



HADESTOWN

THE MYTH. THE MUSICAL.

MUSIC, LYRICS & BOOK BY
ANAÏS MITCHELL

DEVELOPED WITH & DIRECTED BY
RACHEL CHAVKIN

EDUCATION INITIATIVE
STUDY GUIDE

WELCOME TO THE **HADESTOWN** STUDY GUIDE

We are so excited to share the world of *HADESTOWN* with you, where **a song truly can change your fate**. We believe that the experience of this musical in live theatrical performance will appeal to, affect, and inspire your minds, hearts and spirits.

This study guide is designed to discuss and engage the themes and experience of *HADESTOWN* by providing information about the musical and its creation—its intellectual and artistic origins, context, and themes—and by sparking your imagination and creativity through a variety of activities, exercises, and discussion prompts.

The guide is structured in two parts: “*HADESTOWN* in Context” which provides information about the show’s historical, literary, and theatrical bases, as well as its artistic inspiration and journey of creation and activities based off of the creative process of *HADESTOWN*.

*Did we mention that we are so excited that you are learning with *HADESTOWN*?!*

ALRIGHT? ALRIGHT!



2019 Tony Award® Winner
Best Musical *Hadestown*

HADESTOWN EDUCATION INITIATIVE COMMUNITY PARTNERS



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

Welcome Educators.....	2
Table of Contents.....	3

HADESTOWN IN CONTEXT—FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS!

On Myth and Its Power.....	4
More Myth Information.....	5
Greek Tragic Theatre.....	6
Aristotle and The Tragic Effect.....	7
Glossary.....	7
The Creative Process—Anaïs Mitchell and Rachel Chavkin.....	8
The Creative Process (cont.)—Rachel Hauck and Rachel Chavkin.....	9
HADESTOWN Character Profiles.....	10
HADESTOWN Synopsis.....	11-13
HADESTOWN Musical Numbers.....	13
Anatomy of a Song: “All I’ve Ever Known” by Anaïs Mitchell.....	14
HADESTOWN Company.....	15

PRE-SHOW PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE CLASSROOM

HADESTOWN Study Guide Basics.....	16
Interactive Quotable HADESTOWN Synopsis.....	16-17
Post-Synopsis Discussion Questions and Activities for Reflection and Analysis	
1) Simple Story Comprehension Reflection.....	17
2) Questions for Journaling and/or Discussion.....	17
3) Plot-Point Tableaux.....	17-18
4) Analyzing the Story of HADESTOWN: Dramatic Terms and Concepts.....	18
5) Themes in HADESTOWN.....	18-19
Listening Party: “All I’ve Ever Known” and “Way Down Hadestown”.....	19-20
HADESTOWN Designer’s Collage.....	20

POST-SHOW REFLECTIVE ACTIVITIES

Back-to-School Babble: Students Initial Response to HADESTOWN.....	21
HADESTOWN Performance Reflection and Discussion.....	21-22
HADESTOWN Favorite Moments Tableaux.....	22
Additional Post-Show Discussion Points for HADESTOWN.....	22
Writing the “Look Back” Moment Monologue.....	22-23
Writing the Review: HADESTOWN.....	23

APPENDIX OF PRINTER-FRIENDLY RESOURCES

HADESTOWN Character Profiles.....	24
HADESTOWN Quotable Synopsis.....	25-28
HADESTOWN Quotable Synopsis Cards.....	29-33
Lyric Sheet: “All I’ve Ever Known”.....	34
Lyric Sheet “Way Down Hadestown”.....	35-36

ON MYTH AND ITS POWER

“THE FIRST IDEA OF IT CAME A BIT MYSTERIOUSLY; SOME LYRICS POPPED INTO MY HEAD AND THEY SEEMED TO BE ABOUT **THE MYTH OF ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE**. FROM THERE, I GOT EXCITED ABOUT FOLLOWING THE IDEA OF THE MYTH AND EXPLORING TELLING THE STORY THROUGH SONG.”

ANAI'S MITCHELL, SINGER-SONGWRITER & CREATOR OF *HADESTOWN*



Orpheus and Eurydice by Edward Poynter, 1862.

MYTH

[mith]

“...a story, presented as having actually occurred in a previous age, explaining the cosmological and supernatural traditions of a people, their gods, heroes, cultural traits, religious beliefs, etc. The purpose of myth is to explain, and, as Sir G.L. Gomme said, myths explain matters in “the science of a pre-scientific age.” Thus myths tell of the creation of man, of animals, of landmarks; they tell why a certain animal has its characteristics (e.g. why the bat is blind or flies only at night), why or how certain natural phenomena came to be (e.g. why the rainbow appears or how the constellation Orion got into the sky), how and why rituals and ceremonies began and why they continue.”

Source: Jerome Fried and Maria Leach in Funk & Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend. (Harper & Row Publishers, 1984): 788.

THE POWER OF MYTH

Joseph Campbell: “Greek and Latin and biblical literature used to be a part of everyone’s education. Now, when these were dropped, a whole tradition of Occidental mythological information was lost. It used to be that these stories were in the minds of people. When the story is in your mind, then you see its relevance to something happening in your own life. It gives you perspective on what’s happening to you. With the loss of that, we’ve really lost something because we don’t have comparable literature to take its place. These bits of information from ancient times, which have to do with the themes that have supported human life, built civilizations, and informed religions over the millennia, have to do with deep inner problems, inner mysteries, inner thresholds of passage, and if you don’t know what the guide-signs are along the way, you have to work it out yourself. But once this subject catches you, there is such a feeling from one or another of these traditions, of information of a deep, rich, life-vivifying sort that you don’t want to give it up.”

Bill Moyers: So we tell stories to try to come to terms with the world, to harmonize our lives with reality?

Joseph Campbell: I think so, yes...

Source: Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth*. Betty Sue Flowers, ed. (reprint Anchor Books, 1991); 2.



