

**Teacher's Guide For
Great American Authors Since 1650
Program 8: 1958 - Present**

For grade 7 - College

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LINKS TO CURRICULUM STANDARDS

The design for this program was guided by the National Center for History in the Schools, United States History curriculum Era 3: Revolution and the New Nation-Standards 1 and 3 for grades 5-12, Era 9 Postwar United States -Standard 4 for grades 5-12, and the California Public School Standards for Historical Content, Grade 8 - Standards 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 (#4 - #7), Standard 8.8 (#1) and Grade 11, Standards 11.1 (#2, #3), 11.3 (#5), 11.5 - (#3, #4) and 11.10 (#2, #3) and Grade 12, Standards 12.1, 12.4 and 12.5; and the California State Board of Education English Language Arts Grade 8, Section 3.0 – 3.5 Literary Response and Analysis;

Grades 9 and 10, Section 3.0 – 3.5 Literary Response and Analysis; and Grades 11 and 12, Section 3.0 – 3.5 Literary Response and Analysis.

MATERIALS IN THE PROGRAM

Teacher's Guide -This Teacher's Guide has been prepared to aid the teacher in utilizing materials contained within this program. In addition to this introductory material, the guide contains the following:

- *Suggested Instructional Notes*
- *Student Learning Goals*
- *Test Questions on Blackline Masters Quiz for duplication and handout to students.*
- *Gallery of Great American Authors*

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

It is suggested that you preview the program and read the related Student Goals and Teacher Points. By doing so, you will become familiar with the materials and be better prepared to adapt the program to the needs of your class. Please note that this show is set up to be played continuously and you will probably find it best to follow the program in the order in which it is presented, but this is not necessary. The program can be divided into chapters accessed through the DVD's Menu Screen under Chapter Selects. It is also suggested that the program presentation take place before the entire class and under your direction. As you review the instructional program outlined in the Teacher's Guide, you may find it necessary to make some changes, deletions, or additions to fit the specific needs of your students. After viewing the programs you may wish to copy the **Test Questions on Blackline Master Quiz 8A** and distribute to your class to measure their comprehension of the events.

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF PROGRAM

A DVD of Great American Authors Since 1650, Program 8: 1958 to Present is a new approach to presenting in an exciting way the great literary tradition of the United States. The program is designed to present American authors and literature in a way that promotes successful student learning. The program begins with Lorraine Hansberry's ground breaking play about the search for the identity of American black male. It then examines the black humor movement of the American novel through writers Joseph Heller, Truman Capote and Kurt Vonnegut; the maturity of the baby boomer generation in John Updike's *Rabbit Series*; and the new direction of ethnic writers with Amy Tan, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and August Wilson. The program ends by discussing the new frontier of American literature with Cormac McCarthy.

The program is laid out so that it can be viewed in its entirety, or by individual chapters accessed through the DVD's Menu Screen under Chapter Selects. Each chapter presents a complete story of a exceptional American literary figure, as well as themes of American literature: the unique and innovative American voice, Nobel Prize winners, women authors, ethnic authors and playwrights. The chapters show how American authors told the story of America as its chroniclers and interpreters. Most importantly, historical themes and figures are clearly presented using state of the art visuals.

Below is a list of the program with its chapters. Using this program, teachers can create a lesson plan to cover the specific issues, themes and historical figures mentioned.

Program 8: 1958 – Present

1. 1959 - Lorraine Hansberry's Play *A Raisin in the Sun* is Produced
2. 1961 – Joseph Heller Writes *Catch-22*
3. 1966 - Truman Capote Writes *In Cold Blood*
4. 1969 – Kurt Vonnegut Writes *Slaughterhouse Five*
5. 1982 – John Updike's *Rabbit is Rich* Wins Pulitzer Prize for Literature
6. 1989 - Asian American Amy Tan Publishes *The Joy Luck Club*
7. 1993 – Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and August Wilson Redefine the Black Experience
8. 2007 – Cormac McCarthy Wins the Pulitzer Prize for *The Road*

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM 8

Program 8: 1958 – Present

Program eight examines how American themes of alienation, social injustice, and what it means to be an American, find new voices as the nation enters a new century of writing.

Chapter one looks at Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, a poignant depiction of black family life in the 50s.

Joseph Heller's satiric look at World War II army air force life is discussed in chapter two.

Truman Capote's creation of the novel as documentary is outlined in chapter three.

Chapter four looks at how Kurt Vonnegut blended science fiction, fantasy and dark humor to create an original American literary voice.

John Updike's portrayal of the American dream is discussed in chapter five.

Chapters six and seven show how ethnic authors greatly expanded America's literary voice.

Chapter eight examines how author Cormac McCarthy continues America's tradition of literary innovation and brilliance in the 21st century.

