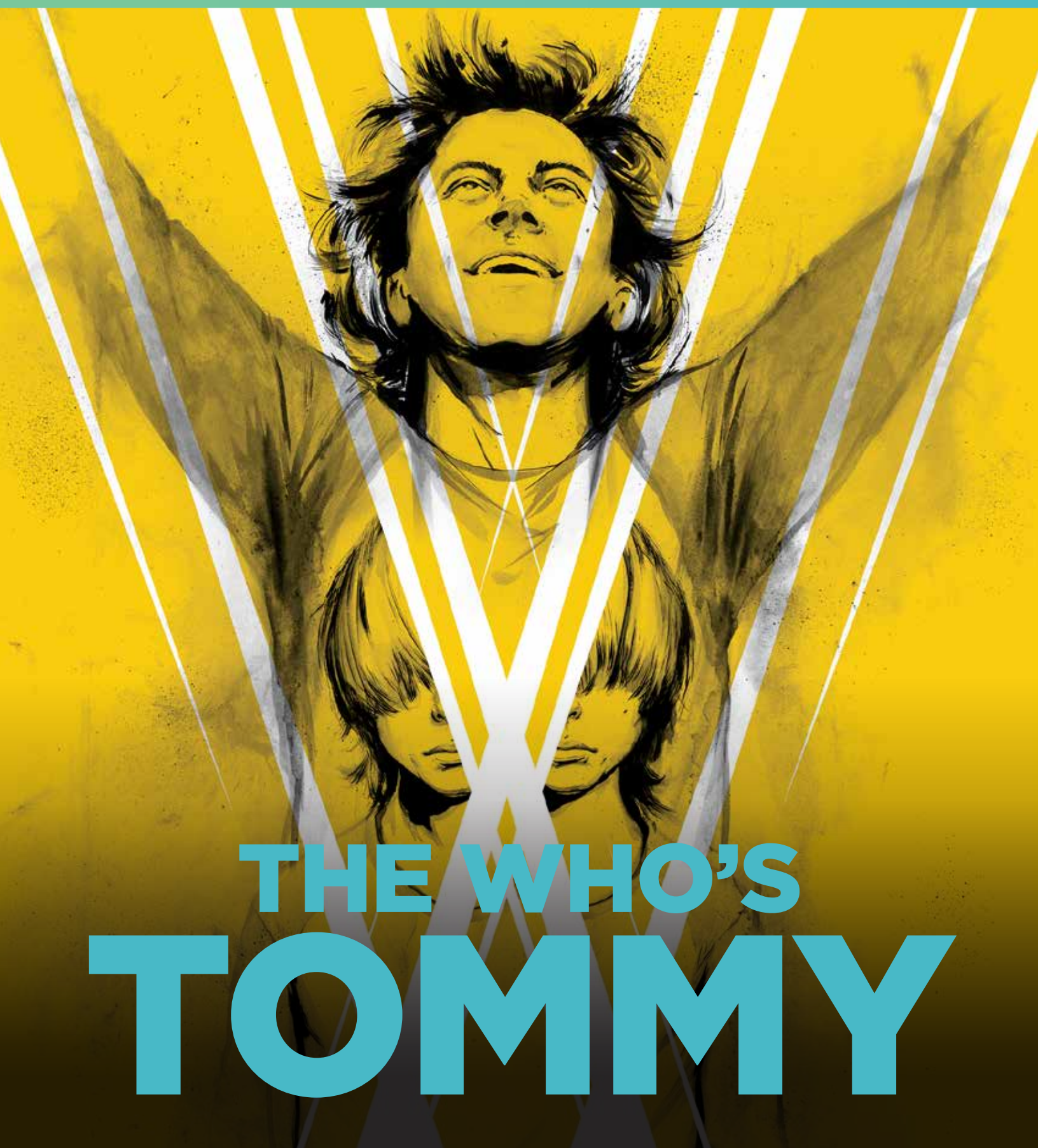




DENVER CENTER FOR THE
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INSIDE OUT

A STUDY GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS



THE WHO'S
TOMMY

THE WHO'S TOMMY SYNOPSIS

Mr. and Mrs. Walker: "You didn't hear it/You
didn't see it/You won't
say nothing to nobody
about it ever in your life."

Tommy, Act I

It is 1940 in war-ravaged Great Britain. British Army Captain Walker goes missing during a military mission and is believed dead. Meanwhile, his apparent widow, Mrs. Walker, has given birth to their son, Tommy. A few years later Captain Walker unexpectedly returns home from a POW camp, and discovers his wife with a lover. Captain Walker kills the man in a fight as Tommy watches. His mother convinces him that he did not see or hear the incident and must not tell anyone about it. Tommy also suffers abuse at the hands of a trusted uncle. As a result of all this trauma, Tommy develops a psychosomatic condition that renders him "deaf, dumb and blind." Tommy retreats into a fantasy world to escape from the grim reality of his life. He relies on his imagination and his sense of touch to create a complex inner world — and a talent for playing pinball.



