

I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell Study Guide

I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell by Tucker Max

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Plot Summary

The book *I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell* is a confessional. It is the story of a young man's debauchery. While it fits well into one package as a whole book, it is actually made up of short stories. Morality is rarely overtly discussed in the book. However, as evidenced by the title and in moments during individual stories when the author has written comments such as "I am a bad person," and at numerous other times, the title is supported by the tenor of condemnation or at least of an emerging awareness that there is something "wrong" with this type of behavior.

This book serves "Generation Y" as it relays stories of a man in his twenties. The first stories occurred back in 1999, and the book ends with a story as recent as 2005. The length of these tales vary. Some are very brief, running a few short pages. Others are far longer, making it to nearly 30 pages.

There is a sense in which this book chronicles the pain and sorrow of a young man whose life, while in certain respects is in good order, in other ways has careened out of control. Readers will only be able to read of the author getting sick from excessive drunkenness so many times in the story before sensing that something is terribly wrong. Readers may wonder why this keeps happening? Does he need help? In this sense, it can serve as a warning for parents of growing children. What can you do so that your sons and daughters don't go the way of Tucker Max?

The messages are mixed. The author's book is successful and Tucker is also excellent at writing, telling stories, picking up women and the like. This makes it seem as though all this is good. However, someone puking into shrubbery from excessive alcohol consumption is rather acutely sad, no matter who it is. The extent of humiliation that the author has endured through the experiences he described in the book is extreme.

The stories also support the title, when, during stories, readers learn that one of the author's best talents is to mock others. He is a master of verbal cruelty. This unpleasant quality is strongly supported by some of his male friends. There is one story in the book when these friends intensely desire the entertainment of Tucker getting drunk and verbally assaulting everyone who comes within range.

Tucker's cruelty, his wanton promiscuity combined with a tendency to harsh judgments against the very women he most likes to have sex with; his struggles with raw greed and whatever it is that makes him repeatedly get too drunk, are the essence of how and why he is planning to be found in Hell if he has any forthcoming "Afterlife."

The book can be taken in a variety of ways. People can feel united in their naughtiness. They might otherwise feel righteously superior because their own behavior is so much better. Readers can live "vicariously" through Max's behavior. Others may feel "exorcised" of their own dark moments by seeing that "it isn't just themselves."



As it happens, the book is also a testament the contemporary art of the short story. As a literary act, the author succeeded in taking the oral tradition of swapping real life stories with others and putting it effectively into the written word. In that sense, this is a triumphant work of today's literature. It simultaneously confirms and shows how true-life stories are traded as part of American culture while immortalizing these stories into a book so that it can live on within the published world long after the moment in which it was shared. In this sense Tucker has effectively used the book format in much the same way that people use photographs to capture fleeting moments...To preserve them, at least partially, indefinitely.



Characters

Tucker Max

The book's author. Most of the stories come from his life during his 20s. Some stem from when he was still a student and the last appear as the book was being prepared for publication, along with an incredible publicity boost given by the televisual media. Tucker Max comes from a wealthy, educated family "stricken by" multiple marriages. He confesses, with a legitimate complaint that his feelings have been so hurt that by the time he was in his early 20s, that he wasn't confident that he even had any emotions left. Evidently, something is terribly wrong with Tucker. He has a troupe of friends, who fully support the fraternity & sorority hazing school of thought. This means that if they can get him out there ragging on other people, they will be quite happy with him. Tucker is either a heavy drinker or an alcoholic. Why he overdoes it and makes himself sick maybe no one knows. Maybe therapy would help. Then again, the difficulty may be something no reader knows or understands. Perhaps Tucker needed to be tucked in at night, but unless you were with him when he was three, you would not understand this...and he has long since forgotten this about himself. Tucker has a pleasantly dramatic personality and a flair for writing and conversation. He has a very sharp wit and knows how to use his critical powers to tear anyone down. Tucker is one of those who can make even God Almighty look like a total loser thanks to this ability to CRITICIZE.

