

Study Guide

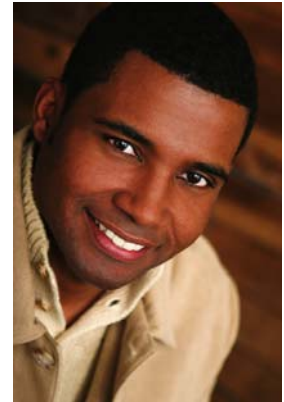
Dar He: The Lynching of Emmett Till



www.ncarts.org



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www.ncarts.org



This project is funded in part by a grant from the Sampson Arts Council Grassroots Funding program. www.sampsonarts.org

Did you know? This performance is a public service of the Sampson CenterStage Performing Arts Series and the County of Sampson and is totally funded and underwritten through the financial contributions of many businesses, corporations, civic organizations, and individuals from across Sampson County and is provided **FREE** to students from Clinton City Schools and Sampson County Schools.

*Many thanks to all **Class Acts-Sampson CenterStage for Students** Sponsors...On the day of the performance a complete list of Class Acts Sponsors will be distributed to each teacher...*

How you can help! Please take a moment to have YOUR students write a note of appreciation to our sponsors...without them this performance would not be possible...

This study guide was prepared and provided as a courtesy of the **Class Acts-Sampson CenterStage for Students** series and is designed to aid in preparing students for an exciting performance...We encourage you to make use of this valuable resource designed to not only enhance each student's theatergoing experience; but to also complement their total educational experience.



Class Acts-Sampson CenterStage for Students

For additional information, contact Ray Jordan at 910.592.6451.
www.sampsoncenterstage.com

GOING TO THE THEATRE (101)



Watching a live performance is very different than watching television or going to the movies. When you see a live performance you play a part too! Your role is an audience member. As an audience member you should obey the following instructions:

When you arrive, follow an usher to your seat. Your group may be assigned to specific areas or seats in the theatre. Please stay in the seat that you are given until the show is over.

Most theaters do not allow cameras, cellular telephones or recording devices. Please leave these at home or in your classroom.

Food, drink, candy and chewing gum are not allowed in the theatre.

Book bags and/or oversized handbags are not allowed in the theatre.

When the theater lights dim, it means the show is about to begin...Please be quiet.

Listen and watch carefully. Talking and making noise disturbs the performers on stage and your fellow audience members. Please hold your comments until after the performance. Of course when something is funny you may laugh. You may even cry when something is sad.

Show your appreciation by clapping when the performance is over and when the performers bow.

Stay seated after the show and an usher or your teacher will lead you out of the theater.

SPECIAL NOTE

This show will have a question and answer period following the performance. Please stay seated after the curtain call. If you have a question, raise your hand. Speak loudly and clearly when you are called on.

Theatre Collaborators



When we see a show, we often think of only the performers on stage. However, many people come together to make a performance happen. Read the list of theatre collaborators and answer the discussion questions with a partner.

Playwright - writes the play

Director - helps the performers understand their roles and tells them where to move on stage. The director also collaborates with designers to create the entire picture you see on stage.

Costume Designer - imagines and designs the clothing and other items worn by the performers on stage.

Lighting Designer - imagines and creates the lights of a performance to enhance the mood and the setting.

Sound Designer - imagines and creates the music and other sound effects which help tell the story of a play

Set Designer - makes a map of each set and its changes

Props - items held or used by the actors on stage that help tell the story

Gels - pieces of plastic that are used in stage lights to change their color

THINK ABOUT IT!



Why is changing the color of lights important for the mood in a scene?

If you were a character in a play, what color gel would you choose for your spotlight? Why?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS...



1. If you were to work in the theater business, which theater collaborator would you rather be?
2. Which job seems most challenging? Why?

Dar He: The Lynching of Emmett Till

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Emmett Till: 14 year old Chicago boy murdered by J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant, Jr. for allegedly whistling at a white woman in Mississippi.

Vocabulary Words...

Acquit
Civil Rights
Jim Crow
Look Magazine
Lynching
NAACP
Peer pressure
Wolf Whistle

Recommended Reading...

