



Mass

F. Sionil José

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Mass, also known as **Mass: A Novel**, is a 1973 historical and political novel written by Filipino National Artist F. Sionil José. Together with *The Pretenders*, **Mass** is the completion of José's *The Rosales Saga*, which is also known as the *Rosales Novels*. The literary message of **Mass** was "a society intent only on calculating a man's price is one that ultimately devalues all men".

The narrative of **Mass** pictured the Philippines during the years prior to and after the imposition of Martial Law in 1972, which occurred within the scope of the middle and the late periods of the twentieth century. It narrated about a movement advocating reform, the resulting struggle for human rights, students' rights, tenants' rights, and women's rights, and mass protests that were manipulated by "fraudulent leaders". The uprising failed. One of the characters went back to Central Luzon to discover his origins in order to rebuild his life.

(from wikipedia.org)

Mass Details

Date : Published December 31st 1984 by George Allen & Unwin (first published 1973)

ISBN : 9780868615721

Author : F. Sionil José

Format : Hardcover 256 pages

Genre : Fiction

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From Reader Review Mass for online ebook

Janice Acosta says

There are no words to describe my love for the Rosales saga. I have read all five of them and this is my favorite among the saga.

The story was set in the time of the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines. There were times when I felt like I was reading about the lives of real people who fought against the tyranny.

It was so easy to fall in-love with the hero/anti-hero and I cried for him during some of the parts in the story when he could not do so.

I also learned so much about the Philippine movement and some flaws that he pointed out.

All in all, I was blown away when I read this book and I have a copy of it at home and even went as far as highlight some lines in it.

Praise for F. Sionil Jose!

Mia says

Great book!!! I learned so much about my Philippine history and how history truly repeats itself. When I read this book, it was still so relevant to the life that the Filipinos are living today. Nothing much has evolved aside from the clothes we wear and the progressing technology. But in terms of attitude and the way we do things, is still somehow similar. People always think that it's better abroad, the same way it was shown in the book. Very interesting read! I really thought I would be bored of it but I was really wrong. Although I read the last book and haven't read the previous ones, i will be reading the previous ones soon. :)

Irish R says

REVIEWED BY: RESUMA, IRISH U.

BOOK TITLE: Mass

WRITTEN BY: F. Sionil Jose

GENRE: Historical/Political Novel

The novel written by F.Sionil Jose, a National Artist for Literature gives a twist in the politics and history. Pepe as his main character in the story is a mirror of a real Filipino. It happens prior to the imposition of the Martial Law.

The plot revolves to the story of Pepe who at first is living in his province at Cabugawan but after his ten-years of studying there, he moved to Antipolo where his uncle and auntie were residing. On his first few days, instead of saving money, he spends his money for not important things. So he ended up studying at a cheaper University where he encounter all of his associates in the brotherhood. Later on the in story he ended up being a drug pusher because of the boyfriend of his neighbor which happens to a friend of his girlfriend which is the housemaid of his uncle. He also discovered further in the story that his real father is his uncle Samson. After some time he quit being a drug pusher because he realizes the bad consequences awaits if he

continue doing so. He came back to the brotherhood in Tondo where he encounter Father Jess and there in the church, he work as sacristan. And they later establish a rally with his brotherhood.

The story is somewhat realistic because it mirrors the happening in the Philippines where the story tells something about a movement advocating reform, the resulting struggle for human rights, students' rights, tenants' rights, and women's rights, and mass protests that were manipulated by "fraudulent leaders". In Pepe's story he encountered the group and so advocating the same mission. But in the story at the end he is also the one who end a crime that is going to happen.

The transition of the story as the author narrates gives us a view of the Philippines, the place and the characters. He never disappoint the reader's expectation to the political novel.

Michael Forester says

When I visited the Philippines for three weeks in February-March 2017, I asked to see some examples of Filipino literature. I was directed first to Jose Rizal, which resulted in a profound and unforgettable personal encounter with this national hero-poet, of which I have written elsewhere. However, I was later given, as a leaving gift, the Rosales Saga by F Sionil Jose which I have been reading since my return home five months ago.

Jose is a difficult author to review literarily, particularly looking back over a distance of thirty years since the series was completed. I cannot say that I found these books to be of outstanding literary merit, being more plot than character driven and in a prose style that is engaging more than gripping. Nevertheless, I still hold the books, particularly 'Po-On' which starts the saga and 'Mass' which completes it, compelling because of their prime historical significance.

Here is the history, set down in a fictionalised, highly readable story, of the struggle of an exploited people. In 'Po-On', Jose draws us inexorably into the lives of a family, one of numberless families, yearning simply for the right to live, their traumas at the hands of an unforgiving natural environment, their suffering under the exploitation of a powerful church and powerful landowners. The experiences of later generations of the same family are explored in 'The Pretenders' and 'My Brother, My Executioner,' culminating in the violent revolution of 'Mass'.

