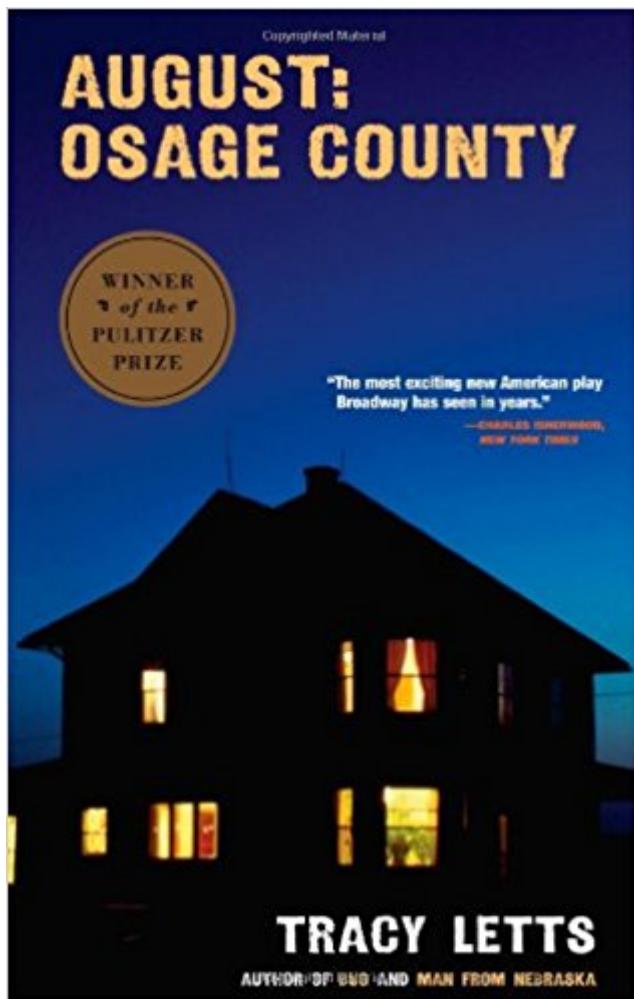


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# August: Osage County (TCG Edition)



## Synopsis

Winner of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the 2008 Tony Award for Best New Play. Now a major motion picture!"A tremendous achievement in American playwriting: a tragicomic populist portrait of a tough land and a tougher people." *TimeOut New York*"Tracy Letts' *August: Osage County* is what O'Neill would be writing in 2007. Letts has recaptured the nobility of American drama's mid-century heyday while still creating something entirely original." *New York magazine*"I don't care if *August: Osage County* is three-and-a-half hours long. I wanted more." *Howard Shapiro, Philadelphia Inquirer*"This original and corrosive black comedy deserves a seat at the table with the great American family plays." *Time*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* has been produced in more than twenty countries worldwide and is now a major motion picture starring Meryl Streep, Julia Roberts, Chris Cooper, Dermot Mulroney, Sam Shepard, Juliette Lewis, and Ewan McGregor. Tracy Letts is the author of *Killer Joe*, *Bug*, and *Man from Nebraska*, which was a finalist for the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. His plays have been performed throughout the country and internationally. A performer as well as a playwright, Letts is a member of the Steppenwolf Theatre Company, where *August: Osage County* premiered.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This fusion of epic tragedy and black comedy is a bold step for Letts, whose earthy, distinctly contemporary wit flows throughout. His account of a family whose secrets and lies come spilling forth under duress ranks with the best American drama of the past decade. — Elysa Gardner, USA Today

In Tracy Letts' ferociously entertaining play, the American dysfunctional family drama comes roaring into the twenty-first century with eyes blazing, nostrils flaring and fangs bared, laced with corrosive humor so darkly delicious and ghastly that you're squirming in your seat even as you're doubled over laughing. A massive meditation on the cruel realities that often belie standard expectations of conjugal and family accord; not to mention on the decline of American integrity itself. — David Rooney, Variety

August will cement Letts' place in theatrical history. He has written a Great American Play. How many of those will we get the chance to discover in our lifetime? — Melissa Rose Bernardo, Entertainment Weekly

Packed with unforgettable characters and dozens of quotable lines, August: Osage County is a tensely satisfying comedy, interspersed with remarkable evocations on the cruelties and (occasional) kindnesses of family life. It is as harrowing a new work as Broadway has offered in years and the funniest in even longer. — Eric Gorde, New York Sun

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Tracy Letts was awarded the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Tony Award for Best Play for August: Osage County, which premiered at Steppenwolf Theatre Company in 2007 before playing Broadway, London's National Theatre, and a forty-week US tour. Other plays include Pulitzer Prize finalist Man from Nebraska; Killer Joe, which was adapted into a critically acclaimed film; and Bug, which has played in New York, Chicago, and London and was adapted into a film. Letts is an ensemble member of Steppenwolf Theatre Company and garnered a Tony Award for his performance in the Broadway revival of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

I purposely chose the play form of Tracy Letts' 'August: Osage County' since there is a screenplay version coming out as a tie in with the movie. Reading a play without a great deal of content is so refreshing. 'August:Osage County' is so good, so dysfunctionally twisted, that no one gets away unscathed. A masterpiece. Mr. Lett's won a Pulitzer Prize for this jewel and deservedly so. The story is set in Oklahoma, in the home of Beverly and Violet Weston. They are children of the 60's, born into poor families. The Weston's worked hard in youth and for their toils have all the trappings of a good life. But it is not enough. The past's secrets haunt them and have taken too great a toll; Beverly drinks, while Violet is addicted to prescription drugs—again. Then Beverly Weston comes up missing. Their three daughters gather to support Violet and each other while they wait for news. This is when the sadness, madness and secrets of every member comes pouring out. At times funny, charming and shocking, 'August:Osage County' receives the highest of fives from me. I just know I will be reading it again. Aloud.

Tracy Letts's masterpiece won the 2008 Tony for best play and the 2008 Pulitzer as well. That's an accomplished double dip that has only been shared by 19 other plays in 90+ years. T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" is a symbolic poem whose themes run throughout the play, and the last verses of the play are also the last verses of the poem: "This is the way the world ends, this is the way the world ends...." The play is set in Oklahoma in 2007. It begins in August and ends around December. It opens in the living room of a country house 60 miles outside of Tulsa. We find Beverly Winston drinking and musing about life by quoting those he likes: Eliot: "Life is long" and Berryman: "The world is gradually becoming a place where I do not care to be anymore." He sums up his situation

shortly: "My wife takes pills and I drink." He interviews Johnna, a 20ish Native American, to work as a caretaker -- especially to look after his wife Violet, a cancer survivor and a prescription pill addict. The prologue ends and that is the last we see of Beverly. Beverly's disappearance causes all three children, his sister-in-law's family and a few assorted others, to descend upon the family home. We watch brutal arguments with stunningly vicious language -- and the meanest viper of all is Violet Weston, who is one of the most difficult mother figures to ever grace the stage. All three daughters have been unlucky in love -- never finding it, picking the wrong man or dealing with the difficulties of a struggling marriage in the face of aging and childrearing. All of these themes are portrayed in dramatic detail. Throughout the action, Letts discusses 21st century education, work, relationships, family, sex, drugs and laws through a variety of the characters. It's an instant classic and something that I'll teach my students if I ever get a drama class.

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'Neill 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?

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