The Hairy Ape

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF EUGENE O'NEILL

Eugene O'Neill was born in a hotel in New York City to Irish immigrants. Both of his parents toured with a theater company and O'Neill attended a Catholic boarding school. His father was an alcoholic and his mother was addicted to morphine, a family situation that influenced his later theatrical works. As a young man, he began working on ships and became involved with unions and labor movements in the US. He became ill with tuberculosis in his early twenties, after which he decided to dedicate himself to writing full-time. His first play, *Beyond the Horizon*, opened in 1920, and *The Emperor Jones* premiered later that year. *Jones* was his first big hit, and expressed O'Neill's thoughts on the US's occupation of Haiti. O'Neill was married three times and had three children. In 1943, after suffering for most of his life from depression and alcoholism, O'Neill's hands began to tremble and he was mostly unable to write for the last ten years of his life. He died in a hotel room in Boston. Though he asked his third wife to wait 25 years to publish *Long Day's Journey into Night* (which O'Neill wrote in 1941-42), she published the play in 1956, and it won a Tony Award for Best Play and posthumously earned O'Neill the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Although O'Neill does not specify when *The Hairy Ape* takes place, it's most likely set during the early 20th century, since Yank tries to join the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a labor union that was not established until 1905. This means that Yank and his fellow stokers are working during what's known as the Second Industrial Revolution, which took place roughly between 1870 and 1914. Whereas the original Industrial Revolution introduced a number of machines that changed the way the world operated, the Second Industrial Revolution saw the general refinement of these inventions, as smaller innovations improved upon the time period's pre-existing technology. One major advancement during this time was the invention of the Bessemer process, which enabled companies to mass-produce steel. Mildred mentions this process in the second act of *The Hairy Ape*, solidifying the notion that her family made its wealth as pioneers of the Second Industrial Revolution. There were also a number of improvements made to large ocean liners during this time, though these boats still used steam power and, thus, still required people like Yank to shovel coal into furnaces. It is largely because of this disparity between wealthy industrialists and impoverished laborers that unions like IWW formed in the first place.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

With its examination of the isolating qualities of machinery and emergent technologies, *The Hairy Ape* is similar to Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal*, a play that premiered in 1928, just six years after the first production of *The Hairy Ape*. Using a barrage of alienating mechanical noises, Treadwell depicts the negative effects that technological advancement can have on human beings. Like O'Neill, she suggests that progress and innovation often have problematic consequences even when they result in a nation's growth. *The Hairy Ape* is also related to Elmer Rice's 1923 play, *The Adding Machine*, a work that shares O'Neill's interest in how machines can replace humans as valuable workers.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Hairy Ape
- **When Published:** *The Hairy Ape* was published in 1921 and premiered in 1922
- **Literary Period:** Expressionism, Realism
- **Genre:** Drama, Expressionism
- **Setting:** The play begins on an ocean liner presumably sometime around the beginning of the 20th century. The setting later shifts to New York City.
- **Climax:** Mildred visits the stokehole, sees Yank raving like a lunatic with his shovel raised violently over his head, and calls him a "filthy beast" before fainting.
- **Antagonist:** The competitive, individualistic worldview that prevents Yank from recognizing the nature of his own oppression

EXTRA CREDIT

Marrying Mildred. In 1929, O'Neill left his second wife and two children to marry Carlotta Monterey, who portrayed Mildred Douglas in the 1922 production of *The Hairy Ape*.

Chaplin. O'Neill disowned his daughter Oona—whom he had with his second wife—when she was 18 because she married Charlie Chaplin, who was at that time 54 (a mere six months younger than O'Neill himself). They remained married until Chaplin's death 34 years later.

PLOT SUMMARY

The Hairy Ape opens in the firemen's forecastle of a large ocean

liner, where Yank and his coworkers spend their time when they're not shoveling coal into the boat's furnaces. The room is loud and rowdy, the many stokers drinking, singing, and shouting. Amidst the uproar, Yank sits and listens to his fellow stokers. He is the "most highly developed individual" in the cage-like forecastle, where the men resemble Neanderthals. The stokers get louder until, finally, Yank tells them to be quiet because he's trying to "think"—an idea that makes all of them laugh. Nonetheless, everyone heeds him for a moment, but soon they're back to their chattering. One stoker belts out a song about a woman waiting for him at home, a sentiment Yank scorns. He goes on to say that the only home these men have is the ship itself.

Hearing Yank's speech about home, a drunken stoker named Long stands up and expresses a number of communist values, describing the ship as "hell," and saying, "All men is born free and ekal." Continuing in this manner, Long says that the "Capitalist clarss" has made the stokers into "wage slaves," but Yank tells him to be quiet, calling his ideas nothing but "Salvation Army-Socialist bull." Instead of agreeing with Long's critique of the inequity that arises under capitalism, he insists that the work he and his fellow stokers do in the engine room has nothing to do with the rich people in the first cabin. Indeed, he upholds that rich people aren't strong or brave enough to work as stokers, arguing that only true men have enough "noive" (nerve) to work in the hell that is the stokehole. This, he says, is where he "belongs."

"We belong to this, you're saying?" says a stoker named Paddy, an older Irishman. Paddy disagrees with Yank and waxes poetic about the past, when he used to sail above deck on beautiful ships with the wind in his face. Arguing that this kind of work was hard but rewarding, Paddy frames the stokehole as exploitative and unfulfilling. Yank responds harshly to Paddy's ideas, calling him "crazy" and moving toward him violently, though he backs off and decides he doesn't deserve a beating because he's "too old" to understand what it means to work in the stokehole. "I belong and he don't," Yank says to his coworkers, insisting that Paddy has lost his nerve. Yank then says that he likes being at the "bottom" of the entire world, since he thinks his job is what makes everything run. "I'm de end! I'm de start! I start somep'n and de woild moves!" he says.

Two days later, Mildred—the daughter of a steel tycoon—sits above deck with her aunt and looks out at the sea. The two women talk about Mildred's desire to see how "the other half lives." Her aunt criticizes her for wanting to help the poor in ways that only make them feel "poorer," but Mildred pays no heed, instead insisting that she's only trying to "be some use in this world." She says she'd like to be "sincere" for once, though she doesn't know if it's possible. She then posits that the wealth she has inherited has left her with "none of the energy, none of the strength of the steel that made it." In search of this kind of "energy," she has decided to take a tour of the engine room. Her aunt is incredulous, but Mildred is set on seeing the stokehole. She even told the captain—who didn't want to let her do this—that her father is president of Nazareth Steel and owns the ocean liner, and so he had no choice but to let her do what she wants. When an engineer finally comes to escort her below, he urges her to change because she's wearing a **white dress**. He tells her she's sure to rub against grease on their way down, but she only says, "It doesn't matter. I have lots of white dresses."

In the stokehole, the men are busy shoveling coal into the furnaces in intervals marked by the sound of a whistle, which an engineer blows from an unseen perch above. When the whistle blows, they throw open the furnaces and are blasted with heat, which is why they need frequent breaks. Although most of the men complain that the engineer blows the whistle too quickly, Yank criticizes them for being weak, urging them along until, finally, he too becomes angry. Before long, he turns around and screams into the darkness, the shovel raised over his head as he yells violent threats at the engineer with the whistle. At this point, he notices that his fellow stokers are all looking at something behind him, so he whirls around and crouches with the shovel held above his head. What he finds is Mildred standing there in her white dress, staring at him; "As she looks at his gorilla face, as his eyes bore into hers, she utters a low, choking cry and shrinks away from him, putting both hands up before her eyes to shut out the sight of his face, to protect her own," reads O'Neill's stage direction. "Take me away!" she shrieks. "Oh, the filthy beast!" With this, she faints, and the engineers at her side carry her away. As he watches her go, Yank "feels himself insulted in some unknown fashion in the very heart of his pride," and says, "God damn yuh!"

Back in the forecastle, Yank sits in the position of Rodin's "The Thinker" while the other stokers speak loudly. Once again, he tells them to be quiet because he's trying to think, and as they try to guess what's going on with him, Paddy suggests he's fallen in love. "I've fallen in hate, get me?" Yank says. Long gets up and insists that Mildred's presence in the stokehole only further emphasizes the divide between the "Capitalist clarss" and the workers, and he tries to get Yank to see that they can—"as voters and citizens"—make a difference if only they finally unite. Agreeing with Long, Paddy says that it was as if Mildred had "seen a great hairy ape escaped from the Zoo." Hearing this, Yank vows to take his revenge.

Three weeks later, Long takes Yank to Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. "We're trespassers 'ere," Long explains. Proletarians keep orf the grass!" Failing to grasp that he most likely won't be able to find Mildred herself, Yank grows impatient, but Long tells him to wait until church lets out, at which point rich people stream over the sidewalks. Giving up on the idea of finding Mildred, Yank tries to pick fights with wealthy passersby, but nobody even acknowledges him, and Long decides to go home because he knows Yank is going to get

them in trouble. Finally, after accosting multiple people, Yank slams into a wealthy gentleman. The man calls for help and "a whole platoon of policemen rush in on Yank from all sides."

In jail the following night, Yank sits in the position of Rodin's "The Thinker" and likens his cell to the cages that animals are kept in at the zoo. His fellow prisoners hear him say this and they make fun of him. He then tells them about Mildred, explaining that she's the daughter of a wealthy man. A man in the nearest cell suggests that Yank "join the Wobblies" if he wants to find Mildred. When Yank expresses his confusion, this prisoner reads him a newspaper article about the Industrial Workers of the World union (IWW). The article is from a speech made by a senator who publicly warned the senate about the "wobblies." Quoting the newspaper, the prisoner reads, "They plot with fire in one hand and dynamite in the other. They stop not before murder to gain their ends." Although the senator meant these words metaphorically, Yank takes the ideas literally and decides to join the IWW when he gets out of prison, thinking this will help him get back at Mildred and her family. In a determined rage, he starts shaking the bars of his cell, and when a guard comes to tell him to stop, he rips the cage apart. Frantically, the guard yells for backup and sprays a hose into the cell as the curtain closes.

A month later, Yank visits an IWW branch and asks if he can join. The secretary who works inside gives him pamphlets and welcomes him in a friendly manner. However, Yank keeps alluding to the idea that the IWW has secret schemes to blow up companies like Nazareth Steel, and this aggravates the secretary, who orders the men hanging around the office to throw Yank out. Sitting in the street outside, Yank says, "So dem boids don't tink I belong, neider."

The next day, Yank goes to the Zoo and talks to a gorilla about how he doesn't "belong" anywhere. "Yuh get me," he says, accepting the idea that he is the "hairy ape" Mildred thinks he is. He tells the gorilla he will let him free, saying that they can stick together and wreak havoc on the people who want to put them both in cages. When he lets the gorilla out, though, the animal squeezes him so hard that his back snaps, and then the large creature tosses him into the cage. "Even him didn't tink I belonged," Yank says. With his dying breath, he says, "Ladies and gents, step forward and take a slant at de one and only—one and original—Hairy Ape from de wilds of—" With this, he dies as the monkeys in the surrounding cages start "chattering."

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Yank – The protagonist of the play, a stoker who works on a large ocean liner. Shoveling coal day in and day out in the excruciating heat of the engine room has made Yank into a strong man who resembles a Neanderthal, with a low brow and "small, fierce, resentful eyes." Yank is uneducated and devoted to his identity as an able-bodied worker. In fact, he's so committed to his life in the stokehole that he refuses to pay attention to the fact that his employers are exploiting his labor by paying him low wages. When Long and Paddy, two of his coworkers, try to point this out to him, he accuses them of not "belong[ing]" in the stokehole anymore, claiming that they've gone weak. However, when Mildred—the daughter of a steel tycoon who owns the ocean liner—visits the stokehole and calls Yank a "filthy beast," he is so angry that his dedication to his identity as a competent worker isn't enough to keep his frustration at bay. As such, he leaves the ocean liner and tries to find Mildred again so that he can take his revenge. However, this only takes him away from the only place where he was truly accepted, and so he finds himself feeling like he doesn't "belong" anywhere. What's worse, he's too unintelligent to navigate his way through the world, so he misunderstands what's happening around him, often violently lashing out because he thinks people are trying to harm him. Before long, he makes his way to the zoo, resigning himself to the idea that he is a "hairy ape"—an idea that Paddy originally suggested because of the way Mildred looked at him. Even so, there's no changing the fact that he *isn't* an ape. Unsurprisingly, then, a gorilla kills him when he—stupidly—lets it out of its cage.

Paddy – An experienced old Irishman who works alongside Yank on the ocean liner. Paddy is jaded and depressed about the miserable conditions of the stokehole, frequently complaining about how wretched it is to work below deck. When Yank tries to convince his fellow stokers that the stokehole is their home, Paddy goes out of his way to emphasize how much better his life was before becoming an undervalued laborer. To drive his point home, he describes what it was like to sail above deck on beautiful boats, contrasting this liberating experience to the feeling of toiling for hours on end in front of the furnaces. After Mildred calls Yank a "filthy beast," Paddy tells him that she looked at him as if he were a "hairy ape," an idea that haunts Yank and inspires him to leave the ocean liner to take his revenge.

Long – A stoker who tries to get Yank to see the nature of his own oppression under the rule of capitalism and industrialization. Long insists that the "Capitalist clarss" is to blame for the majority of the stokers' problems, upholding that the people in the first cabin don't care at all about the workers who are working as "wage slaves" to fuel the boat. Like Paddy, he challenges Yank's unquestioning devotion to life as a stoker, though he uses a more political lens to do this. When Yank decides to leave the ocean liner to go looking for Mildred (to take his revenge), Long takes him to Fifth Avenue in New York City, hoping to impress upon his friend the class disparity plaguing their nation. To his credit, Long is only trying to urge Yank toward a point of political consciousness, but his attempt

fails when it becomes clear that Yank is too preoccupied with his own vanity—his need to prove himself—to thoughtfully consider notions regarding the country's socioeconomic divide. This is why Long winds up leaving Yank on the streets of Manhattan after seeing that his friend is only going to get them both into trouble.

Mildred Douglas – The entitled daughter of the president of Nazareth Steel, a man who also serves as the chairman to the board of directors that controls the ocean liner upon which Yank, Paddy, and Long work. Mildred is traveling with her aunt from the United States to the United Kingdom to work with poor people—a hobby she has picked up over the years because she wants to "discover how the other half lives." Mildred's aunt thinks this is a ridiculous thing to do, but Mildred pays no heed to her, instead insisting that she must do this because it will help her "touch life" in a more "sincere" way than she ever has before. At the same time, she feels as if she's a "waste product" of the process of making steel, which her grandfather perfected years ago. "Or rather," she says, "I inherit the acquired trait of the byproduct, wealth, but none of the energy, none of the strength of the steel that made it." Feeling as if she has no "energy" or "strength," she has decided to push herself out of her comfort zone by taking a trip into the stokehole accompanied by several engineers. When the Second Engineer comes to fetch her, he tells her that she should change out of her **white dress**, but she ignores him. Once they finally descend, it is this white dress that catches the men so off-guard, though Yank himself doesn't notice Mildred until he spins around after yelling curses at an unseen engineer. Seeing Yank with his shovel held over his head and his angry face, Mildred calls him a "filthy beast" and faints before the engineers carry her away.

Mildred's Aunt – An old woman whom O'Neill describes as "pompous and proud." Mildred's aunt is highly critical of her niece, finding her desire to work with poor people utterly absurd. She isn't afraid to voice her misgivings about Mildred, chastising the young woman for seeking "morbid thrills" and telling her that she might as well embrace the fact that she is "artificial" instead of trying to act "sincere."

Second Engineer – A middle-aged engineer who works on the ocean liner. After Mildred convinces the captain of the ship to let her visit the stokehole, this man is charged with escorting her. Before they descend, he tries to tell her that her **white dress** will get dirty as they make their way down, but she refuses to change, saying that she has "lots of white dresses."

The IWW Secretary – A secretary at the office of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union that Yank visits. At first, the secretary warmly welcomes Yank and gives him pamphlets explaining the ins and outs of the organization. However, Yank soon reveals that he's joining the union because he mistakenly believes they will help him blow up Nazareth Steel. When the secretary orders several IWW members to throw Yank out, they ask if they should beat him up, but the secretary says, "No. He isn't worth the trouble we'd get into. He's too stupid." Just before the IWW members throw Yank out the door, the secretary adds, "You're a brainless ape."

