

THIS BODY THE EARTH

By Paul Green

STUDY QUESTIONS

- What is the relationship between the novel and Paul Green's dramas? In what ways are the author's experience and expertise as a dramatist revealed in *This Body the Earth*?
- What characteristics of place, character, and language set the novel in the agrarian South? What folk motifs and rituals of farming run through the book?
- What universal themes dealing with the human condition are found in Green's novel? Comment upon it as the story of an "everyman." What are the defining events of Alvin Barnes' life?
- What beliefs and practices of that period exist today? How have they changed in the 21st century?
- What are the main beliefs of Blake Dewar's social philosophy? What is their relevance to today's thinking? How did they impact Alvin Barnes and other characters in the novel?
- Consider other American novels, like John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, that depict the plight of the migrant worker in post-World War II America. Who are today's migrant workers and what are the determining factors that govern their lives?
- What were the harsh realities of the sharecropper's life at the time of the novel? And, explain the difference between a tenant and a sharecropper. How does the sharecropper in Green's novel differ from other kinds of modern-day laborers?
- In what ways does the author reveal his devotion to the individual and his belief in the rights of people to the fulfillment of their potential?
- Discuss such issues as class, race, and gender in *This Body the Earth*. What place does religion have in the novel?
- What is the role of women in Green's agrarian landscape? What are the characteristics of Ivy Chadbourne that make her a saintly person? Is she a believable, sympathetic character?
- Did you like the book? Why?