Radio Golf
By August Wilson
Directed by
Kenny Leon

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Welcome to the Study Guide

**Welcome** to the *Radio Golf* Student Guide. This page is to give you an overview of how the guide is laid out, and what to look for on the following pages; it is your guide to the guide! When you see a box such as this, you should read that first. It is the background you need to understand the material on the page. It doesn’t appear on every page, but keep an eye out for it.

The text in these boxes contains general information, introductions, and definitions. They are the main boxes throughout the guide. In these boxes you will also find:

**Think About It!**
These are simply questions to discuss with your friends or classmates.

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Pictures generally come with captions in a box like this. For example, the caption for this picture would read:

At the U.S. Comedy Arts Festival, August Wilson was awarded the Freedom of Speech Award. He wore a T-shirt that said, “I am supposed to be white,” on the front and “I am an accident. This didn’t turn out white,” on the back.

---

**He Said It**
These boxes are “He Said It” boxes. They contain quotes from August Wilson. For example:

“All you need in the world is love and laughter. That’s all anybody needs. To have love in one hand and laughter in the other.”

Sometimes, a page will contain a quote by someone who is not August Wilson, but is relevant to the content on the page. This quote will generally not be enclosed in any type of box.

“You can turn painful situations around through laughter. If you can find humor in anything, even poverty, you can survive it.”

-Bill Cosby

---

**Fun Facts!**
This box contains fun and interesting facts relevant to the rest of the page. Also, this box may contain excerpts from interviews, speeches, and other additional material.

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**Activity Box**
This box contains activities for you to do. Some of them are group, some individual, some writing, and some artistic. There’s no limit to what you will find in here.
EXPLORING THE PRODUCTION
Playing

The first play August Wilson wrote has only two lines. Divide the class into two groups. Each group will be responsible for a line of August Wilson’s first play. See how many different ways you can discover to say the lines.

Pair off with someone from the other group and perform your scene for the class. Discuss the ways speaking the lines differently affects the play in terms of location, relationships and characters.

August Wilson stands near the Bedford Street house where he lived until about age 12. The area is the basis for the set of *King Hedley II*.

**Who is August Wilson?**

**August Wilson** was born in 1945 in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, the setting of many of his plays. His birth name was Frederick August Kittel, named after his father, a white German baker who left the family when August was young. His mother was Daisy Wilson, an African-American house-cleaner.

He spent much of his young adult life at the public library reading the works of Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, and Ralph Ellison. To earn a living, he worked in a variety of jobs—gardener, porter, sheet metal worker, and short-order cook in a coffee shop—all of which appear in his plays.

Wilson’s first “professional” writing experience was a term paper comparing Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg; his sister paid him twenty dollars. He bought a typewriter with the money, and the first thing he wanted to type was his name: AUGUST WILSON. He read what he typed on the page and said, “That’s all right, man that’s all right.” Wilson wrote mainly poetry, spending time in cafes where jazz music played nightly and poets read works weekly. Wilson also tried his hand at some one-act plays, but didn’t like his early efforts.

Wilson began to think of himself as a playwright after *Jitney* won him a Jerome Fellowship at the Playwrights Center in St. Paul:

> It was important for me to start to think of myself as a playwright…Claiming it and thinking of myself as a playwright enabled me to do the work. And my creative energy, that unnamed, unformed thing, that for me previously went toward poetry now began to siphon off and began to go into theater, into playwrighting.

Wilson became determined to write “the best play ever,” and that was the beginning of *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*. He began writing relentlessly, working on new plays while others were still being produced. Today, August Wilson is best known for his ten-play cycle chronicling the African-American experience throughout the 20th Century (for more on the cycle, see pages 12-13). August Wilson died on October 22, 2005. Playwright Tony Kushner commented after Wilson’s death, “Heroic is not a word one uses often without embarrassment to describe a writer or playwright, but the diligence and ferocity of effort behind the creation of his body of work is really an epic story.”

**Fun Facts!**

Below is the first play Wilson wrote: it’s only two lines long! Use it for the activity below.

-What’s happening?
-Nothing.

**August Wilson** stands near the Bedford Street house where he lived until about age 12. The area is the basis for the set of *King Hedley II*.

---

**He Said It**

“I’m a struggling playwright. I’m struggling to get the next play down on paper.”
The formal education of August Wilson was filled with strife and hardship, which caused him to drop out of school at 15.

His main cause of anger at the schools he attended was the racist treatment he received:

- Wilson left his Catholic high school because he was often beaten up, yet the teachers and administrators did nothing to stop it. On his last day, a white student standing in front of Wilson made mention of the “nigger” in the classroom. “I said, ‘OK buddy,’” and, during the Pledge of Allegiance at “liberty and justice for all,” Wilson punched him.

- Wilson left his vocational school after he used a T-square to knock in a thumbtack. The teacher punished him by punching Wilson so hard he fell off his chair. Wilson lunged at the teacher and “bounced him off the blackboard.”

- At public school, Wilson refused to participate in class. He tried to redeem himself in the eyes of a black teacher who ran an after-school club. Wilson chose to write an essay on Napoleon. He researched, wrote it, rented a typewriter, and paid his sister 25 cents to type it. His teacher asked Wilson to prove he wrote it to which Wilson responded, “Hey, unless you call everybody in here and have all the people prove they wrote them, even the ones that went and copied out of the encyclopedia word for word, I don’t feel I should have to prove anything.” The teacher gave him a failing grade; Wilson tore the essay, and walked out of school.

- Wilson continued to hang around school, but no teachers or administrators took any interest in bringing him back. That was the end of his formal education.

Not wanting to tell his mother he dropped out of school, Wilson walked to the library each day. Over four years he read over three hundred books: “I didn’t need anyone to teach me. All you had to do was have an interest and a willingness to extract the information from the book.”

Central Catholic High School in Pittsburgh, where Wilson went to school. The school is a designated historic landmark.

**Awards and Nominations:**
1985: New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Play, *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*
1985: Tony Award nomination for Best Play, *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*
1987: Drama Desk Award for Outstanding New Play, *Fences*
1987: New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Play, *Fences*
1987: Pulitzer Prize for Drama, *Fences*
1987: Tony Award for Best Play, *Fences*
1988: Literary Lion Award from the New York Public Library
1988: New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Play, *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone*
1988: Tony Award nomination for Best Play, *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone*
1990: Drama Desk Award for Outstanding New Play, *The Piano Lesson*
1990: New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Play, *The Piano Lesson*
1990: Tony Award nomination for Best Play, *The Piano Lesson*
1990: Pulitzer Prize for Drama, *The Piano Lesson*
1992: American Theatre Critics Association Award, *Two Trains Running*
1992: Tony Award nomination for Best Play, *Two Trains Running*
1996: New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Play, *Seven Guitars*
1996: Tony Award nomination for Best Play, *Seven Guitars*
1999: National Humanities Medal
2000: New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Play, *Jitney*
2000: Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Off-Broadway Play, *Jitney*
2001: Tony Award nomination for Best Play, *King Hedley II*
2003: Heinz Award for Arts and Humanities
2004: The Freedom of Speech Award at the U.S. Comedy Arts Festival.
Who is Kenny Leon?

“I want to be a champion of African American work, but I’m defined by more than race.”

Kenny Leon returns to Goodman Theatre after having directed Miss Evers’ Boys and appearing in August Wilson’s Gem of the Ocean. He is the co-founder and currently the artistic director of True Colors Theatre Company in Atlanta; prior to that, he was the artistic director of Alliance Theatre in Atlanta for over a decade. Leon has directed nine of the ten plays in the August Wilson cycle and is considered one of the leading August Wilson scholars and artists working today. He directed the 2004 Broadway production of Gem of the Ocean which received five Tony nominations. Currently, he is preparing to direct a film version of A Raisin in the Sun for Sony and ABC. According to London’s Financial Times, Leon is one of the “Top 20 Southerners to Watch” and in 2004, he was named one of People Magazine’s “50 Most Beautiful People.” He has also been featured on the back cover of GQ Magazine.

Kenny Leon on August Wilson

“August always wrote about community. He was saying, here at the ending of the 20th century, let’s find our collective voice and not break apart.”

“He put our history in a storytelling context and put a human face on those people who were free from slavery but had no jobs. He gave his characters big voices, when the broader community thought they had little voices, that they had nothing to say.”

“August’s accomplishments are unsurpassed - to me, the only writer to come close is Shakespeare, ... He has been the epitome of American theater for the last 23 years. He’s defined it. His plays not only serve an artistic purpose, but they also serve a social purpose because they look at ourselves as Americans.”

“He’s my hero because he’s not only the anchor of my career, he’s my growth as a man.”

“[His work] encompasses all the strength and power that theatre has to offer. I feel an incredible sense of responsibility to walk how he would want us to walk and to deliver his work.”

