

# MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL

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Musicals are America's premiere contribution to the theatre and MTI is firmly committed to supporting and nurturing a musical theatre that will continue to develop and flourish into the next century.







Book by **John Weidman**

Music by **David Shire**

Lyrics by **Richard Maltby**

Based on the Motion Picture "BIG" Written by Gary Ross and Anne Spielberg  
A TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX FILM



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## About **big**

*big* opened on Broadway on April 28, 1996 with a book by John Weidman, music by David Shire and lyrics by Richard Maltby, Jr. Although it was hailed by Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* as a “bright, shiny, larger-than-life toy of a show,” the original New York production enjoyed only a modest Broadway run. Undaunted, the authors went back to the drawing board, and a refashioned *big* took to the road in September 1997, garnering critical accolades for its triumphant national tour.

Based on the 1988 Twentieth Century Fox megahit movie, the musical tells the story of a twelve-year-old New Jersey boy who wishes to be “big” and suddenly has his wish granted. One morning shortly before his thirteenth birthday, Josh Baskin (who plays Little League and has just started to discover girls) wakes up a full-grown man and runs away to Manhattan, where he rises to become an “idea” man at a toy company, bringing his genuine sense of childish wonder to the jaded adult world.

The show traces his adventures as an adolescent in a corporate world of office politics and romance as he battles his apprehensions and searches for his identity. *big* is about every adult’s longing to return to the simpler days of childhood and every child’s desire to grow up. We are reminded that we must all grow up at our own pace, and that we must be wary of what we wish for — because our wish could come true.

## The Characters in *big*

### CHILDREN

YOUNG JOSH BASKIN, a twelve-year-old boy

BILLY KOPECKI, Josh's best friend

CYNTHIA BENSON, a fourteen-year-old girl

DEREK, a sixteen-year old boy

NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS, KIDS OF SHOPPERS, KIDS OF MACMILLAN EMPLOYEES

### ADULTS

JOSH BASKIN, an adult

MRS. BASKIN, Josh's mother

MR. BASKIN, Josh's father

GEORGE MACMILLAN, owner of MacMillan Toy Company

SUSAN LAWRENCE, Vice-President of Marketing at MacMillan Toy Company

PAUL SEYMOUR, Vice-President for Product Development at MacMillan Toy Company

RICK BIRNBAUM, a MacMillan Toy Company executive

RON BARRETT, a MacMillan Toy Company executive

ARTHUR LIPTON, a MacMillan Toy Company executive

MISS WATSON, Josh's secretary at MacMillan Toy Company

DIANE, Susan's friend

ABIGAIL, Susan's friend

NICK, Susan's friend

TOM, Susan's friend

JUNIOR EXECUTIVES

RECEPTIONIST

BEAN BAG TOSS LADY

TICKET TAKER

SALES PERSON

PANHANDLER

FAT GUY

DETECTIVE

ZOLTAR

DISTINGUISHED VOICE

CARNIVAL WORKERS, EXECUTIVES, OFFICE STAFF, SHOPPERS, TRAVELERS



## Plot Synopsis

### ACT ONE

#### Scene 1

As lights rise, a distinguished voice (in voiceover) introduces us to two New Jersey teens (Young Josh Baskin and Billy Kopecki) as the two boys practice an MTV-style hip-hop dance routine (“Come On, Baby”). A group of teenaged girls enters and a spotlight singles out fourteen-year-old Cynthia Benson. Josh, who has a crush on her, tells himself to calm down, act naturally and speak to her (“Talk To Her”); but when Cynthia says hello, he freezes up. After she leaves, Billy tries to convince Josh she likes him, and gives him advice on how to talk to her. We see Cynthia and the other girls arranging their hair, adjusting their make-up, and doing “teenage girl things” as they complain about the time it takes to grow up.

As Josh continues to wonder how other boys can talk to girls with apparent ease, his parents enter. They announce the family will attend the local carnival. When Josh mentions he’d rather stay home and play his new computer game, his parents wonder if his sour mood is due to a new adolescent interest in girls.

Billy re-enters and tells Josh Cynthia will probably be at the carnival alone. Again, Billy coaches Josh on what he should say to her. As the two boys sing and dance their hip-hop routine, the carnival appears around them (“The Carnival”). Josh convinces his parents to give him and Billy money for the “Wild Thunder” rollercoaster ride. Billy notices Cynthia has joined the line behind them. Once more, Billy urges Josh to talk to her. Just as Josh gets up his courage to speak, sixteen-year-old Derek enters and places his arm around Cynthia, who mentions with awe to Josh and Billy that Derek drives. When Josh and Billy get to the front of the line, the ticket taker tells Josh he is not big enough to ride “Wild Thunder.”

After Cynthia and Derek pass them to get on the ride, Josh walks off and finds himself in a deserted part of the carnival. He works off his frustration by again doing his hip-hop routine as a row of funhouse mirrors appears behind him. As Josh looks at himself in the mirrors, he notices an antique arcade machine: a swami fortune teller encased in a glass box with the words “Zoltar Speaks” written across the top. Josh follows the instructions to insert a coin into a ramp leading to Zoltar’s mouth. When nothing happens, Josh kicks and hits the machine and it comes to life. Music plays, lights come on and Zoltar begins to move, telling Josh to make a wish. Josh wishes to be big and hits the machine again, causing the coin to drop into Zoltar’s mouth; Zoltar then sings that Josh’s wish has been granted. As thunder sounds and lightning flashes, Josh notices the power cord to the machine is not plugged in. He runs home and dives under his covers.

#### Scene 2

It is the following morning. From the kitchen of the Baskin house, Mrs. Baskin tries to wake Josh, yelling up to his room. As she tidies up the kitchen and sets Josh’s breakfast on the table, she considers her life as an overworked wife and mother (“Say Good Morning To Mom”).

Upstairs, Josh, now fully-grown, gets out of bed, looks in the mirror to inspect a pimple on his face, and discovers to his horror he has become an adult... overnight! He dives into the closet, just as his mother enters to collect his dirty laundry. He disguises his voice (which is now considerably deeper) and manages to avoid being seen by her. When his mother leaves the room, Josh tries unsuccessfully to fit into a pair of his child-sized jeans, finally grabbing one of his father's sweat-suits instead. As Josh tiptoes down to the kitchen and toward the front door, the baby begins to cry. Josh tries to quiet her, but she screams even louder. Hiding under the kitchen table, Josh again manages just barely to avoid being seen by his mother; however, when his mother lifts the tablecloth, she sees the adult Josh and, assuming he is a burglar and kidnapper, offers him her purse. Josh tries to tell her who he is, but she grabs a hand-held mixer and begins yelling for the police. He runs out of the house.

