

*Zoot Suit* notes

The discussion started off with the question of what is most important to talk about with *Zoot Suit*. The themes that were brought up were racism, which was a running theme that showed up in the court as well as the penitentiary. The discussion then moved to the purpose of the press throughout the story. It was mentioned that the press was anti-*Zoot Suit* and helped fuel the racism with their headlines. On the subject of racism, examples from the story were the fact that the trial was a mass trial and the Mexican was accused of "stealing" a car because he was Mexican. Furthermore, the police broke into El Pachuco's house despite the fact he was already in jail.

Next the discussion moved to "what if" questions regarding the ending. One question was what if Henry married Alice instead? Also we talked for a little on the writing style of the ending which included the telling of the futures of some of the characters. From there the discussion moved to the part of the writing style that included Spanish. Some questions posed on this topic were 'who was the audience?' and 'what were the intentions of including parts in Spanish?' It was mentioned that the play was first done by an L.A. company on Broadway.

The next part of discussion was who or what is El Pachuco. Is he a narrator or is he the alter-ego of Henry? Also discussed here was the importance of the *Zoot Suit* in the Hispanic community. There was a noted difference between chicanos and Mexican-Americans. It was suggested that El Pachuco might be the soul of the *Zoot Suiter*. After

that part of the discussion, the discussion moved to talking about the character Swabby and his significance. It was mentioned that he might be a generalization representing the armed forces, especially the Navy at the time.

After the discussion about Swabby the discussion moved to talking about the significance of scenes such as El Pachuco being stripped and beaten, what do Zoot Suits represent, and the scenes in prison. Also we talked about the importance of Zoot Suits. For example, it was mentioned that these are not cheap items to come by; thus one had to work hard in order to purchase a Zoot Suit. The Zoot Suits represented a sense of pride for a certain generation of Mexican-Americans. The discussion concluded with a comparison between El Pachuco and Pancho Villa... it talked about how masculinity has changed over the years.