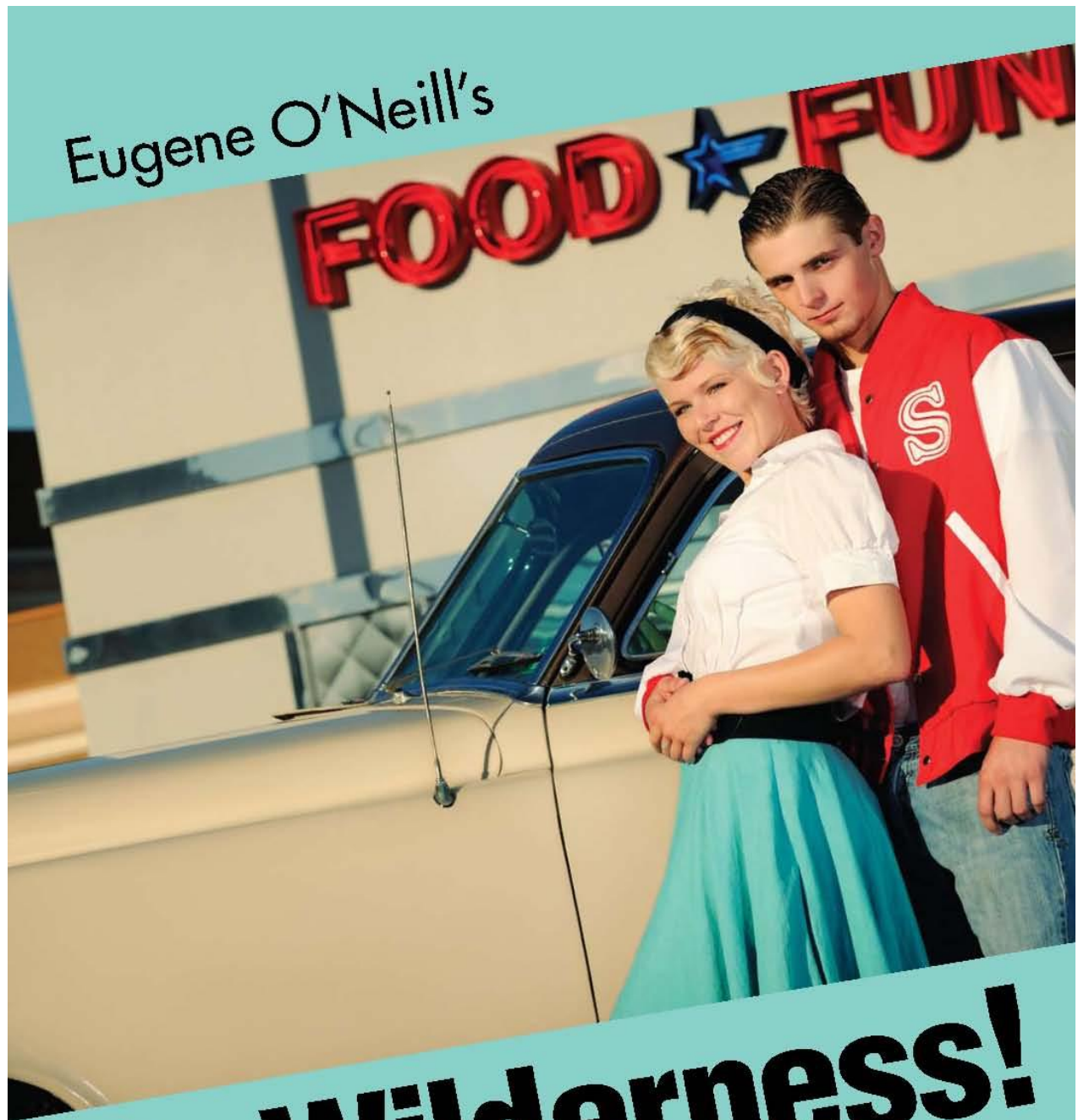


# *Inside*OUT



## Ah, Wilderness!

NTC REP | *AH, WILDERNESS!* | BY EUGENE O'NEILL  
DIRECTED BY LARRY HECHT | PRODUCING PARTNERS: ISABELLE CLARK AND DIANA & MIKE KINSEY

