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## WELCOME TO THE AUGUST WILSON EDUCATION PROJECT

In February 2015, the PBS series American Masters and Pittsburgh's WQED Multimedia will present the documentary, August Wilson: The Ground On Which I Stand, the definitive story of the most prolific playwright of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In support of this documentary, The August Wilson Education Project will equip and empower high school educators to engage their students in meaningful

ways around the life, work, and cultural impact of August Wilson. The goal of the project is to encourage students to develop their unique voice while exploring themes prevalent in Wilson's work: community, identity, diversity, activism, self-reliance, and resilience.

We wish to extend our sincere thanks to The PNC Foundation for supporting this national education outreach project.

66 August Wilson helps us remember who we are...all of us, as an American people.

-Suzan-Lori Parks Playwright, 2002 Pulitzer Prize-winning drama *Topdog/Underdog* 



**Acknowledgments:** Many thanks to the Penumbra Theatre, Pittsburgh Public Theater, and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* for photos.







THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS
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### WHY TEACH AUGUST WILSON?

"There's no idea in the world that is not contained by black life. I could write forever about the black experience in America." -August Wilson

In his own words, August Wilson makes the case for why his Century Cycle is a deep well from which educators and their students can draw endlessly, for inspiration and ideas to discuss, debate, analyze, critique, and embrace. To teach August Wilson is to teach drama, English, creative writing, poetry, metaphor, history, civics, and current events – all at once.

The product of a **master storyteller**, Wilson's plays resonate across boundaries of time, age, race, and location. Through his characters, otherwise marginalized voices are heard. Teaching August Wilson invites students who find themselves in the margins, whether socially, economically, or otherwise, to discover and raise their own voices and tell the stories of their century.

### **HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**

This guide includes the following for each of the 10 plays in August Wilson's Century Cycle:

- **1. Historical Connections** to place the play in historical context
- 2.Concepts for Pre-Teaching to give your students important background information prior to reading the text
- 3. A brief Synopsis, Character List, and a Quotable (excerpt or quote)
- 4.QR Codes to access online content such as video and audio clips\*
- **5. In Your Words** activities inviting students to lend their voices to the August Wilson Education Project. See submission details on page 35.

A deck of 10 cards (one per play) accompanies this guide. Each card contains discussion questions and extension activities for your students.

All of the resources in the deck and in this guide can be found online in the Teacher Toolkit at wqed.org/augustwilson. In the digital Toolkit, you'll also find additional resources including professional development videos, extension activities, and background materials for each play.

Clips marked with an asterisk (\*) will be available after August Wilson: The Ground On Which I Stand airs on February 20, 2015.

# WHEN YOU HEAR THE NAME "AUGUST WILSON," WHAT COMES TO MIND?

Considered **America's Shakespeare**, Pulitzer Prizewinning playwright **August Wilson** (1945-2005) created an unprecedented 10-play Century Cycle-one play set in each decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century-chronicling the joys, struggles, history, and culture of African Americans.

August Wilson was born Frederick August Kittel on April 27, 1945, in the Hill District community of Pittsburgh. He was the son of Daisy Wilson, an African American cleaning woman, and Frederick Kittel, a German immigrant and baker who was mostly absent from Wilson's life. Wilson left school in the 10th grade after experiencing racial bullying and false accusations of plagiarism. For the next several years, he educated himself at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh during school hours, unbeknownst to his mother.

A voracious reader from a young age, Wilson began his artistic life as a poet. He also sought out the poetry in everyday life. He spent time in restaurants, barbershops, and on the streets of The Hill, listening to the residents' voices and stories as they reflected on their lives against a backdrop of economic decline and social upheaval. Wilson would later draw on these voices and histories to create unforgettable characters in his plays.

# visionary



### **August Wilson's 10-Play Cycle**

From the mid-1980s until his death in 2005, August Wilson wrote 10 plays that present **African American life in all its fullness**. With one play set in each decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and all of the plays except *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* set in The Hill, Wilson's plays are collectively known as the Pittsburgh Cycle or the Century Cycle. His works feature powerful monologues that are

a blend of comedy, tragedy, history, and deeply personal meditations on the universal themes of love, community, identity, honor, duty, and justice.

