

Poetry of Broadway Songs

<p><i>"America" (West Side Story)</i> By Leonard Bernstein (The Puerto Rican immigrants sing about their reaction to their new homeland, America, and their new city, New York City.)</p> <p>Puerto Rico You lovely island Island of tropical breezes Always the pineapples growing Always the coffee blossoms blowing</p> <p>Puerto Rico You ugly island Island of tropic diseases Always the hurricanes blowing Always the population growing (¡sí, Anita!) And the money owing (¡es verdad!) And the babies crying (¡cállate!) And the bullets flying (¡eso!) I like the island Manhattan Smoke on your pipe and put that in it</p> <p>I like to be in America O.k. By me in America</p> <p>Ev'rything free in America For a small fee in America (¡ándale!)</p> <p>I like the city of San Juan I know a boat you can get on</p> <p>Hundreds of flowers in full bloom Hundreds of people in each room</p> <p>Automobile in America Chromium steel in America Wire-spoke wheel in America Very big deal in America (Ándale, pero suavcito con los chiquititos aquí!)</p> <p>I'll drive a Buick through San Juan If there's a road you can drive on</p>	<p>IRONY is the contrast between things that are expected and things that exist. What irony is created in the opening of the song? How is it created? Why?</p> <p>Note the back and forward between the two singers (speakers). Why is that effective? What does it suggest about their true feelings?</p> <p>Note the use of language. Why is the use of "free" and "fee" effective?</p> <p>Does she really want her to get on a boat? Why is the use of humor here effective?</p> <p>What hyperbole is used to respond to the comment about flowers? Why is the response exaggerated?</p> <p>What does the emphasis on the automobile reveal about America and the speakers' attitudes toward America?</p>
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I'll give my cousins a free ride
How you get all of them inside?

Immigrant goes to America
Many hellos in America
Nobody knows in America
Puerto Rico's in America

(¡Ándale Anita!)

I'll bring a T.V. To San Juan
If there's a current to turn on

I'll give them new washing machine
What have they got there to keep clean?

I like the shores of America
Comfort is yours in America
Knobs on the doors in America
Wall-to-wall floors in America (jajaja)

(Otra vez, ahora la segunda)
When I will go back to San Juan
When you will shut up and get gone? (ieso!)

Everyone there will give big cheer
Everyone there will have moved here (ies
verdad!)

West Side Story opened on Broadway in 1957. Is immigration really a new topic?

What stereotypes keep occurring in the song?
Why?

At what point does the song seem to get particularly nasty? Why? What does that achieve?