“I really think he was the greatest playwright of our time. And when people say ‘arguably the best’ I think they’re wrong. There’s no argument. There’s a direct line between Gem of the Ocean, which is set in the early 1900s and is about people who had nothing and were trying to find a place to create community, and Radio Golf, which is about people who have something, but where’s the community now? It’s a perfect way for August to end the cycle. And I’m blessed to be a part of it.”

Quotable Kenny

Kenny Leon has heaped high praise on August Wilson. Think of someone you have a great deal of respect for. Why do you respect this person so much? Create a list of reasons, and use that list to create a quote board about the person. Create quotes that express why you respect the person as well as give a sense of who they are as a person.
When Wilson wrote new plays, he would not just finish the play, give it to a director and be done; but rather, Wilson wanted to be an integral part of the rehearsal process, both so he could be available for actors and so he could hear the language and hear the play. He would constantly rewrite parts of the play, rearrange scenes, and add or cut lines all the way until the show was set to open. August first used this strategy of rewriting at Goodman Theatre while working on Seven Guitars, and was not a common practice in the theatre community, but it was a method that August liked and continued to use as he worked on new plays.

**Excerpt from an August Wilson Interview from African American Review**

AAR: I read that you experimented with a new revision strategy for this play. Will you continue to use this strategy with future plays?

Wilson: You are talking about writing in the moment?

AAR: Yes, getting feedback from the actors and directors, writing new parts, and bringing them the next day.

Wilson: That’s a good way to work. I don’t know if it is necessarily a new way to work because generally I’d do the whole rewrite, come to rehearsal, and continue to work on it . . . I guess I’m not consciously aware that I made a change, but I’ll certainly continue doing what I’m doing, working the way I’m working, and I enjoy the rehearsal process and working through there. So I will continue that.

In the past I would rewrite the whole thing and bring it in, and, of course, there were certain revisions that were made in the rehearsal process. But the bulk of the work had been done, so I would sort of lay back off of it (if that’s a way of saying it) because I already did the rewrite, and now I was just patching up various things. With Seven Guitars I didn’t do the rewrite prior to rehearsal. I came into rehearsal knowing that the play had to be rewritten. And I did my rewrite there in rehearsal, which didn’t allow me to lay back off the material and do patchwork. I had to get in there and do the actual work, which seemed to work better in the sense that I wasn’t writing in a vacuum. I had the actors there, so you could press and then you could see a response, or you could do something and see an immediate response. If you’re at home doing the rewrite, you can’t get that response-- you’re sort of working in a vacuum, so to speak.

**Wilson and the O’Neill Center**

The Eugene O’Neill Theater Center holds one of the most important playwrights’ conferences each year, and work to develop new plays. In 1980, Wilson sent Fullerton Street (an earlier play that is not part of his cycle) and Jitney for submission to the conference. They sent them back. Wilson, however, was convinced that nobody read his plays, so he sent them again the next year. Again they sent them back. This caused Wilson to rethink his writing. He thought to himself:

“When they sent them back to me the second time I said maybe they’re not as good as I think. So I told myself, well you’ve got to write a better play if you want to go to the O’Neill. And I asked myself how do I do that because I was already writing the best play that I can write. And that’s when I decided to up my sights, so to speak. Instead of writing a play just to get to the O’Neill, I thought, well, I would write the best play that’s ever been written. And then I would go to the O’Neill, of course, if it’s the best play that’s ever been written. And that’s when I wrote Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom.”
Amiri Baraka was born Leroi Jones and is one of the main leaders and inspirations of the Black Arts Movement. Beginning in the late 1950s, Baraka wrote poetry and plays that captured the experience and anger of African Americans. In 1964, he won an Obie for his play, *The Dutchman*. His writings often involved racial and national identity. Baraka incorporated music into his work, even writing a few librettos. He has said “Poetry is music, and nothing but music. Words with musical emphasis.” His work attempts to turn from a Western cultural background to a new black aesthetic, flowing from the alternative cultural movements of Africa and America.

Jorge Luis Borges was an Argentine writer and is considered one of the top literary figures of the 20th century. He is best known for his short stories and fiction essays, but he was also a poet, critic, and translator. His work is filled with multi-cultural allusions, stemming from his life in Argentina; his work is also full of influences of Christian, Buddhist, Islamic and Jewish faiths—including mainline religious figures, heretics, and mystics as well as fantastical elements.

Borges spent much of his later life without eyesight due to glaucoma, yet continued to write with the help of his mother. He died in 1986 of liver cancer.

Romare Bearden was born in North Carolina in 1912, and moved to Harlem when he was three. He struggled to find his artistic voice in his paintings until he returned from serving in WWII. When he returned, he studied great works of art both in America and Paris, and developed his own style, freely using vibrant color. His great success in painting occurred after he abandoned abstract art and then tried (and failed) at a career in music. He began to create collages. By 1971, he was considered an important contemporary artist. He continued to create until his death in 1988.

Susana Soca

With lingering love she gazed at the dispersed Colors of dusk. It pleased her utterly
To lose herself in the complex melody
Or in the cunous life to be found in verse.
It was not the primal red but rather grays
That spun the fine thread of her destiny,
For the nicest distinctions and all spent
In waverings, ambiguities, delays.
Lacking the nerve to tread this treacherous Labyrinth, she looked in on, whom without,
The shapes, the turbulence, the striving rout, (Like the other lady of the looking glass.)
The gods that dwell too far away for prayer
Abandoned her to the final tiger, Fire.

Many times it is difficult to uncover who or what has inspired an artist. Wilson, however, has said exactly what inspired him! The “Four B’s” as August called them, urged August to create an art that captured the African American spirit.

The Four “B’s”

Amiri Baraka

Jorge Luis Borges

Romare Bearden

Susana Soca

He Said It

“When I saw [Bearden’s] work, it was the first time that I had seen black life presented in all its richness, and I said, ‘I want to do that -- I want my plays to be the equal of his canvases.’”

August Wilson’s Inspirations

Research more about Baraka, Borges or Bearden. See what connections you find between the work of Wilson’s inspirations and Radio Golf. Are there any striking similarities? Or are they more subtle?

Create a Venn Diagram comparing Radio Golf and the inspiration you chose.
THE BLUES

Of his Four B’s, Wilson openly admitted that the Blues were the most influential in his writing.

The Blues evolved in the US in the communities of former slaves from spirituals, praise songs, field hollers, shouts and chants. Blue notes and call-and-response highlight the African tradition of the Blues.

FEELING THE BLUES

Call and Response is a traditional blues form. As a class, practice call and response. A leader begins by singing the first line of “Kye Kye Kule” and performing a motion—the leader can be your teacher, or a fellow student. The circle repeats the line and motion, and then the leader creates a new motion for the next line, with each motion bringing the circle closer and closer to the ground; the last motion should be on the ground. The first student to stand up after “HEY” is the next leader.

He Said It

“Blues is the bedrock of everything I do. All the characters in my plays, their ideas and their attitudes, the stance that they adopt in the world, are all ideas and attitudes that are expressed in the blues. If all this were to disappear off the face of the earth and some people two million unique years from now would dig out this civilization and come across some blues records, working as anthropologists, they would be able to piece together who these people were, what they thought about, what their ideas and attitudes toward pleasure and pain were, all of that. All the components of culture. Just like they do with the Egyptians, they piece together all that stuff. And all you need is the blues. So to me the blues is the book, it’s the bible, it’s everything.”

"Prove It On Me" - Recorded by Ma Rainey in 1928

"Went out last night with a crowd of my friends, They must have been women, ‘cause I don’t like no men. Wear my clothes just like a fan, Talk to gals just like any old man ‘Cause they say I do it, ain’t nobody caught me, Sure got to prove it on me."

When August was young, he spent a great deal of time in thrift stores buying stacks of old albums for a nickel each. He listened to an album by Bessie Smith, a great blues singer of the 1920-30s, and was amazed: “I put that on, and it was unlike anything I’d ever heard before … Somehow all that other music was different from that. And I go, ‘Wait a minute. This is mine … there’s a history here.’”

Listening to the album again and again, especially the first song, “Nobody in Town Can Bake a Sweet Jelly Roll Like Mine,” Wilson realized he could write in the language he heard around him—the black street speak—rather than the proper English he read from writers such as Dylan Thomas. In Wilson’s play, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, Ma calls the blues, “life’s way of talking.” and Wilson himself said this about the blues: “Contrary to what most people think, it’s not defeatist, ‘Oh woe is me.’ It’s very life-affirming, uplifting music. Because you can sing that song, that’s what enables you to survive.”