MINOR CHARACTERS

The Prisoner An unnamed and unseen prisoner Yank meets in jail. This prisoner reads him a newspaper article about the Industrial Workers of the World union.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

PRIDE, IDENTITY, AND BELONGING

In *The Hairy Ape*, Eugene O'Neill tells a cautionary tale about the effects pride can have on a person's sense of self. At the beginning of the play, Yank relishes his identity as a competent stoker on an ocean liner, bragging that he's "part of de engines" and exalting his role of shoveling coal into the furnaces. However, his pride isn't as enduring as it seems, and his ego suffers a considerable blow when Mildred—the daughter of a steel tycoon—visits the engine room and calls him a "filthy beast." This insult ruins Yank's self-esteem, causing him to wonder if anyone values him at all. Indeed, his fragile ego drives him to seek revenge on Mildred and the upper class, and this ultimately takes him away from the ship—the only place where people actually do accept him. As such, he soon finds himself searching for a sense of belonging, and this search eventually leads to his death. What he fails to understand is that his delicate ego has blinded him to the fact that in the engine room he was sure of himself and accepted by his peers. That he dies trying to find something he already has, then, suggests that it's futile and dangerous for people to allow vanity to so thoroughly destabilize their conception of themselves and surrounding social environments.

At the beginning of *The Hairy Ape*, O'Neill frames Yank not as an outcast, but as an able-bodied worker who is well-respected by his peers. He even provides a stage note that refers to Yank as "the most highly developed individual" amongst his fellow stokers, who look up to him as a role model. What's more, he takes pride in his work. Comparing himself to Paddy, who complains about the hardships of life as a stoker, Yank revels in himself, going out of his way to emphasize that he is made for these conditions. Indeed, Yank brags that, although the engine rooms are hellish, he "belongs" here because his identity is

wrapped up in the act of shoveling coal. "Hell in de stokehole?" he says. "Sure! It takes a man to work in hell." Having established that he is exactly the kind of man suited "to work in hell," he goes one step further and suggests that he's integral to the entire operation of running the boat, saying, "It's me makes it roar! It's me makes it move!" He also says that the world *needs* people like him to keep it going. "Everyting else dat makes de woild move, somep'n makes it move," he says. "It can't move witout somep'n else, see? Den yuh get down to me. I'm at de bottom, get me! Dere ain't nothin' foither. I'm de end! I'm de start! I start somep'n and de woild moves!" It's obvious that Yank not only thinks he "belongs" in the stokehole, he also derives a sense of purpose from his work, which he believes makes the world "move." As such, O'Neill emphasizes the extent to which Yank invests himself in his identity as a stoker.

However, Yank's sense of self isn't as assured as it seems. This is made apparent by how unsettled he is when Mildred visits the stokehole and, upon laying eyes on him, calls him a "filthy beast." At first, Yank is filled with rage and a desire to take revenge. After the incident, he expresses his anger to the other stokers, saying, "Tink I'm goin' to let her git away wit dat stuff? [...] I'll fix her!" Following up on this, he goes to Fifth Avenue, hoping to find Mildred so he can spit in her face and show her that she can't simply come into his environment and insult him. However, he soon realizes he won't be able to find Mildred, so he tries to start fights with the wealthy strangers walking by on the sidewalk. Despite his efforts, though, no one engages, and this destabilizes him more than Mildred's original insult. At least Mildred's reaction acknowledged his presence, albeit in an offensive way. By contrast, Yank feels invisible in the streets of Manhattan, and even when he finally gets arrested, his fellow prisoners laugh at him and don't revere him in the same way that the men in the stokehole do. As such, the audience sees that Yank's pride and thirst for revenge have led him astray, ultimately putting him in a position in which he feels undervalued and alone.

Searching for acceptance, Yank tries to join a chapter of the Industrial Workers of the World union, but this doesn't give him the same sense of belonging he used to have in the stokehole. The people at the IWW understand that he's trying to join for the wrong reasons, so they throw him onto the street, where he sits and says, "So dem boids don't tink I belong, neider." With this, it becomes clear that Yank is looking first and foremost for a community that will accept him. However, it's worth noting that no one ever said he didn't "belong" in the stokehole in the first place. After all, he was celebrated amongst his peers and saw himself as the lifeblood of the engine room. Unfortunately, though, he's unable to move beyond Mildred's comment, which so thoroughly shook his sense of self that he has now forgotten about the community to which he *already* belongs.

Although Mildred's conception of Yank as a "hairy beast" rattles him to his core, his quest beyond the ocean liner ironically ends with him accepting that he *is* a "hairy beast"—an acceptance he reaches when he goes to the zoo and speaks to a gorilla, telling the beast, "Yuh get me." Of course, this sense of camaraderie is misplaced, but Yank only realizes this after the gorilla breaks his back. "Even him didn't tink I belonged," he says just before dying. It's worth noting how ridiculous this statement is, since it should be rather obvious that Yank doesn't belong among apes. Instead, it's easy to see where he *does* belong: in the stokehole, where he was in the very beginning of the play and where people respect him. But Yank has let his vanity—his desire to prove himself in the eyes of people like Mildred—obscure the fact that he was originally happy with his identity and social environment, and this leaves him feeling like an outcast when, in reality, his entire journey to find himself has been unnecessary and ill-advised.

EXPLOITATION, OPPRESSION, AND THE INDIVIDUAL

The Hairy Ape illustrates that capitalism often exploits individuals by setting them up to participate in their own oppression. Showcasing the ways in which Yank fails to recognize his disadvantages, O'Neill suggests that capitalist systems create false narratives about individuality and empowerment, ultimately convincing people like Yank that they are toiling for their own good when, in truth, their labor primarily benefits the wealthy. Yank believes that his work empowers him as an individual, and this is why he refuses to listen to his coworkers Paddy and Long when they try to convince him that they're all merely "feeding [their] lives" to employers who don't care about them. As Yank argues against this notion, though, he only demonstrates the extent to which he has internalized the very ideas that keep him from acknowledging his own oppression. As a result, his belief that he's a valued individual is exactly what blinds him to the fact that he isn't valued at all. In turn, O'Neill showcases how hard it is for a person to recognize their own disadvantages while existing in an exploitative system.

In the first scene of *The Hairy Ape*, O'Neill delivers a critique of capitalism by outlining the exploitative tactics of the capitalist (bourgeoisie) class. Before analyzing the play itself, it's important to understand a key concept of *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, since O'Neill draws heavily from this text. Marx and Engels uphold that the bourgeoisie own the "means of production," or everything (materials, facilities, machinery) required to create things that sell. However, these "means of production" are worthless in and of themselves, as workers are required to make actual sellable products. These workers are everyday laborers (the proletariat). According to Marx and Engels, then, the proletariat's work is what generates wealth in society, but the bourgeoisie are the ones who reap the benefits. What's more,

Marx and Engels maintain that the bourgeoisie refrain from paying proletarians enough money to own the "means of production" themselves, effectively exploiting laborers and making sure they'll never become upwardly mobile enough to benefit from their own work. In other words, the proletariat is the key to the capitalist class's wealth, but the bourgeoisie will never share that wealth with them.

These ideas arise in *The Hairy Ape* when one of Yank's fellow stokers, Long, tries to explain to him that they are all being exploited by the wealthy owners of the ocean liner. "Them's the ones," he says. "They dragged us down 'til we're on'y wage slaves in the bowels of a bloody ship, sweatin', burnin' up, eatin' coal dust! Hit's them's ter blame—the damned Capitalist clarss!" By saying this, Long points out that the wealthy people that make up "the damned Capitalist clarss" don't care that everyone is "born free and ekal." Rather, they only focus on forcing people like Yank and his coworkers to work as "wage slaves." Of course, if the stokers refused to work for such low pay, the bourgeoise owners would have to pay them fairly, since they need people like them to operate their "means of production." However, this would require people like Yank to refuse to continue working in such dismal and unjust conditions.

Unfortunately, this is something Yank is unwilling to do because he believes his role as a stoker is valuable in and of itself. As such, he's uninterested in recognizing the patterns of exploitation and oppression that plague his world. Instead of stopping to consider Long's critique, he buys into the competitive, individualistic spirit of capitalism. "I've listened to lots of guys like you, see," he says to Long. "Yuh're all wrong. Wanter know what I t'ink? Yuh ain't no good for no one. Yuh're de bunk. Yuh ain't got no noive, get me? Yuh're yellow, dat's what. Yellow, dat's you. Say! What's dem slobs in de foist cabin got to do wit us? We're better men dan dey are, ain't we?" Invigorated by thinking of himself as tougher and more able-bodied than the capitalist class, Yank unknowingly plays directly into the kind of thinking that the bourgeoisie depend upon in order to continue profiting off of people like him. "We run de whole woiks," he insists, lampooning his coworkers for questioning their own importance. By framing Paddy and Long's thoughtful criticisms of capitalism as nothing more than cowardliness, then, Yank ultimately makes it harder for his fellow proletarians to unite and effect change.

O'Neill suggests that this kind of exploitative capitalism thrives when people like Yank and his coworkers refuse to think about the broader economic structures of their world. Even when Yank tries to join a labor union later in the play, he does so for the wrong reasons, signing up because he thinks doing so will help him get revenge on Mildred—a motive that only further reveals his inability to think about anything other than himself. Paddy, for his part, picks up on this individualistic mindset, mocking Yank by singing a traditional folk song that includes the lyrics, "I care for nobody, no, not I, / And nobody cares for me." These two lines perfectly encapsulate the kind of individualistic thinking that the capitalist class needs the proletariat to adopt—after all, if no one in the working class "cares" about one another, then they won't come together to fight against the exploitative economic system in which they exist.

Unfortunately, Yank is too caught up in this competitive and self-important mentality to even recognize Paddy's irony, and so he merely says, "Dat's de stuff! Now yuh're getting' wise to somep'n. Care for nobody, dat's de dope!" Going on, he adds that he can "care for" himself. Wholeheartedly believing that he "run[s] de whole [works]," he sees no reason to challenge the economic system. Simply put, his belief that he is valuable is exactly what enables his bosses to continue devaluing him. In turn, O'Neill shows just how difficult it is to identify oppression while existing within the exploitative structures of capitalism.

AGGRESSION AND STUPIDITY

It's hard to deny that *The Hairy Ape* centers around the fact that Yank is unintelligent. Indeed, the majority of the play's plot-points are contingent upon his overall lack of intelligence. In many ways, then, it is a play about a man who doesn't have the intellectual capacity to make his way through the world without getting himself into unnecessary altercations. In the absence of adequate reasoning and logical cognition, he turns to violence and aggression, which are celebrated in the ultra-masculine environment of the stokehole. Unsurprisingly, these aggressive tendencies eventually get Yank into trouble. However, it's worth noting that he *does* try several times throughout the play to "think," despite the fact that his fellow stokers discourage him from doing so. As such, O'Neill intimates that all humans—even those who discount the life of the mind—naturally engage in certain forms of philosophical inquiry. And since Yank dies largely because no one helps him work through his problems in a levelheaded way, it's reasonable to say that *The Hairy Ape* outlines the dangers of ostracizing people because of their lack of intelligence.

The stokers who populate *The Hairy Ape* are aggressive and raucous, often resorting to violence to resolve even the most insignificant disagreements. This, O'Neill intimates, is simply a function of the hyper-masculine environment in which they exist, as he describes the stokehole in chaotic, visceral terms; "The room is crowded with men," he writes in his opening stage note, "shouting, cursing, laughing, singing—a confused, inchoate uproar swelling into a sort of unity, a meaning—the bewildered, furious, baffled defiance of a beast in a cage." What's most interesting about this description is O'Neill's attention to the ways in which chaos and raw energy can form "a sort of unity" and "meaning." This suggests that calamity and aggression are the governing principles of the stokehole, a place where

animalistic "bewilder[ment]" is common, an accepted mode of existence. O'Neill's use of the word "baffled" is also noteworthy, since it carries connotations of confusion and an overall lack of comprehension, thereby indicating that intellectual thought does not reign supreme in the "furious" atmosphere of the stokehole. Instead, these men are busy "shouting, cursing, laughing, [and] singing," acting like "beast[s] in a cage" instead of like thoughtful humans.

O'Neill associates this beast-like aggression with intellectual simplicity. This outlook becomes evident when he describes the stokers' physical appearance, writing, "The men themselves should resemble those pictures in which the appearance of Neanderthal Man is guessed at. All are hairy-chested, with long arms of tremendous power, and low, receding brows above their small, fierce, resentful eyes." In this passage, O'Neill goes out of his way to portray the stokers as primitive, likening them to Neanderthals, who—although important in the evolution of *homo sapiens*—were thought to be less intelligent than modern humans. What's more, O'Neill describes their eyes as "fierce" and "resentful," two words that suggest they're capable of sensing their own lack of intelligence, which they "resent" and try to cover up with "fierce" demeanors.

The idea that someone like Yank is capable of recognizing his own intellectual limits is made evident by the fact that he makes a concerted effort to "t'ink" several times throughout the play. As his coworkers drunkenly shout and sing, he says, "Nix on de loud noise. Can't youse see I'm tryin' to t'ink?" What, exactly, he's trying to work out in his head isn't clear, but the mere fact that he wants to sit by himself and reflect upon something is significant, as it implies that he isn't entirely averse to intellectual thought. However, the aggressive and wild environment of the stokehole makes it hard for him to do this, especially since his coworkers mock him for trying to "t'ink." "Drink, don't think!" they chant until, finally, Long stands up for Yank and defends him by launching into his own thoughts, outlining rather complex ideas about their working conditions. Strangely enough, though, Yank immediately abandons his attempt to think, instead resorting to aggression and turning on Long. "Sit down before I knock yuh down!" he shouts. This exchange confirms that as soon as Yank encounters ideas he doesn't resonate with, he abandons his attempt to "t'ink" and falls back into his "fierce," macho persona.

Above all, Yank suffers because no one helps him develop his intellectual capacities. When he leaves the stokehole and ventures into the broader world, the aggression he has used as a crutch renders him unfit for society. As a result, he winds up in jail, and when he's released, he finds himself with no one to turn to, since his stupidity makes it impossible for him to fit in. This, it seems, is partially why he goes to the zoo and tries to engage in a conversation with a gorilla, hoping that the animal will understand him. This is perhaps the only moment in the entire play that Yank shows his vulnerability by admitting his own lack of intelligence. "Tinkin' is hard," he confides to the gorilla. Unfortunately, the gorilla—like everyone else in Yank's life—doesn't care (or, in this case, *can't* care) about helping him learn to work through his problems in intellectual, non-aggressive ways. And when the gorilla kills Yank, O'Neill underhandedly suggests that the primary tragedy of this man's life rests on the fact that no one has nurtured his desire to think. In a cruel twist of fate, violence and aggression—the very things Yank uses to compensate for his stupidity—are what kill him, thereby making it impossible for him to "t'ink" at all.

PROGRESS AND HAPPINESS

The Hairy Ape takes place during a time of change, when the industrial revolution was still altering the way the world operated. However, O'Neill suggests that change is not valuable in and of itself, and he emphasizes the fact that certain kinds of progress can negatively affect human happiness and welfare. For instance, Paddy—a jaded stoker who works alongside Yank—yearns for the past because the hellish conditions of his working environment are the direct result of industrialization. In many ways, Paddy's job of shoveling coal into a furnace to power a commercial ocean liner is a perfect representation of the paradoxical nature of progress: the more technology supposedly changes society for the better, the more people like Paddy are forced to take jobs that diminish their self-worth and happiness. What's more, O'Neill upholds that the even the people making money from this industrialized progress aren't always happier because of their economic prosperity. To that end, Mildred—who's part of a family that made its name at the beginning of the industrial revolution—is discontent with her life, and so she romanticizes the idea of experiencing hardship, fetishizing people like Paddy because her own existence isn't fulfilling. By spotlighting the fact that Mildred's wealth can't make her happy, O'Neill illustrates that innovation and progress are not inherently valuable because they do not provide people with a genuine sense of fulfillment.