1959 - Lorraine Hansberry's Play *A Raisin in the Sun* is Produced

Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:

- Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun* captured the angst and dilemma facing American blacks
- Two years after the play debuted on Broadway, it was made into a movie with a brilliant performance from Sidney Poitier
- The play and the movie showcased the black experience for all Americans

1961 – Joseph Heller Writes *Catch-22*

Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:

- Joseph Heller was a leader of the black humor style of American fiction

- Black humor writers satirized serious subjects with a dark comic style and voice
- In *Catch-22*, Heller pointed out the absurdities of military bureaucracy
- The title *Catch-22* was derived from an incoherent military regulation, invented by Heller, known as ‘catch-22’
- The expression ‘catch-22’ has entered the English language as a term for an absurd and contradictory situation or bureaucratic rule
- Other black humor stylists are John Updike and Philip Roth

1966 - Truman Capote Writes *In Cold Blood*

Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:

- Truman Capote was one of the great southern American writers
- Capote was a part of the post WWII dark style of writing that placed eccentric characters in unusual situations
 - His early novels were *Other Voices Other Rooms* and *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*
- Capote’s *In Cold Blood* would change the landscape of American media in the 20th century by combining journalism with narrative fiction
 - The book’s new docudrama style is a blend of fiction and historical fact
 - The book tells the chilling true-life story of two drifters who brutally murdered a Kansas farm family in 1959

1969 – Kurt Vonnegut Writes *Slaughterhouse Five*

Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:

- Kurt Vonnegut was a writer from the Midwest
- Vonnegut was a member of the dark comedy school of writing, using satire to point out the flaws in life
 - Vonnegut’s worldview essentially saw all of human activity as inescapably destructive
- Vonnegut’s unique style and voice blended space travel and fantastic inventions with fantasy to create memorable characters and places
- His most inventive and significant novel, *Slaughterhouse Five*, became an anti-Vietnam War anthem

1982 – John Updike’s *Rabbit is Rich* Wins Pulitzer Prize for Literature

Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:

- John Updike is a novelist from Pennsylvania who honed his skills working for *The New Yorker* magazine
- Updike’s most famous novels are his *Rabbit* series: *Rabbit, Run*; *Rabbit Redux*; *Rabbit Is Rich*; *Rabbit At Rest*
- The novels follow the life of Harry Rabbit Angstrom and are Updike’s novels are a comment on the potential shallowness of American life in the last half of the 20th century
 - Through the main character, Rabbit, Updike examines middle America’s suburban life
 - Rabbit’s problems are the problems of America’s aging baby boomers
 - A generation that is becoming the wealthiest generation the world has ever seen, yet is spiritually unfulfilled

1989 - Asian American Amy Tan Publishes *The Joy Luck Club*

Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:

- Throughout most of U.S. history, America's largest cities, have harbored smaller ethnic enclaves
- For many Americans, the most exotic of these 'mini-cities' were Asian
- In 1989 Amy Tan published *The Joy Luck Club*, opening up Asian culture to all Americans
- Tan's lyrically written novel of Chinese American mothers and daughters courageously explored relationships between Asian-American children and their immigrant parents
- Details the difficulties of melding Asian traditions with American opportunities

1993 – Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and August Wilson Redefine the Black Experience

Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:

- Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and August Wilson showed new ways of looking at black history and of redefining the black experience
 - They rejected the Harlem Renaissance's glorification of black life as well as the outraged accounts of discrimination and racism by Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Malcom X and Stokely Carmichael
 - They are new generation of black authors, building a bridge to the 21st century, and helping America to integrate itself in this new century
- Between them, these black authors have won four Pulitzer Prizes, seven Tony Awards and a Nobel Prize for literature
- Toni Morrison wrote with an American voice about black themes
 - Morrison won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1993
- Alice Walker the youngest of eight children of black sharecroppers, used her experiences and her family's history to create strong women characters
 - Her best known novel, *The Color Purple* won the Pulitzer Prize for literature in 1983
- Playwright August Wilson is best known for his Pittsburgh Cycle
 - Ten plays, each set in a different decade, giving a unique snapshot of the comedy and adversity of black life in the 20th century America
 - His plays have won two Pulitzers and seven Tony Awards

2007 – Cormac McCarthy Wins the Pulitzer Prize for *The Road*

Student Goals - In this chapter of Great American Authors, students will learn:

- *The Road* is a continuation of the gifted, innovative writing that has characterized American literature since the beginning of the 20th century
- *The Road*'s apocalyptic story of a son and father on the road to nowhere is a culmination of the 20th century's two great literary themes
 - There is no home anymore
 - The nation's flaws leave you wandering in an emotional and intellectual desert
- *The Road* points the way for the next generation of writers who will tell America's story in the 21st century

Answers to Blackline Master Quiz 8A, Great American Authors Since 1650, Program 8 1958 - Present

1-a; 2-a; 3-a; 4-c; 5-b; 6-b; 7-d; 8-c; 9-d; 10-a; 11-b