

Elizabeth and Joe LeVaca present

In the Heights

Music and
Lyrics by
**Lin-Manuel
Miranda**
Book by
**Quiara Alegría
Hudes**



August 13-16, 2020

Live Arts Teen Theater Ensemble

Full length online performances!

Directed by
Rebecca Aparicio

Musical Direction by
Michael Salvatierra

123 East Water St. 434.977.4177 livearts.org



29th Season



Study Guide
August 13-16 2020

Dramaturg's Note by Shannon Montague

I am an educator. My entire life has been focused on the premise that curiosity is a gift with never-ending benefits. The more we seek to understand, the better. When I set out to create a packet of key terms for the cast of *In the Heights*, I didn't think it would become the show's official Study Guide, and that I would become the show's dramaturg. I simply wanted to illuminate the world that Lin-Manuel Miranda created, complete with characters who are multi-layered and a world that spans generations. I not only sought to share what I knew, but also, more importantly, to understand what I didn't know. I lived in the same time as Big Pun. I made mixtapes. Our cast did not. Miranda understands Latinx culture and growing up in New York City. I do not. What we all understand is that musical theater and the arts have power. That's why we are here. I simply sought to fill the gaps.

There are moments in this show that resonate across generations. The character Sonny in his solo rap during the song "96,000" says:

"What about immigration?/ Politicians be hatin'./ Racism in this nation's gone from latent to blatant./ I'll cash my ticket and picket, invest in protest,/ never lost my focus till the city takes notice/ and you know this man! I'll never sleep/ because the ghetto has a million promises/ for me to keep!"

Whether you were alive in 1999 when Miranda was writing his earliest draft of the show or in 1943 when Abuela Claudia arrived in New York or you just know today, seven years since #BlackLivesMatter was founded, what we all see is the continued struggle for BIPOC to be seen, heard and known in America. What we know today is that BIPOC are still under-represented in every aspect of theater from writers to actors to directors. This is just one story in a world of stories waiting to be seen, known, and told. "I illuminate the stories of the people in the street . . . And if not me, who keeps our legacies?" (Usnavi in "Finale"). It is imperative that we continue to create space for everyone's story to be seen and told.

Musicals have power and the arts have power, granting the audience a moment to see into the world of someone else. Perhaps it's a world they know. Maybe it's a world with which they are less familiar. When I created a simple packet of key terms for the cast, I wanted to create a starting point for the cast's curiosity. That goal does not change now that the audience has expanded. The job of a dramaturg is to provide a starting point for curiosity, but the audience takes it from there. This particular musical is so layered that it is a playground for connections and understanding. It is both universal and supremely specific, highlighting the connections between us all and the aspects that make our story, our home, unique. I urge you to learn more about Usnavi's home and the legacies he dares to share with you. I urge you to listen and seek to understand voices that are familiar as well as voices that are unfamiliar.

Table of Contents



Cast of *In the Heights*

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| The Story | 4 |
| Meet the Writers | 4 |
| Spanish-English Translations | 5 |
| Glossary | 6 |
| Character Name Meanings | 11 |
| Important Images and Maps | 11 |
| Additional Resources | 15 |

Study Guide edited and compiled by *In the Heights* at Live Arts Dramaturg Shannon Montague
With contributions by Live Arts Intern Sav Maive and Live Arts Education Director Miller Susen

The Story

Nina has returned to the neighborhood after her first year at college with startling news for her parents, who have spent their life savings to ensure a better life for their daughter. Meanwhile, Nina's friend Usnavi runs a bodega, tends to the neighborhood Abuela, and dreams of winning the lottery so he can return to his homeland in the Dominican Republic. When a power outage leaves the neighborhood sweltering in the summer heat, the folks of Washington Heights explore the joy and heartbreak of calling their neighborhood home. With a dynamic score featuring hip-hop, salsa, merengue and soul, IN THE HEIGHTS invites audiences to celebrate love and life in this delightful summer musical.

Meet the Writers

Lin-Manuel Miranda (music and lyrics)



In the Heights depicts Miranda's childhood barrio, Inwood, located directly adjacent to Washington Heights, the setting of the play. Miranda began writing the play when he was in college. However, before its Broadway debut the play underwent significant changes. It was not until he met Thomas Kail, the future Broadway director of the play, that Miranda was introduced to Quiara Alegría Hudes, a prominent writer who was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2012.