August Wilson told extraordinary stories about ordinary people, and in doing so, he **changed the face of the American theater.** 

Gem of the Ocean [set in 1904]
Joe Turner's Come and Gone [set in 1911]
Ma Rainey's Black Bottom [set in 1927]
The Piano Lesson [set in 1936]
Seven Guitars [set in 1948]
Fences [set in 1957]
Two Trains Running [set in 1969]
Jitney [set in 1977]
King Hedley II [set in 1985]
Radio Golf [set in 1997]

### Influences & Impact

As a playwright, August Wilson worked in the style of a collagist. He scribbled his ideas on napkins, or whatever was handy, then pulled the various pieces together into a cohesive drama. His characters' voices emerged from lines of dialogue he imagined and from bits of conversations he overheard, sometimes many years before. His work was also influenced by...

- · the blues of Bessie Smith
- Black Power Movement and the Civil Rights Movement
- poet playwright Amiri Baraka and the Black Arts Movement
- the paintings of Romare Bearden
- the works of Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges.

The characters and conflicts in Wilson's plays reflect these external influences as well as Wilson's personal history as a biracial child who grew up without his father around. The result is a collection of extraordinary dramas full of gritty realism as well as African and African American spiritual and supernatural elements. In this way, Wilson's plays brought the ordinary yet complex lives of African Americans to the national stage.

66 August Wilson wrote the frustration and the glory of being black...in America.

-Ruben Santiago-Hudson Tony Award-winning actor, Seven Guitars

### **August Wilson's Hill**

Nine of the ten plays in the Century Cycle are set in The Hill District where August Wilson lived until he was 33. In the 1940s and 1950s, The Hill was Pittsburgh's Harlem, a racially mixed hub of creativity and commerce, and one of the most prosperous black communities in the country. The Hill was the center of the Pittsburgh jazz scene, welcoming such luminaries as Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Eckstein, and Lena Horne.

Originally, The Hill was a predominantly Jewish community. Between 1870 and 1890, great numbers of Jewish immigrants arrived from Europe's ghettos. Italians, Syrians, Greeks, and Poles followed. African Americans began to come to The Hill from the rural South between 1880 and 1890. Around the time of World War I through the 1960s, a wave of African Americans migrated to the area from the rural South in search of industrial jobs.

In the 1950s, the growing number of black residents and availability of trolleys spurred white residents of The Hill to move outside of the city center. A decade earlier, a city councilman wrote of The Hill: "Approximately 90 percent of the buildings in the area are substandard and have long outlived their usefulness, and so there would be no social loss if they were all destroyed."

The Hill was about 95% African American in the 1960s when the city demolished much of the Lower Hill (where August Wilson grew up) and displaced 8,000 residents and 400 businesses to make way for what was then known as the Civic Arena, home to the Pittsburgh Penguins.

The Hill experienced sharp economic decline, which was exacerbated by riots in the wake of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1968.

From a real-life jitney station to the imagined residence of the character of Aunt Ester at 1839 Wylie Avenue, **August Wilson immortalized The Hill**. Today, The Hill remains one of the poorest districts in Pittsburgh, but recent revitalization efforts offer hope for a positive dramatic turn in its future.

\*An interactive map of The Hill District is available on our website at wqed.org/augustwilson/hill-district-map/

### Premieres February 20th, 2015\*

August Wilson: The Ground On Which I Stand

A documentary presented by WQED Multimedia and the PBS series, *American Masters*.

August Wilson: The Ground On Which I Stand details August Wilson's unexpected rise from humble beginnings and adversity to create a 10-play cycle about African American life, a groundbreaking achievement in theater history. From the 1980s into the first decade of the 21st century, Wilson was the most produced playwright both on Broadway and in regional theaters. His plays earned Wilson two Pulitzer Prizes.

August Wilson: The Ground On Which I Stand features Wilson's family, friends, and collaborators recalling his formative years and, later, the evolution of his 10-play cycle. Notable actors such as James Earl Jones, Laurence Fishburne, Phylicia Rashad, and Charles S. Dutton discuss Wilson's impact on their careers, his artistic process, and his unwavering belief in black life as rich and full of stories worth telling. Powerful performances of scenes from Wilson's plays round out this definitive story of the life, work, and impact of the most prolific playwright of the last half of the 20th century.

