Paper XI: The 20th Century Unit I

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

Structure

1. Background

1.1 Introduction to the Author

Joseph Conrad, one of the English language's greatest stylists, was born Teodor Josef Konrad Nalecz Korzenikowski in Podolia, a province of the Polish Ukraine. Poland had been a Roman Catholic kingdom since 1024, but was invaded, partitioned, and repartitioned throughout the late eighteenth-century by Russia, Prussia, and Austria. At the time of Conrad's birth (December 3, 1857), Poland was one-third of its size before being divided between the three great powers; despite the efforts of nationalists such as Tadeusz Kosciuszko, who led an unsuccessful uprising

in 1795, Poland was controlled by other nations and struggled for independence. When Conrad was born, Russia effectively controlled Poland.

Conrad's childhood was largely affected by his homeland's struggle for independence. His father, Apollo Korzeniowski, belonged to the szlachta, a hereditary social class comprised of members of the landed gentry; he despised the Russian oppression of his native land. At the time of Conrad's birth, Apollo's land had been seized by the Russian government because of his participation in past uprisings. He and one of Conrad's maternal uncles, Stefan Bobrowski, helped plan an uprising against Russian rule in 1863. Other members of Conrad's family showed similar patriotic convictions: Kazimirez Bobrowski, another maternal uncle, resigned his commission in the army (controlled by Russia) and was imprisoned, while Robert and Hilary Korzeniowski, two fraternal uncles, also assisted in planning the aforementioned rebellion. (Robert died in 1863 and Hilary was imprisoned and exiled.) All of this political turmoil would prove to be predictably disturbing to young Josef, who could only stand idly by as he watched his family embroiled in such dangerous controversy. The notion of the strong oppressing the weak — and the weak powerless to revolt — surfaces in *Heart of Darkness*, where the White TRADERS wantonly murder the Congolese in pursuit of riches and power.

Conrad's father was also a writer and translator, who composed political tracts, poetry, and satirical plays. His public urgings for Polish freedom, however, eventually caused Russian authorities to arrest and imprison him in 1861; in 1862, his wife (Conrad's mother), Eva, was also arrested and charged with assisting her husband in his anti-Russian activities. The two were sentenced to exile in Vologda, a town in northern Russia. Their exile was a hard and bitter one: Eva died of tuberculosis in 1865 and Apollo died of the same disease in 1869. Conrad, now only twelve years old, was naturally devastated; his own physical health deteriorated and he suffered from a number of lung inflammations and epileptic seizures. His poor health would become a recurring problem throughout the remainder of his life. Poland did not gain independence until 1919, and although patriots such as Apollo were instrumental in this eventual success, their martyrdom left many children (such as Conrad) without parents or hope for their future.

The Call of the Sea

After his father's death, Conrad was returned to Krakow, Poland, where he became a ward of his maternal uncle, Thaddeus Bobrowski. His uncle sent Conrad to school in Krakow and then to Geneva under the guidance of a private tutor. However, Conrad was a poor student; Despite his having studied Greek, Latin, mathematics, and (of course) geography, he never completed the formal courses of study that he was expected to finish. His apathy toward formal education was counterbalanced by the reading he did on his own: During his early teenage years, Conrad read a great deal, particularly translations of Charles Dickens' novels and Captain Frederick Marryat, an English novelist who wrote popular adventure yarns about life at sea. (He also read widely in French.)

Marryat's novels may have been partly responsible for the sixteen-year-old Conrad's desire to go to sea and travel the world as a merchant marine (an exotic wish for a boy who grew up in a land-locked country); in 1874, his uncle reluctantly granted him permission to leave Poland and travel, by train, to the French port city of Marseille to join the French Merchant Navy. After his arrival, Conrad made three voyages to the West Indies between 1875 and 1878; during this time, he smuggled guns for the Carlists, who were trying to put Carlos de Bourbon on the throne of Spain. In 1878, Conrad suffered from depression, caused in part by gambling debts and his being forbidden to work on any French ships due to his lying about having the proper permits. He made an unsuccessful attempt at suicide, shooting himself through the shoulder and missing his vital organs. (Biographers differ in their interpretations of this attempt: Some contend that Conrad was depressed about his squandering all his MONEY, while others report that the attempt was a ruse designed to put Conrad out of work and thus escape the grasp of creditors.) Later that year, Conrad boarded an English ship that took him to the eastern port-town of Lowestoft; there, he joined the crew of a ship that made six voyages between Lowestoft and Newcastle. During this time, he learned English. Conrad's determination to succeed as a seaman was impressive: Although he began his career as a common sailor, by 1886 he had sailed to the Asia and was made master of his own ship. He

then became a British subject and changed his name to Joseph Conrad (partly to avoid having to return to Poland and serve in the Russian military).

In 1888, Conrad received his first command of the Otago, a ship harboring in Bangkok whose master had died. Surprisingly, Conrad hated the day-to-day life of a sailor and never owned a boat after becoming famous; The Sea, however, offered Conrad the opportunity to make a living. One of Conrad's most important voyages occurred in 1890, when he sailed a steamboat up the Congo River in central Africa. Conrad was attracted to this region partly because of the adventure he thought it could offer him and (perhaps more importantly) because working in the Congo could earn him some much-needed money. During this voyage, Conrad witnessed incredible barbarity, illness, and inhumanity; his recollections of this trip would eventually become the basis of his most famous work, *Heart of Darkness*. During this time, Conrad was considering turning his seafaring adventures into novels, and he eventually published Almayer's Folly, which he had been composing during the early 1890s in 1895. The success of his first novel lured him away from the sea to his new adventures as an English novelist. He settled in England, married Jessie George (in 1896), and began the career for which the world would remember him best.

From Sailor to Author

After the publication of Almayer's Folly, Conrad began producing a number of books in rapid succession, many of which featured plots about sailors and travel to explore moral ambiguity and the nature of human identity. The Nigger of the "Narcissus" (1897) concerns a tubercular Black sailor whose impending death affects his fellow crewmen in a number of profound ways. Lord Jim (1900) examines the effects of a cowardly act and how this act's moral repercussions haunt a man until his death. (Lord Jim's story is told by ">Marlow, the narrator of *Heart of Darkness*.) In 1902, Conrad published *Heart of Darkness*, a short novel detailing Marlow's journey into the Belgian Congo — and the metaphorical "*heart of darkness*" of man. All three books were highly regarded in their time and are still widely read and studied today. In 1904, Nostromo was published; the complex tale of an imaginary South American republic. The effects of greed and foreign exploitation helped to define Conrad's oblique and sometimes

difficult narrative style. Although he produced a large body of work, Conrad was often a slow writer who felt the pressure of deadlines and the need to keep writing to keep his family financially solvent. His struggles were eased, however, in 1910, when John Quinn, an American lawyer, bought all of Conrad's manuscripts and awarded him a small pension.

Conrad continued writing tales of travel, but also turned his attention to novels of political intrigue. The Secret Agent (1907) concerns a group of anarchists who plan to blow up the Greenwich Observatory; Under Western Eyes (1911), set in nineteenth-century Czarist Russia, follows the life of a student who betrays his friend — the assassin of a government official — to the authorities. His story "The Secret Sharer" (1912) uses the "Doppelganger theme" (where a man meets his figurative double) to examine what Conrad viewed as the shifting nature of human identity and the essential isolation of all human beings. In 1913, Chance was a great success both critically and FINANCIALLY; the novel, like *Heart of Darkness*, explores the ways in which an innocent person (like Marlow) becomes hardened by the horrors that surround her. Other novels marked by these essential Conradian themes include The Inheritors (cowritten with Ford Maddox Ford, 1901), Victory (1915), and The Shadow-Line (1917). Conrad also turned to autobiography: The Mirror of the Sea (1906), A Personal Record (1912), and Notes on Life and Letters (1921). All treat his seafaring days and development as an artist.

Conrad died of heart failure on August 3, 1924. He was buried in Canterbury Cemetery and survived by his wife and sons (Borys and John). Still honored by millions of readers as one of the greatest modern writers, Conrad left behind a large body of work whose nature he defined (in his Preface to The Nigger of the "Narcissus") as "a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect."

1.2 Introduction to the Text

Heart of Darkness originally appeared serially in Blackwood's Magazine in 1899. It was eventually published as a whole in 1902, as the third work in a volume Conrad titled Youth. Since its publication in Youth, the novel has fascinated numerous readers and critics, almost all

of whom regarded the novel as an important one because of the ways it uses ambiguity and (in Conrad's own words), "foggishness" to dramatize Marlow's perceptions of the horrors he encounters. Critics have regarded *Heart of Darkness* as a work that in several important ways broke many narrative conventions and brought the English novel into the twentieth century. Conrad's works, *Heart of Darkness* in particular, provide a bridge between Victorian values and the ideals of modernism. Like their Victorian predecessors, these novels rely on traditional ideas of heroism, which are nevertheless under constant attack in a changing world and in places far from England. Women occupy traditional roles as arbiters of domesticity and morality, yet they are almost never present in the narrative; instead, the concepts of "home" and "civilization" exist merely as hypocritical ideals, meaningless to men for whom survival is in constant doubt. While the threats that Conrad's characters face are concrete ones—illness, violence, conspiracy—they nevertheless acquire a philosophical character. Like much of the best modernist literature produced in the early decades of the twentieth century, *Heart of Darkness* is as much about alienation, confusion, and profound doubt as it is about imperialism. Imperialism is nevertheless at the center of *Heart of Darkness*. By the 1890s, most of the world's "dark places" had been placed at least nominally under European control, and the major European powers were stretched thin, trying to administer and protect massive, far-flung empires. Cracks were beginning to appear in the system: riots, wars, and the WHOLESALE abandonment of commercial enterprises all threatened the white men living in the distant corners of empires. Things were clearly falling apart. *Heart of Darkness* suggests that this is the natural result when men are allowed to operate outside a social system of checks and balances: power, especially power over other human beings, inevitably corrupts. At the same time, this begs the question of whether it is possible to call an individual insane or wrong when he is part of a system that is so thoroughly corrupted and corrupting. *Heart of Darkness*, thus, at its most abstract level, is a narrative about the difficulty of understanding the world beyond the self, about the ability of one man to judge another.

Although *Heart of Darkness* was one of the first literary texts to provide a critical view of European imperial activities, it was initially read by critics as anything but controversial. While the book was generally admired, it was typically read either as a condemnation of a certain type

of adventurer who could easily take advantage of imperialism's opportunities, or else as a sentimental novel reinforcing domestic values: Kurtz's Intended, who appears at the novella's conclusion, was roundly praised by turn-of-the-century reviewers for her maturity and sentimental appeal. Conrad's decision to set the book in a Belgian colony and to have Marlow work for a Belgian TRADING concern made it even easier for British readers to avoid seeing themselves reflected in *Heart of Darkness*. Although these early reactions seem ludicrous to a modern reader, they reinforce the novella's central themes of hypocrisy and absurdity.

2. Plot Overview

Heart of Darkness centers around Marlow, an introspective sailor, and his journey up the Congo River to meet Kurtz, reputed to be an idealistic man of great abilities. Marlow takes a job as a riverboat captain with the Company, a Belgian concern organized to TRADE in the Congo. As he travels to Africa and then up the Congo, Marlow encounters widespread inefficiency and brutality in the Company's stations. The native inhabitants of the region have been forced into the Company's service, and they suffer terribly from overwork and ill treatment at the hands of the Company's agents. The cruelty and squalor of imperial enterprise contrasts sharply with the impassive and majestic jungle that surrounds the white man's settlements, making them appear to be tiny islands amidst a vast darkness.

Marlow arrives at the Central Station, run by the general manager, an unwholesome, conspiratorial character. He finds that his steamship has been sunk and spends several months waiting for parts to repair it. His interest in Kurtz grows during this period. The manager and his favorite, the brickmaker, seem to fear Kurtz as a threat to their position. Kurtz is rumored to be ill, making the delays in repairing the ship all the more costly. Marlow eventually gets the parts he needs to repair his ship, and he and the manager set out with a few agents (whom Marlow calls pilgrims because of their strange habit of carrying long, wooden staves wherever they go) and a crew of cannibals on a long, difficult voyage up the river. The dense jungle and the oppressive silence make everyone aboard a little jumpy, and the occasional glimpse of a native village or the sound of drums works the pilgrims into frenzy.

Marlow and his crew come across a hut with stacked firewood, together with a note saying that the wood is for them but that they should approach cautiously. Shortly after the steamer has taken on the firewood, it is surrounded by a dense fog. When the fog clears, the ship is attacked by an unseen band of natives, who fire arrows from the safety of the forest. The African helmsman is killed before Marlow frightens the natives away with the ship's steam whistle. Not long after, Marlow and his companions arrive at Kurtz's Inner Station, expecting to find him dead, but a half-crazed Russian TRADER, who meets them as they come ashore, assures them that everything is fine and informs them that he is the one who left the wood. The Russian claims that Kurtz has enlarged his mind and cannot be subjected to the same moral judgments as normal people. Apparently, Kurtz has established himself as a god with the natives and has gone on brutal raids in the surrounding territory in search of ivory. The collection of severed heads adorning the fence posts around the station attests to his "methods." The pilgrims bring Kurtz out of the station-house on a stretcher, and a large group of native warriors pours out of the forest and surrounds them. Kurtz speaks to them, and the natives disappear into the woods.

The manager brings Kurtz, who is quite ill, aboard the steamer. A beautiful native woman, apparently Kurtz's mistress, appears on the shore and stares out at the ship. The Russian implies that she is somehow involved with Kurtz and has caused trouble before through her influence over him. The Russian reveals to Marlow, after swearing him to secrecy, that Kurtz had ordered the attack on the steamer to make them believe he was dead in order that they might turn back and leave him to his plans. The Russian then leaves by canoe, fearing the displeasure of the manager. Kurtz disappears in the night, and Marlow goes out in search of him, finding him crawling on all fours toward the native camp. Marlow stops him and convinces him to return to the ship. They set off down the river the next morning, but Kurtz's health is failing fast.

Marlow listens to Kurtz talk while he pilots the ship, and Kurtz entrusts Marlow with a packet of personal documents, including an eloquent pamphlet on civilizing the savages which ends with a scrawled message that says, "Exterminate all the brutes!" The steamer breaks

down, and they have to stop for repairs. Kurtz dies, uttering his last words—"The horror! The horror!"—in the presence of the confused Marlow. Marlow falls ill soon after and barely survives. Eventually he returns to Europe and goes to see Kurtz's Intended (his fiancée). She is still in mourning, even though it has been over a year since Kurtz's death, and she praises him as a paragon of virtue and achievement. She asks what his last words were, but Marlow cannot bring himself to shatter her illusions with the truth. Instead, he tells her that Kurtz's last word was her name.

3. Summary and Analysis

Part 1

Summary

Heart of Darkness begins on board the *Nellie*, a small ship moored on the Thames River in London. After describing the river and its slow-moving traffic, the unnamed narrator offers short descriptions of London's history to his companions who, with him, lazily lounge on the deck, waiting for the tide to turn. With him are the Director of Companies (their Captain), a lawyer, an accountant, and Marlow, the novel's protagonist. As the sun sets, the four men become contemplative and brooding; eventually, Marlow breaks the spell of silence by beginning his tale about his voyage to the Congo.

The other men remain silent while Marlow collects his ideas, after which he begins the story proper. The remainder of the novel becomes (with a few exceptions) the narrator's report of what Marlow tells him and the others on board the *Nellie*. Conrad's novel is thus a *frame story*, or story-within-a-story.

As a boy, Marlow was fascinated by maps and yearned to become a seaman or explorer who could visit the most remote parts of the earth. As a young man, Marlow spent approximately six years sailing in the Pacific before returning to London — where he then saw, in a shop window, a map of Africa and the Congo River. Recalling the news of a Continental trading Company operating in the Congo, Marlow became determined to pilot a

steamboat to find adventure in Africa. He asked his aunt, who knew the wife of a Company official to assist him in getting a job as a pilot; she happily complied.

Marlow hurried across the English Channel to sign his contracts at the Company's headquarters in Brussels. Passing through an office with two women who are knitting, Marlow spoke with the Company's director for less than a minute; after being dismissed, he was asked to sign a number of papers in which he promised not to divulge any TRADE secrets. Marlow finally reached the mouth of the Congo. Finding passage on a little sea-bound steamer to take him where his steamboat awaited him, Marlow spoke with its Swedish captain about the Company and the effects of the jungle on Europeans. The Swede then told Marlow a short yet ominous story about a man he took upriver who hanged himself on the road. Shocked, Marlow asked why, only to be told that perhaps the "sun" or the "country" were too much for him. Eventually, they reached the Company's Outer Station, which amounted to three wooden buildings on the side of a rocky slope. Out of this station was shipped the Company's most important and lucrative commodity: ivory.

Marlow spent the next ten days waiting for the caravan to conduct him to the Central Station (and his steamboat), during which time he saw more of the Accountant. On some days, Marlow would sit in his office, trying to avoid the giant "stabbing" flies. When a stretcher with a sick European was put in the office temporarily, the Accountant became annoyed with his groans, complaining that they distracted him and increased the chances for clerical errors. Noting Marlow's ultimate destination in the interior region of the Congo, the Accountant hinted that Marlow would "no doubt meet Mr. Kurtz," a Company agent in charge of an incredibly lucrative ivory-post deep in the interior. The Accountant described Kurtz as a "first class agent" and "remarkable person" whose station brought in more ivory than all the other stations combined. He asked Marlow to tell Kurtz that everything at the Outer Station was satisfactory and then hinted that Kurtz was being groomed for a high position in the Company's Administration.

The day after this conversation, Marlow left the Outer Station with a caravan of sixty men for a two hundred-mile "tramp" to the Central Station. (The men were native porters who carried the equipment, food and water.) Marlow saw innumerable paths cut through the jungle

and a number of abandoned villages along the way. He saw a drunken White man, who claimed to be looking after the "upkeep" of a road, and the body of a native who was shot in the head. Marlow's one White companion was an overweight man who kept fainting due to the heat. Eventually, he had to be carried in a hammock, and when the hammock skinned his nose and was dropped by the natives, he demanded that Marlow do something to punish them. Marlow did nothing except press onward until they reached the Central Station, where an "excitable chap" informed him that his steamboat was at the bottom of the river; two days earlier, the bottom of the boat had been torn off when some "volunteer skipper" piloted it upriver to have it ready for Marlow's arrival.

Marlow was therefore forced to spend time at the Central Station. As he did with the Outer Station, he relates to his audience on the *Nellie* his impressions of the place. Marlow met a Brickmaker (although Marlow did not see a brick anywhere) who pressed him for information about the Company's activities in Europe. When Marlow confessed to knowing nothing about the secret intrigues of the Company, the Brickmaker assumed he was lying and became annoyed.

At this point, Marlow breaks off his narrative, explaining to the men on the *Nellie* that he finds it difficult to convey the dream-like quality of his African experiences. Marlow resumes his tale by continuing the description of his talk with the Brickmaker, who complained to Marlow that he could never find the necessary materials needed to make any bricks. Marlow told of how he needed rivets to repair his steamboat, but none arrived in any of the caravans. After his conversation with the Brickmaker, Marlow told his mechanic (a boilermaker) that their rivets would be arriving shortly. (Marlow assumed that because the Brickmaker was eager to please him because he assumed Marlow had important friends, he would get him the necessary rivets.) Like the Brickmaker, the mechanic assumed that Marlow had great influence in Europe. However, the rivets did not arrive — instead, a number of White men riding donkeys (and followed by a number of natives) burst into the Central Station. Marlow learned that these men called themselves the Eldorado Exploring Expedition and that they had arrived in search of treasure. The Manager's uncle was the leader of the Expedition, and Marlow saw him and his nephew conspiring on many occasions. At times, Marlow would hear Kurtz's name mentioned

and become mildly curious, but he felt a strong desire to repair his steamship and begin his job as a pilot.

Analysis

Heart of Darkness is best known as the story of Marlow's journey to Africa, which, in part, it is. However, the novel is also the story of a man on board a London ship who *listens* to Marlow's story as well. This "story-within-a-story" form is called a *frame tale*. (The significance of the framing device is discussed in the Critical Essays section.)

Exploring man's inhumanity toward other men and raising some troubling questions about the impulse toward imperialism, *Heart of Darkness* is also an adventure story where (such as many others) the young hero embarks on a journey, and in the process, learns about himself. Marlow begins his narrative as a rough-and-ready young man searching for adventure. Unlike those of Europe, the maps of Africa still contained some "blank spaces" that Marlow yearned to explore; his likening the Congo River to a snakesuggests the mesmeric powers of Africa. However, the serpent is also a well-known symbol of evil and temptation, harkening back to the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament. Thus, Conrad's comparing the river to a snake also suggests the danger Marlow will find in Africa and the temptations to which Kurtz succumbs when he sets himself up as a god to the natives. Despite the uncertainty of what lay there, Marlow had to go.

However, before Marlow even sets foot on the African shore, Conrad begins to ALERT the reader to the terrible power of the African jungle. Marlow learns that a piloting position has become open because a chief's son has killed one of the Company's pilots over two black hens. Fresleven, the dead pilot, was thought by all to be "the kindliest, gentlest creature that ever walked on two legs," but Conrad hints that*something* caused him to shed his self-control (as a snake sheds its skin) and attack the chief of a village. (This *something*, being the effects of "the jungle" on uninitiated Europeans, becomes more and more pronounced to Marlow and the reader as the novel progresses.) Marlow eventually sees Fresleven's remains on the ground with grass growing up through the bones. The image suggests that Africa itself has won a battle against Fresleven and all he represents. The earth reclaimed him as its own, and Naturehas

triumphed over civilization. This is the first lesson Marlow learns about the futility of the Company's agents' attempts to remain "civilized" in the jungle, which releases instinctual and primitive drives within them that they did not ever think they possessed.

When Marlow visits Brussels to get his appointment, he describes the city as a "whited sepulcher" — a Biblical phrase referring to a hypocrite or person who employs a façade of goodness to mask his or her true malignancy. The Company, like its headquarters, is a similar "whited sepulcher,"proclaiming its duty to bring "civilization" and "light" to Africa in the name of Christian charity, but really raping the land and its people in the name of profit and the lust for power. Marlow's aunt, who talks to him about "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways" serves as an example of how deeply the Company's propaganda has been ingrained into the minds of Europeans. Uncomfortable with his aunt's ideas, Marlow suggests that the Company is simply "run for profit"; before he sees *how* these profits are acquired, he is blissfully unaware of the Company's depravity. Marlow dwells in the realm of wishful thinking, wanting to believe that the Company has no imperialistic impulses and is simply an economic enterprise, much like the ones to which he is accustomed as a European.

The first glimpse Marlow and the reader have of the Company's headquarters hints at the organization's sinister, evil, and conspiratorial atmosphere. First, Marlow "slipped through one of the cracks" to enter the building, implying that the Company is figuratively "closed" in terms of what it allows the public to learn about its operations.

Second, the two women knitting black wool suggest the Fates of Greek mythology; like these goddesses, the Company is "knitting" the destiny of the Africans, represented by the black wool. The Company, therefore, plays God with the lives of the Africans, deciding who in the Congo will live or die.

Third, Marlow is led into a dimly lit office — the lighting reflects the "shady" and ambiguous morals of the Company. He only speaks with the Company's President for forty-five seconds, suggesting that the Company views Marlow — and people like him — as expendable.

Fourth, Marlow is asked to sign "some document" that ostensibly contracts him to not reveal "any trade secrets," but figuratively suggests the selling of his soul to the Devil. (As the

Manager of the Central Station will later remark about Africa, "Men who come out here should have no entrails.") As the Devil seeks human souls to overthrow God in Heaven eventually, the Company is metaphorically seeking to acquire the souls of as many Europeans as possible to make greater profits.

Fifth, when Marlow is examined by the Company's Doctor, he learns that many Europeans who venture to Africa become mad: When the Doctor begins measuring Marlow's skull, the reader infers Conrad's point that European "science" and "technology" (even with a science as ludicrous as phrenology) are no match for the power of the jungle. When "civilized" Europeans go to Africa, the restraints placed upon them by European society begin to vanish, resulting in the kind of behavior previously seen in Fresleven. Later in the novel, when his anger begins to grow after finding all of his gear damaged by the porters, Marlow ironically remarks, "I felt I was becoming scientifically interesting."

Also worth noting is the abundance of white and dark images in these opening pages of Marlow's narrative. The Congo is described as a "*white* patch" on a map, Fresleven was killed in a scuffle over two*black* hens, Brussels is a "*whited* sepulcher," the two women knit *black* wool and the old one wears a "starched *white* affair," the President's secretary has *white* hair, and the Doctor has black *ink-stains* on his sleeves. Many critics have commented (sometimes inconclusively) on Conrad's use of white and black imagery; generally, one should note how the *combination* of white and black images suggests several of the novel's ideas:

The Company claims to be a means by which (as Marlow's aunt calls them), "emissaries of light" can bring civilization to the "darkness" of Africa, which is done by denoting Brussels as white and the Congo as white.

The White men in the novel (particularly Marlow and Kurtz) will be greatly influenced by their experiences with the Africans. Although the Company professes to be a force of "White" moral righteousness, it is actually "spotted" with "black" spots of sin and inhumanity, and the corpses of the black natives that are found throughout the Congo.

In short, the Company may *appear* to be "white" and pure, but it is actually quite the opposite, as denoted by the accountant and his white shirt.

Some critics have claimed that Conrad's use of "darkness" to represent evil suggests the racist assumptions of the novel; others argue that the "white" characters in the book are actually more "black" than the natives they slaughter and that Conrad's imagery stresses the hypocrisy of the Company and its "white" employees. Regardless of this critical dispute, a reader should note that Conrad toys with white and black imagery throughout the course of the novel, and of course, in its very title.

Marlow feels like "an imposter" when he leaves the Company's headquarters, because he has joined the ranks of an outfit whose assumptions about Africa and European activity there sharply contrast with his own. Marlow has no imperialistic impulses and only seeks adventure — but he is beginning to see the Company for what it truly is. Thus, Marlow's growing perception of the moral decay around him becomes one of the major issues of the novel.

Like the Company headquarters, Africa itself is initially portrayed as an enchanting and intriguing place. The continent is described as unfinished and "still in the making," possessing an air that beguiles Europeans to "Come and find out" if they can survive there.

This portrayal of Africa as an untouched paradise, however, is quickly countered by Marlow's description. He notices a French man-of-war firing its guns into the bush; the "pop" made by its guns highlights the Company's ineffectual attempts to subdue the continent. Similarly, Marlow notices a boiler lying in the grass, an unused railway car resembling "the carcass of some animal," a series of explosions that do nothing to change the rock they are attempting to remove, an "artificial hole" the purpose of which he cannot discern, and a ravine filled with broken drainage pipes. Stunned by these images of chaos, Marlow remarks, "The work was going on. The work!" Clearly, these signs of waste and ineptitude are not what Marlow expected to see upon his arrival; these discarded machines symbolize the complete disregard of the Company for making any real progress in the Congo, as well as the disorganization that marks its day-to-day operations.

Even more disturbing to Marlow is the "grove of death": a shady spot where some of the natives — like the machinery mentioned previously — are dying without anyone seeming to notice or care. Calling them "nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation" and "bundles of acute angles," Marlow attempts to show some charity by OFFERING one of them a biscuit; the dying native, however, can only grasp it in his hand, too weak to even bring it to his mouth. Marlow notices that this man has "a bit of white worsted" tied around his neck and puzzles over its meaning, but the reader can see that the wool is symbolic of the Company's "collaring" the natives and treating them like animals. Disturbed Marlow leaves the grove to soothe his shaken mind. Rather than confront the horror head-on, he retreats; later he will not have this luxury.

Marlow moves from the natives to a European: the Company's chief accountant, who suggests the immense amount of MONEY that the Company is making from its campaign of terror and whose dress is impeccable. Again the reader sees the Company's attempts to array itself in colors and façades of purity. Marlow calls the Accountant a "miracle" because of his ability to keep up a dignified European appearance amidst the sweltering and muddy jungle. (He even has a penholder behind his ear.) Completely and willingly oblivious to the horrors around him, the Accountant cares only for figures and his own importance: When a sick agent is temporarily placed in his hut, the Accountant complains. He also tells Marlow, "When one has got to make correct entries, one comes to hate those savages — hate them to the death." To the Company, as embodied in the Accountant, profits take precedence over human life and the bottom line is more important than any higher law of humanity.

Marlow's two hundred-mile hike to the Central Station reinforces the Company's lack of organization and brutality. Passing through deserted and razed villages, his perception of the Company becomes sharper. His journey ends at the Central Station, where Marlow spends the remainder of Part 1. Like the Company's European headquarters and the Outer Station, this place reeks of waste, inhumanity, and death. Earlier in the novel, Marlow states that he would, in time, "become acquainted with a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly" — now, at the Central Station, he remarks, "the first glance of the place was enough to let you see the flabby devil was running that show." No longer the enthusiastic

sailor, Marlow grows increasingly suspicious and judgmental of what he sees. The fact that he learns, upon his arrival, that his steamboat is at the bottom of the river only increases his ire and suspicion.

A noteworthy segment of Part 1 concerns Kurtz's painting, which Marlow sees hanging in the Brickmaker's room. The painting depicts a woman, blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch. Clearly, this woman reminds one of the usual personification of justice, while the torch suggests the Company bringing the "light" of civilization into the "Dark Continent." (Recall Marlow's aunt and her hope that Marlow will help those "ignorant" savages become more civilized.) The woman in the painting alsosymbolizes the Company, which willingly blindfolds itself to the horrors it perpetuates in the name of profit; it also recalls the Company's ineptitude and the ways in which it "blindly" stumbles through Africa.

This painting also symbolizes its creator. Like the blindfolded woman, Kurtz once yearned to bring the "light" of civilization and progress to the "dark" continent. (This explains the torch coming out of the darkness.) At the end of his life, however, Kurtz changes his position, most markedly apparent when Marlow reads a handwritten line in one of Kurtz's reports urging, "Exterminate all the brutes!" Thus, according to the painting, Europe puts on a show of bringing "light" — but this light ultimately reveals a "sinister" appearance, which marks the woman's face. Here, Conrad foreshadows what Kurtz will be like when Marlow meets him: a man who once held high ideals about bringing "justice" and "light" to the Congo, but who became "sinister" once he arrived there.

One of Conrad's personifications of the "flabby" (because it has "devoured" Africa), "pretending" (because it masquerades its avarice in the name of enlightenment), and "weak-eyed" (because it refuses to "see" the effects of its work) Company is the Manager. He has no education, is a "common TRADER," inspires "neither fear nor love," creates "uneasiness" in all who meet him, and lacks any "genius for organizing." All Marlow is able to conclude is that he "was never ill" and is able to keep the supply of ivory flowing to European ports. Marlow's growing perceptions soon allow him to understand that the Company possesses "not an atom of foresight or of serious intention" and that "To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was

their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe."

At this point, Conrad increases the amount of rumors and half-truths that Marlow (and the reader) begins to hear about "the man who is so indissolubly connected" with Marlow's journey: Kurtz. As *Heart of Darkness* progresses, Conrad's emphasis shifts from Marlow's desire to explore the "snake" of the Congo to his longing to meet this shadowy figure. Kurtz is first mentioned by the Accountant, who calls him "a first-class agent" and "a remarkable person" who "sends in as much ivory as the others put together." The Manager, however, speaks of Kurtz in more ambiguous terms.

In spite of his claims of concern for Kurtz, the Manager is actually sabotaging Kurtz and doing everything in his power to ensure that he will die at the Inner Station. His motive? Professional jealousy. Marlow notices "an air of plotting" at the station and later overhears the Manager speaking to his uncle (the leader of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition), from which he learns the following things:

The Manager, against his will, was forced to send Kurtz to the interior of the jungle: "Am I the Manager — or am I not?" he asks.

Kurtz *asked* the administration to send him there with the idea of "showing what he could do."

The Manager fears that Kurtz "has the council by the nose" and has requested a position in the interior because he wants the Manager's job: "Conceive you — that ass! And he wants to be Manager!"

Thus, the Manager is nervous when talking to Marlow because he does not know who Marlow really is or if he has any powerful connections in Europe. When he replies, "That ought to do the affair," he means that three months without any relief should be long enough to ensure Kurtz's death. "Trust to this," his uncle says as he gestures to the jungle, and this is just what the Manager is doing: "Trusting" that (as his uncle also says) "the climate may do away with this difficulty" for him. Only later does Marlow realize that the Manager was responsible for his steamboat's "accident": He could not get any rivets because the Manager made sure

that their delivery to Marlow was delayed as long as possible without arousing Marlow's suspicions. (When Marlow's steamboat gets close to Kurtz in Part 2, the Manager tells Marlow to wait until the next morning before pressing on, to delay their arrival even more than he already has.) Even as Marlow felt he was being entered into a giant conspiracy upon accepting his post in Europe, he has unwittingly stumbled upon one in the Congo.

The brickmaker who tries to wrangle information out of Marlow about Kurtz adds to the conspiratorial air of the Central Station. From his conversation with Marlow, the reader learns that Kurtz has disrupted the brickmaker's plans to become assistant-manager. The brickmaker also reflects the Company's disorganization, for he makes no bricks at all; he also reflects the Company's avarice, for he wants to advance in rank without completing any actual work.

While the plot concerning Marlow's steamboat and rivets adds to Conrad's overall air of conspiracy, it also metaphorically enriches the novel as a whole. Rivets *hold things together*, and Conrad uses the rivets as symbols of the ways in which the Company, the Manager, Marlow, Kurtz, and Kurtz's fiancée (hisIntended) attempt to "hold together" their beliefs and ideas. These ideological "rivets" are seen in numerous ways. For example, the Company wants to keep its operations running without criticism, inquiry or restraint; Marlow wants to believe his own naïve ideas about Africa; Kurtz wants to remain king of his private empire and disregard his "civilized" self; and the Intended wants to believe that Kurtz was a great man with a "generous mind" and "noble heart." Each character has his or her own "rivet," from the Company's implied belief that it is "civilizing" the Africans to the Intended's acceptance of Marlow's lie about Kurtz. *Heart of Darkness* is an oftentimes disturbing book because Conrad's suggestion that all of these "rivets" are simply lies — ideas, beliefs and assumptions used to excuse shameless profiteering (as with the Company) or sustain a false image of a loved one (as with the Intended). Only Marlow and Kurtz see that these metaphorical "rivets" are faulty: Marlow when he witnesses firsthand the atrocities perpetuated by the Company and Kurtz when he whispers, "The horror! The horror!" on his deathbed. Marlow's naïve belief that the Company was run only for profit and Kurtz's belief that he could escape his own "civilized" morality are both shown to be "rivets" that simply could not hold.

The final symbol found in Part 1 is the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, run by the Manager's uncle. This fictional expedition is based on an actual one: The Katanga Expedition (1890-1892). The fact that the Manager's uncle leads the expedition suggests that it is another example of White TRADERS scrambling for riches in the Congo. Marlow dismisses them as "buccaneers" who do not even make a pretense of coming to Africa for anything other than treasure.

Glossary

Cruising yawl

a small, two-masted sailing vessel.

Gravesend

a seaport on the Thames River in southwest England.

the greatest town on earth

London.

Sir Francis Drake (c. 1540–1596)

English admiral and buccaneer: 1st Englishman to sail around the world.

Sir John Franklin (1786–1847)

English Arctic explorer.

the *Golden Hind*

a ship sailed by the English navigator Sir Francis Drake (c. 1540–1596) during the reign of Elizabeth I.

the *Erebus* and *Terror*

In 1845, the English Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin led a voyage in the ships*Erebus* and *Terror* in search of the Northwest Passage; the ships were stuck in ice from April 1846 to September 1848.

They had sailed from Deptford, from Greenwich, from Erith

Deptford, Greenwich, and Erith are three ports between London and Gravesend.

Men on 'Change

Men working in a place where merchants meet to do business; exchange.

trireme

an ancient Greek or Roman galley, usually a warship, with three banks of oars on each side.

Gauls

the Celtic-speaking people dwelling in the ancient region of Western Europe consisting of what is now mainly France & Belgium: after 5th century B.C.

Falerian wine

wine made in a district of Campania, Italy.

a mighty big river

the Congo River in Africa.

Fleet Street an old street in central London, where several newspaper and printing offices are located; the term "Fleet Street" has come to refer to the London press.

whited sepulchre

in the Bible, a phrase used to describe a hypocrite. The relevant allusion in Matthew is "beautiful to look at on the outside, but inside full of filth and dead men's bones."

Brussels

The hypocrisy alluded to is that King Leopold's brutal colonial empire was run from this beautiful, seemingly civilized, city.

Ave!* Old knitter of black wool. *Morituri te salutant

Literally, "Hail! Those who are about to die salute you"; a salute of the gladiators in ancient Rome to whomever was hosting their tournaments. Here, Marlow is ironically comparing the knitters to Roman emperors.

Plato (c. 427–c.347 B.C.)

Greek philosopher.

alienist

an old term for a psychiatrist.

Du calme, du calme. Adieu.

French: "Stay calm, stay calm. Goodbye."

Zanzibaris

natives of Zanzibar, an island off the E coast of Africa: 640 sq. mi. (1,657 sq. km).

sixteen stone

224 pounds; a stone is a British unit of weight equal to 14 pounds (6.36 kilograms).

assegais

slender spears or javelins with iron tips, used in southern Africa.

serviette

a table napkin.

Ichthyosaurus

a prehistoric reptile with four paddle-like flippers.

Summary and Analysis

Part 2

Summary

One evening Marlow eavesdropped on the Manager and his uncle as they discussed Kurtz. Marlow learned that Kurtz asked the Company's Administration to send him into the jungle to show how much ivory he could acquire, and that he sent his assistant back to the Manager because he found him inadequate for the work. Marlow further learned that there were "strange rumours" circulating about Kurtz's behavior. The Manager insinuated that he hoped Kurtz would die in the jungle. A few days later, the Eldorado Expedition entered the jungle; they had no news except that all the donkeys were dead. His steamboat repaired, Marlow began his voyage to the Inner Station, accompanied by the Manager, the other agents whom Marlow calls "pilgrims," and 20 natives (who were also cannibals).

