

king hedley ii

king hedley ii is a powerful drama that explores complex themes of redemption, legacy, and the African American experience in urban America. Written by the renowned playwright August Wilson, the play is part of his celebrated Pittsburgh Cycle, which chronicles the Black experience in each decade of the twentieth century. This article provides an in-depth look at King Hedley II, including its historical context, major themes, character analysis, and its impact on American theater. Readers will gain insights into the play's plot, its significance in Wilson's body of work, and its enduring relevance in contemporary society. Whether you are a student, theater enthusiast, or a researcher, this comprehensive guide will help you understand King Hedley II's place in modern drama, and why it remains a pivotal work for exploring issues of identity, family, and societal change.

- Overview of King Hedley II
- Historical and Cultural Context
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- Major Themes and Motifs
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Overview of King Hedley II

King Hedley II is the ninth play in August Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle, set in the 1980s in the Hill District of Pittsburgh. The drama examines the struggles of its titular character, King Hedley II, as he attempts to rebuild his life after incarceration and pursue his dream of owning a video store. The play delves into the generational scars left by systemic racism, violence, and economic hardship. King Hedley II is notable for its raw depiction of African American life, its poetic language, and its exploration of themes such as redemption, hope, and legacy. The play premiered in 1999 and was nominated for several prestigious awards, cementing its status as a significant work in American theater.

Historical and Cultural Context

August Wilson wrote King Hedley II during a period of significant social and political change in the United States. The play is set in the 1980s, a decade marked by the rise of urban

violence, economic downturns, and the ongoing struggle for civil rights. Wilson's work captures the spirit of the era, focusing on the African American community's resilience and challenges. The Hill District, where the play is set, serves as a microcosm of Black urban America and brings authenticity to the narrative. King Hedley II also reflects the broader themes of Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle, which collectively illustrate the impact of history, migration, and generational trauma on African Americans throughout the twentieth century.

Plot Summary and Structure

Main Storyline

The story centers on King Hedley II, recently released from prison and determined to start anew. He dreams of opening a video store and saving enough money to provide for his family. However, King faces numerous obstacles, including unemployment, strained family relationships, and the legacy of violence in his neighborhood. The plot unfolds as King grapples with questions of identity, purpose, and forgiveness, navigating a world that often seems stacked against him.

Supporting Narrative Threads

The narrative weaves in the lives of other characters, such as Tonya, King's wife, who faces a difficult decision regarding her pregnancy, and Ruby, King's mother, whose past choices haunt the present. Mister, King's close friend, and Elmore, an old acquaintance with questionable motives, add complexity to the story. The tension rises as personal ambitions collide with harsh realities, leading to dramatic confrontations and poignant moments of reflection.

Plot Structure

- Exposition: Introduction of characters and King's ambitions
- Rising Action: King's efforts to raise money and rebuild his life
- Climax: Emotional and violent confrontations among the characters
- Resolution: The play's tragic ending and reflection on legacy

Key Characters in King Hedley II

King Hedley II

King Hedley II is the protagonist of the play, a man struggling to overcome his past and achieve his dreams. King's character embodies both defiance and vulnerability, as he seeks redemption and a sense of purpose in a world filled with obstacles. His journey reflects the larger struggles faced by many African Americans during the 1980s, making him a deeply relatable and compelling figure.

Tonya

Tonya is King's wife, whose practical outlook and emotional strength serve as a counterbalance to King's ambition. Her storyline revolves around her decision about whether to keep her unborn child, highlighting the difficulties faced by women in unstable environments. Tonya's character adds emotional depth and realism to the narrative.

Ruby

Ruby, King's mother, carries the weight of past mistakes and secrets. Her relationship with King is fraught with tension and regret, as she struggles to protect her son while confronting her own history. Ruby's character is a poignant representation of generational trauma and the complexities of family dynamics.

Mister and Elmore

Mister is King's loyal friend, offering support and camaraderie throughout the play. Elmore, on the other hand, is a charismatic and manipulative figure from Ruby's past, whose arrival stirs old conflicts and new dangers. Both characters contribute to the intricate web of relationships and conflicts that drive the narrative forward.

Major Themes and Motifs

Redemption and Legacy

One of the central themes in *King Hedley II* is the quest for redemption. King's efforts to build a better life for himself and his family reflect a larger desire to escape the shadows of the past. The play also examines the concept of legacy, as characters grapple with the impact of previous generations' choices on their present circumstances.

Violence and Survival

Violence is a recurring motif throughout the play, symbolizing both the external dangers faced by the characters and the internal struggles they must overcome. Wilson uses violence as a lens to explore the cycles of poverty and desperation that afflict urban

communities. The drive to survive, despite overwhelming odds, fuels the drama and highlights the resilience of the characters.

Family and Community

Family dynamics and community relationships are integral to King Hedley II's narrative. The bonds between parents, children, and friends are tested by adversity, revealing both the strength and fragility of these connections. Wilson's portrayal of familial loyalty and conflict resonates with audiences, emphasizing the importance of support systems in times of crisis.

