

## A View from the Bridge by Arthur Miller

### Video Description

In this play Arthur Miller turns to the dramatic traditions of the classical Greek stage. He confronts the audience with a situation in which we know the outcome. The important questions then arise. How? Why? Alfieri, the lawyer who participates in but also narrates the story, serves as the Greek chorus. Miller chooses as his hero a semi-articulate Brooklyn longshoreman involved in a personal domestic dilemma. Eddie Carbone is a good man, a family man who is respected in his community, who cannot fathom the unbearable affection and passionate feeling he has for his niece, Catherine, who he has raised as his daughter. Eddie is confronted with a situation for which he is unprepared. Rodolpho, a recent illegal emigrant Sicilian, is handsome, sings, spends his money on clothes and makes dresses for Catherine. The two have fallen in love and intend to marry. Eddie's jealousy and repressed sexuality are feelings he can't understand or control. He is bewildered and desperately tries to stop Catherine from marrying or leaving. Catherine struggles to leave, but she cares deeply and feels sorry for Eddie and does not want to hurt him. In an intense, shocking confrontation, a drunken Eddie kisses Catherine and, when challenged by Rodolpho, Eddie kisses him as well. By challenging Rodolpho's masculinity and sexuality, Eddie hopes to destroy Catherine's love for him. Eddie does not stop the wedding, so he betrays Rodolpho to the Immigration Bureau and loses his Sicilian honor in his community. Marco, Rodolpho's brother, requires blood revenge and the play rushes on to its tragic death scenes. Such themes as love, honor, ethics, jealousy, betrayal, justice and identity are woven throughout the play. Once again, an ordinary and decent person cannot face his confusion or stop his eventual corruption. The comments by Arthur Miller and the discussions and rehearsals of the cast are excellent. Both provide perceptive and provocative reflections, which are critically valuable in studying the video presentation.

### Learning Objectives

1. Students will discuss, study, and write about the codes and expectations which determine one's identity and destiny; using *A View from the Bridge*, they will consider how individual choices can distort love, destroy personal honor and damage the lives of others.

(Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12)

2. Students will critically analyze themes and ideas presented; will consider and write from different perspectives; will role play, create and write new scenes and dialogue to achieve deeper understanding and appreciation.

(Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12)

### **Drama Activities**

1. Have students write one-scene dialogs incorporating the voice of an actor who is both a character and narrator, much like Alfieri in *A View from the Bridge*. Students should compose a short script involving a discussion between two persons about an important issue that neither character can fully articulate what they hope to express. The writers should give the narrator lines that clarify, summarize and express the wisdom and insight the characters lack or cannot communicate.
2. Have students assume the role of a character from *A View from the Bridge*. After preparation they sit for an interview by classmates or group members who want to know more about the character's inner thinking and reasoning - how she or he feels about various events and developments. To focus the interviews, students might concentrate their questions on the nature of love and identity as experienced by Eddie, Catherine, Beatrice and Rodolpho.

### **Oral Activities**

1. Eddie Carbone makes the comment about Rodolpho, "The guy ain't right." In small groups, have students analyze Eddie's comment. What does he mean? What is he getting at? Why would he say something like that? Describe the community values Eddie is standing up for. Have students share their analysis with the large group.
2. Have students brainstorm qualities they think are valuable in Eddie's life. Give students three slips of paper on which to record qualities she or he would recommend for Eddie. The class then completes a survey to discover the most important qualities and prioritizes those most crucial to saving Eddie from his tragic fate.

### **Writing Activities**

1. Have students write a one-page essay explaining the necessity for Eddie Carbone to say and actually believe of Rodolpho, "The guy ain't right." The essay should stay closely tied to the text and commentary presented in the video program. Students should explain Eddie's fears as well as his rationalizations.
2. "One's philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices one makes . . . In the long run, we shape our lives and we shape our selves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility." - Eleanor Roosevelt

Consider both Eddie Carbone and Catherine, his niece. Respond with a two-page persuasive essay in which you explain a) how this quote is true for each, but also explain b) how each character is a victim of events beyond their control.