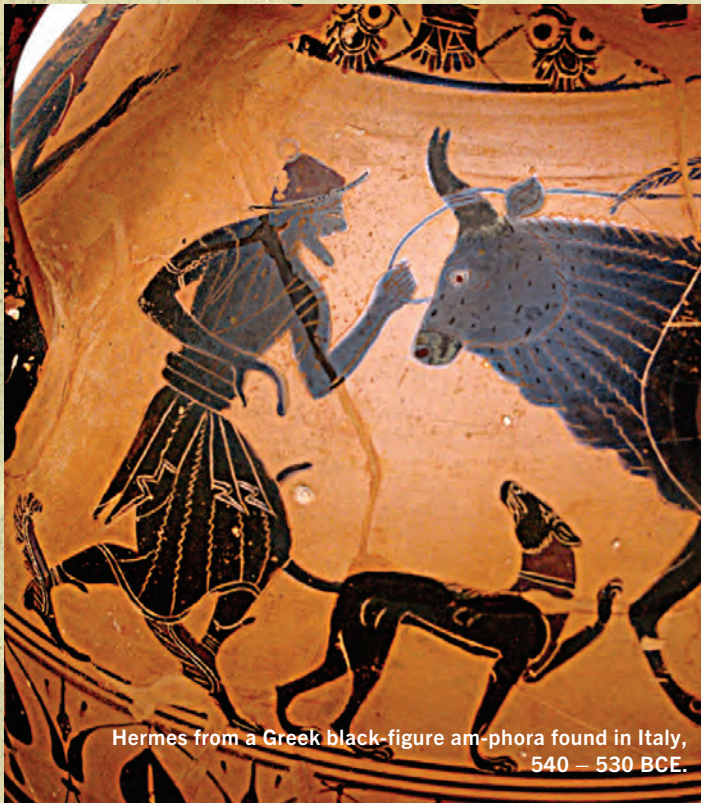
Reeve Carney and Eva Noblezada as Orpheus and Eurydice in *Hadestown*.

MORE MYTH INFORMATION

CHARACTERISTICS OF MYTHS

- Myths are not the creation of a single author.
- **Myths evolve and develop overtime as they are told and retold and passed from storyteller to storyteller—the result can be multiple versions of the same story.**
- In addition to attempting to explain the mysteries and wonders of the world and cosmos—such as the creation of the world and the universe and the development of humanity—**myths also attempt to address the fundamental and ancient questions of the meaning of life and purpose of human existence.**
- Myths are religious stories and are sacred to the cultures that create them. The deities—gods, goddesses, demigods, and other supernatural beings depicted—are worshipped and revered.

Source: Kathleen Sears, *Mythology 101*. (Adams Media, 2014): 10.



Hermes from a Greek black-figure amphora found in Italy, 540 – 530 BCE.

TYPES OF ANCIENT GREEK MYTHS

MYTHS OF ORIGIN

“an attempt to render the universe comprehensible in human terms”

e.g., Chaos, Earth, Tartarus/The Abyss, Love/Desire

MYTHS OF THE AGES OF THE WORLD

critique and explain changes in moral or spiritual qualities of humanity over time

e.g., Golden Age, Silver Age, Heroic Age, Iron Age

MYTHS OF THE GODS

their births, victories, love affairs, special powers, cultic and ritualistic connections

e.g., **Hades the Ruler of the Underworld, Hermes the Messenger of the Gods**

MYTHS OF HEROES

Include elements from tradition, folktale, and fiction e.g., **Orpheus and Eurydice**, Iliad and Odyssey attributed to epic poet Homer

MYTHS OF SEASONAL RENEWAL

allegorical in nature

e.g., **The Abduction of Persephone**

Source: John Richard Thornhill Pollard and A.W.H. Adkins, “Greek Mythology,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. (Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., July 2019): <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Greek-mythology>



André De Shields as Hermes in *Hadestown*.

GREEK TRAGIC THEATRE



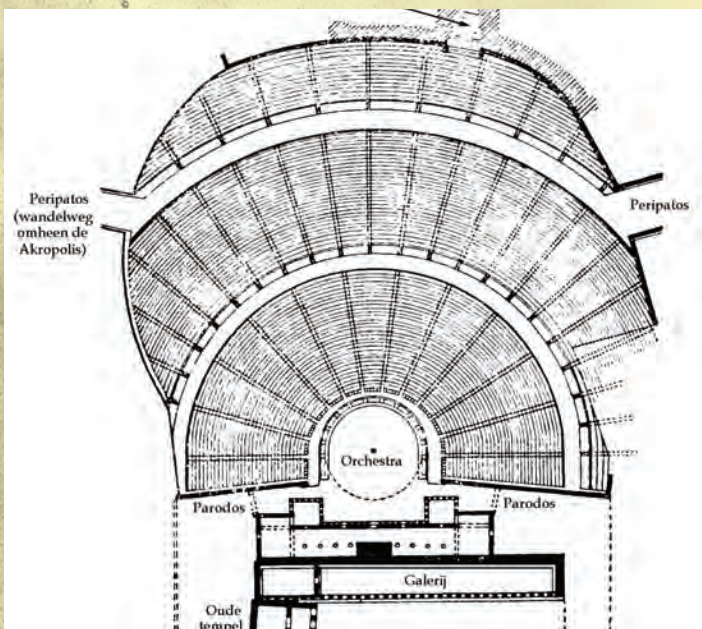
An Ancient Theatre at Epidauros, 4th century BCE, has architectural features similar to the Theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus (below) in Athens where the City Dionysia was held in the 6th - 5th centuries BCE. Photo by Carole Raddato, FRANKFURT, Germany [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>)]

The City Dionysia, or Great Dionysia, was an annual Greek festival held in March in Athens to honor Dionysus, the ancient Greek god of fertility, revelry, and wine. One feature of the festival was a play competition in which three tragic plays—based upon a well-known myth or historical subject—were written, performed before the citizenry of Athens, and judged for poetic merit, as well as for creative interpretation of and invention within the story (e.g., details of characterization, motivation). The prize was awarded to the best dramatist.

The stories of Greek tragedies typically center on characters who are good and moral individuals—sometimes of high or royal birth, though not always—who make errors in judgement or accidental mistakes (including making the wrong choice) that lead to a reversal of their circumstances from good to bad.

The Greek tragic form developed out of choral hymns dedicated to Dionysus that were sung and danced. Tragedies performed at the City Dionysia featured a mostly fixed structure: a prologue, which presented the subject or topic of the play in a monologue or dialogue; the entrance of the chorus and the first of a number of danced choral odes or poems set to music, which provided information on all that had happened before the play began; a series of dramatic episodes or scenes that developed the main dramatic action of the story and were separated by additional danced choral odes; and the final scene of the play, or exodus, which saw the departure of the characters and chorus.

