



August: Osage County

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One of the most bracing and critically acclaimed plays in recent history, *August: Osage County* is a portrait of the dysfunctional American family at its finest—and absolute worst. When the patriarch of the Weston clan disappears one hot summer night, the family reunites at the Oklahoma homestead, where long-held secrets are unflinchingly and uproariously revealed. The three-act, three-and-a-half-hour mammoth of a play combines epic tragedy with black comedy, dramatizing three generations of unfulfilled dreams and leaving not one of its thirteen characters unscathed.

August: Osage County Details

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From Reader Review August: Osage County for online ebook

Brina says

Tracey Letts is the son of Billie Letts who wrote *Where the Heart Is* and other novels, all taking place in Oklahoma. Following in his mother's footsteps, Tracey Letts became a playwright, most notably of *August: Osage County*, which won both the Pulitzer Prize for drama and Tony Award in 2009. In *Osage County*, the dysfunctional Weston family has gathered to assist their mother Violet after their father Beverly's funeral. Premiering at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theater, *Osage County* is a gritty family drama.

Beverly and Violet Weston lived in a small Oklahoma town southeast of Tulsa. Beverly had taught in the Tulsa University literature department for nearly forty years after publishing a stellar poetry collection. Yet, he allowed the early fame to get to him, often at the expense of his wife and three daughters. Over the course of their marriage, Beverly and Violet separated three times to clear the air, yet inevitably reconciled. As a result, Violet became a pill popper and the three daughters carried baggage for their entire adult lives.

Following their father's death, daughters Barbara, Karen, and Ivy must come to grips with their own lives while simultaneously caring for their mother. Barbara the oldest is in the throes of a divorce and raising a difficult teenaged daughter; however, she has declared herself the matriarch of the house. Meanwhile, youngest daughter Karen is finally getting married to a business man ten years her senior, while middle daughter Ivy desires to run off to New York with her first cousin. Total family dysfunction and chaos ensues as the entire family must live under one roof for as long as it takes Violet to get back on her feet.

While the multi-layered characters appear powerful in book form, they inevitable are much more poignant on stage. From the exchanges between the sisters and their spouses to rants of Barbara to her mother or her daughter, this three act play is best seen on stage or a staged televised production. Yet, Letts has crafted a modern classic play rife with memorable characters, who will stay with me even in written format.

For 2017, I have devised myself a Pulitzer challenge across many genres, and *Osage County* is my first completed work. A play reminiscing on a lifetime of what ifs, *August: Osage County* is a play not to be missed. Tracey Letts has created a powerful drama, which I hope to see one day on stage. I also look forward to reading Letts' other dramas. A tale of a dysfunctional Oklahoma family, *Osage County* is a solid 4 stars.

Michelle says

I stayed up late last night so I could finish reading Tracy Letts's exquisite play, *August: Osage County*. I was fortunate enough to see it performed in San Francisco last month. I was especially fortunate to see Estelle Parsons reprise her Broadway role as family matriarch Violet Weston. I just learned that the woman is eighty years old! I can't believe the things she goes through on that stage night after night. She is truly wondrous, and I think I can say with more than a fair amount of certainty that this was the best play I have ever seen or ever will see.

August: Osage County can be described as a darkly comic drama about a dysfunctional family in Oklahoma. You're probably saying "Oh, that's nothing new," but in Letts's capable hands it is. It is **so** dark and **so** bleak and yet so hilarious – sometimes all at the same time. I am sure many people can probably relate to at least part of the family dynamic. At one point the friend I attended the play with leaned over and whispered (about Violet's son-bashing sister Mattie Fae) "That woman right there is my mother." No doubt many people could see at least some of themselves in one generation or another of that family.

Beverly and Violet, the husband and wife, probably loved each other once, but their relationship has degenerated into bitterness and passive-aggressive behavior. She is a pill-popping harpy recently diagnosed with cancer of the mouth; an irony that is not lost on Beverly. He is an alcoholic and the poetic equivalent of a one-hit-wonder. They have three grown daughters, and two of them live out of state while one has stayed in their hometown.

The action really begins when Beverly goes missing and the three girls converge at their childhood home along with Violet's sister, her husband, and their son. The eldest daughter brings her estranged husband and their daughter, and the youngest daughter brings her new fiancé, who has never before met her family. The tension is palpable.

My favorite part of the play was the family dinner scene. It was one of the most real and cringe-worthy things I have ever witnessed on a stage or even on a screen. It starts off pleasantly enough...there's the griping over at the kids' table, the bad jokes courtesy of Uncle Charlie, the fiancé trying and failing to make a good impression. I was just waiting for Violet to blow, and she didn't disappoint.