# InsideOUT

Marti J. Steger.....Contributor, Editor  
David Saphier..... Contributor, Editor  
Linda Eller .....Editor



## The National Theatre Conservatory

Daniel Renner, Dean

A division of the Denver Center Theatre Company

## The Education Department

Daniel Renner .....Director of Education  
Tam Dalrymple Frye.....Director Denver Center  
Theatre Academy

Contact us at 303/446-4892

[www.denvercenter.org/education](http://www.denvercenter.org/education)

## The Education Department also offers:

**Denver Center Theatre Academy On-Site Classes:**  
affordable, high-quality theatre classes for  
children, teens and adults taught by professionals.  
The Academy serves more than 1,900 students  
on-site annually. Scholarships are available.  
Call 303/446-4892 for information.

**Dramatic Learning:** Teaching Artists from the  
Academy bring the creative process into  
classrooms to support and enhance core  
curriculum. Workshops and residencies in any  
discipline are tailored for each classroom.  
Workshops can be held in the classroom or on-  
site. Call 303/446-4897 for more information.

**Family Fun Forum:** This event is FREE. Families will  
rotate from classroom to classroom, learning new  
skills and winning tokens. Families spend their  
“earnings” on face painting, balloons and more.

**Sunday 12 – 2 pm, April 17, 2011**

**Living History:** Living History provides an exciting  
way of exploring the humanities in classrooms  
through the energy and expertise of professional  
actor/teachers. Innovative techniques are used to  
link historical events and literary themes to  
current social issues. The students actively  
participate in a new kind of experience that  
directly ties them into the subjects they are  
studying. It challenges them to engage their minds  
and gives them a dynamic forum to express their  
opinions to others, to ask questions of  
themselves, and to examine their own “cultural”  
perspectives. Living History is designed for all high  
school grades and levels.

**Dates:** September through November.  
Call 303/446-4851 for more information.

For more information go to our website  
[www.denvercenter.org/education](http://www.denvercenter.org/education)

## 50's Style

Eugene O'Neill, America's only Nobel Prize winning playwright, died in a New York City hotel in 1953. His parting words: "Born in a hotel room and (God damn it!) died in a hotel room!" A perfect parting shot for one of the darkest writers of all time. O'Neill could make Strindberg and Ibsen look cheery. His only "comedy" was a play originally titled "Nostalgia", written in 1933. Renamed *Ah, Wilderness!* (a misquote from *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*), it went on to be one of his most popular and beloved works. Although he often called it a piece of fluff and denied it reflected the wishes of his youth, it serves as a perfect balance to the autobiographical nightmare of *A Long Day's Journey into Night*.

For a decade here at the National Theatre Conservatory, I've been leading a workshop in O'Neill with the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students. In class each year, we read aloud *Ah, Wilderness!*. It never fails to entertain and move the students and myself. Each class responds as if having discovered a hidden piece of treasure.

Choosing it as a part of this year's Rep seemed both logical and whimsical. It is a play reflecting gentler times, simpler times -pre World War I (1906), a play of loving family relationships, a play of hope for a bright America. O'Neill, of course, knew what truly lay ahead for our country (a horrific war and a family-rending Depression) but he couldn't help toying with the audience's emotions and nostalgia for earlier times. The past is as much a fiction as the future.

