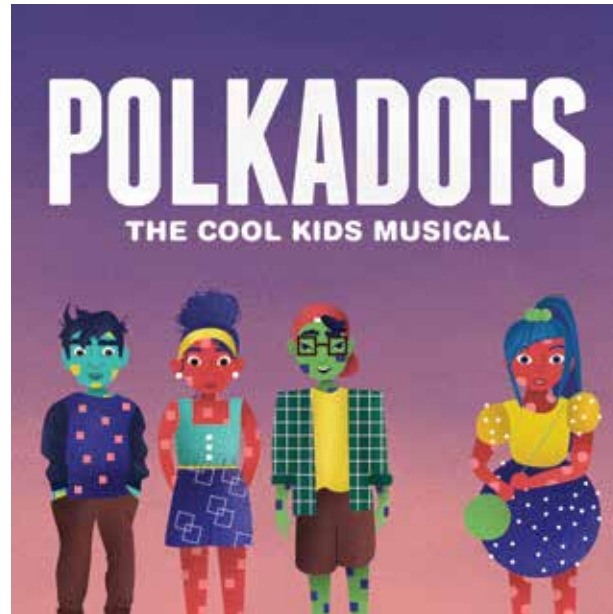


POLKADOTS

THE COOL KIDS MUSICAL





BOOK BY MELVIN TUNSTALL III
LYRICS BY DOUGLAS LYONS
MUSIC BY GREG BOROWSKY AND DOUGLAS LYONS
BASED ON AN ORIGINAL CONCEPT BY DOUGLAS LYONS
DIRECTED BY JACQUELINE THOMPSON

MUSIC DIRECTOR	Lamar Harris
SCENIC DESIGNER	Emily Lotz
COSTUME DESIGNER	Felia K. Davenport
CHOREOGRAPHER	Christopher Page-Sanders
STAGE MANAGER	Carolyn Ivy Carter*

CAST

MAMA SQUARE, MS. SQUARE	Sophia Brown*
SKY SQUARE	Omega Jones*
PENELOPE SQUARE	Kate Shaefer*
LILY POLKADOT	Essence Tyler*

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.



Missouri Arts Council
The State of the Arts



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Who's Who?

Lily Polkadot is a new student at Rockaway School. She wants to make a new friend, but the dots on her skin make that difficult.

Sky Square likes video games, and really doesn't like his sister Penelope. He finds Lily's dots interesting, and wants to get to know her better.

Sky's sister, **Penelope Square**, can be very mean. She doesn't like that Lily is different, and often laughs at her and calls her names.

Ms. Square is their teacher at Rockaway School. She knows what it's like to be different than everyone else and helps Lily to adjust to her new environment.

Sky and Penelope's mom, **Mama Square**, is excited about Sky making a new friend, but changes her mind when she finds out Lily's last name.



Setting the Scene

Moving to a new place and going to a new school can be really hard. Imagine having to leave behind all of your friends and everyone you know. It can be really difficult to start over and to make new friends. When you enter into a group of students that have been together for many years (since kindergarten), it can feel like everyone already has their friends, and that there is no room to add new ones. This can feel very lonely and isolating.

Meet Lily Polkadot. She's eight-years-old and new to Rockaway School. She's worried about making new friends. Not only is she coming to Rockaway after everyone has already made their friends and known each other for a long time, but Lily is a little different than the other students. You see, everyone at Rockaway is a Square! They have little squares all over their skin and clothes. Lily doesn't have squares; Lily has dots. This makes her stand out from everyone else. Some people don't like that Lily looks so different; they think she's strange. They laugh at her and say mean things. She's not allowed to drink out of the same water fountain as the squares.

All Lily wants to do is make a friend, but her dots make that difficult. How is she supposed to fit in when her skin makes her stand out? Will Lily be able to find a friend at Rockaway? Will the squares at her new school get to know her and become her friend, or will Lily continue to be lonely?