And it is in 'Mass' that Jose finally confronts explicitly the core issue that lies at the centre of the multi-generational struggle he has traced through four volumes: the unremitting dedication of the powerful to the exploitation of the powerless. The cynical disregard for the consequences of the exploitation of the many by the few is admirably summed up by Jose's antagonist thus: "Let the scum fight for the crumbs. Ours is the cake... And we are not going to give this cake away... We are going to be here... for always. We know how to change, and that is why we will always be on top. But the change comes from us, dictated by us. Their perception... is dictated by their needs, and we will give those to them slowly, slowly. Never the pie, just the crumbs. Yes, we will talk about social justice, land reform. But we will not give these in cash or in kind. We have to keep them nailed to the plough, to the machine. And we will do it deliberately... And we will not give it up. Only the powerful understand... the impulses of power. And the powerful are the rich. Study your history books... Have they really abolished the elites in Moscow? In Peking? They will always be with us, like death and taxes."

So I look back over the thirty years since Jose was writing, for these have been the years of my own life. And I want to ask Jose a question, but for the fact that I already know what his answer would be. The question is 'What has changed since you set down this history?'

In Manila the substandard housing is being cleared, the population moved out for the inexorable march of the high rise building, the corporation, the dollar. And London is the same. And Los Angeles and Philadelphia and Toronto and Sidney are no different. So the eye answers the question saying that much has changed, much is better. But the heart, the heart cannot agree, for the heart is uneasy that the powerful are still the rich and, like death and taxes, always with us.

And therefore these books, and Mass in particular are recommended, particular to my many Filipino friends to whom I say, if you want to understand your own history, your origins, the struggle of your people, first read Jose Rizal. Then read F Sionil Jose. And do not let 'Mass' be the end of your history.

Michael Forester
23.08.17

IancarlosalbayYahoo.Com says

I want to read Mass by Sionil Jose

Mew says

If you want to know somebody's thoughts on his own country, this is the book you need.

R. says

This book was a great read for anyone interesting in Filipino culture and history. It's fictional, but paints a very accurate picture of historical events (and imaginary, historical people?). The story focuses on several people from very diverse backgrounds who are working within and around the reform movement that brought about the Philippines as it is known today.

Janross Ayson says

F. Sionil Jose's 'Mass' is a book about the continuing introspection of thousands of Filipinos about their lives as persons and as Filipinos. about why we are poor and miserable, why do we fail as a nation, why do the Filipino masses endure misery and hopelessness, and lastly, how would you contribute in the Filipino people's continuing quest for mass nationalist awakening and social justice. A timely book for those who are undergoing a soul-searching about their important role in shaping this nation's history.

Jinky says

very inspiring....love it!! :)

Ayban Gabriyel says

I expected so much from this book, I'm disappointed or maybe I was disappointed the way the story turned out to be or maybe I was boxed on the idea of other novels set in the same dark era; A nationalistic protagonist challenging a rotten system, being so idealistic as a youth.

Mass tells about a story of Pepe Samson, a native from Cabugawan, a young lad who has a laid back attitude, loves to eat and hates going to school but loves literature. He finds himself in a cluttered and densely populated city of Manila trying to get a degree but more than that he was trying to find his own identity. He hopes to enroll in a state university but he soon found out his money was not enough because he spent much of his money eating at restaurants and watching movies rather taking entrance exams on state universities, he later found himself in a diploma mill.

This was the last installment of the Rosales Saga which started in Rosales Pangasinan. Pepe was a descendant of Istak Samsom, who was the protagonist in Po-on, the first novel in the Saga.

It was an unlikely character/protagonist for someone like F. Sionil to have, specially if you are a writer like him who likes to deal and writes socially relevant stories and novels. But the story really turned out good.

Nicole Zapanta says

Mass for me was kind of written out of a lot of hate. It's a dark novel but at the same time very enlightening. It revealed the masses' situation - where they're really at, their needs, their hurts, their problems, and the very root cause why they are poor. I like the book for that. However, how I wish there was not a lot of raunchy scenes in it. The story ended tragically and to me, it was like sure I've seen the real masses but in the end, it was just awful. I think what the novel lacks is hope. I remember what somebody said, "You cannot correct the wrong with another wrong." I still love F. Sionil Jose and his writing is just superb! Oh how he describes the scenes and everything is just flawless! It's beautiful!

Marina Lim says

One of the best books I've read.
Perhaps one of the best authors of my lifetime.
Words, nor tears, could not express how wonderful this book is.

Ma. Lalaine says

It is made of lyrical writing. F. Sionil Jose brings us to Manila. How it is living there from a provinciano perspective. How we Filipinos fail and how we can revolutionize on our own.

Joaquin Mejia says

In terms of chronology, "Mass" is the last book of F. Sionil Jose's "The Rosales Saga". "Mass" takes place in 1970's Philippines. That was an especially dark time in Philippine history. During the 1970's and the 1980's Ferdinand Marcos's dictatorship killed, tortured, and imprisoned thousands of good and innocent people.

