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INSIDE OUT

A STUDY GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS



SWEENEY TODD SYNOPSIS

“Attend the tale of Sweeney Todd
He served a dark and vengeful god.
What happened then, well that’s the play
And he wouldn’t want us to give it away
Not Sweeney, not Sweeney Todd.”

—The Ballad of Sweeney Todd

The barber Sweeney Todd, alias Benjamin Barker, was sentenced to prison in Australia on false charges issued by Judge Turpin who ravished his wife—an act that destroyed Sweeney’s family. Obsessed with revenge to kill the Judge and his Beadle, Sweeney’s plot accidentally broadens to include other citizens of the corrupt society of Victorian London. He is aided by his landlady, Mrs. Lovett, who finds an ingenious method to cover the barber’s crimes as well as her own. Through this darkly comic melodrama, Hugh Wheeler and Stephen Sondheim explore the motivation and consequences of revenge.



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SWEENEY TODD

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Based on an Adaptation by
Christopher Bond

Musical Adaptations by
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STEPHEN SONDHEIM—MUSIC AND LYRICS

Stephen Sondheim was born on March 22, 1930, in New York City to Herbert and Janet Sondheim. They both worked in New York's garment industry; his father was a dress manufacturer and his mother a designer. They divorced in 1942 and Sondheim moved to Doylestown, Pennsylvania with his mother. He began studying piano and organ at a young age and was already writing songs as a student at George School.

In Pennsylvania, Stephen became friends with the son of Broadway lyricist and producer Oscar Hammerstein, who gave young Sondheim advice and tutelage in musical theatre as well as serving as a surrogate father during this time of tumult in his teens. Sondheim had penned a satire about his school, the musical *By George!*, which he thought his mentor would love and asked for feedback. Hammerstein thought the project needed serious work and offered honest criticism, which Sondheim would later see as invaluable. Stephen also worked as an assistant on *Allegro*, Hammerstein's 1947 theatre collaboration with the composer Richard Rodgers. The experience had long-lasting effects on the young composer's approach to his work. Sondheim attended Williams College, where he majored in music. After graduating from the school in 1950, he studied further with the avant-garde composer Milton Babbitt and moved to New York City.

In the early 1950s, Stephen moved to Los Angeles, California, where he wrote scripts for the television series "Topper" and "The Last Word". Returning to New York, he composed background music for the play *The Girls of Summer* in 1956. An acquaintance with director Arthur Laurents brought him into contact with composer Leonard Bernstein and choreographer Jerome Robbins, who were looking for a lyricist for a contemporary musical adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. In writing the lyrics for *West Side Story*, which opened in 1957, Sondheim thus became part of one of Broadway's most successful productions of all time.

His next theatre project was to team up with composer Jule Styne to write the lyrics for *Gypsy*, which opened in 1959 with Ethel Merman as its star. After musical contributions to 1960's *Invitation to a March*, Sondheim then wrote both lyrics and music to *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, a musical farce based on comedies by ancient playwright

Plautus. It opened in 1962, ran for nearly 1000 performances and won a Tony Award for Best Musical.

Sondheim won several more Tony Awards in the 1970s for his collaborations with producer/director Harold Prince, including the musicals *Company* (1970), (a meditation on contemporary marriage and commitment); *Follies* (1971) (an homage to the Ziegfeld Follies and early Broadway); *A Little Night Music* (1973), (a comedy-drama based on Ingmar Bergman's *Smiles of a Summer Night*), and *Sweeney Todd* (1979) (a gory melodrama set in Victorian London.) Sondheim became known for his witty, conversational lyrics, his seamless merging of words with music and the variety of his source materials. *Pacific Overtures* (1979) was partially inspired by haiku poetry and the Japanese Kabuki theatre and 1981's *Merrily We Roll Along* was adapted from a 1934 play by Kaufman and Hart.

In the 1980's Sondheim collaborated several times with playwright/director James Lapine. Their *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984) was based upon the painting "A Sunday on La Grande Jatte" by Georges Seurat; *Into the Woods* (1987) is a collage of plots from classic fairy tales.

Sondheim continues to combine various musical genres with sharp lyrical writing and unexpected subject matter; in the 1980s though some of his work received less popular and critical acclaim. *Assassins* (1990) told the tales of nine presidential assassins in American history, and *Passion*, a 1984 collaboration with Lapine, was a melodramatic romance based on an Italian film. In 1990 he wrote the songs for the movie *Dick Tracy* starring Warren Beatty and Madonna and won an Academy Award for the song "Sooner or Later." He has also been the subject of several revues, including *Side by Side by Sondheim*, *Putting It Together* and *Sondheim on Sondheim* in 2010.

Secrest, Meryle. *Stephen Sondheim: a Life*. New York, NY: Random House Publishing, 1998.

