

# WU?@therep

## BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS

by Neil Simon

Directed by Steven Woolf

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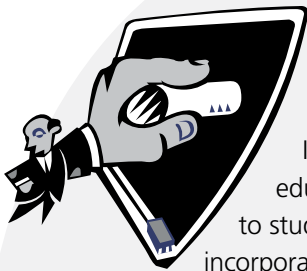


# the 11

At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast. But we also know that some things are worth slowing down

for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together **WU? @ THE REP**—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (**A/S/L**), a plot summary (**FYI**), biographical information (**F&F**), historical context (**B4U**), and other bits and pieces (**HTH**). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means **IRL**, anyway.

## CU@therep!



### The Teacher's Lounge

In an effort to make our educational materials accessible to students and easy for educators to incorporate into the classroom, our study guide is written in a student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, [www.repstl.org](http://www.repstl.org), for additional information including educational games, activity suggestions and behind-the-scenes information. Any materials, either from this guide or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom. As always, we appreciate

your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

**NEATO!**

Show Me Standards: CA 3, 5, 6; FA 2, 3, 4, 5; SS 2, 6  
and Illinois Learning Standards: 1, 2, 5, 15, 16, 18, 25, 27.

## WELCOME!

The desire to learn, insatiable when awakened, can sometimes lie dormant until touched by the right teacher or the right experience. We at The Rep are grateful to have the opportunity to play a role supporting you as you awaken the desire for learning in your students.

Neil Simon is considered one of America's leading playwrights for a good reason. He has the ability to tell a story of specific people in a specific time and yet, also make it timeless and universal. This is definitely the case in *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. Though Eugene's story is set in the 1930s, his journey through adolescence is one to which your students can relate. This play will remind them (and us) that family may drive you crazy but they are still your family and in the end, they are your anchor as you navigate life.

It would be a good idea to take a minute on the bus to give your students these quick theatre etiquette reminders:

- This show has an intermission; there will be time for bathroom breaks before the show and partway through.
- The actors can hear the audience and appreciate the laughter, gasps and quiet attention to action. However, talking, moving around and eating is very distracting to others and can dampen the energy of what is happening on stage.
- Pictures, phone calls and texting are not allowed at any time during the performance.

Live theatre won't allow your students to take a passive role—they must work with us to create the experience which takes the learning deeper. Our unique ability to fuse words and images onstage allows your students to explore new ideas as well as excites their imaginations. We will do our part so your students will be stirred to understandings and self-awareness while delving into new and familiar worlds. You are doing your part by using The Rep to extend your intellectual and aesthetic curriculum. Thank you!

Marsha Coplon  
Director of Education

# A/S/L

**EUGENE JEROME** is a precocious 14-year-old with lots of imagination who dreams of playing major league baseball and becoming a writer.

**STANLEY JEROME** is Eugene's 18-year-old brother who passes on his wisdom to Eugene and works to help support the family.

**KATE JEROME** is Eugene's mother who plays the strong Jewish matriarch role of taking care of everyone because it's her family duty.

**JACK JEROME** is Eugene's sensible father who works tirelessly to make sure his family and his sister-in-law's family are provided for.

**BLANCHE MORTON** is Kate's younger, widowed sister who moved in with the Jeromes when she couldn't financially support her own family alone

**LURIE MORTON** is Blanche's 13-year-old daughter who is treated delicately due to a heart condition.

**NORA MORTON** is Blanche's beautiful 16-year-old daughter who dreams of becoming a professional dancer.

# H

**MEMOIRS:** an account of one's personal life and experiences; an autobiography.

**DIPHTHERIA:** an infectious upper respiratory tract illness that forms a false membrane in the air passages, especially the throat.

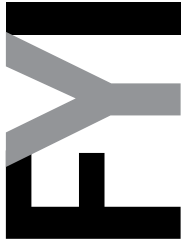
**DAPPER:** neat and elegant; usually refers to men.

