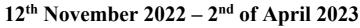
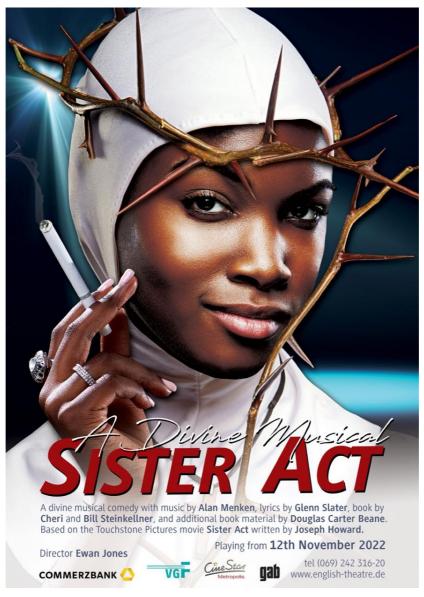
Sister Act

A divine musical comedy with music by Alan Menken, lyrics by Glenn Slater, book by Cheri and Bill Steinkellner, and additional book material by Douglas Carter Beane. Based on the Touchstone Pictures movie Sister Act written by Joseph Howard





Teachers' Resource Pack

This teachers' pack includes information as well as tasks and topics to be dealt with in the classroom. The tasks do not necessarily build on each other. Cut and paste as you please, and please consult the official program for additional information.

Background Information to Sister Act - The musical

The Authors - Cheri and Bill Steinkellner

Cheri Steinkellner has won four Emmy Awards, two Golden Globes, The Peoples Choice, BAFTA, Writers Guild Award, Parents Choice and TV-Land Legend Awards, for writing and producing Cheers (recently named one of the Top 10 Best Written Comedies in TV history), and The Jeffersons, Facts of Life, Family Ties and Who's The Boss, and for creating the acclaimed Disney animated Saturday morning TV series and feature film, Teacher's Pet. A 2011 Tony-nominee for Sister Act (with husband Bill Steinkellner, Alan Menken and Glenn Slater); Cheri has also written Princesses (with Bill, David Zippel and Matthew Wilder); and book and lyrics for Mosaic (with Georgia Stitt), and Jailbirds on Broadway (with Bill and Jeff Rizzo). Other stage includes Our Place. and Instaplay - L.A. s original - and longest-running improvised musical-comedy. An Indy Award winner and Ovation nominee for Hello! My Baby, Cheri currently



teaches writing at Stanford and UCSB and directs youth theatre in Santa Barbara.

Bill Steinkellner

Bill Steinkellner is a producer and writer, known for Cheers (1982), Teacher's Pet (2000) and Bob (1992).

The Director - Ewan Jones



Ewan Jones trained at the Arts Educational Schools and holds an MA in Choreography. Most recently Ewan Directed the Norwegian premiere of *Matilda The Musical* at Folketeateret Theatre in Oslo. Ewan is also Movement Director/Choreographer for Netflix series *Sex Education* and upcoming new Disney+ series *The Ballad of Renegade Nell*. Upcoming projects include *Candide* (Welsh National Opera) and *The Barber of Seville* (Garsington Opera).

Sister Act – Synopsis

In the musical "Sister Act" Deloris Van Cartier performs in the night club run by her gangster boyfriend, Curtis Shank. She is rejected as a performer and is given a gift by Curtis that clearly belonged to his wife. Hurt and frustrated, Deloris goes to her backup singers Michelle, singing about her dreams of stardom and fame. She decides to break up with Curtis to go achieve her dreams on her own. However, she gets to Curtis just in time to see him and his crew, made up of his nephew TJ, Joey and Pablo, shoot someone who they believe has "squealed" about them to the cops. Horrified, Deloris runs to a police station and tells the desk chief, Eddie, about what happened. The two recognize each other as old friends from school with Deloris calling him "Sweaty Eddie". Eddie decides that Deloris needs to go into the witness protection program and sends her to the place he believes Shank will never find her - a convent called The Holy Order of the Little Sisters of Our Mother of Perpetual Faith.

