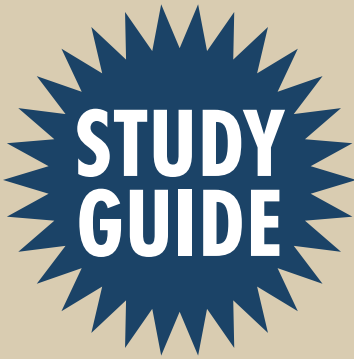


# LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR AND GRILL

BY  
**LANIE ROBERTSON**

DIRECTED BY  
**CANDICE HANDY**



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**FEBRUARY 5-23, 2025**



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MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE

PRESENTS

# LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR AND GRILL

BY  
**LANIE ROBERTSON**

MUSIC ARRANGEMENT BY  
**DANNY HOLGATE**

FEATURING  
**DAVID FREEMAN COLEMAN**  
**MICHAEL MATLOCK**  
**JENECE UPTON**

SCENIC DESIGNER  
**TONY HARDIN**

COSTUME DESIGNER  
**YAO CHEN<sup>^</sup>**

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MUSIC DIRECTOR  
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STAGE MANAGER  
**ELIZABETH YVETTE RAMIREZ<sup>\*</sup>**

DIRECTED BY  
**CANDICE HANDY**  
**FEBRUARY 5-23, 2025**



LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR & GRILL WAS FIRST PRODUCED IN NEW YORK BY THE VINEYARD THEATRE

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<sup>\*</sup>Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



<sup>+</sup>Member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, a national theatrical labor union.



<sup>^</sup>The Scenic, Costume, Lighting, and Sound Designers in this production are represented by United Scenic Artists (USA) Local USA-829, IATSE.



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## GRADES 9-12

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Theatre Arts – *Responding*  
T.R.07, T.R.08, T.R.09  
Technical Theatre – *Responding*  
T.T.R.07  
English Language Arts – *Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text*  
RL.2, RL.3, RI.9.7  
Music – *Responding*  
M.R.07, M.R.08

### ZADIE SMITH'S "CRAZY THEY CALL ME," DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, FRANK O'HARA'S "THE DAY LADY DIED" & CLOSE READING QUESTIONS

English Language Arts – *Reading Literature, Language, Speaking and Listening, Writing*  
RL.1, RL.2, RL.3, RL.4, RL.5, RL.10, L.4, L.5, SL.1, SL.3, W.1, W.4, W.5

### TIMELINE

History and Social Science – *United States History I, United States History II*  
HSS.USI.T5.07, HSS.USII.T4.05, HSS.USII.T4.06

### ALL THAT JAZZ: THE ROOTS OF AN AMERICAN MUSICAL GENRE & MUSICAL TERMS TO KNOW

Music – *Responding*  
M.R.07, M.R.08, M.Co.11

### THE JIM CROW ERA, WATCH: ANGELA DAVIS ON "STRANGE FRUIT" AND BILLIE HOLIDAY & "STRANGE FRUIT:" AN AMERICAN PROTEST SONG

History and Social Science – *United States History I, United States History II*  
HSS.USI.T5.07, HSS.USII.T4.05, HSS.USII.T4.06  
Music – *Responding*  
M.R.07, M.R.08, M.Co.11

# LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR AND GRILL SYNOPSIS

*"IT DOESN'T MATTER IF IT'S GOOD OR BAD; YOU WOULDN'T BE WHAT OR WHO YOU ARE NOW IF YOU HADN'T BEEN WHATEVER YOU WERE WAY BACK WHEN. SEE, I KNOW WHO I AM NOW IS BECAUSE OF WHO I WAS THEN."*<sup>1</sup>

It is a March evening in 1959. The stage is dark, but the voice of Billie Holiday can be heard offstage as she pleads with someone. She says she cannot perform. Pianist Jimmy Powers welcomes the audience to Emerson's Bar and Grill and introduces "the one and only Lady Day." Billie enters the stage and sings the first two songs of her set ("I Wonder Where Our Love Has Gone," "When



COSTUME SKETCH FOR BILLIE HOLIDAY BY COSTUME DESIGNER YAO CHEN.

a Woman Loves a Man"). She thanks the audience for their applause and expresses her fondness for Emerson, who always gave her gardenias to wear when she sang. She says there are no flowers tonight because she's the "new Billie now."

Billie introduces Jimmy Powers to the audience, who she says helps to "take care" of her ("What a Little Moonlight Can Do"). She teases Jimmy for his shyness before explaining that Jimmy helps to "keep her in line" so that she always sings the songs she is supposed to. She recalls a time when, after getting out of prison, she sang at a venue for hours only to go unpaid because she chose not to sing "God Bless the Child."

Billie begins to sing again, only to stop and say that she and Jimmy are to be married after her divorce is finalized. She says all she wants is a "beautiful home and some kids" ("Crazy He Calls Me"). She briefly reflects on her first love, Sonny, who told her he didn't want kids with her. She then reflects on growing up in Baltimore, where, as a kid, she "scrubbed the steps" of the local brothel, which was run by a woman named Alice Dean. Billie says she was inspired to sing after hearing the music of Louis Armstrong



COSTUME SKETCH FOR JIMMY POWERS BY COSTUME DESIGNER YAO CHEN.

and Bessie Smith on Dean's Victrola. Jimmy begins to play, and Billie chastises him for it, telling the audience that he's worried her tangents will lead to a "cryin' jag." She says Jimmy thinks she's better than he is, and because of this, he thinks she ought to act a certain way. Billie says she believes no one person is better than another. She makes a few jokes about the differences between white people and Black people before hinting at the minority complex imposed on Black people by the white majority ("Gimme a Pigfoot And a Bottle of Beer").

Billie says she never met Bessie Smith because Smith's career ended just as hers began. Like Bessie, many of the songs she's covered were once "unheard of" because "first and second rate songs" were only given to white singers ("Baby Doll"). Billie says she needs to "watch herself" lest parole officers show up at the venue and catch her having

"too good a time." The parole officers who check up on her are always white, she says, and always seem afraid of Black people. She teases that getting arrested is a "colored folks' tradition," and Jimmy eyes her, encouraging her to change the subject.

Billie introduces her next song, which she wrote for her mother, who she calls the "duchess," a nickname given to her mother by her friend, Lester Young, who gave Billie the nickname "Lady Day." She says her mother only refused to help her once, when she was desperate for money and married to Sonny. Her mother hated Sonny and blamed him for Billie's trouble with heroin. Billie says Sonny wasn't bad, only "scared and helpless." She says this song always made her mother mad because she knew Billie had written it for her ("God Bless the Child").

