

robert ruark something of value

Robert Ruark's "Something of Value" is a captivating novel that explores themes of love, loyalty, and the complex relationship between man and nature. Written in 1955, this work stands out in the literary landscape of the mid-20th century, reflecting Ruark's deep appreciation for the African wilderness and the intricate dynamics of human relationships. This article will delve into the narrative, characters, themes, and the broader cultural context of the novel, providing a comprehensive understanding of its significance.

Overview of "Something of Value"

"Something of Value" is set in Kenya during the tumultuous period of the Mau Mau Uprising, a significant event in Kenya's fight for independence from British colonial rule. The story follows the lives of various characters who grapple with the socio-political changes occurring around them, all while navigating personal relationships and moral dilemmas. Ruark's vivid descriptions of the African landscape and wildlife serve as a backdrop to the unfolding drama, adding depth to the narrative.

Plot Summary

The novel centers on two main characters, a white settler named Peter and his African friend, Absalom. Their friendship is tested by the rising tensions in the country, as the Mau Mau fighters seek to reclaim their land and assert their rights against colonial oppression.

Key plot points include:

1. Peter's Struggles: As a settler, Peter is torn between his loyalty to his country and his friendship with Absalom. The complexities of colonial life weigh heavily on him as he witnesses the injustices

faced by the native population.

2. Absalom's Journey: Absalom represents the voice of the African people. His journey from a loyal servant to a leader in the fight for independence showcases the transformation of the Kenyan society during this era.

3. The Impact of War: The novel intricately portrays the horrors of war, emphasizing how it affects both the colonizers and the colonized. Ruark does not shy away from depicting the brutal realities of violence and loss.

4. Love and Sacrifice: At the heart of the narrative is a poignant love story that illustrates the sacrifices made in the name of love and loyalty, ultimately highlighting the human condition amidst chaos.

Character Analysis

Ruark's characters are richly developed, each embodying distinct perspectives that contribute to the novel's thematic depth.

- **Peter:** A complex character, Peter symbolizes the internal conflict faced by many settlers. His character arc reflects the struggle between personal values and societal expectations.
- **Absalom:** A representation of the African spirit, Absalom's evolution from a subordinate role to one of leadership underlines the shifting dynamics in Kenyan society.
- **Other Supporting Characters:** Various characters, including family members and other settlers, enrich the narrative, showcasing different viewpoints on colonialism and the fight for independence.

Thematic Exploration

"Something of Value" delves into several critical themes that resonate with readers, making it a significant work in American literature.

Colonialism and Its Consequences

The novel provides a vivid commentary on colonialism, illustrating its effects on both the colonizers and the colonized. Ruark's portrayal of the cultural clash highlights:

- Economic Disparities: The wealth disparity between settlers and natives is starkly depicted, showcasing the exploitation inherent in colonial systems.
- Cultural Identity: The struggle for cultural identity is a recurring theme, as characters grapple with their heritage against the backdrop of colonial rule.

Friendship and Loyalty

At its core, the novel is a testament to the power of friendship and loyalty. Peter and Absalom's relationship serves as a microcosm of the broader societal tensions, emphasizing:

- Bonds Across Cultures: Their friendship transcends racial barriers, reflecting the potential for unity amidst division.
- Moral Dilemmas: The characters face moral choices that challenge their loyalties, forcing them to confront their beliefs and values.

Nature and Wilderness

Ruark's evocative descriptions of the African landscape play a crucial role in the narrative. His reverence for nature is evident in:

- **Symbolism of the Wilderness:** The African wilderness symbolizes both beauty and danger, representing the untamed spirit of the land and its people.
- **Conservation of Wildlife:** The novel subtly addresses the importance of wildlife conservation, foreshadowing modern environmental concerns.

Literary Style and Techniques

Ruark's writing style in "Something of Value" is characterized by its lyricism and vivid imagery. His ability to paint a picture with words allows readers to immerse themselves fully in the African experience.

- **Descriptive Prose:** Ruark's rich descriptions of the landscape and wildlife create a visceral connection to the setting.
- **Symbolism:** The use of symbolism, particularly in relation to nature and wildlife, enhances the thematic depth of the narrative.
- **First-Person Perspective:** The narrative employs a first-person perspective that offers an intimate glimpse into the thoughts and emotions of the characters, particularly Peter.

Cultural Context and Impact

"Something of Value" was published during a time of great change, not only in Kenya but also in the United States and the world at large. The mid-20th century was marked by decolonization movements, civil rights struggles, and an increasing awareness of social justice issues.

Reception and Legacy

Upon its release, the novel received mixed reviews. Critics praised Ruark's evocative prose and compelling narrative but also critiqued it for its portrayal of race relations. Despite this, "Something of Value" has endured, becoming a significant work in understanding the complexities of colonialism and human relationships.

- Influence on Literature: Ruark's work has influenced subsequent generations of writers who seek to explore themes of colonialism, identity, and the human experience.
- Continued Relevance: The themes explored in the novel remain relevant today, as discussions about race, identity, and the legacy of colonialism continue in contemporary society.

Conclusion

Robert Ruark's "Something of Value" is more than just a narrative about love and friendship; it is a profound exploration of the human condition set against the backdrop of a nation in turmoil. Through rich character development, thematic depth, and evocative prose, Ruark invites readers to reflect on the complexities of loyalty, the impact of colonialism, and the beauty of the natural world. As we continue to grapple with the legacies of the past, Ruark's novel serves as a powerful reminder of the lasting effects of history on individual lives and relationships.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of Robert Ruark's 'Something of Value'?

The main theme of 'Something of Value' revolves around the complex relationships between colonizers and indigenous people in Kenya, highlighting the struggles for land, identity, and cultural heritage.

How does Robert Ruark portray the character of the protagonist in 'Something of Value'?

Ruark portrays the protagonist, a white settler named Peter, as someone torn between loyalty to his own community and empathy towards the native people, reflecting the moral dilemmas faced during colonial times.

What historical context is important for understanding 'Something of Value'?

Understanding the historical context of British colonialism in Kenya during the mid-20th century is crucial, as it shapes the narrative and the conflicts between different cultural and social groups.

What literary techniques does Ruark use in 'Something of Value'?

Ruark employs vivid imagery, detailed character development, and rich descriptions of the landscape to immerse readers in the setting and evoke the emotional depth of the characters' experiences.

How does 'Something of Value' reflect Robert Ruark's own experiences?

Ruark's experiences as a big-game hunter and his time spent in Africa inform the novel, providing authenticity to the portrayal of the environment and the complexities of colonial life.

What impact did 'Something of Value' have on postcolonial literature?

The novel is considered significant in postcolonial literature as it challenges colonial narratives and offers insights into the perspectives of both colonizers and the colonized, encouraging a more nuanced understanding of history.

In what ways is 'Something of Value' relevant to contemporary discussions on colonialism?

The book remains relevant by prompting discussions on the lasting effects of colonialism, issues of land ownership, and cultural preservation, which resonate in today's socio-political climate.

What makes 'Something of Value' a notable work in Ruark's bibliography?

It is notable for its depth and complexity, showcasing Ruark's ability to blend adventure with serious social commentary, setting it apart from his other works primarily focused on hunting and adventure.

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