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THE WHO'S TOMMY

Music and Lyrics by **Pete Townshend**

Book by **Pete Townshend** and **Des McAnuff**

Additional Music and Lyrics by

John Entwistle and **Keith Moon**

Directed by **Sam Buntrock**

Producing Partners

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The Rock Opera TOMMY, which was first performed by The Who in 1969, was originally conceived by Peter Townshend and Kit Lambert with contributions to the development by John Entwistle, Keith Moon and Roger Daltrey.

APR 21 - MAY 27
STAGE THEATRE

COMPOSER/SONGWRITER PETE TOWNSHEND

Pete Townshend is a true rock legend, the lead guitar and songwriter for The Who. Onstage, a dynamic whirlwind, offstage, a thoughtful, well-read and spiritual man, Townshend has grown far beyond his blue collar roots.

Born Peter Dennis Blandford Townshend on May 19, 1945, in London, England, Pete was drawn to music from an early age, influenced by his saxophonist father and his mother, a singer. Growing up in the same working class neighborhood with future bandmates Roger Daltrey and John Entwistle, Townshend started playing in bands as a teenager.

After a stint at the Ealing Art College in 1961, Townshend joined the Detours, which included The Who's eventual lead singer Roger Daltrey, who was playing lead guitar. The group eventually evolved into The Who, moving Daltrey to lead vocals and Townshend to lead guitar, first finding success in their native England in 1965 with such songs as "I Can't Explain" and "My Generation." During the band's early days, Townshend became known for his theatrical concert antics, windmilling his arms as he played his signature power chords, sometimes banging his guitar on the amps, or smashing his guitar on stage (the first time because of his frustration with one of his instruments). This guitar destruction became a signature gimmick, a regular part of The Who's performances. Even livewire drummer Keith Moon got into the act, often kicking over and destroying his drum kit at the end of the show. After their first albums — *My Generation*, *A Quick One*, and *The Who Sell Out* — their fourth album, 1969's landmark concept album *Tommy* was a critical and commercial success, with its break-out chart topper "Pinball Wizard".

Townshend made his solo album debut in 1972 with *Who Came First* which was dedicated to his mentor, Meher Baba, followed by *Rough Mix* (1977). These two albums made only modest waves, but his next solo effort, *Empty Glass* (1980) was a bigger

success, reaching the Top 5 on the industry charts.

In 1969, Townshend joined forces with Entwistle and Daltrey to embark on a reunion tour with The Who. In 1993, he took his talents to Broadway with Des McAnuff's stage adaptation of *Tommy*, titled *The Who's Tommy*, a runaway hit that earned Townshend a Tony Award. Before the start of another tour with The Who in 2002, Townshend's longtime friend and bandmate John Entwistle died of a heart attack in 2002. The band had already weathered the death of drummer Keith Moon in 1978; Townshend and Daltrey decided to continue the tour as a tribute to Entwistle.

Townshend has continued to devote much of his time and energy to The Who. He and the rest of the band were the subjects of the 2007 television documentary *Amazing Journey: Story of The Who* and a 2008 special tribute concert.

Townshend has been a spiritual follower of the late Indian avatar Meher Baba for many decades. Townshend was inspired to give up drugs by one of Baba's followers, and he funded a center in London for followers of the saint. Townshend says that when he tours America, many of his audience members are Meher Baba followers. Although he first heard of Meher Baba through a colleague while working on *Tommy*, he realized that a lot of his own ideas about life and spirituality had already been voiced and confirmed many times by Baba. Pete has traveled to India many times, to meet and study with Baba's inner circle of followers, or "mandali." Townshend has said that he continues to pursue his career as a music celebrity, rather than as a renunciate, because Baba told him that career and spiritual life were separate matters.

Townshend continues to this day to be a dedicated follower of Meher Baba.

<http://www.biography.com/people/pete-townshend-12103169>

TOMMY — THE ORIGINAL ALBUM

"At long last, *Tommy* is with us. Pete Townshend's been talking about doing his opera for years. And now we have a 2-LP set that's probably the most important milestone in pop since Beatlemania."

— Rick Sanders, *Rolling Stone*, 1969

The rock opera *Tommy*, which was first performed by The Who in 1969, was originally conceived by Pete Townshend and Kit Lambert with contributions to the development by John Entwistle, Keith Moon and Roger Daltrey.

Townshend and the others members of the

Who had been thinking and talking about writing a rock opera for at least two years. The idea of concept albums had recently begun to emerge, and Townshend wanted to explore creating a continuous related work, not just a series of single songs.

Townshend told *Rolling Stone* magazine that some of the initial ideas had started with songs he had recorded in earlier albums, such as *Glow Girl*, but that the final work took its own shape with his readings of the works of Meher Baba. "The process of writing was controlled by my direct involvement with Baba. His stuff is completely self-contained, and it's a good point to start from. Songs like 'I'm Free,'

'Pinball Wizard' and a couple of others are very much Baba, songs of the quiet explosion of divinity. They just rolled off the pen.

"We approached the album in exactly the way anti-intellectual rock people would hate. We went into it in depth before we worked out the plot; we worked out the sociological implications, the religious implications, the Rock implications. We made sure every bit was solid. When we'd done that we went into the studio, got smashed out of our brains and made it. Then we listened, edited very carefully, then got smashed and did it all again, all the time playing gigs and grooving. And somehow it came out as if we'd done it all in one breath. (Other band members recall the process differently, claiming that many of the songs were recorded and re-recorded many times, to the point where they were nearly "driven mad.")