Billie reflects on her maternal great-grandmother, who was enslaved to a white man by whom she had sixteen children. Billie's last name, "Fagin," comes from the man who enslaved her great-grandmother. She remembers sleeping in the same bed as her great-grandmother as a child and recalls waking one particular morning to find her great-grandmother dead in bed beside her. She says her distress following this incident was so severe that she had to be hospitalized for a month afterward. This incident, says Billie, along with being sexually abused at the age of ten, was "almost one of the worst things" to happen to her.

Billie reflects on her father, a guitar player who longed to be a singer but couldn't sing due to his lungs, which had been irreparably damaged by the gas used in the trenches during the First World War. Her father caught

<sup>1</sup> Lanie Robertson, *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*, (New York: Samuel French, 1989), 15.

## LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR AND GRILL SYNOPSIS

a cold while touring with his band in Texas and was refused medical care because of his race. She recalls receiving the phone call that informed her of her father's death. She becomes quiet and withdrawn before Jimmy's music brings her back to the present (Foolin' Myself / Somebody's on My Mind"). When she finishes the medley, she tells Jimmy she's "not doing so good." Jimmy tells her she's fine before suggesting they play some happier songs ("Easy Livin").

Billie recalls the struggles she's faced in her career due to racism, segregation, and Jim Crow. She shares a particular memory of being denied a toilet by a white hostess, whose shoes she ultimately peed on, to the delight of her fellow band members ("Strange Fruit"). Billie becomes distraught again and

asks Jimmy where her flowers are. She exits, and he announces Billie will be taking a short break. Jimmy plays a blues medley before Billie reenters high ("Tain't Nobody's Bizness If I Do").

High and disoriented, Billie begins to refer to Jimmy as "Sonny." She introduces the audience to her beloved dog, Pepi, but then becomes confused and asks Jimmy again for her flowers. Jimmy expresses his concern for her well-being, but Billie ignores him, continuing to ramble in an increasingly incoherent manner. She reminisces about getting work as a maid at sixteen, only to discover she had been hired as a prostitute, a fact she hid from her mother, who had found her the job. After being brutally injured by a client, she went in search of other work, which led

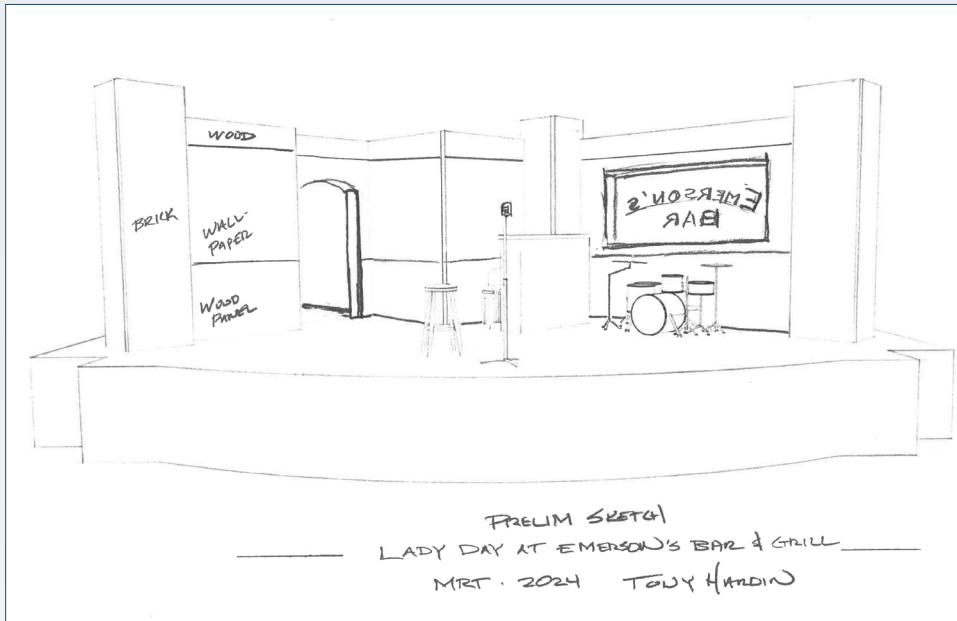
her to her first singing job at the club Pod's and Jerry's. She then recalls being arrested and tried for possession and being tied to bedposts while going through the horrors of withdrawal. She says the worst part of her arrest and sentence was losing her Cabaret Card, barring her from performing in New York clubs. She reveals that the drugs the authorities found in her suitcase belonged to Sonny, who had hidden them there. She says she only consented to taking heroin when Sonny told her "nobody ever loved [him]

enough to try a little bit of a hit or two with [him]." Desperate to prove her love to him, she took her first hit (Don't Explain / What a Little Moonlight Can Do").

Billie says all she wants is a beautiful home with children and maybe her own club where she can sing to all her friends. She begins to sing her last song, but by the final stanza, she is only silently mouthing the words ("Deep Song").

### SONG LIST

"I Wonder Where Our Love Has Gone"  
"When a Woman Loves a Man"  
"What a Little Moonlight Can Do"  
"Crazy He Calls Me"  
"Gimme A Pigfoot (And a Bottle of Beer)"  
"Baby Doll"  
"God Bless the Child"  
"Foolin' Myself / Somebody's on My Mind"  
"Easy Living"  
"Strange Fruit"  
"'Tain't Nobody's Biz-Ness If I Do"  
"Don't Explain / What a Little Moonlight Can Do"  
"Deep Song"



PRELIMINARY SCENIC SKETCH FOR *LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR AND GRILL* BY SCENIC DESIGNER TONY HARDIN.

**THEMES TO CONSIDER WHILE WATCHING *LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR AND GRILL*: FAME, PARENTHOOD, LOVE, RACISM, WOMANHOOD, DEPENDENCY, ISOLATION, OPPRESSION.**



# FROM THE DIRECTOR: AN INTERVIEW WITH CANDICE HANDY

Candice Handy is a Cincinnati-based director, actor, and teaching artist. She is the co-founder of Cincinnati Black Theatre Artist Collective and the Education Director at Cincinnati Shakespeare Company. She recently directed *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* at Cincinnati Shakespeare Company in 2022, and her recent acting credits include *Gaslight* (2023) at Merrimack Repertory Theatre, *Julius Caesar* (2024), *Trouble in Mind* (2023), and *All The Way* (2020) at Cincinnati Shakespeare Company.