SlingBlade

This is one of Tucker's most beloved, same gender friends. The man is not "the best friend you would imagine." In fact, SlingBlade shares the view with Tucker that "all women are whores," but instead of being a whore himself, SlingBlade is a raging prude, a verbal thorn bush against all women who dare approach him. In truth, he would probably do fine with a serious girlfriend, but he has no clue as to how to develop the right kind of relationship with a woman. Instead, he just repeatedly runs into women who are looking to hook up for sex in the smoky dark. This happens while he is drunk and out with Tucker, who likes to force SlingBlade into playing his "wingman." SlingBlade can be quite a cock-blocker and drinker. More importantly, he is a master of action figures and the hidden hero in man. Cartoon bedsheets and action figures galore, SlingBlade is a man's and boy's Heavenly being, but to many a woman probably just comes off as some random boy-man into boring boy toys. When women get very lucky with SlingBlade they perceive him as funny instead of as cruel misogynist. Tucker flat out calls this guy one of his very best friends. He wasn't kidding.



El Bingeroso

This is another loyal law school friend. This is the one who likes big-breasted women. The problem is that this has caused him to end up sleeping with fat girls because it isn't that hard for the other men to pressure him into it. He makes a good wingman and is apparently reasonably strong. Most of the time, El Bingeroso is not dangerous. However, he can only get so drunk before he changes and turns belligerent. Several of the stories feature this man as one of Tucker's trusty companions. Sometimes, a "wingman," El Bingeroso is a good time up until the mean drunk level of intoxication. While this may be a real threat to women, this behavior is hardly reserved for the gals. Tucker tells everyone in the book that their whole crew watches for the warning signs of when El Bingeroso crosses the threshold. How confident do they feel about controlling their buddy? "When El Bingeroso gets that drunk; he is going to jail." In other words, they feel entirely at a loss to prevent police intervention and custody once their man's gone to that side of the bridge. One of the stories recounts the final episode in the series after which El Bingeroso seems to have completely given up getting that drunk. He even has a real girlfriend, who he selects to marry.

PWJ

This is another reliable, law school friend. Tucker uses PWJ to show how the simple female method of going to a bar or night club together with a friend because it's safer and that way it will be fun even if you're not just out to get laid...is counter balanced by "the wingman," This is the one who ends up forced to chat with the friend. These situations can force doubles or not, depending upon the over-all dynamics of a given scenario. This guy knows how to take interference from bouncers.

GoldenBoy

Another loyal drinking buddy from law school. This one turns up at parties, knows how to play wingman for Tucker, runs interference with bouncers, and so forth. He has a female partner who Tucker calls GoldenWife.

Hate

Another man with an incredible pseudonym, this one fulfills all the basic requirements to make good times with Tucker. He does not get arrested anywhere in the story. In fact, as far as readers are concerned, Hate never even upchucked.

Sarah

Sarah got pregnant with Tucker's baby, but they were not even conscious that choosing life was an actual choice given how lame their relationship was. Well, then again maybe



it wasn't. They were "fuck buddies," but did it matter? Well, of course it did; well, no not really very much it didn't. Then again, actually yes, but only from the entirely selfish perspective of each. Wait a minute: the fact that she was saved by early detection from cancer because of having sexual relations with Tucker and getting knocked up is pretty cool...Of course they both valued that they got to have sex with each other.

Jez

Believe it or not, the impression is that Jez is actually not one of Tucker's sex partners but is one of his friends. Some may assume this is only because one or the other does not wish to have the sex, but who knows, maybe there is some other reason. She is famous in the book for taking Tucker to a gay men's bar and having a lot of fun dancing in Florida. How she did this, no one knows but it is noticeable and somewhat impressive.

Rachel

This woman was actually very embarrassed about having sex with a man who was also sexually involved with other women. However, she couldn't even tell Tucker this for a month, and by the time she had the nerve to ask, the two of them had engaged in the most bizarre S & M twists on their sex that her ability to endure humiliations had entirely freaked him out but also caused him to view her as "lowly."

Cousin

Tucker has one or two cousins who include him with invitations that turned out to be so dramatic as to be worthy of writing stories about. Either the cousin, or one of the two cousins is called Josh in the book.



Objects/Places

Red Bull

This is a well-known energy drink, legally marketed within and probably also outside of the USA. It is an important ingredient in Tucker Death Mix. It appears in more than one story.

Long Island

This is precisely what it is called. Famous for being the bottom of New York City, and a connecting zone between New York and New Jersey, Long Island appears in the story through people whom Tucker runs. He can tell that's where they are from by the way they talk.

breathalyzer

This is a device designed to make it rapid and easy to test the alcohol content of peoples' blood. Yes, this means the same thing a quick test of how drunk someone is. Originally it was made for two groups of people: cops and those who want to find methods of keeping their drunken friends from driving while intoxicated.

goatee

This is a short beard and mustache combination that has come and gone and returned in terms of what is fashionable for men's facial hair.