The Who started recording *Tommy* at IBC Studios on September 19, 1968. There was no firm title at

this point, which was variously referred to as *Deaf, Dumb and Blind Boy, Amazing Journey, Journey into Space, The Brain Opera* and *Omnibus*. Townshend eventually settled on *Tommy* because it was a common British name, and a nickname for soldiers in World War I.

Though Townshend wrote the majority of the material, all four contributed to the arrangements.

Townshend asked Entwistle to write two songs ("Cousin Kevin" and "Fiddle About") that covered the darker themes of bullying and abuse, as Townshend had been a victim of childhood sexual abuse himself and didn't feel emotionally able to write the songs himself at that time.

The original album has sold 20 million copies and has been inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame. An all-star concert version was released with the London Symphony Orchestra. It has been reissued several times on CD.

THE WHO — BIOGRAPHY OF THE BAND

Along with the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, The Who completes what some rock critics consider the trinity of classic British rock. The Who started their career as fashionable London "Mods", playing a brand of rhythm and blues, then moving into mainstream rock, and eventually becoming a powerhouse arena act. They were among the first rock groups to integrate synthesizers and stacks of power amplifiers into their show. Their guitar smashing and overturned drum kits symbolized the violent passions of a band that mixed four distinct and powerful elements: Pete Townshend's whirlwind guitar; Keith Moon's primitive drumming; John Entwistle's thundering bass and Roger Daltrey's fiery vocals.

All four band members grew up near poverty-haunted post-war London — Townshend, Daltrey and Entwistle in working-class Shepherd's Bush in, Keith Moon in similar conditions in Middlesex. Townshend and Entwistle knew each other at school in the late 1950s and played in a Dixieland band when they were in their early teens, Townshend on banjo and Entwistle on trumpet. Entwistle left in 1962 to join the Detours, a band which included lead guitar Roger Daltrey, a hot-headed sheet-metal worker with a clarion tenor. When the Detours needed to replace their rhythm guitarist, Entwistle suggested Townshend; Daltrey switched from lead guitar to vocals when Colin Dawson, the original singer, left. Not long after that, drummer Doug Sandom was fired and replaced by Keith Moon, then playing in a band called the Beachcombers. By early 1964 the group had changed its name to The Who.

The group hired manager Pete Meaden, who steered them through two unsuccessful singles and a name change to The High Numbers. Frustrated,

they hired new managers, former small-time film directors Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp. By late 1964 the quartet became The Who again, and with Lambert and Stamp's encouragement, they took the Mod look even further. "The Mods were young working class Brits who rebelled against the conformity and conservatism of British life by wearing extreme styles of clothing, flaunting a cynical, swaggering, macho attitude, and boasting a lifestyle of conspicuous consumption." ¹ With their Mod image, wild stage show and a repertoire of Blues, Soul and Motown songs, their young audiences loved them.

Their first single "I Can't Explain" languished on the charts until the band appeared on the TV show *Ready, Steady, Go*. Townshend smashed his guitar, Moon kicked over his drums, young viewers were electrified, and the song reached number eight in Britain. With more successful singles, The Who became stars in Britain. "Townshend played guitar with wild windmilling motions, Daltrey strutted like a bantam fighter, and Entwistle just stood there impassive as Moon happily flailed all over his drum kit." ²

In 1968, The Who continued to record while Townshend worked on his 90-minute opus, *Tommy*, a project influenced by guru Meher Baba, and taking over two years to complete. *Tommy*, though initially considered both pretentious and overblown, became the first successful rock opera to be written and recorded. The double album went to number four on the U.S. charts, and its single, "Pinball Wizard" went to number 19. The band would perform the opera in its entirety a handful of times — at London's Coliseum in 1969, at New York City's Metropolitan Opera House on June 6 and 7, 1970, and on some

dates during its 1989 reunion tour. Townshend oversaw a new recording of it in 1972 backed by the London Symphony Orchestra. In 1975 Ken Russell directed the film version, starring Eric Clapton, Tina Turner, Ann-Margret, Oliver Reed and Jack Nicholson. Keith Moon played Uncle Ernie and Roger Daltrey played the title role.

As The Who's popularity continued to grow, Townshend wrote his second rock opera, *Quadrophenia*, but he was now a generation older than the rock audience. Meanwhile, the group members, whose personality clashes were as legendary as their music, began pursuing individual solo projects. Moon released a novelty solo disc, which featured guest stars galore; Entwistle recorded two solo records and Daltrey recorded his first solo album. Daltrey found greater success as an actor; he starred in Ken Russell's rowdy movie bio of Franz Liszt *Lisztomania* (1975), Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* (1983), *The Beggar's Opera* (1991) and as Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* (1994).