## WHAT IS YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS LIKE? WHEN STARTING ON A SHOW, WHAT DO YOU DO FIRST?

My process varies a bit per show, depending on what I feel the piece needs

to land with its audience. The first thing I do is always to read the play at least twice through while taking notes each time on blaring observations and feelings that come to me. Within those notes, I discover what is at the core of the play; then I begin

to answer these questions – *what does this show need? What about my production of this play needs special attention and care to ensure that the audience and the performers feel the beating heart of the story?* Answering these questions is always my starting point.

Then, I begin to conceptualize my vision by researching the play's themes, setting, time period, and anything I find interesting and tangible in the script, which then influences stream-of-consciousness journaling, which I organize later into a clear and concise concept for the show. Besides a first read and some table work during the first week of rehearsal, I usually do not know in advance for certain how the rehearsal process will go beyond that point. I like to get a feel for how the actors work best in the room and then plan with my stage manager how to proceed day by day, with a focus on what the play needs from myself and the actors.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HOLIDAY'S MUSIC AND STORY OFFER 21ST-CENTURY AUDIENCES?

I think it offers our audiences the opportunity to really appreciate Holiday's contribution to music and culture. I hope they will hear her story in all of its horrors and experience immense gratitude that Billie was able to fulfill her divine purpose and give us so much of herself and her artistry. She lived with passion, purpose, and freedom, and so she became a legend, which is a timeless lesson.

## LADY DAY IS STAGED IN REAL-TIME AS AN INTIMATE CABARET SHOW. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF THIS DRAMATURGICAL FRAMEWORK?

The benefit of this framework is that the piece is automatically immersive, allowing the audience to feel like they really are there with Billie. A night with Billie Holiday performing inside a club that really existed, where she historically enjoyed performing, feels more tangible than just

watching the story of someone's life play out from a distant seat in the theatre. The playwright Lanie Robertson gives us that framework, and it is a gift. However, the story's structure is still quite Aristotelian. The challenge is how to transform a traditional playhouse experience, whether in a proscenium, thrust, or round, into an experience where the audience feels invited in and empowered enough to respond to Billie's story. While the play features several musical numbers that naturally draw an audience in, it is also dense with lengthy and dramatic monologues that could potentially create distance between the actor playing the role and the audience. The intensity of the speeches takes us out of the intimacy of the jazz club. Perhaps this challenge is the brilliance of the piece. It pulls its audience in and out.

## THIS PLAY FEATURES HEAVY THEMES OF ADDICTION, LOSS, RACE, AND ABUSE. HOW DO YOU CREATE A REHEARSAL ENVIRONMENT THAT BOTH ENCOURAGES POIGNANT PERFORMANCE AND OFFERS A SAFE SPACE FOR THE PERFORMERS?

I encourage my ensemble members to ask for what they need. I don't believe there is an actor on the planet who doesn't want to deliver the most poignant performance they are capable of. I ask actors what they need in order to reach that performance, and we work together to cultivate the best process practices. I listen to everyone in the room to establish the spirit of collaboration, listening, responding, and reacting.

## WHAT DO YOU HOPE MRT AUDIENCES TAKE AWAY FROM LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR AND GRILL?

I hope MRT audiences will appreciate Billie Holiday as a jazz legend and a Black American hero.

## FROM THE COSTUME DESIGNER:

# AN INTERVIEW WITH YAO CHEN

Yao Chen is a costume and scenic designer. Her credits include *Until the Flood* (2021) at Merrimack Repertory Theatre, *Radio Golf* (2020) at Trinity Repertory Company, *The House that Jack Built* (2021) and *The Diary of Ann Frank* (2019) at Indiana Repertory Theatre, *The Little Prince* (2018) at Seattle Children's Theatre, and *The Music Man* (2017) at Berkshire Theatre Group. Chen has worked internationally in the United States, Costa Rica, and China.

### WHAT IS YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS LIKE? WHEN PUTTING TOGETHER A COSTUME, WHAT DO YOU DO FIRST?

Each production has its unique needs and expectations. But normally, getting a fresh sense of the script from a first reading is important because you are feeling this story as an audience. After some thought and reflection, communication with the director is crucial, too. I get the general artistic direction and the vision from that communication, whether it is going to be realistic, stylized, surrealistic, or something else. The next step is initial visual research – collecting and sharing with the director and the team, and collecting feedback. Step by step, the format and direction of the costume becomes clear.

### WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE AS A COSTUME DESIGNER? HOW DO YOU TACKLE IT?

I love all the artistic and challenging things that come with being a costume designer. One of the biggest challenges is balancing life and work. The nature of costume design requires a lot of travel and work, along with the rehearsal schedule. I am a mother of a 5-year-old, and balancing travel and time with kids is hard. One thing I have been trying to do is explain to my kid what I do when I am away and take her to see my productions if possible. I am hoping my kid comes to understand the nature of my work and enjoy the results of my work.

### WHAT IS THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS LIKE WITH THE OTHER DESIGNERS, THE DIRECTOR, THE ACTORS, ETC.?

Core creative team meetings are so important because we need to understand each other's visions and adjust accordingly to make sure the production's direction is unified overall. In theatre, all aspects are related to each other. For example, the color change in costume impacts lighting and scenery. So, being transparent and communicative during the collaborative process is key. Being proactive and offering information is always good to avoid future confusion.

### WHAT INSPIRED YOU WHILE WORKING ON *LADY DAY*?

I was inspired when Candice, the director, mentioned, "It is actually not a fun night." This concept helped me dig deeper and learn more about the nature of jazz, which in turn helped me find the basic tone of the play.

### WHAT DID YOU FEEL WAS MOST CRUCIAL WHEN DESIGNING FOR THIS PLAY?

The beautiful profile of Billie Holiday actually carries a pool of painful memories and suffering. The nature of jazz is emotional, melancholy, and complex. How a costume designer can create a beautiful shell to carry these stories is interesting and challenging. Respect for Billie Holiday's classic profile, as well as respect for the uniqueness of our cast, is also crucial.

# BILLIE HOLIDAY'S BIOGRAPHY

*"THERE IS A SILENT DIALECTIC THROUGHOUT HER BODY OF WORK BETWEEN PAIN AND PLEASURE, LOVE AND DEATH, DESTRUCTION AND THE VISION OF A NEW ORDER."*<sup>2</sup> – ANGELA DAVIS

Billie Holiday was born Eleanora Fagan on April 5th, 1915, in Philadelphia. She spent her early years in Baltimore, Maryland, where her mother, Sadie Fagan, settled after being cast out of her childhood home for falling pregnant as a young teenager. Holiday's father, Clarence Halliday, was largely absent throughout her childhood as he pursued his music career. While Holiday's mother was more present, Holiday was frequently left with different extended family members for long stretches of time.

