EPISODE THREE
CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO POSTAGE STAMPS
SYLLABUS
Episode Three: Caught Between Two Postage Stamps
Syllabus

OVERVIEW:

Born in 1925 in Bermuda, Oona O’Neill saw her famous father, playwright Eugene O’Neill, on only a few occasions after her parents separated when she was only 2. Oona became a fashionable teenager in Manhattan, attending the Brearley School and hanging out with the likes of Gloria Vanderbilt at the Stork Club. After dating J.D. Salinger she left for Hollywood, where she met her husband, screen legend Charlie Chaplin. They had eight children together over a happy marriage that lasted over three decades. Chaplin described meeting O’Neill as “the happiest event of my life” in his autobiography.

EPISODE SUMMARY:

Wooded by perhaps the greatest American writer of the 20th century, born from the loins of its greatest playwright and ultimately wed to the most famous performer on the planet, Oona O’Neill Chaplin lived in the shadow of three of the greatest artists of the 20th century and her story is interwoven with them all. We trace Oona’s life backward from her life with film star Charlie Chaplin in Beverly Hills and Switzerland to her years as a celebrated debutante among New York’s elite cafe society to her dark childhood as the only daughter of playwright Eugene O’Neill.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions based solely on material discussed in the podcast.

1. Why do you think Oona O’Neill fell in love with and married Charlie Chaplin?
2. How did Oona being abandoned by her father at a young age shape her life?
3. Why do you think Oona spent so much time at the Stork Club as a young woman?

BONUS QUESTIONS (for college listeners)

1. How different do you think Oona O’Neill’s life would be if she were a teenager today, instead of during the 1940s?
2. Do you think Oona O’Neill and J.D. Salinger would have been a happy couple had they ended up together?
EPISODE QUIZ (with answers)

Questions based solely on material discussed in the podcast. Correct answers in bold.

1. Which American masterpiece was Oona not a source of inspiration for?
   - a. Breakfast at Tiffany’s
   - b. The Great Gatsby
   - c. The Catcher in the Rye

2. Why did Oona and Charlie Chaplin leave their home in the United States?
   - a. For better film opportunities in Europe
   - b. Charlie wished to return home to England
   - c. U.S. authorities were investigating Charlie for communist sympathies

3. In which European country did Oona and Charlie Chaplin live after they left the United States?
   - a. France
   - b. Switzerland
   - c. Italy

4. What did Oona drink at the Stork Club when the reporters were around?
   - a. Gin and tonic
   - b. Coca-Cola
   - c. Milk

5. Who was Oona O’Neill’s mother?
   - a. Agnes Boulton
   - b. Gloria Vanderbilt
   - c. Rita Hayworth
PRIMARY SOURCES:

- *The Thread*, Episode Three, “Caught Between Two Postage Stamps.” Available at ozy.com/thethread

- *The Thread* immersive story page. Available at: ozy.com/thethread


SECONDARY SOURCES:


- *Charlie Chaplin*, a History Channel biography. Watch on YouTube.