About fifty miles below the Inner Station, the steamboat came across a hut of reeds; near the hut were the remnants of a flag and a neatly stacked woodpile. Near the woodpile, written on a board, were the words, "Wood for you. Hurry up. Approach cautiously." Inside the hut, Marlow found evidence of a White tenant: a rudely formed table, a heap of rubbish, and a book about seamanship with some sort of code written in the margins. The natives took the wood (to power the steamboat) and Marlow slipped the BOOK IN his pocket.

When they were about a mile and a half below the Inner Station, unseen, silent natives who fired small arrows attacked the steamboat. The pilgrims fired their guns into the bush while the attack continued, the helmsman soon being killed by a spear.

Finally, Marlow reached the Inner Station. He first saw a "long, decaying building" with a number of posts around it; each post was topped with a "round curved ball." (Later, Marlow discovered that the building was Kurtz's quarters and that the "balls" were human heads.) A White man met them at the shore and reminded Marlow of a harlequin; he informed them that Kurtz was still alive. The Harlequin then explained that the natives attacked Marlow's steamboat because they did not want anyone to take Kurtz away from them.

Analysis

Part 2 of *Heart of Darkness* OFFERS the reader some of Conrad's most dense passages. Sentences such as "It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention" may seem confusing, but the difficulty here instead is Marlow's, because much of *Heart of Darkness* concerns how its protagonist struggles to articulate what traveling through the jungle is *like*. Marlow explains to his companions on the *Nellie* that they cannot fully grasp the whole truth of what he saw, because they live in the modern, "civilized" world with "a butcher round one corner, a policeman round another, excellent appetites, and temperature normal." Marlow's point here is that language sometimes fails to wholly convey the wonders and horrors of his experience; his remark, "This is the worst of trying to tell," suggests his difficulty in relating to his companions the full emotional, spiritual, and political impact that his journey had on him. His companions will not be able to fully understand him because they live with the "solid pavement" of Europe under their feet. This idea that Marlow's *telling* of the story is a major part of the story itself as suggested by the anonymous narrator who, at the beginning of the novel, explains that, for Marlow, "the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze." In other words, *Heart of Darkness* is as much the story of a man coming face-to-face with a number of political, moral, and spiritual horrors as much as it is one of that same man's search for language adequate enough to convey them. Hence, the novel is by turns both striking and obtuse, both concrete and abstract, both detailed and ambiguous.

Note that Marlow pauses at one point in Part 2 and the flow of his story is broken by the frame narrator's words. This reminds the reader of the fact that Marlow is *telling* his story

instead of living through it — and that what he knows about the story's issues as a whole will affect the ways he relates it to the men on the *Nellie*. There are essentially two Marlows: The one who lived through the experience and the one who looks back on it. Marlow's digression about Kurtz, therefore, allows the reader to eventually meet Kurtz with Marlow's opinions of him in mind.

In Part 1, Marlow calls the forest "primeval" and jokes that he expected to see an "ichthyosaurus" while voyaging through it. Throughout Part 2, Marlow's description of the jungle is marked by an increased emphasis on what he sees as its prehistoric nature. "Going back to that jungle was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world," he states, and subsequent passages reinforce this impression. For example, he calls himself and his crew "wanderers on a prehistoric earth" and the natives examples of "prehistoric man." Marlow also stresses the unreality of the jungle that can make one "bewitched" and cut off from everything one had ever known. The tiny steamboat, "clinging to the skirts of the unknown," causes Marlow to feel small and lost.

Summary and Analysis

Part 2

This attitude may seem patronizing — as if Marlow implies that Africa is unfinished and is ages behind Europe in terms of civilization. However, much of Conrad's novel is a critique of civilization and those who want (like Kurtz) to bring its "light" into the heart of "darkness." Similarly, modern readers may regard where Marlow discusses his connections to the natives as Eurocentric or even racist.

To a European in 1899, the thought of one's kinship with "savages" may, indeed, seem "ugly" — but Marlow's point here is that only someone with the necessary courage could see that the differences between "enlightened" Europe and the "prehistoric" Congo are superficial ones. This is one of the things that Marlow learns from Kurtz and that is stressed when, during the attack on the steamboat, Marlow sees "a face amongst the leaves on the level with my own, looking at me very fierce and steady." The Company may bring no real "light" to Africa, but Marlow is increasingly "enlightened" about his own humanity.

Still, Marlow is not yet the Buddha preaching in European clothes he will become on board the *Nellie*. Instead, he concentrates on steering the steamboat and avoiding snags to save his mind fromconsidering all of these philosophical and political implications. Focusing on "work" instead of deeper moral concerns is what saves Marlow's sanity — and by extension, allows the Company to ravage the Congo without a moment's pause. Piloting is the "rivet" that holds together Marlow as he comes closer to Kurtz, who will upset all of Marlow's "surface-truths" (as he calls them) and force him to consider all the uglinessof which Marlow has been a part.

Marlow does speak well of the cannibals on board his steamboat, for they possess a quality that Marlow sees less and less during his time in Company-controlled Africa: restraint. Although these men "stillbelonged to the beginnings of time," they never attack their White superiors — which would have been an easy feat for them. Marlow argues that "the devilry of lingering starvation" is the most impossible force to defeat, because it outweighs any "superstitions, beliefs, and what you may call principles." Unlike the Company (and its greatest prodigy, Kurtz), the "savage" Africans show a humane and honorable restraint that their "superiors" obviously lack, as seen in their insatiable hunger for ivory and the brutal means by which they acquire it.

As the jungle grows more frightening and mysterious, Marlow struggles to keep himself calm and "European." His joy in finding the Harlequin's book reflects his longing for a sign of his previous world as he trudges through this new one. Despite the fact that the book itself (*An Inquiry into Some Points of Seamanship*) looks "dreary reading enough," Marlow is excited by its very existence as "something unmistakably real." The book's subject matter and author (a "Master in His Majesty's Navy"), while dry, are evidence of "science" and "an honest concern for the right way of going to work." When he is summoned to the steamboat, Marlow confesses that putting down the book is like "tearing myself away from the shelter of an old and solid friendship"; the "friendship" of which Marlow speaks is his long one with Europe, which has always kept him "sheltered" from the truth of his kinship with "savagery."

The death of the helmsman is another scene where Marlow attempts to make the reality of his situation "fade." After finding that the helmsman has been killed in the attack, Marlow is "morbidly anxious" to change his shoes and socks.

In addition to intensifying the reader's understanding of Marlow's impending epiphany, Part 2 contains a digression where he abandons his narrative and speaks of Kurtz in a general sense. Unlike the cannibals, Kurtz possessed a ravenous hunger: "You should have heard him say . . . 'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my — ' everything." His bald head suggested the ivory that he had spent so much effort in securing. His "nerves went wrong" and he participated in "unspeakable rites." He "had taken a high seat among the devils of the land" and Marlow found it impossible to know "how many powers of darkness had claimed him for their own." However, what is more striking than these elusive hints at barbarity is Marlow's short yet important *defense* of Kurtz: "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz." Literally, Marlow is speaking of Kurtz's ancestry — but metaphorically, Marlow implies that the horrors he saw in Africa cannot all be blamed on one man. More importantly, Kurtz is not an isolated figure — all of Europe has produced him, and the power, hunger, and evil he embodies. The appearance of the Harlequin (like Kurtz's jester) at this point emphasizes the charisma and power of the demagogue and prepares the reader — like the previously discussed digression — for the entrance of Kurtz in Part 3.

Glossary

Winchesters

a type of magazine rifle, first made in the 1860s.

sounding-pole

a pole used to determine the depth of a body of water.

scow

a large, flat-bottomed boat with square ends, used for carrying coal, sand, and so on and often towed by a tug.

Martini-Henry
a military rifle.

fusillade
a simultaneous or rapid and continuous discharge of many firearms.

Summary and Analysis

Part 3

Summary

The Harlequin told Marlow that he had spent many nights listening to Kurtz speak about a variety of subjects. Marlow further learned that Kurtz was prone to wandering into the jungle with his band of native followers on ivory raids. While listening to the Harlequin, Marlow looked through hisbinoculars at Kurtz's quarters and discovered that the round knobs he previously saw on the posts bordering the house were the heads of native "rebels," turned inward to face Kurtz as he sat inside. Suddenly, Marlow saw a group of natives appear from a corner of the house, bearing Kurtz on a stretcher. Fearing an attack, Marlow, the Harlequin, and everyone on the steamboat stood still — until Marlow saw Kurtz's emaciated arm emerge from the stretcher and order his army to leave. The Manager and other agents laid Kurtz in his bed and delivered his belated pieces of mail.

Marlow left Kurtz's room and saw, on the bank of the river, Kurtz's African Mistress, who captivated Marlow with her pride, stature, and appearance. She boarded the steamboat for a minute without speaking, lifted her arms, and then vanished into the bush. Marlow then heard Kurtz speaking derisively to the Manager from inside his room. Trying to appear nonplussed, the Manager came out of the room and told Marlow that, while Kurtz had amassed a remarkable quantity of ivory, he was low and that his ivory district would have to be closed because his method was unsound. Fearful of the Manager's intentions, the Harlequin told Marlow his suspicion that Kurtz's White rescuers were actually trying to hurt him. Recalling the overheard conversation between the Manager and his uncle, Marlow told the Harlequin that he was correct. The Harlequin then revealed that Kurtz had ordered the attack on the steamboat because "he hated the idea of being taken away." The Harlequin asked Marlow to guard Kurtz's reputation once he arrived in Europe, asked him for some rifle cartridges and shoes, and then left the Inner Station.

Shortly after midnight, Marlow awoke to the sounds of a drumbeat and natives reciting incantations. After hearing a "burst of yells," Marlow entered Kurtz's room and found he had

escaped. He found Kurtz crawling through the grass and finally approached him. At first, Kurtz told Marlow to run and hide himself — but he then began telling Marlow that he had "immense plans" that were ruined by the Manager. Marlow listened, hoping that Kurtz would make no noise or give no sign for his men to attack. Finally, Marlow led Kurtz back to his room.
They left the Inner Station the next day. As they floated downstream, three natives covered in bright red earth shouted some form of spell; they next saw Kurtz's native mistress run to the riverbank and begin shouting something that the rest of Kurtz's 1,000 followers began repeating. The Whites on the steamboat began pointing their rifles at the shore; to avoid a massacre, Marlow began blowing the whistle to scare the natives away. Many of them ran, but the "wild woman" did not. The Whites on deck then opened fire on Kurtz's followers.

As they made their way to the sea (and Europe), Kurtz continued to talk of his ideas, plans, station, and career. Kurtz gave Marlow a packet of papers and a photograph and asked him to keep it for him, out of reach of the Manager. One evening, after repairing the engine, Marlow entered Kurtz's room and heard him whisper his final words: "The horror! The horror!" Marlow entered the mess-room and refused to meet the inquiring eyes of the Manager. Eventually, the Manager's servant boy peeked into the mess-room and announced, in a contemptuous voice, "Mistah Kurtz — he dead." Kurtz was buried in the jungle the next day. Stricken by Kurtz's death, Marlow almost considered suicide, and the remainder of his journey back to Europe is omitted from his narrative.

Back in Brussels, Marlow's aunt tried to nurse him back to health. An unnamed representative of the Company then visited Marlow and wanted the papers that Kurtz had given to Marlow. As he did when pressed by the Manager on their voyage home, Marlow refused. He eventually gave the man the copy of Kurtz's report on "The Suppression of Savage Customs," but with the postscript ("Exterminate all the brutes!") torn off. Marlow then met Kurtz's cousin, who told Marlow that Kurtz was a great musician and a "universal genius." Marlow gave him some unimportant family letters from the packet. A journalist then accosted Marlow, eager for information about Kurtz. As they talked, the journalist told Marlow that Kurtz could have been a great politician for any party, because he had the charisma and voice to

"electrify" large meetings. Marlow gave him Kurtz's report on "Savage Customs" and the journalist said he would print it.

Marlow thought it necessary to visit Kurtz's Intended — his fiancée, whose photograph Kurtz had given Marlow on the voyage home. Marlow waited for her in her drawing room until she entered, dressed in mourning. She immediately struck Marlow as trustworthy, sincere, and innocent. As she told Marlow that no one knew Kurtz as well as she, he struggled to maintain his composure, because he did not want to reveal to her what Kurtz actually became during his time in the jungle. When she asked Marlow to tell her Kurtz's last words, Marlow hesitated — and then lied, saying, "The last word he pronounced was — your name." The Intended sighed and wept. Marlow's tale is over. On board the *Nellie*, the anonymous narrator and the other men sit motionless. The narrator looks at the dark clouds, the overcast sky, and the Thames — which he now sees as flowing "into the heart of an immense darkness."

Analysis

Throughout Parts 1 and 2 of *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz is a shadowy figure whose name is dropped at different times and whose personality and importance eludes both Marlow and the reader. Only after reading Part 3, however, does Kurtz's overall importance become clear and Conrad's design show itself; the novel is about the meeting of two men (Marlow and Kurtz) whose existences mirror each other. Ultimately, Conrad suggests that Kurtz is who Marlow *may* become if he abandons all restraint while working in the jungle. Part 3 emphasizes Kurtz's godlike stature to show *why* Kurtz became what he did and *how* Marlow retreats from this fate.

Throughout Part 3, Conrad stresses the absolute devotion that Kurtz inspires in his followers. The Harlequin, for example, speaks with enthusiasm when speaking of Kurtz: "He made me see things — things," he tells Marlow, and adds, "You can't judge Kurtz as you would an ordinary man." This is an important statement, because it reflects the idea that Kurtz feels he has moved beyond the judgement of his fellow man. By abandoning himself to his innermost desires and lusts, Kurtz has achieved a god-like status. Note that this god-like

status is not simply an illusion in Kurtz's mind, for the heads of neighboring tribes fall prostrate before Kurtz and, more surprisingly, the very natives being forced into slavery by the Company attack Marlow's steamboat because they do not want Kurtz to leave. The sight later on of the three natives covered in earth and the "wild woman" reinforce Kurtz's godlike stature. "He came to them with thunder and lightning," the Harlequin explains, "and they had never seen anything like it." Fulfilling what Conrad saw as the wish of many Europeans, Kurtz has established himself as a violent force, ready to extract vengeance on anyone who disobeys his commands.

Ironically, however, Kurtz does not appear to fit this description physically. Pale, emaciated, and weak, he is often referred to by Marlow as a shadow of a man, a man who is "hollow at the core" and who actually longs for his own destruction. In essence, succumbing to what Marlow calls the "various lusts" that can possess any man has taken its toll on Kurtz's soul — a toll that is reflected in Kurtz's withered frame. Once a formidable tyrant, Kurtz is now "an animated image of death carved out of old ivory." As Kurtz's "wild woman" is a personification of the jungle Kurtz himself is the embodiment of the Company: a force that revels in its own power for power's sake. (Recall how Kurtz turned his canoe around after coming two hundred miles down the river; after tasting the power that his position afforded him, Kurtz could not return to the confining "civilization" of Europe.)

Besides implying the idea that Kurtz embodies the Company, the passage is important because it suggests that even men with "great plans" such as Kurtz (recall his painting and ideas about how each station should be a "beacon on the road to better things") can discover they are, in fact, exactly like the "savages" they are purporting to "save." Underneath the sheen of "civilization," there exists, in every man, a core of brutality. Many people manage to suppress this part of themselves, but Kurtz chose to court it instead. His previous beliefs and "plans" really meant nothing — there was no substance to them, which is why Marlow calls Kurtz "hollow at the core." Kurtz's report on "Savage Customs" reflects this duality — its opening pages are filled with grandiose plans for reform, but its author's true feelings are revealed in his postscript, "Exterminate all the brutes!"

It is Kurtz's abandoning all previously cherished codes of conduct and morality that strikes Marlow as so fascinating. No longer pretending to be a force of "civilization" (as the Company does), Kurtz has moved beyond the confines of modern morality and ideas about right and wrong. When Marlow says that Kurtz "had kicked himself loose of the earth," he is metaphorically implying that Kurtz broke free from the restraints of the basic morality (a sense of right and wrong) that creates order in the world — but Marlow then qualifies this idea with, "Confound the man! he had kicked the very earth to pieces." In other words, Kurtz has not created a new code of conduct or morality — he has dismissed the very *idea* of morality altogether. This is why Marlow cannot "appeal" to him in the name of country, finance, or even humanity. Like Frankenstein's creature, Kurtz is *in* the world but not *of* it.

The Company wants to get rid of Kurtz because he reveals the lie to their methods. He collects more ivory than any other agent because he uses absolute brute force in collecting it and never hides his real intentions behind the kind of philosophy espoused by Marlow's aunt in Part 1. The Company, however, does not want to appear "loose from the earth" like their number-one agent, which is why its representatives (the Manager and the spectacled man who accosts Marlow in Brussels about Kurtz's papers) want to ensure that Europeans never learn the truth about him. Marlow, while not admiring Kurtz's "methods," does appreciate how Kurtz was able to journey into that part of himself that he (and the rest of us) suppress. According to Marlow, Kurtz was a noteworthy man because "he had made that last stride, he had stepped over the edge, while I had been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot." Kurtz is not heroic, but he is more of an adventurer than Marlow ever imagined he could be — instead of voyaging into an unknown continent, he voyaged into the unknown parts of his own soul. For this alone, Marlow feels the need to safeguard Kurtz's reputation, because no one who had not made such a journey into himself could ever possibly understand Kurtz's.

What Kurtz himself thinks of his own actions and "kicking the earth to pieces" is much more difficult to pinpoint; his final words — "The horror! The horror!" — have elicited an enormous amount of critical commentary. Marlow suggests that these words reflect Kurtz's "supreme moment of complete knowledge" — an epiphany in which Kurtz saw exactly what succumbing to his own darkness had done to him. Care should be taken, however, not to read

Kurtz's finals words as an apology or deathbedretraction of his life. *Heart of Darkness* is not a fable, and one of its themes is that the darkness courted by Kurtz is potentially in everyone's heart — not just the one belonging to this "voracious" demagogue. Kurtz may be commenting on the force for which he has given his life, or the fact that he will not live long enough to finish his "great plans." Conrad's deliberately ambiguous choice of Kurtz's dying words allows for a number of interpretations while simultaneously refusing the reader the comfort he or she would feel in reducing Kurtz to neat categories and descriptions. Like Africa, Kurtz is mysterious, and the workings of his heart at his "supreme moment" remain mysterious as well.

Still, the only character remotely aware of what Kurtz did and what drove him is Marlow, which is why, upon his return to Europe, he finds the people there to be "intruders whose knowledge of life" is "an irritating pretence." He finds them "offensive" because of their self-assuredness in their morals and belief in the inherent "rightness" of their civilization — a "rightness" Marlow now scorns because he sees it (like the Company's wish to bring the "light of civilization" into Africa) as a façade. This is why, in the opening pages of his narrative, Marlow speaks of the Romans conquering England, which "has been one of the dark places of the earth." Marlow now understands that empires are not built without the kinds of activities he witnessed in the Congo and that the "civilization" that is held in such esteem is, in a sense, "just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a grand scale, and men going at it blind." While Marlow never wishes to abandon civilization in favor of the path chosen by Kurtz, he can no longer view it with the same enthusiasm and comfort that he did before working for the Company. Kurtz has taught him too much.

The final meeting between Marlow and Kurtz's Intended dramatizes this conflict in Marlow's heart. The Intended (who knows little about the real Kurtz) contrasts Kurtz's native mistress (who presumably knew intimately of his "various lusts") and brings to mind the duality of Kurtz's character. Dressed in mourning for over a year, she, too, suggests the complete devotion of Kurtz's followers: "For her he had died only yesterday." Her black mourning dress, "ashen halo," and dark eyes bring to mind the numerous examples of light and dark imagery throughout the novel — except that here, the images are more pronounced than anywhere

else in the book. The Intended's "darkness" reflects her own sorrow at the loss of her love, but Marlow attempts to hide a greater and more threatening darkness: The truth about Kurtz.

Marlow is not deliberately trying to be sarcastic by repeating the Intended's words; the irony of the naïve Intended presuming to "know Kurtz best" is what gives Marlow's repetitions their bite.

As Marlow struggles to maintain his composure, he notices the physical and metaphorical darkness that permeates the room. He arrives at the Intended's house at dusk. At the beginning of the conversation, he notices the room "growing darker" and only her forehead remaining "illumined by the inextinguishable light of belief and love." When she begins explaining that she knew Kurtz better than anyone else, Marlow comments, "The darkness deepened" and, in his heart, bows his head before her. The truth about Kurtz — metaphorically represented in the coming of night — becomes more difficult for Marlow to hide, because the Intended's presumed knowledge of Kurtz becomes more unnerving to him as they continue. After the "last gleams of twilight" fall, Marlow even admits to feeling some "dull anger" at her naiveté, but this feeling turns to "infinite pity" when Marlow realizes the immensity of her ignorance. This is why, when asked to repeat Kurtz's final words, Marlow cannot bring himself to repeat, "The horror! The horror!" and instead tells a lie that gives great comfort to the Intended while simultaneously securing Kurtz's reputation. Despite the fact that Marlow knows that lies are wrong, he cannot refrain from telling this one, because to do so "would have been too dark — too dark altogether." As the Intended gratefully receives Marlow's lie, so Europe accepts the one it tells itself about building empires and civilizing "savages."

Glossary

Ulster

a long, loose, heavy overcoat, especially one with a belt, originally made of Irish frieze (wool).

the first of the ebb

the start of the outgoing or falling tide.

4. Character Analysis

4.1 Marlow

Marlow is a thirty-two-year-old sailor who has always lived at sea. The novel's narrator presents Marlow as "a meditating Buddha" because his experiences in the Congo have made him introspective and to a certain degree philosophic and wise. As a young man, Marlow wished to explore the "blank places" on the map because he longed for adventure; his journey up the Congo, however, proves to be much more than a thrilling episode. Instead, his experiences there teach Marlow about the "*heart of darkness*" found in all men: Many (like himself) suppress these evil urges, while others (like Kurtz) succumb to them.

Marlow's chief qualities are his curiosity and skepticism. Never easily satisfied with others' seemingly innocent remarks such as those made by the Manager and Brickmaker, Marlow constantly attempts to sift through the obscurities of what others tell him (such as when his aunt speaks to him of "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways"). However, Marlow is no crusader for Truth. He lies to Kurtz's Intended to save her from a broken heart and ultimately returns to Europe and his home, despite his having been convinced by the Company and Kurtz that civilization is, ultimately, a lie and an institution humans have created to channel their desires for power.

As *Heart of Darkness* progresses, Marlow becomes increasingly sensitive to his surroundings and the "darkness" that they may embody or hide. When he visits the Company's headquarters, for example, he is slightly alarmed by the doctor's comments and puzzled by the two women knitting black wool. When he arrives at the Outer Station, however, he is shocked at the amount of waste and disregard for life he sees there. By the end of the novel, Marlow is almost unable to reintegrate himself into European society, having become convinced of the lies and "surface-truths" that sustain it. He tells his story to the men aboard the Nellie to share with them what he has learned about the darkness of the human heart — and the things of which that darkness is capable.

Although Marlow appears in several of Conrad’s other works, it is important not to view him as merely a surrogate for the author. Marlow is a complicated man who anticipates the figures of high modernism while also reflecting his Victorian predecessors. Marlow is in many

ways a traditional hero: tough, honest, an independent thinker, a capable man. Yet he is also “broken” or “damaged,” like T. S. Eliot’s J. Alfred Prufrock or William Faulkner’s Quentin Compson. The world has defeated him in some fundamental way, and he is weary, skeptical, and cynical. Marlow also mediates between the figure of the intellectual and that of the “working tough.” While he is clearly intelligent, eloquent, and a natural philosopher, he is not saddled with the angst of centuries’ worth of Western thought. At the same time, while he is highly skilled at what he does—he repairs and then ably pilots his own ship—he is no mere manual laborer. Work, for him, is a distraction, a concrete alternative to the posturing and excuse-making of those around him.

Marlow can also be read as an intermediary between the two extremes of Kurtz and the Company. He is moderate enough to allow the reader to identify with him, yet open-minded enough to identify at least partially with either extreme. Thus, he acts as a guide for the reader. Marlow’s intermediary position can be seen in his eventual illness and recovery. Unlike those who truly confront or at least acknowledge Africa and the darkness within themselves, Marlow does not die, but unlike the Company men, who focus only on MONEY and advancement, Marlow suffers horribly. He is thus “contaminated” by his experiences and memories, and, like Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner, destined, as purgation or penance, to repeat his story to all who will listen.

4.2 Kurtz

One of the most enigmatic characters in twentieth-century literature, Kurtz is a petty tyrant, a dying god, an embodiment of Europe, and an assault on European values. These contradictory elements combine to make Kurtz so fascinating to Marlow — and so threatening to the Company.

Like Marlow, Kurtz also wished to travel to Africa in search of adventure — specifically, to complete great acts of "humanizing, improving, instructing" (as he explains in his initial report to the Company). Once he tasted the power that could be his in the jungle, however, Kurtz abandoned his philanthropic ideals and set himself up as a god to the natives at the Inner Station. While he used to worry about the best ways to bring (as his painting demonstrates) the

"light" of civilization to the Congo, he dies as a man believing that the Company should simply "Exterminate all the brutes!"

Kurtz is a dangerous man because he gives the lie to the Company's "humanistic" intentions in the Congo. He returns more ivory than all the other stations put together, and does so through the use of absolute force. This frightens men like the Manager, who complains of Kurtz's "unsound method" — although Kurtz is only doing what the Company as a whole is doing without hiding his actions behind a façade of good intentions. Marlow remarks that "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz," and Kurtz's very existence proves this to be true: Like the Europeans involved in enterprises such as the Company, he epitomizes the greed and lust running wild that Marlow observes in the Congo. However, unlike the Company, Kurtz is not interested in his image or how he is perceived by "noxious fools" such as the Manager. While Brussels is a "whited sepulcher" of hypocrisy, Kurtz is completely open about his lusts. He tells the Manager he is "Not so sick as you'd like to believe." But this statement is applicable to all Europeans involved in imperialistic empire-building: While labeling Kurtz a morally "sick" man might seem comforting, he is actually an exaggeration of the impulses harbored in the hearts of men everywhere.

4.3 The Manager

As Kurtz (in some sense) embodies Europe, the Manager embodies the Company that he represents in the Congo. The Manager's primary concern is preserving his position within the Company, which he incorrectly assumes Kurtz wishes to steal from him. A scheming liar, the Manager sabotages Marlow's steamboat to prevent supplies from reaching Kurtz at the Inner Station. Neither Marlow nor Kurtz believe his shows of concern for Kurtz's health: When he tells Kurtz that he has come to save him, Kurtz replies, "Save the ivory, you mean," and after Kurtz dies, Marlow feels the Manager's eyes on him as he leaves Kurtz's room, eager to learn of his rival agent's death. According to Marlow, the Manager "inspires uneasiness" and tries to use this ability to gain information about Kurtz and his activities from Marlow. A despicable man, the Manager has the power to make the Company a reputable operation, but refuses to do so for fear that this would impede the flow of ivory that comes out of Africa.

4.4 The Accountant

Although he only appears in the novel for a short time, the Accountant is an important figure because he personifies the Company's goals and methods. The fact that he spends his days with his ledger in the middle of the jungle suggests the great importance the Company places on profits. Moreover, his immaculately white and spotless dress suggests the Company's desire to seem "morally spotless" to the rest of the world. When a dying man is brought into his hut, the Accountant complains, "The groans of this sick person distract my attention. And without that it is extremely difficult to guard against clerical errors in this climate." Like the Company, the Accountant wants men to die out of eyesight so he can focus his "attention" on preventing "clerical errors." Sickness and death are inevitable parts of business, and if one dwells on them they are liable to "distract" him from his main purpose: Tallying the profits. Ironically, these profits are supposed to be used to help the natives that the Company is destroying.

The Accountant also hints at the great hatred that the Whites have for the natives, as well as the fact that there are agents at the Central Station who will do anything to further their own careers.

4.5 The Harlequin

This Russian disciple of Kurtz is so named by Marlow because of the different-colored patches he wears on his clothes. The image of a clown in motley dress also suggests the Harlequin's position as Kurtz's "court jester." Despite the fact that Kurtz threatened to kill him, the Harlequin can only offer effusive praise of Kurtz's intellect, charisma, and wisdom. When Marlow first meets him, the Harlequin serves as a possible outcome of Marlow's journey: Will he remain his skeptical self or fall prey to the same "magic" that enraptured this man? The Harlequin says of Kurtz, "This man has enlarged my mind"; like Marlow, he finds Kurtz's voice fascinating, shocking, and compelling.

4.6 The Intended

Kurtz's fiancée is marked — like the Harlequin — by her absolute devotion to Kurtz. When Marlow visits her after his return from Africa, he finds that she has been dressed in mourning for more than a year and still yearns for information about how her love spent his last days. However, she is actually devoted to an image of Kurtz instead of the man himself: She

praises Kurtz's "words" and "example," assuming that these are filled with the nobility of purpose with which Kurtz began his career with the Company. Her devotion is so absolute that Marlow cannot bear to tell her Kurtz's real last words ("The horror! The horror!") and must instead tell her a lie that strengthens her already false impression of Kurtz. On a symbolic level, the Intended is like many Europeans, who wish to believe in the greatness of men like Kurtz without considering the more "dark" and hidden parts of their characters. Like European missionaries, for example, who sometimes hurt the very people they were professing to save, the Intended is a misguided soul whose belief in Marlow's lie reveals her need to cling to a fantasy-version of the what the Europeans (i.e., the Company) are doing in Africa.

4.7 Kurtz's Native Mistress

The Congolese woman that rails against Kurtz's departure is a complete contrast to Kurtz's Intended. As the Intended is innocent and naïve, the native mistress is bold and powerful. Kurtz is a man of many lusts, and she embodies this part of his personality. She frightens the Harlequin because she finds him to be meddling with Kurtz too much; her threats to him eventually scare him into leaving the Inner Station.

4.8 Fresleven

Although he is only mentioned in one section of the novel, Fresleven reflects the power of the jungle on seemingly civilized men. Before he left for Africa, Fresleven was described as a kind and gentle man; after being exposed to the Congo, however, he became savage and was killed in a meaningless quarrel with a native chief. The grass that Marlow saw growing through his bones suggests the power of the jungle over civilized men. Like the Harlequin, Fresleven is presented as one possible outcome for Marlow on his journey up the Congo River.

5. Stylistic Devices of the Novel

Themes, motifs and symbols are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

5.1 Themes

The Hypocrisy of Imperialism

Heart of Darkness explores the issues surrounding imperialism in complicated ways. As Marlow travels from the Outer Station to the Central Station and finally up the river to the Inner Station, he encounters scenes of torture, cruelty, and near-slavery. At the very least, the incidental scenery of the book offers a harsh picture of colonial enterprise. The impetus behind Marlow's adventures, too, has to do with the hypocrisy inherent in the rhetoric used to justify imperialism. The men who work for the Company describe what they do as "TRADE," and their treatment of native Africans is part of a benevolent project of "civilization." Kurtz, on the other hand, is open about the fact that he does not trade but rather takes ivory by force, and he describes his own treatment of the natives with the words "suppression" and "extermination": he does not hide the fact that he rules through violence and intimidation. His perverse honesty leads to his downfall, as his success threatens to expose the evil practices behind European activity in Africa.

However, for Marlow as much as for Kurtz or for the Company, Africans in this book are mostly objects: Marlow refers to his helmsman as a piece of machinery, and Kurtz's African mistress is at best a piece of statuary. It can be argued that *Heart of Darkness* participates in an oppression of nonwhites that is much more sinister and much harder to remedy than the open abuses of Kurtz or the Company's men. Africans become for Marlow a mere backdrop, a human screen against which he can play out his philosophical and existential struggles. Their existence and their exoticism enable his self-contemplation. This kind of dehumanization is harder to identify than colonial violence or open racism. While *Heart of Darkness* offers a powerful condemnation of the hypocritical operations of imperialism, it also presents a set of issues surrounding race that is ultimately troubling.

Madness as a Result of Imperialism

Madness is closely linked to imperialism in this book. Africa is responsible for mental disintegration as well as physical illness. Madness has two primary functions. First, it serves as an ironic device to engage the reader's sympathies. Kurtz, Marlow is told from the beginning, is mad. However, as Marlow, and the reader, begin to form a more complete picture of Kurtz, it becomes apparent that his madness is only relative, that in the context of the Company insanity is difficult to define. Thus, both Marlow and the reader begin to sympathize with Kurtz and view the Company with suspicion. Madness also functions to establish the necessity of social fictions. Although social mores and explanatory justifications are shown throughout *Heart of Darkness* to be utterly false and even leading to evil, they are nevertheless necessary for both group harmony and individual security. Madness, in *Heart of Darkness*, is the result of being removed from one's social context and allowed to be the sole arbiter of one's own actions. Madness is thus linked not only to absolute power and a kind of moral genius but to man's fundamental fallibility: Kurtz has no authority to whom he answers but himself, and this is more than any one man can bear.

The Absurdity of Evil

This novella is, above all, an exploration of hypocrisy, ambiguity, and moral confusion. It explodes the idea of the proverbial choice between the lesser of two evils. As the idealistic Marlow is forced to align himself with either the hypocritical and malicious colonial bureaucracy or the openly malevolent, rule-defying Kurtz, it becomes increasingly clear that to try to judge either alternative is an act of folly: how can moral standards or social values be relevant in judging evil? Is there such thing as insanity in a world that has already gone insane? The number of ridiculous situations Marlow witnesses act as reflections of the larger issue: at one station, for instance, he sees a man trying to carry water in a bucket with a large hole in it. At the Outer Station, he watches native laborers blast away at a hillside with no particular goal in mind. The absurd involves both insignificant silliness and life-or-death issues, often simultaneously. That the serious and the mundane are treated similarly suggests a profound

moral confusion and a tremendous hypocrisy: it is terrifying that Kurtz's homicidal megalomania and a leaky bucket provoke essentially the same reaction from Marlow.

5.2 Motifs

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Observation and Eavesdropping

Marlow gains a great deal of information by watching the world around him and by overhearing others' conversations, as when he listens from the deck of the wrecked steamer to the manager of the Central Station and his uncle discussing Kurtz and the Russian TRADER. This phenomenon speaks to the impossibility of direct communication between individuals: information must come as the result of chance observation and astute interpretation. Words themselves fail to capture meaning adequately, and thus they must be taken in the context of their utterance. Another good example of this is Marlow's conversation with the brickmaker, during which Marlow is able to figure out a good deal more than simply what the man has to say.

Interiors and Exteriors

Comparisons between interiors and exteriors pervade *Heart of Darkness*. As the narrator states at the beginning of the text, Marlow is more interested in surfaces, in the surrounding aura of a thing rather than in any hidden nugget of meaning deep within the thing itself. This inverts the usual hierarchy of meaning: normally one seeks the deep message or hidden truth. The priority placed on observation demonstrates that penetrating to the interior of an idea or a person is impossible in this world. Thus, Marlow is confronted with a series of exteriors and surfaces—the river's banks, the forest walls around the station, Kurtz's broad forehead—that he must interpret. These exteriors are all the material he is given, and they provide him with perhaps a more profound source of knowledge than any falsely constructed interior "kernel."

Darkness

Darkness is important enough conceptually to be part of the book's title. However, it is difficult to discern exactly what it might mean, given that absolutely everything in the book is cloaked in darkness. Africa, England, and Brussels are all described as gloomy and somehow dark, even if the sun is shining brightly. Darkness thus seems to operate metaphorically and existentially rather than specifically. Darkness is the inability to see: this may sound simple, but as a description of the human condition it has profound implications. Failing to see another human being means failing to understand that individual and failing to establish any sort of sympathetic communion with him or her.

5.3 Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

Fog

Fog is a sort of corollary to darkness. Fog not only obscures but distorts: it gives one just enough information to begin making decisions but no way to judge the accuracy of that information, which often ends up being wrong. Marlow's steamer is caught in the fog, meaning that he has no idea where he's going and no idea whether peril or open water lies ahead.

The "Whited Sepulchre"

The "whited sepulchre" is probably Brussels, where the Company's headquarters are located. A sepulchre implies death and confinement, and indeed Europe is the origin of the colonial enterprises that bring death to white men and to their colonial subjects; it is also governed by a set of reified social principles that both enable cruelty, dehumanization, and evil and prohibit change. The phrase "whited sepulchre" comes from the biblical Book of Matthew. In the passage, Matthew describes "whited sepulchres" as something beautiful on the outside but containing horrors within (the bodies of the dead); thus, the image is appropriate for Brussels, given the hypocritical Belgian rhetoric about imperialism's civilizing mission. (Belgian colonies, particularly the Congo, were notorious for the violence perpetuated against the natives.)

Women

Both Kurtz's Intended and his African mistress function as blank slates upon which the values and the wealth of their respective societies can be displayed. Marlow frequently claims that women are the keepers of naïve illusions; although this sounds condemnatory, such a role is in fact crucial, as these naïve illusions are at the root of the social fictions that justify economic enterprise and colonial expansion. In return, the women are the beneficiaries of much of the resulting wealth, and they become objects upon which men can display their own success and status.

The River

The Congo River is the key to Africa for Europeans. It allows them access to the center of the continent without having to physically cross it; in other words, it allows the white man to remain always separate or outside. Africa is thus reduced to a series of two-dimensional scenes that flash by Marlow's steamer as he travels upriver. The river also seems to want to expel Europeans from Africa altogether: its current makes travel upriver slow and difficult, but the flow of water makes travel downriver, back toward "civilization," rapid and seemingly inevitable. Marlow's struggles with the river as he travels upstream toward Kurtz reflect his struggles to understand the situation in which he has found himself. The ease with which he journeys back downstream, on the other hand, mirrors his acquiescence to Kurtz and his "choice of nightmares."