**BOARDER:** someone who pays to stay in a private room temporarily and is supplied with daily meals.

**TUBERCULOSIS:** an infectious disease that usually affects the lungs and is lethal in many cases.

**BOARDWALK:** a raised walkway made of boards or planks, often built along a beach.

**SALOON:** a place for the sale and consumption of alcoholic drinks; a bar.



## SPOILER ALERT!

THE ENTIRE PLAY takes place at the Jerome family home in Brighton Beach, a lower middle-class ocean-side neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, that is mostly inhabited by Jewish, Irish and German populations. Act I takes place around 6:30 in the evening in September 1937 during the Great Depression; Act II takes place a week later, again at 6:30 in the evening.

THE FIRST SCENE opens with 14-year-old Eugene Jerome throwing a ball against the house, playing an imaginary game of baseball. Inside, his mother Kate is setting the table for dinner, while his aunt Blanche who, along with daughters Laurie and Nora live with the Jeromes, is sewing. Because Eugene is giving his aunt a headache, Kate tells him to stop, and he goes up to his room to journal. Here, he starts making confessions to the audience. The first is that he dreams of playing for the Yankees or becoming a writer. The second is that he resents the fact he is always being told to run errands, while everyone coddles his 13-year-old cousin Laurie because she has a heart flutter. He explains to the audience that Blanche, Laurie and Nora moved in with his family three-and-a-half years ago after Blanche's husband died of cancer, and she couldn't support the family alone.

DOWNSTAIRS, KATE BEGS Blanche to stop sewing as it's worsening her poor eyesight, but Blanche is trying hard to make enough money so that they don't have to rely on Kate's husband Jack to support all of them. Kate insists that everything's fine. Although space and money are tight and the atmosphere is stressful, it's obvious there's a great sense of family obligation and closeness in the household.



SOON AFTER, an excited 16-year-old Nora rushes in and says she's been offered the chance to audition for a dancing role in a Broadway show, but she needs a parent's permission first. Blanche, unsure of what to do, tells Nora to wait until her Uncle Jack is home for them to discuss the matter. Nora is surprised and resentful her mother doesn't take the assertive parental role.

LATER ON, Eugene's 18-year-old brother Stanley comes home and confesses to Eugene that he got in trouble with his boss for sticking up for an African-American employee who was being unfairly punished for a mistake someone else made. The boss is demanding a written apology from Stanley or else he is fired. Although Stanley knows his family can't afford for him to get fired, he feels strongly that he shouldn't apologize based on principles. He tells Eugene he plans to talk to their dad about the ethical dilemma.

JACK THEN comes home where he confesses to Kate that the party favors company where he works part-time is going out of business. Worried he won't be able to put food on table, Kate reassures him that something is bound to come up. During the dinner, the family hears on the radio that Hitler has moved into the Austria, and they discuss the possibility of war. Jack knows it's inevitable, and they worry about the safety of their relatives in Europe, and whether or not they'd be able to house them if they escape to America.

BECAUSE OF ALL the current stress, Blanche is hesitant to bring up Nora's audition with Jack, so Nora brings it up herself. Jack says he won't give her a yes or no, but suggests they go for a walk where he'll offer advice. In the meantime,

Eugene speaks to Stanley upstairs about his developing sexual urges and guilty lust for Nora. Stanley tells him it's perfectly normal but to not act on his feelings for Nora for obvious reasons. They then proceed to talk about other topics as erotic dreams and masturbation. Downstairs Blanche talks to Kate about her guilt over not being able to be a strong parent to her daughters. Then she confesses to Kate that she has a date next week with their neighbor Frank Murphy. Kate disapproves because she's heard he's an alcoholic womanizer, but Blanche questions if she's prejudiced against Mr. Murphy because he's Irish.

NORA AND JACK come back, and Jack explains that he advised Nora to finish high school because education is important, but the decision is up to her and her mother. Blanche tells Nora the answer is no. Nora becomes very angry and runs up to her room. Later, Stanley confesses to his father about the situation at work. Jack is sympathetic to Stanley's principles, but he explains how much the family would suffer if he lost his job. Because of this, Stanley decides to apologize.