<http://www.biography.com/people/stephen-sondheim-9488709>

HUGH WHEELER—BOOK AND PLAYWRIGHT

Hugh Wheeler was born in Hampstead, London in 1912 and attended London University. He came to the United States when he was 22 and began writing mysteries under the pseudonyms of Patrick Quentin and Q. Patrick, first in collaboration and then on his own. After 20 years as a successful mystery novelist, in which he wrote or co-wrote 40 books and saw four of them turned into major motion pictures, Wheeler wrote his first play, *Big Fish, Little Fish* in 1961. Subsequently, he devoted his energies to writing for the theatre. His next play was *Look, We've Come Through* which closed shortly after it opened. He also wrote screenplays such as *Travels with My Aunt* and the hilarious *Black Flowers for the Bride*. Shortly after his second play, Wheeler turned to musical theatre and wrote the book for Harold Arlen's musical *Softly*.

Wheeler's fascination with the 1957 Ingmar Bergman film *Smiles of a Summer Night* proved to be a major turning point for him. As Sondheim recalled, the composer was discussing the possibility of a romantic musical with Harold Prince in 1971. Prince called Wheeler and they met together; in the course of the conversation, Bergman's movie came up. The result was *A Little Night Music*. The 1973 musical won six Tony Awards—for Sondheim, Wheeler, Prince, the actresses Glynis Johns and Patricia Elliott and the costumer Florence Klotz. His second Tony came a year later. Leonard Bernstein asked the writer to provide a new book for his musical *Candide*, which had been a success as a recording but had been a disappointment on stage. With some new lyrics by Sondheim, the Wheeler book helped turn Bernstein's *Candide* into a popular musical.

Collaboration with Sondheim was revived again five years later for the 1979 production of *The Ballad of Sweeney Todd*. Wheeler wrote the book for the musical which garnered eight Tony Awards, including another for the composer and the writer. The same year, he wrote the book for Mozart's *Impressario*, which was presented at the inaugural summer opera season at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

In 1981 Wheeler wrote the book for a musical based on *The Little Prince*, the novel by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry; two years later he wrote another musical titled *Bodo*. This work was produced in workshop and a spokesman for the writer said he had been working on revisions at the time of his death in 1987.

<http://www.nytimes.com/1987/07/28/obituaries/hugh-wheeler-award-winning-playwright.html>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/forgotten-authors-to-55-hugh-wheeler-1995784.htm>.

DEVOTCHKA

DeVotchKa is a Denver-based four-piece multi-instrumental and vocal ensemble founded in 1996 who have re-orchestrated the music for this production of *Sweeney Todd*. For more than a decade DeVotchKa has been melting its sweeping influences into an authentic and totally original blend of rock 'n' roll.

DeVotchKa's first big break happened when KCRW introduced LA listeners to DeVotchKa on Morning Becomes Eclectic. The directors of *Little Miss Sunshine* happened to be listening this fateful day, loved what they heard, and hired the band to write the score for their film. A critical and box office smash, the film was nominated for the Best Picture Oscar and, for DeVotchKa's soundtrack, a Grammy. The little band from Denver was suddenly known all across the nation, playing large venues and major music festivals, including Coachella, Austin City Limits, Lollapalooza and Glastonbury. The love spread to Europe, Asia, and South America which are yearly destinations for the band.

Since then *Little Miss Sunshine* front man Nick Urata has composed the scores for countless films including *Crazy Stupid Love* (Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling, Julianne Moore), *Ruby Sparks* (Paul Dano, Zoe Kazan, Annette Bening), and *The Joneses* (David Duchovny, Demi Moore, Gary Cole). Most recently, Urata composed the original music score for the highly anticipated film *Paddington Bear*, based on the popular children's books by Michael Bond, starring Hugh Bonneville, Sally Hawkins, and Nicole Kidman.

Their name comes from the Russian word for "girl." The band members are Nick Urata (vocals, theremin, guitar, bouzouki, piano and trumpet), Jeanie Schroder (vocals, sousaphone, double bass and flute), Tom Hagerman (accordion, violin, and piano), and Shawn King (percussion and trumpet).

Nick Urata explains why the band is a good fit for this musical: "The brass is really important in this show. Trombones played a big part in the original score, and that's one of our favorite instruments to write for, so we plan to expand on the brass section. Hopefully we will have multiple exotic horns in that section."¹

Urata considers *Sweeney Todd* a lofty challenge. "There are some vocal acrobatics in the show that have to be approached with some reverence. That's the vehicle the story travels on in this play. So we have to stay true to that and just kind of build around it with our rock 'n' roll gypsy sound."²

1. Urata, denvercenter.org

2. Ibid.

<http://www.denvercenter.org/blog-posts/news-center/2015/03/13/devotchkas-urata-promises-a-sweeney-todd-that's-loud-and-proud>

VICTORIAN LONDON

“There’s a hole in the world like a great
black pit
And the vermin of the world inhabit it.
And its morals aren’t worth what a pig
can spit
And it goes by the name of London.”

