

FADE IN:

EXT. 1839 WYLIE AVE- WILSON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Present Day. An Urban Public Junior High school in Pittsburgh, PA. Manicured lawn, perimeter protected by gate.

INT. WILSON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A HISTORY CLASS. Posters of African-American "Black History Month" celebration bios ie George Washington Carver decorate the room, along with valentine decorations.

Room is full of students who are determined to get through life by doing the absolute minimum. These include Slacker, and Jaleesha, a biracial female.

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TEACHER

He. . .or she, who doesn't know his history his condemned to repeat it.

C3

I know my history.

SLACKER

Man, this is butt. Can I get my ipod back?

TEACHER

No. Today, in honor of Black History month, were going to the experience of being black

C5

What?

TEACHER

Let me finish. Were going to study the experience of being lack through the eyes of Pittsburgh's own August Wilson.

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She puts large poster on board which children stare at. She opens a book and hands out plays.

At her disposal is also a series of historical slides of the Hill District at various eras.

She opens a large brown box and hands a copy of August Wilson's "Gem of the Ocean" to each student. Some take it with interest, examine the cover, others don't acknowledge its existence on their desktop.

SLACKER

Man, this is butt. Can I get my ipod back?

JALEESHA

I know all about being black. I know about slavery, Jim Crow, the Abolitionists, Frederick Douglas, George Washington Carver, Martin Luther King and Harriet Tubman. Can I be excused?

TEACHER

No. You know the facts. You don't know what it's like.

JALEESHA

Yes, my grandmother told me.

TEACHER

She wasn't alive. I'm talking about what it's like to live through the day to day struggle.

SLACKER

What the hell do you know about struggle?

TEACHER

More than you think. So without further ado, let's begin with Gem of the Ocean. This play is set in 19[04]

SLACKER

Man, this is butt.

TEACHER

In this play you will find out what it's like as a steel worker, an underground railroad technician. .  
.you know this city was built by Andrew Carnegie and on  
the backs of the steel workers.

STUDENT 3

I don't wanna read no old plays.

TEACHER

Don't think of it as reading. Think of it as experiencing. I've attached some additional materials

(she distributes a handout)

To help you understand the unique character that is Aunt Ester-

STUDENT 4

More work? You've got to be kidding me.

TEACHER

Aunt Ester is an important character. She shows up in 4 of his plays, -the first one to include her is the one I include selections of here, "Two Rains Running" she also shows up in, "King Hedley" and "Seven Guitars" these two also have recurring characters and connections in them.

STUDENT 5

We're not going to have to read all of them are we?

TEACHER

Yes, I hope that sometime in life you will, but today we'll only be studying these two. Gem of the Ocean is the only play to feature her as a main character, and Radio Golf features her only in response to her acknowledged existence in other plays.

STUDENT 3

Can I be the narrator?

TEACHER

August Wilson doesn't use a narrator in his plays. Everything you need to know you will hear about in the dialogue.

SLACKER

Man, this is butt. When can I get my ipod back?

TEACHER

You'll like Gem of the ocean. There's a lot of action in it.

STUDENT 4

I'm getting some action tonight.

TEACHER

The story opens with a dramatic event. I'm not going to give away the story and tell you what it is, but just imagine, on stage, this wouldn't be seen. You have to use your imagination. Close your eyes and see the river. IT's night, the year is 1904. There are no cars, no computers, no cell phones, or ipods.

STUDENT 3

What was the point in living?

TEACHER

Good question. You'll find life wasn't so different back then. August Wilson focuses his history not on what was missing, but what is the same. You'll find these characters just as alive today. Keep your eyes closed. In front of you is a salmon colored door. It is the only bright spot in a sea of blackness. This spot is 1839 Wylie Avenue, the setting for both of our plays today. Are you ready now? Let's dive in.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

[should read the act descriptions, open the book and read, her VO goes to the actual opening]

EXT. 1839 WYLIE AVENUE- NIGHT

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Thick rain, fog, black as night, one beacon of light is a salmon colored door, sticking out of the darkness ~~like a lighthouse over water.~~

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EXT. OHIO RIVER, PGH PA- NIGHT

It is dark, murky. A loud SPLASH IS HEARD.

Lights are turned onto the bridge where a small mob gathers to watch the scene. Most are African American, all are poor.

CAESAR WILKS, a police officer whose conceit is higher than his stature stands over the bridge. The accused, GARRET BROWN a young black man, has jumped over the bridge and now treads water in the dark river.

CAESAR

Get back up here!

BROWN

I'm innocent! ~~Innocent I tell you!~~

Caesar pulls a stick from a nearby wagon and reaches it to the water.

CAESAR

Come on out of there, ~~let me help you.~~

BROWN

~~Never!~~

CAESAR

~~Come on now,~~ I won't arrest you. I'll get you a bowl of soup and some dry clothes.

BROWN

Bullshit.

CAESAR

If you're so innocent then come out here and prove it!

BROWN

Go to hell! You and your whole family can go to hell. I'll be laughing down at you from heaven.

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CAESAR

Get up here!

Brown takes one last gulp of air then sinks to the bottom.

ELI, a fifty year old housekeeper is among the crowd at the bridge watching the scene unfold. He walks away, sadly shaking his head.

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Eli passes Citizen Barlow, An African American male in his thirties. Hiding behind a corner clutching a small bucket of nails, Citizen watches the scene unfold with fear. When he sees Caesar turn his way, he quickly runs off. The old fashioned clod hopper shoes he wears give his footsteps an odd sound. When he speaks, his thick southern accent announces his Alabama roots.

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CREDIT SEQUENCE