A WEEK LATER, the mood is somber and tense because of Nora's crankiness over Blanche's decision and Jack's minor heart attack three days prior. To add to the stress, Stanley tells Eugene privately that he lost \$17 gambling in an effort to make extra money. Amid all the stress, Blanche gets ready for her date and is complimented by everyone on how beautiful she looks, but she is disappointed when she finds out Nora went out with her boyfriend without bothering to see her mother first. Later on, Kate asks for Stanley's salary for the week, and he is forced to admit he lost it. Overwhelmed, Kate tells Stanley to lie to his father and say he was robbed. Blanche receives a note from Mr. Murphy's mother that says he is unable to go on their date because he caused a car accident while

drunk and is currently in the hospital. Kate says it's no surprise, which angers Blanche and starts a huge fight, in which Kate finally admits that she resents having to take care of everyone all the time. Racked with guilt, Blanche says she plans to move out and will send for the girls as soon as she finds a job.

UPSTAIRS, ALSO racked with guilt, Stanley tells Eugene he's going to join the Army and send his check home every month to the family. After he leaves, Eugene recognizes the moment as the official end of his childhood. Later on, Nora comes home and she and Blanche have a long talk, in which Nora admits to not feeling as loved as the sickly Laurie. Blanche tells her she will work to change that, but she refuses to apologize because she feels all she does is apologize and it only creates self-pity. Having gained a new understanding of her mother, Nora is no longer angry with her. Afterwards, Blanche and Kate talk about how despite all the resentment, they still love and need each other. Although Blanche still feels she needs a place of her own, she plans to continue staying at the Jerome home while she looks for a job.

THE NEXT DAY everyone is in better spirits, and Stanley returns home because he realized his family needed him more than the Army. Stanley admits losing the money to Jack but promises to make it all back by working extra hours. Jack brings up the impending war, and how important family is during the tough times. As the play closes, Jack receives a letter from his cousin and learns that his family escaped Poland and they are on the way to New York. Overjoyed, the entire family starts discussing how they'll adjust sleeping arrangements so that the relatives can stay with them. Although money and space will be even tighter, Jack comments how the fact that they escaped is all that's important. How will the family cope with this new development?







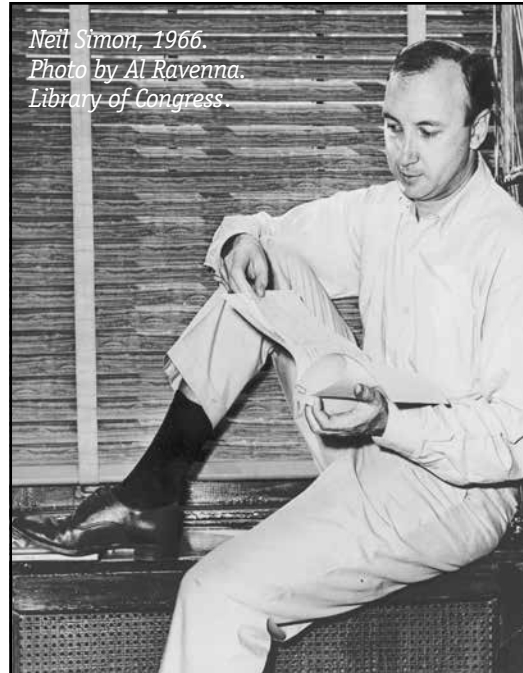
*BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS* is a celebrated play filled with classic American themes, so it should come as no surprise that it was penned by one of the most famous, most successful American playwrights: Neil Simon. Never heard of him? Well even if you have no idea who Mr. Simon is, there's a good chance you've heard of at least one of his plays.

#### BORN IN THE BRONX

in 1927 as Marvin

Neil Simon, the playwright grew up in Manhattan. One of his first major gigs was in the 1950s on the writing staff of *Your Show of Shows*, a famous live television comedy series that also had other comedians working on it at the time, including Mel Brooks, Woody Allen and Carl Reiner. In the 1960s, Simon turned his attention to Broadway where he penned his first hits *Come Blow Your Horn* and *Barefoot in the Park*. In 1966, Simon wrote what is one of his most well-known hits, *The Odd Couple*, which was inspired by his brother Danny's situation when, after his divorce, he moved in with another divorced man.

A major hit for Simon, the play was adapted for the big screen in 1968 when Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau starred in the very successful film version that also spurred a popular television series. During this time, Simon went on to pen numerous classics for stage and screen, including *Sweet Charity*, *The Out-of-Towners* and *The Star-Spangled Girl*.



