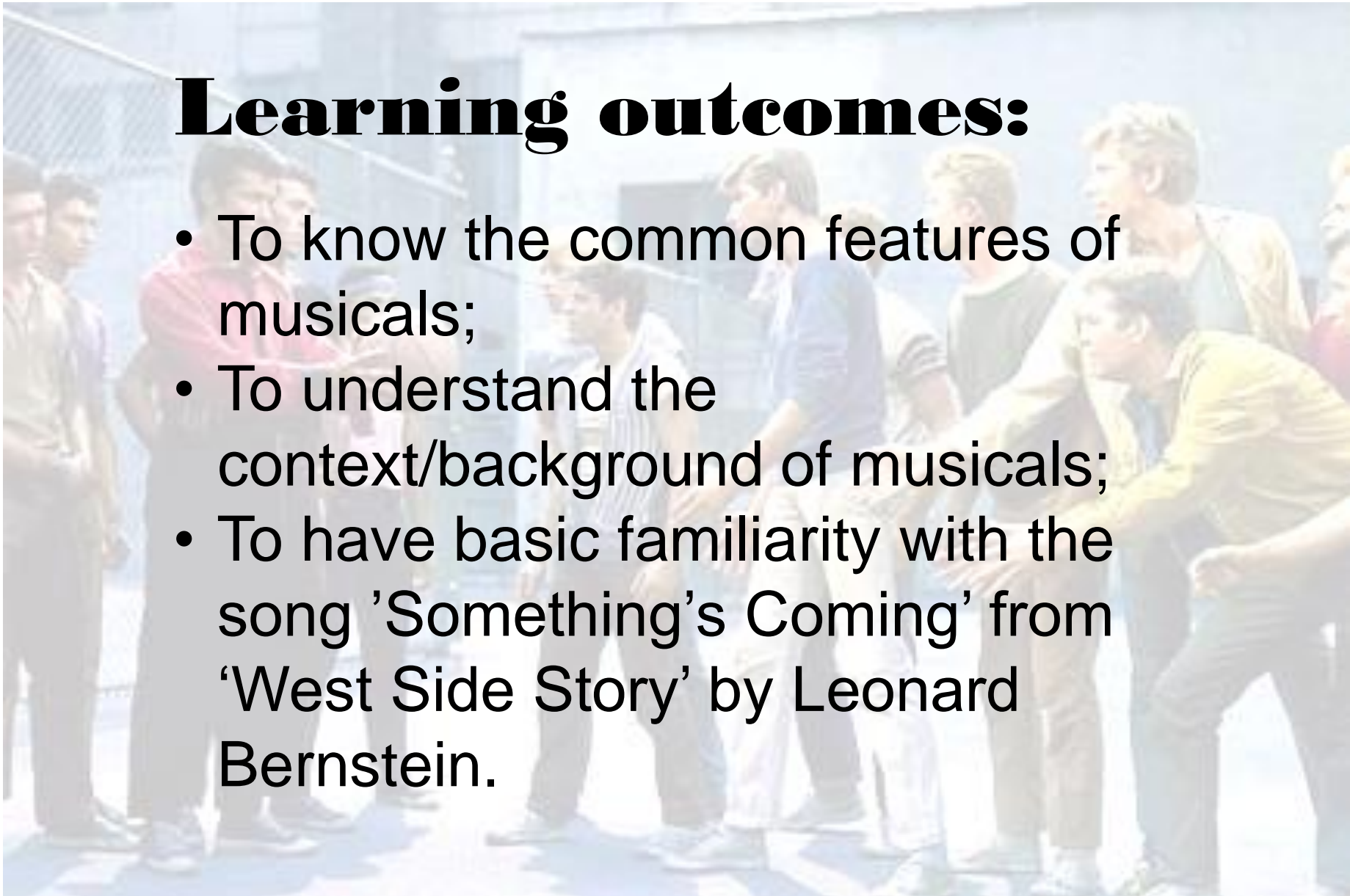


Learning outcomes:

- To know the common features of musicals;
- To understand the context/background of musicals;
- To have basic familiarity with the song 'Something's Coming' from 'West Side Story' by Leonard Bernstein.



WEST SIDE STORY



- A classic musical by Bernstein
- Mirrors the plot of “Romeo and Juliet”
- Based on a love story set in American 60’s gang culture
- Turf wars and the threat of them creates tension in the musical from the beginning

[West Side Story opening](#)

Common features of musicals

- Drama set to music in a popular style;
- Choreography and dance 'numbers';
- Orchestral/band accompaniment;
- Some spoken dialogue;
- Musical 'numbers' carefully placed to highlight action, e.g.: solos, ensembles, chorus numbers;
- Types of 'number' include rhythm songs, comedy songs, ballads & production numbers;
- Stage spectacles & magnificent costumes.



Research task:

To find out about the origins and context/background of musicals, find out answers to the following questions in groups of 3 or 4:

1. What are the main differences between operas and musicals?
2. What is 'Vaudeville'?
3. What is 'Operetta'?
4. Where are the main two venues for the performances of musicals?

The history of the musical:

- **Operas**: 'classical' style music; no spoken dialogue; often in foreign language; around since 1600s; orchestral accompaniment only.
- **Musicals**: 'pop' style, catchy music; spoken dialogue in places; use of microphones; often has band accompaniment; only around since 1920s.
- **'Vaudeville'** = American musical show incorporating many different light entertainment acts – often humorous and many songs. Important pre-cursor to the musical.
- **'Operetta'** = A lighter genre of opera that became popular in the Victorian era, particularly in England with shows by Gilbert & Sullivan, such as 'Pirates of Penzance' and 'The Mikado'.
- **Broadway** (New York) and London's **West End** are the 2 main centres for musical theatre.

Now watch 'Something's Coming' from the film version of 'West Side Story' and listen to how the music works:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xu7sRdRrm_w