Holiday suffered a tumultuous and traumatic childhood. She was sexually assaulted at the ages of ten and twelve and spent time at a Catholic reform school for truancy. By the late 1920s, Holiday had relocated to Harlem, where her mother was living and working.



BILLIE HOLIDAY PERFORMING IN NEW YORK, 1947.  
SOURCE: BRITANNICA

As a teenager, Holiday worked as a cleaner in local homes and even at the local brothel, where she was first introduced to the music of Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong. By the time she was fourteen, Holiday was working as a sex worker, and at the age of fifteen, she was arrested and briefly jailed for prostitution.

Around 1929, Holiday began singing at

nightclubs in Harlem. She performed under the stage name "Billie Holiday," adopting a different spelling of her father's last name and the first name of her favorite actress, Billie Dove. In 1933, when Holiday was eighteen, record producer John Hammond heard her sing at a local club. Impressed with her talent, Hammond arranged for her to make her first recordings with the clarinetist Benny Goodman. Holiday and Goodman recorded "Your Mother's Son In Law," and

<sup>2</sup> Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 195.

## BILLIE HOLIDAY'S BIOGRAPHY

"Riffin' the Scotch," which became Holiday's first hit. Throughout the 1930s, Holiday's popularity steadily grew thanks to several popular recordings with Teddy Wilson, including "What A Little Moonlight Can Do." Holiday also began performing regularly with the saxophonist Lester Young, who became a lifelong friend. Young coined her famous nickname, "Lady Day."

In 1937, Holiday toured with pianist Count Basie and his swing band; in 1938, she toured with clarinetist Artie Shaw and his orchestra. Her collaboration with Shaw's orchestra made her one of the first Black female musicians to play with an all-white orchestra. Shaw's band toured throughout the segregated South, and as a result, Holiday was often subjected to racist heckling and barred from the bars and dining rooms that were open to her white bandmates.

In 1939, she returned to New York and began a months-long stint performing at Café Society, New York's first integrated nightclub. While there, Holiday was introduced to the song "Strange Fruit," a protest song about the lynching of Black Americans in the South. Holiday began performing "Strange Fruit" as the last song of her sets at Café Society, and she recorded it the same year. "Strange Fruit" became one of Holiday's best-selling records, and her star continued to rise.

In the early 1940s, Holiday's mother began borrowing large amounts of money from her to keep her newly opened restaurant running. One night, when Holiday was struggling financially, she asked her mother for money, which her mother refused. The

two had a falling out, which inspired Holiday to write "God Bless the Child," which she recorded in 1941. The same year, Holiday married Jimmy Monroe. By most accounts, Holiday was already struggling with alcohol dependency when she met Monroe. However, it was through Monroe that Holiday was first introduced to heroin, which became an addiction she would struggle with for the rest of her life.

Despite her personal struggles, the 1940s proved to be professionally fruitful years for Holiday. She signed with Decca Records and began recording more pop songs, including the best-selling "Lover Man." In 1947, when her career was at its peak, Holiday divorced



AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR HOLIDAY'S PERFORMANCE AT CARNEGIE HALL, 1957. SOURCE: [CARNEGIEHALL.ORG](https://www.carnegiehall.org)

Monroe, and the same year, she was arrested for narcotics possession. During her trial, Holiday pleaded with the judge to send her to a hospital so she could get help for her addiction, but he sentenced her to a year in prison instead. Holiday was released early for good behavior, but upon her release, her New York Cabaret Card was revoked, barring her from performing in venues where alcohol was sold. In 1948, at the urging of her friends and colleagues, Holiday performed a sold-out concert at Carnegie Hall. In 1949, Holiday released her hits "Crazy He Calls Me" and "Tain't Nobody's Biz-ness If I Do," but her consistent drug and alcohol usage began to affect her health drastically.

In 1951, she married trumpeter Joe Guy, who shared her struggles with addiction, but their romance was short-lived, and she began a relationship with the abusive Louis McKay shortly after. Throughout the early 1950s, she toured in Europe and released her autobiography, *Lady Sings the Blues*, with ghostwriter William Duffy. In 1956, she returned to Carnegie Hall, where she again performed to a sold-out audience, and she released a

number of recordings for Clef Records.

Early in 1959, Holiday was diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver, and her financial situation deteriorated due to her husband's spending and her lack of adequate record compensation. She performed some of her final concerts at Emerson's Bar in Philadelphia before she was hospitalized in May for cirrhosis and heart disease. While in the hospital, Holiday was put under house arrest for narcotics possession. She died on July 17th, 1959, at New York's Metropolitan Hospital.

Today, Billie Holiday is celebrated as one of the greatest American vocalists of the 20th century. An icon of the jazz musical genre, she is still revered for her unique phrasing, powerfully emotional vocal delivery, and musical improvisation skills. Holiday's musical genius has inspired many artists, including Frank Sinatra, Nina Simone, Etta James, Amy Winehouse, Sam Cooke, Erykah Badu, and Janis Joplin. She has been awarded five posthumous Grammy Awards and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2000.

**"MISS HOLIDAY STEPPED FROM BETWEEN THE CURTAINS INTO THE WHITE SPOTLIGHT AWAITING HER, WEARING A WHITE EVENING GOWN AND WHITE GARDENIAS IN HER BLACK HAIR. SHE WAS ERECT AND BEAUTIFUL; POISED AND SMILING. AND WHEN THE FIRST SECTION OF NARRATION WAS ENDED, SHE SANG - WITH STRENGTH UNDIMINISHED - WITH ALL OF THE ART THAT WAS HERS. I WAS VERY MUCH MOVED. IN THE DARKNESS, MY FACE BURNED, AND MY EYES. I RECALL ONLY ONE THING. I SMILED."**<sup>3</sup>  
- THE NEW YORK TIMES CRITIC GILBERT MILLSTEIN, ON WATCHING HOLIDAY PERFORM AT CARNEGIE HALL IN 1956.

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert Millstein, liner notes for *The Essential Billie Holiday: Carnegie Hall Concert Recorded Live*, recorded November 10, 1956, Verve Records.

# ALL THAT JAZZ: THE ROOTS OF AN AMERICAN MUSICAL GENRE

*"JAZZ IS WIDELY REGARDED AS THE PINNACLE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, DISTINGUISHED BY THE ORIGINALITY OF ITS IMPROVISATION, THE VIRTUOSITY AND ERUDITION OF ITS PERFORMERS AND COMPOSERS, AND ITS PROFESSIONALISM AND ARTISTRY."*<sup>4</sup>  
- INGRID MONSON

The roots of the jazz musical genre are frequently traced back to 19th-century New Orleans, Louisiana, before the abolishment of slavery. By the time Louisiana became part of the United States in 1803, it was a melting pot of cultures, home to settlers from France, Spain, Italy, Germany, England, Ireland, and Cuba, Haitian refugees, free people of color, and some tens of thousands enslaved individuals. As the largest city in Louisiana, New Orleans was a place of diversity and grand cultural exchange, shaping the city's art, cuisine, politics, and, of course, music.