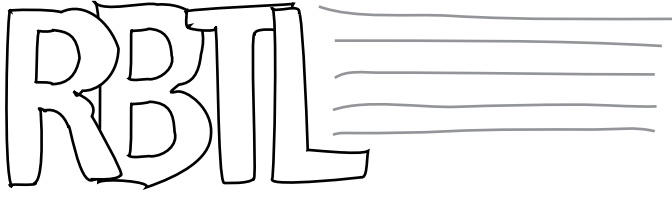
AMIDST ALL HIS professional success, Simon experienced a personal setback when his wife of 20 years died in 1973. He then went on to marry actress, St. Louis native and Nerinx/Webster University alum Marsha Mason, with whom he collaborated numerous times, including on the film *The Goodbye Girl* and the film version of Simon's critically praised play *Chapter Two*, which tells the story of a widowed writer finding love

again, based on Simon's and Mason's actual life together.

ANOTHER STRONG EXAMPLE of his autobiographical work is his "Eugene trilogy" consisting of the plays *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Biloxi Blues* and *Broadway Bound*, which debuted between 1983 and 1986. The trilogy featured the coming-of-age story of Eugene Jerome and his journey from adolescence to becoming an aspiring comedy writer. The plays take place during the Great Depression/World War II era, the setting mainly being a working-class New York neighborhood, the time period and place in which Simon grew up.

OVER HIS 50-YEAR CAREER, Simon has received widespread critical recognition that includes 17 Tony award nominations and three wins, four Oscar nominations for screenplays, the 1991 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for his play *Lost in Yonkers*, and the 2006 Mark Twain Prize for American Humor.





## FAMILIAL OBLIGATION

Supporting family is of the utmost importance in this story. Although it puts a great deal of stress on Jack and Kate, they take in Kate's sister and her daughters without question and work hard to support them. At the end of the play, although the family is struggling, they are eager to take in relatives who narrowly escaped Hitler's terror in Europe. When is a time a family member has been there for you without asking for anything in return? Have you ever made a sacrifice in order to help a family member?

## DREAMS AND IMAGINATION

Although this story deals a lot with the harsh reality of the Great Depression and threat of World War II, the playwright made it a priority to include his characters' hopes and dreams. Eugene freely dreams of becoming a major league baseball player or a professional writer; we even get the sense it will be possible when we find out he gets good grades and is naturally smart. Nora gets the opportunity to audition for a Broadway play. Why do you think the playwright decided to include these storylines? Even in the toughest circumstances, are dreams still important and even possible? What dreams do you have? What personality traits do you have that would help you to achieve dreams? What obstacles might you have to overcome?



## CONFESSIONS

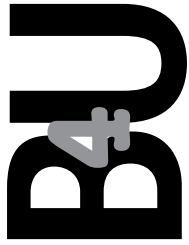
It seems the characters in this play are each ashamed of something that they must eventually confess. Eugene confesses his sexual urges to Stanley. Stanley confesses his almost getting fired and gambling to Eugene, his father and mother. Blanche confesses to Kate her date with a man she knows Kate would disapprove of. Kate confesses her resentment of her always being the one who gets to be taken care of. Have you ever held something in because you were ashamed? Why were you afraid to tell someone? When you finally confessed it, how did you feel? Was the person more or less upset than you thought?

## COMING OF AGE

As the main character Eugene is emotionally and physically growing up; he's confused by his feelings and doesn't know what to do with them. Ruled by his hormones, his lust after his cousin Nora and his erotic dreams make him feel guilty. His loneliness after his brother Stanley leaves makes him feel vulnerable and fearful because even in the trying times, his family stability has been a source of comfort. When was a time you realized you were growing up and things were changing? How did it make you feel?

## THE LIMITATIONS OF POOR HEALTH

Blanche has very poor eyesight, which prevents her from sewing as much as she'd like to make more money. Laurie has a heart condition, which prevents her from being physically active. Jack has a minor heart attack that prevents him from working. The physical disabilities have serious effects as Blanche and Jack fear not being able to support their families, and Laurie doesn't get to fully participate in life or make friends easily. Are you physically limited in any way? How does it hold you back? What have you learned from it that has made you stronger in other ways?