Quiara Alegría Hudes (book)



Author of the book [Welcome to My Neighborhood: A Barrio ABC](#). This book inspired *In the Heights*. "The book centers on a little girl who takes her best friend on a tour of her barrio that is riddled with disinvestment. For example, "A" is for "abandoned car." Set in North Philadelphia, the city where Hudes and most of her family reside, the book reflects the Latinx demographic as well as the financial and economic challenges echoed in the play. Hudes's inspiration builds from her own background with poverty as the daughter of a Puerto Rican mother and Jewish father"¹

¹ [Resisting Gentrification in Quiara Alegría Hudes and Lin-Manuel Miranda's In the Heights and Ernesto Quiñonez's Bodega Dreams](#)

Spanish-English Translations

In alphabetical order

Alabanza a doña Claudia, señor - Praise Madame Claudia, Lord

Barrio - a Spanish word meaning "quarter" or "neighborhood"

Benediccion - blessing

Bodega - in New York City, a bodega is a small owner-operated convenience store. Its name is derived from the Spanish word for "storeroom" or "wine cellar". Usually located on New York's street corners, they are renowned for their convivial culture and colorful character. There are an estimated 13,000 bodegas across the city. Bodegas were originally popularized in the mid-twentieth century by Puerto Ricans. Although they were initially documented in the 1930s, the first bodega may have opened even earlier.

Bolero - refers to two distinct genres of slow-tempo Latin music and their associated dances. The oldest type of bolero originated in Spain during the late 18th century as a form of ballroom music, which influenced art music composers around the world, most famously Maurice Ravel's "Boléro", as well as a flamenco style known as boleras. An unrelated genre of sung music originated in eastern Cuba in the late 19th century as part of the trova tradition. This genre gained widespread popularity around Latin America throughout the 20th century and continues to thrive.

Carajo (also joda) - curse word (f-word)

Carnaval - Carnaval has been a part of the folklore of Puerto Rico since the first half of the 19th century. Originally, it was religious in nature, as it was an anticipation of Lent and meat (carne in Spanish, thus the name carnaval) was eaten for the last time. Over time, it has lost its religious essence. Today, the public festivals take place at various times of the year, are called carnaval and preserve the most traditional elements such as masked vejigantes and a parade of bands.

Coqui - common name for several small species of frog in Puerto Rico. The coqui symbol, shown repeatedly, portrays the influence of the coqui on the art and decorative works, such as poetry, pottery, and beliefs in the Taino society. In these carvings, positioning frog-like hands represented "femaleness." In addition, coqui frogs with their rich vocals before it rained, were said to have been associated with female fertility and children.

Machismo - from Spanish and Portuguese "macho", male) is the sense of being 'manly' and self-reliant, the concept associated with "a strong sense of masculine pride: an exaggerated masculinity."

Mami/Papi - slang for mommy/daddy, also used as a term of endearment for a significant other and children, similar to English slang, baby

Mira - look

Pana - Puerto Rican slang word for “buddy”

Glossary

In order of the script

Piragua - (derived from the words for pyramid and water) a Puerto Rican shaved ice dessert, shaped like a pyramid, consisting of shaved ice and covered with fruit-flavored syrup. Piraguas are sold by vendors, known as piragüeros, from small colorful pushcarts. These are served with a straw.

[How to make piragua](#)



Mamey - fruit from a tree native to Cuba and Central America, naturally ranging from southern Cuba to southern Costa Rica, plus Mexico. Today, the tree is cultivated not only in Cuba, but also in Central America, the Caribbean, and South Florida. Commonly eaten in many Latin American countries, mamey can be found in many Latin American communities throughout the USA, where it is made into milkshakes and ice cream among other things. The fruit's texture is creamy and soft, the flavor is a mix of sweet potato, pumpkin, honey, prune, peach, apricot, cantaloupe, cherry, and almond.



“Take the A Train” -

1. *Song*: is a jazz standard by Billy Strayhorn that was the signature tune of the Duke Ellington orchestra.
[Take the A Train](#)
2. *The subway line*: The title of “Take the A Train” refers to the then-new A subway service that runs through New York City, going at that time from eastern Brooklyn, on the Fulton Street Line opened in 1936, up into Harlem and northern Manhattan, using the Eighth Avenue Line in Manhattan opened in 1932.
3. (See **Important Maps and Images** for NYC subway map)

“I’m getting tested; time are tough on this bodega. Two months ago somebody’s bought Ortega’s. Our neighbors started packin’ up and pickin’ up and ever since the rents went up it’s gotten mad expensive but we live with just enough.”