These ancient musical theatre productions were staged in an open-air space—known as an amphitheatre—that was built into the cliff-face of the Acropolis. It featured a round, flat orchestra or “dancing place,” where the play was enacted and the chorus danced. The orchestra was surrounded on nearly three sides by a tiered theatron or “seeing place”; here the audience sat to watch, were always visible to the performers and in relatively close proximity.



Set Designer Rachel Hauck's scenic design for *Hadestown* was partly inspired by the amphitheatres of Ancient Greece.

ARISTOTLE AND THE TRAGIC EFFECT

Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE) was a Greek philosopher of the Classical period in Ancient Greece and became one of the most influential people who ever lived. His teacher was the similarly influential Plato, whose philosophical writings *The Republic* espoused his beliefs on what he thought did and did not belong in the ideal city-state. According to Plato, anything that was imitation, including tragic plays or any kind of theatre was dangerous and morally harmful, because it stirred human passions and fostered irrationality and excessive emotion. In his final analysis, tragedy did not belong in the ideal city-state and “the poets” who create tragedies should be banished; though, he conceded that if anyone could come up with a good argument for why poets should be allowed, he would permit them back into the state.

So, what do you do if you are the student of Plato and you really love reading tragic plays and going to the theatre? You take up your teacher’s challenge—you prove him wrong! This is just what Aristotle did in his writings (or possibly lecture notes), which we know as the *Poetics*. In *Poetics*, Aristotle employs the scientific approach to describe and defend the utility and importance of poetry in general and tragedy specifically. He also defends imitation (or mimesis) itself, noting that humans are naturally imitative—we learn by imitating, delight in imitating, and delight in watching an imitation. In Aristotle’s all important sixth chapter, he describes the tragic form, and in his description, includes what he views as its usefulness and value to the state:

Tragedy, then, is the imitation of a good action, which is complete and of a certain length, by means of language made pleasing for each part separately; it relies in its various elements not on narrative but on acting; through pity and fear it achieves the purgation [catharsis] of such emotions.

Aristotle agreed that Plato was right; tragedy did stir up in its audience excessive emotion—specifically pity and fear—but it also allowed for the catharsis or purging or cleansing of these negative emotions. To Aristotle, experiencing a tragic play doesn’t encourage the passions, but instead rids or relieves the audience member of them. He argues that it is healthy to be purged of any excess of emotion, and, therefore, tragedy and the tragic poets or playwrights are beneficial to and belong in the ideal state!

Do you agree? How does the experience of a tragic play effect you?

Source: Translation of Aristotle by G.M.A. Grube from Michael J. Sidnell’s *Sources of Dramatic Theory 1: Plato to Congreve*. Cambridge, 1994, 41-43.

GLOSSARY

ARCHETYPE in literature, a typical character that seems to represent common aspects or universal patterns of human nature; e.g., the hero, the villain, the mentor, the mother figure, the innocent.

DRAMATIC IRONY a literary technique, originally used in Greek tragedy, by which the full significance of a character’s words or actions are clear to the audience, yet unknown to the character.

LYRE a stringed instrument like a small u-shaped harp with strings fixed to a crossbar, used especially in ancient Greece.

MORTAL a human being subject to death, often contrasted with a divine or god-like being.

MUSE in Classical mythology, any number of sister goddesses, all the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne who presided over the various arts; e.g., Calliope, the goddess of epic poetry and mother to Orpheus.

SHADE in literature and poetry, a shade is the spirit or ghost of a dead person who resides in the underworld.

UNDERWORLD the regions below the earth’s surface, imagined as the home of departed souls or spirits; sometimes referred to as Hades.

UNIVERSAL THEME an idea that is central to human nature or the human condition and can be applied to any one regardless of cultural differences or geographic location; found throughout the literature of all time periods.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS



ANAÏS MITCHELL

MUSIC, LYRICS, AND BOOK

“I play the guitar, so I write my songs on the guitar. I think a different kind of song comes out of the guitar, than the piano, and I am certainly influenced by **folk music** and **American blues music**.”*

“The very first sort of inkling of this story in this show came out of nowhere. I was driving in my car and these lyrics came into my head that went, ‘**Wait for me. I’m coming in my garters and pearls. With what melody did you barter me from the wicked underworld?**’ And those lines never made it into any version of the show, but the melody, is the melody of ‘**Wait for Me,**’ which is obviously still in the show.”*

“It’s been really important for both Rachel [Chavkin] and I to find the place where this show can exist, that is **somewhere between a concert and a theatre show**. There is a logic operating that goes beyond the story.”†

“From very early on, the instrumentation had this prominently featured trombone and then these two twin-strings counter-line parts, and then just a really fatty rhythm section. And so, from early on, a lot of people were identifying the music as sounding like it was a **big-band New Orleans jazz music**.”‡

“**A big part of the storytelling is this decaying marriage between Hades, the King of Industry, and his wife Persephone, the Queen of Nature and the Seasons**, and there are a lot of themes of **climate change** based on industrial practices. And **New Orleans** has all of that as well, because of Katrina and the subsequent hurricanes that have happened there. It feels like all of our themes can be found in that part of the country.”‡

“The first thing that Anaïs ever said to me ...was, ‘**This is a poetry piece; not a prose piece.**’ And I think what maybe was initially meant by that is that it all was going to rhyme. But also, I think more than anything, **a poem is like the most essentialized amount of language for the densest amount of meaning**

“...My inspirations while making the show: **I thought a lot about a tree and gathering around a tree in the old times to hear a story** I looked at **images of oil refineries and steel mills and places of really heavy labor and construction**

“...**Louisiana became a really frequent touchstone for us in multiple ways**. On the set, there’s the filigree of wrought iron and age and compression. **Preservation Hall** is a big source of research for us, because we talked about, ‘Where do you want to hear this story?’ So, Rachel Hauck, our set designer, and I have talked a lot about Louisiana, both the music aspect of it, and, of course **New Orleans**, but **also the drilling and oil industries** that are all through that state. And so, hopefully, it feels like show kind of begins—you think that you’re in Preservation Hall—and then actually there’s this quite extraordinary transformative moment, scenically, where you realize, ‘**Oh my gosh, I’m in an oil drum...and maybe I’m at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean.**’”‡

