

Steppenwolf for
Young Adults 2011/12
STUDY GUIDE

*THE
HEART
IS A
LONELY
HUNTER*

October 11 - November 4, 2011

Adapted by **Rebecca Gilman**

Based on the novel by **Carson McCullers**

Directed by **Hallie Gordon**

steppenwolf

Dear Teachers and Students:

Welcome to the 11/12 Steppenwolf for Young Adults season!

This year's season offers an exploration of the process by which a piece of literature evolves through adaptation and reinterpretation. We will explore the way original work can be born from the ideas and themes of a classic text—how the compelling work of one artist can prompt a bold response and fresh story of another. We are thrilled to involve students in this intergenerational conversation across time and across forms, from the book by Carson McCullers to Rebecca Gilman's play *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* as well as our second production this winter, Sarah Gubbins' artistic response, *fml: how Carson McCullers saved my life*.

Carson McCullers wrote *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* when she was only 23 years old and it was first published in 1940. Over 70 years later, we are still drawn to it and regard it as a classic. Why do we keep returning to this book? Because of McCullers' deft characterization and profound understanding of loneliness and isolation? Because of her vividly drawn “outsider” characters with whom we can identify? Because of her courage in her unsparing portrayal of these troubled people? There are many different ways of defining a “classic” and we look forward to uncovering those ways with you.

Throughout this study guide, you will see references to both plays in our season as well as questions for the classroom, suggestions for further reading, and classroom activities to guide your examination of these productions. If further questions arise for you, if you make discoveries along the way you wish to share with us, if you need anything regarding your visit to the theatre, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to seeing you at Steppenwolf and to investigating these exciting plays with you.

Hallie, Megan & Lauren

- 1 Letter of Introduction
- 3 What is a Classic?
- 4 The Leap from Page to Stage:
The Challenge of Adapting a Classic
- 6 Through the Lens of a Classic:
Creating Something New
includes classroom activity
- 10 Timeline:
Disability and Gay Rights Movements
Running Parallel
- 17 *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*:
Synopsis and Character Descriptions
- 21 Where does writer end and character begin?
Biography of Carson McCullers
includes classroom activity
- 25 Profile of a Costume Designer
- 27 *fml: how Carson McCullers saved my life*
- 28 Young Adult Council
- 29 Scene Events for 11/12 season
- 30 Acknowledgements

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Accessibility

*The Heart Is a Lonely
Hunter* additional
services/dates to note:

Audio Description and Touch Tour
Sunday, October 16–3:00pm

**American Sign
Language-Interpreted**
Sunday, October 23–3:00pm
Saturday, October 29–7:30pm
Sunday, October 30–3:00pm

**Open Captioning with
Scene Events for teens to follow**
Sunday, October 23–3:00pm
~ come get play'ed

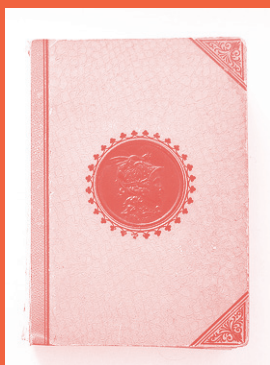
WHAT IS A CLASSIC?

How does something become a classic?

How does a classic successfully endure the test of time?

Titles such as *The Great Gatsby*, *A Separate Peace*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* are fixtures in the American literary canon. But why?

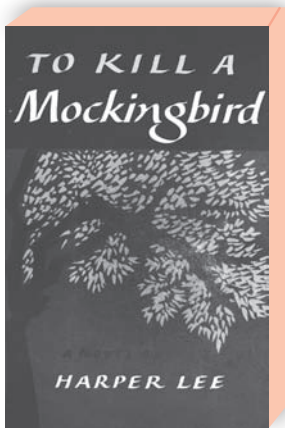
Classics examine the world in a unique and authentic way. Classics portray dexterity with language and a mastery of storytelling. They contain universal life lessons and memorable characters. As publisher David Fickling stated, “Plenty of books are enjoyable to read once, but with a classic, the more you re-read, the more comes out.” Perhaps Jonathon Jones from [The Guardian](#) said it best: “Classics can take anything you throw at them.” They can stand the test of time.