### Scene 3

Hysterical, Josh goes to his junior high school to find Billy. Billy, like Mrs. Baskin, doesn't believe this grown man could be Josh, but Josh finally convinces Billy by telling him things only Josh could know and by performing their hip-hop routine.

### Scene 4

Billy and Josh are in the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City, surrounded by an assortment of commuters, panhandlers and various other people who live and work there ("Port Authority Shuffle"). Determined to find a Zoltar machine so they can wish Josh back to his former self, Billy and Josh ask someone at a video arcade where they might search for one. The arcade manager suggests they write the Bureau of Arcades and Amusements for a complete list of carnivals. He gives them the address, telling them to expect a response in three to four weeks.

When Josh complains he can't wait three to four weeks, Billy points out most kids would love the chance to be grown-up and do whatever they want, without fear of parental reprimand ("You're A Big Boy Now"). Billy assures Josh getting a job will be easy, and Josh eventually agrees this is his chance to feel grown-up feelings without waiting to grow. Billy, after suggesting Josh find a place to sleep in the terminal, leaves to go back home. Josh, alone and scared, calls his mother, but she still believes the grown-up Josh has kidnapped her son. A police detective grabs the phone from her, and Josh quickly hangs up. After telling himself big boys don't get scared or cry, he sits down and begins to cry.

### Scene 5

Josh has gone to a large Manhattan toy store, where a chorus of salespeople, wooden soldiers and clowns invites customers to come in ("The Time Of Your Life").

Josh, attempting to sound and look like an adult, tells a salesperson he wants a job and is directed up to the personnel office. He is then accosted by a little boy who shoots him with a ping pong ball fired from a toy space gun. Josh chases the boy as the employees continue to invite customers into the store.

George MacMillan enters, approaches a little girl, and asks her if she would rather play with her doll or with an evil-looking space action figure he holds in his hand. The girl's mother intercedes, dragging the girl away from MacMillan. He then approaches a little boy with the action figure; the boy screams and runs away. Josh, now holding a toy space gun and chasing the boy who shot him, crashes into MacMillan and knocks him down.

When MacMillan asks Josh if he is trying out the toy gun for his son, Josh responds he merely wanted to see if the gun is fun to play with. MacMillan, owner of the MacMillan Toy Company, introduces himself to Josh and tells him his company is having trouble coming up with a Christmas toy that will sell. MacMillan bemoans the difficulty of understanding what kids find "fun" ("Fun"). Josh points out why several of MacMillan Toy Company's formerly big-selling games and toys aren't fun anymore. The store employees push out a large toy keyboard, upon which Josh and MacMillan then dance, first plunking out "Chopsticks" and then "Heart and Soul." After they dance, they sing about all the things having fun can do for people; MacMillan offers Josh a job at his company.

### Scene 6

Billy accompanies Josh on Josh's first day at MacMillan Toys, a very sleek and cold corporate office. As Josh and Billy speak to a chilly receptionist, a chorus of junior executives welcomes them to MacMillan Toys, describing what they do and how the company was founded ("Welcome To MacMillan Toys"). Miss Watson, an executive secretary, arrives to take Josh to his new office as the junior executives continue to sing their welcome.

Susan Lawrence, the Vice-President in charge of Marketing, enters with an armful of folders; she is followed by Paul Seymour, the Vice-President for Product Development, who is carrying a "Dr. Deathstar" action figure, the latest hope for MacMillan's Christmas catalogue. Susan complains she can't get any work done because of her secretary's impending wedding ("My Secretary's In Love").

Josh, rushing to find the conference room where he is to meet MacMillan and the other executives, bumps into Susan and knocks her folders on the floor. Rick Birnbaum, Ron Barrett and Arthur Lipton, the Vice-Presidents in charge of Advertising, Production and Promotion, respectively, arrive as Josh helps Susan pick up the folders. Susan and Paul introduce themselves to Josh. As they all wait for the conference where Mr. MacMillan will announce the season's top toy design, Paul boasts the conference will go smoothly and quickly.

When Mr. MacMillan arrives, he and Josh announce the "Dr. Deathstar" figure is not fun to play with; MacMillan then announces he is stopping the planned release of the toy. He demands the executives reevaluate their previous toy designs and introduces Josh to everyone as the new Vice-President in charge of Product Evaluation. As Josh is shown his huge new toy-filled office, Paul complains about MacMillan's decision to drop the toy based on Josh's opinion.

Billy meets Josh in Josh's office and is shocked at its large size. Josh discovers Miss Watson will get them all the junk food and videos they ask for, and asks her to type Billy's algebra homework. After Josh explains his job is to play with all of the new toy prototypes and discover which ones are fun, he and Billy start to realize being big can be fun.

Susan breaks up with Paul, who immediately gets a headache. Susan goes to Josh's office to ask if he has any aspirin and interrupts a game of "Astro-blasters" between him and Billy. Billy introduces himself to Susan as Josh's Special Assistant for Research and Testing. Josh mentions Susan should see the apartment he has been given, which he is free to furnish any way he wants. Susan takes this as an invitation and accepts. She leaves Josh's office excited and flushed she has accepted his "invitation" as Paul and the junior executives suggest Josh should "watch his back" ("MacMillan Toys — Part 2").

### Scene 7

Josh and Susan return to Josh's apartment after having dinner together. Josh, unaware Susan believes they have been on a "date," begins to open the front door, but Susan pushes it shut, pretending to be shy about going in. She insists they not rush into a "relationship" and suggests it might be better for her to leave than see Josh's apartment ("Let's Not Move Too Fast"). Josh concedes, entering his apartment alone and closing the door behind him. Susan frowns, knocks on Josh's door and invites herself in.

Josh's large loft appears around them; it is filled with the kinds of things a thirteen-year-old boy might wish for: arcade games, a huge TV, a Coke machine, pinball machines, a basketball hoop, etc. Susan, stunned, asks Josh if he lives alone. When he says "yes," she assumes he has just come off of a romantic relationship.

Josh asks Susan if she would like a drink, and points her in the direction of the Coke machine. Susan has other ideas, though: she pulls a bottle of champagne out of her shoulder bag. As Josh gets two glasses — plastic mugs with NFL logos on them — Susan opens the champagne and produces a jar of caviar from her bag. She tells Josh how relaxed and comfortable she feels with him.

