



The Mineola Twins

A Study Guide

Student Matinee performance Dec. 11, 2002

The Mineola Twins: A Synopsis of the Plot

As the title of the play indicates, *The Mineola Twins* traces the lives of a pair of sisters. Though they look almost exactly alike, their personalities couldn't be more different. And though they share that special "twin bond" that we often hear about, they also spend much of their time and energy pushing away from each other, defining themselves in opposition to each other, both in their real lives in in their dreams.

When we first meet them in the 1950s, Myrna, the "good" twin, and Myra, the "evil" twin, are high schoolers. Good and evil are defined in terms of that time but in an exaggerated way. Good women are chaste and virginal, have marriage as their top goal in life, and are secondary to the men in their lives. Myrna is doing her best to live up to these ideals, and already has herself a virtuous fiancé. But she is disturbed by her sister's total disregard for the rules. Myra is messy, promiscuous, rebellious, works as a cocktail waitress and wants anything but the proverbial house with the white picket fence.

Things come to a showdown for the sisters after Myrna's sexually frustrated fiancé Jim ends up having a one-night stand with Myra — and Myrna finds out about it.

Flash forward to 1969. We see Myrna standing in a bank line accompanied by her teenage son, Kenny. She is "a woman who continues to embrace the fifties; only the hem of

her skirt tells us it is actually 1969," Vogel writes. The conversation between Myrna and Kenny fills us in on what the twins have been doing since we last saw them. Myrna's married, but not to Jim. By now, she's a bitter woman who's had a mental breakdown and spent time in a mental institution.

Myra, meanwhile, is involved with a radical 1960s anti-war group and, disguised as her twin, took part in the group's bank robbery. Now, she's an emotional mess, on the lam. She shifts from defiant anti-establishment talk to laments about her situation and regrets about what's happened to her twin. Myrna, despite everything, has sent her son Kenny (who seems more a chip off Myra's block than Myrna's) to Myra with money to fund her escape.

We flash forward once again, this time 20 years to 1989. Again, the scene opens with Myrna. Always a supporter of right-wing ideas, she's no different now: She is the popular host of a radio talk-show called *Talk Back, Get Back, Bite Back*, and she is the president of Concerned Americans for America, a group representing conservative causes.

In the studio, she's visited by Ben, Myra's young son. Just as Kenny seems to have been born to the wrong twin from an ideological standpoint, so has Ben, who idolizes his aunt and wants to grow up to be just like her. The two talk and Myrna shares her views of Myra's current life — she is now a lesbian and works for reproductive rights, both

abhorrent to Myrna.

The final showdown comes at the women's health clinic where Myra works. Myrna shows up, dressed like her twin, but with nefarious plans in mind. She wants to blow up the clinic. That plan is considerably complicated when she runs into Myra's lover, Sarah, and their son, Ben, who are both meeting Myra there after her return from a trip.

Despite their lack of direct contact for many years, the twins are dressed identically on this day, and confusion ensues when each keeps popping up and having conversations with Sarah. All the while, Myrna's trying to plant her bomb, Myra's distracted by work and other issues, and Sarah's trying to have a serious relationship talk with what she thinks is a weirdly inconsistent partner.

Myrna backs off her plan to bomb the building, though, when she realizes it could kill her sister or her family, and in one of their psychic "twins" moments, she saves her twin from being inside the building.

The play ends on a conciliatory note, with Myra and Sarah talking about what has happened. Myrna will probably go to jail — Myra notes that it didn't seem too different from high school detention when she was there. But more important to Myra is the fact that Myrna saved her. At the end, there is an image of the two twins, reaching out symbolically across the differences that separate them.

