell recorded teenagers dancing "The Hand Jive" in a crowded London coffee shop. There wasn't enough room for everyone to dance comfortably so they made up clapping choreography that could be done only with their hands. It didn't take long for the craze to make it to the United States and the "Hand Jive" trend was born.
- ★ Rydell High School is named after popular rock and roll singer Bobby Rydell.
- ★ Jeff Conaway, who played Kenickie in the film, actually played Danny on Broadway.
- ★ Elvis was supposed to be Teen Angel in the film instead of Frankie Avalon, but he passed away during filming.
- ★ *Grease* was the highest grossing movie musical of the 20th century.

Resources

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grease_\(musical\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grease_(musical))

<https://stageagent.com/>

<https://www.summerjamboree.com/en/1950s/1950s-dance-styles/>

<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/entertainment/g3193/grease-facts/>