Meanwhile, the punk movement was burgeoning in Britain, and bands like the Sex Pistols were pulling ahead of The Who's dated power chords and macho attitude. Townshend's song "Who Are You" became a hit, the lead cut on the last and highest-charting album of the original band. The next few

years brought tragedy and turmoil and the end of the original Who. Keith Moon, a prodigious drinker and drug abuser, died of a sedative overdose. Later, John Entwistle, the bass player, died of a heart attack. In 1979, eleven concert-goers were killed, trampled to death or asphyxiated, in a rush for festival seating at a Who concert in Cincinnati's Riverfront Stadium. Despite all this, the revamped Who soldiered on. In 1982, The Who embarked on their last tour. They have since reunited occasionally, with replacements in for Moon and Entwistle, to perform special concerts, one for Live Aid in 1985, a star-studded performances of *Tommy* in Los Angeles and New York, and a concert in New York City for a 9/11 benefit where they were warmly received. Despite time, adversities and addictions, their legacy endures.

1. Bruno, Richard, p. 26.

2. Greene, Andy. *The Rolling Stone*, 2001.

Bruno, Richard. *The Who's Tommy: a Study Guide to the Musical*. New York: The Tommy Company, 1989.

Jacobs, Rita D., ed. *The Who's Tommy, the Musical*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998.

<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/artists/the-who/biography>

THEMES IN TOMMY

"Meher Baba once said that God plays marbles with Creation."

— Pete Townshend, writer/composer of *Tommy*

According to Pete Townshend, the musical was named "*Tommy*" because the name is equivalent to "to me" and that is the direction the work moves — toward Tommy. "Tommy is the embodiment of adolescence, that liminal period of transition from childhood to adulthood."¹

The 60's generation distrusted authority: they didn't look for guidance or enlightenment from established religious, social or political systems. They joined communes and cults; they believed true enlightenment could only come from within. A commonly heard caveat was "Don't trust anyone over 30." Thus, when the megastar Tommy starts his own religion, he inspires hordes of youthful followers who drop out of traditional society.

Mirrors play a major role in the stage production of *Tommy*. They challenge the audience to see themselves as part of the stage action; they show the play's characters the unadorned images of themselves, and we too are challenged to take a cold hard look at ourselves and our illusions. Furthermore, the mirrors work to reveal the Truth, showing Tommy who he really is.

Pete Townshend has said that he "uses Tommy's disability as a metaphor for our own spiritual impotence."² Tommy's transformation from silent recluse to cultural hero is a challenge to viewers to overcome their own limited views of themselves and their lives. The musical also shows the struggle of disabled people in post-war Britain; Tommy is let down by a medical system that lacks sympathy, doesn't understand him and does not try to. His vulnerability is exploited by those closer to home who ought to be caring for him.

Tommy's condition is caused by childhood trauma. His parents think his condition is physiological, so they try conventional methods of healing. But they find no conventional cure for Tommy — he is a victim of repressed memory. His cure and transmutation comes not from the outside, but from within. He experiences a deep confrontation with himself, following a life-changing initiation into psychedelics and sex by a charismatic gypsy healer. This plot element may have roots in Townshend's own experimentation with psychedelics, and the fact that his Indian guru Meher Baba warned his followers that using recreational drugs could be harmful and would not lead to true spiritual growth. Tommy is initially brought back to life by his experience with the Acid Queen, a metaphor for the seductive social

powers of alcohol and drugs (“everybody’s doing it”), but later when he becomes a spiritual leader he renounces all such stimulants.

Tommy gains great fame and following as a heroic and charismatic pinball champion, but the story points out that though fame while it lasts can be glorious, yet it is fleeting — what goes up must come down — simple truths that Townshend learned through his guru, Meher Baba.

The musical is also a critique of popular culture and its power of the minds of the young. Tommy may be a sports and pop star of a sort, but surely doesn’t have the depth and wisdom to be a spiritual leader, yet his followers are inspired to follow Tommy until they drop him for the next shiny thing that comes along.

Finally, in the musical, pinball is a metaphor for life itself. A random silver marble, like a newborn infant, is shot out into the playing area. The marble in its journey through life, confronts noise, random

movement, flashing lights and the bumps and bruises of tilts, flippers and bumpers, all manipulated with greater or lesser skill by the Player, all while desperately trying to stay in the game, and all inevitably rolling downhill to disappear. The goal of pinball is to rack up the highest score but in the end it all seems to come to nothing. No matter how rich, successful, charismatic or powerful, everybody dies, says the musical — every ball disappears off the table and down the hole, to obscurity.

1. Bruno, Richard, p. 41.
2. stepbystep.com

<http://changingmindsnow.org>

<http://quora.com/Why-is-fame-so-fickle?>

<http://www.stepbystep.com/The-Who's-Tommy-A-Complex-Portrait-of-Disability-129400/>

Bruno, Richard. *The Who's Tommy: a Study Guide of the American Musical*. New York: The Tommy Company, 1993.

THE WHO'S TOMMY — THE STAGE MUSICAL

Although there had been previous stage adaptations of *Tommy*, notably by Seattle Opera in 1971 starring Bette Midler, directed by Richard Pearlman, and with choreography by Dennis Nahat of American Ballet Theatre, it was Des McAnuff, artistic director of La Jolla Playhouse, former AD of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, and originator of several hit musical adaptations including *Big River* and *The Jersey Boys*, who brought his adaptation of *Tommy* to La Jolla and then to Broadway, in collaboration with Pete Townshend. McAnuff created a more coherent stage story for the loosely-plotted original,

and worked with his designers to create a stunning visual concept for the show, featuring mirrors. *The Who's Tommy* opened at La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego, California, on 1 July 1992. The Broadway production previewed at the St. James Theatre on 29 March 1993, opened April 1993, and closed June 1995, after 899 performances. The musical was produced by Sir George Martin and directed by Des McAnuff, with choreography by Wayne Cilento. The production subsequently toured throughout North America and Europe. It received Tony Awards for best musical and best director.

