

Shantaram

semester 1 2021 Naomi Goodridge

Gregory David Roberts is the author behind the novel Shantaram. An international bestseller inspired by true events. The real story of an escaped convict who went on to thrive in the underworld of Bombay. Producing and starring in Bollywood movies, joining the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan and becoming an active member of the mafia. All whilst fighting wars across the world and saving lives as a doctor in his beloved slum. Highly recommended this debut novel has sold over 6 million copies worldwide.

From the very beginning I found this book to be entirely bewitching. The powerful descriptions explode on the page and encompassed me immediately and throughout. Shantaram depicts beautifully the nature of the human spirit and our innate instinct to survive. Our mind, thoughts and choices both conscious and subconscious absolutely essential in our endeavour to survive. It is in this way that certain themes of this book if not one of the most prominent, relates to my project. It has inspired and flavoured my project throughout as the characters thought processes and impromptu decisions excited me about exploring the scientific side of our thoughts. With regards to neurones, synapses specifically which have dominated my final project. Initially the green thread being made from seaweed and then onto another natural resource being the branches of a fir tree. The hundreds of needles along each branch perfectly and naturally illustrating the thousands of synapses present in just one single neurone, being far more effective visually. Alongside this the book is packed with great humour, spiritual insights, bombshells (quite literally) and authentic characters you feel a genuine connection with. Shantaram poses challenging questions at times encouraging the reader to consider our own action in the face of situations designed to break the human spirit. Shantaram also urged me the reader to really think about love in its most simplistic forms. Without the luxury of gifts and basic essentials and the impact of imminent threats of poverty and war to the people I love in my personal life. This is something I loved about this novel, it invited me to delve into the reality of millions of other people's truths in this world. I thoroughly appreciate and relished this book. From the intimacy and adventure, I enjoyed the love that formed in the details of the relationships bonding me to

many moments. I found this book to portray warmth between friends and family in a humorous and meaningful light. Having said that Shantaram has an intensity to it and a potency that committed me to its story and all of the people involved in it. A particular favourite chapter of mine is chapter 18 in the novel. This stage is of significance as the pivotal themes of love, desire and vulnerability are prominent in this part of the book. Love in platonic ways as well romantic longing are tested in the face of the cholera outbreak. Desire to help ease the suffering of those around us in times of crisis appears. The vulnerability of risking heartache when confessing love to another. The fragility of health when confronted with the pandemic all come to life. To not only stir emotions but make this an exhilarating read. This story relays the tumultuous times undertaken by the main character from prisons, starvation and war and I was profoundly affected by them, much of this book will stay and resonate with me.

In all honesty there isn't much about this book that I didn't personally enjoy. Being critical to extract negatives from Shantaram I will mention what I felt towards the very end of the book. Possibly too eager or enthused to conclude the fate of the characters I began to feel slightly impatient. I do feel this was exacerbated by Gregory David Roberts prolonging the final parts of the story. I found that some thoughts and opinions of the main character where laboured home to the point of becoming slightly repetitive. Drawing that stage of the book out longer than I believe was necessary. In reflection I do think the ending and conclusion to the story were delayed. However, as Shantaram is based on true events patience on my behalf might have proved helpful. Ultimately, I have very few cynical opinions and feedback from this book.

What shines through is the understanding of unseen and higher paths. This spiritualism is found in one of the many religion's practices throughout India. Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam among others are all loosely based around consciousness and enlightenment. All faiths are practiced largely in India, awareness like this is a strong theme throughout Shantaram.

I recommend this book to those with a love for adventure and extraordinary story telling. For anyone who appreciates a tale with grit, drama and utterly compelling sagas. I found Shantaram to be a brave and accomplished book, one that is thought provoking as well as hilarious and the perfect depiction of

escapism. This book is steeped in morality and bravery. Shantaram is an impassioned and sometimes brutal account of the consequences and bonds life can conjure. I feel this book is unique, in not only its explicit criteria but the way in which this extremely bold story is told. Fearlessly written Shantaram is a stunning portrayal of life on both ends of the financial spectrum in India. I learned about customs and the reality of many people in Bombay. This knowledgeable book pays homage to the beauty of the Indian culture and the importance placed on love, family and generosity in this part of the world. Honestly told this international bestseller is also vivid in its descriptions of painful memories and haunting experiences. A remarkable true story that has tenderness alongside struggle. This book has importance themes with very unexpected turns that had me captivated throughout. Conclusively Shantaram is an outstanding story beautifully told, that you have to remind yourself is true at points. An authentic narrative that delivers you to another world through exquisite writing and storytelling.