By Louisiana state law, all enslaved persons were allowed a day free from work on Sundays. In New Orleans, those enslaved individuals would gather in what was known as Congo Square, an open area where they could play music, dance, and set up market stalls. They used string and percussion instruments in their music circles, likely handmade with what was available to them and similar to

the Indigenous instruments used in various parts of Africa. These gatherings in Congo Square became a part of the oral history of Black America before and after emancipation and well into the 20th century. Jazz clarinetist and saxophonist Sidney Bechet recalled hearing about the musical gatherings in Congo Square from his grandfather, who "would beat out rhythms on the drums at the square," where "no one had to explain notes or feeling or rhythm to him. It was all there inside him, something he was always sure of."<sup>5</sup> Bechet's description of his grandfather's rhythm and musical improvisational abilities are reminiscent of the musical elements that have come to be associated with the jazz genre, which is generally defined by its syncopation, complex harmonies, and some level of musical improvisation. Jazz frequently blends traditional African rhythms with European harmonic structures.

## MUSICAL TERMS TO KNOW

**SYNCOPIATION** A musical technique where rhythms emphasize offbeats rather than main, typically stressed beats.

**COMPLEX HARMONY** A harmonic line that utilizes varied chord progressions, dissonance, or chords outside a musical composition's given key.

**CALL AND RESPONSE** A song structure in which a musical soloist sings or plays a musical phrase that an ensemble or another soloist then answers. Call and response is common in many Black music genres, including soul, gospel, blues, and jazz.

**IMPROVISATION** The act of playing or singing rhythms, riffs, and melodies that were not composed previously.

**JAZZ** A music genre known for its syncopated rhythms, improvisation, and complex harmonies.

**RAGTIME** A popular style of African-American music that emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ragtime utilized syncopated rhythms and a steady bass line.

**BLUES** A music genre that originated in Black communities throughout the American Deep South. Many blues songs follow a simple structure of chord progression, often referred to as "12-bar blues." Common themes in blues songs include love, betrayal, religion, pain, and struggle.

**SWING** A style of jazz traditionally performed in large band ensembles. Swing traditionally featured a medium tempo, often with a clear melodic line and strong beat. Swing ensembles often featured vocal soloists. Swing emerged in the 1920s and reached peak popularity in the mid-1930s and 40s.

**BEBOP** A music genre that evolved from jazz and swing. Bebop was usually performed by groups smaller than swing bands, and unlike the jazz of the previous decades, bebop traditionally featured faster tempos and rapid chord changes. Bebop reached peak popularity in the latter half of the 1940s.

<sup>4</sup> Ingrid Monson, "Jazz," in *African American Music: An Introduction*, Second Edition, ed. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (New York and London: Routledge, 2015), 229.

<sup>5</sup> Sidney Bechet, Treat it Gentle, qtd. in Ted Gioia, "The Prehistory of Jazz The Africanization of American Music," *The New York Times*, 1997, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/first/g/gioia-jazz.html>.



# THE JIM CROW ERA

After the era of Reconstruction in 1877, primarily Southern states began enacting a series of laws meant to disenfranchise, marginalize, and segregate Black Americans and other people of color. These white supremacist state and local laws segregated schools, housing, hospitals, public transportation, parks, restaurants, bathrooms, and drinking fountains; they outlawed interracial marriage, dating, and adoption; and they disenfranchised Black voters.

These laws were made possible in large part because of the *Civil Rights Cases of 1883*, five cases brought before the United States Supreme Court that questioned the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which ensured that people of color received equal accommodation on public transportation and in theatres, churches,

inns, and public schools. In the *Civil Rights Cases of 1883*, the Supreme Court deemed the *Civil Rights Act of 1875* unconstitutional, ruling that the 13th and 14th constitutional amendments failed to give Congress the ability to implement laws designed to hinder racial discrimination by citizens and private businesses. Nine years later, the Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, ruling that segregation laws did not infringe on the 14th Amendment so long as there was equal accommodation for white people and people of color. This ruling introduced the now infamous “separate but equal” doctrine, a doctrine used by Southern state and local governments to enforce racial segregation, where “equality” was not a priority.

Throughout the first half of the 20th century,

Jim Crow laws affected nearly every aspect of life for Black Americans, and life itself was often threatened. Lynching and racial violence were common occurrences, not only in the South but in border states as well. Perpetrators of racial violence and murder were rarely tried, and if they were, the guarantee of an all-white jury ensured acquittal.

The era of Jim Crow lasted nearly eighty years. The oppressive, violent, and racist

tyranny of Jim Crow laws in the United States prompted the national civil rights movement in the mid-1950s, a movement that sparked lasting, legally protected change. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 effectively outlawed segregation, racial discrimination, and disenfranchisement.

Examine primary sources from the Jim Crow era [HERE](#).

## TERMS TO KNOW

RECONSTRUCTION  
COMPROMISE OF 1877  
JIM CROW  
BLACK CODES  
WHITE SUPREMACY  
SEGREGATION  
13TH AMENDMENT  
14TH AMENDMENT  
15TH AMENDMENT

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1871  
*CIVIL RIGHTS CASES OF 1883*  
THE REDEEMERS  
STUDENT NONVIOLENT  
COORDINATING COMMITTEE  
(SNCC)  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF  
COLORED PEOPLE (NAACP)

SEPARATE BUT EQUAL  
GRANDFATHER CLAUSE  
POLL TAX  
SIT-INS  
BOYCOTT  
*PLESSY V. FERGUSON*  
*BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION*  
VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

A SEGREGATED BUS STATION IN DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA, 1940. SOURCE: [LOC.GOV/RESOURCE/CPH.3C25806](https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3c25806)



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Where did the term “Jim Crow” originate?
2. What factors led to the rise of Jim Crow laws after Reconstruction?
3. What are the details of the Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*?
4. Who were “The Redeemers?”
5. What was “The Lily White Movement?”
6. How did Jim Crow laws affect the everyday lives of Black Americans?
7. What was “The Grandfather Clause?”
8. What factors led to the beginning of the civil rights movement?
9. Why is *Brown v. Board of Education* considered a landmark ruling?
10. What factors eventually led to the overturning of Jim Crow laws?
11. What did the Voting Rights Act of 1965 achieve?
12. How were the Nazis influenced by the Jim Crow laws in the United States?
13. What were some of the lasting effects of the Jim Crow laws?