THE LEAP FROM PAGE TO STAGE:

The Challenge of Adapting a Classic

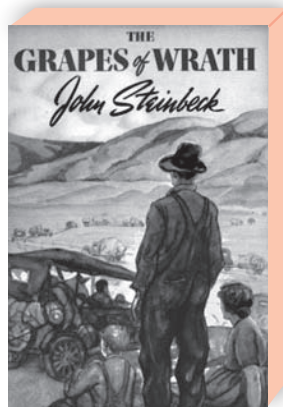
To Kill a Mockingbird, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* are all examples of classic pieces of literature first adapted to film, and then eventually for the stage. John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, first published in 1939, was immediately adapted for film and opened in 1940 to great commercial success. Similarly, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, published in 1960, was made into a film shortly after in 1962. Carson McCullers' *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* was first adapted for the screen long before Rebecca Gilman envisioned bringing it to the stage.



TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, STEPPENWOLF 2011



GRAPES OF WRATH, STEPPENWOLF 1988



The task of capturing the spirit of a novel on stage is a difficult one. A novel can travel swiftly to different moments and places with the turn of a page while a successful stage adaptation must possess theatricality. In other words, time and setting must feel specific to the theatrical medium and fit within the physical space of the theatre.

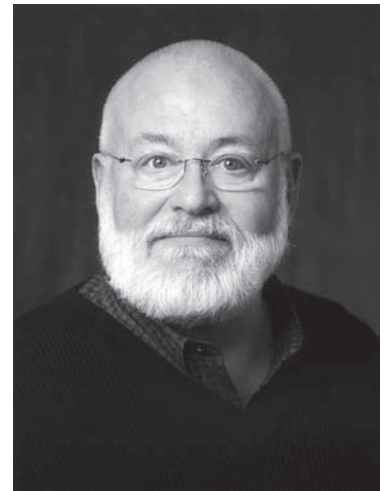


REBECCA GILMAN

As Rebecca Gilman, adaptor, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, points out, the task of turning narrative into captivating action on stage is a difficult one: “*The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* is a hard novel to adapt in a lot of ways because it’s an interior story about lonely people who aren’t communicating. What they didn’t say to each other seemed really important to me. You have to work a little bit to find out who these people are, but I hope that makes for a satisfying experience in the end because of that.”

It can also be difficult to find ways to condense the vast amount of story found in a novel. A good adaptor knows how to pull the theatrical elements from a novel and bring them to life on stage. As Frank Galati, adaptor, *The Grapes of Wrath*, stated:

“Novels and plays are modalities of story-telling. Novels tend to be long, measured in pace, composed of chapters, giving an epic sense often of entire lives lived over time. Plays tell stories in playing time over the course of a couple hours. For many years I have studied and taught the form of the novel and explored ways of discovering the play that may be hiding inside a given work of prose fiction. Not all novels have plays in them but some do...” And when they do, they have the advantage of bringing to life the characters we have come to know from a classic text and allowing us, as audience members, to access and experience them in a way no other medium can offer.



FRANK GALATI

THROUGH THE LENS OF A CLASSIC:

Creating Something New

According to playwright Sarah Gubbins (*fml: how Carson McCullers saved my life*) there are multiple ways to reinvent a classic. As she explains, "*fml: how Carson McCullers saved my life* is a response to source material. It is allowing the moment of engagement with literature to influence you in such a way that you can create new material. *fml: how Carson McCullers saved my life* is a play inspired by Carson McCullers' novel rather than an adaptation of it."

There are many contemporary movies, poems, songs, etc. inspired by classics. For this activity, students will explore how a classic can be reinvented, or re-imagined, into something new.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

DAY 1

1 | Divide your class into five groups and assign each group a classic. Feel free to use any of the five examples listed here or choose your own. Whether or not students have familiarity with their assigned classic, they should use the themes found in the synopsis to guide their brainstorming session as outlined in the next step.

THE GRAPES OF WRATH

John Steinbeck | 1939

During the 1930s, the United States faced a seven-year drought that left many people moving westward to look for work. This classic tale follows the Joad family on their travels from Oklahoma to California and their struggle for survival along the way.

BEOWULF

unknown | 1000 A.D.

A giant monster named Grendel is terrorizing a Danish kingdom and has left its King terrified. Beowulf, the protagonist of this tale, must take his 14 soldiers to destroy the beast.

THE SCARLET LETTER

Nathaniel Hawthorne | 1850

Hester Prynne has committed adultery and now must wear the letter A on her gown at all times. Rumors of her affair spread through a small town in Massachusetts and Hester must endure the shame of her supposed crime.