Before examining the ways in which the characters in *The Hairy Ape* conceive of change, it's worth considering the time period's obsession with progress. By the 1920s—when O'Neill wrote *The Hairy Ape*—the industrial revolution had thoroughly altered the way the world operated, having introduced machinery that enabled people to work faster and travel farther. Part of this revolution included the introduction of transatlantic commercial vessels, which operated using steam engines that were powered by coal. This technological advancement was not quite as efficient as it may have seemed, since entire teams of people were required to shovel coal into furnaces in order to power the engines. This is the world in which Paddy and his fellow stokers toil, all in the name of progress and advancement.

Relegated to the scorching heat of the engine rooms, Paddy

knows that his work goes largely unnoticed by the majority of society, since the ocean liner's passengers never encounter the stokers and, therefore, can go on believing that the industrial revolution has brought society nothing but prosperity, happiness, and efficiency. And though the introduction of the steam engine did indeed benefit society (at least in an economic sense), there's no denying that this kind of change was not as ideal or uncostly as it may have appeared.

Part of the reason Paddy is unhappy is because he remembers a time before the world was dominated by steam engines. "Oh, to be back in the fine days of my youth," he says. "Oh, there was fine beautiful ships them days—clippers wid tall masts touching the sky—fine strong men in them—men that was sons of the sea as if 'twas the mother that bore them." Reminiscing about working on sailboats instead of monstrous steamships, Paddy talks about the past as if everyone around him has forgotten what it's like to live in the natural world. He upholds that sailors used to be "sons of the sea," as if the ocean itself were their mother. This stands in stark contrast to the terrible conditions of the dirty and mechanical engine rooms. "Work—aye—hard work—but who'd mind that at all?" he says. "Sure, you worked under the sky and 'twas work wid skill and daring to it." In this moment, Paddy discounts the value of working on a steamship, even if such vessels are capable of going faster and holding more people. For him, such progress isn't categorically good. He'd rather do "hard" and skillful work under the sun at a slower pace than waste away below deck with "the bloody engines pounding and throbbing and shaking" around him. Unlike most people in his society, the only kind of change Paddy is interested in is a return to the past, as he doesn't believe that the industrial revolution has brought along anything but misery.

O'Neill provides an even more compelling example of the downsides of industrialization by presenting Mildred, a young woman saddled with ennui despite her opulent wealth. Bored and unhappy, Mildred sets herself to the task of "discover[ing] how the other half lives," essentially romanticizing poverty and perversely wishing that she herself could experience what it would be like to be poor. "I would like to be sincere, to touch life somewhere," she tells her doubting aunt. "But I'm afraid I have neither the vitality nor integrity. All that was burnt out in our stock before I was born. Grandfather's blast furnaces, flaming to the sky, melting steel, making millions." Outlining her family's upward trajectory, she says that she is "a waste product" of the entire process of making steel. "Or rather," she continues, "I inherit the acquired trait of the byproduct, wealth, but none of the energy, none of the strength of the steel that made it." In other words, she believes that wealth itself has "burnt out" the "vitality" and "energy" of her "stock."

Mildred thus reinforces Paddy's idea that the changes brought about by the industrial revolution haven't necessarily made the world a better, happier place. Instead, these changes have thrust the economy forward in ways that don't create actual happiness. Nothing, it seems, compares to Paddy's days above deck on the open ocean—a happiness that has nothing to do with progress. In this way, O'Neill outlines the dangers of embracing change without preserving the elements of life that give humanity a sense of "vitality."

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

RODIN'S "THE THINKER"

Throughout *The Hairy Ape*, O'Neill references Rodin's "The Thinker" in his stage notes as a way of representing Yank's internal struggle to understand the nature of his own unhappiness. "The Thinker" is a sculpture by Augustine Rodin that depicts a large, muscular man sitting nude in deep thought with his chin resting on one hand. Given Yank's severe lack of intelligence, the fact that he frequently strikes this pose is quite significant, as it suggests that he yearns for the capacity to engage in intellectual thought. As such, O'Neill intimates that even the most unintelligent people are capable of sensing their own lackluster mental faculties. More importantly, Yank's periodic bouts of thinking in this position signal to the audience that he is undeterred by the fact that, as he puts it, "Tinkin' is hard." In this way, Rodin's "The Thinker" comes to stand for the natural tendency humans have of gravitating toward complex cognition—a tendency that sets people like Yank apart from the gorillas and "hairy ape[s]" with whom they might otherwise identify.

MILDRED'S WHITE DRESS

When Mildred visits the stokehole, she wears a white dress that symbolizes her extreme privilege. Despite the fact that the engineers urge her to wear something else, she insists that she has "plenty of white dresses." As such, she doesn't care if this one gets dirty when she rubs against greasy ladders on her way down to the "bowels" of the ship. However, this kind of privilege is so out of place in the stokehole that Yank isn't even capable of identifying Mildred as a human when he first lays eyes on her, instead thinking that she's a "white apparition." Indeed, his inability to contextualize her presence in the engine room is a testament to how sorely out of place she is, an interloper in this world of grease, dirt, and coal dust. Using this dress as a way of emphasizing the harsh juxtaposition between Mildred and the stokers, O'Neill shows the audience just how unprepared Mildred is to see what it's actually like to live in poverty, despite her desire to "see how the other half lives." In turn, her dress represents her naivety when it comes to matters of class disparity and

inequality.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Vintage edition of *Anna Christie, The Emperor Jones, The Hairy Ape* published in 1995.

Scene One Quotes

The room is crowded with men, shouting, cursing, laughing, signing—a confused, inchoate uproar swelling into a sort of unity, a meaning—the bewildered, furious, baffled defiance of a beast in a cage. […]

The treatment of this scene, or of any other scene in the play, should by no means be naturalistic. The effect sought after is a cramped space in the bowels of a ship, imprisoned by white steel. The lines of bunks, the uprights supporting them, cross each other like the steel framework of a cage. The ceiling crushes down upon the men's heads. They cannot stand upright. This accentuates the natural stooping posture which shoveling coal and the resultant over-development of back and shoulder muscles have given them. The men themselves should resemble those pictures in which the appearance of Neanderthal Man is guessed at. All are hairy-chested, with long arms of tremendous power, and low, receding brows above their small, fierce, resentful eyes.

Related Characters: Paddy, Long, Yank

Related Themes:

Page Number: 141

Explanation and Analysis

This is O'Neill's description of the fireman's forecastle, where Yank and his fellow stokers live when they're not shoveling coal into the ocean liner's furnaces. O'Neill goes out of his way to establish the harsh conditions of this environment, outlining the "cramped" nature of the stokers' accommodations. In doing so, he creates a claustrophobic atmosphere that resembles that of a "cage." In turn, this prison-like setting is a perfect representation of the ways in which Yank and his coworkers are essentially "wage slaves" (as Long later puts it).

What's also interesting about this description, though, is that O'Neill focuses on the "confus[ion]" of the raucous environment. Indeed, he suggests that the forecastle is full of "shouting, cursing, laughing," and "singing," all of which create "a confused, inchoate uproar." However, this "uproar" builds into "a sort of unity," one that gives people like Yank a sense of "meaning." Because the surrounding aggression and chaos is all Yank has ever known, he feels he understands it. By establishing this fact, then, O'Neill prepares the audience to comprehend why Yank is eventually so disoriented when he leaves the ocean liner and ventures into the outside world.

Dis is home, see? What d'yuh want wit home? (*proudly*) I runned away from mine when I was a kid. On'y too glad to beat it, dat was me. Home was lickings for me, dat's all. But yuh can bet your shoit no one ain't never licked me since! Wanter try it, any of youse? Huh! I guess not.

Related Characters: Yank (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 146

Explanation and Analysis

Yank says this after hearing one of his fellow stokers sing a sentimental song about "home." Insisting that the stokehole is his "home," Yank reveals his complete devotion to life on the ocean liner. This identification with the life of a stoker makes sense, considering that he had a difficult upbringing. "Home was lickings for me," he says, making it clear that he has always been around the same kind of violence and aggression that now runs rampant throughout the forecastle. The difference, of course, is that Yank is capable of defending himself as an adult, whereas he was at the mercy of his parents when he was a child. This is why he is eager to prove himself to his peers, bragging that he has never been "licked" since leaving home. "Wanter try it, any of youse?" he asks, challenging them to question his physical prowess. As such, the audience sees how important it is for Yank to feel powerful and physically indominable, ultimately incorporating this macho worldview into his identity as a fearless stoker.

This is 'ell. We lives in 'ell,—Comrades—and right enough we'll die in it. (*raging*) And who's ter blame, I arks yer? We ain't. We wasn't born this rotten way. All men is born free and ekal. That's in the bleedin' Bible, maties. But what d'they care for the Bible—them lazy, bloated swine what travels first cabin? Them's the ones. They dragged us down 'til we're on'y wage slaves in the bowels of a bloody ship, sweatin', burnin' up, eatin' coal dust! Hit's them's ter blame—the damned Capitalist clarss!

Related Characters: Long (speaker), Yank

Related Themes:

Page Number: 146

Explanation and Analysis

Long delivers this speech to his fellow stokers after hearing Yank say that the stokehole is his home. Although Yank only wants to impress upon his peers the fact that he is dedicated to the life of a stoker, Long takes this opportunity to suggest that their living conditions are hellish and oppressive. This, he argues, is because of the "Capitalist clarss." By saying this, he references the communist notion—introduced in *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels—that society is comprised of two groups: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The stokers belong to the proletariat. Everyday laborers, they are the ones who are forced by the bourgeoisie to work as "wage slaves in the bowels of a [...] ship."

When Long talks about this kind of inequality, he emphasizes the fact that the capitalist class doesn't "care" about fair working conditions, as long as they can keep living the decadent lives of "bloated swine." This is the first time in *The Hairy Ape* that O'Neill encourages the audience to consider the disparity between socioeconomic classes—a thread that becomes important and fruitful as the play progresses, since Yank fails throughout the story to fully grasp the nature of his own oppression.

> Wanter know what I t'ink? Yuh ain't no good for no one. Yuh're de bunk. Yuh ain't got no noive, get me? Yuh're yellow, dat's what. Yellow, dat's you. Say! What's dem slobs in de foist cabin got to do wit us? We're better men dan dey are, ain't we? Sure! One of us guys could clean up de whole mob wit one mit. Put one of 'em down here for one watch in de stokehole, what'd happen? Dey'd carry him off on a stretcher. Dem boids don't amount to nothin'. Dey're just baggage. Who makes dis old tub run? Ain't it us guys? Well den, we belong, don't we? We belong and dey don't. Dat's all. (*A loud chorus of approval. Yank goes on.*) As for dis bein' hell—aw, nuts! Yuh lost your novie, dat's what. Dis is a man's job, get me? It belongs. It runs dis tub. No stiffs need apply. But yuh're a stiff, see? Yuh're yellow, dat's you.

Related Characters: Yank (speaker), Long

Related Themes:

Page Number: 147

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Yank criticizes Long for preaching communist ideas about class disparity and capitalist exploitation. Instead of recognizing the ways in which the capital class depends upon but undervalues his work as a laborer, Yank chooses to double down on his identity as a macho stoker. Because of this, he frames Long as cowardly—"yellow"—because of the man's complaints about the job. For Yank, it's fulfilling enough simply to know that he's better at this kind of hard work than any of the bourgeois people in the first "cabin." "We're better men dan dey are, ain't we?" he asks, going on to brag about the fact that he could easily beat up a "whole mob" of wealthy people. When he says this, though, the audience sees that his confident swagger is blinding him from bigger, more important ideas. Indeed, he focuses on his own strength instead of stopping to think about how he is being treated unfairly.

Worse, he plays into the exact narrative that the capitalist class no doubt wants him to think—namely, that his work is an intrinsically good thing that is rewarding regardless of whether or not he's treated well or fairly compensated. Turning on Long, Yank subscribes to a kind of individualism that makes it impossible for laborers like himself to unite and effect change on a broader level. In this way, he becomes the engine of his own oppression.

> Yerra, what's the use of talking? 'Tis a dead man's whisper. (*to Yank resentfully*) 'Twas them days a ship was part of the sea, and a man was part of a ship, and the sea joined all together and made it one. (*scornfully*) Is it one wid this you'd be, Yank—black smoke from the funnels smudging the sea, smudging the decks—the bloody engines pounding and throbbing and shaking—wid divil a sight of sun or a breath of clean air—choking our lungs wid coal dust—breaking our backs and hearts in the hell of the stokehole—feeding the bloody furnace—feeding our lives along wid the coal, I'm thinking—caged in by steel from a sight of the sky like bloody apes in the Zoo! (*with a harsh laugh*) Ho-ho, divil mend you! Is it to belong to that you're wishing? Is it a flesh and blood wheel of the engines you'd be?

Related Characters: Paddy (speaker), Yank

Related Themes:

Page Number: 149

Explanation and Analysis

Paddy says this after reminiscing about the days before he worked on the ocean liner as a stoker. When he was young, he explains, he sailed on beautiful boats and reveled in the feeling of working above deck in a rewarding capacity. During those days, he says, "a ship was part of the sea, and a man was part of a ship." By saying this, he essentially suggests that he had no problem devoting himself wholeheartedly to his job, since it was a fulfilling position that brought him happiness. Now, though, he works in horrendous conditions, which is why he's baffled by Yank's complete devotion to his life as a stoker.

"Is it one wid this you'd be, Yank," he asks, pointing out that—if a man is to become "one" with his occupation—the ocean liner is an ugly and unhappy place to exist. Indeed, Paddy views working in the stokehole as "feeding" his life into the very same furnaces into which he shovels coal. Furthermore, when he asks Yank if he wants to be a "flesh and blood wheel of the engines," he references the fact that the stokers aren't treated like humans by their employers, but like cogs in a machine.

> Everyting else dat makes de woild move, somep'n makes it move. It can't move witout somep'n else, see? Den yuh get down to me. I'm at de bottom, get me! Dere ain't nothin' foither. I'm de end! I'm de start! I start somep'n and de woild moves! It—dat's me!—de new dat's moiderin' de old! I'm de ting in coal dat makes it boin; I'm steam and oil for de engines; I'm de ting in gold dat makes it money! And I'm what makes iron into steel! Steel, dat stands for de whole ting! And I'm steel—steel—steel!

Related Characters: Yank (speaker), Long, Paddy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 151

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Yank disregards Paddy and Long's various critiques of working in the stokehole. Although they have tried to impress upon him that he is undervalued by the wealthy owners of the boat, he remains unshaken in his belief that his job gives him a sense of purpose and value. Indeed, he upholds that his position as a laborer is vital to the smooth operation of the entire world, saying that he's at the "bottom" of "everything." Funnily enough, he's actually correct: the capitalist world depends upon laborers like him to fuel engines and do the dirty work required to power the economy. But Yank isn't thinking in these terms. Rather, he considers himself invaluable to the world in a somewhat egotistical way, believing that he's "de new dat's moiderin' de old," a self-aggrandizing mentality that aligns with the progress-oriented mindset of the Second Industrial Revolution. Unable to recognize that this worldview is exactly what enables people to take advantage of him, he champions ideas of self-worth that are, in reality, only recycled capitalist sentiments about individuality and innovation.

> PADDY—(*begins to sing the "Miller of Dee" with enormous good nature*)
>
> "I care for nobody, no, not I,
> And nobody cares for me."
>
> YANK—(*good-natured himself in a flash, interrupts Paddy with a slap on the bare back like a report*) Dat's de stuff! Now yuh're gettin' wise to somep'n. Care for nobody, dat's de dope! To hell wit 'em all! And nix on nobody else carin'. I kin care for myself, get me! (*Eight bells sound, muffled, vibrating through the steel walls as if some enormous brazen gong were imbedded in the heart of the ship.* […].)

