

ASF 2015 Study Materials for



Driving Miss Daisy

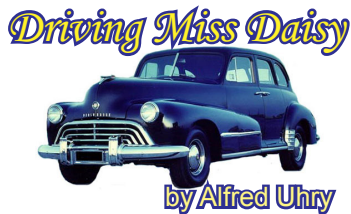
by Alfred Uhry

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Characters

Daisy Werthan, a widow aged 72 to 97 during play

Boolie Werthan, her son, aged 40 to 65 during play

Hoke Coleburn, Miss Daisy's chauffeur, aged 60 to 85 during play

Setting: Atlanta, Georgia, between 1948 and 1973, and on Alabama highways to Mobile

About These Study Materials

The study guide offers an array of options for teaching overview or details and for comparing the play to issues and ideas in your curriculum:

- 1) information about the author, Alfred Uhry
- 2) public events in the play, with primary documents, a timeline, and general character perspectives
- 3) a discussion of the play's structure
- 4) the dynamics of Hoke's world—the African American experience
- 5) the dynamics of Daisy's world—the Jewish American experience
- 6) the process of assimilation
- 7) activity ideas (discussion/writing)

Quotations from New York Times articles related to the Broadway production, December 23, 1987; icon from a modern chauffeur service

Welcome—Let's Take A Drive Together

Alfred Uhry is almost as good a chauffeur as Hoke Coleburn. He transports us not only through the span of 25 years in the lives of three characters but also through the transformation of an entire era in the South. He negotiates these changes with smooth, effortless turns, with pungent, realistic dialogue, and with detailed character development. To be subject to Uhry's dramatic drive is pure pleasure.

Driving Miss Daisy is a memory play, almost a scrapbook of moments. In it Uhry depicts a world he knows well, the world of Atlanta and the Reform Jewish community he grew up in, the world that shaped him and which he has evoked in shaping this play. Uhry not only creates memorable onstage characters, but intriguing offstage characters as well, for who does not enjoy imagining Boolie's wife Florine or Idella with her fabled coffee?

The strength of Uhry's story, as he realizes, is what he calls its truth. His story looks simple, but to achieve depth and portray a sense of community with so few characters is far from easy. Daisy does not want a chauffeur, but she needs one, so her son Boolie hires Hoke. The process of acceptance—where Daisy is "transported"—is slow, and the relationship has to be negotiated more than once in delicate social exchanges of white and black, man and woman, Jew and Christian, "boss" and employee, elderly and caregiver, and finally friend to friend. Their friendship may take decades to acknowledge, but it is strong, true, and unmistakable. It manifests the best of each character and suggests the possibility that what we share can be just as important as what appears to divide us, just as it can lead us to relish and appreciate our particularities.

Daisy: Where are you going? ...
I want to go the way I always go.... This is wrong.... I've been driving to the Piggly Wiggly since the day they put it up.... This isn't the way! Go back! Go back this minute!

Hoke: Yonder the Piggly Wiggly.

Daisy: Get ready to turn now.



Uhry on the Play and the South

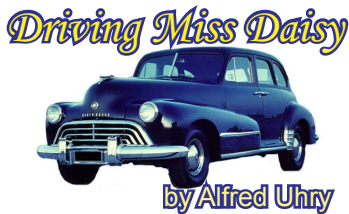
"I thought somebody should tell what the South was really like," Alfred Uhry claims as he describes his impetus for writing the play:

I was tired of all these stereotypes—that white people were running around being openly hostile and rude toward black people, and that black people were standing there with hat in hand saying, 'Yassir, boss,' or else being firebrand revolutionaries. None of that was true in our case. What's interesting is that all those feelings were there under the surface, but what was really important was good manners on both sides. Being rude is frowned upon in the South; it's not so much what you do as how you do it.

The situation and characters are drawn from Uhry's own memories. Miss Daisy draws from Uhry's grandmother and the chauffeur from her driver, Will Coleman, who did indeed begin driving for her when she was 72 and continued doing so for the next 25 years. At the Atlanta premiere of the play, Uhry's family and Will Coleman's descendants were all present. Uhry recalls that "after the play, a young Coleman relative asks his grandmother which side of the family I'm on.... I find tears in my eyes."

The situation was deeply rooted not only in place but in time, for who the characters are is to a large part derived from when they live. As the respect and affection between them grows, part of the tension of the play is that it cannot be expressed. As Uhry observes,

It [that emotional response] would never have happened. My grandmother was not huggy; she stood very erect, she was very smart and she had very high standards. Sentiment was never going to get in her way. When I was a little boy and wrote her letters, she would send them back to me—corrected. In that environment, it was just not good form to express your feelings.



About the Author: Alfred Uhry

Alfred Uhry is best known for his 1987 Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Driving Miss Daisy*, which in 1989 was made into a popular, Academy Award-winning film starring Jessica Tandy and Morgan Freeman, for which he also won the Oscar for screenplay adaptation. In 1996 Uhry was commissioned by the Atlanta Cultural Olympiad to write a play for the Alliance Theatre, and he continued his exploration of the Jewish community in his native Atlanta with *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, a play about the 1930s and Southern Jews' attitudes toward "the other kind," that is, observant Jews newer to the U.S.



Alfred Uhry

Uhry grew up in Atlanta's thriving German-Jewish community and graduated from Druid Hills High School. He was educated at Brown University and moved to New York City to work as a lyricist with Frank Loesser. For most of his career, he has been a writer of musicals, including the book and lyrics for the adaptation of *The Robber Bridegroom* as well as *Here's Where I Belong*, *Swing, America's Sweetheart*, and *Parade*, a musical based on the Leo Frank case. He has also written film screenplays for *Mystic Pizza* and *Rich in Love*.

Driving Miss Daisy was Uhry's first non-musical play, and it grew out of his depression following a failed musical when he was considering leaving show business altogether. Instead he wrote a "straight play" and found new success. He at first thought Daisy was just "a little play that could surely have appeal only to my family, and to a few other southerners," but audiences all over the world have affirmed its universality.

First quotations from "*Ballyhoo and Daisy, Too*," American Theatre, April 1997.

In thinking about his subject, Uhry comments,

Everyone thinks Jews are all the same, but we didn't think so in the South. People were uncomfortable with being Jewish there. The way I was brought up, the best thing to be was Episcopalian. In our temple the music was Christmas hymns. I was brought up with Christmas trees, Easter egg hunts—and my Jewish face.

Uhry's own life is a testament to the issues he raises in his plays. Only later in life did he begin to have a seder at Passover:

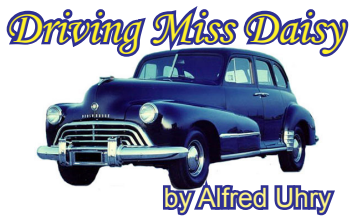
I went to Israel in 1992, which really woke up in me that it was nothing to be ashamed of. It's embarrassing to admit you're ashamed of being Jewish all your life. At the end it was not a prejudice but an ignorance, a hole where the Judaism should be.

Memory and Reality

In his "Preface" to the play (1988), Uhry explains the names and basis of the characters he created or remembered:

There was a real Miss Daisy. She was a friend of my grandmother's in Atlanta, back in the forties when I was a child. She was a 'maiden lady' as we called it then, the last of a big family, and she lived in what I remember as a spooky old Victorian house. There was a Hoke, too. He was the sometime bartender at our German-Jewish country club.... And Boolie ... well, I didn't really know him, but he was the brother of my dear Aunt Marjorie's friend Rosalie. They were real people, all right, but I have used only their names in creating the three characters in *Driving Miss Daisy*. I wanted to use names that seemed particular to the Atlanta I grew up in.

The actual characters, though, are made up of little bits and pieces of my childhood. Quite a bit of my grandmother, Lena Guthman Fox, and her four older sisters have gone into Miss Daisy herself.... Hoke is based on my grandmother's chauffeur, Will Coleman, but also on Bill and Riley and Marvin and Pete and other black chauffeurs I knew in those days. And Boolie is so many pieces of so many men I know (including me, I suppose) that it would be hard for me to say what exactly comes from what.