ROMEO AND JULIET

William Shakespeare | 1599

A young man meets a young woman and the two experience love at first sight. The only problem is they come from feuding families who want to keep the couple separated.

HAMLET

William Shakespeare | 1598

Hamlet, the son of a murdered king, believes his uncle is guilty of his father's murder. He must decide whether or not to avenge his father's death.

DAY 1 CONT.

2 | Each group should start by reading the synopsis of their classic and begin to brainstorm a list of familiar, contemporary works (ie. short stories, movies, songs, poems, other novels, etc.) that have similar elements and themes to their assigned story. Each group should brainstorm 7-10 references for their list.



3 | From the brainstorm list, each group must choose the short story/movie/song/etc. they feel best relates to their assigned classic. After choosing the reference, students should answer the following questions:

Why might the author/creator of the short story/movie/song/etc. have used this classic as inspiration?

How directly is the classic incorporated into the short story/movie/song/etc.?

How does knowing that the short story/movie/song/etc. is somehow related to the classic change your understanding of it?



4 | Utilizing playwright Sarah Gubbins' approach to *fml: how Carson McCullers saved my life*, each group should create an original work of art inspired by their assigned classic. This might be an original poem; a collage of images inspired by the text; a short scene; or a story board for a film.

DAY 2

5 | Students should continue to finalize creative projects and ready them for presentation to the class.



6 | Students will present the material from the exercise to the rest of the class: first sharing the new work of art they have created and then presenting from which classic the new work was derived. Classmates from other groups should respond with which elements they found the new work of art and the classic to have in common.

QUESTIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

What was the easiest part of creating a new work of art from a classic?
 What was most challenging?

Having done this exercise, can you think of any other contemporary short stories/movies/songs/etc that you believe might be inspired by a classic?

FURTHER READING:

[In Literature, What Makes a Classic?](#), 2006, National Public Radio Archival Podcast
Addresses the various components that classify something as a 'classic work'

Craig, Amanda. "What Makes a Classic?" [The Sunday Times](#), 24 March, 2007
Discusses the Everyman Library, which is a resource for classic literature

TIMELINE:

Disability and Gay Rights Movements Running Parallel



DISABILITY RIGHTS

Beginning in 1817, the Disability Rights movement has been an almost two-hundred-year-old struggle for the equality of persons with disabilities in the United States. Although much advancement has been made for persons with disabilities since the 1930s, there is still much progress to be made. Advocates for members of the Deaf community and persons with hearing disabilities strive to help explain complexities inherent for those living with a disability. For example, there is a difference in usage between Deaf vs. deaf: Deaf with a lowercase “d” refers to an individual with partial or complete loss of hearing. Deaf with a capital “D” refers to a community of individuals with hearing loss who take pride in Deafness as part of a cultural identity and have fluency in American Sign Language. For example, persons who classify themselves as Deaf do not regard Deafness as a disability but instead celebrate the uniqueness of the Deaf community.



GAY RIGHTS

A relatively young movement in the United States, the Gay Rights movement (also referred to as the LGBTQ* movement) began in 1924, when the first known gay rights organization was founded in Chicago. However, mass following and support of the movement was not catalyzed until 1969, when police raided a gay bar, the Stonewall Inn in New York City, culminating in a unification of queers and allies across the country. The current manifestation of the Gay Rights movement is centered on achieving equality in marriage and adoption rights for the LGBTQ citizens of the United States. Most recently, the movement has been centered on anti-violence. This year alone, it estimated that nearly 30 percent of gay teens have been targets of bullying, much like the harassment Jo faces in *fmI: how Carson McCullers saved my life*. The “It Gets Better Project,” founded by Dan Savage, has brought awareness to this issue, and aims to add comfort and encouragement to gay teens around the country.

*LGBTQ is a term used since the 1990s to collectively describe lesbian, gay, transgender, and queer (or questioning) persons.