Josh asks about the caviar; Susan mentions it is Beluga, and spreads some on a cracker. He tastes it and immediately spits it out; Susan gives him the champagne to drink, which he also spits out. Josh pulls his shirt out of his pants, wipes his tongue on it, finds a can of Coke and gargles with it.

As Susan continues talking, Josh asks her what games she wants to play. He mentions a number of games he has in his apartment, finally realizing all of his toys are for boys ("Do You Want To Play Games?"). Josh mentions he can give Susan stars and presses a button on a remote control unit; the lights go out and the walls and ceiling are covered with pinpoints of light ("Stars, Stars, Stars"). Josh tells her he found the little planetarium at the Museum of Natural History and points out constellations; Susan joins Josh in looking at the stars.

At the end of the song, Susan, realizing she is sitting on Josh's bed, mentions she was hoping Josh would ask her to spend the night. Josh immediately invites her to spend the night for a sleepover party; he gives her a pair of pajamas and hops up to the top bunk of his bunk bed. He then leans over the top, dangling his fists, and tells her to pick a hand. When she does, he gives her the "Official Startraveller's Compass Ring" he was hiding in that hand. Susan thanks him and mentions how wonderful the evening has been.

As Josh falls asleep, Susan looks at the ring, rises and moves downstage. The loft and bunk beds disappear and Susan remembers her first true love, a boy named Buzz Babcock who gave her a

plastic compass ring when she was in fifth grade (“Little Susan Lawrence”). She thanks Josh for having awakened her memories with his gift.

### Scene 8

The chic, black-tie company party is in progress in the garden of a midtown Manhattan restaurant; MacMillan employees are dancing stiffly as an offstage band plays. Paul shows Lipton a copy of Josh’s job application, which is filled with the kind of answers a twelve-year-old would write: “Highest Degree: 103, during a bout with whooping cough”; “Goals: 6 in soccer, 9 in hockey”; etc. As Paul tries to show Susan the application, Josh enters in a white dress suit; everyone applauds his entrance. Josh then gives Susan her lipstick, which he mentions he found behind his bed. Paul becomes very upset.

After Mr. MacMillan greets Josh, Paul demands Josh play a game called “Toss Your Cookies.” Paul misses on his cookie throw, claiming Josh hit his arm. Josh denies this and refuses to give him back his cookie; Paul jumps on Josh and starts beating him up. Susan pulls Paul off Josh, accusing Paul of being jealous and demanding from him his set of keys to her apartment.

Susan comforts Josh as Mr. MacMillan takes the floor and demands the executives find a way to connect with kids. Josh suggests everyone dance, and he and the kids who have come with their parents begin to do so (“Cross The Line”). MacMillan threatens to fire anyone who doesn’t dance — including Paul, who has been trying to show Mr. MacMillan Josh’s personnel file. MacMillan tells everyone they have three days to come up with the design for a new Christmas toy.

Susan kisses Josh and the dance goes into slow motion. Billy enters, having just received the list of carnivals from the Bureau of Arcades and Amusements. Josh ignores him, promising to call him later. Josh is pulled back into the dance and Billy runs off as the curtain falls.

## ACT TWO

### Scene 1

Back in their New Jersey neighborhood, Billy is throwing away all of the things he has shared with Josh: the baseball bat with which Josh taught Billy how to bunt; their fourth-grade Field Day medal; Josh’s dirtbike pedal; their two-way walkie-talkie system; and the list of carnivals.

Mrs. Baskin enters, carrying a box from the bakery; she mentions to Billy today is Josh’s thirteenth birthday and she bought a cake just in case he comes home. Retrieving the list of carnivals from the trash, Billy assures her Josh will return soon.

Mrs. Baskin tells Billy not to grow up too fast and as he exits, she remembers Josh’s childhood and wishes she could have stopped time to keep him from growing up too quickly. She walks into her kitchen, sets the cake on the table, puts a candle in it and lights it, wishing she had been able to stop time six weeks ago, because then Josh would still be home (“Stop, Time”).

Josh appears and watches his mother, as if in a dream. As Mrs. Baskin wishes him a happy birthday and blows out the candle, Josh crumples to the stage.

## Scene 2

Susan, who is still working in her office at 4 AM, notices Josh asleep on the floor in front of her sofa. She is working on a game which involves boxing with oversized boxing gloves while standing in hula hoops. She and Josh, each standing in a hoop, begin to box. They continue playing until they eventually tumble out of the hoops, rolling around and hitting each other. Suddenly, Josh finds he has rolled on top of Susan. He quickly rolls off, and they remove their gloves.

Susan suggests they try to imagine they are kids and asks Josh to pick an age. He suggests thirteen. When he asks Susan what she liked to do as a thirteen-year-old girl, she at first has trouble remembering, but soon recalls she was constantly busy with dance classes (“Dancing All the Time”). She gets Josh to ballroom dance with her.

Suddenly, Young Josh appears. As Josh and Susan dance, Young Josh wonders about what men and women do together. Older Josh wonders how a woman kisses a man she likes (“I Want To Know”). They continue to sing as Susan and Josh dance. Finally, Susan and Josh embrace; the lights fade on them as Young Josh finishes the song.

## Scene 3

It is the following morning. We see the exhausted and disheveled MacMillan executives greet each other. Soon after Miss Watson arrives, the elevator doors open and Josh enters. He is dressed in an Armani suit, wearing dark glasses and, unlike the others, full of energy. He greets Miss Watson exuberantly and asks her to make some coffee for him (“Coffee, Black”). Josh tells her he has come up with a great idea for the Christmas toy and asks her to contact the various company departments. With Miss Watson following closely behind, Josh finds the other junior executives, shows them his design, and tells them what he needs from their departments.

MacMillan enters, having heard Josh has found the perfect toy; but when he asks to hear Josh's idea, Josh tells him he'll have to wait for the presentation meeting the following morning. After a tense moment, MacMillan throws his arm around Josh, praising him to the other executives. MacMillan demands the others make sure Josh gets whatever he needs.

When Billy arrives and shows Josh the list of carnivals, Josh tells him he doesn't want to go back to being a kid anymore. What's more, if Billy finds the Zoltar machine and makes the same wish, Josh can get him a job at the company. Billy gets angry. Josh accuses him of being jealous. Susan enters and, not seeing Billy, kisses Josh. Billy leaves angrily, sarcastically wishing Josh a “Happy Birthday” just before exiting.

Susan, not realizing it is Josh's birthday, invites him to accompany her to dinner with her friends. Josh, excited at the prospect of attending a grown-up dinner, eagerly accepts.