Economic Hardship and Social Injustice

The play offers a stark depiction of economic hardship and social injustice, reflecting the realities faced by many African Americans in the 1980s. Unemployment, limited opportunities, and systemic discrimination are persistent challenges for the characters. Wilson uses their stories to critique broader societal issues and advocate for change.

Critical Reception and Legacy

Initial Reception

King Hedley II premiered to critical acclaim, with reviewers praising its intense performances, powerful writing, and emotional depth. The play was nominated for several awards, including the Tony Award for Best Play. Its raw portrayal of urban life and exploration of complex themes won the admiration of theater professionals and audiences alike.

Long-Term Impact

Over time, King Hedley II has been recognized as one of August Wilson's most challenging and thought-provoking works. It continues to be studied and performed in theaters across the United States, contributing to discussions on race, identity, and social justice. The play's legacy is evident in its influence on contemporary playwrights and its role in broadening the scope of American drama.

Impact on American Theater and Society

Influence on Drama

King Hedley II played a significant role in shaping modern American theater. August

Wilson's commitment to authentic storytelling and representation of African American experiences inspired a new generation of playwrights. The play's complex characters and intricate narrative structure have become models for dramatic writing.

Social and Cultural Significance

Beyond its artistic achievements, *King Hedley II* holds cultural significance as a work that addresses pressing social issues. The play encourages dialogue about race, justice, and family, fostering greater understanding and empathy among audiences. Its relevance endures, making it a vital piece for educators, activists, and theater practitioners.

Educational and Community Engagement

King Hedley II is frequently used in educational and community settings to spark discussions about history, identity, and social change. Its themes resonate with diverse audiences and offer valuable lessons on resilience, hope, and the power of storytelling. Wilson's play continues to inspire meaningful engagement and reflection.

Frequently Asked Questions about King Hedley II

Q: What is the main plot of King Hedley II?

A: *King Hedley II* follows the journey of its protagonist, King Hedley II, as he seeks to rebuild his life after prison and achieve his dream of opening a video store. The play explores his struggles with family, community, and economic hardship in the 1980s Hill District of Pittsburgh.

Q: Who wrote King Hedley II?

A: *King Hedley II* was written by August Wilson, a renowned African American playwright known for his Pittsburgh Cycle, which chronicles Black life in each decade of the twentieth century.

Q: What are the main themes of King Hedley II?

A: Major themes in *King Hedley II* include redemption, legacy, violence, survival, family dynamics, economic hardship, and social injustice.

Q: How does King Hedley II fit into August Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle?

A: *King Hedley II* is the ninth play in Wilson's ten-play Pittsburgh Cycle. Each play in the

cycle is set in a different decade, offering a comprehensive look at African American history and experiences in Pittsburgh.

Q: Who are the key characters in King Hedley II?

A: Key characters include King Hedley II (the protagonist), Tonya (his wife), Ruby (his mother), Mister (his friend), and Elmore (an old acquaintance).

Q: Why is King Hedley II significant in American theater?

A: King Hedley II is significant for its authentic representation of African American life, its exploration of complex social issues, and its influence on modern dramatic writing.

Q: What is the setting of King Hedley II?

A: The play is set in the Hill District of Pittsburgh during the 1980s, capturing the challenges and atmosphere of urban life at that time.

Q: Has King Hedley II won any awards?

A: King Hedley II was nominated for several prestigious awards, including the Tony Award for Best Play, and has been widely acclaimed for its performances and writing.

Q: What impact has King Hedley II had on audiences?

A: The play has resonated with audiences for its emotional depth, powerful themes, and relevance to contemporary issues, fostering greater awareness and empathy.

Q: How can King Hedley II be used in educational settings?

A: King Hedley II is often used in schools and community programs to discuss topics such as race, history, identity, and social justice, making it a valuable resource for learning and engagement.

King Hedley II

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King Hedley II: A Deep Dive into August Wilson's Powerful Play

Are you fascinated by the raw power of August Wilson's plays? Do you crave a deeper understanding of the complex characters and social commentary woven into his dramatic tapestry? Then you've come to the right place. This comprehensive guide delves into August Wilson's *King Hedley II*, exploring its themes, characters, historical context, and lasting impact. We'll unpack the play's intricate symbolism, examine its critical reception, and offer insights to enhance your appreciation of this profound work. Prepare to embark on a journey into the heart of a story that resonates with both brutal honesty and enduring hope.

Understanding the Context: The Pittsburgh Cycle and King Hedley II

King Hedley II, the ninth installment in August Wilson's celebrated ten-play "Pittsburgh Cycle," stands as a powerful testament to the struggles faced by African American men in the post-Civil Rights era. Set in 1985, the play confronts themes of masculinity, legacy, and the enduring impact of systemic racism and poverty. Unlike some of Wilson's other works that delve deeper into specific decades, *King Hedley II* grapples with the lingering effects of a past that refuses to stay buried. It's a play about generational trauma, the search for identity, and the difficult path toward redemption. Understanding this context is crucial to fully grasping the depth and complexity of the narrative.

