Timeline Theatre Company

PARADISE LOST

by Clifford Odets
directed by Louis Contey

STUDY GUIDE

prepared by
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Clifford Odets: Early Influences

> "Dear American friend. That miserable patch of event, that mélange of nothing, while you were looking ahead for something to happen, that was it! That was life! You lived it!"
>
> — *Clifford Odets, 1963*

Clifford Odets was the son of Eastern European, Jewish immigrants. He was born in Philadelphia on July 18, 1906. His mother, Pearl, who suffered from tuberculosis and bouts of depression, was often remote and emotionally inaccessible when he was a child. His father, Lou, was both an ambitious businessman and womanizer who had high expectations for his son.

Lou Odets was obsessed with the American dream, and, as he grew more successful, he distanced himself from his immigrant past. The family was forbidden to visit his mother's grave for fear they would see the family name, Gorodetsky, on the gravestone. After moving to New York City, he added the initial "J" to his name and expanded his first name to Louis. He also began claiming he had been born in Philadelphia.

Caught between the emotional distance of his mother and the severity and ambition of his often-absent father, Clifford Odets was a bookish child who craved approval and a family.

He grew up living upstairs from an aunt and uncle in Philadelphia, then in a series of increasingly expensive apartments in New York City. They were in social neighborhoods, and Odets, always seeking family, was often in the homes of his neighbors, observing their lives with his prominent blue eyes.

Odets' childhood journals are filled with precocious and self-conscious accounts of his dreams of becoming an actor or a writer. Early successes in theatrical performances in grade school and high school cemented his desire to act.

His father, however, did not appreciate his son's artistic inclinations and refused to send him to college, hoping instead to train him in his printing and copywriting business. Odets was not a success in his father's business and drifted from job to job before finding like-minded actors and writers with whom he shared ragged apartments paid for by bit parts in plays and, occasionally, financial contributions from his mother.

Throughout this time, Odets suffered from depression and entertained thoughts of suicide, even as he worked to educate himself in the theater, art and music.

After a performance in a small role with the Theatre Guild, Odets met Harold Clurman, who invited him to meet with a group of actors and directors who were holding weekly meetings to discuss the state of theater, the need for more training and rehearsal time, and the method of acting pioneered by Konstantin Stanislavski. These meetings would ultimately grow into the Group Theatre, and Clurman would become Odets' friend and the director of many of his plays. It was the Group that, for a time, offered Odets a family and artistic home.

Clifford Odets and *Paradise Lost*

> "The tragedy of our times in the theatre is the tragedy of Clifford Odets." — *Elia Kazan*

> "I will reveal America to itself by revealing myself to myself." — *Clifford Odets*

In 1935, the Group Theatre and Odets were flush with the success of *Awake and Sing!*.

Odets had been offered writing contracts in Hollywood but still clung to the Group Theatre's ideals and found it his artistic home. He also was struggling through multiple revisions of *Paradise Lost*, afraid the play would seem like a pale shadow of *Awake and Sing!* with the references to the family's Jewish faith removed.

In fact, he was striving to find a balance between the naturalism and street language of his other plays and a more allegorical style that might speak to universal themes. The play still features the slangy language Odets heard from his father — whose favorite slang, always monetary, was "a million bucks" — but at the same time he also used poetic, symbolic language.

The title of the play, a reference to John Milton's epic poem of the same name, suggests this shift to a more metaphorical landscape. Milton's poem retells the story of the angel Satan as he overreaches himself in attempting to become a god and is cast out of paradise by God. He returns to tempt Adam and Eve to their fall. While Odets draws on language that references Milton — there are images of fruit, fire, sickness, death and failed ambitions — the world of the play is a decidedly fallen one. Odets described *Paradise Lost* as "about a man, Leo, who was trying to be a good man in the world and meets raw, evil, and confused conditions where his goodness comes to nothing."

In spite of some praise, the play struggled financially, and Odets decided to go to Hollywood in order to help finance it. He experienced his own "fall" as New York critics and some in the Group Theatre called him a "sell-out." He surprised his critics by returning to the company with 1937's production of *Golden Boy*

It would not be the last time Odets would be accused of compromising his ideals.

A 1938 article in *Time* magazine was heralded by a photograph of Odets on the magazine's cover with the André Malraux quote as a caption, "Down with the general Fraud." Attacking the general fraud was a task Odets openly set for himself. With his earliest plays, critics praised him as a voice for social reform, but even in 1938, the *Time* article pointed out the paradox of Odets' financial success, allying him with the middle-class fraud he sought to attack.