“**The song ‘Wait for Me’ has this incredibly surging chorus**...There’s like a forward and back motion to the music, and that was the image of **the lamps** coming forward and going back. **That’s a song and a dramatic moment where one of our heroes is changing the laws of the space-time continuum**, not from a place of political activism or anything. He wants his lover back. And I think that’s so fundamental. And so, the surge felt really good for that.”‡

“I think **HADESTOWN offers a really unique Broadway experience**...I think, you’re going to hear music that is pretty much unlike anything you’ll hear past or present. **It’s actually deeply warm and just beautiful in a way that is quite literally spiritually moving**. I want everyone singing **HADESTOWN**. I mean, this is a show that cracks my rib cage open every time I see it. So, **I want that in people’s hearts.**”‡



RACHEL CHAVKIN

DIRECTOR

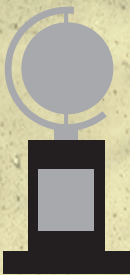
Sources: The above quotations are excerpted and transcribed from *Hadestown.com’s Hadestown: The Creative Process with Book and Songwriter Anaïs Mitchell and Director Chavkin video interview, 2019, and †Broadway.com’s Building Broadway: Hadestown Book and Songwriter Anaïs Mitchell and Director Rachel Chavkin video interview, 4 June 2019.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS (CONT.)



RACHEL HAUCK

SCENIC DESIGNER



2019 Tony Award® Winner
Best Scenic Design of a Musical
Rachel Hauck for *Hadestown*

RACHEL HAUCK & RACHEL CHAVKIN ON DESIGNING *HADESTOWN*

Rachel Hauck: I would describe [the set] as the best New Orleans hybrid bar-music joint you could find. It's a hybrid between Preservation Hall and the Greek amphitheatre. It's like the coziest most intimate place to hear some music and the story just takes over.

Rachel Chavkin: The thing that we both strongly agreed upon were actually the back walls—you think the show has begun in this bar and actually you realize the whole time the bar was maybe in the bottom of an oil drum. It's basically steel plating and rusted and awful.

Rachel Hauck: When this world pulls apart, it feels like you've gone to the center of the earth or something. You are so far underground, and there are lots and lots of little things we did to make it feel that way, but mostly it's when the set moves, you just get kind of kicked in the chest by it. It's a beautiful moment.

Rachel Chavkin: *Hadestown* the show requires a way to journey down to the Underworld and a way to journey back. It felt like the answer was a treadmill of some kind. Rachel's first impulse when we were at New York Theatre Workshop was a circle, and I think that is very tied to the fact that we are telling an extremely ancient story, and circles are pretty old, and, thus, we have a lot of turntables.

Source: This content is excerpted and transcribed from Theatremania.com's Take a Tour Way Down *Hadestown* with Rachel Hauck and Rachel Chavkin video interview, 4 June 2019..



Exterior of Preservation Hall, New Orleans, 2008.

Source: KimonBerlin [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>)]



Entrance to Preservation Hall, 2008.

Source: Photo by Francis Lee. Phier at English Wikipedia [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>)]



Interior of Preservation Hall, 2010.

Source: Photo by Infrogmatation of New Orleans [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>)]

CHARACTER PROFILES

HERMES [HUR'-MEEZ]

In Greek mythology, fleet-footed guide, messenger of the gods, and conductor of souls to the Underworld. In some tellings, it was Hermes who taught Orpheus to play the lyre. In this telling, he is a worldly-wise narrator, master-of-ceremonies, and friend and mentor to Orpheus.

AND ON THE ROAD TO HELL THERE WAS A RAILROAD STATION

[MMMM...]

AND A MAN WITH FEATHERS ON HIS FEET

[MMMM...]

WHO COULD HELP YOU TO YOUR FINAL DESTINATION

Mr. Hermes, that's me!

FATES [FEYTS]

Three goddesses who together determined the destinies of mortals, measuring their lifespans and apportioning their suffering. In this story, they follow, fluster, niggle, and cast doubt and insecurity in the minds of some.

LIFE AIN'T EASY

LIFE AIN'T FAIR

A GIRL'S GOTTA FIGHT FOR A RIGHTFUL SHARE

WHAT YOU GONNA DO WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN?

...

HELP YOURSELF

TO HELL WITH THE REST

EVEN THE ONE WHO LOVES YOU BEST

WHAT YOU GONNA DO WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN

ORPHEUS [AWR'-FEE- UH S]

Son of the muse of epic poetry, engaged to marry Eurydice. With his golden voice and lyre, Orpheus charmed all living things, even rocks and stones. This modernized account features an Orpheus on a musical mission beyond his love for Eurydice.

THAT'S WHAT I'M WORKING ON

A SONG TO FIX WHAT'S WRONG

TAKE WHAT IS BROKEN, MAKE IT WHOLE

A SONG SO BEAUTIFUL

IT BRINGS THE WORLD BACK INTO TUNE

BACK INTO TIME

AND ALL THE FLOWERS WILL BLOOM

EURYDICE [YOO-RID'-UH-SEE]

A dryad, or tree nymph, engaged to marry Orpheus. On the day of their wedding, she was bitten by a poisonous snake, died, and descended into the Underworld. The Eurydice of this version is a runaway who has experienced much hardship in her young life, which makes it hard for her to trust others.

PEOPLE TURN ON YOU JUST LIKE THE WIND

EVERYBODY IS A FAIRWEATHER FRIEND

IN THE END YOU'RE BETTER OFF ALONE

ANY WAY THE WIND BLOWS

...

YOU WOULD DO ANYTHING

JUST TO FILL YOUR BELLY FULL OF FOOD

FIND A BED THAT YOU COULD FALL INTO

WHERE THE WEATHER WOULDN'T FOLLOW YOU

PERSEPHONE [PER-SEF'-UH-NEE]

Goddess of the seasons, flowers, fruit, and grain. By arrangement, she spent half the year with Hades in the Underworld, causing fall and winter above. The other half she returned to her mother, bringing spring and summer with her. In this modern version, she plays the good-time party girl to dull her disenchantment with said arrangement and other problems in her marriage.