6. Study Questions

6.1 Important Quotations Explained

1. ***"The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse. By Jove! I've never seen anything so unreal in my life. And outside, the silent wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion."***

This quote, from the fourth section of Part 1, OFFERS Marlow's initial impression of the Central Station. The word "ivory" has taken on a life of its own for the men who work for the

Company. To them, it is far more than the tusk of an elephant; it represents economic freedom, social advancement, an escape from a life of being an employee. The word has lost all connection to any physical reality and has itself become an object of worship. Marlow's reference to a decaying corpse is both literal and figurative: elephants and native Africans both die as a result of the white man's pursuit of ivory, and the entire enterprise is rotten at the core. The cruelties and the greed are both part of a greater, timeless evil, yet they are petty in the scheme of the greater order of the natural world.

2. ***"In a few days the Eldorado Expedition went into the patient wilderness, that closed upon it as the sea closes over a diver. Long afterwards the news came that all the donkeys were dead. I know nothing as to the fate of the less valuable animals. They, no doubt, like the rest of us, found what they deserved. I did not inquire."***

During the first section of Part 2, Marlow watches the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, a band of freelance bandits, reequip and then depart from the Central Station. This enigmatic report is the only news he receives concerning their fate. The dry irony of this quote is characteristic of Marlow, who by this point has truly come to see white men as the "less valuable animals." Although he chalks up the Expedition's fate to some idea of destiny or just REWARD, Marlow has already come to distrust such moral formulations: this is why he does not seek further information about the Expedition. Again he mentions a "patient wilderness": the Expedition's fate is insignificant in the face of larger catastrophes and even less meaningful when considered in the scope of nature's time frame.

3. ***"It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—the suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of***

there being a meaning in it which you—you so remote from the night of first ages—could comprehend. And why not?"

As Marlow journeys up the river toward the Inner Station in the first section of Part 2, he catches occasional glimpses of native villages along the riverbanks. More often, though, he simply hears things: drums, chants, howls. These engage his imagination, and the fact that they do so troubles him, because it suggests, as he says, a "kinship" with these men, whom he has so far been able to classify as "inhuman." This moment is one of several in the text in which Marlow seems to admit the limits of his own perception. These moments allow for a reading of*Heart of Darkness* that is much more critical of colonialism and much more ironic about the stereotypes it engenders. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that Marlow still casts Africans as a primitive version of himself rather than as potential equals.

4. ***"The brown current ran swiftly out of the heart of darkness, bearing us down towards the sea with twice the speed of our upward progress; and Kurtz's life was running swiftly, too, ebbing, ebbing out of his heart into the sea of inexorable time. . . . I saw the time approaching when I would be left alone of the party of 'unsound method.'"***

This quote, which comes as the steamer begins its voyage back from the Inner Station in the third section of Part 3, with Kurtz and his ivory aboard, brings together the images of the river and the "*heart of darkness*" which it penetrates. The river is something that separates Marlow from the African interior: while on the river he is exterior to, even if completely surrounded by, the jungle. Furthermore, despite its "brown current," the river inexorably brings him back to white civilization. The first sentence of this quote suggests that Marlow and Kurtz have been able to leave the "*heart of darkness*" behind, but Kurtz's life seems to be receding along with the "darkness," and Marlow, too, has been permanently scarred by it, since he is now ineradicably marked as being of Kurtz's party. Thus, it seems that the "darkness" is in fact internalized, that it is part of some fundamental if ironic "unsoundness."

5. ***"I was within a hair's-breadth of the last opportunity for pronouncement, and I found with humiliation that probably I would have nothing to say. This is the reason why I***

affirm that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He had something to say. He said it. . . . He had summed up—he had judged. 'The horror!' He was a remarkable man."

At the beginning of the final section of Part 3, Marlow has just recovered from his near-fatal illness. His "nothing to say" is not reflective of a lack of substance but rather of his realization that anything he might have to say would be so ambiguous and so profound as to be impossible to put into words. Kurtz, on the other hand, is "remarkable" for his ability to cut through ambiguity, to create a definite "something." Paradoxically, though, the final formulation of that "something" is so vague as to approach "nothing": " 'The horror!' " could be almost anything. However, perhaps Kurtz is most fascinating to Marlow because he has had the courage to judge, to deny ambiguity. Marlow is aware of Kurtz's intelligence and the man's appreciation of paradox, so he also knows that Kurtz's rabid systematization of the world around him has been an act and a lie. Yet Kurtz, on the strength of his hubris and his charisma, has created out of himself a way of organizing the world that contradicts generally accepted social models. Most important, he has created an impressive legacy: Marlow will ponder Kurtz's words (" 'The horror!' ") and Kurtz's memory for the rest of his life. By turning himself into an enigma, Kurtz has done the ultimate: he has ensured his own immortality.

6.2 Important Questions

1. ***The Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe has claimed that Heart of Darkness is an "offensive and deplorable book" that "set[s] Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest." Achebe says that Conrad does not provide enough of an outside frame of reference to enable the novel to be read as ironic or critical of imperialism. Based on the evidence in the text, argue for or against Achebe's assertion.***

Answer: This novel opens with Marlow noting that England was once one of the dark places of the earth. This can be read two ways. First, Marlow may mean that "Western" civilization is just as barbarous as African civilizations. This reading may contradict the European belief that white men are more "civilized" than their colonial subjects, but it hardly mitigates racist notions

about primitive or degraded “savages”: it just means that Europeans are as “bad” as that which they have constructed as the lowest form of humanity. The second way to read Marlow’s comment is as a reference to the historical precedent for colonization of other peoples. England, after all, was once a Roman colony. Again, this reading is more ambiguous than it seems. On the one hand, it implies that all peoples need a more advanced civilization to come along and save them; on the other hand, though, it also implies that the British would and did react to an exploitative colonial presence in the same way the Africans are reacting. The ambiguity and angst inherent in the statements this book makes about imperialism suggest that Achebe’s condemnation is too simple. Additionally, moments of irony and narrative unreliability are scattered throughout the text, suggesting that Conrad does indeed provide a framework against which *Heart of Darkness* can be read as critical or ironic. At the same time, the fact that Africa is set up as a place where white men can go to have profound experiences and think philosophically could be read as reinforcing Achebe’s claim that “Africa [is used] as [a] setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor” in a troubling way.

2. Discuss the importance of the Congo River in this narrative. Why does Marlow travel primarily by boat and seldom on land?

Answer: The river is a space that allows Marlow to be simultaneously within and removed from the African interior. On the river he is isolated, a spectator. To discern his surroundings, he must watch and interpret the thin margin of land at the river’s edge: from this he must guess at what lies behind and all around him. This inability to penetrate the continent’s interior is a symptom of the larger problem with interiors and exteriors in the book. Marlow is unable to see into the interior selves of those around him; instead, he, like the doctor he visits before he departs for Africa, must base his knowledge on exterior signs. At the beginning of *Heart of Darkness,* the unnamed narrator discusses the fact that for Marlow the meaning of a story or an episode lies in its exterior rather than in any kernel of meaning at its heart. Throughout the book Marlow is indeed confronted with a series of exteriors, of which travel on the river is a prominent example. The caravan that goes from the Outer Station to the Central Station provides Marlow with his only opportunity for travel inland, and he finds there only a

depopulated waste scattered with a few corpses: it tells him nothing. At the very least, travel by river lays before Marlow a surface to interpret.

3. Marlow constantly uses vague and often redundant phrases like "unspeakable secrets" and "inconceivable mystery." At other times, however, he is capable of powerful imagery and considerable eloquence. Why does Marlow use vague and "inconclusive" language so frequently?

Answer: In its treatment of imperialism and individual experience, *Heart of Darkness* is on many levels a story about ambiguity. Thus, Marlow's use of language is at the very least thematic. Throughout the book, words assume a bizarre, almost fetishistic power: "ivory," for example, becomes almost more concrete than the elephant tusks themselves. The name "Kurtz" also takes on a life of its own, as it comes to stand for a set of legends and rumors rather than an actual man. Marlow becomes suspicious of words, as they threaten to overtake and distort the meaning they are supposed to convey. On the one hand, words fail to reflect reality adequately, and reality is often so paradoxical that the words don't exist to describe it; but, on the other hand, words sometimes take on an independent life of their own. Marlow's vague terminology, in addition to possessing a lyrical beauty, helps him to negotiate the dual threats of language.

7. Suggested Essay Topics

1. Why does *Heart of Darkness* have two competing heroes? Make the case for either Marlow or Kurtz as the true "hero" of the book.

2. Discuss the framing story that structures *Heart of Darkness.* Why is it important to narrate Marlow in the act of telling his story?

3. Interpret Kurtz's dying words ("The horror! The horror!"). What do they mean? What are the possible "horrors" to which he is referring? Why is Marlow the recipient of Kurtz's last words?

4. Contrast Kurtz's African mistress with his Intended. Are both negative portrayals of women? Describe how each functions in the narrative. Does it make any difference in your interpretation to know that Conrad supported the women's suffrage movement?

5. Describe the use of "darkness" both in the book's title and as a symbol throughout the text. What does darkness represent? Is its meaning constant or does it change?

6. How does physical illness relate to madness? How does one's environment relate to one's mental state in this book?

7. Why does Marlow lie to Kurtz's fiancée about Kurtz's last words? Why not tell her the truth, or tell her that Kurtz had no last words, rather than affirming her sentimental and mundane ideas?

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Paper XI: The 20th Century Unit II

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*

Structure

1. Background

1.1 Introduction to the Author

Sir Leslie Stephen was fifty years old when his second daughter, Virginia, was born January 25, 1882. He had been married before, to a daughter of Thackeray, and after her death had remarried a widow with three children. He reared that family and now was in the midst of rearing one of his own. Sir Leslie was a renown literary critic, and was also a cantankerous old man, not always a pleasant father to live with. Years after her father was dead, Virginia, over fifty herself, wrote in her journal that had her father lived she would never have produced

either her novels or the many volumes of essays. Her father's dominance would have prevented all creativity.

Virginia inherited her father's passion for books, and, from her mother, she inherited beauty. Virginia and her sister Vanessa were strikingly good-looking girls, their beauty being classic Greek rather than "pretty." When they were children, Henry James thought that they were unusually attractive creatures but, after they were grown, he revised his estimate. The girls were still attractive, physically, but James was shocked by their most unladylike behavior. Both girls radiated a certain demure shyness but underneath they were, like their father, out-spoken and satirical.

The Stephen children (Thoby, Vanessa, Virginia, and Adrian) were a closely-knit group and though Virginia was frail, stayed at home, and educated herself with her father's library, she was never left out of a gathering or an outing. Leonard Woolf, who married Virginia, recalls that Virginia and Vanessa were invariably together. He also recalls that when they came up to Cambridge to visit their brother, Thoby, he fell in love with Virginia immediately; many years later George Bernard Shaw wrote Virginia that she had had the same effect on him.

From the first, Virginia Stephen was unusual. Besides having James Russell Lowell as godfather, and besides being self-educated, in her mid-teens she filled a number of copybooks with original compositions, imitating first one literary style, then another. Later, after both her father and mother were dead, Virginia moved out of the family home in Hyde Park. Eventually she took a lease on a large four-storied house in Brunswick Square and rented the top floor to Leonard Woolf; she occupied the third floor; her brother Adrian lived on the second; and Maynard Keynes and Duncan Grant occupied the bottom apartment. In 1911 this arrangement was very daring for most young women but to Virginia it seemed the pleasant and practical thing to do.

Leonard Woolf had been in the Civil Service for seven years and was happy to re-acquaint himself with his old friends, the Stephens. Not surprisingly, while he was living in the apartment above his "landlady," during his leave of absence, he fell in love with Virginia all over again. He tried to prolong his leave so that he might return to Ceylon if Virginia refused his

proposal of marriage but the Service demanded an answer, so Leonard decided to resign and gamble on Virginia's saying "Yes" to him. He courted her with long WALKS, tickets to the theater and to the ballet, but Virginia was reluctant to give him an answer. When she did agree to marry him, they made a special day of it. They took a train out from London, then hired a boat, and rowed up the river. A little over a month later, they were married.

The Woolfs spent a long and leisurely honeymoon traveling through France, Spain, and Italy, and when they returned to London they moved into Clifford's Inn, Fleet Street. It was a sooty section of London but the rooms were fine and both Virginia and Leonard felt very free in this neighborhood that had known Chaucer, Shakespeare, Pepys, Johnson, Boswell, and Tennyson. During the day Virginia worked on The Voyage Out and Leonard wrote The Village in the Jungle. In the evenings, they would cross Fleet Street and dine at the Cock Tavern.

During 1913, when Virginia was finishing The Voyage Out, Leonard noticed that his wife was becoming irritable and nervous. She had worked on perhaps a dozen drafts of her first novel and now that it was almost done, she was developing excruciating headaches and was unable to sleep. Leonard was not unaware that Virginia had a history of mental instability before he married her. During her childhood, Virginia suffered a breakdown, and after her mother's death in 1895 she suffered another breakdown. Now the old symptoms were recurring. For a few weeks, Virginia agreed to rest in a nursing home, but after she returned home, the delusions and sleeplessness returned, and although Leonard tried to get his wife to rest in Holford, a quiet little village where Coleridge and Wordsworth once lived, Virginia's condition remained unstable. The Woolfs returned to London, and a few days later, Virginia attempted suicide. She swallowed an overdose of veronal tablets. Four trained nurses were required during her recovery and, had it not been for Leonard, Virginia would probably have been committed. The doctors who treated Virginia during these periods of semi- and acute insanity were either ready to place her in a hospital or they were (like the doctors in Mrs. Dalloway) only able to suggest that she be given plenty of rest and good food. In 1913 very little was known about mental illness; nearly all cases were diagnosed as various stages of neurasthenia.

Virginia's breakdown lasted almost two years with only short periods of respite but Leonard stayed with her constantly. Meals, he remembers, would often take an hour, sometimes two. Occasionally Virginia could be induced to feed herself but often Leonard had to spoonfeed her. At times Virginia was violent, even with the nurses; at other times, she was depressed and suicidal; once she lapsed into a coma for two days.

In 1915, The Voyage Out, which had been held up from publication for two years, appeared. It received fairly good reviews and Virginia was cited as being an important new novelist. Immediately she began Night and Day. In 1917, Virginia began to return to a normal social life and it was during this time that she met Katherine Mansfield and Middleton Murry. It was also during this period that Leonard and Virginia founded the Hogarth Press. Many myths surround the Press, supposing it to have been the toy of eccentric moneyed dilettantes. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Woolfs had been living off Virginia's investments and had very little money. Leonard bought the hand press in order to occupy Virginia's mind with something manual. During 1917 and 1918, there was not a single month that she did not have reviews in The Times Literary Supplement and, of course, she was working on her second novel. Leonard was fearful of another breakdown. But this creative tempo was typical of Virginia's output all during her life. She always tried to keep a flow of creative writing pouring during the mornings, then, during the afternoons and in odd hours, she would write critical essays as relief and as a different sort of mental discipline.

The Hogarth Press was begun in the Woolf's dining room, with the press on the table and Virginia and Leonard teaching themselves to print by the instructions in a 16-page manual. Their first publication was Two Stories — one by Virginia, "The Mark on the Wall," and one by Leonard, "Three Jews." The book was entirely hand-printed, hand-bound, and sold 134 copies. Ten years later, the Press was recognized as an important publishing house and their publications' schedule was so full that the printing had to be jobbed out. During this time, the Woolfs published Kew Gardens by Virginia and Poems by T. S. Eliot (including "Sweeney Among the Nightingales" and "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service"); later the Press published another of Eliot's poems, The Waste Land.

The Woolfs and Eliot were close friends and it was he who suggested that, since no other English publisher would touch it, the Hogarth Press publish a large, bulky manuscript by James Joyce. Virginia and Leonard agreed to consider the manuscript, and Eliot had a friend deliver a portion of Ulysses. Virginia read it and thought it was raw and not particularly well-written but she did recognize a strata of genius in it, so she and Leonard promised to publish it, provided they could find someone willing to set it up in print. That was in 1918; in 1919, they had to return the manuscript. All the printers they contacted were wary of the voluminous anomaly.

The Woolfs lived in Hogarth House from 1915 to 1924. The Press was begun and became famous during the time WWI ran its course and ended. Night and Day appeared and received praise, but less than The Voyage Out; both books were FINANCIALLY unprofitable. In April 1920, Virginia began Jacob's Room, her first masterpiece. The novel concerns Jacob Flanders, a man remembered first through one person's memory, then another's. The viewpoint changes continually. It was Virginia's first successful attempt since Kew Gardens to fashion a multidimensional reality and to concoct a plot that abolished pat formulas for writing fiction. She was revealing many faces of reality when her contemporaries were insisting on a one-viewpoint, unified approach.

Jacob's Room was not an easy book to write because Virginia had no models; she was creating a new medium of narration. In addition, she was again suffering terrible headaches and insomnia and was required to spend much time in bed. She was diagnosed for lung trouble, then for heart trouble. Again the doctors suggested (as they do for Septimus Smith in Mrs. Dalloway) that all she needed was rest and relaxation. When she was able, however, Virginia continued to write, using a large piece of plywood with an inkstand glued to it, filling self-bound notebooks with her almost indecipherable, sharp script.

Jacob's Room was published in October, 1922, and received fiercely partisan reviews; either the reviewers thought that the novel was a poetic, electric masterpiece or else they were shocked. Virginia Woolf, the latter clique said, had defied the form of the novel: she had gone too far! They bemoaned the end of English literature. But Virginia was already working into

Mrs. Dalloway (first called The Hours) and although she was upset by the bad reviews, she continued to unfold yet another impressionistically told story. Looking through her diary, one notices her excitement of being able to battle words and form and being able to do so without also having to battle mental fatigue and illness. At this time, Virginia was using the hours not spent with Mrs. Dalloway to write and assemble The Common Reader, a collection of essays about English literature. And, while writing on these two projects during 1923 and 1924, she was already planning her next novel, one to be written about her father and mother, *To The Lighthouse*.

Mrs. *Dalloway*, *The Common Reader*, and *To The Lighthouse* were all recognized as revolutionary, solid productions. The fiction was an attempt to reveal the mystery and magic of personality beneath the skin of human beings, yet it was not until after *Orlando* was published in 1928 that Virginia began to receive real monetary reward from her writings. She was 47 years old and had written for nearly 27 years. Also, it was not until *Orlando* that her work became popular with the public. The critics recognized Virginia Woolf's importance, discriminating people bought and read her novels, libraries acquired them, but the public found them difficult. *Orlando* was a breakthrough, an extravagant novel tracing the reincarnation of its main character — as various men and women — throughout the ages of English history and literature.

Following *Orlando*'s success was *The Waves* (1931), a complex prose poem taking place almost entirely within the minds of its characters with a counterpoint evocation of waves and the sea; Flush (1933), a biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's dog*;* and *The Years* (1937), a major best seller, both in England and America, Virginia Woolf's last novel, Between the Acts, was published posthumously. She had finished a first draft but she was unsatisfied. No doubt she would have continued to cut and revise and polish had she lived; with all her novels she was a merciless perfectionist. But she felt her old sickness returning. During most of 1940, insomnia and nervousness grated at her, and one day in March, 1941, she wrote a note to Leonard: she felt that she was going mad and did not have the courage to battle the voices and delusions again. She acknowledged Leonard's goodness and his continuous, kind care. While

she was writing the note, Leonard passed her worktable and reminded her that it was nearing lunchtime. A little later, he called to her but there was no answer. He went to look for her and found her hat and her walking stick on the river bank. She had drowned herself.

1.2 Introduction to the Text

Mrs. Dalloway is a unique novel in that it takes place in a single day — a Wednesday in mid-June 1923. The novel interweaves two seemingly unconnected storylines during this day. At the beginning, Clarissa Dalloway, fiftyish and recently recovering from an illness, is preparing for a party she will host that evening. She begins her day running an errand to purchase the flowers for the party. Throughout the morning, Clarissa reflects on her past, including her decision to marry Richard Dalloway thirty years earlier, rather than her more fiery suitor Peter Walsh.

Meanwhile, the second storyline begins with Septimus Smith, a shellshocked war veteran, out on the street with his wife, Lucrezia. Septimus struggles with the aftereffects of the war, hearing voices and feeling that life has little meaning. A car backfiring paralyzes him, and he reflects on his life. Septimus lost his good friend and commanding officer Evans in the war and continues to carry on conversations with this lost friend.

Clarissa has returned home and begins to remember a special friendship she shared in her youth with Sally Seton, a vivacious, slightly scandalous young woman. The two shared a special bond, bordering on a crush, and Clarissa remembers a kiss they shared.

Clarissa begins mending her green silk dress for the evening when she receives an unexpected visit from Peter Walsh, her former suitor. Peter had once told Clarissa disparagingly that one day she would become "the perfect hostess," and it becomes more and more clear that his prediction was accurate. Clarissa and Peter talk to each other easily about the present, but both are thinking of their past and the decisions they made to get them to the place they are now. Clarissa's 17-year-old daughter Elizabeth enters and Peter ends his visit.

Peter goes to a park where Septimus and Lecrezia are also WALKING. The couple get into a heated discussion about suicide, and Peter sees them as a young and in love couple

quarreling. He doesn't realize the depth of their emotions or how unsteady Septimus is. Lecrezia has made an appointment for Septimus to see a specialist, Sir William Bradshaw, who dismisses the complexity of Septimus's madness and suggests a rest in an asylum to get more perspective.

Meanwhile, Richard Dalloway has been to lunch with Lady Bruton. Clarissa was somewhat miffed that Lady Bruton invited only Richard and not her, and sees it as a remark on Clarissa's validity. Richard has realized during this lunch that he wants to come home and tell Clarissa that he loves her. Unfortunately, he never finds the words, as he has gone so many years without saying them.

Clarissa goes to see Elizabeth, who is studying with her tutor, Doris Kilman. Clarissa despises Doris, who she sees as a monster with "hooves" taking her daughter from her. Doris also despises Clarissa, largely for her bourgeois ways and financial means. Septimus and Lecrezia go to their apartment to wait for the attendants who will take him to the asylum. When they arrive, Septimus decides to escape from them, and not wanting to leave life but not wanting to meet the attendants, he jumps out the window to his death.

Clarissa's party is underway, with several ghosts from her past – including Peter Walsh and Sally Seton – in attendance. Richard has still been unable to tell her that he loves her. Very late into the party, Sir William and Lady Bradshaw arrive, very apologetic for their tardiness. Lady Bradshaw explains that they were delayed as one of Sir William's patients (Septimus) had committed suicide that day. The party ends with Clarissa surprisingly disappointed at the success of her party.

Characters in Mrs. Dalloway occasionally perceive life’s pattern through a sudden shock, or what Woolf called a “moment of being.” Suddenly the cotton wool parts, and a person sees reality, and his or her place in it, clearly. “In the vast catastrophe of the European war,” wrote Woolf, “our emotions had to be broken up for us, and put at an angle from us, before we could allow ourselves to feel them in poetry or fiction.” These words appear in her essay collection, The Common Reader, which was published just one month before *Mrs. Dalloway*. Her novel

attempts to uncover fragmented emotions, such as desperation or love, in order to find, through “moments of being,” a way to endure.

While writing *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf reread the Greek classics along with two new modernist writers, Marcel Proust and James Joyce. Woolf shared these writers' interest in time and psychology, and she incorporated these issues into her novel. She wanted to show characters in flux, rather than static, characters who think and emote as they move through space, who react to their surroundings in ways that mirrored actual human experience. Rapid political and social change marked the period between the two world wars: the British Empire, for which so many people had sacrificed their lives to protect and preserve, was in decline. Countries like India were beginning to question Britain’s colonial rule. At home, the Labour Party, with its plans for economic reform, was beginning to challenge the Conservative Party, with its emphasis on imperial business interests. Women, who had flooded the workforce to replace the men who had gone to war, were demanding equal rights. Men, who had seen unspeakable atrocities in the first modern war, were questioning the usefulness of class-based sociopolitical institutions. Woolf lent her support to the feminist movement in her nonfiction book *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), as well as in numerous essays, and she was briefly involved in the women’s suffrage movement. Although Mrs. Dalloway portrays the shifting political atmosphere through the characters Peter Walsh, Richard Dalloway, and Hugh Whitbread, it focuses more deeply on the charged social mood through the characters Septimus Warren Smith and Clarissa Dalloway. Woolf delves into the consciousness of Clarissa, a woman who exists largely in the domestic sphere, to ensure that readers take her character seriously, rather than simply dismiss her as a vain and uneducated upper-class wife. In spite of her heroic and imperfect effort in life, Clarissa, like every human being and even the old social order itself, must face death.

Woolf’s struggles with mental illness gave her an opportunity to witness firsthand how insensitive medical professionals could be, and she critiques their tactlessness in *Mrs. Dalloway*. One of Woolf’s doctors suggested that plenty of rest and rich food would lead to a full recovery, a cure prescribed in the novel, and another removed several of her teeth. In the early twentieth

century, mental health problems were too often considered imaginary, an embarrassment, or the product of moral weakness. During one bout of illness, Woolf heard birds sing like Greek choruses and King Edward use foul language among some azaleas. In 1941, as England entered a second world war, and at the onset of another breakdown she feared would be permanent, Woolf placed a large stone in her pocket to weigh herself down and drowned herself in the River Ouse.

2. Plot Overview

Mrs. Dalloway covers one day from morning to night in one woman's life. Clarissa Dalloway, an upper-class housewife, WALKS through her London neighborhood to prepare for the party she will host that evening. When she returns from flower shopping, an old suitor and friend, Peter Walsh, drops by her house unexpectedly. The two have always judged each other harshly, and their meeting in the present intertwines with their thoughts of the past. Years earlier, Clarissa refused Peter's marriage proposal, and Peter has never quite gotten over it. Peter asks Clarissa if she is happy with her husband, Richard, but before she can answer, her daughter, Elizabeth, enters the room. Peter leaves and goes to Regent's Park. He thinks about Clarissa's refusal, which still obsesses him.

The point of view then shifts to Septimus, a veteran of World War I who was injured in trench warfare and now suffers from shell shock. Septimus and his Italian wife, Lucrezia, pass time in Regent's Park. They are waiting for Septimus's appointment with Sir William Bradshaw, a celebrated psychiatrist. Before the war, Septimus was a budding young poet and lover of Shakespeare; when the war broke out, he enlisted immediately for romantic patriotic reasons. He became numb to the horrors of war and its aftermath: when his friend Evans died, he felt little sadness. Now Septimus sees nothing of worth in the England he fought for, and he has lost the desire to preserve either his society or himself. Suicidal, he believes his lack of feeling is a crime. Clearly Septimus's experiences in the war have permanently scarred him, and he has serious mental problems. However, Sir William does not listen to what Septimus says and diagnoses "a lack of proportion." Sir William plans to separate Septimus from Lucrezia and send him to a mental institution in the country.

Richard Dalloway eats lunch with Hugh Whitbread and Lady Bruton, members of high society. The men help Lady Bruton write a letter to the Times, London's largest newspaper. After lunch, Richard returns home to Clarissa with a large bunch of roses. He intends to tell her that he loves her but finds that he cannot, because it has been so long since he last said it. Clarissa considers the void that exists between people, even between husband and wife. Even though she values the privacy she is able to maintain in her marriage, considering it vital to the success of the relationship, at the same time she finds slightly disturbing the fact that Richard doesn't know everything about her. Clarissa sees off Elizabeth and her history teacher, Miss Kilman, who are going shopping. The two older women despise one another passionately, each believing the other to be an oppressive force over Elizabeth. Meanwhile, Septimus and Lucrezia are in their apartment, enjoying a moment of happiness together before the men come to take Septimus to the asylum. One of Septimus's doctors, Dr. Holmes, arrives, and Septimus fears the doctor will destroy his soul. In order to avoid this fate, he jumps from a window to his death.

Peter hears the ambulance go by to pick up Septimus's body and marvels ironically at the level of London's civilization. He goes to Clarissa's party, where most of the novel's major characters are assembled. Clarissa works hard to make her party a success but feels dissatisfied by her own role and acutely conscious of Peter's critical eye. All the partygoers, but especially Peter and Sally Seton, have, to some degree, failed to accomplish the dreams of their youth. Though the social order is undoubtedly changing, Elizabeth and the members of her generation will probably repeat the errors of Clarissa's generation. Sir William Bradshaw arrives late, and his wife explains that one of his patients, the young veteran (Septimus), has committed suicide. Clarissa retreats to the privacy of a small room to consider Septimus's death. She understands that he was overwhelmed by life and that men like Sir William make life intolerable. She identifies with Septimus, admiring him for having taken the plunge and for not compromising his soul. She feels, with her comfortable position as a society hostess, responsible for his death. The party nears its close as guests begin to leave. Clarissa enters the room, and her presence fills Peter with a great excitement.

3. Summary and Analysis

3.1 Out for Flowers

Mrs. Dalloway is not a novel that chronicles the years of the life of Clarissa Dalloway. In fact, Mrs. Dalloway is not a conventionally narrated novel at all. It is a collage, a mosaic portrait; it pieces together bits of Mrs. Dalloway's past and bits of Mrs. Dalloway's present on a single day — a Wednesday in mid-June, 1923. As far as plot is concerned, Mrs. Dalloway on this particular day in June prepares for and gives a party. That is all that happens. Our job is to look beyond the plot and realize who Mrs. Dalloway has been and what she has become. We must try to see the diversity beneath the surface of this English lady and try to get a sense of her personality. This is not an easy task because appearances deceive.

When Mrs. Dalloway was a young girl, her beau, Peter Walsh, prophesied that someday Clarissa would be The Perfect Hostess. Peter said this impulsively, out of jealous anger, yet when we finish Mrs. Dalloway we are left with a literal image of Clarissa Dalloway as The Perfect Hostess. Peter Walsh's chance and angry remark seems to have been most accurate. Clarissa's destiny does indeed seem to have been that of a well-bred wife who would give successful parties for her husband. This would seem to be the only value of her life.

In a sense, Clarissa Dalloway does develop into a perfect hostess; and, in a sense, Mrs. Dalloway is about a party Clarissa gives. But these ideas are only on the surface. A woman is never just a wife, or a mother, or a hostess; human beings cannot be defined in one word. It is only when we are ignorant, or lazy, or angry (as Peter Walsh was) that we label one another. But we make these generalized, easy assessments of people every day while knowing that we — individually — are certainly too complex to be summed up so easily. We would never dream of simplifying ourselves so narrowly because we know how very little of our "real selves" is displayed to the world. There are depths of feeling — hatred, despair, joy, sensitivity — which are rarely revealed. And, in the same way that much of our emotions remain submerged, our minds also pile up ideas, dreams, conversations, and multitudes of words and thoughts that are

never uttered. The acts we actually perform are only pale outlines of another multithought and — feeling individual. It is this individual which is Virginia Woolf's concern in Mrs. Dalloway.

Who is Mrs. Dalloway?

Probably it is best to start with what Clarissa Dalloway looks like so that we have a frame for our discoveries about her. And in determining Mrs. Dalloway's physical features we should note how we learn such details; Virginia Woolf's art of narration is just as important as the content of her novels.

We learn that Mrs. Dalloway prefers to buy the flowers herself This seems like an innocuous statement, yet this single sentence is the entire first paragraph; it is a curious way of beginning a novel. What lies behind the first sentence is this: Virginia Woolf is getting Mrs. Dalloway out of the house so that she can be seen by strangers, by an old friend, and by a neighbor. Also, Mrs. Dalloway can react to a London she has not seen for some time. We are going to learn about Mrs. Dalloway from various points of view; we will not be told outright the facts about Mrs. Dalloway because such collections of facts reveal too little. We must learn by observation.

Mrs. Dalloway's excursion is not routine. Usually Mrs. Dalloway has things done for her; she is not used to doing errands. Today, however, seems special to her because it is fresh and brisk. The fact that the maid is busy supervising the removal of the winter doors is an excellent opportunity for Mrs. Dalloway to go out shopping. This is a day when Mrs. Dalloway is going to do something she enjoys but which, because of illness, she has not been able to do for some time: to go strolling on an errand through London's noisy, bustling traffic. The return of the summer season, the return of Mrs. Dalloway's health, and her return to a busy London scene parallel one another.

As Clarissa heads for the flower shop, we leave her thoughts and enter the mind of Scrope Purvis. Purvis has been Clarissa's neighbor for many years so his observation is valuable. He thinks of Mrs. Dalloway as bird-like — perched, as it were, on the curb. She seems bird-like

despite being fiftyish and still bearing the pallor of her recent illness. She is wearing a feathered yellow hat (we learn this after she returns home) and possibly this spot of plumage influences Scrope's comparison. But, no, Clarissa also thinks of herself as bird-like — too bird-like, she would say. We learn this when she reflects on Lady Bexborough.

By comparing herself with Lady Bexborough, Clarissa (not Virginia Woolf) tells us about herself. We learn about Clarissa's physical appearance and we learn her thoughts as she compares herself with a woman whom she considers ideal. Clarissa would, for instance, gladly exchange her own pale and smooth complexion for Lady Bexborough's dark and crumpled one. She would like to have a face with more visible character. She would like to move more slowly and stately, not lightly; she feels that she is too flighty, too pointy-featured, and too insincere. Clarissa, it would seem, would like to be less feminine; more masculine, perhaps. At least she would like to have a more serious mien and be interested in, say, politics. She does not find her pallor or smooth skin attractive — or even natural. She talks of her body as being a "nothing" that she "wears." The only features that she approves of are her hands and feet. Otherwise, she is not happy with her outward appearance — the thin, white, bony sack that contains Mrs. Dalloway.

Perhaps these seem like unusual, contradictory thoughts — this despair at aging, and at aging unattractively, while Clarissa is very obviously enjoying being in the hurry and noise of the London morning. Without a doubt, Clarissa is thrilled to be in this colorful London stream; our first view of her is filled with her excited responses to being a part of the city's thoroughfare again. Her moods do alternate however; in one paragraph she is troubled and worried, in the next she is sparkling. Yet Virginia Woolf did not insert these changes of mood merely to be whimsical or lyrical.

Consider this: Clarissa's flashes of worry about aging are not at all unnatural; she has already said that she wishes she were not so delicate and brooding. Also, Clarissa has been ill, has become even more delicate, and has had too much time to think. No doubt her doctor and husband and friends commented on her looks and Clarissa would probably have consulted, first of all, her mirror as she searched for signs of illness in her over-fiftyish face. In addition, one

must remember in assessing Mrs. Dalloway's fluctuations of moods that if Clarissa was confined to bed during her illness she would, like most people past fifty and confined to bed, have reflected on life. She would have recalled and pondered. Recovered now, and back in the stream of London traffic, her sick-bed seriousness would not have been immediately flushed away. There would be this natural residue of seriousness in the midst of all the wonder of this morning.

Virginia Woolf is not manipulating, for sheer effect or merely for exposition, Clarissa's present-to-past-to-present changes of mood and thought. There is valid motivation for Clarissa's ebb and flow of mood and time. The transitions are indeed swift, but our own minds can be every bit as mercurial. Human beings seem geared to clock time as it continuously moves forward, but in fact they are not. Within themselves, their minds ignore clock time and obey a different sense of time. Virginia Woolf has used Clarissa to imaginatively approximate a mind's natural course.

We discern that Mrs. Dalloway has been ill, has been resurrected, and is again enjoying the smells and sights of this busy London morning. Sharp-featured, angular-jointed, she is almost intoxicated by the noisy goings-on and, at turns, lost in thought about decisions she has made during her lifetime and about her physical shortcomings. She has been ill but has returned to the life of London and has plunged into its traffic. Now, as she makes her way up the streets, we make our own way — into Mrs. Dalloway. We have learned what she looks like from Scrope Purvis' image; then we were given Clarissa's verification. Listening to her negative comments about herself, we learned certain of Clarissa's quirks — plus one very important clue to her character. From Clarissa's minor dissatisfactions with her looks and personality grows one of the novel's major concerns: is Mrs. Dalloway satisfied being "Mrs. Dalloway"? Piecemeal, we are to learn the circumstances and the results of Clarissa's decision to become Mrs. Dalloway — this decision on a husband, the most important decision in a woman's life.

Returning to Peter Walsh, it is important to consider that we hear of him long before we hear about Richard Dalloway. This is a novel about Richard Dalloway's wife, yet it is not Richard that we learn about first; it is Peter. We discover that Clarissa, very rationally, chose to break

off her relationship with Peter Walsh and, very rationally, to become Mrs. Richard Dalloway. The title of this novel and its first words are one and the same: Mrs. Dalloway. Our first impression is a double-barreled emphasis on Clarissa's married state. But already on the first page we see that Clarissa is concerned not with her husband, but with remembering a wry comment Peter Walsh, her former beau, made long ago as he caught Clarissa gazing into space.

The first thing we hear Peter say, as he chides Clarissa for appearing so deep in revery, is that he prefers men to cauliflowers. Peter is saying, in effect, that he prefers the company of men — of human beings — to the non-human. It is a trivial joke that Peter tossed to Clarissa, yet Clarissa's memory has preserved it all these years; and, since Virginia Woolf places it before us as Peter's first speech in the novel, it is important — a key to why Clarissa rejected Peter, why she denied herself Peter, and why still today she argues with herself that she was right not to marry Peter.

Had she married Peter, Clarissa says, he would have insisted on sharing; she then changes thoughts and recalls their break-up and the gossip she heard later about Peter's marrying an Indian woman. Even in her thoughts, Clarissa is cautious about too thoroughly considering Peter, as if even that would be too much "sharing." Clarissa is terribly fearful of the implications of sharing. As we shall see later, Clarissa equates sharing (with a man) with surrender. And Peter would have insisted on sharing an intimacy with Clarissa — and not intimacy in a sexual sense only. Peter would have insisted on a basic, defenses-down, baring-of-souls kind of intimacy — the kind of intimacy that exists between absolute friends. It was this exchange, this possession of one another's most secret depths, which frightened Clarissa. Marrying Peter would have cost Clarissa all private thoughts and feelings. This may seem to be a paltry sort of consideration but it is, in fact, more important than had Clarissa only had qualms about giving in to Peter sexually. Clarissa is considering basic communication between husband and wife — basic honesty, basic compassionate intimacy. Peter would have demanded that Clarissa release all her hopes and fears and joys to him — and he would reciprocate. This is a far more dangerous and sustained exchange than that of sex.

