

Loop Players

Bus Stop

by William Inge

Study Guide



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Produced by the department of
English, Speech and Theatre
Harold Washington College

directed by
Kathryn Nash
Assistant Professor

Study Guide written/compiled by Elisabeth Heard, Instructor

Bus Stop, by William Inge

CAST:

Bo	Christian Creasy
Cherie	Nicole Narro
Grace	Rachael Hansen
Elma	Emily Lindsay
Will	Matthew McGuire
Dr. Lyman	Christian Isely
Carl	Jeremy Campbell
Virgil	Michael Doucet

UNDERSTUDIES:

Matthew McGuire - Bo; Jeremy Campbell – Virgil
Kimela Reed – Cherie; Seth Leonard – Dr. Lyman
Delysa Richards – Grace/Elma;
Terry Haynes –Carl/Will

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Biography of William Inge

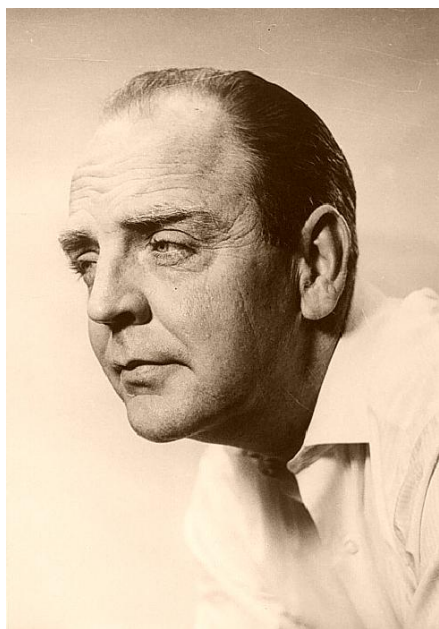


Image courtesy of the William Inge
Center for the Arts

William Inge's Kansas boyhood is reflected in many of his works. Born in Independence on May 3, 1913, he was the second son of Luther Clay Inge and Maude Sarah Gibson-Inge and the youngest of five children. His boyhood home at 514 N. 4th Street in Independence still stands. His siblings were Lucy, Luther, Jr., Irene (died at 3 years of age), and Helene. His father was a traveling salesman, and Inge had a close relationship with his mother.

Independence in the 1920s was a wealthy white-collar town and the home of Alf Landon, Harry Sinclair, and Martin Johnson. Until the depression, Independence was said to have had more millionaires per capita than any other city in the country.

Inge's fascination for the theatre began early. In the 1920s, Independence had many cultural events as top artists and shows stopped over for one night stands between performances in Kansas City, Missouri, and Tulsa, Oklahoma. Although Inge was not from a well-to-do family, he did get to see many shows as a member of a local Boy Scout Troop. The troop met in the Civic Center, a large 2,000 seat theater where these shows were held. The scouts were regularly invited to sit in the balcony after their meetings to watch the performances.

In 1930, Inge graduated from Independence High School and went on to attend Independence Junior College (now Independence Community College). At that time, the high school and college were located across the street from each other at 10th and Laurel streets.

In 1935, Inge graduated from the University of Kansas at Lawrence with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Speech and Drama. He said once that at this stage in his life he had wanted to plunge into Broadway but felt that he lacked the necessary funding. When the George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee, offered him a scholarship to work on a master's degree, he accepted. He later dropped out of Peabody. "I sort of based my life on the theatre," said Inge. "Having given up the theatre, I had given up the basis that I'd set for my life upon. I was terribly confused. I went home to Kansas and began to flounder."

Back in Kansas, he began to consider a more defined purpose for his life and a better understanding of his problems. He found physical exhaustion helpful and that summer worked as a laborer on the state highway. He also went to Wichita where he worked as a news

announcer. In 1937-38, Inge taught high school English and Drama in Columbus, Kansas, and in 1938, he returned to Peabody to complete his Master of Arts Degree. From 1938-1943, Inge was a member of the faculty at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri.

