

barometer rising hugh maclennan

Barometer Rising by Hugh MacLennan: A Deep Dive into Canadian Literature and History

barometer rising hugh maclennan is often regarded as a seminal work in Canadian literature, weaving together personal drama with the broader historical context of World War I. This novel not only solidified Hugh MacLennan's reputation as a leading Canadian author but also helped define a distinctly Canadian voice in the literary world. If you're curious about the themes, characters, and historical significance of Barometer Rising, this article will guide you through everything you need to know.

Understanding Barometer Rising Hugh MacLennan: An Overview

Barometer Rising, published in 1941, is set against the backdrop of the Halifax Explosion of 1917, one of the most devastating disasters in Canadian history. Hugh MacLennan masterfully captures the tension, trauma, and resilience of Halifax's citizens during this catastrophic event.

At its core, the novel explores themes of identity, love, and loyalty, all intertwined with the chaos and uncertainty brought on by war and disaster. The story follows Neil Macrae, a young Canadian soldier and architect, who returns home to Halifax after serving overseas. Upon his return, he confronts personal and societal challenges, including a complicated love triangle and the lingering scars of the explosion.

The Significance of the Halifax Explosion in the Novel

One of the most compelling aspects of Barometer Rising is its vivid portrayal of the Halifax Explosion. On December 6, 1917, a munitions ship exploded in Halifax Harbor, leveling large parts of the city and killing approximately 2,000 people. MacLennan uses this real historical event not only as a dramatic climax but also to symbolize the upheaval and transformation affecting Canada during the early 20th century.

This disaster serves as a powerful metaphor for the disruption of old social orders and the birth of new identities, reflecting the broader changes that World War I imposed on Canadian society.

Hugh MacLennan: The Author Behind Barometer Rising

Hugh MacLennan is often hailed as one of Canada's greatest novelists. His work consistently explores themes of Canadian identity, culture, and history. Barometer Rising was his first major novel and set the tone for his literary career, which included other notable works like *Two Solitudes* and *The Watch That Ends the Night*.

MacLennan's own experiences and academic background influenced his writing. He studied literature

and philosophy and was deeply interested in the cultural divisions within Canada, particularly between English and French Canadians. This interest is subtly woven into *Barometer Rising*, as the novel grapples with questions of belonging and national unity during a time of global conflict.

MacLennan's Writing Style and Narrative Techniques

What makes *Barometer Rising* stand out is MacLennan's ability to blend historical fact with rich, character-driven storytelling. His prose is both elegant and accessible, drawing readers into the emotional landscape of his characters while painting a detailed picture of early 20th-century Halifax.

MacLennan's narrative technique often involves shifting perspectives, which allows readers to see the impact of historical events from multiple angles. This approach enriches the story, providing a deeper understanding of the social and personal ramifications of the Halifax Explosion.

Exploring Themes in *Barometer Rising* Hugh MacLennan

Barometer Rising is not just a historical novel; it's a profound exploration of human resilience and the quest for identity amid chaos. Several key themes emerge throughout the book:

1. National Identity and Patriotism

The novel reflects Canada's evolving sense of national identity during World War I. Neil Macrae's character embodies the tension between duty to one's country and personal desires. Through his experiences, MacLennan examines what it means to be Canadian in a country still defining itself on the world stage.

2. Love and Conflict

At the heart of the story lies a complex love triangle involving Neil Macrae, his former love Joan, and his rival, Cpl. Keith Blair. This personal conflict mirrors the larger social upheaval, highlighting how love and loyalty are tested in times of crisis.

3. The Impact of War and Disaster

The Halifax Explosion serves as a stark reminder of the destructive power of war, even far from the battlefield. The novel delves into the physical and emotional scars left on survivors, emphasizing themes of loss, trauma, and healing.

Why Barometer Rising Still Matters Today

Barometer Rising Hugh MacLennan remains relevant for several reasons. For readers interested in Canadian history and literature, it provides an engaging entry point into the country's past and cultural identity. The novel's exploration of resilience in the face of tragedy resonates universally, making it timeless.

Additionally, the book offers valuable insights into how literature can capture and preserve historical memory. By fictionalizing the Halifax Explosion, MacLennan ensures that this pivotal moment in Canadian history continues to be remembered and understood.

Tips for Reading Barometer Rising

If you're planning to read Barometer Rising, here are some tips to enhance your experience:

- **Familiarize yourself with the Halifax Explosion:** Understanding the historical background will deepen your appreciation of the novel's setting and events.
- **Pay attention to character development:** The relationships and personal growth of the characters reflect broader societal changes.
- **Consider the themes of identity and loyalty:** Reflect on how these themes are still relevant in today's world.
- **Note the narrative structure:** Observe how MacLennan shifts perspectives to provide a multifaceted view of the story.

