

ALANIS MORISSETTE'S

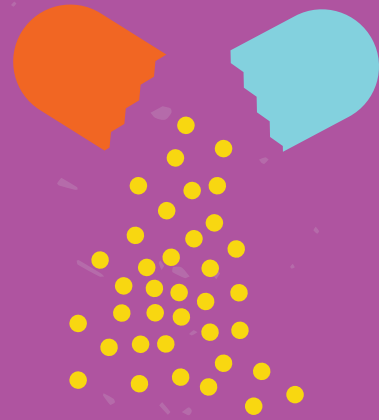
JAGGED



LITTLE

PILL

THE MUSICAL



Study Guide | 9–12th Grade



COLORADO SPRINGS
Fine Arts Center
at COLORADO COLLEGE

BEFORE THE SHOW

Welcome!

Musicals often offer us a chance to escape, to experience the space where the inner conflict and emotion become visible for a character. A chance to take the chaos of a complicated world and provide order. For the audience to be invited into the messiness of a character's hopes, dreams, despair, and ultimately their triumph. Usually something that is epic and will cause people to sing it in the shower, their cars, or at karaoke night. From romantic stories that tell a cohesive story to massive hits and spectacles like *West Side*

Story, Les Misérables, Sound of Music, Wicked or Cabaret. In contrast to these the modern era of musical theatre musicals like *Rent, In the Heights, Dear Evan Hanson, The Waitress,* and *Come from Away* exist to examine the more realistic and societal issues such as gentrification, the AIDS crisis, identity, xenophobia, and self-advocacy. *Jagged Little Pill* fits into one of these later and more realistic shows using 90s style alt rock music as the primary music style medium and dealing with a host of realistic characters and struggles.



A few reminders so that you and others can enjoy the play fully!

- Please make sure that you have completely turned off your cellphone, smart watch and any other device.
- No photography or video recording of any kind as the setting, artwork, set pieces and writing are intellectual property and may be under copyright protection.
- Please remain quiet during the play itself and save all conversations for the intermission or after the show! This is a live show not a short TikTok video!

ABOUT THE SHOW



Synopsis

This musical follows two overarching storylines one that is internal and a much more community focused one. One that follows the Healeys and the climax of this storyline is the overdose of Mary Jane and Frankie running away to New York. The primary conflict of this storyline is the Healy's trying to be the perfect

family and the pressures and struggles that each has. The second storyline is a communal moral one: this deals with a student being assaulted and the effect within the community. Nick the "golden boy" witnessing the assault and choosing to remain silent while Frankie becomes the victim's most vocal advocate.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWNS

The Healys: Primary family of the musical. Each deals with their own unseen struggles.

Mary Jane: an affluent, middle aged white woman, the central conflict of playing the part of having a "perfect family" while privately struggling and coping with dependency and pain.

Frankie: A 16-year-old girl, she is adopted, black, and bisexual. Her central conflict is trying to fit in and find her place and her identity. She is a decadent of the Riot Grrrl era and is often found activating.

Nick: Mary Jane and Steve's "perfect" son. He has recently been accepted into Harvard. Captain of the swim team. Throughout the musical he deals with the conflict of masculinity, moral responsibility, and peer pressure.

Steve: A middle-aged white man, a higher up at his corporate job. He often avoids conflict to maintain the status quo in his family.

Friends/community members

Bella: Classmate to Nick. She is a free spirit who one night at a party is sexually assaulted by a classmate. In Act 2 she looks for justice and accountability in a town that is victim shaming her.

Jo: AFAB. (Assigned Female at Birth) Frankie's best friend and girlfriend. They are experimenting with their gender as well navigating private feelings and public persona all while dealing with belonging and acceptance.

Phoenix: A friend of Bella's and a classmate of Frankie. A sixteen-year-old boy who is often carrying for his younger sister while their mom works.

KEY THEMES

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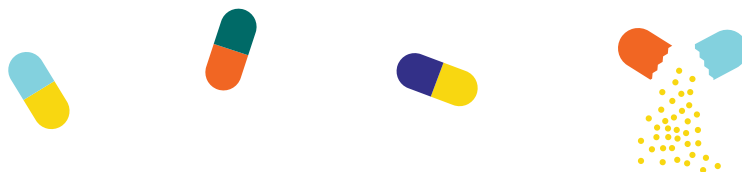
Content Warning: *This study guide and play deals with topics such as sexual assault and consent, substance abuse, mental health, and pornography.*

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The “Pain/Difficulty of Perfection”: During the first song *Right Through You*. The audience gets the dichotomy of trying to live as the perfect suburban family while dealing with the internal and external pressures of this. This is also evidence in the song *Perfect* that is sung by Nick.

Addiction/The Opioid Crisis: Mary Jane’s addiction does not start as a choice. It started with a prescription in response to her car crash. However, the pressures of trying to keep things together along with a highly addictive substance leads her to dependency on the drugs culminating with an overdose of oxycodone laced with fentanyl.

The Bystander Effect: When individuals are present for something but choose to do nothing to help the victim. This is encapsulated by the character of Nick.