See the play if you can; read it if you can't or if you're a fan of theater. I read it because I just wanted to experience the Westons one more time. What a sad and beautiful treat.

Paquita Maria Sanchez says

Way better than expected. I hate to see Oklahoma so neatly dispatched, but at least it was an Okie who did it. Accurately.

Alana says

[what, you're in love with your cousin? (hide spoiler)]

Amanda says

Oh. My. God. This play deserves every hint of praise and recognition it's ever been given. A perfect blend of realistic household bullshit and and spectacularly weird fuckedupperry, the Weston family grabbed my heart and ripped it out through my tearducts.

How can you know when enough is enough? Or when it's not enough? How do you swim through oceanic waves of family crisis, when the breakers are nothing but violent reflections of your own personal doom? Goddamnit. This play is both human and animal at the same time. And regardless of the fact that some of the shit that goes down is pretty twisty, I'm astounded by Letts' perfect psychological portrayal of humanity kicking itself in the crotch. Repeatedly.

Fuck, this play is good.

Daniel says

It seems like it's been far too long since we've had a living-room drama play that is actually touching and disturbing and hysterically funny as well. I snorted with laughter and cringed with disgust while reading this. It was easy to imagine it staged, a real plus for script reading!

There are no heroes in this play. There are heroic moments by individuals, but really, no one comes away stronger or better off. A case could be argued for some, I suspect, and it could be staged or played that way, but the tragedy here is that none of these characters escapes the dysfunctional family genes.

If anyone ever wonders what the term 'dysfunctional' really means, or implies, this script could be THE example.

If I could have rated this 4-1/2 stars, I would have, taking half a star away for a couple of minor points.

Mainly...it went on too long. I don't necessarily mean the actual running time (though it would probably clock in at about 3 hours), but there were so many subplots that needed a resolution, and each ended as disastrously and dysfunctionally as the previous one, that it actually got tedious.

On the other hand the fact that each subplot actually had a resolution was a precious treat.

And...the dysfunction was just a little too much sometimes. Did Karen's fiancée Steve really have to be so stereotypically a lecherous jerk? Sure, it shows that Karen can't escape the tradition of dysfunction by choosing such for a partner, but it did have me shaking my head, thinking, "Oh, come on."

Still, all in all, a fantastic wild ride.

Ana Rînceanu says

This play messed up my brain... I have book hangover so we'll talk about it later.

William2.1 says

I saw this on Broadway so I'm going to count it as a read. Fantastic production with Estelle Parsons as the crazy mother.

Jason says

Hit the nail on the head with this one. Osage County has been dysfunctionally raw since the beginning. It is a place of treachery, murder, and hardship on the macro, and with this contemporary glimpse of the micro, this story is congruous with its past. The characters are alive. They breathe and weep and scorn through every scene. The plot was so simple that it had to be what it was. The plot was inevitable. Oklahoma was an ambivalent space of colliding cultures, not a melting pot but a caldron of dissonant, vibrating identities, identities on a path toward destruction, identities poised to give up. The only unfulfilled desire I had after

finishing this little treasure was seeing the play acted out.

Steven says

Given that there aren't many 2-star-or-below ratings, nor reviews with such ratings, I figured I should write something that may give another reader some sort of review to relate with (as I was searching for one earlier, but was left disappointed by the rather superficial reviews, e.g. "I couldn't relate with the characters," or "It was strong and powerful, but I didn't really enjoy it," etc.).

This play has a good amount of potential in it. References to Eliot's *The Hollow Men*, a set-up of commentary on Native American-White relations in the Midwest (Oklahoma), and a running commentary on the "relativeness" of literature. However, these aspects (including an exploration of time and death, as is usual in just about any piece of literature) sort of get thrown by the wayside and we mostly see family dysfunction taken to a rather extreme level (to the point of dysfunction-for-dysfunction's-sake).

The premise is rather cliché: the father goes missing and a family has to come together. And we have to wait a little while until we find out that he has committed suicide - but the only thing that seems important in starting out by hiding this information is to show the reaction of the family to this news, of which there is barely anything. The tale continues on as if his death is not even needed (other than to bring this family together - which is a rather amateur use of instrumentalism).

An aspect of the play I felt to be superfluous was Jean smoking pot, and then Steve hitting on her. This was predictable from their very first interaction. The play is already full of dysfunction without adding this on top of it. It's all just way overdone; in its quantity, all the potential quality that we started out with ends in a huge disappointment. We already understand how fucked up the world is; show us something more interesting.

Sawsan says

A play by the American author Tracy Letts
reunion of a family at August, Osage County
a lot of emotional damages and secrets have been hidden for years
after days of confrontation between the family members
they left home with feelings of grief and hurt more than before
good family drama, and the details of the characters are well written

Lavinia says

This is THE BEST play I've read in years. Twisted on ALL levels and digging deep into SO many aspects: family - in all its intricate and dysfunctional combinations, personal growth, addiction, the "great" generation, academia, you name it.
I would love to see this performed but I'll settle for the star-studded movie version for the time being.