Barometer Rising and Canadian Literary Canon

Barometer Rising is often studied in Canadian literature courses as a foundational text that helped define the nation's literary voice. It stands alongside other classics that explore the complexities of Canadian culture and history.

The novel's blend of historical accuracy, emotional depth, and social commentary makes it a rich subject for analysis and discussion. Scholars often highlight MacLennan's skill in balancing the personal and the political, a hallmark of great literature.

Impact on Contemporary Canadian Writers

Many contemporary Canadian authors cite Hugh MacLennan and Barometer Rising as inspirations. The novel's focus on place, identity, and history echoes in the works of writers like Margaret Atwood,

Michael Ondaatje, and Alice Munro.

By addressing universal themes through a distinctly Canadian lens, *Barometer Rising* set a precedent for future generations to explore their heritage and cultural identity through fiction.

Barometer Rising by Hugh MacLennan is more than just a historical novel; it's a powerful narrative that captures a defining moment in Canadian history and the complexities of human experience during times of upheaval. Whether you're passionate about Canadian literature, history, or simply enjoy a compelling story of love and resilience, *Barometer Rising* offers a rich and rewarding reading experience.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'Barometer Rising' by Hugh MacLennan?

The main theme of *'Barometer Rising'* is the impact of war on individuals and society, exploring issues of identity, loyalty, and the struggle to rebuild in the aftermath of the Halifax Explosion during World War I.

Who is the protagonist in 'Barometer Rising' and what challenges does he face?

The protagonist is Jim Taggart, a returning soldier who faces challenges such as uncovering family secrets, dealing with personal loss, and helping to rebuild Halifax after the devastating explosion.

How does Hugh MacLennan portray the city of Halifax in 'Barometer Rising'?

MacLennan portrays Halifax vividly as a city marked by resilience and tragedy, capturing the destruction caused by the Halifax Explosion and the spirit of its inhabitants as they work towards recovery.

What historical event forms the backdrop of 'Barometer Rising'?

'Barometer Rising' is set against the backdrop of the Halifax Explosion of 1917, one of the largest man-made explosions prior to the atomic age, which profoundly affects the story and its characters.

How does 'Barometer Rising' explore Canadian identity?

The novel explores Canadian identity through its characters' experiences of war, community, and the struggle to define themselves in a changing society, highlighting themes of nationalism and cultural pride.

What role does family play in 'Barometer Rising'?

Family plays a central role, with Jim Taggart's quest to uncover the truth about his family history driving much of the plot and emphasizing themes of loyalty, heritage, and reconciliation.

How is the theme of love depicted in 'Barometer Rising'?

Love is depicted as a powerful force that motivates characters and provides hope amidst chaos, particularly through the romantic subplot involving Jim Taggart and Joan Savage.

Why is 'Barometer Rising' considered an important work in Canadian literature?

'Barometer Rising' is considered important because it combines historical fiction with national identity, providing insight into a pivotal moment in Canadian history while showcasing Hugh MacLennan's literary skill and contribution to Canadian cultural heritage.

Additional Resources

Barometer Rising by Hugh MacLennan: An In-Depth Literary Exploration

barometer rising hugh maclellan represents a seminal work in Canadian literature, blending historical fiction with a nuanced exploration of national identity during the tumultuous period of World War I. First published in 1941, the novel remains a critical touchstone for understanding the cultural and social dynamics that shaped Canada's emergence on the world stage. Hugh MacLennan's narrative craftsmanship in *Barometer Rising* not only captures the emotional landscape of a nation in flux but also delves into the personal and collective struggles experienced amid conflict and change.

Contextual Background and Historical Significance

Barometer Rising is set against the backdrop of the Halifax Explosion of 1917, one of the most devastating disasters in Canadian history. This event forms a pivotal point in the novel, symbolizing both destruction and the potential for regeneration. MacLennan's choice to anchor the story in this historical moment allows readers to engage with a vivid portrayal of wartime Halifax, offering insights into the societal upheaval that accompanied the explosion.

The novel's historical accuracy and attention to detail have been widely praised, with MacLennan meticulously researching the period to provide an authentic depiction of life during the war. This dedication to realism enriches the narrative, providing a textured understanding of the challenges faced by Canadians, from the front lines to the home front.