In 1943, he moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where he worked as the drama and music critic for the St. Louis-Times. It was while he worked as a drama critic that Inge became acquainted with Tennessee Williams. He accompanied Williams to a performance of his play *The Glass Menagerie* in Chicago. "I was terrifically moved by the play," said Inge. "I thought it was the finest (play) I had seen in many years. I went back to St. Louis and felt, 'Well, I've got to write a play.'" Within three months he had completed *Farther Off From Heaven*, which was produced by Margo Jones in Dallas. Inge returned to a teaching position at Washington University in St. Louis and began serious work on turning a fragmentary short story into a one act play. This work evolved into a play that earned Inge the title of most promising playwright of the 1950 Broadway season. The play was *Come Back, Little Sheba*.

In 1953, *Picnic* opened at The Music Box Theatre in New York City. The play is set in a small Kansas town on Labor Day. Rosemary, the spinster school teacher, fears she will continue to live her life without someone to take care of her. Inge recalled the genesis of this character profile. "When I was a boy in Kansas, my mother had a boarding house. There were three women school teachers living in the house. I was four years old, and they were nice to me; I liked them. I saw their attempts and, even as a child, I sensed every woman's failure. I began to sense the sorrow and the emptiness in their lives and it touched me." *Picnic* won Inge a Pulitzer Prize, The Drama Critic Circle Award, The Outer Circle Award, and The Theatre Club Award.

It was in 1952 that Paramount Pictures released the film version of *Come Back, Little Sheba* directed by Daniel Mann and starring Shirley Booth and Burt Lancaster. Shortly after, in 1956, Columbia Pictures released the film version of *Picnic* directed by Joshua Logan and starring William Holden, Kim Novak, and Rosalind Russell.

Inge's next success came in 1955 when *Bus Stop* opened at The Music Box Theatre in New York City. Directed by Joshua Logan, the film version of *Bus Stop* was released by Fox in 1956 with Marilyn Monroe, Don Murray, and Eileen Heckart in starring roles.

Inge's fame continued to grow as *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, a reworking of his first play *Farther Off From Heaven*, opened on Broadway in 1957. *Dark*, considered to be Inge's finest play, is one in which he draws most directly from his own past. He confessed the play was his "first cautious attempt to look at the past, with an effort to find order and meaning in experiences that were once too close to be seen clearly." *Dark* was released as a film starring Dorothy McGuire, Robert Preston, Shirley Knight, Eve Arden, and Angela Lansbury in 1960.

Inge's mother, Maude Sarah Gibson Inge, died in 1958 at the age of 86 in Independence.

In 1959, *A Loss of Roses* opened to poor reviews and closed after a three week run. Inge was devastated by the criticism. In 1960, he announced plans to teach at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. These plans, and all subsequent plans to return to his native state, fell through even though he later purchased property in Lawrence.

In 1960, Inge's first screenplay, *Splendor in the Grass*, was filmed in New York. It starred Natalie Wood, Pat Hingle, and newcomer Warren Beatty. It also featured the only screen appearance of Inge himself, who played the part of Reverend Whitman. He is shown giving part of a sermon and bidding farewell to his parishioners as they leave the church. *Splendor* was a triumph for Inge and won him an Academy Award for Best Screenplay.

His next two plays were *Natural Affection* in 1963 and *Where's Daddy?* in 1965. Both were unsuccessful. This prompted him to leave New York in 1963 at the age of fifty and move to California. In 1968, he resumed his teaching career at the University of California at Irvine, but, becoming increasingly depressed, he quit in 1970.

The products of his remaining years were two novels: *Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff* in 1970 and *My Son Is a Splendid Driver* in 1971, a largely autobiographical account of Inge's boyhood years.

Throughout his life, Inge struggled with internal demons—mainly his homosexuality and his alcoholism. He was intensely guarded about his personal life and went to great lengths to maintain a public image that was just that—an image. While the majority of the characters in his plays are heterosexual, he did create two homosexual characters in plays written at the end of his career, perhaps as a result of American society becoming a bit more accepting of homosexuality in the 1960s. These characters are Pinky in *Where's Daddy?* and Archie in *The Disposal* (1967).

