

The Life

The Life tells the story of Queen, a prostitute who works to support her man, a vietnam war veteran named Fleetwood. After years of selling her body on the street, Queen has finally managed to save enough money for her and Fleetwood to escape "The Life", but he stole her savings to pay off his drug debts. Meanwhile, Fleetwood and an opportunistic pimp, JoJo, have befriended an attractive young girl named Mary who is fresh off the bus. That night, Queen is picked up by the police, and upon her release, she learns that Fleetwood and Mary slept together. Furious, Queen leaves him and is soon taken in by the rival pimp Memphis. It isn't long before Memphis reveals his true nature, threatening to kill both Queen and Fleetwood if she should ever attempt to leave him. Queen has finally had enough. Sonja, a fellow prostitute, gets Queen a bus ticket out of town, and she decides to say goodbye to "The Life" forever, but before she can board that bus, Queen is confronted by both Fleetwood and Memphis, and only one of the three will walk away alive...

CAST OF CHARACTERS

QUEEN. A temporary hooker from the sticks, recently moved to the city with Fleetwood. She still hopes their dreams of a better world outside "The Life" can come true.

SONJA. An experienced hooker from up-state, and one of Memphis' women. Resigned to her fate but not broken by it, she befriends Queen.

MARY. A young, pretty blonde from the south. New to the city, but not new to hustling men. She feigns innocence of "The Life" while using everyone to climb ahead.

GRETCHEN. A blond bordering on bimbo. Hails from California. Tart with a heart.

TRACEY. Hard as nails, no messing with her. Sells her body to support her daughter.

SHENICE. A larger than life Jamaican ho.

MERCEDES. A woman of few words. Keeps herself to herself. Likes her meth.

DANCER. "The Doll House" topless bar employee.

MEN

FLEETWOOD. A disillusioned Vietnam vet trying to get ahead in New York City. Unable to break a drug habit, he loses everything in pursuit of "The Life."

JOJO. A Machiavellian hustler who would sell his own grandmother to make a fast buck.

MEMPHIS. The City's most successful pimp on the block. He is sure of his power and is looked after by an entourage of other pimps & enforcer/bodyguards.

LACY. Late middle age. A likeable if eccentric owner /bartender at the regular gathering place for the pimps & hookers of "The Life."

LOU. A purveyor of popular pornography, a typical movie man, thinks he's remaking Schindler's List when in fact he's making Schindler's Fist.

AXEL. Enforcer for Memphis. DANTE. A mean ass pimp.

STREET PREACHER. A zealous religious nut trying to clean up the city's streets.

BRUCE KOWALSKI. A cop.

Say what? The show includes a lot of American slang, here is a glossary, available in the programme to help students.

Glossary

Backwater – an isolated place

Bail – money paid by or for someone in order to secure their release on bail

Bling – jewelry or fashion accessories, usually made of metal or other shiny material

Boozing it up – drinking

Buck – money

Busted – arrested, be caught in the act of doing something wrong

Call a spade a spade – to call something by its right name

Carouse – a noisy, lively drinking party

Chump – informal a foolish or easily deceived person

Clap – a venereal disease, especially gonorrhoea

Copped – received or attained

Corn-fed – healthy and strong, but provincial and unsophisticated

Crib – a person's apartment or house

Cunning – having or showing skill in achieving one's ends by deceit or evasion

Dapper – (of a man) neat and trim in dress and appearance

Dead-beat – an idle, feckless, or disreputable person

Do it Nestlé quick – to do something very fast, like Nestlé Quik

Don't sweat it – don't worry about it

Drag-ass – a lazy person

Dreg – the remnants of a liquid left in a container, together with any sediment

Faggot – offensive word for a male homosexual

Freebie – a van used by police for taking suspects into custody

Gravy train – an occupation that requires little effort while yielding big profit

Gutter – used to refer to a poor or squalid existence

Haggle – dispute or bargain persistently, especially over the cost of something

Harlot – a prostitute or promiscuous woman

Hocked – pawned, deposit (an object) with a pawnbroker as security for money lent

Hustler – a person adept at aggressive selling or illicit dealing, a prostitute

Jarhead – a marine

Jive – misleading, phony, or worthless

Jive ass – In the '80s, it was fashionable to hold a boom-box on one's shoulder and jive-ass down the street

