



Desire Under the Elms

Eugene O'Neill , Paul Adelstein (Narrator) , Orson Bean (Narrator) , Amy Brenneman (Narrator) , Dwier Brown (Narrator) , Maurice Chasse (Narrator) , Charlie Kimball (Narrator)

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Desire Under the Elms Eugene O'Neill , Paul Adelstein (Narrator) , Orson Bean (Narrator) , Amy Brenneman (Narrator) , Dwier Brown (Narrator) , Maurice Chasse (Narrator) , Charlie Kimball (Narrator) Eugene O Neills tale of Ephraim Cabot, greedy and hard like the stone walls that surround his farm, the family patriarch brings home his new young bride, Abbie. His grown sons disapprove; one leaves but the other stays to fight for the family fortune. What follows is a tragedy of epic proportions.

Desire Under the Elms Details

Date : Published October 1st 2004 by L A. Theatre Works (first published 1924)

ISBN : 9781580812818

Author : Eugene O'Neill , Paul Adelstein (Narrator) , Orson Bean (Narrator) , Amy Brenneman (Narrator) , Dwier Brown (Narrator) , Maurice Chasse (Narrator) , Charlie Kimball (Narrator)

Format : Audio CD 78 pages

Genre : Plays, Drama, Classics, Fiction, Theatre, Literature, American

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From Reader Review Desire Under the Elms for online ebook

Jessica says

By watering down the tragedy of the life and relationships of the characters with comical aspects, Eugene O'Neill balanced the line between darkness and humor quite admirably in this play. Or perhaps it's the sadness in the pitiful defense mechanisms each character uses to shield themselves against the mockery of the other characters (paired with their god-awful, redneck accents) that make it funny, but either way - it's good tragic humor. That said, it does feel a bit soap-opera at times. It's obvious that the father in the play represents O'Neill's own father, and the father-son relationship represents his own struggle to mend the broken relationship between his father and him, but I really like the plays that contain autobiographical glimpses into O'Neill's own life (*A Long Day's Journey into Night* is still one of my favorite plays); the other climactic elements that make the play read like a soap opera also parallel the plot of *Desire Under the Elms* to the tragedy of the Greeks (specifically Euripides' *Medea*), which was O'Neill's intention. He used Greek inspiration as a model for this play, but wanted to manipulate traditional structure and thought the characters would be more profound if they were "ordinary" people. I recommend it. It's a great introduction to O'Neill's work and, if you've already read his other plays, it's another good read. Just as a warning, though: the accents do require extra time to adjust to because they disrupt the flow of the writing, but read it anyway.

Clinton Powell says

In 30-40 years I need to find a production of "Desire Under the Elms" and play Ephraim. This is one of my two dream roles at the moment, though I will have to wait a while to get to try this one on. (The other dream role is Renfield in any adaptation of "Dracula", my more immediate acting aspiration.)

"Desire Under the Elms" is a masterpiece. The blending of Greek tragedy with Modern Realism works beautifully and helps make the characters sometimes outlandish motivations seem very real and immediate. The characters are clearly defined, the motivation is rooted in the emotional life of the characters, and the conflicting intentions of the characters combine for Maximum Drama. The use of the dance party gives a realistic motivation for a chorus of characters outside of the main plot to comment on the action and bring some levity before Eugene O'Neill brings down the hammer and hits you in the gut. This play pulls no punches and speaks to the deeper desires that push ordinary people to do horrifying things.

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[illegible][illegible]

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Mont says

Ephraim Cabot is a greedy, harsh old New England widower. He has taken over his second wife's farm and worked her to death. He has brutalized his three sons, working them like animals on the farm until they hate him bitterly. At 76, he marries 35-year-old Abbie Putnam, a deed intended to cheat his sons of their inheritance. The two older sons have left the farm, but Eben, the youngest, remains.

Eben hates Ephraim for the way that the self-righteous old hypocrite treated his mother. After buying out the claims of his brothers to the farm, he bitterly resents the arrival of a young stepmother who seduces him and he fathers her child. Her final act of love toward him changes his hatred of her to love, and he willingly goes away with her to share her punishment.

Abbie marries Ephraim to get a home. Abbie seduces Eben in order to get a child who will be Ephraim's heir and who will deprive Eben of his inheritance, but then she falls in love with Eben. To prove her love for Eben, Abbie smothers the baby.

The father achieves a Pyrrhic victory that costs him both son and spouse.

Momina Masood says

Well shit.

Ibrahim Saad says

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Rachel Teferet says

Seriously depressing, but with exquisite character development. They did a wonderful job on the audio production!

Illiterate says

Themes: Greek tragedy - power & pride, love & loss, incest & infanticide. Style: naturalism. Setting: rural America.