Related Characters: Paddy (speaker), Yank

Related Themes:

Page Number: 152

Explanation and Analysis

Having heard Yank praise his own value as a stoker in a highly individualistic manner, Paddy sings an old folk song called the "Miller of Dee," focusing especially on a couplet that directly applies to Yank's self-aggrandizing and competitive pride. "I care for nobody, no, not I, / And nobody cares for me," he sings, emphasizing the fact that Yank is only concerned with himself. And although he sings this as a way of mocking Yank's self-centered worldview, Yank fails to pick up on the irony. "Dat's de stuff!" he says, agreeing that "nobody" should care for anybody but him- or herself. "I kin care for myself," he asserts, a phrase that suggests a certain amount of self-possession and personal agency. Ironically, though, as soon as he finishes praising his own individuality, the ocean liner's bells go off, signaling to the workers that they must return to the engine room. In this way, O'Neill subtly shows the audience that, despite what Yank might think about his personal agency and ability to

exist self-sufficiently, he is actually at the mercy of his employers—a fact that shows just how far "car[ing] for nobody" but himself has gotten him.

Scene Two Quotes

The impression to be conveyed by this scene is one of the beautiful, vivid life of the sea all about—sunshine on the deck in a great flood, the fresh sea wind blowing across it. In the midst of this, these two incongruous, artificial figures, inert and disharmonious, the elder like a gray lump of dough touched up with rouge, the younger looking as if the vitality of her stock had been sapped before she was conceived, so that she is the expression not of its life energy but merely of the artificialities that energy had won for itself in the spending.

Related Characters: Mildred's Aunt, Mildred Douglas

Related Themes:

Page Number: 154

Explanation and Analysis

This passage appears at the beginning of Scene Two, when O'Neill outlines what the stage should look like as Mildred and her aunt sit on the deck of the ocean liner and look out over the water. Contrasting the "vivid life of the sea" with the "incongruous, artificial" nature of these two women, he emphasizes the ways in which their wealth has removed them from the living world, such that they have trouble experiencing beauty with any kind of real "energy" or vitality. Indeed, Mildred's aunt is well-dressed, but she resembles "a gray lump of dough touched up with rouge," a description suggesting that not even expensive clothing or makeup can disguise her "arificialit[y]." Similarly, Mildred herself is young but has none of "the vitality" that one might expect someone like her to have. When O'Neill references her "stock," he refers to the fact that she comes from a long line of wealthy people who have made fortunes forging steel. In turn, he intimates that innovation and progress don't necessarily bring happiness, since her lavish lifestyle has done nothing to give her a sense of contentment or "life energy."

After exhausting the morbid thrills of social service work on New York's East Side—how they must have hated you, by the way, the poor that you made so much poorer in their own eyes!—you are now bent on making your slumming international.

Related Characters: Mildred's Aunt (speaker), Mildred Douglas

Related Themes:

Page Number: 155

Explanation and Analysis

Mildred's aunt says this to her in a conversation about the fact that Mildred is on her way to London, where she plans to volunteer to help poor people in the Whitechapel district. Her aunt finds her "social service work" appalling, suggesting that Mildred only engages in such activities because she wants the "morbid thrill" of seeing how "the other half lives." Despite the old woman's bitterness, it's worth pointing out that she is—in many regards—correct to point out the grotesquerie of Mildred's supposedly philanthropic deeds. After all, seeing "how the other half lives" (which is what Mildred says she wants to do) does nothing to actually *help* those in need. Rather, it is a voyeuristic act predicated on her desire to witness a way of life with which she's unfamiliar. As such, she subjects people like Yank and his fellow stokers to her outsider's gaze, and this makes them feel even "poorer."

Please do not mock at my attempts to discover how the other half lives. Give me credit for some sort of groping sincerity in that at least. I would like to help them. I would like to be some use in the world. Is it my fault I don't know how? I would like to be sincere, to touch life somewhere. (*with weary bitterness*) But I'm afraid I have neither the vitality nor integrity. All that was burnt out in our stock before I was born. Grandfather's blast furnaces, flaming to the sky, melting steel, making millions—then father keeping those home fires burning, making more millions—and little me at the tail-end of it all. I'm a waste product of the Bessemer process—like the millions. Or rather, I inherit the acquired trait of the byproduct, wealth, but none of the energy, none of the strength of the steel that made it.

Related Characters: Mildred Douglas (speaker), Mildred's Aunt

Related Themes:

Page Number: 156

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Mildred defends herself against her aunt's cynicism. Arguing that she wants to gain a sense of

"sincerity" by seeing "how the other half lives," she tells her aunt that her "social service" efforts are valid because she genuinely wants to be "some use in the world." However, she admits that she doesn't "know how" to do this, since she has never had to live life for herself. Indeed, the "millions" that her family has made by producing steel has made her into a "waste product," somebody who has "none of the energy" that originally inspired her grandfather to make steel in the first place. As such, she—and, in turn, O'Neill—intimates that wealth and economic progress don't necessarily lead to happiness.

Although Mildred is right to think that wealth doesn't create happiness, it's worth pointing out that her motives for volunteering amongst the poor are still flawed. Indeed, she has romanticized the idea of helping people like Yank and Paddy because she wants to be able to say she's been "some use in the world." This is why she says, "Give me credit for some sort of groping sincerity"; she wants *credit* for her philanthropy. By saying this, she reveals the fact that her true motivations have more to do with her appearance than any kind of genuinely altruistic impulse.

Scene Three Quotes

❝ There is a tumult of noise—the brazen clang of the furnace doors as they are flung open or slammed shut, the grating, teeth-gritting grind of steel against steel, of crunching coal. This clash of sounds stuns one's ears with its rending dissonance. But there is order in it, rhythm, a mechanical regulated recurrence, a tempo. And rising above all, making the air hum with the quiver of liberated energy, the roar of leaping flames in the furnaces, the monotonous throbbing beat of the engines.

Related Characters: Yank

Related Themes:

Page Number: 160

Explanation and Analysis

This passage appears at the beginning of Scene Three, when O'Neill's stage note describes the stokehole. It's worth paying attention the words he uses to convey the harsh and chaotic experience of being in the engine room: "tumult," "noise," "brazen clang," "grating," "teeth-gritting grind," "clash of sounds," "dissonance." All of these words or phrases communicate a feeling of intensity and an overwhelming sense of movement. However, O'Neill then says that "there is order" in these sounds—a "rhythm" and "tempo." As such, he shows the audience how a person like Yank can get used to spending time in an environment that is otherwise unpleasant and hectic. Indeed, it is undoubtedly this lulling "rhythm" that gives Yank a sense of "order" and purpose, helping him ignore the difficulty of his existence as an under-compensated laborer.

❝ He whirls defensively with a snarling, murderous growl, crouching to spring, his lips drawn back over his teeth, his small eyes gleaming ferociously. He sees Mildred, like a white apparition in the full light from the open furnace doors. He glares into her eyes, turned to stone. As for her, during his speech she has listened, paralyzed with horror, terror, her whole personality crushed, beaten in, collapsed, by the terrific impact of this unknown, abysmal brutality, naked and shameless. As she looks at his gorilla face, as his eyes bore into hers, she utters a low, choking cry and shrinks away from him, putting both hands up before her eyes to shut out the sight of his face, to protect her own. This startles Yank to a reaction. His mouth falls open, his eyes grow bewildered.

Related Characters: Mildred Douglas, Yank

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 163

Explanation and Analysis

After shouting obscenities at an unseen engineer, Yank turns around and sees Mildred standing before him in her white dress. It's important to note the way that O'Neill describes Yank in this moment, as he uses language that accentuates Yank's animalistic qualities. For instance, instead of writing that Yank grits his teeth, he says his "lips" are "drawn back over his teeth." There is something unhuman about this description, and O'Neill takes this one step further when he says that Yank's eyes are "small" and "gleaming ferociously." Zeroing in so specifically on Yank's facial features, O'Neill manages to portray him as beastly and severe. This, it seems, is exactly how Mildred views him. Conversely, Mildred appears to Yank as a "white apparition." Indeed, he doesn't even know what he's looking at when he sets his eyes upon Mildred, and this emphasizes the extent to which she is out of place in the stokehole. In fact, this is a scene in which neither Mildred nor Yank know what to make of one another. Representatives of their social classes, each one can hardly contextualize the other, ultimately

creating a rift that underlines the separation between the ultra-wealthy and the ultra-poor.

Scene Four Quotes

❝ Hinsultin' us, the bloody cow! And them bloody engineers! What right 'as they got to be exhibitin' us 's if we was bleedin' monkeys in a menagerie? Did we sign for hinsults to our dignity as 'onest workers? Is that in the ship's articles? You kin bloody well bet it ain't! But I knows why they done it. I arsked a deck steward 'o she was and 'e told me. 'Er old man's a bleedin' millionaire, a bloody Capitalist! 'E's got enuf bloody gold to sink this bleedin' ship! 'E makes arf the bloody steel in the world! 'E owns this bloody boat! And you and me, Comrades, we're 'is slaves! And the skipper and mates and engineers, they're 'is slaves! And she's 'is bloody daughter and we're all 'er slaves, too! And she gives 'er orders as 'ow she wants to see the bloody animals below decks and down they takes 'er!

Related Characters: Long (speaker), Yank, Mildred Douglas

Related Themes:

Page Number: 167

Explanation and Analysis

Long says this to his fellow stokers after Mildred comes down to the stokehole and insults Yank by calling him a "filthy beast." Unsurprisingly given his commitment to communism, he emphasizes the fact that Mildred's father is a "bloody Capitalist" who makes millions of dollars, produces most to the steel in the world, and owns the ocean liner. According to Long, Mildred's visit is a perfect representation of the way the bourgeoisie view the proletariat: as "bloody animals" that rich people can gawk at whenever they want. After all, he argues, he and his coworkers are "slaves" to Mildred's father. Nonetheless, he upholds that they have "dignity" as honest workers. This assertion suggests that Long is perhaps involved in some kind of labor union, since unions fight to protect the rights of workers who otherwise might have their "dignity" ridiculed by people like Mildred, who are content to stare at them as if they're "monkeys in a menagerie."

❝ And there she was standing behind us, and the Second pointing at us like a man you'd hear in a circus would be saying: In this cage is a queerer kind of baboon than ever you'd find in darkest Africy. We roast them in their own sweat—and be damned if you won't hear some of thim saying they like it! (*He glances scornfully at Yank.*)

[...]

'Twas love at first sight, divil a doubt of it! If you'd seen the endearin' look on her pale mug when she shriveled away with her hands over her eyes to shut out the sight of him! Sure, 'twas as if she'd seen a great hairy ape escaped from the Zoo!

Related Characters: Paddy (speaker), Second Engineer, Yank, Mildred Douglas

Related Themes:

Page Number: 168

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Paddy recounts what it was like to watch Mildred react to seeing Yank for the first time. This is an important moment, as Paddy suggests that Mildred looked at Yank as if he were a caged "ape." Of course, O'Neill has already compared Yank and his peers to monkeys several times, but this is the first time that someone suggests that people outside the stokehole might think of Yank in this way. Indeed, Paddy pretends to be a tour guide at a zoo, pointing out Yank and suggesting that he "like[s]" being "roasted" in his "own sweat"—a comment that is unfortunately rather true, since Yank has already demonstrated just how much he likes to revel in his identity as a hardworking stoker, despite the fact that this requires him to play into his own exploitation and oppression.

What's more, Paddy teases Yank by suggesting that Mildred fell in love with him "at first sight." This, it seems, is only a way of making Yank feel even more uncomfortable, perhaps because Paddy wants to shake him out of the complacent mindset he has adopted regarding his existence as a stoker. However, it's also possible that Paddy has picked up on the fact that Mildred has romanticized the idea of people like Yank. Under this interpretation, he says that Mildred had an "endearin[g] look" on her face even as she "shriveled away" from Yank, suggesting that—despite her abject horror—this is exactly the kind of experience she wanted to have. Having told her aunt she wants to be "sincere" and wants to experience life outside the confines of her protected, wealthy environment, it makes sense that she might relish her moment of terror in the stokehole. After all, this moment of shock is perhaps the only time she has ever truly felt the "vitality" of life.

Scene Five Quotes

Here the adornments of extreme wealth are tantalizingly displayed. The jeweler's window is gaudy with glittering diamonds, emeralds, rubies, pearls, etc., fashioned in ornate tiaras, crowns, necklaces, collars, etc. From each piece hangs an enormous tag from which a dollar sign and numerals in intermittent electric lights wink out the incredible prices. The same in the furrier's. Rich furs of all varieties hang there bathed in a downpour of artificial light. The general effect is of a background of magnificence cheapened and made grotesque by commercialism, a background in tawdry disharmony with the clear light and sunshine on the street itself.

Related Characters: Long, Yank

Related Themes:

Page Number: 173

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, O'Neill describes the storefronts on Fifth Avenue, where Long takes Yank in an attempt to "awaken" his "clarss consciousness." The way O'Neill writes about these stores is worth noting, for he uses very direct language to communicate his distaste for "commercialism," calling the stores "grotesque" despite their seeming "magnificence." Indeed, O'Neill wants to juxtapose Yank's filthy clothes with "glittering diamonds, emeralds, rubies," and "pearls." These items, he goes out of his way to mention, are selling for "incredible prices"—prices Yank would never be able to afford. Similarly, the furrier's window displays "furs of all varieties" in a glow of "artificial light." This is an interesting description, considering that fur coats are made of natural materials. The fact that they are presented in this "artificial" way, then, implies that O'Neill sees "commercialism" as something that distorts the world, ultimately turning things into false representations of "magnificence."

LONG—(*as disgusted as he dares to be*) Ain't that why I brought yer up 'ere—to show yer? Yer been actin' an' talkin' 's if it was all a bleedin' personal matter between yer and that bloody cow. I wants to convince yer she was on'y a representative of 'er clarss. I wants to awaken yer bloody clarss consciousness. Then yer'll see it's 'er clarss yer've got to fight, not 'er alone. There's a 'ole mob of 'em like 'er, Gawd blind 'em!

YANK—(*spitting on his hands—belligerently*) De more de merrier when I gits started. Bring on de gang!

Related Characters: Long (speaker), Mildred Douglas, Yank

Related Themes:

Page Number: 175

Explanation and Analysis

Walking along Fifth Avenue, Long tries to get Yank to recognize the broader structures of power that oppress him. He urges his friend to stop thinking about his vendetta against Mildred as a personal affair, insisting that she's only "a representative" of her class. Whereas Yank has trouble seeing beyond the mere fact that Mildred has insulted his pride, Long understands that what happened between them in the stokehole was simply a product of the capitalist system in which they exist. This is why he wants to "awaken" Yank's "clarss consciousness," so that his friend can finally recognize the greater engines of his own oppression. To this end, he points out the people passing them on the street, trying to emphasize just how many wealthy people there are in the world who are exactly like Mildred. Unfortunately, though, Yank fails to see his point, instead focusing on his violent impulses and saying that he'd be happy to beat up anyone who might want to fight him. "De more de merrier when I gets started," he says, proving that he's still fixated on exacting a very small and petty form of revenge instead of thinking about how he might bring about a longer lasting form of change.

LONG—(*excitedly*) Church is out. 'Ere they come, the bleedin' swine. (*after a glance at Yank's face—uneasily*) Easy goes, Comrade. Keep yer bloomin' temper. Remember force defeats itself. It ain't our weapon. We must impress our demands through peaceful means—the votes of the on-marching proletarians of the bloody world!

YANK—(*with abysmal contempt*) Votes, hell! Votes is a joke, see. Votes for women! Let dem do it!

Related Characters: Long, Yank

Related Themes:

Page Number: 176

Explanation and Analysis

As wealthy people stream out of church and onto the sidewalks of Fifth Avenue, Long tries to convince Yank that Mildred is only a "representative" of her class. However, he quickly becomes nervous when he sees the murderous look

on Yank's face, and so he says, "Easy goes, Comrade. Keep yer bloomin' temper. Remember force defeats itself." This is an important idea—one that Yank fails to internalize. Indeed, Yank is somebody who often insists that he *is* "force" itself, which is why he is so eager to prove himself in aggressive and violent ways. This, however, is an ineffective way of standing up against oppression. Long upholds that Yank and his fellow stokers should "impress [their] demands through peaceful means" instead of using brute "force," which only invites more trouble. Unfortunately, Yank is too devoted to the idea of violence and power to agree with Long's wholistic vision of political change. Indeed, his stereotypically masculine aggression is evident when he says that voting is "for women," a statement that once again illustrates his lack of intelligence.