By 1953, however, Odets, like his friend Elia Kazan, would name names in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Safe from blacklisting, Odets wrote for film, television and the stage. Toward the end of his life, Odets frequently told others of his plans for another play, but *The Flowering Peach*, produced in 1954, would be his last.

American Utopianism

> "From consideration of acting and plays we were plunged into a chaos of life questions, with the desire and hope of making possible some new order and integration. From an experiment in the theatre we were in some way impelled to an experiment in living." — Harold Clurman, *The Fervent Years: The Group Theatre and the Thirties*

> "We cancel our experience. This is an American habit."
> — Leo Gordon, *Paradise Lost*

> "There is no one so bitter as a disappointed idealist, no mockery so sharp as that which springs up in the breast of a frustrated utopian." — Harold Clurman, *The Fervent Years: The Group Theatre and the Thirties*

The United States has been an exceptionally fertile soil for utopian projects, both religious and secular. Protestant religious sects and communities thrived. From the earliest Quaker and Shaker settlements to the Mormon pioneers, the United States has offered sufficient space for groups to attempt their projects in living. Between 1841-1847 prominent transcendentalists,

including Nathaniel Hawthorne, attempted and ultimately failed at a communal-living project at Brook Farm, in West Roxbury, Massachusetts.

Between the mid-18th Century and the early 20th Century, there were waves of new religious (mostly Protestant) Christian sects. These three Great Awakenings, as they came to be known, seem to have been unique to the United States, which already was more religiously diverse than most countries. They not only informed religious life but also championed such moral and political tenets as abolitionism, prohibition of alcohol and the women's suffrage movement. The third Great Awakening saw the creation of religious-political organizations such as the Young Men's Christian Association and secular-social organizations such as Jane Addams' Hull House. Americans have a long history of exploring and supporting religious and social projects.

Some historians see President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's response to the country's economic crisis in the form of such social programs as the Works Progress Administration and Social Security as offshoots of such optimistic programs.

The Group Theatre, with its tight-knit community and focus on the ensemble, was a similarly utopian theater project.

The Group Theatre: Utopia and its Discontents

> "Without a home, homeless (or an alien in the home of his parents — alienated!) he went out to find or make a home; and he attached himself to certain homeless others, men or women who themselves did not know what they lacked or sought."
>
> — *Clifford Odets, 1959*

> "There were to be no stars in our theatre, not for the negative purpose of avoiding distinction, but because all distinction — and we would strive to attain the highest — was to be embodied in the production as a whole." — Harold Clurman, *The Fervent Years: The Group Theatre and the Thirties*

> "From consideration of acting and plays we were plunged into a chaos of life questions, with the desire and hope of making possible some new order and integration. From an experiment in the theatre we were in some way impelled to an experiment in living." — Harold Clurman, *The Fervent Years: The Group Theatre and the Thirties*

Directors Harold Clurman, Lee Strasberg and Cheryl Crawford organized the Group Theatre in 1931. It was so-named because the three directors had been holding weekly meetings to discuss theater with their group of actors since November 1930. Notable members included Clifford Odets, Stella Adler, Sanford Meisner, Elia Kazan, Howard Da Silva, Paul Green, Lee J. Cobb, Morris Carnovsky and Franchot Tone. One of the company's guiding principles was that the plays were ensemble driven and no individual actor's performance was to outshine the meaning of the play. There were no stars, and the playwright and director were not superiors in the production of a play.

The company devoted itself to long days of summer rehearsals in rented camps and homes in the country. They studied movement, their version of Stanislavski's method of acting, and rehearsed. All their efforts were designed to bring about an authenticity they felt was lacking in the theater. The young company struggled; while some plays were well reviewed, there were also financial failures and pressures. Many members of the Group shared run-down apartments to save money.

Odets played several small roles in their productions but did not immediately reveal his literary ambitions. Strasberg worried that Odets was not a very good actor and expressed his doubts about his inclusion in the Group, but Clurman maintained that Odets was "stewing" and would produce something interesting in time.

As the Great Depression wore on, Odets and other members of the Group Theatre became increasingly socially aware. For a time Odets joined the American Communist Party but found it artistically restricting and abandoned it, though his desire to address social issues remained the driving force of his plays throughout the 1930s. Socially conscious and topical subject matter and striking, naturalistic language would become the hallmark of Odets' early plays.