One of the pleasures of the NTC REP is our freedom and mandate to reinterpret classics in ways that may not be mainstream in vision; i.e., a graphic novel *Hamlet*, a film noir *Harvey*, a surreal *As You Like It*, etc. So in envisioning *Ah, Wilderness!*, the America of 1906 seemed safe and pretty and faraway. We discovered another nostalgic world that pre-dated great changes in American culture. It was a time of turmoil, of

## Synopsis

Originally set on the Fourth of July in 1906 and reset in 1956, *Ah, Wilderness!* focuses on a young Richard Miller and his poet's rebellion against the conformity of family life and the apparent self deception it creates. Feeling out of place in his parent's idyllic home he longs to explore life in all its different aspects. Discontent and determined to discover the deeper mysteries of life armed with the words of his dead and not-so-dead poet predecessors, the young Richard sets out on an adventure into the land of unknown pleasures. His rebellion is given a jumpstart by a letter of rejection from his innocent girlfriend, and a surprise invitation to the infamous Pleasant Beach Hotel from a college friend of his brother's. There he experiences many "firsts"; his first kiss from a "working" girl no less, his first drunken stupor and his first fight. Richard soon comes to the realization that the indulgences romanticized by his literary heroes are a far cry from reality. Like the prodigal son, he quickly returns to his loving family and a happy ending seems inevitable when he learns that his girlfriend still loves him. *Ah, Wilderness!* became one of O'Neill's greatest successes, and for many, it will be a nostalgic trip down memory lane, while others will share O'Neill's own yearning for a childhood they never had.

growing up, of Rock n' Roll, of transistor radios, of TV dinners, of James Dean, of "I Love Lucy", of "Father Knows Best", and of puppy love. It was a time of civil rights and civil "wrongs"; a time that would eventually lead to Dallas, Selma, Vietnam, Watergate and the upending of our way of life. A time reminiscent to many of us who lived through it and remember; the summer of 1956!

By bringing *Ah, Wilderness!* forward 50 years in language, in look, in politics, we investigate what is universal and timeless about the American family and true "family values". Can O'Neill's genius stand the move? Well, we'll find out, but I bet it can and will! Great writing is great anytime; anywhere. Great stories aren't limited but enhanced by change now and then. So don't have a cow, we're gonna crank it up and give you a cookin' *Ah, Wilderness!* 50's style! Larry Hecht - Director

## *The Playwright*

Eugene O'Neill, was born Oct. 16, 1888 in a hotel room, he spent his early childhood criss-crossing the country with his family. His father, James O'Neill, was a successful touring actor and his mother, Ella, accompanied her husband with their two sons. After age seven, O'Neill was educated at boarding schools in New York and Connecticut. His summers were spent at the family's only permanent home, a modest house overlooking the Thames River in New London, CT. He attended Princeton University for one year after which he left school to begin what he later regarded as his real education in "life experience." At the age of 24, he held a job for a few months as a reporter and contributor to the poetry column of the New London Telegraph but soon came down with tuberculosis. Confined to a Sanitarium for six months, he began to write plays.

O'Neill's first efforts were awkward melodramas, but they were about people and subjects that had previously been considered unfit subjects on the American stage. O'Neill's first credit as a playwright came in the summer of 1916, with a group of young writers and painters. They produced his one-act sea play *Bound East for Cardiff*. This group later became the Playwrights' Theater in Greenwich Village. Their first bill in 1916 saw O'Neill's New York debut. His first full-length play, *Beyond the Horizon*, was produced on Broadway in 1920. By this time, the young playwright had already built a small reputation.

*Beyond the Horizon* impressed the critics with its tragic realism and O'Neill won his first of four Pulitzer prizes in drama for the play. For the next 20 years his reputation grew steadily, both in the United States and abroad. After Shakespeare and Shaw, O'Neill became the most widely translated and produced dramatist. Between 1920 and 1943 he completed 20 long plays and a number of shorter ones. O'Neill's plays were written from an intensely personal point of view, deriving directly from the scarring effects of his family's tragic relationships.

O'Neill's only comedy, *Ah, Wilderness!*, appeared on Broadway in 1933. Written in a lighthearted, nostalgic mood, the work was inspired in part by the playwright's desire to demonstrate that he could portray the comic as well as the tragic side of life. Significantly, the play is set in the same place and period, a small New England town in the early 1900s, as his later tragic masterpiece, *Long Day's Journey into Night*. *Ah, Wilderness!* was characterized by O'Neill as "the other side of the coin," meaning that it represented his fantasy of what his own youth might have been, rather than what he believed it to have been.

