

## LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT

BY **EUGENE O'NEILL**  
DIRECTOR **MILES POTTER**

### GRADE RECOMMENDATION

Suitable for Grades 11–12

### CONTENT ADVISORY FOR STUDENTS

Contains some mature themes

### STUDENT MATINÉE DATES

June 7, 20, 27; September 6, 13, 19, 20; October 2

### ABOUT THE PLAY

One of Eugene O'Neill's later plays, *Long Day's Journey Into Night* evokes the dramatist's own family experiences and the environment in which he was raised. Its action spans a single day; hence "Long Day" in the title. It won O'Neill a posthumous Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1956.

### SYNOPSIS

It is morning in the Tyrone household: a clear morning after a night of oppressive fog. James Tyrone attempts some after-breakfast pleasantries with his wife, Mary, but under the teasing banter swirl currents of guilt, anger and dread. Open antagonism breaks out with the entrance of the couple's two sons, Jamie and Edmund.

James Tyrone has been successful in his career as a stage actor. But the memory of his impoverished upbringing has stayed with him, causing him to skimp on the comforts of life. He is a compulsive speculator in real estate, but for all his buying of land he has never managed to provide a real home for his family. Mary Tyrone repeatedly complains of the rootlessness of her married life, of night after night spent in seedy rooms in second-class hotels. Even the summer residence where the family is now living, she says, was wrong from the start: a cheerless and cheaply built house in a town she hates.

Mary's yearning for a true home is a symptom of a deeper spiritual loss. A past tragedy has left her with a pain that can be addressed only by doses of morphine, prescribed for her years ago by a cut-rate doctor; now she is struggling vainly



SEANA MCKENNA, SCOTT WENTWORTH

against her addiction. She is obsessed by her hands, as if they were the visible emblems of her soul. Once, she says, they were beautiful, a musician's hands; now they are ugly and crippled.

Jamie, the elder of the couple's two sons, has unwillingly followed his father on to the stage but has been unable to hold any job for long. He does odd jobs for his father and spends his meagre wages on women and whisky. The younger son, Edmund, favours a different intoxicant: he writes poetry, while struggling to make a living as a reporter for the local newspaper. He is also seriously ill: although Tyrone encourages Mary to believe that the boy has only a "summer cold," it is plain that Edmund is suffering from consumption.

The doctor's confirmation of that diagnosis and Mary's relapse into her addiction trigger a long day of recriminations, accusations and confessions. In laying bare the most bitter intimacies of their hearts, the Tyrones painfully uncover the roots of their despair. "It's wrong to blame your brother," Mary tells Edmund. "He can't help being what the past has made him. Any more than your father can. Or you. Or I." As day darkens into night and the fog envelops the house once more, the Tyrones' inexorable journey of self-discovery takes them into the darkest recesses of the

soul and raises unanswerable questions about the workings of human fate.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

1. **All grades:** Language/English (listening to understand, speaking to communicate, reading for meaning)
2. **All grades:** Drama, Music, Visual Art
3. **Grades 11–12:** Health and PE (interpersonal skills, conflict resolution, harassment, emotional violence and abuse)
4. **Grade 11:** Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology (explaining human behaviour and culture, socialization)
5. **Grade 11:** Dynamics of Human Relationships (healthy relationships, rights and responsibilities, interpersonal skills)
6. **Grade 12:** Families in Canada (the effects on family and parent-child relationships, trends, issues and challenges)
7. **Grade 12:** Human Development throughout the Lifespan (risk and resilience, social-emotional development and personality)
8. **Grade 12:** Challenge and Change in Society (social change)
9. **Grades 11–12:** Philosophy (metaphysics, ethics, epistemology, aesthetics)

## THEMES AND MOTIFS

- Guilt and blame
- Suffering
- Drugs and alcohol
- Memory and the past
- Denial and delusion
- Isolation and alienation
- Faith
- Communication
- Forgiveness
- Society and class
- Family
- Fate and free will
- Lies and deceit

## CLASSROOM WARM-UP

Write on the board the following question: Does art imitate life? Have each student write a paragraph or two in response to this question. Afterwards, have a class discussion, giving students sufficient time to debate the question.

After seeing the play, have students write on multiple post-it notes and place on the board or large chart paper what they specifically noticed about the Tyrone family's dynamics, the issues that arose and how each family member dealt with them. What specifically stood out for them about this Stratford Festival production? Did this art form reflect life in your opinion?

## ENRICHMENT

Workshops and post-show chats may be arranged by calling the Education Department at 519.271.4040, ext. 2354.

Festival Theatre and Costume Warehouse tours may be arranged by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

## BOOKING INFORMATION

### Online

You can order your group tickets online at any time right from your desk. You can even select your seats! To start planning your trip, go to [stratfordfestival.ca/schools](http://stratfordfestival.ca/schools).

### Email

[groups@stratfordfestival.ca](mailto:groups@stratfordfestival.ca)

### Phone

1.800.567.1600 or 519.273.1600

### Mail

Stratford Festival  
Attn: Groups and Schools  
P.O. Box 520  
Stratford, ON N5A 6V2

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