\*For airtimes, please check your local PBS listings at pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/

# On Our Website wqed.org/augustwilson



Take a virtual tour of August Wilson's Hill, a map featuring real and fictional locations that served as the settings or inspiration for the settings in Wilson's plays.

### Biographical Timeline

Learn about August Wilson's life and work along this interactive timeline, featuring:

- Video and audio clips of August Wilson, noted scholars, and acclaimed actors discussing Wilson's life, influences, and artistic process, and the evolution of his 10-play cycle
- Still photos



The August Wilson Education Project blog features:

- Interviews with actors and others about Wilson's legacy and their favorite August Wilson play
- News and special events
- · Project updates

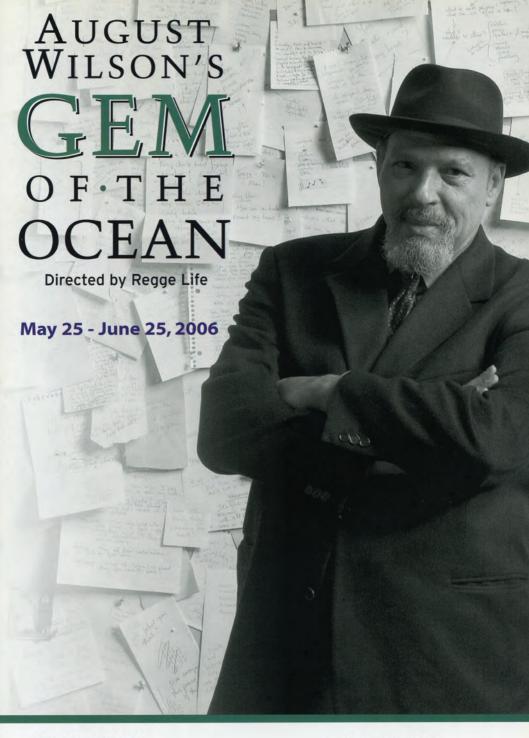
Ask the Expert

Ask an August Wilson expert a question about his life and work!

Other Resources

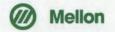
- News and feature articles about Wilson and his plays
- Discussion guides
- Curriculum-targeted digital resources at PBS Learning Media PBSLearningMedia.org (available February 2015)





PRINCIPAL SPONSORS

EDEN HALL FOUNDATION





### **GEM OF** THE OCEAN

Through the power of memory, a man takes a mystical journey toward freedom and redemption.

**SYNOPSIS** Citizen Barlow arrives at 1839 Wylie Avenue in Pittsburgh after a long journey from Alabama. He has come to see Aunt Ester Tyler, who is a known "cleanser of souls." Citizen wants his soul cleansed, and Aunt Ester offers to take him. on a symbolic journey to the "City of Bones"-the burial place for enslaved Africans who perished along the Middle Passage to the Americas—to better understand his past. Along the way, the characters explore the ways in which the legacies of slavery continue to affect their lives.

QUOTABLE "I came across that ocean, Mr. Citizen. I cried. I had lost everything. Everything I had ever known in this life I lost that. I cried an ocean of tears. Did you ever lose anything like that, Mr. Citizen? Where you so lost the only thing that can guide you is the stars. That's all I had left. Everything had ever known was gone to me. The only thing I had was the stars." -Aunt Ester



Aunt Ester on memory



Phylicia Rashad discusses the character of Aunt Ester\*

**IN YOUR WORDS** Write a one-act play set entirely in the City of Bones.

\*Available after the premiere of August Wilson: The Ground On Which I Stand



### **Historical Connections**

- Trans-Atlantic slave trade
- · Aftermath of the Civil War and Reconstruction

### Concepts for Pre-Teaching

- Emancipation
- Middle Passage
- The Underground Railroad

### **Main Characters**

Citizen Barlow Aunt Ester Tyler Black Marv Rutherford Selig Solly Two Kings Caesar Wilks

### **Key Monologue**

Aunt Ester describes the City of Bones, Act 2; Scene 1

Tony Award® Nominee

BEST PLAY

# JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE

By August Wilson



### **JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE**

Tenants of a boardinghouse contend with the personal and social aftermath of slavery and the Great Migration.

