

PinkMonkey[®] Literature Notes on . . .

Sample MonkeyNotes

Note: this sample contains only brief excerpts and does not represent the full contents of the booknote. This will give you an idea of the format, layout, and content.

Of Human Bondage

by

**William Somerset Maugham
1915**



MonkeyNotes Edited by Diane Sauder

PinkMonkey.com Copyright ©1997-1999, All Rights Reserved.

Distribution without the written consent of PinkMonkey.com is strictly prohibited.

KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

The major character of the novel, Philip, spends most of his life in two places, which become the dominant settings for the book. From the time he becomes aware of the world around him until his adolescence, Philip is found in Blackstable and its neighboring town of Tercanbury. Even after he goes abroad to study, he keeps coming back to Blackstable during the holidays and whenever he feels the need for a change.

In the process of establishing his identity, Philip visits London twice and spends the major part of his mature years in that city. Returning back from Heidelberg, he goes to London to become a clerk in the company of Chartered Accountants. When he realizes he has no aptitude for accounting, he returns.....

CHARACTER LIST

Major Characters

Philip Carey - an orphan with a clubfoot. He is the protagonist of the novel whose story Maugham traces from age nine to thirty.

William Carey - the uncle of Philip and the vicar of Blackstable. He is self-centered and rigid in his views.

Mildred Rogers - Philip's antagonist on one level. Selfish, shallow, and flirtatious, she successfully lures Philip with her charms.

Thorpe Athelny - a boisterous journalist. He is a loving family man who becomes Philip's friend, philosopher, and guide.

Minor Characters

Mrs. Carey - the kind and gentle wife of the vicar. She loves Philip and helps him fulfil his desires.

Mr. Perkins - one of Philip's well-wishers. He is the scholarly headmaster of King's School.....

Additional characters are identified in the complete study guide.

CONFLICT

Protagonist - Philip Carey, an orphan with a clubfoot, is the protagonist of the novel. During the book, he undergoes the trials and tribulations of life and emerges stronger. He falls in love

Antagonist - On one level, Mildred Rogers is Philip's antagonist. She exploits his goodness, blackmails..... him emotionally, drains his finances, and has an affair with his friend. She keeps him in

Climax - The climax occurs in London during the war when Mildred leaves him. He suffers a financial setback, losing all his stock investments, and discontinues his medical education. He is

Outcome - Philip's story ends as a comedy. In spite of his many setbacks in life, he finally.....

SHORT PLOT/CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)

The novel is the story of Philip Carey. The story opens with his mother dying after childbirth. The nine-year-old Philip is taken by his uncle to Blackstable. After spending a few initial years at the Vicarage, the boy is admitted to King's School at Tercanbury. Having a clubfoot, he is ostracized and becomes introverted, but his intelligence and his aptitude for studies help him academically. Unable to bear the humiliation and taunts of his

fellow students and the rigid norms of school, he finally quits and goes to Germany. In Germany, Philip learns new languages, is introduced to philosophy, and discovers the beauty of nature. His stay in Heidelberg expands his vision of humanity and life. He graduates and starts planning his future.

After talking to his uncle, Philip decides to go to London to become a clerk; however, he discovers after a few months that he is more inclined toward art than accounting. Taking financial aid from his aunt, he leaves for Paris to study. The city gives him an insight into the world of artists and their struggle to exhibit their talent. At the end of two years, he also discovers that he lacks the potential to be a great artist. As a result, he leaves Paris and returns back to Blackstable.

Philip decides to take up his father's profession of medicine and enrolls as a student in St. Luke's hospital. He does not, however, pursue his goal in earnest because of a waitress named Mildred. Not caring about

THEMES

Major Theme

The major theme of the novel is that the submission to passion is human bondage, while the exercise of reason is human liberty. Philip Carey loves Mildred passionately and, in trying to possess her, traps himself in her bondage. His freedom is curbed, his education is disrupted, and his fortune is lost. All his reasoning, power, and intelligence are eradicated by his passion for Mildred. On the other hand, when Philip

Minor Themes

There are several minor themes in the novel. The first is that inappropriate love can be destructive. In spite of her many weaknesses, Philip loves Mildred and showers his affection and money on her. He even sacrifices his education and limited resources to please her. In the process, Philip wastes the important years of his life following a woman who is not deserving of his love. It is definitely a destructive relationship for Philip, one that keeps him in bondage.