## EUGENE'S AMERICA

Taking place in 1937, the play is definitely dealing with the hardships of the time. Here's some more information on the tensions the Jerome family is dealing with.

### THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Due to the stock market crash in 1929, the economy was still reeling during this time. Banks failing and businesses closing caused more than 15 million Americans (one quarter of the workforce) to become unemployed. Money was tight everywhere, and families struggled to send children to school and put food on the table.

### BEGINNINGS OF WORLD WAR II

To make matters worse, European tensions were rising and were felt all around the world. Although World War II didn't officially begin until 1939 when Germany invaded Poland, Adolf Hitler had been rising in power for quite some time. By 1936, he had already violated the Treaty of Versailles by reoccupying a demilitarized zone in the Rhineland, as well as developed a "Four Year Plan" that outlined policies and steps to take for Germany to become a completely self-sufficient country and to be ready for war within the next four years. In 1937, Germany declared an alliance with Italy, and signed the Anti-Comintern (Anti-Communist) Pact with Japan, beginning the formation of the Axis Powers. In 1938, Hitler became supreme commander of the German armed forces.

### U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICIES

Jack is relieved when he hears his relatives have made it out of Poland safely. This ends the play on a serious yet positive note and gives the play a great sense of hope. However, the U.S. was greatly opposed to immigration during the Great Depression due to the economic state and unemployment rate. About 100,000 German Jews arrived in the U.S. in the 1930s and escaped Hitler's reign of terror. However, the U.S. did not implement an organized rescue policy for Jewish victims of Nazi Germany until 1944 when, under pressure from some government officials and the American Jewish Community, President Roosevelt established the War Refugee Board (WRB) to help rescue refugees. Along with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the World Jewish Congress, as well as many resistance groups in Europe, the WRB helped to rescue as many as 200,000 Jews from Nazi-occupied countries. It received its due praise for this life-saving accomplishment though many were and still are upset when considering how many more lives could have been saved had the WRB been established sooner.

## TIMELINE

1918

The end of World War I in 1918 resulted in a defeated Germany with a depressed economy and an injured national pride. The newly established government, the Weimar Republic, tried to establish a democratic course, but extreme political parties from both the right and the left struggled violently for control.

1919

The Treaty of Versailles was signed disarming Germany, who was also forced to pay reparations to France and Britain for the huge costs of the war.

Adolf Hitler joined the right-wing German Workers' Party and rose among the ranks due to his captivating speeches, which encouraged national pride, militarism, anti-Semitism and a commitment to a racially







"pure" Germany. Hitler changed the party's name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party, or the Nazi Party, for short.

#### 1925

While in prison for committing high treason with the failed Beer Hall Putsch governmental overthrow in Munich, Hitler wrote and published volume one of *Mein Kampf (My Struggle)*. The book outlined radical ideas of German nationalism, anti-Semitism and anti-Bolshevism.

#### 1929

The U.S. stock market crashed causing stock prices to plummet and banks to call in loans. An estimated \$30 billion in stock values would "disappear" by mid-November.

In Germany, the Nazi Party grew to 108,000 members from 27,000 in 1925.

#### 1930

More than 3.2 million people were unemployed in the U.S., more than double the number before the October 1929 crash.

#### 1931

"Food riots" began to break out in parts of the U.S., where men and women smashed windows of grocery markets and stole food.

Resentment of foreign workers increased during the unemployment crisis as many U.S. citizens accused immigrants of stealing jobs.

#### 1932

More than 750,000 New Yorkers were reported to be dependent upon city relief each receiving \$8.20/month; an additional 160,000 were on the waiting list.

#### 1933

German president Paul von Hindenburg appointed Hitler as Reich Chancellor.

The Dachau concentration camp was created.

The Nazi regime created Special Courts to punish political dissent and pass civil laws that ban Jews from holding positions in the

civil service, in legal and medical professions and in teaching and university positions.

President Roosevelt began his first 100 days in office and instituted the New Deal, a collection of programs designed to produce Relief (providing jobs to the unemployed) Recovery (growing the economy) and Reform (regulating Wall Street, banks and transportation).