The Central Character: King Hedley II - A Man Defined by His Past

The play's title character, King Hedley II, embodies the struggle of inherited trauma and the desire for a better future. He is a young man burdened by his father's legacy, a legacy of violence and incarceration. His name, a reflection of his father's own, suggests a cycle of despair that he desperately tries to break. However, his efforts are often hampered by his own impulsive nature and the circumstances surrounding him. Wilson masterfully portrays King's internal conflict: his desire for redemption clashes with his impulsive actions and violent tendencies.

Key Relationships: Exploring the Web of Interconnected Lives

King Hedley II is not just about King; it's about the people who shape his life and are shaped by him.

His relationship with his wife, Tonya, is fraught with tension, revealing the complexities of intimacy and survival within a marginalized community. His mother, Ruby, adds another layer of complexity, representing both a source of support and a reminder of the past. The character of Mister, a seasoned con man, offers a stark contrast to King's youthful naivety, showcasing different coping mechanisms within a similar environment. Each relationship serves as a crucial element in understanding King's choices and the wider societal pressures he faces.

Themes and Symbolism: Unpacking the Layers of Meaning

The play is rich with symbolism, adding layers of meaning to its narrative. The recurring motif of the garden, for example, represents King's yearning for growth, renewal, and escape from his impoverished surroundings. The act of planting symbolizes his hope for a better future, but the challenges he faces reflect the uphill battle against systemic oppression. The frequent use of violence and death highlights the harsh realities faced by many within the community. The play's overall message is one of complex and often tragic circumstances, but it also hints at the resilience and determination to overcome adversity.

Critical Reception and Legacy: A Play That Continues to Resonate

King Hedley II received mixed reviews upon its initial release, with some critics praising its raw power and emotional honesty, while others found it bleak and pessimistic. However, its enduring impact on contemporary theater is undeniable. The play's exploration of complex themes continues to spark discussion and debate, solidifying its place as a significant contribution to American drama. Its exploration of masculinity, particularly Black masculinity in the face of societal challenges, continues to resonate with audiences today.

Conclusion: A Journey into the Heart of the American Experience

King Hedley II is not simply a play; it's a visceral experience that compels viewers to confront uncomfortable truths about race, class, and the enduring legacy of trauma. It's a testament to August Wilson's unparalleled ability to capture the nuances of the human spirit and to illuminate the struggles of those often marginalized in society. While the play's ending offers little in the way of neat resolutions, it leaves a lasting impression, prompting reflection on the cycles of poverty and violence and the enduring search for hope in the face of adversity.

FAQs

1. What is the significance of the title, *King Hedley II*? The title emphasizes the cyclical nature of poverty and violence, suggesting that King is doomed to repeat his father's mistakes unless he actively fights against his inherited trauma.
2. How does the setting of 1985 contribute to the play's themes? The post-Civil Rights era setting highlights the lingering effects of systemic racism and the continued struggle for equality, despite legal advancements.
3. What are some of the key symbols used in the play? The garden, the gun, and the act of planting are all significant symbols, representing themes of hope, violence, and the potential for growth.
4. How does *King Hedley II* compare to other plays in the Pittsburgh Cycle? While sharing thematic concerns with other plays in the cycle, *King Hedley II* focuses specifically on the experiences of a younger generation grappling with the lingering effects of the past.
5. What makes *King Hedley II* a significant work of American drama? Its unflinching portrayal of marginalized communities, its exploration of complex themes, and its powerful language solidify its place as a crucial contribution to American theater.

king hedley ii: *King Hedley II* August Wilson, 2005 The eighth work in playwright August Wilson's ten-play cycle chronicling the history of the African-American experience in each decade of the 20th century, *King Hedley II* is set in 1985 and tells the story of an ex-con in post-Reagan Pittsburgh trying to rebuild his life.

king hedley ii: *August Wilson's King Hedley II* August Wilson, 2015-09 Peddling stolen refrigerators in the feeble hope of making enough money to open a video store, King Hedley, a man whose self worth is built on self delusion, is scraping in the dirt of an urban backyard trying to plant seeds where nothing will grow. Getting, spending, killing and dying in a world where getting is hard and killing is commonplace are threads woven into this 1980's installment in the author's renowned cycle of plays about the black experience in America. Drawing on characters established in *Seven Guitars*, *King Hedley II* shows the shadows of the past reaching into the present as King seeks retribution for a lie perpetrated by his mother regarding the identity of his father.