❝ Many police whistles shrill out on the instant and a whole platoon of policemen rush in on Yank from all sides. He tries to fight but is clubbed to the pavement and fallen upon. The crowd at the window have not moved or noticed this disturbance. The clanging gong of the patrol wagon approaches with a clamoring din.

Related Characters: Yank

Related Themes:

Page Number: 180

Explanation and Analysis

After Long leaves Fifth Avenue because he's afraid Yank will get him in trouble, Yank starts trying to pick fights with the people passing him on the sidewalk. However, nobody pays attention to him, so he starts attempting to pull a lamppost out of the ground. As he does this, a rich gentleman runs into him while trying to catch a bus, and Yank takes this opportunity punch him in the face. Despite the tremendous force of his hit, though, the gentleman hardly reacts. He even *apologizes* for bumping into Yank in the first place, though he goes on to say that Yank has made him miss his bus. Because of this, he calls out for the police, who descend upon Yank in great numbers, a "whole platoon" "rush[ing] in on" him "from all sides."

The fact that the police officers instantly start "clubb[ing]" Yank without asking what has happened is an indication that Yank is not welcome in this environment, where he's punished not for his violent behavior, but simply for making a wealthy man miss his bus. Furthermore, audience members surely note in this moment that the people on the street have not even stopped to watch the police officers bludgeon Yank. Instead, they remain at the shop windows, admiring the goods—yet another sign that the commercialism of oppressive capitalist systems distorts the world and blinds people to what's going on around them.

Scene Six Quotes

❝ "They plot with fire in one hand and dynamite in the other. They stop not before murder to gain their ends, nor at the outraging of defenseless womanhood. They would tear down society, put the lowest scum in the seats of the mighty, turn Almighty God's revealed plan for the world topsy-turvy, and make of our sweet and lovely civilization a shambles, a desolation where man, God's masterpiece, would soon degenerate back to the ape!"

Related Characters: The Prisoner, Yank

Related Themes:

Page Number: 186

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, a prisoner in the cell next to Yank quotes from a newspaper article. This article is the printed version of a speech a senator recently gave to his fellow politicians regarding the supposed dangers of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) labor union. Having heard that Yank wants to harm Mildred's father, who is president of Nazareth Steel, this prisoner reads this article to Yank, correctly assuming it will inspire him to join the IWW. In this moment, the senator who delivered the speech frames the IWW not as an organization of honest laborers who want to effect political change through legitimate means, but as a rag-tag group of miscreants who "plot with fire in one hand and dynamite in the other." Going on, the senator suggests that the IWW members want to "tear down society." When he says that these men want to "put the lowest scum in the seats of the mighty," the audience begins to understand why wealthy people like this senator are so alarmed by growing strength of the IWW: they're afraid they will lose their positions of power, which enable them to exploit the working class.

Scene Seven Quotes

SECRETARY—President of the Steel Trust, you mean? Do you want to assassinate him?

YANK—Naw, dat don't get yuh nothin'. I mean blow up de factory, de woiks, where he makes de steel. Dat's what I'm after—to blow up de steel, knock all de steel in de woild up to de moon. Dat'll fix tings! (*eagerly, with a touch of bravado*) I'll do it by me lonesome! I'll show yuh! Tell me where his woiks is, how to git there, all de dope. Gimme de stuff, de old butter—and watch me do de rest! Watch de smoke and see it move! I don't give a damn if dey nab me—long as it's done! I'll soive life for it—and give 'em de laugh! (*half to himself*) And I'll write her a letter and tell her de hairy ape done it. Dat'll square tings.

Related Characters: Mildred Douglas, The IWW Secretary, Yank

Related Themes:

Page Number: 192

Explanation and Analysis

This conversation between the IWW secretary and Yank takes place when Yank tries to join the Industrial Workers of the World. Sensing that Yank doesn't understand the point of the organization, the secretary asks him what he wants to do once he joins, and Yank admits he wants to harm Mildred's father. When the secretary asks if he wants to "assassinate" this man, Yank says, "Naw, dat don't get yuh nothin'." This is an interesting thing to say, as it suggests that Yank has internalized some of Long's ideas. Indeed, Long—and, to a certain extent, Paddy—has already tried to impress upon Yank that the best way to take revenge on Mildred is to stop thinking of the matter as personal. Rather than harming Mildred, Long urges Yank to unite with his fellow proletarians to challenge the capitalist class in a more effective manner. By saying that assassinating Mildred's father wouldn't "get yuh nothin'," then, Yank proves that he finally understands that small, personal acts of vengeance won't bring about change.

Despite this newfound understanding of the way to fight oppression, though, Yank quickly demonstrates that he still doesn't fully grasp the fact that "force defeats itself." He does this by saying that he wants to "blow up" Mildred's father's factory, which he thinks would "fix" everything. What's more, his desire to fight back against the capitalist class is still quite personal, as made clear by his assertion that he will "write [Mildred] a letter" after attacking the steel factory so that she knows he was the one who did it. As such, it becomes clear that he's still hell-bent on taking his revenge in a very personal way.

So dem boids don't tink I belong, neider. Aw to hell wit 'em! Dey're in de wrong pew—de same old bull—soapboxes and Salvation Army—no guts! Cut out an hour offen de job a day and make me happy! Gimme a dollar more a day and make me happy! Gimme a dollar more a day and make me happy! Tree square a day, and cauliflowers in de front yard—ekal rights—a woman and kids—a lousy vote—and I'm all fixed for Jesus, huh? Aw, hell! What does dat get yuh? Dis ting's in your inside, but it ain't your belly. Feedin' your face—sinkers and coffee—dat don't touch it. It's way down—at de bottom. Yuh can't grab it, and yuh can't stop it. It moves, and everything moves. It stops and de whole woild stops. Dat's me now—I don't tick, see?—I'm a busted Ingersoll, dat's what. Steel was me, and I owned de woild. Now I ain't steel, and de woild owns me. Aw, hell! I can't see—it's all dark, get me? It's all wrong!

Related Characters: Yank (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 193

Explanation and Analysis

Yank speaks these words after he's thrown out of the Industrial Workers of the World office. Having tried to join the organization, he discovers that he doesn't "belong" in this context, and this makes him feel as if no one understands him. Worse, he himself doesn't understand other people, as evidenced by his failure to grasp why the IWW members want what they want. "Cut out an hour offen de job a day and make me happy!" he says, mocking the idea that such small gestures would ever satisfy him. Indeed, Yank is uninterested in "ekal rights," upholding that the nature of his discontent is something deep "inside" of him, something that can't be "touch[ed]" or remedied by better pay or fairer working conditions. By expressing these ideas, he ventures into existential despair. Simply put, he's capable of recognizing his own unhappiness but incapable of articulating what, exactly, is causing it. Too unintelligent to pinpoint the nature of his suffering, then, he feels like a broken watch—a "busted Ingersoll"—and believes that this sense of aimlessness has to do with the fact that he no longer believes he's "steel." As such, his agony arises out of his decision to leave the stokehole, where he felt he had a purpose. Whereas at the beginning of the play he felt as powerful as "steel," now he's convinced that the world "owns" him, and this powerlessness confuses him, making him feel as if everything is "wrong."

Scene Eight Quotes

❝ On'y yuh're lucky, see? Yuh don't belong wit' em and yuh know it. But me, I belong wit 'em—but I don't, see? Dey don't belong wit me, dat's what. Get me? Tinkin' is hard—(*He passes one hand across his forehead with a painful gesture. The gorilla growls impatiently. Yank goes on gropingly.*) It's dis way, what I'm drivin' at. Youse can sit and dope dream in de past, green woods, de jungle and de rest of it. Den yuh belong and dey don't. Den yuh kin laugh at 'em, see? Yuh're de champ of de woild. But me—I ain't got no past to tink in, nor nothin' dat's comin', on'y what's now—and dat don't belong. Sure, you're de best off! Yuh a bluff at talkin' and tinkin'—a'most git away wit it—a'most!—and dat's where de joker comes in.

Related Characters: Yank (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 196

Explanation and Analysis

In this moment, Yank speaks to a gorilla in the zoo as if they are the same as one another. Having been jailed by the wealthy and rejected by the Industrial Workers of the World, he feels like he doesn't "belong" anywhere, which is why he comes to the zoo and tries to fit in with the monkeys. As he speaks to this gorilla, he expresses his envy that the animal doesn't have to go through the pretenses of blending into human society. "Yuh don't belong wit' em and yuh know it," he says, lamenting the fact that he himself *technically* "belong[s]" with humans but doesn't feel like anyone truly accepts or understands him. As he says this, it becomes clear that he can't determine whether it's his fault or society's fault that he doesn't fit in, but this line of inquiry proves too complex for him. "Tinkin' is hard," he says, giving up on trying to understand the nature of his isolation.

Going on, Yank says that the gorilla is lucky because he can think about his past and remember the joy of living the ideal life. This sentiment recalls Paddy's earlier monologue, in which the old Irishman waxed poetic about the life he led before working on the ocean liner. However, Yank has worked in the stokehole since he was very young, meaning that he doesn't know any other way of life. This is why he feels so untethered: he has left behind the only environment in which he's ever felt at home. Cut off from the stokehole, he's forced to "talk" and "tink" like everyone else in the outside world, but he's incapable of doing this because of his lacking intelligence. Whereas in the stokehole he could make up for his stupidity with brute strength, here his aggression only lands him in jail. It is for this reason that he envies the gorilla's ability to "bluff at talkin' and tinkin'" without being held responsible for his actions. In other words, Yank wishes he too were an animal so that he wouldn't have to pretend to fit into a society for which he's completely unfit.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

SCENE ONE

A cacophony of sound swirls through the firemen's forecastle of an ocean liner making its way from New York City to England. Inside the forecastle there is a horde of laborers, all of whom work below deck as stokers (people who shovel coal into furnaces to power steam engines). The room they occupy is full of bunks and steel, with a ceiling so low that the men are forced to hunch over—a position that "accentuates the natural stooping posture which shoveling coal and the resultant over-development of back and shoulder muscles have given them." In fact, these men look like "Neanderthal[s]," their chests hairy, their arms enormous and strong, their brows low, and their eyes "small, fierce," and "resentful." As the stokers shout and sing and grunt, Yank sits by himself. He is stronger than his coworkers, who see him as "their most highly developed individual."

Eugene O'Neill's description of the forecastle—the part of a ship where the crew lives—calls attention to the primal and brutish qualities of life as a stoker. Indeed, these men are loud and strong, and the fact that they resemble "Neanderthals" implies a certain lack of intelligence. As such, O'Neill prepares his audience to view the stokers as lacking in nuance, ultimately portraying the laborers as primarily physical beings. This initial portrayal is worth remembering, as The Hairy Ape *is largely about the ways in which these men are treated not like humans, but as mere animals required to make the ocean liner run efficiently.*

The stokers yell about drinking and aggressively challenge one another to fights, but Yank tells them to "Choke off dat noise," demanding that somebody bring him a bottle of liquor. With this, multiple men rush forward to offer alcohol. The men then encourage an "old, wizened Irishman" named Paddy to sing. Paddy has an "extremely monkey-like" face and is exceedingly drunk, though the Irishman insists that he'll always be able to sing and promptly launches into an old sailor's song. "Aw hell!" Yank shouts. "Nix on dat old sailing ship stuff! All dat bull's dead, see? And you're dead, too, yuh damned old Harp, on'y yuh don't know it. Take it easy, see. Give us a rest. Nix on de loud noise. Can't youse see I'm tryin' to t'ink?" In response, the group of stokers laugh loudly, repeating the word, "Think!" and telling Yank not to strain himself.

Yank's scorn for Paddy's "old sailing ship" attitude signals his belief in forward momentum and progress. For Yank, thinking about the past only holds a person back, which is why he calls Paddy "dead." What's more, it's worth noting how surprised his fellow stokers are when he tells them he's trying to "think," a reaction that suggests intellectual thought is not highly valued in the challenging physical world of the stokehole, where strength and power are what gain a person respect.

As another stoker launches into an old song about a loved one waiting for him at home, Yank cuts him off, telling him to shut up and criticizing him for romanticizing the idea of home. "Home?" he asks. "Home, hell! I'll make a home for yuh! I'll knock yuh dead. Home! T'hell wit home! Where d'yuh get dat tripe? Dis is home, see?" Yank goes on to say that he ran away from his home when he was only a child because his father used to beat him. "But yuh can bet your shoit no one ain't never licked me since!" he declares. "Wanter try it, any of youse?"

Yank responds to his coworker by suddenly becoming violent, a reaction that suggests he uses aggression to avoid thinking about deep or emotional ideas like "home" or the past. Indeed, he asks if any of his peers want to fight him, as if he must prove his physical prowess. What's more, he reveals his dedication to his identity as a stoker, saying that the engine room is his "home," despite the fact that its conditions are undoubtedly terrible.

Agreeing with Yank's idea of the ship as a home, a stoker named Long jumps up and drunkenly says, "Listen 'ere, Comrades! Yank 'ere is right. 'E says this 'ere stinkin' ship is our 'ome. And 'e says as 'ome is 'ell. And 'e's right! This is 'ell. We lives in 'ell,—Comrades—and right enough we'll die in it." Shouting furiously, Long points out that it's not the stokers' fault that they have to live in such misery. "We wasn't born this rotten way," he says, adding that men are born free and equal in the Bible but the "lazy, bloated swine" in the first cabin have forced them down. Now, they're only "slaves in the bowels of a bloody ship, sweatin', burnin' up, eatin' coal dust!" They aren't to blame for their situation instead, it's "the damned Capitalist clarss!"

In this moment, Long completely misinterprets what Yank has said about the stokehole being "home." Having heard Yank say, "Home, hell!", he assumes that Yank is calling the engine room hellish, when in reality Yank believes that he and his fellow stokers belong in the stokehole. Nonetheless, he makes a good point regarding the fact that their poor working conditions are the result of capitalist exploitation. Emphasizing the disparity between the capitalist class (the bourgeoisie) and the lower class (the proletariat), he tries to make his coworkers see that they have become "wage slaves" despite the fact that they do the important work of shoveling the very "coal" that makes the ocean liner run.

Along with his fellow stokers, Yank tells Long to be quiet, saying that he'll "knock" him down if he doesn't shut up. "De Bible, huh?" he says. "De Cap'tlist class, huh? Aw nix on dat Salvation Army-Socialist bull." He tells Long that he's "listened to lots of guys" like him before and that he has determined they're all "wrong" and cowardly (or "yellow") to boot. He insists that they're better men than "dem slobs in de foist cabin," adding that a single stoker could easily "clean up de whole mob wit one mitt." One first cabin man wouldn't last one watch in the stokehole, he continues; "Dey'd carry him off on a stretcher." Concluding, he says, "We belong and dey don't."

Yank is unable to acknowledge the nature of his own oppression. Instead of stopping to consider what Long has said about the exploitative measures of the capitalist class, he focuses on his prideful identity as a stoker, bragging that he is braver and stronger than the rich people who live above deck. What's more, he boasts that he could "clean up" an entire "mob" of wealthy people with just one hand, once again calling upon his violent and aggressive predilections instead of engaging in intellectual thought. Furthermore, his idea that he "belong[s]" in the stokehole is exactly why he's unable to identify the ways in which he's being treated unfairly.

Having listened to Yank's ideas about "belonging" in the stokehole, Paddy says that if they're so important to the ship, then "that Almighty God have pity on us!" He wishes "to be back in the fine days of [his] youth," when beautiful ships were manned by "fine strong men […] men that was sons of the sea as if 'twas the mother that bore them." Reminiscing about his days before working on the ocean liner, Paddy waxes poetic about toiling beneath the sun with the wind in his face and clean men all around him, insisting that back then he and his mates were "free men." "Work—aye, hard work—but who'd mind that at all?" he says. "Sure, you worked under the sky and 'twas work wid skill and daring to it."

