LIFE-LIKE:

American Society and the Early to Mid-Twentieth Century Musical
Pre-World War I

- National pride was a common characteristic
  - *Celebration of American industry*
  - *The American Dream*
  - *Gunboat musicals*

- This sense of national pride was unfortunately accompanied by prejudice against other cultures
  - *This included foreign cultures and African Americans*
Most productions were revues

- These revues were meant to support the troops and to boost national morale
- The ideas of heroism and romanticism were apparent
The Roaring Twenties

- Economic boom made ticket prices affordable

- “Cinderella” musicals
  - Irene (1919)
  - The O’Brien Girl (1921)

- The African-American musical progressed
  - Shuffle Along (1921)
  - Show Boat (1927)
The Great Depression

- Stock market crash led to a diminished style of musical
  - Producers couldn’t afford to put on extravagant shows

- Naturalism and satire were more common
  - Porgy and Bess (1935)
  - Of Thee I Sing (1931)
  - Let ‘Em Eat Cake
World War II

- Propaganda supporting the war was very present in most of American culture.

- This was not true for Broadway, most musicals did not have a war theme.

- Broadway composers would write popular music in support of the war, but usually not full shows.
  - *Irving Berlin’s “God Bless America”*
Rodgers and Hammerstein

- From 1943 to 1959, Rodgers and Hammerstein were the dynamic duo of Broadway. They made musicals that were both idea-bearing and entertaining.

- Their shows had similar themes of eradicating prejudice and promoting tolerance.
  - Oklahoma! (1943)
  - South Pacific (1949)
  - The King and I (1951)