Hairspray began as a 1988 film by John Waters. It featured Ricki Lake as Tracy Turnblad and popular Baltimore drag queen Divine as Edna Turnblad. Waters’ Hairspray was not a musical, although it did feature 1960s dance music.

More than a decade later, a team of accomplished composers and writers started the musical adaptation of Hairspray. The show featured an infectious 1960s-pop score by partners Scott Wittman and Marc Shaiman and a book by Mark O’Donnell and Thomas Meehan (Tony-winning author of Annie and The Producers).

On August 15, 2002, Hairspray boogied onto Broadway at the Neil Simon Theatre. Starring Marissa Jaret Winokur as Tracy and (continuing the drag tradition)* Harvey Fierstein as Edna, the show went on to win nine 2003 Drama Desk awards and eight 2003 Tony Awards, including Best Musical. Says John Waters’ of the Broadway adaptation, “my jokes were still there and they wanted to sing!”

In 2007, New Line Cinema released a movie musical adaptation of the Broadway musical starring some big name stars like John Travolta as Edna, Zac Efron as Link, James Marsden as Corny Collins and newcomer Nikki Blonsky as Tracy. Only a few changes were made from the Broadway show, including the addition of four fabulous new songs written by Wittman and Shaiman.

* (continuing the drag tradition) - A drag queen is usually a man who dresses, and usually acts, like a caricature woman often for the purpose of entertaining or performing. This practice dates back to the early 18th century.
Characters

TRACY TURNBLAD - Our protagonist. Tracy is a big girl with big hair and a big heart who has dreams of being a star. Tracy isn't afraid to be herself and stand up for what she believes in.

EDNA TURNBLAD - Tracy’s overprotective, plus-size mother (played in drag).

WILBUR TURNBLAD - Tracy’s goofy father who owns a joke shop and encourages Tracy to follow her heart.

AMBER VON TUSSLE - The reigning teen queen on The Corny Collins Show and Link’s former girlfriend.

VELMA VON TUSSLE - Amber’s scheming mother and producer of The Corny Collins Show.

LINK LARKIN - A teenage heartthrob on The Corny Collins show and Tracy’s love interest.

MOTORMOUTH MAYBELLE - The owner of a record store and the host of “Negro Day” on The Corny Collins Show.

SEAWEED J. STUBBS - A “Negro Day” dancer and Motormouth Maybelle’s son. Penny’s love interest.

LITTLE INEZ - Seaweed’s little sister who can’t be on The Corny Collins Show because she is black.

PENNY PINGLETON - Tracy’s slightly dorky but lovable best friend.

CORNY COLLINS - The host of The Corny Collins Show. In favor of Tracy and integration.
ACT ONE

It’s a Monday morning in Baltimore, 1962. Tracy Turnblad, a pleasantly plump teenager dances through the streets of her city and dreams of being a star (“Good Morning Baltimore”). After school that day, Tracy and her friend Penny rush home to watch a dance TV show, The Corny Collins Show (“The Nicest Kids in Town”).

At the TV studio, hunky Link offers his Council Member ring to vapid dancer Amber (whose mother, Velma, is the show’s producer). Corny Collins announces auditions for a new female dancer on the show and an upcoming special where a Miss Teenage Hairspray contest will be held. Tracy begs her mother, Edna, to let her go. Meanwhile, Penny’s mother Prudy berates Penny for listening to “race music,” and Velma criticizes Amber on her poor dancing. All three girls argue with their mothers (“I’m a Big Girl Now”).

Tracy ultimately attends the auditions, where she literally bumps into Link, initiating a romantic dream sequence (“I Can Hear The Bells”). Velma rejects Tracy due to her weight and her positive view of racial integration (“(The Legend of) Miss Baltimore Crabs”).

The following day at school, Tracy is sent to detention, where an African-American boy named Seaweed teaches her some dance moves. Afterwards, Corny guest DJs at the school’s dance (“The Madison”) and is impressed by Tracy’s dance moves. He decides to give Tracy a shot on the show (“The Nicest Kids in Town - Reprise”). During an interview with Corny, Tracy again comes out in favor of racial integration. Amber is becoming increasingly jealous of Tracy, especially when Corny invites Link to sing a song to Tracy (“It Takes Two”). Tracy and Link kiss at the conclusion of the song.