Deloris is disappointed by this idea as she learns from the Mother Superior that contact with the outside world is limited, and that she cannot smoke, drink, or wear any of her less than appropriate clothing

Meanwhile, back in his nightclub, Shank is frustrated that he cannot find Deloris anywhere Back at the convent Deloris is bored by the simple life of the nuns and decides to hit the town, resulting in her almost getting caught by Curtis's men. . Mother Superior and Eddie find her with two other nuns and reprimand her

The following morning Deloris attends the church's choir practice and admits that the choir sounds terrible. This prompts the Mother Superior to let Deloris lead the choir. Deloris does so and teaches the nuns how to sing on key and in time. That Sunday, the choir performs an uptempo hymn which, to the struggling church's surprise, brings in more people and more donations. The Mother Superior, however, is horrified how the simple traditional choir she knew has changed and become modern. The news of the choir soon spreads with news reporters coming in to get the story behind the latest sensation - this wonderful non-traditional choir.

Consequently, Curtis and his thugs spot Deloris on the news. He orders his men to get into the convent and bring Deloris to him. Meanwhile, back at the church, Monsignor O'Hara has some terrific news: the choir has been asked to perform for the Pope. The choir are overjoyed until the Mother Superior tells Deloris that Curtiss's men have just come looking for her and she must leave quickly. The other nuns overhear, and Deloris is forced to tell them the truth about who she really is and that she cannot perform with them

However, it's too late. Curtis and his men are already there, and it all comes down to a final confrontation in which Curtis, armed and dangerous, is about to start firing at Deloris when Eddie comes in and shoots Curtis. After the arrest of the thugs Deloris and Eddie get together. Mother Superior and Deloris come to a truce and accept that perhaps they are not so different after all.

The Characters

Deloris van Cartier

An aspiring performer, Deloris is a passionate, witty, confident woman, a talented singer and loves a bit of fun. Morally speaking she is no nun, which isn't necessarily something she views as a negative.

Mother Superior

The head of the convent, Mother Superior is strict and proper, and apart from her wit and sarcasm she is exactly what one would imagine when thinking of a head nun.

Sister Mary Robert

Quiet and reserved, Sister Mary Robert starts finding her voice when Deloris encourages her to be as loud as she wants to be. She also doubts whether the nun's life is for her as a result of her newfound confidence.

Sister Mary Patrick

An excitable, consistently perky individual.

Sister Mary Lazarus

A deadpan sarcastic personality and the leader of the choir.

Monsignor O'Hara

One of the heads of the convent, O'Hara is a big fan of the changes to the church choir that Deloris brings.

Eddie

Eddie is a cop who happens to know Dolores from high school. Also, he handles Dolores's case because he was already working on bringing Curtis and his thugs down. He has had a major crush on Dolores since high school.

Curtis

Curtis is a thug who is both Delores's boyfriend (even though he has a wife) and the reason that Dolores has to go into witness protection because she witnesses him going about his business (his business is crime)

TJ

One of Curtis' less efficient Thugs, he also happens to be Curtis' nephew. A poster child for the phrase "Ignorance is Bliss".

Joey

Another of Curtis' thugs. He believes himself to be quite the ladies' man.

Pablo

Thug the third, Pablo is a natural follower who speaks a mix of Spanish and English. Sister Martin-of-Tours

A nun in the convent, Sister Martin-of-Tours is usually in her own little world. She does, however, have moments in which she is astonishingly lucid.

Sister Mary Theresa

The oldest of the nuns, she is underestimated but packs a punch.

Michelle

One of Deloris' backup singers, she is quick with a retort.

Tina

The other backup singer, a bit naïve.

Ernie

An ex-thug who is murdered by Curtis when it becomes apparent that Ernie has been a police informant for some time.

"Sister Act" movie vs. musical



Whilst the plot of the musical is largely similar to that of the 1992 comedy, there are some notable differences between the two. One example is the relationship between Eddie and Deloris. In the film they are friends, in the musical there is a notable flirty and/or romantic energy that ends with them getting together. The film gangster is called Vince, the musical gangster is called Curtis. They are honestly equally awful, but one has to mention the difference in work ethic. Curtis is actively involved in his "business" (murders and such) and does his own dirty work. Vince hardly lifts a finger and lets his henchmen deal with almost everything except dirty looks, gaslighting and intimidation.

