

Gem of the Ocean

By August Wilson

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Gem of the Ocean By August Wilson

“No one except perhaps Eugene O’Neill and Tennessee Williams has aimed so high and achieved so much in the American theater.”—John Lahr, *The New Yorker*

“A swelling battle hymn of transporting beauty. Theatergoers who have followed August Wilson’s career will find in Gem a touchstone for everything else he has written.”—Ben Brantley, *The New York Times*

“Wilson’s juiciest material. The play holds the stage and its characters hammer home, strongly, the notion of newfound freedom.”—Michael Phillips, *Chicago Tribune*

Gem of the Ocean is the play that begins it all. Set in 1904 Pittsburgh, it is chronologically the first work in August Wilson’s decade-by-decade cycle dramatizing the African American experience during the 20th century—an unprecedented series that includes the Pulitzer Prize–winning plays *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*. Aunt Esther, the drama’s 287-year-old fiery matriarch, welcomes into her Hill District home Solly Two Kings, who was born into slavery and scouted for the Union Army, and Citizen Barlow, a young man from Alabama searching for a new life. *Gem of the Ocean* recently played across the country and on Broadway, with Phylicia Rashad as Aunt Esther.

Earlier in 2005, on the completion of the final work of his ten play cycle-surely the most ambitious American dramatic project undertaken in our history-**August Wilson** disclosed his bout with cancer, an illness of unusual ferocity that would eventually claim his life on October 2. Fittingly the Broadway theatre where his last play will be produced in 2006 has been renamed the August Wilson Theater in his honor. His legacy will animate the theatre and stir the human heart for decades to come.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

August Wilson is the most influential and successful African American playwright writing today. He is the two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Fences, The Piano Lesson, King Hedley II, Ma Rainy's Black Bottom, Joe Turner's Come and Gone, Seven Guitars, Two Trains Running, Jitney and Radio Golf. His plays have been produced all over the world.

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