Jiving – lying, bragging on something you ain't got

John – a prostitute's client

Kicks – the sharp stimulant effect of alcohol or a drug

Loose joints – limber or agile in movement

Machete – a broad, heavy knife used as an implement or weapon

Manhandle – handle (someone) roughly by dragging or pushing

Paddy wagon – a van used by police for taking suspects into custody

Pariah – an outcast

Peg pants – trousers that are wide at the hips and taper off towards the ankle

Pimp – a man who controls prostitutes and arranges clients for them, taking a percentage of their earnings in return

Plat du jour – a dish specially prepared on a particular day, dish of the day

Prancing – walk or move around with ostentatious, exaggerated movements

Punter – a prostitute's client

Rap sheet – a person's criminal record

Reces – a break between school classes

Scam – a fraudulent business scheme; a swindle

Shenanigans – silly or high-spirited behaviour; mischief

Slammer – prison

Slapper – a promiscuous or vulgar woman

Smoking gun – an object or fact that serves as conclusive evidence of a crime or similar act

Snort – a quantity of an illegal drug, especially cocaine, inhaled through the nose

Sore – (of a part of one's body) painful or aching

Sore – upset and angry

Spank – to slap or smack with the open hand, esp on the buttocks

Street-smart – skills and knowledge necessary for dealing with modern urban life.

Strewing – scattering or spreading (things) untidily over a surface

Strife – angry or bitter disagreement over fundamental issues; conflict

Strutting – walking with a stiff, erect, and apparently arrogant or conceited gait

Sucker – a gullible or easily deceived person

Tab – a tally of items ordered in a bar or restaurant

Turning tricks – an act of prostitution

Tutu – a female ballet dancer's costume

Up to snuff – satisfactory, as good as is required

Uppin' the ante – to increase the costs, risks involved in taking an action

VD – abbreviation for venereal disease

Weary – tired

Help! I don't know anything about Musicals!!!! Then read on....

"How Long Has This Been Going On?" A Brief History of Musical Theatre

This article is based on [Musical Theatre: A History](#), Continuum (2008) by John Kenrick ISBN 0-8264-3013-9 see also: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Kenrick

The origins of the musicals trace all the way back to story-telling ballads. The ballads were stories in songs, passed down orally from generation to generation. The art of telling stories either through or with songs dates back to time immemorial. We know that the ancient Greeks included music and dance in their stage comedies and tragedies as early as the 5th Century B.C. While some Athenian playwrights may have included existing songs, we know that Aeschylus and Sophocles composed their own. Staged in open air amphitheatres, these plays featured sexual humour, political and social satire, jugglers, and anything else that might entertain the masses. The songs were often a means for the chorus to comment on the action, but they also took part in the plot, and musical solos were not unheard of. Some evidence of ancient musical notation has been discovered, but the melodies used in the few surviving plays are all long lost. While these musicals had no direct effect on the development of modern musical theater, they demonstrate that showtunes have been around for twenty five hundred years.

In the Middle Ages, Europe's cultural mainstays included traveling minstrels and roving troupes of performers that offered popular songs and slapstick comedy. In the 12th and 13th centuries, there was also a tradition of religious dramas. Some of these works have survived, such as The Play of Herod and The Play of Daniel.

Intended as ritualistic teaching tools set to church chants, these plays developed into an autonomous form of musical theatre. This reached its apex during the Renaissance in the commedia dell'arte, an Italian tradition where raucous clown characters improvised their way through familiar stories. These clowns included Harlequin, Pulcinella and Scaramouche – personas that became basic elements in Western stage comedy for centuries to come. Formal musical theatre was rare in the Renaissance, but Moliere turned several of his plays into comedies with songs (music provided by Jean Baptiste Lully) when the court of Louis XIV demanded song and dance entertainments in the late 1600s.

By the 1700s, two forms of musical theatre were common in Britain, France and Germany – ballad operas like John Gay's *The Beggars Opera* (1728) that borrowed popular songs of the day

and rewrote the lyrics, and comic operas, with original scores and mostly romantic plot lines, like Michael Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl* (1845).

Opera has been with us since the late 1500s, but contemporary musical theatre and film are not direct descendants of grand opera. However, opera can be called a descendant of classical theatre. When Renaissance writers and composers tried to resurrect the forms of Greek drama, they added music. This eventually led to the birth of grand opera. From its birth in the 1800s, the musical has often spoofed opera, but it traces its main lineage to other sources. Vaudeville, burlesque, and many other forms are the true ancestors of the modern musical -- not opera.

