



## **The Trip to Bountiful**

*Horton Foote*

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## **The Trip to Bountiful** Horton Foote

In The Trip to Bountiful, Carrie Watts is determined to escape a cramped, unpleasant life in a small Houston apartment with her son and avaricious daughter-in-law. Her burning desire is to return to the now desolate town of her childhood, against the inexorability of change and the refuge of memory. Foote earned an Oscar nomination for Best Adapted Screenplay in 1985 for his work on Bountiful.

## **The Trip to Bountiful Details**

Date : Published January 1st 1982 by Dramatists Play Service, Inc. (first published June 1st 1954)

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Author : Horton Foote

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## From Reader Review The Trip to Bountiful for online ebook

### Marissa says

“I’ve waited a long time. Just to get to Bountiful. Twenty years I’ve been walkin’ the streets of the city, lost and grieving. And as I’ve grown older and my time approaches, I’ve made one promise to myself, to see my home again... before I die...”

Such is the premise of Horton Foote’s elegiac drama *The Trip to Bountiful*. Mrs. Carrie Watts lives in a cramped apartment in Houston with her kind but weak-willed son Ludie and her frivolous, overbearing daughter-in-law Jessie Mae. For years, she has been trying to sneak away to her East Texas hometown, Bountiful, and each time, her relatives catch her before she can leave Houston. But one day...

*The Trip to Bountiful* is largely a touching character study, but there is a surprising amount of suspense as we watch to see how Mrs. Watts will make her escape. I also liked how Mrs. Watts is kind of an opaque figure during Act One (which is dominated by Jessie Mae’s chattering) but comes into her own when she sets out on her journey.

Admittedly, it’s disconcerting to see that according to the stage directions, Mrs. Watts is only 60. She seems much older than the 60-year-old women I know nowadays; indeed, in recent productions, the role is often taken by a more elderly actress. (Cicely Tyson was 88 when she played Mrs. Watts on Broadway in 2013!) At any rate, it is a lovely role for an older lady who can project an unpretentious, middle-American dignity. It is not a “diva” role; quite the opposite.

Another Southern writer famously said “You can’t go home again.” *The Trip to Bountiful* complicates that statement: when Mrs. Watts returns to Bountiful, she finds it diminished, abandoned, a ghost town. But nonetheless, it is still home.

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### Tom Mathews says

A beautiful story about aging and one's desire to return to a past that is long gone. Horton Foote, who also wrote *Tender Mercies* and the screenplay to *To Kill a Mockingbird*, nailed the sense of yearning of an elderly woman far from the home she identifies with.

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### Jason says

What a beautiful play. Stunning in it's simplicity-and a rich work for an actor who really wants to mine a character for great moments. Just Lovely.

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### Ckg says

Oh my...that wife is the most shallow, obnoxious, pathetic nag. I spent six weeks of my life doing this

production. Luddy is painful to watch. Horton Foote has done an excellent job of capturing a man and his mother trapped in the shallow mundane world of now, with no escape except to look back on how things used to be, and maybe bring some of the past back to life in the present.

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### **Mary Beth says**

I spent an early morning in bed reading this and crying and crying and crying. I'm not sure if it would have the same effect on everyone though. I think you might have to be Southern. And female.

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### **Joy H. says**

I watched a Netflix DVD of "**The Trip to Bountiful**" (1985)

[http://www.netflix.com/Movie/The\\_Trip...](http://www.netflix.com/Movie/The_Trip...)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0090203/>

I gave the film 4 stars out of 5.

As Netflix describes it: "Geraldine Page won an Academy Award for this bittersweet tale set in 1947 about an elderly Houston woman in search of happier times."

The story slowly draws you in as you develop empathy for the old woman who is longing to go back to her hometown of Bountiful. She sneaks out of her son's house and gets on a bus but the sheriff catches up with her.

The film is based on the play, *The Trip to Bountiful*, by Horton Foote. Wiki says: "*The Trip to Bountiful* premiered March 1, 1953 on NBC-TV with the leading cast members (Lillian Gish, Eva Marie Saint) reprising their roles on Broadway later that year." GR says: "Foote earned an Oscar nomination for Best Adapted Screenplay in 1985 for his work on *Bountiful*".

IMDb describes **Horton Foote** as a "Pulitzer Prize-winning dramatist and Oscar-winning screenwriter". He wrote the screenplay for *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

PS-Below is a link to an interview with Horton Foote at the NYS Writers Institute in 2006:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4tDSF...>

PPS-Below are some quotes I took down as I watched the DVD of "**The Trip to Bountiful**":

From the film: "Mama, I want to stop remembering. It doesn't do any good remembering."

From the DVD's bonus commentary on the film: "An exploration of the human condition. It is a gentle reminder that life is not forever, that each of us must be free to find its meaning and in doing so, we may find inner peace."