A Timeline: Daisy's and Hoke's Lives in Historical Context

Daisy Werthan's/ Hoke's Life

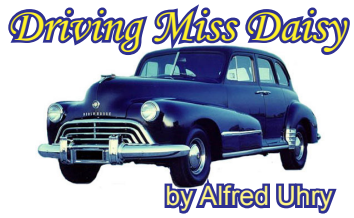
- 1876** •Daisy born in Atlanta
- 1888** •trip to Mobile for cousin Walter's wedding
• *Hoke born north of Macon, GA on a farm*
- 1890s** •Werthan's business begins
• *Hoke sees lynching*
- late 1890s/early 1900s:**
•Daisy (age 20+) marries Sig Werthan; she teaches school
- 1908** •Boolie born
- 1921** •Idella begins working for the Werthans; Boolie in 8th grade
- 1930s:** *Hoke now a chauffeur in Atlanta*
- 1948** •Daisy (age 72) wrecks new car; Boolie hires a chauffeur, *Hoke* (age 60)
- 1960** •trip to Mobile for cousin Walter's 90th birthday
- 1971** •Daisy (age 95) moves to nursing home

Events in America and the World

- 1876** •Custer's last stand at Little Big Horn
•Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone
• Ulysses S. Grant is president
- 1877** •Edison invents the phonograph
- 1879** •Edison invents the light bulb
- 1883** •The Brooklyn Bridge opens, the world's first suspension bridge
•First skyscraper (10 stories) built in Chicago
- 1888** •George Eastman invents Kodak camera
- 1890** •Mississippi begins poll tax and literacy tests to prevent blacks from voting
- 1893** •Henry Ford builds his first car
- 1896** •U.S. Supreme Court upholds racial segregation in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, establishing the "separate but equal" standard
- 1903** •Wright Brothers make first flight at Kitty Hawk, NC
- 1908** •Henry Ford's first Model T automobile, which sold for \$850
- 1912** •New Mexico and Arizona become 47th and 48th states
- 1914** •Outbreak of World War I
- 1920** •19th Amendment grants women the right to vote
• Woodrow Wilson is president
- 1925** •Scopes' "Monkey Trial"
- 1929** •Stock Market Crash
- 1934** •Dust Bowl hits West, desiccating farms
- 1935** •Social Security Act becomes law
- 1941** •U.S. joins World War II after Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor
- 1943** •Race riots in Harlem and 46 cities
- 1948** •President Truman abolishes racial segregation in U.S. military
• [Israel becomes a Jewish nation]
- 1954** •In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court outlaws segregation
- 1955-65** •Civil rights movement; Civil Rights Bill passes in 1964
- 1963** •President Kennedy, country's first Catholic president, assassinated
- 1965** •Vietnam War escalates
- 1968** •Martin Luther King, Jr. assassinated
- 1973** •U.S. ceasefire ends Vietnam War

Popular Culture and Everyday Life in U.S.

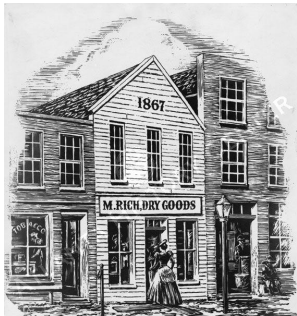
- 1880** •First canned fruits and meats sold
- 1884** •Mark Twain publishes *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
- 1885** •First modern bicycle built
- 1886** •Statue of Liberty dedicated in NY
- 1887** •Annie Sullivan begins to teach Helen Keller
- 1891** •Naismith invents basketball
- 1903** •First teddy bears, named after President Teddy Roosevelt
- 1904** •The first comic book appears
- 1905** •First neon signs
- 1910** •The "weekend" becomes popular
- 1915** •First long distance telephone service
- 1918** •First airmail postal service
- 1920s** • Harlem Renaissance
- 1931** •Freon makes refrigerators safe for home use
- 1938** •First minimum wage law
- 1950** •"Snoopy" comic strip first appears
- 1955** •Disneyland opens, first theme park
- 1966** •National Organization of Women founded
- 1973** •Atlanta elects a Jewish mayor, Sam Massell, Jr.



Atlanta: A History in Pictures



Sherman burned down two-thirds of Atlanta on his 1864 March to the Sea



The storefront shop of the Rich brothers in 1867 that became the Rich's Department Store chain



Atlanta reborn: Peachtree Street in the 1870s, the time Daisy is born

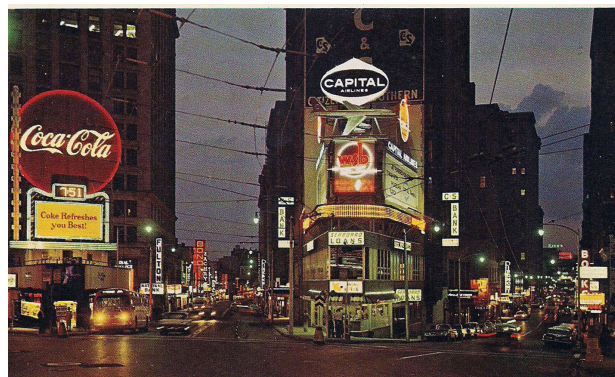


Atlanta in 1907, about the time Boolie is born

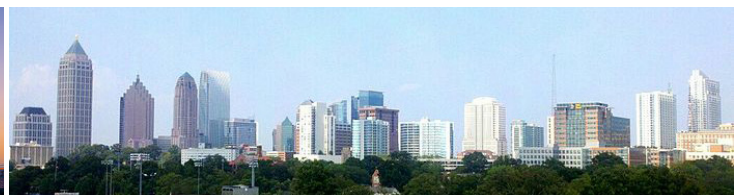
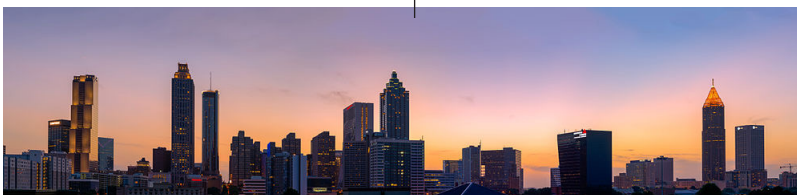


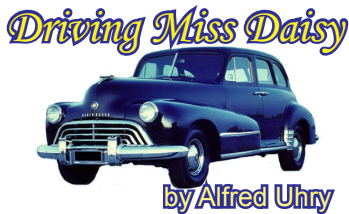
Peachtree Street near Forsyth (near Daisy's childhood home) in 1950

Peachtree at Pryor in 1960



Left, Atlanta downtown skyline today; right, midtown skyline (north on Peachtree)





The Public Events of *Driving Miss Daisy*

By watching the personal lives of Miss Daisy, Hoke, and Boolie, we also see events and values in the world they inhabit—Atlanta, the South, America. Thus the play is both very personal and specific and also indicative of larger trends and attitudes.

1948: STEREOTYPES

In the opening scenes, Miss Daisy and Hoke introduce the outsider's view of the communities—Miss Daisy objects to more of “them” being in her life, being idle and careless, and Hoke sees the new job as “driving for Jews” who are sometimes seen as “stingy” and “cheap.”

1948: [UN]EMPLOYMENT

Boolie hires a chauffeur for his mother, but thereby we see the aftermath of the World War II economy on the black community in Atlanta. During the war, blacks had moved into new jobs and new areas of employment, but with the return of the veterans, white and black, all of whom had fought for their country, the society tried to return to the pre-war status quo. Jobs went to veterans, and many of those who had worked through the war now found themselves out of a job. As Hoke observes, “they hirin’ young if they hirin’ colored, an’ they ain’ even hirin’ much young, seems like.”

1958: THE TEMPLE BOMBING

On October 12, 1958, just past 3:30 a.m., fifty sticks of dynamite destroyed one side of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation [the Temple] in Atlanta, the work of the self-styled “Confederate Underground.” This was one of 47 such bombing attacks in the South that year, many aimed at black targets, but at least 10% at Jewish, with a clear sense of “us” vs. “them,” “the other” or “not-us,” behind these acts. Like the Leo Frank lynching, this violence brought the Jewish community into focus—as a victim of prejudice and as a Southern minority.



Rabbi Rothschild and Atlanta mayor Hartsfield in the wreckage after the Temple bombing in 1958

Quotations from Melissa Fay Greene, The Temple Bombing (1996)



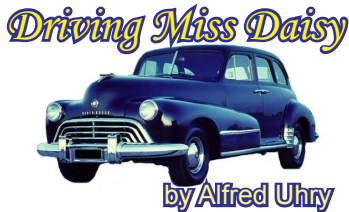
Rabbi Rothschild of the Temple with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the Atlanta dinner

1965: THE KING BANQUET

Uhry mentions the UJA [United Jewish Appeal] banquet honoring King, but Boolie's response parallels another, larger King banquet in Atlanta. In October, 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr. was named winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. The white power structure of Atlanta was both proud of its native son and appalled at an “agitator” being rewarded. A small interracial, interfaith group proposed a dinner honoring Dr. King. At first, white business leaders objected and boycotted, but outside economic pressures changed their minds, and tickets to the King Banquet became hot items.

Finally, on January 27, 1965, 1,250 Atlantans dined at the Dinkler Hotel, which had until recently barred blacks from entering except as employees. As Rabbi Rothschild noted, it was “the largest gathering of whites and blacks ... in the history of our city.” Blacks and whites were seated at the same tables: “it was miscegenation at the banquet table. And, for the moment, stature—lineage—derived from an entirely new, an unforeseen direction: ‘Oh?’ the white women politely inquired, and responded with vivacious curiosity, ‘you go to his church? You were with him in Birmingham? You’ve practiced medicine in Atlanta for thirty years? You teach romanticism?’ ... The conversations took place on a plane that simply had not existed the night before and did not exist on this night anywhere else in the South.”

Rabbi Rothschild's opening remarks reflected the momentous occasion: “You attest the truth that goodness and righteousness do reside in the human heart. You give the lie to the canard that prejudice is always stronger than decency, that hate is more powerful than love....”