A Wreath For Emmett Till
By Marilyn Nelson

Getting Away With Murder, The True Story of the Emmett Till Case
By Chris Crowe

The Lynching of Emmett Till A Documentary Narrative
Edited by Christopher Metress

Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime that Changed America by Mamie Till- Mobley and Christopher Benson

Map It Out

Emmett Till was raised by his mother, Mamie in Argo, Illinois – just a hair outside of Chicago. He was lynched and killed in Money, Mississippi while on a vacation visiting his uncle, Moses Wright.

Find the two cities on a map. How many miles separate Chicago, Il and Money, MS?

What was the population of Chicago in 1955? What was the population of

Money, MS in 1955? What are the populations in those cities now?

List the possible differences in lifestyle in the North vs. South; Big City vs. Small Town; Black vs. White Citizens; and Relationships between Black and White citizens in the 1950's.

How were race relations different in the 1950's? How are race relations similar in 2006? Why do

you think Emmett's mother was reluctant to send her son for a visit in the South?

What role did peer pressure play in the events that lead up to Emmett's murder? Who was pressured? Emmett Till? Carolyn Bryant? Roy Bryant? J.W Milam? The Jury? How might each have been pressured into his/her actions?

Playing The Dozens

Playing the dozens is an African-American custom in which two competitors take turns insulting one another, their adversary's mother or other family members until one of them has no comeback.

In the U.S., the practice can be traced back to slavery, when verbal sparring became a substitute for physical contention.

While the competition is usually light-hearted, smiles sometimes mask real tensions.

The dozens can be a harmless game, or, if tempers flare, a prelude to physical violence. But in its purest form, the dozens is intended to defuse conflict amicably, descended from an oral tradition rooted in traditional West African cultures.

The dozens is a contest of personal power -- of wit, self-control, verbal ability, mental agility and mental toughness. Defeat can be humiliating; but a skilled contender, win or lose, may gain respect.

"Yo' mama," a common, widely recognized phrase, is a cryptic reference to the dozens.

The term "the dozens" refers to the devaluing on the auction block of slaves who were past their prime, who were aged or who, after years of back-breaking toil, no longer were capable of hard labor. These enslaved human beings often were sold by the dozen.



Remembering BoBo

Bobo – as Emmett was known to his family and friends, was a memorable young man. He dressed well, spoke with a stutter, played the dozens with wit, and grew up with his mom in the big city of Chicago.

His life was cut short at the age of 14. His grieving mother spent the rest of her life making sure that Emmett would live on by making sure others

never forgot him. Mamie Till started her mission by insisting that Emmett's body be displayed in an open coffin so that visitors could see his bloated body and bludgeoned face and head. She said, "I wanted the world to see what they had done to my boy."

What do you think it would be important to remember about Emmett Till?

Write an obituary for Emmett Till. Include his personal likes, his surviving family members, the charity to which the family might like donations sent in his honor.

Write in a respectful tone the things you feel would be important to remember about this young man.

*"Lord, take my soul.
Show me what you
want me to do and
make me able to do it."*

*-Mamie Bradley Till
Emmett Till's Mother*

The Acquitted

Although they confessed to the murder of Emmett Till in a *Look Magazine* article, J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant, Jr. were acquitted of the murder charges against them. Both men have since died from cancer. J.W. died in 1980. Roy died in 1990. Carolyn Bryant is still alive. She remarried and moved to Greenville, MS. She refuses to talk about the events surrounding the Emmett Till case.

In 2004, the FBI reopened the Emmett Till murder case. In 2005 Emmett's body was exhumed from his grave in search of DNA evidence to pursue murder charges against any surviving suspects. At this time, murder charges could still be filed against Carolyn Bryant and any field hands who might have assisted J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant.

Proposed legislation, known as the "Till bill," would create an Unsolved

Civil Rights Crime Investigative Office, which would allow the FBI to investigate unsolved killings in coordination with state and local law enforcement officials. "There are unsolved cases like the Till case in many states in America," said fellow sponsor U.S. Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga. "If we allow these crimes to go unanswered, we cannot candidly declare we are a nation that believes in justice."



Roy Bryant, Jr. and J.W. Milam

Curriculum Links

Arts Education
Theatre Arts
English Language Arts
Social Sciences
Character Education
American History

Other Emmett Till inspired works...

