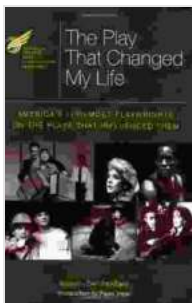


America on the Plays That Influenced Them

The American theater has a long and storied history, dating back to the colonial era. Over the centuries, American playwrights have drawn inspiration from a wide range of sources, including European tradition, American history, and contemporary social issues.

Some of the most influential American plays have been those that have tackled difficult or controversial topics. For example, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) explored the themes of futility and despair in the American Dream. August Wilson's *Fences* (1985) shed light on the challenges faced by African Americans in the post-Civil War era. And Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* (1991) examined the AIDS crisis and its impact on the American psyche.



The American Theatre Wing Presents the Play That Changed My Life: Americas Foremost Playwrights on the Plays That Influenced Them (Applause Books): America's ... on the Plays That Influenced Them

by Ben Hodges

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 2514 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 204 pages



Other American plays have been more lighthearted and comedic. For example, George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart's *You Can't Take It with You* (1936) is a hilarious satire of the American middle class. Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple* (1965) is a classic comedy about two mismatched roommates. And Terrence McNally's *Love! Valour! Compassion!* (1994) is a poignant drama about a group of gay men in New York City.

No matter what their subject matter, American plays have always reflected the values and beliefs of the American people. They have helped to shape our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world. And they continue to inspire and entertain us today.

The Colonial Era

The American theater began in the colonial era, with the first plays being performed in the early 18th century. These plays were often adaptations of European works, but they also began to reflect the unique experiences of Americans.

One of the most popular playwrights of the colonial era was Thomas Godfrey. His play *The Prince of Parthia* (1767) was the first American play to be professionally produced. It was a tragedy set in ancient Persia, but it also contained many allusions to the American Revolution.

Another important playwright of the colonial era was William Dunlap. His play *André* (1798) was the first American play to be based on a historical event. It told the story of John André, a British officer who was executed for spying during the Revolutionary War.

The 19th Century

The 19th century was a time of great growth and change for the American theater. New theaters were built in cities across the country, and American playwrights began to produce more original works.

One of the most important playwrights of the 19th century was Eugene O'Neill. His plays often explored dark and psychological themes. His masterpiece, *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941), is a searing drama about a dysfunctional family.

Another important playwright of the 19th century was Lillian Hellman. Her plays often dealt with social and political issues. Her most famous play, *The Children's Hour* (1934), is a drama about two women who are accused of being lesbians.

The 20th Century

The 20th century was a time of great experimentation and innovation in the American theater. New playwrights emerged who challenged traditional forms and conventions.

One of the most important playwrights of the 20th century was Arthur Miller. His plays often explored the themes of the American Dream and the search for meaning in life. His masterpiece, *Death of a Salesman* (1949), is a tragic drama about a man who has lost his faith in the American Dream.

Another important playwright of the 20th century was Tennessee Williams. His plays often explored the themes of love, loss, and the search for identity. His masterpiece, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), is a tragic drama about a woman who is driven to madness by her desire for a man.

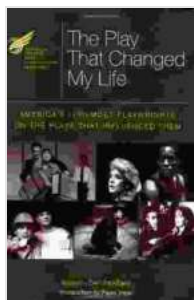
The 21st Century

The 21st century is a time of great change for the American theater. New playwrights are emerging who are using new forms and conventions to tell stories that reflect the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

One of the most important playwrights of the 21st century is August Wilson. His plays often explore the themes of race, identity, and the American Dream. His masterpiece, *Fences* (1985), is a drama about a black family in the post-Civil War era.

Another important playwright of the 21st century is Tony Kushner. His plays often explore the themes of history, memory, and the American Dream. His masterpiece, *Angels in America* (1991), is a two-part drama about the AIDS crisis and its impact on the American psyche.

The American theater is a vibrant and ever-evolving art form. It has played a vital role in shaping American culture and continues to inspire and entertain us today.



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