- Reference to *gentrification*

“Gentrification, defined as the phenomenon of increased demand by young professionals for housing in a convenient, well-located neighborhood and the resulting rapid increase in rents that displaces poorer longer-term residents, is a problem all over New York City. Washington Heights/Inwood, has not been immune. According to the Furman Center, Washington Heights/Inwood is rapidly gentrifying; threatening its poor with displacement because of the escalating rents. Gentrification has been a fact of life in Washington Heights/Inwood since at least the late 1990s. Following in the footsteps of similar neighborhoods that have gone through gentrification, Washington Heights/Inwood has slowly witnessed a growing population resurgence fueled by the arrival of high-income, upper-middle class newcomers. Unfortunately, the resurgence has come at the expense of long-term, poorer residents, who are having trouble paying the high rent increases and are unable to find housing that they can afford in the neighborhood.”²

Manny Ramirez - a Dominican baseball player who grew up in Washington Heights. He was one of the great baseball players of the late '90s/early '00s, batting 555 home runs and being awarded World Series MVP in the historic Red Sox 2004 Series win. If he's visiting, traffic is going to be heavy on the Deegan, which goes by Yankee Stadium.

Con Edison - short for Consolidated Edison, one of the largest energy companies in the United States, providing electric and gas service in New York City. The 2006 Queens blackout was an unresolved series of power outages that affected the northwest section of the New York City borough Queens in July 2006. The blackout primarily affected the neighborhoods of Astoria, Long Island City, Sunnyside, and Woodside. The outages affected 174,000 people, caused business losses of tens of millions of dollars, caused airport and transit delays and cancellations, and caused unsavory living conditions due to a concurrent heatwave.

Schmutz - dirt/smudge

Chita Rivera - An American actress, dancer, and singer best known for her roles in musical theatre. She is the first Hispanic woman and the first Latino American to receive a Kennedy Center Honors award (December 2002). She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009. Some shows: West Side Story (Anita); Bye, Bye Birdie (Rose); Chicago (Velma).



Rockefeller - an American industrial, political, and banking family that owns one of the world's largest fortunes. The fortune was made in the American petroleum industry during the late 19th and early 20th centuries by John D. Rockefeller and his brother William Rockefeller, primarily through Standard Oil. The family has had a long association with,

² [When a Neighborhood Becomes a Revolving Door for Dominicans: Rising Housing Costs in Washington Heights/Inwood and the Declining Presence of Dominicans](#)

and control of, Chase Manhattan Bank. As of 1977 the Rockefellers were considered one of the most powerful families in the history of the United States.

Roman candles, bottle rockets - fireworks illegal to set off or possess in New York.



“brass ring, like Frodo”/ “Mr. Frodo of the shire” - Frodo is a fictional character in J. R. R. Tolkien's writings, and a central figure in *The Lord of the Rings*. Frodo is a hobbit of the Shire who inherits the One Ring from his cousin Bilbo Baggins and undertakes the quest to destroy it in the fires of Mount Doom in Mordor.

Braggadoccio - braggart/in rap MCs use braggadoccio to boast—to speak about themselves with great pride. Braggadoccio may include subjects such as physicality, fighting ability, financial riches, sexual prowess, or "coolness". Often heavily used in battle rap, braggadoccio lyrics can range from just saying, "I'm the best MC ever," to using elaborate phraseology and wit.

“poppin’ lockin’ up the block” -

popping: Popping is a street dance adapted out of the earlier Boogaloo cultural movement in Oakland, California. The dance is rooted through the rhythms of live funk music, and is based on the technique of Boogaloo's posing approach, quickly contracting and relaxing muscles to cause a jerk or can be a sudden stop in the dancer's body, referred to as a pose, pop or a hit. This is done continuously to the rhythm of a song in combination with various movements and poses.

locking: Locking is a style of funk dance, which is today also associated with hip hop. The name is based on the concept of locking movements, which basically means freezing from a fast movement and "locking" in a certain position, holding that position for a short while and then continuing at the same speed as before.

Cuban emigration/immigration to the US in 1943 - emigration basically comprised workers looking for jobs, mainly in New York and New Jersey. They were classified as labor migrants and workers, much like other immigrants in the area at that time.

“You better clean this mess! You better learn ingles! You better not be late! You better pull your weight! Are you better off than you were with the bird of LaVibora.”

