



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1990 Volume II: Contemporary American Drama: Scripts and Performance

What's a Nice Girl Like Me Doing in a Place Like This?

Guide for Curriculum Unit 90.02.09
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I think this unit will be of particular interest to female teachers. Most male teachers will probably hate it—my husband does. That's okay with me. I know this paper does not favor the male perspective. This paper first addresses two important concerns of the feminist movement: marriage and motherhood. It then goes on to examine the status of these two institutions today.

The feminist movement destroyed many of the traditional modes and mores from which women previously took their cues. Women are still very much in the process of redefining their roles in American society, especially the roles of wife and mother. In this country there are still many myths about marriage and motherhood which we continue to sanctify and perpetuate.

I have selected four plays from modern and contemporary American drama which have mothers and daughters as central characters. These plays, all written by women, are the core of this unit. Each play offers its own unique perspective of the mother/daughter relationship. By examining the relationships of the women in the plays, in conjunction with the issues raised by the feminists, students will better comprehend the role the feminist movement has played in contemporary society.

Educated understanding is the most powerful weapon society has to use against prejudice and discrimination. Unless we as a nation raise our level of consciousness concerning all forms of social injustice, then we as a nation will continue to perpetuate discriminatory attitudes and behaviors which are dangerous and harmful to the well-being of society as a whole. I, for one, think that the classroom is an excellent place to plant the seeds of social justice. I hope that some of you, my colleagues, will want to do a little gardening of your own. Perhaps some day we will harvest a healthy crop of minds—minds that can discriminate in a more positive manner.

(Recommended for English, Drama, Life Skills, and History, grades 7-12)

Key Words

Feminist Drama History Women's Movement American

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