The U.S. government established a relief and employment program called the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Designed for young men 17-27 years old, the CCC found men work in national forests, parks and federal land for nine-month stints.

#### 1934

After President Hindenburg died, Hitler combined the offices of Reich Chancellor and President, declaring himself Führer.

#### 1935

The Works Progress Administration was created in the U.S. and employed more than 8.5 million individuals in 3,000 counties across the nation. Earning only \$41.57/month, workers improved or created highways, roads, bridges, and airports. Additionally, the WPA put thousands of artists, including writers, painters, theater directors and sculptors, to work on various projects.

President Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act of 1935 into law, which was financed through a payroll tax.

Hitler announced the Nuremberg Laws, which stripped Jews of their civil rights as German citizens and defined them as a race separate from Germans legally, socially and politically.

#### 1937

The slow economic recovery created by New Deal programs suffered a setback as unemployment rose.

## THEN AND NOW

Having grown up during the Great Depression in New York City, Neil Simon could draw from his personal experience to create his characters, and likely inserted much of himself into the characters of Stanley, Nora, Laurie and especially Eugene. Even though you didn't grow up in the 1930s, it's likely you have more in common with the teenagers of that time than you might think due to the current recession. Here's some more insight on what teenagers went through during the Great Depression, how it was illustrated in *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, and how you might be able to relate.

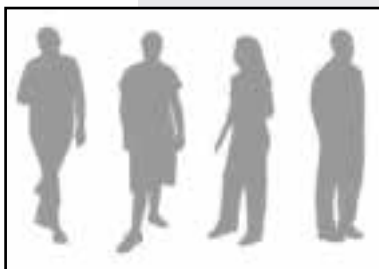
### COMMON GROUND

**Play plotline: Jack loses one of his jobs making him scared he'll be unable to put enough food on the table. Stanley, due to a mixture of guilt over his gambling and a desire to become more independent, leaves home to join the Army.**

At the height of the Great Depression in the mid-1930s, about 14 million American workers were unemployed causing many teenagers to work and contribute to family income or even to leave home early so that parents had fewer mouths to feed. Many teenagers followed the harvest seasons and found short-term jobs as farmers. Some found meals and temporary lodging at mission churches or the Salvation Army. Some of the luckier young people got temporary jobs with the Civilian Conservation Corps, which gave them food and a place to live for six months or more. However, young drifters earned only a fraction of adult wages. George Rhodes, who was interviewed for PBS' documentary *Riding the Rails*, said he once worked all day unloading a coal car and his employer paid him with two tomatoes.

More than 250,000 teenagers were living on the road, many hopping freight trains for temporary shelter and to travel to new areas where they could find jobs. Life was tough and dangerous, as migrants faced daily threats of arrest, theft, hunger or even losing a limb when hopping trains.

Even without the physical dangers, the loneliness of the lifestyle was enough to cause depression. James San Jule, another *Riding the Rails* interviewee who was 17 when he left home, lived in a subway kiosk for four months while he stole food from the market. During one of his interviews in the documentary, he recalls receiving a birthday cake mailed to him from his mother and eating it alone on a hillside while crying.

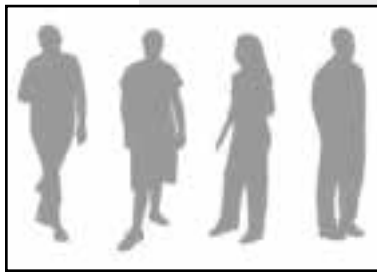


- \* How has the recession affected your family?
- \* Is your family feeling the stress of strained finances? How so?
- \* Has one of your parents lost a job or had to pick up a second job? Have you had to start working to pay for things your parents can no longer pay for, such as new clothes or gas money?

## A "HARD-TO-GET" DAY'S WORK

**Play plotline:** *Stanley almost loses his job over an ethical dilemma. This is especially stressful because jobs are scarce, and he won't be able to easily get another one.*

Even if teenagers today have not been forced to leave home, they face struggles of the current recession, one of them being unemployment. According to recent studies, the teen jobless rate is two to three times worse than the national average, and 25% of American teenagers were out of work in July 2011, compared to 15.5% in 2006. The reason teens are taking such a hit is because there are plenty of more experienced work-seeking adults for employers to hire. These facts are disappointing not only for teenagers who could use extra money but also because part-time work can teach valuable skills and help prepare for the responsibilities of a full-time job.