However, Odets' writing was finely attuned to the two-edged sword of American optimism and failure. He crafted plays in which dreamers promote utopian projects even as their personal and familial dreams are being destroyed. In *Paradise Lost* Leo says, "We cancel our experience. This is an American habit." It reflects not only the American failure to remember

history so as to avoid repeating mistakes, but also the American power to hope for and to strive for a new future in which society will learn from its past mistakes — much as Leo suggests in his final monologue. Odets offers self-reliance in one hand and loss in the other, which is perhaps what makes him such a uniquely American playwright.

Writing became a way to act on his desire to address the social problems of poverty, homelessness and labor abuses. In 1935, the Group Theatre performed his one-act play, *Waiting for Lefty,* in which a group of taxi drivers come to the decision to strike. It was performed first as a benefit performance. *Waiting for Lefty* was remounted, paired with his anti-Nazi one-act, *Till the Day I Die*, with great critical success. *Till the Day I Die* was one of the first anti-Nazi plays produced on the American stage, and Odets had written it in a single week.

The audience response to *Waiting for Lefty* was even stronger than the critics'. Clurman recounted how, at the pivotal moment at the end of the play, the audience would call out, "Strike! Strike!," joining the characters in their moment of decision.

1935 was a banner year for Odets: After the success of *Waiting for Lefty,* The Group Theatre also produced his *Awake and Sing!*, which follows the trials of the Berger family in 1933.

With *Awake and Sing!* the Group Theatre hit a pinnacle of critical success and social awareness. It rushed to produce Odets' *Paradise Lost* later that year. It opened to mixed reviews. But in spite of loyal audiences, it failed to be the financial success the company hoped it would be.

Odets, who had resisted the lure of lucrative Hollywood screenwriting jobs, finally left for Los Angeles and sent back money to help pay the actors' salaries for *Paradise Lost*.

The utopian theater experiment began unraveling in the late 1930s as infighting, ever-present financial problems and the departure of various members for Hollywood took their toll. In 1937, after a harsh critique of their skills from a committee of Group actors, Strasberg and Crawford resigned. In spite of the financial success of Odets' *Golden Boy*, the financial burdens of producing subsequent seasons and the increasing pressure to cast outside actors already had started a downward slide for the Group Theatre, and it dissolved in 1941.

The Great Depression

> "Whenever people talk to me of the advantages of America, I think of all these broken middle-class lives which I know so well." — *Clifford Odets, 1940*

> "No one talks about the depression of the modern man's spirit."
> — Lucas Pike, *Paradise Lost*

It is difficult to understand the juxtaposition of the Roaring '20s with the Great Depression. The change from economic security to financial duress happened within a few years, or even a few months, for many families.

As Harold Clurman wrote in *The Fervent Years: The Group Theatre and the Thirties*: "Between 1921 and 1927, society's headlong rush looked as if it would never end. Between '27 and '29, a slowing down became perceptible, notes of doubt, fear, loneliness, stole into the picture."

A set of government case studies on the unemployed between 1921 and 1929 compiled by the Unemployment Committee of the National Federation of Settlements suggests that this anxiety was growing well before the stock market crashes of 1929. The chapter of the government study titled "Effects on the Spirit" suggests that, "The man who, with the loss of his job, has lost his sense of belonging, and with it his place in the scheme of his own household, is on new and unsteady footing. Under the emotional upset of fathers and mothers is the sense of trying to build on quicksand. … If you have been hungry, you may build up when you get food. But your whole outlook on life changes when you have been discouraged too often or too long."

At the height of the Great Depression in 1933, nearly one quarter of the population was unemployed, according to the Franklin Delano Roosevelt library.

Clifford Odets and other members of the Group Theatre saw and experienced the economic reality of the Depression. These hardships proved to be the catalyst Odets needed to drive his playwriting.

The Current Middle-Class Crisis

In the book *The Two Income Trap: Why Middle-Class Mothers and Fathers are Going Broke* and in numerous interviews with the media and before Congress, Harvard Law Professor Elizabeth Warren and her co-author Amelia Warren Tyagi have pointed out some startling facts about the current American middle

class, not least of which is how two incomes are now necessary to come close to the lifestyle that one income offered a generation ago.