Unlike Yank, Paddy has no qualms about thinking nostalgically about the past. Indeed, he isn't concerned with the idea of progress, instead mourning the days before the effects of industrialization touched his life, when he was able to work outside in a capacity that was not only enjoyable, but rewarding, too. Unfortunately, he now works under dismal conditions that require brute strength but no skill, rendering the job both unfulfilling and physically taxing.

As he speaks, Paddy sees he isn't getting through to Yank. "'Twas them days a ship was part of the sea," he says, "and a man was part of a ship, and the sea joined all together and made it one. Is it one wid this you'd be, Yank—black smoke from the funnels smudging the sea, smudging the decks—the bloody engines pounding and throbbing and shaking—wid divil a sight of sun or a breath of clean air—choking our lungs wid coal dust—breaking our backs and hearts in the hell of the stokehole—feeding the bloody furnace—feeding our lives along wid the coal, I'm thinking—caged in by steel from a sight of the sky like bloody apes in the Zoo!" Laughing at this idea, Paddy asks if Yank wants to be a "flesh and blood wheel of the engines."

When Paddy asks Yank if he wants to be "one" with the "black smoke from the funnels" and the "bloody engines pounding and throbbing and shaking," he suggests that working as a stoker is an all-consuming job, one that "break[s]" a person's "back" and requires him to "feed" his entire life into the furnaces. Indeed, he frames this kind of work as so demanding that it becomes oppressive, intimating that such thankless toiling turns the workers into "apes." When he asks Yank if he wants to be a "flesh and blood wheel of the engines," he references the fact that the capitalist class depends upon people like him to operate the machinery that makes them rich, requiring proletarians like Yank and Paddy to sacrifice their livelihood without ever truly benefitting from their efforts.

Paddy's words have no effect on Yank, and so he resignedly says that he hopes a large wave will take him overboard someday soon. For a moment, Yank comes at him as if to hurt him, but then he stops and admits that Paddy is "aw right," suggesting that the old Irishman has simply grown "too old" to work in the stokehole. Turning to the other stokers, Yank says, "I belong and he don't. He's dead but I'm livin'. Listen to me! Sure I'm part of de engines! Why de hell not! Dey move, don't dey? Dey're speed, ain't dey! Dey smash trou, don't dey? Twenty-five knots a hour! Dat's goin' some! Dat's new stuff! Dat belongs! But him, he's too old." Going on, he insists that he is the lifeblood of the engine room, saying that he's what makes everything move.

Once again, Yank demonstrates his devotion to the notion of progress and forward momentum. In this moment, he uses this obsession to discount Long's ideas about exploitation and happiness, which he would otherwise be forced to admit are troubling. This is perhaps why his first instinct is to become violent with Paddy: before deciding to ignore Paddy based on the fact that he is "too old," he has no way of denying his own oppression, and so he lashes out. Once he reasserts his commitment to "new stuff," though, he finds himself capable of calling Paddy "aw right." As such, both Yank's aggressive tendencies and his refusal to acknowledge his exploitative circumstances appear to be nothing more than defense mechanisms that he employs in order to protect himself from the harsh realities of his life.

"Hell in de stokehole?" Yank asks. "Sure! It takes a man to work in hell. Hell, sure, dat's my fav'rite climate. I eat it up! I git fat on it! It's me makes it hot! It's me makes it roar! It's me makes it move!" Going on, he says that people like him are what make engines run, and engines are what make the world run, meaning that he himself is what keeps everything moving forward. "I'm de end! I'm de start! I start somep'n and de woild moves!" he brags. "It—dat's me! de new dat's moiderin' de old! I'm de ting in coal dat makes in boin; I'm steam and oil for de engines." He even says that he's "steel," which he claims is what "stands for de whole ting."

In this brief monologue, Yank reasserts his commitment to progress, clearly deriving a sense of power from the idea of forward movement. This is evident by the fact that he says he's the thing that makes the world "move." As such, the audience begins to understand why he's so invested in his identity as a stoker. Indeed, whereas Paddy dislikes life in the stokehole because the hellish conditions leave him feeling unfulfilled, Yank squeezes a sense of purpose out of this dismal existence, ultimately feeling rewarded by his job.

Yank scoffs at the idea that he and his fellow stokers are "slaves." Instead, he maintains that they "run de whole woiks." As he speaks, Paddy sips begrudgingly from the bottle, as if trying to drink himself into a stupor. As Yank finishes his speech, Paddy starts to sing an old folk song called "Miller of Dee," belting out: "I care for nobody, no, not I, / And nobody cares for me." Hearing this, Yank says, "Now yuh're getting' wise to somep'n. Care for nobody, dat's de dope! To hell wit 'em all! And nix on nobody else carin'. I kin care for myself, get me!"

Although Paddy sings "Miller of Dee" ironically, Yank fails to see that his coworker is making fun of his individualistic attitude. By singing this song, Paddy emphasizes the extent to which Yank has internalized the competitive spirit of capitalism. Indeed, Yank doesn't "care" about anyone, and this is the exact kind of attitude that keeps workers like him from uniting against exploitative employers. As such, Yank plays into the mechanisms of his own oppression, taking pride in the kind of attitude that makes it easier for his bosses to exploit his labor in the first place.

At this point, bells in the forecastle ring, signaling to the stokers that it's time for them to return to the engine room. However, Paddy refuses to leave, saying that he'll stay sitting in the forecastle "drinking" and "thinking" and "dreaming dreams." On his way out, Yank turns around and says, "Tinkin' and dreamin', what'll that get yuh? What's tinkin' got to do wit it? We move, don't we? Speed, ain't it?"

Despite the fact that Yank has already expressed a desire to "think," he now offers Paddy the same anti-intellectual worldview that his fellow stokers forced upon him when he told them he was trying to work something out in his head. In this way, O'Neill shows the audience how hard it is for the intellect to triumph in hostile environments that only promote notions of power and strength.

SCENE TWO

Two days later, Mildred Douglas—the wealthy daughter of a steel tycoon—sits above deck with her aunt. She is "slender" and "delicate" with "a pale, pretty face marred by a self-conscious expression of disdainful superiority." In line with this, she is "nervous and discontented, bored by her own anemia." Her aunt, on the other hand, is "pompous and proud," though she sits like a "gray lump of dough touched up with rouge" while Mildred herself looks like "the vitality of her stock [was] sapped before she was conceived, so that she is the expression not of its life energy but merely of the artificialities that energy ha[s] won for itself in the spending."

O'Neill's physical descriptions of both Mildred and her aunt suggest that their wealthy, sedentary lifestyles have taken a toll on their overall physical wellbeing and happiness. Indeed, Mildred's aunt tries to compensate for her lack of life-force by dressing in a "pompous and proud" manner, though there's no hiding the fact that she looks like a "gray lump of dough." Similarly, Mildred looks as if she has no "vitality." What's more, O'Neill suggests that this is a direct result of her wealth, since her "life energy" has been exhausted by the "artificialities" that have come as a result of her family's good economic fortune. In this moment, then, he intimates that growth and economic progress do not necessarily lead to happiness.

Looking out over the ocean, Mildred comments on the "black smoke" coming from the ocean liner, suggesting that it looks "beautiful" as it "swirls back against the sky." Her aunt, however, says that she "dislikes smoke of any kind." As the two women argue with one another, it becomes clear that they aren't on good terms—a notion made all the more apparent when Mildred says, "I detest you, Aunt. Do you know what you remind me of? Of a cold pork pudding against a background of linoleum table cloth in the kitchen of a—but the possibilities are wearisome." Her aunt hardly pays attention to this insult, suggesting that they try to make a "truce" since she has to accompany Mildred to England as her chaperone.

Mildred and her aunt are clearly unhappy with their lives, despite the fact that they are wealthy and have seemingly everything a person could ask for. Interestingly enough, this general discontent works its way into their relationship, so that they turn their scorn on one another as a way of expressing their overall unhappiness. With nothing to do, it seems, they feel the need to insult one another as a way of distracting themselves from their own everyday ennui.

Mildred's aunt criticizes her for seeking "morbid thrills" by working with the poor. "How they must have hated you, by the way," she says, "the poor that you made so much poorer in their own eyes!" Now, she says, Mildred is taking her "slumming" abroad to the London district of Whitechapel. "Please do not mock at my attempts to discover how the other half lives," Mildred says. "Give me credit for some sort of groping sincerity in that at least. I would like to help them. I would like to be some use in the world. Is it my fault I don't know how?"

According to Mildred's aunt, Mildred's brand of philanthropy only makes poor people feel even "poorer," since her very presence emphasizes the yawning gap between wealthy people and the working class. And although this might be true—and although Mildred's intentions are perhaps self-serving—there's no denying the fact that the desire to "be some use in the world" is a genuinely admirable one. The problem, then, isn't that Mildred wants to help the poor, but that she doesn't seem to know how to do so in any kind of meaningful way.

Going on, Mildred says that she wants to be "sincere" and that she'd like to "touch life somewhere," though she doesn't know if she'll be able to do this. "I'm afraid I have neither the vitality nor the integrity," she admits. "All that was burnt out in our stock before I was born. Grandfather's blast furnaces, flaming to the sky, melting steel, making millions—then father keeping those home fires burning, making more millions—and little me at the tail-end of it all. I'm a waste product in the Bessemer process—like the millions. Or rather, I inherit the acquired trait of the byproduct, wealth, but none of the energy, none of the strength of the steel that made it."

The Bessemer process is a method of mass-producing steel that came about in the Second Industrial Revolution, when a number of smaller inventions emerged so that companies could improve upon the innovations that came about in the original Industrial Revolution. When Mildred says that she is a "waste product" of this process, she alludes to the fact that wealth has had a negative effect on her ability to live life with "sincerity." Under this interpretation, Mildred has benefited from her family's fortune, but this has kept her from experiencing the "energy" and "vitality" of what it means to live her own life, which is why she is so obsessed with seeing how "the other half lives," an experience that she clearly hopes will help her transcend her own limited worldview.

Mildred's aunt mocks her for trying to be "sincere," saying she ought to be "artificial," since this would be more "sincere" than anything else she might do. In response, Mildred says she glad she'll soon be going down to the stokehole. Hearing this, her aunt is quite upset, refusing to believe that she'll actually go through with her idea to see "how the other half lives." Nonetheless, Mildred tells her that she convinced the captain and the chief engineer to let her go down. "Oh, they didn't want to at first," she says, "in spite of my social service credentials. They didn't seem a bit anxious that I should investigate how the other half lives and works on a ship. So I had to tell them that my father, the president of Nazareth Steel, chairman of the board of directors of this line, had told me it would be all right."

Ironically, Mildred—who wants to prove how unattached she is to her wealthy background—has called upon her high social status as a way of convincing the captain to let her visit the stokehole. As such, she makes use of the very thing she is hoping to subvert by seeing "how the other half lives": her wealth and privilege.

When the Second Engineer comes to fetch Mildred, he tries to make small talk while waiting for another engineer to accompany them into the stokehole. He says that it's nice and hot in the sun, but Mildred says, "Not hot enough for me. I don't like Nature. I was never athletic." Smiling, the engineer says, "Well, you'll find it hot enough where you're going." In response, Mildred says, "Do you mean hell?" Beside himself, the engineer forces an awkward laugh and says, "Ho-ho! No, I mean the stokehole." He then suggests that Mildred change out of her **white dress** because she's sure to rub against grease on her way down the many ladders and pathways leading to the stokehole, but Mildred refuses, saying that she has "plenty of white dresses." As Mildred follows the engineer, her aunt calls after her, calling her a "poser."

When Mildred conflates the stokehole with "hell," O'Neill reminds the audience of the conversation that Yank and his coworkers have in the play's first scene about the terrible conditions of their everyday environment. What's more, he emphasizes how unprepared Mildred is to go below deck—although she insists that she can withstand great heat, it's easy to see that she has no idea what she's about to do, as evidenced by the fact that she refuses to change her white dress. Indeed, this refusal not only underlines her naivety regarding the abysmal conditions of the stokehole, but also reveals her extremely privileged attitude, as she says that she has "plenty of white dresses" and therefore doesn't mind ruining this one.

SCENE THREE

In the stokehole, the stokers stand before the furnaces. Whenever a whistle sounds from high above—issued in the darkness by an unseen engineer—they throw open the furnace doors and are hit with the staggering heat of the coal fires. For a short interval, they throw coal by the shovelful into furnaces and then close the doors, at which point they take a small break and wait for the next whistle. Paddy—who apparently left the forecastle after all—complains about the difficult work, saying that he is "destroyed entirely," but Yank chastises him for this attitude, saying that he might as well lie down and die. At this point, the engineer's whistle sounds, and Yank urges his fellow stokers to get back to shoveling, saying, "Come on, youse guys! Git into de game! She's gittin' hungry!"

Once again, Yank is gung-ho about his job as a stoker. By suggesting that Paddy might as well be dead, he frames a person's work ethic as a sign of vitality, ultimately implying that anybody who doesn't want to contribute to the capitalistic system in which he exists is hardly alive at all.

As he shovels, Yank speaks admiringly about the power of the coal, taking pleasure in the idea that he's causing the ship to move at amazing speeds. When they finally slam the furnace doors closed for another break, Paddy once again complains, and the engineer blows the whistle after hardly any time at all. Shaking his fist into the darkness, Yank says, "Take it easy dere, you! Who d'yuh tinks runnin' dis game, me or you? When I git ready, we move. Not before!" Hearing this, his coworkers cheer him on, and he says, "He ain't got no noive. He's yellow, get me? All de engineers is yellow." Disparaging the engineers in this way, he turns around and opens the furnace doors, flinging coal into the "blazing heat." As he does so, Mildred comes down with the engineers, still clad in her perfect **white dress**.

Despite Yank's pride, it's hard to deny that he's wrong when he says that he is the one "runnin' dis game." Of course, it's true that he and his fellow stokers are integral to the entire operation of keeping the ocean liner running, but there's no changing the fact that Yank is not the boss. Since he exists as a laborer in a capitalist system, he must answer to people who rank higher than him, but he refuses to think this way, instead exalting himself as his own boss and insisting that he's the one who calls the shots even when this is blatantly untrue.

Mildred stands directly behind Yank, but he doesn't see her. Even as he stoops to get a new shovelful of coal, the engineer blows the whistle again, sending Yank into a blind rage while the rest of the men halt and stare at Mildred (which is the reason the engineer has blown the whistle in the first place). "Toin off dat whistle!" Yank howls with his shovel raised over his head and his free hand beating his chest in a "gorilla-like" fashion. Going on like this, his anger mounts and mounts, until he finally says, "I'll slam yer nose trou de back of yer head! I'll cut yer guts out for a nickel, yuh lousy boob, yuh dirty, crummy, muck-eatin' son of a—" Suddenly, he realizes that the other stokers are staring at something behind him, so he whirls around and strikes a violent pose.

It's worth noting that O'Neill describes Yank as "gorilla-like" in this moment of his anger. His aggression, it seems, makes him seem unhuman, a notion that is important to bear in mind as the play advances, especially since Yank becomes so sensitive to the ways in which people perceive him as beastly. In this moment, his anger overtakes him and throws him into a fit, one that demonstrates the extent to which he uses violence to cope with his harsh environment.

Ready to kill the engineer he thinks is behind him, Yank is astounded to see Mildred standing there in her **white dress**. She appears to him "like a white apparition in the full light from the open furnace doors." As she stares at him, she is horrified by his "gorilla face" and his "small eyes," which are "gleaming ferociously." Letting out a scream, Mildred shields her face. "Take me away!" she says, backing into the engineers. "Oh, the filthy beast!" Having said this, she faints, and the engineers rush her out of the stokehole. As she retreats, Yank becomes enraged once more, feeling himself "insulted in some unknown fashion in the very heart of his pride." "God damn yuh!" he yells, throwing his shovel at the door through which Mildred has just disappeared. As it falls to the floor, the whistle sounds again from overhead.

This is a rather complex moment. First and foremost, Mildred's reaction to seeing Yank draws upon classist prejudices, as she is revolted by his dirtiness and brazen behavior, both of which she's unused to encountering in the protected world of her wealthy life. However, it's worth noting that her fear is also somewhat legitimate, considering that Yank is screaming out violent threats with his shovel raised above his head. As such, it's easy to see why this would scare her, since this kind of aggressive behavior would frighten almost anybody.