Dangerous, in fact, is the word Clarissa uses to describe the act of living. Were she to have chosen Peter, Clarissa would have had to lose her balance; she would have had to dare make mistakes. She chose security and safety in Richard Dalloway. Yet the spirit in Clarissa that responded to Peter, before rationality denied him to her, is still alive. In this morning's walk there is evidence of this responsive streak — one that Clarissa is still trying to discipline. As she thrills to the morning's light, sharp freshness, so like "the kiss of a wave"; as she tenses, anticipating the striking of Big Ben; and as she hears the cacophonous noise of trucks and cars and vendors magically harmonized, Clarissa scolds herself for foolishly succumbing to such sensual delight. She wonders why she loves London's bustle so.

The answer is simple: Clarissa, by nature, is responsive and spontaneous but she has learned to conceal her responses and feelings. She allows a loose rein to her senses but only in this way: London is a collection of noises, colors, smells, and people, and Clarissa can walk amidst them, can savor them, yet not have to merge with them. She can smile lovingly, and ironically, at the follies of old ladies and at the follies of young lovers, but she does so with a love that keeps its distance. She appreciates London as she might appreciate a lovely, familiar painting come to life. London — a living work of art — is like a salve to Clarissa's feeling of isolation and to the post-effects of her illness. Clarissa's doctors said that her heart might have been affected by influenza, but this is only another way that Virginia Woolf underscores for us the fact that, figuratively, Clarissa's heart has already been weakened. It was weakened by disuse long before influenza felled her. Clarissa has been too careful with her heart's affection.

Mrs. Dalloway is not a simple person. She is most complex. She is fascinating in that she realizes that her "self" changes, that it modifies to a certain degree, depending on whom she is with. With Richard, she is a little different than she is with Elizabeth; and she is different in another way when she is with Hugh Whitbread. Unlike Clarissa, most people think that they are always the same, regardless of whom they are with. In truth, few people remain constant: we all change, reacting with different parts of our personality to the many different people we spend time with.

Mrs. Dalloway also appraises people differently than most people do. When she meets Hugh Whitbread, she comments on his "well covered ... handsome, perfectly upholstered" body. She is referring rather novelly to how Hugh's clothes fit. But, besides Clarissa's showing us a different way of looking at someone, we learn more about Clarissa. She thinks of Hugh's clothes as she thinks of her own clothes and body: as covering, distinct from the inner self under the "upholstery." This idea of a body's being upholstered is unusual and interesting, and it reinforces our notions about Clarissa's complexity. Already she has remarked about feeling "outside, looking on." She walks through life; she is inside her body, yet she feels apart from life and alien to her body. Not only does she have these feelings but she is lucid about them — and Clarissa is not a learned woman. She is not a college graduate; she has little formal education: she is merely a woman, sensitive and intuitive — with a special sensibility. Her emotions are very intense despite the fact that she would like them, like her world, to be carefully guarded and within boundaries. She would like her world of marriage and motherhood to be cool and quiet like the cool and serene park she crosses through this morning.

Matters are often beyond Clarissa's control, however. She has tried to order her life by marrying Richard Dalloway, but lately she has been near death, and lately the world has been torn by the Great War. Now both she and the world seem to be healing. The king and queen are in the palace and are giving a party tonight — just as Clarissa will be giving a party tonight. These should be happy moments — and some are — but Clarissa's joys cannot fend off certain unhappy thoughts — the intense feelings of hatred, for instance, that she has for Miss Kilman, her daughter's tutor.

Why Clarissa hates Miss Kilman is not entirely clear but already we can guess at a little: Clarissa was very ill and her daughter Elizabeth represents youth, the essence of aliveness, and the extension of Clarissa. Clarissa has never "possessed" Elizabeth, nor has Richard, but now, to Clarissa, it seems that Miss Kilman is devouring Elizabeth. This concept of owning, that was so odious about Peter's personality, has dangerously reasserted itself just when Mrs. Dalloway is growing old and the world is changing and she becoming a stranger to it.

And so, worrying about Miss Kilman, though delighting in Bond Street, Mrs. Dalloway reaches the flower shop. It has been an unusual walk. This first scene is one of great contrasts — one of active sensual excitement but also of intermittent reflection. Mrs. Dalloway has walked through the noisy streets of London, entered a quiet park, re-emerged into the noise and color, and has slipped into a peaceful, sweet-smelling flower shop. She has thought about the present, about the past, and about the present again. The back-and-forth narrative, and this back-and-forth, in-and-out current of noise and quiet have suggested the rhythm of waves, their ebb and flow. Virginia Woolf is a remarkable architect: Clarissa has already mentioned that the day felt as though it carried the kiss of a wave; she has remembered the rising and falling of the rooks — very much like waves; Big Ben booms out hours one after another, irrevocably — very much like waves; life, she says, builds up, tumbles, then creates afresh — very much like waves. In this scene and throughout the novel the changes of time, the changes of scenes, and the motif of water — the sea and the waves — are all carefully synthesized.

3.2 Septimus

While Mrs. Dalloway selects flowers for the party, we leave her for awhile and consider a new character: Septimus Warren Smith. The change of focus is brief, but it is important because Clarissa is only one half of the design for Mrs. Dalloway. While she worked on this novel, Virginia Woolf jotted in her diary that she wanted to sketch, in a shadowy way, "the world seen by the sane and the insane." The book was to be more than a story about Clarissa Dalloway; it would be a novel with two main characters and two stories alongside one another. The two characters — Clarissa and Septimus — never meet in the novel, yet they are linked to one another through various characters and because of the value they both give to that "leaf-encumbered forest, the soul."

Both Mrs. Dalloway and Septimus Smith are intense and sensitive — especially about the privacy of their souls — that collection of qualities which make up a personality's essence and individuality. Mrs. Dalloway has a veneered composure; she attempts to keep her most serious thoughts, dreams, and musings to herself; no one else would treasure or understand them. She restricts the boundaries of her secret world. She lives with her husband and her

daughter and among her friends; she is wife, mother, and hostess, but she is never completely relaxed and open with anyone. No one sees the dark depths of Mrs. Dalloway's soul. And when Clarissa uses dark to describe her soul, she does not mean dark to connote something necessarily evil or fearful; dark simply means that the soul is not open for public view. Mrs. Dalloway's soul is a place of retreat, like a private garden. Perhaps this is not the healthiest attitude to take towards oneself, but Mrs. Dalloway is considered sane.

Septimus Smith, on the other hand, is insane. He has almost wholly retreated into his private world. Notice, for example, how his reaction to the noise of a car backfiring echoes and amplifies, but differs from, Mrs. Dalloway's reaction. Clarissa immediately thinks that she has heard a gun shot. There is nothing pathological about this association. The Great War is just over. An era of terrifying death and violence has officially ended, yet the fearful sounds of war remain in the unconscious. England still trembles; the sound stills the rush and hubbub of the streets.

Ironically, it was a gunshot — a multitude of them — which cut Septimus Smith's contact with reality. He is a casualty of the Great War, a victim of shell-shock, Nevertheless, he does not imagine the car's backfiring to be a gunshot. To him, the noise is the sound of a whip cracking ("The world has raised its whip; where will it descend?"). Everyone else is only startled; Septimus is terrified.

In this crowd scene of London, we have gone beyond the exterior of appearance and have had a glimpse into two private, inner worlds — Clarissa Dalloway's and Septimus Smith's. We have seen two confused and frightened people. They differ in degree, of course. Clarissa has been weakened by an illness and she is frightened and furious about Miss Kilman's "possession" of Elizabeth. But, as best she can, she attempts to keep her fears corralled and orderly. In contrast, Septimus' fears cannot be governed; they are too overpowering and chaotic. London, through Clarissa's eyes, is familiar and reassuring; for Septimus, it is only fragments of sensation. To Lucrezia, Septimus' wife, London seems totally alien. She is a stranger in a strange land, with no friends, and with a husband who threatens to kill himself.

Focusing on a simple morning scene, Virginia Woolf has challenged us with a many-prismed view: we wandered through Clarissa's wonderland of past and present thoughts; we drew back and saw the citizens of London react like one unified organism to a car backfiring; then we were jolted by the jagged reality of Septimus Smith's thoughts. Now we see what is happening through the eyes of a foreigner. So what is the "real world" like? Each person has a different idea of what truth and reality are. There is a general, agreed sense of what is true and real in a given situation but there are always highly individual interpretations. Virginia Woolf continually reminds us of such individual intricacies. One of the characters will frequently show us a sense of what is extraordinary in even the most mundane occurence. A car's backfiring is only a loud noise, yet it has unusual effects, individually, and it does something unusual to the mass of people who happen to be together on a London Street. The noise catches their attention, then the important-looking car mesmerizes them with awe. The car does not, for certain, contain anyone important, but everyone has deep VENERATION for it. And, from far above the story itself, we hear Virginia Woolf meditating, reflecting on the crowd's need to be associated with Greatness. The car is just a car — and even the Queen, if she be inside, is only a woman.

Yet this potent mystery takes the crowd away from its sense of being ordinary. The car endows each person with an Extraordinary Moment. Everyone feels individually distinguished because they have encountered the possibility of being in the same street with royalty, with England. We observe the blind awe of the crowd and listen to Virginia Woolf comment that only historians will know for sure who is in the mysterious car. Her attitude is like the attitude of Clarissa when, earlier, she was crossing London streets. Both women smile at the comic folly of us mortals.

The novel continues on its course as Clarissa's momentarily conferred "dignity" passes. The thought of the queen in the mysterious car reminds her of the queen's party which reminds her of her own party, and thus she is reminded once again of Peter Walsh's taunt — that she would eventually define herself as a Hostess. The pleasant, patriotic, quasi-dignity is replaced by the dread of a more sterile dignity, the dignity of a Hostess.

Suddenly our attention is drawn to something else. Something else mysterious has appeared. A plane discharging white smoke is passing overhead. The instant patriotism for Royal England that held the public spellbound only minutes before is gone — but the awe of the unknown remains. No one knew who was in the black car before; now no one knows what the skywriting says, yet both forces have a similar compelling power over the public. The skywriting letters form words but the message is blurred and indecipherable. What the public is watching is only an advertising gimmick, but they don't seem to recognize it as such. They are enchanted by this riddle of a commercial message in the heavens. Their attempts to read the sky-writing are wryly described, as though there were an oracular significance to the enigmatic letters.

At this point we learn that not everyone agrees that Septimus Smith is insane. Septimus' doctor, for instance, thinks that Septimus' problem is only habitual, obsessive introspection. This is Lucrezia's reason for trying to interest Septimus with the words written in the sky. But we know that Septimus is insane because we enter his mind and are shown the sad beauty of his madness. Time is dispersed; it is stretched, lengthened, slowed down. The smoke shapes do not mean anything to Septimus; they simply are. They are modulating colors of white, rising and tumbling.

Sounds around Septimus are amplified and richly suggestive. The movement of Septimus' sight and sound experiencing are wave-like: the smoke languishes, melts; sounds converge, then break; the light on the elm leaves rises and falls. This water imagery has been used before. It punctuated Mrs. Dalloway's morning walk and the journeys back and forth from her past to the present. The rising and falling is the rhythm of waves and it is also the same rhythm of a throb, the beat of a heart — the beat of the individual heart and the beat of our primeval mother, the sea. The rhythm beckons mightily to Septimus; the metaphorical rhythm of the great Unconscious, of the sea, is like a siren's song to Septimus' unconscious, and the remnant of his rationality fights to preserve itself. He pleads with himself that he will not go mad. Septimus is struggling to be the master of his own destiny, just as Clarissa is still struggling (in a parallel, though much less intense way) to be master of her destiny.

We draw away from Septimus' intense inner conflicts and Lucrezia's fears, and catch a glimpse of the Smiths from another side — from Maisie Johnson's point of view. Like Lucrezia, she is foreign to London. She is Scottish, just down from Edinburgh, and the men and women and the "prim" flowers of London — all the things that thrilled Clarissa — seem odd to Maisie. Especially odd are the Smiths, she thinks. Then we look at Maisie through Mrs. Dempster's eyes. We observe old Mr. Bently. The scene is blurring. Life has gone awry for most of the people we have met since Clarissa Dalloway stepped out of her house this morning to go shopping for flowers. The scene ends with the sky-writing airplane still noiselessly spilling blurred letters onto the sky. What do they say? They might say "toffee" but the message is still incomplete. We can interpret its blurred image any way we choose, just as Clarissa, Septimus, Lucrezia, and Maisie, Mrs. Dempster, and Mr. Bently can each decide differently about London, Londoners, and life. Human beings interpret moments of reality variously; we have seen several striking instances through the perceptions of the sane, the insane, the foreigner, the newcomer, and the elderly.

3.3 Home Again

There is scarcely any real action in this scene. Yet a few commonplace acts structure the real matter of this scene — Clarissa's thoughts about life and death. Virginia Woolf does not use these labels, of course, but they are the fundamental considerations at the core of the scene.

Already Clarissa has mulled over certain aspects of dying. Looking into Hatchards' shop window this morning, she pondered the idea that bits and pieces of herself might continue to live after she had ceased living. Also, the lines from Cymbeline that caught her attention concerned death; "Fear no more the heat o' the sun / Nor the furious winter's rages" is part of a funeral song. Clarissa, in the midst of noisy and colorful London, thought about death. As contrast, note what it is that accompanies Clarissa's current thoughts of death: we read that the Dalloway hall is as "cool as a vault." This is the first thing we learn about Clarissa's house when she returns home; this is our first impression. Thus there are two kinds of life to consider here: one is the busy living on the streets of London; the other kind is that which is lived within the Dalloway house. Clarissa has stepped out of the milieu of the London life and returned to her

life, her sanctuary where living is, to extend the metaphor, as "cool as a vault." Virginia Woolf suggests a certain death-in-life atmosphere in the Dalloway house.

Mrs. Dalloway is aristocratic and wealthy, but one should not stereotype her; she is not a one-dimensional well-bred, well-mannered, gently religious lady. Clarissa is a lady in the old sense — but she is also an atheist. This is a surprise and thus Virginia Woolf's allusion to Clarissa's being like a nun is ironic; Clarissa is a paradox, a secular nun. Consider how Clarissa's day-to-day acts of living are performed: she does what is expected of her and whatever she does she is very orderly. Her acts are performed with the regularity of a rosary being recited. There is something holy about Clarissa's observance of day-to-day acts. But what Clarissa seems like, she is not really like. She seems nun-like, her daily acts are performed with religious devotion, yet she is an atheist. We are impressed with the irony between appearance and reality.

There is yet another contrast between the appearance of Clarissa Dalloway and the reality of Clarissa Dalloway — and it is one which Clarissa is well aware of. Clarissa realizes that her home, the Dalloway house, is a safe refuge. The house is fortress-like and sturdy, and as well-bred in its exterior appearance as Clarissa is; but, in their interiors, Mrs. Dalloway and the Dalloway house differ. Clarissa, inside, is a mass of doubts and fears. This is dramatic irony because Lucy, Clarissa's maid, worships her mistress and imagines Clarissa to be as regal and composed as she appears to be.

We see the truth of the matter when we enter Clarissa's mind. Already we have glimpsed into some of Clarissa's fears and worries; now we perceive that Clarissa is truly hurt by Lady Bruton's inviting Richard, and not Clarissa, to luncheon. Life is slipping away from Clarissa; she is frail, white-haired, and already, it would seem, is being neglected. Socially, Clarissa does not like to be snubbed by another society lady; as a female, she is jealous that Lady Bruton invited only Mr. Dalloway to her luncheon; and, deep down in her soul, Clarissa is stunned. Even though she does not greatly fear death, she is pained at being neglected so soon after she has been seriously ill; it is as though she were already forgotten.

We have seen that Mrs. Dalloway has secured for herself a safe, if somewhat sterile, existence. Our next matter is with Clarissa's truly "happy times." She remembers these isolated moments, fittingly, as she loosens and removes the trappings of the public Mrs. Dalloway. Up in her tower room, away from London and away from the lower rooms of the Dalloway house, Clarissa removes her hat and puts her coat away. She literally "lets her hair down." As she does so, memories of Sally Seton return. Sally was the first person Clarissa ever shared secrets and affection with. Clarissa was fascinated by Sally. Sally was everything Clarissa wasn't. Clarissa obeyed all the rules, Sally broke them. Sally sat on the floor, propped up her knees, and smoked. Once she ran naked out of the bathroom to fetch a sponge she forgot. Sally was a rebel who did the unexpected, the romantic: everything a well-bred, well-mannered young girl at the turn of the century did not do.

Many of us are attracted to a rebel personality, especially when we are young — and especially, we can imagine, if we had been reared, as Clarissa was, in a cloistered, Victorian atmosphere. We are told that flowers at Bourton (Clarissa's family home) were arranged in "stiff little vases all the way down the table." This is an appropriate image for Clarissa's life — because it was, until Sally appeared, made up of stiff, indistinguishable days arranged along the length of the years. Then Sally sparked Clarissa's spirit. Clarissa felt that she and Sally could "communicate."

At first, communication may seem a rather tame prize for Clarissa to value so highly, but even today our popular magazines are continually concerned with the matter of communication between people. Can men and women truly communicate? Is the male sensibility different from the female sensibility? D. H. Lawrence, a contemporary of Virginia Woolf, believed that men and women were two entirely different species. Historically, the mind of a woman has always been relegated to second place whenever a man is concerned. This was especially true when Mrs. Dalloway was a girl. In those years, whom could a girl open her heart to? A sensitive, imaginative, timid girl like Clarissa? Men were superior. If one were a woman, could she tell her husband everything she thought? If so, how would he receive it? as the confession of a silly chatterbox? or in a spirit of trust? This problem was one which frustrated

Virginia Woolf. She was a published critic and author. She had many male friends, but she was prone to distrust their friendships. She wondered if she were being patronized when she talked of literature and politics. Did her male friends think of her as only a clever curiosity? Did they really "share" themselves with her as her women friends did? Was there an even exchange?

This concept of "sharing" — of giving and taking — is central to Mrs. Dalloway. Clarissa rejected Peter because he wanted to share himself and wanted an equal return. Clarissa feared open, total involvement with a man. The concept was foreign and frightening; to her, sharing meant surrender. Marriage to Peter would have been a dangerous, immoral one-sided contract. Compare, however, the give-and-take aspect of Clarissa's memory of Sally Seton. Clarissa gave her "soul" absolutely and exclusively to Sally. Sally gave her "soul" to Clarissa — but she offered, freely, just as much of herself to everyone else. When Sally kissed Clarissa, she gave the kiss impulsively. Clarissa, however, did not accept the kiss as an impulsive gesture. Clarissa accepted Sally's kiss as a treasure; she accepted it as though a ceremony had been performed and a gift had been bestowed. Nevertheless, Clarissa does not seem to see anything unjust or wrong in this disproportionate exchange.

The memory of Sally's kiss is still precious to Clarissa even though the incident happened long ago. Clarissa can remember that she thrilled in response to another human being's warmth. But how she thrilled? that is another matter. Her emotional response today to that memory barely registers. The memory is a keepsake, like a dead flower; Clarissa has preserved it too completely for too long, just as she has preserved a certain virginal quality about herself. Her white hair, her narrow bed, the clean tight sheets, and the book she reads about Marbot's retreat from Moscow are symbolic of the pristine, barren result of Clarissa's decision not to attempt a vital male-female relationship.

Clarissa's going upstairs is symbolic of her retreat from the challenge of living a full, adventurous life. Quiet, unassuming Richard Dalloway and his house are the principal peripheries of Clarissa's refuge but, inside the Dalloway house, there is an even safer nook for Clarissa to hide away in. This is, appropriately, the attic room. In these private quarters of hers,

as in her deepest depths, Clarissa can be all alone; here she will not be disturbed, even at night by her husband

We feel a sense of loss as Clarissa mounts the stairs and pauses midway. The soft June air and the barking of dogs flow in through an open window and remind us of what Clarissa denies herself when she nurtures and constructs protective barriers around herself. Barking dogs (fierce unpleasantness) are vanquished but then so is warm, mild June air (simple, natural happiness). And, as we shall see more clearly later, Clarissa has not really been successful in her attempt to live peacefully and harmoniously in her sanctuary. She chose to marry Richard, not Peter, to escape the "heat o' the sun" and the "furious winter's rages" — extremes of passion and unhappiness. But Clarissa did not escape entirely. Memories of Peter still fester, Elizabeth is not maturing into the image Clarissa has for her daughter, and Miss Kilman is like an awful monster that is gaining possession of Mrs. Dalloway through Elizabeth. There is a startling contrast between the public image of Mrs. Dalloway, the hostess, and the Mrs. Dalloway that Virginia Woolf shows us.

Like the dress she mends later, Clarissa shines in artificial light (the chandelier lights of parties she gives), but in real light she is revealed to be a white-haired woman beside a narrow, white-sheeted bed. In real light, Clarissa loses color — life's coloring. We watch her contemplate her image in the mirror. Like a puppetmastcr, she purses the image's lips and draws the composure tightly together — concealing all jealousies, vanities, and suspicions. Clarissa composes her features, exactly as she mends her dress — drawing the folds together, arranging the folds in patterns, disguising the rents in the appearance. Back and forth, in and out, Mrs. Dalloway draws a needle through the waves of green silk. The silk, green and wavy, is reminiscent of the sea — of the vastness and the freedom of the sea. Mrs. Dalloway "plunges" her hands into it. Yet, true to form, she collects and orders the fabric — exactly as she has attempted to order the form of her life.

3.4 Peter's Visit

In contrast to the last scene of safe quietude, we now see Clarissa pitted against a flesh-and-blood person, one who loved Clarissa long ago. This, incidentally, is the first vigorous male introduced to us. Clarissa did meet Hugh Whitbread in the park, but he was a rather pallid specimen of manhood — stiff, stale, and "upholstered." Now Clarissa meets her opposite — a male who lives vitally every day in his life.

Having been inside Clarissa's thoughts for so many pages, we expect her to panic when Peter arrives. Her nerves are frail and her thoughts have been fanciful and light as gossamer. We expect this reunion to be painful. It is — but not in the way we anticipate. It is Peter, not Clarissa, who suffers most in this scene. Virginia Woolf surprises us; therefore, we should consider how she accomplishes this reversal.

It is also too easy to imagine Clarissa's agony. We know that she is lost in thought ... safe in her house ... quietly preparing for her party. These private moments are holy. Then Peter shatters the silence of Clarissa's sewing. Of course Clarissa is inwardly furious at the bad manners of whoever has dared trespass into her home. Frightened, she even tries to hide her dress. Then she is calm. Why the change? The answer lies in the many years Clarissa has trained herself to respond like a lady — as nearly as possible — to any situation. Composure is regained and Clarissa is happy and excited but she continues to sew, working her needle mechanically. Judging from appearances, one would never guess the extent of Clarissa's thrill at seeing Peter. Again, there is an enormous contrast between appearance and reality. Not even Peter guesses what is happening inside Clarissa. The regularity of the motion of her sewing suggests to him that she might, conceivably, have always lived no more exciting a life than just this.

We hover above Clarissa and Peter observing the disparity between what they think about themselves and each other and what they actually say to one another. As they talk, we watch the struggles beneath the talk. At the same time that Clarissa hates Peter's silly, childish ways, she loves his adventurous qualities. She feels inadequate and inferior and needs the presence of Richard or Elizabeth to strengthen her. For his part, Peter too feels inferior. He has made no fortune and has accumulated none of the expensive things that one is expected to pile

up as evidence of success. He despairs that his life has been so disorderly (full of travels, love, and work) in contrast to Richard Dalloway's undeviating years of success. What irony this is. Peter has lived a very full life yet admires values — Dalloway values — which he could not possibly emulate. And Clarissa admires qualities in Peter that she could not emulate. And how ironic it also is that Peter has come to tell Clarissa — a girl he loved long ago — that he has just recently fallen in love again. He offers Clarissa the thrill he feels about being in love — an odd gift to offer a woman who fiercely respects the privacy of feelings. Peter sits beside Clarissa exposing his secret — which, we realize, is not his love for Daisy, but his continuing love for Clarissa.

Thus we see these two old people — he, scrawny-necked but boyish; and she, white-haired and frail. They failed as lovers long ago and now they find it awkward to be friends. The conversation flares, then fades. Talk becomes touchy, so they mistakenly use the past as a crutch. The past is barbed and recalling it is like fearing open an old wound. Yet it is not the woman who breaks; it is Peter. And, above Peter's sobs we hear Clarissa, silently crying for him to take her away — meaning it, yet also not meaning it.

Later, Clarissa does call to Peter, aloud, but her attempt is pathetic. Above the roar of the open air, the traffic, and the sound of clocks striking, her offer is barely heard. These sounds — air, traffic, and clocks — are sounds of life. The rush of air, the jangle of traffic, and the noisy climax of time are far stronger than the sounds coming from Clarissa. Arid what, we should ask, is Clarissa offering to Peter? After he wanted to share the news of his impending marriage, what is she offering him? An invitation to a party. This is Clarissa's offer. She has offered Peter the role of guest when she will be hostess — the single role that Peter has said she would be destined (and damned) to play.

3.5 Peter In Regents Park

In general, this long scene is one of reflection. Like Clarissa, who has been ill and has "returned" to London, Peter also has been away; he is returning to London after five years spent in India. As Clarissa did, Peter sees London through unaccustomed eyes. He notices subtle nuances, and revels in being a part of, and within, a metropolis. Also, as Clarissa did, Peter

considers not only present time but also past time. Especially since he has just left Clarissa, he pauses to wonder, particularly about the "success" of each of their lives. We learn a good deal more now about the circumstances of Peter and Clarissa's estrangement and also more about Peter himself. Through an interior monologue, Virginia Woolf slips us chunks of exposition and a resume of Peter's character without ever seeming to interrupt the flow of the story.

Almost everything we learn about Peter and about the past is washed with irony. In the last scene, Clarissa imagined Peter free; she ached for freedom such as his. Here, however, we see that Peter is not as "free" as Clarissa imagines. He is free, but he is caged in loneliness. Clarissa and her set (that is, the Establishment) have rejected him. He has conformed to the requirements of his class insofar as he did go to India, "to the colonies," but he has always been an outsider. He does not, like Clarissa and Richard Dalloway, conform to the letter of the rules. When he was with Clarissa, we saw symbolic evidence of Peter's nonconformity. He played nervously with a pocketknife; he pared his nails; ecstatically, he confessed his love for a married woman. In contrast to Clarissa's conduct, Peter was not, by definition, an English gentleman whereas Clarissa, until she ran to cry after Peter, seemed the epitome of a disciplined English lady. In short, Peter has shown little social discipline.

Perhaps this is why Peter confesses to admiring the small unit of drilling soldiers: it is their discipline that is admirable. They are symbolic of war and of national greatness, but their real relevance to Peter lies in their quick-stepping, obedient uniformity — their thorough discipline. Their discipline is akin to Clarissa's. They — and Clarissa — follow rules, but Peter's nature refuses to be bridled with absolute obedience. Peter's play-adventure, for example, when he follows the strikingly good-looking woman, is a sample of his impulsive make-up. He has an imaginative bent, as does Clarissa, but Clarissa acts out her adventures within her mind. Peter puts his imagination into action. He is not content merely to dream and muse. He has teased Clarissa more than once for stargazing. True, it does seem a little mad of Peter, over fifty years old, to play at intrigue and follow the woman, but he does it on impulse. And, since this a book about sanity and madness, we might consider whether or not it really shows a touch of

madness to disregard common sense and play at shadowing a glamorous, strange woman. Conversely, is it really sane to always follow all the rules, as Clarissa has?

We know that Clarissa is more insecure than anyone suspects. She is able to show a composed facade. But discipline has accomplished this show of strength. In truth, both Peter and Clarissa are dreadfully lonely people, entering old age, and approaching death. Clarissa has already felt the beginning of the end of her mortality but her attitude is the antithesis of Peter's reaction. Death, Clarissa tells herself, will be a time of "Fear no more," a quiet, untroubled rest. She is attempting to reckon with death rationally, as she rationally reckoned with love — and chose Richard Dalloway. She is able to admire the vitality of Peter Walsh and Sally Seton, but she married the conventional, respected Richard Dalloway. Peter is not a rational reckoner. He was unwilling to accept Clarissa's refusal to marry him and he is as equally unwilling to accept old age and the idea of dying. Clarissa's white hair and the sound of time (the iron strokes of Big Ben) weigh heavily, but he is defiant.

Peter is caught in a dilemma. He can't be like the punctual, reliable, disciplined Establishment. Yet England wouldn't be her admirable self were it not for this same Establishment. Worse, he is still very attached to Clarissa, while unable to emulate her standards. Besides this, he has never been able to basically understand Clarissa. He wonders, for instance, if Clarissa wasn't being cold and insincere when she said, "Here's my Elizabeth." He does not realize the possibility that Clarissa might have been grasping for Elizabeth. Peter's lack of little social niceties, even though they annoyed Clarissa, were signs of Peter's deep aliveness, as was his confession of new love. Peter was feeling inferior to Clarissa and she to him, yet neither knew. Then Elizabeth appeared and Clarissa grabbed for her. Peter had his "new love" and Elizabeth, at least, was Clarissa's claim to having something. Elizabeth was a desperate trump card for Clarissa.

In the interlude while Peter dozes, Virginia Woolf talks about the disparity of appearance and reality, and we have seen throughout this novel instances of this dichotomy. We have also seen how intangible and fragile the division between the two is. We have seen the multitude of "appearances" surrounding a certain reality and the illusiveness of that reality.

When Clarissa was out for flowers, she said to herself that she would never say of Peter or herself "I am this, I am that." Of course, she does not strictly obey this vow, but for a moment she does gain this valuable insight. Peter too realizes something very much like these thoughts of Clarissa's. He realizes that long ago he knew why Clarissa annoyed him, why he was repulsed by her while at the same time loving her. Several times already he has said variations of "still, there it is" — about situations which are ridiculous and contradictory, yet — at their core — painfully human.

This realization of Peter's is that irony and ambiguity inevitably accompany most human relationships. Both Peter and Clarissa have, individually, considered and decided about the death of Clarissa's soul. Clarissa was sure that she was saving her soul when she chose to renounce Peter and marry Richard; Peter is sure, even today, that the death of Clarissa's soul began the moment that Clarissa married Richard Dalloway. In so many ways we saw that Clarissa and Peter were able to talk to one another without verbal communication, yet about this all-important point — Clarissa's soul — their ideas are antithetical.

There is also irony surrounding Peter's and Charissa's confessions of love. The day Clarissa rejected Peter is in vivid juxtaposition to the scene just finished at the Dalloway house. Earlier we saw Peter telling Clarissa about his new-found love, a married woman with children; now we see how Clarissa told Peter of her affection for Richard. Never before had Clarissa been so open and free with him. Peter, however, insisted later on Clarissa's pronouncing the truth about herself and Richard. He wept then and he wept today. He called after Clarissa then just as she called after him today. But above all other of the impressions we have about Clarissa and Peter, there is a strong pervading sense that in spite of Peter's "love" and Clarissa's "security" that each of them is still lonely for the other. When we left Clarissa calling after Peter, the mood was one of agonized loneliness. And Peter is in love, and should be happy, yet he is not.

This mood of loneliness is used as a transition. Septimus and Lucrezia Smith come into our focus. They are with Peter in the park and both of them, like Clarissa and Peter, feel isolated from one another. Like Clarissa's being unable to understand Peter's social ineptness, Lucrezia cannot understand Septimus. It seems to Lucrezia that her husband should not "act like that."

Clarissa disapproved of Peter's actions; Lucrezia disapproves of Septimus' actions — but the contrast is enormous: Septimus is insane and losing his hold on life; eventually he will toss it away. Peter has never abandoned life.

Peter of course never guesses what we know about Rezia and Septimus. And Rezia never guesses at the multitude of confusing thoughts simmering inside that "kind-looking man," as she describes him. Peter sees Rezia and Septimus and thinks that young people are freer than he was as a youth. But Peter and Sally Seton, although they were not in love with one another, were very free and candid with one another. And Rezia and Septimus are not young lovers and their quarrel is far more serious than a simple lovers' quarrel.

The sun is lulling Peter; he is basking in a brief, lazy luxury of blaming the times for his troubles. It has been a long interior monologue; Peter has tried, and failed, to fit all the pieces of the past into the empty spaces of the present.

3.6 The Doctors

The Smiths are still here in the park and, by bringing Peter to the park, Virginia Woolf provides a seemingly chance link between the two narrative threads of the novel — Clarissa's story and Septimus' story. Peter does not speak to the Smiths, nor they to him; in passing, they merely observe one another. The linking of Clarissa to Septimus, via Peter, is frail but Virginia Woolf is structuring each world — Clarissa's and Septimus'- linking them as if by chance. Later in the novel, again as if by chance, the two worlds will collide: Septimus' death will intrude upon Clarissa's party.

Up to now, Virginia Woolf has incorporated interior monologues, scenes from past and present, brief conversations, and lyric interludes into her narration; there have been few passages which could be called directly expository. Midway in her novel, however, she inserts this long section dealing with Septimus Smith — why he is insane and how his wife deals with his insanity. During the first half of the book, Clarissa (and Peter, to a lesser degree) has been stage center and the Septimus scenes have seemed only distant, distilled echoes of the lonely Clarissa-Peter situation. Virginia Woolf has pieced together the riddle of Clarissa's isolation very

artfully, but she deals differently with Septimus' situation. We are told starkly what Septimus did before the war and his madness is not explained in depth. One might naturally think that the techniques used to tell Clarissa's story might lend themselves more readily to exploring Septimus' insanity but Virginia Woolf makes a reversal. This insane situation is described almost clinically and Septimus' insanity becomes all the more horrifying thereby.

The war destroyed Septimus Smith: Virginia Woolf makes this point clear. One of the first things that we should be concerned with is what, exactly, was destroyed. Before the war, Septimus was absentminded, or at least he did not care enough about social amenities to observe them. Like Peter's playing with his pocketknife in public, Septimus neglected washing his hands. These are small matters but Virginia Woolf's style is sparse and suggests by these hints that each of these men had a streak of the rebel in him. Peter was a romantic, open, adventurous man; Septimus was a poet. He stammered, lectured on Shakespeare, did not take care of his health, kept irregular hours, and had a wistful, poetic love affair with a Miss Pole. He was thoroughly undisciplined. To his employer, he appeared to have a serious lack of manly, commercial initiative.

It was the war which, in the opinion of those who knew and worked with Septimus, made a man of him. Yet Septimus had no real grasp of what he was doing when he volunteered for the war. Virginia Woolf insists that Septimus Smith's England was not the England of most soldiers. His England existed only in literature. It was not to save an economically and politically distressed island that Septimus went forth to war.

Septimus himself, for a time, became proud of his manly nonemotional reaction to military carnage. He faced death and did not flinch: this was what it meant to be a mature man. Before the war, Septimus had been a disciple of literary romance; during the war, he was converted to the popular romance of the brave, undaunted hero one sees on recruiting posters. Ironically, the war did not metamorphose Septimus into a man: the war emasculated Septimus. It left him in horror of himself. He was a tragic casualty — a walking corpse because he could not care any longer what happened to himself or anyone else. His capacity for compassion was destroyed and he is very conscious of what has been lost.

The paragraphs Virginia Woolf devotes to Septimus shimmer. The broken pieces of his intellect and imagination turn like a mobile of wind chimes, changing colors, turning, reflecting whatever brushes them. He and Rezia are as different as a wildly abstract painting and a primitive domestic scene. Rezia is at a loss to know why her English husband is so complex; all she wants is a HAPPY HOME and babies. Thus she calls in the doctors. As a simple person, she believes that there must be a simple solution to Septimus' problems.

The doctors in this scene are monstrous. Virginia Woolf is bitter in her portrayal. One, Holmes, is a professional ignoramous and a lecher; he is a smiling villain. He thinks Septimus cannot really be ill because there is no germ. But he continues to treat him because he enjoys ogling Rezia. If Holmes is ineffectual, however, Sir William Bradshaw is even worse. He recognizes that Septimus is on the verge of a nervous collapse but he is eager to experiment with Septimus. Ironically, he is an unfeeling doctor, the very worst type to help Septimus. He does not really care about Septimus, and yet Septimus' concern about his own inability to care has driven him insane. Bradshaw, like the soldiers Peter saw drilling, is an example of what rigid discipline can produce. He meticulously trained himself, crossed social class barriers, and emerged inhuman — full of platitudes, STOCK optimism, sterile knowledge, and an aggravating sense of inferiority. Bradshaw wants power; he demands that his patients be absolutely submissive. Ironically, Rezia brought Septimus to the doctors so that Septimus' alienation could be cured; she is even more alienated from her husband when the scene ends and soon the doctors will demand that Septimus be physically separated from her.

3.7 At Lady Bruton's

Halfway through Mrs. Dalloway, Richard Dalloway makes his first appearance. However, he is still not our main concern. Virginia Woolf is far more interested in showing us Lady Bruton and, to a lesser degree, Hugh Whitbread, than she is in introducing us to Clarissa's husband. In her diary, Mrs. Woolf wrote that she wanted to criticize the social system in this novel. Here, in the character of Lady Bruton and Hugh Whitbread, she makes a critical jab. In the preceding scene, she exposed Holmes and Bradshaw's slavish devotion to appearances; here she uses an entire scene to gently ridicule certain English manners. The small luncheon party scene is a

foretaste, a miniature of the later, climactic party scene. It shows us the hypocrisy, the fear, and also the boredom which are beneath the surface of social amenities.

Virginia Woolf satirizes English pomp and stuffiness. As the scene begins, Lady Bruton is presented as monied, imperious, and brusque; by the time the scene is over, we have watched Lady Bruton weaken, grow fearful, and become downright obedient. Hugh Whitbread appears to be a milquetoast, but he is brutish in that he is robot-like — a specimen of super discipline. He has no imagination and little emotion; he has followed all the right roads, said all the right things, and, unlike Peter Walsh, he has never been caught in a social faux pas.