—The Ballad of Sweeney Todd

While life in England changed dramatically during the industrial revolution, the biggest social change was felt in the cities. Thousands of citizens left the rural life and came to the large metropolises for the guaranteed jobs which manufacturing offered. The influx of people into the city centers made for rapid growth and some prosperity. However, there was also a very negative aspect as the crowds of workers had to be accommodated and cared for in a system which was not prepared to do so. Tenement buildings were quickly built in Victorian London for factory workers and their families. Large houses were subdivided into flats. The cost of rent was extremely high, especially when a worker wanted to live within walking distance of his place of employment.

Conditions were extremely cramped, as many members of a single family would live in one room. Many landlords were indifferent to the appalling conditions their tenants were living in and with housing so difficult to find, few tenants made a fuss. Running water, sanitation facilities and cooking arrangements were roughshod at best. With tenements consisting of many floors, Victorian Londoners lived uncommonly close to their neighbors. Disputes were common, and often caused by drunkenness and over-crowding.

London at the start of the 19th century was basically filled with cesspools. There

would be brick chambers, about 6 feet deep and four feet wide; every house would have them. Ideally they’d be located in the back garden away from the house, but in central London and more crowded areas, it was common to have a cesspool in the basement. Above the cesspool would be the household privy and made up the “sanitary” facilities (for want of a better term).

This system actually worked quite well for a time, but people became very interested in a new invention—the water closet. It was ignored that these water closets were initially connected to these cesspools, not the sewer system that existed at the start of the century, that was just for rainwater. The results of all this volume of flushing water were great surges of waste, dump and smell. People became concerned about the stench rising from their cesspools, not to mention the prospect of diseases such as cholera and typhoid.

But the Victorians did achieve something. They built the famous great sewer network of the mid-19th century (designed by Joseph Bazalgette) which reduced the likelihood of wholesale cholera, typhus and typhoid epidemics. Public squares were offered for pleasure and for privacy to homeowners. The present Trafalgar Square was completed in 1845; Grosvenor Square was improved and is now a public park. The Royal Albert Hall began to offer music in 1871. Buckingham Palace became the monarch’s main London residence while Victoria was on the throne.

Jackson, Lee. *Dirty Old London: the Victorian Fight Against Filth*. Hartford, CT: Yale University Press, 2014.

<http://www.aboutbritain.com/articles/Victorian-london.asp>

PENNY DREADFULS

Story papers, also known as penny dreadfuls, penny horrors, penny awfuls, penny numbers and penny bloods began in the 1830s and became immensely popular because they cost only one penny. These books were the result of cheaper printing methods and replaced the old single broadsheets that accompanied any scandalous or gruesome news story, which had also sold for a penny. Originally created as a cheaper alternative to mainstream fiction for working class adults (Charles Dickens's illustrated novels sold in monthly parts for a shilling) , by the 1850s the serial stories were often aimed at teenagers. For the first time the children of the lower classes were learning to read, thanks to the universal education instituted by the British Parliament; therefore, publishers quickly found ways to entertain this new demographic of customers.

Penny dreadfuls usually featured lurid, sensational, exciting tales with lavish illustrations, some in color. Many of the subjects were taken from popular novels; some were historically based; others were about famous criminals. Some highly successful tales boasted a weekly sale of 30,000 copies. One of the longest running series followed the exploits of Dick Turpin, highwayman, which continued for 254 episodes. Although there were countless copies of these story papers printed, very few original copies exist, because the colorful covers were ideal for papering the walls of a poor family's rooms where they faded under

coal soot and tobacco smoke. George A. Sala (1828-95), a respected journalist, started off as a penny blood writer; he described them as "a world of dormant peerages, of murderous baronets, and ladies of title addicted to the study of toxicology, of gypsies and brigand chiefs, men with masks and women with daggers, of stolen children, withered hags, heartless gamesters, nefarious roués, foreign princesses, Jesuit fathers, gravediggers, resurrection-men, lunatics and ghosts." ¹

Many famous authors contributed to the series, among them, Bram Stoker and Wilkie Collins. It was in *The String of Pearls* that Sweeney Todd made his first appearance, 1846 to 1847, by J. M. Rymer and T. P. Priest.

1. www.katetattersall.com

Haining, Peter. *Sweeney Todd :the True Story of the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. London, U.K.: Robson Books, 1993.

<http://www.katetattersall.com/kate-tattersall-adventures-an-e-penny-dreadful-style-series/>

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF *SWEENEY TODD*

The first appearance of a Todd-like character occurred in 1795 in a British magazine. In 1825, that story was re-told in another publication called *Tell-Tale* magazine. Although the main character was French in this version, many familiar aspects of the homicidal barber take shape; he kills his customers and delivers the corpses to a woman who is renowned for her meat pies. The barber also gives her a string of pearls taken from one of his victims. The victim's dog eventually guides police to a basement piled with gruesome remains.

