

Return of the Sphinx: Unraveling the Secrets of Hugh MacLennan's Timeless Novel



In the realm of Canadian literature, few novels have left an enduring legacy as profound as Hugh MacLennan's *Return of the Sphinx*. Published in

1967, this literary masterpiece delves into the complexities of human relationships, the search for meaning, and the enduring power of art.



Return of the Sphinx by Hugh MacLennan

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 1152 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 305 pages



Over the years, *Return of the Sphinx* has captivated readers with its evocative prose, thought-provoking themes, and unforgettable characters. This comprehensive article aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the novel, exploring its literary significance, examining its key characters, and unraveling the enigmatic symbolism that permeates every page.

The Labyrinthine Plot

At the heart of *Return of the Sphinx* lies a captivating plot that unfolds through a series of interconnected stories. The novel follows the journey of four individuals who find themselves intertwined in a web of love, loss, and redemption.

- **Paul Tallard:** A young artist struggling to come to terms with his homosexuality and the societal pressures that threaten to stifle his true self.

- **Judith Eden:** A brilliant archeologist haunted by a tragic past and an unquenchable thirst for knowledge.
- **Dunstan Ramsay:** A wealthy industrialist grappling with the emptiness of material success and longing for a deeper connection.
- **Dr. T.J. Edwards:** A renowned psychiatrist who serves as a catalyst for the characters' emotional and psychological growth.

As these characters navigate their personal trials and tribulations, their paths converge in a series of poignant encounters that test their very identities. Their relationships become a microcosm of the human condition, exploring themes of love, betrayal, ambition, and the search for meaning in a chaotic world.

Unveiling the Symbolism

MacLennan employs a rich tapestry of symbolism throughout *Return of the Sphinx*, inviting readers to delve into the hidden depths of the text. The titular "sphinx" serves as a central symbol, representing the enigmatic nature of human existence and the search for answers to life's unyielding questions.

Other symbols, such as the ancient Egyptian artifact known as the "Demon of Doubt," the labyrinthine streets of Montreal, and the transformative power of art, further enhance the novel's symbolic landscape. These elements add layers of meaning, encouraging readers to grapple with the novel's profound philosophical and psychological themes.

Exploring the Characters

The characters in *Return of the Sphinx* are complex and multifaceted, each carrying the weight of their own unique experiences and struggles. Through their interactions, MacLennan explores the complexities of human psychology, the yearning for connection, and the resilience of the human spirit.

Paul Tallard, the aspiring artist, grapples with his own sexuality and the societal norms that threaten to silence his true voice. Judith Eden, the driven archeologist, carries a deep sense of loss and seeks solace in the pursuit of ancient knowledge. Dunstan Ramsay, the wealthy industrialist, realizes the hollowness of material success and embarks on a journey of self-discovery.

Themes and Literary Significance

Return of the Sphinx transcends the boundaries of conventional storytelling, offering a profound exploration of universal human themes. The novel grapples with the complexities of love and relationships, the search for meaning and identity, and the enduring power of art.

MacLennan's prose is both lyrical and evocative, painting a vivid portrait of human experience with exquisite precision. His exploration of psychological depth and the interplay of different perspectives elevates the novel to a level of literary brilliance.

Critical Acclaim and Legacy

Since its initial publication in 1967, *Return of the Sphinx* has received widespread critical acclaim and has become a staple of Canadian literature. The novel has been praised for its insightful exploration of human nature, its lyrical prose, and its enduring relevance.

Over the years, the novel has been the subject of numerous scholarly studies and academic dissertations. Its timeless themes and powerful characters continue to resonate with readers of all generations, cementing its place as a literary classic.

Return of the Sphinx by Hugh MacLennan is a masterpiece of Canadian literature that invites readers to embark on a profound journey into the depths of human existence. Its intricate plot, compelling characters, and labyrinthine symbolism offer a rich tapestry of themes that continue to challenge and inspire readers today.

This novel is not merely a tale to be read but an experience to be savored. It is a testament to the enduring power of art to illuminate the human condition and to remind us of the profound beauty and complexity of our shared humanity.



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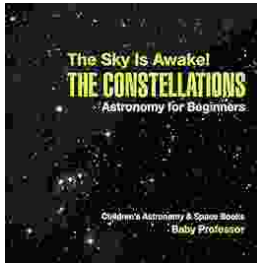
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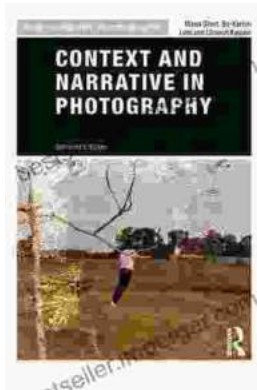
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