

# Miss lonelyhearts



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The focus of Miss Lonelyhearts begins with the American Dream and the frailty of the people whose lives have been spent trying to achieve the American Dream, only to have lost everything during the Depression. West paints the American Dream as an illusion, one that seems unachievable, particularly after reading the many letters written to him. The letters depress him. Miss Lonelyhearts starts to believe that there is no true happiness, no true love in the world.

He seeks out companionship as a physical release, but nothing more. This depression leads Miss Lonelyhearts to search for something that may bring good in the world, and turns to Christ. Through Miss Lonelyhearts, West is addressing a central dilemma facing modern man; having abandoned God, where do people turn to for answers?

Turning to Christ does not seem to provide resolve for Miss Lonelyhearts, as he even feels that he and the world fail at religion. He initially turns to Christ when his boss, Shrike, mocks him by writing a prayer that compares Miss Lonelyhearts to Christ. Miss Lonelyhearts thinks that perhaps Christ can help him to help these people, but knows that ultimately the suffering of others will be more than he can bear.

He knows that he is not Christ, although he tries desperately to emulate the Christian faith, through the sacrifice of a lamb, which doesn't work. Miss Lonelyhearts is trying to find order in a chaotic world. The world exists as one in which faith should have the ability to save people, but it won't. Miss Lonelyhearts creates this order in a manner to deal with the chaos and

depression. Miss Lonelyhearts believes that it is this very modern world that is killing itself.

Miss Lonelyhearts does not attach emotion to people or relationships. The other people in his life are there for a purpose. Betty represents the order that he thinks that he and the world need. Emotion is not something that Miss Lonelyhearts displays in any way other than when he is angry. He appears to be trying to get himself out of his current situation, but the depression of his readers suggests to him that there is no hope, only despair. Christ could not provide a way out for him and turns instead to sex. His admission that he does not believe in Christ appears to come from his refusal to acknowledge the sin in his own life.

Even with women and during sex, it is not as though he longs for their companionship or is even excited by their presence. It seems as though it is just another task in his day. It is a physical release. The people who write to Miss Lonelyhearts did not represent a world where love could exist. Rather, they represented a world where hearts get broken and dreams vanish.

Miss Lonelyhearts lets the world beat him down. His boss is never kind or reassuring. His coworkers mock him and remind him that he must not be a man, given the position that he works in. Even punched in a bar, he does not retreat, but barely even notices. He is emasculated by Mary and others, as he retreats further and further into himself and his world.

When all else fails, Miss Lonelyhearts removes himself to the country in one more attempt to free himself from this suffering. His retreat is also to nature, as nature may help the world heal itself. His suffering is revealed in

his illness in the country. As he endures his suffering it is reminiscent of Christ. He endures the suffering and takes on the suffering of others. In his illness, he realizes that even leaving his job would not relieve him of this suffering, because it is now part of him. This suffering is leaving him numb. He even begins to feel like stone.

His three day illness is representative of the death of Christ. Miss Lonelyhearts returns to the city a stronger man, ready to face his battle. He seems resigned to accept Christ into his life, seems to know that his suffering is nearly over. His religious experience joins him with God and makes him faithful, ready to embrace life. Miss Lonelyhearts decision to embrace God and life brings him the peace he needs that frees him from the suffering of his life.

The Christian faith plays a major role in Miss Lonelyhearts. Miss Lonelyhearts displays his obsession with Christ with the picture of Christ that is hung on his walls. He takes the disorder of the world and tries to create a cross with it. He tries to reproduce the sacrifice of Christ by sacrificing a lamb. Ultimately, Miss Lonelyhearts fails his mission and he feels he has failed most of his life. His failed sacrifice of the lamb represents the failure of religion in the modern world and the failure of Miss Lonelyhearts to live up to the Christian faith. The stone, as used by Miss Lonelyhearts to sacrifice the lamb, is a repetitive theme in the novel.

Miss Lonelyhearts speaks of the relevance of stone to him when he states that man breaks stones " desperately, almost as if they know that the stones would someday break them." Stones and rocks are also used to illustrate

the cold nature of the world in which Miss Lonelyhearts lives. His emotionless state is like that of a stone. When he returns from the country, feeling like a stone, suggests that he feels stronger than he has ever felt before.

Miss Lonelyhearts relationship with women is detached as is his relationship to the world. Miss Lonelyhearts' brutal assault on Mrs. Doyle's face, "He kept hitting her until she stopped trying to hold him, then he ran out of the house." Miss Lonelyhearts Christian mission is obscured by the oppression of those he tries to help. His brutality towards Mrs. Doyle is the result of his repressed emotions and her voicing of his unspoken sexual feelings. Mrs. Doyle had called Miss Lonelyhearts a fairy, again emasculating the man he was supposed to be. Miss Lonelyhearts is repulsed by individuals he views as grotesque, and finds himself driven toward violence in their presence. His response to these individuals reveals the violence that he feels toward those that mock him or bully him. The way in which they mock him, calling him a "leper licker," leaves him feeling unsuitable for human kind.

The manner in which female writers are discussed, as though they should be raped to teach them a lesson, combined with Miss Lonelyhearts's name, continuously remind us of his emasculation. Miss Lonelyhearts is virtually a female writer himself, by name and his position as an advice columnist. Miss Lonelyhearts is not treated like a male. Even the women in his life can be cruel and overbearing. Miss Lonelyhearts continued emasculation contributes to his anger and depression.

Miss Lonelyhearts's job was considered to be a joke, an effort to laugh at the expense of the victims of the world. Miss Lonelyhearts considers himself to be a victim also. He feels that he has been victimized professionally.

Because of Shrikes strong willed nature and his mockery of Miss Lonelyhearts faith, he feels that he is unable to provide any meaningful answers to the people who write to him for help. This makes him the loneliest of all.

The environment undergoes many transformations, as Miss Lonelyhearts reveals himself.

Initially, Miss Lonelyhearts maintains a sterile environment, always seeking order in his world.

The reveal shows a man who is struggling more than his writers would have known. His is not a sinless world. He was always seeking redemption from something and seeking redemption for others who suffered. Miss Lonelyhearts is representative of the disillusionment that can be found in the American dream and the broken promises of religion, and society as a whole.

The victims who write to Miss Lonelyhearts have dreams and wishes of a better life. They have no resources to accomplish their dreams and no ability to work toward them, and their condition weakens. He asserts that even their faith cannot help them, as his Christ dream could not help him. His redemption, in the end, seems as simple as giving up as it does finding his faith.

In an attempt to offer salvation to the crippling throng of humanity that writes him daily in the advice column of a big city newspaper, Miss Lonelyhearts became a self-anointed crucifixion figure, who dies tragically at the hands of someone he tried so desperately to help. Having abandoned God, the newspaper has replaced traditional modes of seeking solace and compassion. Weighed in the balances of human suffering, the newspaper is found wanting. Religion that once provided man with some sense of security has been replaced by a hollow media.