



# The Iceman Cometh, a Play

*Eugene O'Neill*

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## **The Iceman Cometh, a Play** Eugene O'Neill

Eugene O'Neill was the first American playwright to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. He completed *The Iceman Cometh* in 1939, but he delayed production until after the war, when it enjoyed a long run of performances in 1946 after receiving mixed reviews. Three years after O'Neill's death, Jason Robards starred in a Broadway revival that brought new critical attention to O'Neill's darkest and most nihilistic play. In the half century since, *The Iceman Cometh* has gained enormously in stature, and many critics now recognize it as one of the greatest plays in American drama. *The Iceman Cometh* focuses on a group of alcoholics and misfits who endlessly discuss but never act on their dreams, and Hickey, the traveling salesman determined to strip them of their pipe dreams. Review *Tragedy in four acts by Eugene O'Neill*, written in 1939 and produced and published in 1946. Considered by many to be his finest work, the drama exposes the human need for illusion and hope as antidotes to the natural condition of despair. O'Neill mined the tragedies of his own life for this depiction of a ragged collection of alcoholics in a rundown New York tavern-hotel run by Harry Hope. The saloon regulars numb themselves with whiskey and make grandiose plans, but they do nothing. They await the arrival of big-spending Theodore Hickman ("Hickey"), who forces his cronies to pursue their much-discussed plans, hoping that real failure will make them face reality. Hickey finally confesses that he killed his long-suffering wife just hours before he arrived at Harry's, and he turns himself in to the police. The others slip back into an alcoholic haze, clinging to their dreams once more. -- The Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.



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