In contrast to Clarissa Dalloway (who admires but admits feeling inadequate next to Hugh), Lady Bruton does not admire Mr. Whitbread. He is able to impress Clarissa with a sense of sound money, gentle birth, and impeccable breeding, but Lady Bruton thinks of him as decidedly ill-bred. The only crack in Lady Bruton's polished manner is her inability to write well. To fill this deficiency she is dependent on a master of disciplined form, social and rhetorical: Hugh Whitbread. It is little wonder that, because her illustrious ancestors were responsible for vision and victory in Britain, she is pained at being dependent on this perfectly turned, un-human cog. But Lady Bruton is not the only one dependent on Hugh. So is Peter; Hugh already expects that he will have to write a letter of recommendation for Peter Walsh.

Besides revealing that sterility and sham lie under certain social manners, Virginia Woolf is also linking her "tunnels," as she calls them, that she is digging beneath each of her characters. All three of these people — Lady Bruton, Hugh Whitbread, and Richard Dalloway — were on the periphery of Peter and Clarissa's love affair. The past again intrudes on the present; no one at the luncheon party has forgotten Peter's passionate love for Clarissa. This germinates a vow in Richard Dalloway — one that he will repeat, in vain, to himself numerous times — that he will tell Clarissa that he loves her.

3.8 Richard and Clarissa

Clarissa Dalloway's character was introduced to us in fragments; but the pieces were large and began to fit together rather easily. Our introduction to Richard, on the other hand,

has existed only in very small fragments so far — as an instant in memory (Clarissa's) or in contrast to another character (Peter Walsh). In this scene, the fragments fasten themselves to a large, chapter length portrait, and we finally meet the man Clarissa preferred to Peter Walsh.

Certainly Virginia Woolf has nursed our curiosity about Richard Dalloway. Peter Walsh has told us a few things about him, as has Lady Bruton, but sometimes one person's comments about another will reveal infinitely more about himself than about the other person. Peter's judgment, for example, that Richard would be far happier in Norfolk than in London, should be held in suspension until we hear or have verification from Richard himself; it's possible that Peter could have been rationalizing. As it turns out Peter's intuition was accurate; Richard is nostalgic for Norfolk. He is not merely the vague English official that has been suggested by various hints. He is sensitive to the feel of the wind, the color of the sky, and the movements of grass. He is like Clarissa in this respect. But, unlike Clarissa, he is not resistant. Clarissa resists too-active sensual experiences and active male-female relationships, where Richard is more pliable, both with Clarissa and with a stuffed shirt like Hugh Whitbread. Richard's pliability is seen in the manner in which he acquiesces to Clarissa's needs and notions about the temper of their marriage, and because he is naturally amiable, he gives in to Hugh's whims.

Here Virginia Woolf shows us a situation in which Richard is aware that Hugh is a prig and poseur yet follows him into the jewelry store anyway. Therefore we realize that Richard lets Hugh make demands of him, just as he lets Clarissa make demands of him. In other words, Richard lets himself be carried along. And thus by characterizing Richard in this way, Virginia Woolf moves imperceptibly from character to motif. She speaks again of tides and seas and we realize that wave-like, scene by scene, we — and the characters of this drama — are being carried along toward the shore, where the party will climax the novel. Then all will recede — back into the past, back into the sea, back into memory. Throughout this novel, Virginia Woolf has taken us on toward the party, inserting the sound of clocks as they marked off the end of one wave, one moment of this day, then merged us into the next moment to carry us farther.

In this scene in the jewelry shop, while Hugh is being a pompous boor about a piece of Spanish jewelry, we note a difference between Richard Dalloway and Peter Walsh. Peter is a

romantic, he follows dreams, and he also follows people (the girl on the street), but he made the girl the object of a playful quest. Richard Dalloway also follows people, but he follows them doggedly. He is not very romantic, in either an adventurous or an amorous sense. His thoughts about a present for Clarissa are tainted with apology and fear. He has never been successful with his gifts to her; he does not dare actually buy jewelry for Clarissa. Instead he chooses flowers. Flowers, of course, are lovely and thoughtful. But only a few pages back, we saw another man offering flowers to a woman: Hugh Whitbread gave them to Lady Bruton: he gave them to his hostess. Now Richard will reject the idea of jewelry and decide on a gift of flowers and present them to Clarissa, another hostess. Virginia Woolf's sense of irony is keen.

Richard chooses flowers because they can be given, and accepted, impersonally. He dares not break a certain silent compact between himself and Clarissa and make any situation too personal. Clarissa did not dare marry Peter Walsh; Richard does not dare buy too personal a present for Clarissa. He is hesitant about daring to really love her, just as she was hesitant about daring to love Peter Walsh. Richard's fear of crossing Piccadilly, while several children nonchalantly scamper across, is indicative of this timidity. He has lost a life in the country by marrying Clarissa; she let herself lose Peter Walsh. Clarissa fled to Richard and has infected him with certain of her fears. He must now observe certain rules of behavior with his wife if he is to preserve their untroubled union. When Virginia Woolf says that Richard carries his flowers "as a weapon" as he crosses the park and approaches the female vagrant, she intends for us to understand that he also carries the flowers as a weapon against saying the unsaid "I love you" to his wife. He is afraid to be natural and impetuous. How paradoxical that flowers — natural and beautiful — should be a substitute and a defense against the natural and beautiful "I love you."

When we compare Richard's arrival with Peter's earlier arrival, we find that Clarissa is upset in both scenes. She is not, however, upset by Richard as she was by Peter. Invitations, obligations, and Elizabeth's relationship with Doris Kilman vex her — but Richard does not. In fact, she does not even respond, initially, to Richard. She responds to the flowers. Their relationship, in this first scene together, seems almost as empty as the drawing room with its

chairs moved back against the wall. For a few minutes, like the flowers "at first bunched together," Clarissa talks quickly about Hugh and Peter, and Richard talks quickly about Hugh and Lady Bruton; then, like the flowers, the two people begin "starting apart." And Richard must be off — separating — like the flowers.

When Richard is gone, Clarissa thinks him silly for wanting her to follow the doctor's orders, but this is quite in keeping with what we have seen of Richard. He follows doctors' orders because he follows Clarissa's own unspoken orders. He respects and observes the gulf Clarissa wishes to remain between them. She tells herself that she "loves her roses" more than the Albanians Richard has gone to confer with and we recall Peter Walsh's long-ago taunt that he preferred people to cauliflowers. What is important to Clarissa: people or cauliflowers?

She says she likes life so we must consider what her sense of life is. At her parties people gather and talk and this satisfies Clarissa. For herself, she has created a life-situation. Can we condemn her for her definition of life? For she is not just a cold, cocktail party hostess; we know that. We have seen that she is responsive to the poetic and to the imaginary; her impressions of atmosphere, people and time are most sensitive. But we must also realize too that parties are arranged situations. There is little that is natural or spontaneous about them until cocktails have warmed the cold contact between the guests. People wear their best faces and best manners to parties. They keep one another at a certain social distance. Of course Clarissa enjoys party situations with their observed, good-mannered, friendly distances. This metaphysical distance around one is what supremely matters to her. Parties are Clarissa's gift; these are her own words — her gift — meaning her special talent — and her special present to life.

3.9 Elizabeth and Her Tutor

It is far more interesting to consider the tutor, Miss Kilman, than it is to consider Elizabeth Dalloway. Perhaps this is true because Virginia Woolf, like Milton and many other writers, produces tour de force creations in her villains. And certainly Miss Kilman is a villain — and a magnificently created one. She is the counterpart of the doctors in the Septimus scenes; they are after Septimus' soul, she is after Clarissa's.

When Mrs. Dalloway was out for flowers this morning, she thought of death — and tried not to fear it; it seemed to promise an end to fearing. Far more than death, we realized when the scene was ended, Mrs. Dalloway fears Doris Kilman. She thinks of the tutor as a tyrant, as a blood-sucking, nocturnal spectre. A monster, she calls her, with "hooves" that threaten "that leaf-encumbered forest, the soul." She is like a heathen invader and it is apropos that when we first meet Miss Kilman she is on the landing, outside Clarissa Dalloway's door. She is outside the Dalloway's social class — and fiercely jealous of their easy manners, their money, and their position. She is a bulky, mackintoshed bundle of hate and self-deception.

Doris Kilman's self-deception has two poles — the secular and the sacred: concerning the first, she was hired to teach history to Elizabeth, theoretically a subject for objectivity, but Miss Kilman lacks all sense of objectivity. She is convinced she has a right to all that the Dalloways possess. Why? For one reason: because she is poor. Her reasoning is that Mrs. Dalloway does not deserve money or social position because her life has been full of vanity and deceit. If this were true, however, Miss Kilman could not logically claim the Dalloway prize either because she herself is fiercely vain. She is a reverse snob. She wears her old, smelly mackintosh as a proud insignia — to show that she is poor and that she is not trying to look as though she belongs to another, higher, social class. The impression is fraudulent.

Miss Kilman's other pole of self-deception, her sacred dimension, is her main source of strength — and hate. She has turned to religion for solace and peace but does not realize that she is actually waging a small-scale holy war against Clarissa Dalloway. She gives herself absurd grandeur by comparing her suffering in life with Christ's agony. Like the church, she is dogmatic, and like all invaders who wage holy wars, she is terribly self-righteous. She is after Clarissa's soul, the goal of the church, and also the most sacred, individual possession of Mrs. Dalloway. Ironically, Clarissa feared males, rebelling against their tradition-conferred domination. She idealized the natural, easy comradeship of "women together." Yet here, in Doris Kilman, is a monster far more terrifying than any man in Clarissa's life. And, though we see that Clarissa can face Miss Kilman in the flesh, it is the idea of Miss Kilman that terrifies her — the vulgar,

envious, destructive force that, like a serpent, has slipped into the Dalloway house and threatens to poison and destroy Clarissa.

Miss Kilman, the sweaty, mackintoshed tutor, looks like a nobody; no one would guess the degree of frustrated possessiveness seething in her: if only she can gain Elizabeth, she will have succeeded, as a first step, in conquering Clarissa Dalloway. Her appearance successfully disguises her goal. But Virginia Woolf shows us Doris Kilman's real nature. When, for example, Miss Kilman is eating in the restaurant with Elizabeth, we see her eating "with intensity" — greedily gobbling down the pink sugared cakes and consuming the chocolate eclairs. Ugly, plain Miss Kilman is trying to devour Clarissa Dalloway and Elizabeth. She is hungry for Clarissa's loveliness, for Elizabeth's youth, for money, poise, and class — arid the cakes and pastries will never sate her. As she stuffs the delicacies into her mouth, we notice her hands. They open and close, the fingers curling inward. It reminds us of the convulsive, spreading claws of a cat who is intent on its prey.

Virginia Woolf does not leave us with thorough hatred for Doris Kilman, however; she draws us back and gives us the distance to pity this thwarted creature. Her last words, in fact, as she calls after Elizabeth are "Don't quite forget me." They are very much like the words Clarissa called after Elizabeth as she left the house, "Remember the party." Both women, Clarissa and Doris, are frightened of loneliness. Clarissa's parties are her restorative, but Miss Kilman has no such solace, not even in the church. She feels that Clarissa has won and that she has lost. Her love for Elizabeth and her hate for Clarissa have torn her apart.

Clarissa, on the other hand, fears that Doris Kilman has won the battle for Elizabeth. Neither woman, we realize, has won thus far. If Elizabeth belongs to anyone, which is doubtful, it might be her father. Like Richard, she is pliable. She allows Miss Kilman to dominate much of her time, just as Richard allows Hugh Whitbread to corral him into the jewelry shop. And, also like her father, she prefers being in the country to London. Parties tire her and compliments are beginning to bore her. She is, according to her class, disciplined; so she returns punctually for Clarissa's party. But Elizabeth has not begun to really either live or love yet. She is only at the brink of adulthood. What will Elizabeth eventually be like? It's impossible to say because in

addition to being like her father, she is carrying her mother's sense of privacy. She daydreams of helping other people, but it is as the mistress of a grand manor that she sees herself — making the rounds, checking on the health of the workers. It is a silly, adolescent ideal but it does contain this kernel: she would help others, she would love — but from a distance, a social distance, in this case, but still a distance.

3.10 The Suicide

Of all the novel, Virginia Woolf found it hardest to write Septimus' mad scenes. She herself had suffered long periods of insanity and it was painful to recall the visions and the sounds she hallucinated. These scenes, however, besides containing the ruins of a lyric, poetic mind, are some of the most concrete in the novel. There is a terrifying sense of what it is like to be insane, to have one's mind lucid one moment, displaced the next. Solids become liquids, lights become shadows, colors glow and fade. The change from moments of sanity to moments of insanity follow a rhythmic ebb and flow, a rhythm already noted which is much like a continuing heartbeat behind the actions of the novel. The sound and the sense of the sea is continually with Septimus — and especially in this section.

Septimus' feeling of being very far away is akin to Clarissa's feeling early this morning as she strolled through London. His "Fear no more" is her comfort. From what he has dictated to Rezia, he seems to have come to terms with death, a subject which has also been on Clarissa's mind. His "there is no death" is very similar to Clarissa's belief that bits of her self will continue after she is gone, becoming parts of trees, air, people, water. Indeed, the touch of the neurotic in Clarissa, and in the other characters, is paralleled and condensed into madness in Septimus. As Miss Kilman has just done, he cries out against human cruelty. Yet Septimus is not cruel. People who dominate are cruel — whether it is within the drama of war or of single personal relations. In Septimus' case it is both. The war destroyed him; now the doctors have come to feed on him. "Holmes is on us," he says. Miss Kilman is after Clarissa's soul, but Clarissa has prized her soul for a very long time; she married to protect it and has built social and psychological barriers around it. Septimus was broken by the violence of war and can no longer defend himself — nor can the lonely, foreign Rezia defend him. Doctor Holmes has come to

invade Septimus' most private depths; like Miss Kilman, Holmes and Bradshaw are obsessed with what Clarissa and Septimus fear most: possession. The opponents of Clarissa and Septimus are all from classes lower than the best, but they have been granted admittance through perseverence, education, and employment. They do not demand equality in the new class; they demand domination. Septimus characterizes Holmes as having red nostrils and as "snuffing into every secret place."

This is very much like the descriptions of the monster, Miss Kilman, who threatens Clarissa Dalloway. Both Miss Kilman and Dr. Holmes believe that they have a right to their victims.

Septimus' last words, "I'll give it you," are ironic. Since Holmes intends to carry Septimus off, Septimus gives himself — that is, his physical body — to the doctor. But his soul he refuses to give up. He leaps out to preserve, through death, the privacy of himself. Holmes calls Septimus a coward, but his name-calling smacks of a villain's "Foiled!" Holmes cannot understand why Septimus has jumped, but for the first time Rezia und**erstands her husband.**

3.11 Before the Party

The first sentence in this scene is transitional, linking Septimus' suicide — a major occurrence — with a random observation that Peter Walsh makes. The speed and the noise of the passing AMBULANCE suggest to Peter one of the "triumphs of civilization." This is nothing more than a commonplace, a pause to appreciate the scientific mind and its achievement. Yet in the preceding scene we were concerned with the same subjects — science and triumph. The scene ended, however, not with the scientists' triumph but with Septimus' triumph. He refused to submit; his "self" was precious; he believed in its sanctity and its mystery; and he died to preserve that mystery. There is irony in Peter's speaking of efficiency and organization so soon after Septimus' suicide, as there is irony in Septimus' receiving no respect when he was alive while the ambulance, possibly carrying his mangled body, prompts Peter's respect.

Peter's marveling at the invention of the automobile recalls the fascination of the townspeople for the black limousine early in the novel. Men are dazzled by things, by titles on

people, by skywritings, but they approach one another with closed minds, pre-judgments, and scientific curiosity. Too often they are devoid of awe for the greatest miracle of all: the diversity and the mystery of the human personality. Certainly our own appreciation for the human mind becomes enriched as we read this book. Virginia Woolf offers us the human personality in its most disciplined sanity and in its most chaotic insanity.

As Peter continues to reflect, his observations are echoes of ideas we have already been concerned with. The idea of life and death merging and coming together are forces at work within Clarissa, as they were within Septimus. When Peter identifies his flaw as his "susceptibility," we remember that Clarissa also shares this flaw. Both have skeins of naked nerves; both are vulnerable to beauty, both register sensitive insights into life, yet Clarissa has sheltered her flaw within Richard Dalloway's gentle protectiveness. Peter has no such refuge from reality. He has never been able to disguise or master his intensities — but then he was not able to master Clarissa either; she feared too much the conjunction of their susceptibilities.

Clarissa's idea this morning about people not really dying but becoming part of other people takes on another meaning now. As the day of Wednesday, June 23, has passed, Virginia Woolf has caught moments, touched them with water imagery, and offered them to us as happening before our eyes. But do they fade and die? No, they become part of many people's memories; they become like snapshots imprinted on the leaves of memory. They will blur, but they will be waiting for a place or a phrase to recall them.

Consider the memory-snapshots Peter takes out tonight. They once were "moments" too, unfamiliar moments to us; Clarissa, breathless, on the upper deck of a bus, babbling to Peter; Clarissa in the country; Clarissa on a hilltop, pointing, her cloak blowing out; and Clarissa, spontaneous, arguing, discussing. True, Clarissa while walking through London this morning recalled plunging into the spring air when she was a girl, but the Clarissa we see very frequently straightens herself upright when she feels herself physically, or mentally, slumping. Her imagination soars and plunges, but what of the woman herself? This Clarissa has avoided spontaneity between herself and Peter, and between herself and Richard. Does Peter see, then, the Clarissa we have seen in our moments with her? Or does he see another Clarissa beyond

the white-haired, beak-nosed woman we watched mending her sea-green dress? We cannot but like Peter's memories of Clarissa. The Clarissa he is in love with, the young girl on the hill, is a captivating creature — twinkling, a bit of a nymph, thoroughly lovely. How often, we must wonder, was Clarissa like the girl he remembers? Has his memory been idealized, colored with his own imagination? For Peter is imaginative. Even now he is imaginatively trying to re-create what was happening within Clarissa as she wrote the letter he receives.

Abruptly Virginia Woolf moves us into Daisy's mind. We see Peter through Daisy's eyes and he becomes different from the man we know as Peter Walsh. Daisy sees Peter as having reserves, as being a bookish gentleman, and as being the best judge of cooking in India. Again Virginia Woolf is showing us the variety of selves that inhabit a human being under the guise of a single name. It would seem that Peter does not toy with his pocketknife when he is with Daisy, as he does with Clarissa; nor does he sob uncontrollably with Daisy. The man Daisy describes sounds more like Richard or Hugh. Daisy evokes certain attitudes and responses from Peter; Clarissa evokes entirely different facets of Peter's personality.

And what kind of a marriage will Peter and Daisy have? More than likely, paradoxically, Peter's thoughts lead us to believe that it might become a marriage very much like Clarissa and Richard's. With Clarissa, Peter, although in his fifties, is like a young boy responding to the young girl in Clarissa that he knew and will always remember. With Daisy, Peter is fiftyish. Note how conservative he is about this marriage, compared to the one he had hoped for with Clarissa. He considers the quiet of being alone, and of being "sufficient to himself." These attitudes are foreign to his relationship with Clarissa, yet they are what he is contemplating after he marries the 24-year-old Daisy.

Peter is lonely as the scene ends. This theme pervades the novel. The strangers whom Peter meets at dinner do their best to establish a satisfying link, through small talk, with Peter. Peter has tried to re-establish a link with Clarissa; he has thought about the links he is forging with Daisy. People go to parties to link together, to not be lonely. People give parties to offer the opportunity for other people, for a moment, to link; for a moment, not to be lonely.

3.12 The Party

Like the birds on the curtain that blows back and forth during the party, we flit in and out of the party. First we are in the mind of one of the guests, then we are above and listening to that guest speak; we note incongruities, Virginia Woolf's satiric touches, then move on to another guest. The pace is fast, the tempo is party-like. Out of scraps and impressions, this scene is constructed to give us the noise, the smells, the rhythm of a party, and to give us omniscience. We note the mannered fraudulence and dramatic ironies. Most of the novel's cast are here, brought together for a moment in time, as Virginia Woolf ties together the narrative threads of her novel.

Among some of the incongruities and dramatic ironies, we note Elizabeth Dalloway wearing the necklace her father gave her. Her mother, remember, has never been satisfied by Richard's choice of jewelry; Richard gave Clarissa a bracelet once but she has never worn it. And, while on the subject of Elizabeth, note that while she is standing, elegantly and handsomely adorning the party as the Dalloways' daughter, she radiates composed loveliness: she knows she does. People compare her to a lily or a willow: she knows they do. Yet she never betrays her lack of interest in her mother's party or her continuing concern over her dog, which has been shut up for the evening. We see surface impressions, then dive inward and see an entirely different sort of reality. Virginia Woolf has continually taken us backstage. And it is literally backstage that we begin the party scene. This section begins with the maids bustling and worrying. Foods are described and the comedy among the cooks and the servants is recorded; the party preparations are solid support for Virginia Woolf's impressionistic style; they anchor the scene and give it balance. Then, besides cleverly taking us through the kitchen before we are admitted to the party, Virginia Woolf slyly slips in Peter Walsh's entrance to the party. It would be easy to overlook his entrance for he is included with several "Lords" and "Ladies" and "Sirs" and only his last name is announced by Wilkins.

Some of the irony in this scene is tender, like the differing responses of mother and daughter to Richard's gifts of jewelry. But most of the irony is wry. We are sure that Clarissa will manage her party most efficiently but, at its beginning, she has a bad case of nerves. Clarissa is

timid, sure she will be awkward, and sure that Peter can spot the cracks in her composure. Her frustration is therefore piled on Ellie Henderson, whom Clarissa considers a bore. Ellie is standing alone, like a DOLT, but inside she is as unnerved and panicky as Clarissa. Likewise, Lady Bruton assumes a regal air, yet we learned at her luncheon that parties terrify her. In fact, strangely, the person who seems to be most enjoying the party is Richard Dalloway. He talks easily to the titled guests, eases Ellie's terror, and is truly delighted to discover and talk with Peter Walsh. Richard is far more at ease than his wife. Clarissa, the hostess, of course, recalls Peter's taunt. Her fears remind us that Peter has as much as said that she would turn into a wooden, party-giving robot.

Certainly Clarissa is not robot-like, but the one thing Clarissa has done with her life is give it design. She has tried to make her life sane and safe; she realizes that it does have a certain wooden quality. And we realize this fact even more thoroughly when Sally Seton appears. Sally is still a good deal like Peter. Neither one follows the rules if they choose not to. Sally comes to Clarissa's party without an invitation. Peter burst in on Clarissa unexpectedly earlier in the afternoon. Both were, and still are, impulsive people. Sally is sure that Clarissa disapproves of her marrying a self-made man and having five sons. And Peter, by the same token, is sure that Clarissa disapproves of his never having gotten rich or obtaining a really fine position. Yet both are still fascinated with Clarissa — and she is still fascinated by each of them. Why? Perhaps for that answer we must return to our original question: Who is Mrs. Dalloway?

We realize the futility of answering such a question. It is a question that Virginia Woolf tried not to answer with a portrait, but with a novel-as-sketch. Human beings, she knew, are mixtures. So is the present — and the past. Within themselves, human beings are composed of their concepts, their memories, and their presents; and, in the eyes of other people, the same human beings are composed of another set of impressions, emotions, and distortions. To get a true sense of Clarissa Dalloway, one must not look for a clearly outlined, traditionally dimensioned reproduction of a fictional character. The pieces of Clarissa which Virginia Woolf has given us do fit together, but each person's impression of Clarissa must be considered as being separate, yet valid; then if we realize this, and draw back and see the novel as a sketch, as

shadowy, as a series of gestures, and not as a complete, composed picture, we see a work of art far more exciting and multi-dimensional than had the author merely created a conventional figure in a conventional plot.

The novel ends as Clarissa is approaching Peter. We end by observing Clarissa Dalloway, along with Peter, as he says, "there she was." We see multiple images; we see the mystery, the variety and the richness of a human being who is far more than a hostess. We are particularly aware of the mystery because the spirit of our age is scientific and too often we expect when we finish a book to say, "I know all about that character." One cannot say that about Clarissa Dalloway. We have continually seen how different people interpret what they see and what they hear.

Who is Mrs. Dalloway: Is she the girl on the hilltop who, within Peter's memory, will remain forever on the hilltop, pointing toward the river? Is she the plumed bird Scrope Purvis saw perched stiffly on the curb? Is she the vain, emotionless grande dame whom Doris Kilman sees? Is she the recluse in the tower room? Is she the frail white-haired lady, mending a dress, crying silently for Peter to take her away? Is she the young girl Sally Seton impulsively kissed? Is she the flower-buyer, deeply and deliciously inhaling the sweet odors of lilacs and roses? Is she the generous, composed lady that Lucy the maid sees? To the doctors, would she be a latent Lesbian who is frigid and harboring paranoid tendencies? Is she a complete stranger, yet someone who knows more thoroughly than even Rezia why Septimus committed suicide?

The list could continue but, concerning Septimus, Clarissa certainly does understand why fie killed himself She is as aware of the reason for his death as she is that the Bradshaws use the suicide as an excuse for being late. Septimus and Clarissa are linked at last. The suicide unnerves Clarissa at first, just as Peter Walsh earlier startled her. Death is an intruder but Clarissa conceals her anxiety well; she has a true lady's discipline. No one, unless it be Peter, would guess at the tumult of emotion that blazes beneath Clarissa's pale, thin exterior. Clarissa understands that Septimus kept his "soul" through death, the ultimate weapon against Fate. Clarissa has preserved herself, her soul, in Richard Dalloway's house and within a social milieu that does not condone violence either in life or death. She prepares her days of living, just as

she is trying to prepare for death. She considers consequences, lives carefully — thus is awed, and not a little envious of Peter Walsh, who has flung himself at life, and of Septimus Smith, who has flung himself at death.

4. Character Analysis

4.1 Clarissa Dalloway

Clarissa has just recovered from an illness and is still frail. Her husband tries to protect her, urging her to follow doctors' orders, but then Richard has always tried to protect his wife. Despite the fact that she enjoys giving parties, Clarissa is basically shy, and Richard is also shy; therefore each is considerate and thoughtfully protective of the other. There are verbal and emotional boundaries Clarissa does not cross and there are just such boundaries that Richard does not cross. He thinks that Clarissa's preoccupation with her parties is foolish but he never tells her outright; she is aware of his attitude because of what he doesn't say. Likewise, Clarissa is unconcerned about Richard's interests in governmental affairs; he knows about her feelings but neither one of them verbalizes what they know about each other. They do their best not to hurt one another.

There is strength in the love between Richard and Clarissa, but the strength is not made up of years of toughened scar tissue. The love between Richard and Clarissa has no scars. It is strong because both have tended it and have not torn it with slashes of anger, then repaired it with re-doubled affection. The love between Clarissa and Richard is literally that: between them. It binds them, loosely, but it is also a barrier- self-imposed and, for each of their sakes, protective.

Richard would like a life in the country, with dogs, but he is not able to demand it for himself. A country life is a lost dream; he is happier and more secure in his governmental post, living with his gentle, well-bred wife. Like her husband, Clarissa also has a lost dream: she would like to be able to live as fully as she realizes Peter Walsh does. But long ago Clarissa, according to what she knew about herself, realized that she would never be able to join Peter in his adventure in living. Their values were too different. Peter wanted to share himself and all that he experienced. Clarissa believed that she would never be able to — nor would Peter be

able to — break away all of the fears she had about men and women and life, set herself free, and be happy. Clarissa valued her "soul" too much to give it to Peter. She was afraid of surrendering to Peter, or to life, and accepting "the heat of the sun" and "winter's furious rages." She shied away from the way Peter loved life. She married Richard Dalloway so that she could love life in her own intense, but inward, fashion.

In her own way, Clarissa does respond to living. Mrs. Dalloway contains many examples of Clarissa's response to life. She enjoys flowers deeply, inhaling their delicate sweetness and their rich earthy odors; the air rushes over her skin and she thrills to its wave-like sensations; the jangling noise of cars and street vendors stir within her. She is sensitive to the "moment," to the "poetry of existence" in all its sensual dimensions — but the excitement goes only to Clarissa's own boundaries. Unlike Peter, she is not driven to share experiences; unless Peter can "share" a moment, its value is not wholly consummated. In this sense, Clarissa is still virginal.

4.2 Septimus Warren Smith

Septimus Warren Smith is the other side of the coin in this study of sanity and insanity. Septimus went to war, he tried to defend his country, and he attempted to become a "man." He lost. Clarissa did not do battle; she withdrew and married a safe man who would not dare her to be more of a woman than she believed herself capable of being. And she lost. She believed that marriage would destroy both herself and Peter. She considered consequences; Septimus did not.

When the novel begins, both Clarissa and Septimus are out and about in London. Both absorb the exquisite beauty, but Clarissa does not weep at what she sees and hears and feels. She does not release and exude her excitement. Her reactions and Septimus' are similar but Septimus' are far more intense.

Both Septimus and Clarissa feel that they are outside, looking on, and at the same time dashing headlong through life. They are both alternately very happy, then very worried and fearful. Virginia Woolf shows us the moment of terror in Septimus' heart and then relates it to what supremely matters to Clarissa. To her, what supremely matters is what one "feels" — and

what terrifies Septimus is that he cannot "feel." Yet despite their similarities, Clarissa and Septimus do differ. Septimus is concerned that he cannot feel and care for another person; he is horrified that he is unable to feel as, say, Peter Walsh might feel. Clarissa is afraid of "feeling too completely." Clarissa is a bit guilty of Sir William Bradshaw's sin — of giving service to Proportion. But, one might ask, what is one to do if he, like Clarissa, is convinced that he is not capable of flinging himself at life — and surviving? Should he make himself a willing victim? Clarissa is unlike Peter and Sally and Septimus; she does not have their abandon nor their flair for rebellion.

The quality most central to Clarissa and Septimus is their insistence on no one's having power over them. Septimus refuses to let Bradshaw use him for experimentation and Clarissa is equally as defiant of Miss Kilman's determination to dominate her. But Clarissa has also refused Richard's, and Peter's, intimacy because of her intense fear of domination. In this novel Virginia Woolf includes flaws and impurities in her major characters so that human nature, and not metaphors, are revealed.

5. Stylistic Devices of the Novel

5.1 Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

Communication vs. Privacy

Throughout Mrs. Dalloway, Clarissa, Septimus, Peter, and others struggle to find outlets for communication as well as adequate privacy, and the balance between the two is difficult for all to attain. Clarissa in particular struggles to open the pathway for communication and throws parties in an attempt to draw people together. At the same time, she feels shrouded within her own reflective soul and thinks the ultimate human mystery is how she can exist in one room while the old woman in the house across from hers exists in another. Even as Clarissa celebrates the old woman’s independence, she knows it comes with an inevitable loneliness. Peter tries to explain the contradictory human impulses toward privacy and communication by

comparing the soul to a fish that swims along in murky water, then rises quickly to the surface to frolic on the waves. The war has changed people's ideas of what English society should be, and understanding is difficult between those who support traditional English society and those who hope for continued change. Meaningful connections in this disjointed postwar world are not easy to make, no matter what efforts the characters put forth. Ultimately, Clarissa sees Septimus's death as a desperate, but legitimate, act of communication.

Disillusionment with the British Empire

Throughout the nineteenth century, the British Empire seemed invincible. It expanded into many other countries, such as India, Nigeria, and South Africa, becoming the largest empire the world had ever seen. World War I was a violent reality check. For the first time in nearly a century, the English were vulnerable on their own land. The Allies technically won the war, but the extent of devastation England suffered made it a victory in name only. Entire communities of young men were injured and killed. In 1916, at the Battle of the Somme, England suffered 60,000 casualties—the largest slaughter in England's history. Not surprisingly, English citizens lost much of their faith in THE EMPIRE after the war. No longer could England claim to be invulnerable and all-powerful. Citizens were less inclined to willingly adhere to the rigid constraints imposed by England's class system, which benefited only a small margin of society but which all classes had fought to preserve.

In 1923, when Mrs. Dalloway takes place, the old establishment and its oppressive values are nearing their end. English citizens, including Clarissa, Peter, and Septimus, feel the failure of the empire as strongly as they feel their own personal failures. Those citizens who still champion English tradition, such as Aunt Helena and Lady Bruton, are old. Aunt Helena, with her glass eye (perhaps a symbol of her inability or unwillingness to see the empire's disintegration), is turning into an artifact. Anticipating the end of the Conservative Party's reign, Richard plans to write the history of the great British military family, the Brutons, who are already part of the past. The old empire faces an imminent demise, and the loss of the traditional and familiar social order leaves the English at loose ends.

The Fear of Death

Thoughts of death lurk constantly beneath the surface of everyday life in Mrs. Dalloway, especially for Clarissa, Septimus, and Peter, and this awareness makes even mundane events and interactions meaningful, sometimes even threatening. At the very start of her day, when she goes out to buy flowers for her party, Clarissa remembers a moment in her youth when she suspected a terrible event would occur. Big Ben tolls out the hour, and Clarissa repeats a line from Shakespeare's Cymbeline over and over as the day goes on: "Fear no more the heat o' the sun / Nor the furious winter's rages." The line is from a funeral song that celebrates death as a comfort after a difficult life. Middle-aged Clarissa has experienced the deaths of her father, mother, and sister and has lived through the calamity of war, and she has grown to believe that living even one day is dangerous. Death is very naturally in her thoughts, and the line from Cymbeline, along with Septimus's suicidal embrace of death, ultimately helps her to be at peace with her own mortality. Peter Walsh, so insecure in his identity, grows frantic at the idea of death and follows an anonymous young woman through London to forget about it. Septimus faces death most directly. Though he fears it, he finally chooses it over what seems to him a direr alternative—living another day.

The Threat of Oppression

Oppression is a constant threat for Clarissa and Septimus in Mrs. Dalloway, and Septimus dies in order to escape what he perceives to be an oppressive social pressure to conform. It comes in many guises, including religion, science, or social convention. Miss Kilman and Sir William Bradshaw are two of the major oppressors in the novel: Miss Kilman dreams of felling Clarissa in the name of religion, and Sir William would like to subdue all those who challenge his conception of the world. Both wish to convert the world to their belief systems in order to gain power and dominate others, and their rigidity oppresses all who come into contact with them. More subtle oppressors, even those who do not intend to, do harm by supporting the repressive English social system. Though Clarissa herself lives under the weight of that system and often feels oppressed by it, her acceptance of patriarchal English society makes her, in part, responsible for Septimus's death. Thus she too is an oppressor of sorts. At

the end of the novel, she reflects on his suicide: “Somehow it was her disaster—her disgrace.” She accepts responsibility, though other characters are equally or more fully to blame, which suggests that everyone is in some way complicit in the oppression of others.

5.2 Motifs

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text’s major themes.

Time

Time imparts order to the fluid thoughts, memories, and encounters that make up Mrs. Dalloway. Big Ben, a symbol of England and its might, sounds out the hour relentlessly, ensuring that the passage of time, and the awareness of eventual death, is always palpable. Clarissa, Septimus, Peter, and other characters are in the grip of time, and as they age they evaluate how they have spent their lives. Clarissa, in particular, senses the passage of time, and the appearance of Sally and Peter, friends from the past, emphasizes how much time has gone by since Clarissa was young. Once the hour chimes, however, the sound disappears—its “leaden circles dissolved in the air.” This expression recurs many times throughout the novel, indicating how ephemeral time is, despite the pomp of Big Ben and despite people’s wary obsession with it. “It is time,” Rezia says to Septimus as they sit in the park waiting for the doctor's appointment on Harley Street. The ancient woman at the Regent’s Park Tube station suggests that the human condition knows no boundaries of time, since she continues to sing the same song for what seems like eternity. She understands that life is circular, not merely linear, which is the only sort of time that Big Ben tracks. Time is so important to the themes, structure, and characters of this novel that Woolf almost named her book The Hours.

Shakespeare

The many appearances of Shakespeare specifically and poetry in general suggest hopefulness, the possibility of finding comfort in art, and the survival of the soul in Mrs. Dalloway. Clarissa quotes Shakespeare’s plays many times throughout the day. When she shops for flowers at the beginning of the novel, she reads a few lines from a Shakespeare play,

Cymbeline, in a book displayed in a shop window. The lines come from a funeral hymn in the play that suggests death should be embraced as a release from the constraints of life. Since Clarissa fears death for much of the novel, these lines suggest that an alternative, hopeful way of addressing the prospect of death exists. Clarissa also identifies with the title character in Othello, who loves his wife but kills her out of jealousy, then kills himself when he learns his jealousy was unwarranted. Clarissa shares with Othello the sense of having lost a love, especially when she thinks about Sally Seton. Before the war, Septimus appreciated Shakespeare as well, going so far as aspiring to be a poet. He no longer finds comfort in poetry after he returns.

The presence of an appreciation for poetry reveals much about Clarissa and Septimus, just as the absence of such appreciation reveals much about the characters who differ from them, such as Richard Dalloway and Lady Bruton. Richard finds Shakespeare's sonnets indecent, and he compares reading them to listening in at a keyhole. Not surprisingly, Richard himself has a difficult time voicing his emotions. Lady Bruton never reads poetry either, and her demeanor is so rigid and impersonal that she has a reputation of caring more for politics than for people. Traditional English society promotes a suppression of visible emotion, and since Shakespeare and poetry promote a discussion of feeling and emotion, they belong to sensitive people like Clarissa, who are in many ways antiestablishment.

Trees and Flowers

Tree and flower images abound in Mrs. Dalloway. The color, variety, and beauty of flowers suggest feeling and emotion, and those characters who are comfortable with flowers, such as Clarissa, have distinctly different personalities than those characters who are not, such as Richard and Lady Bruton. The first time we see Clarissa, a deep thinker, she is on her way to the flower shop, where she will revel in the flowers she sees. Richard and Hugh, more emotionally repressed representatives of the English establishment, offer traditional roses and carnations to Clarissa and Lady Bruton, respectively. Richard handles the bouquet of roses awkwardly, like a weapon. Lady Bruton accepts the flowers with a "grim smile" and lays them stiffly by her plate, also unsure of how to handle them. When she eventually stuffs them into

her dress, the femininity and grace of the gesture are rare and unexpected. Trees, with their extensive root systems, suggest the vast reach of the human soul, and Clarissa and Septimus, who both struggle to protect their souls, revere them. Clarissa believes souls survive in trees after death, and Septimus, who has turned his back on patriarchal society, feels that cutting down a tree is the equivalent of committing murder.