The study shows that the reasons for 87 percent of all bankruptcies are job loss, a medical problem, or a separation or divorce. In addition, research for the book found that the pressures on families are what they always have been: a sudden job loss and the cost of health care, raising a family, owning a home and assuring a good education.

Warren, a bankruptcy expert, clarifies 10 misconceptions about the current middle-class family:

10 Reasons America's Two-Income Families Aren't What You Think

1. Two-income families today make 75% more in inflation-adjusted dollars but have less money to spend than one-income families did 30 years ago.
2. Two-income families today spend: 21% less on clothing, 22% less on food, and 44% less on appliances compared to one-income families a generation ago.
3. Every 15 seconds an American family files for bankruptcy.
4. This year, more kids will live through their parents' bankruptcy than through their parents' divorce.
5. 1.6 million families will file for bankruptcy this year; 9 million more are already in credit counseling.
6. Home-mortgage foreclosures are up more than three-fold over the last generation, and car foreclosures have hit record levels.
7. More than 62% of families say that they worry about making ends meet.
8. The average family spends 69% more in inflation-adjusted dollars on their home mortgage than their parents spent a generation ago.
9. The average family spends 61% more on health insurance than their parents spent a generation ago.
10. Credit-card default rates are at a record high.

Source: Harvard Law professor Elizabeth Warren, on the PBS program NOW, June 25, 2004. http://www.pbs.org/now/politics/middleclassmyths.html

Kurt Anderson points out the similarities between the American economy disparity before the Great Depression and the present American economy in a recent *New York* magazine article titled "American Roulette: In our winner-take-all casino economy, the middle class is getting royally screwed. A call to arms for populism, before it's too late."

> "Back before the Second World War, in the teens and twenties, the richest one-half of one percent of Americans received 11 to

> 15 percent of all income, but from the fifties through the seventies, the income share of the superrich was reasonably cut back, by more than half. … Starting in the late eighties, however, the piece of the income pie taken each year by the rich has once again become as hugely disproportionate as it was in the twenties. Meanwhile, the median household income has gone up a measly 15 percent during the past quarter-century — and for the last five years it has actually dropped."

1930s Currency

It can be difficult to understand the difference in currency values between the 1930s and the present. Here are some comparisons:

- The value of a dollar in the 1930s is equivalent to $12 to $14 dollars today.
- In 1930, the average cost of a new house was $7,145; by 1939, however, it was only $3,800 because of the national economic duress.
- A gallon of gas cost 10 cents; a new sweater was $1. New cars were going for $500 and $700.
- An accountant made $45 a week and a doctor $61.11. For a laborer in manufacturing, it was just $16.89.

The Playwriting of Clifford Odets

Clifford Odets was known for his skill with naturalistic language that incorporated the current slang and the linguistic style of both the working and middle classes. His writing is also highly allusive and symbolic.

In *Paradise Lost*, he not only refers to John Milton's epic poem of the same name, he quotes William Shakespeare, Robert Browning, Mark Twain, the Bible and an American missionary hymn.

He names his characters in a symbolic way. The politically opinionated and fiery-tempered furnace man is Lucas Pike, and the newspaper reporter is Dave Post. Gus and Libby have the surname Michaels, a reference to the archangel Michael in Milton's poem. And Harold Clurman, the original director, is referenced as Dr. Clurman.

The family lives on Shakespeare Place, and Walt Whitman (Odets would also name his son after this favorite author) is used as a street name.

Even slang is used to build specific imagery. The former champion runner Ben Gordon peppers his language with slang, but it is also always the language of success such as "four-stars" and "aces."

Odets also was sensitive about the small roles he had played with the Group Theatre and in productions with other companies. As a playwright, he could rectify this inequality: Even minor characters have key moments in his plays. Plus, he gives them great language and ideas that are key to the plays' overall themes.

As a result, Odets' works remain excellent pieces for an ensemble.

The Legacy of Clifford Odets

The "white hope" that *Time* magazine proclaimed Clifford Odets in 1938 never lived up to expectations.

Odets' name is not as familiar as Eugene O'Neill, his artistic predecessor, or Arthur Miller, who followed him. Stylistically and thematically, though, he fills the gap in theater genealogy between them.

Whether it was because of his testimony in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee or his Hollywood career, Odets seemed to lose his way — and thus acknowledgment as a major American playwright.

