



WICKED MINNEHAHA

INTRODUCTION

There was a time when Minnehaha Falls flowed with whiskey, crime, and debauchery. Settlers of all kinds found beauty, entertainment, libation, and company nearby, opening a class rift that nearly tore young Minneapolis apart. From ladies of the night, to corruption in the highest office, it was all there. Come along on a lively walking tour through the raucous history of this wicked waterfall.

More about the series:

You Are Here is a tour through Twin Cities place and time. The premiere episode of the new nostalgia anthology series from the makers of *Lost Twin Cities* reveals the raucous, rowdy early history of Minnehaha Park area, the inspiring story of Bdote – a sacred birthing Island, and St Paul’s West Side, the historic heartbeat of Minnesota’s Latine community.

How to use this guide:

This guide includes discussion questions you can use as written or adapt for viewers, plus additional resources at the end to support deeper conversation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Essential Question

1. How can a place reveal stories of the past, the environment, and the people?

Supporting Questions

1. Why are stories tied to specific places important for understanding history?
2. How does understanding a place's history help create community, respect, and foster cultural understanding?

Before watching consider following questions to activate conversation:

1. What is a place that is meaningful to you and why is it important?
2. Have you heard of Minnehaha Falls? If so, what do you know about it and its history?
3. Look at a map of Minnehaha Falls and the surrounding area. What features might have made this place important to visitors and residents?

While watching consider following questions:

1. Who was Franklin Steele, and how did he shape what Minnehaha Falls became?
2. How did Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s “The Song of Hiawatha” shape public perceptions of Minnehaha Falls?
3. What kinds of businesses, entertainment, and social activities developed around Minnehaha Falls? Why were people drawn to the activities at the Falls?
4. What conflicts emerged over how Minnehaha Falls should be used?
5. Who had influence over the Falls, and how did that change over time?
6. How does the episode show that Minnehaha Falls was experienced differently by different groups of people?



After watching consider the following questions to engage in conversation:

1. What are you thinking about differently after watching the film?
2. What role did tourism, entertainment, and publicity play in shaping the public image of Minnehaha Falls?
3. Who was welcomed at Minnehaha Falls, who was excluded, and why does that matter when telling the history of a place?
 - a. How did women engage with Minnehaha Falls? How are double standards presented?
 - b. What insights did the episode provide regarding Black people's experiences as visitors to Minnehaha Falls and as part of the entertainers for other visitors? What does this reveal about access and inclusion at the Falls?
4. What tensions exist between preserving a natural place, using it for public recreation, and allowing private business or development?
5. What new insights or perspectives did you gain about the relationship between history, place, and community after watching?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Research project: Explore Local History

In this activity, choose a local street or place to explore. Research the topics below, then create a presentation using visuals, maps, and video clips to support your ideas.

1. History: What is the historical background of the place? When was it established, and what significant events have occurred there?
2. Origins: What are the origins of the name? Does it reflect any particular significance or cultural background?
3. Notable Individuals: Are there any important figures associated with this place? What contributions did they make to the community or area?
4. Communities: What communities or groups of people have lived or gathered in this area over time? How have they shaped the place's identity?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Deepen the conversation by incorporating this video with activities, related books, resources, other engaging videos, exploring local restaurants, and visiting cultural heritage and history centers.

- Read [The Song of Hiawatha](#) by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.
 - What is the poem about?
 - How does the poem present Minnehaha Falls and the Indigenous community?
 - Why do you think the poem had such a cultural impact at that time?
 - In what ways could the inaccuracies about Indigenous communities and culture in the poem impact understanding these communities?
- Read about the history of the [Minnehaha Falls, Minneapolis](#) | [MNopedia](#)