The Role of Canadian Identity in Barometer Rising

A central theme in *Barometer Rising* is the exploration of Canadian identity during a formative period

in the nation's history. MacLennan uses his characters to reflect various facets of this evolving identity, particularly the tension between British colonial heritage and emerging Canadian nationalism. The protagonist, Neil Macrae, embodies this duality as he returns from war to confront both personal and societal conflicts.

The novel interrogates concepts of loyalty, sacrifice, and belonging, revealing how the war acted as a catalyst for redefining what it meant to be Canadian. MacLennan's narrative suggests that national identity is not static but is instead shaped through shared experiences and collective memory, a perspective that resonates with contemporary discussions on cultural identity and nationhood.

Narrative Structure and Character Development

MacLennan employs a multi-layered narrative structure that intertwines personal stories with broader historical events. The novel's pacing balances moments of intense drama with introspective passages, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of character motivations and societal pressures.

Neil Macrae, as the central figure, is portrayed with psychological depth, his internal struggles mirroring the external chaos of war and disaster. Supporting characters add complexity to the narrative, representing diverse social classes and viewpoints within Halifax society. This ensemble approach enables MacLennan to examine the multifaceted impact of war and tragedy on different segments of the population.

Literary Techniques and Symbolism

Barometer Rising is notable for its rich use of symbolism and literary devices that enhance thematic expression. The "barometer rising" itself functions as a metaphor for impending change and tension, foreshadowing both the explosion and the societal transformations it precipitates. Weather imagery recurs throughout the novel, often reflecting the emotional states of characters or the broader atmosphere of uncertainty.

MacLennan's prose combines realism with moments of lyrical introspection, creating a narrative voice that is both accessible and evocative. His descriptive passages vividly evoke the physical and emotional landscapes of wartime Halifax, immersing the reader in the setting while underscoring the novel's central concerns.

Critical Reception and Legacy

Upon its release, *Barometer Rising* received acclaim for its compelling storytelling and insightful treatment of Canadian history. Literary critics have highlighted MacLennan's skill in weaving personal and political narratives, noting how the novel contributes to a greater understanding of Canada's cultural heritage.

Over the decades, *Barometer Rising* has been incorporated into educational curricula, serving as a key text for students studying Canadian literature and history. Its continued relevance speaks to the enduring power of MacLennan's work to engage with themes of resilience, identity, and the human

cost of conflict.

Comparative Analysis with Contemporary Works

When compared to other war novels of its era, *Barometer Rising* stands out for its distinctly Canadian perspective. Unlike many contemporaneous works focused on European theatres of war, MacLennan's novel centers on the domestic impact of global conflict, particularly through the lens of the Halifax Explosion.

This focus provides a unique contribution to war literature, emphasizing how international events reverberate within local communities. The novel's blend of historical detail and character-driven storytelling aligns it with other significant Canadian works that seek to define national narratives through personal experience.

Relevance of *Barometer Rising* in Modern Literary Discourse

In today's literary and cultural conversations, *Barometer Rising* continues to offer valuable insights into the complexities of national identity and historical memory. The novel's themes resonate with contemporary readers interested in how literature can shape and reflect collective understanding of past events.

Moreover, MacLennan's nuanced portrayal of trauma and recovery offers a framework for examining the long-term effects of disaster on communities. As such, *Barometer Rising* remains a pertinent study not only for its historical context but also for its exploration of human resilience and the processes of healing.

***Barometer Rising* and Canadian Literature Canon**

Barometer Rising's position within the Canadian literary canon is firmly established, often cited alongside works by contemporaries such as Morley Callaghan and Robertson Davies. Its influence extends beyond literature into cultural studies and historical scholarship, marking it as a multidisciplinary resource for understanding early 20th-century Canada.

The novel's enduring popularity is evidenced by ongoing publications, adaptations, and scholarly analyses, cementing Hugh MacLennan's reputation as a foundational figure in Canadian letters.

In examining *Barometer Rising* by Hugh MacLennan, one encounters a work that transcends its immediate historical setting to explore universal themes of identity, loss, and renewal. Its layered narrative and rich symbolism continue to invite analysis and reflection, ensuring its place as a cornerstone of Canadian cultural heritage.