The character and his story developed still further with the appearance in 1846 of *The String of Pearls*, a serialized novel in one of London's so-called "penny dreadful" newspapers in eighteen installments. In this treatment, the barber is now named Sweeney Todd and his barbershop is located on Fleet Street, details which were never to be altered again. We also have the first appearance of a sweet young girl named Johanna, the love interest of a sailor who is the hero of the story. These two are the clear predecessors of Sondheim's Joanna, who becomes Todd's daughter, and her suitor Anthony Hope.

The popularity of *The String of Pearls* led to Sweeney Todd's first incarnation as a stage play, courtesy of a dramatist named George Dibdin-Pitt, whose adaptation debuted in London in 1847, adding a subtitle, *The Fiend of Fleet Street*. Without the protection of our modern concept of copyright laws and intellectual property, Dibdin-Pitt's drama was reproduced many times in a variety of stage-works, most of dubious quality. Some of them incorporated musical numbers; some even restored the dog from the 1825 story. The next version to advance the plot came from a novel by Frederick Hazleton in 1862. In this work, Johanna, like the corresponding character in the musical, disguises herself as a man to search for her lover.

A 1936 film about Sweeney Todd, directed by George King, starred an actor with the appropriate name of "Tod Slaughter" in the title role. By now, many of the familiar characters had coalesced into figures resembling those Sondheim would depict, including Mrs. Lovett, the apprentice Tobias and the corrupt Beadle.

But it was Christopher Bond's 1970 drama which, in the opinion of many, elevated Sweeney to the status of a tragic character worthy of a musical drama by creating a plausible motive for his homicidal rage other

than poverty and general depravity. Bond imagined Todd as a man betrayed by a corrupt justice system, adding the characters of Judge Turpin and Lucy, in addition to transforming Johanna into Todd's daughter.

Featuring cannibalism and graphic special effects including the slitting of throats, Sweeney Todd was strongly influenced by a genre of Parisian theatre known as Grand Guignol. Guignol was a French puppet similar to the traditional puppets known as Punch and Judy; thus, the name Grand Guignol roughly means "big puppet". The theatre was opened in 1897 by Oscar Metenier, who was also its first stage director. His goal was to present dramas depicting life among the lower classes of French society, including the poor and homeless, prostitutes and criminals. However, when Max Maurey joined the staff, the productions took a darker turn, specializing in tales of horror staged for maximum shock value upon the audience members, some of whom became ill during attendance. These dramas earned Grand Guignol its notoriety and, for several decades, this theatre was a popular venue. The special effects in Maury's shows were realistic and gruesome; no violent act was too extreme to be simulated in the bloody, climatic scenes. The settings were usually an insane asylum, prison or other place harboring depraved individuals. World War II brought an end to the Grand Guignol.

While most believe that Sweeney Todd's roots lie in urban myth, some, such as Peter Haining, believe he was an historical figure.

Mack, Robert L. *The Wonderful and Surprising History of Sweeney Todd*. New York: Continuum Press, 2007.

[www.vaopera.org/attachments/article/39/Sweeney 20 Todd pdf](http://www.vaopera.org/attachments/article/39/Sweeney%20Todd.pdf).

Haining, Peter. *Sweeney Todd: The True Story of the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. London: Robson Books, 1993.

HISTORY OF FLEET STREET

Fleet Street begins at The Strand and leads up to Ludgate Hill in London, linking the East end and the West end. It originally connected the metropolis to the open country and received its name from the nearby River Fleet, London's largest underground river. In addition to serving as a main thoroughfare for the city, Fleet Street is considered one of London's most historically significant streets. Law courts are located near one end of Fleet, with the British Royal Courts of Justice on the Strand. St. Paul's Cathedral marks the ecclesiastical history at the other end of the street. When clergymen migrated to London, they settled on Fleet and the Thames, which brought a clerical culture to the street; this clerical presence is supplemented by landmark churches

such as St. Brides, St. Dunstan's and the Temple Church. However, Fleet Street is probably most commonly associated with the British press, because the majority of British newspapers were established there. The first print shop was built on Fleet in the 15th century; major newspapers did not relocate there until the 1980s. "Fleet Street" still refers to the British National Press in the same way that "Wall Street" is tied to the financial industry in the United States.

www.PortlandCenterStage.org/assets/uploads/resource-guide/PCS-Resource-Guide-01-SweeneyTodd/pdf

CRIME IN VICTORIAN LONDON

Petty crime was common in 19th century London and most citizens expected corruption of the law, so large-scale criminals were able to blend in with the regular pick-pockets. In fact, the criminal class of Victorian London was difficult to define, because forgers and burglars pervaded the so-called professional class. The increased crime and poverty of London was largely a result of industrialization and the rapid urbanization of the mid-1800's. Although many people moved to London in search of work, the Industrial Revolution also brought congested slums and brutal conditions for the working poor.