Of course, the melodies of grand opera were part of the popular musical culture of the 1800s and early 1900s, and therefore had some residual effect on the musical theater melodies of that time. However, the so-called "comic operas" that dominated Broadway in the late 1880s and 90s, including *Robin Hood* and the works of Gilbert & Sullivan, are not operas -- at least not as most people use the term. Producers called these shows "comic operas" to make them sound more high-minded, but with extended dialogue and melodies designed for the popular taste of that era, they were clearly musicals. The real irony is that grand opera was invented by Renaissance Italians who were trying to copy Greek drama, which they mistakenly believed was sung-through. So not only are musicals not descended from opera, but opera is descended from the earliest musicals!

The greatest revolution in American musical theatre up to that time came in 1927 with *Show Boat*, by Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome Kern. The show featured popular music, such as jazz and gospel, which separated *Show Boat* from both operetta and all the musicals before it. Here was a complete integration of song, humour, and production numbers into a single and inextricable artistic entity; a musical with a consistent and credible story line, authentic atmosphere, and three-dimensional characters.

Then came the first of the Rodgers and Hammerstein masterworks, *Oklahoma!*, in 1943, with which musical theatre finally became a significant American art form. According to Rodgers, "By opening the show with the woman alone onstage and the cowboy beginning his song offstage, we did more than set a mood; we were, in fact, warning the audience,

'Watch out! This is a different kind of musical. The national tour of *Oklahoma!* ran for an unprecedented ten years, playing before a combined audience of more than ten million people.

During the late 1950's and early 1960's, popular music began to change when rock 'n roll became more mainstream. This trend influenced musicals such as *West Side Story* (1957) and *Bye Bye Birdie* (1960) to feature more popular, contemporary music.

Hair in 1968 continued this movement by incorporating rock music with storylines based on the hearts of the younger generation. and controversial issues of homelessness, AIDS, and drug addiction. *Rent* not only challenged the mainstream, but reinvented it. Shows following *Rent*,

such as *Ragtime* (1998) and *Wicked* (2003), also contained intricate storylines, unique styles of music, and visual spectacle, while continuing to address social and political issues.

And setting a pattern that would redefine Broadway, *Cats* premiered in 1982, introducing opulent sets, extravagant costumes and makeup, and over-the-top special effects. The visual spectacle was unlike the painted backdrops and simple costumes seen in the past. The trend continued with shows like *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon*, *The Lion King* and *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Then came *Rent* in 1996, which revolutionised the very concept of musical theatre around the world. *Rent* blended pop, dance, salsa, rhythm and blues, gospel, and rock music together to tell its moving tale of hopes and dreams, while also addressing the serious

Activity

Presenting Musicals

What is your favorite musical? Present your choice in class with a brief synopsis and music samples! Suggestion: Have you seen any musical at the English Theatre Frankfurt before? If so, brush up your memory and watch the trailers on:

Saturday Night Fever

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zfs0hmvCfRk> and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZ1DNgP6Q5k>

and **Ghost** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FBMK5dok7A>

The Who's **Tommy**:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEfNmgQlK1A>

Spring Awakening

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieNSQMKEsW>

THEMES in The Life

The Reality of Prostitution

In **The Life**, we see the „working girls“ in jail. Is this a reality for prostitutes in the USA?

More than 30 Arrested in Prostitution Sting By Jenni Pompei

The sting was conducted in five College Park area hotels over two days. Washington, August 3, 2012

More than 30 people were arrested this week in a prostitution **sting** conducted at College Park hotels, according to Prince George's County police.

The operation was carried out in conjunction with the FBI Human Trafficking Unit.

“Prostitution is a **gateway crime**,” Capt. Leigh Mints said in a statement. “We want to let everyone know this kind of activity is not something we want in this county and we’re doing all we can to prevent it.”

Prince George's County Police say female officers posed as prostitutes and engaged the suspects over the phone after posting fake solicitation ads online. When the suspects showed up for the erotic services, they were arrested.

On Wednesday, 13 men were arrested on a charge of **assignation**—the act of meeting up with the purpose of exchanging sex for money—and six women were arrested on prostitution charges in five College Park hotels, according police. On Thursday night, police said 11 more men were arrested and charged with assignation and six more individuals for prostitution. All involved were adults.

DID YOU KNOW?

SOME FACTS ABOUT PROSTITUTION AS A BUSINESS

It might be the "world's oldest profession," but in many ways prostitution is a mystery -- especially in the United States, where the sex trade is one of the country's largest unregulated industries. In an attempt to pull back the curtain on the business of sex, the Justice Department recently teamed up with The Urban Institute, a public-policy think tank, to study it. They recently published their findings in a report, "Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities."