POST WORLD WAR II BRITAIN

The British equivalent of the so-called Baby Boomer generation grew up in extremely tough times. The immediate postwar period in England was one of severe privation. More than 4 million houses had been destroyed or badly damaged by the German Luftwaffe; the result was an acute housing shortage especially after soldiers returned from the war. Food and commodity shortages meant continued wartime rationing.

The winter of 1947 was probably the lowest economic point of the century. Fuel shortages, gas rationing, inadequate food and shelter, and one of the coldest seasons on record all added to the

nation's woes. Unemployment reached 2.3 million, the monetary crisis worsened, and the national psyche was deeply pessimistic. In 1948, the United Kingdom took advantage of the Marshall Plan, a four-year economic recovery program designed by the United States to revitalize the economies of European countries by making low cost loans available for reconstruction.

All this was prologue to the rise in influence of the English post-war generation, the teenage tidal wave that transformed the staid old British Isles into Swinging England.

THE 1960S: THE DECADE THAT SHOOK BRITAIN

If the post-war Fifties in England were in black and white, then the Sixties were in Technicolor. The 'Swinging Sixties' became a defining decade for Britain. In just ten short years, London had transformed from a bleak, conservative city, just beginning to forget the troubles of the Second World War, into a jet set world capital, alive with freedom, hope and promise. It was the center of all excitement; the city where anything and everything was possible.

In post-war England the conservative character of the country initially hung on, but gradually, young Brits began to rebel against England's traditional, stiff attitudes and social restrictions. The BBC and other media began to give more coverage to popular cultural figures, musicians, fashions, relaxed sexual mores and music than before. Repressive anti-gay laws were relaxed or rescinded. Political scandals, such as the infamous Profumo Affair shook, and shook up, the establishment. Pirate radio, which was radio transmitted from off-shore ships lying outside the English boundary waters, played entire 45 RPM pop and rock records from the U. S. and England from start to finish, whereas the BBC would cut off the ends of records to accommodate ads.

Hot fashionistas like Mary Quant, the rise of trend-setting Mods and the Rockers, the popularity of rock music and American youth culture, and music, theatre and literature, began to shake up the establishment. Even the then-young royals like Princess Margaret began to embrace the trendy new order.

Although rock n' roll began appearing in Britain in the 1950s, it wasn't until the early Sixties and the emergence of 'British Invasion' groups like The Beatles, the Stones, the Kinks, the Yardbirds, the Animals, and all the great Mersey Sound bands, that English pop music truly began its revolutionary changes. Many talented female singers soon came after, such as Cilla Black, Dusty Springfield, and Sandie Shaw, but it was the male groups that lead the charge.

The Beatles and other bands led the way into a new awareness of life's possibilities, personal freedoms, Eastern religions, drugs, meditation, and social mobility, not to mention hair and fashion. The Beatles had begun playing in Berlin underground clubs, covering R & B standards, and honing their dynamic performance style, but it wasn't until they retooled their look and sound, and began writing their own material, that they solidified into the game-changing group that they became. The Beatles began by covering rock and R & B standards of the 1950s but by 1967, their *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* became an important turning point in popular music, inspiring other musicians, such as The Beach Boys and The Rolling Stones, to experiment with new psychedelic sounds. Young people on the listening end embraced the music and began to stand up for their own beliefs and their individuality.

Recreational drugs were also synonymous with the Sixties and became more commonly used as

the decade wore on. Images of America's landmark Woodstock Rock Festival show young people high on marijuana, nude, dancing in fields with painted faces, their hair flowing free. Recreational drugs became the norm in the music world, and, as impressionable young people looking for fun, many were motivated to follow their idols and take hallucinogens, which could indeed seem to bring startling insights and attitudinal changes. The effects of these drugs were reflected not only in music but in psychedelic art and films, bringing new, vibrant and exciting colors and ideas to the fore. 'Yellow Submarine', the Beatle's film with its trance-like music, and Heinz Edelman's eccentric images, was a cultural mirror of the changing times.

Although Britain wasn't directly involved in the Vietnam War, musicians like John Lennon, then a U.S. resident, raised its profile with the British people by popularizing peaceful protest. Songs like Lennon's *Give Peace a Chance* with its anti-war sentiment tapped into the growing 'hippie' movement. Young people began to challenge authority, something that would have been unheard of in earlier decades.

The Profumo Affair, a scandalous mix of sex, spies and government corruption, captured the public's attention in 1963. The Secretary for War John Profumo was discovered to be having an affair with a woman who was also involved with a Russian military attaché. Profumo denied the affair but later admitted that he had lied to the House of Commons, and resigned. The scandal changed the relationship between government and press forever and seriously undermined the public's trust in politicians. The traditional deference to figures of authority was now gradually being replaced by suspicion and mistrust.