There is also a noteworthy difference in ethnicity in the roles of Curtis/Vince and Eddy. While in the movie, the villain is a white mafia-like gangster and Eddie is a black cop, in the musical the roles are reversed. Curtis is a black male portrayed as a typical thug, and Eddie, the good guy, is portrayed as a white person.

The musical nuns are almost exactly like the ones in the film, although Mother Superior is a lot less helpful in the musical when danger reaches its peak, and Sister Mary Robert much more doubtful about her choice to become a nun.

Most importantly, there are absolutely no cheesesteak references in the movie.



The effects of singing

Singing together plays an immense role in the Musical "Sister Act" but not only members of religious communities or sports clubs could benefit from singing regularly.

The most accessible stress reliever by By Sarah Keating 19th May 2020

Whether you have the voice of a songbird or sound like some ball-bearings in a blender, singing can have some remarkably positive effects.

- [...] [T]here are scientific reasons for why singing feels good.
- [...] When we sing, large parts of our brain "light up" with activity, says Sarah Wilson, a clinical neuropsychologist and head of the School of Psychological Sciences at the University of Melbourne. She led a study which looked at how the brain reacts when we sing by giving volunteers of varying vocal ability MRI scans as they warbled.
- "There is a singing network in the brain [which is] quite broadly distributed," Wilson says. When we speak, the hemisphere of the brain dealing with language lights up, as we might expect. When we sing, however, both sides of the brain spark into life. [...]

Body and mind

The physical exertion involved in singing – filling of our lungs, the firm control of our vocal chords, the movements of our mouth and body – is among the reasons why it can boost our mood. Singing is an aerobic exercise which sees the release of endorphins, the brain's 'feelgood' chemicals, says Baishali Mukherjee, the Southeast Asia regional liason for the World Federation of Music Therapy. "Endorphins [are] related to an overall lifted feeling of happiness, it gives a feeling of euphoria so it's all associated with a reduction in stress," she says. [...] "When your mood is up, you [strengthen] your immune system..., you respond to stress factors in a more positive way [and] enhance sleep patterns."

It also engages what is potentially the **body's greatest stress-reliever** – **breathing.**

[...] In a recent study, researchers found that focusing on controlling your rate of breathing – a key skill in singing – activates parts of the brain that are linked to emotion, attention and body awareness.

Sense of connection

But do you have to be any good?

Well, yes and no. [...] [T]he better you are at singing, the more pronounced your specialised singing network.

"What we are doing when we practise and engage in singing is developing this specialised network, which gives us that physiological reward hit, the chills, the dopamine release, the sense of feeling good," says Wilson. The more we sing, the more we develop this network in our brains, and the better it feels.

While the act of singing in itself activates several things in our bodies and brains, when we engage in it with others, it adds another layer to this.

Wilson's team is about to embark on a new study looking at how music creates a feeling of unity. [...] "There is evidence that, in general, singing in a group enhances our sense of empathy and social connection," says Wilson. "We see this at football clubs... (and) people

[singing] in congregations at church. It's a community-building activity because we're united in our voice."

As well as endorphins racing through your body, another hormone released when we sing is **oxytocin**. Mukherjee explains that oxytocin has a powerful effect in enhancing **a feeling of connectedness between people**.

"[It] is often related to breastfeeding as well as sexual activity," she says. [...]

One voice

[...] "Song or music is able to capture something that goes beyond what we would normally be able to articulate in our rational, logical minds," says Jerome Lewis, an anthropologist at University College London. [...]

Lewis has spent many years studying remote hunter-gatherer tribes in the Central Africa Republic – specifically the BaYaka people. Through his work, he has examined how BaYaka use song not as a performative act but one of deep communication.

There are no leaders in the BaYaka community, no frontmen or women. The singing they do comes from a place of connectedness that mirrors the lack of social hierarchy.

Without any organisation, their singing is dense with polyphony, yet each member must create their own harmony and find their place in the song. "Learning to do this when singing cultivates a particular sense of personal autonomy," says Lewis. "One that is not selfish or self-obsessed, but is keenly aware of what others are doing. [...] [A]ll voices are equal."

