



**James Agee: Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, a
Death in the Family, Shorter Fiction (Library of
America)**

James Agee

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A passionate literary innovator, eloquent in language and uncompromising in his social observation and his pursuit of emotional truth, James Agee (1909- 1955) excelled as novelist, critic, journalist, and screenwriter. In his brief, often turbulent life, he left enduring evidence of his unwavering intensity, observant eye, and sometimes savage wit.

This volume collects his fiction along with his extraordinary experiment in what might be called prophetic journalism, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), a collaboration with photographer Walker Evans that began as an assignment from Fortune magazine to report on the lives of Alabama sharecroppers, and that expanded into a vast and unique mix of reporting, poetic meditation, and anguished self-revelation that Agee described as "an effort in human actuality." A 64-page photo insert reproduces Evans's now iconic photographs from the expanded 1960 edition.

A Death in the Family, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel that he worked on for over a decade and that was published posthumously in 1957, re-creates in stunningly evocative prose Agee's childhood in Knoxville, Tennessee, and the upheaval his family experienced after his father's death in a car accident when Agee was six years old. A whole world, with its sensory vividness and social constraints, comes to life in this child's-eye view of a few catastrophic days. It is presented here for the first time in a text with corrections based on Agee's manuscripts at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center.

This volume also includes *The Morning Watch* (1951), an autobiographical novella that reflects Agee's deep involvement with religious questions, and three short stories including the remarkable allegory "A Mother's Tale."

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