

# BACK TO FUTURE THE MUSICAL



Lesson Objective: To explore the social and cultural context of *Back to the Future The Musical*.

## Read the following short synopsis of Back to the Future The Musical.

*The musical begins in 1985. Teenager Marty McFly has grand ambitions to become a musician. His friend Doctor Emmett Brown has invented a time machine using a DeLorean. Marty accidentally travels back in time to 1955 and meets his parents when they were in high school. He must get back to 1985 but also must make sure that his parents fall in love, or "the consequences will be disastrous." Will he make it back to the future? Only Doc Brown can help...*

# THINK/PAIR/SHARE

What are you expecting to see onstage?

What do you think are the main themes of the musical?

# **KEY THEMES OF *BACK TO THE FUTURE THE MUSICAL***

Ambition

Re-writing history

Failure before success

Courage and self-belief

The power of love

# MEET THE CHARACTERS



MARTY MCFLY



DOC BROWN



LORRAINE BAINES



GEORGE MCFLY



GOLDIE  
WILSON



BIFF TANNEN

Discussion Task - What are your first impressions? What adjectives would you use to describe the characters?

# EIGHTIES OR FIFTIES?

- 1) Divide the class into two groups.
- 2) Give one half of the class the Back to the Eighties Handout (Section 1: p.18) and the other half of the class Back to the Fifties Handout (Section 1: p.19)
- 3) Let them read, highlight and discuss the contextual information of the handout for 10 minutes.
- 4) The teacher will read out the following statements and students must stand up and say either “eighties” or “fifties,” depending on which decade they think the statement applies to. The teacher begins the activity by saying, “We are going to play ‘Eighties or Fifties.’ I’ll show you an image and read a statement, then you stand and say either “eighties” or “fifties” depending on which decade you think is correct.

ARE YOU READY?

# FACT 1 - EIGHTIES OR FIFTIES?

People started to watch television in black and white.



## FACT 2 - EIGHTIES OR FIFTIES?

The decade when skateboarding became part of popular culture.





# FACT 3 – EIGHTIES OR FIFTIES?

Youth culture emerged in diners, coffee shops and dances.



# FACT 4 – EIGHTIES OR FIFTIES?

Fast food became popular, especially burgers and hot dogs.



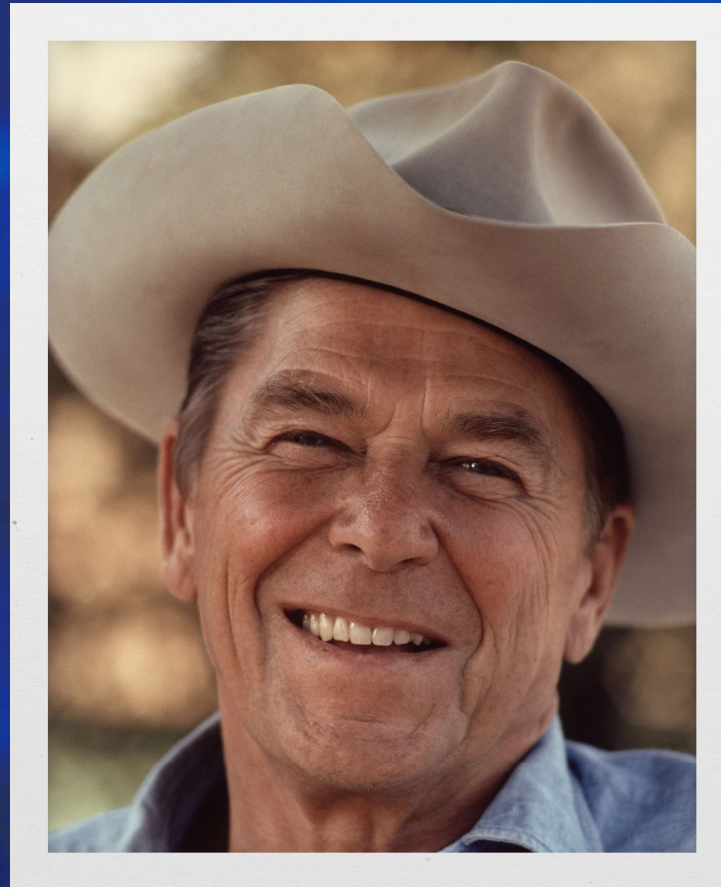
# FACT 5 - EIGHTIES OR FIFTIES?

The decade when the Rubik's Cube™ reached its height of mainstream popularity.



# FACT 6 - EIGHTIES OR FIFTIES?

Ronald Reagan was president of the United States of America.



# FACT 7 – EIGHTIES OR FIFTIES?

Prom dances became popular within American high schools.



# FACT 8 - EIGHTIES OR FIFTIES?

The emergence of youth culture and rock 'n' roll.



# FACT 9 – EIGHTIES OR FIFTIES?

Advancements in technology led to the invention of the CD player, the mobile phone, and the video recorder (VCR).



## FACT 10 – EIGHTIES OR FIFTIES?



In this decade, the gender roles for men and women were clearly defined.

Couples wed early. The average age of American women at marriage was 20.



What are you most looking forward to when you see the show?



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**Mousetrap**  
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[www.mousetrap.org.uk](http://www.mousetrap.org.uk)



**WE TEACH DRAMA**

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Updated for Broadway by  
**iTheatrics**  
[www.itheatrics.com](http://www.itheatrics.com)

DESIGNED BY **DEWYNTERS**

Photo Credit: Matthew Murphy & Evan Zimmerman

# BACK TO FUTURE THE MUSICAL



Lesson Objective: Explore and understand the key theme of “failure before success” within the production.