Durham

The location of the law school that Tucker Max attended.

Fenwick & West

The law firm that helped Tucker get started. First they maintained an excellent reputation. Next, they hired Tucker Max as one of their law school summer interns and paid him over \$2000/week. After that, they fueled conditions that led to him coming up with a couple good stories. When that had happened, they read and passed around of his emails in a way that subtly helped him get launched directly into fame just a few short years later with a best selling book.



tequila

This is a type of alcohol. A lot of people cannot take much of it, at least not very well. Others have that very special something that enables them to take in a great deal of tequila. The one writing this is one of those people who can barely endure the scent of tequila, but there are people out there who are the complete opposite. Their bodies love tequila and tequila loves them in return. Tucker can take small doses of tequila without getting too sick but obviously it goes better if he hasn't pre-loaded his body with beer.

fake tits

Silicon breast implants make a few appearances (in the chests of women) in multiple stories during the book. The author of the book is not opposed to these. They are dominant during a strip club story where someone is kneading the b'Jesus out of a strippers hard-earned set.

Baby Dolls

This is the name of a strip club in Austin, Texas. It is featured in the story "The Austin Road Trip."

Jail

We've all heard of it; it's police custody; it's the lock-up for the naughty. It's that creepy there go your rights place. There is a stigma attached to it. In this book, it mainly shows up simply as a sign that El Bingeroso got too drunk.

Tantra

A fancy and expensive restaurant that actually has grass flooring. They do this even though they have to switch the grass weekly.

Montessori

Montessori: this was the name of the woman who founded this educational method. It is more hands on and directed by the children themselves than many other conventional instructional systems. It comes up in "The UT Weekend" only as part of a reference to how some woman did something that he found irresistible but in the opposite way that she might have hoped...Instead of making sure he would be careful, he was set off.



Tucker Death Mix

Everclear or other liquor, Gatorade and Red Bull, this is a Tucker Max special cocktail.

Dungeons & Dragons

This is a fantasy role-playing game that only comes up when Tucker proves how versatile he is at finding the best way to torment and mock others, at which he is very good.

Ru-486

This is the morning after birth control pill, designed to make sure that someone doesn't get knocked up after having had sex-for-pleasure or for manipulative purposes rather than having had sex in order to make a baby.

Transsexual

These come up: in this case, the type referred to are the ones who have a male base with some bolstered femininity such as breast implants and who perhaps take estrogen. These people come up as tricksters, who have better chances of seducing heterosexual men into homosexual relations in "The Most Disturbing Conversation Ever."

Foley Catheter

This is a medical device used to drain bladders for people who are about to undergo or have just been through surgery. It comes up in "Tucker Ruptures His Appendix."



Themes

Tucker's Sexual Behavior

One of the themes running through the book is Tucker's sexual behavior. It's really rather simple, most of the time. When he was a horny, young grown man, he learned how to hook up in bars while drunk. Some break up happened that he reacted to by deciding to "have sex with as many women as he possibly could." Well, obviously you can see that he's going to be or appear to be a total whore when that's his goal. There's not really any other way. He gets good at reading women out at bars while intoxicated and going home with them or taking them home. Understandably many of them may feel more at ease in their own surroundings.

By the time Tucker is 23 years old, he is adept at this, the way some people learn to shoot baskets. He might not be much good at the follow through behaviors, but he's great at taking a simple, easy shot with some horny woman and scoring: they get laid. He has cultivated this to the point of making it a strong habit, and since he nurtured the desire to have as many sex partners as possible, he made himself an ideal whore for horny women in bars, who just need to hone in on one of the men who will say yes. Sometimes he manages to have more of a relationship with women than that, but the habit of shoot and score at the bar is so strong that the number of women build up until something else breaks, and he loses a woman or two, freeing up the space to carry on as he has been. Now and then, something will occur that is powerful enough to alter Tucker's habitual behavior. The result is some kind of longer-term relationship with a woman. Again, usually it ends up being relationships with women, but even Tucker has occasionally had just one for a while. In reality, this is also the best that he has ever seen either of his parents do.