## WATCH: ANGELA DAVIS ON "STRANGE FRUIT" AND BILLIE HOLIDAY

In 2020, activist and author Angela Davis introduced the song "Strange Fruit" at an SFJAZZ concert where jazz singers Kim Nalley and Tammy Hall covered the iconic song made famous by Billie Holiday in 1939. Davis's introduction, which is adapted from her 1988 book *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, examines the history of the song and its importance to Holiday while considering the broader themes of race, sexuality, violence, and oppression that marked both Holiday's life and career and the life of Black Americans living in the era of Jim Crow. This video provides students with a context for "Strange Fruit" and encourages them to think critically about what Davis calls "the intersection between music and radical social consciousness."<sup>6</sup> Davis's introduction ends at the 4:37 mark in the video.

[WATCH THE VIDEO HERE](#)

## "STRANGE FRUIT": AN AMERICAN PROTEST SONG

In 1936, Abel Meeropol, a Jewish high school teacher from the Bronx, penned the poem "Bitter Fruit" after coming across a 1930 photograph depicting the lynchings of J. Thomas Shipp and Abraham S. Smith, two Black boys who were murdered in Marion, Indiana. Meeropol's poem, which compared the bodies of lynching victims to fruit hanging in trees, was first published in the union magazine *The New York Teacher* in January of 1937 under the pseudonym "Lewis Allen." On writing the poem that would become the song "Strange Fruit," Meeropol stated simply: "I wrote 'Strange Fruit' because I hate lynching, and I hate injustice, and I hate the people who perpetuate it."<sup>7</sup>

In 1938, Meeropol set the poem to music, renaming it "Strange Fruit." The song was first performed by Meeropol's wife, Anne, at union meetings and small social gatherings, and it was sung later that year by the singer Laura Duncan at Madison Square Garden. Either club manager and founder Barney Josephson or music director Robert Gordon introduced Billie Holiday to the song in 1939, when she was regularly performing at Josephson's club, Café Society. Marketed as "the wrong place for the right people," Café Society was a New York hotspot for left-wing progressives and some of the greatest blues and jazz musicians of the era, including Bessie Smith, Ella Fitzgerald, John Coltrane,



ABEL MEEROPOL  
SOURCE: AAREGISTRY.ORG

"Strange Fruit," the final song of Holiday's set, and forbade the waiters and bartenders from moving or making noise. The club was plunged into darkness for the song's duration, except for a single small spotlight that illuminated Holiday's face. Josephson wrote about his staging of "Strange Fruit" years later in his book about Café Society, writing, "I wanted them to remember every word of the song or at least to go out thinking about it," otherwise, "what would be the purpose?"<sup>8</sup>

Meeropol was at Café Society the night Holiday performed "Strange Fruit" for the first time. "She gave a startling, most dramatic and effective interpretation which could jolt an audience out of its complacency anywhere," he recalled, "this was exactly what I wanted the song to do and why I wrote it."<sup>9</sup> Meeropol was not alone in his opinion of Holiday's rendition. Holiday's nightly performances of "Strange Fruit" became a sensation, quickly sparking widespread media attention and drawing large crowds to Josephson's club. When Columbia Records refused to record the song, deeming it too controversial, Holiday turned to her friend Milt Gabler, who willingly recorded it

Miles Davis, Lena Horne, Josh White, and Duke Ellington. Josephson staged Holiday's performances of "Strange Fruit" for "full impact." He made

under his label, Commodore Records. Holiday recorded the song with the Café Society band the same year, and the record quickly became one of her greatest hits, going on to sell over one million copies. However, "Strange Fruit" was not without its critics. It was not uncommon for audience members to leave or heckle when Holiday sang it. Many radio stations refused to play it, and many club managers tried to convince Holiday not to sing it at their venues.

The legacy of "Strange Fruit" is inextricably bound up with the American history of racial violence and oppression, segregation, and civil rights. With its brutal symbolism made haunting through Holiday's vocal delivery, "Strange Fruit," in the words of Black music scholar Emily J. Lordi, "distills the fact of racial violence so unmistakably. It's shorthand for 'What is a song I can think of that most powerfully indicts the ongoing legacy of racial violence in this country and across the world?'"<sup>10</sup> "Strange Fruit" was



HOLIDAY SINGING AT CAFE SOCIETY IN 1939. FROM BARNEY JOSEPHSON'S "CAFE SOCIETY: THE WRONG PLACE FOR THE RIGHT PEOPLE."

<sup>6</sup> Angela Davis, "Angela Davis introduces Billie Holiday's 'Strange Fruit,' performed by Kim Nalley & Tammy Hall," filmed June 12, 2020, SFJAZZ, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SvqHpJDS19E>.

<sup>7</sup> Abel Meeropol, qtd. in David Margolick, "Strange Fruit," *Vanity Fair*, September 1998, <https://archive.vanityfair.com/article/1998/9/strange-fruit>.

<sup>8</sup> Barney Josephson with Terry Trilling-Josephson, *Café Society: The Wrong Place for the Right people* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 47-48.

<sup>9</sup> Abel Meeropol qtd. in Dorian Lynskey, "Strange Fruit: the first great protest song," *The Guardian*, February 15, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/feb/16/protest-songs-billie-holiday-strange-fruit>.

## "STRANGE FRUIT": AN AMERICAN PROTEST SONG

adopted by the anti-lynching movement and later, by the civil rights movement. In 2020, it was often referenced and utilized by Black Lives Matter protesters. Today, eighty-five years after it was first performed and recorded, Holiday's rendition of Meeropol's song is still considered one of the greatest American protest recordings ever made. Some music critics consider it the first. In 1978, "Strange Fruit" was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame, and in 1999, TIME named Holiday's rendition of the song "The

Song of the Century."

Listen to Billie Holiday's 1939 recording of "Strange Fruit" [HERE](#).

*"Southern trees bear strange fruit  
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root  
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze  
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees*

*Pastoral scene of the gallant south  
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth  
Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh  
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh*

*Here is fruit for the crows to pluck  
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck  
For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop  
Here is a strange and bitter crop"*

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

HAVE STUDENTS ANALYZE, COMPARE, AND CONTRAST HOLIDAY'S FIRST RECORDING OF "STRANGE FRUIT" WITH A LIVE, FILMED PERFORMANCE OF HER SINGING SONG IN 1959, AVAILABLE [HERE](#).