Inge committed suicide on June 10, 1973 at his home in Hollywood, where he lived with his sister, Helene. He was 60 years old. He was buried in Mt. Hope Cemetery in his hometown of Independence, KS. His headstone reads simply, "Playwright."

Portions of this biography are taken from: "About William Inge." *About William Inge*. William Inge Center for the Arts/Independence Community College. Web. 24 Jan. 2010.
<<http://www.ingecenter.org/aboutinge.html>>.

Performance History of *Bus Stop*

Bus Stop premiered on Broadway on March 2, 1955 at the Music Box Theatre and had a successful first run of 478 performances. Directed by Harold Clurman, the original cast included Kim Stanley as Cherie, Albert Salmi as Bo, Phyllis Love as Elma, Anthony Ross as Dr. Lyman, and Elaine Stritch as Grace, who ultimately received a Tony Award nomination for the role. The play appealed both to the critics and to the general audience. "Robert Coleman of the *Daily Mirror* summed it up when he advised that *Bus Stop* 'should prove a popular terminal for playgoers for months to come.' In this 'endearing, though deceptively simple, comedy,' the audience can find 'magical warmth and humor,' according to Coleman. In wrapping up his review, Coleman advised readers to make reservations right away, since the play 'has heart, compassion, wisdom, and loads of laughs'" (Galens and Spampinato 61).

One of the most positive reviews was written by Brooks Atkinson of *The New York Times*. "Atkinson deemed *Bus Stop* 'an uproarious comedy that never strays from the truth.' He also asserted that 'once it gets started it flows naturally and sympathetically through the hearts and hopes of some admirable people.' He was especially complimentary of Inge's writing. Atkinson pointed to the dialogue and stated that there are 'some moving conversations about the nature of love and the generosity that makes it possible.' This, according to the reviewer, was because Inge 'has more than an evening's entertainment in mind. He has ideas and principles . . . [and] he says a number of simple truths that give height and depth to his writing.' To sum up his review, Atkinson recommended 'both the writing and the acting . . . [as] a memorable achievement'" (Galens and Spampinato 62-3).

A few reviews were mixed, primarily noting that *Bus Stop* lacked the dramatic intensity of his earlier works, particularly *Come Back, Little Sheba* and *Picnic*. Even in the wake of this criticism, however, reviewers noted that *Bus Stop* is highly entertaining and well written. Richard Watts, Jr. of the *New York Post* stated that the play is a "romantic comedy about ordinary people that is at once humorous, simple, steadily entertaining and vastly endearing. It is also splendidly acted" and John McClain of the *Journal American* conceded that "*Bus Stop* will be with us as long as the road to The Music Box is open" despite the fact that he felt as though the play's action grinds to a halt in the second act (Galens and Spampinato 62).



Image courtesy of <http://www.movieposter.com>

The popularity of the play spawned a film adaptation. Released in August 1956, *Bus Stop* starred Marilyn Monroe as Cherie and Don Murray as Bo, who was nominated for an Oscar for Best Actor in a Supporting Role. Overall, the critics and the audience enjoyed the movie, particularly the performances of the two headliners. Bosley Crowther's review of the movie, originally printed in *The New York Times* on September 1, 1956, stated, "Hold onto your chairs, everybody, and get set for a rattling surprise. Marilyn Monroe has finally proved herself an actress in 'Bus Stop.' She and the picture are swell!" The movie also garnered two Golden Globe nominations: one for Best Motion Picture—Musical/Comedy and one for Monroe in the category Best Motion Picture Actress—Comedy/Musical. Unfortunately, the movie is quite different from the original play and even omits key characters such as Lyman and Will. In 1961, the film became the inspiration for a television series. *Bus Stop* the series starred Marilyn Maxwell as Grace and Buddy Ebsen as Verge Blessing. The series, however, was short lived and only lasted for one 26-episode season.

Brief Synopsis of the Play

Act I

As the play opens, Grace and Elma anticipate the arrival of the bus and its passengers at the bus stop. The two women are waitresses at the diner, and as they wait for customers they discuss romance, or the lack of it. Grace has been married, but her husband left her; Elma is single and lonely. The sheriff, Will, comes into the diner and announces that the snowstorm has closed the roads, and the bus and its passengers will be stuck at the diner until the road is cleared.