THE WORLD OF THE PLAY



Setting: Present Day during the Christmas season. Greenport, Connecticut with some scenes in New York City. Greenport is a small but affluent town.



Author:

Alanis Morissette - (Lyrics and Music): Breaking on to the broader scene in 1995 with her album *Jagged Little Pill*. Alanis Morissette has become one of the most influential singer/song writers in North America over the past 20 years. She has won 7 Grammys and has partnered with several films such as *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Prince and Persia*, and *The Devil Wears Prada*. Her music is often about personal growth, complexities of vulnerability and strength.

Glen Ballard - (Music): Grammy Award Winner is a popular songwriter and producer in film and on Broadway. Songs that he has produced and films he has composed songs for include *A Christmas Carol*, *Charlotte's Web*. He co-wrote and produced the song "Believe" along with Josh Groban for the *Polar Express*.

Diablo Cody - (The book) An American screenwriter and author, and academy award winner. Having written several modern popular coming of age, or dark humor films like *Juno*, *Lisa Frankenstein*, *Jennifer's Body* in addition to the book for *Jagged Little Pill*. In 2020 she won a Tony Award for best book of a musical and in 2008 she won a BAFTA, and an Academy Award for *Juno*.

LESSON PLAN

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This guide address's mature themes including sexual assault, addiction, eating disorders, racial identity, and LGBTQ+ experience. Educator discretion is advised.

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Intro (5 minutes): Choose one or more based upon time and have them share out

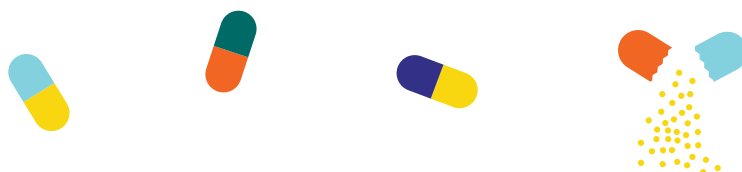
Warm up questions

- If someone knew you only through your social media profile (Instagram, TikTok/Snap) what is one important thing about your life that they would get wrong. (*Question focused on masking/being the perfect person*).
- In response to the Pop/Glitter of the 80s the 90s was about being Authentic and Real. In a world of AI, filters and glam is it still possible to be real? What does that even mean to you?
- If you were at a party and you witnessed something illegal or unfair happen at the party. What are two to three reasons that might make you stay silent and not speak up? (Bystander Effect You can choose to show this clip as well [THE BYSTANDER EFFECT](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSsPfbup0ac) (youtu.be/OSsPfbup0ac?si=mUGVAgOaHAVcAnoG))



(10–15 minutes): The overarching assessment for this to create a zine

thecreativeindependent.com/guides/how-to-make-a-zine



ALANIS MORISSETTE'S
JAGGED **LITTLE** **PILL**
 THE MUSICAL

Introduce the author, Alanis Morissette, her album *Jagged Little Pill*. Highlight that her music was something rarely seen before, a woman expressing raw fury and was unapologetic about it. Compare this style of writing to the 80s pop music.

Below is a comparison chart to help generate some suggestions of songs to compare/contrast.

A.M. Song	80s comparison	How to examine it
<i>You Oughta Know</i>	<i>I wanna know what love is by Foreigner</i>	How does the singer in IWKWLI show vulnerability to feel acceptance vs. how the vulnerability is weaponized and used to fill her rage in the A.M. song
<i>You Oughta Know</i>	<i>Girls, Girls, Girls, by Motley Crue</i>	Male gaze/objectification of women in Motley Crue's song vs reclamation of identify
<i>Ironic</i>	<i>Material Girl by Madonna</i>	Materialism vs. those materialistic things failing/
<i>Ironic</i>	<i>Heaven is a place on Earth Belinda Carlise OR Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now Starship</i>	Compare the utopian or perfect versions of these two to the song <i>Ironic</i> which has a more gritty and realistic life

After you discuss the differences in the Alt Rock Movement compared to the 80s before it moved into the more Alt Rock/ Grunge of the 90s.

Play a 60 second clip of *You Oughta Know*. and then play a clip of a modern artist such as Olivia Rodrigo *good 4 u*, Paramores *Misery Business* or Chappell Roan's *Feminine Entrance* (**please review music before you play it**).

- What emotions do you hear in each song?
- What do the two songs have in common? What sounds different, musically? Lyrically?
- Does this style of music, the sound of anger in women, seem more accepted today? If so, what was the difference?



Transition into the concept of Riot Grrrl and the 90s alternative scene.

- Response to sexism by men in the music scene.
- Focused on feminism, identify
- “Girls to the Front” - the movement for women to be in the front of the concert with men in the back. Both as a sense of providing safety for women and giving them the center stage.
- Compare and contrast Bikini Kill *Rebel Girl*, given that the Riot Grrrl movement was intentionally provocative to use shock and awe most songs are explicit. The following example are Radio cuts that are more school appropriate. L7 *Pretend we are Dead*, Sleater-Kinney’s *Modern Girl*, the Muff Kids *in America*. (The last can be used to compare/contrast the 80s/90s style too.