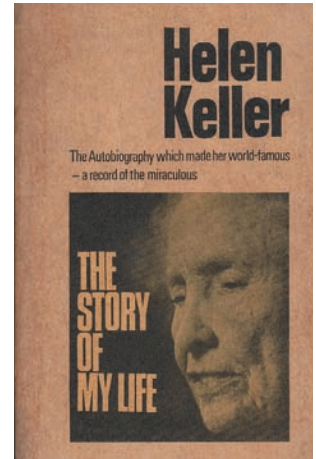
DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT



THE AMERICAN SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF, THE FIRST SCHOOL FOR DEAF PERSONS IS FOUNDED; HARTFORD, CT



BRAILLE IS INVENTED BY LOUIS BRAILLE



HELEN KELLER, THE FIRST DEAF-BLIND PERSON TO ATTEND COLLEGE, RELEASES HER AUTOBIOGRAPHY

1817

1829

1902

1883



ESSAYS IN EUGENICS, BY SIR FRANCIS GALTON, IS PUBLISHED; THIS BOOK INSPIRES THE EUGENICS MOVEMENT, WHICH ENCOURAGES THE PASSING OF LAWS TO STERILIZE AND INSTITUTIONALIZE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES; LONDON, ENGLAND

1927

IN THE CASE OF BUCK V. BELL, THE SUPREME COURT RULES THAT FORCED STERILIZATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IS NOT A VIOLATION OF THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS



VIRGINIA HOUSE OF DELEGATES STATES IT REGRETS THE USE OF EUGENICS PRACTICES BETWEEN 1924 AND 1979

2011

REAGAN ADMINISTRATION TAKES AWAY SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS FROM THOUSANDS OF DISABLED PERSONS

1981

PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH SIGNS THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, GIVING FULL LEGAL CITIZENSHIP TO AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES

1990

SOCIAL SECURITY ACT PASSES, ALLOWING FOR GOVERNMENT FUNDING OF THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED

1935

A DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE, ON LINGUISTIC PRINCIPLES IS PUBLISHED

1965

CLOSED-CAPTIONING IS INVENTED, ALLOWING TELEVISION ACCESS TO DEAF VIEWERS

1971

1979

VIRGINIA ENDS EUGENICS PRACTICES (PRACTICED SINCE 1924)

1939

WORLD WAR II BEGINS AND ADOLF HITLER ORDERS MASS EXTINCTION AND GASSING OF DISABLED PERSONS IN EUROPE

1973

REHABILITATION ACT BECOMES LAW, PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION OF DISABILITY IN THE WORK PLACE AND IN FEDERAL PROGRAMS

NOT BEING ABLE TO SPEAK IS NOT THE SAME AS NOT HAVING ANYTHING TO SAY



GAY RIGHTS MOVEMENT

SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IS ESTABLISHED AS THE FIRST KNOWN GAY RIGHTS ORGANIZATION; CHICAGO, IL

1924



HARVEY MILK



FIRST GAY PRIDE MARCH HELD; NEW YORK, NY

1970

1950

U.S. SENATOR JOSEPH MCCARTHY TARGETS GAYS AND LESBIANS; THEY ARE SUBJECT TO POLICE BRUTALITY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

1969

POLICE RAID A GAY BAR, THE STONEWALL INN; RIOTS BREAK OUT AND MANY ARE KILLED AND INJURED AS A RESULT; THE RESPONSE TO THIS RAID BY GAYS, LESBIANS AND THEIR ALLIES STARTS THE GAY RIGHTS MOVEMENT; NEW YORK CITY, NY



1973

THE AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION REMOVES HOMOSEXUALITY FROM ITS LIST OF DISORDERS

1977

HARVEY MILK IS ELECTED TO THE SAN FRANCISCO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, MAKING HIM THE FIRST OPENLY GAY MAN TO BE ELECTED TO PUBLIC OFFICE



1978

HARVEY MILK IS ASSASSINATED BY HIS COLLEAGUE, DAN WHITE

1981

FIRST AIDS CASE IS REPORTED; IT IS QUICKLY CLASSIFIED AS A "GAY MAN'S DISEASE" AND A "GAY PROBLEM," FURTHER OSTERICIZING THE GAY COMMUNITY

1993

"DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL," AN OFFICIAL UNITED STATES POLICY, IS PASSED, STATING THAT GAYS AND LESBIANS WILL BE BANNED FROM SERVING IN THE U.S. MILITARY

1996

U.S. DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE ACT IS PASSED, MAINTAINING THAT NO STATE NEEDS TO ACKNOWLEDGE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE AS LEGAL, EVEN IF ANOTHER STATE DEEMS IT SO

2000

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION OPPOSES THE "CURING" OF GAYS, SIGNIFYING THAT THE AMA DOES NOT VIEW BEING GAY AS A DISEASE OR DISABILITY

2011

"DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL" IS REPEALED BY THE U.S. SENATE
NEW YORK STATE LEGALIZES GAY MARRIAGE



DAN SAVAGE, "IT GETS BETTER" CAMPAIGN

2009

PROPOSITION 8 IN CALIFORNIA PASSES, REDEFINING MARRIAGE AS ONLY BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN

1998

MATTHEW SHEPARD IS MURDERED IN LARAMIE, WYOMING, SPARKING A NATIONAL AWARENESS OF HATE CRIMES TOWARDS HOMOSEXUALS

2010

DAN SAVAGE STARTS THE "IT GETS BETTER" CAMPAIGN, AN INTERNET-BASED PROJECT INSPIRED BY THE SUICIDE CRISIS OF MANY GAY TEENS IN THE U.S.

QUESTIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

What similarities and differences do you see between the Disability and Gay Rights movements?

In what ways has the Disability Rights movement changed everyday life for those living with disabilities? What barriers still exist? How are those barriers similar or different to those that still exist in the LGBTQ community?

Do you consider the Disability Rights movement successful? What about the Gay Rights movement? What would be required in order for a movement to be considered successful?

Where do you see areas of overlap between these two movements?

FURTHER READING:

[Handicapping America](#), 1978, by Frank Bowe

Details barriers in the mid-70s that denied equal citizenship to those with disabilities

[Images of Ourselves: Women with Disabilities Talking](#), 1981, by Jo Campling

Focuses on the concerns of women with disabilities prior to the 1980s

[The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk](#), 2008, by Randy Shilts

Follows Harvey Milk's personal and political life in the 1970s

[It Gets Better: Coming Out, Overcoming Bullying, and Creating a Life Worth Living](#), 2011, edited by Dan Savage and Terry Miller

A collection of stories and confessions from celebrities, politicians, and everyday citizens responding to bullying of LGBTQ adolescents

THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER

SYNOPSIS & CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter follows John Singer, a deaf man who resides in a local boarding house, and four other vivid but desperately lonesome residents in a Georgia mill town during the 1930s on the eve of the Great Depression. Mick Kelly, a 14-year-old tomboy who dreams of becoming a concert pianist; Benedict Copeland, the town's only black doctor; Jake Blount, a drunken political activist; and Biff Brannon, a recent widower and owner of the town's diner and bar. As each finds solace in Singer's ability to listen, they all unintentionally overlook their confidante's profound isolation in this timeless tale woven from the lives of ordinary people.



JOHN SINGER

Played by Robert Schleifer

John Singer, a deaf man who works as a silver engraver at a local jewelry store, is the central focus of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. Even after his friend, Antonopoulos, is sent away to an asylum, Singer remains his loyal companion.



SPIROS ANTONOPOULOS

Played by Jay Reed

Antonopoulos lives with Singer for ten years before he is sent away to an asylum by his cousin, Charles Parker. Although Singer desperately misses his friend, away in the asylum, Antonopoulos is more concerned with eating and drinking than returning Singer's care and affection.



MICK KELLY

Played by
Jessica Honor Carleton

Mick finds sanctuary in Singer, who owns a radio and gives her access to music. Mick dreams of learning the piano and one day composing a famous symphony.



DR. COPELAND

Played by Walter Coppage

As the only black doctor in town, Dr. Copeland struggles with the injustices African Americans face at the time. Father of Portia and Willie, Dr. Copeland often feels estranged from his children for what he sees as their acceptance of racial injustice and what he perceives as an over-emphasis on religion.



PORTIA

Played by Ann Joseph

A servant in the Kelly household and primary caretaker of Mick, Portia is daughter to Dr. Copeland. Portia is deeply religious and even in the face of her father's harshness remains loyal to him.



WILLIE

Played by Derrick C. Cooper

Son of Dr. Copeland and brother of Portia, Willie is a kitchen worker in Biff's café. Out one night with friends, Willie finds himself in a fight, leading to serious consequences.



BIFF BRANNON

Played by Colm O'Reilly

Owner of the New York Café, a central diner in town, Biff is a recent widower without any children. As he notices her coming of age, Biff is oddly drawn to Mick.



JAKE BLOUNT

Played by Loren Lazerine

A wanderer and an alcoholic prone to violent outbursts, Jake confides in Singer. He has become radicalized by the economic inequality he sees around him, but his attempts to organize workers in the town prove unsuccessful.



CHARLES PARKER & MR. KELLY

Played by ensemble member Alan Wilder

Charles Parker: Owner of the town's fruit and candy store, Parker is the cousin and boss of Antonopoulos. At the beginning of the play, Parker sends his cousin away to the asylum, separating Singer from his friend.