— Anna-Maria Goossens

Follow the timeline across the bottom of these pages for important events in U.S. and world history relevant to the play.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● North Korea invades South Korea, sparking the Korean War. ● Alleged Communist spy Alger Hiss is convicted of perjury.. Senator Joseph McCarthy begins his anti-Communist witch hunt. ● U.S. Gross National Product (GNP) tripled since 1940, reaching \$284 million. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, accused of cold war espionage, are sentenced to death. The Rosenbergs are executed in 1953 amid protest. ● J.D. Salinger 's <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i> is published. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dick Clark hosts the first <i>American Bandstand</i>. ● The first birth control pill is introduced, although it will not be available to the public for 8 years. ● Dwight D. Eisenhower is elected president. Richard Nixon serves as his vice-president. ● The world's first nuclear power plant accident occurs at Chalk River, Canada. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research on mice links cancer to tobacco tar. ● Stalin 's death causes a power struggle in the USSR. ● 20million homes have TVs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In <i>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka</i>, Kansas the Supreme Court rules unanimously that racial segregation violates the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. ● Senator Joseph McCarthy is formally censured by Congress. ● Elvis Presley records "That's All Right Mama."
1950	1951	1952	1953	1954

Who Is Paula Vogel?

Paula Vogel grew up in a working class family in Washington, DC. She first became enamored of the theater in a high school drama class; she spent three years as a stage manager, and began writing plays in her senior year.



She attended Catholic University, and received her PhD in Theatre from Cornell University. Since 1985, she has been the director of the playwriting program at Brown University in Rhode Island. This program is now considered one of the country's best.

Paula Vogel's plays are provocative. They deal with complex social issues such as AIDS, sexual abuse, and gender stereotypes, in equally complex ways. Her plays also defy traditional theatre logic—they often attempt to stage the impossible. They call the conventions of theater into question, in order to call society into question.

Vogel has written over 20 plays. Her plays have been performed at theatres throughout the US, Canada, England, Brazil, Chile and Spain, and have won her numerous awards. *The Baltimore Waltz*, a poignant satire of the AIDS epidemic, won an Obie (Off-Broadway Award) for Best Play in 1992. Her best known play, *How I Learned to Drive*, an exploration of the effects of sexual abuse, earned her the 1998 Pulitzer Prize.

In the scene shop

Labor estimates for *The Mineola Twins*:

Scenery: 1375 man hours

Props: 525 man hours

Scenic painting: 235 man hours

Assembling the set on stage, rigging, etc.: 160 man hours

Striking the set after production: 90 man hours

The Biology and Psychology of Twins

Identical twins (monozygotic) result when a single fertilized egg splits after conception. The resulting twins are the same sex and genetically alike, with similar foot and hand prints, but different fingerprints and teeth marks. The egg then splits into two genetically identical halves. They share 100% of their genes.

In their book *The Sibling Bond*, Stephen P. Bank and Michael D. Kahn describe twins as:

...siblings who always have an innate sixth sense about one another, even to the extent that they think they magically know each other's thoughts, feelings, wishes and inner most secrets.

Twins offer striking illustrations of what can occur when boundaries of separateness between any siblings become fuzzy, when mirroring and fusing [of personalities] predominate. Fused by being put in the same playpen, bathed and fed together, and encouraged by their parents to stay and play together, twins become emotionally intertwined...

Twins can, however, develop serious problems with ego boundaries. Cycles of intense fighting and intense affection often dominate their relationship; yet they often appear to be unable to live without each other.

Many anecdotes exist about twins who are separated at birth. When reunited, these twins often arrive wearing the same clothes, or having similar haircuts. They often find that details of their lives are similar. They may have married persons with the same name, or chosen the same name for their children. They like the same foods and movies.

Such anecdotes have led to the common perception that twins have a special supernatural bond.

— Megan Smithling



- Ray Kroc buys a hamburger franchise from the McDonald brothers and launches an empire of golden arches. Harland Sanders begins his Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise.
- The U.S.S.R. organizes the Warsaw Pact to defend against the Western European Cold War alliance, NATO.
- Disneyland, part of the empire Walt Disney built, opens in California, the first theme park in the US history of leisure.

- In Montgomery, Alabama, a bus boycott organized by Martin Luther King brings the young preacher into the national eye.
- Elvis Presley tops the charts with "Love Me Tender," "Hound Dog," and "Heartbreak Hotel."
- Allen Ginsberg publishes *Howl*, a classic of the beat generation in American poetry and literature.

- The Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), an anti-nuclear protest organization, is created.
- Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* is published, catapulting him into beat generation stardom.
- Inaugurating a new era in exploration, the U.S.S.R. launches Sputnik I and II, the first earth satellites. Space exploration becomes a new arena of Cold War competition.