Ralph McGill was one of the clearest, staunchest journalistic voices supporting the civil rights movement in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s. From his editorial post at the Atlanta Constitution he spoke out on the need for equality and justice in the South.

Analyzing the Editorial

- What are McGill's major points and how does he order them? How does he build his argument? How does he approach his audience and where does he want them to end up?
- Compare this editorial to Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham City Jail." How many points do they share? Do they address sensitive audiences the same way? What tones do they use? What arguments and examples? What images? What is the power of each element?
- Given contemporary issues concerning the Confederate flag in the U.S., is McGill's editorial still relevant? How many of his points still resound in our world? What does it mean if they do?
- Pick a contemporary issue of local, regional, or national concern and write your own persuasive "front-page column."

Primary Documents: Ralph McGill on the Temple Bombing

Ralph McGill's front-page *Atlanta Constitution* column on the Temple Bombing, October 13, 1958

Dynamite in great quantity Sunday ripped a beautiful Temple of worship in Atlanta. It followed hard on the heels of a like destruction of a handsome high school in Clinton, Tenn.

The same rabid, mad-dog minds were, without question, behind both. They also are the source of previous bombings in Florida, Alabama, and South Carolina. The school house and the church are the targets of diseased, hate-filled minds.

Let us face the facts.

This is a harvest. It is the crop of things sown.

It is the harvest of defiance of courts and the encouragement of citizens to defy law on the part of many southern politicians. It will be the acme of irony, for example, if any of four or five southern governors deplore the bombing. It will be grimly humorous if certain state attorneys general issue statements of regret. And it will be quite a job for some editors, columnists and commentators, who have been saying that our courts have no jurisdiction and that the people should refuse to accept their authority now to deplore.

It is not possible to preach lawlessness and restrict it.

To be sure, none said go bomb a Jewish temple or a school.

But let it be understood that when leadership in high places in any degree fails to support constituted authority, it opens the gate to all those who wish to take law into their own hands.

There will be, to be sure, the customary act of the careful drawing aside of skirts on the part of those in high places.

'How awful,' they will exclaim. 'How terrible. Something must be done.'

But the record stands. The extremists of the citizens' councils, the political leaders who in terms violent and inflammatory have repudiated their oaths and stood against due process of law have helped unloose this flood of hate and bombing.

This, too, is a harvest of those so-called Christian ministers who have chosen to preach hate instead of compassion. Let them now find pious words and raise their hands in deploring the bombing a synagogue.

You do not preach and encourage hatred for the Negro and hope to restrict it to that field. It is an old, old story. It is one repeated over and over again in history. When the wolves of hate are loosed on one people, then no one is safe.

Hate and lawlessness by those who lead release the yellow rats and encourage the crazed and neurotic who print and distribute the hate pamphlets, who shrieked that Franklin Roosevelt was a Jew; who denounce the Supreme Court as being Communist and controlled by Jewish influences.

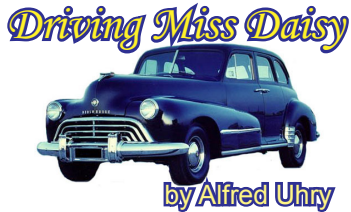
The series of bombings is the harvest, too, of something else.

One of those connected with the bombing telephoned a news service early Sunday morning to say the job would be done. It was to be committed, he said, by the Confederate Underground.

The Confederacy and the men who led it are revered by millions. Its leaders returned to the Union and urged that the future be committed to building a stronger America. This was particularly true of Gen. Robert E. Lee. Time after time he urged his students at Washington University to forget the War Between the States and to help build a greater and stronger union.

But for too many years now we have seen the Confederate flag and the emotions of that great war become the property of men not fit to tie the shoes of those who fought for it. Some of these have been merely childish and immature. Others have perverted and commercialized the flag by making the Stars and Bars, and the Confederacy itself, a symbol of hate and bombings.

For a long time now it has been needful for all Americans to stand up and be counted on the side of law and the due process of law - even when to do so goes against personal beliefs and emotions. It is late. But there is yet time.



- Dr. King's Nobel acceptance speech is available online at http://www.emersonkent.com/speeches/nobel_prize_acceptance_king.htm
- McGill's Temple Bombing editorial is available at <http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/thisday/own-words/10/13/ralph-mcgill-response-to-temple-bombing>
- Dr. King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" is also available online through the King website.



Primary Documents: Dr. King's Nobel Acceptance Speech

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Nobel Acceptance Speech, December 19, 1964

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness, Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen: I accept the Nobel Prize for Peace at a moment when 22 million Negroes of the United States of America are engaged in a creative battle to end the long night of racial injustice.

I accept this award on behalf of a civil rights movement which is moving with determination and a majestic scorn for risk and danger to establish a reign of freedom and a rule of justice.

I am mindful that only yesterday in Birmingham, Alabama, our children, crying out for brotherhood, were answered with fire hoses, snarling dogs and even death. I am mindful that only yesterday in Philadelphia, Mississippi, young people seeking to secure the right to vote were brutalized and murdered. And only yesterday more than 40 houses of worship in the State of Mississippi alone were bombed or burned because they offered a sanctuary to those who would not accept segregation. I am mindful that debilitating and grinding poverty afflicts my people and chains them to the lowest rung of the economic ladder. Therefore, I must ask why this prize is awarded to a movement which is beleaguered and committed to unrelenting struggle; to a movement which has not won the very peace and brotherhood which is the essence of the Nobel Prize.

After contemplation, I conclude that this award which I receive on behalf of that movement is a profound recognition that nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time - the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression. Civilization and violence are antithetical concepts. Negroes of the United States, following the people of India, have demonstrated that nonviolence is not sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force which makes for social transformation. Sooner or later all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace, and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood.

If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love. The tortuous road which has led from Montgomery, Alabama to Oslo bears witness to this truth. This is a road over which millions of Negroes are travelling to find a new sense of dignity. This same road has opened for all Americans a new era of progress and hope. It has led to a new Civil Rights Bill, and it will, I am convinced, be widened and lengthened into a super highway of justice as Negro and white men in increasing numbers create alliances to overcome their common problems.

I accept this award today with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind. I refuse to accept despair as the final response to the ambiguities of history. I refuse to accept the idea that the "isness" of man's present nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal "oughtness" that forever confronts him. I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life, unable to influence the unfolding events which surround him. I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality. I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of thermonuclear destruction.

(continued)

above left, Dr. King with the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize and above, earlier with others in a civil rights demonstration in Mississippi

Driving Miss Daisy



by Alfred Uhry

Primary Documents: Dr. King's Nobel Speech/ 2

I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant. I believe that even amid today's mortar bursts and whining bullets, there is still

hope for a brighter tomorrow. I believe that wounded justice, lying prostrate on the blood-flowing streets of our nations, can be lifted from this dust of shame to reign supreme among the children of men. I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits. I believe that what self-centered men have torn down men other-centered can build up. I still believe that one day mankind will bow before the altars of God and be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed, and nonviolent redemptive good

will proclaim the rule of the land. "And the lion and the lamb shall lie down together and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid."

I still believe that We Shall overcome! This faith can give us courage to face the uncertainties of the future. It will give our tired feet new strength as we continue our forward stride toward the city of freedom. When our days become dreary with low-hoovering clouds and our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, we will know that we are living in the creative turmoil of a genuine

civilization struggling to be born.

Today I come to Oslo as a trustee, inspired and with renewed dedication to humanity. I accept this prize on behalf of all men who love peace and brotherhood. I say I come as a trustee, for in the depths of my heart I am aware that this prize is much more than an honor to me personally. Every time I take a flight, I am always mindful of the many people who make a successful journey possible - the known pilots and the unknown ground crew. So you honor the dedicated pilots of our struggle who have

sat at the controls as the freedom movement soared into orbit. You honor, once again, Chief Lutuli of South Africa, whose struggles with and for his people, are still met with the most brutal expression of man's inhumanity to man. You honor the ground crew without whose labor and sacrifices the jet flights to freedom could never have left the earth. Most of these people will never make the headline and their names will not appear in Who's Who. Yet when years have rolled past and when the blazing light of truth is focused on this marvelous age in which we live - men and women will know and children will be taught that we have a finer land, a better people, a more noble civilization - because these humble children of God were willing to suffer for righteousness' sake.

I think Alfred Nobel would know what I mean when I say that I accept this award in the spirit of a curator of some precious heirloom which he holds in trust for its true owners - all those to whom beauty is truth and truth beauty - and in whose eyes the beauty of genuine brotherhood and peace is more precious than diamonds or silver or gold.

Analyzing the Speech

- What is Dr. King's rhetorical situation and does he use it argumentatively/ persuasively or declaratively? What are his major points and how does he order them? How does he built his speech? How does he approach his audience and where does he want them to end up?
- How does he negotiate the issue of the individual honor in light of the group movement?
- Compare this speech to his "mountain top" speech (his last speech before his assassination). How many points do they share? Do they approach their audiences the same way (identify each audience and situation)? What tones do they use? What arguments and examples? What images? What is the power of each element?
- Given contemporary issues concerning the deaths of black citizens at the hands of police officers and neighborhood watch members, are Dr. King's speeches still relevant? How many of his points still resound in our world? Are his hope and faith in humanity well placed?