# THINK/PAIR/SHARE

In the production, Doc Brown says,  
“You know how many tries it took Edison  
to get the light bulb right?”

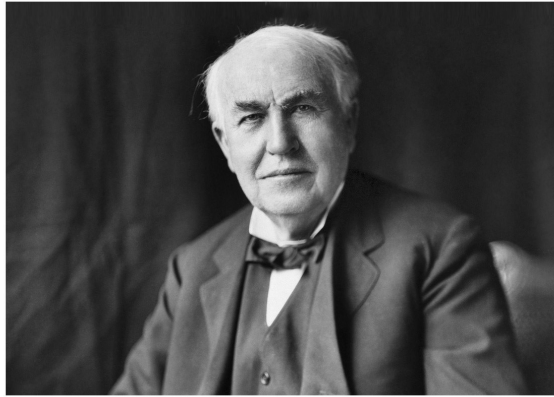
Q. How many tries do you think it took?

*“We have the scene in the show where Doc Brown says, ‘You know how many tries it took Edison to get the light bulb right?’ It was like 10,000, I believe; 10,000 experiments with different filaments until he found the right one that worked. Failure is really important to get to success, and I think that’s a lesson that isn’t taught well enough.”*

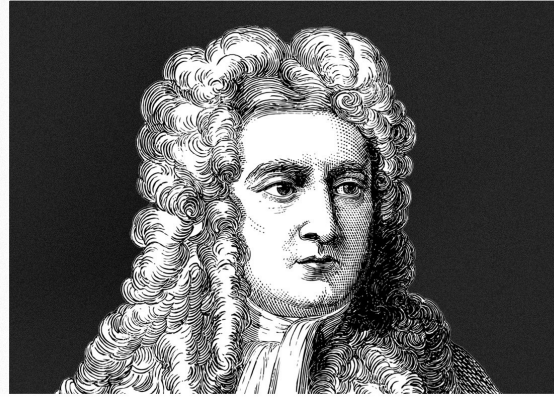
Bob Gale - Writer, *Back to the Future*

Discussion: Are you surprised by this? If not, why? Do you agree that failure is important in order to succeed?

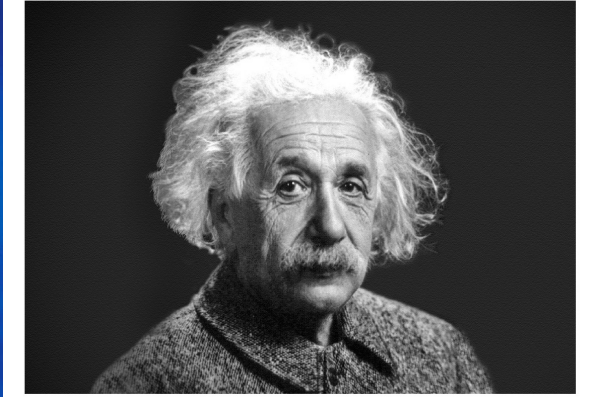
# WHAT CHALLENGES DID THESE SCIENTISTS FACE? HOW WERE THEY VIEWED BY SOCIETY?



Thomas Edison



Isaac Newton



Albert Einstein



Marie Curie



Ada Lovelace



Stephen Hawking

# DOC EMMETT BROWN

## Discussion

- 1) Why are the scientists important role models for Doc?
- 2) As someone trying to create something innovative, new, or deemed "impossible", how does society view Doc and his experiments?
- 3) Have you ever failed before finally succeeding? Share examples.
- 4) Is it failure or is it just problem-solving?



Extract - This One's for the Dreamers

*"LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE DREAMERS  
WHO NEVER STOP BELIEVING  
ONE GRAIN OF SAND  
BECOMES A PEARL  
A GREAT IDEA  
CAN CHANGE THE WORLD  
THEY CAN SEE  
WHAT OTHERS DON'T  
TRY THINGS OTHERS WON'T"*

# MAIN ACTIVITY 2 – CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

- All the creatives involved with the show loved how challenging *Back to the Future* was, and how much problem-solving was involved. Brainstorm in your group the challenges that the creative team might have faced when staging the following moments.
- ✓ How do you think the creatives had to work to overcome these challenges?
- ✓ What qualities and skills do they need?
- ✓ What creative problem-solving was involved?

## Key Moments:

1. The DeLorean driving to 88mph
2. Time-travel sequences
3. The DeLorean flying
4. Doc climbing up the clock tower
5. Biff chasing Marty through the school



# QUALITIES

- Why are the following qualities important when creating theatre?
- Resilience
- Perseverance
- Self-belief
- Determination



Original Broadway Cast

# WHAT THE CREATIVES SAID ABOUT WORKING ON THE SHOW

“This, for me, was probably the best creative experience I've ever had.”

***Bob Gale - Writer***

“I've loved all of the problem-solving involved in the show.”

***Tim Lutkin - Lighting Designer***

“I think working with all our collaborators has been great; just the nuts and bolts of solving what seemed impossible or very difficult is extremely satisfying. It just uses all of the cogs in your head...I love a puzzle.”

***Tim Hatley - Set Designer***

# YOUR FUTURE SELF

- Close your eyes.
- Focus on something you want to achieve in the future. This could be tomorrow, next week, or next year (it should be something which is a challenge for you!).
- Picture yourself achieving it.
- Now, as your future self, looking back, what advice would you give to your younger self about ‘failure before success’?

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