NOW SOME MAY SAY THE WEATHER AIN'T THE WAY IT USED TO BE

BUT LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING THAT MY MAMA SAID TO ME:

YOU TAKE WHAT YOU CAN GET

AND YOU MAKE THE MOST OF IT

SO RIGHT NOW WE'RE LIVING IT

LIVIN' IT—LIVIN' IT UP

BROTHER RIGHT HERE WE'RE LIVIN' IT

LIVIN' IT UP ON TOP!

HADES [HEY'-DEEZ]

God of the dead, ruler of the Underworld, sometimes called "the Wealthy One." He fell in love with and married Persephone. Her mother, the goddess of the harvest, refused to bless the earth while Persephone was below. In this version of the story, he is a greedy and zealous industrialist.

HERE I FASHIONED THINGS OF STEEL

OIL DRUMS AND AUTOMOBILES

THEN I KEPT THAT FURNACE FED

WITH THE FOSSILS OF THE DEAD

LOVER WHEN YOU FEEL THAT FIRE

THINK OF IT AS MY DESIRE FOR YOU

WORKERS CHORUS [WUR'-KERZ / KOHR'-UH S]

In ancient Greek theater, the Chorus sang, spoke, and danced in unison. Often representing the voice of citizens, the Chorus commented on the actions of characters and served as an emotional conduit for the audience.

OH, KEEP YOUR HEAD, KEEP YOUR HEAD LOW (KKH)

OH, YOU GOTTA KEEP YOUR HEAD LOW (KKH)

IF YOU WANNA KEEP YOUR HEAD (HUH, KKH)

OH, YOU GOTTA KEEP YOUR HEAD LOW



ANATOMY OF A SONG

“ALL I’VE EVER KNOWN”

BY ANAÏS MITCHELL

EURYDICE

I WAS ALONE SO LONG
I DIDN’T EVEN KNOW THAT I WAS LONELY
OUT IN THE COLD SO LONG
I DIDN’T EVEN KNOW THAT I WAS COLD
TURN MY COLLAR TO THE WIND
THIS IS HOW IT’S ALWAYS BEEN

ALL I’VE EVER KNOWN IS HOW TO HOLD MY OWN
ALL I’VE EVER KNOWN IS HOW TO HOLD MY OWN
BUT NOW I WANNA HOLD YOU TOO

-Interlude-

YOU TAKE ME IN YOUR ARMS
AND SUDDENLY THERE’S SUNLIGHT ALL AROUND ME
EVERYTHING BRIGHT AND WARM
AND SHINING LIKE IT NEVER DID BEFORE
AND FOR A MOMENT I FORGET
JUST HOW DARK AND COLD IT GETS

ALL I’VE EVER KNOWN IS HOW TO HOLD MY OWN
ALL I’VE EVER KNOWN IS HOW TO HOLD MY OWN
BUT NOW I WANNA HOLD YOU

NOW I WANNA HOLD YOU
HOLD YOU CLOSE
I DON’T WANNA EVER HAVE TO LET YOU GO
NOW I WANNA HOLD YOU
HOLD YOU TIGHT
I DON’T WANNA GO BACK TO THE LONELY LIFE

ORPHEUS

I DON’T KNOW HOW OR WHY
OR WHO AM I THAT I SHOULD GET TO HOLD YOU
BUT WHEN I SAW YOU ALL ALONE AGAINST THE SKY
IT’S LIKE I’D KNOWN YOU ALL ALONG
I KNEW YOU BEFORE WE MET
AND I DON’T EVEN KNOW YOU YET
ALL I KNOW’S YOU’RE SOMEONE I HAVE ALWAYS
KNOWN

ORPHEUS & EURYDICE

ALL I KNOW’S YOU’RE SOMEONE I HAVE ALWAYS
KNOWN
AND I DON’T EVEN KNOW YOU
NOW I WANNA HOLD YOU—HOLD YOU CLOSE
I DON’T WANNA EVER HAVE TO LET YOU GO

EURYDICE

SUDDENLY THERE’S SUNLIGHT BRIGHT AND WARM

ORPHEUS

SUDDENLY I’M HOLDING THE WORLD IN MY ARMS

-Interlude-

EURYDICE

SAY THAT YOU’LL HOLD ME FOREVER
SAY THAT THE WIND WON’T CHANGE ON US
SAY THAT WE’LL STAY WITH EACH OTHER
AND IT WILL ALWAYS BE LIKE THIS

ORPHEUS

I’M GONNA HOLD YOU FOREVER
THE WIND WILL NEVER CHANGE ON US
LONG AS WE STAY WITH EACH OTHER

ORPHEUS & EURYDICE

THEN IT WILL ALWAYS BE LIKE THIS

“Usually at the beginning of a song, what comes is one lyric line with a melody, and so that ‘All I’ve ever known is how to hold my own,’ that was the first phrase that came. Off-Broadway this [song] was really a solo feature for Eurydice, and Reeve who’s playing Orpheus said I wish that Orpheus had a moment where he really could express his love for Eurydice. It was tough, because I had written what felt anatomically a really tight song for Eurydice to sing and then when I realized I wanted it to become a duet it was hard to figure out how to crack that thing open and get Orpheus in there.

He couldn’t say the same thing that she said, like ‘All I’ve ever know is how to hold my own’—that’s not his experience, that’s her experience. So, it was tough to find that moment where he says a sort of subversion of that line, which is ‘All I know is you’re someone that I’ve always known, and I don’t even know you.’ That did feel like it was true to his experience, but also poetically close enough to her chorus that it would feel like it was a homecoming, which a chorus always wants to feel like.”

As the characters have evolved, Eva is playing this really beautiful tough character who has actually seen a lot already. When she says, ‘Say that we’ll stay with each other,’ when I watch that scene I see her saying ‘I’ve never stayed anywhere before, I’ve left everywhere that I’ve ever been, so say that that’s never going to happen again.’”

—ANAÏS MITCHELL

Source: This content is excerpted and transcribed from Theatremania.com’s [Making the Music: Anaïs Mitchell on the Creation of “All I’ve Ever Known” from Hadestown video interview](#), 14 June 2019.

