

THE thread

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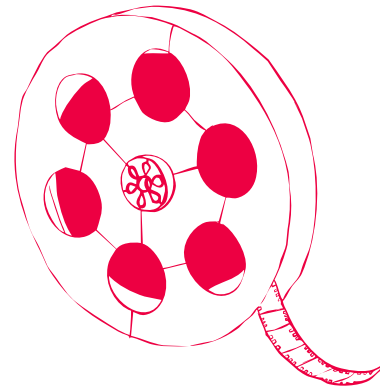


EPISODE THREE

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:

Wooed 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.

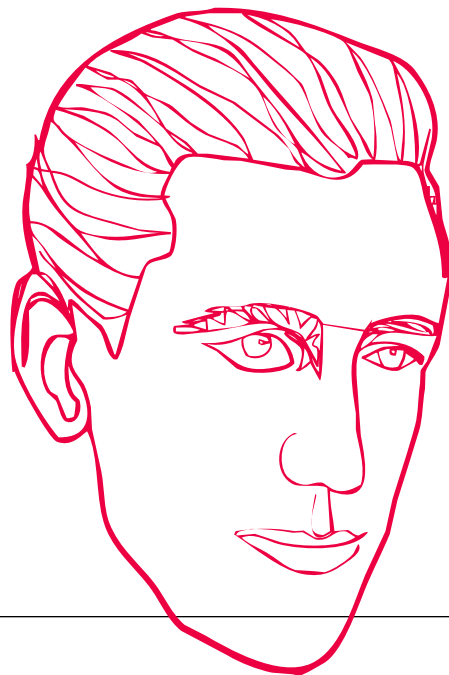
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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
- “Letter From J. D. Salinger to Oona O’Neill,” read by Annie Chaplin. Watch on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1111111111).
- Oona O’Neill’s 1942 Hollywood screen test. Watch on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2222222222).

SECONDARY SOURCES:

- *Oona — Living in the Shadows: A Biography of Oona O’Neill Chaplin* (1999), by Jane Scovell.
- *The Curse of the Misbegotten — A Tale of the House of O’Neill* (1959), by Croswell Bowen.
- “J.D. Salinger’s Women,” by Paul Alexander. Read at [New York magazine](https://www.newyorkmagazine.com).
- “The Story Behind Charlie Chaplin and Oona O’Neill’s Extreme Age-Gap Marriage,” by Samantha Drake. Read at [Country Living](https://www.countryliving.com).
- *Charlie Chaplin*, a History Channel biography. Watch on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3333333333).