**SYNOPSIS** After being forced to work for seven years on Joe Turner's chain gang, Herald Loomis arrives in Pittsburgh's Hill District in search of his estranged wife. Throughout his stay, he admits to himself that he has also lost his own sense of identity, his "song." Herald's journey becomes a search for the meaning of his own past and the possibilities of his future.

QUOTABLE "Mr. Loomis done picked some cotton. Ain't vou. Herald Loomis? You done picked a bunch of cotton. I can tell from looking at you. My daddy taught me how to do that. Say when you look at a fellow, if you taught yourself to look for it, you can see his song written on him. Tell you what kind of man he is in this world. Now, I can look at you, Mr. Loomis, and see you a man who done forgot his song. Forgot how to sing it. A fellow forget that and he forget who he is." -Bynum





■ WATCH
Laurence Fishburne on Joe Turner\*

**IN YOUR WORDS** What is your song? Write it down.



### **Historical Connections**

- Trans-Atlantic slave trade
- Aftermath of the Civil War and Reconstruction

### **Concepts for Pre-Teaching**

- Emancipation
- The Great Migration
- Juba/African Ring Shout
- Romare Bearden's The Mill Hand's Lunch Bucket painting

### Main Characters

Seth Holly Bertha Holly Bynum Walker Jeremy Furlow Herald Loomis Zonia Loomis Mattie Campbell Molly Cunningham Rutherford Selia Reuben Mercer Martha Pentecost

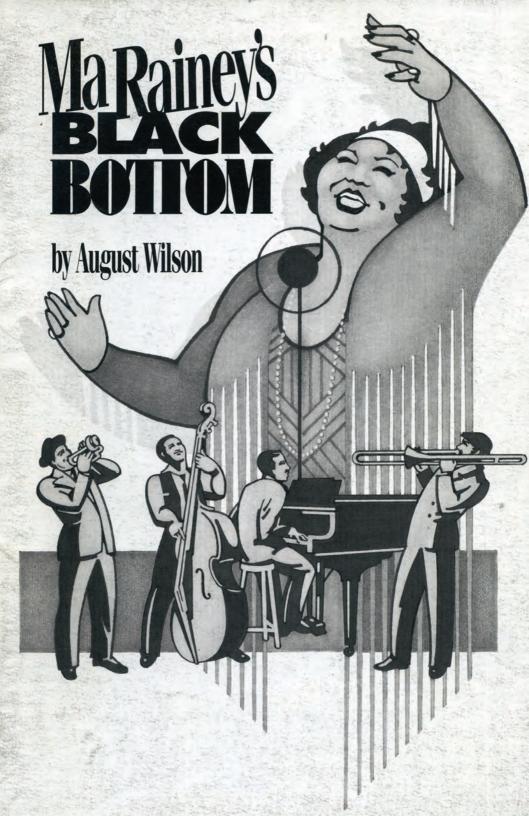
### Key Monologue

Bynum tells Loomis that he's forgotten his song, Act 2; Scene 2

New York Drama Critics' Circle Award Winner

REST PLAY

\*Available after the premiere of August Wilson: The Ground On Which I Stand



### **MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM**

Stifled and disillusioned by exploitation by white record labels, black musicians turn their rage inward.

**SYNOPSIS** The play opens as band members Levee, Toledo, Cutler, and Slow Drag arrive to record a new album with Ma Rainey, an acclaimed blues singer. There are tensions among the members of Ma Rainey's band and with their white producers. Through their artistic differences, it becomes clear that each character has a different view of the purpose of creative expression. The play explores the continued exploitation of work by African-Americans in the 20th century.

QUOTABLE "You don't sing [the blues] to feel better - you sing 'cause that's a way of understanding life." -Ma Rainey



Ma Rainey on the blues



Stanford University Vice Provost and Professor Harry Elam discusses Ma Rainev's Black Bottom and the musicality of August Wilson's plays

IN YOUR WORDS Which Ma Rainey character are you most like in your response to injustice? If you experience or observe an injustice, what steps do you take to make things right?



