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YORK NOTES ADVANCED - THE ULTIMATE LITERATURE GUIDES.

The spire, William Golding : notes Details

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From Reader Review The spire, William Golding : notes for online ebook

Jenny says

This is a powerful story of obsession and the effects of on Priest's obsession with adding a spire to a gothic cathedral on those around him.

Ellen says

Did not enjoy this book. Confusing and dull. On the other hand, the play created from the novel, as staged at Salisbury Playhouse (UK) in 2012, is excellent.

Ed says

I was recently reminded of this book, which I read some 20 years ago. I vividly remember enjoying the reading experience. It is a story set in the middle ages concerning the building of a cathedral. Yo, ch-ch-ch-check it out, boyyyyyy.

Lydia says

This book is half about manic religious faith, and half about structural engineering in the Middle Ages. God has told our churchman to erect a new church spire, to honor Him, but technology is not up to the challenge [yet]. Rapture, lust, mortality, and obsession are the themes. What lengths do we go to to honor a wacky idea, and what is the difference between a visionary and a fool? William Golding puts us in the brain and heart of our churchman and it's a wild, sometimes sickening ride.

Jeff says

I've actually been to the Salisbury Cathedral so, well, so nothing; I just wanted to brag.

This book is not bad. Golding really does show the obsessive and fanatical quality of blind ambition and religion (these two marrying in this book) and dynamically shows the sexual frustration of priests that lead to horrific acts (in this book, the praying for a tempting woman to die). Also, finally, it shows how spires, or, all tall buildings/skyscrapers, etc are phallic representations of self-conscious manhood. I did not mind the stream-of-consciousness, but I think Joyce did it better.

Golding illustrates how ambition, no matter how noble, can destroy relationships and the dreamers who dream them.

It's just not that fun to read.

Jimmy says

Golding's story of a man obsessed and destroyed by his obsession whilst being a difficult read due to the narrative style is admittedly brilliantly done. Some of the religious imagery & symbolism used was lost on me, otherwise I would have rated it higher.

Wallowing Hippo says

Definitely recommended, whether you are reading *The Spire* as a set text or just for wider reading.

I found this a very useful accompaniment to the novel which allowed me to read with far greater insight and understanding than I would have otherwise have done. It enhanced my enjoyment of the excellent novel no end.

Anum says

This book was a bit of a 'no, no' for me. I liked certain aspects of it but overall it really kind of got on my nerves. It is praise worthy when you note the symbolism and the manifestation of a man's temptation on the world, however, Golding's characters seemed a little too black and white for me. In *'Lord of the Flies'* this served a well drawn out function, but in *'The Spire'*, it just made me feel that the people were a little colourless and the plot became tasteless as a result.

Florin Pitea says

"*The Spire*" appears to be post-modern in its approach to the human mind. Unlike "*Sons and Lovers*" or "*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*", which depict the development of a character's mind at a young age, "*The Spire*" follows an elderly reverend's gradual descent into insanity and the corresponding alienation and dissolution of the community he lives in. For a more detailed review of this novel, please visit my blog here: <http://tesatorul.blogspot.ro/2012/03/...>

Graham says

the best book ever written about pride and fall

Linda Thompson says

This is a story of a man of God who believes he has been called to build a spire on his cathedral- a building which has no foundations and was never intended to carry the additional weight. The book is full of symbolism and I found it hard to make sense of parts of it, along with the stream of consciousness technique through which Golding portrays Jocelin's increasing descent into madness as the spire rises ever higher.

Not an easy read.

Gavin says

Meh.

This thing was a one trick pony. Watching a character get bitch-slapped by his own pious righteousness just isn't that interesting. Even if it were, you could tell it was coming from the very first page, so what's the point in reading the rest? Ole' Jocelin was so obviously and one-sidedly loathesome (again, from the first page), there was little of interest or surprise to be found.

By the end I was on my knees begging for the damn tower to fall on the sorry son of a bitch and end it all. But no, the book disappoints on even that simple hope. I almost stopped reading with 15 pages left, but decided to stick it out. Death has never been so boring.

Krisz says

Loved this. Fantastic.

It has pace, it is unpredictable, it talks in riddles... I wish I wrote it!

The reader sees everything through the eyes of the dean - and to him, only the building of the tower counts, so it keeps us on the edge because he hardly sees anything from what surrounds him, and doesn't really talk about his other feelings or his past. So we never get the full picture, we have to keep on guessing what is what, and we only see towards the end how many things were going on.