## Scene 4

Nick and Abigail and Tom and Diane, two married couples who are friends of Susan, sip drinks and set caviar and crackers in Nick and Abigail's standard yuppie living room while listening to classical music. They all discuss Susan's love life and anticipate meeting the new, wonderful boyfriend she has told them all about — Josh.

Susan and Josh arrive. Susan's friends greet Josh, scrutinizing him the way close friends will, and warn him not to hurt her.

Josh, who doesn't smoke or drink, immediately impresses the friends with his unpretentiousness. The women all go into the kitchen, and Abigail and Diane tell Susan they find Josh wonderful and adorable ("The Real Thing"). Meanwhile, Josh and the men talk in the living room; Tom offers Josh the tray of caviar. After making sure the caviar isn't Beluga, Josh tries one and has the same reaction he had before: he immediately spits it out, finds a throw pillow on the couch and wipes his tongue on it, leaving a big black smear.

The women return from the kitchen with a tray of steamed artichokes and a bottle of champagne. Abigail sees the pillow, forces a laugh, turns it over and throws it back on the couch. She then asks Josh to open the bottle of champagne for a toast, but he clearly has no idea how. The others begin eating the artichokes and Abigail, seeing the trouble Josh is having, asks Tom to open the bottle. Josh, who has never eaten an artichoke before, takes a big bite off the top. He winces as he tries to chew it.

Nick asks Josh to move Tom's brand new BMW before Tom gets a parking ticket. Josh, who has never driven a car before, takes the keys. After he leaves, everyone agrees he is wonderful; then they hear a loud crash. Tom exits. Josh returns and mentions the car went into reverse. Tom returns with a large piece of the wrecked BMW. Abigail, Diane and Nick try to lighten the mood by offering a toast to Susan and Josh, but Josh suddenly runs out of the apartment and up to the roof.

### Scene 5

Susan finds Josh on the roof. She tries to console him by telling him what she loves about him. Josh tells her he is really a thirteen-year-old boy from New Jersey who got "big" after making a wish at a carnival. She does not believe him, and slaps him to make him stop talking. After telling him she loves him, she exits.

### Scene 6

A confused and upset Josh returns to his old neighborhood. He now realizes being grown-up means having to take responsibility for one's actions ("When You're Big"). Billy enters and the two set off to find the Zoltar machine.

### Scene 7

Josh and Billy are searching through a cavernous warehouse when Josh finds a Zoltar machine. Susan, whom Josh has called on the telephone, enters; Josh asks Billy to leave for a few minutes. Susan realizes everything Josh has told her about himself is true. She recognizes the Zoltar machine as the basis for Josh's new Christmas toy idea. They say goodbye to each other, and Josh starts to cry ("We're Gonna Be Fine"). Susan shows Josh the Startraveller Compass ring he gave her. They promise they will never forget each other.

Billy returns with a bag of quarters and Josh inserts one into the machine. He kicks the machine and it comes to life. As Billy and Susan watch, Josh makes his wish and is magically transformed

back into a thirteen-year-old boy. He and Billy break into their hip-hop routine. Josh and Susan wave goodbye as Susan exits. Mrs. Baskin enters and embraces Josh as the curtain falls.







# Themes and Topics to Explore

## Questions and Assignments

Our study guide focuses on a wide-ranging list of themes and topics suggested by the style and content of *big*.

Avenues for exploring each theme and topic are suggested in the form of:

**QUESTIONS:** Designed to prompt in-class discussions before and after viewing or reading the show.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Designed to be researched and written out of class.

## The Characters in *big*

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- What is the function of the characters in a musical play? Could you create a musical play without characters? A story? A film?
- What is the difference between a major and minor character? Who are the major characters in *big*? Who are the minor characters?
- Who was your favorite character? Why?
- With which character did you sympathize most? Why?
- Did you recognize anything in any of the characters that reminded you of yourself?
- How does Josh change by the end of the play? Which other characters undergo major changes over the course of the play? Try to identify the specific point at which each character changes.
- Which is more important: the musical play as it is written down or as it is brought to life by live performers? Which one is the “real” play?
- What should the title of a play tell you about the main character? If you had to think of a different title for this play, what would it be?
- Which of Josh’s dreams and problems do you share?
- Trace Billy’s role through the musical. What is his significance in the show? What does Billy have that no other character has? What power does this give him?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- Make a list of details about Josh, Mr. Baskin, Mrs. Baskin, Billy Kopecki, Susan Lawrence, Cynthia Benson, George MacMillan and Paul Seymour. Where did you find this information? In the dialogue? In the lyrics? In the music? In design elements such as costumes?
- During *big*, we follow each character on a journey. What journeys do Josh, Mr. Baskin, Mrs. Baskin, Billy Kopecki, Susan Lawrence, Cynthia Benson, George MacMillan and Paul Seymour make during the course of the show?
- Describe the relationships each of these characters has with the others.
- What is the nature of Susan’s initial interest in Josh? How does Susan “use” other people? What do we learn about her from the way she speaks about her secretary?
- What do you think happens to each of these characters after the show ends?
- When playwrights create characters, they often invent “character maps” before they begin to write. These “maps” list everything about the characters, from their favorite color to their political beliefs. A character map gives us the “back story” of that character (the history of the character before the time of the play) and tells us what is in that character’s pockets and what

is in that character's heart. Write a biographical character map for Josh, Susan, Mr. Baskin, Mrs. Baskin, George MacMillan and Paul Seymour, based on details of your own invention. Tell their "back stories."

- Imagine someone is going to write a play about you. Create a character map for yourself. Write a short story about the character described in your map who wakes up one morning fifteen years older than the previous night.
- Write a scene in which your own parents come down to breakfast and discover you to be a year older than you were the night before.
- Describe a typical day in Josh's life — perhaps the day before we meet him in *big*.
- Describe a typical day in Susan's life — perhaps the day before we meet her in *big*.

## Josh and His Wish

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever wished you could be another age? What circumstances prompted your wish?
- When you were younger, did you ever wish to be the age you are now? Can you remember what you thought it would feel like to be the age you are now? How do your fantasies compare with the reality of your current life?
- What makes Josh want to return to being a child?
- As we grow older, our "world view" (the way we see the world) changes. Why do you think this happens? Do we actually change or does the world around us change? How does the fact Josh sees Manhattan through a thirteen-year-old's eyes affect his experience in the city? How might his experiences have been different if he had undergone them ten years later?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- Imagine you wake up ten years older than when you went to bed. Write about how your external life would be affected. How would you change?
- Interview five adults of varying ages. Ask them if they would return to childhood if given the opportunity. Write about the reasons they would or would not.
- Interview your parents or two other adults you know well. Ask them how and why they think they changed between the ages of thirteen and twenty-three.
- Write about aspects of yourself you believe will never change as you age. Write about aspects of yourself you hope will change as you grow older.
- Do you assume older people are "different" than younger people? Talk to the two oldest people you know. Ask them if they believe they are different people now than they were at thirteen, or if they feel they are the same people living in changed bodies.