Words to the Wise

Mindset: an established set of attitudes held by someone; assumptions or judgements made by a group of people about another group of people.

Roll call: attendance

Discreet: to be discreet is to be careful or quiet so that you don't offend anyone

Commentary: to describe or explain an event or situation, usually as it is happening

Involuntarily: without control or thought; without meaning to

Ploy: a plan designed to gain an advantage; a strategy to win

Motto: a short phrase used as a reminder of rules and beliefs; a slogan

Circumstances: conditions that have an effect on an event or situation

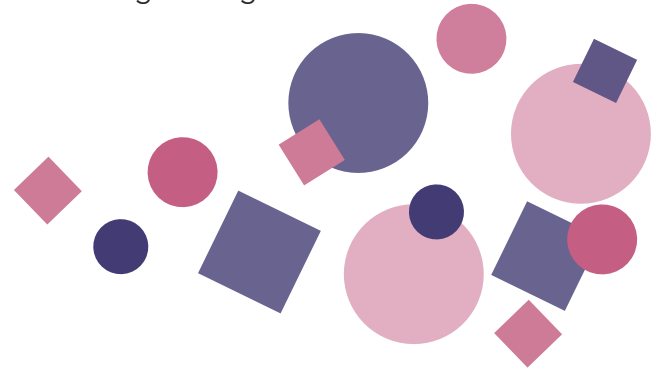
Elite: the best; those having the greatest privilege or authority

Destined: to be placed on a path that cannot be changed; to have a purpose

Recital: a music or dance performance

Cooties: an imaginary germ that comes from annoying people

Petition: a written request signed by many people to encourage change



What's the Story?

It's the first day of a new school year, and Penelope Square is very excited. She's dressing to look her best, and no one, not even her little brother Sky, is going to get in her way. Sky is also getting ready for school, but he's not as excited as Penelope; he would much rather stay home and play video games. At school, Ms. Square is preparing her classroom for all of her new students, including a very special new student: Lily Polkadot. Lily is a new student at Rockaway, and she's feeling a little nervous. All she really wants to do is make a friend.

As class begins, Sky is distracted by his video game and Penelope is late. Once everyone is present, Ms. Square makes an exciting announcement. In the past, the first week of school is usually celebrated by doing a talent show. However, this year Ms. Square has planned a Square Dance! Penelope is not excited about this change, as she practiced her

talent all summer long. A knock at the door signals the arrival of a new student: Lily Polkadot. All of the students at Rockaway are surprised: only squares go to Rockaway. Penelope does not like this change at all. She refuses to sit next to Lily and storms out of the room.

At her desk, Lily meets Sky. He tells her that Penelope is mean to everyone, but Lily says she knew not everyone would like her. At her old school, there were squares and triangles and dots. Sky is surprised and doesn't believe her. At Rockaway, there are only squares. Ms. Square and Penelope re-enter the classroom and Penelope apologizes to Lily, but it's clear that she doesn't mean it. Lily tells her that she doesn't need to apologize, as she didn't hurt Lily's feelings. Words can't hurt her, she says.



The class takes a quick bathroom and water break. Lily is not allowed to use the Square Sprinkler to get water, and the school has yet to install a Polkadot Pump for her. Lily doesn't understand why she can't drink from the Square Sprinkler, but Ms. Square tells her it's not allowed. Later that day, on the playground, Lily gets hit by a dodgeball. Penelope threw it, saying it was an accident, but decides to make a game out of it. She wants to use the dots on Lily's skin as targets. Sky stops her before she can throw another ball at Lily. Penelope tells Lily to go away, but Lily stands her ground. Sky is very impressed that Lily refuses to be afraid.

Left alone on the playground, Lily decides to try the water from the Square Sprinkler. Before she can take a drink, Ms. Square brings out the Polkadot Pump. Lily is curious about what makes the two fountains different, but Ms. Square doesn't know, as she has never used a Polkadot Pump. She tells Lily that they must follow the rules. Lily wishes that she could scrub off all of her dots so that she would be like everyone else. Then, she thinks, she would be able to make a friend.

