



## "Master Harold" ...and the boys

*Athol Fugard*

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This play about a young white boy and two African servants is at once a compelling drama of South African apartheid and a universal coming-of-age story. Originally produced in 1982, it is now an acknowledged classic of the stage, whose themes of injustice, racism, friendship, and reconciliation traverse borders and time.

## **"Master Harold"…and the boys Details**

Date : Published October 13th 2009 by Vintage (first published 1982)

ISBN : 9780307475206

Author : Athol Fugard

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## From Reader Review "Master Harold"...and the boys for online ebook

### Emad (TheBookCritic) says

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Actual rating: 3.5

Awesome.

The simplicity of this play (and its moral message) made it a wonderful read!

Racism is deeply rooted into the human nature, and we cannot get rid of it easily.

Harold would ALWAYS be the 'Master', and his dear friends would ALWAYS remain his slaves 'Boys'!!

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### Azizi says

I teach this play every other year and don't feel like writing a review this year. Perhaps I'll come back to it in 2018. =)

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### Edward Cheer says

I honestly first thought that this was some sort of parody or modernization of Mother Courage and her Children, purely from the similarity of the titles. Never have I been so wrong. This play focuses far more on aspects of philosophy, race, and politics- all between three characters and withing a relatively small amount of pages. I've really grown to like these plays with very small casts, showing how focused it can be on those characters. And the dialogue is really good. Some highlights for me were in the parts where Hally would talk to his mother and father on the phone. In the right hands, these could be some really emotionally-charged segments. This is one play you definitely shouldn't miss out on reading.

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### James says

#### Book Review

2+ out of 5 stars to Master Harold...and the boys, a play written in 1982 by Athol Fugard. It pains me to give this work only 2 stars as I know the value it truly brings to highlighting apartheid in South Africa when it needed more attention. Perhaps because I read this when I was still fairly young, I couldn't connect with it. As a younger reader, I often struggled with themes around depression, war, slavery and human rights. I couldn't fathom not treating people equally and fairly, and struggled to read the stories. Might be that I didn't want to feel those emotions or I didn't know how to at the time. With this work, the language, the theme and the overall setting was so unfamiliar to me, I thought it wasn't doing justice to the story and the cause. It was

meant for an older audience, and probably if I went back to read it now, I'd like it more. It's interesting to think about how you'd change ratings for books and plays as you age, hence why on my blog, I've created the "what age to read which book by genre" series... to help ensure books receive the best possible attention when being read. That said, I wouldn't discourage anyone from reading this as it wasn't bad; it just fell too flat for me. I suppose the characters were meant to feel like templates... archetypes as opposed to real people suffering... in order to show how this was happening all over in many respects, shapes and forms. In the end, it was work to read it, and when that happens, which is rare, I have to give a lower rating.

Anyone read this who felt differently? What did I miss?

### **About Me**

For those new to me or my reviews... here's the scoop: I read A LOT. I write A LOT. And now I blog A LOT. First the book review goes on Goodreads, and then I send it on over to my WordPress blog at <https://thisismytruthnow.com>, where you'll also find TV & Film reviews, the revealing and introspective 365 Daily Challenge and lots of blogging about places I've visited all over the world. And you can find all my social media profiles to get the details on the who/what/when/where and my pictures. Leave a comment and let me know what you think. Vote in the poll and ratings. Thanks for stopping by.

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### **Scott says**

I am really enjoying teaching this book. It felt like a risk since it's such a talky play, but we seem to be able to do interesting things with it.

Love me some kites and politics.

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### **Ethan Olsen says**

Very quick read that touches on family heritage, racism, and adolescence changes. This script has a flow that makes one finish it quickly and it leaves the reader with questions they must answer themselves. The imagery of this being performed live is what gives it such strong power as at times you can get carried along as these men imagine a separate world with you.

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### **Jolene says**

There's a lot to unpack in this hour-long interaction. I honestly hadn't heard of this play before it was introduced as part of the sophomore English curriculum at OPRF during a unit on South Africa, but I was in tears by the end (and trying to be subtle about it so the people sitting next to me in the coffee shop wouldn't notice). That last confrontation is heartwrenching.

I hope my students will find things in Hally to identify with: his curiosity, his attempts at intellectualism, his nostalgia for childhood. And I hope that identification will help them to understand that racism and whiteness are internalized and systemic -- sometimes despite an individual's personal experiences and feelings.

