

# Life and the notable achievements of august wilson

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## **August Wilson**

August Wilson was born April 27 1945 in Pittsburgh PA Frederick August Kittel, Jr. the fourth of six children. His mother, Daisy Wilson was an African-American cleaning woman from North Carolina while his father, who was for the most part not an active participant in his life, Frederick August Kittel, Sr. was a German-Sudeten immigrant who worked as a baker. Originally living in a ghetto on Bedford Avenue Daisy Wilson then remarried and relocated to a predominantly white neighborhood where they encountered discrimination, countless threats, and bricks thrown through their window and they had to move.

August, whose mother insisted he go to Central Catholic High School, was the only black person in the student body and soon had to move schools due to the many threats he then received. However at Connelley Vocational High School, a mostly black school, he felt he already exceeded the curriculum. Finally, Wilson dropped out of Gladstone High School in the 10th grade after his teacher accused him of plagiarizing a twenty page paper. Although he never returned to school he taught himself through the works of authors such as Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps at the local library. He also later received many honorary degrees for his work in literature.

After dropping out of high school Wilson worked a variety of jobs through which he met various amounts people, some of which he based his characters off like Sam in “ The Janitor”. Wilson knew he had found his

passion in writing, much to the displeasure to his mother who wanted him to practice law, forcing him to be on his own. He then enlisted in the military for three years but only followed through with one. Afterwards Wilson worked many odd jobs to make ends meet but continued to write where ever he could, bars and cigar stores on yellow note pads to cafe's on napkins. After his father died in 1965 Fredrick August Kittel Jr. changed his name to August Wilson for his mother's benefit.

Wilson used the raw use of language and dialects he heard around him in his work. He would wright things down on scraps of paper or napkins and type them later on a stolen typewriter he bought for ten dollars. Living in the heart of the Civil Rights movement August often took inspiration from the top black leaders of the time, Malcolm X in particular. Nation of Islam and the Black Power movement spoke to his need for self-sufficiency and he later converted to Islam to marry his first wife, who he had his first child with.

When Wilson submitted " Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" to the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford in 1981 he sparked a relationship with director Lloyd Richards they found a match that would last more than a decade. They then went on to develop many of Wilson's later plays including many of the plays included in Wilson's most notable work in ' The Pittsburgh Cycle' which was a series of ten plays that captured the lives of African-American's in Pittsburgh in each decade.

Wilson went on to receive the Two Pulitzer Prizes for Drama for " Fences" and " The Piano Lesson", a Tony awards, several Drama Desks, and many

others. Although controversial to some, his plays won critical acclaim for their truthfulness and realness. August Wilson died October 2nd 2005 of liver cancer aged 60 having succeeded in completing his century play and toughing the hearts and minds of others.