Dr. King accepting the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway; below, being congratulated by the Nobel dignitaries



Driving Miss Daisy



by Alfred Uhry



Atlanta History Center picture of Crew Street School, where Miss Daisy taught fifth grade; it was then an all-white segregated school.

Below: the kind of sign Hoke Coleburn lived with much of his life.



ATLANTA DEMOGRAPHICS

Metropolitan

Atlanta Population/ # of Jews

| | | |
|------|-----------|---------|
| 1850 | 2,572 | 26 |
| 1880 | 37,409 | 600 |
| 1910 | 155,000 | 4,000 |
| 1950 | 331,000 | 10,000 |
| 1970 | 500,000 | 16,500 |
| 1990 | 2,959,950 | 70,000 |
| 2010 | 5,729,304 | 120,000 |

Atlanta Population / # blacks

| | | |
|------|--------|------------|
| 1850 | 2,572 | 492 slaves |
| | | 18 free |
| 1870 | 71,700 | 32,982 |

Atlanta % white % black

| | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1940 | 65.4% | 34.6% |
| 1970 | 48.4% | 51.3% |
| 2010 | 38.4% | 54.0% |

Daisy and Hoke: One Town, Two Worlds

Miss Daisy

Mrs. Daisy Wertham is 72 years old in 1948 when the action of the play opens, which means she was born in 1876, a mere 11 years after the close of the Civil War. Her sensibility and cultural prejudice have been shaped by the harsh racial attitudes of Reconstruction and the Jim Crow laws in effect for so many decades in the South. She denies being a racist, but the world in which she lives seems inherently racist, just as it is often anti-Semitic. She has witnessed much change, but not nearly so much change as will occur during the 25 years of the play's action, which ranges from 1948 to 1973, from the aftermath of World War II through the civil rights era.

Hoke

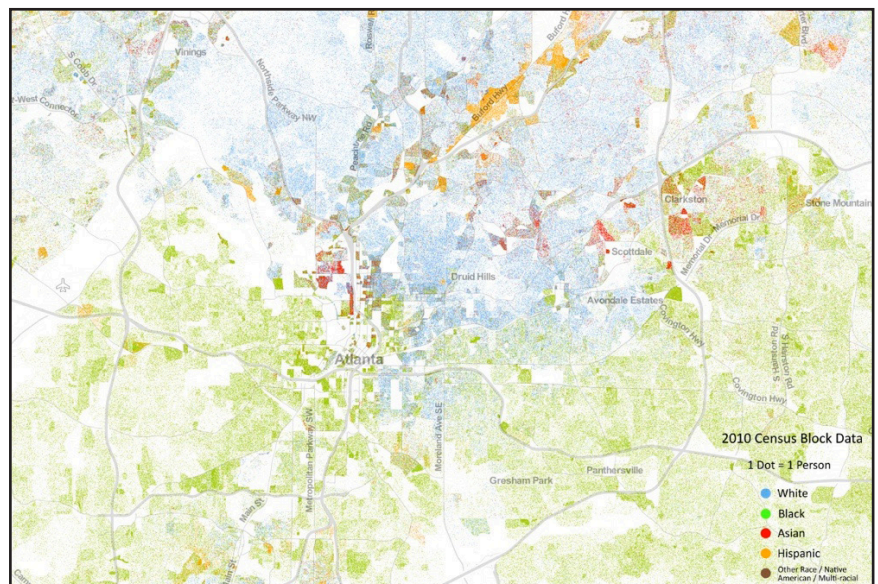
Hoke Coleburn, who is 60 when the play begins in 1948, is likewise a product of those same Jim Crow laws and decades of segregation, but since he is black his experience with society is in many ways markedly different than Daisy Werthan's. Daisy could easily get an education or go to public parks; she could ride on the front of the bus. Hoke grew up on a farm north of Macon and was never taught to read. He was barred by his race from many aspects of public life in Atlanta into the 1950s, well beyond the start of the play. He, too, is aware of differences and stereotypes. If Daisy says "they" have no manners and no conscience when she suspects Hoke of theft, Hoke acknowledges that many people consider Jews to be money-focused, a view he says he does not share.

Atlanta in 2010, still evidence of separation, but improving. Between 1970 and 2014, housing segregation decreased from 82% to 66%.

"The history of the Americans of African descent and Jewish descent is a story of two groups of people who have suffered uncommon persecution but who have persevered with uncommon faith. This is our common ground. We share the dream of a beloved community where one can live without the threat of racism, poverty, or violence. We share the dream of a beloved community where the worst of the human spirit is defeated by our best."

—Martin Luther King III

Daisy has had a black maid for almost three decades, and Hoke has driven for a Jewish judge prior to being hired to drive Miss Daisy. Both come from groups often excluded from Atlanta society and parts of Atlanta life. Each knows something of the other's world, but nothing of the individuals in it. Time and experience changes that for them, just as it changes the world around them.



Driving Miss Daisy



by Alfred Uhry

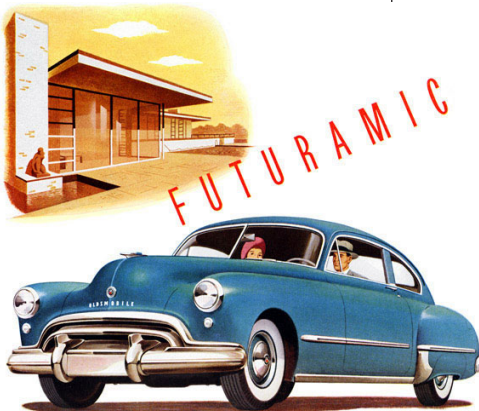


Key to a new 1948 Oldsmobile Futuramic— which Daisy holds on to

Action as Imagery

Explore the way these moments work as images for larger issues in the play:

- being able to drive
- backseat driving/ going the route I've always gone
- tending the graves
- being able to read
- the map and getting lost
- using the restroom on a trip
- the power outage
- the Temple bombing
- recognition banquets
- a care facility and caring



In this ad, the 1948 Oldsmobile "Futuramic" drives off into a modern or "futuristic" world. To what extent do both Daisy and Hoke drive off into a "futuramic" world at the start of the play? How long does it take them to arrive?

The Shape of the Play's Action and Issues

Driving Miss Daisy is a classic example of the Rodgers and Hammerstein song "Getting to Know You": "Getting to know you, getting to know all about you;/ Getting to like you, getting to hope you like me." Such learning environments are not just the stuff of Broadway musicals; they are the stuff of human life. While romantic love fills drama with Romeo and Juliet "getting to know you" plots, human connection is more than just romantic—friendship and understanding across social barriers or prejudice are also significant and worthy human connections.

Any time strangers from different backgrounds are thrown together by circumstances, the learning curve can be steep at first; then a breakthrough occurs, an opening that engages more than the surface of prejudice, presumption, and suspicion of the "other"; and finally friendship can emerge.

Alfred Uhry shows this changing dynamic using individuals from two minorities in the American South, Jews and African Americans.

Initial Problem: You Can't Drive

- Boolie brings Hoke and Miss Daisy together to solve a problem, which is both his and hers. Her driving skills seem to be slipping, a fact she denies and rejects, and he needs her to have mobility but not driving herself. In addition, Hoke needs a job, so all three are poised for a working relationship. The immediate challenge, however, is how to make the relationship "work."

- We see prejudice and stereotyping at work immediately. In his interview, Hoke mentions the stereotypes about Jews as stingy, but he says he rejects that view and mentions that a former employer gave him secondhand the nice suit he's wearing comparing

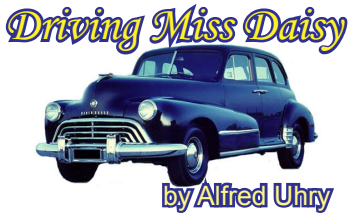
that to the woman who offered to sell him badly worn family clothing (we see this secondhand element developed as Hoke later buys Daisy's car when Boolie replaces it).

For her part, Daisy does not want more black presence in her life or home. Over time she has gained an uneasy truce with her maid, a kind of apartheid or Jim Crow separation, but we see her prejudice as she counts her silver and pantry items so as not to be robbed by "them." Getting past the "them" to individual identity is part of the challenge the play poses her and us. So she refuses to use Hoke as a driver, even when he is there. She says she'll take the bus.

- Of course, Hoke's presence is only part of the change Daisy is facing as the action begins; she is also facing an aging crisis. Boolie insists she cannot drive any more, and driving works as an image for guiding/ deciding one's own life. Daisy faces several accommodations and challenges at the top of the play, and her very human first response is denial and rejection on all fronts.
- Once she lets Hoke drive her to the store, she becomes an insistent backseat driver, setting the route the "old way," the way she has always driven. While she's insisting, Hoke simply drives another, actually shorter route to the store. The old way may not be the best way—and that is true of far more than the route to the grocery in this play. Times change and people change. Tradition and being set in one's ways and prejudices and views of self and others need examination from time to time, and the play offers that opportunity. But Daisy cannot easily concede to Hoke's route; without commenting on the better route, she tells him where to park.

