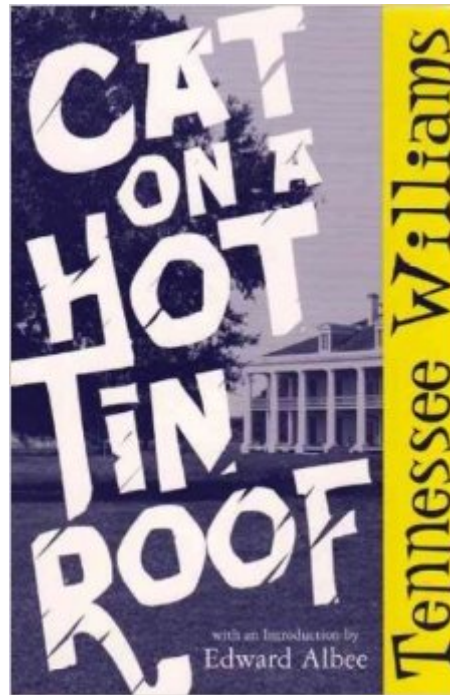


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# Cat On A Hot Tin Roof



## Synopsis

The definitive text of this American classic •reissued with an introduction by Edward Albee (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *A Delicate Balance*) and Williams' essay "Person-to-Person." *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* first heated up Broadway in 1955 with its gothic American story of brothers vying for their dying father's inheritance amid a whirlwind of sexuality, untethered in the person of Maggie the Cat. The play also daringly showcased the burden of sexuality repressed in the agony of her husband, Brick Pollitt. In spite of the public controversy *Cat* stirred up, it was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the Drama Critics Circle Award for that year. Williams, as he so often did with his plays, rewrote *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* for many years •the present version was originally produced at the American Shakespeare Festival in 1974 with all the changes that made Williams finally declare the text to be definitive, and was most recently produced on Broadway in the 2003-04 season. This definitive edition also includes Williams' essay "Person-to-Person," Williams' notes on the various endings, and a short chronology of the author's life. One of America's greatest living playwrights, as well as a friend and colleague of Williams, Edward Albee has written a concise introduction to the play from a playwright's perspective, examining the candor, sensuality, power, and impact of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* then and now.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a superbly written play about that most basic of human issues, the desire to communicate

honestly and openly with someone that you care about. At its core, Tennessee Williams' masterpiece is really about nothing more than that. Everyone wants and needs someone to listen to, and accept, you. All of Williams' plays are about lonely people when you come right down to it. However, "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" is unique in that these lonely characters are part of a large family, and at times are literally tripping over each other. What makes us lonely is our inability to communicate with those that we love. It is in that essential human drive that Williams creates the tragedy of this piece. A father knows his son is a closeted gay man; he loves him, but can't get the son to believe or accept that. A wife knows the truth about her husband, but can't make herself believe it. (Actually that last one applies to two wives in the play, for different reasons.) A man faces death, in essence alone, because he can't admit how terrified he is. And the list goes on. These are the stories of the Pollitt family of the Mississippi Delta. Those particulars are different for all of us, but the essential worries and fears of the members of this family are universal, and have been at the heart of a powerful drama for over 50 years. The writing of this play is luminous and gorgeous. In fact, at times it reads like poetry. However, the power in this piece is also due in large part to the structure of this three act play. The first act is almost a solo from the character of Maggie. The second act is a painful and terrifying duet from the characters of Brick and Big Daddy, and the final act is the ensemble number that builds, and then ends on a slow drawn out note. If you see "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" in performance it is a long play, and at times painful. You will not feel the same intensity unless you let yourself sit down and devour it in one gulp. Read the play in a day, and you will come closer to approximating seeing it in performance than you otherwise would. In the best of possible worlds, you will read it, and then a month or so later see it in a well done performance. This play is the pinnacle of American Drama. You should know it. Make that the case if it is not so!

Tennessee Williams's Pulitzer Prize winning play "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" is a reverie filled drama of lust, greed, and death that puts emphasis on the interaction of families. Williams creates universal characters that are pathetic yet familiar and therefore warrant the reader's sympathy. He writes with such deceptive simplicity that he masks his characters's inner turmoil initially, making the turnout of such characterizations intriguing. The play presents that humanity isn't beautiful while attempting to shed light on the emotional lies that govern the interaction of families. "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof"'s intertwining themes of the lie of life and the deception of death provide the reader with insight towards the ambivalence of life. To say so much within such a short piece is a mystery within itself. The sheer power of the plot is testimony of Williams's genius. The play is beautifully constructed and hits upon many themes and emotions with clarity and precision, making it an enjoyable read

while having substance. I did an analysis of this book for my junior Reading class, and recommend the read to anyone seeking high drama and a well rounded take on death.

"Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" is another masterpiece by Tennessee Williams, who was truly one of the 20th century's greatest playwrights. This play was presented in New York in the 1950s, and in book form it is an excellent read. I haven't looked at other editions, but the Signet edition contains two different versions of Act 3, along with a note by Williams explaining how director Elia Kazan persuaded him to write a second version. This feature makes the book particularly useful for teachers and students. "Cat" takes place on a Southern plantation, and deals with a wealthy, but very dysfunctional family. Williams creates stunning dialogue for his characters: Brick, the bitter, alcoholic ex-athlete; Brick's frustrated wife Margaret; "Big Daddy," the patriarch, who is dying of cancer; and the rest. Williams also establishes the plantation's original owners as a haunting presence through the lines of his characters. "Cat" is an explosive family drama about greed, secrets, guilt, alcoholism, and sexual frustration. Williams' characters are larger-than-life, and even grotesque, but Williams never loses a grasp on their essential humanity. An important book for those with a serious interest in American drama.

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