- “In her solo, Claudia shares how she arrived in New York City in 1943 as a child due to financial hardship, unlike post-1959 Cuban immigrants who . . . left the island because of Fidel Castro’s rise to power. Abuela Claudia’s experience instead strongly parallels the struggles of many Puerto Rican and Dominican immigrants, for whom service sector jobs historically functioned as one of the principal areas of employment available.”³

Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia - an American politician best known for being the 99th Mayor of New York City for three terms from 1934 to 1945 as a pro-New Deal liberal progressive Republican. As a New Dealer, he supported President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a Democrat, and in turn Roosevelt heavily funded the city and cut off patronage for La Guardia's enemies. La Guardia revitalized New York City and restored public faith in City Hall. He unified the transit system, directed the building of low-cost public housing, public playgrounds, and parks, constructed airports, reorganized the police force, defeated the powerful Tammany Hall political machine, and reestablished employment on merit in place of patronage jobs.

Rain check - a coupon issued to a customer by a store, guaranteeing that a sale item that is out of stock may be purchased by that customer at a later date at the same reduced price.

Blase - unimpressed or indifferent to something because one has experienced or seen it so often before.

“You should teach them some local vocabulary.”

Code switching: the practice of shifting the languages you use or the way you express yourself in your conversations.⁴

Mr. Softee - an American ice cream truck franchisor, best known in the northeastern United States. It is based in Runnemede, New Jersey.

³ [-Resisting Gentrification in Quiara Alegria Hudes and Lin-Manuel Miranda's In the Heights and Ernesto Quiñonez's Bodega Dreams](#)

⁴ [Five Reasons Why People Code Switch](#)

Bourgeoisie - relating to, belonging to, or having qualities or values associated with the middle class; too concerned about wealth, possessions, and respectable behavior—NOT relating to the upper class or fancy⁵

Salud and l'chaim - both ways of toasting/"cheers"

Poet laureate - a poet officially appointed by a government or conferring institution, typically expected to compose poems for special events and occasions.

Severance package - pay and benefits employees may be entitled to receive when they leave employment at a company unwillingly.

Knight Rider and Kit - an American action crime drama television series starring David Hasselhoff as Michael Knight, a high-tech modern crime fighter assisted by KITT, an advanced artificially intelligent, self-aware and nearly indestructible car.



Calling card - a card that allows the user to make telephone calls up to a specified value or charge the cost to a specific account.

Big Pun - an American rapper and actor. Emerging from the underground hip hop scene in The Bronx borough of New York City in the early 1990s, he came to prominence during the latter half of the decade for his work with Fat Joe and the Terror Squad. Pun's lyrics are notable for their technical efficiency, having minimal pauses to take a breath, heavy use of alliteration as well as internal and multi-syllabic rhyming schemes. He is frequently cited as one of the best MCs of all time.



⁵ [How Did Bourgeoisie Become a Bad Word?](#)

“It’s a wonderful life that I’ve known. Merry Christmas you ole building and loan!”

- a line spoken by George Bailey, the main character in *It’s a Wonderful Life*. Similarly George Bailey decides not to leave (commit suicide) at the end of the movie after being convinced no man is a failure who has friends.

“There’s no place like home . . . Where it’s a hundred in the shade . . .”

“There’s no place like home” - a reference to *The Wizard of Oz*.

“Hundred in the shade” - a reference to the musical, *110 in the Shade* which ends with the idea of promise (for rain) and renewal. Note: The rest of this verse alludes to other songs in the show: “When You’re Home”; “Everything I Know”; *Paciencia y Fe*; “It Won’t Be Long Now”.

Character Name Meanings

Usnavi

“Your father said, ‘Usnavi, that’s what we’ll name the baby.’ It really said, ‘US Navy,’ but hey . . . I worked with what they gave me okay . . .” *de la Vega* (II-8-120) - is a surname in the Spanish language, most of its bearers belonging to the nobility. It means "of the meadow"

Nina

Means “child” in Spanish

Vanessa

Name of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s wife, who he met in high school and married in 2010 but might be coincidental as they did not start dating until after the show was written.

Rosario

Spanish surname, means rosary (string of beads to count components of prayer in Catholicism)

Important Images and Maps

Use [this map](#) to search for the following locations:

Washington Heights

“I never been North of Ninety-Sixth Street. Well, you must take the A train. Even farther than Harlem to Northern Manhattan and maintain. Get off at 181st, and take the escalator . . .”

Queens

“... but I always say I’m from Queens!” (Carla)

West Fourth Street

“I’m going down to West Fourth Street . . .” (Vanessa)

Dominican Republic

- Playa Rincon (there is also a Playa Rincon in Puerto Rico)
- Puerto Plata

Puerto Rico

- Playa Rincon (where Usnavi’s parents lived before he was born)
- Arecibo, Puerto Rico (where Kevin and Camilia are from)
- Vega Alta (where Daniela is from; also where author Lin-Manuel Miranda’s grandparents are from)

GWB (George Washington Bridge)

The George Washington Bridge is an important travel corridor within the New York metropolitan area. It has an upper level that carries four lanes in each direction and a lower level with three lanes in each direction, for a total of 14 lanes of travel. Crossing the Hudson River, it connects New Jersey (Fort Lee) to Manhattan (Washington Heights).