Fashion in the decade mirrored many of the social changes of the Sixties. Mary Quant became famous for popularising the mini skirt, the epitome of 1960s fashion. The mini was designed to be free and liberating for women, allowing them to "run and jump". Her fashion designs used bold geometric shapes and colours. Women were suddenly free to wear more playful, youthful clothes that would have seemed outrageous ten years earlier. By the late Sixties, psychedelic prints and vibrant colours began appearing on clothes as the hippie movement gathered steam.

Feminism began to be an influential ideology as more jobs became available to young British women in the Sixties. This allowed them the freedom to move away from home and become more independent. The Pill became legalized in 1967, helping to make motherhood and its responsibilities optional. The Women's Liberation movement was in its infancy when in 1968 at a Ford factory in Dagenham, England, 850 women went on strike, arguing for equal pay with their male co-workers. This action resulted in the passing of the Equal Pay Act of 1970. Women were becoming increasingly involved in politics. In 1968, Barbara Castle became the first and only woman to

be appointed First Secretary of State, and women began finding a voice in society and the running of the country.

Technological advancements of the 1960s drastically changed how people spent their leisure time. Factory jobs and an increase in discretionary income allowed people to spend more on leisure activities. Color television and transistor radios allowed people to spend time listening to music and watching TV. Every teenager owned a transistor radio allowing it to listen to pop music on the move. The microwave oven saved time in the kitchen, further allowing women more free

time. By the end of the decade, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin achieved the impossible by becoming the first men on the moon in 1969.

The 1960s was a decade of rapid change. People began to realize the liberty and individuality they had fought for, and that so many of us now take for granted nowadays. The Sixties began bleak and restricted, but by the end, people were full of hope for a better future.

<http://www.countriesquest.com/Europe/united-kingdom/history/world-war-ii-and-its-aftermath/postwar-britain.htm>

MEHER BABA — SPIRITUAL MENTOR TO PETE TOWNSHEND

“You must keep before you the idea of that spiritual culture which imparts life and beauty to all undertakings.”

— Meher Baba

Pete Townshend was one of the first British rock musicians to embrace Eastern spirituality, becoming a devotee of the legendary Indian mystic Meher Baba. Townshend's studies with the great silent teacher opened his mind to new and profound ideas that shook his conservative working class background, inspiring Townshend among other pursuits to write his rock opera *Tommy*, with its themes of personal and spiritual awakening.

Meher Baba was born Merwan Sherar Irani in 1894 in Pune, India, to Zoroastrian parents. At the age of 19, he began studies with spiritual teachers before beginning his own teaching mission in early 1922, at the age of 27. From 1925 to the end of his life, Meher Baba maintained silence, communicating by means of an alphabet board or hand gestures. With his circle of disciples, he spent long periods in seclusion, during which time he meditated and fasted. He also traveled widely, held darshans (public gatherings of his devotees), and engaged in works of charity with lepers, the poor and the mentally ill.

In 1931, Meher Baba made the first of many visits to the West, where he attracted crowds of devoted followers. Like other influential Eastern teachers who came to the West, such as Vivekananda, Paramahansa Yogananda, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Eknath Easwaran, Krishnamurti et al, Meher Baba attracted numbers of students and followers, drawn to his charismatic but simple messages of love, peace, simplicity and spiritual dedication, beyond the traditional teachings of the western Church.

After being injured in two serious auto accidents, Baba's mobility was severely impaired. In 1962, he invited his Western followers to India for a mass darshana, or conference, called the “East-West Gathering.” Concerned about the increasing use of LSD and other psychedelic drugs among the young, Baba warned in 1966 that recreational drugs would not bring any lasting spiritual benefit. Despite deteriorating health, Baba continued what he called his “Universal Work”, which included fasting and seclusion, until his death in 1969. His shrine in Meherabad, India, has become a place of international pilgrimage.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meher-Baba>

THE BRITISH INVASION

In the 1960's American popular music seemed to be dominated by sentimental love songs that had more in common with 1940s and 1950s popular music than with the emerging youth culture. The best rock and roll, in some opinions, was being performed by girl groups such as the Shirelles, the Crystals, the Ronettes and the Supremes, not to mention a flood of talented Soul, Country and R&B artists. Elvis Presley was still popular as was Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Fats Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis and Buddy Holly, along with California artists like the Beach Boys. But it took the British to really shake things up.

Some of the loudest, rawest and toughest music of the rock n roll era came out of London. A rhythm and blues scene was thriving in the late 50's and early 60's, inspired originally by the early rock, blues, country and R & B music in America. A number of important British groups began to take shape, some beginning as humble "skiffle" groups (such as the Beatles), acoustic bands that played spoons, washboards, and home-made banjos and guitars, singing and playing popular music hall and folk tunes. The Rolling Stones began as avatars of the Blues music of Chicago and the American South, and soon began writing original material. They put the raunch in rock n' roll with their scrappy personas and scruffy manners. Even their manager Andrew Loog Oldham encouraged their delinquent images. Their first big hit in America was "I Can't Get No Satisfaction", written by lead guitar Keith Richards, an anthem to romantic disappointment.