During a discussion with Velma and the show’s sponsor, Ultra Clutch Hairspray, Corny stands up for Tracy and threatens to switch networks if Velma interferes. After he departs, a seething Velma decides to ruin Tracy (“Velma’s Revenge”).
At the Turnblad apartment, Tracy gets a call inviting her to become the spokesperson for plus-size clothing outfitter Mr. Pinky and asks Edna to represent her as her agent. Edna receives an elaborate makeover (“Welcome to the 60’s”).

Tracy’s popularity is skyrocketing at school. Penny and Seaweed meet during a dodgeball game and immediately hit it off. Seaweed invites Tracy, Link and Penny to a party at his mom’s record shop. At first Link is uncomfortable going to Seaweed’s neighborhood, but Seaweed tells him it’s fine (“Run and Tell That!”).

Seaweed takes them to Motormouth Maybelle’s Record Shop, where he introduces them to his sister, Little Inez, who wants to dance on TV. Tracy hatches a plan to integrate the Corny Collins Show. Link is reluctant to participate and departs. Edna expresses her embarrassment at being seen on TV, but Motormouth assures her that it’s great to be “Big, Blonde and Beautiful.” During the protest at the television studio, Velma calls the police. Link changes his mind and supports Tracy as most of those present are arrested.

**ACT TWO**

All the females are stuck in jail (“The Big Dollhouse”). Soon, everyone but Tracy has been released (“Baltimore - Reprise”). Tracy’s parents return home from jail upset but are comforted by their shared love (“You’re Timeless to Me”). Later, Link breaks into jail to help Tracy while Seaweed helps Penny sneak out of her room. Both couples declare their love for each other (“Without Love”). The friends are tempted to abandon their goal of integrating The Corny Collins Show, but Motormouth convinces them to struggle on (“I Know Where I’ve Been”).

It’s now the day of the live broadcast of The Corny Collins Show (“It’s Hairspray!”). Corny reports that Tracy and Amber are currently tied for Miss Teenage Hairspray. Amber performs an unflattering dance dedicated to Tracy (“Cooties”). Tracy storms onto the set, accompanied by Link, Penny, Seaweed, Little Inez, and company (“You Can’t Stop the Beat - Part 1”).

Corny crowns Tracy Miss Teenage Hairspray 1962 and Tracy declares the show officially integrated. As the show closes, the company celebrates a brand new day for Baltimore (“You Can’t Stop the Beat - Part 2”).
People often use art or performance to get a message across. Hairspray takes place in Baltimore, Maryland in 1962 and tackles a serious issue, the African-American Civil Rights Movement, through song. Below is a timeline of some important events in the movement.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Plessy vs. Ferguson</td>
<td>Although slaves became free citizens of the United States in 1863, Jim Crow laws in the South greatly segregated blacks from the rest of society. This court case ruled that “separate but equal” facilities were legal and constitutional. The separate public facilities for blacks and whites, like water fountains, were rarely equal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Brown vs. Board of Education</td>
<td>This court case overturned Plessy v Ferguson and declared “separate but equal” unconstitutional and unequal.</td>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>Rosa Parks and bus boycotts</td>
<td>After a meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Rosa Parks got on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. She refused to give up her seat to a white passenger and was arrested. Following a bus boycott by Montgomery’s 50,000 African-Americans, causing an 80% loss in bus revenue, buses were desegregated by court order in 1956.</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>The Buddy Deane Show</td>
<td>The Buddy Deane Show was the real-life inspiration for The Corny Collins Show. It aired in Baltimore from 1957 until 1964, but was taken off the air because the TV station did not want to integrate black and white dancers.</td>
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Study Guide

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<td>1960</td>
<td>SIT - INS</td>
<td>Students in Greensboro, North Carolina disagreed with the segregation of the Woolworth’s lunch counter and sat down in protest. These non-violent acts of protest which characterized the Civil Rights Movement quickly spread across the South and brought the movement national attention.</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>March on Washington</td>
<td>An estimated 250,000 protestors of all races came to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. to advocate for civil rights laws, full and fair employment, integrated education and the right to vote. Among the protestors were powerful orator Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and folk singers Bob Dylan and Joan Baez.</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>The Civil Rights Act</td>
<td>John F. Kennedy began this landmark piece of legislation and Lyndon B. Johnson signed it into law after JFK was assassinated in 1963. The Civil Rights Act desegregated schools and made discrimination based on race, religion or national origin illegal in public places.</td>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>Thurgood Marshall</td>
<td>Thurgood Marshall, the grandson of a slave, was the first African-American justice appointed to the Supreme Court.</td>
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