

APPENDICES

The Synopsis of A Gathering of Old Men

The action takes place over the course of one day in rural Louisiana in a sugar cane plantation in the 1970s. A Cajun farmer has been shot dead and lies in the yard of a black man's house. A young white woman and about eighteen old black men gather at the house and each claims to be responsible for the killing. The brutal white sheriff is sure to know who killed the Cajun, although each man is toting a shotgun, only one of them could hit a barn door; but threats and slaps fail to change their stories. Each one claims guilt, and all but one promise to provoke a riot at the courthouse if the sheriff tries to arrest them. In the mean time the sheriff conducts his investigation as the old men await the revenge of the dead man's relatives, who have a fearsome, longstanding reputation against the black.

By the end of the day, there have been many surprises, and many of the characters have changed in ways that they could not have imagined. The one who killed the Cajun is finally revealed. A black man in his fifties who is weary of being compressed all the time, and in order to save his pride and dignity, he shoots down his own master. Before it is over, a clash occurs between the Cajun's friends and the old black men who want to lynch them. They shoot at one another and as a result, the chief of the Cajun and the murderer are killed.

The Biography of Ernest J. Gaines

Ernest J. Gaines was born on January 15, 1933 in the River Lake Plantation near Oscar, Louisiana, in a small town called Pointe Coupee Parish. Ernest's parents, Manuel and Adrienne were both sharecroppers and raised a large family of nine boys and three girls. Ernest is the oldest boy. His parents were separated when he was eight, and it was his aunty who took care of him and his siblings.

In 1983 Gaines published A Gathering of Old Men. This story becomes another Gaines's novel to become popular and air as a movie in 1987 as well as receives a *California Commonwealth Award for Fiction* for the book. He wrote Catherine Carmier (1964), (1967) Of Love and Dust, The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman (1971), and In My Father's House (1973).

After A Gathering of Old Men, Gaines began teaching creative writing at Southwestern Louisiana State University in Lafayette Louisiana and divided his time between there and his second home in San Francisco. In 1993 he married Dianna Saulney, and published his final book, A Lesson Before Dying. In 2000 he won the *Louisiana Center for the Book's Louisiana Award*, the *National Governors' Associations Awards for Distinguished Service in the Arts*, the *Louisiana Governor's Award for Lifetime Achievement*, and the *Louisiana Writers Award*.

Currently Gaines resides in Lafayette where he continues to teach his creative writing classes. Over the years Gaines has gained considerable recognition including honorary doctorates from Brown University.