

what makes sammy run budd schulberg

What makes Sammy run Budd Schulberg is a question that explores the intricate themes and character dynamics in Schulberg's famous novella. Published in 1941, "What Makes Sammy Run?" is not just a story about ambition and the ruthless pursuit of success in the entertainment industry; it also serves as a critical reflection on American society and its values. In this article, we will delve into the core elements of the novella, examining how Schulberg's portrayal of his characters and the narrative's context contribute to its lasting impact and relevance.

Understanding the Plot and Characters

"What Makes Sammy Run?" follows the story of Sammy Glick, a young, ambitious writer in the newspaper business who will stop at nothing to achieve success. The novella is narrated by Al Manheim, an older journalist who becomes both fascinated and repulsed by Sammy's relentless drive.

The Protagonist: Sammy Glick

Sammy Glick is a complex character whose ambition and cunning lead him to the top of the newspaper world. Some of his defining traits include:

- **Ambition:** Sammy's desire for success is unparalleled. He is willing to exploit others and manipulate situations to climb the social and corporate ladder.
- **Manipulativeness:** He uses charm, deceit, and ruthlessness to navigate the competitive landscape of journalism.
- **Charisma:** Despite his morally questionable actions, Sammy possesses a magnetic personality that draws people to him.

The Narrator: Al Manheim

Al Manheim serves as a foil to Sammy. He is a seasoned journalist who has witnessed the darker side of ambition. His reflections provide depth to the narrative and raise questions about the cost of success. Key aspects of Al's character include:

- **Disillusionment:** Al represents the older generation of journalists who are more aware of the ethical dilemmas in the industry.
- **Observer Role:** As the narrator, he provides critical insight into Sammy's character and the societal influences that shape his ambition.

- **Moral Conflict:** Al struggles with his own values as he becomes increasingly fascinated by Sammy's rise.

Thematic Elements

Budd Schulberg's novella tackles several profound themes that resonate with readers, making it a classic exploration of ambition and morality.

The Price of Ambition

One of the central themes is the price one pays for ambition. Sammy's success comes at the expense of his relationships and ethics. This raises questions such as:

- Is success worth losing one's integrity?
- What sacrifices are individuals willing to make to achieve their dreams?

The novella suggests that the relentless pursuit of success can lead to moral decay, as Sammy's character exemplifies the emptiness that often accompanies achieving one's goals through unethical means.

Corruption in the Media

Schulberg critiques the media industry, highlighting how it often prioritizes sensationalism over integrity. The competitive nature of journalism is depicted through Sammy's manipulative tactics, illustrating how the pursuit of ratings and readership can corrupt values. Key points include:

- Pressure to conform to sensationalist narratives.
- Ethical dilemmas faced by journalists.
- The impact of media on public perception and societal values.

The American Dream

"What Makes Sammy Run?" also serves as a commentary on the American Dream. Sammy embodies

the idea that anyone can achieve success through hard work and determination, yet his story reveals the darker side of this ideal:

- The notion that the American Dream is often a facade.
- Success can lead to isolation and disillusionment.
- Different interpretations of what it means to be successful.

Symbolism and Motifs

Budd Schulberg employs various symbols and motifs throughout the novella to enhance its themes and character development.

The City as a Character

The bustling city of New York serves as a backdrop that symbolizes opportunity and ambition. However, it also represents the moral ambiguity and chaos of the media landscape. Key observations include:

- The city is both a place of dreams and a battleground for ambition.
- It mirrors Sammy's internal struggle and relentless pursuit of success.

Sports and Competition

Sports metaphors are prevalent in the novella, reflecting the competitive nature of the journalism field. Sammy's drive can be likened to that of a sportsman, constantly seeking to outpace his rivals. Important aspects include:

- The idea of "running" as a metaphor for ambition.
- Competition as a double-edged sword that fuels both success and ethical compromise.

Literary Style and Impact

Budd Schulberg's writing style in "What Makes Sammy Run?" is engaging and direct, capturing the fast-paced world of journalism. His use of dialogue and character interactions brings the story to life, making it both a compelling read and a thought-provoking exploration of its themes.

Cultural Context

The novella was published during a time when America was grappling with its identity leading up to World War II. The themes of ambition, corruption, and the quest for success resonate with the societal changes of the era, making it a critique of the American ethos. Notable points include:

- The reflection of societal values during the early 20th century.
- How the narrative captures the zeitgeist of the time.

Conclusion

In conclusion, **what makes Sammy run Budd Schulberg** is a multifaceted exploration of ambition, morality, and the complexities of the American Dream. Through the characters of Sammy Glick and Al Manheim, Schulberg crafts a narrative that delves into the ethical dilemmas faced by individuals in the pursuit of success. The novella's themes remain relevant today, prompting readers to reflect on their own aspirations and the societal values they uphold. As we continue to navigate a world driven by ambition and competition, Schulberg's work serves as a powerful reminder of the potential costs of our pursuits.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'What Makes Sammy Run?'

The main theme of 'What Makes Sammy Run?' revolves around ambition, the moral ambiguities of success, and the ruthlessness of the entertainment industry, as embodied by the character Sammy Glick.

Who is the protagonist in 'What Makes Sammy Run?'

The protagonist of the story is Sammy Glick, a young, ambitious newspaper reporter who will stop at nothing to achieve success in the world of journalism.

How does Budd Schulberg portray the media industry in the novel?

Budd Schulberg portrays the media industry as cutthroat and corrupt, highlighting the ethical compromises individuals make in their pursuit of fame and fortune.

What narrative style is used in 'What Makes Sammy Run?'

The narrative style of 'What Makes Sammy Run?' is characterized by a first-person perspective, allowing readers to experience the protagonist's internal conflicts and observations of Sammy Glick.

What is the significance of Sammy Glick's character?

Sammy Glick's character is significant as he embodies the archetype of the anti-hero, representing both the ambition and moral emptiness that can arise in the quest for success.

What societal commentary does Schulberg make through Sammy's story?

Schulberg uses Sammy's story to comment on the American Dream, suggesting that the relentless pursuit of success can lead to ethical decay and a loss of personal integrity.

How does the setting influence the plot of 'What Makes Sammy Run?'

The setting in the bustling world of 1930s New York City plays a crucial role in shaping the plot, as it serves as a backdrop for the competitive journalism landscape that fuels Sammy's ambition.

What impact did 'What Makes Sammy Run?' have on literature and popular culture?

The novel had a significant impact on literature and popular culture by influencing portrayals of ambition and morality in media, and it remains a critical reference point in discussions about ethics in journalism.

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