The researchers interviewed pimps and sex workers in eight different cities. Their findings are not comprehensive - they left out major cities like New York and Los Angeles, for example. But their report still reveals some intriguing details. For example:

The sex trade is alive and well in America (and extremely lucrative).

LOW PROFILE, HIGH VALUE

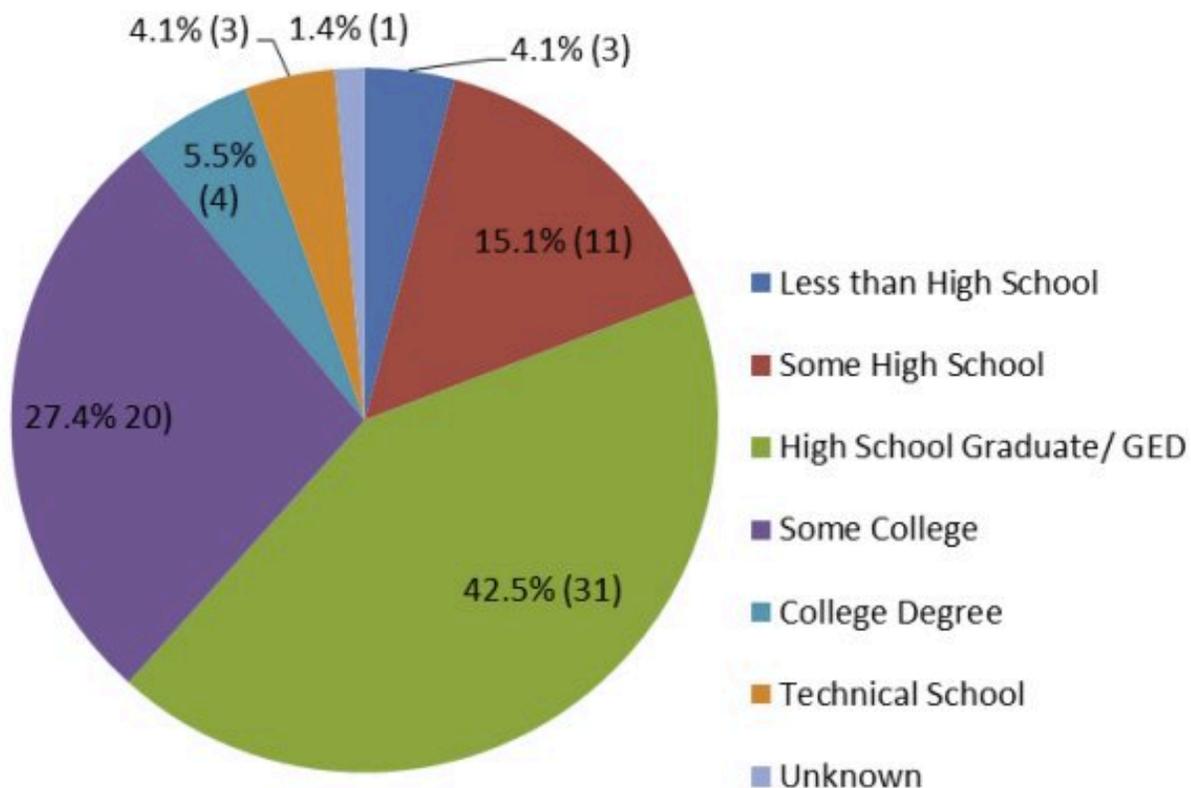
In case you had any doubt, there is big money in sex. Atlanta's sex trade was worth a whopping \$290 million in 2007 alone. Miami's sex economy was worth \$235 million, and Washington D.C.'s \$103 million. The chart above, produced by the Urban Institute, leaves out Kansas City, the eighth city studied in the report, because of a lack of data.

But the take-home pay for pimps varies widely.

The survey found pimps can make anywhere between \$5,000 per week (the average in Kansas City) to \$32,833 per week (in Atlanta).

The sex trade is not run by uneducated people. It's run by people who are struggling to find other opportunities.

Figure 5.3 Highest Level of Education Completed



Of the pimps surveyed, just 5.5 percent had a college degree, but the vast majority had earned a high school degree, received a GED or attended college for at least some time, as the chart above shows.

One former sex worker said that her primary motivation for getting involved was the need to provide for her children:

"At the time -- I didn't have a job. I couldn't find a job. And somebody had made the comment 'You got a million dollars between your legs' and I was like 'ok' and I just kind of fell into it, I guess you could say."