[...]Like the BaYaka tribes of the Central African Republic, singing together is a primal way to communicate – one without hierarchy or the complexities of speech in modern life.

"We are in a pandemic and what do we do?" says Wilson. "We go back to these roots of [the] innate things that bring us connection and strength. What better way to do this than to sing."

further material: https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/choir-singing-improves-health-happiness-%E2%80%93-and-perfect-icebreaker https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/choir-singing-improves-health-happiness-%E2%80%93-and-perfect-icebreaker https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2996848/

¹ https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200518-why-singing-can-make-you-feel-better-in-lockdown

Pre-Watching-Activities

Working with the script

1) Read the excerpt of the play. Look up words you need for understanding the text and write them down as vocabulary to learn.

SISTER ACT

ACT ONE Scene 1

A Disco

(The curtain goes up on three girls. It is Deloris and her two back-ups, Tina and Michelle.)

DELORIS

Hello, Philadelphia! Give a hometown girl welcome to me, Deloris Van Cartier! Merry Christmas, 1977!

I'VE BEEN THINKIN' ABOUTCHA.
SINCE RECEIVIN' YOUR CALL.
CAN'T SEE LIVIN' WITHOUTCHA,
YOU'VE GOT ME MIND, SOUL, BODY AND ALL.

DELORIS / MICHELLE / TINA

PRAY AND I PRAY

EV'RY NIGHT AND EACH DAY-

DELORIS

HOPIN' THAT YOU'LL DROP A LINE.

DELORIS / MICHELLE / TINA

PRAY AND I PRAY

"TIL YOU SWEEP ME AWAY —

DELORIS

STRAIGHT TO CLOUD NUMBER NINE!

[...]

(As she continues to sing, the set reveals that she is auditioning in an empty club. Curtis' club. It is December 24th, early afternoon. Chairs on tops of tables. A bartender cleans up. Curtis listens to the number with his four henchmen, Joey, TJ, Pablo, and Ernie.)

[...] DELORIS

Thanks for letting me audition, Curtis.

[...]

DELORIS

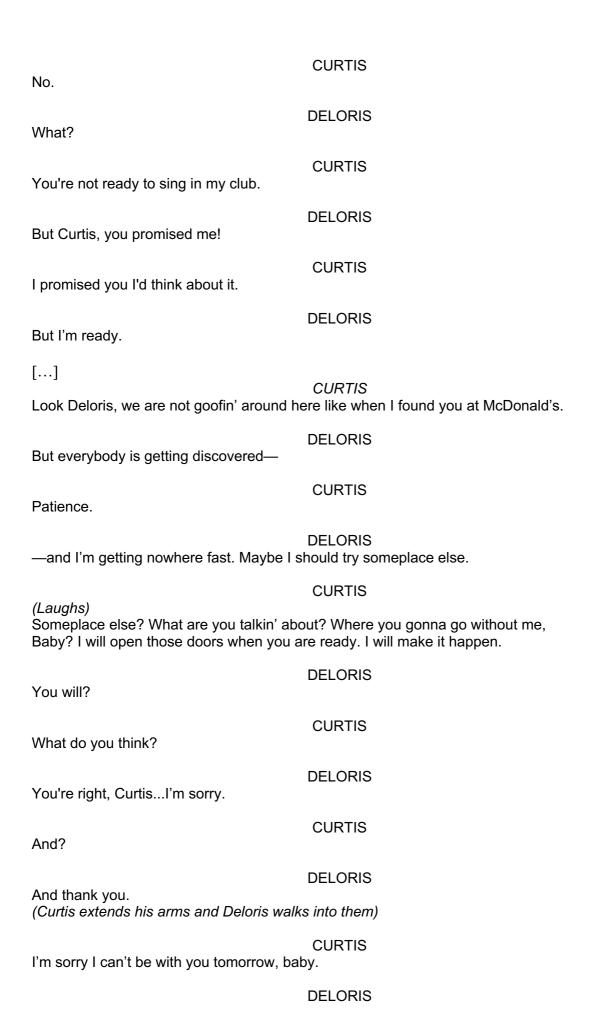
What do you think, Curtis?

CURTIS

Baby, you look good, you move good, you sound good.

DELORIS

So can I sing in your club?



