

West Side Story Research

Questions that aroused as I watched West Side Story:

1. Did West Side Story have any impact on its audience based on the discrimination of Puerto Ricans?
2. What inspired the writer of the musical to use a theme like Romeo and Juliet?
3. In what ways did the musical make a comment on immigration?
4. How is West Side Story similar and different from Romeo and Juliet?
5. What was the purpose of the role of Nobody's?

Themes discussed in relation to West Side Story:

1. A theme that is widely discussed in relation to the musical is the discrimination portrayed amongst Puerto Ricans. They were judged harshly in the musical by the jets, and many audiences criticized the play for not having proper, but stereotypical portrayal of Puerto Ricans.
2. Another theme is sexism. In the musical women were viewed as nothing more but objects that were made to please man and not “act like a man”.

Why was your musical successful in your year?

1. West Side Story was so successful because it was close to reality in many ways. It showed conflict among racial and ethnic groups that occur around the world. In addition, it demonstrated common occurrences in our society such as people of different ethnicities competing.

What was in the news this year?

1. The civil rights act of 1957 was passed. This act was made to protect the rights of African Americans when it came to vote. It gave the department of justice the right to seek court injunctions against anyone who attempted to interfere with African Americans right to vote. However, it was said that it didn't really have a big impact.

What was the historical context?

1. In the 1950s after world war 2, a domestic migration from Puerto Rico took place. Women from Puerto Rico were being discriminated and encountered racism.

What might've inspired those involved in the making of your musical?

1. The story of Romeo and Juliet was probably a big inspiration to those involved in making the musical considering that they both were very similar in many ways.

Reporter Questions:

1. What had to be done to the actors to make them look Puerto Rican, considering that none of them were Puerto Rican?

2. How were Puerto Ricans stereotyped throughout the musical?
3. Where was the musical made and did the setting have any effect on the theme given throughout the play?
4. Who were the most impactful characters in the musical who really gave the idea of discrimination towards women?
5. When in the story was the idea of Romeo and Juliet mainly portrayed?