Almost immediately, the bus pulls in to the diner. A young blond woman, Cherie, enters. She is scared and trying to hide from a fellow passenger, Bo. Dr. Lyman and the bus driver, Carl, walk into the diner. It becomes obvious that Grace and Carl are interested in one another, and after a whispered conversation, they contrive reasons to leave and, presumably, meet secretly upstairs in Grace's apartment. Meanwhile, Dr. Lyman is obviously drunk, circumspect, and suspicious.

Eventually, Bo and Virgil enter the diner. Bo believes that he is in love with Cherie; moreover, he has practically kidnapped her with the intent of marrying her. Act I ends with a confrontation between Will and Bo, who learns that Cherie has sought the protection of the sheriff. Bo is shocked to learn that Cherie, or any other woman, might be able to resist his charms.

Act II

Act II opens with Dr. Lyman beginning his seduction of Elma. He arranges to meet her later in Topeka, where she will be attending a symphony. Elma is too innocent to recognize that Dr. Lyman's intentions are less than honorable.

Cherie reveals to Elma that she has had a long and unhappy history with men. She considers marrying Bo but asserts that she does not love him. Yet in the next breath, she contends that love is not that important, and she will probably just settle down at some point, regardless of love. Dr. Lyman overhears the last part of this conversation, and after Cherie walks away, he also begins to talk about love. Elma suggests that they all put on some sort of show to help pass the time and enlists Virgil, Cherie, and Dr. Lyman as participants. Virgil will play the guitar, Cherie will sing, and Elma and Dr. Lyman will enact a scene from *Romeo and Juliet*.

Meanwhile, Virgil has been advising Bo about women; he tells the young man that women want tenderness from men. During Virgil's song, Bo begins to tell Cherie how tender he can be. She, however, is irritated that he would talk during his friend's performance and pushes him away. Elma and Dr. Lyman's performance ends abruptly when Dr. Lyman has a moment of clarity and he sees himself for what he is: a drunk and a fake. Lyman collapses on the floor and is placed on a bench to sleep it off.

Next, Cherie begins to sing, and Bo is so aroused by her performance that he begins to loudly declare his love. When Cherie stops singing and slaps him, Bo seizes her and declares that they

will get married immediately. She is screaming for help as Bo carries her to the door. Will enters and a fight ensues. Bo is knocked out and arrested. The scene ends with Virgil asking Cherie not to press charges. He also tells her that Bo was sexually innocent before he met Cherie and that she was his first sexual experience. Cherie agrees not to press charges after Virgil promises to protect her from his young friend.

Act III

Act III opens a few hours later, and almost all of the characters are waking from a few hours sleep. As the sun rises, the storm has passed and the roads are clear. After checking the conditions, Will enters the diner and forces Bo to apologize to the women. Later, Cherie confesses to him that she has been with many other men; therefore, she thinks that he has had the wrong perception of her. At the counter, Elma prepares breakfast for Lyman, who begins to admit his failures and suggests that perhaps he should go to Toledo to the hospital and sign up for psychiatric care. Carl, Will, and Virgil go out to put chains on the bus.

Bo tells Cherie that he loves the real her, not his idealized perception of her. As Carl announces the bus' departure, Bo asks for a final kiss. Cherie shows him how to kiss her tenderly, and she goes through her own transformation as she realizes how important it is to receive love as well as give it. Once again he asks her to marry him and she agrees, and the two embrace. As Bo and Cherie prepare to get back on the bus, Virgil announces that he will not be going with them. When Bo expresses his disappointment, Cherie reminds him that he cannot force people to do what he wishes.

As Carl boards the bus, he tells Elma that Lyman was wanted by the law in Kansas City for inappropriate behavior with young girls. Shocked, she realizes that Lyman was trying to seduce her. Grace ponders the night's events, and she is disappointed that Carl did not deny that he was married. The play ends with everyone leaving the diner and Grace going upstairs to get some sleep.

Synopsis taken from: "Bus Stop." *Drama for Students*. Eds. David Galens and Lynn Spampinato. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 227–30. 56-7.