Mr. Kelly: Mick's father, Mr. Kelly owns and operates the boardinghouse where John Singer stays. Mr. Kelly has an injury that prevents him from working and providing for his family.



HARRY

Played by Nick Vidal

Politically-minded and wise beyond his years, Harry and Mick share a deep, personal relationship and often confide in one another.

HISTORICAL FIGURES REFERENCED IN THE PLAY

Here is a list of persons referenced throughout the play with whom students should be familiar.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

A German composer and pianist, Beethoven is considered one of the greatest musicians of all time. In his 20s, Beethoven began to lose his hearing, and soon became completely deaf. Though deaf, he continued to compose musical sensations that are still popular today. Mick is fascinated by Beethoven, particularly his Symphony No. 3, and hopes to write music of his caliber one day.



BEETHOVEN

ADOLF HITLER

Hitler was the (Austrian-born) German political leader of the National Socialist German Worker's, or Nazi, Party. He is most infamous for his role in the rise of fascism in Europe during World War II. In the play, Harry expresses his fascination with fascism. Fascists believe a nation requires strong leadership, a singular collective identity and the will to wage war to keep the nation strong. Fascist governments forbid and oppress opposition to the state.



HITLER

KARL MARX

A philosopher, journalist, and socialist, Marx founded the social-political theory of Marxism. Marxism flows from the idea that economic organization is the foundation of all other parts of society, and that social change emerges from conflicts between unequal economic classes. Communism is a political theory derived from Karl Marx, proposing class war with the desired consequence of a society in which all property is publicly owned and each person works according to their abilities and is paid according to their needs. Jake Blount is a self-proclaimed Communist. He and Dr. Copeland argue over Marxist ideas in the play.



MARX

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

A prominent composer of the Classical era, Mozart composed over 600 works in this lifetime. Mick is very drawn to Mozart in her aspirations to become a composer and pianist.

MUTT AND JEFF

Mutt and Jeff are the protagonists of an early 1900s comic strip by the same name. In the comic, the characters Mutt and Jeff are two visually opposite men, with a yin and yang connection. Biff compares Singer and Antonopoulos to these two comic book characters.

EUGENE ORMANDY

A Hungarian-born American conductor and violinist, Ormandy was a musical prodigy from the age of three. In the 1930s, he became of the radio's most well-known conductors. In the play, Mick is very drawn to Ormandy's music.

POPEYE THE SAILOR MAN

Popeye is a fictional cartoon hero, made famous through comic strips, television shows, and animated films. While visiting Antonopoulos in the asylum, Singer brings him a film reel of Popeye to lift his spirits.



POPEYE & OLIVE



MOZART



MUTT & JEFF CARTOON



VEBLEN

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Schumann began his career as a concert pianist, but after sustaining a terrible hand injury, this career option was abruptly terminated. As a result, Schumann focused on composing music, and became one of the most influential composers of the Romantic era. Mick listens to Schumann on Singer's radio.

BARUCH SPINOZA

A Dutch philosopher, whose work was not recognized until years after his death, Spinoza is considered one of the great "rationalists": philosophers who maintained that reason, not experience, is the basis for all knowledge. Dr. Copeland reads Spinoza throughout the play.

THORSTEIN VEBLEN

An American socialist and economist, Veblen was the brains behind "institutional economics," an approach that focuses on institutions and their role in shaping economic behavior. Jake Blount is a follower of Veblen, and makes a toast in his honor during the play.



ORMANDY & WIFE



SCHUMANN



SPINOZA

WHERE DOES WRITER END AND CHARACTER BEGIN?

Biography of Carson McCullers



CARSON MCCULLERS

Who was Carson McCullers? And who is Mick Kelly?

At the young age of 23, Carson McCullers rose to literary stardom with the publication of her first novel, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. Throughout her career she wrote four novels, a handful of short stories, a play, and a collection of poems. When McCullers first began writing *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, the main character of John Singer was not clear to her. In McCullers' unfinished autobiography, *Illumination and Night Glare*, she explains, "I had at least five or six characters who were very clear in my mind. I understood

them, but the main character was unfocused, although I knew that he was central to the book. Time and again I thought I would just write these characters as short stories, but always I restrained, because I knew that this mysterious creation was going to be a novel."