O'Neill was old fashion and his manuscripts were hand written. Sadly, just after completing *A Touch of a Poet* in the late 1930s, O'Neill was struck with a crippling illness which made it impossible for him to hold a pencil, effectively ending his writing career. O'Neill's final years were spent in grim frustration. Unable to work, he secluded himself in a Boston hotel, seeing no one except his doctor, a nurse, and his third wife, Carlotta Monterey. O'Neill died Nov. 27, 1953; as tragic a figure as any he had created for the stage.

O'Neill was the first American dramatist to regard the stage as a literary medium and the only American playwright ever to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. Through his efforts, the American theatre grew up during the 1920s, developing into a cultural medium that could take its place with the best in American fiction, painting, and music.

<http://www.eoneill.com/biography.htm>

## Who's Who

**Nat Miller** – In his late fifties, Nat is the even-tempered father of the Miller family and publisher of the Evening Globe

**Essie Miller** – Somewhere in her mid 40's Essie is full of motherly love and concern. She is the heart of the family.

**Arthur** – A self-important sophomore at Yale, Arthur is the eldest son of the Miller family.

**Richard** – The budding “rebel” of the family, 17-year-old Richard is exploring the painful process of losing and finding himself.

**Mildred** – The only daughter of the Miller's, Mildred is an energetic 15-year-old who loves to torment all of her brothers.

**Tommy** – The youngest child in the Miller family; he is full of the typical curiosity and impishness of an 8-year-old boy.

**Sid Davis** - Essie's 40-ish brother and the charming family “screw-up”.

**Lily Miller** – Nat's younger sister, she is quietly becoming a spinster while she denies her love for Sid and waits for him to grow-up.

**David Mc Comber** – The bitter town merchant whose daughter has been “corrupted” by Richard.

**Muriel Mc Comber**- Mc Comber's daughter and in love with Richard Miller.

**Nadia** – is the well-meaning though poorly skilled young serving girl from Russia.

**Wint Selby** – is a wild classmate of Arthur's from Yale

**Belle** - a young “working” girl.

**George** – the bartender at Pleasant Beach Hut

## Socialism

As Richard struggles to find himself and to establish an identity outside of his typical middle-class nuclear family, he turns to radical thinking. Socialism seems to be at the heart of Richard's rants. His favorite ammunition becomes the quotes of “revolutionaries”. Whether 1906 or 1956 this would have been considered dangerous thinking and ultimately endangered the entire family which may explain part of Mrs. Miller's dismay over her son reading such subversive books and sending notes with these ideas to Muriel.

While Socialism was gaining in popularity in the US during the early 1900's, it was still considered a radical idea and was not widely accepted. At its height, the Socialist Party boasted a membership of almost 900,000 members. It appealed to blue collar workers hungry for improved working conditions and higher wages. The Socialist Party was included within the Progressive Movement which was popularized by Woodrow Wilson. Unlike the Communist movement, the Socialist Party at that time felt no obligation to adhere to an international party-line but rather dealing with “American problems in an American manner.” In 1911, there were 18 Socialist candidates for mayor, and they nearly won the mayoral races in Cleveland, Ohio, and Los Angeles, California.

By the 1950s, the Communist and Socialist parties had virtually disappeared. McCarthyism and the Cold War had many Socialists fleeing the party; membership fell below 2,000. During the McCarthy era, thousands of Americans were accused of being communists or communist sympathizers and became the subject of aggressive investigations and questioning before the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and also private-industry panels, committees and agencies. The primary targets of such suspicions were government employees, those in the entertainment industry, educators and union activists. Many people suffered loss of employment, destruction of their careers, and even imprisonment. Richard's father, Nat, surely would have been susceptible to McCarthyism and the threat to his career as a newspaper editor if he or his son were branded a “commie”.