Finding their way into this new and vital music, The Who burst on the scene with an anarchic stage show featuring the smashing of guitars, drums and amps, and angry lyrics about modern youth's alienation. The Who's songs sprang from Pete Townshend, the group's guitarist and spokesman. Other Brit groups like the Yardbirds and the Kinks established themselves through the force of their songwriting and musical hooks as well, but it was The Who's rebellious energy that put them in the forefront.

It was of course the Beatles who reigned supreme in the second half of the Sixties. Many other bands tried to emulate them or top them, though the Beatles music kept constantly evolving. From their early hits like "Please Please Me," "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and "She Loves You," to innovative albums like *Revolver*, *Rubber Soul*, the landmark *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, the jaw-dropping *White Album*, and *Abbey Road*, the Beatles began to experience personal differences, lost interest in their celebrity status, and finally stopped touring in 1966, most pursuing solo careers. Their music turned more inward and was greeted with a more mature appreciation of the journeys on which they were taking their audience. But The Who staunchly maintained their unique identities, by creating music that refused to follow popular trends, yet had wide appeal.

<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/the-british-invasion-from-the-beatles-to-the-stones-the-sixties-belonged-to-britain>

THE HISTORY OF PINBALL

"That deaf, dumb and blind kid sure plays a mean pinball." — "Pinball Wizard", *The Who's Tommy*

Pinball is a coin-operated arcade game where players score points by shooting metal balls on an inclined playing field, hitting special targets, manipulating flippers, bouncing off bumpers, and trying to keep the silver balls in play.

In 1871 British inventor, Montague Redgrave was granted a US patent for his "Improvements in Bagatelle." Bagatelle was a game that used a table and metal marbles. Redgrave's changes to Bagatelle included adding a coiled spring and a plunger, making the game smaller, replacing the large bagatelle balls with marbles and adding the inclined playfield.

During the early 1930s pinball machines appeared en masse as countertop machines featuring the improvements created by Redgrave. In 1932, manufacturers began to add legs to their machines. The term pinball as a name for the arcade game was

coined in 1936.

The "tilt" mechanism was invented in 1934 as a solution to the problem of players physically lifting and shaking the games. In short order, pinball machines became electrified, allowing for new types of sounds, music, lights, lighted backglass and other features. Bumpers, flippers and scoreboards were added in the 1950s. Later versions of pinball are now of course digital.

Pinball has become popular with celebrities, baby boomers, business executives and families. "The machines have become a fixture on many TV shows, commercials, movie sets and magazine shoots perhaps because of the "nostalgia factor" of having personal home game rooms."¹ Playing a few games of pinball after a hard day's work or a relaxed weekend is thought by fans to be as a first-rate stress reliever.

1. www.bniggaming.com/history-of-pinball-1992320
<http://www.thoughtco.com/history-of-pinball-1992320>
<http://www.bniggaming.com/pinballhistory.htm>

ROCK OPERA

Opera is an ancient art form, usually thought of as a musical drama that is totally sung, or has only brief passages of spoken dialogue. Opera, like stage plays, is almost always based on a story, but with the focus on singing and orchestral music. Opera has always been a showcase for composers and great singers, continuing in current times with new works by modern composers, and re-conceived for today's audiences by leading directors and conductors.

Rock opera began to emerge as a popular form in the 1960's and 70's. Rock operas generally are written in rock music styles, with rock style vocals, and electric instruments such as guitars and synthesizers. Though *Tommy* was the first popular rock opera, many others have preceded or followed. Some titles include *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Evita* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream*

Coat by Andrew Lloyd Webber et al, *American Idiot* by Green Day, Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, *The Story of Simon Simopath* by Nirvana, and *S. F. Sorrow* by The Pretty Things. Several of these actually originated as concept albums prior to finding a life on the theatre stage.

Many critics of so-called rock operas have said that most 'rock operas' are actually more like song cycles, with loosely-related songs that only vaguely suggest a story line, or that they are actually musicals, not operas in the strictest sense. However, many of these rock operas have found huge popularity both as recordings and as stage productions. Rock musicals have also grown in popularity, going back to early examples like *Hair* and *Godspell* in the 1970's, which also had little dialogue but were written as musicals, not operas.

THE WHO'S TOMMY

STUDY QUESTIONS

Pre-Performance Questions

1. What are your expectations of seeing *The Who's Tommy*? Are you coming for the nostalgia? Are you coming for the rock and roll?
2. How does contemporary society treat celebrity? What value do we bestow upon entertainers and why do we do this?

Post-Performance Questions

1. How do the scenic elements of set design, costuming, lighting, and sound help tell the story? Which scenic elements are the most effective and why?
2. How does the setting (where and when) of the play effect the happenings in the play?
3. How does the theatrical convention of having a narrator enhance or detract from the telling of the story?
4. What happens to soldiers that return home from war? How does it affect their relationships? What effect does Captain Walker's return have on Tommy and his mother?
5. What causes Tommy's condition? What are some of the treatments that the family tries? Why do you think the treatments are or are not effective?
6. What effect does Tommy's condition have on the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Walker?
7. How would you describe Uncle Ernie? What does he do to Tommy and what effect does it have?
8. How would you describe Cousin Kevin? What does he do to Tommy and what effect does it have?
9. Why does Mr. Walker take Tommy to the Acid Queen and what happens?
10. Why do you think the arcade game pinball is chosen as Tommy's passion? What do you think would be the equivalent today?
11. What happens to Sally Simpson at Tommy's concert? How does this moment comment on celebrity?