THE HADESTOWN COMPANY

(original Broadway company)



HERMES
ANDRÉ DE SHIELDS



2019 Tony Award® Winner
Best Performance of an Actor in a
Featured Role in a Musical
André De Shields for *Hadestown*



ORPHEUS
REEVE CARNEY



EURYDICE
EVA NOBLEZADA



PERSEPHONE
AMBER GRAY



HADES
PATRICK PAGE



FATE
JEWELLE BLACKMAN



FATE
YVETTE GONZALEZ-NACER



FATE
KAY TRINIDAD



WORKER
ANTHONY CHATMON II



WORKER
AFRA HINES



WORKER
TIMOTHY HUGHES



WORKER
JOHN KRAUSE



WORKER
KIMBERLY MARABLE



SWING
MALCOLM ARMWOOD



SWING
T. OLIVER REID



SWING
JESSIE SHELTON



SWING
KHAILA WILCOXON

THEMES IN *HADESTOWN*

Going beyond what happens in the story, ask your students to discuss what *HADESTOWN* is about, that is, what the story means or says in terms of its themes. Have students brainstorm a list of themes central to the story of the musical. [The number of recognizable themes will be dependent upon how much of the synopsis is read.]

- Themes might include:
 - The power of music to heal, unite, remind, help us understand ourselves and others, etc.
 - Love and its power of attraction
 - Love as a force for good
 - Love lost or broken—it's causes and effects
 - The fleeting nature of happiness
 - Death as an inescapable fact of human/mortal life
 - Trust and mistrust in relationships (promises kept, broken, or forgotten; loyalty)
 - The natural world processes—new life/spring, development/summer, maturation/fall, death/winter—and their effect on humanity
 - The impact of climate change
 - The oppression of workers by power/authority
 - Fear of the outsider
 - Hope in the face of loss/tragedy, et al.
 - Have students choose a theme from the list generated and ask them to free-write on the theme in relation to the story of *HADESTOWN* and their own experience or interest.
 - Ask students to recall and make connections to other works they've read or studied with themes similar to those of *HADESTOWN*.
 - If students read only Act One of the Synopsis or stop reading at the "Spoiler Alert," ask them what they think will happen next in the story and what the overall message or theme of the story might be.
-

LISTENING PARTY: "ALL I'VE EVER KNOWN" AND "WAY DOWN HADESTOWN"

Share with your students that the genesis of *HADESTOWN* began with a lyric line that expressed itself in singer-songwriter Anaïs Mitchell's head—inspired by the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice—that she grew into a song, then into a series of songs exploring the Orpheus-Eurydice story, then into a folk-opera "concept album" (i.e., musical recording unified by some theme/story), which then was developed by Anaïs Mitchell and director Rachel Chavkin into an almost entirely sung musical theatre experience on Broadway. Then give students the opportunity to explore two songs from *HADESTOWN*—"All I've Ever Known" and "Way Down HADESTOWN."

"ALL I'VE EVER KNOWN"

The lyrics to "All I've Ever Known" are included on p.14 of this Study Guide and in the Appendix on p.34 as a printer-friendly version for study.

Have students examine the lyrics, and ask them to consider the following:

- How would you characterize this song? What sort of song is it?
- What feeling or mood does the song evoke?
- What do you notice about the overall imagery in the song? What one image or line especially stood out to you?
- Thinking of the lyrics of the song as dialogue, what are the characters expressing to one another? What does each character seem to want in the song?
- What does Eurydice mean when she says, "All I've ever known is how to hold my own?"
- What does the song reveal about the individual characters in terms of their personalities/temperaments and/or backstories?
- Does anything change in the course of the song or is anything achieved by its end?
- What do you think this song's purpose or point in the overall story of the musical *HADESTOWN* might be?

Then, have students listen to Anaïs Mitchell's performance of the song at the National Theatre in London—available through YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5Zqd9fQjoY>—and ask them to consider:

- How did hearing the music with the lyrics make you feel?
- What type of music is it, and did the music fit the lyrics to the song?
- Did hearing the song sung make you aware of something you didn't consider before?

If students haven't already read the quotation by Anaïs Mitchell on the development of "All I've Ever Known" on p. 13, now would be a great opportunity to share it with them.

"WAY DOWN HADESTOWN"

Now share the song "Way Down Hadestown" from the Original Broadway Cast Recording with your students—it is available through YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-aSMoAEmtU>.

Prompt students that you will have them listen to it twice: First, for a general understanding of the song (characters, topic/subject, story), an appreciation of it musically, and for comparison with "All I've Ever Known"; and second, for background information for the HADESTOWN Design Collage project immediately below.

FIRST LISTEN

Asks students to take notes as they listen to the song. Before playing the song, instruct them to put at the top of their notebooks/papers the following guide words:

Characters, Topic/Subject, Imagery, Style/Genre, Feeling/Mood, Instruments, Surprises

These are all aspects of the song they might consider taking notes on as they listen to it the first time. [Note: A lyric sheet for "Way Down Hadestown" is available in the Appendix, pp.35-36 for students with hearing impairments or learning differences.]

Following their first listening experience, ask students:

- How would you characterize this song? What sort of song is it? What type of music is it?
- What feeling or mood does the song evoke?
- What characters were you able to distinguish as singers of the song?
- What does the song reveal about the individual characters in terms of their personalities/ temperaments and/or wants?
- What is the song about? Does it tell a story? What's the story?
- What do you notice about the overall imagery in the song? Were there any images or lyrics that especially stood out to you?
- Where there any surprises in the song for you?
- How is "Way Down Hadestown" different from "All I've Ever Known" both musically and functionally? Does it have a different dramatic purpose or goal as a song?

SECOND LISTEN

Now have students to listen to the song again. This is a chance to refine the notes they've already taken. And this time they should focus specifically on clues about Hadestown itself: What is it like? What words and images are used to describe it? What ideas and images are evoked in the students from the song itself?

After they listen to the song again, ask them if they discovered anything new they would like to share.

Students now have research they can utilize for the next activity.

HADESTOWN DESIGN COLLAGE

Share with your students the thoughts of Director Rachel Chavkin and Scenic Designer Rachel Hauck on how they view the world of the musical *HADESTOWN* and some of their design ideas for the overall look and feel of the set found on **The Creative Process** pages (pp. 8 and 9) of this Study Guide. Hauck describes the set we see at the start of the show as "the best New Orleans hybrid bar-music joint...a hybrid between Preservation Hall and the Greek amphitheatre." She refers to it as both cozy and "intimate." However, in the course of the action of the show—when we go "Way Down Hadestown"—there is, as Chavkin describes it, quite an "extraordinary transformative moment" and we are transported into the Underworld to Hadestown.