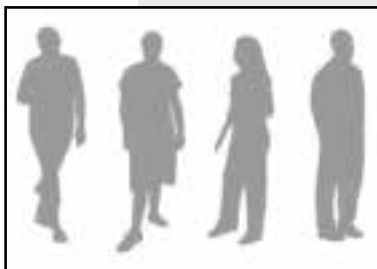


- \* Are you working right now? Have you tried to get a job but are having a hard time finding a place that's hiring?
- \* If you do have a part-time job right now, what skills are you learning that you think will be helpful in your future career?

## LIFE LESSONS

**Play plotline:** *Although Stanley is forced to swallow his pride, he apologizes to his boss for being disrespectful because he knows how much his family needs his salary. Nora hopes to be a Broadway dancer not only because it would fulfill her dream but also because she thinks her income can help support her family. Jack proves a strong parental figure when he teaches both Stanley and Nora about the importance of responsibility and education.*

Through the harsh realities of the current recession, many teenagers are finding a silver lining by learning valuable lessons. In fact, a recent Charles Schwab survey showed that the majority of teenagers have had major perspective shifts, such as making them much more appreciative of what they have and being less likely to ask for material things from their parents. On another positive note, the survey shows that parents are more likely to talk about financial responsibility with their teens; three out of four teens said their parents have had this discussion with them. In fact, as a result of the recession, 73% of the teens surveyed say they've learned it's important to have enough emergency savings in case times get tough, and 51% learned it's important to understand the consequences of borrowing money.



- \* Has hearing about how hard some families have been hit by the recession made you more grateful for what you have? What do you appreciate more now than you did five years ago?
- \* Have you had a conversation with your parents about financial responsibility? How do you make sure you're smart with your money?

# SWDYT?

**BLANCHE:** *How can you go to Philadelphia? What about school?*

**NORA:** *School? Momma this is a Broadway show. This is what I want to do with my life. Algebra and English aren't going to help me on the stage.*

**BLANCHE:** *You mean not finish school? Not get a diploma? Do you know how hard it is today for a girl to get a good job without a high school diploma?*

- \* Do you sympathize more with Blanche or Nora in this argument? It's important to follow your dreams, but isn't it important to get an education as well? Do you think Nora is being naïve? Or do you think Blanche is being too conservative? If you were in Blanche's place, what would you tell Nora?

**BLANCHE:** *I am not going to be a doormat for all the frustrations and unhappiness that you or Aunt Kate or anyone else wants to lay at my feet...I did not create this universe. I do not decide who lives or dies, or who's rich or poor or who feels loved and who feels deprived. If you feel cheated that Laurie gets more than you, then I feel cheated that I had a husband who died at 36. And if you keep on feeling that way, you'll end up like me—with something much worse than loneliness or helplessness and that's self-pity.*

- \* Blanche unapologetically tells all this to her daughter Nora who feels like she never received as much attention as her sickly sister Laurie. Do you think Blanche was being insensitive to Nora's needs or was she doing Nora a favor by teaching her a valuable lesson? Why was this monologue a turning point for Blanche? How do you think this lesson

will affect Nora the rest of her life? Why do you think Blanche views self-pity as being worse than loneliness or helplessness? When's a time you knew you were feeling sorry for yourself and placing blame on others? How did it affect you?

**JACK:** *On the other hand, you did a courageous thing. You defended a fellow worker. Nobody else stood up for him, did they?*

**STANLEY:** *I was the only one.*

**JACK:** *That's something to be proud of. It was what you believed in. That's standing up for your principles.*

**STANLEY:** *That's why I didn't want to write the letter. I knew you'd understand.*

**JACK:** *The question is. Can this family afford principles right now?*

- \* Stanley struggles with a major ethical dilemma of either standing up for his principles or keeping a job to help put food on the table. This causes him a lot of stress. Have you ever felt pressure like this? Do you think Stanley could have handled the situation better? What could he have done? When's a time that you had to stand up to authority? What resulted from it? Was it worth it?