## The Suburbs in *big* and Josh's Life Before He Changes

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- Do you live in a suburban area? How does your area differ from the nearest city? What impact has growing up in a suburb had on your life? How would your life be different if you lived in a city?
- How does Josh's life at home remind you of our own? Does Josh seem discontent with his life in the suburbs or with his life at home?
- How do Josh's experiences in the city differ from his previous experiences in the suburbs? Do you think his overall experience would have been different if he had gotten his wish, but spent his days in the suburbs instead of the city?
- Do you like the fact *big* takes place in a very familiar setting? What special power do films and plays have when they take place in familiar settings?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- Investigate the history of the American suburbs. When did they first appear? Why did they emerge? What do you think is the future of the suburb in America? Is the American-style suburb a staple in other countries?

## Adolescence

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- What is adolescence?
- What events in Josh's personal life make him restless and anxious to get on with growing up?
- Josh is humiliated when he is told in front of the girl he is trying to impress that he is too small to go on an amusement park ride. Have you experienced this kind of humiliation? When? Can you laugh about it now, or is the pain of the memory still strong?
- Young Josh has trouble finding the right words to say in certain social situations. Write about a time when you were too overcome by shyness to say what you meant.
- When Josh sees himself in the funhouse mirrors, he sees a distorted version of his true self. How is this a metaphor for adolescence?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- What rites and rituals celebrate the arrival at adolescence in American society?
- What are some rites and rituals of adolescence in other societies?
- Have you ever felt caught between childhood and adulthood and not known in which world you belonged? Write about those feelings.

## Toys

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think the creators of *big* decided to have Josh work at a toy company instead of another kind of business?
- What does Josh understand about toys the other employees at the toy company don't understand? Why does he have this understanding? Can they possibly attain it?
- What meaning do toys have in our lives?
- Do we have toys only in childhood? What kinds of objects can become toys in later life?
- What do toys say about the culture in which they are created?
- What does Josh learn about adult "toys" at the party with Susan's friends?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- Research the history of toys. When did the first known toys appear?
- Discuss how toys have changed over the centuries.
- Visit a large toy store. Write about the toys you find there. What do they say about American culture today? Do the toys you find seem to relate to childhood or adulthood?
- Read about the toy industry in America today. What kinds of people become involved in this business? Does what you read about the industry remind you of the way it is portrayed in *big*?
- Invent a new toy. Sketch it. Write about how it operates. Write about for whom it is meant. Price it. Design a commercial for it.

## Fun

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- What is "fun"? Is "fun" an absolute?
- Can "fun" mean the same thing to a child as to an adult?
- Is it more appropriate for children to have "fun" than adults?
- What is the significance of "fun" in *big*?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- Research the history of "fun" in America. What was the Puritan viewpoint on the importance of "fun"?
- If you had to choose between a life full of "fun" or a life full of "meaning", which would you select? Why?

## **Imagination**

### **Questions and Discussion Prompts**

- What is imagination? What determines whether or not we have imagination?
- The employees at the toy company are hired to use their imagination. How does Mr. MacMillan know when their imagination fails?
- What about Josh attracts Mr. MacMillan? What is different about the way Josh uses his imagination?
- Paul and his associates have college degrees that supposedly qualify them to do their jobs. Why does Josh, who has never been to college, seem more qualified than the company's other employees?

### **Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts**

- Write about three people whose imagination you most admire.

## **Wishes and Fortune-Tellers**

### **Questions and Discussion Prompts**

- What is a wish?
- Have you ever made wishes? Do you still make them? If so, to whom do you direct your wishes?
- What is the difference between a wish and a prayer?
- What role do fortune-tellers play in our lives?
- Why do people turn to fortune-tellers?
- Does Josh believe his wish will come true? If he had known what was ahead of him, do you think he would have made his wish?

### **Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts**

- Write about a wish you made that came true. Did having the wish granted mean as much to you as you had anticipated?
- Write about a wish you did not receive. How did the fact your wish was denied affect your life?
- Explore incidents in history when fortune-tellers have had an impact on the outcome of events.



## Carnivals

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- What is a carnival? Why do carnivals exist?
- Would carnivals have the same significance if they were always available to us?
- How does the fact Josh is at a carnival affect what happens to him? Could his transformation have occurred at a neighborhood fast-food restaurant, in his dentist's office, or in any other "normal" everyday place?
- What gives a carnival its aura of magic?
- Have you ever seen an old arcade machine like "Zoltar Speaks"? What kinds of modern machines function like the old arcade machines? What is the connection between children and machines that involve an element of chance?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- Research the history of carnivals in America.
- Write a short story using a carnival setting as the departure point for your plot.

## Corporations

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- What is a corporation?
- Based on what you observe in *big*, what are some problems corporations confront?
- How does Josh's natural, instinctive behavior clash with accepted corporate behavior?
- Why do you think Mr. MacMillan is able to relate to Josh in spite of MacMillan's corporate background?
- What does Josh bring to the corporation the corporation has lost?
- What are some examples of how the corporation in *big* has dehumanized its business, customers and employees?
- The corporation in *big* relies on market research for information about what children like. Do you feel this is a mistake? Why or why not?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- Read about the history of the corporation in America.
- What are the alternatives to corporate structure?
- Write about the struggle to maintain an individual identity within a corporate structure, as represented by Josh's experience at MacMillan Toys. How is Josh seduced by corporate life?

## Language

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- Many of the complications in Josh's Manhattan life are caused by the misinterpretation of language. What is language?
- If words are symbols, do they have any inherent meaning? Or does their meaning come from us? Is there such a thing as a right or wrong meaning?
- Just as different languages are spoken in different countries, are different languages spoken in different cities within the same country? In different age groups? In different neighborhoods?
- What language does Josh speak? What language do Paul and Susan speak?
- What do Josh and Susan learn about language?
- What misunderstandings in *big* take place because of language differences?
- What is "marketing"? What does Josh assume it means?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- Listen to your friends as they talk. Make a list of words you and your friends use that your parents do not use. Make a second list of words your parents use that your friends do not use. Ask your parents to tell you what they think the words on your "friends" language list mean.
- Read about the concept of semantics.