king hedley ii: *King Hedley II* August Wilson, 2008

king hedley ii: *Seven Guitars* August Wilson, 1997-08-01 Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson* Winner of the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play It is the spring of 1948. In the still cool evenings of Pittsburgh's Hill district, familiar sounds fill the air. A rooster crows. Screen doors slam. The laughter of friends gathered for a backyard card game rises just above the wail of a mother who has lost her son. And there's the sound of the blues, played and sung by young men and women with little more than a guitar in their hands and a dream in their hearts. August Wilson's *Seven Guitars* is the sixth chapter in his continuing theatrical saga that explores the hope, heartbreak, and heritage of the African-American experience in the twentieth century. The story follows a small group of friends who gather following the untimely death of Floyd Schoolboy Barton, a local blues guitarist on the edge of stardom. Together, they reminisce about his short life and discover the unspoken passions and undying spirit that live within each of them.

king hedley ii: *August Wilson* Alan Nadel, 2010-05-16 Contributors to this collection of 15 essays are academics in English, theater, and African American studies. They focus on the second half of Wilson's century cycle of plays, examining each play within the larger context of the cycle and

highlighting themes within and across particular plays. Some topics discussed include business in the street in *Jitney* and *Gem of the Ocean*, contesting black male responsibilities in *Jitney*, the holistic blues of *Seven Guitars*, violence as history lesson in *Seven Guitars* and *King Hedley II*, and ritual death and Wilson's female Christ. The book offers an index of plays, critics, and theorists, but not a subject index. Nadel is chair of American literature and culture at the University of Kentucky.

king hedley ii: August Wilson's *Jitney* August Wilson, 2002 Regular cabs will not travel to the Pittsburgh Hill District of the 1970s, and so the residents turn to each other. *Jitney* dramatizes the lives of men hustling to make a living as jitneys--unofficial, unlicensed taxi cab drivers. When the boss Becker's son returns from prison, violence threatens to erupt. What makes this play remarkable is not the plot; *Jitney* is Wilson at his most real--the words these men use and the stories they tell form a true slice of life.--The Wikipedia entry, accessed 5/22/2014.

king hedley ii: *The Ground on which I Stand* August Wilson, 2001 August Wilson's radical and provocative call to arms.

king hedley ii: *King Hedley the Second* August Wilson, 2007 *King Hedley II* is the eighth work in playwright August Wilson's 10-play cycle chronicling the history of the African American experience in each decade of the twentieth century. It's set in 1985 and tells the story of an ex-con in post-Reagan Pittsburgh trying to rebuild his life.

king hedley ii: August Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle Sandra G. Shannon, 2016-01-14 Providing a detailed study of American playwright August Wilson (1945-2005), this collection of new essays explores the development of the author's ethos across his twenty-five-year creative career--a process that transformed his life as he retraced the lives of his fellow Africans in America. While Wilson's narratives of Pittsburgh and Chicago are microcosms of black life in America, they also reflect the psychological trauma of his disconnection with his biological father, his impassioned efforts to discover and reconnect with the blues, with Africa and with poet/activist Amiri Baraka, and his love for the vernacular of Pittsburgh.

king hedley ii: *How I Learned What I Learned* August Wilson, 2018-05 From Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson comes a one-man show that chronicles his life as a Black artist in the Hill District in Pittsburgh. From stories about his first jobs to his first loves and his experiences with racism, Wilson recounts his life from his roots to the completion of *The American Century Cycle*. *How I Learned What I Learned* gives an inside look into one of the most celebrated playwriting voices of the twentieth century.

king hedley ii: *Corduroy Takes a Bow* Viola Davis, 2018-09-04 Celebrate 50 years of America's favorite teddy bear with a brand-new, classically illustrated picture book by Academy Award winner Viola Davis. When Lisa takes *Corduroy* to the theater for the very first time, it's so magnificent and exciting that he just can't help heading out on his own to explore. From the orchestra pit to the prop table to the dressing rooms, *Corduroy* sees it all. Could there be a place for *Corduroy* on stage, too? Fifty years after this lovable, inquisitive teddy bear was first introduced to readers, he's now the star of the show. Author and Audiobook narrator Viola Davis uses her own experience as an Emmy, Tony, and Oscar Award-winning actress to imbue *Corduroy's* adventure with all the magic of the stage. A beautifully illustrated tale with a classic feel, *Corduroy Takes a Bow* is sure to spark an interest in theater in children of any age.

king hedley ii: *The Facts on File Companion to American Drama* Jackson R. Bryer, Mary C. Hartig, 2010 Features a comprehensive guide to American dramatic literature, from its origins in the early days of the nation to the groundbreaking works of today's best writers.

king hedley ii: *The Cambridge Companion to August Wilson* Christopher Bigsby, 2007-11-29 One of America's most powerful and original dramatists, August Wilson offered an alternative history of the twentieth century, as seen from the perspective of black Americans. He celebrated the lives of those seemingly pushed to the margins of national life, but who were simultaneously protagonists of their own drama and evidence of a vital and compelling community. Decade by decade, he told the story of a people with a distinctive history who forged their own future, aware of their roots in another time and place, but doing something more than just survive.

