



The America Play

Suzan-Lori Parks

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Once upon a time there was a theme park called the Great Hole of History. It was a popular spot for honeymooners who, in search of "post-nuptial excitement," would visit this hole and watch the daily historical parades. One of these visitors was a man who has now come to call himself The Foundling Father. He was a digger by trade a grave digger and he was struck by the size of the Hole and the pageantry of the place. He returns home with his wife, Lucy, a woman who keeps secrets for the dead, and together they start a mourning business. Unfortunately, our hero can't get the Great Hole pageantry out of his head; the echoes of history speak to him and call him to greatness. At rise we meet this Foundling Father. He has left his wife and child and gone out west to dig a huge replica of the Great Hole of History. In the hole sits our hero. He is dressed like Abraham Lincoln, complete with beard, wart, frock coat and stove pipe hat. He tells us the story of his own life (in the third person) and tells us that he has become a very successful Abraham Lincoln impersonator! He's so successful that people actually pay a penny to re-enact Lincoln's assassination, using our impostor-hero and a phony gun. Eventually the Father dies, and the second act sees his wife Lucy and thirty-five-year-old son, Brazil, a professional weeper, visit the hole to dig for his Father's remains. Listening to the past through her deaf-horn, Lucy hears echoes of gunshots and lurid stage-shows. When they dig up the Foundling Father's body (he's alive) they decide they have to lay him to rest for good. In the play's last image, his son is trying to climb a ladder out of the Hole of History while the Foundling Father sits starkly on his own coffin, refusing burial.

The America Play Details

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From Reader Review The America Play for online ebook

Jessica says

Unfortunately, this play left me feeling confused. Even after hearing my English professor lecture on it, I still don't have a very good understanding of what the author is trying to show.

Valerie says

I read this for my American Drama class. What a weird play...

Jon Hewelt says

I like this play a lot.

I don't think I understand much of it, but I like it, like the mood and the atmosphere and the feeling it evokes. It's something I'd like to see performed someday.

Suzan-Lori Parks is a fabulous playwright and her most famous work Topdog/Underdog, is a must-read. But absolutely check out The America Play. It's stunning.

Marie says

The repetition of certain lines throughout the text had a very interesting effect, but that didn't make it easy to understand. It seemed like complete gibberish to me.

Rebecca says

SLP Rocks! I also love the essay from "elements of style" on playwriting in the beginning of this edition.

Sarah says

Really great and worthwhile read. Enjoyed this immensely- hoping to read more by Parks in the near future.

Feargal says

Nope.

Jonathan says

Parks makes several great points about the black experience in the United States, but if you read this you have to struggle to get those points. I think this is a perfect example of a play that is meant to be seen and not read.