## Josh and His Family; Children and Adults

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- When the show opens, Josh is beginning to rebel against participating in family trips. Do you enjoy taking part in family outings? Would you rather be with your friends? How do you reconcile this conflict?
- Do Josh's parents appreciate the fact he has adult concerns of his own? Do your parents appreciate your changing interests?
- What is Mrs. Baskin saying when she sings "Stop, Time"?
- After Josh spends the night with Susan, what about his behavior suggests he has crossed over into being more of an adult than a child?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- When Josh is suddenly on his own and has money to spend, how does he spend it? If you were in his situation, list the first twenty things you would buy. Why would you buy these particular items?

- Write about five things you have observed about adult life you hope will be different in your own adult life. In what way would you like them to be different? How can you hold on to your intentions as you grow older? If you could only hold on to one intention and realize it in later life, which one would it be?
- Write about the qualities Josh has that make him superior to the adults he meets in Manhattan.
- Write your own version of the events that take place in the Baskin household when Mr. and Mrs. Baskin realize Josh is missing.
- Why doesn't Mrs. Baskin recognize Josh when he appears as a grown-up in her kitchen? What does she assume has happened to Josh? Why does Billy finally recognize Josh when Josh's own mother doesn't?
- Read the play *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder and compare the Act III kitchen scene between Emily and her mother with this moment in *big*.
- Write an imaginary scene in which one of your parents does not recognize you.
- If you could stop time, when would you stop it and why?

## **Susan, Josh and Billy; The End of The Story**

### **Questions and Discussion Prompts**

- When Susan meets Josh, she perceives him to be her age and falls in love with him. After she discovers his real age, she can never again see him in the same way. Could Susan and Josh have stayed together if they had met when she was thirty-six and he were actually twenty-three? What about if he were thirty-six and she were twenty-three? What does age have to do with choosing a life partner?
- What is signified by Josh's treatment of Billy when Billy arrives at the MacMillan Toy Company party with the list of carnivals? How does Billy feel about Josh's actions? What does Billy do as a result of these feelings? Why does Billy change his mind and decide to try to bring Josh back?
- What does the song "Stars, Stars, Stars" mean to Josh? What does it mean to Susan?
- Why doesn't Josh want the list of carnivals Billy brings him? What has started to happen to Josh?
- What finally makes Josh decide to go home?
- What has Josh gained as a result of his experiences as an adult? What has he lost? Did he make the right decision?
- What other plays, musicals, television shows, or films can you think of in which the characters are kept apart because of complications of time and space?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- How does the ending of *big* make you feel? Do you wish Josh and Susan could have stayed together? Are you glad Josh has gone back? Write your own final scene for *big* which ends differently than the musical or the film.

## Adaptation and Musical Theatre

### Questions and Discussion Prompts

- *big* is based on the film of the same name, which was a megahit during the 1988 season. Musical theatre works are frequently adapted from sources such as films, plays, novels, fairy tales, myths, short stories and television shows. How many examples of musical theatre works adapted from such source materials can you name?
- Name five original musical theatre works not based on any other sources.
- What does a team of musical theatre collaborators add to a work from another medium in adapting it for the musical stage?

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- Rent the film *big* on videotape. Think about the significant ways in which the show differs from the film. What are the qualities of *big* that make it a good source for a musical?
- What are the source works on which the following musicals are based:

*Fiddler on the Roof*

*Hello, Dolly!*

*Sweet Charity*

*The King and I*

*Cabaret*

*Guys and Dolls*

*A Little Night Music*

*South Pacific*

- Select a film, non-fiction book, satirical book, play or group of short stories you think would make a strong musical theatre work.
  - Why do you think this piece “sings”? What is inherently musical about it? What can music add?

- What elements of the source would be hard to transfer to musical theatre form?
- Outline a musical theatre work based on your source.
- What role would music play? Would the text be completely sung, or would the work include dialogue as well as songs? What role would dance play in your work? What would be the musical style of your adaptation?

## **big as Musical Theatre**

### **Questions and Discussion Prompts**

- Would *big* have been as successful if it were a straight play without music? Why or why not? What does the score contribute to the basic storyline? How does it move the action of *big* forward? What does the music tell us we might not otherwise know?
- How does the music help us understand the larger themes of the show?
- Lyrics and music can give information about the characters and situations. Listen to the song “Talk To Her”. How does the music tell you the two boys are young?
- Listen to the patterns in the bass line of the first two songs in *big*. Do they sound like bass patterns in contemporary pop music? Does that help establish the time and place of the story?
- In what other ways do the music and lyrics of the show evoke time and place?
- What musical sounds or techniques do the authors use to tell us there is something unusual about “Zoltar Speaks”?
- Listen to “The Time Of Your Life”. How does this song immediately evoke a toy store? If it were sung by a single baritone voice, would it have the same effect?
- What does the beginning of “Welcome To MacMillan Toys” tell us about the employees and their attitudes? Susan’s first song is very different; how does her first song tell us she is very different from the junior executives?
- How do changes in rhythm within a song affect our understanding of the situation and/or emotional state of the characters?
- Does older Josh’s music sound like young Josh’s music? Should it?
- How does the music of “Do You Want To Play Games?” diffuse the sexual tension that would seem natural when Susan shows up late at night at Josh’s apartment?
- Does “Stars, Stars, Stars” begin to change the mood of the scene? It is a waltz (a romantic dance). Name some other ways the music of the song changes the mood. Does the instrumentation suggest anything to you?
- Listen to the entire score. What songs use dance or pop musical beats and grooves?

