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Island



Synopsis

In his final novel - which he considered his most important - Aldous Huxley transports us to the remote Pacific island of Pala, where an ideal society has flourished for 120 years. Inevitably, this island of bliss attracts the envy and enmity of the surrounding world. A conspiracy is underway to take over Pala, and events are set in motion when an agent of the conspirators, a newspaperman named Faranby, is shipwrecked there. What Faranby doesn't expect is how his time with the people of Pala will revolutionize all his values and - to his amazement - give him hope.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is the work of a social planner - and not the kind that coordinates seating arrangements and makes out guest lists. The culmination of several explorations in cultural engineering, *Island* is a how-to book describing the requisite customs, attitudes, and institutions for a society devoted to the positive development and individuation of its citizens. In this book Huxley subverts all the conventional storytelling devices to make his points. Plot and characterization really are afterthoughts here unless they assist in some way to get an idea across. All the relevant conclusions that have been carefully and thoughtfully arrived at over an entire lifetime are given airing here mostly in awkward asides. Huxley is reaching the end of his life, and there's an urgency in the prose that resembles a harangue. But if we recall the ambitious intention here - to lay out a blueprint for a society truly dedicated to individual liberty and liberation - it seems inane to complain about the lack of conventional storytelling devices. In this book we can see that Huxley has done all

the heavy lifting long before the hippies came on the scene and turned drug-taking into a recreational activity - invalidating drug use for any other purpose in the minds of a majority of people. Many of these same people now seek to invalidate Huxley's crowning achievement because the writing can't be enjoyed as an escapist, recreational activity. This paradox is the result of an all-too-human tendency to manipulate facts and use them to argue against any idea that might contradict their ingrained beliefs. Of course, some will argue that their problem with *Island* is not that it can't be enjoyed recreationally, but that it is the leftist ravings and ramblings of a drugged-out kook.

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