Kye Kye Kule

Leader: Kye Kye Kule (chay chay koo-lay)
Chorus: Kye Kye Kule
Leader: Kye Kye Kofinsa (chay chay koh-feen sah)
Chorus: Kye Kye Kofisa
Leader: Kofisa Langa (Koh-fee sah lahn-gah)
Chorus: Kofisa Langa
Leader: Kaka Shilanga (Kah-kah shee lahn-gah)
Chorus: Kaka Shilanga
Leader: Kum Aden Nde (koom ah-dehn day)
Chorus: Kum Aden Nde
Leader: Kum Aden Nde (koom ah-dehn day)
Chorus: Kum Aden Nde, HEY!
1900’s: Gem of the Ocean
(set in 1904, written in 2003, produced at Goodman in 2003)

287-year-old Aunt Esther welcomes into her home Sully Two Kings, who was born into slavery and recruited by the Union Army, and Citizen Barlow, a young man from Alabama in search of a new life. Aunt Ester is not too old to heal, so she guides Citizen on a soaring, lyrical journey of spiritual awakening to the City of Bones.

1910’s: Joe Turner’s Come and Gone
(set in 1911, written in 1986, produced at Goodman in 1991)

Seth and Bertha Holly, black owners of a boarding-house, see a variety of visitors—mostly other African Americans coming North in search of jobs and prosperity. Herald Loomis shows up searching for his wife that he lost long ago after being forced into a chain gang. “Conjure man” Bynum shows him that he is really searching for himself.

1920’s: Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom
(set in 1927, written in 1981, produced at Goodman in 1997)

The only cycle-play not set in the Hill District, Ma Rainey takes place in a Chicago recording studio. The white owners of the studio cater to Ma Rainey’s every whim, because she’s their cash cow; but they call her musicians “boy.” The story centers around the tension between Ma Rainey and Levee, the trumpeter who wants to jumpstart his career as a songwriter with his jazzy version of “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom” at the recording session. Levee’s attraction to Ma’s young lover Dussie Mae adds to the potential for trouble.

1930’s: The Piano Lesson
(set in 1936, written in 1987, produced at Goodman in 1989)

Bernice and her brother Boy Willie are descendents from a family of black slaves in Mississippi who were traded by a slave owner in exchange for a piano, which now sits in Bernice’s Pittsburgh home. Boy Willie dreams of buying the land where his family had been slaves, but doesn’t have the money. He plans on selling the piano, of which he is half-owner, but Bernice is unwilling because it is a tangible reminder of the suffering of her ancestors. This conflict leads to a realization neither could have anticipated.
1930’s: Seven Guitars
Floyd Barton, a blues musician, has recorded a radio hit and record executives want him to record more albums. However, Floyd has squandered the money he received from the first recording, left his girlfriend, pawned his guitar, and spent 90 days in jail. But Floyd is ready to right the wrongs of the past and return to Chicago with a new understanding of what’s important in life. Unfortunately, his ways of righting his wrongs are flawed.

1950’s: Fences
(set in 1957, written in 1985, produced at Goodman in 1986)
Garbage collector Troy Maxon has difficulties with his son pursuing his dream of a football career, especially since Troy’s own athletic hopes were shattered by racism. Troy is having an affair with Alberta who becomes pregnant with his child. When Alberta dies during childbirth, Troy’s wife, Rose, takes responsibility for his baby, putting an end to the intimacy of their relationship.

1960’s: Two Trains Running
In a Pittsburgh diner, the regulars grind out an existence against the backdrop of a turbulent world and rapidly changing city. Memphis Lee looks to prevent the demolition of his restaurant in the face of a municipal project while across the street, Mr. West, the local funeral director, has more business than he can handle. Faced with racial inequality, a depressed economy, and the threat of violence, the local residents fight to hang on to their solidarity and sense of community.

1970’s: Jitney
(set in 1971, written in 1979, produced at Goodman in 1993)
A Pittsburgh gypsy-cab business is threatened by inner-city “renewal” projects. As they face losing their work and ponder their future, the black owner and his drivers face some difficult choices.

1980’s: King Hedley II
Set in a backyard in the decaying Hill District of Pittsburgh, King Hedley II follows the characters created by August Wilson in Seven Guitars. A woman is tormented by a secret she has kept for 36 years, while her only son returns home after serving time for murder to find a neighborhood riddled with crime, poverty and broken families. King’s epic struggle to survive is at the center of this poetic portrayal of life in the inner city during the 1980s.

1990’s: Radio Golf
EXPLORING THE TEXT
I used to think I was poor. Then they told me I wasn’t poor, I was needy. Then they told me it was self-defeating to think of myself as needy. I was deprived. (Oh not deprived, but rather underprivileged.) Then they told me that underprivileged was overused. I was disadvantaged. I still don’t have a dime, but I have a great vocabulary. -Jules Feiffer (cartoonist)

**Vocabulary Challenge**

The following is a list of vocabulary words from *Radio Golf* with which you may be unfamiliar.

- In small groups, try to figure out the definition of the words. It may help to find them in the play and use context clues.
- Write down the word, and what you think the definition could be.
- Your teacher will collect the definitions and read several of them aloud for each word, including the actual definition. You as a class will vote on what you think is the correct definition—there may be more than one correct answer.
- After voting, your teacher will reveal the correct definition.

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Why “Radio Golf”? 

**Think About It!**
Looking at the titles of August Wilson’s Pittsburg Cycle plays, which of the plays seem most interesting to you? Go through the titles one by one, and ask yourself, “What do I think this play is about?” Compare your answer to the summary on pages 10-11. Do you think the title accurately reflects the nature of the play? Which of August Wilson’s plays do you most want to see, based on title? Which do you least want to see?

--- 

**Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom**

_He Said It_

“Regardless of the medium, rewriting and more rewriting is still necessary. No one gets anything right the first time, and since I don’t write with a hammer and chisel, it’s relatively easy for me to change. It’s just words on paper. Words are free. You don’t go to the store and order a pound of words, or five hundred words, and pay your three dollars. They’re free.”

--- 

**Seven Guitars**

**Two Trains Running**

While August Wilson was writing this play, he received some very valuable advice from his 7-year-old daughter, Azula Carmen.

“She asked, ‘Daddy, what’s the title?’” Wilson recalls, “I said I didn’t have one, and she said, ‘Call it Secrets of the Radio Sisters.’ And I said, ‘Well, I don’t have any radio sisters in there. It’s about a guy and he has a radio station, and they’re playing golf.’ So she said, ‘Call it Radio Golf.’”

And I said, ‘That’s a good idea.’ Then she said, ‘I’ll write Secrets of the Radio Sisters.’”

--- 

A title is an author’s first chance to make an impression on the audience. A lot can be done with a title: set the scene, intrigue the reader, or create anticipation. However, an inappropriate title can confuse and even lose the reader. This page will help you explore the importance of titles, and question why August Wilson chose _Radio Golf_ as the title for this play.

“Originally we were going to title it, “The Daily Show with Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays Off,” but it was too long.”

-Jon Stewart

--- 

**Talk About It!**

Titles are extremely important to focus the audience’s attention. Pretend you were going to write the story of your life. What would your title be? Try to make it interesting and informative. Share your title with the class.

Now try to come up with a title for your experience in the 2000s. Just as Wilson created ten titles for the African American experience in the 1900s, create one for your experience so far in the 2000s.

--- 

**Title This, Title That**

After reading _Radio Golf_, create a list of reasons as to why August Wilson chose that as his title. Discuss your list with your classmates. It may help to break down the title into the individual words in addition to looking at them as a whole.

After you have discussed the rationale for the title with your classmates, come up with another title for the play. Do this on your own, and once everybody has created a new title, have a class discussion about which is the most fitting.
"I feel sort of embarrassed I don’t go to plays, but I can’t keep the characters straight. I feel I should be somewhere else."

Do you have problems keeping the characters straight? If so, this is the page for you. Use the space provided to create character profiles to help you as you read *Radio Golf*. Use the following list as a starting point for your notes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambitions</td>
<td>Dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sees Self as</td>
<td>Is seen by others as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy of life</td>
<td>Habits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not every character will contain the same information. Using quotes from the play is a good way to ensure accurate profiles.

---

### Mame Wilks

---

### Harmond Wilks

---

### Roosevelt Hicks

---

### Sterling Johnson

---

### Elder Joseph Barlow

---

**Musical Identity**

Each character has a unique identity, and according to Wilson, music is an “expression of the human spirit that illuminates our humanity.” Choose a theme song for each character in *Radio Golf* that expresses his/her human spirit. It can be based on the lyrics or the sound. Be ready to defend your choices.
August Wilson’s early writing career as a poet certainly helped to shape the way he heard and wrote language. He struggled to find his poetic voice early in his career. However, in a poem called “Morning Statement” he was finally able to write something that “didn’t pretend to be anything else.” Wilson said, “It wasn’t struggling to say eternal things. It was just claiming the ground as its own thing.” This sentiment is the basis for how Wilson approached playwrighting.

In his plays, he was able to share his poetic voice, a voice common to the black experience. However, it took silence for him to truly hear the language. In 1978, Wilson moved away from the Hill to St. Paul, MN. He went from a neighborhood with 55,000 African Americans to a state with 55,000. The absence of his peers forced Wilson to really hear how they speak, and Wilson incorporated it into his plays. The way Wilson uses language in his plays is considered one of the most poetic in all of modern theatre.