- Listen to and read about pop music from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. How many different kinds of current pop music are used in the show?
- Dance is a very important part of the show. Pick out different dance moments by listening to the score. How can you tell which are dance moments?
- How do the instrumentation and tempo change during the song “Cross The Line” and what do those changes signify?
- Does “Stop, Time” sound like a song an adult would sing? What makes it sound that way? If Mrs. Baskin didn’t have as many held notes, would the song have the same effect?
- Listen to the score and find moments when notes are held by the singer. Are these notes held on vowels or consonants? Do these held notes have any emotional content?
- How does the music let us know when characters are happy or sad or angry?
- Listen to “I Want To Know”. Does the song ever evoke the feeling Josh is floating on air? How does the music accomplish this?
- Songs give the impression of progression (forward movement) through their lyrics and music. The lyrics bring the characters to new realizations. The harmony (the movement of chords under the melody) gives the effect of motion in the music. Listen to the harmony of each song (you might hear it most clearly in the relationship of the bass lines to the rest of the accompaniment) and see if you can hear how the harmony moves the song along.
- What is suggested when one character repeats the same lines another character has just sung? Listen to “Coffee, Black”. Would the song have the same effect if it didn’t include any such responses?
- Interludes (small musical moments inserted in the middle of a longer piece or song) can provide a break from the familiar musical material in a song and can heighten the pleasure of that material’s return when the interlude is over. Are any interludes used in any of the songs in *big*?
- Is the music sung by Susan’s friends funny? What makes it funny? What makes some music funny?
- In what ways is the music indispensable to the plot?
- Why do the lyrics to some theatre songs rhyme? Write a few verses in prose about something you wish would happen, and then write it in rhyme. How is the experience of writing in the two forms different?
- Discuss the ways in which music and lyrics can compress information and elevate its importance.
- What role does music play in your life? Which moments of your life might be set to music?
- What role do music and dance appear to play in the lives of the kids in *big*?

- Find examples of duets or shared songs in the show. How do these duets help to define relationships?
- Select a song from *big* and summarize its content. Discuss the song in terms of the following:
  - a. What do we learn about the singing character or characters? What do we learn about each character's personal philosophy?
  - b. How does the song relate to the larger themes of the show?
  - c. What makes singing appropriate at this moment (e.g., does the emotional energy of the moment make song more appropriate than dialogue)?
  - d. Does the song further the action of the plot? How?
  - e. Every dramatic scene has a "main beat" or central moment of importance. Is the song you chose the "main beat" of the scene in which it appears?
  - f. Does the song exist in real time (i.e., does each minute of stage time represent one minute of actual time in the world of the play)? Or does it take place in suspended time (does it magnify or expand the moment temporally) or compressed time (does it speed up time)?
  - g. What is the physical action of the singing character or characters during the song?
- Imagine you have been asked to create a new song or musical sequence for the show. Who would sing it? Where in the show would it take place? What would it be about? What kind of music would it involve?

### **Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts**

- The song lyrics and the language of the characters in *big* are conversational and colloquial (anchored in the words and grammar people might use in everyday conversation). Select a word or a sound prevalent in your culture (such as "like", "you know" or a local expression often used in everyday speech) and build a song lyric around it.
- Tape-record the speech patterns of ten people you know. Use their speech patterns to create a "rhythmic collage," to be played on "found" musical instruments.
- Take a current media sales pitch and use it as the basis for a song.

## The Creators of Musical Theatre

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- Three collaborators created the musical *big*: John Weidman, who wrote the book; David Shire, who wrote the music; and Richard Maltby, Jr., who wrote the lyrics. Read a biography or autobiography of another famous musical theatre collaborator or collaborative team. Report on that collaborator or collaborative team's creative and/or collaborative process.
- Read and listen to other works by John Weidman, Richard Maltby, Jr. and David Shire to obtain a broader view of their approach to their craft and a deeper understanding of their artistic sensibilities.

## Production Elements

### Assignments: Research and Writing Prompts

- Design your own sets and costumes for *big*. Explain the reasons behind your creative choices.
- Read about set designers and lighting designers to learn more about their role in creating musical theatre.

## Create Your Own Musical

- Where do ideas come from? Have you ever begun a project with a simple idea?
- Give examples of great ideas or inventions that began with simple thoughts or images.
- Write a story in which the plot revolves around an identity switch. Write about a place and a group of people with whom you are familiar and set the story in a period of American history that interests you. Use this story as the basis for a musical.
- Why would this story make a good musical? How would it “sing”?
- What role would music play in your work? What kind of music would your characters sing?
- Outline your musical scene by scene.
- Make a list of the characters.
- Make a list of musical sequences you would include.
- Would your work include dance? How would dance be used?
- Try to write three scenes from your musical: the first scene; a scene involving an important turning point; and the final scene.
- Try to write a lyric or melody for one of the songs.



## **Critical Analysis**

### **Assignment: Writing Report**

- Write a review of a performance of *big*. You may wish to include any combination of the following elements in your review:
  1. Did the show hold your interest? Why?
  2. Describe the manner in which the story was presented to the audience. What was the dialogue like?
  3. What was the structure of the story? Was there one story or were there multiple stories? Was there anything unexpected about the story? How did the story begin and end?
  4. Describe the way music and lyrics worked in the show.
  5. Describe the sets, costumes, lighting and musical accompaniment. How did these elements add meaning to the show?
  6. Discuss the effectiveness of the performers.
  7. Discuss the ideas presented in the show. Analyze their importance to your reader.
  8. Explain why your reader should make an effort to see the show.

## Appendix

The following background material and bibliography are designed to enrich your exploration of the Themes and Topics.

### About The Authors

RICHARD MALTBY, JR. (lyricist), a graduate of Yale University who is also a director, wrote lyrics for *Starting Here, Starting Now* (1977, directed also), *Ain't Misbehavin'* (1978, provided additional lyrics, conceived and directed — Drama Critics Circle Award, Drama Desk Award, Obie Award for Best Musical, Tony Awards for Best Direction of a Musical and Best Musical), *Baby* (1983, directed also — nominated for seven Tony Awards), *Song and Dance* (1985, co-lyricist and director), *Miss Saigon* (1989, co-lyricist — London Evening Standard Award for Best Musical), *Closer Than Ever* (1989, directed also — Outer Critics Circle Awards for Best Score and Best Musical), *Nick & Nora* (1991) and *big* (1996 — nominated for five Tony Awards, including Best Score). He has also contributed crossword puzzles to *Harper's* magazine.

DAVID SHIRE (composer), a graduate of Yale University, has, in addition to *big* (1996), written theatre scores for *The Sap of Life* (1961), *Graham Crackers* (1962), *The Unknown Soldier and His Wife* (1967), *How Do You Do, I Love You* (1968), *Love Match* (1970), *Starting Here, Starting Now* (1977), *Baby* (1983 — nominated for seven Tony Awards), *Urban Blight* (1988) and *Closer Than Ever* (1989 — Outer Critics Circle Awards for Best Score and Best Musical). He has written scores for many films, including *The Conversation*, *The Taking of Pelham 1-2-3*, *Farewell, My Lovely*, *All The President's Men*, *Saturday Night Fever* (additional music — two Grammy Awards), *Norma Rae* (1980 Academy Award for Best Song), *The World According to Garp*, *Paris Trout* and *One Night Stand*. His many television scores include *Raid on Entebbe*, *The Women of Brewster Place*, *The Kennedys of Massachusetts*, *Broadway Bound*, *My Brother's Keeper*, *The Heidi Chronicles*, *My Antonia* and *The Streets of Laredo*, and have earned him four Emmy nominations. He has also written many songs and recorded numerous albums.