Mike W says

I haven't laughed this hard while reading in a long, long time.

C?r?i ?i c?l?torii says

O pies? intens? despre o familie disfunc?ional?, reunit? cu ocazia dispari?iei tat?lui. Toate personajele au tare, sechele, p?cate, probleme, secrete, toate se rateaz? într-un fel sau altul de mâna lor sau din cauza altora. Mama, Violet, dependent? de pastile, tat?l alcoolic, fost profesor universitar ?i autor al unei singure c?r?i de succes, fiicele cu probleme ?i sechele proprii: Barbara p?r?sit? de so?, Bill, pentru o student? (ce cli?eu, nu?), fiica lor, Jean, de 14 ani, fumeaz? marijuana ?i e suficient de matur? s? în?eleag? foarte bine situa?ia din familie, Karen ?i Ivy, celelalte surori, triste, singure, cu singura ?ans? la iubire ?i fericire spulberat? de revela?iile care au loc acum, o m?tu??, Fanny Mae, mam? îngrozitoare, un unchi, Charlie, singurul care pare cât de cât normal ?i tat? bun, fiul lor, Little Charlie, infantilizat ?i nel?sat s? se maturizeze, personaje cheie într-una dintre revela?ii (alt cli?eu?).

În ciuda celor dou? cli?ee de care am amintit, mi s-a p?rut o pies? excelent scris?, intens?, care concentreaz? atâtă dramatism în câteva scene, cu citate memorabile, personaje excelent construite ?i un dozaj perfect al suspansului ?i tensiunii. Avem de toate aici: rela?ii dintre p?rin?i ?i copii, dintre so?i, dintre surori, mediul academic, dependen??, adulter, problema rasial?, discriminarea ?i corectitudinea politic? etc.

Abia a?tept s? v?d ?i filmul, cu o distribu?ie de zile mari: Meryl Streep, Julia Roberts, Ewan McGregor, Chris Cooper, Abigail Breslin, Benedict Cumberbatch, Juliette Lewis, Margo Martindale, Dermot Mulroney, Julianne Nicholson ?i Sam Shepard.

Kenny says

Brilliant.

Vasileios says

<http://www.dreamersandco.com/2013/02/...>

Π?ς ?μαθα για το βιβλ?ο αυτ?; Π?ρυσι τα Χριστο?γεννα στη Μαρ?τη ?θελα να δω μια θεατρικ? παρ?σταση. Ξαφνικ? βλ?πω οτι μια απ? τις πιο σημαντικ?ς φιγο?ρες της ισπανικ?ς θεατρικ?ς σκην?ς, Amparo Baró βρισκ?ταν σε ?ναν απ? τους πρωταγωνιστικο?ς ρ?λους της παρ?στασης August. Δι?βασα την περ?ληψη και αμ?σως συνειδητοπο?ησα το π?σο ?θελα να το δω. Για την απογο?τευσ? μου τα εισι?ρια ε?χαν εξαντληθε? για π?νω απ? ?να μ?ση μ?να. ?τσι λοιπ?ν, μου ?μεινε απωθημ?νο, αλλ? τουλ?χιστον ?πεσε στα χ?ρια μου το βιβλ?ο το οπο?ο απ?λαυσα.

Κ?ριο θ?μα του ε?ναι πως το αμερικανικ? ?νειρο που ζο?σε μια οικογ?νεια κ?που στην Αμερικ?, μετατρ?πεται σε εφι?λητη απ? τη μια στιγμ? στην ?λλη. Ο Tracy Letts μας παρουσι?ζει μια οικογ?νεια στα καλ?τερα αλλ? και στα χειρ?τερ? της, ο ορισμ?ς του dysfunctional. Η οικογ?νεια

Weston, αν και πολ? ψυχη ε?ναι γεμ?τη μυστικ? που χρει?ζονται μ?νο μια αφορμ? για να βγουν ?λα στο φως και να απογυμ?σει τελε?ως τους χαρακτ?ρες. Το ?ργο κορυφ?νεται τ?σο με στοιχε?α τραγικ? αλλ? και μα?ρης κωμωδ?ας. Ξεκ?νησε την επιτυχημ?νη πορε?α του στο Broadway με απ?στευτες κριτικ?ς και δεν ε?ναι τυχα?ο οτι κατ?κτησε το βραβε?ο Pulitzer το 2008.

