

Agee's father died
when the author was
very young

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James Agee was a critically acclaimed author and film critic. This novel, *A Death in the Family*, was published after his death. Since the novel was not yet in its completed form, editors have taken the liberty to insert some text Agee had not yet placed within the story.

Agee's father died when the author was very young. That event influenced his writing of this novel even more so than his previous works. As do the characters in this book, Agee struggled to find meaning in that tragic event. Agee died in 1955, exactly forty years after his father died.

In *A Death in the Family* Agee addresses two broad issues - coping with loss and religion. Both issues are dealt with from a variety of perspectives. The book was originally published in 1955. This version was published in 1985 with some editorial adjustments.

A Death in the Family is set in the summer of 1915 in Knoxville Tennessee. The critical event in the book is the death of Jay Follet. Throughout the book, Agee jumps forward and backward in time in order to give the reader perspective on that event. It is a book full of emotion and conflict.

Synopsis

The Follet and Lynch clans contain most of the main characters in this family-centered story. Their various reactions to Jay's death are portrayed. Religion is a secondary, but important, theme that occurs throughout the book. Other characters include Father Jackson, Walter Starr, George Bailey and Jessie Bailey.

Rufus Follet, the main character, is modeled after Agee himself. The young boy is forced to deal with the needless death of his father. After the boy
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shares an enjoyable day at the movies with his father, the two return home. Later that night his father is called out on an emergency. Grampa Follet is in danger of dying. Rufus' father comes to Grampa's aid only to find out that it is a false alarm. On his way home, the father dies in a car accident.