# *What Richard Was Reading*

**Thomas Carlyle** - A Scottish satirical writer, essayist, historian and teacher during the Victorian era  
*The French Revolution a History* - The three-volume work written in prose which is considered to be an authoritative account of the early course of the Revolution in France.

**Oscar Wilde** - Nineteenth century poet and playwright. His theories and flamboyant lifestyle made him highly controversial in Victorian society.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* - the only book written by Wilde

*The Ballad of Reading Gaol* – a poem about his time in prison after being convicted of homosexuality.

**Tennessee Williams** – Considered one of the greatest playwrights in American history, he was awarded four Drama Critic Circle Awards, two Pulitzer Prizes and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

*The Resemblance between a Violin Case and a Coffin* - Told from the perspective of a little boy, this story is a fascinating tale of the coming of age and leaving behind childhood.

**Arthur Miller** – An American playwright and essayist, often in the public eye, particularly during the late 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s, a period during which he testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee, received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and was married to the movie star, Marilyn Monroe.

**JD Salinger** - An American author, best known for his 1951 novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, as well as his reclusive nature.

*Catcher in the Rye*- popular with adolescent readers for its themes of teenage confusion, angst, alienation, language and rebellion

**Henrik Ibsen** – The “father of modern drama” is a nineteenth-century Norwegian playwright.

**Richard Swinburne** - A poet and literary critic, often wrote of the decadences in life.

*Anactoria*- dramatic monologue on the relative values of carnal love and artistic immortality.

**Omar Khayyam** -A mathematician, philosopher, astronomer, physician, and poet whose work had an impact on literature and societies through the translation of his works and popularization by other scholars.

*The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* –Highly popular Persian poem translated into 4,000 lines of English text.

<http://www.wikipedia.org/>

# What Are They Saying?

**Sachem Club** – A men’s social, political and business club

**John D. Rockefeller Jr.** – Son of the oil tycoon J.D. Rockefeller.

**Tumbril**- Large farm carts used to carry French Revolutionist to their execution

**Nikita Khrushchev**- Led the Soviet Union as First Secretary and then Premier from 1953-1964

**Mirabeau, Marat, Robespierre** – French revolutionaries idolized by Richard

**Put that in your pipe and smoke it** – An idiom for telling someone they must accept what you are saying whether they like it or not

**Jack LaLanne**- Fitness guru and nutritional expert, he opened the nation’s first fitness center in 1936, he died in 2011

**J. Edgar** – Reference to J. Edgar Hoover, the first director of the FBI

**On the QT**– A slang expression which indicates that the subject under discussion is confidential

**Square** – A “not cool” person or idea, a conformist  
Cut the gas – Keep it quiet

**Dollies** – Cute girls

**Long Green** – Money

**Like Crazy**- Better than cool

**Make the scene** – Attend an event or activity

**Real fast** – Sexually active

**Dead Janes** – Boring proper girls

**On the stick** – Bright, intelligent or prepared

**Beemans** – Chewing gum invented in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by a doctor in Ohio; that tastes like licorice and anise

**Burn rubber** – A car reference like “peal out”, be quick

**Splitting their sides** – ROFLOL – Rolling on the floor laughing out loud

**Jack Benny** - Comedian, vaudevillian, and actor Benny played the role of the comic penny-pinching miser

**Deadeest burg** – Boring and uneventful place

**Roll up the sidewalks** – When a town is shutting down for the night

**Kinsey Report** – Controversial reports from the 1940s and 50s on human sexuality.

**Lucretia Georgia** - A confused reference to Lucrezia Borgia (1480-1519), a noblewoman who figured prominently in the Italian Renaissance. A member of an extremely powerful and infamous family, she is associated with ambition, incest, and murder.