### **Historical Connections**

• The Great Migration

### **Concepts for Pre-Teaching**

- · Race records (term used for African American recorded music in the 1920s and 1930s)
- Institutional racism

### **Main Characters**

Ma Rainev Cutler Dussie Mae Irvin Levee Policeman Slow Drag Sturdyvant Sylvester Toledo

### **Key Monologue**

Levee on race and religion. Act 2: Scene 1

> Tony Award® Nominee **BEST PLAY**

# THE PIANO LESSON

by August Wilson
Directed by Israel Hicks



APRIL 24 through MAY 25, 2003



### THE PIANO LESSON

Siblings disagree about how to honor the legacy of their family's painful past.

**SYNOPSIS** When Boy Willie arrives in Pittsburgh from Mississippi, he announces a plan to sell the family's piano to buy the land that their ancestors worked on as slaves. His sister Berniece is adamantly opposed to selling the piano because it was acquired during slavery through the sale of two of the family's ancestors.

QUOTABLE "Mama Ola polished this piano with her tears for seventeen years. For seventeen vears she rubbed on it till her hands bled. Then she rubbed the blood in...mixed it up with the rest of the blood on it. Every day that God breathed life into her body she rubbed and cleaned and polished and prayed over it. 'Play something for me, Berniece. Play something for me, Berniece.' Every day. 'I cleaned it up for you, play something for me, Berniece." -Berniece



LISTEN
Berniece on the piano

**IN YOUR WORDS** Write a persuasive letter urging Berniece or Boy Willie to have a change of heart about the piano.



### **Historical Connections**

Slavery

### **Concepts for Pre-Teaching**

- Plantation life/sale of enslaved people
- · Romare Bearden's The Piano Lesson painting

### **Main Characters**

Doaker Berniece **Boy Willie** Lymon Averv Wining Boy Maretha Grace

### **Key Monologue**

Berniece refuses to let Boy Willie take the piano, Act 1; Scene 2

**Pulitzer Prize Winner** 

DRAMA



### SEVEN **GUITARS**

Internal and external struggles shape African American men as they fight for their humanity and self-worth.

**SYNOPSIS** Floyd Barton, a musician recently released from jail, must rebuild his life and his relationships after burning several bridges. He and the other characters strive to understand themselves and each other in the midst of instability. The play explores the challenges of establishing oneself in a tumultuous and often dangerous environment.

QUOTABLE "I am not a historian. I happen to think that the content of my mother's life - her myths, her superstitions, her prayers, the contents of her pantry, the smell of her kitchen, the song that escaped from her sometimes parched lips, her thoughtful repose and pregnant laughter - are all worthy of art. Hence, Seven Guitars." -August Wilson



Louise on men and guns

IN YOUR WORDS Make a list similar to Wilson's above about the contents of the life of someone you love. Use these details to create a story, poem, song, or one-act play.



### **Historical Connections**

Aftermath of World War II

### Concepts for Pre-Teaching

- History of jazz
- Marcus Garvev
- Buddy Bolden
- Toussaint L'Ouverture
- Muddy Waters
- Joe Louis
- Lazarus

### **Main Characters**

Louise Canewell Red Carter Vera Hedlev Flovd Barton Rubv

### **Key Monologue**

Vera tells Floyd how she felt when he left her. Act 1: Scene 2

New York Drama Critics' Circle Award Winner

BEST PLAY

# AUGUST WILSON'S FENCES

PHTSBURGH PALIC THEATER

N

### **FENCES**

A father's frustration with his own past threatens his son's future.

**SYNOPSIS** Troy Maxson is a middle-aged trash collector who eventually becomes the first African-American garbage truck driver in Pittsburgh, Earlier in his life. Troy was a talented baseball player, but was unable to play for the Major Leagues because he was too old by the time they allowed black players. Troy must reconcile his disappointment in his past with the choices he makes in the present. In striving to take control of his life, he alienates his wife and son. The play explores Troy's search for self-actualization and the mistakes he makes along the way.

**QUOTABLE** "Some people build fences to keep people out...and other people build fences to keep people in." -Jim Bono



### 法系统回 LISTEN

Rose on Troy's betraval



High school students read Fences and 📇 discuss August Wilson

IN YOUR WORDS Imagine Cory's life after the events that took place in *Fences*. Write a monologue for him set in the future, when he is Troy's age.