I found the following at the IMDb page containing quotes from the film:

"I guess when you've lived longer than your house and your family, then you've lived long enough." [said by the old lady]

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**Tina says**

Loved it! This short three act play starred the famous Lillian Gish in 1953 and is still as relevant today as it was then. We all age and, if you look deep enough within yourself, you can find a Bountiful. A place or time in your life that you wish to get back to.

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**Rick Davis says**

This strikes really close to home for me. Heart-rending.

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**Doug H says**

Loved it. Review to follow.

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**Mia says**

This is a bittersweet play with a lot of great characters and emotional depth. The story is slower, but I didn't find it boring at all. The play deals with the tension between family members, longing for the past, and a struggle with loss. Loved the ending. This is definitely a play I'll reread.

If you like dramas, and tugs to heart strings I'd highly recommend this play. I'm so happy I won a copy to read.

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**Marcia Kauffman says**

Some people might look at Mrs. Watts' trip to Bountiful as depressing. I, on the other hand, looked at it as fulfilling because she found what she felt was missing from her life.

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**Janebooks says**

Only twelve more miles to Bountiful, Texas....., August 28, 2014

Although I read the play by Horton Foote many years ago, I was very happy to find new meanings and re-read it through Cicely Tyson's remarkable performance as Carrie Watts filmed in 2014 for television.

American playwright and screenwriter Horton Foote (1916-2009) is best known for his screenplay for Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) and his own screenplay for *Tender Mercies* (1983). Both won Academy Awards for Foote. I recall with fondness his play, *The Trip to Bountiful*. Although I didn't see the original film released in 1953 on NBC, I saw the 1985 movie that won Geraldine Page an Oscar for best actress.

The play, set in the 1940s in Texas, tells the story of an elderly woman, Carrie Watts, who wants to return home to the small town where she grew up, but is frequently stopped from leaving Houston by her bossy daughter-in-law and an overprotective son. The unhappy Watts family lives in a cramped two room apartment. Determined to visit her parents' old home in Bountiful, Texas, Carrie Watts runs away and boards a Greyhound bus to a town near her childhood home for a \$3.50 fare. On the journey, she befriends a young war bride traveling alone and reminisces about her younger years. The local sheriff, moved by her story, offers to drive her the twelve miles out to what remains of Bountiful. The village is deserted, and the few remaining houses are derelict. Her childhood friend, the last remaining resident, whom she had planned to visit has just died.

A Broadway revival of *A Trip to Bountiful* premiered in April 2013. Legendary Cicely Tyson played Carrie Watts. It was her first Broadway appearance since 1983. The staging earned a total of four Tony Award nominations and Cicely Tyson won a Tony for best actress in a play. On March 8, 2014, a made-for-television remake premiered on the Lifetime network. The film featured Cicely Tyson in the lead role as Carrie Watts, Vanessa Williams as Jessie Mae Watts, Blair Underwood as Ludie Watts and Keke Palmer as Thelma, the young war bride. Tyson and Williams also appeared in the Broadway revival. I watched the DVD of the cable network remake that was released August 5, 2014.

The mostly African-American cast is remarkable. I read somewhere that this cast was a non-issue because the themes of aging, memory, and the yearning to return to one's roots are blind to race. The racial casting is an issue: it provides a new and profound shadow to the drama with its 1940s setting in the Jim Crow South and its segregated restrooms and hotels. Mrs. Watts sleeps on a bench in the bus depot when she arrives in a nearby town in the dead of night. The casting of a white Texas sheriff who offers to drive her the additional twelve miles to Bountiful is a nice touch.

To prepare for her role, octogenarian Tyson visited Horton Foote's home in rural Wharton, Texas, to get "a sense of what it is like, to smell it, feel the earth, hear people talk, go to the marketplaces. Being there [in Texas] I understood very clearly why my character longed to return because I was myself mesmerized by the beauty of the place and the tender enfolding of the gulf wind."

In a way, Cicely Tyson echoes a 1986 interviewer's words about Horton Foote: "His Texas is not the brawling, big-mouth land of cattle and oil. It's more like the Old Deep South in culture and appearance: a place of moist breezes and lush farmland, devoted spirituality and virulent racism, of aristocracies old, new and fading. It is what he has spent his life writing about."

A mesmerizing beauty... and the tender enfolding of the gulf wind. A place of moist breezes and lush farmland. These phrases evoke a deep sense of place, and it abounds in this production with a gospel hymn, "This is my story...this is my song...," hummed and sung in the background. Yes, it's the Old Deep South that I grew up in, too.

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**Thomas Shaw says**

I read this for an audition and it kind of reminded me of The Glass Menagerie if Amanda had been the central focus. It isn't very interesting, but I assume with the best female actress' foot forward--it could work the crowd to tears.

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**Misti says**

Female lead with lots of bit male parts and a Debbie Downer.

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**Sharon says**

Heartbreaking and absorbing story of an elderly widow, Carrie Watts who longs to return to the home she grew up as a girl in Bountiful. Her determination to make the journey against the wishes of her son and daughter in-law demonstrates her strong will to fulfill her dream to go home for the last time. I saw the movie some years ago and was captivated by Geraldine Page's performance.

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