But Curtis, it's Christmas Day. []	CURTIS
Deloris baby, I got you a little present. Who you really mean to me. Merry Christmas. (Ernie hands a box to Deloris)	
	(CURTIS)
Gentlemen, we have a quick meeting. (Curtis and his four thugs exit)	
	DELORIS
(Trembling as she opens the box) I know what it's GOT to be. It's a white fox wore when she played Philly. She showed so classyand she sang so nasty. "Oh, Lo (They all laugh.)	up simple, all in white. Yeah, she looked
ı	MICHELLE
Open it! (The box is open, the fur is blue. Silence)	
	TINA
Oh my God, somebody shot a Smurf.	
	MICHELLE
(To Tina) Girl, it's dyed.	
	TINA
I hope it died, 'cause she's gonna put it 'ro (They laugh)	ound her neck.
Hey, don't laugh at Curtisit's the thought blue with sequins and —	DELORIS that counts, right. Maybe I'll be all in
1	MICHELLE
Where's it from?	
	TINA
What's it say?	
	DELORIS
(Looks at the tag, she is devastated) Cynthia.	DELONIO
[] The man gave me his wife's coat. I don't b	elieve it. Merry Christmas to me.
You know, my psycho-analyst says that we	MICHELLE omen always date their fathers.
	DELORIS
That's stupid. I never knew my father. He was about him was how bad he was.	

MICHELLE

So you date men who are bad, who walk out on you, that you'll never truly know — you wanna Quaalude?

DELORIS

(Suddenly realizing)

I don't need Curtis. I can do undiscovered all by myself. I have had it.

TINA

(Setting her straight)

You have had nothing. You just better shut up, sit down and do what Curtis says.

DELORIS

No. Not this time.

[...]

Goodbye Curtis Jackson. I don't need your club, I don't need your blue fur, and I don't need you. [...]

Scene 2

An alley. Curtis enters with his four thugs.

ERNIE

So where to boss?

CURTIS

Oh I got a special place for you, Ernie. But first—I know how you love a joke.

ERNIE

Oh, yeah, I do love a good joke, boss.

CURTIS

Good. Knock Knock.

ERNIE

Who's there?

(Curtis pulls out a pistol and puts it to the side of Ernie's head.)

CURTIS

What were you doing for four hours at the police station this afternoon talking to an officer Eddie Souther?

(Ernie, caught and terrified, says nothing)

"What were you doing for four hours at the police station this afternoon talking to an officer Eddie Souther" who?

CURTIS

One of my boy's been talking to the cops and my gut tells me it was you Ernie.

ERNIE

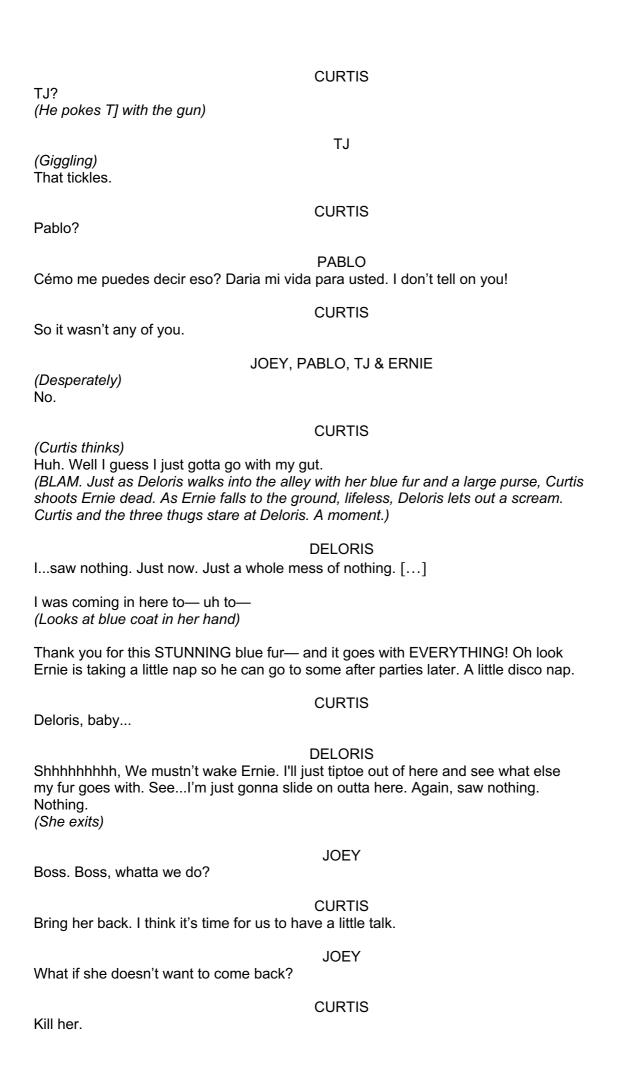
It wasn't me boss, it was Joey.