Manhattan references

From "Benny's Dispatch"

"We got traffic on the West Side, get off at 79th and take the left side of Riverside Drive, and ya might slide. West End's ya best friend if you catch the lights! And don't take the Deegan; Manny Ramirez is in town this weekend."

"There's a traffic accident I have to mention at the intersection of 10th Ave and the Jacob Javitz Convention Center and check it out, don't get stuck in the rubber-neckin' on a hundred and ninety second, there's a double decker bus wreck!"

La Vibora, Havana, Cuba

La Vibora was founded in 1689, as a small town where the exchange of horses would occur for caravans traveling from Havana to Güines. The town grew rapidly, and by 1698 it began to appear in local maps and chronicles. Today, it is Havana's most populated "barrio", with 23,118 inhabitants.

From "Paciencia y Fe"

"It was hotter at home in La Vibora the Washington Heights of Havana! A crowded city of faces the same as mine! Back as a child in La Vibora, I chased the birds in the plaza praying Mama, you would find work."

New York City Subway

"When the world was just a subway map and the one-slash-nine climbed a dotted line to my place. There's no nine train now."

- "9" train discontinued service in May of 2005



Castle Garden

“Are we going to Castle Garden?”

Castle Garden - (known as Castle Clinton since the 1970's) is a national monument and departure point to visit Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty, but it is in Battery Park, not in Washington Heights.

The Cloisters - The Cloisters Museum and Gardens is located in Washington Heights. It contains medieval gardens and a series of chapels and themed galleries, including the Romanesque, Fuentidueña, Unicorn, Spanish and Gothic rooms.

Castle Village - is a five-building cooperative apartment complex located on Cabrini Boulevard between West 181st and 186th Streets in the Hudson Heights neighborhood of Manhattan, New York City. It was built in 1938-39 by real estate developer Charles V. Paterno on the 7.5 acres site of what had been the castle that was his residence, and was designed by George F. Pelham, Jr., whose father, George F. Pelham, had designed the nearby Hudson View Gardens.

Hudson View Gardens - cooperative apartment complex located on Pinehurst Avenue and Cabrini Boulevard in the near vicinity of West 183rd and 185th Streets, located in the Hudson Heights subsection of the Washington Heights neighborhood Manhattan, New York City. It overlooks the Hudson River to the west and Bennett Park – which includes Manhattan's highest natural point – to the east. A "garden community" of cooperative apartments to attract those who wanted the comforts of the new suburbs but wanted to reside in New York City.

Bennett Park - Bennett Park is a small park and playground between 183rd and 185th St. It is the site of highest elevation on the island, and the former location of Fort Washington during the American Revolution

“You’d hang out in Bennett Park . . .”

Stanford University

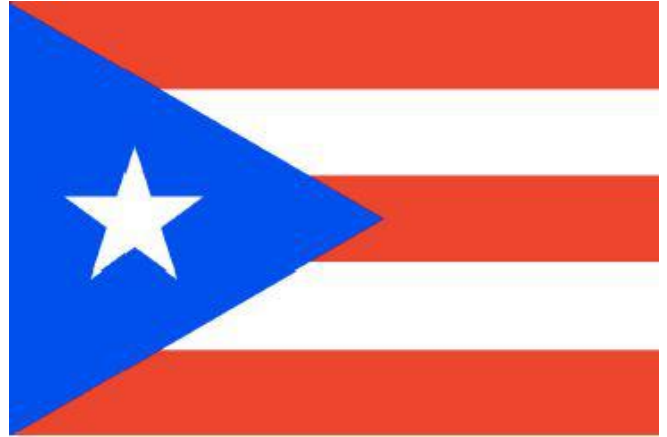
Private university in California; Stanford ranks high and often first on many college-ranking lists

East Secaucus, New Jersey

“In fact, can we sing so loud and raucous, they can hear us across the bridge in East Secaucus?”

Flags (*Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Cuba*)

(*script translation*) “I remember my homeland! That beautiful flag contains my entire soul! And when I die, bury me in my homeland.”



Upper Left: Dominican Republic; Upper Right: Puerto Rico; Lower Left: Mexico; Lower Right: Cuba

Additional Resources

[*In the Heights* Elon University Dramaturgy](#)

[*In the Heights* Study Guide \(Pittsburgh Musical Theatre\)](#)