?λα ξεκινο?ν με την εξαφ?νιση του Beverly, πατ?ρα της οικογ?νειας Weston. Η σ?ζυγ?ς του Violet μ?ζ? με τα τρ?α της κορ?τσια αλλ? και ?λλους, ?πως η αδερφ? της, ο ?νδρας της αλλ? και τα παιδι? τους, ?ρχονται αντιμ?τωποι με ?τι συνεπ?γεται αυτ? η εξαφ?νιση (αδερφικ? ζ?λια, οι σχ?σεις μεταξ? γονι?ν και παιδι?ν ?ταν οι δε?τεροι πρ?πει να τους φροντ?σουν κτλ.) που τους μπερδε?ει σε ?να παιχν?δι γεμ?το ενοχ?ς, δε?τερες σκ?ψεις και εγωισμ?ς που θα αποκαλ?ψει απ? τα πιο ανθρ?πινα μ?χρι τα πιο ζω?δη ?νσικτ? τους εν? ταυτ?χρονα ε?ναι ικαν? να μας ταυτ?σει με οποιοδ?ποτε οικογενειακ? μας πρ?βλημα.

Απ? τις πιο δυνατ?ς σκην?ς του, ε?ναι αυτ? που το διαζευγμ?νο ζευγ?ρι (το ?χουν κρυφ? απ? ?λους) βρ?σκεται στο κρεβ?τι αλλ? και η σκην? με το οικογενειακ? δε?πνο που ε?ναι σαν ?να καζ?νι που βρ?ζει και ε?ναι ?τοιμο να εκραγε?.

Αξ?ζει να πο?με πως ?δη γυρ?ζεται η ομ?τιτλη ταιν?α με ον?ματα ?πως η Meryl Streep στο ρ?λο της Violet (φιγο?ρα πολ? ξεχωριστ? που ?χει καταλ?βει τα π?ντα και ας μην ?χει πει τ?ποτα σε καν?ναν) αλλ? και ?λλοι ?πως ο Benedict Cumberbatch γνωστ?ς απ? την φοβερ? σειρ? Sherlock και η Julia Roberts. Η ταιν?α ?χει προγραμματιστε? να προβληθε? περ?που στο τ?λος του 2013. Την αναμ?νουμε με αγων?α! Αξ?ζει ?μως να διαβ?σετε και το θεατρικ? που ε?ναι τ?σο καλογραμμ?νο που διαβ?ζεται απνευστ?.

Kiwi Begg2Differ \ says

A tragedy triggers a perfect storm that will leave the Weston family relationships in ruins. Talk about drama! I loved the author used humour to relive the hard blows that the family secrets delivered. I remember watching Meryl Streep (playing Violet) stunning performance in the movie version, and I loved reading the play just as much. 4.5 stars.

Lesley says

This was a fast read because it is written in screenplay format. It does dysfunctional family well, drinking, drugs, cheating, lies and other secrets for this family in Oklahoma! I think its dark comedy at times (or to tell in the play format) but that's how my sense of humor took it. I liked this story better than I thought, I read this as its part of a 2016challenge I am doing!

Brian says

"It lives where everything lives: somewhere in the middle."

There is no doubt that "August: Osage County" is a great American play. Reading it one instantly gets the same feeling you get from the best O'Neil and Williams dramas. And like those plays, it is saturated with anger and bitterness and love, and all those complex emotions that make us human.

Tracy Letts has written the text in a very simple direct style that flows easily, and the structure of the piece fills out nicely. It opens with a prologue that is worth going back and rereading after getting about halfway through, just to see what new resonance it has now that the reader has more information.

Written in three acts, the same structure that many great American plays seem to share, the first act pulls you in with an interesting ensemble and plotlines that hint at more under the surface. The second act features a family dinner for the ages and violently and relentlessly will propel the reader to its conclusion. The third act contains more scenes, seems to have a quicker pace, and really punches the reader in the gut with many moments that come up in quick succession. In the hands of a talented director and cast this play would be a gripping night in the theatre.

A key moment that stood out to me was Act 3:2, when the character of Barbara realizes that she will never really know why her marriage ended. That moment of acknowledging that she will never get the answers she deserves is recognizable, and painful, to anyone who has suffered through a breakup where the communication was less than should be desired. And really, that lack of honest communication is what the play is about in general. Our inability to be honest with others, and ourselves, is a profound recognition that you see in yourself as you read this play. Which brings me to the ending of the piece, a dark warning that to live your life without honesty and kindness will catch up to you at some point.

"August: Osage County" is a play that will be performed and read for generations, and it deserves to be because it is about important human truths, and if we don't read and go to the theatre every once in a while to have those things pointed out to us...then why are we doing it?

Kazza says

A dysfunctional family dynamic on full and earnest display. The writer (play write) effectively nails the psychology of *you can't see the forest for the trees* of certain situations, especially pertaining to love and family.