Drunkenness

Another theme running through the book is drunkenness. It is very noticeable during the book that the names of bars hold some importance, but they also run together after a while. The important thing to observe is that a bar is a major player in settings for the stories included in the book. Those scenarios that are not bars are typically places where there is a party that serves alcohol.

There are various aspects to the drunkenness. One is knowledge of distinctive extents of intoxication. One of the saddest and most painful lessons that Tucker shares with readers is about sick drunk. Many times, Tucker goes past very drunk all the way over into so drunk that it makes him vomit. In the morning he awakens dehydrated and hung over. He refers to this as "paying" for having taken in that much booze the night before. The trouble is that there is something else going on there. Either Tucker is easily manipulated or else there is a whole different set of rules for what makes it so that a man can stop without going way too far. Tucker explains to readers about times when



he did, in fact, see what was coming in advance, in terms of taking in shots at a bad time, but that he felt it was imperative that he not back down. even though all it was going to do was make him puke later. That being the case, then there has to be something else that makes it okay to stop before going past the limit. Tucker never clarifies what it is for him. For his friend El Bingeroso, the solution is to behave in such a way that all his friends, as well as his girlfriend, agree that he is allowed to stop before he gets so drunk that he goes to jail. Even so, there are times during the stories when a friend does try to make Tucker stop getting more drunk that night but he won't.

The other aspect of the drunkenness is how it pertains to the women. In general, the women in the stories are also drunk. Most of the sex takes place within the context of inebriation. Getting drunk together with women at tail gate parties, frat parties or in bars is part of the picture. A lot of the time this comes off as being nothing other than a thinly-veiled social lubricant to help people get laid. What is a little confusing is that either the women in the stories are simply out to get laid, or else, Tucker and his friends really won't include women in their social life unless its for sex, however painful that might be for women's psyches. In the end, that might mean that the women get drunk so that the hurt and justifiably angry feelings towards the men won't get in the way of their getting laid when they feel the need for sex.

Tucker's Career Development

The third theme running through this set of stories is the progression of Tucker's career development. In the beginning, he is a student. For those who did not spend lots of time in the Halls of Academia, this might be a great window into an otherwise closed world. During this era, Tucker first gives birth to his novel website. This shows readers what a man of the times he is, and the level of ingenuity. What he also informs readers, either truthfully or falsely, was that he never in a million years would have imagined that he would ever get anywhere with the website. Was he pretending that he did not have great ambitions and high hopes? Or did he really have no idea since he was just joking around?

A couple years later, the same website which his friends both encouraged him to start and mocked him for:

"Date Application" included, had begun to generate some publicity. It wasn't so much that, as it was the way that that fact, combined with the "circle of attorneys," who fell in love with the "Charity Auction Debacle" story that went around on an email circuit. Sure, Tucker started it, but then it moved further and faster without his knowledge or control, and this turned out to be advantageous to him. Years can go by in a blink or they can run together. It depends a lot on what is going on with a person. Another couple of years later, Tucker has an interested, or sealed deal, with one of the bigger publishing houses and MTV is giving him a gargantuan swathe of media exposure. He even provides a few insights on how the last couple stories have a very close tie-in with the publication of this best seller.



Style

Perspective

The author is a fairly young man from a wealthy American family. He is a smart fellow. We don't know whether or not he is a genius, but he's smart enough to get through law school, so he must not be an idiot. His expertise is in law, writing and the bar scene. Whether he is a heavy drinker or an alcoholic is not entirely clear.

His reasons for writing: surely he wants money but one major motivation is that unlike his lawyer job after graduation, he likes to write. That doesn't mean he wants to do it all the time, or anything, but instead of hating it, he loves it.

The intended audience is any adult. For the greater part, younger adults, meaning people in their 20s and 30s and others who were into partying in bars will get a great deal of pleasure from these stories. The tales are often painfully funny, rife with humiliation and defeat, intermingled with fun and growing understanding. Others who would love this are people who aren't like the characters in the stories at all, who want a voyeuristic look at the bar scene and the sleaze of Tucker and his crew of mates.

The author's desired impact may be best described by the reader feedback on the back of the book. There's a lot of love-hate on the feedback listed on the rear cover. The comments used provide the extreme reactions: "Wow this guy is great!" whereas others felt "This is the most vile and repugnant individual I have ever even heard of!" Tucker is most likely happy to at least get this kind of shock value from his readers. The audience is perhaps supposed to be polarized, but in truth there are those whose views are more middle of the road.

