

Study Guide for Sister Helen Prejean's Dead Man Walking: A Journey of Grace and Justice

Sister Helen Prejean's *Dead Man Walking: A Journey of Grace and Justice* is a powerful and moving account of her experiences as a spiritual advisor to two death row inmates. The book explores the complex issues surrounding the death penalty, and it challenges readers to confront their own beliefs about crime, punishment, and redemption.



Study Guide for Sister Helen Prejean's Dead Man Walking (Course Hero Study Guides) by Oscar Wilde

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

- Language : English
- File size : 1250 KB
- Print length : 44 pages
- Lending : Enabled
- Screen Reader : Supported
- Hardcover : 152 pages
- Item Weight : 13.8 ounces
- Dimensions : 6.45 x 0.61 x 9.52 inches



This study guide will help you understand the key themes, characters, and events in *Dead Man Walking*. It will also provide you with discussion questions and activities that you can use to explore the book's themes in more depth.

Key Themes

* The death penalty: *Dead Man Walking* is a powerful indictment of the death penalty. Prejean argues that the death penalty is a cruel and unjust punishment that does nothing to deter crime. She also highlights the racial disparities in the application of the death penalty, and she argues that the death penalty is often used to punish the poor and the marginalized. *

Grace and forgiveness: *Dead Man Walking* is a story of hope and redemption. Prejean shows that even the most hardened criminals can experience grace and forgiveness. She also shows that the process of forgiveness can be a healing and transformative experience for both the victim and the perpetrator. * Social justice: *Dead Man Walking* is a call to action for social justice. Prejean argues that we need to work to create a more just and equitable society in which all people are treated with dignity and respect. She also calls on us to challenge the systems that perpetuate poverty, violence, and crime.

Characters

* Sister Helen Prejean: Prejean is a Catholic nun who has spent her life working with death row inmates. She is a passionate advocate for the abolition of the death penalty, and she has been instrumental in saving the lives of several inmates. * Patrick Sonnier: Sonnier is a death row inmate who was convicted of murdering a young woman. He is a complex and troubled character, but Prejean comes to see him as a human being who is worthy of compassion and redemption. * Elmo Patrick Sonnier: Elmo is Patrick's younger brother, who was also convicted of murder. He is a more hardened and violent criminal than Patrick, but Prejean still believes that he can be redeemed.

Events

* The trial: The book opens with the trial of Patrick and Elmo Sonnier. Prejean is present at the trial, and she is deeply affected by the testimony of the victims' families. * The death row years: Prejean visits Patrick and Elmo on death row for several years. She gets to know them as human beings, and she witnesses their struggles with fear, guilt, and loneliness. * The executions: Patrick and Elmo are both eventually executed. Prejean is present at both executions, and she describes the experience in vivid detail.

Discussion Questions

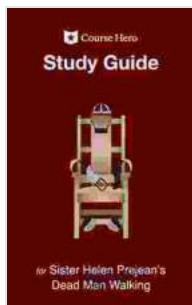
* What are your thoughts on the death penalty? Do you believe that it is a just and effective punishment? * What do you think of Sister Helen Prejean's work? Do you agree with her views on the death penalty and social justice? * How does *Dead Man Walking* challenge your beliefs about crime, punishment, and redemption? * What is the role of grace and forgiveness in the criminal justice system?

Activities

* Write a letter to Sister Helen Prejean in which you share your thoughts on her work. * Organize a screening of the film *Dead Man Walking*. * Volunteer with an organization that works to abolish the death penalty. * Start a book club to discuss *Dead Man Walking* and other works of literature that deal with the death penalty.

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understanding of the book's themes, characters, and events. It has also provided you with discussion questions and activities that



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