

# DRIVING Miss Daisy

## The World of the Play: Activity One

### Discussion in groups of 2

- Before attending the play, read the character descriptions in the “Who’s Who in the Play” section of this study guide.
- Based on this information, imagine what Miss Daisy’s appearance is like in 1900, 1948, 1965, and 1973. What would be your first impression of her if you met her for the first time in all four years?
- Based on this information, imagine what Daisy’s driver, Hoke Coleburn’s appearance is like in 1948, 1965, and 1973. What would be your first impression of him be if you met him for the first time?
- Does physical appearance play an important part in how we analyze and judge others? How does one’s appearance inform us of someone’s character or personality?
- Does one’s demeanor and energy help us establish first impressions? If yes, how so?
- Do you think the first impressions we make support or reject stereotypes? Are stereotypes often accurate or inaccurate? Are stereotypes conducive or destructive to what is true and what is false? Why or why not?
- Share your answers/opinions with the class and discuss similarities and differences.



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## The World of the Play: Activity Two

At the turn-of-the-century, heightened forms of politeness and courtesy were the everyday, external signs of a person's moral virtue. Manners and social graces, such as prefixing "Miss" or "Master" to others' first names in ordinary conversation, the correct posture and gait, the way a lady held a wrist-fan or a tea cup, the way a gentleman bowed, and the colors of one's dress were all measurements of a person's moral virtue and quality of life.

Social life centered on the front parlor, the school, and the church hall. There were strict rules for interaction in each of these settings.

### Discussion in groups of 3 to 5

- Keeping in mind Miss Daisy's upbringing in Georgia during an era that abided by strict rules of conduct, discuss why Daisy reacted to Hoke in the following way:

**HOKE**

How yo' Temple this mornin', Miss Daisy?

**DAISY**

Why are you here?

**HOKE**

I bring you to de Temple like you tell me.  
(He is helping her into the car.)

**DAISY**

I can get myself in. Just go. (She makes a light little social smile and a wave out the window.) Hurry up out of here! (Hoke starts up the car.)

**HOKE**

Yassum.

**DAISY**

I didn't say speed. I said get me away from here.

**HOKE**

Somethin' wrong back yonder?

**DAISY**

No.

**HOKE**

Somethin' I done?

**DAISY**

No. (A beat.) Yes.

**HOKE**

I ain' done nothin'!

**DAISY**

You had the car right in front of the front door of the Temple! Like I was Queen of Romania! Everybody saw you! Didn't I tell you to wait for me in the back?

- Describe Daisy's reaction to Hoke in this scene?
- Why do you think she reacts in this manner?
- Do you think Daisy's reaction is reasonable or justified? Why or why not?
- Share your opinions with the class. Discuss similarities and differences between groups.



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## The World of the Play: Activity Three

The rules for interaction between men and women were still more complex. Taken from the *Encyclopedia of Etiquette* (1911), the following excerpts outline the rules of behavior for ladies and gentlemen who meet in public. In 1911, Miss Daisy would have been a 35-year-old woman.

### Conversations on the street . . .

When a man meets a feminine acquaintance in the street and is desirous of speaking with her, he lifts his hat and, coming to her side, walks beside her. If he meets a woman friend walking alone, or accompanied by a woman to whom he is at once introduced or whom he already knows, he is privileged to ask permission to accompany the lady to her destination.

### Bowing

It is the woman's privilege to bow first when meeting men acquaintances. In doing this, she bends her head slightly, looks directly at the person recognized, according him, at the same time, a slight smile or an amiable glance... A young lady takes the initiative when she meets in the street a gentleman with whom she may have gone in to dinner or with whom she may have danced several times at a ball. She always bows to him, though no further acquaintance may ever after exist between them. Too many women have the mistaken impression that manifestly to refuse all recognition is the proper method by which to end an undesirable acquaintance or to administer a rebuke for discourteous treatment received. It is perfectly easy, when desired, to acknowledge a salutation with such dignity and brevity of glance as plainly to indicate that one's wish is to hold the person from whom the salutation is received to the merest bowing acquaintance; and when the desire is to close an acquaintance entirely, one need only look away as the undesirable person approaches and keep the eyes persistently, but not ostentatiously, averted or downcast until he is by. This is in most cases quite as effective and in every way much better than to give an insolent and deliberate stare in answer to a bow and smile.

### Discussion in groups of 3 or 4

- Using the information provided on social etiquette and interaction in the southern states during the turn-of-the-century, create a tableau that represents the key manners of this time period.
- One member of each group will take on the role of Director or sculptor who will 'shape' the members of the group into frozen statues that represent the characters engaged in a social exchange.
- The Director will either instruct or physically move the statues/characters into position and interpret the scene for the class.
- Extension: Once each tableau is set, the Director taps the shoulder of each frozen statue cueing each character to 'come to life' and speak a line (in character) that explains his/her action(s) at that moment in time. Characters should speak out loud their inner thoughts and feelings

#### Technique Tips for Tableaux Work

Tableau is a frozen representation of human figures captured in the middle of action. Tableaux communicate meaning and maintain aesthetic form by ensuring that all figures and actions:

1. Relate to a given story, theme, time or place;
2. Depict an emotional quality;
3. Engage in physical activity that incorporate a variety of levels (high, medium, low) and directions;
4. Are well balanced, large, and easy to read with a clear focal point.