



A Walk in the Night and Other Stories

Alex La Guma

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Of French and Malagasy stock, involved in South African politics from an early age, Alex La Guma was arrested for treason with 155 others in 1956 and finally acquitted in 1960. During the State of Emergency following the Sharpeville massacre he was detained for five months. Continuing to write, he endured house arrest and solitary confinement. La Guma left South Africa as a refugee in 1966 and lived in exile in London and Havana. He died in 1986.

A Walk in the Night and Other Stories reveals La Guma as one of the most important African writers of his time. These works reveal the plight of non-whites in apartheid South Africa, laying bare the lives of the poor and the outcasts who filled the ghettos and shantytowns.

A Walk in the Night and Other Stories Details

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From Reader Review A Walk in the Night and Other Stories for online ebook

Laura says

“The pub, like pubs all over the world, was a place for debate and discussion, for the exchange of views and opinions, for argument and for the working out of problems. It was a forum, a parliament, a fountain of wisdom and a cesspool of nonsense, it was a center for the lost and the despairing, where cowards absorbed dutch courage out of small glasses and leaned against the shiny, scratched and polished mahogany counter for support against the crushing burdens of insignificant lives. Where the disillusioned gained temporary hope, where acts of kindness were considered and murders planned.”

Jey says

Few days ago we lost a great man who sacrificed and made his utmost efforts to help achieve the freedom and liberation of a whole black nation in South Africa, without mentioning his name, I do believe most of you realize that I'm talking about the late Nelson Mandela. Given that I live in Africa, the continent, I noticed that my knowledge about its Literature is very limited. For that reason, I decided to read a variety of works from east west north and south Africa.

A Walk in The Night and Other Stories was written by the South African Alex La Guma. With his vivid realistic description of the people, the slums and the city of Cape Town, you will be caught up in that tragic dark world, live and sense it as well. Within the book, Alex tackles the issue of racism, Apartheid, violence, poverty and other social problems the people of South Africa suffered from for decades.

missy jean says

The novella is devastating and the short stories are powerful. I really enjoyed this book. (Actually, I'm not sure if "enjoyed" is the right word--it is full of sadness and injustice--but I am glad I read it. We'll put it that way.)

Gpickle says

Excellent writing and very serious material. The first (and longest) story weaves together multiple characters in rapid succession but spends enough time with each to give a powerful view of where they are coming from and where they might be headed. Excellent dialog, even with lots of (dated) South African slang. A sad story that rings true.

The other stories in the book were much shorter, a couple of them were just a few pages. One (At the Portagee's) was even lighthearted.

Tattoo Marks and Nails could have been 1 page longer, or even just a paragraph for me. Great imagery and

descriptions from that story:

The heat in the cell was solid.

Yellow sand and yellow sky. Man, just sand and sky and some thorn bushes.

We used to cut slices off the heat, put them on our biscuits and make toast.

All in all a very well written and thought provoking collection.

secondwomn says

i wouldn't call this enjoyable, but these stories are finely crafted and i'm glad they came into my life. thanks tony eprile.

Vernin says

This was an nice collection of stories written from within the gritty context of latter 21st century South Africa. A solid diversion from the common style of US non-fiction and worth a try for anyone appreciating African writers.

Moses Kilolo says

Thanks to an unusual insomnia on my part last night, I read this through. The story of one Michael Adonis and an acquaintance Willeyboy, it covers such themes as police brutality, social discrimination, crime, poverty, etc etc. it is a wonderful piece, really interesting, except that I felt the description as slightly overdone. I guess this was written during the days of apartheid, because the theme is so central to the story.

A.J. says

I don't have strong feelings either way about this book. It's a story about anger and apartheid. Characters stuck in a grimy South African world suffer and simmer and stew. The bloodshed doesn't begin in earnest during the time period in which the story is set, but as a Preview of Coming Attractions this novella opens up the psyche of an oppressed and despairing people.

The prose is okay. I'm a limited-description sort of guy, and sometimes this story is a few adjectives short of fully capturing Montana in the fall. Sometimes storylines sound pretty simple when they're broken down to their actual plot points; such would be the case here. It's a character story, not something that's going to get talked about in Camelot. Human rights and ongoing personal tragedy are on display.