### **Historical Connections**

- Aftermath of World War II
- Pre-Civil Rights Movement

### **Concepts for Pre-Teaching**

- Segregation
- Integration
- Negro League Baseball
- Jackie Robinson

### Main Characters

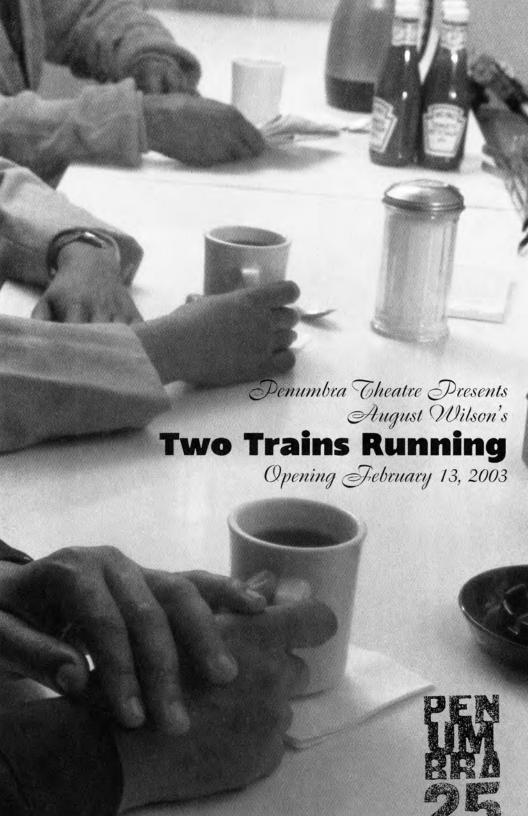
Trov Maxson Rose Maxson Cory Maxson Jim Bono Gabriel Maxson Lvons Maxson Raynell Maxson

### **Key Monologue**

Cory asks Troy why he has never liked him; Troy responds, Act 1; Scene 3

Pulitzer Prize Winner

DRAMA



### TWO TRAINS **RUNNING**

African Americans grapple with the social and psychological impact of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements.

**SYNOPSIS** Two Trains Running is set entirely in a restaurant owned by Memphis, a self-made man who prides himself on hard work and diligence. The restaurant has several regular customers. each of whom has differing views on work, faith, and race relations. The play explores, through the experiences and opinions of each character, whether much has changed for African-Americans by the end of the 1960s.

QUOTABLE "You can't go through life carrying a ten-gallon bucket. Get you a little cup. That's all you need. Get you a little cup and somebody put a little bit in and it's half full. That ten-gallon bucket ain't never gonna be full. Carry you a little cup through life and vou'll never be disappointed." -West



Holloway on love and death



Laurence Fishburne on blackness in Two Trains Running\*

IN YOUR WORDS Write a preguel to Two Trains with Risa as the central character. In your preguel, reveal the events that led her to cut her legs.



### **Historical Connections**

Post-Civil Rights Movement

### **Concepts for Pre-Teaching**

- Civil Rights Movement
- · Black Power Movement
- · Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination
- Malcolm X