Another minor theme is that experience in life makes a person wiser. Philip profits from every.....

MOOD

The mood of the novel is serious, but not gloomy. Maugham, with irony and cynicism, presents the struggle of a lonely protagonist and the turmoil in his mind. Philip Carey suffers because of his handicap, his

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY

William Somerset Maugham, the youngest child of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Maugham, was born in Paris, France on January 25, 1874. At the time of his birth, his father was working as a lawyer for the British Embassy in Paris. In 1882, his mother died of tuberculosis. His three brothers went to study in London, and William was sent to a clergyman attached to the British Embassy. When his father died two years later, there was no one to look after him in Paris. As a result, he was sent to Kent to live with his uncle, Henry Maugham. Since his uncle and aunt were childless, they found it difficult to care for him. William, at the age of ten, was a lonely and unhappy child. His life at King's School in Canterbury was no better. Frail and sensitive, he felt isolated from the other boys because of his stammer.

Maugham was smart, but the rigid school discipline and the taunts of his classmates made him leave school before he could complete his education. He left for Germany with the help of his uncle. In

LITERARY / HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Of Human Bondage is semi-autobiographical. In it Maugham reveals his childhood, his student days in Heidelberg and London, and his philosophy of life. It was not, however, his first autobiographical attempt. In

the *Artistic Temperament of Stephen Carey*, Maugham retold much of his first twenty-four years of life. The protagonist, however, was sent to Rouen instead of Heidelberg and studied music instead of painting. The novel did not come up to Maugham's expectations and was not published. After this.....

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES

CHAPTERS I - IV

Summary

The novel opens with the scene of a dying woman attended by a doctor and the nurses. She has just delivered a stillborn child, and her condition is critical. At her request, the nurse brings her first-born child, Philip, to her bedside. Mrs. Carey caresses him, tenderly touches his feet, and bursts into tears. The doctor advises her to rest, and the boy is taken away by the nurse to his godmother, Miss Wilkens. Shortly afterwards, the woman dies.

Philip is brought back home to meet his uncle, William Carey, the brother of Philip's father and the vicar of Blackstable. The Vicar informs the boy that he would be accompanying him to Blackstable to live there. Even though William Carey and his wife are kind and childless, the prospect of having a boy under their roof does not really delight them. Their means are limited, and Philip's father had left behind only 2000 pounds for the boy, which had to last him until he was old enough to earn his own living.

Philip, though disturbed by the thought of leaving his home, is reconciled to the situation. As a mark of remembrance, he picks up his mother's favorite clock, visits his mother's room, and prepares to depart. As he journeys with his uncle to Blackstable, he forgets his sorrows and enjoys the countryside scenery. When they reach Blackstable, everything about the place and its people seems strange to Philip.

Notes

In these opening chapters, Maugham conveys the poignancy of Philip's situation through clear descriptions and short conversations. It is a touching scene when his mother calls him to her bedside before she dies. They obviously had a close relationship, as evidenced by her tender touches, by his taking her favorite clock as a remembrance, and by his trying to feel her presence left in her room. Because Philip has a clubfoot, she has probably been particularly gentle and patient with her first-born son.

The loss of his mother and her baby are made all the more tragic when Philip finds out he must leave home. Because he is now an orphan at the age of nine, he must go to live with his uncle, William Carey, and his wife in Blackstable; unfortunately, they are not particularly pleased about raising the child, and Philip is not pleased about going. He does not want to leave his home and the memories of his mother. He goes into her room to vent his emotions. Hiding his face in her clothes, he tries to breathe her into his being by touching and smelling the things that belonged to her. In these first chapters, Maugham does an outstanding job of presenting Philip as a sensitive and intelligent child who craves affection and sympathy.

Philip shows his innocence when he looks with curiosity at all the sights on his way to Blackstable; he is struck with wonder at the vision and temporarily forgets his sorrow and loneliness. He is almost eager to see a new place. After all, as a handicapped child he has been closely watched and protected. He has not experienced much of the world.