Using Chavkin and Hauck's comments on their creative ideas and process; clues gleaned and images and ideas evoked from Anaïs Mitchell's lyrics and music to "Way Down Hadestown," and the **Character Profiles** and **Synopsis**, ask your students to imagine themselves as members of the *HADESTOWN* creative team who have been given the task of coming up with preliminary design ideas for the scenic location of Hadestown. Theatre professionals utilize various communication tools, such as "look books" and "image boards," to inspire their work.

One form of visual communication is collage, in which paper, cutout images and text/words, paint, materials/fabrics, and other small objects are glued to a piece of paper to symbolize an environment, its spirit, and its inhabitants. Have your students make a design collage of Hadestown.

- Students should review their research materials (study guide interviews, notes from the Listen Party activity or the lyric sheet for “Way Down Hadestown” found in the Appendix, Character Profiles and Synopsis) and then think of ways to visually communicate their impressions of Hadestown and its inhabitants. They should seek out images online, in magazines (if available), and collect small objects and fabric/material for their design collages.
- They will need an 8½ x 11” sheet of paper (either colored paper or paper that can be painted), scissors, additional color paper for cutouts, magic markers, colored pencils or paint for a background, and glue.
- You might also opt for your students to create electronic collages by utilizing PowerPoint technology and images gleaned from the Internet. [Urge your students to avoid researching HADESTOWN and images from the actual production.]
- Students should be given the opportunity to show their finished collages to the class and to explain how the images, objects, and words in their collages symbolize Hadestown itself.

ADDITIONAL POST-SHOW DISCUSSION POINTS FOR HADESTOWN

1. ON “THE TRAGIC EFFECT” TODAY: PITY, FEAR, OR SOME OTHER FEELING IN 2020?

Share or review with your students the brief article on “Aristotle and the Tragic Effect” found on p. 7 of this Study Guide and then ask them to consider Aristotle’s definition from Poetics, specifically in relation to his assertion that the experience of tragic plays evokes feelings of pity (i.e., sympathetic suffering or distress) and fear in its audience and allows for those excessive and negative emotions to be purged or cleansed from the viewers.

- What feelings or emotions were evoked in you as a result of your HADESTOWN experience? If not pity or fear, then try to a name on the effect that the theatre musical in performance had on you.

- Imagine that you are a student of Plato today in 2020, and you feel passionately about taking on his challenge. Why should tragic musical theatre and its poet-creators—such as HADESTOWN and Anaïs Mitchell—be admitted into the ideal city state? What purposeful or useful reason do they serve in society?

2. ON THE POWER OF MYTH IN 2020 CE—WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN TO YOU?

In the quotation from **The Power of Myth** featured on p. 4 in this Study Guide, noted literature professor and expert on comparative mythology and religion Joseph Campbell says:

“When the story [of a myth] is in your mind, then you see its relevance to something happening in your own life. It gives you perspective on what’s happening to you. [...] These bits of information from ancient times [...] have to do with deep inner problems, inner mysteries, inner thresholds of passage, and if you don’t know what the guide signs are along the way, you have to work it out for yourself.”

Ask student to consider the following questions:

- Did the mythical story played out in HADESTOWN in any way resonate with you or seem relevant to something happening in your own life or the life of someone you know?
- What themes in your own life connect with themes touched upon in HADESTOWN?

A list of themes appears on p. 18 of this Study Guide. You may also take a moment to have your students generate a list of themes themselves, if they haven’t done so already.

**THANK YOU FOR
SHARING THE
HADESTOWN
EXPERIENCE!**

“ALL I’VE EVER KNOWN”
BY ANAÏS MITCHELL
FROM *HADESTOWN*

EURYDICE

I WAS ALONE SO LONG
I DIDN’T EVEN KNOW THAT I WAS LONELY
OUT IN THE COLD SO LONG
I DIDN’T EVEN KNOW THAT I WAS COLD
TURN MY COLLAR TO THE WIND
THIS IS HOW IT’S ALWAYS BEEN

ALL I’VE EVER KNOWN IS HOW TO HOLD MY OWN
ALL I’VE EVER KNOWN IS HOW TO HOLD MY OWN
BUT NOW I WANNA HOLD YOU TOO

-Interlude-

YOU TAKE ME IN YOUR ARMS
AND SUDDENLY THERE’S SUNLIGHT ALL AROUND
ME
EVERYTHING BRIGHT AND WARM
AND SHINING LIKE IT NEVER DID BEFORE
AND FOR A MOMENT I FORGET
JUST HOW DARK AND COLD IT GETS

ALL I’VE EVER KNOWN IS HOW TO HOLD MY OWN
LL I’VE EVER KNOWN IS HOW TO HOLD MY OWN
BUT NOW I WANNA HOLD YOU

NOW I WANNA HOLD YOU
HOLD YOU CLOSE
I DON’T WANNA EVER HAVE TO LET YOU GO
NOW I WANNA HOLD YOU
HOLD YOU TIGHT
I DON’T WANNA GO BACK TO THE LONELY LIFE

ORPHEUS

I DON’T KNOW HOW OR WHY
OR WHO AM I THAT I SHOULD GET TO HOLD YOU
BUT WHEN I SAW YOU ALL ALONE AGAINST THE
SKY
IT’S LIKE I’D KNOWN YOU ALL ALONG
I KNEW YOU BEFORE WE MET
AND I DON’T EVEN KNOW YOU YET
ALL I KNOW’S YOU’RE SOMEONE I HAVE ALWAYS
KNOWN

ORPHEUS & EURYDICE

ALL I KNOW’S YOU’RE SOMEONE I HAVE ALWAYS
KNOWN
AND I DON’T EVEN KNOW YOU
NOW I WANNA HOLD YOU—HOLD YOU CLOSE
I DON’T WANNA EVER HAVE TO LET YOU GO

EURYDICE

SUDDENLY THERE’S SUNLIGHT BRIGHT AND
WARM

ORPHEUS

SUDDENLY I’M HOLDING THE WORLD IN MY ARMS

-Interlude-

EURYDICE

SAY THAT YOU’LL HOLD ME F OREVER
SAY THAT THE WIND WON’T CHANGE ON US
SAY THAT WE’LL STAY WITH EACH OTHER
AND IT WILL ALWAYS BE LIKE THIS

ORPHEUS

I’M GONNA HOLD YOU FOREVER
THE WIND WILL NEVER CHANGE ON US
LONG AS WE STAY WITH EACH OTHER

ORPHEUS & EURYDICE

THEN IT WILL ALWAYS BE LIKE THIS



“WAY DOWN HADESTOWN”
BY ANAÏS MITCHELL
FROM *HADESTOWN*

HERMES

ON THE ROAD TO HELL, THERE WAS A RAILROAD TRACK

PERSEPHONE

Oh, come on!