With many stories and characters woven into one novel, one of the most vivid characters she created is the young Mick Kelly. Though never explicitly stated by McCullers, biographers agree that there are striking commonalities between McCullers and Mick. McCullers was born Lula Carson Smith but she would later shorten her name to Carson. McCullers was a tomboy, and a lanky individual who many said resembled more a young man than a woman. In addition, McCullers saw herself becoming a famous concert pianist. When she was five years old, her father purchased a piano and McCullers' connection with the instrument was instantaneous. However, years later, she was forced to abandon her musical dreams as her father was unable to send her to a competitive music school. Following that disappointment, McCullers chose to dedicate her life to becoming a writer. A woman with strong convictions and self-discipline, McCullers wrote every morning, and quickly established herself as one of our nation's greatest writers.

*"Cause I got this idea
for radios the size of green
peas. People could stick
'em in their ears and walk
around listenin' to music
any time they wanted.
But that was dumb.
Now I know I want to be
a real musician. I already
got a lot of music in
my head."*

-MICK KELLY

WHO AM I?

Writing Exercise

1 | Using the prompt questions below, students should create an original character around whom they can imagine writing a scene. Answers should be based on the first thought that comes to mind and given in short form.

.....

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

BASIC FACTS ABOUT CHARACTER:

My character's name is

My character's age is

My character's hair color is

My character's eye color is

My character's height is

My character's favorite color is

My character's favorite kind of music is

My character's favorite food is

My character's best friend is

Other basic facts about my character are

DIVING A BIT DEEPER:

My character is happiest when

My character is saddest when

My character is angry when

The most important person in my character's life is

My character's favorite childhood memory is

Something my character wishes s/he could change about his/her life is

My character is most afraid of

My character is proudest of

Other important things to know about my character are

SET UP FOR SCENE:

Today my character woke up and

Last year was an important year for my character because

My character recently learned something important and it was

Tomorrow, my character will

2 | Once students have answered all of the questions from the prompt, have them (individually or in groups) write an outline for a scene in which they can imagine their character. Whether or not students complete the scene, have them answer ‘Questions for the Classroom’ to discover ways in which they see themselves—or others in their lives—in the characters they have created.

QUESTIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Based on the character you created, in what ways is this fictional person similar and different to you? Similar and different to someone you know? What is something you do not know yet about your character that you are curious to find out?

Why do you think writers tend to pull from their personal lives when creating characters? What challenges and/or positive outcomes do you imagine come from this choice?

PROFILE OF A COSTUME DESIGNER: MYRON ELLIOTT

Interviewed by Cindy Avila, Senior at Francis Parker High School and member of Steppenwolf's Young Adult Council

SEE P. 28 FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE YOUNG ADULT COUNCIL PROGRAM



MYRON ELLIOTT'S COSTUME COLLAGES FOR
THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER

Cindy Avila: Thank you so much for talking with me today. I am very excited to get to know you and the world of costume construction and design. To start with, you're a costume designer and a Staff Draper. Can you explain what a Draper does?

Myron Elliott: Sure, my staff job here at the theatre is generally working for other costume designers—figuring out how to get them what they want. A Draper is a pattern maker: we take things from a sketch, talk to the designer to make sure we understand their costume rendering in the correct way, and then we start the process of creating a garment in 3D, for a real body.

CA: When you design, in terms of your vision of a costume, how do you interact with the director [of the play]? Are there ever conflicts with his/her vision and what you design?

ME: Well, it all depends on the director-- it depends on how the rehearsal is going, how clear the script is. Sometimes the script tells you exactly how it has to be. Sometimes the actors come in, too, and frequently have a lot of input and you want to honor that as much as possible. There's no point in putting somebody in something they don't feel comfortable in, something that doesn't feel right. If you're not helping the actors, or you're getting in their way, you're not doing your job.

CA: Can you explain these collages? What is the purpose, and how do you make these?

ME: I try to make sure that if I'm doing sketches for a production, I tailor them to that production as much as possible, down to the style of the illustration, the paper that they're on, the colors that are used. I want to get tone across and these collages are a part of that.

CA: Would you say these collages are more for your gain, or, who uses them the most?

ME: Whatever sketches are submitted, whether it's a drawing or a research collage like these, they are for everybody: from the designer, to the Costume Shop [where clothes are actually made], to the director, to the actor. It's hopefully kind of a visual tool for all of us to use so that everybody knows where we are going. As a designer, it helps me communicate.