- The U.S.S.R. sets off an international, space-age buzz when it launches a rocket with two monkeys on board.
- The doll industry gets a new major player when Barbie debuts. Barbie is created by the Handlers, a husband and wife team who found Mattel, Inc.

1955

1956

1957

1959

The Mineola Twins and the Principles of Camp

camp: banaility, artifice, etc. sp extreme as to amuse or have a perversely sophisticated appeal — Webster's New World Dictionary

by Megan Smithling

Bad wigs. “B” horror flicks. Men in drag. Tacky accessories. What do these things have in common? These are all elements found in our current production of *The Mineola Twins*, and they can all be described as “campy.”



B-Movies from the 1950s and 1960s, such as *Attack of the 50-foot Woman*, are treasured by many for their ‘camp’ value

Camp is an aesthetic sense. It is a way of seeing the world in terms of stylization. There are “campy” movies, clothes, furniture, songs, and personalities. Camp is a love of the exaggerated. It sees everything in quotation marks. A woman is a “woman” in a campy film. The stereotypical qualities that we think of as making up a woman or a man are blown out of proportion.

Camp is the clearest example of the metaphor of life as theater; it focuses on the roles we play in society. Camp can

also make satirical political statements. By showing people or things as exaggerated, camp points up the ways in which we stereotype people and things in society. Like all good satire, camp uses humor to show us the darker side of life. We might laugh at the man wearing a woman’s clothes, but camp can also cause us to think about the way in which we view women.



Whatever Happened to Baby Jane? is camp landmark.

In *The Mineola Twins*, Paula Vogel uses the camp aesthetic to look at American history and the role of women in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1980s. Bad wigs, women and men in drag, and overly exaggerated characters contribute to her critical examination of our own society.

Vogel wants to know: How do we look at the expectations that our society has for men and women? Have these expectations changed over time, or do they remain the same? What do we really think about these expectations? Do we look at them critically, or simply accept them for what they are? Vogel’s play challenges us to look at these issues critically, and to have fun while doing it.

Post-show discussion questions

After you have seen the play, think about the following questions:

1. In her interview, director Danielle Sertz talked about the challenges facing the actors who had to play several different roles each. How well do you think the actors did that? Was each of the characters they created distinct? If yes, how did they do it? If no, what do you feel was missing?
2. Camp, and the idea of things being over-the-top and not strictly realistic, are viewed by Paula Vogel and the members of our creative team as important elements in making this play work. How do you feel about that? Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. What do you think of Paula Vogel’s use of twins to tell her story? Do you think the play would have work equally well with non-twin siblings? Why or why not?
4. What do you think was the best thing about the play? What was the worst? Given what you have read about the background of the play and the creative teams’ aims in bringing it to the stage, what would you have done differently if you were in charge?

● Democrat John F. Kennedy defeats Republican Vice-President Richard Nixon to win the presidential election.

- The Berlin Wall is built in East Germany to stop refugees escaping from East to West Berlin.
- Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin is the first man to travel in space when he orbits the earth in *Vostok I* for 89.1 minutes on April 12th.
- Bob Dylan, originally named Robert Zimmerman, is discovered singing in Greenwich Village. His songs become symbolic of the civil rights movement and the hippie culture.
- The Freedom Rides in Alabama attempt to overturn southern segregation in the civil rights movement.

- American surveillance discovers Soviet missiles installed in Cuba. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, the possibility of nuclear war raises its head.
- Marine Corps pilot John Glenn is the first American in space.
- President John F. Kennedy sends federal troops to enforce integration at the University of Mississippi.

- John F. Kennedy is assassinated on November 22nd in Dallas, Texas. Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson takes office.
- Martin Luther King, Jr., delivers his famous, “I have a dream” speech.
- The Beatles get their first U.S. hit with “I Wanna Hold Your Hand.”
- Congress votes to guarantee women equal pay for equal work, and feminist Betty Friedan publishes *The Feminine Mystique*, starting the Feminist Movement.