Wilson deliberately addressed black America, but in doing so discovered an international audience. Alongside chapters addressing Wilson's life and career, and the wider context of his plays, this Companion dedicates individual chapters to each play in his ten-play cycle, which are ordered chronologically, demonstrating Wilson's notion of an unfolding history of the twentieth century.

king hedley ii: *The Taking of Hong Kong* Susanna Hoe, Derek Roebuck, 2013-10-11 Relations between Britain and China have, for over 150 years, been inextricably bound up with the taking of Hong Kong Island on 26 January 1841. The man responsible, Britain's plenipotentiary Captain Charles Elliot, was recalled by his government in disgrace and has been vilified ever since by China. This book describes the taking of Hong Kong from Elliot's point of view for the first time - through the personal letters of himself and his wife Clara - and shows a man of intelligence, conscience and humanitarian instincts. The book gives new insights into Sino-British relations of the period. Because these are now being re-assessed both historically and for the future, revelations about Elliot's role, intentions and analysis are significant and could make an important difference to our understanding of the dynamics of these relations. On a different level, the book explores how Charles the private man, with his wife by his side, experienced events, rather than how Elliot the public figure reported them to the British government. The work is therefore of great historiographical interest.

king hedley ii: *Broadway Yearbook 2000-2001* Steven Suskin, 2002-06-28 Broadway Yearbook 2000-2001 is a relevant and irreverent record of the theatrical year. A vivid album of the year on the Great White Way, Broadway Yearbook gives readers front-row seats for the phenomenon of The Producers and the rest of the season's hits and misses. Steven Suskin's acclaimed new theatre annual delivers a vibrant, candid, and thoughtful account of every show to hit the boards: exciting musicals such as *The Full Monty* and the revival of *42nd Street*; intriguing new plays like *Proof* and *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*; and fascinating failures, including *Jane Eyre* and the beleaguered *Seussical*. Broadway Yearbook tells us what the shows were actually like. It is an interpretive record, featuring not only dates and names but also the stories behind the statistics. Each entry is accompanied by credits and cast lists, scorecards summarizing overall critical reception for each show, a summary of each show's financial performance, and copies of the illustrative program covers and title pages. Appendices provide a roundup of the season's major awards, memorable performances of the year, obituaries, long run leaders, shows still running from prior seasons, scheduled shows that never reached Broadway, and a comprehensive index. Steven Suskin has provided a unique and detailed record of the season's memorable moments and high points (and low points as well). Written from an insider's perspective, the book is knowledgeable, intriguing, provocative, and entertaining. Broadway Yearbook brings the shows of the 2000-2001 season back for an encore.

king hedley ii: *King Hedley II* August Wilson, 2007 The story of an ex-con in post-Reagan Pittsburgh, 1985, trying to rebuild his life. Part of August Wilson's Century Cycle, his epic dramatisation of the African American experience in the twentieth century. 'By focusing on the eternal journey of the misplaced African, whose story was the truest account of the American struggle toward freedom and independence, he opened up not only what American theater could be about, but also who could do the telling' Marion McCClinton, from her Foreword

king hedley ii: *Gem of the Ocean* August Wilson, 2006 The ninth play of Wilson's 10-play masterwork

king hedley ii: *Approaches to Teaching the Plays of August Wilson* Sandra G. Shannon, Sandra L. Richards, 2016-06-01 The award-winning playwright August Wilson used drama as a medium to write a history of twentieth-century America through the perspectives of its black citizenry. In the plays of his Pittsburgh Cycle, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*, Wilson mixes African spirituality with the realism of the American theater and puts African American storytelling and performance practices in dialogue with canonical writers like Aristotle and Shakespeare. As they portray black Americans living through migration, industrialization, and war, Wilson's plays explore the relation between a unified black consciousness and America's collective identity. In part 1 of this volume, Materials, the editors survey sources on Wilson's biography,

teachable texts of Wilson's plays, useful secondary readings, and compelling audiovisual and Web resources. The essays in part 2, Approaches, look at a diverse set of issues in Wilson's work, including the importance of blues and jazz, intertextual connections to other playwrights, race in performance, Yoruban spirituality, and the role of women in the plays.

king hedley ii: Modern Drama Richard Paul Knowles, William B. Worthen, Joanne Tompkins, 2003-01-01 The contributors examine varied topics such as the analysis of periodicity; the articulation of social, political, and cultural production in theatre; the re-evaluation of texts, performances, and canons; and demonstrations of how interdisciplinarity inflects theatre and its practice.

king hedley ii: Two Trains Running August Wilson, 2019-08-06 From the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson* comes a "vivid and uplifting" (Time) play about unsung men and women who are anything but ordinary. August Wilson established himself as one of our most distinguished playwrights with his insightful, probing, and evocative portraits of Black America and the African American experience in the twentieth century. With the mesmerizing *Two Trains Running*, he crafted what Time magazine called "his most mature work to date." It is Pittsburgh, 1969, and the regulars of Memphis Lee's restaurant are struggling to cope with the turbulence of a world that is changing rapidly around them and fighting back when they can. The diner is scheduled to be torn down, a casualty of the city's renovation project that is sweeping away the buildings of a community, but not its spirit. For just as sure as an inexorable future looms right around the corner, these people of "loud voices and big hearts" continue to search, to father, to persevere, to hope. With compassion, humor, and a superb sense of place and time, Wilson paints a vivid portrait of everyday lives in the shadow of great events.