**Dutch courage** – A slang term meaning the fake courage gained while being intoxicated

**Sweetbreads**- Considered a delicacy they are thymus glands and/or pancreas of calves, lambs and piglets under one year old

**Johnny Weissmuller** – An Austro-Hungarian-born American Olympic swimmer and actor made famous for his distinctive Tarzan yell

**Hedda** – Richard refers to this character from the Ibsen play *Hedda Gabler* as though she is someone he knows.

**Delirium tremens**- A violent loss of mental and physical faculties marked by trembling and quaking, often resulting from the excessive and prolonged use of alcohol.

# A Boyhood Wish

By Christa Skiles

Eugene O'Neill often is acknowledged as the country's greatest playwright, a four-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize for drama and the only American dramatist to earn the Nobel Prize for literature in 1936. O'Neill's own tortured family history (an absent actor father, an alcoholic brother and a mother addicted to morphine.) is familiar to many theatergoers, brought to the stage with unblinking honesty in the author's tragic masterpiece *Long Day's Journey into Night*. But, in *Ah, Wilderness!*, though O'Neill was quick to emphasize that this earlier play was more "wishing out loud" than recollection, he, nevertheless, found numerous autobiographical inspirations. In his only comedy, O'Neill shows us, through his depiction of the Miller family, a more compassionate and idealized view of small-town family life.

The "large, small-town in Connecticut" that serves as the setting for *Ah, Wilderness!* clearly represents New London, the O'Neill family's own summer home. Eugene's father James, a successful touring actor, shuffled the family from city to city, from boarding school to hotel. New London was the only permanent home the family ever knew.

In addition to idealizing O'Neill's own family, the Millers of *Ah, Wilderness!* resemble two of New London's other households. John McGinley, a friend of James O'Neill, encouraged the actor to purchase property in New London. The patriarch of one of the town's large families and a reporter for one of its newspapers, the *New London Day*, he was a neighbor to the O'Neill's. Eugene admired the family's closeness, pulling several of the Miller children's names directly from members of the McGinley family. Frederick Latimer was the editor of the *New London Telegraph*, where Eugene worked shortly as a reporter and as a contributor of poetry. Eugene O'Neill considered him the first person truly to encourage his writing and to tolerate his rebellious political views.

O'Neill frequently brushed aside the idea that any similarities existed between himself and Richard Miller in *Ah, Wilderness!* "The idea that Richard in the play resembles me at his age is absurd," O'Neill said. "I was the exact opposite...I had no youth." But the truth is that O'Neill did share many of the characteristics he ascribed to the young Richard. In 1906, when the play is set, O'Neill was roughly the same age as Richard, and he too was about to head off to college (although to Princeton, not Yale) Acquaintances of that time described O'Neill as a dreamer and a romantic, but one with a rebellious side, all qualities exemplified by Richard in the play. O'Neill liked to say that his portrait of Richard was inspired by the personality of his friend, Charles Hutchinson Collins. Both young men were fond of poetry and shared a passion for the works of what were then considered to be scandalous authors. O'Neill described their place in New London society as "twin disreputable's in the village gossip."

Muriel McComber, the object of Richard Miller's affections in *Ah, Wilderness!*, is in reality a composite of three New London girls that Eugene O'Neill dated over his time there. In 1905, he enjoyed a brief infatuation with Marion Welch, the daughter of a doctor from Hartford who was visiting a friend in New London. It was O'Neill's first documented romance. He experienced a more serious relationship with Maibelle Scott during the fall of 1912. Theirs was a passionate romance complete with clandestine meetings, parental disapproval and earnest plans for marriage. Intense but short-lived, the romance ended when O'Neill became ill with tuberculosis. The third inspiration for the character of Muriel likely was Beatrice Ashe, the most serious romance of the three, which lasted from 1914 to 1916. O'Neill wrote to Beatrice of his intentions to marry her while he was studying playwriting at Harvard. However, Ashe ultimately dissolved the relationship because she felt oppressed by both his neediness and his inability to keep his promises to stay sober.