Punishment for legal offenders was also harsh. In 1800, more than 160 crimes warranted the death penalty; public hangings were a form of free entertainment. Since brutality was promoted by the authorities, it is no mystery that the public had a thirst for

blood in literature and fiction; they could probably relate to the fear and villainy that were illustrated in penny dreadfuls. Furthermore, despite the "Bloody Code" that encouraged harsh punishments, Britain had no detective force until 1842, when the Detective Police in Scotland Yard was established. Prior to that, many citizens feared police corruption in investigations and thus resisted such a specialized force. The weakness and irrationality of the British justice system would explain how Sweeney Todd's murderous rampage could be so believable for the Victorian audience.

[www. Portland Center Stage.org/assets/uploads/resource-guide/PCS-Resource-Guide-01-Sweeney Todd/pdf](http://www.PortlandCenterStage.org/assets/uploads/resource-guide/PCS-Resource-Guide-01-SweeneyTodd/pdf)

THE MUSIC OF STEPHEN SONDHEIM

“It was Oscar Hammerstein who taught me that content is what counts. He taught me how to structure a song like a one act play.”

—Stephen Sondheim ¹

Sondheim’s lyrics rely on subtext or context. The singer can be singing one thing while another performer is demonstrating the opposite. For example, in the song “Pretty Women”, Todd and the Judge sing caressingly about female graces while Todd is preparing to slit the Judge’s throat.

Sondheim begins his melodies by writing the accompaniment first with specific patterns and a bass line. As he says, “Accompaniment gives a song thematic form; it’s what’s going on inside.”² His chord structures are influenced by Stravinsky, Saint Saens, Mahler and Bernard Herrmann, the composer of many of Alfred Hitchcock’s movie scores.

The music of *Sweeney Todd* is filled with leitmotifs, musical passages that describe a character. Extensively used by Richard Wagner in his operas, these motifs probe the psychology behind what is being sung. “In *Sweeney Todd*, Sondheim uses the leitmotif far more extensively and pointedly than he does in his previous works. Each character is identified with a particular musical theme; all their music evolves from that theme and each song depends on the one prior to it.”³ In addition, there are musical surprises such as dissonances, modulations (change of key), blue notes and variations. “Melody lines work the way people do; they feel regret, deception, doubt, ambivalence.”⁴

The use of the Dies Irae is significant for it is the symbol of doom used by such composers as Berlioz, Mahler and Mozart. One of the most famous melodies of the Gregorian chants, it is a reflection upon the final judgment and was formerly part of the Mass of the Dead. Since Tod means

“death” in German, it is fitting that this fragment appears in the musical. This theme (built on the scale figures of 3-1-2-7-1) is heard in the instrumental opening, then in the “Ballad of Sweeney Todd” and in the “Epiphany”. As Sweeney’s mind becomes distorted, so the music becomes more frantic and discordant.

With its underscoring, leitmoifs and arias, *Sweeney Todd* has been performed on some opera stages. Sondheim calls it a “dark operetta that keeps the audience in suspense and even scares the hell out of them.”⁵ In a musical about revenge, obsession and corruption, Sondheim’s music “Intends to unsettle and disturb.”⁶

1. Schiff, p. 78.

2. Ibid, p. 86.

3. Gordon, p. 216.

4. Schiff, p. 87.

5. Austin, p. 8.

6. Gordon, p. 209.

Austin, Josh. “Opera or Musical Theatre?” *Sondheim Review*, Summer 2015.

Banfield, Stephen. *Sondheim’s Broadway Musicals*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1993.

Gordon, Joanna. *Art Isn’t Easy: the Theatre of Stephen Sondheim*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1992.

Schiff, Stephen. “Deconstructing Sondheim.” *The New Yorker*. March, 8, 1993.

<http://www.broadwaybullet.com/tp=130>

THE THEMES IN *THE BALLAD OF SWEENEY TODD*

After arriving back in London from an unjust exile given by Judge Turpin, Sweeney is bent upon revenge. As Sondheim said, “It’s a story about revenge. It’s about how revenge eats itself up and its pleasures and its dangers.”¹ Todd becomes swallowed up by his own sense of vengeance and notices nothing else. When Mrs. Lovett confesses her feelings for Todd in the song “By the Sea”, it is obvious Todd does not feel the same way. He barely sees her, answering her questions with an absent “Anything you say.” At the play’s conclusion, Mrs. Lovett and Todd sing, “To seek revenge may lead to hell, but everyone does it but seldom as well as Sweeney.” Not only does this identify Todd with the audience, but also it shows that everyone encounters revenge at some time in this world of corruption, competition and exploitation.