JOHN WEIDMAN (bookwriter), a graduate of the Yale Law School and a member of the New York Bar Association, wrote the book for *Pacific Overtures* (1976 — nine Tony nominations, including Best Musical and Best Book). He co-authored the book for *America's Sweetheart* (1984, with Alfred Uhry) and the new book for the Tony Award-winning revival of *Anything Goes* (1987, with Timothy Crouse), and wrote the book for *Assassins* (1991 — Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Musical, Drama Desk nomination for Best Book, London Drama Critics Award for Best Musical) and *big* (1996 — Drama Desk nomination for Best Book, five Tony nominations including Best Book). Since 1986 he has written for television's "Sesame Street," winning seven Emmy Awards for Outstanding Writing for a Children's Program. He received the 1996 Kleban Award.

## About *big*

*big* opened in 1988 as a movie directed by Penny Marshall (known to many as “Laverne” on television’s long-running hit show “Laverne and Shirley”). Produced by Twentieth Century Fox, the movie starred Tom Hanks as Josh Baskin, the twelve-year-old boy who grows into an adult overnight after making a wish at a mysterious carnival arcade. The film garnered universally positive reviews. Richard Maltby, Jr. and David Shire were not initially attracted to the show, but soon saw it as an extension of their 1983 musical *Baby* (written with bookwriter Sybille Pearson). They and John Weidman started out to write a small, intimate musical. When Mike Ockrent and Susan Stroman joined the team, the concept grew into that of a Broadway-sized show.

The songwriters wrote many songs over a five-year period. The show had an out-of-town tryout in Detroit in early 1996, where much writing and rewriting occurred in the theatre of the Fisher complex and hotel rooms.

The show opened on Broadway at the Shubert Theater on April 28, 1996. The cast included Daniel Jenkins as Josh Baskin, Barbara Walsh as Mrs. Baskin, Crista Moore as Susan Lawrence, Jon Cryer as George MacMillan, Gene Weygandt as Paul Seymour, Patrick Levis as Young Josh, and Brett Tabisel as Billy Kopecki. The show received five Tony Award nominations: Best Actress in a Musical (Crista Moore), Best Featured Actor in a Musical (Brett Tabisel), Best Choreographer (Susan Stroman), Best Score (David Shire and Richard Maltby, Jr.) and Best Book (John Weidman). The show closed October 13, 1996 after 23 previews and 193 regular performances. An original cast recording is available on Universal Records UD-53009.

An all-new version with a significantly revised score was created for the national tour of the show, which opened in Wilmington, Delaware in September 1997 with direction by Eric Schaeffer, choreography by Karma Camp, set designs by Zack Brown, lighting design by Ken Billington, orchestrations by Doug Besterman, the original Broadway costumes by William Ivey Long, and a cast featuring Jim Newman as Josh, Jacquelyn Piro as Susan, Ron Holgate as MacMillan, Nick Cokas as Paul, Joseph Medeiros as Young Josh, Judy McLane as Mrs. Baskin, and Brett Tabisel as Billy.

## Critical Acclaim

“Consider *big*, the bright, shiny, larger-than-life toy of a show that opened Sunday night at the Shubert Theater. It doesn’t have a solemn thought in its head, although the thoughts it does have are sometimes primal. It’s like the nine-foot teddy bear that participates in one of its glitzy production numbers: a bit awkward at first, but endearingly familiar and, when it dances, so exuberantly gifted that it gives you the helium high of a balloon flight.

Whatever the collaborators did in Detroit has paid off. Among other things, *big* is (at long last) an answer to *Beauty and the Beast*. Here’s a show for kids who have outgrown fairy tales but aren’t yet so jaded that a stroll through F.A.O. Schwarz doesn’t aggravate their itch to acquire. Which, of course, could mean that it’s for people of any age. The show follows the screenplay with as much fidelity as is possible on the stage. Many of the lines are funny for recalling the movie, although Weidman also has written a number of others that sound brand new. Weidman’s book departs from the movie in relating the circumstances that finally persuade the puffed-up Josh that perhaps he should go home. It’s the best of the show’s original inspirations.

The weightiest lesson to be learned from *big*: with 25 cents and a mechanized carnival magician, you can take the man out of the boy, but no amount of magic can ever take the boy out of the man who really is a boy. Or, put a disguised kid into the middle of a cocktail party for Manhattan achievers and, sooner or later, he’s bound to look like a hungry, homesick slob with beluga caviar on his shirt. It worked as a movie. It works as a show.”

— Vincent Canby, *The New York Times*, April 29, 1996

## Resources

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SARAH SCHLESINGER is the Department Chair of the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program at New York University. She is a lyricist and librettist whose work has been seen Off-Broadway and at regional theatres around the country. She has been commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera Guild to write the librettos for two new operas — *The Amazing Adventures of Alvin Allegretto*, which premiered in 1995 and *Different Fields*, which premiered in 1996. With Nashville composer Mike Reid, she has written *The Ballad of Little Jo*, a new musical developed in the Harold Prince-Denver Theatre Center Musical Theatre Program. She is the co-librettist and lyricist for *Love Comics*, a new musical which has been optioned for Off-Broadway. She is also the author of recent non-fiction works published by Random House/Villard, William Morrow, Avon Books and the Princeton Book Company.

FRED CARL, a 1991 graduate of the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program at New York University, has written scores and incidental music for many musical theatre works, plays and films. He has written numerous songs and short- and longer-form pieces for a variety of performing ensembles, and has performed as an improvisational flutist for many years. Since 1991, he has been a volunteer with The 52nd Street Project (a New York City-based play-making program which teams theatre professionals with children). With Sarah Schlesinger, Fred has co-authored several study guides on American musicals published by Music Theatre International, including the study guides for *The Music Man*, *1776*, *The Pajama Game*, *The Who's Tommy*, *Company*, *Follies* and *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum*. He was the archivist of the Harburg Foundation for many years and has also been a researcher/editor for several projects concerning the history of American musical theater. He is currently a core faculty composer at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program.

The Music Theatre International Study Guides are edited by Robert Lee. Anthony Angeles is Associate Editor.