Waves and Water

Waves and water regularly wash over events and thoughts in Mrs. Dalloway and nearly always suggest the possibility of extinction or death. While Clarissa mends her party dress, she thinks about the peaceful cycle of waves collecting and falling on a summer day, when the world itself seems to say "that is all." Time sometimes takes on waterlike qualities for Clarissa, such as when the chime from Big Ben "flood[s]" her room, marking another passing hour. Rezia, in a rare moment of happiness with Septimus after he has helped her construct a hat, lets her words trail off "like a contented tap left running." Even then, she knows that stream of contentedness will dry up eventually. The narrative structure of the novel itself also suggests fluidity. One character's thoughts appear, intensify, then fade into another's, much like waves that collect then fall.

Traditional English society itself is a kind of tide, pulling under those people not strong enough to stand on their own. Lady Bradshaw, for example, eventually succumbs to Sir William's bullying, overbearing presence. The narrator says "she had gone under," that her will became "water-logged" and eventually sank into his. Septimus is also sucked under society's pressures. Earlier in the day, before he kills himself, he looks out the window and sees everything as though it is underwater. Trees drag their branches through the air as though dragging them through water, the light outside is "watery GOLD," and his hand on the sofa reminds him of floating in seawater. While Septimus ultimately cannot accept or function in society, Clarissa manages to navigate it successfully. Peter sees Clarissa in a "silver-green mermaid's dress" at her party, "[l]olloping on the waves." Between her mermaid's dress and her ease in bobbing through her party guests, Clarissa succeeds in staying afloat. However, she

identifies with Septimus's wish to fight the cycle and go under, even if she will not succumb to the temptation herself.

5.3 Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

The Prime Minister

The prime minister in Mrs. Dalloway embodies England's old values and hierarchical social system, which are in decline. When Peter Walsh wants to insult Clarissa and suggest she will sell out and become a society hostess, he says she will marry a prime minister. When Lady Bruton, a champion of English tradition, wants to compliment Hugh, she calls him "My Prime Minister." The prime minister is a figure from the old establishment, which Clarissa and Septimus are struggling against. Mrs. Dalloway takes place after World War I, a time when the English looked desperately for meaning in the old symbols but found the symbols hollow. When the conservative prime minister finally arrives at Clarissa's party, his appearance is unimpressive. The old pyramidal social system that benefited the very rich before the war is now decaying, and the symbols of its greatness have become pathetic.

Peter Walsh's Pocketknife and Other Weapons

Peter Walsh plays constantly with his pocketknife, and the opening, closing, and fiddling with the knife suggest his flightiness and inability to make decisions. He cannot decide what he feels and doesn't know whether he abhors English tradition and wants to fight it, or whether he accepts English civilization just as it is. The pocketknife reveals Peter's defensiveness. He is armed with the knife, in a sense, when he pays an unexpected visit to Clarissa, while she herself is armed with her sewing scissors. Their weapons make them equal competitors. Knives and weapons are also phallic symbols, hinting at sexuality and power. Peter cannot define his own identity, and his constant fidgeting with the knife suggests how uncomfortable he is with his masculinity. Characters fall into two groups: those who are armed and those who are not. Ellie Henderson, for example, is "weaponless," because she is poor and has not been trained for any career. Her ambiguous relationship with her friend Edith also puts her at a disadvantage in

society, leaving her even less able to defend herself. Septimus, psychologically crippled by the literal weapons of war, commits suicide by impaling himself on a metal fence, showing the danger lurking behind man-made boundaries.

The Old Woman in the Window

The old woman in the window across from Clarissa's house represents the privacy of the soul and the loneliness that goes with it, both of which will increase as Clarissa grows older. Clarissa sees the future in the old woman: She herself will grow old and become more and more alone, since that is the nature of life. As Clarissa grows older, she reflects more but communicates less. Instead, she keeps her feelings locked inside the private rooms of her own soul, just as the old woman rattles alone around the rooms of her house. Nevertheless, the old woman also represents serenity and the purity of the soul. Clarissa respects the woman's private reflections and thinks beauty lies in this act of preserving one's interior life and independence. Before Septimus jumps out the window, he sees an old man descending the staircase outside, and this old man is a parallel figure to the old woman. Though Clarissa and Septimus ultimately choose to preserve their private lives in opposite ways, their view of loneliness, privacy, and communication resonates within these similar images.

The Old Woman Singing an Ancient Song

Opposite the Regent's Park Tube station, an old woman sings an ancient song that celebrates life, endurance, and continuity. She is oblivious to everyone around her as she sings, beyond caring what the world thinks. The narrator explains that no matter what happens in the world, the old woman will still be there, even in "ten million years," and that the song has soaked "through the knotted roots of infinite ages." Roots, intertwined and hidden beneath the earth, suggest the deepest parts of people's souls, and this woman's song touches everyone who hears it in some way. Peter hears the song first and compares the old woman to a rusty pump. He doesn't catch her triumphant message and feels only pity for her, giving her a coin before stepping into a taxi. Rezia, however, finds strength in the old woman's words, and the song makes her feel as though all will be okay in her life. Women in the novel, who have to view patriarchal English society from the outside, are generally more attuned to nature and the

messages of voices outside the mainstream. Rezia, therefore, is able to see the old woman for the life force she is, instead of simply a nuisance or a tragic figure to be dealt with, ignored, or pitied.

6. Study Questions

6.1 Important Quotations Explained

1. For Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh; but the veriest frumps, the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall) do the same; can't be dealt with, she felt positive, by Acts of Parliament for that very reason: they love life.

This quotation, part of Clarissa's thoughts as she walks to the flower shop in the early morning and Big Ben chimes the hour, reveals her strong attachment to life and the concept of life as her own invention. The long, galloping sentence, full of commas and semicolons, mirrors her excitement at being alive on this June day. Clarissa is conscious that the impressions of the things around her do not necessarily hold beauty or meaning in themselves, but that humans act as architects, building the impressions into comprehensible and beautiful moments. She herself revels in this act, in the effort life requires, and she knows that even the most impoverished person living on the streets can derive the same wonder from living. She sees that happiness does not belong to a particular class, but to all who can build up a moment and see beauty around them. Later her husband Richard sees a vagrant woman on the street but classifies her only as a social problem that the government must deal with. Clarissa believes that every class of people has the ability to conceptualize beauty and enjoy life, and she therefore feels that government intervention has limited uses. She does not equate class with happiness.

2. She had a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day.

This quotation, which occurs during Clarissa's shopping expedition when she pauses for a moment to look at the omnibuses in Piccadilly, emphasizes the contrast between the

busyness of public life and the quiet privacy of the soul. Clarissa, even when she is walking in the crowded city streets, contemplates the essential loneliness of life. The image of water acts much like the image of the sun in the novel. The sun beats down constantly, sometimes creating a wonderful feeling of warmth, sometimes scorching unbearably. The rhythmic movement of the sea's waves is similar. Sometimes the cyclical movement is breathtaking, while sometimes it threatens to drown whoever is too weak to endure the pressure, such as Lady Bradshaw or Septimus. Each person faces these same elements, which seems to join humans in their struggle. However, everyone is ultimately alone in the sea of life and must try to stay afloat the best they can. Despite the perpetual movement and activity of a large city like London, loneliness is everywhere.

Clarissa's reflection occurs directly after she considers her old friend Peter, who has failed to fulfill the dreams of his youth. As Clarissa ages, she finds it more difficult to know anybody, which makes her feel solitary. She hesitates to define even herself. Failing, becoming overwhelmed by the pressures of life, and drowning are far too easy. Clarissa is fifty-two, she's lived through a war, and her experiences amplify the dangers of living and of facing the world and other people.

3. This late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears. Tears and sorrows; courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing.

This quotation occurs directly after Clarissa reads lines from Shakespeare's play Cymbeline in a bookshop window. The lines "Fear no more the heat o' the sun / Nor the furious winter's rages" come from a hymn sung at a funeral and suggest that death is a release from the hard struggle of life. The words speak very directly to Clarissa's own time period, the years after World War I. England is still in shock after having lost so many men in battle, the world now seems like a hostile place, and death seems like a welcome relief. After Clarissa reads the words from Cymbeline, she considers the great amount of sorrow every person now bears. Everyone, regardless of class, has to some degree been affected by the war.

Despite the upright and courageous attitudes many people maintain, they all carry a great sadness, and people cry constantly in Mrs. Dalloway. Peter Walsh bursts into tears at

Clarissa's house. Clarissa's eyes fill with tears when she thinks of her mother walking in a garden. Septimus cries, and so does Rezia. Tears are never far from the surface, and sadness lurks beneath the busy activity of the day. Most people manage to contain their tears, according to the rules of society, or cry only in private. Septimus, the veteran, is the only character who does not hesitate to cry openly in the park, and he is considered mentally unstable. People are supposed to organize bazaars to help raise money for the veterans. People are supposed to maintain a stiff upper lip and carry on. Admitting to the horrors of the war by crying is not acceptable in English culture, though as Clarissa points out, a well of tears exists in each of them.

4. Clarissa had a theory in those days . . . that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death . . . perhaps—perhaps.

This quotation occurs as Peter Walsh walks back to his HOTEL. He hears the ambulance go by to pick up Septimus's body and remembers Clarissa's passion during their youth. Clarissa was frustrated at how little one person could know another person, because she felt that so much of a person existed out of reach of others. A person's soul was like a plant or a tree, with a small part showing aboveground and a complex, unseen root system existing underneath. Although Clarissa had experienced death at a young age when her sister Sylvia died, she did not want to believe that death was the absolute end. Instead she believed that people survived, both in other people and in the natural world. To know someone beyond the surface, one had to seek out the people and places that completed that person. The structure of Mrs. Dalloway supports Clarissa's theory, since most of the novel concerns people's thoughts rather than surface actions. These thoughts connect to people and things far beyond the people and things that are ostensibly closest to them.

Clarissa told Peter of this transcendental theory while riding on an omnibus with him through London. The omnibus, an open-air bus that offers a view of everything around, symbolizes the ease with which the friends could once share their deepest thoughts. As adults,

they are restricted by the repressive rules of English society, which is symbolized by great and somber automobiles with their blinds drawn. Clarissa still believes in the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world, and she thinks about it during her walk to the shops. However, Peter and Clarissa no longer feel so easy sharing their most deeply held ideas with one another, and Peter supposes Clarissa has hardened into a boring and shallow upper-class society wife who would no longer consider such ideas true or important.

5. She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back. She must assemble.

This quotation occurs at the day's end, when Clarissa is at her party and receives news of Septimus's death from Lady Bradshaw. Clarissa retreats to the small room where the prime minister sat to reflect on the young veteran. She had never met him and does not even know his name, but she experiences a moment of clarity, or "moment of being," in the small room when she identifies strongly with him and his dramatic action. Woolf created Septimus as Clarissa's double, and throughout the book he has echoed her thoughts and feelings. In this scene, Clarissa realizes how much she has in common with this working-class young man, who on the surface seems so unlike her.

Everything converges in this one moment, and this scene is the climax of the book. The narratives of Clarissa and Septimus finally meet. A wall separates the public sphere of the party from Clarissa's private space, where her soul feels connected to Septimus's soul. The clocks that have been relentlessly structuring the passing day continue to chime. Despite the sounding clocks and the pressures of the party outside, however, Clarissa manages to appreciate that Septimus has preserved his soul through death. Clarissa began her day by plunging metaphorically into the beautiful June morning, and Septimus has now literally plunged from his window. An effort and commitment to the soul is necessary to plunge into life or death, and Clarissa, who has reached middle age and is keenly aware of the compromises she has made in her own life, respects Septimus's unwillingness to be crushed by an oppressive power like the

psychiatrist Sir William. Clarissa repeats the line from Cymbeline, “Fear no more,” and she continues to endure. She will go back to her party and “assemble.” In the postwar world, life is fragmented and does not contain easy routes to follow, but Clarissa will take the fragmented pieces and go on trying to make life up as best she can.

6.2 Study Questions

1. “Fear no more the heat ’o the sun / Nor the furious winter’s rages” is a quote from Shakespeare’s play Cymbeline. The words are repeated or alluded to many times throughout Mrs. Dalloway, by both Clarissa and Septimus. What do the words mean, and why do Clarissa and Septimus repeat them?

Answer: Clarissa Dalloway first reads the words from Cymbeline in a bookshop window when she sets out to buy flowers for her party, and their meaning is particularly significant in light of World War I. The lines are from a funeral dirge and suggest that death is not a thing to be feared, but rather it should be seen as a relief from the hard struggles of life. World War I has wrought devastation throughout England, and tragedy or the possibility of it is never far from people’s thoughts. Clarissa, a middle-aged woman who is coming to terms with her own aging and eventual death, meditates on these lines throughout the day. The words foreshadow the death of Clarissa’s double, the veteran Septimus, who repeats them before he commits suicide.

The lines from Cymbeline connect to the strong use of nature imagery that appears throughout the novel. The characters who are most connected to nature, such as Clarissa and Septimus, are also the most responsive to poetry and reflect about death and their place in the world most frequently. Both Clarissa and Septimus feel the importance of fire. The “heat o’ the sun” can appear as something wonderful, like passion. Clarissa describes romantic love as “a match burning in a crocus.” The heat can also consume, however, and Septimus, mentally wounded by the horrors of war, feels that the world will erupt in flames, in a fire that can no longer be contained. Whether wonderful or deadly, the heat of the sun is constant, and something everyone must endure. The quote suggests that death be embraced as a release from the burden of endurance.

2. Woolf created Septimus Warren Smith as a double for Clarissa. In what ways are Clarissa and Septimus different? In what ways are they the same?

Answer: Woolf originally planned to have Clarissa die at the end of Mrs. Dalloway, but she decided instead to create a double for her, Septimus Warren Smith. Septimus would die in Clarissa's place, while Clarissa continued to endure. Many obvious differences exist between the two characters. Septimus is a man and twenty years younger who has fought and been damaged in the war. Clarissa is of the upper class, while Septimus is a working-class clerk. Clarissa still finds meaning in the symbols of English society, such as the prime minister and expensive cars, while Septimus sees them as meaningless. While Clarissa is able to gather her face into a neat diamond shape so she can meet the world with pursed lips and an unflappable demeanor, Septimus's lips are loose and he has lost the ability to focus or distinguish reality from his own visions. Septimus's inner world overflows into the public sphere, whereas Clarissa's interior remains contained. Septimus is considered insane, while Clarissa remains sane.

Clarissa and Septimus differ, but they also share many physical and emotional qualities. Each has a beak-nose, enjoys being at home in the domestic sphere, and quotes Shakespeare. Both have doting spouses. The first time we encounter Septimus, he is observing the car that backfires, just as Clarissa is. Their similarities also go beyond these surface details. Both have an instinctive horror of those who crave power, such as Sir William and Miss Kilman. Both Clarissa and Septimus believe that people are connected to trees in a spiritual way, and nature matters a great deal to both of them. At the end of the novel, in a very direct link, Clarissa "felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself." She realizes that Septimus's death is, like her party, an attempt to communicate. This moment is an epiphany, or moment of being, when Clarissa realizes that Septimus is in some way a part of herself.

3. Conversion is seen as a constant threat in the novel. Which characters wish to convert others, and what are they trying to convert others to? Are some characters more susceptible to conversion than others?

Answer: The two characters who try most actively to convert others in the novel are the psychiatrist, Sir William Bradshaw, and Elizabeth's history teacher, Doris Kilman. Sir William ostensibly attempts to convert people to his conception of health and science, while Miss Kilman introduces people to her views on religion and God. Both characters, however, seek dominion over others and use the concept of conversion only to gain power. Miss Kilman admits to herself that it is Clarissa's soul she wishes to "subdue" and "make feel her mastery." Miss Kilman seeks power in the name of Christianity, just as Sir William exiles people to mental institutions in the name of science.

The very sight of Sir William makes Clarissa uncomfortable, and she is highly sensitive to his desire to convert people to his worldview. Her awareness and vulnerability to Sir William's and Miss Kilman's greed for power comes from her ability to think deeply and empathize with others' emotions and motivations. Septimus also has this acute awareness about the world around him, and he is even more susceptible to conversion than Clarissa, due to his low social status. English society is another force that tries to convert people, but it also, to some extent, protects the upper class from the control of someone like Sir William. While Lady Bradshaw succumbs to social—and marital—pressure, Lady Bruton, in contrast, is safe from Sir William's clutches due to her close association with the empire. She may have lost her sense of "proportion" with her Canada obsession, but other members of her class will indulge and protect her. Characters who are more individual, like Clarissa and Septimus, are more at risk than those who view themselves purely as part of English society.

7. Suggested Essay Topics

1. Mrs. Dalloway is constructed from many different points of view, and points of view are sometimes linked by an emotion, a sound, a visual image, or a memory. Describe three instances when the point of view changes and explain how Woolf accomplishes the transitions. How do the transitions correspond to the points of view being connected?

2. Flowers, gardens, and nature are important motifs in the novel. Choose three characters and describe their relationships to the natural world. What do these relationships reveal about the characters or their functions in the novel?

3. Characters in the novel come from a range of social classes. What does Peter mean when he feels the “pyramidal accumulation” that weighed on his generation is shifting? How did the old social order weigh particularly heavily on women?

4. What role does Sally Seton play in Clarissa’s life, and what is the significance of her surprise appearance at the party?

5. World War I affected all the characters in the book to some degree. How did the war influence at least three of the characters?

6. The multitude of minor characters in the novel can be compared to the chorus in a classical Greek drama. They are often observers in the street. Choose three or four minor characters and describe their roles. What is their importance to the novel as a whole?

7. When Clarissa reflects on Septimus’s death at the end of the novel, she experiences a moment of being, or an epiphany. What truth becomes clear to her, and why is it significant?

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Paper XI: The 20th Century Unit III

Unit III – D.H.Lawrence's *Sons & Lovers*

Structure

1. Background

1.1 Introduction to the Author

David Herbert Lawrence (called Bert) was born on September 11, 1885 to a miner and his wife in the small village of Eastwood near Nottingham, England. Arthur and Lydia Lawrence, his parents, had a troublesome marriage from the start: his father, a miner, was content to stay on the mining grounds while his mother yearned to leave. They already had

three children by the time David Herbert was born: George Arthur, William Ernest (called Ernest), and Emily (their fifth and last child would be Ada, who was born twenty-months after Lawrence).

Lawrence was very close to his mother, so much that even he admitted that his relationship with his mother interfered with his own relationships with women. Lawrence confessed at one point that he looked at his mother with a sexual way. His relationship with his father, however, was very much like Paul Morel's - both young men sided with their mothers and clung to them. They did not hate their fathers, but detested how their fathers treated their mothers. After Ernest went to London and George married, Lawrence once said that he was the man in the house. He had always been more comfortable with women; as a young boy, he was sickly and weak and preferred to stay at home with his mother and sisters rather than play with the boys.

Lawrence was a very intelligent and clever child, excelling in reading and writing. He attended the Nottingham High School on scholarship. Later, he even taught Jessie Chambers, whose family he was friendly with, to speak French.

Lawrence became friendly with the Chambers family when he and his mother began visiting their farm. He bonded with Jessie's older brothers and father before he got to know her. Jessie was reserved and shy with him, because she felt inferior to Lawrence. The Lawrence family was impressed by Lawrence's knowledge of literature and philosophy. Lawrence cared for Jessie very deeply, but he did not feel any attraction for her. Jessie Chambers is the "Miriam" of *Sons and Lovers*. His relationship with Jessie fluctuated between love and hate; he intensely disliked the power she held over him. His sister, Ada,

introduced Lawrence to Louie Burrows: all three of them were trained to be teachers at the same school.

He ended his engagement with Jessie and began another one with Louie Burrows in the last days of his mother's life. His mother died on December 10, 1910; Lawrence was ill and grief-stricken for months. Prior to his mother's death, Lawrence started writing *Sons and Lovers*, which he called *Paul Morel* first. *Sons and Lovers* is Lawrence's most autobiographical novel - Lawrence drew upon his own memories and experiences to write the story of Paul Morel.

He met Frieda von Richthofen Weekley, who was six years his senior. Frieda was already married, but she ran off with Lawrence to the Continent, leaving her three children and husband behind. They married on July 13, 1914. They resided in England from 1914 to 1919 because of World War I, in various towns and cities. They were expelled from Cornwall in 1917 because the police believed then to be spies for the enemy. After the war, they left for Italy in November 1919, staying at the Villa Fontana Vecchia until 1922.

Lawrence published a number of novels, essays, and poems including *The White Peacock* (1911), *The Prussian Officer* (1914), *Sons and Lovers*(1913), *The Lost Girl* (1920), *Women in Love* (1921), *Aaron's Rod* (1922),*Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923), *Studies in Classic American Literature*(1923), *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928).*The Rainbow* was published in November 1915 but was suppressed. He won the James Tait Black Memorial prize for *The Lost Girl*.

After their stay in Italy, the Lawrences travelled to San Francisco, California; Taos, New Mexico; and Mexico. Lawrence was told in 1925 that he had tuberculosis and did not have much time to live. He died in a sanatorium on March 2, 1930.

Lawrence was a gifted poet, painter and novelist, although some of his works may be considered pornographic. Editors cut out highly sexually-charged scenes in *Sons and Lovers*. In 1929, some of his paintings in the Warren Gallery in London were seized because they were too obscene. Whether or not Lawrence's fascinations and fixations were too sexual for the general audience, his appeal to the human mind and soul remains unchanged.

1.2 Introduction to the Text

Though D. H. Lawrence's third published novel, *Sons and Lovers* (1913) is largely autobiographical. The novel, which began as "Paul Morel," was sparked by the death of Lawrence's mother, Lydia. Lawrence reexamined his childhood, his relationship with his mother, and her psychological effect on his sexuality.

The roots of *Sons and Lovers* are clearly located in Lawrence's life. His childhood coal-mining town of Eastwood was changed, with a sardonic twist, to Bestwood. Walter Morel was modeled on Lawrence's hard-drinking, irresponsible collier father, Arthur. Lydia became Gertrude Morel, the intellectually stifled, unhappy mother who lives through her sons. The death by erysipelas of one of Lawrence's elder brothers, Ernest, and Lydia's grief and eventual obsession with Lawrence, seems hardly changed in the novel. (Both Ernest and his fictional counterpart, William, were engaged to London stenographers named Louisa "Gipsy" Denys.)

Filling out the cast of important characters was Jessie Chambers, a neighbor with whom Lawrence developed an intense friendship, and who would become Miriam Leiver in the novel. His mother and family disapproved of their relationship, which always seemed on the brink of romance. Nevertheless, Chambers was Lawrence's greatest literary supporter in his early years, and he frequently showed her drafts of what he was working on, including

Sons and Lovers (she disliked her depiction, and it led to the dissolution of their relationship). Lawrence's future wife, Frieda von Richtofen Weekly, partially inspired the portrait of Clara Dawes, the older, sensual woman with whom Paul has an affair. To be fair, Lawrence met Frieda only in 1912 at Nottingham University College, and he started "Paul Morel" in 1910.

Considered Lawrence's first masterpiece, most critics of the day praised *Sons and Lovers* for its authentic treatment of industrial life and sexuality. There is evidence that Lawrence was aware of Sigmund Freud's early theories on sexuality, and *Sons and Lovers* deeply explores and revises of one of Freud's major theories, the Oedipus complex. (Lawrence would go on to write more works on psychoanalysis in the 1920s.) Still, the book received some criticism from those who felt the author had gone too far in his description of Paul's confused sexuality. Compared to his later works, however, such as *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Sons and Lovers* seems quite modest.

2. Plot Overview

The first part of the novel focuses on Mrs. Morel and her unhappy marriage to a drinking miner. She has many arguments with her husband, some of which have painful results: on separate occasions, she is locked out of the house and hit in the head with a drawer. Estranged from her husband, Mrs. Morel takes comfort in her four children, especially her sons. Her oldest son, William, is her favorite, and she is very upset when he takes a job in London and moves away from the family. When William sickens and dies a few years later, she is crushed, not even noticing the rest of her children until she almost loses Paul, her second son, as well. From that point on, Paul becomes the focus of her life, and the two seem to live for each other.

Paul falls in love with Miriam Leivers, who lives on a farm not too far from the Morel family. They carry on a very intimate, but purely platonic, relationship for many years. Mrs. Morel does not approve of Miriam, and this may be the main reason that Paul does not marry her. He constantly wavers in his feelings toward her.

Paul meets Clara Dawes, a suffragette who is separated from her husband, through Miriam. As he becomes closer with Clara and they begin to discuss his relationship with Miriam, she tells him that he should consider consummating their love and he returns to Miriam to see how she feels.

Paul and Miriam sleep together and are briefly happy, but shortly afterward Paul decides that he does not want to marry Miriam, and so he breaks off with her. She still feels that his soul belongs to her, and, in part agrees reluctantly. He realizes that he loves his mother most, however.

After breaking off his relationship with Miriam, Paul begins to spend more time with Clara and they begin an extremely passionate affair. However, she does not want to divorce her husband Baxter, and so they can never be married. Paul's mother falls ill and he devotes much of his time to caring for her. When she finally dies, he is broken-hearted and, after a final plea from Miriam, goes off alone at the end of the novel.

3. Summary and Analysis

Chapter 1: The Early Married Life of the Morels

Summary

The first chapter begins with a description of the neighborhood of “The Bottoms,” the miners’ dwellings in which the Morels live. We get a small amount of description of Mrs. Morel and learn that her husband is a miner. At this point in the story, the Morel family consists of Mr. Morel and Mrs. Morel (expecting her third child), William (age seven), and Annie (age five). The first action of the novel begins three weeks after the Morels have moved into their new home, on the day of the wakes (a kind of fair). William goes off to the wakes in the morning and comes back at mid-day for dinner, telling his mother to hurry so that he can return by the time the wakes begin again. He runs off quickly when he hears the music of the merry-go-round, and Mrs. Morel takes Annie later in the afternoon. They run into William and he shows his mother two egg-cups he has won as a present for her. The three of them spend some time together at the fair, and William decides to stay after his mother and sister leave. However, we learn later that he does not enjoy himself after his mother has gone.

After the children go to bed, Mrs. Morel waits for her husband to return from the bar where he is working and reflects on her situation. She cannot afford and does not want her coming child, and she “despises” her husband because of his drinking. Her only solace is in her two children. She wonders if her life will ever change, and reflects that the events in her life seem to take place without her approval. She cleans the house and sits down to sew, and her husband finally comes home. They argue about whether or not he is drunk, he shows her that he has brought gingerbread and a coconut for the children, and she goes to bed.

The next part of the chapter fills in the background to the Morels’ marriage. It begins by describing Mrs. Morel, previously Gertrude Coppard, her upbringing in a poor family, and

her friendship with a man named John Field, who gave her a Bible when she was nineteen, which she still keeps. The flashback shows her encouraging John Field to stand up for himself and go into the ministry, even though his father wants him to continue the family business. She claims that if she were a man, she would do as she liked. He tells her that being a man isn't everything, and she has finally learned that lesson.

The next part of the flashback describes the meeting between Gertrude Coppard and Walter Morel at a Christmas party when she was twenty-three and he was twenty-seven. It seems the main attraction he holds for her is that he is different from her father. At the party he asks her to dance, she refuses, and he sits down and talks with her instead. The next Christmas they marry, and their early married life seems very happy.

However, after they have been married for seven months, Gertrude finds the unpaid bills for the household furniture in her husband's coat pocket. She confronts him to ask about the bills and he brushes her off, so the next day she goes to see his mother. She tells Gertrude that her husband still owes a good deal of MONEY, and that the house they live in belongs to her. This information changes the way Gertrude feels toward her husband: she becomes colder and more condescending toward him. She begins to feel isolated from her husband, and this causes her to turn toward her child instead.

A key incident happens when Morel cuts William's hair while Mrs. Morel is sleeping. This is one of the major factors in her estrangement from her husband, as the betrayal she feels when she discovers William's haircut remains with her throughout the coming years.

The next important incident, at which the narrative appears to have caught up to the present, occurs on another wakes holiday when Morel goes out with his friend, Jerry Purdy.

Jerry is Morel's good friend, but Mrs. Morel does not like him. Jerry and Morel walk to Nottingham, which is ten miles away, and stop at all the pubs along the way. After a nap in a field, Morel does not feel so well. When he finally returns home, he has become irritable and has a fight with his wife, each calling the other a liar. He locks her outside in his anger and then falls asleep at the kitchen table. Mrs. Morel wanders in the yard for a while and eventually, after an hour of knocking at the door, succeeds in waking up her husband.

Analysis

The novel thus far is told from a third person perspective, but the narrator is closest to Mrs. Morel. The narrator is partially omniscient; he can narrate the thoughts of Mrs. Morel, but not of the other characters. Throughout the novel the perspective of the narrator changes, so the best description of the narrative mode of the novel is probably third person omniscient.

This chapter sets up the importance of the relationship between William and his mother. Through the present of the egg-cups and the way that William acts when his mother is with him, we can see that he is proud of and loves his mother very much. We also see that she contributes to his enjoyment of the fair, as he is miserable after she leaves.

The hair-cutting incident also illustrates the way that William is the most important person to Mrs. Morel, since she is willing to throw over her husband in favor of her son. When the narrator describes why Gertrude likes Morel, we see the importance of Morel's difference from her father. This theme will come up again later when we see that William's fiancee is very different from his mother.

In the flashback section of this chapter we see the first hint of the declining happiness of the Morels' marriage: "for three months she was perfectly happy: for six months she was very happy." This suggests that Mrs. Morel's level of happiness declines steadily over the course of their marriage.

This chapter contains many elements of foreshadowing. For example, we are told that Mrs. Morel thinks she lives in a house owned by her husband. The ambiguity provides a clue that her suspicion is incorrect and that the house they live in does not actually belong to Mr. Morel.

This chapter's temporal organization is quite noteworthy. The flashback in the middle of the present-time narration confuses the time reference; past and present blend since it becomes difficult to tell when the flashback ends, or when the present resumes.

Chapter 2: The Birth of Paul, and Another Battle

Summary

Morel feels ashamed for bullying his wife. He also realizes her difficulties and begins to be somewhat more helpful. One morning Mrs. Morel summons her neighbor, Mrs. Kirk, by banging on the back of the fireplace with the poker, and tells her to fetch Mrs. Bower, the midwife. She gives birth to a boy and is very ill. Her husband comes home and is told by Mrs. Bower that he has a son. He asks her for a drink and then, after he has had his dinner, goes up to see his wife and son.

We are then introduced to Mr. Heaton, the Congregational clergyman, who comes to visit Mrs. Morel every day. One day Morel comes home while he is still visiting and begins to make a scene by enumerating the difficulties of working in the mine. Mrs. Morel feels disgusted by her husband's tendency to play for sympathy with those around him.

One evening after a quarrel with her husband, Mrs. Morel takes Annie and the baby and goes for a walk near the cricket fields. She seems at peace and feels strongly for her baby son; she has a sudden instinct to call him Paul.

The next major battle between the Morels begins when Walter comes home late and drunk again and accidentally pulls out a kitchen drawer in his haste to get something to eat. When his wife tells him she will not wait on him, he becomes enraged and flings the drawer at her, cutting her forehead on the corner of the drawer. For the few days after this incident, Morel refuses to get out of bed. When he finally gets up, he immediately goes to the Palmerston, one of his favorite bars, and this is where he spends the next several nights.

One night, however, he finds himself out of money, and therefore takes a sixpence from his wife's purse. She notices that it is missing and confronts him, upon which he becomes very indignant. He then goes upstairs and returns with a bundle and says he is leaving. Mrs. Morel feels sure that he will return that night, but she begins to get worried when he has not returned by dark. However, she finds his bundle hidden behind the door of the coal-shed and begins to laugh. Morel sulkily returns later that evening and his wife tells him to fetch his bundle before going to bed.

Analysis

This chapter mainly serves the purpose of providing more examples of the battles between Mr. and Mrs. Morel. It also contains a few examples of the themes that have already been noted.

In this chapter, the way the narrative perspective shifts between characters is illustrated by a brief shift to Morel's perspective: he insists to himself that the quarrel is Mrs. Morel's fault.

Morel also reflects that having his family around him at meals makes the meals less pleasant. This suggests that Morel prefers to be separated from his family, in contrast to his wife, who lives for her children.

Chapter 3: The Casting off of Morel - The Taking on of William

Summary

Morel begins to fall ill, despite all of his requests for medicine. His illness is attributed to the time he fell asleep on the ground when he went with Jerry to Nottingham. He falls seriously ill and his wife has to nurse him. She gets some help from the neighbors, but not every day. Eventually, Morel grows better, but he has been spoiled during his illness and at first wants more attention from his wife. However, she has begun to cast him off and to turn completely to her children to find a sense of meaning in her life.

During the period of peace following Morel's illness, another baby is conceived, and this child, Arthur, is born when Paul is seventeen months old. Arthur is very fond of his father, and this makes Mrs. Morel happy.

Meanwhile, time is passing, William is growing bigger, and Paul begins to have fits of depression in which he cries for no reason. One day, one of the other women of the neighborhood, Mrs. Anthony, confronts Mrs. Morel because William has ripped her son Alfred's collar. Mrs. Morel asks William about it, he gives her his side of the story, and she reprimands him. However, Mrs. Anthony also tells Morel about the incident and he comes home very angry with William. This provokes yet another battle between Mr. and Mrs. Morel, as it is only her intervention that prevents him from beating William.

Mrs. Morel joins the Women's Guild, a club of women attached to the Cooperative Wholesale Society, who meet and discuss social questions. When William is thirteen, she gets him a job at the Co-op office. This provokes another argument with her husband, who would have preferred his son to become a miner like himself. However, William does well in his job as he does well in everything. He wins a running race and brings his mother home the prize, an inkstand shaped like an anvil.

However, William clashes with his mother when he begins to dance. Mrs. Morel turns away girls who come to call, much to William's dismay. At nineteen, William gets a new job in Nottingham and also begins to study very hard. Then he is offered a job in London at a hundred and twenty pounds a year and is ecstatic, failing to see his mother's dismay at his departure. William and his mother have one final shared moment as they burn his love letters, and then he goes to London to start his new life.

Analysis

This chapter continues the theme of the constant lessening of Mrs. Morel's love for her husband; Lawrence writes that her love for him ebbed in stages, but ebbed constantly.

We can see that Mrs. Morel does actually desire to have her whole family together as one. She thinks that her happiest moments come when her children seem to love their father. More evidence of William's devotion to his mother is introduced here in the form of his presentation of the anvil. His breathless eagerness and her solemn pride underscore the intimacy and intensity of their relationship.

They quarrel, however, over William's dancing. This may be the beginning of a change in the relationship between William and Mrs. Morel, as his acceptance of the dancing corresponds to his rejection of his mother. This is especially evident when William goes to a fancy-dress ball; after an initial hesitation, he seems to forget about his mother completely.

William's acceptance of the job in London seems the final step in his distancing from his mother. According to Lawrence, William never considers that his mother might be sorry to see him go, only that she must be happy for his success.

Mrs. Morel does not want her eldest son to become like his father—she refuses to let him enter the mines, and she disapproves of his dancing because his father danced.

This chapter also provides the first textual clue that Paul is viewed differently by Mrs. Morel. Paul's fits of depression come only rarely, but when they manifest themselves, Mrs. Morel begins to treat Paul differently from the other children.

One narrative technique that is presented in this chapter and throughout the novel is the use of the iterative mode to suggest events happening the same way a number of times. Frequently-employed iterative words and phrases such as ‘would’ and ‘used to’ suggest repeated events, and this suggestion contributes to the novel’s confusion of time periods by making it unclear how many times an event happened.

Chapter 4: The Young Life of Paul

Summary

This chapter begins by describing the way that Paul, in the absence of William, bonded most closely with his sister Annie. She was a tomboy, who played games with the other neighborhood children, and Paul would quietly tag along behind her. One day, while Annie’s favorite doll is lying covered up on the sofa, Paul jumps off the sofa arm and lands on the doll. Annie is very upset, but her brother is perhaps more upset at her grief. A few days later, Paul suggests that they make a sacrifice of the doll, and they burn and smash its remains.

One evening when Paul comes home, he finds his father and older brother in the midst of an argument, which only fails to come to blows because of Mrs. Morel’s intervention.

The family moves out of the Bottoms into a house with an ash-tree, which makes noise when the wind blows through it. Morel likes it, but the children hate it.

Morel still comes home late and drunk most nights, and Paul begins to worry because his mother is worrying about his father. One night he goes out to play, then at night anxiously runs into the kitchen to check on his mother. When he finds that his father has not

come, he goes to visit Mrs. Inger, who lives two doors down and has no children of her own. He talks to her for a while, then goes home.

When Morel finally does come home, he is usually rude and irritable. During this time period he becomes more and more shut out from the family affairs, as the children begin to tell their mother everything and their father nothing. This is illustrated by the example of Paul's prize, which his mother convinces him to tell his father about. During their conversation, it becomes apparent that Morel is an outsider in his own family.

The next part of the narration, however, describes the times of happiness between Morel and his children. When he is happily engrossed in his work, he gets along well with his children. He tells stories, like the ones about Taffy the horse. On these nights, when Morel has some job to do, he goes to bed early and the children feel secure when he is in bed.

One day Paul comes home at dinnertime feeling ill and does not go back to school. It turns out that he has bronchitis. His father visits him while he is ill, but he asks for his mother, and sleeping with his mother comforts him.

The next episode is that of Paul going to collect the money for his father's pay on Fridays. When his name is called, he is at the back of the room behind all the men and almost misses his turn. He is saved by Mr. Winterbottom, the clerk, who pauses and asks the men to step aside so that Paul can get through. Paul is embarrassed and flustered by the experience, and he is relieved when it is over, and he is outside. He then goes to the New Inn to meet his father and has to wait a long time before he comes. When he gets home, Paul tells his mother he doesn't want to go collect the money any more. His mother soothes him "in her own way."