king hedley ii: The Theatre of August Wilson Alan Nadel, 2018-05-17 The first comprehensive study of August Wilson's drama introduces the major themes and motifs that unite Wilson's ten-play cycle about African American life in each decade of the twentieth century. Framed by Wilson's life experiences and informed by his extensive interviews, this book provides fresh, coherent, detailed readings of each play, well-situated in the extant scholarship. It also provides an overview of the cycle as a whole, demonstrating how it comprises a compelling interrogation of American culture and historiography. Keenly aware of the musical paradigms informing Wilson's dramatic technique, Nadel shows how jazz and, particularly, the blues provide the structural mechanisms that allow Wilson to examine alternative notions of time, property, and law. Wilson's improvisational logics become crucial to expressing his notions of black identity and resituating the relationship of literal to figurative in the African American community. The final two chapters include contributions by scholars Harry J. Elam, Jr. and Donald E. Pease

king hedley ii: Conversations with August Wilson Jackson R. Bryer, Mary C. Hartig, 2006 Collects a selection of the many interviews Wilson gave from 1984 to 2004. In the interviews, the playwright covers at length and in detail his plays and his background. He comments as well on such subjects as the differences between African Americans and whites, his call for more black theater companies, and his belief that African Americans made a mistake in assimilating themselves into the white mainstream. He also talks about his major influences, what he calls his four B's-- the blues, writers James Baldwin and Amiri Baraka, and painter Romare Bearden. Wilson also discusses his writing process and his multiple collaborations with director Lloyd Richards--Publisher description.

king hedley ii: Rutherford and Son Githa Sowerby, 2019-07-25 No one's any right to be what father is - never questioned, never answered back... First staged in 1912 and described as the most powerful play produced in England in this decade, Githa Sowerby's Edwardian classic on family and labour enjoyed huge success in London and New York before disappearing from view. In a Northern industrial town, John Rutherford rules both factory and family with an iron will. But even as the furnaces burn relentlessly at the Glassworks, at home his children begin to turn against him. Sowerby's astonishing play was inspired by her own experience of growing up in a family-run factory in Gateshead. Writing in 1912, when female voices were seldom heard on British stages, she now claims her place alongside Ibsen and Bernard Shaw with this searing depiction of class, gender and

generational warfare. This new edition was published to coincide with the National Theatre's revival in May 2019.

king hedley ii: Joe Turner's Come and Gone August Wilson, 2019-08-06 From the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Fences* comes Joe Turner's Come and Gone—Winner of the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play. “The glow accompanying August Wilson’s place in contemporary American theater is fixed.”—Toni Morrison When Harold Loomis arrives at a black Pittsburgh boardinghouse after seven years' impressed labor on Joe Turner's chain gang, he is a free man—in body. But the scars of his enslavement and a sense of inescapable alienation oppress his spirit still, and the seemingly hospitable rooming house seethes with tension and distrust in the presence of this tormented stranger. Loomis is looking for the wife he left behind, believing that she can help him reclaim his old identity. But through his encounters with the other residents he begins to realize that what he really seeks is his rightful place in a new world—and it will take more than the skill of the local “People Finder” to discover it. This jazz-influenced drama is a moving narrative of African-American experience in the 20th century.

king hedley ii: Finding Me Viola Davis, 2023-04-04 THE INSTANT SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER 'A mind-blowing and emotionally honest tale of survival against all odds.' BERNARDINE EVARISTO 'A breathtaking memoir...I was so moved by this book.' Oprah 'It is startlingly honest and, at times, a jaw-dropping read, charting her rise from poverty and abuse to becoming the first African-American to win the triple crown of an Oscar, Emmy and Tony for acting.' BBC News THE DEEPLY PERSONAL, BRUTALLY HONEST ACCOUNT OF VIOLA'S INSPIRING LIFE In my book, you will meet a little girl named Viola who ran from her past until she made a life changing decision to stop running forever. This is my story, from a crumbling apartment in Central Falls, Rhode Island, to the stage in New York City, and beyond. This is the path I took to finding my purpose and my strength, but also to finding my voice in a world that didn't always see me. As I wrote *Finding Me*, my eyes were open to the truth of how our stories are often not given close examination. They are bogarted, reinvented to fit into a crazy, competitive, judgmental world. So I wrote this for anyone who is searching for a way to understand and overcome a complicated past, let go of shame, and find acceptance. For anyone who needs reminding that a life worth living can only be born from radical honesty and the courage to shed facades and be...you. *Finding Me* is a deep reflection on my past and a promise for my future. My hope is that my story will inspire you to light up your own life with creative expression and rediscover who you were before the world put a label on you.

