



SUMMARY

Grammy winner Alicia Keys is behind *Hell's Kitchen*, a semi-autobiographical musical about a rebellious teen in '90s New York City who finds a passion for piano and first love.

CHARACTER GUIDE

Ali: Angsty 17-year-old New Yorker in the 1990s in the quest for independence and romantic love. She also discovers her innate musical talent with the help of her wise, elderly neighbor.

Jersey: Ali's overprotective single mother. She works two jobs to provide for them and wants her daughter to make different choices from her own.

Knuck: Ali's older love interest. He works as a building painter and plays the drums with his friends at the Manhattan Plaza courtyard, the building where Ali and Jersey live.

Davis: Ali's absentee, piano-playing father.

Miss Liza Jane: Ali's stern neighbor who inspires her to take up the piano. They form an unlikely bond, which Jersey ultimately becomes jealous of.

Other characters: Ali, Knuck, and Jersey's friend groups, plus Ray, the friendly doorman at Manhattan Plaza.



EXERCISES & ACTIVATIONS

Writing

Imagine that Ali was your best friend and you told each other everything, but now you live far away in a different time zone and can only write to each other. In her last letter, she told you about her arguments with her mom, her grades, her need for freedom, her feelings for Knuck, and the loss of Miss Liza Jane. Ali feels heartbroken, trapped, and unsure of what to do. What advice would you share in your letter? How would you comfort her?

Work in groups of two to four. Write a scene at the diner table between Jersey, Ali, and Davis, who was an hour late. What mood were Jersey and Ali in when he arrived? Was the food cold? Were they happy to see him, or was there a big confrontation between the parents? Did Ali try to calm the situation, or was she also arguing? Was it a special occasion? Why couldn't Davis call? Perhaps the next-door neighbor rings the bell and gets involved as well. Were other guests invited?

Embodiment

Create drumming bands of three to six students each. Stomp, slap, clap, snap, tap, and use objects to create a rhythm. Does the rhythm start small and quiet, then build up, or does it start big and gradually change to a smaller sound? Does it change into different patterns? Does it speed up or slow down? What name would you give your piece and your group? Would passersby stop and listen, maybe give them tips? Will others join in by dancing?

Contextual

If you were to have a musical written about a time and/or event in your life, which artist would you like to create the music and score for it? Think about the style of music you would want, what genre would you want the music, stage design, costumes, and overall production to be in? Would it be more comedic or dramatic? Do you have someone particular in mind to play you and the other characters in it? Start by listing artists and genres. If you're not sure, research genres and artists associated with that genre. If you have a clear idea about which artists you would want to represent you and your life, start by finding images of them, cutting them out, and creating a collage of images on a large poster board. Add preferred colors, textures, texts, and further images. If you have a particular song in mind, add the lyrics to the collage.