SCENE FOUR

Back in the forecastle, Yank and his coworkers have just come back from dinner. Everyone except Yank has washed the dirt and coal dust from their faces, so that now he stands out as a "blackened, brooding figure." As the stokers yell raucously amongst themselves, Yank sits by himself in the position of **Rodin's "The Thinker,"** and his peers talk about how he didn't eat anything at dinner or wash his face. "Aw say, youse guys, Lemme alone. Can't youse see I'm tryin' to tink?" he says, at which point everybody laughs and repeats the word, "Think!" "Yes, tink!" he replies. "Tink, dat's what I said! What about it!"

Yet again, Yank's surrounding social context reveals itself to be unfit for intellectual thought. When his coworkers laugh at him for trying to "think," the audience sees just how difficult it is for him to engage in the life of the mind, since the world of the stokehole rewards aggressive, macho behavior instead of thoughtfulness.

Slyly, Paddy suggests that he knows what's bothering Yank. "'Tis aisy to see. He's fallen in love, I'm telling you," he says. Once again, the stokers laugh and repeat the word, saying, "Love!" Yank corrects Paddy by saying that he's fallen in "hate," not love. "'Twould take a wise man to tell one from the other," Paddy remarks. "But I'm telling you it's love that's in it. Sure what else but love for us poor bastes in the stokehole would be bringing a fine lady, dressed like a white quane, down a mile of ladders and steps to be havin' a look at us?" This elicits howls of anger from the stokers, and Long jumps onto a bench and says. "Hinsultin' us! Hinsultin' us, the bloody cow! And them bloody engineers! What right 'as they got to be exhibitin' us 's if we was bleedin' monkeys in a menagerie?"

Paddy's suggestion that Yank has fallen in love is a strange one that he doesn't quite explain. After all, it's rather clear that Yank isn't in love with Mildred. As such, the audience senses that Paddy is simply trying to draw Yank out of himself by aggravating him. In this way, he prepares Yank to hear what Long says about the voyeuristic nature of Mildred's visit. By destabilizing Yank's conception of what happened in the stokehole, Paddy and Long force him to admit that his existence as a laborer is not quite as glorious as he previously believed.

Inciting anger amongst his peers, Long says that he knows why Mildred came down to the stokehole. "I arsked a deck steward 'o she was and 'e told me. 'Er old man's a bleedin' millionaire, a bloody Capitalist!" Going on, Long says that Mildred's father makes half the steel in the world and owns the ocean liner. "And you and me, Comrades, we're 'is slaves!" he adds. Hardly believing his ears, Yank asks if this is true, and Long confirms that it is and asks what Yank's going to do about it. "Are we got ter swaller 'er hinsults like dogs?" he asks. "It ain't in the ship's articles. I tell yer we got a case. We kin go to law—" Interrupting Long, Yank scoffs at this idea, saying, "Hell! Law!" Echoing this sentiment, the other stokers laugh and repeat him, saying, "Law!"

Although Yank recognizes the injustice about which Long is speaking, he doesn't allow himself to fully embrace the idea that the "law" will do anything to help his situation. This is perhaps because he understands that he is not in a position of power. Ironically, though, this is exactly the mentality that ensures that he will remain *powerless in the face of his oppressors. Nonetheless, he scoffs at Long's idea, making fun of him for investing in anything other than brute force and aggression—the only ways that Yank himself knows how to respond to adversity.*

Long insists that he and his coworkers have rights as "voters and citizens," but the stokers only disparage these thoughts, so he says, "We're free and equal in the sight of God." To this, Yank says, "Hell! God!" Once again, the stokers repeat him with cynical delight until Long backs away and Paddy continues as if he hasn't been interrupted, saying, "And there she was standing behind us, and the Second pointing at us like a man you'd hear in a circus would be saying: In this cage is a queerer kind of baboon than ever you'd find in darkest Africy. We roast them in their own sweat—and be damned if you won't hear some of thim saying they like it!" Saying this, he glances accusingly at Yank and says that Mildred looked at him "as if she'd seen a great hairy ape escaped from the Zoo."

Paddy and Long both want Yank to acknowledge the sad reality of his own life, but their approaches differ when it comes to how they push him toward introspection. Long, for his part, uses political theories to awaken Yank's ability to recognize the ways in which class disparity influences his life. By contrast, Paddy's technique is more personal, as he calls upon Yank's vanity. Indeed, he suggests that Mildred looked at Yank like "a great hairy ape," knowing that this will surely enrage Yank, who is proud of his identity as a stoker and therefore prone to defending his honor.

"I'll brain her!" Yank yells, "I'll brain her yet, wait 'n' see!" He then slowly walks toward Paddy and says, "Say, is dat what she called me—a hairy ape?" In response, Paddy tells him, "She looked it at you if she didn't say the word itself," and this prompts Yank to state for all to hear that he will take his revenge on Mildred. "I'll show her I'm better'n her, if she on'y knew it," he says. "I belong and she don't, see! I move and she's dead!" He then vows to "fix" her if he sees her again, but Paddy assures him she won't return to the stokehole, so he rushes toward the door, saying he'll go above deck and "bust de face offen her." At this point, his fellow stokers pile atop him, stopping him from leaving the forecastle and getting murdered.

Yank responds to the idea that Mildred thinks he's a "hairy ape" in the exact manner one might expect from a man who is overly proud of his identity. Interestingly enough, his vehemence in this moment suggests that he doesn't have a very strong sense of self—otherwise, he wouldn't feel the need to defend his honor so aggressively. Nonetheless, he screams that he "belong[s]" and that Mildred doesn't, a strange assertion that underlines his desire to be accepted. Of course, it's true that he "belong[s]" in the stokehole—where his peers celebrate him—but he oddly wants to leave this environment in order to take revenge, thereby leaving behind the only place where he truly fits in.

SCENE FIVE

Long takes Yank to Fifth Avenue in midtown Manhattan three weeks later. The streets are clean and empty, as everybody is at church. Unlike Long, who has cleaned his face and is dressed in "shore clothes," Yank is still in his filthy work clothes and hasn't shaved or fully washed away the dirt around his eyes. "Well," Long says, "'ere we are. Fif' Avenoo. This 'ere's their bleedin' private lane, as yer might say. We're trespassers 'ere. Proletarians keep orf the grass!" Looking down, Yank notes that he doesn't see any grass, though he does point out that the sidewalk's so clean "yuh could eat a fried egg offen it." He then impatiently asks where all the people like Mildred are, and Long tells him they're in church.

In this scene, Long references the communist idea that society is made up of two classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Walking around Fifth Avenue in New York—home to some of wealthiest people around—he and Yank feel like trespassers in their own country, as if they don't belong simply because they are poor. And yet, the bourgeoisie require people like them to do the hard physical labor that earns them so much money. On another note, Yank's profound lack of intelligence comes to the forefront of the play in this moment, as he fails to grasp that Long is speaking metaphorically when he says, "Proletarians keep orf the grass!"

Yank says that he used to go to church as a kid, since his parents made him, though they never went themselves. He tells Long that his parents used to fight with one another quite frequently, getting drunk and tearing up the entire house with their violence. When his mother died, he says, he ran away and started working as a stoker. "I ain't never seen dis before," he says, referring to Fifth Avenue. "De Brooklyn waterfront, dat was where I was dragged up. Dis ain't so bad at dat, huh?" he says. In response, Long says, "Not bad? Well, we pays for it wiv our bloody sweat, if yer wants to know!"

Again, Long tries to emphasize the fact that he and Yank are the ones who put in the work—as oppressed proletarians—that allows the bourgeoisie to lead such clean, stylish lives. Nonetheless, Yank is uninterested in his friend's political ideas, instead talking about his own history and, in doing so, making it clear that his aggressive and violent tendencies have arisen from an entire lifetime of tumult.

Yank grows impatient because he doesn't see anyone who looks like Mildred, but Long tells him to wait. I don't wait for no one," Yank replies. "I keep on de move." To convince him to stay, Long reminds him that he wants to get back at Mildred, and Yank recounts how he tried to catch up with her once the ocean liner reached shore. Sneaking onto the dock, he waited for her so that he could spit in her face, but a group of police officers saw him and forced him to leave. "Yer been lookin' at this 'ere 'ole affair wrong," Long says. "Yer been actin' an' talkin' 's if it was all a bleedin' personal matter between yer and that bloody cow. I wants to convince yer she was on'y a representative of 'er clarss. I wants to awaken yer bloody clarss consciousness."

When Long says that he wants to "awaken" Yank's "clarss consciousness," he reveals that he isn't bringing his friend to Fifth Avenue so that he (Yank) can spit in Mildred's face, but because he wants to show him the broader framework of their oppression. Indeed, Yank has been looking at the entire "affair" in the "wrong" way by focusing on Mildred, who is only a "representative" of the bourgeoisie and the ways in which they don't truly care about people like Long and Yank, whom they actually depend upon in order to continue making money.

As Long and Yank wait for church to let out, they look into the windows of nearby storefronts and marvel at the opulent goods displayed therein. Long, for his part, is appalled by the diamonds they see in a jeweler's window, saying that one of the rocks could feed an entire family for a year. Yank, on the other hand, is uninterested in this kind of talk, saying, "Aw, cut de sob stuff!" He then says, "Say, dem tings is pretty, huh?" Adding to this sentiment, he upholds that such things "don't count," so Long takes him to the window of a furrier and says, "And I s'pose this 'ere don't count neither—skins of poor, 'armless animals slaughtered so as 'er and 'ers can keep their bleedin noses warm!"

It isn't readily apparent what Yank means when he says that diamonds and riches "don't count," but it's reasonable to assume that this is his way of dismissing the problem of class disparity in order to focus on his personal vendetta with Mildred. Indeed, Yank is only concerned with asserting himself and establishing his self-worth, and so he chooses to ignore the political and socioeconomic implications of his unfavorable situation. This is why Long takes it upon himself to show his friend the frivolous spoils of the capitalist class.

Looking into the furrier's, Yank is startled to find a monkey fur coat selling for $2,000. "It's straight enuf," Long assures him when he asks if the coat really costs that much. "They wouldn't bloody well pay that for a 'airy ape's skin—no, nor for the 'ole livin' ape with all 'is 'ead, and body, and soul thrown in!" he tells Yank, who is suddenly enraged. "Trowin' it up in my face!" Yank yells. "Christ! I'll fix her!"

Finally, Long manages to impress upon Yank the injustice of the capitalist class. He does this by forcing his friend to look at a fur coat, which is more highly valued by the bourgeoisie than people like Long and Yank themselves. However, although Long succeeds in getting him riled up, it's worth noting that Yank is still fixated on taking revenge upon Mildred, saying, "I'll fix her!" instead of acknowledging that she is, as Long has said, merely a "representative" of her class.

When church finally lets out, the streets fill with wealthy people. Sensing that Yank is about to become aggressive, Long says, "Easy goes, Comrade. Keep yer bloomin' temper. Remember force defeats itself. It ain't our weapon. We must impress our demands through peaceful means—the votes of the on-marching proletarians of the bloody world!" Yank can't believe his ears, saying that voting is a "joke." Calling Long "yellow," he asserts that he himself is nothing but pure "force." As he says this, he tries to put himself in the way as rich people pass him, but no one even acknowledges his presence. "Say, who d'yuh tink yuh're bumpin'?" he says when someone brushes by him. Insisting that the police will soon descend upon them, Long says this isn't what he had in mind. "And whatever 'appens, yer can't blame me," he adds as he leaves.

The audience sees the fundamental difference between Long and Yank in this scene, as the two men reveal the ways in which they confront injustice. Long, for his part, believes in the power of legitimate political action and organization, insisting that "force defeats itself" when it comes in the form of violence. Yank, on the other hand, doesn't know how to handle a situation like this without resorting to aggression. Indeed, he fails to see that his violent anger will do nothing but get him in trouble. As such, his stupidity and his unflinching vanity get in the way of his ability to combat injustice.

After Long leaves, Yank tries to pick fights with the wealthy people, yelling that they "don't belong." "See dat building goin' up dere?" he says. "See de steel work? Steel, dat's me! Youse guys live on it and tink yuh're somep'n. But I'm *in* it, see!" Paying no attention, a group crowds around the furrier's shop, as one woman gasps, "Monkey fur!" in admiration. Enraged, Yank tries to rip a lamppost from the sidewalk, and as he does so, a rich man runs into him while chasing a bus. "At last!" Yank says, punching the man in the face with all his strength. Nonetheless, "the gentleman stands unmoved as if nothing ha[s] happened," and says, "I beg your pardon. You have made me lose my bus." With this, the man calls out for the police, and "a whole platoon" suddenly descends upon Yank and beats him to the ground.

Long's idea that "force defeats itself" comes to full fruition in this moment, as Yank's strength does nothing to change his situation. Rather absurdly, he tries to rip a lamppost out of concrete—an incredibly futile endeavor. What's more, when he finally punches a rich person straight in the face, the man remains unharmed. In fact, Yank's violence isn't even what attracts the attention of the police officers. Indeed, the man he hits doesn't alert the police because of Yank's violence, but because Yank has disrupted his everyday life by causing him to miss his bus. In this way, O'Neill suggests that the most effective way to unsettle the bourgeoisie is by interfering with their otherwise comfortable and uninterrupted lives of opulence and ease.

SCENE SIX

The following night, Yank sits in a jail cell in the position of **Rodin's "The Thinker."** His bruised face is framed by a "blood-stained bandage" wrapped around his head, and as he looks at the bars of the cell, he says, "Steel. Dis is de Zoo, huh?" This statement elicits laughter from a number of unseen prisoners in neighboring cells, who all make fun of Yank for thinking the jail is the zoo. "I musta been dreamin'. I tought I was in a cage at de Zoo," he says. "But de apes don't talk, do dey?" The other prisoners then ask him who he is, urging him to tell them his story. "I was a fireman," he says, "stokin' on de liners. I'm a hairy ape, get me? And I'll bust youse all in de jaw if yuh don't lay off kiddin' me."

Despite the fact that his violent proclivities have landed him in jail, Yank once again resorts to aggression when met with adversity, this time threatening his fellow prisoners when they laugh at his stupidity. What's more, the audience sees that he is slowly beginning to internalize the notion that he is a "hairy ape." Whereas this idea originally threw him into a blind rage, now he says, "I'm a hairy ape," strangely accepting this as part of his identity even as he struggles with it.

After the other prisoners shout back at Yank for threatening them, one of them tells everybody to calm down and again asks Yank why he's in jail. "Sure, I'll tell youse," Yank says. "Sure! Why de hell not? On'y—youse won't get me. Nobody gets me but me, see? I started to tell de Judge and all he says was: 'Toity days to tink it over.' 'Tink it over! Christ, dat's all I been doin' for weeks!" Going on, he explains that he was trying to get even with Mildred. He describes her **white dress** and says that if he can't find her specifically, he'll "take it out on de gang she runs wit." He tells the prisoners that Mildred's father is a millionaire whose last name is Douglas. "Douglas?" says another inmate. "That's the president of the Steel Trust, I bet."

When Yank says that "nobody gets" him, it becomes clear that he feels like an outcast. Removed from his exalted position in the stokehole, he feels alienated from the world and utterly alone. What's more, the fact that he can't "think" through his problems only makes his lonely existence even worse.

A prisoner in a nearby cell says, "Hey, feller, take a tip from me. If you want to get back at that dame, you better join the Wobblies." By way of explanation, he tells Yank about this "gang of blokes" that he read about in the newspaper. "There's a long spiel about 'em," he says. "It's from a speech made in the Senate." Rummaging in his cell, he finds the paper and quotes the article, saying, "There is a menace existing in this country today which threatens the vitals of our fair republic—a foul menace against the very life-blood of the American Eagle [...]. I refer to that devil's brew of rascals, jailbirds, murderers and cutthroats who libel all honest working men by calling themselves the Industrial Workers of the World; but in the light of their nefarious plots, I call them the Industrious *Wreckers* of the World!"

