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Reading history in the present: Sol Plaatje's Mhudi as an allegory of the 1913 Natives' Land Act

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Abstract

Sol Plaatje's novel Mhudi revisits prominent events detailing the relationship between the various clans that occupied the South African Landscape in the 1800's. This story is a reflection of the conflict that arises between the different groups, how it is overcome and prospects of a new harmonious beginning. Plaatje writes his novel in the light of the occurrences in South Africa following the 1913 Natives Land Act. Plaatje uses various elements of culture and literary aesthetics to pose Mhudi as an allegory of the 1913 Natives Land Act. Literature is a carrier of culture and knowledge that can be used as a credible source to assess the past, the present and the future. Plaatje uses a story of love to elucidate how love conquers evil, the story of land and the knowledge and cultural significance it holds. Through this he highlights the wisdom that lies in the knowledge and application of culture through reverence.