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Through The Arc Of The Rain Forest



Synopsis

Through the Arc of the Rain Forest is a burlesque of comic-strip adventures and apocalyptic portents that stretches familiar truths to their logical extreme in a future world that is just recognizable enough to be frightening. In the Author's Note," Karen Tei Yamashita writes that her book is like a Brazilian soap opera called a novela: "the novela's story is completely changeable according to the whims of the public psyche and approval, although most likely, the unhappy find happiness; the bad are punished; true love reigns; a popular actor is saved from death ... an idyll striking innocence, boundless nostalgia and terrible ruthlessness." The stage is a vast, mysterious field of impenetrable plastic in the Brazilian rain forest set against a backdrop of rampant environmental destruction, commercialization, poverty, and religious rapture. Through the Arc of the Rainforest is narrated by a small satellite hovering permanently around the head of an innocent character named Kazumasa. Through no fault of his own, Kazumasa seems to draw strange and significant people into his orbit and to find himself at the center of cataclysmic events that involve carrier pigeons, religious pilgrims, industrial espionage, magic feathers, big money, miracles, epidemics, true love, and the virtual end of the world. This book is simultaneously entertaining and depressing, with all the rollicking pessimism you'd expect of a good soap opera or a good political satire."- Kirsten Backstrom, 500 Great Books by Women

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have heard Brazilian children say that whatever passes through the arc of the rainbow becomes its opposite. But what is the opposite of a bird? Or for that matter, a human being? And what then, in

the great rainforest, where, in its season, the rain never ceases and the rainbows are myriad? This epigraph precedes Karen Yamashita's novel, "Through the Arc of the Rain Forest." Yamashita's novel focuses on the journey of Kasumasa Ishimaru as narrated by a ball revolving several inches from Kasumasa's head. The examination of this piece, however, will revolve (literally and figuratively) on the motif of a rainbow through different parts of the novel, including the epigraph. Yamashita uses rainbows and arcs as symbols relating to consistent negative and positive patterns, imagery, and meanings within the novel. The first introduction of the rainbow as a symbol occurs when Kasumasa encounters American J.B. Tweep, who is employed within a company Kasumasa holds controlling stock. J.B. chides Kasumasa into searching for more Matacao, which is the material that will create economic profit for Kasumasa's conglomerate. Within their search, J.B. Tweep hides protagonist Kasumasa Ishimaru from his competition. Tweep's undercover agents had been described as hiding themselves "at the arc of every rainbow" (149). The rainbow in this sense takes the meaning of a vast, unending space. The perceived sense of unrest, searching, and mystery contrasts the allusion of a peaceful rainbow. The arc represents an unexplainable plain which can be pilfered for special interest. In this instance, the rainbow does not take the shape of a beautiful vision, but rather a vision of greed and deception.

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