The anecdotal style often incorporated by Wilson stems from the oral tradition of African culture—a time-honored method of passing history and stories through generations. Wilson has even referred to his own style of story-telling as “the blood’s memory,” those things a person knows just by being a part of a culture.

**Your Poetic Voice**

August Wilson discovered his own poetic voice by writing. He wrote poems even if he thought they were bad. He wrote and wrote and wrote. Now it’s your turn to find your poetic voice. The following activities are meant to help you find your own voice in writing.

- One of the keys to becoming a better writer is to write. Grab a sheet of paper, and begin writing a story. No stopping! If you get stuck, just keep writing your last sentence over and over until you know what to write next. Have a competition in your class and see who can write the most number of words. The goal is not to write a great story, but to write a story; it’s all about quantity, not quality.

- Discovering your voice is about discovering yourself. Journal about the following questions; they are open-ended so you can really examine yourself: (1) What do you see? (2) Who are you? (3) Where do you come from? (4) What obstacles have you overcome in life? (5) What do you feel strongly about?

- Reread your story and your journal. Pick out any lines that are really good and really capture your voice. Using those as a starting point, write a short poem that is fully your voice just as “Morning Statement” is fully Wilson’s.

**He Said It**

“There weren’t many black folk around. In the silence, I could hear the language for the first time...[I] hadn’t really valued or respected the way that black folks talked. I’d always thought that in order to create art out of it you had to change that...I got lonely and missed those guys and sort of created them. I could hear the music.”

**Morning Statement**

It is the middle of winter
November 21 to be exact
I got up, buckled my shoes,
I caught a bus and went riding into town.
I just thought I’d tell you.

- Why would Wilson have Old Joe and Sterling speak more poetically than Mame, Harmond, or Roosevelt? How does the manner in which the characters speak affect how they are perceived?
August Wilson has often said the biggest influence on his writing is the Blues. For more on the Blues, see page 11. Because of his love for the Blues, Wilson incorporated a great deal of song into his plays, most noticeably Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom, where the title character is a Blues singer.

In Radio Golf, only two songs are mentioned by the characters: “Blue Skies” and “Hail, Hail, The Gang’s All Here,” a 1917 World War I song. Look at the lyrics to the entire song; Why do you think August Wilson chose to put this song in Radio Golf? What significance does the song have for the characters?

Fun Facts!

August Wilson’s play Gem of the Ocean takes its name from an 1843 song, “Columbia, Gem of the Ocean,” a US patriotic song popular in the 19th and early 20th century which at one time was considered as a possible national anthem. It includes such lines as “the home of the brave and the free” and “thy banners make tyranny tremble.”

Hail! Hail! The Gang’s All Here!

(Words by D.A. Estron, 1917)

A gang of good fellows are we, (are we,)
Are we, (are we,) are we, (are we,)
With never a worry you see, (you see,)
You see, (you see,) you see, (you see,)
We laugh and joke, we sing and smoke,
And live life merrily;
No matter the weather
When we get together
We have a jubilee.

[Chorus]

We love one another we do, (we do,)
We do, (we do,) we do, (we do,)
With brotherly love and it’s true, (it’s true,)
It’s true, (it’s true,) it’s true, (it’s true,)
It’s one for all, the big and small,
It’s always me for you;
No matter the weather
When we get together
We drink a toast for two.

[Chorus]

When out for a good time we go, (we go,)
We go, (we go,) we go, (we go,)
There nothing we do that is slow, (is slow,)
Is slow, (is slow,) is slow, (is slow,)
Of joy we get our share you bet,
The gang will tell you so;
No matter the weather
When we get together
We sing this song you know:

[Chorus]

ORIGINAL CHORUS:

Hail! Hail! The gang’s all here,
What the deuce do we care,
What the deuce do we care,
Hail! Hail! we’re full of cheer,
What the deuce do we care Bill!

ANOTHER WELL KNOW VERSION:

Hail, hail, the gang’s all here,
Never mind the weather, here we are together;
Hail, hail, the gang’s all here,
Sure we’re glad that you’re here, too!

Your Musical Identity

As mentioned, Wilson feels music is an “expression of the human spirit that illuminates our humanity.” Do you agree with that statement? What role do you feel music plays in our society? What would society be like if there were no music?

Now it’s time to choose your theme song. Pick something that you relate to, either the lyrics or the feel of the music itself. Bring in a copy of the song to play for the class and explain your choice.
The Monologues of August Wilson

A monologue is a long, uninterrupted speech (in a narrative or drama) that is spoken in the presence of other characters. August Wilson used monologues in most of his plays as a way for characters to remember and connect with the past, but also as a way to allow the audience to hear information about the lives of the characters they may not have known. Monologues also generally reveal a great deal about the character who says it, displaying their thoughts and desires.

Think About it!

Read Loomis’ monologue from Joe Turner’s Come and Gone and see if you can figure out the story based on the monologue. It may help to read it aloud a few times.

According to theatre critic Geoffrey Himes, “Radio Golf doesn’t have the spellbinding memory monologues.” Compare some of the Radio Golf monologues to Loomis’. How are they alike? How are they different? Do you agree that Radio Golf lacks great monologues? Why or why not?

Think About it!

Reread some of the monologues in Radio Golf aloud. Read them a couple times, listening once to understand the story being told in each monologue, and then another time to listen to the language and the syntax of the words. Some good monologues to look at are Old Joe’s on page 34 or 53, Harmond’s on page 36, Sterling’s on page 50 or Roosevelt’s on page 78-79.

Discuss how the monologues function within the play. Do they reveal interesting back-story? Something about the characters in the play? Is there another purpose for the monologue?

He Said It

“I believe that whatever a character says is true. So I write down everything the character says—pages and pages. Then, the trick is weeding through all that and finding the story that is really buried in there. And sometimes you really have to dig. You have to discover the connection of all the characters to the story that you’re writing, to the play. That’s the fun part.”

From Joe Turner’s Come and Gone

LOOMIS: I just been waiting to look on your face to say my goodbye. That goodbye got so big at times, seem like it was gonna swallow me up. Like Jonah in the whale’s belly I sat up in that goodbye for three years. That goodbye kept me out on the road searching. Not looking on women in their houses. It kept me bound up to the road. All the time that goodbye swelling up in my chest till I’m about to bust. Now that I see your face I can say my goodbye and make my own world.

(LOOMIS takes ZONIA’S hand and presents her to MARTHA)

Martha...here go your daughter. I tried to take care of her. See that she had something to eat. See that she was out of the elements. Whatever I know I tried to teach her. Now she need to learn from her mother whatever you got to teach her. That way she won’t be no one-sided person.

(LOOMIS stoops to ZONIA)

Zonia, you go live with your mama. She a good woman. You go on with her and listen to her good. You my daughter and I love you like a daughter. I hope to see you again in the world somewhere. I’ll never forget you.

Woulda Coulda Shoulda

Many of Wilson’s monologues have some connection to the past. Now it’s your turn to connect to your past through monologue. Think of a moment in your past where you regret something you did or perhaps something you didn’t do. Think of an individual you know associated with that regret. Write a “Woulda Coulda Shoulda” monologue to that person saying everything you wish you had said or done at that time.
EXPLORING THE CONTEXT
The action of *Radio Golf* takes place in Pittsburgh’s Hill District. In fact, in the ten-play cycle, only *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* does not take place in the Hill (it is set in Chicago). Throughout the cycle, the Hill takes a dramatic journey of its own, changing from a tenement village for southern migrant workers to an epicenter for culture and entertainment to an impoverished ghetto struggling to rebuild.

The Hill District overlooks downtown Pittsburgh. It’s first residents were predominantly Jewish and settled in the early twentieth century, but the Hill became one of the most energetic and powerful African American neighborhoods in the country from the 1930s to the 1950s, providing a home for such artists as Lena Horne, Billy Eckstine, Erroll Garner, Art Blakey and August Wilson. This social and artistic flourishing occurred in contrast to its struggling economic development; the Hill has historically been one of the poorest districts in Pittsburgh.

Q & A About the Hill District

**How did the Hill District begin?**
The Hill District began as a farm which was owned by a grandson of William Penn and sold two centuries ago to General Adamson Tannehill, a Revolutionary War veteran, for $20 an acre. By 1889, Pittsburgh dominated the American steel industry, and thus attracted workers.

**Has the Hill been known by any other names?**
Yes. In the early days, it was known as Minersville. Part of the Hill was also known as Haiti. It is common to divide The Hill into Lower, Middle, and Upper; Upper Hill has been known as Sugartop.

**What happened during the Hill riots?**
The riots began on April 5, 1968—the day after Martin Luther King Jr. was shot—and lasted until April 12. That week saw 505 fires, $620,000 in property damage, one death, and 926 arrests. The violence heightened the decline of the already struggling Hill.