LEFT: BETWEEN 200,000 AND 500,000 DEMONSTRATORS MARCH DOWN CONSTITUTION AVENUE DURING THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR JOBS AND FREEDOM, WASHINGTON D.C., AUG. 28, 1963; RIGHT: PROTESTERS GATHER IN HARLEM TO PROTEST THE DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD ON MAY 30, 2020 IN NEW YORK CITY. SOURCE: HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; DAVID 'DEE' DELGADO—GETTY IMAGES | [TIME.COM](#)

<sup>10</sup> Emily J. Lordi, qtd in Aida Amoako, "Strange Fruit: The most shocking song of all time?," BBC, April 27, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20190415-strange-fruit-the-most-shocking-song-of-all-time>.

# ZADIE SMITH'S "CRAZY THEY CALL ME"

Zadie Smith is an award-winning English novelist, essayist, and short story writer known for her books *White Teeth* (2000), *On Beauty* (2005), *Swing Time* (2016), *Grand Union* (2019), and *The Fraud* (2023). Her work frequently explores themes of racial and cultural identity and interpersonal relationships. Her best-selling and critically acclaimed novels, essays, and short stories have solidified her as one of the most celebrated literary voices of the 21st century.

Smith's short story, "Crazy They Call Me," was published in *The New Yorker* in 2017 and served as the introduction to the book *Jerry*

*Dantzig: Billie Holiday at Sugar Hill*. The book documents Holiday's time in Newark in 1957 through photographs. Smith's short story is uniquely told through second-person narration, whereby Holiday addresses herself.

Have students listen to Smith's reading of "[Crazy They Call Me](#)."<sup>11</sup> Encourage students to take notes as they listen and discuss the story as a class or in small groups. For more context on the story and Zadie Smith, students can also read "[Zadie Smith on Inhabiting the World of Billie Holiday](#)," an interview where Smith discusses how and why she came to write "Crazy They Call Me."<sup>12</sup>

NOTE: "CRAZY THEY CALL ME" CONTAINS ADULT LANGUAGE

*"AND IF A FEW SWEET, CLUELESS BOBBYSOXERS, HAPPY AS SUNDAY, STOP YOU ON 110TH TO TELL YOU HOW MUCH THEY LOVED YOU AT CARNEGIE HALL, HOW MUCH THEY LOVED YOU ON THE TONIGHT SHOW, TRY YOUR BEST NOT TO LOOK BORED, TAKE OUT YOUR PEARL ENCRUSTED CIGARETTE BOX, AND HAND THEM A SMOKE. GIRL, YOU MUST GIVE AWAY TWENTY SMOKES A DAY. YOU GIVE IT ALL AWAY. IT STREAMS OUT OF YOU LIKE RIVERS GOING INTO THE SEA: LOVE, MUSIC, MONEY, SMOKES."*



ZADIE SMITH [THEGENTLEWOMAN.CO.UK](http://THEGENTLEWOMAN.CO.UK)

<sup>11</sup> Zadie Smith, "Crazy They Call Me," read by the author (New York: *The New Yorker*, 2017), audio recording, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/03/06/crazy-they-call-me>.

<sup>12</sup> Zadie Smith, "This Week in Fiction: Zadie Smith on Inhabiting the World of Billie Holiday," interview by Cressida Leyshon, *The New Yorker*, (February 27, 2017), <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/fiction-this-week-zadie-smith-2017-03-06>.

## ZADIE SMITH'S "CRAZY THEY CALL ME"

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Smith's story is written in the second person, with Billie Holiday addressing herself. Which self is she addressing? Her past self, her present self, or her future self? How does the narrator feel towards the "self" she is addressing?
2. What is the effect of this second-person narration on the reader/listener? How might the story be different if it was told in first person or third person?
3. Consider this line: "In fact, though many aren't hip to this yet, not only is there no more Eleanora, there isn't any Billie either. There is only Lady Day." What does the narrator mean by this?
4. Consider the theme of fame, which is explored in both "Crazy They Call Me" and *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*. Do these works portray Holiday's relationship to fame in a similar way?
5. Like *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*, "Crazy They Call Me" focuses on the end of Holiday's life. Where is there foreshadowing in Smith's story?
6. Pearls are a recurring motif in Smith's story. What do pearls represent? What does the narrator mean when she says, "You wear pearls, and you throw them before swine, more or less."
7. What do the narrator's reflections on her dog, Pepi, reveal about her character?

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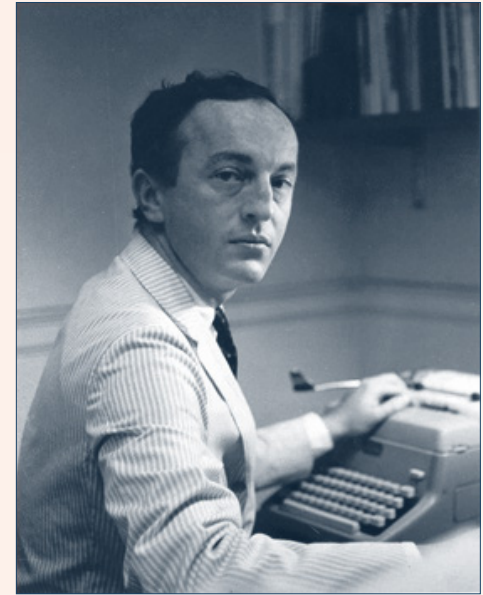
# FRANK O'HARA'S "THE DAY LADY DIED"

Frank O'Hara (1926-1966) was an American poet, art critic and curator. He was a prolific member of The New York School, an informal group of avant-garde writers, musicians, and artists in the 1950s and 1960s. Like other members of the New York School, O'Hara was influenced by abstract expressionism, surrealism, jazz music, modernism, and experimental theatre. His poetry was often autobiographical and colloquial and explored themes of personal connection and the everyday. O'Hara is best known for his poetry collection *Lunch Poems* (1964), much of which he wrote during his lunch breaks while working at the Modern Museum of Art. In his poem, "The Day Lady Died," O'Hara reflects on the day he learned Billie Holiday had died.

Not only is O'Hara's poem rich in literary devices, but it also references several artists, writers, places, and events. A close reading of this poem encourages students to interrogate O'Hara's references and apply basic research and contextual knowledge to their literary analyses.

**"...AND I AM SWEATING A LOT BY NOW AND THINKING OF  
LEANING ON THE JOHN DOOR IN THE 5 SPOT  
WHILE SHE WHISPERED A SONG ALONG THE KEYBOARD  
TO MAL WALDRON AND EVERYONE AND I STOPPED BREATHING"**

<sup>13</sup> Frank O'Hara, "The Day Lady Died," from *Lunch Poems*, Poetry Foundation, 1964, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42657/the-day-lady-died>.