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) is a labor union that was established in the United States in 1905. The IWW pushed for the unionization of industrial workers, attempting to organize these laborers to take a stand against exploitative working conditions. In this scene, the prisoner quotes from a newspaper that has reprinted a speech by a senator warning his fellow politicians of the dangers that such an organization poses to the structures of capitalism. It's worth noting that this organization represents the kind of thinking that Long has already tried to introduce to Yank. However, this article frames the IWW as menaces—a notion that is likely to appeal to somebody like Yank, who wants first and foremost to take revenge on people like Mildred.

"Wreckers, dat's de right dope!" Yank says. "Dat belongs! Me for dem!" Pushing on, the nearby prisoner keeps reading the article, which upholds that the IWW "must be destroyed" because it threatens democracy. "They plot with fire in one hand and dynamite in the other," he reads. "They stop not before murder to gain their ends [...] They would tear down society, put the lowest scum in the scats of the mighty, turn Almighty God's revealed plan for the world topsy-turvy, and make of our sweet and lovely civilization a shambles, a desolation where man, God's masterpiece, would soon degenerate back to the ape!" Impressed, Yank says, "So dey blow up tings, do dey? Dey turn tings round, do dey?" The nearby prisoner then hands him the newspaper through the bars.

Sure enough, Yank likes the sound of the IWW because the newspaper frames the organization as an ominous threat. Of course, he doesn't gravitate to the IWW because he believes in unionization, but because this senator suggests that the organization "plot[s] with fire in one hand and dynamite in the other." As such, Yank's lack of intelligence once more leads him astray, as he fails to grasp that the senator's words are metaphorical. "So dey blow up tings, do dey?" he says, proving that he has taken these ideas quite literally and thus failed to comprehend the nuances of the article.

Reflecting upon what he's just heard, Yank sits for a moment in the position of **Rodin's "The Thinker"** before jumping to his feet and muttering, "Sure—her old man—president of de Steel Trust—makes half de steel in de world—steel—where I tought I belonged—drivin' trou—movin'—in dat—to make *her*—and cage me in for her to spit on! Christ. He made dis—dis cage!" His voice having grown to a shout, he begins to shake the bars so hard that the entire corridor of jail cells vibrates. "But I'll drive trou!" he yells. "Fire, dat melts it! I'll be fire—under de heap—fire dat never goes out—hot as hell—breakin' out in de night."

Although Yank fails to fully absorb the intentions of the IWW, the newspaper article has a startling effect on him, as it encourages him to reflect on class disparity. This, it seems, is one of the first moments in which he appears capable of conceptualizing the idea that Mildred is only a "representative" of her class. As such, he recognizes the broader structures of oppression that have disenfranchised him and put him in the position he's currently in. Although he himself doesn't make steel, he is a laborer and, thus, the type of person who makes it possible for people like Mildred's father to become rich. What's more, he recognizes the circularity of this oppression, as he sees that the very same steel that people like him create is what the capitalist class uses to keep him locked away in a cage. Wanting to escape this cycle of subjugation, then, he determines to "break out."

When Yank says the words "breakin' out," he lifts his feet off the ground and puts them against the bars, placing them right where his hands are so that he is "parallel to the floor like a monkey." In this position, he pulls at the metal, which "bends like a licorice stick under his tremendous strength." Having heard the incredible commotion, a guard rushes in with a large firehose and tells everybody to quiet down. "Hell, look at dat bar bended!" he shouts. Turning down the hall, he tells the other guards to turn on the hose, at which point a great rush of water sprays out and slaps the steel of Yank's cell as the curtain closes.

Unfortunately, Yank's determination to "break out" from his cell is yet another display of aggression, suggesting that he still doesn't understand that "force defeats itself." As such, his newfound recognition of class disparity and subjugation fails to help him navigate the world, a fact illustrated by the "monkey"-like pose he strikes as he rips the bars apart. Rather than focusing on uniting with his fellow laborers to combat the broad capitalist structures of oppression, he resorts to animalistic forms of brute strength and physical power.

SCENE SEVEN

A month later, Yank visits an IWW office near the New York City waterfront. In his dirty clothes, he knocks on the door and waits as the secretary inside says, "What the hell is that—someone knocking? Come in, why don't you?" When Yank doesn't enter, the secretary tells one of the many men in the office to see who's there. Once inside, Yank explains that he wants to become a member, and the secretary happily says he'll file his card. "Glad to know you people are waking up at last. We haven't got many members in your line," he tells Yank. When he asks what Yank's name is, Yank pauses, saying, "Lemme tink." "Don't you know your own name?" the secretary asks. "Sure," Yank says, "but I been just Yank for so long—Bob, dat's it—Bob Smith."

The fact that Yank can't recall his own name once again indicates his lack of intelligence. That he needs to use it at all in this context also symbolizes that he has left the comfortable (to him) world of the stokehole, where everybody simply calls him Yank. On his own in the real world, he has to put in an actual effort to remember his own identity—something he hasn't had to consider in years because he's been so focused on cultivating his persona as a well-respected worker in the blasting heat of the engine room.

The secretary writes Yank's name on the membership card and welcomes him to the IWW, telling him to take some pamphlets to distribute to his fellow stokers. He then asks why Yank knocked when he first arrived, and Yank says that he thought there were a lot of police officers in the neighborhood and figured the organization would want to inspect any visitors through a peephole before letting them inside. "What have the cops got to do with us? We're breaking no laws," the secretary says. "Sure," Yank says conspiratorially. "I'm wise to dat." The secretary is confused by this, eventually saying, "It's all plain and above board; still, some guys get a wrong slant on us. What's your notion of the purpose of the IWW?" In response, Yank refuses to answer, saying he knows better than to speak out of turn.

In this moment, it's overwhelmingly clear that Yank is joining the IWW for the wrong reasons. Even the secretary—who has only known him for a matter of minutes—can see that he has the "wrong" idea about the organization. His error, of course, is that he thinks the IWW is a violent group seeking to "blow up" the titans of industry that oppress the working class. What's more, if he knew that the IWW was a straightforward labor union, it's unlikely he'd be interested in joining, considering the way he has continually disregarded Long's ideas about communism and class disparity.

After a tiresome back and forth about the nature of the IWW, Yank says, "Yuh wanter blow tings up, don't yuh? Well, dat's me! I belong!" In response, the secretary says, "You mean change the unequal conditions of society by legitimate direct action or with dynamite?" "Dynamite!" Yank answers. "Blow it offen de oith—steel—all de cages—all de factories, steamers, buildings, jails—de Steel Trust and all dat makes it go." Subtly indicating to the surrounding men that they should grab Yank, the secretary asks Yank what specific job he wants to carry out, and Yank reveals that he wants to blow up Nazareth Steel.

When Yank admits that he wants to target Nazareth Steel, the audience sees once and for all that his desire to join the IWW has nothing to do with unionization. Instead, Yank simply sees this as a way to take revenge on Mildred for calling him a "filthy beast." And although it seems that he has finally comprehended the fact that Mildred is only a representative of her entire class (as evidenced by the fact that he has given up on trying to track her down), it's obvious that he still doesn't understand that "force defeats itself."

Hearing Yank's intentions, the men of the IWW grab him. Just before they throw him onto the streets, they ask the secretary if they should "put the boots to him." "No," the secretary responds. "He isn't worth the trouble we'd get into. He's too stupid." He then walks over and laughs in Yank's face, saying, "By God, this is the biggest joke they've put up on us yet. Hey, you Joke! Who sent you—Burns or Pinkerton? No, by God, you're such a bonehead I'll bet you're in the Secret Service!" Going on, he tells Yank to return to whomever sent him and tell them that the IWW is a legitimate operation, but then he says, "Oh, hell, what's the use of talking? You're a brainless ape."

When the secretary tells Yank to report back to whomever sent him, he assumes that Yank has been hired to entrap the IWW. This is a reasonable assumption, considering that the IWW has many enemies (as evidenced by the senator's speech that ran in the newspaper). However, the secretary realizes that Yank is "too stupid" to even comprehend what he's saying. Calling him a "brainless ape," he issues an insult that once again emphasizes to Yank the fact that society sees him as a grotesque beast instead of a human being.

After the IWW men throw Yank out of the office, he sits in the streets and assumes the position of **Rodin's "The Thinker."** "So dem boids don't tink I belong, neider." Talking to himself, he scorns the way unions think about the world, saying that equal rights and better working conditions don't mean anything. "What does dat get yuh?" he wonders aloud. "Dis ting's in your inside, but it ain't your belly. Feedin' your face—sinkers and coffee—dat don't touch it. It's way down—at de bottom. Yuh can't grab it, and yuh can't stop it. It moves, and everything moves. It stops and de whole woild stops." He then likens himself to a broken watch. "Steel was me," he adds, "and I owned de woild. Now I ain't steel, and de woild owns me."

Yank is a deceivingly complex character. For the most part, he is unintelligent, aggressive, and vain, and his failure to understand simple concepts is both aggravating and inevitable, given his meager mental faculties. That said, O'Neill also uses Yank as a mouthpiece to express some rather nuanced existential ideas about unhappiness. In this moment especially, Yank references a certain kind of life force that exists "inside" of him. This energy is something that can't be "touch[ed]," and it has nothing to do with working conditions or unions. What he seems to be referring to, then, is a generalized form of discontent, one that perhaps comes along with his experience of living in a world that fails to understand him. When he says that he used to "own" the world, the audience understands that his existential angst is the result of his sudden lack of purpose. After all, he was a celebrated worker in the stokehole, but now he feels alienated and purposeless in a world that refuses to accept him.

Hearing Yank talk to himself, a passing police officer tells him to get out of the street. "Sure!" Yank says. "Lock me up! Put me in a cage! Dat's de on'y answer yuh know. G'wan, lock me up!" When the officer asks what Yank has done to deserve jailtime, Yank says, "Enuf to gimme life for! I was born, see? Sure, dat's de charge." Ignoring this, the officer accuses Yank of being drunk, but decides they're too far from the station to make it worth walking him to a cell, so he simply tells Yank to get up and go elsewhere. "Say, where do I go from here?" Yank asks. Pushing him on his way, the officer grins and says, "Go to hell."

Again, O'Neill intimates that Yank's discontent has to do with the fact that nobody understands him. Having lost his sense of purpose, he wanders through the real world, which simply cannot accommodate him. Indeed, people like the IWW secretary and the police officer don't know what to do with him. When he tells the officer to "lock [him] up," the audience sees that he has resigned himself to the existence of a "hairy ape," treating himself like a creature that must be kept in a cage.

SCENE EIGHT

The next evening, Yank makes his way to the "monkey house" at the Central Park Zoo. In the foremost cage sits an enormous gorilla, who is in the position of **Rodin's "The Thinker."** As Yank enters, "a chorus of angry chattering and screeching breaks out" from the many surrounding monkeys, though the gorilla barely looks up. Going to his cage, Yank begins to speak to him in a casual voice with "a deep undercurrent of sympathy," saying that he's a "hard-lookin' guy." As if he can understand, the gorilla stands and beats his chest. "Sure, I get yuh," Yank says appreciatively. "Yuh challenge de whole woild, huh?" He then says that the gorilla understands what he's saying even if he doesn't quite understand the words themselves. "And why wouldn't yuh get me?" he adds. "Ain't we both members of de same club—de Hairy Apes?"

Yank has finally decided to fully accept the idea that he is a "hairy ape." This is, of course, a ridiculous thing to think about oneself, but Yank feels so alienated from the rest of humanity that he simply resigns himself to the idea. As such, his stupidity combines with his need to belong, ultimately driving him to the zoo and inspiring him to try to talk to a gorilla, who he believes understands him because they have had similar experiences in life. The fact that Yanks journey has taken him away from the ship—where he actually felt a sense of belonging—and led him to this miserable end demonstrates the tragic effect that vanity can have on a person's sense of self. After all, if Yank wasn't so hell-bent on taking revenge on Mildred in order to prove his self-worth, then he would have stayed on the ocean liner and would still be leading a happy—albeit naïve—existence.

Looking at the gorilla, Yank considers the idea that this is what Mildred imagined when she saw him in the stokehole. "I was you to her, get me?" he says. "On'y outa de cage—broke out—free to moider her, see? […] She wasn't wise dat I was in a cage, too—worser'n yours—sure—a damn sight—'cause you got some chanct to bust loose—but me—" Faltering for a moment, he grows confused and says, "Aw, hell! It's all wrong, ain't it?"

Even though Yank would be happier if he had stayed on the ocean liner instead of trying to prove himself, it's worth pointing out that he has at least become capable of recognizing the nature of his own oppression. This is clear when he admits that he was in a metaphorical "cage" when he was working as a stoker. As such, O'Neill intimates that Yank has become somewhat enlightened. However, he doesn't have anybody with whom he can talk about these ideas, and so he finds himself floundering and confused. "Aw, hell! It's all wrong, ain't it?" he says, a sentiment that indicates that his intellectual awakening has perhaps troubled him more than it has liberated him.

Frustrated that people like Mildred visit the zoo to gape at the gorilla, Yank hits the cage, which prompts the gorilla to shake the bars and roar alongside him. "Dat's de way it hits me, too," Yank says. "On'y yuh're lucky, see? Yuh don't' belong wit 'em and yuh know it. But me, I belong wit 'em—but I don't, see? Dey don't belong wit me, dat's what. Get me?" Pausing once again, he says, "Tinkin' is hard." Going on, he looks at the gorilla and says, "You belong! Sure! Yuh're de on'y one in de woild dat does, yuh lucky stiff!" The gorilla roars at this, and Yank says, "Sure! Yuh get me."

In this moment, Yank expresses exasperation regarding the fact that he can't find a sense of belonging in society. Unlike the gorilla—whom he envies because the creature doesn't have to pretend to "belong" with the humans who oppress him—Yank is expected to fit into a world that is rigged against him. Of course, what he fails to recognize is that he hasn't always been so out of place, since he was widely accepted by his peers in the stokehole.

Maintaining that he and the gorilla belong to the same "club," Yank decides to let the creature out of its cage. Asking the gorilla if he wants to "git even," he says, "Dey'll have to make de cages stronger after we're trou!" With this, he opens the cage door and lets the gorilla out. Once the animal isn't in its cage anymore, it looks at Yank, who holds out his hand for a handshake, but the gorilla takes him in his "huge arms" and squeezes him in a "murderous hug" that cracks his ribs. "The gorilla lets the crushed body slip to the floor," O'Neill's stage note reads, "stands over it uncertainly, considering; then picks it up, throws it in the cage, shuts the door, and shuffles off menacingly into the darkness at left."

Yank's quest to find a sense of belonging—which began as a quest to prove himself to people like Mildred—appropriately ends in a gorilla's cage. This is a perfect representation of his inability to fit into society. Too unintelligent and aggressive to safely navigate his way through the world, he seeks camaraderie with an animal that is incapable of showing him affection. The fact that he goes from the metaphorical "cage" of capitalist exploitation to an actual cage suggests that he has achieved nothing. In fact, he has regressed since the beginning of the play—whereas the nature of his imprisonment was chiefly abstract when he worked in the stokehole, now he is literally trapped in a cage. As such, it's clear that he would have been better off if he'd remained on the ocean liner, even if this existence kept him from recognizing his own oppression. After all, he's now capable of identifying the ways in which capitalism has suppressed him, but this realization has only brought him sadness, misery, and a feeling of helplessness.

From the floor of the closed cage, Yank says, "Even him didn't tink I belonged." As the monkeys around him begin to screech, he desperately says, "Christ, where do I get off at? Where do I fit in?" Then, as if hearing himself, he decides to fight the pain and, standing up with his hands clutching the bars of the cage, forces a laugh. "Ladies and gents," he says in a false tone, "step forward and take a slant at de one and only—one and original—Hairy Ape from de wilds of—" With this, he crumbles to the ground and dies. "The monkeys set up a chattering, whimpering wail," writes O'Neill. "And, perhaps, the Hairy Ape at last belongs."

When O'Neill suggests that "the Hairy Ape at last belongs," he alludes to the fact that Yank was never capable of fitting into society when he was alive. As such, his death offers him the only sense of belonging he might ever hope to experience, essentially putting him out of his misery and sparing him from an exploitative world that is unable to accommodate him.

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