**When did the Hill become residential?**
In the late 1840s, Thomas Mellon bought a piece of farmland on the slopes nearest the city, and divided it into smaller plots, selling them off for profit. The Hill’s first residents were very wealthy.

**What brought African Americans to the Hill?**
Around World War I, industry recruiters urged Southern blacks to move North by promising relief from the segregation laws. It was meant as a “pitt stop” on the way to bigger cities. Blacks continued to come to The Hill through the 1960s.

**What led to the Hill’s redevelopment?**
In 1943, a member of the city council noted, “90% of the buildings in the area are sub-standard and have long outlived their usefulness, and so there would be no social loss if they were all destroyed.” This led to destruction of much of the Lower Hill in 1956 to make way for the Civic Arena.

**Why did The Hill change?**
With the explosion of population after the Civil War and the introduction of trolleys, residents sought new homes further from the city centers. The influx of black laborers in the 1950s caused middle-class families to move to the suburbs, leaving the hill 95% black, a figure still accurate today.
**Your Community**

The Hill District has changed a great deal over the years. What about your neighborhood in Chicago; how has that changed? In small groups, research your neighborhood and prepare a short presentation (which could be a speech, photo journal, discussion, or skit) about the growth of your neighborhood. Use pictures if you can.

**Billy Eckstine** (L), a jazz singer and band leader, and Erroll Garner (below), jazz pianist and composer, are both from the Hill District.

**The Civic Arena**, now known as the Mellon Arena. It is home to the Pittsburgh Penguins.

**Demolition of the Hill District in the 1950s**

**The Crawford Grill on Wylie Ave.** recently closed its doors.

**Easter Parade on Wylie Avenue, 1951**

**Crawford Square in the Hill District.**

**A modern day building in the Hill District.**
Do you Remember when...

Radio Golf takes place in 1997, but do you remember what was happening in the world then? This page will give you a brief summary of events from 1997. The next page give you events that occurred in 2006, as a comparison.

Top Five Films
Titanic
The Lost World: Jurassic Park
Men in Black
Tomorrow Never Dies
Air Force One

Sports Champions
Basketball: Chicago Bulls
Football: Green Bay Packers
Baseball: Florida Marlins
Hockey: Detroit Red Wings
Tour de France: Jan Ullrich

Population
World: 5,760,000,000
United States: 267,744,000
Chicago: 2,721,547
Pittsburgh: 356,000

Price of Foods
- McDonald’s hamburger: $0.55
- Coke—2 liter: $0.59
- White Bread—per pound: $0.824
- Bacon—per pound: $2.699
- Milk—gallon: $2.303
- Egg—dozen: $0.812
- Bananas—per pounds: $0.435
- Red Delicious Apple—pound: $0.886
- Coffee—per pound: $4.496
- Wine—liter: $5.241

Sports Champions
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Baseball: Florida Marlins
Hockey: Detroit Red Wings
Tour de France: Jan Ullrich

#1 Hit Singles
• Un-Break My Heart—Toni Braxton
• Wannabe—Spice Girls
• Can’t Nobody Hold Me Down—Puff Daddy
• Hypnotize—The Notorious B.I.G
• MMMBop—Hanson
• I’ll Be Missing You—Puff Daddy w/ Faith Evans
• Mo Money Mo Problems—B.I.G. w/ Puff Daddy
• Honey—Mariah Carey
• 4 Seasons of Loneliness—Boyz II Men
• Candle in the Wind 1997/
  Something About the Way You Look Tonight—Elton John

Notable Deaths
Notorious B.I.G.
Allan Ginsberg
Princess Diana
Mother Teresa
Red Skelton
John Denver
Chris Farley

Nobel Peace Prize
Jody Williams, coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, used the internet to send e-mails to countries around the world urging them to ban landmines.

World Leaders
America: Bill Clinton
Canada: Jean Chrétien
Iraq: Saddam Hussein
Mexico: Ernesto Zedillo
Cuba: Fidel Castro
England: John Major / Tony Blair
Pope: John Paul II

Notable Events
- “The Simpsons” becomes the longest-running prime-time animated series.
- The comet Hale-Bopp makes its closest approach to Earth.
- Timothy McVeigh is sentenced to death for his part in the Oklahoma City bombings.
- Hong Kong reverts to China after 156 years as a British Colony.
- Russian space station ‘Mir’ experiences a series of life threatening malfunctions and accidents.
- The first book in the award winning Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling is published.
- A treaty prohibiting the use and manufacture of landmines is signed by 121 countries. Russia, the United States, and China do not sign.

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Statue of Liberty
Do you Remember when...

**Notable Deaths**
Coretta Scott King  
Earl Woods  
Red Buttons  
Steve Irwin  
James Brown  
Gerald R. Ford  
Saddam Hussein

Almost ten years after Radio Golf takes place, a lot has changed in the world; new leaders, new ideas, and new pop culture. Here are the same topics as the other page, but this time, they represent what happened last year...remember?

**Top Five Films**
Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest  
The Da Vinci Code  
Ice Age: The Meltdown  
Cars  
X-Men: The Last Stand

**Sports Champions**
Basketball: Miami Heat  
Football: Pittsburgh Steelers  
Baseball: St. Louis Cardinals  
Hockey: Carolina Hurricanes  
Tour de France: Floyd Landis

**Price of Foods**
- McDonald’s hamburger: $1.10  
- Coke—2 liter: $1.79  
- White Bread—per pound: $0.897  
- Bacon—per pound: $3.266  
- Milk—gallon: $2.990  
- Egg—dozen: $1.231  
- Bananas—per pounds: $0.469  
- Red Delicious Apple—pound: $1.094  
- Coffee—per pound: $2.970  
- Wine—liter: $10.951

**Population**
- World: 6,555,000,000  
- United States: 300,363,904  
- Chicago: 2,873,790  
- Pittsburgh: 316,718

**World Leaders**
America: George W. Bush  
Canada: Paul Martin / Stephen Harper  
Iraq: Jalal Talabani  
Mexico: Felipe Calderón  
Cuba: Fidel Castro  
England: Tony Blair  
Pope: Benedict XVI

**Notable Events**
- Twelve deceased coal miners and one survivor are discovered in the Sago Mine Disaster near Buckhannon, West Virginia.  
- Gerald Ford surpasses Reagan as longest-lived US President.  
- Democrats win control of both houses of Congress for the first time since 1994.  
- North Korea claims to have conducted its first ever nuclear test.  
- A 6.3 magnitude earthquake strikes central Java in Indonesia, killing more than 6,000, injuring at least 36,000 and leaving some 1.5 million people homeless.  
- The population of the United States reaches 300 million people.  
- Iran and Syria recognize government of Iraq, restore diplomatic relations, send high-level envoys to Baghdad, and call for peace conference.  
- Promiscuous—Nelly Furtado  
- London Bridge—Fergie  
- SexyBack—Justin Timberlake  
- Money Maker—Ludacris  
- My Love—Justin Timberlake  
- I Wanna Love You—Akon  
- Irreplaceable—Beyoncé

**2006**
The Game of Golf

Golf is an individual game in which a ball is hit from an area known as the “tee box,” across the “fairway” (very short and well-cared for grass) to a second area called the “putting green.” The object of the game is to complete the hole by playing a ball from the tee box to a hole in the putting green in the fewest number of strokes or hits. There are generally 18 holes per round of golf.

“I would like to deny all allegations by Bob Hope that during my last game of golf, I hit an eagle, a birdie, an elk and a moose.” -Gerald Ford

Golf Clubs

There are three general types of golf club: Woods, Irons, and Putters. By rule, a player may only carry 14 clubs per round.

Woods are the longest clubs, and are generally used for long shots. They were originally made of persimmon or maple wood, hence the name. Today, however, they are often made of titanium or steel.

Irons are used for shorter shots that woods, most often shots approaching the green. They range in number from 1 to 9, with lower numbered clubs having lower lofts. The lower the loft, the longer the shot. Therefore a 3 iron hits the ball further than an 8 iron. Wedges, very highly lofted clubs, are also irons and are used for very short shots.

The Putter has an extremely low loft and often a short shaft. They are used to play the ball on the green (putt). The swing is a shorter swing than with the other clubs.

Scoring

Golf is scored in relation to par. Par is the number of strokes that a skilled golfer should require to complete the hole. For example, on a par four hole, it would take a skilled golfer two shots to reach the green, and two shots to putt. A birdie is one shot under par, which on a par 4 hole would be a score of 3. See the chart for more scoring terms. The lowest score wins.

Term on a scoreboard | Specific term | Definition
---|---|---
-3 | albatross or double-eagle | three strokes under par
-2 | eagle | two strokes under par
-1 | birdie | one stroke under par
+0 | par | strokes equal to par
+1 | bogey | one stroke more than par
+2 | double bogey | two strokes over par
+3 | triple bogey | three strokes over par
+4 | quadruple bogey | four strokes over par

Fun Facts!