JOEY

I wouldn't tell on you, Boss.

(He is moved)

I love you.



- 2) Get together with your neighbor and discuss the plot. Try to explain to each other the parts you had troubles understanding.
- 3) Come up and write down three questions dealing with the text together.
- 4) Do an interview round and pose each question to a different partner. You cannot choose your neighbor.
- 5) Discuss in class: If you were Deloris and you saw Curtis murder someone, what would you do?
- 6) Write an inner monologue either from Deloris's perspective when she witnesses the murder and decides to leave or from Curtis's perspective who has just been caught committing murder.

The effects of singing

- 1) Choose an easy song, like a canon or children's song or something you all know very well and that is easy to sing along. It can also be a church song. Only additional guideline: It should not be too long.²
- 2) Practice singing this piece of music together. Keep repeating for at least 5 minutes without unnecessary talking in between.
- 3) Reflect first for yourself, then with a partner and then in class:
 - What do you feel while singing together?
 - What is easy, what is difficult?
- 4) Collect: What do you need in order to sing together successfully?³
- 5) Reflect: What does singing do to you as a group? What does it do to you as an individual?
- 6) Sing together again. Try smiling while singing.
- 7) Reflect: Did something change while smiling?

Alternatively:

1) Share: When do you sing?

- 2) Think of moments in/areas of social life in which singing plays an important role.
- 3) Think/Pair/Share: Compare singing in churches to singing in football stadiums. Which effect(s) do they have in common? What are the differences?

For audio-visual support: Watch short videos of singing football fans and church services.

² Suggestions: Hejo, spann den Wagen an / Row, row, row your boat / Frère Jacque / Kookaburra / Refrain des Wellermans / Viel Glück und viel Segen / Laudate omnes gentes / Donna nobis pacem / Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer / Schrei nach Liebe (Ärzte) / ...or from the Sister Act movie as a sing along: My guy(my god), or I will follow him

³ E.g. Listening to each other: being just as loud as the others – not much louder not too quietly, listening to each others' paces....

While-Watching-Activities

Ouiz

- 1) Why is Deloris unhappy with the gift Curtis gives her?
 - a) It is a tacky necklace
 - b) She doesn't like coats
 - c) It belongs to Curtis's wife
 - d) No matter what gift he gives her, she will always be the other woman
- 2) Why does Curtis shoot his thug, Ernie?
 - a) Ernie messed up an important deal
 - b) He slept with Curtis's wife
 - c) Ernie insulted Curtis's family
 - d) He found out that Ernie was a police informant
- 3) Which of Curtis's thugs is clearly a nepotist hire?
 - a) Ernie
 - b) Pablo
 - c) TJ
 - d) Joey
- 4) What does Eddie do for a living?
 - a) He's a cop
 - b) He's a detective
 - c) He's a bodyguard
 - d) He's a singer
- 5) What is Deloris's Nickname for Eddie?
 - a) Sweaty Eddie
 - b) Nervous Edward
 - c) Unattractive Dumb-Dumb
 - d) Edwina Sweatmore
- 6) How does Deloris end up in a convent?
 - a) She wants to connect with her Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ
 - b) She wants to seduce a priest on a dare
 - c) She is put into Witness Protection after witnessing a murder
 - d) She wants to escape her unhappy relationship
- 7) According to Monseigneur O'Hara, why do the bachelors want to buy the church?
 - a) They're antiquity enthusiasts
 - b) They want to build a bar for other "bachelors"
 - c) They want to establish a protestant church in its place
 - d) They want to build a community centre
- 8) How does Mother Superior feel about Deloris's presence in the convent?
 - a) Overjoyed because Deloris's flair is a cure for the stagnant church vibes
 - b) Apprehensive, since Deloris stands for everything, she dislikes about society outside church
 - c) Apprehensive because she is jealous that Deloris gets to live her life free of the confines of the church