Odets never passed out of the American consciousness. His plays from the 1930s are still produced locally and around the country. The human drama that Odets understood so well and the challenging characters he created keep drawing theater companies and audiences to his work:

- TimeLine Theatre produced *Awake and Sing!* in 2002. That play was also revived on Broadway in 1984 and 2006.

- Remarcable Productions, a new Chicago theater company, has chosen *Waiting for Lefty* as its first production this season.

- Shattered Globe Theatre produced *Rocket to the Moon* in 1999; Writer's Theatre produced it in 2002.

Timeline

July 18, 1906	Clifford Odets is born in Philadelphia.
1912	Odets' family moves to New York City.
June 28, 1914	Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his wife are assassinated. In the months that follow, Austro-Hungary, Serbia, Russia, Belgium, France and Germany all are drawn into what would become the World War I.
April 6, 1917	The U.S. Congress declares war on Germany.
November 11, 1918	World War I ends with the signing of the Armistice.
1920	Adolf Hitler, as head of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, or Nazi Party) announces his 25-point program, which provided the permanent basis of the party.
1923	Odets drops out of high school.
1923-1929	Odets acts with various small theaters and has occasional parts with the Theatre Guild.
1929	Odets understudies Spencer Tracy in Warren F. Lawrence's *Conflict* on Broadway.
October 24, 1929	The stock market crashes; it came to be known as Black Thursday.
October 29, 1929	Five days later, there is a second stock-market crash. Soon known as Black Tuesday, this crash causes widespread panic. Most historians now believe these crashes were symptoms of the Great Depression, not the cause.
1930	Harold Clurman, Lee Strasberg and Cheryl Crawford begin holding meetings to discuss theater. Odets is among a number of actors attending these gatherings, which would become the basis for the Group Theatre.

September 29, 1931 The Group Theatre produces Paul Green's *The House of Connelly* as its first production.

1931 Banks suspend operations by the end of the year.

March 9, 1932 The Group Theatre opens *Night Over Taos*, by Maxwell Anderson.

November 8, 1932 Franklin Delano Roosevelt defeats Herbert Hoover and is elected the 32nd president of the United States.

January 1, 1933 Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany.

September 26, 1933 The Group Theatre opens *Men in White*, by Sidney Kingsley.

1933 American unemployment rises to nearly 25 percent.

1933 President Roosevelt commences his plan to alleviate the economic privations of the Great Depression with a series of legislation, creating social and public-works programs that would collectively be known as the New Deal.

1934 Odets joins the American Communist Party. He leaves the party a few months later.

1934 Clurman, Strasberg and Stella Adler visit the Moscow Art Theatre; on the return trip, Adler studies acting with Konstantin Stanislavski in Paris.

December 9, 1935 The Group Theatre opens *Paradise Lost*, by Odets.

1935 Odets' play *Waiting for Lefty* is performed as a benefit for the Group Theatre; it is later remounted and performed with his anti-Nazi play *Till the Day I Die*, with great critical success. *Waiting for Lefty* wins the George Pierce Baker Drama Cup and the Yale University and New Theatre drama awards.

1935 The Group Theatre performs Odets' plays *Awake and Sing!* and *Paradise Lost*, both directed by Clurman.

1935 Odets, as a representative of the League of American Writers, is among a group of artists who make a protest trip to Cuba, to investigate the treatment of students under Fulgencio Batista. He is arrested and deported.

1935 Legislation to create the Works Progress Administration, which ultimately would include the Federal Art, Music, Theatre and Writers' Projects, is passed by Congress. The Group Theatre's work was a forerunner to this only American attempt to develop a nationalized theater program in the form of the Federal Theatre Project. Many Group actors work for the Federal Theatre Project, and the style of acting pioneered by The Group Theatre would strongly influence Federal productions.

July 1936 In response to general discontent, the Group Theatre reorganizes, creating an Actors' Committee to represent the views of the ensemble.

1936 Odets writes *I Can't Sleep*.

January 8, 1937 Odets marries actress Luise Rainer.

1937 Odets writes the film scenario for *The General Died at Dawn*.

April 1937 After criticism from the Actors' Committee, Strasberg and Crawford resign from the theater.

August 23, 1937 Clurman returns from Los Angeles to direct Odets' *Golden Boy* for the Group Theatre; it becomes the theater's most profitable play.

