



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2008 Volume IV: Representations of Democracy in Literature, History and Film

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## **Toward a Democratic Literature: The Study of Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Wilson's Twentieth-Century Cycle in the Twenty-first Century**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 08.04.05  
by Matthew S. Monahan

This unit explores the history of American dramatic arts. Students participating in its implementation will be able to do the following: work individually and cooperatively in defining democracy and related terms, understand and appreciate the development of the institution of theatre in the United States of America, read and appreciate multiple works by playwright August Wilson (i.e. *Fences*, *The Piano Lesson* and *King Hedley II* ) as well as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* , analyze both literary elements contained in and the historical significance of these works and develop theories that relate these dramas to their own lives and to the current American sociopolitical landscape.

Extending the theme of democracy to democracy in the classroom there will be a limited number of choices for students regarding their culminating activity. Each final project will include a written component, either an essay or a one-act play. The culminating project will also include at least one other medium to be presented in class. Other media include visual art, performance, oral presentation/public speaking, etc.

(Recommended for English, grades 10-12)

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