The researchers found people largely stay in or come back to the sex trade because they can't find work that makes as much elsewhere. "Several of the sex workers reported returning to the work even after leaving, primarily because they needed money," the researchers wrote in the report.

The sex economy, at its root, is a family businesses.

Some 32 percent of respondents had a family member who was involved in pimping or prostitution before them, the report found. And for many, that had a large role in shaping their views toward the industry:

"At age five and six and seven, I seen it because my auntie was a ho. I've seen men come and go all the time, didn't know. One night, I saw and asked. She said, 'The clothes on your back, the apartment, this is how I pay the rent.' I had nothing but love for my auntie, that's what made me fall in love with a working woman. Then my sister and my momma did it. It's been in the family. My uncle and father were pimps."

In fact, the study found that the most common reason people got into pimping was a family connection to the industry.

The customer base is diverse (but there are a lot of white men).

The majority of the respondents surveyed said customers didn't typically fit any one mold. "I'm dealing with anyone: lawyers, police officers, some judges, and the common dude on the corner," one now-incarcerated pimp said. "My son was in middle school; some of his teachers would come."

That includes cops, by the way.

"[L]aw enforcement are the biggest ones that buy," one former pimp reported. "The same people locking me up are the ones breaking the law."

It's not a cash-only business. In fact, roughly 10 percent of customers pay with a credit card.

"Normal" businesses are often complicit in the sex economy's operation.

Yes, the sex trade is underground, but it intersects with many legal, regulated businesses. "Pimps built their businesses by developing relationships with multiple actors, including employees engaged in sex work, non-sex worker employees, other pimps, legal businesses, lawyers, and law enforcement," the report said.

Hotels and hotel employees are especially involved, according to one now-incarcerated pimp: "Some Holiday Inns, stuff like that. They were involved in the activity. Some hotels, they don't know what's going on, but they have employees that like to make a little money on the side."

WORKSHEET MATERIAL for students.

Activity:

Put the scenes from Act 1 in the correct order.

- Lacy's Bar—Early evening
- A holding cell in the City Jail—The present
- The District
- Fleetwood's hotel room—Later that morning
- The Street—Later, the same day
- Lacy's Bar—Early evening
- The District—Later that evening
- The street outside Fleetwood's hotel—Immediately following Lacy's bar

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS:

1. Where was Queen at the beginning of the play?
 - a) At a client's house
 - b) At the bar
 - c) In Jail

2. What does Queen dream of?
 - a) Becoming a star
 - b) Getting married and having a family
 - c) Travelling the world with Fleetwood

3. What happens to Fleetwood at night?
 - a) He has insomnia
 - b) He has nightmares
 - c) He drinks all night

4. Fleetwood says he feels like
 - a) A pinball in a pinball machine
 - b) A square peg in a round hole
 - c) A black sheep

5. What happened when he got home after the war?
 - a) He got a boring 9-5 job?
 - b) He wore out his shoes looking for work?

- c) He got involved with drugs.
6. If Bullshit was money you'd be a
- a) Billionaire
 - b) Rich man
 - c) Millionaire
7. How many girls does Memphis have?
- a) 9-10
 - b) 4-5
 - c) 3-4
8. How long have Fleetwood and Queen been in New York?
- a) 1 year
 - b) 3 years
 - c) half a year
9. What does Jojo do when Mary gets off the bus?
- a) Flirts with her
 - b) Steals her bag
 - c) Offers her drugs
10. What is a „John“?
- a) An ordinary guy
 - b) A rich guy
 - c) A customer
11. In Lacey's bar: What is the drink of the house?
- a) Whisky sour?
 - b) Gin Fizz
 - c) Pink Champagne
12. How many `dates has Sonja been on?
- a) 1000
 - b) 10000
 - c) 15000
13. What does Memphis do to Sonja at Lacey's bar?
- a) He drinks her beer
 - b) He buys her beer
 - c) He puts her beer into her bag

14. What does Mary order at the bar?
- a) A pink Lady
 - b) A whisky sour?
 - c) Sex on the beach?
15. What is a hick?
- a) Someone from out of town?
 - b) A white person?
 - c) Someone from the country
16. What is a caucasian?
- a) A neanderthal
 - b) A white person
 - c) Someone from North Asia
17. Mary says „cheese and ...“
- a) Smackers
 - b) Sleeze
 - c) Crackers
18. Who says I´m a bratwurst?
- a) Gretchen
 - b) Sonja
 - c) Axel
19. Queen used to sing at
- a) The Apollo
 - b) Church Choir
 - c) School
20. What ist the one commandement according tot he girls?
- a) Thou shalt survive
 - b) Thou shalt not steal
 - c) Thou shalt not kill
21. Mary gets offered a job as a
- a) Cocktail waitress
 - b) Prostitute
 - c) Stripper