Barometer Rising Hugh MacLennan

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barometer rising hugh maclelennan: *Imagination and the Creative Impulse in the New Literatures in English*, 2021-11-01 *Imagination and the Creative Impulse in the New Literatures in English* brings together the proceedings of a symposium organised by the editors at the University of Trento in 1990. At a time when the study of the post-colonial literatures is gaining more widespread recognition, scholars based mainly at universities in Italy and Germany were invited to address the manner in which writers are giving literary expression to the complexity of contemporary post-colonial and multicultural societies and to consider, from their differing perspectives on the new literatures, central questions of formal experimentation, linguistic innovation, social and political commitment, textual theory and cross-culturality. Focusing on such major writers such as Achebe, Soyinka and Walcott, as well as on lesser-known figures such as Jack Davis, Witi Ihimaera, Rohinton Mistry and Manohar Malgonkar, the contributors take up many themes characteristic of the new literatures: the challenge posed to traditional authority, the expression of national identity, the role of literature in the liberation struggle, modes of literary practice in multicultural societies; the relationship of the new literatures in English to that of the former metropolitan centre; and the complex intertextuality characterizing much of the literary production of post-colonial societies.

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and theoretical approaches, the essays seek to explicate depictions of “the historical” in individual texts and to explore larger questions relating to historical fiction as a genre with complex and divergent political motivations and goals. Although the topics of the essays vary widely, as a whole the collection raises (and answers) questions about the significance of the roles historical fiction has played within Canadian culture for nearly two centuries.

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barometer rising hugh maclellan: *Canadian Literary Landmarks* John Robert Colombo, 1984-01-01 Here is a list of three dozen of the top literary locales in the country. The selection of sites is necessarily subjective, yet it attempts to represent geographical, historical, social, and cultural concerns as well as strictly literary interests. Had this list been prepared by the editors of Michelin Guide, they would have added asterisks or stars to the entries: * Interesting. ** Worth a detour. *** Worth a journey. It is the opinion of the author of *Canadian Literary Landmarks* that all thirty-six sites are Worth a journey. It is recognized that the average person is unlikely to visit No. 1, not to mention No. 36, but as these sites happen to be the first and last entries in the book, they mark a convenient and symbolic beginning and ending. (No. 1 being L'Anse aux Meadows, Epaves Bay, Nfld. and No. 36 being the North Pole, NWT).

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barometer rising hugh maclellan: *Man Should Rejoice*, by Hugh MacLennan Hugh MacLennan, 2019-04-16 *Man Should Rejoice* is one of two hitherto unpublished novels by acclaimed

novelist Hugh MacLennan. Completed in 1937 and left unpublished due to economic conditions during the Great Depression, it lay in the McGill archives until now. This critical edition of *Man Should Rejoice*, which is also the first-ever publication of the work, is comprised of a critical introduction, a bibliography of published and unpublished sources, a fully-edited text based on a typescript of the novel, a list of textual emendations, and explanatory notes. The introduction draws upon extensive research undertaken in three Canadian archival collections located in Montreal and Calgary. It provides relevant historical, cultural, and biographical context for the novel. From hundreds of archival documents, Colin Hill reconstructs a textual history of the novel's production that acknowledges the crucial contribution of Dorothy Duncan, who heavily revised the text and assisted MacLennan behind the scenes. Hill also explores the critical reception of MacLennan's fiction from the 1930s to the present. This book is published in English. - *Man Should Rejoice* est un des deux romans inédits du grand romancier Hugh MacLennan. Terminé en 1937, il fut victime de la Grande Crise et fut conservé dans les archives de McGill jusqu'à maintenant. Cette édition critique de *Man Should Rejoice* comprend une introduction critique, une bibliographie des sources publiées et non publiées, le texte révisé tiré d'un tapuscrit du roman, une liste des emendations textuelles, et des notes explicatives. L'introduction, qui repose sur des recherches archivistiques poussées de trois collections canadiennes situées à Montréal et à Calgary, fournit le contexte historique, culturel et biographique du roman. Colin Hill érige l'histoire textuelle de l'écriture de ce roman à partir de centaines de documents d'archives qui jettent la lumière sur la contribution clé de Dorothy Duncan, qui a révisé en profondeur le texte et a aidé MacLennan en coulisses. Il explore par ailleurs la réception critique de la fiction de MacLennan, des années 1930 jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Ce livre est publié en anglais.

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tolerance of ethnic difference, the ability to do one's duty without complaint or arrogance, and the inclination to show moral as well as physical courage. Paradoxically, Canadians are shown to decry the horrors of war while making use of its productive cultural effects. Through a close analysis of the way sacrifice, service, and the commemoration of war are represented in these literary works, *Catching the Torch* argues that iterations of a secure mythic notion of national identity, one that is articulated via the representation of straightforward civic and military participation, work to counter current anxieties about the stability of the nation-state, in particular anxieties about the failure of the ideal of a national character.

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