After school, Penelope and Sky's mother, Mama Square, asks about their first day at school. Penelope teases Sky about making a new friend, and Mama says that they should invite her over to play. Sky reveals that Lily's last name is Polkadot. Mama Square immediately shows concern, saying that they will need to speak to Father to see if Lily could come over to play. It seems very unlikely. Left alone, Sky reveals how beautiful he thinks Lily's dots are, and how he wishes that he could be her friend.

The next day at school, Sky asks Lily what it's like to have dots. He also shares his sandwich with her. They are becoming friends. When Lily makes a joke about being his "girl friend," Sky panics and runs away. Penelope sees this and yells at Lily to go back home because no one wants her at Rockaway. Ms. Square finds Lily crying. She says she knows how hard it can be to be the first one to do something.

Lily is the first polkadot to come to Rockaway, and Ms. Square was the first female teacher to teach at Rockaway. She says that it can be hard to be different, but you just have to be yourself and never give up.

Lily finds Sky on the playground. Sky is still upset, but Lily makes it clear that she just wants to be friends. Sky says they can't be friends because they're different, but Lily tells him to close his eyes; that way, he won't be able to see their differences. They realize they have a lot in common. They see the water fountains nearby and their curiosity gets the better of them. Sky tries water from the Polkadot Pump and Lily tries water from the Square Sprinkler. They realize they are both the same!

At the end of the day, Ms. Square reminds Lily to get her permission form signed for the Square Dance. Lily and Sky try to figure out a way to get people to like Lily so that they can dance together at the Square Dance.

At the dance, Penelope sings a song all about how great she is and how great it is to be a square. Lily and Sky show up to perform a new dance that they have created: the Squa-dot! Sky, now going by Squot, has painted dots inside of his squares. Lily, now going by Dare, has painted squares inside of her dots. They tell Ms. Square and Penelope that they think they are the same on the inside and that they don't care about the rules. They want to be friends and dance together. They begin to perform their new dance for everyone and after some time, everyone joins in, even Penelope. Thirsty from all of the dancing, Penelope gets Lily a drink from the Square Sprinkler, telling Lily how much she liked the dance. Ms. Square gets rid of the Polkadot Pump, which is now unnecessary.

The next day at school, Ms. Square introduces a new classmate, who is a triangle. This student is welcomed by everyone, including Penelope. They are all excited about the new day at Rockaway!



Cool Kids History: The Civil Rights Movement

Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical is a play that was inspired by real events. When watching the play, you will discover that the characters go to a school called Rockaway, which is not a real school. It's fictional. Lily Polkadot, Sky Square, Penelope Square and Ms. Square are not real people. They are fictional, written by the playwrights for this story. People are not born with polkadots and squares all over their skin; at least, not the way that they are in the play. All of these details are fictional.

However, the story that is told in *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical* is based on real, factual events. At one point in history, a little girl with different-colored skin went to school that had never had a student with different-colored skin before. She had a hard time fitting in when her appearance made her stand out. *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical*, was inspired by an event that happened during America's Civil Rights Movement. Let's take a look at some of the things that happened during this time in history!

The Civil Rights Movement took place mainly during the 1950s and 1960s in the United States of America. It was a series of demonstrations and events led by activists and cultural leaders that fought for equal rights under the law for black people. Up until this moment, black people faced violence and prejudice due to the color of their skin. They were not protected by the law, and were forbidden to take part in a lot of different activities due to the color of their skin.

For example, black people had to sit in the back rows of the public bus, separate from the white people, who sat at the front. They had to use different restrooms and drink from different water fountains. Sometimes, they could not live in certain towns and often they had to go to different schools. Under the Jim Crow Laws, which were adopted by states in the South, black people could not marry someone with a different skin color or vote without passing a test that was designed for them to fail.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gives a young protester a pat on the back as a group of youngsters started to picket in St. Augustine, Florida, on June 10, 1964.