king hedley ii: Fences August Wilson, 2019-08-06 From legendary playwright August Wilson comes the powerful, stunning dramatic bestseller that won him critical acclaim, including the Tony Award for Best Play and the Pulitzer Prize. Troy Maxson is a strong man, a hard man. He has had to be to survive. Troy Maxson has gone through life in an America where to be proud and black is to face pressures that could crush a man, body and soul. But the 1950s are yielding to the new spirit of liberation in the 1960s, a spirit that is changing the world Troy Maxson has learned to deal with the only way he can, a spirit that is making him a stranger, angry and afraid, in a world he never knew and to a wife and son he understands less and less. This is a modern classic, a book that deals with the impossibly difficult themes of race in America, set during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s. Now an Academy Award-winning film directed by and starring Denzel Washington, along with Academy Award and Golden Globe winner Viola Davis.

king hedley ii: On Golden Pond Ernest Thompson, 1979 THE STORY: This is the love story of Ethel and Norman Thayer, who are returning to their summer home on Golden Pond for the forty-eighth year. He is a retired professor, nearing eighty, with heart palpitations and a failing memory--but still as tart-tongue

king hedley ii: Proof David Auburn, 2001 THE STORY: On the eve of her twenty-fifth birthday, Catherine, a troubled young woman, has spent years caring for her brilliant but unstable father, a famous mathematician. Now, following his death, she must deal with her own volatile emotions; the

king hedley ii: After August Patrick Maley, 2019 After August argues that August Wilson was

foremost a bluesman working in drama, and that recognizing his blues techniques reveals American drama's fascination with the process of defining the self in collaboration with community. The book reads Wilson's Century Cycle plays alongside the cultural history of blues music, as well as the work of Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Katori Hall, Lynn Nottage, and Suzan-Lori Parks, examining these dramatists' efforts to establish a sustainable identity for the self within social terrain that is often oppressive of racial, gendered, and sexual identity--

king hedley ii: Flyin' West Pearl Cleage, 1995 THE STORY: Facing problems ranging from the inevitability of long, cold winters, to the possibility of domestic violence, to the continuing spectra of racial conflict, the women of FLYIN' WEST include Miss Leah, the old woman whose memories of slav

king hedley ii: The Best Man Gore Vidal, 2012-05-01

king hedley ii: The Theatre of August Wilson Alan Nadel, 2018-05-17 The first comprehensive study of August Wilson's drama introduces the major themes and motifs that unite Wilson's ten-play cycle about African American life in each decade of the twentieth century. Framed by Wilson's life experiences and informed by his extensive interviews, this book provides fresh, coherent, detailed readings of each play, well-situated in the extant scholarship. It also provides an overview of the cycle as a whole, demonstrating how it comprises a compelling interrogation of American culture and historiography. Keenly aware of the musical paradigms informing Wilson's dramatic technique, Nadel shows how jazz and, particularly, the blues provide the structural mechanisms that allow Wilson to examine alternative notions of time, property, and law. Wilson's improvisational logics become crucial to expressing his notions of black identity and resituating the relationship of literal to figurative in the African American community. The final two chapters include contributions by scholars Harry J. Elam, Jr. and Donald E. Pease

king hedley ii: Icons of African American Literature Yolanda Williams Page, 2011-10-17 The 24 entries in this book provide extensive coverage of some of the most notable figures in African American literature, such as Alice Walker, Richard Wright, and Zora Neale Hurston. Icons of African American Literature: The Black Literary World examines 24 of the most popular and culturally significant topics within African American literature's long and immensely fascinating history. Each piece provide substantial, in-depth information—much more than a typical encyclopedia entry—while remaining accessible and appealing to general and younger readers. Arranged alphabetically, the entries cover such writers as Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, and August Wilson; major works, such as Invisible Man, Native Son, and Their Eyes Were Watching God; and a range of cultural topics, including the black arts movement, the Harlem Renaissance, and the jazz aesthetic. Written by expert contributors, the essays discuss the enduring significance of these topics in American history and popular culture. Each entry also provides sidebars that highlight interesting information and suggestions for further reading.

king hedley ii: August Wilson Mary Ellen Snodgrass, 2015-03-10 Award-winning African-American playwright August Wilson created a cultural chronicle of black America through such works as Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, Fences, Joe Turner's Come and Gone, The Piano Lesson, and Two Trains Running. The authentic ring of wit, anecdote, homily, and plaint proved that a self-educated Pittsburgh ghetto native can grow into a revered conduit for a century of black achievement. He forced readers and audiences to examine the despair generated by poverty and racism by exploring African-American heritage and experiences over the course of the twentieth century. This literary companion provides the reader with a source of basic data and analysis of characters, dates, events, allusions, staging strategies and themes from the work of one of America's finest playwrights. The text opens with an annotated chronology of Wilson's life and works, followed by his family tree. Each of the 166 encyclopedic entries that make up the body of the work combines insights from a variety of sources along with generous citations; each concludes with a selected bibliography on such relevant subjects as the blues, Malcolm X, irony, roosters, and Gothic mode. Charts elucidate the genealogies of Wilson's characters, the Charles, Hedley, and Maxson families, and account for weaknesses in Wilson's female characters. Two appendices complete the generously

cross-referenced work: a timeline of events in Wilson's life and those of his characters, and a list of 40 topics for projects, composition, and oral analysis.

