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SAMPLE EXCERPTS FROM THE MONKEYNOTES FOR "The Power and the Glory" by Graham Greene.

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THE POWER AND THE GLORY

by

GRAHAM GREENE



Edited by Diane Sauder

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KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

The novel *The Power and the Glory* deals with religious persecution in Mexico after the Mexican Revolution of 1910. There were clashes between the state and the church and under the presidency of Plutarco Elias Calles (1924-28), anti-clerical measures were adopted and organized religion was banned. Calles believed that the Catholic Church was responsible for.....

CHARACTERS

Major Characters

The Whisky Priest - the protagonist of the book who is supposedly the last surviving priest in a province where churches have been closed down. He is trying to.....

The Lieutenant - the antagonist of the Whisky Priest. He is an ambitious young man who wishes to see his country free from poverty, superstition, and ignorance. Since he believes.....

Maria - the woman with whom the Whisky Priest

Brigitta - the illegitimate daughter of.....

Padre José - a weak Priest who, in order to save his life, gives up his.....

The Chief of Police - a character who is more interested in

The Mestizo - a half-Spanish and half-Indian man who

James Calvin (The Gunman or The Gringo) - a bank robber and murderer who is pursued by the.....

Minor Characters

Mr. Tench - an English dentist who is stranded in Mexico.

Captain Charles Fellows - a foreigner and a trader who operates the Central American Banana Company and who is resented by the Mexicans.

Mrs. Trix Fellows - Captain Fellows' wife.....

CONFLICT

Protagonist: The Whisky Priest, as a symbol of the Church, is the.....

Antagonist: The Lieutenant, as the symbol of the

Conflict: The conflict in *The Power and the Glory* is between the Government (the Power) and the Church (the Glory). The Government wishes to

Climax: The Whisky Priest's meeting with the Lieutenant at the police station after spending a night in prison is the climax of the plot. This takes place in

Outcome: The story of the Whisky Priest ends in a tragedy when

PLOT

The plot of *The Power and the Glory* is a simple one. It is the story of a priest who tries to practice his faith while seeking safety in the anti-religious age in Mexico. He journeys from Carmen through various villages and back to Carmen again, with the Lieutenant constantly in pursuit of him. Imprisonment and release take him away from Carmen a second time. Again, he moves from village to village performing his priestly duties until he is.....

THEME

The Church is eternal and triumphant, and no repressive regime can destroy it.

MOOD

The mood of the novel is gloomy. The picture of the world as presented through Mexico is chaotic, and sin is ever present. Vultures, snakes, hyenas, beetles, turkeys, and sharks are all unpleasant creatures contributing to the mood. The physical features of the land are

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

GRAHAM GREENE

Graham Greene, one of six children, was born on October 2, 1904, in Berhamsted, Hertfordshire, England. He attended Berhamsted public school, where his father was the headmaster. He also went to Balliol College at Oxford in 1922. His life at school and at home was so unhappy that he.....

LITERARY/HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Graham Greene had a long literary career. He started writing before World War II and continued writing until his death in 1991. He gained popularity in the thirties, largely because

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES

PART I

CHAPTER 1

Summary

The chapter opens with Tench, the dentist, who is looking for his ether cylinder, which is supposed to have come by ship. The first description of the scene is ominous. Vultures are looking down from a rooftop on a scorching Mexican waterfront; they are in search of carrion. Tench throws a stone and hits them. One vulture flies over the plaza, over the bust of an ex-president, and toward the river and the sea.

Tench is an Englishman settled in Mexico. He is seen walking towards the quay, sweating in the heat. A few important landmarks are mentioned, like the treasury, which has once been a church, the barber's, the dentist's, the warehouse, and the customs. Tench is watching the ship, *General Obregon*, being unloaded. The main cargo is beer; he counts one hundred forty cases of it being unloaded. Prohibition is the law of the region, and only beer is permitted.