At Blackstable, Philip finds the ways of his uncle and aunt quite different. Although they are kind, he is not comfortable with them, and they feel strange with a child in the vicarage. Philip watches in amazement as his uncle offers him only the top portion of a boiled egg at tea, when he craves the whole thing. In spite of such peculiar habits, Philip learns to adjust to his surroundings and tries to please his guardians.

It is important to notice several things in these opening chapters. Although Philip's clubfoot is not made an issue here, it is mentioned because it becomes more important later in the novel. The interest in money is also presented. The Careys are not well off, and they worry that the 2,000 pounds (equivalent to about \$10,000 at the time of the novel) will not be enough to provide for Philip until he is on his own. A concern about money will be seen throughout the book, for Philip will have and lose a fortune. Finally, the British tradition of tea is presented and will be seen frequently throughout the novel. Tea was served in the late afternoon and really consisted of a small meal; it was also a social time of the day.....

OVERALL ANALYSES

Of Human Bondage is not a true autobiography, but an autobiographical novel. In the words of Maugham, "Fact and fiction are inextricably mingled; the emotions are my own, but not all the incidents are related as they happened and some of them are transferred to my hero not from my own life but from that of persons with whom I was intimate." Maugham wove an inspiring tale out of his experiences, made it....

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Philip Carey - Philip displays certain aspects of Maugham's persona. Like his creator, he is an orphan with a physical deformity that isolates him from his fellow beings. Throughout the novel, Philip is very conscious of his clubfoot. In order to avoid people taking note of his abnormality, he shuns company and keeps away from physical activity. As a result, through much of the book, he has no friends and feels.....

Mildred - Mildred is a stupid, shallow, vain, and selfish woman. Aware of Philip's feelings for her, she exploits him. She accepts his gifts and seeks his protection, but thwarts his affection. Philip forgives her for her deceitfulness and helps her when she is in distress. In return for Philip's love, kindness and

William Carey - Maugham presents William Carey as a symbolic church official, whose rigidity, conformity, and hypocrisy are the source of ironic humor. Carey, the Vicar of Blackstable, leads a self-centered existence. His life follows a standard pattern. His daily routine is well planned and strictly adhered to. He does.....

Athelny - This journalist is one of Maugham's lovable characters. He is not only gregarious and loud, he is also kind and generous. His bombastic talk and exuberant spirits light up the pages. A loving

Hayward - Hayward is one of Philip's friends who first makes his appearance in Heidelberg as a boarder in the house of Erlin. He has a fairly comfortable income that allows him to experiment with his life. Philip is impressed by his appearance, sophistication, and fluent tongue. Hayward's romanticism and

Sally - Sally, though a minor character, helps Philip establish his identity in the world. The eldest child of Athelny, she is pretty, charming, sensible, and responsible. Though she admires her.....

PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

The plot of *Of Human Bondage* traces the story of one man's struggle for survival in a cruel world. Most of the action is mental, as the protagonist tries to conquer his passion and replace it with reason. There is a great deal of introductory material to establish Philip's background and philosophies. It is not until the book is almost half over that the antagonist, Mildred, is introduced. The rising action of the plot is then one misadventure with Mildred after another. Each time Philip treats her with kindness, she responds with cruelty; but because.....

THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS

The dominant theme in the novel is human bondage. Throughout life, Philip experiences bondage to different things, and the novel is his fight to find freedom from the bondage. Philip is born with a physical deformity that

causes him to suffer humiliation and isolation. His clubfoot becomes a bondage to him throughout the book. It curbs his physical activity in school and makes him the object of criticism. It induces him to shun....

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. There are a series of deaths presented in the novel. List them and explain Philip's reaction to each. In the end of the novel, what does Philip decide about death?
2. What is the contrast Philip experiences between life with his mother and life at the Vicarage? What does Maugham want to convey through his portrayal of the Vicar?

Copyright ©1997-1999, PinkMonkey.com

www.pinkmonkey.com All Rights Reserved.

Distribution without the written consent of PinkMonkey.com is prohibited.

END OF SAMPLE MONKEYNOTES EXCERPTS