1960

1961

1962

1963

An Interview with Director Danielle Sertz

The Mineola Twins was proposed as a part of the UMass Theater production season by Danielle Sertz, a graduate student in our directing program, as her thesis production. Sertz has been a fan of Paula Vogel, and this play, for some time, and is pleased to be able to bring the play to the stage.

Here, she talks with Megan Smithling, the production dramaturg, about the work behind the show.

M: What is your most important job as a director?

D: As a director, my job is to tell a story. So I help actors find ways to clarify what it is their characters want and their relationships to one another, so that we care about what happens to them in that story.

M: So as a storyteller, which elements in *The Mineola Twins* stand out to you as the most important?

D: I want to show how the sisters hurt one another, knowingly and unknowingly. And how they need each other at the same time. Of course, this is only made more difficult by the fact that they're played by the same person.

M: What are the challenges of that? Everyone in this play doubles roles at least once. Does that affect way the actors work on their roles?

D: As an actor, your resource is yourself. So as an actor, your first instinct is to find things completely similar and completely different from yourself. In this play, the characters are extreme, but sometimes I'm asking the actors to find a middle ground with their physical and vocal qualities.

For example, both the twins are strong people. So you can't play them strong and weak. You have to find two different ways of being strong.

M: The style of this play is very specific. Paula Vogel even specifies that in the script. She says "This play can be done in two ways: 1. with good wigs, 2. with bad wigs. I prefer the second." What does that mean to this production?

D: We're spoofing campy horror films of the 1950s and 1960s. This plays up the stereotypes, and we're able to find the horrific in common everyday things. It's a heightened, broad acting style, similar to what's found in classic musical theatre, like *Oklahoma* or *The Music Man*. What's different about musicals and what we're doing is that the musicals didn't acknowledge that they were over-the-top.

With our play, there's a subtle awareness that we're using these stereotypes knowingly to question their validity. We're asking questions: "If a woman doesn't behave according to society's idea of a "woman," then what is she?"

M: Paula Vogel spoke at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst last year, as a part of the Rand Lecture series. You were able to meet and talk with her. What was that like?

D: She's a very accessible person. She was smart, funny, and really giving to all of the students that she met, including me. Paula Vogel is very inspirational in that if she thinks it's true, she won't hesitate to say it, no matter how taboo.

In talking about the play, she got very excited about the campy films, the forms she was spoofing. She wanted to talk about these movies and how fun they are. The style of the piece she had created was the most interesting to her.

Material costs

Estimated materials needed to build scenery for the show

Wood: 480 board feet of dimension lumber

Plywood: 432 sq ft.

Muslin/canvas: 600 sq ft.

Glue: 2 gallons

Screws: 12 pounds various sizes

Nails/air staples: 5 pounds various sizes

40 hinges

Bolts with nuts and washers: 325

Steel tube: 280 feet.

Paint: 12 gallons

Fire proofing: 4 gallons

50 swivel casters

- North Vietnam attacks United States naval destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin, prompting Congress to pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which authorizes President Lyndon Johnson to "take all necessary measures" and later justifies massive military buildup in Vietnam.

- The Civil Rights Bill is passed on July 2.
- The Surgeon General releases a report that links smoking to lung cancer; despite warnings, cigarette smoking increases.

- The war in Vietnam escalates, and American bombing of North Vietnam begins.

- At the University of Michigan, a "teach-in" to protest the Vietnam War heralds the beginning of the anti-war movement.

- In fashion, the miniskirt, designed by Mary Quant, appears in London and will soon be all the rage — thanks to the pantyhose.

- Bombing of North Vietnam escalate despite questions from some.

- The National Organization for Women (NOW), led by feminist Betty Friedan, is formed.

- Mao Zedong begins the Cultural Revolution in China to purge disaffected party leaders and kindle the revolutionary spirit of the Communist party.

- Anti-war sentiment increases in the United States: Martin Luther King, Jr., encourages draft evasion, more than 100,000 people demonstrate in New York, and 647 people are arrested out of about 150,000 who protest outside the Pentagon. Despite public outcry, more troops are deployed.