Tench spots a pretty young girl with a fine thin figure. Her smile reveals a gold tooth. He exclaims, "My God, a pretty one." Someone asks in English, "What did you say?" Tench looks at the stranger with surprise. He is delighted to hear English and finds out that the stranger has learned it in the U.S. The man has "a hollow face with a three days beard"; he is a small man dressed in a shabby, dark city suit, carrying a small attaché case. He has a novel under his arm. He gives an impression of unstable hilarity. Tench asks the stranger whether he has arrived by the boat or whether he is departing. The stranger gives

evasive answers. In the course of the conversation, he finds out when the ship is likely to sail to Vera Cruz. He even mentions the name of a man called Lopez, and Tench informs him that the man has been shot dead because he helped “undesirables . . . to get out.” Lopez’s girl friend now lives with the chief of police.

Tench wishes to know the stranger’s profession, but again he gets an evasive answer. Tench asks if he has a drink in his attaché and is told that the attaché contains only medicines. The stranger claims to be a quack. A little later he whispers to Tench that he has some brandy in his pocket. Tench takes the stranger to his hut, where he lives and works, and shows him around, the dental operating room and all his equipment. He tells the stranger, “I’d like to show you . . . you’re an educated man.” The stranger notices a stained glass window and exclaims, “The window is very beautiful.” The stained glass pane shows a Madonna gazing out. Tench explains he has picked it up when the church was sacked.

Tench brings two glasses; they settle down in the rocking chairs and drink the stranger’s brandy. Tench warns him that the water is unsafe to drink and complains of a stomachache. Tench observes that the stranger’s teeth are yellow and need attention. “The man’s dark suit and sloping shoulders reminded him uncomfortably of a coffin, and death is in his curious mouth already.”

Tench talks about his estranged wife and two sons, one of whom is dead. The stranger asks if the boy has died in a Christian country. Tench answers the question positively but says it hardly mattered. The stranger asks if Tench keeps in touch with his family. Tench explains he has given up writing to them since he could not send any money nor help in any other way. The two men talk nostalgically about the past when the Red shirts had not yet taken over. The stranger comments that those were happier times because they had God.

While they sit and drink, a child, with two mules, comes to the door. He is looking for a doctor since his mother is sick. The stranger is reluctant to go, and Tench asks the child to leave. He feels if the woman is dying, no one can be of any help, but the stranger gets up and accompanies the child. Tench reminds him that he will miss the boat, and the stranger answers that perhaps he is meant to miss it. Tench tells him that the ship will be back again after a few days. Tench also comments that the stranger is lucky because he can escape; Tench does not think he’ll get away. No matter how hard Tench tries to save money, it is never enough due to the constant devaluation of the peso. The stranger departs saying, “I will pray for you”.

After the stranger’s departure, Tench finds a book he left behind. The book is *La Eterna Martir*. Tench is quite taken aback when he finds that the book is in Latin. He does not have the heart to burn the book, so he hides it. Tench suddenly remembers the ether cylinder. He runs to the quay, but the ship has just left.

Far away, the stranger is riding a mule across the damp swamp towards the home of the child and the dying mother.. He hears the siren of the *General Obregon* and feels abandoned. He has tried to escape but failed. The chapter ends with his prayer, “Let me be caught soon, let me be caught”.

Notes

The chapter introduces the protagonist in the form of a stranger, which is very appropriate since nowhere in the book is his name revealed. His appearance is not very priestly; he wears a suit and is unshaven and unclean. Little else is learned about this stranger in the opening chapter, but there are a few hints that allow the reader to surmise that the stranger is a Priest: 1) when Mr. Tench tells him that one of his children is dead, the Priest asks him whether he died in a Christian country; 2) when asked about his

occupation, the stranger quite unwillingly admits that he is some sort of doctor (perhaps a healer of souls); 3) the book that he leaves behind, *The Eternal Martyr*, is in Latin (and is really just a cover for the religious book he hides inside); and 4) he ends the chapter in prayer. This closing prayer, however, raises the question of what this man is trying to escape and why does he want to be caught.