1938 The Group Theatre produces Odets' *Rocket to the Moon*.

1938 Martin Dies is named head of the newly formed House Un-American Activities Committee.

June 25, 1938 The Fair Labor Standards Act passes, creating a minimum wage.

December 5, 1938 A photograph of Odets appears on the cover of *Time* magazine with the André Malraux quote as a caption, "Down with the general Fraud!" The *Time* feature claims, "Odets defines the general fraud" because of his Cinderella story and rise to affluence.

1939 *Six Plays of Clifford Odets* is published. The plays are: *Waiting For Lefty, Awake and Sing!, Till the Day I Die, Paradise Lost, Golden Boy* and *Rocket to the Moon*.

September 1939 Germany invades Poland and annexes the Danzig region; France and England declare war on Germany. World War II begins.

February 1940 The Group Theatre opens Odets' *Night Music*.

December 17, 1940 Irwin Shaw's *Retreat to Pleasure* opens, directed by Clurman. It will be the Group Theatre's final play.

1941 Odets writes *Clash by Night*. He and Rainer divorce.

May 18, 1941 Clurman publishes an obituary for the Group Theatre in the *New York Times* writing, "our means and our ends were in fundamental contradiction."

May 14, 1943 Odets marries actress Bette Grayson.

1943 Odets writes the film scenario and directs *None But the Lonely Heart*.

1944 Odets writes the film scenario for *Deadline at Dawn*.

May 8, 1945 Winston Churchill announces the end of World War II on the European front.

September 2, 1945 Japan signs its unconditional surrender, ending World War II on the Pacific Front.

1948 Odets writes *The Big Knife*.

1950 Odets writes *The Country Girl*.

1951 Odets divorces Grayson.

1953 Odets is called before the House Un-American Activities Committee as a "friendly witness." He disavows communism and names fellow communists.

1954 Odets' writes *The Flowering Peach*, and it is produced on Broadway. Grayson dies.

1961 Odets receives the Award of Merit Medal for Drama from the American Academy of Arts and Letters for his body of dramatic work.

August 18, 1963 Clifford Odets dies in Los Angeles of stomach cancer.

Discussion Questions

About the Play

- Do you feel the ending is optimistic or ironic, or both?
- How do you interpret Leo Gordon's final speech?
- What do you think the future of the Gordon family will be like?
- The Gordon children (Ben, Pearl, and Julie) all have certain skills, but seem doomed to failure? What factors contribute to each one's inability to succeed?
- Audience members view a play through the filter of their experiences. Does this play resonate with current issues facing Americans? How? What lines, scenes and themes resonate most with you? What lines, scenes and themes do you imagine would have resonated with the 1930s audiences?
- Why does Leo Gordon try to give Kewpie's money to the homeless men? Why don't they take the money?
- What is Clara Gordon offering when she tells friends and family to "take a piece of fruit"?
- Odets wrote an earlier draft of *Paradise Lost* in which Leo Gordon committed suicide. Does that information change your thoughts about the play and the ending, and why?

About the Production

- Music plays a large role in the play, how does Pearl Gordon's piano playing affect the family? How does it influence the play overall?

- The set is not a realistic set. How do the structure of the piano and the presence of Ben Gordon's statue influence how you feel about the themes of the play? Does the set seem to change when the Gordon's furniture is moved into the streets?

- How do the costumes contribute to your impressions about certain characters? How do the costumes change during the course of the play?

Projects for Students

- Ask students to write what about what will happen to the members of the Gordon family after the play ends. Have them explain why the family will do the things they suggest.

- On separate pieces of paper, write the monthly cost of certain fixed expenses: for example, rent or mortgage, food, medical, insurance, gasoline, commuting fees and incidental expenses. Put these amounts in a hat and have teams of students pick a set of expenses. On separate pieces of paper also write a monthly income amount, in different amounts. These amounts may all be current income and expense estimates. Have the teams try to figure out whether or not they will be able to survive, given their monthly income and expenses. Give some teams of students additional expenses. Have them compare how income and expenses contributed to their success or failure.

- Ask students to write down all the slang they recall hearing in the play. Have them write what they think that slang means. Then have them write down current slang words and what they mean. Compare them with Odets' 1930s slang.

- Have the students form groups. Ask each group to write a short scene in which they are family members talking to each other and then perform the scenes for the class. After the scenes have been performed, ask the class to discuss which felt like family members really were talking to each other. What made those scenes seem real? What scenes did not feel real? Why?

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