



August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* Educator Resources

Our Student Matinees (formerly Young Audiences Program) are for teachers of every subject across all grade levels, and provide a unique model for integrating the arts in your class, not just for a single performance but throughout the year.

Whether your students are seasoned theatregoers or first-time attendees, we want them to have a rich and fulfilling experience when they come to see a play on one of our stages. We want them to feel smart, ready, and welcomed when they arrive at the theatre.

Getting the most out of your visit...

In order for students to get the most out of August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, please explore the educational materials provided by Center Theatre Group. For this production, students will receive a Discovery Guide that introduces them to the world of the play with thought-provoking questions and information about Center Theatre Group and the world of theatre. Teachers will also receive lesson plans detailing the activities covered at the Educator Conference.

Use the Discovery Guide to go over the Where, Who, What, and Why of going to the theatre. Take time to discuss the upcoming performance. Have your students seen live theatre before? If they have, what were their experiences like?

When students are connected to the world of the story and feel comfortable in the audience, they feel free to react heartily with laughter, gasps, tears, and applause in all of the right places.

Emphasize the impact that each audience member has on the show. Let students know it is great to react to and enjoy the show. And remind them that the actors can see and hear them. Talk about the responsibility each audience member has to help shape that performance and how that makes every piece of theatre a one-of-a-kind event.

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom offers us a special opportunity to discuss challenges specific to race and identity in America. We will work hard in our Educator Conference to give you the language you need to engage with students along these subject lines. Please feel empowered to ask questions about how this can apply in your classroom.

Also, please go over the section for students on the "Performance Day Logistics" handout. If they are aware of the rules, they won't be surprised when they arrive at the theatre.

We can't wait to have you and your students visit the Mark Taper Forum for
Center Theatre Group's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you would like to dive more deeply into the world of August Wilson and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* with your students or in advance of discussing the show with them, please explore the links below.

August Wilson and *The American Century Cycle*

In fall 2013, close to 100 theatre artists from across the globe convened at The Greene Space at WNYC Radio in Lower Manhattan to record all 10 plays in August Wilson's *The American Century Cycle*. While the recordings are not available, some great documentation of the surrounding events are.

<http://www.thegreenespace.org/series/august-wilsons-american-century-cycle/2/>

Watch the PBS *American Masters* documentary about August Wilson.

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/august-wilson-the-ground-on-which-i-stand-full-film/3727/>

PBS also published synopses of the 10 shows in *The American Century Cycle*. Plus, you can see one of Ma Rainey's monologues here.

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/august-wilson-the-ground-on-which-i-stand-scenes-and-synopses-of-august-wilsons-10-play-cycle/3701/>

Read a timeline of Wilson's life and a brief biography from PBS.

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/august-wilson-the-ground-on-which-i-stand-august-wilson-biography-and-career-timeline/3683/>

One of August Wilson's last interviews is a sharp exploration of his influences in *The Believer*.

http://www.believermag.com/issues/200411/?read=interview_wilson

Center Theatre Group has produced nine of the 10 plays in *The American Century Cycle* and was involved in the development of many of these works. We've created a history of August Wilson at Center Theatre Group.

<https://www.centertheatregroup.org/news-and-blogs/news/2016/september/coming-full-cycle/>

The Blues

PBS offers a lesson plan for the teaching students about the blues.

<http://www.pbs.org/theblues/classroom/essaysblues.html>

This biography of Ma Rainey also includes a short video.

<http://www.biography.com/people/ma-rainey-9542413>

Chicago public TV station WTTW's series *DuSable to Obama: Chicago's Black Metropolis* presents an overview of the blues in Chicago.

<http://interactive.wttw.com/a/dusable-to-obama-explore-riots-to-renaissance-jazz-blues-music>

Learn more about the real-life "Mother of the Blues" on the Center Theatre Group website.

<https://www.centertheatregroup.org/news-and-blogs/news/2016/august/the-story-of-the-mother-of-the-blues/>

Enjoy these Spotify playlists created by Center Theatre Group: the music of Ma Rainey and songs sung by the great blueswomen of the 1920s.

<https://play.spotify.com/user/centertheatregroup/playlist/6V4VRrTGEGZUrIS42efsH7>

<https://play.spotify.com/user/centertheatregroup/playlist/2EIIxza6TX4aOegYZyvVn7>

MARK TAPER FORUM SEATING CHART

A seating chart of The Mark Taper Forum, where August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* will take place, is provided. Use this as a tool to familiarize your students with the layout of the Mark Taper Forum and with its seating capacity. The capacity for the Student Matinee performance will be 729 seats.