On Friday night, Paul stays home and bakes while his mother goes to the market. He likes to draw or read while the baking is being done. His mother gets home, shows her purchases to Paul, and they discuss the bargains she has gotten.

The rest of the family's life in the Scargill Street house is rather happy. The children love playing outside on winter evenings with the other neighborhood children.

The final part of the chapter concerns the preparations made for William's visit at Christmas. The three other children go to the station to meet him and get very discouraged when the train is more than two hours late. At last, however, the train arrives with William. At home the parents are also anxious and begin to quarrel slightly, but finally the children arrive. William has brought presents for everyone, and everyone feels happy. After he returns to London, William is offered a trip to the Mediterranean over the midsummer holiday. However, he declines in favor of returning home, much to the delight of his mother.

Analysis

This chapter focuses on Paul so that each event is narrated in its relation to him. We are told, for instance, that all the children feel "peculiarly" ill at ease with their father, but particularly Paul. The use of 'peculiarly' in this sentence suggests that it is somehow unusual for the children to be against their father. Another example of the focus on Paul is the family's divergent opinions about the ash-tree: Paul finds it an almost unbearable presence. The disagreement about the ash-tree is representative of the conflict between father and children.

There is a sense that Paul represents all of the children; that narrating what happens to Paul suffices for describing the experiences of all of them. This is created partly by the

way that all of the events in this chapter are told in relation to Paul, and partly by passages like the following in which the subjects 'Paul' and 'the children' are used seemingly interchangeably. Paul wakes, hearing thuds downstairs, and wonders nervously what his father is doing. It seems that events like this begin from Paul's perspective and continue to include the perspective of all the children.

However, we also see further evidence of the way that Paul is treated differently from the other children; he is more delicate, and Mrs. Morel realizes it. Physically, Paul resembles his mother, and like each of the children, he picks up on and shares her anxieties about her husband.

Even though Paul is treated differently, William is still Mrs. Morel's favorite. She thinks of him as a successful young man in London, and imagines him as her knight in shining armor.

After he breaks Annie's doll, Paul feels resentful toward the doll. This is reminiscent of the statement about Mr. Morel in Chapter 2: "He dreaded his wife. Having hurt her, he hated her."

Chapter 5: Paul Launches into Life

Summary

Morel is injured at work when a piece of rock falls on his leg. When Mrs. Morel gets the news, she is very flustered while she is preparing to go to the hospital to see him. Paul calms her down and gives her some tea, and she leaves for the hospital. When she returns, she tells the children that their father's leg is injured rather badly. They all feel anxious, but are comforted by the fact that her father is a strong healer. Mrs. Morel feels somewhat

guilty because she no longer loves her husband; while she is sorry for his pain and his injury, she still feels an emotional emptiness. She is somewhat comforted by talking to Paul, who is able to share her troubles. True to his nature, Morel does recover, and the family is very happy and peaceful while he is still in the hospital, almost to the point of regretting that he will soon return.

Paul is now fourteen, and it is time for him to find a job. Everyday, his mother sends him to the Co-op reading room to read the job advertisements in the paper. This makes him miserable, but he dutifully writes down a few offers and brings them home. He makes applications for several jobs using a variation on a letter that William had written. He is summoned to call on Thomas Jordan, a manufacturer of surgical appliances, and his mother is overjoyed.

Paul and Mrs. Morel travel to Nottingham one Tuesday morning to respond to the invitation. Paul suffers the whole way there, dreading the interview and the necessity of being scrutinized by strangers. During the actual interview, Mr. Jordan asks Paul to read a letter in French and he has trouble reading the handwriting, becomes flustered, and continually insists that doigts means fingers, although in this case it refers to the toes of a pair of stockings. Nevertheless, he is hired as junior spiral clerk.

After the interview, Paul and his mother have dinner in an eating-house, where it turns out that the food is more expensive than they realized; they order the cheapest dish possible. After dinner they wander around the town, look at some shops, and buy a few things. Paul is happy with his mother.

The next day he applies for a season ticket for the train. When he returns and tells his mother how much it will cost, she says that she wishes William would send them some money to help pay for things like the ticket.

Meanwhile, William is becoming a gentleman in London and is beginning to see a girl, Louisa Lily Denys Western, whom he calls Gipsy. He asks her for a photograph to send to his mother, and when the photo comes it shows her with bare shoulders. Mrs. Morel comments to William that she does not think the photo is appropriate, and the girl sends another one in which she is wearing an evening gown. Mrs. Morel is still not impressed.

The next Monday morning, Paul goes off to work on the train. He arrives at the factory and is introduced to his boss, Pappleworth. Pappleworth shows him how to fetch and copy letters, to write out orders and invoices, and to make up parcels for shipping. He also introduces him to some of the other people who work in the factory, and Paul gets along best with the women, like Polly, the overseer of the sewing crew, and the hunchback Fanny, who works in the finishing-off room. He becomes friends with many of the women and grows to like his job at Jordan's.

Analysis

We can see the way the narrative perspective has shifted from that of Mrs. Morel to that of Paul through the way Mrs. Morel's trip to the hospital is narrated. The narrator describes Mrs. Morel leaving for the hospital, and then he describes her returning; the events that happen outside of the house seem to be outside the narrative field of vision. However, this is not the case later in this chapter, when Paul goes to Nottingham to work. This suggests that Paul has become the primary focus of the narration.

This chapter contains further examples of the identification between Paul and Mrs. Morel: Paul comforts her, and talks to her every day. It seems as if their identification is extended to the point that they are sharing the same life, and this is a motif that will continue through the rest of the novel.

We also see further evidence of Mrs. Morel's disappointment in William, her favorite, in this chapter. She has been previously disappointed in William when he takes up dancing, and here she is disappointed that he does not send them MONEY. She also disapproves of the girl he is seeing and the pictures that she sends.

Chapter 6: Death in the Family

Summary

This chapter begins with a description of Arthur, and tells how, as he grows older, he comes to detest his father. All of the children follow this same trend until they all loathe him. Arthur wins a scholarship to the school in Nottingham, and his mother decides to let him live in town with one of her sisters because of his adversarial relationship with his father. Annie is a teacher in the Board-school, and Mrs. Morel clings to Paul.

William becomes engaged to the girl he has been seeing, and decides to bring her home at Christmas. She comes home with him and puts on airs of high station, treating Annie like a servant. William begins to be annoyed with the way that she acts much grander than his family, and he tells his mother that he only feels fond of the girl when he is around her in the evenings; otherwise, he has no feelings for her.

Paul has Monday afternoons off from work, and one Monday his mother tells him that they have been invited to see Mr. Leivers on his new farm. They decide to go that

afternoon. They have a nice walk through the countryside on the way there, and then are welcomed and given a tour of the farm when they arrive. The Leivers boys show Paul how to make the chicken eat out of his hand, and they tease their sister Miriam because she is afraid to try. Paul later finds her shyly reaching her hand toward the chicken and helps her to let it eat out of her hand.

The next time William brings his fiancee home, she once again annoys him and the rest of his family with her attitude toward his sister. He begins to ridicule her in front of others, and discusses with his mother that he no longer really wants to marry her, but feels that he has gone on too long to break it off now. He comes home again, alone, the first weekend in October, and his mother notices that he has not been well. The Tuesday morning after his return, Mrs. Morel gets a telegram saying that he is ill. She takes the train to London, arrives at William's lodging, and stays with him until he dies late that night. She sends a telegram for Morel to come to London, and when it arrives Paul has to go to the mine to fetch his father. Morel goes to London, and Mr. and Mrs. Morel return on Saturday night. After William's death, Mrs. Morel becomes shut off until one day Paul falls ill with pneumonia. She almost loses him as well, but he somehow pulls through and "Mrs. Morel's life now rooted itself in Paul."

Analysis

The title of the chapter foreshadows what will happen in the end of the chapter; however, the reader wonders throughout the chapter which member of the family will die. Since the first sentence of the chapter begins with Arthur, the reader might begin by suspecting that Arthur will die. It isn't until William alludes to his death by saying that his fiancee would forget about him three months after he died that we begin to suspect that

William will die. He makes many allusions to his death so that, by the time his mother gets the telegram from London that he is ill, the reader is hardly surprised.

After William dies, Mrs. Morel remains closed off from the world until Paul also falls ill. Lawrence uses an image of tulips to illustrate the bond forged between Paul and his mother as a result of his illness. Mr. Morel buys Paul a pot of tulips, and they flame in the window where Paul and his mother sit closely and contentedly.

In this chapter William follows in his mother's footsteps of choosing a spouse who is very different from his corresponding parent. He tells his mother that his fiancee is neither serious nor thoughtful—the exact opposite of Mrs. Morel.

Chapter 7: Lad-and-Girl Love→

Summary

This chapter describes the growing intimacy between Paul and Miriam. It begins from Miriam's perspective and describes the way that she aspires to learning, since she cannot have pride in her social status. She is interested in Paul, but scorns him because he only sees the swine-girl side of her and not the princess she believes she is inside. When he falls ill, she feels like he would be weaker than she and that is she could take care of him, she would love him deeply.

Paul enjoys visiting the Leivers' farm because it is so different from his own home. Miriam and her mother both have very strong religious and spiritual convictions, and this strikes Paul as enormously different from his own mother's logical manner.

One evening when he is there for dinner, the boys all become very upset with Miriam because the potatoes are burned. Her mother reprimands her for answering them instead of turning the other cheek, and Paul is puzzled why an insignificant matter like potatoes would cause such conflict.

Miriam and Paul make their connection through nature, as they share the experience of looking at a birds' nest. The narrator tells us, though, that it is a long time before Paul really notices Miriam. He first becomes friends with the boys, most of all Edgar. Then one day Miriam shows him the swing they have in the cowshed, and they slowly grow closer. Paul is troubled by her "intensity, which would leave no emotion on a normal plane" (153). She tells him of her desire to learn, and he agrees to teach her algebra. They are both frustrated by the effort, and Paul finds her simultaneously infuriating and attractive.

One evening when Paul and Miriam are walking home, she brings him into the woods to see a particular bush because she wants to share it with him. This excursion causes him to be late coming home, and his mother is unhappy with him, partly because she is not fond of Miriam. They argue about his relationship with the girl and he insists that they are not courting.

Paul organizes a walk to the Hemlock Stone on Good Friday. During this walk, Miriam notices that Paul is different when she is alone with him. On the way back, she comes upon him alone in the road, trying to fix his umbrella so his mother will not be upset, and she realizes that she loves him.

Miriam and Paul get along well during another excursion to Wingfield Manor on Easter Monday. However, after this she begins to feel tormented about whether she should

be ashamed of loving him, and she decides she will no longer call at his house on Thursday nights. One evening she does call, and Paul picks some flowers to pin on her dress. Paul still refuses to define his and Miriam's relationship as that of lovers, and he forces his family to accept her as his friend.

When Paul is twenty, he has saved enough MONEY to take his family away for a holiday for two weeks at a cottage called Mablethorpe. The night before they leave, Miriam stays at the house so she doesn't have to walk in the morning. One evening, she and Paul are walking on the beach and see a beautiful view of the moon, and Paul is confused by his instincts: he feels powerful feelings toward Miriam, but does not know how to interpret them. So they return to the cottage, Mrs. Morel admonishes him once more for being late, and the chapter ends with Paul feeling irritated at Miriam because she has made him feel unnatural.

Analysis

This chapter presents the conflict between logic, represented by Mrs. Morel, and religion, represented by the Leivers. Paul feels simultaneously attracted and repelled by the fascinating and different tone of life at the Leivers' farm,

Miriam's unpleasant relationship with her brothers causes her to speculate on the fundamental differences between women and men. This may be an indication of the cruelty of her brothers or of Miriam's sensitivity, rather than of some actual difference between all men and women.

This chapter begins to suggest that Paul needs some connection beyond what he shares with his mother. In his free time, Paul is a painter, and he still needs his mother to do

his best work, as he tells her. But Miriam allows him to take his work to another level; she makes him feel an intensity he has never before experienced.

Miriam also seems to have some sense of this connection. She feels that, until she shows him the rose bush, she will not fully have experienced it herself. The connection between Paul and Miriam may be one reason that Mrs. Morel dislikes Miriam. “She could feel Paul being drawn away by the girl.” She seems to view Miriam as direct competition for her son’s love and attention.

Chapter 8: Strife in Love

Summary

Arthur enlists in the army on a whim, and then writes a letter to his mother to try to get out of it. She is very upset and goes to the sergeant, but is not able to get him out of it. He does not like the discipline of the army, but he has no choice.

Paul wins two first-prize awards in an exhibition for students’ work in the Castle, which makes his mother very proud of him, and she goes to the Castle to see his work on display.

One day Paul meets Miriam in town with Clara Dawes, the daughter of an old friend of Mrs. Leivers. The next time Paul sees Miriam, she asks him what he thinks of Clara. He tells her that he likes her somewhat, and she sulks. He tells her that she is always too intense, and he longs to kiss her but cannot. When he leaves, he invites her and Edgar to tea the next day and she is happy. However, when he gets home and tells his mother, she is not pleased, and they argue.

Paul feels torn between Miriam and his mother, and resents Miriam because she makes his mother suffer. She feels hurt one day when he tells her he will not meet her before a party at his house because “you know it’s only friendship.”

One Friday night while Paul is doing the baking, Miriam comes to call and, when she hangs up her coat, he feels as though they live in the house together. He shows her a curtain he has made for his mother, and gives her a cushion-cover in the same design that he has made for her. They begin to talk about his work, and this is the time that Paul is happiest with Miriam.

They are then interrupted by Beatrice, a friend of the family, who makes fun of Miriam and flirts with Paul until Miriam reminds him that he is supposed to be watching the bread. He has burned one of the loaves, and then begins to feel somewhat guilty for ignoring Miriam. On some level, though, he feels that she deserves it. They go over her French notebook, they read a little bit, and he walks her home. When he returns, his mother and sister are waiting for him and they have found the burnt loaf of bread. They are angry that he has been with Miriam and his mother is ill. He reconciles with his mother and realizes that he loves her more. His father comes home, and they fight, stopping only after Mrs. Morel faints, and Paul takes care of her.

Analysis

Paul continues to be Mrs. Morel’s favorite son, and he is the one she believes will be successful. We see finally in this chapter the way that this close relationship finally leads Paul to abandon Miriam because he loves his mother best: “She was the chief thing to him, the only supreme being.”

Paul suggests that perhaps Miriam likes Clara because of her apparent grudge against men. The narrator writes that Clara's grudge might be one of the reasons Paul himself likes her; this seems to suggest that Paul would appreciate a grudge against men, which is a somewhat puzzling idea.

Paul begins to echo the actions of his father, after he argues with his mother. He flings off his boots before going to bed, just as Mr. Morel had done several chapters earlier. In addition, Paul is happiest with Miriam while they are discussing his work, just as Morel is happiest with his children while he is engaged with some work.

In this chapter we see Miriam's objectification of Paul. She thinks of him as an object weaker than herself, and never considers him as an individual or as a man.

Chapter 9: Defeat of Miriam

Summary

Paul realizes that he loves his mother more than Miriam, and Miriam seems also to realize that their relationship will never deepen. One day Paul comes to call and is unusually irritable. When Miriam begs him to tell her what is the matter, he tells her that they had better break off. She does not understand why, and he tries to tell her that, even though they have agreed that they are to be friends, "it neither stops there, nor gets anywhere else." She finally understands that he is telling her that he does not love her and wants to leave her free for another man.

Miriam feels that he is mistaken and that deep in his soul he loves her, and she is angry with him for listening to his mother, who has told him that he cannot go on in the same way unless he means to become engaged. She is angry that he lets his mother and his

family tell him what he should do, thinking that she wishes the outside world would let the two of them alone.

Paul misses Willey Farm when he does not go there to call on Miriam, so he continues to go there to be with Edgar and the rest of the family. He no longer spends much time alone with Miriam, but one night he ends up alone with her when Edgar stays for Communion with Mrs. Morel. They are discussing the sermon and he reads to her from the Bible, and they almost attain their previous level of harmony—until Paul begins to feel uncomfortable.

Miriam invites Paul to come to the farm one day to meet Clara Dawes. He accepts and is excited to meet her. He arrives, meets her in the parlor, talks to her and Miriam for a short time, and quickly decides that he does not like her. He goes to meet Edgar on his way back from getting coal. He tells Edgar that Clara should be called 'Nevermore' because she is so disagreeable.

Later, Miriam asks Paul to accompany the two women on a walk. They meet Miss Limb and her horse, and Clara especially is very fond of the horse. After they leave, Paul and Miriam mention that they both feel there is something strange about Miss Limb, and Clara suggests that she wants a man.

Clara walks a little ahead, and Miriam asks Paul if he still finds her disagreeable. He replies that something is the matter with her, and she agrees. They arrive at a field of wildflowers, and enjoy it together. Paul and Miriam pick flowers, and Clara says she doesn't like to pick them because she doesn't want the corpses around her. Paul argues that it is sufficient reason that he likes and wants the flowers and that there are plenty of them, and

Miriam says that the spirit in which the flowers are picked is what matters. When Clara bends forward to smell the flowers, Paul scatters cowslips over her hair and neck.

Paul takes his mother to Lincoln to see the cathedral, and he becomes worried about her when she cannot climb the hill because of her heart. He laments the fact that his mother is old and ill and that he was not the eldest son, and his mother tells him that she is only a bit old and not really ill.

At this time Annie is engaged to Leonard, who has a talk with Mrs. Morel because he wants to get married right away. She cautions him that neither he nor Annie has much money, and he tells her that he realizes that, but he still wants to marry Annie right away. She trusts him, as she tells Paul, and so the wedding takes place immediately.

Mrs. Morel decides to buy Arthur out of the army, at which he is overjoyed. He comes home and takes up with Beatrice Wyld.

Paul writes Miriam a letter attempting to explain what has happened in their love, and we are told that this is the end of the first phase of Paul's romantic endeavors.

Analysis

The main significant event in this chapter is that Paul returns to his mother's love, re-asserting her place as his closest loved one. He decides to abandon his affair with Miriam because his mother is more important, and he also strongly insists that he will not marry and leave his mother.

It is also significant because it contains the first real meeting between Paul and Clara. Although their friendship does not really begin until later, this is their first important point of contact.

Clara, who is portrayed as a feminist and a man-hater, makes a surprising remark that Miss Limb wants a man. This suggests that she might not be as feminist as she thinks she is, something that Paul also observes.

Chapter 10: Clara

Summary

Paul sends a painting to an exhibition at Nottingham Castle, and one morning Mrs. Morel gets very excited upon reading a letter. It turns out that he has won first prize and that the painting has been sold for twenty guineas to Major Moreton. Paul and his mother rejoice at his success, and he tells her that she can use the MONEY to buy Arthur out of the army. Paul is invited to some dinner parties and tells his mother he needs an evening suit. She gives him a suit that was William's.

Paul's newfound success prompts discussions with his mother about class and happiness. She wants her son to ascend into the middle class, but he says that he feels closest to the common people. Mrs. Morel wants her son to be happy, which seems mostly to mean finding a good woman and beginning to settle down. Paul argues that he worries a normal life might bore him.

Paul maintains his connection with Miriam, able neither to break it off entirely nor to go the full way to engagement. He feels that he owes himself to her, but he begins to drift slightly away from her.

Arthur is married to Beatrice, and she has a child. At first he is irritable and unhappy, but eventually he begins to accept his responsibilities and care for his wife and child.

One day a mutual friend asks Paul to take a message to Clara Dawes. He goes to her house, meets her mother, and observes them working on making lace. He delivers his message, has a pleasant conversation with Clara and her mother, and leaves, having gotten a humbling view of Clara, whom he had previously believed to be so high and mighty. Paul finds out that Susan, one of the girls at Jordan's, is leaving to get married, and so he gets Clara her job. The other girls do not like Clara because she acts like she is above them; they call her the Queen of Sheba.

One day Paul is rude to Clara; later, he regrets his rudeness and brings her chocolates as an apology. On his birthday Fanny surprises him with a gift of paints that all the girls except Clara, who they do not include in their planning, have chipped in to buy him. Paul goes out walking at dinnertime with Clara, and she complains that the girls have some secret from her. Paul tells her that the secret was the planning for his birthday present, and, that evening, she sends him a book of verse and a note. This incident brings Paul and Clara closer together.

They discuss what happened between Clara and her husband, and somehow the subject of Miriam comes up. Paul says that Miriam wants his soul, which he cannot give her. Clara, however, informs him that Miriam does not want his soul, only Paul himself.

Analysis

Paul maintains his close relationship with his mother, allowing her to live vicariously through his experiences. He tells her everything that happens in his life, and she feels as though she is a participant.

William is mentioned and reflected on several times in this chapter. First of all, when they are discussing Paul's success, Morel says that William might have been as successful as Paul, had he only lived. This statement affects Mrs. Morel deeply, and makes her feel strangely tired. When Paul tries on William's suit, she thinks again of William but is comforted by the thought of Paul. The notion that Mrs. Morel possesses Paul is particularly strong here, and this concept, which is constant throughout the novel, may account for Paul's failure to develop a strong relationship with another woman.

In the very end of this chapter, Clara provides the motivation for Paul to go back to Miriam. It is interesting that this motivation comes from Clara, since Miriam is her chief rival (besides Mrs. Morel) for Paul's affection.

Chapter 11: The Test on Miriam

Summary

Inspired by Clara's advice, Paul realizes that he must go back to Miriam. He reflects that the problems between the two of them may have been caused by the lack of sexuality in their relationship. He feels no aversion to her; rather, he feels that his desire for her has been overwhelmed by his stronger shyness and virginity.

He begins to spend more time with Miriam again, much to the dismay of his mother. One day he begins a serious discussion with her about marriage, and asks her if she thinks they have been “too fierce” in their purity toward each other. He tells her that he loves her, that he has been obstinate, and he kisses her. On their way home, he asks her (not in so many words) if she will sleep with him, and she tells him that she will, but not now.

Miriam feels that her submission to Paul will be a sacrifice, and it is a sacrifice she is willing to make for him. He begins to treat his relationship with her as a romantic relationship. One evening they go into the woods and “she relinquished herself to him,” but with some horror and with her soul somewhat apart.

Miriam goes to stay at her grandmother’s cottage, and Paul visits her often. One holiday he goes to spend the whole day with her. She prepares dinner, for that day they feel as though they live together in that cottage. They take a walk outside after dinner, and then come back inside and make love. Paul feels that he is sacrificing Miriam and that she is allowing herself to be sacrificed because she loves him so much.

During the next week, he asks her why she is so hesitant toward him, and she replies that she feels it is not quite right because they are not married. He tells her that he would like to marry her, but she feels they are too young. He begins to feel a sense of failure and to draw somewhat away from Miriam again. He begins to spend more time with his men friends and also once again with Clara.

Paul tells his mother that he will break off with Miriam, because he does not love her and does not want to marry her. She is somewhat surprised, and encourages him to do whatever he thinks is best. He goes to Miriam and tells her they should break off because he

does not want to marry. She is upset, tells him he is a child of four, and tells him that she knew all along that it would not work out between them. This upsets Paul and he begins to feel that she has deceived him, she had only pretended to love him. They part, each full of bitterness.

Analysis

Partly because of Paul's more frequent visits to Miriam, Mrs. Morel begins to give up on him. She feels that his mind is made up, and that nothing would persuade him to change his mind and restore his loyalties to her.

Lawrence's language seems to be deliberately vague on the subject of sex; it seems that Paul and Miriam sleep together in the woods when the narrator says "she relinquished herself to him." However, when they are in her grandmother's cottage, it seems that he makes love to her for the first time. Paul feels as he rides home that night that he had finally moved past his youth. This vagueness of language is largely due to the strict public morality that characterized society when the novel was written. Lawrence's books, despite his efforts at vagueness, often produced horror—many of them were even banned because of their sexual content.

Chapter 12: Passion

Summary

Paul begins to spend much of his time with his mother again. They go to the Isle of Wight for a holiday, and Mrs. Morel has a bad fainting fit caused by too much walking. She recovers, but Paul still feels anxious about her condition.

Paul also returns to spending a great deal of time with Clara. He tells her that he has broken off with Miriam. One Saturday evening Paul and Clara go for a walk and he kisses her, then, upon leaving, he is suddenly consumed by passion for her and cannot wait for Monday to come so that he can see her again. On Monday they go walking in the afternoon and take a tram out to the country. They walk near a river and decide to go down to the bank, but because of the rain, the path is gone. They encounter two fishermen while walking along the riverbank and keep walking until they find a secluded clearing slightly above the river level. After they leave, they climb up to the top again and they stop while Paul cleans off Clara's boots. She distracts him with kisses, but he finally finishes. They stop for tea at the house of an old woman, who gives Clara some flowers.

Paul returns home and tells his mother that he has been with Clara. She cautions him because Clara is a married woman, and he tells her not to worry. He asks if she would like to meet Clara, and decides to invite her to tea at their house one Sunday afternoon.

He still sees Miriam occasionally, and they talk about Clara and why she left her husband. Miriam tries to compare them to Mr. and Mrs. Morel, but Paul disagrees; he says that his mother felt passionately toward his father and that's why she stayed with him. He feels that Clara never had this type of passion for Baxter. Miriam understands that he is trying to initiate himself into passion. He tells her that Clara is coming to tea at his house on Sunday to meet his mother, and she understands that this is an indication of his seriousness.

When Clara comes to tea, she gets along well with his mother. Morel also meets her and impresses her with his politeness. Clara and Paul are in the garden looking at the flowers when Miriam arrives to say hello to Clara. She sees them together, and feels as though they are married. Mrs. Morel is not pleased to see Miriam, whom she still dislikes.

All three go to chapel and, afterward, when Paul and Clara are walking home, she asks him if he will give Miriam up. He tells her that he thinks he will always be friends with Miriam, and she draws away from him slightly and mocks him, telling him to run after Miriam. He gets angry with her and kisses her in rage. They go off into the fields, where they look at the lights of the town until Clara realizes she must go to make her train. They run and she just makes the train.

The next week Paul takes Clara to the theatre. She tells him to wear his evening suit, and she arrives dressed in a green evening dress. After the play, Paul realizes that he has missed his train, and Clara tells him to come home with her instead of walking. They arrive, and Clara's mother, Mrs. Radford, makes fun of their fancy clothes. Paul and Clara sit up playing cribbage, and Mrs. Radford waits up for them. Finally Paul goes to bed, but he cannot sleep for want of Clara. After he hears Mrs. Radford go to sleep and realizes that Clara is waiting downstairs, he goes down to her and asks her to come to his bed instead of going to sleep with her mother. She refuses, and he goes back to bed.

Mrs. Radford wakes him up in the morning, and he realizes that she is fond of him. He asks if she and Clara would like to go to the seaside with him and is amazed when she accepts.

Analysis

Paul continues to exhibit physical similarities to his mother. At one point in this chapter he clicks his tongue, and the narrator comments that Mrs. Morel shares the same habit.

Paul's relationship with his mother also continues to be central. Miriam knows Paul well enough to understand that whether he has told his mother about Clara is an indication of the seriousness of his feelings for her. This illustrates the way that his mother is still the most important woman to him, and the degree to which other events in his life can be understood by the way that they relate to her. It is also very important that Clara gets along well with his mother, as Clara understands, dreading the meeting because she realized Paul's intense love for Mrs. Morel.

Again, there is no direct mention of sex in this chapter, but it is alluded to in Clara and Paul's discussion of whether they are criminals, and in Paul's mention of Eve after they have been walking by the riverbank.

Chapter 13: Baxter Dawes

Summary

Paul is in a bar with some friends when Baxter Dawes enters, Clara's husband from whom she has been separated for years. Paul offers him a drink, since he is the superior at Jordan's, but Dawes refuses. Dawes begins to talk about Paul being at the theatre with a 'tart,' and Paul is about to leave when Dawes says something that causes Paul to throw a glass of beer in his face. Dawes rushes at Paul but is held back, and he is thrown out of the bar. Paul's friends at the bar tell him that he should learn to box, so that he can take care of Dawes. When he leaves, one of the men walks with him.

He tells Clara what has happened, and she does not seem surprised, saying that Baxter is a low sort of person. She wants Paul to carry a gun or a knife for protection and is angry when he refuses.

One day at the factory, Paul runs into Dawes. Dawes threatens him while he carries on with his work. Finally Dawes grabs Paul's arm, and Thomas Jordan comes out of his office to see what is happening. He tells Dawes to leave and, when he does not, grabs his arm. Dawes jerks his elbow and sends Jordan flying backward through a spring-door and down half a flight of steps. Jordan is not hurt, but he dismisses Dawes.

Paul discusses love with his mother and says that perhaps something is the matter with him and that he can't love. She says that he has not met the right woman, and he replies that he will never meet the right woman while she is alive. Clara asks him about the future, and he tells her he will go abroad and then come back to be with his mother. He tells her not to ask about the future but just to be with him now, and they surrender to their passion. She does not want a divorce from Baxter and therefore cannot belong to him completely. They both realize that they will go separate ways.

One evening they pass Dawes as they are walking, and Paul does not realize who it is until after they have passed him, and Clara says it was Baxter. Another night some time later, Paul is walking alone and encounters Dawes waiting for him. They fight and Paul is hurt. He struggles to get himself home and goes to sleep, and his mother is there to take care of him when he awakes. While he is ill, Clara and then Miriam come to visit him, and he tells his mother that he doesn't care about them.

After he is better, he goes on a holiday with his friend Newton and arranges to meet his mother at Annie's house in Sheffield. When he arrives there, Annie opens the door and he realizes that his mother is ill. They discover that she has a tumor, and Paul goes to see her doctor in Nottingham. He agrees to come to Sheffield, looks at the tumor, and says that

he may be able to cure it. Mrs. Morel stays in Sheffield for two months, and then the family hires a motor-car to drive her home, at which she is very glad.

Analysis

In this chapter Paul admits that his mother does not share in all aspects of his life: his sex life is separate from her. He evidently feels that the incident with Dawes in the bar belongs to this life, because he feels mortified at the thought of telling her about it. However, he does not like having to conceal anything from his mother.

We can see, however, that his mother is still the most important to him through his thoughts as he tries to make his way home after his fight with Dawes: he thinks over and over again that he must make it home to his mother.

Paul's reflections on love recall his older brother William's complaints when he was engaged. Paul thinks that he loves Clara when he is with her, is indifferent toward her when not with her, and often tunes her out when she talks to him.

Chapter 14: The Release

Summary

Dr. Ansell tells Paul that Baxter Dawes is in the fever hospital in Sheffield, and Paul decides to visit him. Paul tells Dawes that he can recommend him a convalescent home in Seathorpe. He tells Clara that he has been to visit Dawes in the hospital, and she becomes upset and realizes that she has treated her husband badly. She goes to see him to try to make amends, but at first they do not get on well. Paul also visits Dawes a few times, and the two men begin to develop a sort of friendship.

Paul does not spend much time with Clara now, because he is occupied with his mother's illness. Mrs. Morel gets gradually worse, and Paul spends much time caring for her. When Clara reminds him that it is her birthday, he takes her to the seashore, but spends most of the time talking about his mother and how he wishes that she would die.

The next time he sees Dawes, Paul mentions that he has been with Clara, and this is the first mention the two men make of Clara. He tells Dawes that he will go abroad after his mother dies.

Time passes, and Mrs. Morel stays the same. Miriam writes to Paul and he visits her. She kisses him, believing he will be comforted, but he does not want that kind of comfort from her and finally manages to get away. Paul and Annie share the nursing of their mother. They begin to feel as if they can no longer go on, and Paul decides to give her an overdose of morphia to put an end to all their suffering. He crushes all the pills they have into his mother' milk, and she drinks it obediently, believing it to be a new sleeping draught. She lasts through the night and finally dies the next morning.

Dawes is now in a convalescent home, and Paul goes to see him again and suggests that he has plenty of life left in him and that he should try to get Clara back so that he can regain something of his former life. The next day, he and Clara bring Dawes to his lodging and Paul leaves them together.

Analysis

This chapter is an excellent example of the way that the novel is not always narrated in chronological order, since the first episode in which Paul visits Baxter Dawes in the

hospital actually occurs before Mrs. Morel is taken home, an episode which is included in the previous chapter.

Mrs. Morel's desire to be with Paul is so strong that he tells Clara he believes she refuses to die so that she can stay with him. "And she looks at me, and she wants to stay with me . . . She's got such a will, it seems as if she would never go - never!" Even though he says he wishes she would die, Paul's strong bond to his mother remains. He feels as though a part of him were dying also. After she dies, Paul still feels this connection: "Looking at her, he felt he could never, never let her go."

Morel shows his vulnerability after his wife dies, when he waits up for Paul to return home, so that he is not alone in the house with the dead body. Paul, who had considered Morel to be fearless, is taken by surprise.

Chapter 15: Derelict

Summary

Clara goes back to Sheffield with her husband, and Paul is left alone with his father. There is no point in keeping their house any longer, so they each take lodgings nearby. Paul is lost without his mother. He can no longer paint, and he puts all of his energy into his work at the factory. He has debates within himself, telling himself that he must stay alive for his mother's sake. However, he wants to give up.

One Sunday evening, however, he sees Miriam at the Unitarian Church. He asks her to have supper with him quickly and she agrees. She tells him that she has been going to a farming college and will probably be kept on as a teacher there. She says that she thinks they should be married, and he says he's not sure that would be much good. He says he

does not want it very much, and so she gives up. That is the end between them. She leaves him, realizing that “his soul could not leave her, wherever she was.”

Paul, alone, yearns for his mother and considers following her into death. However, he decides to leave off thinking about suicide, and instead walks toward the town.

Analysis

This chapter is Miriam’s last attempt finally to possess Paul, now that the obstacle of his mother is out of the way. However, by the end she sees the futility of her efforts and realizes that, even in death, Mrs. Morel still owns Paul and he can never be hers.

Paul says of his mother that, “She was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid all this. And she was gone, intermingled herself. He wanted her to touch him, have him alongside with her.” This completes the book’s treatment of the relationship between Paul and Mrs. Morel and illustrates the way that his love for her has remained constant throughout.

4. Character Analysis

4.1 Paul Morel

Paul is the protagonist of the novel, and we follow his life from infancy to his early twenties. He is sensitive, temperamental, artistic (a painter), and unceasingly devoted to his mother. They are inseparable; he confides everything in her, works and paints to please her, and nurses her as she dies. Paul has ultimately unsuccessful romances with Miriam Leiver and Clara Dawes, always alternating between great love and hatred for each of them. His relationship fails with Miriam because she is too sacrificial and virginal to claim him as hers,

whereas it fails with Clara because, it seems, she has never given up on her estranged husband. However, the major reason behind Paul's break-ups is the long shadow of his mother; no woman can ever equal her in his eyes, and he can never free himself from her possession.

4.2 Gertrude Morel

Mrs. Morel is unhappily married to Walter Morel, and she redirects her attention to her children, her only passion in life. She is first obsessed with William, but his death leaves her empty and redirects her energies toward Paul. She bitterly disapproves of all the women these two sons encounter, masking her jealousy with other excuses. A natural intellectual, she also feels society has limited her opportunities as a woman, another reason she lives through Paul.

4.3 Miriam Leiver

Miriam is a virginal, religious girl who lives on a farm near the Morels, and she is Paul's first love. However, their relationship takes ages to move beyond the Platonic and into the romantic. She loves Paul deeply, but he never wants to marry her and "belong" to her, in his words. Rather, he sees her more as a sacrificial, spiritual soul mate and less as a sensual, romantic lover. Mrs. Morel, who feels threatened by Miriam's intellectuality, always reinforces his disdain for Miriam.

4.4 Clara Dawes

Clara is an older women estranged from her husband, Baxter Dawes. Unlike the intellectual Miriam, Clara seems to represent the body. Her sensuality attracts Paul, as does

her elusiveness and mysteriousness. However, she loses this elusiveness as their affair continues, and Paul feels she has always "belonged" to her husband.

4.5 Walter Morel

Morel, the coal-mining head of the family, was once a humorous, lively man, but over time he has become a cruel, selfish alcoholic. His family, especially Mrs. Morel, despises him, and Paul frequently entertains fantasies of his father's dying.

4.6 William Morel

William, Mrs. Morel's "knight," is her favorite son. But when he moves away, she disapproves of his new lifestyle and new girlfriends, especially Lily. His death plunges Mrs. Morel into grief.

4.7 Baxter Dawes

Dawes, a burly, handsome man, is estranged from his wife, Clara Dawes, because of his infidelity. He resents Paul for taking Clara, but over time the men become friends.

4.8 Annie Morel

Annie is the Morel's only daughter. She is a schoolteacher who leaves home fairly early.

4.9 Arthur Morel

Arthur, the youngest Morel son, is exceptionally handsome, but also immature. He rashly enters the military, and it takes a while until he gets out. He marries Beatrice.

4.10 Louisa Lily Denys Western

Lily, William's girlfriend, is materialistic and vain. Her condescending behavior around the Morels irritates William, and she soon forgets about him after his death.

4.11 The Leivers

The Leivers own a nearby farm that Paul and Mrs. Morel visit. They have three sons□Edgar being the eldest□and two daughters, including Miriam.

4.12 Edgar Leivers

The eldest Leiver son, Edgar and Paul become friends.

4.13 Agatha Leivers

The elder sister of Miriam, Agatha is a school-teacher who fights with Miriam for Paul's attention.

4.14 Beatrice

A friend of the Morel's who stops by and insults Miriam and flirts with Paul. She eventually marries Arthur.

4.15 Mrs. Radford

Clara's mother, with whom she lives. Clara is embarrassed by her.

4.16 Thomas Jordan

A curt, old man, Jordan employs Paul at his warehouse of surgical appliances.

4.17 Pappleworth

Paul's supervisor at Jordan's.

4.18 Fanny

A lively hunchback who works at Jordan's.

4.19 Polly

Worker at Jordan's whom Paul regularly has dinner with.

