



Picnic

William Inge

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The play takes place on Labor day Weekend in the joint back yards of two middle-aged widows. The one house belongs to Flo Owens, who lives there with her two maturing daughters, Madge and Millie, and a boarder who is a spinster school teacher. The other house belongs to Helen Potts, who lives with her elderly and invalid mother. Into this female atmosphere comes a young man named Hal Carter, whose animal vitality seriously upsets the entire group. Hal is a most interesting character, a child of parents who ignored him, self-conscious of his failings and his position behind the eight ball. Flo is sensitively wary of temptations for her daughters. Madge, bored with being only a beauty, sacrifices her chances for a wealthy marriage for the excitement Hal promises. Her sister, Millie, finds her balance for the first time through the stranger's brief attention. And the spinster is stirred to make an issue out of the dangling courtship that has brightened her life in a dreary, minor way.

Picnic Details

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Author : William Inge

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From Reader Review Picnic for online ebook

Matt says

I had the pleasure of not only reading this play multiple times this year, but also performing it for exam plays at my school this year. This is a play full of vibrant life exposed by the beautiful use of the English language by William Inge.

Eden Nicholls says

Southern, dramatic, fantastic, holy.

Nathan Holcomb says

After researching the author I found that he was extremely interesting and I can actually relate to him in many ways. William Inge is a Pulitzer Prize winning playwright and novelist. He won his Pulitzer for this 3-act play. He focuses on the struggles women had to face in the 1950s in particular. He is able to relate and empathize with women because he grew up surrounded by women. He had an absent father so he has a lot of respect for women. He was also gay, giving him an even greater understanding of some of the emotions and desires women have. He was very successful but often times was his own worst critic. He feared rejection and often thought his works wouldn't be successful, even though several of his writings have made it to broadway, television, and movies. Picnic is a coming of age story for young adults and focuses on the fears and struggles of middle aged single women. The 1950s was a time when women were expected to have husbands and families. This is considered domestic realism in a time when everyone wanted the American dream--the perfect house, husband, and family. To be feminine, women were expected to not work, clean house, cook, and take care of children. However, that just wasn't reality for everyone and Inge felt it necessary to talk about it. I really enjoyed this play and recommend it.

Dylan says

The play responsible for me quitting my job as a stage manager in college. Pointless, and completely irrelevant trash. No real expression of anything, just characters rambling on about nothing. Always hate when people jump on the bandwagon of some piece of "art" and say it's great because they've been conditioned to say it's great by other so-called experts. Then, without really analyzing it for themselves, they say it's great too and think they've become individual and thus superior to the rest of the people who haven't wasted their time with it.

Sookie says

End of summer, the weekend before new school year and a fresh romance in the making.

Inge's play starts with an idyllic morning set in the shared backyard of two middle class houses that is about to be disrupted by the arrival of a young man - Hal. The seemingly perfect relationships are tested and exposed with Hal's bragging nature and inability to stick to a job. Inge's play is anything but romanticized; it in fact explores the complicated relationship the women in the play, share. Be it the siblings who envy each other - one is the beauty and the other is the brains, the spinster school teacher who has a strict moral principle, the kind neighbor and the matriarch herself who desperately wishes her oldest daughter would settle down with her beau.

Inge explores passion, desperation, sisters envy, jealousy and the spark that is summer romance that changes everything. As the weekend comes to close, new dreams are pursued, old dreams are crushed and fresh ones are made. A fateful whirlwind of a weekend that changes lives of two families forever.

Bobby says

Probably the most "American" play I've ever read. The small town, the proper way to act, the outsider who is despicable yet irresistible: it's all here. Makes you feel so nostalgic you'll hum Souza, even though Inge is pointing out how deluded our perfect American dream lives really are.

Janay Brazier says

I've been meaning to read this play for so long and I'm so glad that I finally got around to it. It was a lovely, small town American play that I enjoyed reading. It took me less than two hours to read so it was a nice, quick read too. I wish I could see this on stage. I wish I'd seen the New York version starring Sebastian Stan too.

Sadie Hillier says

I would write you a review of this play, but instead I wrote a thesis on it. And I'm almost certain that no one on Goodreads wants to read that here.

Abigail Oldham says

A classic; my forever favorite play.

AJ (the.booknerd.reads) says

good dynamics between all the romantic relationships, as well as the familial aspect of Flo wanting to protect her children. decent writing, somewhat interesting plot. it'll be quite an experience to play Flo in a reader's theatre production at school

Flossmoor Public Library (IL) says

5 stars

- Ms. Jenn

B says

Thank you little Americana butter sandwich, thank you.

I am auditioning for this play. I had to look at the email twice to see that they really want me to audition for the 16-year-old younger, uglier, smarter sister, Millie. It's a great role, don't get me wrong, but... 16? I guess I did just play a 16-year-old murderer...

I was surprised how much I liked this play. I'm still not so sure why. Maybe it's the whole porch culture thing that I can very easily and viscerally relate to. That and the complicated sister relationship, the sense of loving and hating your sister at the same time for being smarter or prettier at that age.

I kept waiting for something major to happen like someone to die, but it turns out the message was just that you don't get to pick who you fall in love with. Which was fine.

There's this totally odd scene in the book where people take, I kid you not, like one sip of alcohol and then start acting like they've snorted a few lines of cocaine. It's weird seeing alcohol be the big bad Drug and have that heightened effect.

I don't know, I just kept smiling quietly to myself while reading this whole play. It encapsulated Labor Day in middle America just...so well, it made me ache.

Jessica says

I was reluctant to pick this one up on the heels of Bus Stop (which rather upset me), but I'm glad I did. Although there are still elements that could be construed as disturbing in the right light, really this seems like a much more "wholesome" play about young love and mistakes and less about predators and prey.

As a read, it's fine; quick, interesting, well-developed characters. But it's easy to see that this would shine on stage in a way that just doesn't translate via a solo reading.

I think Inge himself said he didn't really write "stories" but wanted to delve more deeply into the small vignettes of life and that describes this play perfectly. The most important actions of the two days over which the play is set happens almost entirely off-stage leaving the reader with the pre- and post- events which makes for a stunning way to develop characters in a very short amount of time and to keep the reader engaged as they work to figure out what EXACTLY happened.

While there are some pretty heavy elements to the overall theme, I dare to say it - this was kind of fun.

Katherine says

This play would be so fun to direct! Nuanced female roles. Maybe I enjoyed reading it so much because it explores themes I'm currently pondering.... like the nature of beauty, what it gets you and where it leaves you. My only criticism is, sometimes the characters' motivations seem quixotic. I mean, really, would any woman marry a man who said to her, after she asks him, "Well—you got to give me time to think it over." !! I guess that's desperation for you. Anyway, this is such a very insightful play and I loved it.

Stephanie says

If Tennessee Williams and Flannery O'Connor had a love child, it'd be this play. Streetcar meets Temple of the Holy Ghost.