Sweeney’s world of Victorian London is rife with corruption that gives Sondheim’s melodrama a commentary on the conditions of the social classes. In the case of Sweeney, the social context revolves around how society makes one feel impotent and impotence leads to rage and rage to murder thus causing the breakdown of society. Todd lives as a middle-class worker and feels the sting of the upper class’s power and corruption. His awareness of this fact becomes clear in the song “Epiphany” when he sings, “In all of the whole human race, Mrs. Lovett, there are two kinds of men and only two. There’s the one staying put in his proper place and the one with his foot in the other one’s face.” Clearly, Todd is the one who received the foot in the face from Judge Turpin who sent him into exile.

Cannibalism serves as a metaphor in *Sweeney Todd* for the predatory nature of class and capitalism. In the song, “A Little Priest”, Todd sings, “The history of the world, my sweet, is who gets eaten and who gets to eat.” This phrase seems very Darwinian—survival of the fittest. However, Todd and Mrs. Lovett begin killing customers and using human flesh to make meat pies. The idea of the “dog eat dog” world becomes real in the play and demonstrates the discord between the social classes.

A minor theme is love. Antony loves Johanna, but we don’t know where that will lead. Clearly, Mrs. Lovett wants to marry Todd; she mothers young Tobias in hopes of making a family. Todd loves his silver knives when he croons “My Friends” to them; passively he loves his wife and daughter, but shows no great emotion until the end when he realizes how obsession has blinded him.

1. *The Ballad of Sweeney Todd*, p. 177.

<http://theatrewiki.wikispaces.com/Sweeney+Todd+The+Demon+Barber+of+Fleet+Street>

<http://ananswersyehoo.com/question/index?qid=20100029175411AaqqMS>

GLOSSARY

Beadle

a law enforcement or educational officer.

Tonsorial Parlor

a barbershop

Upward mobility

the ability for someone of lower socio-economic status to gain wealth and social standing in a particular society.

Botany Bay

a bay in modern day Sydney, Australia, famous for being home to transported English prisoners in the 19th century.

Asylum/Madhouse

a prison or home for people who were considered to be insane. Fogg's Asylum was famous in London.

Industrial Revolution

a period of great economic and social change in the 18th and 19th centuries originating in England that saw inventions like steam power and cast iron that caused economies to shift from agriculture to industry.

Melodrama

a dramatic or literary work in which the plot, which is typically sensational and designed to appeal strongly to the emotions, takes precedence over detailed characterizations. The Victorian stage melodrama featured six stock characters: the hero, the villain, the heroine, an aged parent and a servant of the aged parent who are engaged in a plot featuring themes of love and murder. The sensation novels of the 1860s and 1870s provided fertile material for melodramatic adaptations. Notable examples are the novels of Wilkie Collins (such as *The Woman in White*), the murderous careers of Burke and Hare and Sweeney Todd, first featured in *The String of Pearls*.

www.theatreworks.org/media/upload/misc/sweeney-todd-study-guide.pdf.

MEAT PIE

1 medium potato, peeled and cubed
½ pound ground beef.
½ pound ground pork
⅓ clove garlic, chopped
½ cup chopped onion
¼ cup water
½ teaspoon mustard powder
½ teaspoon dried thyme
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon dried sage
1 (15 ounce) package refrigerated pie crusts

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Place the potatoes in a saucepan with enough water to cover. Bring to a boil and cook until tender, about 5 minutes. Drain, mash and set aside.

Meanwhile, crumble the ground beef and pork into a large saucepan; add the garlic, onion and water. Add all the seasonings and cook over medium heat, stirring to crumble the meat until it is thoroughly browned. Remove from heat and mix in the mashed potato. Pour mixture into pie crusts.

Bake for 25 minutes in the preheated oven, or until the crust is browned. Serve by itself or with a beef gravy.

<http://allrecipes.com/recipe/6296/meat-pies>

VICTORIAN LUNATIC ASYLUMS

Large Victorian public asylums haunt the history of psychiatry. They were hailed as places of refuge for some of society's supposedly most vulnerable men and women. These institutions were called "lunatic asylums" and later renamed "mental hospitals"; they earned a reputation as dehumanizing, prison-like establishments because they controlled the patients by using shackles and chains.

Before asylums, the burden of keeping the mentally unstable individuals rested almost entirely on loved ones. "Mad" people who could not be kept at home wandered free, begging for food and shelter. In Europe, a few small Christian institutions dedicated to sheltering the insane emerged in the early Middle Ages. London's St. Mary's Bethlehem Hospital (now called Bedlam) was the most famous although it did not hold more than two dozen inmates until the 1620s.