CA: I visited your website, and I looked at your resume, and I was just flabbergasted by all the plays you've done. And it was just totally insane because it was just rolling down the pages--it was as if you were doing three productions at the same time. What has been your favorite show to work on? Or favorite types of projects?

ME: Projects in which you can have influence beyond whatever your title says in the program are great. That's kind of my ideal world-- a round table design setting. Somewhere where you really can have a range of ideas, and people aren't going to get their toes stepped on. For *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, for example, meeting as a team to ask, well, who do we think this Mick Kelly is? Our Mick Kelly. Who is she? What does she look like? Or, more importantly, why is she the way she is? That process is really rewarding.

CA: My last question is, do you have advice for the younger generation, for those who are interested in costume design or in being a Staff Draper?

ME: Start people watching. I love people watching. That's such a big part of what you do even if you're, you know, doing a show set 100 years ago. That's kind of the cool part of being a clothes psychologist: you get to go, 'oh, why are they wearing this?' Not just, 'they wear this' but specifically, 'what would this person wear, or how would they use this particular thing?'

CA: Okay, so what do my clothes say about me?!

(Both laugh)

CA: Thank you so much for talking with me today. I can't wait to see the show!

ME: Thank you very much and me either!

FML: HOW CARSON MCCULLERS SAVED MY LIFE

February 28-March 18, 2012

A world premiere by **Sarah Gubbins**
Directed by **Joanie Schultz**

Jo's junior year of high school in suburban LaGrange, IL started off just fine—not that it's ever easy being queer at 16. Thankfully, a new English teacher assigns Carson McCullers' famed novel *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and Jo discovers an unshakable kinship to McCullers' central character John Singer. Like Singer, Jo is forever the listener, definitively the outsider, perpetually misunderstood and filled with unrequited love. Yet when she is a victim of a gay-bashing incident, her world is turned upside down and she must decide whether to seek revenge or redemption. A story of isolation, fitting in and finding oneself, *fml: how Carson McCullers saved my life* is a play about surviving high school and how literature still has the power to transform how we see the world.

In the Downstairs Theatre

Tuesday - Friday 10 am
Saturday at 7:30 pm
Sunday at 3 pm

M	T	W	TH	F	S	S
	28 10 am	29 10 am	1 10 am	2 10 am	3 7:30 pm*	4 3 pm*
5	6 10 am	7 10 am	8 10 am	9 10 am	10 7:30 pm*	11 3 pm*
12	13 10 am	14 10 am	15 10 am	16 10 am	17 7:30 pm*	18 3 pm*

* Public Performances

fml additional services/dates to note:

Audio Description and Touch Tour
Sunday, March 18—3:00pm

American Sign Language-Interpreted
Sunday, March 11—3:00pm
Saturday, March 17—7:30pm

Open Captioning
Sunday, March 18—3:00pm

Scene Event for teens
Saturday, March 10—7:30pm
~ come get play'ed

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CLYBOURNE PARK
Saturday, September 24
@ 7:30pm*

**THE HEART IS A
LONELY HUNTER**
Sunday, October 23
@ 3:00pm

PENELOPE
Saturday, January 28
@ 3:00pm

**FML: HOW CARSON
MCCOLLERS SAVED
MY LIFE**
Saturday, March 10
@ 7:30pm*

TIME STANDS STILL
Saturday, April 21
@ 3:00pm

THE MARCH
Saturday, May 13
@ 3:00pm

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Join us for the SYA 2011/12 season as we explore the process through which art and literature evolve through adaptation and interpretation—how an original work can be born from the ideas and themes of a classic text.

Announcing the Steppenwolf for Young Adults
2011/12 Season: Two Plays in Conversation.

THE
HEART
IS A
LONELY
HUNTER

October 11 - November 4, 2011

Adapted by **Rebecca Gilman**
Based on the novel by **Carson McCullers**
Directed by **Hallie Gordon**

The Heart Is A Lonely Hunter follows John Singer, a deaf man who resides in a local boarding house, and four other vivid but desperately lonesome residents in a Georgia mill town during the 1930s. Mick Kelly, a 14-year-old tomboy who dreams of becoming a concert pianist; Benedict Copeland, the town's only black doctor; Jake Blout, a drunken political activist; and Biff Brannon, a recent widower and owner of the town's diner and bar. As each finds solace in Singer's ability to listen, they all unintentionally overlook their confidant's profound isolation in this timeless tale woven from the lives of ordinary people.

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CARSON
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