king hedley ii: Encyclopedia of American Drama Jackson R. Bryer, Mary C. Hartig, 2015-04-22 Provides a comprehensive guide to American dramatic literature, from its origins in the early days of the nation to American classics such as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* to the groundbreaking works of today's best writers.

king hedley ii: Anna in the Tropics (TCG Edition) Nilo Cruz, 2003-09-01 Winner of the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Drama . . . there are many kinds of light. The light of fires. The light of stars. The light that reflects off rivers. Light that penetrates through cracks. Then there's the type of light that reflects off the skin. —Nilo Cruz, *Anna in the Tropics* This lush romantic drama depicts a family of cigar makers whose loves and lives are played out against the backdrop of America in the midst of the Depression. Set in Ybor City (Tampa) in 1930, Cruz imagines the catalytic effect the arrival of a new lector (who reads Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* to the workers as they toil in the cigar factory) has on a Cuban-American family. Cruz celebrates the search for identity in a new land. The words of Nilo Cruz waft from the stage like a scented breeze. They sparkle and prickle and swirl, enveloping those who listen in both specific place and time . . . and in timeless passions that touch us all. In *Anna in the Tropics*, the world premiere work he created for Coral Gables' intimate New Theatre, Cruz claims his place as a storyteller of intricate craftsmanship and poetic power.—Miami Herald Nilo Cruz is a young Cuban-American playwright whose work has been produced widely around the United States including the Public Theater (New York, NY), South Coast Repertory (Costa Mesa, CA), Magic Theatre (San Francisco, CA), Oregon Shakespeare Festival, McCarter Theater (Princeton, NJ) and New Theatre (Coral Gables, FL). His other plays include *Night Train to Bolina*, *Two Sisters and a Piano*, *Hortensia* and *the Museum of Dreams*, among others. *Anna in the Tropics* also won the Steinberg Award for Best New Play. Mr. Cruz teaches playwriting at Yale University and lives in New York City.

king hedley ii: Milk Like Sugar Kirsten Greenidge, 2012 It's Annie Desmond's sixteenth birthday, and her friends have decided to help her celebrate in style, complete with a brand new tattoo. Before her special night is over, however, Annie and her friends enter into a life-altering pact. When Annie tries to make good on her promise to her friends, she's forced to take a good look at the world that surrounds her.

king hedley ii: The Starry Messenger KENNETH. LONERGAN, 2019-05-30 Mark Williams is tired of his marriage and tired of his job teaching astronomy at the Hayden Planetarium in New York City. Angela Vasquez is a young single mother training to be a nurse. Norman Ketterly is fighting for his life in a cancer ward. Their intertwining stories unspool under a canopy of stars too vast to imagine and too beautiful to comprehend, especially when the travails of life on Earth threaten to blot it out. Kenneth Lonergan's play *The Starry Messenger* is a bittersweet exploration of love, hope and the mysteries of the cosmos. It premiered in New York in 2009, and received its UK premiere at Wyndham's Theatre, London, in May 2019, featuring Matthew Broderick and Elizabeth McGovern.

king hedley ii: Fifty Modern and Contemporary Dramatists Maggie B. Gale, John F. Deeney, 2014-11-27 *Fifty Modern and Contemporary Dramatists* is a critical introduction to the work of some of the most important and influential playwrights from the 1950s to the present day. The figures chosen are among the most widely studied by students of drama, theatre and literature and include such celebrated writers as: • Samuel Beckett • Caryl Churchill • Anna Deavere Smith • Jean Genet • Sarah Kane • Heiner Müller • Arthur Miller • Harold Pinter • Sam Shephard Each short essay is written by one of an international team of academic experts and offers a detailed analysis of the playwright's key works and career. The introduction provides an historical and theatrical context to the volume, which provides an invaluable overview of modern and contemporary drama.

king hedley ii: A Companion to Twentieth-Century American Drama David Krasner, 2008-04-15 This Companion provides an original and authoritative survey of twentieth-century American drama studies, written by some of the best scholars and critics in the field. Balances consideration of canonical material with discussion of works by previously marginalized playwrights

Includes studies of leading dramatists, such as Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neill and Gertrude Stein Allows readers to make new links between particular plays and playwrights Examines the movements that framed the century, such as the Harlem Renaissance, lesbian and gay drama, and the solo performances of the 1980s and 1990s Situates American drama within larger discussions about American ideas and culture

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