### **Main Characters**

Holloway Wolf Sterling Risa West Hambone Memphis

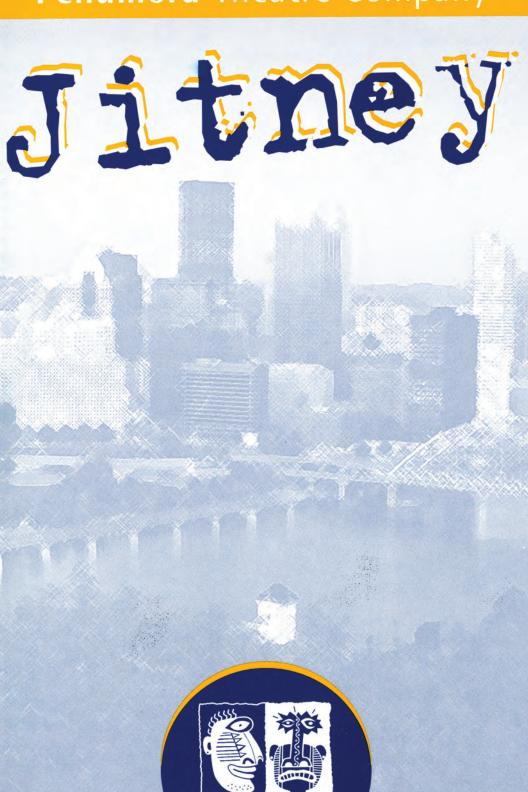
### **Key Monologue**

Memphis on socioeconomic decline in the community, Act 1: Scene 1

New York Drama Critics' Circle Award Winner

**BEST AMERICAN PLAY** 

Penumbra Theatre Company



### **JITNEY**

Bonds between generations are tested by personal and community conflicts.

**SYNOPSIS** Set in a jitney station that is being threatened with demolition, *Jitney* explores the lives and relationships of the station's various drivers. The story begins when the station's owner, Becker, learns that his son is to be released from jail the following day. Becker and his son disagree on what it means to be a man. The play explores their relationship and what kind of legacy Becker will leave behind.

QUOTABLE "The only thing I ever knew him to do was work hard. It didn't matter to me too much at the time cause I couldn't see it like I see it now. He had his ways. I guess everybody do. The only thing I feel sorry about...is that he ain't got out of life what he put in. He deserved better than what life gave him. I can't help thinking that. But you right...I'm proud of my old man. I'm proud of him. And I'm proud to be Becker's boy. I didn't come here to preach no sermon." —Booster



### LISTEN Becker on Booster's betrayal

**IN YOUR WORDS** If you wrote a scene set in the hub, or center, of your community, where would it take place? Who would be there? What conflicts might arise? Write or draw that scene.



### **Historical Connections**

Post-Civil Rights Movement

### **Concepts for Pre-Teaching**

- Urban renewal/ redevelopment
- Jitney cabs

### **Main Characters**

Shealy Becker Fielding Philmore Turnbo Doub YoungBlood/Darnell Booster Rena

### **Key Monologue**

Booster reflects on his father's life, Act 2; Scene 4

New York Drama Critics' Circle Award Winner

2000



### KING HEDLEY II

A man's quest for identity and dignity is thwarted by limited opportunity, secrets from the past, and personal demons.

**SYNOPSIS** King, an ex-convict, seeks to rebuild his life. Tonya is pregnant with King's first child, and despite King's excitement, Tonya is reluctant to raise a child in a world that constantly threatens the lives of black youth. As King tries to rebuild his life through mainly illegal means, his focus is on leaving a better legacy behind through his child. The play explores the challenges of creating a stable family and sense of self in a community plagued by violence and prejudice.

QUOTABLE "I'm through with babies. I ain't raising no more. Ain't raising no grandkids. I'm looking out for Tonya. I ain't raising no kid to have somebody shoot him. To have his friends shoot him. To have the police shoot him. Why I want to bring another life into this world that don't respect life? I don't want to raise no more babies when you got to fight to keep them alive." —Tonya

**IN YOUR WORDS** Find local, state, and national current events, such as in Ferguson, MO, that reflect the issues that Tonya lamented in 1985. Make a collage of headlines to illustrate the problems.



### **Historical Connections**

- Post-Civil Rights Movement
- Reaganomics

### **Concepts for Pre-Teaching**

- Buddy Bolden
- Buffalo Soldiers
- "Trickle down" economics

### **Main Characters**

Tonya Ruby Elmore King Mister Stool Pigeon

### **Key Monologue**

Tonya tells King she doesn't want to bring another child into the world, Act 1; Scene 2

**Pulitzer Prize Finalist** 

2000



AUGUST WILSON'S

# RADIO VOTE WILKS LIFE VOTE WILKS LIF VOTE WILKS VO

DIRECTED BY
RON OJ PARSON

OCTOBER 2 THROUGH NOVEMBER 2, 2008

### **RADIO GOLF**

The rewards of the American Dream are weighed against the cost to the larger community.

