

The Stone Angel

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above the town on the hill brow the stone angel used to stand i wonder if she stands there yet hagar shipley an irascible independent nonagenarian has lived a quiet life full of rage as she approaches her death she retreats from the squabbling of her son and his wife to reflect on her past her ill advised marriage her two sons the harshness of farm life on the prairie her own failures and the betrayals and failures of others

susan s efforts to become a saint after receiving a message from a stone angel on a tombstone are aided by her loyal east indian friend rab

a study guide for margaret laurence s the stone angel excerpted from gale s acclaimed novels for students this concise study guide includes plot summary character analysis author biography study questions historical context suggestions for further

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story of the last few days in the life of hagar shipley a proud stubborn old woman of ninety who struggles against the assistance she requires to live

a compelling journey seen through the eyes of a woman nearing the end of her life at ninety hagar shipley speaks movingly of the perils of growing old and reflects with bitterness humor and a painful awareness of her own frailties on the life she has led from her childhood as the daughter of a respected merchant to her rebellious marriage hagar has fought a long and sometimes misguided battle for independence and respect in the course of examining and trying to understand the shape her life has taken her divided feelings about her husband her passionate attachment to one son and her neglect of another she is sometimes regretful but rarely penitent asking forgiveness from neither god nor those around her she must still wrestle with her own nature pride was my wilderness and the demon that led me there was fear she has been afraid of being unrespectable afraid of needing too much afraid of giving too much and her pride is both disturbing and inspiring 500 great books by women review by sonja larsen

the stone angel the diviners and a bird in the house are three of the five books in margaret laurence s renowned manawaka series named for the small canadian prairie town in which they take place each of these books is narrated by a strong woman growing up in the town and struggling with physical and emotional isolation in the stone angel hagar shipley age ninety tells the story of her life and in doing so tries to come to terms with how the very qualities which sustained her have deprived her of joy mingling past and present she maintains pride in the face of senility while recalling the life she led as a rebellious young bride and later as a grieving mother laurence gives us in hagar a woman who is funny infuriating and heartbreakingly poignant this is a revelation not impersonation the effect of such skilled use of language is to lead the reader towards the self recognition that hagar misses robertson davies new york times it is laurence s admirable achievement to strike with an equally sure touch the peculiar note and the universal she gives us a portrait of a remarkable character and at the same time the picture of old age itself with the pain the weariness the terror the impotent angers and physical mishaps the realization that others are waiting and wishing for an end honor tracy the new republic miss laurence is the best fiction writer in the dominion and one of the best in the hemisphere atlantic laurence demonstrates in the stone angel that she has a true novelist s gift for catching a character in mid passion and life at full flood as hagar shipley daydreams and chatters and lurches through the novel she traces one of the most convincing and the most touching portraits of an unregenerate sinner declining into senility since sara monday went to her reward in joyce cary s the horse s mouth time laurence s triumph is in her evocation of hagar at ninety we sympathize with her in her resistance to being moved to a nursing home in her preposterous flight in her impatience in the hospital battered depleted suffering she rages with her last breath against the dying of the light the stone angel is a fine novel admirably written and sustained by unfailing insight granville hicks saturday review the stone angel is a good book because mrs laurence avoids sentimentality and condescension hagar shipley is still passionately involved in the puzzle of her own nature laurence s imaginative tact is strikingly at work for surely this is what it feels like to be old paul pickrel harper s

a guide to the novel the stone angel

these 17 essays ponder the character of prairie literature what is prairie literature now what has it been and what is its future that the prairies are west of eden is an idea only and a somewhat mischievous one is this spot distant from the glory of the garden writers have often pondered the ambiguous sanctity of the prairies while those who recruited settlers certainly exploited the notion these varied essays engage with margaret laurence rudy wiebe and neil young they present analysis of nfb films and the gopher as icon here are strategies for teaching and views of the canadian prairies from abroad this is a significant collection of fresh views of prairie literature

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