

Study Guide for Barnum: The Life of P.T. Barnum

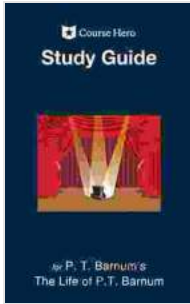


Study Guide for P. T. Barnum's The Life of P.T. Barnum

by Matthew Burgess

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English



File size : 1184 KB
Screen Reader : Supported
Print length : 127 pages
Lending : Enabled



Phineas Taylor Barnum, the renowned "Prince of Humbug," left an indelible mark on the world of entertainment. Known for his audacious hoaxes, captivating performances, and pioneering role in the circus industry, Barnum's life is a testament to innovation, resilience, and the allure of show business.

Early Life and Career

- **Birth and Upbringing:** Born in 1810 in Bethel, Connecticut, Barnum's early life was marked by poverty and entrepreneurial aspirations.
- **Business Ventures:** From operating a country store to managing a lottery, Barnum displayed an astute business acumen and a flair for self-promotion.
- **The American Museum:** In 1841, Barnum acquired Scudder's American Museum in New York City, transforming it into a vast emporium of curiosities, oddities, and live entertainment.

Rise to Fame

- **"The Feejee Mermaid":** Barnum's infamous hoax of a preserved mermaid captivated the public and cemented his reputation for

sensationalism.

- **Jenny Lind:** The renowned Swedish opera singer's American tour, promoted by Barnum, became a cultural sensation and solidified his dominance in the entertainment industry.
- **The Greatest Show on Earth:** In 1871, Barnum merged his American Museum with James Anthony Bailey's circus, creating the legendary Barnum & Bailey Circus, which toured the world for decades.

Legacy and Impact

- **Entertainment Pioneer:** Barnum introduced innovative marketing techniques, such as advertising, publicity stunts, and the concept of "the greatest show on earth."
- **Cultural Influence:** His museums and circuses not only entertained the masses but also educated them about different cultures and scientific discoveries.
- **Controversy and Criticism:** Barnum's sensationalism and exploitation of performers often drew criticism, yet his contributions to entertainment remain undeniable.
- **Enduring Legacy:** The Barnum & Bailey Circus continued to operate until the 1950s, and his name remains synonymous with entertainment and showmanship.

Discussion Questions

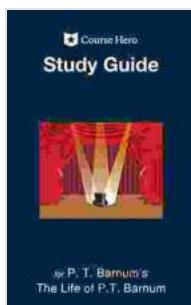
- Analyze Barnum's business strategies and their impact on the entertainment industry.

- Discuss the ethical implications of Barnum's hoaxes and exploitation of performers.
- Examine how Barnum's museums and circuses contributed to public education and cultural exchange.
- Compare Barnum's approach to entertainment with that of contemporary entertainment companies.
- Debate the lasting legacy of Barnum as a pioneer and showman.

Additional Resources

- American Museum of Barnum
- Encyclopædia Britannica: P.T. Barnum
- History.com: P.T. Barnum
- Smithsonian Magazine: The Truth About P.T. Barnum

P.T. Barnum's life and career are a fascinating study in entertainment, entrepreneurship, and the allure of the extraordinary. Through his hoaxes, spectacles, and groundbreaking contributions to show business, Barnum forever changed the landscape of entertainment and left an enduring legacy that continues to inspire and intrigue.



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