**The Effect of Gamma Rays On Man-In-The-Moon Marigolds**

**By Paul Zindel**

The play revolves around a dysfunctional family consisting of single mother Beatrice and her two daughters, Ruth and Tillie, who try to cope with their abysmal status in life. The play is a lyrical drama, reminiscent of Tennessee Williams' style.[citation needed]

Shy Matilda "Tillie" Hunsdorfer prepares her experiment, involving marigolds raised from seeds exposed to radioactivity, for the science fair. She is, however, constantly thwarted by her mother Beatrice, who is self-centered and abusive, and by her extroverted and unstable sister Ruth, who submits to her mother's will. Over the course of the play, Beatrice constantly tries to stamp out any opportunities Tillie has of succeeding, due to her own lack of success in life. As the play progresses, the paths of the three characters diverge: Tillie wins the science fair through perseverance; Ruth attempts to stand up to her mother but has a nervous collapse at the end of the play, and Beatrice—driven to the verge of insanity by her deep-seated enmity towards everyone—kills the girls' pet rabbit Peter and ends up wallowing in her own perceived insignificance. Despite this, Tillie (who is much like her project's deformed but beautiful and hardy marigolds) secretly continues to believe that everyone is valuable