THE WHO'S TOMMY

ACTIVITIES

Album Cover

1. Start by gathering in a small group of about 3-5 students. This group will be your "band."
2. Discuss with your group what genre of music you will play and what kind of musical ensemble that you will be. Will your band be playing rock and roll, jazz, rap, country, etc.? Assign what each member's contribution to the band will be or which instrument they will play.
3. Decide on a name for your band and a title for your album. These should be fairly prominent on your album cover design.
4. Discuss what you would like the album cover to look like. What visual medium are you going to use to create the desired effect? Will you use photographs, collage, paintings, abstract art, or something else?
5. For the back of the album cover, take a photograph of your band. Try to capture the essence of your group in the photograph.
6. Create an artistic rendering of the album cover.

Visual Art PG: Analyze, interpret, and make meaning of art and design critically using oral and written discourse.

Visual Art PG: Recognize, articulate, and debate that the visual arts are a means for expression.

Perspective Writing | Monologue: Personal Narratives for Characters

1. Select an important moment from the musical. This should be a moment that has more than one person in attendance. For example, Captain Walker's return to the family.
2. From this moment, the students are to pick a character from the story and to give the character's perspective and attitude of what transpired. Explanations of how they felt about this moment and what affects them should be explored.
3. Each student will write a short monologue describing the moment from the character's perspective of what they experienced.
4. Compare the monologues about the event from other characters that were involved. Discuss the similarities and differences that arose during the writing process. Was there general agreement of what happened or marked differences? Why were the moments similar or different? Were the variations subtle or obvious? Did the class agree on what was important to include and why? If not how would the elimination of some elements change the way the story would be understood when read?

Writing PG: Articulate the position of self and others using experiential and material logic.

Writing PG: Write with clear focus, coherent organization, sufficient elaboration, and detail.

THE WHO'S TOMMY

ACTIVITIES

Historic Timeline

1. Ask students to research significant events in Colorado, the United States and the world leading up to, during and following the play and to place them in chronological order.
2. Create a timeline using the information gathered.
3. Discussion Questions: What changes or innovations were happening during these times? How was the world changing? How are these historical events included in the play?

Tommy Character Timeline

1. Ask students to chart the events of a certain character's life before and after the production of *The Who's Tommy*.
2. Use the timeline from the study guide as a starting point and add other historical/social, both national and international during the time of the play.
3. Discuss: Why were these events important to the individual character? Did these events affect the character's life, the nation and the world? In what ways are these events represented or omitted from ?

History PG: Develop an understanding of how people view, construct, and interpret history.

History PG: Analyze key historical periods and patterns of change over time within and across nations and cultures.

PERSPECTIVES

Make your experience unforgettable when you join us for one of these insightful, educational events:

Cast Perspectives

Apr 29 | 1:30pm

Join a fun and engaging discussion with the actors after the performance.

Perspectives: Theatre & Theology

May 1 | 6:30pm

Join Pastor Dan Bollman of the Rocky Mountain Evangelical Lutheran Synod after the performance to examine each show through a theological lens.

Perspectives: Higher Education Advisory Council

May 6 | 1:30pm

Participate in a topical discussion led by members of our academic community after the performance.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The Denver Public Library recommends: Read!

Clockwork Angels by Kevin J Anderson and Neal Peart (2012).

Can't get enough epic storytelling through epic music? Try this novel on for size. This bildungsroman follows Owen Hardy on his allegorical journey to manhood, tripping along to the tunes of Canadian Rock band Rush's conceptual album of the same name. As you travel with Owen on his adventures you will ponder questions of good vs evil, life and death, chaos vs order and FREEDOM.

Watch!

The King of Kong: a fistfull of quarters (2007).

Billy Mitchell earned the highest Donkey Kong score ever recorded in the early 1980's, and his legendary triumph was unbeatable for almost 25 years. This documentary follows newcomer and underdog Steve Wiebe as he attempts to unseat the reigning champ. With Mitchell and Wiebe both vying for a spot in the *Guinness Book of World Records*, the competition becomes more than just a game as they duke it out for the arcade crown.

Listen!

American Idiot by Green Day (2004)

Not only was Green Day's dramatic, Grammy-winning album called a punk rock opera when it was released in 2004, but Green Day listened to *Tommy* while making the album. The similarities expanded when *American Idiot*, like *Tommy*, was made into a musical that was nominated for multiple Tony Awards, including Best Musical. *American Idiot* follows cynical teenagers, bored with their suburban lives, and angry in a post-9/11 world. They fight apathy while facing their inner demons driving them their longing for more.

Download!

Volume Denver

Rock Opera got you grooving? Need some more? Get in touch with the local music scene with DPL's streaming music site, *Volume Denver*! *Volume* is the official record of the Denver sound whether it be Hip-Hop, punk rock, jazz, folk, soul, or country and western. Your library card is the key to this treasure of streaming or downloadable tracks. Check out staff favorites Snake Rattle Rattle Snake, Sophisticated Boom Boom, or ChurchVan! Build your own playlist of *Volume* tunes and find yourself where the cool kids are: <https://volumedenver.org/>



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