- d) Happy, because now she has someone with whom she can get high
- 9) What does Deloris mistake the smell of incense to be?
 - a) A bonfire
 - b) Burnt hair
 - c) Marijuana
 - d) Apple pie
- 10) What does Curtis want to do when he finds Deloris?
 - a) Calmly discuss the pros and cons of her informing the police about the "Incident"
 - b) Propose to her
 - c) Torture her until she vows to keep quiet
 - d) Kill her
- 11) What is the big change that Deloris brings to the church?
 - a) She introduced a new chore wheel system for the convent
 - b) She coaches the church choir
 - c) She convinces the Sisters to moonlight as strippers
 - d) She plays pranks on Mother Superior
- 12) Which Sister doubts her decision to become a nun?
 - a) Sister Martin-of-tours
 - b) Sister Mary Robert
 - c) Sister Mary Patrick
 - d) Sister Mary Theresa
- 13) What food does Eddie know Deloris likes?
 - a) Steak
 - b) Tacos
 - c) Burgers
 - d) Cheesesteak
- 14) Why does Deloris return to the convent to perform for the pope even though doing so will put her in mortal danger?
 - a) She has grown so fond of the nuns that she can't bear to abandon them when they need her
 - b) She wants to kill Curtis herself
 - c) She has fallen in love with Sister Mary Robert
 - d) She wants to set a trap for Curtis and his thugs with the help of the convent

12-14 correct answers	5-11 correct answers	0-4correct answers
©©	☺	⊕
Congratulations! You understood a lot!	classmates again about the play, you	Don't give up! Talk to your classmates about the parts of the play that are still a bit fuzzy to you.

The effects of singing

Deloris, who has witnessed a murder, is hidden in a convent as part of the witness protection program and hates the idea. However, her stay with the nuns transforms her and changes her life.

- 1) Explain the role singing has in Deloris's development. Remember your own singing experience.
- 2) Imagine: What will Deloris's life look like now that she is free of Curtis? Give reasons for your ideas.

Alternatively:

- 1) Read the BBC article "The most accessible stress reliever" and mark the key information
- 2) Explain why and how Deloris changed based on the article "The most accessible stress reliever".
- 3) Imagine: What will Deloris's life look like now that she is free of Curtis? Give reasons for your ideas

"Sister Act" – a musical about redemption and change – working with a quote

Ian Lavender, who played Monsignor O'Hara in the original London production, said about the Musical:

"Sister Act is a wonderful story and it really is a moral show: it's about redemption and it's about change. Everybody changes somewhere. It's about compromise and compromise is about living with people and learning about how you've changed."

After having seen *Sister Act* recently, explain and discuss Ian Lavender's quote. Give examples based on the play.

Post-Watching-Activity

1) Watch this short clip from the movie "Sister Act". Concentrate on the depiction of both the villain Curtis (who is called "Vince" in the movie) and the cop Eddie.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZ9s1XheiSk

- 2) Briefly sum up what happens in the scene. Place the scene in the plot.
- 3) Compare both characters to the characters of the Musical you've seen. What is different?
- 4) A theatre critic writes in her blog about a production of the musical "Sister Act":

"A decision was made that turned a black cop into a white cop and a rich, white thug into a rich, black thug – feeding the idea that white men are heroes and black men shoot to kill. This is a narrative that should be challenged not peddled."

Comment based on The English Theatre Frankfurt's production.

⁴https://afronalysis.com/2017/07/26/why-cant-the-awkward-black-guy-get-the-girl-review-sister-act-palace-theatre/

Appendix

Quiz

- 1) Why is Deloris unhappy with the gift Curtis gives her?
 - It belongs to Curtis's wife
- 2) Why does Curtis shoot his thug, Ernie?
 - e) He found out that Ernie was a police informant
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 - e) Cheesesteak

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e) She has grown so fond of the nuns that she can't bear to abandon them when they need her