



The Lonesome West

Martin McDonagh

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This Student Edition features expert and helpful annotation, including a scene-by-scene summary, a detailed commentary on the dramatic, social and political context, and on the themes, characters, language and structure of the play, as well a list of suggested reading and questions for further study and a review of performance history.

The Lonesome West was first presented as a Druid Theatre company and Royal Court co-production in the summer of 1997, and is the final part of McDonagh's Leenane trilogy.

This edition explores the play's substantial themes and textured controversy, which make it such a popular choice to study: the Catholic Church is exposed as irrelevant and powerless and the characters have a dangerously skewed sense of morality. The text is full of McDonagh's characteristic combination of farce, aggression and wit. The plot follows two brothers, Valene and Coleman, living alone in their father's house after his recent death. They find it impossible to exist without massive and violent disputes over the most mundane and innocent of topics. Only Father Welsh, the local young priest, is prepared to try to reconcile the two before their petty squabbings spiral into vicious and bloody carnage.

Martin McDonagh is the most controversial Irish dramatist working today, with his explorations of Irish national identity which look at the darker side of provincial life. His bleak but blackly comic portrayal of modern, rural Ireland courts debate with its dark farce, caricatures of violence and barbarism and an exaggerated, poeticised dialect of Hiberno-English.

The Lonesome West Details

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Libby says

So I have now read all of McDonagh's plays! I love them all! They are funny, brutal, shocking and surprisingly tender. I think Pillowman is my favorite and Cripple of Inishmaan is so moving I cried myself silly. I would love to see any of these gems on the stage!

Ellie says

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SeyedAli says

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Alane says

This was the best of the 3 plays I've read by him. This is partially due to the introduction of Father Welsh Walsh Welsh as a real character instead of through asides. I think I liked this so much because of the completely dark and miserable portrait of ministry it paints. Makes my life look like a breezy walk through the park.

Then there's the obscenities and absurdities. The probing life question I was left with: how could you make the theater smell like melting plastic without making everyone gag?

Mustapha says

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Reza Mardani says

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Rachel says

The Lonesome West is the conclusion to McDonagh's Leenane trilogy - three unrelated plays all set in the same Irish village. I've actually yet to read The Beauty Queen of Leenane, but I much preferred this to A Skull in Connemara. It's about two brothers living alone after their father's death, getting into arguments about mundane things that often escalate to physical violence.

Reading this play was a very quintessentially McDonagh experience: tension is high, but broken by dark, irreverent humor, and characters are all pretty much terrible people, and it should be irrevocably bleak for that, but there's an undeniable quality of tenderness. As always, McDonagh doesn't offer redemption or resolution. His stories are never about villains becoming heroes. But there's still a glimpse of hope, that maybe people can change - certainly not in the course of a two-hour long play, but maybe eventually.

The dialogue in The Lonesome West was as witty and biting as ever, but there was also such an openness and honesty to it that I found refreshing. This exchange in particular struck me as rather beautiful in its simplicity, and as always I love McDonagh's use of dialect. Seeing his plays performed live is obviously the ideal, but reading them still feels like a sensory experience.

WELSH. We should be scared of their ghosts so but we're not scared. Why's that?

GIRLEEN. [...] The opposite of that, I do *like* cemeteries at night.

WELSH. Why, now? Because you're a morbid oul tough?

GIRLEEN. (*Embarrassed throughout.*) Not at all. I'm not a tough. It's because... even if you're sad or something, or lonely or something, you're still better off than them lost in the ground or in the lake, because... at least you've got the *chance* of being happy, and even if it's a real little chance, it's more than them dead ones have. And it's not that you're saying 'Hah, I'm better than ye,' no, because in the long run it might end up that you have a worse life than ever they had and you'd've been better off as dead as them, there and then. But at least when you're still here there's the *possibility* of happiness, and it's like them dead ones know that, and they're happy for you to have it. They say 'Good luck to ya.' (*Quietly.*) Is the way I see it anyways.

Lee says

Could be the funniest thing I've read. I had to stop reading this in the local cafe, it became too embarrassing.

Mohammadreza says

[illegible]

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Pooriya says

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Fatemeh sherafati says

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Jeff says