# *A Long Day's Journey Commentary*

by Margaret Loftus Ranald

This remarkable autobiographical play is generally considered to be O'Neill's finest work, and he himself believed that the last scene was the best he had ever written. It is a play of little outward action but a great deal of interaction of past and present, in terms of the lives of four members of this intertwined family who cannot forget. It observes the Aristotelian unities scrupulously and has refined dramatic action to a minimum, being an orchestration of confessional and self-exculpatory monologues interspersed with familial interactions. The autobiographical elements are clear, and for that reason O'Neill restricted its release, refusing to allow it to be printed or played until twenty-five years after his death when all the participants would be dead. But he reckoned without Carlotta Monterey, his third wife who insisted on its release. Later, Karl Ragnar Gierow, director of the Royal Dramatic Theatre of Stockholm, with the assistance of the then secretary of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, managed to obtain permission for its presentation in Stockholm, where it was a resounding success. A New York production followed shortly after, and the play has since been ranked as possibly the greatest naturalistic American drama to date, winning O'Neill, posthumously, a fourth Pulitzer Prize.

In this drama, O'Neill resurrects and exorcises old ghosts, coming to terms with his father but not with his mother, for whom he shows some sympathy but never forgiveness or understanding. *Long Day's Journey* belongs primarily to the playwright's father James O'Neill, with O'Neill's own exculpation of himself in the character of Edmund. The tale of his tuberculosis in 1912 is true, as was his father's original intent to send him to the state farm. In fact, O'Neill actually did spend a little time there before transferring to Gaylord Farm, the locus of *The Straw*. The accounts of O'Neill's sea travels and attempted suicide are also true, but O'Neill is easy on himself as Edmund, for he edits out the fact of his first marriage and first son, as well as the help his father gave him to leave the country. The circumstances of Mary Tyrone's addiction are also identical to those of Ella Quinlan O'Neill, including the death of a child from measles, though O'Neill omits her breaking of the habit. But the play is more than mere autobiography because it shows the struggle of human beings in torment, and at times O'Neill assesses things with the greatest clarity, especially his own poetic talent. In *A Long Day's Journey*, he reaches greater heights than elsewhere, partly because of his intense emotional involvement. The setting, in Monte Cristo Cottage, New London, goes beyond either realism or naturalism because this little world encapsulated in fog becomes symbolic of the human condition and the traps in which human beings find themselves caught, without possibility of release, because they are so disoriented by fog that they have lost their bearings, both psychological and spiritual—a metaphor for loss of faith, for unfulfilled ambitions, for wasted lives which end in death without ever having celebrated life but continually avoided it whether through liquor or morphine. Only Edmund seems to have the possibility of escape, though in this play it is tenuous. *Long Day's Journey* also has affinities with the earlier *Ah, Wilderness!* which might be termed the comic view of O'Neill's family life in New London and which has also gained considerable popularity. The later play, however, is by far the greater achievement both emotionally and dramatically. Here O'Neill has come to trust his actors, giving each one of them a chance to shine, for every part requires a professional of great ability, even star quality, for the success of a production.

*A Note on Names:* That O'Neill named his dramatic family Tyrone is very important because it underlines his interest in his own Irish heritage. Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, who took upon himself the clan title of "The O'Neill" in 1593, kept the forces of Elizabeth I occupied in Northern Ireland from 1598 to 1603, submitting six days after her death and being permitted by James I to retain his earldom. The name Edmund is also significant because it corresponds to that of the heroic Edmond Dantès, the Count of Monte Cristo, the role with which O'Neill's father was irredeemably associated, and also to Edmund Burke O'Neill, the middle child of James and Ella O'Neill who died at the age of eighteen months.

<http://www.eoneill.com>

# Activities

## Memory Story

Although they can be structured differently, memory plays usually begin with a recollection, delivered by the protagonist as a monologue. The character remembers an important moment in his or her life, and then the story of the past unfolds on stage. While there is not a conventional narrator in *Ah, Wilderness!* as in *Our Town* or *The Glass Menagerie* it is a memory play with a nostalgic look back, in this instance to a wish of what could have been, while *Long Day's Journey into Night* also by O'Neill is a darker exploration of the truth of his family and their painful history together.