The novel is about Pepe Samson, a youth from the barrio Cabugawan who goes to Tondo, Manila. He learns that Tondo is almost no different from Cabugawan because both places are filled with poverty. But it is in Tondo where he begins his activism. He later becomes friends with a Catholic priest called Father Jess, a student called Toto, and an activist university teacher called Professor Hortenso.

If "The Pretenders" is about Antonio Samson who becomes part of the class of very wealthy people, "Mass" is about his son, Pepe, who lives among the poor and hungry. While Antonio Samson seems to have become indifferent to the poor, Pepe knows and understands the poor because he lives with the poor in both Cabugawan and Tondo. Unlike his father, Pepe Samson remained poor.

"Mass" is about the activists and the poor people. They both want change. Activists want political, social, and economic change while the poor just want to change their lives with food and jobs. Even in the Philippines of today, we still have a lot of people like the characters depicted in the novel. Many people still don't have food and jobs and many people still want genuine change to happen.

Sometimes, the novel seems to say that the poor don't want radical change, just food for their stomachs and jobs to work for. I don't know what to say about this. Like Crisostomo Ibarra in Jose Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere", I was not born and raised among the poor, so I don't know what they want. But I believe that without radical change, many Filipinos will remain poor and hungry.

"Mass" is a very good book. I liked the characters in the novel. It is easy to empathize with them because many of the characters are people who want a change for the better. I also found the setting fascinating. The book takes place in a slum during a time when Marcos's dictatorship was approaching. This is probably going to be my favorite book in "The Rosales Saga" next to Po-On.

I finally finished F. Sionil Jose's "The Rosales Saga". If I read them all consecutively, maybe it would have felt like an epic journey through many decades of Philippine history. But I didn't. But it was still an epic journey.

K.D. Absolutely says

Mass is the fifth and final book in "The Rosales Saga," that is considered as the masterpiece of F. Sionil José, a 90-y/o old highly respected, multi-awarded and illustrious writer here in the Philippines. He has been our long bet for the Nobel Prize for Literature. We hope that the Nobel committee will finally award the honor to a Southeast Asian.

After the first book in the saga, *Dusk* (5 stars), this is the second best. It almost got the same stars for me except that I will forever remember the appearance of the non-fictional (historical) characters such as Diego Silang, Apolinario Mabini, and Gen. Gregorio Del Pilar. It was my first time to actually read our Philippine heroes talking, moving and pouring out their thoughts in a fictional work especially in a serious work in English. Really, what a brilliant work of art.

However, each book in the saga is written differently. I thought that Jose wanted to showcase his different

styles in writing so in the four succeeding books, there were no more non-fictional characters. Here in *Mass* for example, all characters are fictional but are too familiar to us that they can be the people that you read in the newspapers or bump into while walking down the road to work. In other words, they can be as non-fictional as you and I.

It tells the story of **Pepe Samson**, the great-great grandson of **Eustaquio "Istak" Salvador/Samson** in "Dusk/Po-On." Remember that in Book 1, Istak and Dalin have two sons, Antonio and Pedro? Antonio gets married and **Tony Samson** of Book 4 *The Pretenders* (4 stars) has a bastard son with **Emy Samson** his cousin. Because of they are cousins, Tony and Emy have to separate and Tony goes to Harvard to study as a history scholar. There he meets **Carmen Villa** and when they come back to the Manila, marry each other. So, the bastard son, Pepe grows up with only Emy and her younger sister **Bettina Samson** in Cabuwagan. After graduation from high school, Pepe goes to Manila and lives with his paternal aunt and uncle **Betty** and **Bert** in Antipolo St. in Tondo near the railway track where Tony Samson has committed suicide. That's not the summary of this book, *Mass*. Rather, that is just the link between Books 1 & 4 to this final book (Book 5).

Mass for me, is about a young provincial man trying to survive in the chaotic Manila in the 70's particularly during the First Quarter Storm (FQS) or the start of political protest against the US-Marcos Dictatorship. It is also about that young man's search for his place under the sun considering that he is a bastard and has no distinct memory of his popular father. He has his father's love for words, charisma and intelligence but he has nothing for him but hate and contempt. His mother and aunt keep the stories about his father to themselves and he only comes to hear those stories when he is already in Manila.

The story is jam-packed with dramatic twists and turmoils both inside Pepe Samson's mind but also in this environment. It is almost at that level when it could become too many for comfort. Do you know the feeling when the plot becomes too convoluted that the whole thing becomes artificial or implausible? Pepe Samson has too much on his plate that he could have broken down and gone crazy or committed suicide like his father. However, it did not get into that because he was able to channel his anger on other devious character in the end. It was a cathartic finale that liberates all the bottled up angst and pain that Pepe Samson held in his heart since childhood.

Thank you so much to my reading buddy Ben who read this with me last weekend during the Holy Week break. It has always been fun to read a book with somebody and exchange views while reading. Especially if it is a great book like this one from our very own F. Sionil Jose, one of the Filipinos writers who are definitely of world-class caliber!