Floyd Satterlee Rood golfed the United States, when he played from the Pacific to the Atlantic from September 14, 1963, to October 3, 1964, in 114,737 strokes. He lost 3,511 balls on the 3,397.7 mile trail.

Free as a Birdie

In Radio Golf, Harmond says, “You teach kids how to play golf and they have all the rules they need to win at life.”

Think about some activity you participate in; it can be an individual sport like golf, a team sport such as football or baseball, or any other activity like school newspaper or chess team. Create a poster called, “Rules to Win at Life.” The poster should list rules learned from the activity in which you participate that you can apply to life. For example, for football, you could write, “Everybody gets tackled, but the best continue to fight.” Share your poster with the class.
Tiger Woods

Eldrick “Tiger” Woods is currently the number one golfer in the world, and has been for most of his career. Woods’ father, Earl Woods, was a Vietnam veteran and a retired US Army lieutenant colonel of mixed African American, Chinese, and Native American descent. It was Earl who introduced Tiger to golf, and who coached him as he began to learn the game. The nickname “Tiger” was also the nickname of Vuong Dang Phong, a Vietnamese friend of his father’s and fellow Vietnam veteran.

Tiger’s mother, Kultida Woods, originally from Thailand, is of mixed Thai, Chinese and Dutch ancestry, making Tiger Chinese, Thai, African, Native American and Dutch. He refers to himself as Cablinasian (Caucasian, Black, American-Indian, and Asian), a term he made up himself.

In August of 1996, Tiger announced “Hello, world” and became a professional golfer. He signed multi-million dollar deals with Nike and Titleist and was named the 1996 PGA Rookie of the Year and “Sportsman of the Year” by Sports Illustrated for his impact on the game of golf.

In April 1997, Tiger won his first major, The Masters, becoming the youngest Masters winner, and the first winner of African or Asian descent. Tiger reached the Number 1 ranking that year, and has held it for most of his career.

The Major Championships, simply known as the “Majors,” are the four most prestigious annual tournaments in men’s golf. To win a major is a difficult task as all the top players in the world participate in them. The chart below shows Tiger’s major championship wins.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Championship</th>
<th>Margin of Victory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>The Masters</td>
<td>12 strokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>PGA Championship</td>
<td>1 stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>U.S. Open</td>
<td>15 strokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>The Open Championship</td>
<td>8 strokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>PGA Championship (2)</td>
<td>Playoff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The Masters (2)</td>
<td>2 strokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>The Masters (3)</td>
<td>3 strokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>U.S. Open (2)</td>
<td>3 strokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The Masters (4)</td>
<td>Playoff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The Open Championship (2)</td>
<td>5 strokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>The Open Championship (3)</td>
<td>2 strokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>PGA Championship (3)</td>
<td>5 strokes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tiger and rival Phil Mickelson at the 2006 PGA Championship

Hockey is a sport for white men. Basketball is a sport for black men. Golf is a sport for white men dressed like black pimps.

-Tiger Woods

Fifty years ago, 100 white men chasing one black man across a field was called the Ku Klux Klan. Today it’s called the PGA Tour.

-Author Unknown

Tiger Woods celebrates after he won the 1997 Masters, his first Major Championship, at the age of 21.

The following is an excerpt from a review of Huntington Theatre Company’s production of Radio Golf. Do you agree with the writer’s interpretation of what Tiger represents? Or do you think Tiger represents more than just himself?

“And why golf, of all things, in an August Wilson play? Well, as Roosevelt Hicks sees it, the sport is entree into the American Dream. Tiger Woods represents the triumph of the individual.”

-Tiger Woods celebrates after he won the 1997 Masters, his first Major Championship, at the age of 21.

Think About It!

The following is an excerpt from a review of Huntington Theatre Company’s production of Radio Golf. Do you agree with the writer’s interpretation of what Tiger represents? Or do you think Tiger represents more than just himself?

“And why golf, of all things, in an August Wilson play? Well, as Roosevelt Hicks sees it, the sport is entree into the American Dream. Tiger Woods represents the triumph of the individual.”

-Golf: A Good Walk Spoiled

Golf courses have been referred to as the white man’s outdoor office, partly because many golf courses are within country clubs, many of which have a history of excluding Jews, blacks, and women. Why then, do you think Wilson chose to incorporate golf into his final play? Write a short essay about the sport represents the moral of Radio Golf.
Martin Luther King

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born Michael Luther King, Jr. on January 15, 1929, but later had his name changed to Martin. His grandfather began the family’s legacy of serving as pastors of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, serving from 1914-1931. Martin’s father, served for 44 years from 1931-1975 and from 1960-his death, Martin Luther acted as co-pastor with his father.

While King was studying in Boston, he met Coretta Scott, an individual of extraordinary intellectual and artistic ability. They married and had two sons and two daughters.

By the mid-1950s, King was a member of the executive committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and in late 1955, he led the first great Negro nonviolent demonstration of modern times in the United States—the Montgomery Bus Boycott in response to Rosa Parks’ arrest. The boycott lasted for 382 days!

**Excerpt from “I Have a Dream”**

I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.”

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification; one day right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.
“Community” usually refers to a group of people who interact and share certain things as a group. There are many different types of communities. They can be based on location (such as a town or school district) common identity (such as people with related jobs), family (such as immediate and extended family) or friends.

**List It!**
Create a list of the communities of which you are a member; who can create the longest list? How many of your communities are related?

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**Drawers.** The drawers attempt to draw the picture, however they cannot see the original. They can only draw and listen. They may not talk and they must stand with their backs to the group so they cannot receive nonverbal messages.

**Talkers.** The talkers attempt to describe the design to the drawers. The talkers also do not see the design.

**Viewers.** The viewers are the only ones to see the design. They may not talk and must communicate nonverbally. The talkers may question the viewers who must respond nonverbally. The viewers may not draw the design in the air or use any other nonverbal communication which actually shows the design. The game is complete when the viewers are satisfied with what the drawers have created.

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**Build Your Own**
Now it’s time to make your own classroom community. Use the following activities to create a stronger sense of community with your class...or at least have a little bit of fun.

**Anybody Anybody**
Everybody sits in a circle on chairs, with one person in the middle. The person in the middle makes a statement such as or “Anybody who likes the Cubs.” Any person in the chairs who fits that description must get up and move to a different chair. The person without a chair must make the next statement.

**Looking at Your Community**
After doing the community activities, do you feel a stronger sense of community among your classmates? Why do you feel that way?

During the games, how did your class community organize itself? Did a leader emerge or did you all work on an even level? What role did you play?

Think back on Radio Golf. What communities are present in the play? Who is the leader and follower in the communities? Create a chart showing who has power over whom in the play.

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**He Said It**
“As Americans of various races we share a broad cultural ground, a commonality of society that links its various and diverse elements into a cohesive whole that can be defined as ‘American.’”

**Now I Know My ABCs**
The group sits in a circle. One member starts by saying the letter A. No one is assigned to continue the alphabet. The group members just keep saying the letters until the alphabet is complete. However, the trick is for only one person to say each letter at a time. If more than one person says a letter, then the group needs to start over again.

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**Spider Web**
The group stands in a circle. Everyone holds hands with two different people who are not standing next to them. The goal (just as in the picture) is to untangle the web of people to form a complete circle without letting go of each others’ hands. Make it harder by only communicating nonverbally.

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A young community working together to untangle themselves. Exercises such as this help to create a strong sense of community.
Exploring the Social Issues
Blight Sweet Blight

Under redevelopment Law, the legal term *blight* may encompass any number of conditions including, but not limited to:

- Buildings which are unhealthy or unsafe for occupancy as a result of code violations
- Properties, including those containing hazardous wastes, whose values have depreciated or stagnated, possibly due to impaired investments
- Business properties experiencing low occupancy, low lease rates, as well as high turnover rates; even abandonment
- Factors that prevent or substantially hinder the economically viable use of building or lots, such as substandard design, inadequate size, lack of parking, etc.
- Residential overcrowding and high crime in the area

In *Radio Golf*, Roosevelt and Harmond are waiting for the city to declare the Hill District “blighted,” so they can get funding for their redevelopment project. But what does blight mean? This page will give you an overview of the Blight Machine!

The Blight Machine

Meet the Blight Machine! A creature that works towards the redevelopment of communities. Here’s a step-by-step guide to its inner workings.

**Step 1:** Selecting a neighborhood for redevelopment

A community is targeted for major redevelopment, and is often determined to be “blighted.” This is not always the case, but is common because many government redevelopment funds are only for blighted areas. Sometimes the area to be redeveloped is just one lot and other times it is an entire neighborhood.

