

The People of the Abyss: A Comprehensive Study Guide

Jack London's *The People of the Abyss* is a groundbreaking work of investigative journalism and social commentary that exposes the harsh realities of life for the poor in London at the turn of the 20th century. London spent seven weeks living incognito among the poor in the East End of London, and his firsthand account of their struggles and suffering is a powerful indictment of the social and economic conditions that created such a vast and desperate underclass.



Study Guide for Jack London's *The People of the*

Abyss by Course Hero

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 919 KB

Screen Reader : Supported

Print length : 29 pages

Lending : Enabled



The People of the Abyss is a challenging and disturbing read, but it is also an essential one. It is a reminder of the importance of empathy and compassion, and it challenges us to confront the injustices that continue to plague our society today.

Summary

The *People of the Abyss* is divided into three parts. In the first part, London describes his experiences living among the poor in the East End of London. He visits slums, workhouses, and shelters, and he talks to people from all walks of life, from the desperately poor to the wealthy philanthropists who try to help them.

In the second part of the book, London analyzes the causes of poverty. He argues that poverty is not simply a matter of individual failure, but rather a systemic problem caused by the social and economic conditions of the time. He criticizes the government for its failure to provide adequate support for the poor, and he calls for a more just and equitable society.

In the third part of the book, London offers a series of proposals for how to alleviate poverty. He calls for increased government spending on social programs, better housing and working conditions for the poor, and a more progressive tax system. He also argues for the importance of education and opportunity, and he believes that everyone has the potential to succeed if given the chance.

Characters

The *People of the Abyss* is a work of nonfiction, but it features a number of memorable characters who represent the different faces of poverty in London.

- **Jack London:** The author himself is the protagonist of the book. He is a young man who is deeply affected by his experiences in the East End of London.
- **The Abyss:** The Abyss is the name that London gives to the slums of the East End. It is a place of poverty, crime, and despair.

- **The People of the Abyss:** The people of the Abyss are the poor and working-class people who live in the East End. They are a diverse group of individuals, but they are all united by their struggle to survive.
- **The Philanthropists:** The philanthropists are the wealthy people who try to help the poor. They are often well-intentioned, but their efforts are often misguided and ineffective.
- **The Politicians:** The politicians are the people who are responsible for making the laws that affect the poor. They are often indifferent to the suffering of the poor, and they often put their own interests ahead of the needs of the people.

Themes

The People of the Abyss is a complex and multifaceted work that explores a wide range of themes, including:

- **Poverty:** The book is a powerful indictment of the poverty that existed in London at the turn of the 20th century. London describes in graphic detail the squalid conditions in which the poor lived, and he exposes the social and economic forces that created such a vast and desperate underclass.
- **Social justice:** London argues that poverty is not simply a matter of individual failure, but rather a systemic problem caused by the social and economic conditions of the time. He calls for a more just and equitable society, and he believes that everyone has the potential to succeed if given the chance.
- **Empathy and compassion:** The book is a powerful reminder of the importance of empathy and compassion. London urges readers to put

themselves in the shoes of the poor, and to understand the challenges that they face.

- **The human condition:** The book is a meditation on the human condition. London explores the nature of poverty, suffering, and hope. He argues that even in the darkest of times, there is always hope for a better future.

Symbolism

The People of the Abyss is a highly symbolic work. London uses a variety of symbols to represent the different aspects of poverty and the human condition.

- **The Abyss:** The Abyss is a symbol of the slums of the East End. It is a place of poverty, crime, and despair, but it is also a place where hope can still be found.
- **The People of the Abyss:** The people of the Abyss are symbols of the poor and working-class people who struggle to survive in a society that often ignores them. They are often overlooked and forgotten, but they are also capable of great strength and resilience.
- **The Philanthropists:** The philanthropists are symbols of the wealthy people who try to help the poor. They are often well-intentioned, but their efforts are often misguided and ineffective.
- **The Politicians:** The politicians are symbols of the people who are responsible for making the laws that affect the poor. They are often indifferent to the suffering of the poor, and they often put their own interests ahead of the needs of the people.

Style

The People of the Abyss is written



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