Miscues and Assumptions: Doors, Salmon

- The stereotypes do not change quickly. A delicate détente still leaves gaping holes in the relationship, as the next scenes reveal. Hoke pulls right up to the door of the Temple to pick up Miss Daisy after services; she is mortified because it seems presumptuous, as if she were an aristocrat. To Hoke, of course, Daisy is rich; her family can afford a chauffeur. Her anger over that moment pales beside her finding an empty can of salmon in the trash—she already thinks "they" steal and now Hoke has stolen. He knows the way of the white world so well, however, that he walks in with a replacement can and defuses the explosive moment.



The Shape of the Play's Action/ 2

Breakthrough #1: I Can't Read

- The individual issue finally breaks through when Hoke must admit to Daisy he cannot read. He tries to hide the fact, but cannot just "look at the pictures" to find the right cemetery headstone as he does with the newspaper. Ability and vulnerability are now apparent on both sides: Daisy can read but not drive; Hoke can drive but not read.

As a teacher, Daisy dealt with students' reading challenges her entire career, and rather than defining herself as a white woman with a black chauffeur, a definition that still engages her prejudice,

she now defines herself and engages with Hoke as a teacher to build his skill. Giving Hoke a textbook as a non-Christmas present at Christmas becomes a larger expression of acceptance and working together. She does not see it as a "they" issue; it is addressing Hoke's need.

And consider the image of this scene being set with Miss Daisy in the cemetery tending the graves of the dead. She was raised to remember the family this way; Boolie just says let the cemetery staff do it. Daisy is loyal, commemorative. But as an image, in what ways are Daisy's behavior and views also a way of tending something dead, old attitudes, old ways of preserving a world that, if not dead, perhaps should be re-evaluated and moved beyond? The reading incident is such an opening.

Breakthrough #2: I'm Stopping this Car

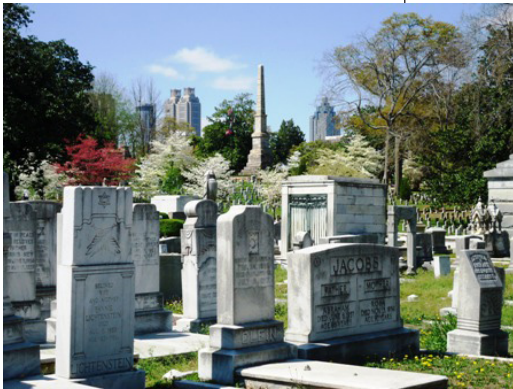
- The drive to Mobile poses two challenges to the white/black power structure and Jim Crow assumptions.

First, under Jim Crow "separate and supposedly equal" laws, Hoke cannot use a whites-only restroom, even though he needs to urinate. Daisy tells him not to stop the car, but he does, insisting she see him as a person with needs and not just "the back of a head" in the front seat. He demands basic personhood and with respect walks away to urinate, leaving Daisy to sit a moment in the darkness alone.

The drive to Mobile also raises the issue of who chooses the route, a development of the first Piggly Wiggly drive and the larger backseat driving pattern. Daisy keeps the map on this trip and tells Hoke where to turn, but they have gotten off the route and she becomes flustered and blames Hoke. Insisting on one's own way, a way in which one can get lost, causes difficulty and impedes the journey—in life and on highways—as Daisy learns the hard way.

Breakthrough #3: It's All Right; Hoke's Here

- The winter power outage clarifies who Daisy can rely on. It is cold and she is alone without "power." Being "without power" is itself a powerful image; an ice storm is a kind of leveler; how much "power" is she without? She calls Boolie, who says he will try to come later. Hoke just shows up; his work experience driving a dairy truck gave him skills in winter weather driving. He is there not because Daisy wants to drive anywhere but because he knows she is cold, alone, and without electricity to make her breakfast or morning coffee, so he brings them and himself unasked. That is more than doing his job; that is a caring personal relationship.



The Jewish section of Atlanta's historic Oakland cemetery (a modern shot with the current skyline)

Thinking about the Play

- Compare Boolie's relationship with and caring for his mother with Hoke's relationship with and caring for Miss Daisy
- Compare the challenges of and responses to aging in the three characters
- Assess the role of the unseen characters: Boolie's wife, Hoke's granddaughter, Martin Luther King Jr.

Driving Miss Daisy



by Alfred Uhry

The Shape of the Play's Action/ 3

The Other "Others": The Temple Bombing

- The earlier scene of Hoke picking up Daisy at the Temple shows her sensitivity to public appearance and her place among her peers. Her car should not be "out front" as if she were rich—part of an ongoing sensitivity to money matters that is shared by many older Americans on a fixed income. [Even in medieval morality plays, money matters only appear in later life.]. She does not want to appear to flaunt wealth amid this community that has worked hard for generations so that many have succeeded and gained some wealth.
- The next scene of driving to the Temple is climactic in several senses.

The normal "route" of life is shattered by an explosion. Prejudice in our world is not only focused on African Americans in the South but against anyone who can be defined as "other"—here, the Jews of Atlanta at a time when synagogue bombing was occurring across the South.

The incident actively shifts Daisy to the receiving end of prejudice. We have watched the cultural accommodation and assimilation in the Christmas scene discussion, the "fitting in" issues and Daisy's rejection of her daughter-in-law's illuminated decorations.

At first Daisy cannot fathom a reason for bombing the Temple. Hoke helps her see that hatred and prejudice often have no basis; they are not there for a justified specific reason, but just emanate from the hater.

- Is Hoke's having seen a lynching as a child comparable to the bombing? For anyone Jewish in Atlanta the mention of lynching would remind Daisy of the 1913 anti-semitic outcry in Atlanta culminating in the lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish man falsely accused of rape and murder? She would have lived through that time of being vilified by one's peers who suddenly do not see the Jews as one of themselves but as "others." Lynching is a scarring memory they both share.

Banquets and Recognition

- Juxtaposing Boolie's business award with the Atlanta community's effort to recognize Martin Luther King Jr.'s Nobel Peace Prize turns things around yet again. Boolie talks about his family working to achieve and is grateful for the recognition of his community. However, Daisy never considers, or "recognizes," that Hoke might want to go and celebrate Dr. King's Nobel recognition, saying "you can see him any time." The importance of "recognition" becomes clear, socially and individually. (Would Daisy have wanted to attend such a banquet in 1948?)

In between these two scenes is Boolie's explanation to his mother of why he cannot go to the banquet, why he must "fit in" with the general attitudes of the Atlanta business community, which he suggests are still prejudiced. He must consider the majority view.

Care and Caring

- Daisy's aging reaches another stage at the end of the play; she can no longer live alone but needs a care facility (or family care, an option not explored). Her mobility challenge may have shifted from needing a driver to needing a walker. Boolie continues to take care of his mother by arranging the care facility and selling her house—without telling her. Compare this moment to his hiring a driver for her without her consent at the beginning. (And his attitude about the cemetery?)

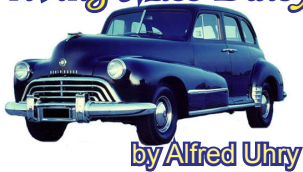
Hoke's caring is of a different nature. He no longer drives Miss Daisy or drives at all, but he still gets paid, an unofficial form of retirement benefit. As in the power failure, Hoke shows up in friendship to visit Miss Daisy and she is pleased to see him.

Is it important that this is a holiday visit, and that the holiday is Thanksgiving? Is "giving thanks" part of the end of the play?



The Temple, home of Atlanta's oldest Jewish congregation. They moved to this structure on north Peachtree in the 1930s.

Driving Miss Daisy



Daisy: "Isn't it wonderful the way things are changing?"...

Hoke: "Things changin', but they ain't change all dat much."



The separate and supposedly equal world of Jim Crow at a bus station



Whitehall Street in 1880—Boolie says the Werthan Company began on Whitehall Street about this time. Note the trolley tracks in the street.

"Us" and "Them": Shifting Southern Perspectives

For all the talk of America being a melting pot of nationalities, beliefs, and religions, every region of the country has its ethnic majority and ethnic minorities, its particular cultural hegemonies, and its divisiveness. In the South, the distinction between "us" and "them" can be brusque or subtle, as brusque as the black versus white of Jim Crow or side by side country clubs, one excluding Jewish members and one for Jews, or as subtle as who gets a business contract or a job.

White, Black, & Jim Crow—Hoke's World

The history of the South has long been told in terms of white and black. The system of slavery on which the antebellum plantation economy relied brought on the War between the States, and the freeing of the slaves promised a deep and abiding change in Southern society. It was a deep and abiding change that did not come, however, for along with suffrage laws granting black men the right to vote came a series of exclusionary laws designed to separate the races as forcefully, perhaps, as before the War. The era of "Jim Crow" segregated schools, dining establishments, railroad waiting rooms, restrooms, water fountains, and even dictated that black customers could not try on clothing unless they lined the garments with paper so their skin did not touch the fabric.