FRANK O'HARA [FRANKOHARA.ORG](http://FRANKOHARA.ORG)

A list of textual elucidations is offered below to aid students in their close readings.

Have students do a close reading of O'Hara's "[The Day Lady Died](#)."<sup>13</sup> This can be done individually or in small groups.

## FRANK O'HARA'S "THE DAY THE LADY DIED"

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the pace of the poem? Does the pace of the poem change?
2. O'Hara's poem is written in the first person. What does the poem reveal about the speaker?
3. Examine the list of textual elucidations. Why might O'Hara choose to mention Bastille Day? Why might he choose to mention the "poets of Ghana"?
4. What is the tone of O'Hara's poem? Does the tone change?
5. What is the mood of the poem?
6. What literary devices does O'Hara use? How and where does he use them? Consider: enjambment, assonance, alliteration, allusion, imagery, and irony.
7. Aside from the poem's title, how might Holiday's death be foreshadowed before the poem's final stanza?
8. How does the speaker feel about the death of Billie Holiday?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

HAVE STUDENTS SPEND 15 MINUTES RESEARCHING JEAN GENET, BRENDAN BEHAN, OR PAUL-MARIE VERLAINE. ENCOURAGE THEM TO SHARE THEIR FINDINGS WITH THE CLASS AND ASK THEM TO CONSIDER WHY O'HARA MAY HAVE CHOSEN TO REFERENCE THESE WRITERS IN "THE DAY LADY DIED."

### TEXTUAL ELUCIDATIONS

**BASTILLE DAY** July 14<sup>th</sup>, a national holiday in France. It celebrates the start of the French Revolution, marked by the storming of the Bastille, a prison and armory.

**NEW WORLD WRITING** A popular literary magazine known for publishing essays, poetry, and fiction from writers worldwide.

**GHANA** A country in West Africa. In the 18th century, Ghana was at the center of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. When O'Hara wrote this poem, Ghana had recently achieved independence from British rule.

**GOLDEN GRIFFIN** A now-defunct New York City bookstore.

**PAUL-MARIE VERLAINE** A 19<sup>th</sup>-century French poet. A significant figure in the Symbolist and Decadent literary movements.

**PIERRE BONNARD** A post-impressionist painter and illustrator.

**HESIOD** An ancient Greek poet best known for his epic *Theogony*, which details the origins of the Greek gods.

**RICHMOND LATTIMORE** An American classicist and poet best known for his translations of ancient Greek epics and plays.

**BRENDAN BEHAN** An Irish Republican and writer whose work was often autobiographical, political, and satirical. He was open about his struggles with alcoholism and its effect on his life and his writing.

**JEAN GENET** A French playwright, novelist, and political activist celebrated as a radical figure in the avant-garde theatre scene of the 1950s and 1960s.

**STREGNA** An Italian herbal liquor.

**GAULOISES AND PICAYUNES** Brands of cigarettes made with caporal, a kind of French tobacco. Gauloises are from France, and Picayunes are from New Orleans.

**THE FIVE SPOT** A jazz club in New York City.

**MAL WALDRON** A jazz pianist and composer who served as Billie Holiday's accompanist during the last years of her life.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

HAVE STUDENTS USE THEIR ANALYSES OF *LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR AND GRILL*, "CRAZY THEY CALL ME," OR "THE DAY LADY DIED," TO CRAFT TWO POSSIBLE THESIS STATEMENTS FOR ONE OF THESE WORKS. IF TIME ALLOWS, HAVE STUDENTS GIVE EACH OTHER FEEDBACK ON THEIR THESIS STATEMENTS AND ALLOW THEM TO REVISE THEM AFTERWARD.

# TIMELINE | BILLIE HOLIDAY

1915	Billie Holiday is born in Philadelphia, PA. Her parents name her Eleanora Fagan.	1915
1929	Holiday begins working as a singer in Harlem nightclubs.	1929
1933	Holiday releases her first record with Benny Goodman. "Riffin' the Scotch" becomes her first hit.	1933
1934	Holiday releases "What a Little Moonlight Can Do."	1934
1937	Holiday begins touring the country with Count Basie's band and, later, with Artie Shaw's orchestra. She becomes one of the first Black musicians to tour with an all-white orchestra.	1937
1939	Holiday sings "Strange Fruit" for the first time at Café Society, the first integrated club in New York City.	1939
1941	Holiday co-writes and records "God Bless the Child."	1941
1947	Holiday is arrested for narcotics possession and sentenced to a year in prison.	1947
1948	Holiday performs to a sold-out audience at Carnegie Hall.	1948
1949	Holiday releases "Crazy He Calls Me."	1949
1954	Holiday tours in Europe.	1954
1959	In March, Holiday gives some of her last performances at Emerson's in Philadelphia. In July, she dies in New York at the age of 44.	1959

# TIMELINE | US HISTORY

1910	The Great Migration begins. Black Americans from the South move to northern and midwestern cities, hoping to escape racial violence and the social, economic, and educational oppression imposed by Jim Crow. By 1970, six million Black Americans will have migrated.	1910
1917-1918	The United States enters World War I-World War I ends (The Harlem Renaissance begins.)	1917-1918
1919	Red Summer. White supremacist race riots occur in over twenty US cities.	1919
1920	The 19th Amendment is passed, granting women the right to vote.* <small>*While the passage of the 19th Amendment enabled most white women to vote, that wasn't the case for many women of color. <a href="http://WHY.THE.19TH.AMENDMENT.DID.NOT.GUARANTEE.ALL.WOMEN.THE.RIGHT.TO.VOTE">WHY THE 19TH AMENDMENT DID NOT GUARANTEE ALL WOMEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE   HISTORY.COM</a></small>	1920
1925	30,000 Klu Klux Klan members march through Washington D.C.	1925
1929	The Great Depressions begins, and the Jazz Age ends.	1929
1939	The Great Depressions ends.	1939
1941	The United States enters the Second World War.	1941
1945	World War II ends.	1945
1948	President Truman ends segregation in the US military	1948
1954	The Supreme Court case <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> ends segregation in American public schools.	1954
1955	Fourteen-year-old Emmett Till is brutally murdered in Mississippi for allegedly flirting with a white woman. Later that year, Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat to white man on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama.	1955
1957	President Eisenhower signs the Civil Rights Act of 1957.	1957
1960	The Greensborough sit-ins. In North Carolina, four Black college students take part in a non-violent protest, sitting at the "white only" lunch counter of F.W. Woolworth Company. Similar non-violent sit-ins subsequently occur across the country in restaurants, churches, public pools, and local businesses, spurring desegregation efforts.	1960