HERMES

THERE WAS A TRAIN COMIN' UP FROM WAY DOWN BELOW

PERSEPHONE

That was not six months!

FATES

BETTER GO AND GET YOUR SUITCASE PACKED

GUESS IT'S TIME TO GO

HERMES

SHE'S GONNA RIDE THAT TRAIN

COMPANY

RIDE THAT TRAIN...

HERMES

SHE'S GONNA RIDE THAT TRAIN

COMPANY

RIDE THAT TRAIN...

HERMES

SHE'S GONNA RIDE THAT TRAIN 'TIL THE END OF THE LINE

'CAUSE THE KING OF THE MINE IS COMING TO CALL

DID YOU EVER WONDER WHAT IT'S LIKE ON THE UNDERSIDE?

COMPANY

WAY DOWN UNDER

HERMES

ON THE YONDER SIDE?

COMPANY

WAY DOWN YONDER

HERMES

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF HIS WALL

FOLLOW THAT DOLLAR FOR A LONG WAY DOWN

FAR AWAY FROM THE POORHOUSE DOOR

YOU EITHER GET TO HELL OR TO HADESTOWN

AIN'T NO DIFFERENCE ANYMORE!

WAY DOWN HADESTOWN

WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND

HOUND DOG HOWL AND THE WHISTLE BLOW

TRAIN COME A-ROLLIN, CLICKETY-CLACK

EVERYBODY TRYIN' TO GET A TICKET TO GO

BUT THOSE WHO GO THEY DON'T COME BACK THEY GOIN'...

HERMES & COMPANY

WAY DOWN HADESTOWN WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND

HERMES

Ha!

PERSEPHONE

WINTER'S NIGH AND SUMMER'S O'ER

HEAR THAT HIGH, LONESOME SOUND

OF MY HUSBAND COMING FOR

TO BRING ME HOME TO HADESTOWN

COMPANY

WAY DOWN HADESTOWN WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND

PERSEPHONE

DOWN THERE, IT'S A BUNCH OF STIFFS

BROTHER, I'LL BE BORED TO DEATH

GONNA HAVE TO IMPORT SOME STUFF

JUST TO ENTERTAIN MYSELF

GIVE ME MORPHINE IN A TIN

GIVE ME A CRATE OF THE FRUIT OF THE VINE

TAKES A LOT OF MEDICINE

TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE WINTERTIME

COMPANY

WAY DOWN HADESTOWN WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND

FATES

EVERY LITTLE PENNY IN THE WISHING WELL

EVERY LITTLE NICKEL ON THE DRUM

COMPANY

ON THE DRUM!

FATES

ALL THEM SHINY LITTLE HEADS AND TAILS

WHERE DO YOU THINK THEY COME FROM?

THEY COME FROM

COMPANY

WAY DOWN HADESTOWN WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND

HERMES

EVERYBODY HUNGRY EVERYBODY TIRED

EVERYBODY SLAVES BY THE SWEAT OF HIS BROW

THE WAGE IS NOTHING AND THE WORK IS HARD

IT'S A GRAVEYARD IN HADESTOWN

COMPANY

WAY DOWN HADESTOWN WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND

HERMES

MR. HADES IS A MEAN OLD BOSS

PERSEPHONE

WITH A SILVER WHISTLE AND A GOLDEN SCALE

COMPANY

AN EYE FOR AN EYE!

HERMES

AND HE WEIGHS THE COST

COMPANY

A LIE FOR A LIE!

HERMES

AND YOUR SOUL FOR SALE

COMPANY

SOLD!

PERSEPHONE

TO THE KING ON THE CHROMIUM THRONE

COMPANY

THROWN!

PERSEPHONE

TO THE BOTTOM OF A SING SING CELL

“WAY DOWN HADESTOWN”
BY ANAÏS MITCHELL
FROM *HADESTOWN*

HERMES

WHERE THE LITTLE WHEEL SQUEALS AND THE BIG WHEEL
GROANS

PERSEPHONE

AND YOU BETTER FORGET ABOUT YOUR WISHING WELL

COMPANY

WAY DOWN HADESTOWN
WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND

HERMES

On the Road to Hell, there was a railroad car
And the car door opened and a man stepped out
Everybody looked and everybody saw
It was the same man they'd been singin' about

PERSEPHONE

You're early.

HADES

I missed ya.

FATES

MR. HADES IS A MIGHTY KING
MUST BE MAKING SOME MIGHTY BIG DEALS
SEEMS LIKE HE OWNS EVERYTHING

EURYDICE

KIND OF MAKES YOU WONDER HOW IT FEELS...

HERMES

All aboard!
A-ONE, A-TWO
A-ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR

COMPANY

WAY DOWN HADESTOWN WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND
WAY DOWN HADESTOWN WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND
WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND WAY DOWN UNDER THE
GROUND!

“WAY DOWN HADESTOWN”
BY ANAÏS MITCHELL
FROM HADESTOWN

HERMES

WHERE THE LITTLE WHEEL SQUEALS AND THE BIG WHEEL
GROANS

PERSEPHONE

AND YOU BETTER FORGET ABOUT YOUR WISHING WELL

COMPANY

WAY DOWN HADESTOWN
WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND

HERMES

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EURYDICE

KIND OF MAKES YOU WONDER HOW IT FEELS...

HERMES

All aboard!
A-ONE, A-TWO
A-ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR

COMPANY

WAY DOWN HADESTOWN WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND
WAY DOWN HADESTOWN WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND
WAY DOWN UNDER THE GROUND WAY DOWN UNDER THE
GROUND!

Save a tree!
Cut into half sheets!
Thank you.