Blacks who could afford to bought land and farmed it; those who could not afford to buy land rented it as tenant farmers or sharecroppers who earned a percentage of the crop at harvest time, but before then borrowed money to buy seed, supplies, and household goods, including food. Harvest meant paying the huge bill owed the landowner or the local store out of the small percentage of the crop the farmers could call theirs. Not surprisingly, when cotton prices plunged or insect infestations damaged crops, many tenant farmers were forced off the land. Such economic hardships fed the Great Migration northward in the early decades of the twentieth century as tens of thousands of blacks felt the call of Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, or New York City, where opportunity seemed more promising than in the South.

This migration also drew rural blacks into the Southern cities; that is Hoke's history. He has grown up under Jim Crow in rural Georgia, moved to Atlanta, been forcibly "separate" all his life, and yet watched his fellow African Americans defend the United States through the

recent World War. Waves of racist rhetoric and terrorism from groups such as the Ku Klux Klan kept life uneasy for Hoke and other Southern blacks, whose awareness of disparity in the land of the free was growing exponentially.

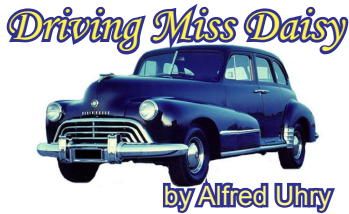
Since he is black, Hoke's experience with society is markedly different than Daisy's. Born 11 years after the Civil War ended, she lived in the white world and could get an education, teach school, go to public parks, ride at the front of the bus. Hoke was never taught to read, and he was barred by his race from many aspects of public life in Atlanta into the 1950s. His entire life has been an awareness of difference and stereotype. The long wait ended in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, when boycotts of buses and lunch counters, freedom marches and sit-ins and speeches at the Lincoln Memorial forced an end to legal segregation.

"Not Our Kind"—Miss Daisy's World

Yet religious differences were not less of a problem than racial differences in the South. The majority of the population was Protestant, so even to be Catholic or Jewish was to be almost a pariah in Southern society. Suspicion and ignorance drove such feelings, which were present but not as graphic in much of the 19th century, but they gained force and visibility in the late 19th and early 20th century. The German-Jewish community sought to blend in to Southern society, dropping dietary laws and other practices that separated them.

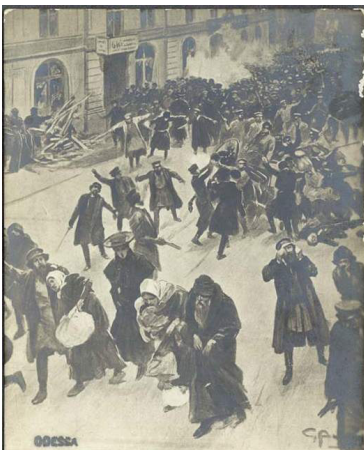
Clubs suddenly became "exclusive"—that is, exclusively white and Protestant—and white society would shift its definition of "us" depending on the context. Daisy and Boolie live in this social world, insulated in their own community and yet vulnerable to the prejudice of the larger society. Anti-Semitism surged in Atlanta between 1913 and 1915 and regained strength during the 1930s, when all Europe was awash with Nazi-fed anti-Jewish sentiment.

Daisy denies being a racist, but her world is inherently racist, just as it is often anti-Semitic. She has had a black maid for almost three decades, and Hoke has driven for a Jewish judge. Both come from groups often excluded from Atlanta society and life. Each knows something of the other's world, but nothing of the individuals in it. They have witnessed change, but not nearly the change that will occur from 1948 to 1973, the range of the play's action, from the aftermath of World War II through the civil rights era.



Africans were sold or kidnapped into slavery and then had to endure the Middle Passage before getting to the New World;. Above, an exhibit of a slave ship at the Griot Museum of Black History and Culture in St. Louis.

Violence did not prompt the immigration that brought Daisy's German Jewish family to America, but the second wave of Jewish immigrants came fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Eastern. Below, a postcard of a pogrom in Odessa.



Coming to America: Two Very Different Experiences

The Black Experience: Slavery to Freedom

In 1619 a Dutch trader sold 19 African slaves to settlers in Jamestown, Virginia, and thus began a very different journey to freedom for blacks in America than that experienced by the Jews coming to America as immigrants. In time, some 3.5 million other slaves joined the first 19 in America to help build America without fully being able to benefit from its promise. Slavery separated families, tribes, and cultural groups and continued as a stern and often brutal system of forced labor, denying education. Slaves adapted their various faith systems to Christianity and forged a strong black church, while freedom became a dream that some struggled to buy for themselves and others fled into at great peril.

In the 19th century the United States divided into "slave" states and "free" states along the Mason-Dixon Line, and western expansion extended this political and territorial divide. The Civil War resolved the national issue without resolving the basic political and social issues, resulting in the passage of discriminatory "separate but equal" Jim Crow laws that emphasized difference for almost another century.

The Civil Rights movement that boycotted buses and took to the streets and lunch counters in the 1950s and '60s finally got such legal discrimination reversed with the passage of the Voting Rights Law and other legal assurances of equality. Business and social attitudes began to evolve in the wake of this movement and the legal protections it fostered. As a matter of pride, African Americans keep their roots evident in their identification as Americans.

The Jewish Experience: Free to Succeed

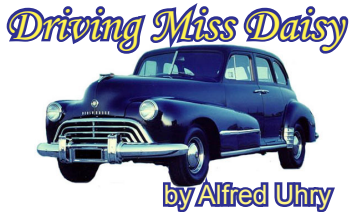
The first Jews in America were Sephardic, Jews from Spain and Portugal, and Ashkenazim, the Jews of northern European origin. Immigration continued from the first settlement of Jews in New York in 1654 as communities founded synagogues along the Eastern seaboard during the 18th century, but their governance was secular until 1840, when the first rabbi came to America.

The pattern of settlement and assimilation was repeated generation by generation through the end of the 19th century, for the vast new opportunities of America involved new Jewish settlers in the general social life to a much greater degree than they had experienced in Europe. Therefore, while they remained Jews, at the same time they actively became American. There was no enforced, exclusively Jewish community, ghetto, or shtetl, as there had been in the old country; now the Jews were part of the community at large, with equal opportunities. As one writer points out:

In the traditional community, an all-pervasive pattern of Jewish thought, action, outlook, and association had been punctuated by occasional excursions into the general society primarily in pursuit of economic ends. In the newly developing American Jewish mode, a distinctively American style of thought, action, outlook, and association was punctuated by occasional excursions to the synagogue for the performance on increasingly marginal ceremonial functions.

Each new group of Jewish immigrants sought to redefine their presence in America. But as the United States grew through the frontier phase and the Land of Opportunity became more industrial than agrarian, the nature of the assimilation as well as the needs of the incoming groups changed. Through the end of the 19th century acculturation was the norm; established American Jews often saw Jewish newcomers as "alien, abrasive, and uncouth," while immigrants found Jews already there to be "lax in religious observance," for the newcomers wanted to recreate the intimate and religiously observant Jewish village or ghetto life they had known before.

The 19th-century pattern changed, however, with the influx of nearly two million Jews from Eastern Europe between 1890 and 1915. These immigrants came not by choice but from necessity, driven from their homes by pogroms. They were more interested in safety and their own community than assimilation. Such an influx affected the Jewish community in Atlanta as the Russian orthodox community founded new synagogues and made its own way rather than joining the reform Jewish community in melding with Southern culture. So another issue of separateness and Jewish identity arose in America.



Hoke's World: Growing Up "Colored" in the South

When *Driving Miss Daisy* opens, Hoke Coleburn has lived all sixty years of his life under Jim Crow, the nickname given to the segregation laws that separated the races living in the same locales all over the South. Even

in the 1940s and 1950s, Georgia had not yet awakened from the dream and the nightmare of the Confederacy. Black students were barred from attending public schools with white children and were not accepted at a single [non-black] southern university, graduate school, law school, or medical school. The percentage of the state budget going to the education of black children was infinitesimal. 'The negro child,' Governor Hoke Smith had stated, 'should be taught to work.' Black children and adults were prohibited from enjoying public parks, playgrounds, botanical gardens, golf courses, and

swimming pools; and they were excluded from white churches, hotels, barbershops, restaurants, movie theaters, and cemeteries. in clothing stores, they could not try on clothing. On the sidewalk,, they were expected to step into the street to allow whites to pass.... Black doctors

and nurses could not treat white patients; black patients could not be seen in white hospitals.

They were required to use separate elevators, and courtrooms had two Bibles: one for the oaths of white witnesses, one for black.

These worlds were certainly separate but in no way equal. For many black Southerners, opportunities were few, hard-earned, and fragile. Yet the experience of World War II and a renewed effort at voter registration and organization began to change life for black Atlantans. Moreover, the nonviolent civil rights movement in large part came to be centered in Atlanta, with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Ebenezer Baptist Church and as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

Other groups, such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panthers had more activist agendas as an array of approaches worked to address the problem of inequality in America.