A growing market economy in the 1600s and 1700s saw "service professions" emerge. Those who worked in them did thankless jobs, formerly handled at home or by the church, and included undertakers, private tutors and "madhouse" keepers. Families paid for secrecy and discretion, and these private institutions left few records. Some keepers adopted management techniques developed by Renaissance horse-masters to control stubborn horses. Finally, in 1790, William Tuke, a Quaker businessman, founded the York Retreat, the first asylum to shun physical restraint and coercion. Its influential methods became known as moral treatment, which relied on constant surveillance.

Women were frequently assigned to asylums for a range of conditions, from postnatal depression to alcoholism and senile dementia, and even for social transgressions such as infidelity. Anyone who could persuade two doctors to sign certificates of insanity could put away inconvenient or embarrassing relatives in a madhouse. Women, with lower social status, less power and money, were more vulnerable.

While great strides have been made, one can't dismiss entirely the Victorian efforts to understand the mind. Indeed, compared with the early asylums—rough, brutal places where the most disturbed patients were chained in windowless rooms with straw bedding—the mid-Victorian era was positively progressive. Theories that still hold today, such as the value of occupational therapy, were becoming fashionable in Victorian times. It was here that the shift away from the idea of control from without and towards control from within, via treatment or cure, began.

<http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/broughttolife/themes/mentalhealthandillness/mentalinstitutions.aspx>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-2141741/Sent-asylum-The—an-woman-locked-suffering-stress-post-natal-depression—anxiety.html>

THE HISTORY OF BARBERING

“Babies haven’t any hair;
Old men’s heads are just as bare,
Between the cradle and the grave
Lies a haircut and a shave.”

—Samuel Hollenstein,
Songs of Faith in the Year After Next. VIII.

The barbering profession is one of the oldest in the world. Archeological studies indicate that some crude forms of facial and hair adornment were practiced among prehistoric people.

In ancient Egypt monuments and papyrus show that early Egyptians were extremely fussy about hair and held lots of superstitions about it. Artistic friezes illustrate men being shaved while priests were “de-haired” every few days. The Biblical figure Joseph was described as being shaved before seeing the Pharaoh “so he didn’t have a dirty face.”¹

When Ticinius Mensa came from Sicily to Rome in 296, he brought the art of shaving with him. Barbershops soon became the place to meet, socialize and gossip much as they are today. The absence of beards actually set “free men” apart from the slaves. The Persian victory over Alexander the Great turned on facial hair. It is said the Persians would grab the Macedonians by their beards, pull the soldiers to the ground and spear them. Later, Alexander ordered all his men to shave.

By the Middle Ages barbers were not only cutting hair and shaving, but also pulling teeth, dressing wounds and performing simple operations. These barber-surgeons actually formed their first organization in France in 1096, after the archbishop of Rouen prohibited the wearing of beards. In 1210 in Paris academic surgeons were identified by their long robes while the barber surgeons wore short robes.

Up until the 18th century the barber-surgeons duties consisted of not only cutting hair and shaving but picking out lice from hair, pulling rotten teeth, lancing abscesses, setting bone fractures and very often bloodletting. Bloodletting was an important practice, as it was believed that as a person ate and digested food, it was turned into blood. If an individual had an excess of blood, all sorts of ailments would follow, so bloodletting was deemed an important purifying technique. Many physicians thought this cutter’s art beneath them, so left it to the barbers.

In the 18th century barbers recovered their social relevance with the growing use of wigs. Barbers became wig makers, wig designers and were in charge of wig maintenance. Barbers had to learn how to powder, perfume and color these elegant creations. Wig factories became an important industry employing as many as 600 people.

1. www.trimtimes.com.

<http://www.timtimes.com/history-of-barbering>

<http://thehistoryofthehairwold.com/barbers-history.html>

STUDY QUESTIONS

Pre-Performance Questions

- 1) How would you define revenge? Is revenge ever justified? Are consequences ever considered when revenge is the goal or does it cloud choices?
- 2) How can love be demonstrated in ways both light and dark? Is love and affection ever self-less?

Post-Performance Questions

- 1) How do the music and lyrics convey the tone of the play?
- 2) How do the technical elements of scenic design, costumes and lighting enhance the stories?
- 3) How do the songs convey the elements of emotion, character and story?
- 4) How would you describe the relationship between Sweeney Todd and Anthony? If circumstances were different, would they know each other?
- 5) How is upper class privilege portrayed and how does this affect the lower class characters? How is corruption and power represented?
- 6) How would you describe the relationship between Mrs. Lovett and Sweeney Todd? What, if anything, do they want from each other?
- 7) Does the main ingredient in Mrs. Lovett's pies hold some meaning? Why do you think they become so popular?
- 8) Why does Mrs. Lovett take Tobias in? What does she hope to achieve by doing so?
- 9) How would you describe the revenge path that Sweeney Todd takes and does he get his just desserts?
- 10) What changes would you make if you were to change the time and place from Victorian England to today? What city and what time period would you choose and why?