What I also loved was that the story is universal. There are people today who are building their towers, and this book is a perfect insight to how their mind works. There are always people around us (near or far) who seem to believe one thing or another and are blind to real life, right?

And once we see similarities, the book, somehow, becomes funny. It's a subtle fun, though, and rather ironic, but... hell, irony is the new black.

Oh.

This was awesome.

Duncan says

Overall trajectory pretty clear from the beginning, but effectively harrowing to read both literally and as metaphor.

Jaclyn says

I just didn't get this.

Mary says

I think that this was the book that inspired Follett to write, Pillars of the Earth. Although I loved Pillars....this one is the "University of Cambridge" to Follett's "A Good State School" novel. You'll recognize the premise: The vision that drives Dean Jocelin to construct an immense new spire above his cathedral tests the limits of all who surround him. The foundationless stone pillars shriek and the earth beneath them heaves under the structure's weight as the Dean's will weighs down his collapsing faith. Now, saying all that, I think I liked Follett's version a little better. This one is artsy, beautifully done, critically acclaimed, and one of those books I felt I should read. Follett's books (there are three in the series) are big door stops - they're huge, but they're easy reads that I flew through.

Jennifer (aka EM) says

Re-read. A bit obtuse, almost experimental in places, but the central metaphor of the spire as a symbol of teetering faith (and disintegrating sanity) for an arrogant, delusional priest is still as powerful as I remember it. This time around, I also was able to more clearly see the central conflict between Fr. Jocelin and Master Builder Roger Mason as one of faith versus science, which has even greater resonance today. What Golding achieves here is a comment, nested in high symbolism, that vision and progress - either spiritually or technologically - is often the product of madness; or leads to it. Or both. And it's difficult to tell the difference between genius and insanity.

There is a remarkable scene in which Fr. Jocelin climbs to the top of his not-yet-completed tower and is able to survey the land, looking down upon his parishioners as they go about their lives. The symbolism is multi-layered (throughout, but especially in this scene): Fr. Jocelin sets himself far above his people, looming like a false god (they have by now moved beyond fearing him to dismissing him as crazy and irrelevant). Remote and removed from the real lives of the people who look to him to provide comfort and spiritual guidance, Fr. Jocelin's neglect of his spiritual duty comes to be his downfall.

This re-read follows Death Comes For The Archbishop, which makes for an excellent contrast in just about every respect, and I like both books better for it, I think.

Angelique says

I'm not sure I understood what was going on, it felt like it was written in a style like nothing else, I did enjoy the ride a bit for that reason, but was defo had moments of confusion...

C says

Written in 1964 by the Nobel Prize winning author William Golding, *Dean Jocelin* has a divine vision that he must make a spire on his cathedral four hundred feet high. The base of the church is on four pillars that can barely support what is already there. In building the tower, the stone pillars sing and bend, stones fall, fumes that can only be from the ancient graves under the church are released. I can't imagine.. it'd be like a forty story building... and not anywhere close to the time frame of the present day (I'm not sure when the book is supposed to take place, but it seems like many centuries ago.) Jocelin has to decide what to sacrifice in order to make the spire happen. Jocelin doesn't seem like an intentionally terrible person, he is just full of pride, ignorance, arrogance and naivety. At some point, his confessor says no one ever taught him how to pray, but as the "master of novices" that kind of seemed like his job. Jocelin likes staying in the tower. I like the idea that he was building this tower to be further from the earth and reality, but he probably just wanted to be godlike. There was plenty happening in that cathedral that Jocelin had good reason to want to avoid. I think Golding wrote the book in a way for each reader to take their own meaning from it. I assumed I knew what the book was about allegorically, but I don't think it was the point of the book exactly... or not all of it. I thought I knew exactly how the book would play out, but I was wrong. I really liked the way the book is written: it's a bit of a puzzle to figure out. Maybe I'm a bit dull, but as soon as Jocelin is in the tower looking at the fires all around for Midsummer Night, realizing that most of the workers for the tower were missing, and then realizing they weren't exactly religious people, Jocelin loses his sanity a bit and the book kind of goes off the rails. I was confused after that. Someone Jocelin is talking to says "What are you talking about?" and I had just thought the same thing. Jocelin says "I need three tongues to say three things at once" and I'm thinking, No, you need to make any sense with the tongue you have. I know I'm probably lacking many of the biblical references.. obviously such a religious book will have a few. If only the last quarter of the book didn't get so irritatingly confusing, I would have liked it better. Also, I liked the ending that I imagined better but was happy it didn't end up being so obvious.

Chris Earls says

While not my favorite, this is probably the best book I have ever read.