Civil Rights Timeline

- 1866** • 14th Amendment grants citizenship to former slaves and equal protection under the law
- 1870** • 15th Amendment makes it illegal to deny a citizen the right to vote on account of race or color
- 1896** • Supreme Court upholds racial segregation in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, establishing the 'separate but equal' standard. Segregation flourishes.
- 1944** • Supreme Court, in *Smith v. Allwright*, declares all-white political primaries violate the 15th Amendment. (In Georgia, elections were virtually won in white-only Democratic primaries.)
- 1947** • Jackie Robinson breaks the color barrier in baseball's major leagues
- 1954** • In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the Supreme Court rules that racial segregation violates the 14th Amendment
- 1955** • Rosa Parks refuses to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama, beginning the Montgomery bus boycott led by young Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- 1958** • *A Raisin in the Sun*, first play on Broadway by a black playwright, Lorraine Hansberry
- 1961** • Demonstrations and Freedom Rides confront segregation
- 1964** • After a filibuster by Southern senators, the Civil Rights Bill is passed
- 1965** • Selma-to-Montgomery March
• Voting Rights Act passes Congress
• Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. awarded Nobel Peace prize
- 1968** • Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. assassinated in Memphis



Signs of the Time

Driving Miss Daisy



by Alfred Uhry

Atlanta and Civil Rights

- In 1895, Booker T. Washington's famous "Atlanta Compromise Speech" at Atlanta's Cotton States and International Exposition advocated a gradual move to equality.
- W. E. B. DuBois, then a Morehouse professor and activist, said the speech was seen as a surrender.
- In 1906, a race riot, fed by newspaper accounts of black men assaulting white women but really driven by fear of white working class job loss to black workers, led to about 25 blacks killed.
- The legal challenge to segregation began in the 1920s as lawyers Charles Houston and Thurgood Marshall "decided to train a group of black lawyers who would challenge the laws."
- One of SNCC's first lunch counter sit-ins after its first meeting, in Atlanta, was at Rich's department store
- Dr. King's presence at Ebenezer Baptist Church and with the Atlanta-based SCLC kept non-violence in the forefront
- Since 1974, Atlanta has had one Jewish and five African American mayors

A Cadillac LaSalle key opens Hoke's "new" used Cadillac which he buys once Boolie gets Daisy a new car



Success in "Sweet Auburn"—The Heart of Black Atlanta

Many black neighborhoods during segregation did not share in Atlanta's growth and modernization—the roads were still dirt, the houses plain and with no city services: no running water, no sewers, no electricity. Yet a substantial black middle class was also emerging in Atlanta, and they made their own opportunities

In fact, from the 1920s through the 1940s the black community built their own city within the city. And at the heart of this black community, Atlanta had Auburn Avenue, a mile and a half long and the "main street of black America," which in 1956 *Forbes Magazine* called "the richest Negro street in the world." In Atlanta:

- there was a black daily newspaper, the *Atlanta Daily World* (the first such paper in the country),
- and in 1949 the first black-owned radio station, WERD, began broadcasting.
- Atlanta had the first black CPA in the country, the first black optician's shop;
- there were a number of black millionaires.
- There were "more black homeowners than any other southern city."
- Moreover, in rebuilding the city after the Civil War, Atlanta also became home to a consortium of black colleges, a graduate school, and seminary (later known as Atlanta University)—making it the "intellectual capital of black America." After World War II this neighborhood became the fashionable area for black development.

Auburn Avenue was the genesis of this progress. By day, Auburn Avenue was an economic center with business and medical offices, banks, restaurants, hardware stores, barbers, hairdressers, churches, and a library. By night, it was full of clubs playing jazz and blues, where folks could dress up and partake of the entertainment, and the entertainment included Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Dinah Washington, Ray Charles, the Supremes, and the Temptations, and Atlanta's own Gladys Knight. "It was," says Melissa Fay Greene, "for newcomers, like the first sight of Israel for a Jew, the first breathtaking sense of *majority*."



Birthplace of Martin Luther King, Jr.
on Auburn Avenue



Auburn Avenue's Herndon Building, built in 1924 by Alonzo Herndon, a former slave and shoeshiner who founded the Atlanta Life Insurance Company (also on Auburn Avenue) and became Atlanta's first black millionaire.

Driving Miss Daisy

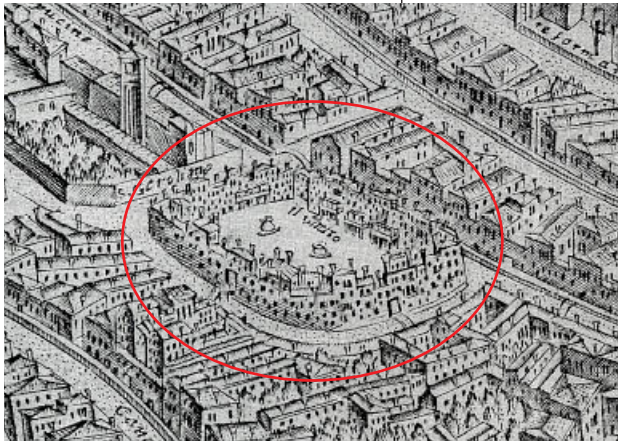


by Alfred Uhry

Jews Coming to America: The Promise of Opportunity

The European Experience: Jews Apart

From the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. to the creation of Israel as a Jewish state in 1948, the Jews had no homeland. As Jacob Neusner points out in *The Way of Torah*, "the majority of the Jewish people has not lived in the Holy Land since the second century C.E. and does not do so today." Consequently, being Jewish living amid other groups has long shaped the Jewish experience. Jews have spoken the languages of their dwelling places, adopted their mores, lived in their societies. At the same time, Jews have recognized that as a people their history is one of suffering centered on the theme of exile and return.



The first "ghetto" [Italian for foundry, its previous use], the island where all Jews in Renaissance Venice were required to live. Its only two bridges were barred and locked at night.



Morris Rich's original small dry goods store in 1867 grew into Rich's, the city's first large department store, which opened in 1906, one of the first to use plate glass windows to encourage "window shopping"

A People Unto Themselves

For nearly 2,000 years, Jews lived amid Islam and Christendom but within their own communities and laws. Thus they were not fully integrated into other nations, but lived as a people within a people. While these centuries involved the study of philosophy and the law through talmudic commentary for the Jewish community, "to the outside world, Jewish history was the tale of persecution and massacre, degradation and restriction to despised occupations, then riot and expulsion, and the discovery of new homes elsewhere." It was debilitating and dangerous to be perceived as "other."

A People Restricted from Society

Thus from the Middle Ages through the Enlightenment, Jews were separated from the other members of society partly by their own doing, but also partly by restrictive laws that forbade them housing, forbade them professional development except in certain lines of trade such as peddling and cobbling and moneylending, and forbade them citizenship rights. Forced into ghettos and misunderstood due to their differences, Jews often found their every success to be suspect. For instance, when they thrived as moneylenders, one of the few professions open to them, the larger community considered them greedy. Opportunities were few, restrictions were many, and suspicion was rampant. Even when Jews sought to emigrate, difficulties often arose.

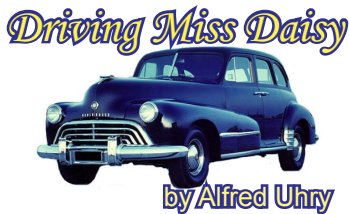
The American Experience: Equality Under the Law

The promise of religious freedom drew many peoples to America—the Pilgrims, the Quakers, and the Jews among them. But more than religious freedom, for which the Jews had suffered for thousands of years, the promise of equality and economic opportunity attracted Jewish immigrants who for hundreds of years had been denied access to economic and personal well-being in other societies.

America changed that, and the traders and peddlers from Europe found that they could come to America and trade in the newly settled areas of the Midwest and South—trading with whites and blacks. As the son of one such trader explained, "The itinerant merchant ... filled a real want, and his vocation was looked upon as quite dignified. Indeed he was treated by the owners of the plantations with a spirit of equality that it is hard to appreciate today." Eventually such traders might buy a small store, which often grew into far more sizable concerns. The success stories of 19th-century Jewish peddlers and small store owners are inspiring:

- Atlanta's Morris Rich, whose tiny shop became Rich's Department Store
- Henry, Emanuel, and Mayer Lehman from Bavaria who emigrated to Montgomery, Alabama, in the late 1840s, traded with packs and then from a small store, shifted into cotton brokering and founded what became the Lehman Brothers financial empire
- Adam Gimbel left Bavaria in 1835, landed in New Orleans, traded up the Mississippi River and opened a dry goods store in Vincennes, Indiana, from which grew the Gimbel Brothers department store chain
- Benjamin Blumenthal of Bavaria landed in New York in 1837; in 1886 his sons opened Bloomingdale Brothers Department Store
- In 1843, 14-year-old Levi Strauss left Bavaria for New York, where two of his brothers already owned a textile business; he went to California and created denim cloth for miners' durable work pants.