I'd take a pass on this unless you're just that interested. I guess the best way to describe this is a book that fulfills its purpose, but its purpose isn't grandiose. Entertainment value is fairly limited and considering the subject matter, there are ways to take a story set in this scenario that might've amped up the reader's emotional reaction. As it is, three stars.

Stephanielaurenwilling says

There's so much world literature that I have missed out on, and reading Alex la Guma's South African fiction was a reminder that there is so much I need to seek out. I read it as part of the "Literary Homage" seminar I took with Tony Eprile at Lesley University. It's a retelling, if you will, of Hamlet. Claudius is played by colonialism, and all of District 6 is the usurped prince. The writing is specific and steady, a regular pulse of contained rage. Characters are described physically in such detail that you feel like you could recognize them if you saw them on the street. Highly recommend, although it's not an easy read.

Also, there's such a direct parallel to Freddie Gray that it really makes you wonder if the world has gotten any better since this was published in the 1960's. Doesn't seem like it.

Steve says

This is a powerful and evocative book. It is essentially one long story about one existential night in the life of a powerless black man in South Africa. He gets fired from his job for talking back to his white boss. The writing is raw and electric. The night is full of normal adventures that take on a tragic tone in light of his proscribed circumstances. How does one be a man in a world where authority denies you respect? You drink, curse, fight and maybe turn to crime.

Prince M says

I loved a short story 'Blankets' by Alex La Guma two years ago, in my English Literature class, taught by Professor David Medalie (who is a writer himself; and whose short story *The Mistress's Dog* inspired my first published story in print by University of Pretoria's *Inclinations* in 2017). After analyzing that story, I became interested and curious to know about his other works. This collection of stories and a novelette (*A Walk in the Night*) proves La Guma to be one of South Africa's brightest storytellers, tackling many issues - including that of race (racist South Africa in the 1950s particularly, after the rise of draconian apartheid regime) in an almost subtle but powerful way. I missed the points addressed by others stories, for La Guma writes subtly. Even 'Blankets' tells a powerful story, which you can miss if you are not too careful to read 'between the lines'.

Marie Rose says

NOTE I ONLY READ THE FIRST STORY A WALK IN THE NIGHT SO I AM NOT ADDING MY RATING BECAUSE I DID NOT READ ALL OF THE STORIES IN THE BOOK:

A WALK IN THE NIGHT: 3 stars?? 3.5

In simple terms: I appreciate what he did I just didn't really like it.

I liked the style switching between perspectives and characters and it taught me about the dynamic happening in South Africa during apartheid, but it wasn't really enjoyable. Not that this story really should be because it's messed up but I didn't really connect with or like any of the characters. They all do and say awful things. There's also this anger surrounding everyone. It was just a really heavy book. I could feel bad distantly in the way that this stuff was bad but I wasn't really hurting for these characters, just for the fact that I know these situations happened in real life to real people.

So all in all it was okay??? I would recommend for African literature, it was enjoyable, it just didn't really grab me or make me care about any of the characters. I think analyzing it in class made me appreciate it more which is weird cause usually that ruins the book for me.

Jazzie Orth says

good

Katie Bailey says

stories from south africa, read this in college and didn't really get it. trying again. so far i like the contrast of protagonist's inner life, seething resentment, and the bustle and chatter of the city swirling around him. After finishing it, there are some technical lapses but the novella length title story manages to include most of the themes in literature of oppressed peoples and not get treacly or didactic. YOU can really see how the situations of apartheid make discussions of a humanistic morality problematic, almost irrelevant. I also really liked the short story about a make believe dinner.

James F says

A novella set in the slums of Cape Town and six very short stories, all written in a stark realistic style, but with many arresting metaphors and similes; taken together, they give a good idea of life under the apartheid regime during the early sixties. La Guma is one of the best known novelists of South Africa; I read his *In the Fog of the Season's End* some thirty-five years ago, a similar book although I don't remember many details.