**Step 2:** Property is acquired by the city.

In order to reconstruct and redevelop, the city must own the property. If the building is abandoned, the lot can be seized by the city. The city then generally sells the lot to a redevelopment firm who is in charge of drawing up plans and overseeing reconstruction.

**Step 3:** Plans are drawn and approved

The redevelopment company creates a plan and presents its proposal to the city. Often times this includes a public forum where citizens can debate the new design. Once the plans are approved by the city council, reconstruction or renovation can proceed. See picture.

**Step 4:** Development by the Blight Machine!

Massive redevelopment occurs to the blighted area. Every situation is unique, but often new housing and commercial spaces are built. This may include theatres, shopping centers, and such, often from national chains such as Starbucks and Whole Foods. These new stores are built and compete with existing stores for business.
George Evans, a white city councilman, argued the black ghetto neighborhood of the Hill was blighted and should be bulldozed. In 1943, he wrote:

The Hill District of Pittsburgh is probably one of the most outstanding examples in Pittsburgh of neighborhood deterioration…There are 7,000 separate property owners, more than 10,000 dwelling units, and in all, more than 10,000 buildings. 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 area is criss-crossed with streets running every which way, which absorb at least one-third of the area. These streets should all be vacated and a new street pattern overlaid. This would effect a saving of probably 100 acres now used for unnecessary streets.

The sense of community and the buildings are related, in an old area. The buildings were old, the streets were cobblestone and old, there were many small alleyways, and people lived in those alleyways… There were small walkways that ran in between the alleyways that were really a playground. So, the physical condition of the buildings helped to create a sense of community. We all lived in similar conditions and had similar complaints about the wind whipping though the gaps between the frame and the window, and the holes in the walls, and the leaking, and the toilet fixtures that work sometimes and don’t work sometimes. But that kind of common condition bound us together more as a community. I knew everybody on my block, and they knew me. They knew me on sight, and they knew all the children on sight, and my behavior changed when I entered the block. And so, I think there was a very strong sense of community.

Sala Udin lived in the Hill District as a young man, and was later elected to City Council. He points out a strong connection between narrow streets and social life within the Hill District:

Redevelopment debate occurs constantly, and one of the most common issues is the one articulated by George Evans and Sala Udin: what is more important to help this neighborhood progress: identity or commercialization? In Chicago, when Macy’s bought out Marshall Field’s, many people were upset that a New York icon was overtaking a Chicago landmark. What are your feelings on the issue?

The Great Blight Debate!

Your community has been blighted by the city due to its old, run-down houses and rat infested streets. Divide into teams of redevelopers and determine the best way to revitalize your neighborhood. The following list are issues that should be addressed:

- Local stores vs. national chains
- Knockdown and rebuild, or renovate existing structures
- Culture and entertainment for the community

Create a presentation for the city council. Remember that you have limited budget and limited space, so you can’t have everything. Be prepared to take questions from the city council (your classmates) and the mayor (your teacher).
This page contains pictures of politicians you may have heard of and seen. If you need to, do a little research about the politician, and then complete the following activities.

1. Compare each politician to Harmond Wilks. Look at their similarities as well as their differences. See how many you can come up with.

2. Create a winning campaign slogan for each politician. You can use the ones in *Radio Golf* as a starting point.

**Fun Facts!**

Here is a breakdown of the current United States Senate:

- 16 women
- 13 Jews
- 3 Hispanics
- 2 Asian Americans
- 1 of Arab Descent
- 1 African American
- 84 men
- 93 Caucasians
- Average age is 64

**Think About It!** Look at the pictures of well-known politicians and the statistics about the Senate. Do they accurately represent the American people? Why or why not? How do we as a country choose our representatives? Do we look for people who share our race? Our gender? Our ideas? Which of these is most important to you? Why?
What's the Difference?

In *Radio Golf*, Sterling states the difference between “nigger” and “negro”:

“Negroes are the worst thing in God’s creation. Niggers got style. Negroes got blind eye yest. A dog knows it’s a dog. A cat knows it’s a cat. But 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.”

Is there a different between *Nigger* and *Negro* or do they both carry the same weight? Is Sterling oversimplifying a difficult concept, or does he have it right? Journal about these questions.

Talk About It

Why do you think Wilson chose to incorporate this word into his play? Do you feel it was appropriately used throughout the play? Explain your answer.

Are There Any Niggers Here Tonight?

Lenny Bruce was a controversial stand-up comedian and social satirist of the 1950s and 1960s. The following is part of a routine he often performed. In it, he claims that the power and hatred of *nigger* is in its suppression, in people not saying the word. After reading the speech, respond to his claim in a journal entry.

Are there any niggers here tonight? . . . what did he say? “Are there any niggers here tonight?” There’s one nigger here. I see him back there working. Let’s see. There’s two niggers. And between those two niggers sits a kike. And there’s another kike. That’s two kikes and three niggers. And there’s a spic, right? Hm? There’s another spic. Ooh, there’s a wop. There’s a Polack. And then, oh, a couple of grease balls. There’s three lace-curtain Irish Micks. And there’s one hip, thick, hunky, funky boogie. Boogie, boogie. Mm-mm. I got three kikes. Do I hear five kikes? I got five kikes. Do I hear six spics? Six spics. Do I hear seven niggers? I got seven niggers. Sold American! I’ll pass with seven niggers, six spics, five Micks, four kikes, three guineas, and one wop.

You almost punched me out, didn’t ya? I was trying to make a point, that it’s the suppression of the word that gives it the power, the violence, the viciousness.

Dig. If President Kennedy would just go on television and say “I’d like to introduce you to all the niggers in my cabinet.” And if he’d just say “nigger, nigger” to every nigger he saw, “Boogie, boogie, boogie, nigger, nigger, nigger, nigger,” till it didn’t mean anything any more! Then you’d never be able to make a black kid cry because somebody called him a nigger in school.

You Decide

There is a debate raging about the appropriate use of the N-word. Some celebrities, such as Oprah, feel that the word should never be said again. Others feel it is appropriate for blacks to use it, but not whites. What do you think about it? Should the word be silenced, or should it be embraced? What about other racial epithets? In small groups, see if you can come to an agreement about what should be done regarding the N-word. Then see if other groups agree.
1. What is the difference in how Wilson wrote and revised his early plays and his later plays?

2. How do each of the characters view community? Is it important to them?

3. Why is it important to be involved with a community?

4. Compare issues facing young people today with issues facing young people in 1997. How are they similar? How are they different?

5. What affect did the Blues have on African American culture? How has August Wilson incorporated that into his plays?

6. Discuss the significance of music in general. Then look at a current style of music; what is its social and historical impact on its audience?

7. Relate the characters, events and subject matter of Radio Golf to Wilson’s own experiences growing up in the Hill District of Pittsburgh.

8. Blight needed to be declared in order for the Hill District to be redeveloped. Do you think that is a fair way to approach redevelopment, or is there a better solution?

9. How has the Hill District changed throughout history? How has Chicago changed throughout your lifetime?

10. Why did the Hill District become such an artistic haven for African Americans? What artistic elements of Chicago do you enjoy?

11. How are Tiger Woods and Martin Luther King Jr. similar? What affect have they had on society?

12. August Wilson’s plays explore the history of African Americans and issues of racism and discrimination. In interviews, he has stated that when people lose connection to their history, they lose their purpose, their direction and their own sense of responsibility to their community. Explore your thoughts about this belief and apply them to issues in your community.
ACT ONE

Scene One

1. Where is the play set? What is the condition of this place? What feeling do you get from Wilson's description of the setting?
2. Who are Harmond and Mame? What do we know about their relationship from this scene?
3. What is Harmond’s current job? What job does he hope to have soon?
4. What does the Post-Gazette want to print in the paper?
5. Why won’t Roosevelt park in the parking lot?
6. For what job is Mame being considered?
7. On what kind of project are Harmond and Roosevelt working? What are they trying to do?
8. To what does Harmond want to change the name of the health center? Why? Why does Mame disagree with him?
9. Who is on the poster Roosevelt hangs on the wall? Who is on the poster Harmond hangs on the wall?
10. What do Harmond and Roosevelt need the city to declare the Hill District for their project to be successful? What will happen if the city doesn’t do this?
11. What kind of camp is Roosevelt working on? Why is he doing this? Why does he think it’s important?
12. Why does Roosevelt keep golf clubs in his car? What has golf done for him and his life?
13. What does Mame see when she drives past the development site?
14. How does Harmond know Sterling?
15. Who was Raymond? What happened to him?
16. What did Sterling do that sent him to jail? Why did he do it? What was he really looking for?
17. What does Sterling think about Harmond trying to bring back the Hill District?
18. What are Harmond and Roosevelt ready to offer Sterling?
19. What does Roosevelt find when he goes to investigate the development site?
20. What does Roosevelt have to pick up? Why does he need them? What will happen without them?