22. She ends up working as a
- a) Prostitute
 - b) Stripper
 - c) Porn star
23. What is Fleetwood addicted to?
- a) Alcohol?
 - b) Heroin
 - c) Cocaine
24. What is a white lady
- a) Cocaine
 - b) A Vodka drink
 - c) Mary's nickname
25. How much does Queen's dress cost?
- a) \$1000
 - b) \$3000
 - c) \$6000
26. What does Carmentake out of her bag?
- a) A gun
 - b) A taser
 - c) A machete
27. Complete the sentence: You lie down with dogs you get fleas. You lie down with Memphis you get
- a) AIDS
 - b) Stitches
 - c) pregnant
28. Where is Mary going?
- a) Las Vegas
 - b) Los Angeles
 - c) New York
29. How is Queen going to leave?
- a) By bus
 - b) By ferry
 - c) By train?

30. Who is left alive at the end?

- a) Memphis
- b) Fleetwood
- c) Jojo

MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS

1. Where was Queen?

- a) At a client's house
- b) At the bar
- c) In Jail

2. What does Queen dream of?

- d) Becoming a star
- e) Getting married and having a family
- f) Travelling the world with Fleetwood

3. What happens to Fleetwood at night? A:

- d) He has insomnia
- e) He has nightmares
- f) He drinks all night

4. Fleetwood says he feels like

- d) A pinball in a pinball machine
- e) A square peg in a round hole
- f) A black sheep

5. What happened when he got home after the war?

- d) He got a boring 9-5 job
- e) He wore out his shoes looking for work
- f) He got involved with drugs.

6. If Bullshit was money you'd be a

- d) Billionaire
- e) Rich man
- f) Millionaire

7. How many girls does Memphis have?

- d) 9-10
- e) 4-5
- f) 3-4

8. How long have Fleetwood and Queen been in New York?

- d) 1 year
- e) 3 years
- f) half a year

9. What does Jojo do when Mary gets off the bus?

- d) Flirts with her
- e) Steals her bag
- f) Offers her drugs

10. What is a „John“?

- d) An ordinary guy
- e) A rich guy
- f) A customer

11. In Lacey's bar: What is the drink of the house?

- d) Whisky sour
- e) Gin Fizz
- f) Pink Champagne

12. How many dates has Sonja been on?

- d) 1000
- e) 10000
- f) 15000

13. What does Memphis do to Sonja at Lacey's bar?

- d) He drinks her beer
- e) He buys her beer
- f) He puts her beer into her bag

14. What does Mary order at the bar?

- d) A pink lady
- e) A whisky sour
- f) Sex on the beach

15. What is a hick?

- d) Someone from out of town?
- e) A white person?
- f) Someone from the country

16. What is a caucasian?
d) A neanderthal
e) A white person
f) Someone from North Asia
17. Mary says „cheese and ...“
d) Smackers
e) Sleeze
f) Crackers
18. Who says I´m a bratwurst?
d) Gretchen
e) Sonja
f) Axel
19. Queen used to sing in/at
d) The Apollo
e) Church Choir
f) School
20. What ist the one commandment according to the girls?
d) Thou shalt survive
e) Thou shalt not steal
f) Thou shalt not kill
21. Mary gets offered a job as a
d) Cocktail waitress
e) Prostitute
f) Stripper
22. She ends up working as a
d) Prostitute
e) Stripper
f) Porn star
23. What is Fleetwood addicted to?
a) Alcohol
b) Heroine
c) Cocaine
24. What is a white lady

- d) Cocaine
- e) A Vodka drink
- f) Mary's nickname

25. How much does Queens's dress cost?

- a) \$1000
- b) \$3000
- c) \$6000

26. What does Carmen take out of her bag?

- a) A gun
- b) A taser
- c) A machete

27. Complete the sentence: You lie down with dogs you get fleas. You lie down with Memphis you get

- d) AIDS
- e) Stitches
- f) pregnant

28. Where is Mary going?

- d) Las Vegas
- e) Los Angeles
- f) New York

29. How is Queen going to leave?

- d) By bus
- e) By ferry
- f) By train

30. Who is left alive at the end?

- a) Memphis
- b) Fleetwood
- c) Jojo