Activities for Various Disciplines

Art/Architecture

Background

From abstract expressionism to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, art and architecture during the 1950s was distinctive and left a legacy of paintings, sculptures, and buildings that people still study and admire today. While many of the important movements in art and architecture were centered in large cities like New York and Chicago, the influences of the changing 1950s aesthetics still trickled down to the heartland. All of the action of *Bus Stop* takes place in a small-town, rustic diner in the heart of Kansas. When attempting to visualize the set, one image that most likely comes to mind is drawn from Edward Hopper's famous painting, "Nighthawks" (1942).



Image courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago.

While this impression of a spotless diner with chrome fixtures, twirling bar stools, and a polished counter may have been accurate in some parts of the country, this is not the kind of diner that would have existed in rural Kansas.

Possible Classroom Activities

Do some research on how rural, rustic diners were constructed. What did the floors look like? The walls? What type of furniture was used, and how might it have been organized? What kinds of appliances did the cooks and the servers have behind the counter? Also, try to envision how a diner such as this one would have been decorated. What was on the walls? What kinds of color schemes were popular at the time?

With these questions in mind, either write about, draw, or design what a 1950s, small-town diner would have looked like.

Business

Background

After WWII ended in 1945, the United States experienced a time of economic prosperity. More Americans were able to purchase homes due to affordable mortgages. Technological innovation brought about by the war combined with disposable income allowed families to purchase items such as kitchen appliances and televisions. People began to see themselves as consumers, buying many of the products advertised on television and the radio that promised to make lives quick and easy.



The 1950s saw the rise of the car culture, which was fueled by the National Highway Act in 1956. This act worked to improve the interstate highway system across the US, paving roads and building four and eight-lane highways. These modern roads led to the boom in the bus transportation industry. Running an average of 1 1/2 cent to 2 cents per mile, a bus ticket from Kansas City, Kansas to Billings, Montana would have cost between \$15 and \$20 in the 1950s.

The creation of a safe, convenient interstate system and the rise in the automotive industry, combined with affordable mortgage rates, fueled the growth of the suburbs. Also, families reuniting after the war brought about a sharp increase in the population—a generation now known as the "baby boomers."

Image courtesy of www.vintageadbrowser.com

Possible Classroom Activities

Do some research on the economic climate of the 1950s. Just how prosperous was the 1950s? What was the employment rate? What was the main source of industry in various parts of the country (midwest, east coast, south, west coast etc.)?

Make a list of new products available for consumers to buy. What were the price ranges for these products, and how do those numbers translate into today's dollars?

Do some research on the housing boom and the mortgage industry. What kinds of connections can be drawn between the two? What kinds of rates and loans were banks distributing, and where were some of the most prosperous sub-divisions/suburbs located?

Write a paper or do a presentation on any of these issues.

Criminal Justice

Background

The 1950s were a time of great legal upheaval. Some influential laws were passed during this era with great ramifications for the rest of US history. One of these legal decisions was *Brown vs. The Board of Education* (1954), which decreed segregation of schools to be illegal, and the Supreme Court's decision was one of the keys to opening the floodgates of the Civil Rights movement in the late 1950s and 1960s. In the 1950s, the American public was also surrounded by crime in the news, and television and radio often broadcast titillating stories about organized crime and young offenders. Crime was not just an issue in the big cities, however, and small, rural towns relied upon their sheriffs to keep the peace and enforce the law.



Although it premiered in 1960, an idealized version of a small-town sheriff was portrayed in *The Andy Griffith Show*, where the main character spent his days interacting with the citizens of Mayberry, North Carolina and encountering virtually no real crimes. The life of a real rural sheriff was, of course, quite different.

Image courtesy of www.imdb.com

Possible Classroom Activities

The character of Sheriff Will Masters is Inge's representation of a small-town, midwestern sheriff. During the 1950s, what would his duties entail? What kinds of situations and issues might a sheriff in Will's position come up against? In other words, reconstruct what you think an ordinary day in the life of a 1950s, rural Kansas sheriff might have been like.