ACTIVITIES

Status Card Game

Material needed: Deck of cards

1. Choose five students and have them stand in a line in front of the class. Each student receives a card, and without looking at the card, s/he places the card face out on their forehead. Explain that the cards' ranking is equal to the student's status in relation to the other students. For example, a student with a queen would have high status, but a king or an ace would have more and a two would have the least amount of status.
2. Students must determine their status in relation to the other students non-verbally, treating higher cards with deference, lower cards casually or dismissively. Because the students are not able to see their cards, they must assess and then behave within the status that they believe themselves to be based upon how the other students treat them.
3. After the exploration, have the five students line up in the order where they think their card would place them.

Discuss the activity: How does it feel to be treated well or poorly by your peers?

What are some of the ways that you were treated that helped you to understand what your status was? In what ways was it easy to assess your status? More difficult? Were midrange cards (3-6) easier or harder to perceive than lower or higher cards? Why/why not?

Discuss the play: Which characters in *Sweeney Todd* have more status than others? How do the characters interact and display that they have more or less status than the other characters? Which characters use status for their advantage? How did choices in this activity echo or mirror choices or events made by characters in *Sweeney Todd*?

Social Science PG: Analyze and practice rights, roles, and responsibilities of citizens.

Drama and Theatre Arts PG: Employ drama and theatre skills, and articulate the aesthetics of a variety of characters and roles.

ACTIVITIES

Perspective Writing — Personal Narratives

1. Select an important moment from the musical. This should be a moment that has more than one person in attendance. For example, the first meeting between Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett or the shaving contest between Sweeney Todd and Pirelli.
2. From this moment, the students pick one character and note, from the character's perspective and attitude, what transpired during and after the moment. Students may use what is provided by the playwright/lyricist but should be encouraged to expand the character. Explanations of emotion, physicality and the impact of the moment should be noted.
3. Students then write a short monologue describing the moment from the character's perspective
4. Students present their writings from small groups that represent the same moment. Here, each character's varying perspective of the moment can be heard in presentation.

Discuss the process: What were the similarities and differences that arose during the writing process? Was there general agreement or marked differences in the characters' perspective of the moment? Were there subtle or obvious variations? Did members of the group agree on what was central to the moment? If not, how would the elimination of some elements change the way the moment would be understood or performed?

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.

UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES

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

Insider Perspectives

Get an exclusive insider's perspective of each play when you join us for a professionally-moderated discussion with our creative team. Held at The Jones at Speer & Arapahoe. Free.
Apr 8 | 6pm

Talkbacks with the Cast

Join a fun and engaging discussion with the actors directly after select performances. Free.
May 1 | Post-Show

Talkback with the Higher Education Advisory Council

Participate in a topical discussion led by members of our academic community held directly after select performances. Free.
Apr 17 | Post-Show

Theatre & Theology Talkbacks

Join Pastor Dan Bollman of the Rocky Mountain Evangelical Lutheran Synod to examine each show through a theological lens directly after select performances. Free.
Apr 19 | Post-Show

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The Denver Public Library recommends:

Read!

Haircutting for Dummies by Elaine J. Spear

Have you, like Sweeney, ever thought of going into the barbershop or haircutting business? Or perhaps be able to give friends and family a trim while saving some? Whether you're wanting to become a licensed stylist or explore a new hobby, no matter what level you are at, this guide will walk you through creating basic men's and women's styles alongside tips from the experts.

Watch!

Burke and Hare (MPI Home Video 2011)

Mrs. Lovett wasn't the only one collecting bodies for profit in early 18th century Britain. This dark comedy, based on a true story, follows the exploits of William Burke and William Hare as they discover that selling cadavers to the local medical college in Edinburgh is fast and easy money. But how will they keep up with business when they find themselves blackmailed and in need of more bodies?

Listen!

I Wear the Black Hat: Grappling with Villains (Real and Imagined) by Chuck Klosterman

Renowned cultural critic Chuck Klosterman explores our fascination with the villainous and the antihero in this collection of essays. What is it that defines a villain? Why is it that we often find ourselves rooting for the "bad" guy and at what point does one become bad? Narrated by Klosterman himself, the recorded version of this book crosses the line between podcast and audiobook with ease.

Download!

Idle Creatures by Tom Hagerman

If you enjoyed listening to Devotchka's lyrical gypsy folk sounds during this show, you'll have to check out Colorado native Tom Hagerman on volumedenver.org, a free streaming music service from the Denver Public Library highlighting the work of local musicians. Hagerman is best known for his work as a multi-instrumentalist for Devotchka, but has also performed with M Ward, Crooked Fingers, She and Him, Neko Case, Bettye Lavette, Caalexico and Sage Francis, among others.



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