

James and
regulations and goes
to live



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

James A. Michener is often regarded as a literary outsider.

Despite his vast works that have sold millions of copies and delighted readers everywhere, his blunt approach to literature has brought him much criticism. Despite his lack of many literary vehicles to convey his ideas, his works do contain several universal and underlying themes. These themes can often be applied to our lives and thought processes to benefit us for the better. One of Michener's most apparent and perennial underlying themes is on the issue of race.

As literary critic Pearl K. Bell has said, He Michener tries to improve their the readers hearts by exposing the torment and destruction caused by racial intolerance (Stine and Marowski, ed. 29: 314). Michener himself has said that one of his major themes has been man as a brother to all other men (The World is My Home, 507). In *This Noble Land: My Vision for America*, Michener says, No aspect of our society causes me greater apprehension than the lamentable state of our race relations (49). Indeed, Michener has seen racial tensions as a great trouble in our society, and has written his works to deal with such. The theme of race first comes up in Michener's debut novel, *Tales of the South Pacific*. In *Our Heroine*, Nellie Forbush, a nurse from Little Rock, Arkansas, falls in love with a French planter who has eight illegitimate, mixed-race children.

She has trouble accepting these nigger children because of her Southern roots, but in the end she overcomes this prejudice and accepts the children as her own. In *Fo Dolla*, Lieutenant Joe Cable falls in love with an island girl, but he is not allowed to marry her because of military regulations and

American prejudice (Day 36-54). The theme of overcoming racial tensions is central in *Sayonara*. In this novel, an army major is sent to Japan for rest and recovery during the Korean War, and while there he falls in love with a Japanese dancer.

He defies orders and regulations and goes to live with her, risking his entire military career. In the end, however, he is forced to return to America without as much as even saying goodbye to his Japanese sweetheart (Day 81-85). The theme of race is also apparent in Hawaii. In one part of the novel, missionary Abraham Hewlett is forced to resign from the mission because he married a Hawaiian girl, an act considered an abomination by his peers. He condemns them with the words, You love the Hawaiians as potential Christians, but you despise them as people (Hawaii 290). Michener also describes races cooperating and mixing to advance Hawaii and allow it to ascend in power and greatness (Day 118-130). In *The Source*, Michener chronicles the persecution of the Jews.

In the town of Makor, during the Roman invasion, most Jews are executed and the rest become slaves. When the Muslim invaders come years later, they also execute and enslave Jews, and subject them to harsh rule. All of this suffering was simple because they were Jews (Becker 87-88). The race issue is also dealt with in *Centennial*. The Indians and whites start out as peaceful on the frontier. However, bigot whites come to the frontier, see the Indians as meddling, and therefore want to exterminate them (Becker 121-126).

This leads to much conflict between the whites and Indians. In Chesapeake, Michener puts the theme of race in with black slavery. The horrors of slavery are chronicled, starting with the capture of slaves in Africa and moving on to plantation life. Shown is how the slaves were pulled down to a mournful level because the whites think they are inherently superior (Becker 144-149).

Also described is how blacks live in a diminished state of life after the abolition of slavery due to discrimination by whites. A less obvious and less persistent, but still prominent, underlying theme of Micheners is the environmental issue. According to Frank N.

Magill, Michener discusses the fragile bond that exists between the land and the people who live on it (Magills Survey 1352). Indeed, in *The Quality of Life*, Michener says, The quality of a good life depends in large measure on how