Do some research on crime and the legal system during the 1950s. What were some of the major concerns during the 1950s with regards to illegal behavior, laws, and social issues?

Although not a law passed in the 1950s, the play does make reference to the Mann Act. What is the Mann Act, when was it passed, and what is the relevance of this law to the play?

Write a paper or do a presentation on any of these issues.

English/Humanities/Women's Studies

Background

As the biography of Inge stated, he was born in Independence, Kansas and spent much of his early life in the midwest. He was familiar with the culture and attitudes of people from the region, and when combined with his personal passion for the theatre, he carved a career for himself that allowed him to combine his experiences with his love. Part of what makes Inge's plays so real and identifiable is the fact that they are set in small towns and reflected the kinds of people he was familiar with. As the biography also states, Inge was a closeted homosexual. In the 1950s, open discussion of homosexuality was practically non-existent, and many gays and lesbians felt compelled to hide their sexuality and live inauthentic lives.



Socially and politically, the 1950s brought about a change in women's roles. Previously called to join the work force in support of the war effort, many women, particularly middle-class white women, found their skills outside of the home no longer needed as the men returned and re-entered the work force. In an attempt to reinforce the importance of domesticity, publishers released books that served as guides for how to be a happy housewife, including suggestions like have a drink ready for your husband when he returns home from a hard day's work and make sure that the children are clean and well behaved for their father. Society's push for these women to return to their domestic duties was resisted by a growing number of women, which set the stage for the feminist movement that would explode in the 1960s.

Image courtesy of The Bridgeman Art Library

Possible Classroom Activities

One popular piece of advice that is often given to beginning writers is to "write what you know," meaning that a writer should tap into his/her own experiences when constructing a text. Do some additional research on Inge's background and experiences. Do you see connections between Inge's experiences and the types of plays he wrote? Are there links to his own life that you can make to the character types and the plot lines of his plays?

When writing plays, authors often deliberately choose significant names for their characters. Review the names for the main characters in *Bus Stop*. Do you see any connections between the names and how the characters behave?

Inge uses several literary quotes throughout *Bus Stop*, particularly in the scenes with Dr. Lyman. Track down the origins of some of them. What literary works are the quotes from? Why do you think Inge chose to use those quotes in particular scenes?

Bus Stop is noteworthy for having several female characters, all of whom are very different in terms of life experiences and behavior. Analyze the female characters in the play. What kinds of women are they? How does their behavior either conform to or fight against common perceptions of how women should behave in the 1950s?

Write a paper or do a presentation on any of these issues.

History/Sociology/Political Science

Background

While the 1950s were, in many ways, a time when many Americans felt optimistic about the future (particularly as a result of the economic climate), at the same time, a new threat loomed. Overseas, communism was taking hold, particularly in the Soviet Union and China. Only five years after WWII ended, the US jumped into another war, this time in Korea. Communist North Korea invading South Korea, the Cold War with the USSR, and the "Red Scare" fueled by Senator Joseph McCarthy all contributed to a decade that was full of tension and uncertainty. Americans lived with the fear of nuclear attack, and children practiced "Duck and Cover" drills in preparation for the detonation of a hydrogen bomb.



At the same time that Americans were dealing with the threat of nuclear war and the Communists, the media sold a pop-culture image that was full of worry-free teenagers, fast food restaurants, Cadillac cars, and hula hoops. The iconic doll Barbie was created in the 1950s, as was Mr. Potato Head. On television, Americans distracted themselves from world events by watching *I Love Lucy*, *The Honeymooners*, and *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

Image courtesy of www.undergroundbombshelter.com

Possible Classroom Activities

Do some research on what life would have been like for the residents of a small Kansas town in the mid-1950s. What would life had been like? What television shows would they have been watching? What political and social issues would they have been talking about?

The 1950s were a time of great tension contrasted with a pop-culture that sold a carefree, optimistic lifestyle. Do you see this tension present in *Bus Stop*? Where in the play do you see the collision of both the positivity and the negativity of the decade?

Write a paper or do a presentation on any of these issues.