Television - *Playhouse 90/Noon On Doomsday* by Rod Serling

Song – *The Death of Emmett Till* by Bob Dylan

Theatre - *Blues for Mr. Charlie* by James Baldwin

Poetry – *Emmett Till* by James A. Emanuel

BIO: MIKE WILEY

Mike Wiley Productions

"A marvel to watch..." Robert McDowell, Triangle Theatre Reviews

"More than mere versatility... It's virtuosity." American Theatre Magazine

Mike Wiley is the NC-based playwright, actor and director whose distinctive original works in documentary theatre, film, educational residencies and performances for student audiences have been acclaimed across America and abroad.

His dramas relay the stories of fugitive slaves, civil rights game-changers, sports heroes and freedom fighters. Dynamic multi-character portrayals offer penetrating views into parallel lives whose roles within African American history have shaped a richer total American experience. Wiley's remarkable one-man "cast" sometimes introduces dozens of characters during the course of a single play. Morphing from young to old, man to woman, African American to white, his gripping stories enlighten and inspire audiences of every age to apply history's lessons to events and situations of the present.

An MFA Graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill, Wiley's original theatrical repertoire includes *The Parchman Hour*, *Songs and Stories of the 1961 Freedom Riders*, premiered by Playmakers Repertory Company in Chapel Hill in 2011 and subsequently produced by Cape Fear Regional Theatre and others. *One Noble Journey: A Box Marked Freedom* relays the true story of Henry "Box" Brown, a slave who crated and mailed himself to freedom. *Dar He: The Story of Emmett Till* chronicles the murder, trial and confession of the men accused of the Chicago youth's lynching in Mississippi in 1955. *Blood Done Sign My Name* is Wiley's riveting dramatization of Tim Tyson's best-selling memoir of race and religion. Additional plays include *Jackie Robinson: A Game Apart*, about African American athletes who pushed the color barrier to its breaking point; *Tired Souls: The Montgomery Bus Boycott*, documenting men and women who stood up to Jim Crow segregation; *Life Is So Good*, about the amazing life of George Dawson who learned to read at the age of 98, and *Brown v. Board of Education: Over Fifty Years Later* on the high-impact ruling that desegregated schools.

Mike Wiley has been featured as News and Observer's "Tar Heel of the Week," profiled in Our State magazine, spotlighted on UNC-TV's "North Carolina Now" and North Carolina Public Radio's "The State of Things" and was named the 2012 Indie Artist of the Year by the Independent Weekly.

In **DAR HE**, a gripping independent film adaptation of his play about Emmett Till, Wiley himself portrays more than 30 characters in a tour-de-force which has garnered major film and acting awards at numerous film festivals across North America, Europe and Australia, including “Best Actor” at the most recent Harlem International Film Festival.

Extended educational residencies have been funded through grant programs of the North Carolina Arts Council, and his plays have been selected for spotlight showcases at major industry conferences including Arts Northwest, Performing Arts Exchange, Arts Midwest and ArtsMarket. During 2014, Wiley completed a 20+-performance tour of *One Noble Journey* in Ontario, Canada.

Mike Wiley is the current 2014 Lehman Brady Visiting Joint Chair Professor in Documentary Studies and American Studies at Duke University’s Center for Documentary Studies and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Artist site: www.mikewileyproductions.com

Artist booking: www.goingbarefoot.com

Video compilation reel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Op0_rWON4k

75-word bio thumbnail:

Mike Wiley is the NC-based playwright, actor and director whose distinctive original works in documentary theatre, film, educational residencies and student performances have been acclaimed across America and abroad. With eight original touring productions, Wiley’s gripping stories inspire audiences of every age to apply history’s lessons to events and situations of the present. Wiley is the currently the 2014 Lehman Brady Visiting Joint Chair Professor in Documentary Studies and American Studies at Duke University’s Center for Documentary Studies and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
www.mikewileyproductions.com



AT HOME

Dear Parents,

Recently, your student attended a performance of *Dar He: The Lynching of Emmett Till*. Award winning actor, Mike Wiley, created a powerful picture of the murder, trial and unbelievable confession of the men accused of Emmett Till's lynching.

Prior to attendance, teachers reviewed proper theatre etiquette with students and provided background information about the performance. Aside from the many benefits for students of simply experiencing theater, the material addressed in this play supported many goals in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

As a parent, you are your child's best teacher. They can also teach you through their experiences. Ask your student about the play they attended and read through this booklet. This is a wonderful opportunity to talk about important American history.

Thank you for your participation in the arts.



DO IT!

A reviewer writes an opinion of the actors, sets, and director for a newspaper or magazine. Write your review of the play for your family.