Mr. Tench is developed in more detail. He is forgetful, not remembering the ether cylinder that seems important to him. He lies without hesitation, telling the custom official he will have his false teeth ready by evening. He does not appear well, for he constantly clears his throat and spits into the street. He is preoccupied with money, especially since his dental practice does not do well. Tench feels trapped in a futile existence in Mexico, and he is unable to save enough money to escape.

There are several themes that this chapter foreshadows. To begin with, Tench thinks about the sham of government prohibition in the province. The reader clearly sees cases of beer being unloaded from the *General Obregon* (named after a past Mexican President); but it is a government ship, and the government has produced the beer, which is very expensive. There is, therefore, smuggling of hard liquor. Later on in the book, the protagonist is accused of smuggling and is punished. The next theme that the chapter touches upon is the loneliness of Tench, who has lived by himself for fifteen years. He is, therefore, pleased to see the pretty girl on the ship. Later in the book, it is loneliness that leads the priest to the sin of adultery. The third theme is Tench's inability to help his children, for he lives too far from them. The protagonist will be in a similar predicament later in the book.

It is important to note several things in this chapter. First, Tench reveals the religious persecution that is going on in Mexico when he tells about a man named Lopez who has been recently shot for helping priests to escape. (Ironically, the Whisky Priest has counted on Lopez to help him.) Secondly, there are many references to disarray and decay, such as the disorganized dentist office, the rotting *General Obregon*, and the sandy brandy glasses; this decaying imagery is symbolic of the moral decay of Mexico. Third, there is much animal imagery, all negative, such as the.....

OVERALL ANALYSES CHARACTERS

The Whiskey Priest

The protagonist of the book is the unnamed priest, known as the Whisky Priest. For eight years, he has been defying the government and carrying on with his priestly duties. He lives as a fugitive, trying to escape to safety. Each time he is about to escape, someone needs him and because of his basic goodness and sense of duty, he cannot refuse. He risks his life to help.....

The Lieutenant

The unnamed Lieutenant is a well-groomed, smart man, whose "meanness gave an effect of inordinate ambition in a shabby city." He has a scar on his jaw, which is symbolic of the scar on his psyche. Unlike his chief, he is dedicated to his work and means business. He is a fanatic who believes in the anti-clerical policies of his state and who wants to rid Mexico of

Padre José

Padre José is a weak man who has left the priesthood and married in order to save himself physically; as a result, he has lost his soul. In everything he does, he shows he is a coward, fearful of persecution. In truth, he is a simpleton who has no intellectual understanding.....

The Mestizo

The Mestizo is the Judas character who betrays the Priest. Appropriately, he is characterized by his yellow fang-like teeth, which are symbolic of the.....

Maria

Maria is the woman with whom the Priest has sinned and the mother of his child, Brigitta. Proud to have been the woman of the Priest, Maria suffers no guilt. She shelters the.....

The Chief of Police

The Jefe is a fat official who is more often found at the.....

Luis' Mother

Luis' mother is a pious woman who reads stories of martyrs to her children. These stories are typical of religious propaganda. She has a

The Children in the Novel

There are several children in the novel. The most important children are Coral, Brigitta and Luis. Coral is the daughter of Captain Fellows. She is a very.....

THEMES

The story is one of pursuit in which the Lieutenant is chasing the Priest. Symbolically, it is the government's attempt to destroy the Church. The Lieutenant succeeds in capturing him and killing him, but he does not succeed in destroying the Church. At the end, another unnamed priest appears to carry on his religious duties.

The Priest's journey is not only an attempt to escape from the Lieutenant, but an attempt to keep alive his priestly function. The Priest is burdened with.....

The Power and the Glory as a religious novel

The novel analyzes the challenges of faith, religious ritual, sin, confession, absolution and martyrdom. Graham Greene explores these issues by portraying a

QUESTIONS

1. Show how the Revolution has affected the life of the people in *The Power and the Glory*.
2. What are the good and the bad qualities of the Priest?.....

END OF SAMPLE MONKEYNOTES FOR "The Power and the Glory" by Graham Greene