

Grade level: 10-12
Famine Curriculum

Aim: Students will examine the influence of James Tyrone's childhood on his character in Long Day's Journey into Night.

Do Now: "Let a man go down to hell and open an Irishman's heart. The first thing he'll written across it is 'land.'" (Manuscript 1408, 141. Irish Folklore Department, UCD.) Why is this quotation significant to a discussion of James Tyrone's character?

Standard: Language Arts 2. Speaking and writing for critical analysis and evaluation requires presenting opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information, and issues clearly, logically, and persuasively with reference to specific criteria on which the opinion or judgment is based.

Historical Background: James and Mary Tyrone are based on O'Neill's parents James O'Neill and Ella Quinlan. Born in Ireland in 1846, O'Neill's family emigrated to America during the post-Famine exodus (1855). O'Neill gives his protagonist the surname Tyrone, a name that means literally Tír Eoghan, the land of the O'Neills who were important Irish kings. Conn O'Neill was created Earl of Tyrone when he submitted to Henry VIII. Hugh O'Neill, the 2nd Earl, fled to the continent in 1607 after losing to the English at Kinsale (1601). O'Neill calling James Tyrone instead O'Neill was to take on the Great Earl's dispossession. (it shows Eugene O'Neill could be as romantic as James Tyrone.)

Lesson Plan:

1. Students share responses. Why is land an issue in Long Day's Journey? What is the basis of James Tyrone's obsession with land? What influence did that experience have on Tyrone's character?

2. The landless in Ireland were faced with eviction and the poorhouse. More than 60,000 families were evicted between 1846 and 1851. Even after they emigrated to America, the Tyrones were not secure. After his father left the family to return to Ireland, Tyrone recalls being evicted from his American home at age ten. As a result, he he impoverishes his family to speculate in land deals. What are the consequences of his behavior on the other members of his family? Cite the text in your answers.

Mary Tyrone

James Tyrone

Eugene Tyrone

Homework: Read Liam O'Flaherty's "Two Lovely Beasts." How is father's character similar to Tyrone's?