SYNOPSIS Wilson's final play revolves around the proposed demolition of the house at 1839 Wylie Avenue, the location mentioned in previous plays as the residence of Aunt Ester. Harmond Wilks and Roosevelt Hicks have formulated an ambitious plan to redevelop The Hill District. Harmond discovers that the house at 1839 Wylie was acquired illegally; furthermore, its owner is reluctant to sell. Harmond and Roosevelt clash over whether to proceed with the demolition and deny the past in the name of "development," or to preserve the house and therefore a significant part of The Hill's history.

QUOTABLE "A Negro don't know he's a Negro. He thinks he's a white man. It's Negroes like you who hold us back." -Sterling



### The LISTEN Sterling on independence

**IN YOUR WORDS** You've been asked to address the crowd protesting the demolition of 1839 Wylie Avenue. Write a 2-minute speech that conveys your thoughts about the fate of the house.



### **Historical Connections**

- Post-Civil Rights Movement
- Reaganomics
- Manifest Destiny

### **Concepts for Pre-Teaching**

- Urban renewal/ redevelopment
- Gentrification
- "Cowboys and Indians"

### **Main Characters**

Harmond Wilks Mame Wilks Roosevelt Hicks Sterling Johnson Joseph Elder Barlow

### **Key Monologue**

Sterling accuses Roosevelt of holding back the community, Act 2; Scene 5

New York Drama Critics' Circle Award Winner

BEST AMERICAN PLAY





### **Digital Toolkit**

Want more August Wilson education resources? Check out our Digital Toolkit at wged.org/augustwilson for:

- MORE printable extension lessons and activities
- watch party kit for the documentary, August Wilson: The Ground On Which I Stand

回線器画 professional development videos

- study guides from theaters around the country
- links of interests related to August Wilson's life, work, and impact

In addition, membership is free on PBS Learning Media which will also include excerpts and lesson from the documentary.

### Visit:

### wqed.PBSLearningMedia.org

to find these and other compelling PBS videos from the American Masters series.



PBS Learning Media

### **August Wilson Inspires**

In August Wilson: The Ground on Which I Stand, many actors are discussed and offer what August Wilson meant to their burgeoning careers. Famous actors playing famous Wilson roles include:

Viola Davis Charles S. Dutton Laurence Fishburne James Earl Jones Phylicia Rashad Ruben Santiago-Hudson **Denzel Washington** 



# In Your Students' Words: Storytelling With Us!

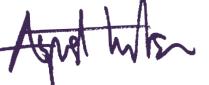
After completing In Your Words, In Your Backyard or your Expression Projects activities listed for each play or any of the activities in the deck of cards, your students can share their voices with us! Submit to:

wqed.org/augustwilson/ resource/share Selected student work may be:

- · featured on our blog
- placed on our digital storytelling map (audio and video)
- shared as an exemplar of student learning with other teachers around the nation

We welcome **student reviews** of August Wilson's plays in audio or written format.

Join our social media conversation about all things \_\_ August Wilson!









Facebook.com/WQEDPittsburgh

### F **Educators' Voices**

The language and themes in August Wilson's work are challenging, intense, and often racially charged. In particular,

Wilson's use of the "n-word" may give some educators pause. Here's how Daniela Buccilli, an English teacher in a suburban school district. addresses

this issue:

"I teach August Wilson's awardwinning play Fences to lower-tracked 11th graders in a predominately-white and conservative school district. My colleague and I use Gloria Naylor's article from *The New* York Times "The Meanings of a Word"(1986) to help us with the very beginning of the play, a beginning where Wilson has the hero Troy use the word 'n\*gger.'

"I start the lesson (that usually spans two to three days) with the announcement that I refuse to use the "n-word." I am honest about how the word makes me cringe to hear and to say-that growing up in the 70's and 80's as a white person has made the word nothing but a hate

word for me: and I choose not to use hate language. I may be old-fashioned, and you might think I'm wrong, or that I am being fussy or fearful;

> maybe you think I'm exaggerating, but

I have made my decision based on information and experience that you will also have. You will have to make your decision. Don't make a decision

without being informed, though. Ignorant people do so. You may think you know everything about the 'n-word'; let's see. This lesson challenges students to decide what the word means to them..."



Read more from Daniela and other educators, and share your classroom success stories at:

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