A black man drinking at a "colored" drinking fountain in a streetcar terminal in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1939 © Library of Congress



Cool Kids History: The Civil Rights Movement

THE LITTLE ROCK NINE

Although the Civil Rights Movement lasted for about 20 years and included a variety of important events, *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical* is inspired by one specific moment in history. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court (the group of individuals who help make laws and decisions for the entire country) voted on the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*. This vote made it illegal for public schools in the United States to remain segregated. So, a school that used to only be for white students could no longer deny black students the right to attend if they wanted to.

In 1957, nine black students volunteered to attend the all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. This gained national recognition, as the

governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, ordered the Arkansas National Guard to block the students from entering the school. They were accompanied by a threatening mob as well. For weeks, the students could not attend their new school, even though the law said that they could. When they did finally make it inside the school, they faced violence due to the color of their skin. Finally, the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, ordered federal troops to escort the students to classes to help keep them safe. The students, known as the Little Rock Nine, continued to face prejudice and injustice, but they continued to fight for their right for a better education.



The Little Rock Nine being escorted by Federal troops to Little Rock Central High School, Arkansas, 1957.
CSU Archive—Everett Collection



Cool Kids History: The Civil Rights Movement

FORMS OF PEACEFUL PROTEST

The Civil Rights Movement is perhaps best known for a series of nonviolent demonstrations and protests. This included the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which took place in Montgomery, Alabama in 1956. The bus boycott began when a woman named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus. Remember, black people were supposed to sit at the back of the bus and the front seats were left for white people. Rosa Parks sat in a seat at the back of the bus, like she was supposed to, but all of the seats for white people had been filled, and there was not enough room. Rosa Parks and a few others were told to give up their seats for white people, but they refused and were arrested. This sparked outrage, and the bus boycott began. It lasted for 381 days and during that time, many black people refused to ride the public buses. In 1956, the United States Supreme Courts declared that segregation on public transportation was unconstitutional, meaning that, by law, black people could sit wherever they wanted on the bus.

Another form of protest is something called a sit-in. This was famously demonstrated in 1960, when four college students refused to leave a restaurant lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. The staff refused to serve them, so the students remained seated until they were served. During the following days, hundreds of people joined them by "sitting in" at businesses across the city of Greensboro. Some of these demonstrators were arrested. This led to a boycott of the segregated lunch counters, with many people refusing to go to these businesses until the original four students were served. This cost the business owners a lot of money, and they were forced to give in and serve the students. These demonstrations led to the formation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which encouraged students to get involved in peaceful protests like sit-ins and boycotts.



Rosa Parks, seated on bus, looking out window, her face in profile. Photographed at the end of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, December 21, 1956. United Press photo.



Rosa Parks booking photo following her February 1956 arrest beginning the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Source: Alabama Department of Archives and History



Really Cool People: Civil Rights Activists

There were a lot of really important events that took place during the Civil Rights Movement. The planning for these events were often done by organizations with strong cultural leaders and activists. Activists are people who fight for a cause that they believe in. Below are a few of the major Civil Rights Movement leaders who fought for the rights of black people during the 1950s and 1960s.



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

You've probably heard of this very important activist and leader. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a Baptist minister from Alabama who led large groups of people in various demonstrations during this time in history. He led the Montgomery Improvement Association to help improve the lives of black people living in Montgomery. The MIA conducted the Montgomery Bus Boycott that sparked major change and national attention. For years, Dr. King worked with other national leaders and activists towards peaceful protest and nonviolent demonstrations. In August of 1963, he led the March on Washington, during which 250,000 people gathered to draw attention to the injustices faced by black Americans. Dr. King gave a very famous speech to the crowd, known as his "I Have a Dream" speech.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed — 'we hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.'

Above: Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking against the Vietnam War, St. Paul Campus, University of Minnesota. Photo credit: Minnesota Historical Society.