Not every immigrant became a business tycoon, of course, and many Jewish businesses thrived as distinctly local concerns until the mall phenomenon and standardization of chain stores after 1970.



"Simply, quietly, in a world ruled by Anglo-Saxon Protestants, southern Jews had laid aside their yarmulkes; forgotten their Hebrew letters; cultivated a taste for shellfish, baked ham, and pork roast; and celebrated Christmas and Easter with their children....

The members [of the Temple] kept up the appearance of perfect contentment...by insulating themselves against the petty insults, glass ceilings, and restrictive clauses of the outside world."

—Melissa Fay Green,
The Temple Bombing



Architectural Assimilation—above, the original Jewish synagogue in Atlanta built in 1875 on Forsyth Street (in the neighborhood in which Daisy grew up). On page 12 compare the architecture of the new Temple built on north Peachtree (note: Daisy, too, moves to the north side of Atlanta as her husband's business prospers).

Americanizing Immigrants: Jewish Assimilation in Atlanta

Until pogroms drove nearly two million Russian and Eastern European Jews to the U.S. between 1890 and 1915, America's Jewish immigrants had come by choice. Ostracized in Europe and for centuries following their own moral, ethical, and ceremonial commandments governing clothing, diet, work habits, and conduct, they arrived to find themselves Americans and finally part of the larger community. As one writer observes, they adopted "a distinctively American style of thought, action, outlook, and association ... punctuated by occasional excursions to the synagogue for the performance of increasingly marginal ceremonial functions."

Some of this response was also driven by the 19th-century reform movement in Judaism, including abbreviated services, use of national languages rather than Hebrew for sermons and prayers, and a minimization of ceremonial commandments, thus limiting the differentiation of Jews from the rest of the community.

Slavery kept Jews from settling in Atlanta, but after the Civil War the community grew with Jewish immigrants who wanted to join American society. Thus, during the late 19th century, the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, known as the Temple, slowly moved to embody reform. With the 1890s' influx of observant Russian Jews who maintained traditional dress and customs, reviving ideas of Jewish "difference," the established German-Jewish community, many now white-collar businessmen, sought to blend even more thoroughly.

Atlanta laws forbade businesses from operating on Sunday, so many Jewish stores and businesses stayed open on Saturday, even though that is the Jewish Sabbath. By the 1890s observance of dietary laws was largely dropped by the Temple congregation, and ham and shellfish began to be served in Jewish homes and at the Temple.

Rabbi David Marx was the Temple's first American-born rabbi when he came to Atlanta in 1895. He stayed at the Temple until 1946, leading the way to radical Reform. The bar mitzvah ceremony waned, and Marx instituted a Sunday service. To insure his congregation thrived, he sought closer ties with Protestant churches than with the Russian Jewish synagogues. He the Temple "the Jewish church," and felt Jewishness was for Friday night at home, but the rest of the week congregants were Americans.

Thus, when the early 20th century brought a fear of "aliens" in Atlanta, the Temple community sought to be perceived as "native." Nonetheless, social clubs and benevolent societies began to exclude Jews from membership, and the 1913 arrest of Jewish businessman Leo Frank for the rape and murder of a teenage employee inflamed the Atlanta community, flames fed by anti-Semitic press accounts. The innocent Frank was lynched—an act with two consequences: the formation of the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League to fight prejudice and a resurgent Ku Klux Klan, which had almost died out in the late 19th century but now spread six million members 1924. The conviction and lynching of Frank left a permanent scar on Atlanta's Jewish community and mitigated their public support of civil rights.

These events enhanced Rabbi Marx's desire for the Jewish community at the Temple to be "invisible." It was common for Temple members to celebrate all the holidays, Jewish and Christian, including Christmas and Easter, though Jews usually put a Star of David atop their Christmas trees. Only the coming of Rabbi Rothschild in 1946 began to reorient the community toward observing more Jewish tradition. Also, one of the first issues he championed was civil rights.

Seeing Assimilation in the Play

Holidays

- *Boolie*: Mama? Merry Christmas!
and Daisy discussing *Florine*:
- *Daisy*: She always has to go and stick a wreath in every window she's got.
- Hoke*: Mmm-hmmm.
- Daisy*: And that silly Santa Claus winking on the front door! ...
- Hoke*: I enjoy Christmas at they house.
- Daisy*: I don't wonder. You're the only Christian in the place!

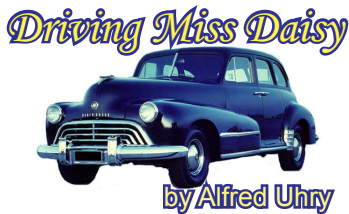


Food

- *Hoke*: I know you say to eat the leftover pork chops, but they stiff.

The Temple bombing

- *Daisy*: Well, it's a mistake. I'm sure they meant to bomb one of the conservative synagogues or the orthodox one. The Temple is reform. Everybody knows that." [implying that we're not "other"]
- Hoke*: It doan' matter to them people. A Jew is a Jew to them folks....



The new 1963 Cadillac that Boolie buys his mother looks like a stretch limo next to the 1948 Oldsmobile she had (in title icon above) that was new when the play opens. Though we never see the cars mentioned, anyone with automotive knowledge has a clear sense of changing car styles and what they say about American popular culture and its values.

Interview

- Pick a relative or a family friend two generations older than you are, and interview that person about what everyday was like when they were your age, how they saw themselves and others, and what the world looked like to them then.
—What has changed between then and now? How does your world work?

Plays with Chauffeurs

- Compare Hoke in *Driving Miss Daisy* to Walter Lee Younger in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. Both men are chauffeurs, but we see Hoke largely from the outside (we are never in his home), but we are in Walter Lee's home and know his family—what difference does that make? Is it as simple as a white male playwright and a black female playwright?

Questions and Activities for *Driving Miss Daisy*

Friendship

- What is the basis of friendship? Do all friendships have the same basis and dynamic? Do you "make" friends or does friendship grow, evolve or discover itself? What does "friend" mean in our Facebook world? How many kinds of "friend" are there? Which ones would bring you break-fast in a power outage?

Perspectives

- Take the perspective of one of the characters and express his or her personal views. What are Boolie's concerns? What do you suppose Boolie says to his friends about his responsibilities and his mother? Hoke rarely says what he must really feel and think; what is his inner monologue? What might Hoke say to his daughter about the ongoing nature of his new job? What would Daisy put in her diary? What might Daisy say to a sister about Boolie or Hoke in 1948 or twenty years later?

History / Cultural Literacy

- As these study materials suggest, having a sense of some 20th-century cultural history deepens the experience of seeing this play, so research the 1948-73 time frame and its background, especially:
 - Reconstruction and its aftermath
 - Jim Crow laws
 - the Holocaust
 - the idea of cultural assimilation for immigrants and former slaves
 - the varieties of social prejudice and social divisions in America and the ways they can be overcome
 - the Leo Frank incident in Atlanta
 - the Civil Rights movement
 - anti-Semitic actions in post-World War II America

Self and Society

- Society is a powerful force in American life; the sense of belonging can be potent and the ability to include or exclude heady. What are the lines between the individual and society? Does all of society see the world the same way? Or do we have separate societies within a larger society? What are our "groups" and what is one's place within or despite them?

Social Issues

- The film of *Driving Miss Daisy*, which came out in 1989, the same year Spike Lee released *Do the Right Thing*, has been criticized for soft-pedaling the racial issues in the South and preserving a nostalgia for the past (and a one-sided view of the past). Does the play sugarcoat the issues and characters? does it show how *one* relationship developed? does it present the truth as Uhry experienced it? does it say this is the truth for all?
- Change is a major element of the play. Compare what changes and what does not between the characters and in their society. What is the play's view of change?
- Does social change or changing attitudes toward groups of people work the same way individual relationships do? Does the play suggest an answer to this question?
- What is the role of the automobile in American society? Has it changed since 1948? Is driving an appropriate and important "vehicle" for this play's concerns and issues? How or how not?
- We talk of America as a melting pot. How does the play look at American society—is it a melting pot, a stew pot, or a styrofoam container with separations?
 - What has happened in the U.S. since 1973 that might continue or alter the commentary of the play? What groups confront each other over what issues in our contemporary society?
 - If we are one nation, does that mean we all have to be identical and share exactly the same views? to what extent is unanimity desirable and when problematic? Are there majority and minority concerns that need heeding?

Prejudice

- What causes prejudice? What is the best way to deal with it? Are bombings or counting our silverware our only options?
 - On page 2 Uhry talks about the shame of being Jewish. How is that feeling like and/or unlike racial prejudice?
 - Uhry comments that "it's not so much what you do as how you do it." Is that true in terms of prejudice?

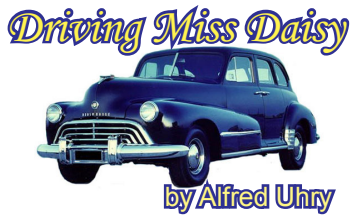


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