Scene Two

1. Who is Old Joe? Why has he come to Harmond’s office?
2. What does Old Joe think about Harmond running for mayor? Why does he feel this way?
3. Why was Old Joe charged with fraud?
4. Why does Old Joe compare America to a slot machine? What does Harmond think about this comparison?
5. What does Harmond say that makes Old Joe think he’s already acting like mayor?
6. What connection does Old Joe have to the development project? What does he says he has down at the courthouse?
7. What does Harmond have dismissed?
8. What does Roosevelt tell Old Joe is going to happen to the house on Wylie Avenue?
9. Who is Bernie Smith? How does Roosevelt feel about him? How does Harmond?
10. What song does Roosevelt sing at the end of this scene?
Scene Three

1. What are Harmond and Mame arguing about at the top of this scene? What specifically does Harmond want to keep?
2. Why is Harmond running for mayor? What aspects of the city government make him angry?
3. What has happened to Harmond’s car?
4. What are Old Joe’s views on women? What does he say about them?
5. Describe what happened when Harmond first met Mame.
6. Who does Harmond call to invite to the redevelopment groundbreaking?
7. What did the courthouse tell Old Joe when he went to get his deed? Why did this happen?
8. From where has Roosevelt just come? Who was he with?
9. What deal is Roosevelt going to be part of? What will he be getting out of the deal?
10. What does Harmond warn Roosevelt not to let happen?

Scene Four

1. What does Harmond discover about his purchase of the house on Wylie?
2. What news does Mame give Harmond? What has happened for her?
3. What does Sterling read to Harmond? What has he come to check on?
4. What does Sterling say when Harmond tells him the union said Sterling wasn’t a member?
5. What old neighborhood business do Sterling and Old Joe talk about? Why do you think they do this? What might Wilson be trying to say with this discussion?
6. Whose house is the house with the red door, the one Old Joe has been painting?
7. What did Old Joe have ripped off his jacket in Georgia after the war? What does he say to Harmond about his flag?
8. Who was paying the taxes on the house on Wylie?

Act Two

Scene One

1. What slogan has Harmond decided on for his campaign?
2. What solution does Roosevelt offer if the city doesn’t declare the Hill District blighted?
3. Why was the sale of the house on Wylie illegal? What does Harmond say must be done? How does Roosevelt respond to this?
4. What are two things discussed in this scene that indicate a change in Roosevelt and his self-image?
5. What news does Harmond receive on the phone?
6. Why does Sterling say he’s owed money?
7. What is going to happen on Thursday, rightly or wrongly?
8. What is the old fashioned way of dealing with the situation Sterling mentions? What role will he play — what role will Harmond and Roosevelt play in this method?
Scene Two
1. What is the name of Roosevelt’s radio show?
2. What event has Sterling organized?
3. Who did Sterling go to visit at the house on Wylie? What two things did this person tell Sterling about himself and about what he should do?
4. What does Sterling sell Harmond for $20? What does Sterling later point out Harmond has done?
5. Which people does Harmond say he’ll be the mayor of if he’s elected? What plan does he have to improve Pittsburgh?
6. What does Harmond give Old Joe? How does Old Joe respond? What does he not seem to understand, according to Harmond?
7. What comparison does Sterling draw between Harmond’s golf clubs and Old Joe’s house?

Scene Three
1. What did Roosevelt do as soon as he got his new office keys? Who will he almost be able to watch play from his new office?
2. Where has Harmond been? How did it affect him; to what does he want to make changes? What does he show Roosevelt?
3. What does Harmond call to cancel?
4. What is the tie between Harmond and Old Joe? How are they related? How does Harmond react to this news?

Scene Four
1. To where does Harmond want to move? Why does Mame say she can’t do that?
2. Roosevelt says he’s been putting out fires all morning – what does he mean by this? What have the reactions been to Harmond’s new plan?
3. What did Roosevelt get from the police sergeant? How does Harmond respond to what he hears?
4. What has Roosevelt rescheduled for Thursday?
5. What is Harmond going to do at the courthouse?

Scene Five
1. What did Herman do to stall the demolition of the house on Wylie?
2. What’s happening at the house according to Mame? To what does she compare it?
3. What has happened with Mame’s job with the governor? What has happened because she’s tied herself so tightly to Harmond?
4. What does Sterling say Harmond’s problem was? Why is he suddenly having such a hard time, according to Sterling?
5. What does Sterling tell Roosevelt he is? Why does he say that?
6. Who does Sterling blame for his lack of advancement in the world? How does that person respond to his accusation?
7. What does Sterling do just before he leaves?
8. Roosevelt reveals that the judge has done what? What has he ordered?
9. What is Roosevelt going to buy from Harmond? Why can he do this? Where is he going to get the money?
10. What does Harmond decide to do just before the play’s end?
RESPONDING TO THE PLAY
### What Did You Think?

After watching the play, use the following questions as a guide to write a review of the production. You don’t have to answer every question; you can focus on one specific aspect of the production, such as lighting or acting, or you can review the production as a whole. You may want to look in the newspaper for some other theatre reviews to get a model.

#### Create a Headline

Create a headline and a byline for your review. A headline is the title, and the byline is your name. Make the headline catchy; for example:

*Radio Golf* Hits a Hole-In-One by Roosevelt Hicks

#### Write an Introduction

The introduction should include the name of the play, the type of production—musical, comedy, drama, etc.—and the performing group. Remember, this is your first chance to grab the reader’s attention, so make it interesting.

#### Write about the Theme

Describe the main subject matter or message of the play. What is the playwright’s purpose? Does it succeed? Does the play add something to your understanding and experience in life?

#### Write about the Director

Was the blocking—the movement of the actors—appropriate? Was the stage picture balanced? Were any elements of the story confusing?

#### Write about the Lighting and Sound

How did the lighting and sound establish the atmosphere of the play? Were there particular moments where the lighting or sound was particularly effective? When? Did the music add to or distract from the play?

#### Write about the Set Design

How did the set enhance the atmosphere of the play? Did the set work well with the lights, costumes, and sounds? Did the set reflect the themes, type, and style of the story? Was there an aspect of the set that was especially captivating? What made it work so well?

#### Write about the Costumes, Make-up and Hairstyles

How did these elements add to the atmosphere of the production? Were they correct in terms of period fashion? Did these elements illuminate the themes, type, and style of the play? Did the costumes, make-up, and hairstyles reflect the personality of the characters? What clues did they provide?

#### Write about the Actors

Were the actors convincing? Did you understand what the characters wanted? Were there any outstanding performances? Did the actors make their relationships clear?

#### Your Opinion

Discuss how you feel about any aspects of the play, and the production as a whole. Be sure to back up your opinions with specific examples.

It may help to discuss the play with your classmates before you write your review!
Writing Your Student Response Letter

Now that you have discussed your responses to the show in the classroom, it is time to let us know what you thought! Your letter responding to the performance plays an important role at Goodman Theatre. Pick one of the artists involved with Radio Golf—it can be an actor, the director, a designer—and write him or her a letter giving your feedback about his/her work. Be honest, and don’t be afraid to ask questions—you may get a response!

Your teacher will send us your letter, and we’ll forward it to the artist.

If possible, please use a computer to write your letter. If you can’t, please be sure to write legibly!

Remember to choose a specific person to write a letter to!

Here are two great student letters we received in response to King Lear.

Dear Mr. Falls,

I attend North Lawndale College Prep High School. . . After attending the play, I was amazed at what you had done with it. My class and I have been studying this play for a while now, and I can honestly say that this modern production of King Lear opened my eyes to new ideas and concepts not only about the play or Shakespeare, but also about the world we live in today.

Mr. Falls, your production of King Lear was so unique and educational that it left my classmates and I intrigued and full of questions. While watching the scene following the French’s defeat where the numerous dead bodies were thrown on a stage as a result of the war, I felt as if you were sending a message to the viewers about the current war saying that if we don’t stop the madness that’s occurring in society today as a result of the war, then nothing will be accomplished, but death…

Your vision of Lear and the portrayal of all of the characters in the production was unique and really had a powerful effect on me as an audience member. I really believe that this production not only attacks the audience, but it hits home in the heart about what’s occurring in society today. Thanks for inviting us, and congrats to you and your cast on a great performance.

Crystal Wills

Dear Kim Martin-Cotton,

Let me start off my saying that you did a magnificent job of portraying the role of Goneril. This play was the best play I have ever seen. Watching this play inspires me to consider a career in the acting business. What inspired you to get into the acting business? What do you do to get into character? Are there any similarities between you and Goneril? The deep voice that you used shows that you are one who takes charge and does not take crap from anyone. I thought you did a great job.

I noticed a huge difference between reading the script versus watching the play. When my drama class read the Goodman script, it seemed like it took months. When reading the play, it was so hard to understand although it was interesting; there was no comparison to the live play. As we were watching the play, I didn’t even bother to look at the time. I was so into it. I loved it.

Maria Soledad R. Irizarry