Right: Ruby Bridges attends William Frantz Elementary School, New Orleans, 1960.

RUBY BRIDGES

Like the Little Rock Nine, Ruby Bridges was the first black student to attend what had previously been an all-white elementary school. Unlike the Little Rock Nine, Ruby Bridges attended her school alone. On her first day, in 1960, she was escorted to school by four federal marshals. Like Lily Polkadot, Ruby faced a lot of injustice. Parents pulled their students from the school, and teachers refused to teach her. For her first year, Ruby was the only student in her class. *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical* is inspired by the Little Rock Nine, but it is also probably inspired by other young students, like Ruby Bridges, who faced their injustices alone.



STOKELY CARMICHAEL

Stokely Carmichael was a civil rights activist during the 1960s. He was studying at Howard University when he discovered the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, an organization that helped students get involved in peaceful demonstrations for justice and equality. He participated in the Freedom Summer of 1964, where he visited towns in Mississippi to register black voters. He was a very outspoken leader and was arrested many times for his acts of activism.



Read More About It

Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical is inspired by real-life events that took place during the Civil Rights Movement. The resources below expand on the history of the Civil Rights Movement, as well as take inspiration from other historical events.

***Let the Children March* by Monica Clark-Robinson, Illustrated by Frank Morrison**

This book details the role that black children and students played in the Civil Rights Movement when they marched against segregation (the separation of people based on their skin color) in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963.

***If You Were a Kid During the Civil Rights Movement* by Gwendolyn Hooks, Illustrated by Kelly Kennedy**

Two girls find themselves in the middle of a civil rights demonstration. Joyce Jenkins is attending a segregated school for the first time, while Connie Underwood is trying to figure out what her twin brothers are keeping a secret.

***The Civil Rights Movement for Kids* by Mary C. Turck**

Children, right alongside adults, played a major role in the Civil Rights Movement. This book details how children were inspired by leading activists like Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers, and Rosa Parks to perform their own demonstrations against segregation.

***American Girl: Mysteries Through Time* series by various authors**

This series of 22 novels places the main characters in various moments of history, including the American Revolution in 1776 (*Betrayal at Cross Creek* by Kathleen Ernst), the Saint Louis World's Fair in 1904 (*The Minstrel's Melody* by Eleanor E. Tate), and the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s (*Circle of Fire* by Evelyn Coleman).

***Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges**

Six-year-old Ruby was the first black student to attend an all-white school in the segregated South. Written by Ruby herself, this book tells the story of how she remembers it.

***Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott* by Russell Freedman**

This book tells the dramatic stories of the heroes who stood up against segregation and Jim Crow laws in 1950s Alabama by staging a bus boycott.

***Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor**

Set in Mississippi at the height of the Great Depression, this story depicts one family's struggle against racism and social injustice. Winner of the Newbery Medal.

***The Color of Friendship* (2000 TV Film) directed by Kevin Hooks**

This film depicts a friendship between two girls: Mahree and Piper, one from the United States and the other from apartheid South Africa, who learn about tolerance and friendship in 1977 America.





Activity: Inspired by History

Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical is a play inspired by historical events. The writers of the musical took ideas from events that actually happened in history, such as the story of the Little Rock Nine, and placed them in their own fictional world. They even used some of the details from the Civil Rights Movement, such as the idea of separate drinking fountains and students with different-colored skin not being able to sit next to each other. They added their own elements too, like the characters having different shapes on their skin and the fake town of Rockaway.

Give it a try! You can write a story inspired by history too. Like any story, you'll have to come up with characters, a setting and a plot. However, you can do a little research about a specific moment in history and use what you learn to help you create your story. Grab a pencil and piece of paper, and let's get started!

First, pick a historical event. Below are some options to consider, but you can come up with your own historical event, too!