Tone

The over all tone of the book is powerful in that it contains multiple tones. It is part confessional. Tucker Max exposes himself in a myriad of ways through this set of true-life tales. On another level, these are upbeat, cheerful tales of a contemporary hedonist. Too many others, having already been through this or living this way now, will be delighted to see the men in the book having such a good time, and will laugh along at the sometimes distressing side effects of excessive alcohol usage.

The author has written this in a predominantly-subjective modality. Sometimes, he finds ways to give an objective quality to it even though it is highly subjective. Usually, he does this by extending into descriptions of other people.

There is some kind of chaos associated with these stories. How readers take the chaos depends a great deal on what they are like as individuals. Some of the wildness comes from the frequent changes of Tucker's sex partners. As noted above, he just shoots and sinks 'em meaning that the whole thing often has a revolving door quality to it. What



happens to Tucker while he is out getting drunk is another matter, but one of the greatest revelations about this for readers, especially for women readers, is the way he describes the teamwork involved with picking up women. The word "wingman" is a big one that crops up repeatedly.

The greatest thing about these Tucker Max stories is that they really do give readers the feeling that they have participated in an intimate conversation with him. Somehow, even with few words, he is able to get across to readers an essence of each scene. His style has the economy of a newspaper journalist with the flair and color of a full-fledged novelist or poetry writer.

Structure

The book is set up as a long sequence of stories. They vary in length. Some are so brief that you can readily see why they would be told over a barstool or at a booth during those few moments when Tucker commanded everyone's attention. Other of these nonfiction tales are longer. Even so, he is able to maintain an easy, natural flow that engages the readers almost as if they were along with him. This is what makes his writing so fantastic. People will feel as if they are somehow in Tucker's head, a fly on the wall observing the antics of this young man, and out there with them as part of the clique or group of people, whether riding along in the car or at the bar. It works out, because it is devised in basic chronological order.

The organization of the book limits it very much to its form. However, for what it is, it works very well. Let's face it, all it is meant to be is a book-length run of real life, easy to read, confessional, but hopefully still fun stories that allow readers to laugh along with the author, at him and at some others. The author is generally saved by his capacity to laugh at himself.

Quotes

"Two girls call me close-minded. I tell them that they are so open-minded that their brains leaked out." The Famous Sushi Pants Story p. 3

"It is the devil dressed in a transistor." The Famous Sushi Pants Story, p. 7

"And then all hell starts breaking loose." The Night We Almost Died, p. 13

"GUN! GUN! GUN! A FUCKING GUN!." The Night We Almost Died, p. 15

"...a solid 5-roper." The Blowjob Follies, p. 23

"I am not a toy expert." Everyone Has "That" Friend, p. 28

"But there is a limit to what a girl will endure before she gets pissed and leaves." Everyone Has "That" Friend, p. 34

"My liver hurts, my liver is dying." Everyone Has "That" Friend, p.44

"...would I do it again? That's a stupid question." Tucker Fucks a Fat Girl; Hilarity Ensues p.53

"The night before I got my roommate and myself into the SOMA magazine opening party in San Francisco where I got completely shit-faced and went home with one of the models at the party." The Now Infamous Tucker Max Charity Auction Debacle, p. 55.

"(I swear this is true)" The Now Infamous Tucker Max Charity Auction Debacle, p. 61

"...for a split second I thought she was trying to kill me." Quite The Vacation, p. 69

"It was the single greatest fast food meal in the history of civilization." Tucker Goes To Vegas, p. 73

"How could you leave your glasses?" Tucker Goes To Vegas, p. 76



Topics for Discussion

What is the relevance of where Tucker Max attended law school?

Do you agree with Tucker's views on women? If not, why not? If so, why?

The pseudonyms of Tucker's friends: put them into a group and then discuss whether or not there is any new meaning revealed.

Discuss the reality of the vomiting. While most strongly associated with real illness and heroin addiction, it is quite possibly true that more people throw up from consuming too much alcohol than from shooting up heroin. Discuss the dangers, the implications and how this might be solved.

Discuss Tucker's rise to fame.

What do you think about the different types of people who emerge as characters in Tucker's book?

Which of the exploits in the book do you feel were the wildest? Why?

Having read the whole thing, which stories stand out in your mind the most? Do you know why?

Could you describe Tucker's sense of humor?