1964

1965

1966

1967



Thom Kendall/University Photo Services

When director Danielle Sertz decided to bring *The Mineola Twins* to the UMass stage, she decided to follow playwright Paula Vogel's suggestion that it be done in a campy way, with over-the-top costumes and bad wigs. But this publicity photo, featuring lead actress Anne McDonnell, should give you some idea of the direction this show is heading in, visually. Anne is playing two characters — Myra and Myrna, the twins — and will need to use the wigs and costumes in her efforts to switch from role to role, sometimes within a single scene.

Fact!

In a non-musical production, on average, it takes 30 people off stage for every actor on stage to get the show done. In a musical the average drops to 18 due to the large number of people in the chorus.

Costumes and Wigs

Interesting facts about costumes and wigs for our production of *The Mineola Twins*

Number of wigs: 18

Number of wigs worn by lead actress Anne McDonnell throughout the play: 6

Number of costume changes: 35

Number of costume changes for Anne McDonnell: 14

Number of sets of fake breasts for "Myrna" character: 4

Fastest costume change: 35 seconds

Cheapest costume item in the show: 99-cent "bank robber" stocking cap

Amount of fabric in the skirt Myrna wears in the first scene: 6 yards

To help Anne change from Myrna to Myra after the first scene, her entire costume, including bra, blouse, bowtie, skirt, slip and apron comes off in one piece with a big zipper.

At one point, the dancers in the show are "underdressed" (wearing all of the clothes) four scenes ahead.

Cheerleading pompoms are being made to order by a pompom company to match the costumes and set.

Some sources of inspiration for costume designer Nellica Rave: 1950s home economics textbooks, late-1960s detective movies, and *Family Ties*' Alex P. Keaton.

Class Exercise

In *The Mineola Twins*, Paula Vogel uses negative and positive stereotypes to examine recent history and how we look at men's and women's roles in our society. In this exercise, let's look at those stereotypes and how they have changed — or not — over the decades.

On a sheet of paper, draw two columns, one for positive stereotypes, and one for negative stereotypes. Now, for the 1950s, brainstorm and list as many of each as you can find. Pay particular attention to stereotypes about men and women. Do the same thing for each remaining decade of the 20th century.

How have the stereotypes changed. How do stereotypes about men and women from the 1950s compare to those from the 1990s? Can you draw any conclusions about how those changes relate to the stereotypes we have about those decades in general? Finally, although stereotypes may have some basis in reality, often, they are exaggerated or untrue. Can you make any guesses about the truth or untruth about some of the stereotypes you have listed?

- An overwhelming North Vietnamese attack on South Vietnamese cities called the Tet Offensive is a turning point in the war. In the South Vietnam village of My Lai, American soldiers kill over 300 men, women, and children.
- Inspired by Students for a Democratic Society, Columbia University students stage a sit-in, closing down the university in protest.

- Richard Nixon is inaugurated president of the United States and announces the beginning of troop withdrawal from Vietnam. Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) begin between the United States and the U.S.S.R., as President Nixon tries to control the nuclear arms race and promote a policy of détente.
- Neil Armstrong becomes the first man to walk on the moon when he exits the lunar capsule *Apollo 11* with the famous words "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."
- The gay rights movement begins in New York with the Stonewall Inn Riot, protesting a police raid of a dance club and bar in Greenwich Village.
- The Woodstock music festival stretches for four days.

- After Lech Walesa leads a strike by shipyard workers, Poland's Solidarity Party becomes an independent labor union, the first in the sphere of Soviet influence.
- Cigarette sales exceed \$600 billion. Smoking among adults has declined but is rising for teenage girls.
- Republican Ronald Reagan, former actor and California governor, ousts incumbent president Jimmy Carter. Inflation is running at double-digits.

1968

1969

1980

Women's Legal, Political and Cultural Position in History

Throughout most of history, women generally have had fewer legal rights and career opportunities than men. Wifehood and motherhood were regarded as women's most significant professions. In the 20th century, however, women in most nations won the right to vote and increased their educational and job opportunities. Perhaps most important, they fought for and to a large degree accomplished a reevaluation of traditional views of their role in society.