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### **Kirsten says**

The impact of this play on me was so much more than expected. I was assigned to read this for English class, so of course I assumed this play would be just another unimportant, mandatory reading assignment. It was so much more than that. This play, set in South Africa during 1950, shows the raw, ugly truth of racism. That it is not just a word which means discrimination against a particular race, it is a thing that breaks friends, families, and societies apart. Hally, a young white man who struggles with a failing relationship with his family, forms friendships with two black servants, Sam and Willie, who are employed by his mother. As the play progresses one starts to question how anyone, could say such horrible things to another human being, and feel they have justification in saying it. This play portrays a harsh reality of how things were, and I would recommend it to anyone.

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### **Liz says**

This is very interesting and satisfying play about a privileged white teen and two black servants in South Africa having an extended conversation, and set during apartheid. There are some high points, beautiful imagery in a monologue about ballroom dancing and also ugly pugilistic behavior which is fitting considering the setting. However, I dislike it when themes and morality are heavy handed. It's a good play but perhaps I would need to see it performed.

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### **Stephanie says**

I had to read this for my world literature class and it is now my absolute favorite play. It's short but powerful as it tugs at the reader's humanity. Despite it's broad themes of racism, coming of age, and family dysfunction, the play manages to be personal and affect the reader in the issue most important to them. For me, it was the coming of age aspect. It's bittersweet ending remains hopeful for a better tomorrow. I absolutely cherished this read.

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### **Hannah says**

Thoughtful play about the relationship between a white boy and two black men in apartheid-era South Africa. The play was Fugard's way of working through his own complicity in the white supremacy surrounding him during his childhood years. It shows how his family's servants helped him begin to grow up--and also grow beyond his early racist ideology and behavior.

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### **Camryn says**

I feel like this is another one of those books that teaches white people about racism. It wasn't bad and it made its point. I just feel like the racism directed at the men was really painful and not worth the lesson,

since I already know it.

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### **Kieran says**

Fugard manages to not only create a convincing domestic drama, but situates it incredibly well into the political milieu of the period in which he wrote.

His symbolism though understated is nevertheless powerful, and compelling events such as the kite flying scene are rightfully well known, not only for their metaphysical importance but also for the simplicity of the human drama that they convey.

The play is oblique at times, but all the more powerful as a result, as it focuses the audience or readers perception onto the tiny matters and affairs of the characters that create a comprehensive whole.

The dialogue is fast moving and natural, and is lenient with interpretation whilst still retaining its essential meaning. Though there have been a variety of performances, the characters (despite differing interpretations) remain ostensibly the same due to the meanings being conveyed.

This is definitely one of the iconic plays of South Africa, and deservedly so. It was made into a movie starring Freddie Highmore, so even if you're not lucky enough to be able to attend a performance it is still available to be watched.

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### **Laura Leaney says**

This is a powerful play about the damage of apartheid and the corrosive nature of shame. There is no "action" per se, all the dialogue takes place in one setting, the St. George's Park Tea Room, and is spoken by only three characters - two adult black men (Sam and Willie) who work at the tea room and the white seventeen-year-old son of the owner (Hally/Master Harold). It's 1950, and the relationship between the boy and the two men is impressively complicated. They, especially Sam, are the fathers he grew up with but also the "boys" of the play. Hally's own father is a cripple and a drunk, but Hally ends up directing all his anger onto Sam by the end of the play, changing forever the nature of their bond. He is an awful boy, lacking in compassion but deserving ours because we understand what has perverted his heart. What a sorrowful drama.

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### **Jyotsna Hariharan says**

You would think a little 50 page play with just 3 characters, set in a single room, with a run-time of barely 100 minutes, would be inadequately equipped to comment on something as nuanced and systemic as Apartheid. You would be wrong.

Everything great about this play stems from its supposed "littleness". Unlike, say Tony Kushner's epics, Master Harold is least bothered with the spectacle. It's less about the horrible, shocking tales of slavery and segregation, and more about the ways hatred manifests in the small, daily things. Everything about this play is a microcosm, a masterclass in minimalist writing.

That tea room in 1950's South Africa and those three men are all you'll need -not just to understand the basic problem- but to understand the origin of hate itself. And here's Fugard's piece de resistance: Hally, the person doling out the hate, is likable, intelligent and charming from the start. And once you're bound to the character

like that, Fugard forces you to bear witness to his racism and still continue empathizing with him. It's a ride - with snappy, light language that flows so easy. This will take you literally an hour to read, tops. Read.

P.S: there's also a metaphor in here -comparing ballroom dancing to wars and global conflicts - which is totally going down in the list of my favorite metaphors.

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