Memories are subjective; often colored by what we knew then and what we know now. Details are skewed; joys and hurts are grown or diminished based on the audience and the storyteller. When we reflect on a memory, what are we looking for? Are we seeking understanding, wanting to keep someone or thing alive or holding to a tradition?

Ask students to call up a past event and be prepared to share it with the class. An example would be:

A happy memory

A traumatic event

An intense conversation

A favorite moment from childhood

Close your eyes and “look” at the memory

What stands out?

Do you remember specific sights, sounds, smells, or tastes?

Where are you?

Who are you with?

What is happening?

Is there a specific part of the memory that is clearer?

Ask students to write a personal narrative about that past event. What did the questions trigger? Are there specifics they may have previously forgotten about that are now clearer? Do they think certain aspects of this memory have been impacted by their present circumstances? Are there pieces of information they didn't have at the time that change what they see now?

Next ask the students to flip this narrative, i.e. if it was happy it will now be sad.

**New CO Standards Writing:** Effectively use content-specific language, style, tone and text structure to compose or adapt writing for different audiences and purposes.

**New CO Standards Writing:** Write with clear focus, coherent organization, sufficient elaboration, and detail.

## All in the Family

O'Neill explores a number of relationship dynamics in *Ah, Wilderness!* He explores the familial relationship between husband and wife, parents and children, and siblings. He also comments on the relationship friends between lovers. Define some of these relationships:

How do you think Nat sees his son? Is he really a rebel or simply trying to figure out who he is? Do you believe Nat treats his son fairly? Would you have handled the situation differently? What about Nat's relationship with his other children?

Does Richard have the same type of relationship with his mother that he does with his father? Why? Why do you think Essie reacts so strongly to the books Richard is reading? How does this impact her relationship with her son?

Richard has several models of adult relationships in his life. The relationship between his parents and the relationship between his Uncle Sid and Aunt Lilly. Which do you think he is attempting to modeling his relationship with Muriel after? What do you think happens to Richard and Muriel after the end of the play?

Write a narrative from Richard or Muriel's point of view. What is happening to them as Richard goes to college? Do they stay together? Why or why not? Do their families approve of their relationship?

**New CO Standards Writing:** Effectively use content-specific language, style, tone and text structure to compose or adapt writing for different audiences and purposes.

**New CO Standards Writing:** Write with clear focus, coherent organization, sufficient elaboration, and detail.

## Timeline

The 1950s mark the beginning of radical change in US history. The McCarthy era was an important point in that change.

1. Ask students to research significant events in history leading up to, during and following the McCarthy era and place them in chronological order.
2. Create a timeline using the information gathered.
3. Discussion Questions: What changes or innovations were happening during these times? How was the world changing? How are these historical events included in the play *Ah, Wilderness!*? What are the parallels of these significant events to United States History or global current events? How would life be different today if this event never occurred?

**New CO Standards History** – Analyze key historical periods and patterns of change over time within and across nations and cultures.

## Exploring the language

While adapting the play from 1906 to 1956, one of the challenges was keeping the intent of the play the same while making the language relevant to the era it was set in.

Below are examples of words, phrases or people who were changed from one era to another. Now modernize them even further. In the course of 100 years what if anything remains the same? Why?

1906	1956	2011	Future
Rube	Square		
Nick Carter	Hardy Boys		
“Nearly broke”	“Short on the long green”		
Cloves	Beemans		
“It’s a pippin”	“It’s a hottie”		
Babies	Dollies		
Natty	Cool		
Eugene Sandow	Jack LaLanne		
Spooning	Make-out		
Pierpoint Morgan	J.D. Rockefeller		
“Tie that bull outside”	“Take that bull outside”		
Emma Goldman	Nikita Khrushchev		

**New CO Standards Research and Reasoning:** Evaluate explicit and implicit viewpoints, values, attitudes, and assumptions concealed in speech, writing, and illustration.