Early Attitudes Towards Women

❖ Since early times women have been uniquely viewed as a creative source of human life. Historically, however, they have been considered intellectually inferior to men and a major source of temptation and evil. In Greek mythology, a woman, Pandora, opened the forbidden box and brought plagues and unhappiness to mankind. Christianity's Eve gets blamed for causing humanity's expulsion from Eden by eating the forbidden fruit.

❖ Early Christian theology perpetuated these views. St. Jerome, a 4th-century Latin father of the Christian church, said: "Woman is the gate of the devil, the path of wickedness, the sting of the serpent, in a word a perilous object." Thomas Aquinas, the 13th-century Christian theologian, said that woman was "created to be man's helpmeet, but her unique role is in conception . . . since for other purposes men would be better assisted by other men."

❖ Nevertheless, when they were

allowed personal and intellectual freedom, women made significant contributions. During the Middle Ages nuns played a key role in the religious life of Europe. Whole eras were influenced by women rulers, such as Queen Elizabeth of England in the 16th century, Catherine the Great of Russia in the 18th century, and Queen Victoria of England in the 19th century.

The Weaker Sex?

❖ Women were long considered naturally weaker than men, squeamish, and unable to perform work requiring muscular or intellectual development. In most pre-industrial societies, for example, domestic chores were relegated to women, leaving "heavier" labor such as hunting and plowing to men —ignoring the fact that caring for children, as milking cows and washing clothes also required heavy, sustained labor. Research now suggests that women have a greater tolerance for pain, live longer and are more resistant to many diseases.

❖ Maternity, the natural biological role of women, has traditionally been regarded as their major social role as well. The resulting stereotype that "a woman's place is in the home" has largely determined the ways in which women have expressed themselves. Today, contraception and, in some areas, legalized abortion have given women greater control over the number of children they will bear. However, the cultural pressure for women to become wives and mothers still prevents many talented women from finishing college

or pursuing careers.

❖ Traditionally, a middle-class girl in Western culture tended to learn from her mother's example that cooking, cleaning, and caring for children was the behavior expected of her when she grew up. Tests made in the 1960s showed that the scholastic achievement of girls was higher in the early grades than in high school. The major reason given was that girls' own expectations declined because neither their families nor their teachers expected them to prepare for a future other than that of marriage and motherhood.

❖ Women obtained 19 percent of all undergraduate college degrees at the beginning of the 20th century. By 1984, the figure had increased to 49 percent.

The Legal Status of Women

❖ The myth of the natural inferiority of women greatly influenced the status of women in law. During the early history of the United States, a man virtually owned his wife and children as he did his material possessions.

❖ During the 1960s several federal laws improving the economic status of women were passed. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 required equal wages for men and women doing equal work. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination against women by any company with 25 or more employees.

❖ Despite the Equal Pay Act of 1963, women in 1970 were paid 45 percent less than men for the same jobs; in 1988, 32 percent less.

❖ Working women often faced

continued on back

- IBM sells its first personal computer. The operating system, MS-DOS, was developed by Bill Gates's Microsoft.
- AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) begins to be recognized as an epidemic.
- Both Pope John Paul II and President Reagan are wounded in assassination attempts. U.S. press secretary James Brady, severely wounded in the latter attack, will become the namesake of a bill advocating greater gun control.
- Sandra Day O'Connor becomes the first woman to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court. Subsequent changes, such as the appointment of Anthony Scalia to the Court and of William Rehnquist to Chief Justice, mark a turning to a more conservative judicial stance.

● U.S. Surgeon Everett Koop denounces cigarette smoking.

● Cellular phones first appear in the U.S.
● Crack debuts. This addictive substance spells disaster for many American people and communities.

● Apple Computer, founded by Stephen Wozniak and Steven Jobs, releases the Macintosh personal computer.
● President Ronald Reagan is re-elected. His Democrat opponents are Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro, the first woman to run for vice-president from a major political party.

1981

1982

1983

1984

The Historical Roles of Women, continued

continued from previous page

discrimination on the mistaken belief that, because they were married or would most likely get married, they would not be permanent workers. But married women generally continued on their jobs for many years and were not a transient, temporary, or undependable work force. From 1960 to the early 1970s the influx of married women workers accounted for almost half of the increase in the total labor force, and working wives were staying on their jobs longer before starting families.

