



## An Autobiographical Journey

Guide for Curriculum Unit 88.03.01  
by Carol Leavitt Altieri

This curriculum unit studying Eugene O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey Into Night" should take four weeks to cover adequately and to experience deeply. Before writing their own autobiographical play, students will be asked to write vignettes, poems, short stories, and dialogue which express their own life experiences and which are engaging to read. After fully experiencing and dramatizing "Long Day's Journey Into Night," students will be asked to write an autobiographical play. The plays can be performed within the classroom and they do not need to be very elaborate.

This curriculum unit is most approachable for students in the eleventh and twelfth grade American literature class or in an advanced drama class that will include other classics such as: "The Night of the Iguana," "A Streetcar Named Desire," "The Glass Menagerie," "The Death of a Salesman," "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," "Raisin in the Sun," "Fences," "The Emperor Jones," "Strange Interlude," "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf," "A Soldier's Play," and "Ah, Wilderness!" as a comparative group of American contemporary plays.

My objectives for the unit are as follows:

1. To improve "literary analysis skills" and comprehension by understanding cause and effect, the differences between fantasy and reality, and past and present.
2. To improve writing skills by providing a variety of assignments, including the one-act autobiographical play.
3. To understand dramatic elements, such as symbols, stage direction, and irony and how they are used in the context of the play.
4. To help students explore and understand the intentions, characterizations, and meanings of "Long Day's Journey" and to interpret the development or lack of it in the four characters.
5. To enrich students' vocabulary and to encourage them to use the vocabulary of the theater, such as: climax, exposition, atmosphere, dialogue, fantasy, setting, tragedy, stage directions, tempo, and theme.
6. To have students look deeply into O'Neill's view of his family experiences and his paradoxical vision of life.
7. To have students appreciate the outstanding dramatic and psychological scope of "Long Day's

Journey.”

8. To encourage students to bring “Long Day’s Journey” alive through oral reading at first and then as a scenario for an audience performance in the classroom.

(Recommended for American Literature classes, grades 10-12; Contemporary Drama classes, grades 11 and 12; and English Literature classes, grades 11 and 12)

**Key Words**

*Contemporary O’Neil Eugene Drama Long Day’s Journey Night Autobiography Reading Instruction Journals Writing*

---

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>