- Montgomery Bus Boycott
- Greensboro Sit-ins
- Civil Rights March on Washington
- The Great Depression
- The Dust Bowl
- The California Gold Rush

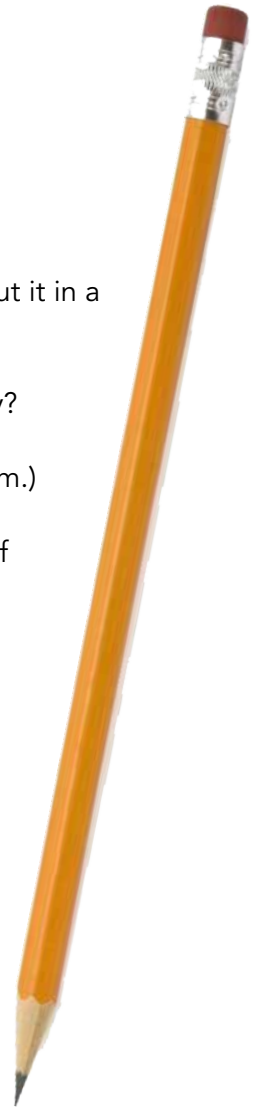
Write your chosen event at the top of your page, then start your research. You can read about it in a book from your library, or do a search online with a grown-up's permission.

Second, you'll want to identify your characters. Who needs to be present to tell your story? (For example, if you were writing about the Greensboro sit-ins, you would definitely need someone to sit at the counter and someone working at the counter who refuses to serve them.) The more characters you create, the more possibilities you will have when writing your story. However, you don't want to have too many characters who distract from the main purpose of your story. Make a character list with a brief description for each.

Third, you'll need to identify your setting. Where does your story take place? Is it a real place, or a made-up place like the school in *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical*? Are there multiple locations? Give a brief description of your setting next.

Finally, what is the plot of your story? What happened during this historical event? Since you're writing a story inspired by the event, you don't have to include everything that actually happened, but your readers should be able to connect your story to the real-life moment in history. Make sure you have a good idea of what you want to include before you begin writing. Make a list of the important events that will happen.

Okay, now it's time to write your story! Make sure to look back at your character list, setting description and plot outline to include everything that you planned. Go back to your research on the historical event if you need further inspiration.





Activity: Making Music

Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical is a musical, just like the title says! This means that at certain moments during the play, the characters stop speaking and sing out their thoughts and feelings instead. Often, one person will write the story and a different person will write the songs for a show. They work with the person who writes the script to make sure it all works together. The person who writes the music for a show is called the **composer**.

Give it a try—you can be a composer too! When writing a song, you have to focus on two different things: the music and the lyrics. The music is what the song sounds like. The music helps to decide the rhythm of a song, as well as how fast or slow it is. You don't need an instrument to make music; you can clap your hands and stomp your feet to find a beat and create a rhythm. What other ways can you make music without an instrument? Maybe you can find some objects in your desk at school to help you out!

The second part of writing a song is the lyrics. The lyrics are the words that the characters sing to express their thoughts and feelings. Writing lyrics is like writing a poem. Often, the lyrics will rhyme, like lines of a poem, but they don't have to. The most important part of writing lyrics is to make sure you are clearly expressing what your characters are feeling.

Write a song for a character in *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical*. At the end of the play, the audience is introduced to a triangle. However, this character does not get a song to sing. You can write one for them! Start by thinking about how the triangle might be feeling. It's their first day at a new school. Write down some thoughts below.

Next, decide if other characters in the show will sing with the triangle. Is your song a solo (one person singing) or a duet (two people singing)? Or maybe it's the entire cast of characters? You decide!

Now, start to write your lyrics. Remember, you'll want to write it like you would write a poem. Your lyrics can rhyme, but then don't have to. A rhyming dictionary or a thesaurus might help you find the right words to use. Just remember, your lyrics should express what your character is thinking and feeling. Be creative, but focus on what the song is really about!

Once you have your lyrics, you're ready to make a song. Put your lyrics together with the music that you made earlier (clapping your hands, stomping your feet, or tapping your fingers on your desk). You've written a song!