Music

Background

The 1950s saw a boom in various genres of music—musicals, rock and roll, country and western, and rhythm and blues. Popular movie musicals like *The King and I*, *Show Boat*, *Oklahoma!*, and *Guys and Dolls* had people singing along to their catchy tunes on the radio. The 1950s marked the birth of rock and roll with one of the genre's biggest icons, Elvis Presley, bursting onto the scene with some of his early hits like *Hound Dog*, *Jailhouse Rock*, *All Shook Up*, and *Love Me Tender*. Rock and roll artist Chuck Berry also forwarded the genre with his unique guitar-playing style and his catchy songs like *Maybellene*, *Nadine (Is It You?)*, and *Johnny B. Goode*. Country and western had its own icons in Johnny Cash and Hank Williams, and artists like B. B. King, Fats Domino, Muddy Waters, and Sam Cooke dominated the genre of rhythm and blues.



Other great musicians from the 1950s include rock and roll/rhythm and blues crossover artist Little Richard, crooners Pat Boone and Perry Como, and groups like Bill Haley and His Comets, the Coasters, the Platters, and Frankie Lymon and The Teenagers. One thing that all the musical genres had in common in the 1950s is the fact that, for the most part, the songs were not political in nature. Music in the 1950s was more feel-good, and it motivated the audience to get up and dance, which Americans did every week as they tuned into the hit television show, *American Bandstand*.

Image courtesy of Dick Clark Productions, Inc.

Possible Classroom Activities

Bus Stop was first performed in 1955. Do some research on the most popular songs during that year. Which genres/artists seemed to dominate the air waves at the time the play was being performed?

The internet now makes it easy to find clips of songs and performances. Pick an artist or genre from the 1950s and construct a web page or PowerPoint presentation that gives a multi-media overview of that artist/genre.

American Bandstand began in the 1950s and would become a highly influential show for music artists. Do some research on *American Bandstand* and present your research in a paper or multi-media presentation.

Psychology

Background

In the first half of the 20th century, psychoanalysis and behaviorism dominated the field of psychology. In the 1950s, in a reaction against these movements, humanistic psychology rose to the forefront. According to the Association for Humanistic Psychology, "Humanistic psychology is a value orientation that holds a hopeful, constructive view of human beings and of their substantial capacity to be self-determining . . . Humanistic psychology acknowledges that the mind is strongly influenced by determining forces in society and in the unconscious, and that some of these are negative and destructive. Humanistic psychology nevertheless emphasizes the independent dignity and worth of human beings and their conscious capacity to develop personal competence and self respect." Generally speaking, humanistic psychology is more positive in nature than psychoanalysis and behaviorism and sees basic human nature as being inherently good.



Possible Classroom Activities

Several of the characters in *Bus Stop* behave in interesting (and not entirely predictable) ways, particularly Dr. Lyman and Bo. Pick one of the characters and create a psychological profile of him/her. What kind of person is he/she, and how do you think he/she became that way?

As stated in the background, humanistic psychology became dominant in the 1950s. Do you see the characters in the play behaving in a way that is inherently good? If not, what do you think are the "determining forces in society and in the unconscious" that motivate their behavior?

Further Readings

Leeson, Richard M. *William Inge: A Research and Production Sourcebook*, Greenwood Press, 1994.

A critical overview of Inge's plays with information about reviews and critical studies.

McClure, Arthur F. *Memories of Splendor: The Midwestern World of William Inge*, Kansas State Historical Society, 1989.

Contains production information and photographs of Inge and his work.

Shuman, R. Baird. *William Inge*, Twayne Publishers, 1996.

This book is primarily a biography of Inge's work. It also contains a detailed discussion of each of his works.

Voss, Ralph F. *A Life of William Inge: The Strains of Triumph*. University of Kansas Press, 1989.

A critical biography of Inge's life and work.

Wager, Walter. "William Inge." *The Playwrights Speak*. Delacorte Press, 1967.

Wagner presents interviews with several contemporary playwrights. This book presents an opportunity to "hear" each writer express his or her thoughts about the art of writing.

(List taken from "Bus Stop." *Drama for Students*. Eds. David Galens and Lynn Spampinato. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale, 1998.)

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