❖ Since 1960 more and more women with children have been in the work force. This change is especially dramatic for married women with children under age 6: 12 percent worked in 1950, 45 percent in 1980, and 57 percent in 1987. Just over half the mothers with children under age 3 were in the labor force in 1987. Black women with children are more likely to work than are white or Hispanic women who have children. Over half of all black families with children are maintained by the mother only, compared with 18 percent of white families with children.

❖ Despite their increased presence in the work force, most women still have primary responsibility for housework and family care. In the late 1970s men with an employed wife spent only about 1.4 hours a week more on household tasks than those whose wife was a full-time homemaker.

❖ Sex discrimination in the definition of crimes existed in some areas of the United States. A woman who shot and killed her husband would be accused of homicide, but the shooting of a wife by her husband could be termed a “passion shooting.” Only in 1968 did the Pennsylvania courts void a state law which required that any woman convicted of a felony be sentenced to the maximum punishment prescribed by law. In most states, abortion was legal only if the mother’s life was judged to be physically endangered. In 1973, however, the United States Supreme Court ruled that states could not restrict a woman’s right to an abortion in her first three months of pregnancy.

Feminist Philosophies

❖ In 1789, during the French Revolution, Olympe de Gouges published a ‘Declaration of the Rights of Woman’ to protest the failure of revolutionists to include women in their

‘Declaration of the Rights of Man’. In ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Women’ (1792) Mary Wollstonecraft called for female enlightenment.

❖ Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a leading theoretician of the women’s rights movement. Her ‘Woman’s Bible’, published in parts in 1895 and 1898, attacked what she called the male bias of the Bible. Contrary to many religious female colleagues, she believed that organized religion would have to be abolished to achieve true emancipation for women..

❖ During the late 19th century the term “new woman” came to be used in the popular press. By the 20th century, more young women were going to school, working in blue- and white-collar jobs before marriage, and living by themselves in city apartments. Some social critics feared that feminism, which they thought meant the end of the home and family, was triumphing.

The Mineola Twins Study Guide

Prepared by the UMass Department of Theater Educational Services.

Editor: Anna-Maria Goossens

Writers: Anna-Maria Goossens and Megan Smithling

Department Editor: Patricia Warner

Dramaturgy Advisor: Dominica Borg

Outside Sources/Further Reading:

Timeline compiled from the History Channel website, www.historychannel.com

Paula Vogel biography:

<http://www.dramaguild.com/doc/bios/6135.htm>, web site of the Dramatists Guild of America

Twins: *The Sibling Bond* and www.discovery.com

Camp: Moe Meyer, *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*; Pamela Robertson, *Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp from Mae West to Madonna*; Susan Sontag, *Notes on ‘Camp’*

Women’s History: compiled from *Women’s History in America*, presented by Women’s International Center

Teachers: Please be aware that *The Mineola Twins* includes sexual references, as well as discussions of the Vietnam War, reproductive rights and homosexuality.

● The makers of the Dalkon Shield, a form of intra-uterine birth control, earmarks over \$600 million to settle a class-action suit brought by its users.

● The space shuttle *Challenger* explodes after lift-off, generating national mourning and a setback for the U.S. space program.

● The U.S. national debt exceeds \$2 trillion and is accompanied by a trade deficit of over \$170 billion.

● In the world’s worst nuclear accident, the Chernobyl plant in the Ukraine explodes, polluting the environment and causing some 8,000 short-term deaths.

● Electronic games from Nintendo debut.

● Soviet Secretary Gorbachev and U.S. President Reagan sign the INF Treaty in Washington, D.C. to reduce their nuclear stockpiles.

● In the wake of Gorbachev’s *glasnost*, political activity erodes cold war divisions. Soviet states agitate for independence. East Germany allows citizens to leave the country without exit visas, resulting in a breach of the “iron curtain” and a rush of migration to West Germany. The Berlin Wall, symbol of the division between East and West, is dismantled piece by piece.

● 10 million gallons of oil pollute Alaskan waters when the *Exxon Valdez* runs aground.

1985

1986

1987

1989