DISCUSS

Why do you think that Alanis Morissette’s music was accepted and mainstream and why were bands like Bikini Kill and others were ignored?

ZINES

The Riot Grrrl movement produced Zines “handmade, self-published magazines of protest and community” Make sure to focus on how these zines were intentionally rough, person, unpolished a protest to the widespread media that they had raged against.



thecreativeindependent.com/guides/how-to-make-a-zine

Discuss how these are similar or different to modern social media like Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok.

ASSESSMENT



For the rest of the class, have them design their own zine. *Jagged Little Pill* deals with several contents dealing with social, political, addiction, assault, and more. (See Appendix 1).



PRESHOW QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to look like you have the perfect life? Who do you perform that for?
- When something bad happens to someone you know, what makes it easy or hard to speak up?
- What do you think adults in your life are afraid of? What do you think that they are not telling you?
- Have you ever felt like you belonged somewhere and didn't at the same time? Describe that feeling?
- If your family had a public Instagram, what would never make it onto the feed?

POST SHOW QUESTIONS

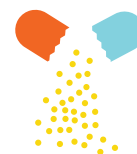
- Which character do you think was the loneliest? Was it the one you expected?
- At what moment did you most want to reach into the stage and change what was happening? What stopped the characters from doing the same?
- Whose silence in this story did the most damage?
- What do you think happens to each character five years after the curtain falls?
- If this show had been made by and about teenagers today, what would be different about it?
- Research a list of key movements now and in the 90s. This play was updated for modern day after a cultural shift in the 90s. How does that change the show's meaning?





EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Look at the list that you choose for your zines.
And research another topic. Compare and
contrast them to modern day.



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APPENDIX 1

Directions: *Jagged Little Pill* was originally written in the 1990s and then updated for modern day. Showing that the themes of anger, silence, and longing from that didn't disappear when the millennia changed. You are to research one of the social movements from the 90s and trace it forward by creating a Zine.

Keep in mind that zines are authentic, person, entirely choose yours. Feel free to do it handwritten and cut/paste writing, letter things by hand, add collages, etc.

Pick an option from the following lists and trace it through to its modern counterpart. You will need at minimum of 6 pages.

	90s movement	Modern counterpart
1	Riot Grrl	Modern feminist rage in music
2	Rodney King Uprising/ 1992 LA riots	Black Lives Matter
3	Grunge as protest music	Anti-mainstream music now
4	Queercore	Trans rights/visibility
5	Anti-NAFTA labor movement	Amazon/Starbucks unionization movement
6	"Just say No" drug narrative	Harm reduction/decriminalization
7	Third wave feminism	Fourth wave feminism
8	Animal rights/ PETA	Environmentalism / Climate activism in Gen Z
9	Culture Wars/ censorship	Book banning / curriculum choice
10	AIDS Crisis	LGBTQ+ rights
11	Opioid crisis	Opioid epidemic/Fentanyl crisis
12	Zines/xerox journalism	Independent journalism/ social media

Your zine should include at minimum the following 5 pages. Combining visual and text.

Page 1: **Your zines title** (make it yours don't just put the one you choose, show why you choose it!) Your name, and art/collage that sets the tone

Page 2: **90s movement:** What was the movement? Who started it? Why did it start? What was the goal? Include 1 specific person/event/image from the era.

Page 3: **2000s** How did the movement change in the 00s? Did it taper off? Why or why not? Include 1 specific person/event/image from the era.

Page 4: **Present Day:** What does the movement look like today? What changed? Who leads it? Why is there still this movement.

Page 5: **Argument page.** Connect it all together. What common thread connects these 3 or 4 decades? What generally changed? What hasn't changed? Make your claim and support it with details from your research

Page 6: **Why does it matter for this show?** How does it connect to the play? What questions does it raise or solve?

Page 7: **Bibliography page:** What sources did you use?

Page 8: **Closing page:** Make it pretty!



Rubric: 20 points

	4	3	2	1
Thematic Connection	Deep understanding of both eras; clear, original argument about what connects them	Clear understanding: argument present but may be surface level	Movement referenced but not developed; argument unclear	No meaningful connection to movement or musical
Then vs. Now	Makes a specific claim about the relationship between eras and supports it with evidence	Clear comparison: evidence is general rather than specific	Comparison attempted but vague or underdeveloped	Describes one era only: no comparative argument
Visual language	Images, layout, and text work together intentionally; visuals carry meaning	Visual elements present and generally support content	Some visuals present but disconnected from content	Minimal or no visual work
Student Voice	Strong, consistent personal voice; clear point of view throughout	Student voice identifiable; perspective comes through	Voice inconsistent; hard to identify a perspective	No clear voice or point of view
Completeness/ Craft	All pages present; assembled and readable; construction shows care and intention	All pages present; one or two underdeveloped	Some pages missing or significantly underdeveloped	Largely incomplete or unassembled