Ahmed says

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Ali says

A satiric play,also tragic, critical and full of movements,

[illegible]

J says

I now recall what it is about O'Neill that I dislike. All the characters are unpleasant, angry cranks, ignorant peasants, racists, caricatures, monomaniacs. It'd be nice to have a play where at least one character is someone you'd actually want to spend time with, but every O'Neill play I've spent any time reading/watching/listening just makes me feel like I've wasted time with odious company.

Nikki says

Everyone is tragically crazy here. That's the biggest impression I got from this play.

At first it was a bit difficult to read because of spelling and grammar and nonsense, but after couple of pages it got easier (the trick is, you don't need to understand every word).

Everything is a big mixup, everyone fucks up (pardon my French) and there is Oedipus complex involved, and old dudes who think they can make children at 75... well, crazy.

Brian McCann says

So. Much. Drama. Yikes!!!!

Tim says

This may not be as highly regarded as some of his others, but this reader enjoyed it immensely. It is not flawless, but it is unique. The language of the play is pretty distracting. For this piece, and I think only for this piece, O'Neill attempted to recreate New England Yankee vernacular from the 1830s or so. Therefore the dialogue is written in a ludicrous accent, with every pronunciation written out on the page. Characters say things like, "They's me, hain't they? What's all this sudden likin' ye've tuk to Eben?" - just to pick a random example.

The story appears to be based on the classic Greek myth of Phaedrus and Hypollita. O'Neill himself claimed the idea for it had come to him in a dream. The setting is in rural New England, and the play opens with the three Cabot brothers living together and working the family farm. Two of them, Simeon and Peter, are very similar, and disappear after the first act. Their younger half brother, Eben, is emotional and unpredictable. The father, Ephraim, has disappeared for some unclear reason. Eben takes some money that his mother hid away, and buys Simeon and Peter's shares of the farm, so that he becomes his father's sole heir. The 76 year-old father, a tough and egoistic old bastard, then shows up with a new, and much younger, bride, named Abbie. She promptly falls in love with Eben. He lusts for her too, but is torn between his feelings of resentment toward her and his attraction. Needless to say this is heading for a dark resolution.

It is really a powerful story, altho it is so over-the-top in both plotting and dialogue, so packed with rancor and passion, that it becomes almost funny. I think that O'Neill must have had his tongue in his cheek for some of it. Apparently, some audiences back in the day found it disturbing, with its oedipal overtones, and

the presentation of a father and son screwing the same woman, and other things. Interestingly enough, the high school class I taught this to seemed to like it and followed along with it very well.

Mariana says

A great challenge for a set designer, but the intriguing aspects of this play stop there, I'm afraid. The characters felt very one-dimensional to me, I just couldn't get invested in their stories, and so remained very indifferent to the unfolding tragedy. Not to mention I didn't find any of their behaviours very credible. Maybe it would be different in the hands of very talented performers, but somehow I doubt it. I remember feeling much the same indifference after watching the film adaptation with Anthony Perkins and Sofia Loren. The writing just isn't there.

Shanae says

The only words I can use to describe Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* are: shocking and disturbing. The play is very well written and the characters are so well developed that, as a reader, I felt like I really knew them. I understood Peter and Simeon's bond and their desire to make a life for themselves; I felt Eben's desire to own something and avenge his mother's death, pay Ephraim back for all he had done; I admire Ephraim's hardness and determination to succeed; and sympathized with Abbie's gold digging ways - her desire to come up should not be ignored (lol). These characters are so fascinating alone, but then O'Neill throws in some jealousy, desire, adultery, trickery, murder, and a few Freudian issues and before you know it, you're so into the play you don't want to put it down ever. I'm afraid this story will haunt me and I probably shouldn't have read it so late into the night, but I just couldn't help myself. I will be watching the 1958 film version with the lovely Sophia Loren later...I want to see how the director captured the drama in this play. I truly see *Desire Under the Elms* fast becoming one of my favorite literary works. It's so amazing.

Angela says

Interesting rendition of a modern Greek tragedy. If you dig Freudian concepts and revenge, this might be the performance for you.

Nikola Korbuc says

To be quite frank, the more appropriate rating would be 3.5-3.8 or thereabouts. The only major qualm I have with this play, though well-crafted and containing finely written dialogue in respect to its overall setting, is that it simply ain't **tragic** enough. The ending, in particular, could have been executed far better, the atmosphere being just a tad bit too vaguely saccharine - though indeed tragic - thereby taking away, somewhat, from the gloomy passion-imbued darkness that overarches the whole of the drama, much like the two brooding elm trees that loom over the Cabot house. Still, the hick-distilled symbolism, psychology of the characters, and the general ambient make for an interesting read, I'll concede. I should believe this work to be far superior when actually acted out, of course, and I *may* even raise its rating up a notch if I get the chance to see one of its better reproductions (thereby perchance assuring myself of its tragic virtù).