4.20 Connie

An attractive, redheaded worker at Jordan's.

4. 21 Louie

Facetious worker at Jordan's.

4.22 Emma

Old, condescending worker at Jordan's.

4.23 Mr. Heaton

Clergyman who visits Mrs. Morel and becomes Paul's godfather.

4.24 Dr. Ansel

Mrs. Morel's doctor.

4.25 Jerry Purdy

Friend of Morel's.

4.26 John Field

Childhood friend of Mrs. Morel's.

5. Stylistic Devices of the Novel

5.1 Themes

Oedipus complex

Perhaps Sigmund Freud's most celebrated theory of sexuality, the Oedipus complex takes its name from the title character of the Greek play Oedipus Rex. In the story, Oedipus is prophesied to murder his father and have sex with his mother (and he does, though unwittingly). Freud argued that these repressed desires are present in most young boys. (The female version is called the Electra complex.)

D.H. Lawrence was aware of Freud's theory, and Sons and Lovers famously uses the Oedipus complex as its base for exploring Paul's relationship with his mother. Paul is hopelessly devoted to his mother, and that love often borders on romantic desire. Lawrence writes many scenes between the two that go beyond the bounds of conventional mother-son love. Completing the Oedipal equation, Paul murderously hates his father and often fantasizes about his death.

Paul assuages his guilty, incestuous feelings by transferring them elsewhere, and the greatest receivers are Miriam and Clara (note that transference is another Freudian term).

However, Paul cannot love either woman nearly as much as he does his mother, though he does not always realize that this is an impediment to his romantic life. The older, independent Clara, especially, is a failed maternal substitute for Paul. In this setup, Baxter Dawes can be seen as an imposing father figure; his savage beating of Paul, then, can be viewed as Paul's unconsciously desired punishment for his guilt. Paul's eagerness to befriend Dawes once he is ill (which makes him something like the murdered father) further reveals his guilt over the situation.

But Lawrence adds a twist to the Oedipus complex: Mrs. Morel is saddled with it as well. She desires both William and Paul in near-romantic ways, and she despises all their girlfriends. She, too, engages in transference, projecting her dissatisfaction with her marriage onto her smothering love for her sons. At the end of the novel, Paul takes a major step in releasing himself from his Oedipus complex. He intentionally overdoses his dying mother with morphia, an act that reduces her suffering but also subverts his Oedipal fate, since he does not kill his father, but his mother.

Bondage

Lawrence discusses bondage, or servitude, in two major ways: social and romantic. Socially, Mrs. Morel feels bound by her status as a woman and by industrialism. She complains of feeling "'buried alive,'" a logical lament for someone married to a miner, and even the children feel they are in a "tight place of anxiety." Though she joins a women's group, she must remain a housewife for life, and thus is jealous of Miriam, who is able to utilize her intellect in more opportunities. Ironically, Paul feels free in his job at the factory,

enjoying the work and the company of the working-class women, though one gets the sense that he would still rather be painting.

Romantic bondage is given far more emphasis in the novel. Paul (and William, to a somewhat lesser extent) feels bound to his mother, and cannot imagine ever abandoning her or even marrying anyone else. He is preoccupied with the notion of lovers "belonging" to each other, and his true desire, revealed at the end, is for a woman to claim him forcefully as her own. He feels the sacrificial Miriam fails in this regard and that Clara always belonged to Baxter Dawes. It is clear that no woman could ever match the intensity and steadfastness of his mother's claim.

Complementing the theme of bondage is the novel's treatment of jealousy. Mrs. Morel is constantly jealous of her sons' lovers, and she masks this jealousy very thinly. Morel, too, is jealous over his wife's closer relationships with his sons and over their successes. Paul frequently rouses jealousy in Miriam with his flirtations with Agatha Leiver and Beatrice, and Dawes is violently jealous of Paul's romance with Clara.

Contradictions and oppositions

Lawrence demonstrates how contradictions emerge so easily in human nature, especially with love and hate. Paul vacillates between hatred and love for all the women in his life, including his mother at times. Often he loves and hates at the same time, especially with Miriam. Mrs. Morel, too, has some reserve of love for her husband even when she hates him, although this love dissipates over time.

Lawrence also uses the opposition of the body and mind to expose the contradictory nature of desire; frequently, characters pair up with someone who is quite unlike them. Mrs. Morel initially likes the hearty, vigorous Morel because he is so far removed from her dainty, refined, intellectual nature. Paul's attraction to Miriam, his spiritual soul mate, is less intense than his desire for the sensual, physical Clara.

The decay of the body also influences the spiritual relationships. When Mrs. Morel dies, Morel grows more sensitive, though he still refuses to look at her body. Dawes's illness, too, removes his threat to Paul, who befriends his ailing rival.

Nature and flowers

Sons and Lovers has a great deal of description of the natural environment. Often, the weather and environment reflect the characters' emotions through the literary technique of pathetic fallacy. The description is frequently eroticized, both to indicate sexual energy and to slip pass the censors in Lawrence's repressive time.

Lawrence's characters also experience moments of transcendence while alone in nature, much as the Romantics did. More frequently, characters bond deeply while in nature. Lawrence uses flowers throughout the novel to symbolize these deep connections. However, flowers are sometimes agents of division, as when Paul is repulsed by Miriam's fawning behavior towards the daffodil.

6. Study Questions

The novel is arranged in a series of episodes, not necessarily in chronological order. This type of narrative is called episodic. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this

type of narration? One effect this technique has is the blending of different time periods. Another element that contributes to the blending of time periods is the use of the iterative mode, which causes confusion about whether events happened one or many times. Think about the effects these techniques have on the text.

Think about the role the chapter titles play in the novel. Do they reveal too much information about the story? Contrast them with chapter headings in eighteenth-century episodic novels like Henry Fielding's Tom Jones or Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy, both of which have elaborate chapter headings describing everything that happens in the chapter. Also think about if the novel would have been different if the chapters had no titles.

a) What role do the shifting narrative perspectives play in the novel? Trace the shifting perspective throughout the novel to determine from which character's point of view the story seems to be narrated at each point.
b) What function does the division of the novel into two parts serve? One possible interpretation: the first part of the novel focuses on Mrs. Morel and the second part focuses on Paul. Does this seem like a valid distinction? What other factors seem to distinguish the two sections of the novel from each other?
c) Much of the novel is concerned with Paul's RELATIONSHIP WITH WOMEN, most importantly his mother, Miriam, and Clara. Examine Paul's interactions with the other male characters in the novel. Consider his father, his brothers, Mr. Pappleworth, Edgar Leivers, Baxter Dawes.
d) Paul's close relationship with his mother has provoked many Freudian and Oedipal readings of this novel. Is this type of reading valid? If not, what do you make of the

relationship between Paul and his mother, which seems to be the one constant force throughout the novel?

e) Is Mrs. Morel the most important woman to Paul throughout the novel, or are there moments at which his relationships with Miriam or Clara take precedence? If so, what is the significance of these moments? Why does he always come back to his mother in the end? You may also want to trace the theme of a higher level of understanding between Paul and his mother throughout the novel, possibly beginning with his illness immediately after William's death.

f) What goes wrong between Paul and Miriam? Is it just that she cannot compete with his love for his mother, or is there some other problem?

g) Why does Paul change his mind so often? Trace his on- again, off-again feelings for Miriam and Clara throughout the novel.

Think about the religious aspects of this novel. Consider in particular Miriam's notions of sacrifice and of "baptism of fire in passion."

Morel speaks in a dialect throughout the novel.

h) Why might Lawrence have chosen to make Morel use a dialect? Does it set him apart from the other characters? Are there any other characters who speak in this dialect, and, if so, what purpose does this serve? What is the function of language as communication in the novel?

7. Suggested Essay Topics

a) In your opinion, does Paul have a healthy relationship with his mother? If you were Paul's friend, how would you advise him about changing this relationship?

b) For a while, it looks like William Morel is going to be our main character. Then Lawrence just ditches him and throws Paul into the book to take his place. What do you think William Morel's main purpose was in this story? Why did Lawrence pull this bait-and-switch on us?

c) Why does Mrs. Morel disapprove of Paul's relationship with Miriam? Do you think her objections to Miriam are valid, or do they mostly stem from jealousy? Use specific examples from the text to support your answers.

d) How does Lawrence's writing style affect your reading of the book? When does he tend to write in a straightforward manner? How about a poetic and emo manner? What is the significance of these shifts in writing style?

e) Do you have any sympathy for Walter Morel (the father character)? Does the text seem to want you to have any sympathy for him?

f) Why does Paul come to value his relationship with Baxter Dawes? What does the relationship mean to Baxter?

g) Why does Lawrence try to capture the Nottinghamshire accent when he's writing dialogue for Walter Morel? Is it annoying for you as a reader, or do you find it an effective strategy for rooting you in the environment of Lawrence's homeland?

h) In your opinion, should Paul settle down with Clara, Miriam, or neither? Use examples from the text to support your claim.

i) Why is Lawrence so intense when he writes about nature? If nature were a character in this book, what kind of character would it be? How does Lawrence want us to think about nature?

j) In your opinion, is Paul going to end up a boozer just like his father? Why or why not? How will his life be different from Walter's? How will it be the same?

k) Why does Lawrence write this book from a third-person omniscient perspective, rather than a first-person perspective (through the eyes of Paul Morel) or third-person limited perspective (filtered through Paul's worldview)? What do we gain by having direct access to all of the characters' thoughts and motives? What might we lose?

8. Suggestions for Further Reading

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Paper XI: The 20th Century Unit IV

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Structure

1. Background

1.1 Introduction to the Author

James Augustine Joyce was born on February 2, 1882, in the Dublin suburb of Rathgar, Ireland. Son of a dutiful mother and a charming but improvident father, Joyce was the oldest of

ten surviving children; five others died in infancy. One critic has remarked, in jest, that the large number of children in the Joyce household was surpassed only by the enormous number of debts which Joyce's father incurred. Despite the family's continuous financial instability, however, Joyce's father was aware of his son's exceptional talents, and he arranged for Joyce to attend two of Ireland's most prestigious educational institutions, thereby providing his son with a solid, impressive education.

Education

In September of 1888, Joyce began his studies at a Jesuit boarding school for boys, Clongowes Wood College. At first, he suffered from vague maladies; he felt tormented and isolated from the other boys. After a period of adjustment, both his health and his attitude improved, and soon, in spite of an occasional need of discipline by his Jesuit teachers, Joyce began to impress the Clongowes faculty with his keen memory, musical talent, and athletic ability.

Joyce returned home for his first Christmas vacation from Clongowes and found his family in turmoil because of the death of Charles Stewart Parnell, the leader of the Irish Nationalist Party. Parnell, formerly an indomitable and respected politician, had recently suffered the decline of his career as a result of his romantic involvement with a married woman, Kitty O'Shea; this highly publicized, scandalous affair resulted in his political downfall, and a year later, fervently attempting to build up a new independent party, he died of exhaustion. He was only forty-five years old.

Parnell's downfall and his subsequent death were important in Joyce's life not only because they made him aware of the disparity between Church and State in Ireland, but also because they created within the mind of a boy who had admired Parnell's heroism a fear that Ireland would always destroy its own prophets. The effect of this revelation on nine-year-old Joyce is clearly evident in "Et Tu, Healy," a poem he wrote and distributed to friends, denouncing the man who was partly responsible for Parnell's undoing.

The fall of Parnell seemed to herald yet another decline in the Joyce family fortune, and it was not long until financial reversals and a series of domestic moves made it impossible for Joyce to return to Clongowes Wood. Nonetheless, in 1893, through his father's contacts, Joyce was able to enroll in an equally prestigious day school, Belvedere College. Joyce attended school there until he was sixteen, distinguishing himself as a school leader, thespian, and award-winning essayist, whose poems and essays were published in the school magazine.

For the most part, Joyce's school years seem idyllic, but two significant events occurred when he was fourteen which helped shape the boy's spiritual and creative future. First, Joyce was admitted to, and later became the prefect of, the school's Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and second, he had his first sexual experience — with a Dublin prostitute; this paradoxical turn of events occurred within just a few weeks of each other. (Joyce's attempts to reconcile the trinity of women, sex, and creativity are woven throughout his works.) Two years later, Joyce entered University College in Dublin.

Advanced Education

Although University College was known as a Jesuit institution, the emphasis on religious instruction had recently been deemphasized in order to please the emerging taste for the classics. This emphasis on humanistic studies, coupled with Joyce's mature changes in temperament, enabled him to depart from religious study almost entirely; he preferred to pursue a growing interest in the myths which Wagner used for his operas. He was also fascinated by the dramas of the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen.

This latter interest was not shared by the conservative members of the faculty. In fact, Joyce received considerable criticism for an essay which he delivered before the college's Literary and Historical Society, denouncing Greek and Shakespearean drama in favor of the works of more modern playwrights, such as Ibsen. Undaunted by the attacks on his aesthetic opinions, Joyce further asserted himself by revising his presentation into an essay entitled "Ibsen's New Drama," which appeared in the Fortnightly Review in 1900.

Throughout the remainder of Joyce's university years, he continued to take issue with popular artistic tastes. Intolerant of the emerging Irish Theater Movement, which he believed was producing offensive provincial dramas, he wrote a scathing article, "The Day of the Rabblement," in which he encouraged people to reject the paltry works of Irish dramatists and explore the works of great beauty and truth which were being produced by new European writers.

Joyce departed from University College on December 1, 1902, and traveled to Paris, where he hoped to begin a medical career and continue his writing. He soon fell behind in his

studies and fell even further behind in his finances. Luckily, some of these pressures were alleviated with the help of a recent acquaintance, Lady Augusta Gregory, and a fortuitous friendship with William Butler Yeats. Both Gregory and Yeats provided Joyce with encouragement and contacts which enabled him to write reviews for Dublin's Daily Express.

Originally, Joyce had hoped to stay in Paris for several years, but in April 1903, his father sent him an urgent cable concerning Joyce's mother's failing health. Joyce returned to Dublin and learned that his mother had been diagnosed as dying of cirrhosis of the liver; ironically, Joyce began spending most of his time drinking and carousing with medical students. His mother finally succumbed to cancer on August 13, 1903; she was forty-four.

The Creative Years

During the months following Mrs. Joyce's death, the household was in continuous turmoil. Joyce, however, withdrew from family problems, and on January 7, 1904, he sat down to write a piece for Dana, a new intellectual journal. He composed a lengthy autobiographical, satirical piece which, at his brother Stanislaus' suggestion, he entitled "A Portrait of the Artist."

A month later, the editors at Dana rejected the work because of its sexual content, but Joyce seized on this opportunity to develop the manuscript into a novel entitled Stephen Hero; the protagonist would be a Catholic artist who was both a hero and a martyr. The novel was published posthumously in 1944, and today, Stephen Hero is treasured because of the rich lode of autobiographical material which Joyce used for his later fictional masterpiece, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.

In the spring of 1904, while Joyce was writing the early drafts of Stephen Hero, he was also writing verses for what would eventually become the collection (or suite) of thirty-six poems entitled Chamber Music, a work which was not published until 1907.

It was at this point in his life that Joyce met the woman whom he would love for the rest of his life, Nora Barnacle. They first met on June 10; six days later, on June 16, Joyce knew that he was in love. Thus June 16 became a special day for him, a day which he would use for the chronology of Ulysses. Today, Joyce fans throughout the world still celebrate June 16 as "Bloomsday."

In October 1904, Joyce and Nora moved to Zurich, where Joyce had been promised a teaching position at the Berlitz School. Arriving there, he learned that he could not be employed because the school administrators could not find a record of his application. Frustrated, Joyce decided to move to Trieste. He remained there for the next ten years and continued his writing. A son, Giorgio, was born in 1905, and a daughter, Lucia, was born in 1907.

In September 1907, Joyce began to transform Stephen Hero into A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, retaining "Stephen Daedalus" for the protagonist's name. It was a name which Joyce himself had already used as a pen name, and it was also a name which linked the first Christian martyr (Stephen) and the mythic Greek maze-maker (Daedalus), a man known for his cunning and skill. In addition, because Daedalus was the father of Icarus (who attempted to fly with wings fashioned by his father), the surname provided Joyce with multiple variations on the flight theme, a motif which would pervade the novel. Later, Joyce changed the spelling of the

hero's last name — ostensibly, in order to deemphasize the autobiographical nature of the book.

Joyce also began working again on Dubliners, a book of short stories that he hoped would be a "polished looking glass" of Dublin, a mirror in which he could lamentably reflect on the intellectual, spiritual, and cultural paralysis that he believed had infected the people of Ireland. He was unsuccessful in getting Dubliners published, and, in a sudden fit of rage, he threw the manuscript of A Portrait into the fire. Luckily, his sister Eileen was nearby and recovered it nearly intact.

Feeling that he needed to return to Ireland, Joyce took young Giorgio with him, leaving his wife and daughter behind in Trieste. He wanted to see for himself what had happened to his country of "betrayers."

Back in Dublin, not only did Joyce come to grips with the forces which had created his deep concern for Ireland, but a personal episode occurred which shaped his future works. During a meeting with an old friend and former rival for Nora's attentions, Vincent Cosgrave, Joyce became convinced that in the early days of his courting Nora, she would, after leaving Joyce for the evening, spend the rest of the evening with Cosgrave. Joyce's feelings of betrayal caused him to write a series of accusatory letters to Nora, who didn't respond at first. Later, Joyce learned from a friend that Cosgrave had lied about the incident. This revelation caused Joyce to become penitent and, in some ways, even worshipful of Nora. These letters to Nora, written during the Joyces' separation in 1909, have proven literarily significant. We know now that they provided the psychological spur, as well as the literary material, which Joyce needed

to complete the final chapters of A Portrait and establish the essential themes for his novel Ulysses and his play, Exiles.

In 1915, after the outbreak of World War I, Joyce moved his family to Zurich, and there he finished A Portrait and received welcome assistance from such literary notables as William Butler Yeats and an American exile, Ezra Pound, both of whom were instrumental in A Portrait's being published in serial form in The Egoist. The first installment appeared in 1914, on Joyce's birthday, February 2. The publication of A Portrait as a single volume met with difficulties, and it was only with the help of two literary patronesses, Harriet Shaw Weaver and Edith Rockefeller McCormick, that it was finally published by B. W. Huebsch in New York in 1916, and later in England by Miss Weaver's newly formed Egoist Press, in 1917. Coincidentally, Dubliners was also published in 1914, by Grant Richards.

In August of 1917, Joyce began to undergo a series of eye operations, surgery which would continue throughout the next fifteen years. He sustained his creative enthusiasm, nonetheless, and the serial publication of his new work, Ulysses, appeared in the Little Review in 1918 and continued through 1920.

This enormous novel, loosely structured in episodes akin to Homer's Odyssey, takes place during the course of a single day in the life of Leopold Bloom, a Jewish advertising canvasser, and a now-matured Stephen Dedalus. Ulysses revolutionized the notion of what a novel was; never before had a writer so challenged the elasticity of the English language. Immediately, critical debate raged regarding Ulysses' literary merit, and eventually the New York Society for the Prevention of Vice lodged an official complaint against the Little Review for

publishing obscene material, which it identified with references to specific episodes. The result of this suit deemed Ulysses virtually unpublishable until Sylvia Beach, through her Shakespeare and Company bookstore, decided to undertake the production of the novel. It appeared on February 2, 1922.

The censorship of Joyce's epic whetted public interest in the work, and, at one time, one never traveled to Paris and returned home without attempting to smuggle in a copy of Ulysses. Until the famed Woolsey decision of 1933, Ulysses could not be legally admitted into the United States. In 1923, Joyce began working on Finnegans Wake, the enigmatic work that would consume him throughout the final years of his life. This novel, a dream-like vision of life's cycles, seems to be specifically about the past and future of man's "universal history." Essentially, the work seems to be a written revelation of the author's inner life, related in what Joyce called the "stages" of night language — with its "conscious, then semi-conscious, then unconscious" associations. Reflecting on the novel, Joyce said that the work represented a reality that was, to him, more real than everyday life. This perception of the work, however, was neither shared by his friends nor by his literary associates. The work appeared, in part, in several magazines from 1927 through 1938 and was finally published in its complete form in 1939.

The final days of Joyce's life were filled with frustration — beginning with the angry, critical reception of Finnegans Wake and continuing through the beginning of World War II, an event which once again necessitated Joyce's moving his family. In addition, Joyce's eyes and his general health had begun to steadily decline, and he was continually worried about the mental instability of his daughter, Lucia; she had suffered a severe mental breakdown in 1932 and was

diagnosed as an incurable schizophrenic. In spite of the hopelessness of Lucia's condition, Joyce persisted in trying to find a cure for her; he felt that in some way he was responsible — that he had failed her as a father.

Joyce's own health continued to decline, and after succumbing to stomach cramps, he agreed to surgery for a previously undiagnosed duodenal ulcer; he never recovered and died on January 13, 1941. He was buried in the Fluntern Cemetery on a hill in Zurich, and his grave was decorated with only a green wreath woven in the shape of a lyre, a symbol and emblem of Ireland.

1.2 Introduction to the Text

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man was first published in serial form in the Egoist in the years 1914-15. Chronicling the life of Stephen Dedalus from early childhood to young adulthood and his life-changing decision to leave Ireland, the novel is profoundly autobiographical. Like Stephen, Joyce had early experiences with prostitutes during his teenage years and struggled with questions of faith. Like Stephen, Joyce was the son of a religious mother and a financially inept father. Like Stephen, Joyce was the eldest of ten children and received his education at Jesuit schools. Like Stephen, Joyce left Ireland to pursue the life of a poet and writer. Joyce began working on the stories that formed the foundation of the novel as early as 1903, after the death of is mother. Previous to the publication of Portrait, Joyce had published several stories under the pseudonym "Stephen Dedalus."

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is one of the earlier examples in English literature of a novel that makes extensive use of stream of consciousness. Stream of conscious

is a narrative technique through which the author attempts to represent the fluid and eruptive nature of human thought. The narrative is anchored in the interior life of a character rather than from the perspective of an objective third-person narrator. While in Paris in 1902, Joyce discovered the French novel Les Lauriers sont Coup?s; Joyce credits this novel with the inspiration for creating his own style of stream of consciousness narrative.

While Portrait lacks the ambition and scope of Joyce's later stream of conscious masterpiece, *Ulysses*, in many ways it was a revolutionary novel. The opening section is in stream of consciousness with a child protagonist, and the novel is marked by an increasing sophistication of narrative voice as the protagonist matures. Although many sections of the novel are narrated in a relatively direct style, Joyce writes long passages that sustain a complex and difficult language attempting to approximate the workings of human thought. Even when the work is narrated in a straightforward manner, the narrative voice never strays from the interior life of Stephen Dedalus. We see events only as they are filtered through Stephen.

The book shows a wide range of narrative styles. There are lush and intricate passages, sections narrated in a direct style, and highly experimental sections. The close is very simply done, all in the form of Stephen's journal entries before leaving Ireland. The variety of styles is part of what makes Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man such an enjoyable read.

Joyce is one of the central authors of the modernist canon, and he is best known for a core of four works: *Dubliners* (1914), *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914-5), *Ulysses* (1922), and *Finnegan's Wake* (1939). These last three works in particular had a huge impact on

the development of modernist English literature. Writers as illustrious as Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner were strongly influenced by Joyce's innovative narrative experiments.

2. Plot Overview

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man tells the story of Stephen Dedalus, a boy growing up in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century, as he gradually decides to cast off all his social, familial, and religious constraints to live a life devoted to the art of writing. As a young boy, Stephen's Catholic faith and Irish nationality heavily influence him. He attends a strict religious boarding school called Clongowes Wood College. At first, Stephen is lonely and homesick at the school, but as time passes he finds his place among the other boys. He enjoys his visits home, even though family tensions run high after the death of the Irish political leader Charles Stewart Parnell. This sensitive subject becomes the topic of a furious, politically charged argument over the family's Christmas dinner.

Stephen's father, Simon, is inept with money, and the family sinks deeper and deeper into debt. After a summer spent in the company of his Uncle Charles, Stephen learns that the family cannot afford to send him back to Clongowes, and that they will instead move to Dublin. Stephen starts attending a prestigious day school called Belvedere, where he grows to excel as a writer and as an actor in the student theater. His first sexual experience, with a young Dublin prostitute, unleashes a storm of guilt and shame in Stephen, as he tries to reconcile his physical desires with the stern Catholic morality of his surroundings. For a while, he ignores his religious upbringing, throwing himself with debauched abandon into a variety of sins—masturbation, gluttony, and more visits to prostitutes, among others. Then, on a three-day religious retreat,

Stephen hears a trio of fiery sermons about sin, judgment, and hell. Deeply shaken, the young man resolves to rededicate himself to a life of Christian piety.

Stephen begins attending Mass every day, becoming a model of Catholic piety, abstinence, and self-denial. His religious devotion is so pronounced that the director of his school asks him to consider entering the priesthood. After briefly considering the offer, Stephen realizes that the austerity of the priestly life is utterly incompatible with his love for sensual beauty. That day, Stephen learns from his sister that the family will be moving, once again for financial reasons. Anxiously awaiting news about his acceptance to the university, Stephen goes for a walk on the beach, where he observes a young girl wading in the tide. He is struck by her beauty, and realizes, in a moment of epiphany, that the love and desire of beauty should not be a source of shame. Stephen resolves to live his life to the fullest, and vows not to be constrained by the boundaries of his family, his nation, and his religion.

Stephen moves on to the university, where he develops a number of strong friendships, and is especially close with a young man named Cranly. In a series of conversations with his companions, Stephen works to formulate his theories about art. While he is dependent on his friends as listeners, he is also determined to create an independent existence, liberated from the expectations of friends and family. He becomes more and more determined to free himself from all limiting pressures, and eventually decides to leave Ireland to escape them. Like his namesake, the mythical Daedalus, Stephen hopes to build himself wings on which he can fly above all obstacles and achieve a life as an artist.

3. Summary and Analysis

3.1 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 1

Summary:

We begin with Stephen Dedalus' earliest childhood, described to us in the terms a child would use: there are touches of baby talk, along with visceral imagery of his parents, his governess Dante, and his Uncle Charles. One of his neighbours is a little girl named Eileen, and Stephen announces that when he is grown, he will marry her. His announcement infuriates Dante. We learn later that Eileen is Protestant.

We then move to Stephen's first days at the boarding school of Conglowes, and the language changes to reflect Stephen's aging: he is now a young boy, and he is terribly homesick. He comforts himself with thoughts of how it will feel to return home. He is also very devout, and his nightly prayers are a cross between a child's compulsive superstitions and the Catholic faith in which he has been raised. One day, a larger boy named Wells picks on Stephen and pushes him into a cesspool. Stephen gets a fever from the filthy water, and he fantasizes about how sorry everyone will be when he dies. In the school clinic, Brother Michael takes care of him and another boy named Athy. Brother Michael reads the paper to them. Stephen and Athy hear about the death of Charles Parnell, an Irish nationalist politician. Stephen has earned some respect from the boys for not ratting on Wells.

That Christmas holiday, Stephen eats at the table with the adults for the first time. The happiness of the occasion is shattered by a bitter argument between Dante on one side and

Stephen's father, Simon Dedalus, and John Casey, friend of the family, on the other. The fight is over Charles Parnell. Dante is fanatically Catholic, and she approves of the decision of the Church to condemn Parnell for his marital infidelity. That action destroyed Parnell's career, and hounded him to his death from exhaustion. Casey and Simon were both great admirers of Parnell; he was a hero to Irish nationalists. They point out the many times that the Church has betrayed Ireland. The fight is emotional and vicious, and ends with Dante storming out of the room. Casey is in tears; Stephen is horrified when he sees his father begin to cry as well.

Back at Conglowes, Stephen hears about an incident in which several boys stole and drank the altar wine. He listens to the other boys talking it over. He remembers Eileen's fair hands and blonde hair; because he understood those hands and hair, he feels he can understand the meaning of "Tower of Ivory" and "House of GOLD," two phrases Catholics use to describe the Virgin Mary.

Some of the boys involved in the altar theft have been given the choice of expulsion or flogging. Only Corrigan has chosen flogging. The other boys approve of his choice; a boy named Fleming adds that Mr. Gleeson will not flog Corrigan hard, because it would look bad if he did. Later, Stephen thinks about Mr. Gleeson. He agrees that Gleeson will not flog Corrigan hard, but he silently disagrees with Fleming's judgment. Mr. Gleeson will be merciful, but not for the sake of appearances; he will be merciful because he is a kind man.

We see Stephen and the boys in Latin class, which is headed by the intimidating Father Arnall. The frightening Father Dolan enters, seeking out boys to punish as examples for the rest of the class. Stephen is not doing any work, because his glasses have been broken; when Father

Dolan sees him, Stephen explains that his glasses are broken, but Father Dolan accuses him of having broken them on purpose. He paddles Stephen's hands.

Stephen is humiliated by the punishment and angry about its injustice. After class, his friends encourage him to go complain to the rector. Stephen thinks he might. But as he stays in during recess and heads towards the rector's office, he is seized by terror. He passes through the intimidating corridors, with their paintings of saints, and finally musters the courage to knock on Father Conmee's door. Nervously, he explains to the Father what happened. Father Conmee promises to talk to Father Dolan about it, and sends Stephen on his way. When Stephen goes out to the playground, his friends surround him, eager for news. He tells them what happened and they hoist him up in the air, yelling out with joy. They throw their caps in the air and celebrate Stephen as if he were a hero.

Analysis:

We are following Stephen through the course of his first year at Conglowes, climaxing in his small victory at Father Conmee's office. The opening condenses the journey Stephen takes in the novel, as he moves toward his decision to become an artist; we also are introduced to the major forces that shape Stephen: Irish nationalism, Catholicism, and his incredible sensitivity.

We watch as Stephen gradually becomes more accepted by his classmates. Although he will always remain something of an outsider, certain events of this passage predict his future position as a reluctant leader. Although initially he is an easy target for bullies because of his

sensitive nature, small size, and social awkwardness, we see several traits in Stephen that are the seeds of a formidable personality. He is not a whiner, despite his sensitivity: when pushed into the cesspool by Wells, he remembers his father's warning never to tattle on anyone. And he is tough enough to go to the rector and complain of Father Dolan's unfairness. Still, these moments of strength are not easy for Stephen. He is an extremely sensitive child, and his athletic incompetence makes him nervous and fearful. In all his interactions with the other boys, he is practically silent. If he disagrees with their judgments, he keeps his thoughts to himself.

Two major themes are Catholicism and Irish Nationalism. We see that Stephen is a very devout child, fearful of hell and enraptured by the Virgin Mary. But his relationship with religion will soon grow troubled, and the difficulties are foreshadowed here. The argument at Christmas reminds us that Ireland is a conflicted land, and here we see here as she has lost one of her great heroes. Catholicism is part of Ireland's national identity, but the argument shows that the Church is not always compatible with the Irish longing for liberty.

Nor is rabid Catholicism compatible with Stephen's basic character. Dante's fury over his friendship with Eileen is against the very core of Stephen's sensitive nature: later, he makes sense of the Virgin Mary by remembering Eileen's hands and hair. Ironically, he relates to an icon of his faith by remembering the pretty features of a young Protestant girl.

We see Stephen's sensitivity again and again. He observes his world with the eyes of a poet; even in the naïve and child-like way he explains the things around him, he shows intellectual grace and imagination. He also is already an observer of men. Note that he alone is

generous and sensitive enough to see the real reason why Mr. Gleeson will not flog Corrigan hard. There are many moments like this one throughout Chapter 1, as we see how different Stephen is from the other boys in the way he sees the world.

3.2 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 2

Summary:

Stephen spends his summer at his family home in Blackrock, a town near Dublin. His old Uncle Charles is his constant companion. Uncle Charles smokes reeking tobacco and takes Stephen on long walks. Stephen also spends a part of each day with Uncle Charles and Mike Flynn, an old friend of Stephen's father's. Mike Flynn has trained famous runners, and Stephen is being put through a bit of training himself. Stephen also goes with Uncle Charles to Church every day, where his Uncle prays fervently. Stephen is respectful of his uncle's piety, but he has no idea what need or wish could make Uncle Charles pray so intently. Stephen also takes a constitutional every week with his father and grandfather; together, they walk many miles.

He is enraptured by The Count of Monte Cristo, and he imagines himself living through the adventures of the protagonist, culminating in his rejection of his old love, Mercedes. As another outlet for Stephen's longing for adventure, Stephen and a neighbouring boy named Aubrey Mills head up a pack of boys and go on adventures together. In the fall, Stephen is happy because he does not have to return to Clongowes; but he also knows that this change is because of some financial trouble of his father's. Although the neighbourhood gang of boys breaks up, he and Aubrey still play together. Stephen still feels himself different from other

children. At times, their play annoys him. He has a vague conception of a world of images that he longs to meet; he also awaits some kind of transformation, although he is not exactly sure what it will entail.

That autumn, the family moves to a shabby home in Dublin. Stephen understands his father is in some kind of trouble, but there is little Stephen can do to help. Uncle Charles is growing more senile. The move is depressing, and Dublin is a world of new urban experiences. We see Stephen at a Christmas party: he has developed a crush on a neighbouring girl. But he cannot muster the courage to kiss her; the next day, he tries to write love poetry for her.

Soon, Stephen leans he will be going to Belvedere, a Jesuit School his father ran into Stephen's old rector and chatted him up. The rector will arrange for Stephen to come back to school with the Jesuits. His younger brother, Maurice, is also old enough to go.

We jump forward in time; Stephen is now a teenager, a reluctant leader in his own way, and a successful essayist and actor at his school. It is the night of the Whitsuntide play, and Stephen is taking a moment for himself as he prepares to go onstage and act his part. Outside, he runs into Wallis and Heron, two other boys at Belvedere; Heron is both his rival and his friend, as Stephen and Heron are the two brightest boys in their class. Heron and Wallis tease Stephen about a girl in the audience. Their chiding makes sets off a new train of through for Stephen, as he remembers an incident that took place during his first term at Belvedere. A teacher found heresy in one of Stephen's essays, but Stephen simply explained that he meant something different; still, the idea of heresy gave him a strange feeling of joy. Some time later, Heron, Nash, and Boland caught up with Stephen outside and pulled him into a conversation

about writers. Stephen refuses to say that Tennyson was a better poet then Byron, even though Byron was a heretic, and the boys physically attacked him, trying to get him to say that Tennyson was better. He managed to escape. We are brought back to the evening of the Whitsuntide play, as Stephen, Heron, and Wallis continue to make light talk. Stephen looks at Heron now, remembering the past incident and Heron's cowardice, but he realizes that he feels no anger. He thinks about the girl sitting in the audience, remembering their shy contact and his unfulfilled desire to kiss her. A boy comes to tell Stephen to get dressed and ready for his part. As the curtain is about to go up, Stephen thinks about the silliness of his part and feels humiliation. After the play is over, he does not socialize but instead goes for a walk, restlessly searching for something. The crisp night air, occasionally heavy with the odours of the city, calms him, and he goes back.

Some time later, Stephen is taking a voyage by train with his father. They are going to Cork to sell property at an auction. The trip is marked by Simon's attempts to bond with Stephen, but Stephen feels embarrassed by his father's intense nostalgia and trite advice. Images of the dead are unreal to Stephen, save that of his dead Uncle Charles (this is the first time we hear of Charles' death). In Cork, his father chats up everybody about old times and how things were; only when Stephen goes with his father to Queen's College do his father's stories come to life. There, in an old anatomy theatre, Stephen sees the word Foetus carved into a desktop. Suddenly, he sees the world of the students come to life: he can imagine the boy carving the letters, the students of the past sitting and studying, all of them now aged or dead. The word also reminds Stephen of his increasing preoccupation with sex. He tries to remember his own childhood but the memories seem faded and unreal; he is a different person now. He

suffers through the rest of the trip with his father, meeting with Simon's old friends and sitting through sessions of wet-eyed nostalgia and avuncular advice.

We are back in Dublin. Stephen has won a hefty sum in an essay contest. Rather than save the money, he begins a prolonged spending binge, buying useless gifts for everyone and indulging himself. When the money is gone, he feels ashamed. He had tried to use the money to create a feeling of elegance and affluence, but in reality they are as poor as ever. He also wanted to use the gifts to bring himself closer to his mother and his many younger siblings; however, he feels as isolated from them as ever. He wanders the streets of Dublin, lonely and suffering from intense sexual longing. He accepts the proposition of a prostitute; his time with her is his first sexual experience.

Analysis:

Chapter Two contains the transition from Stephen's late childhood to his teenage years. We begin in the world that Stephen will later be unable to remember clearly: his Uncle Charles, adventures with the boys in the neighbourhood. There is also a strong contrast between Stephen's fantasies about romance at the beginning of the chapter to his encounter with the prostitute at chapter's end. We move from vague ideas of romance, influenced by The Count of Monte Cristo, to a much more visceral sexual experience.

Adolescence is a conflicted time for Stephen, and an extremely important one. We see him finding success as an actor and an essayist, somewhat popular among his peers, a "leader afraid of his own authority" (103). But again and again, the narrative emphasizes Stephen's

isolation from others. He is full of thoughts and feelings that he cannot articulate to others. The world strikes him in a way that he is not yet ready to share.

The voices of his elders and peers often sound hollow to him, but he does not yet have a means of rebellion. Nor is rebellion necessarily how he wants to react. His isolation des not mean he despises his family and peers; he simply feels disconnected from them. The child in Chapter 1 is often frightened, ashamed of the difference between himself and others; the adolescent Stephen is more independent. His rejection of the Church is foreshadowed here: he defends Byron, despite the poet's heresies, and he himself writes an essay that contains a small bit of heresy on a philosophical point. Stephen's independence and sensitivity are at odds with the dogmatism and limited perspective of Christian philosophy.

The gap between his childhood and his adolescence is paralleled by a series of moves and deaths: we see the move to Dublin and the move to Belvedere, as well as the death of Uncle Charles, who is portrayed in the early part of the chapter as an inextricable part of Stephen's childhood. During the trip to Cork, Stephen realizes that he has changed so completely that his childhood seems like a dim memory. In some way, the fate of the child Stephen is similar to death; he has not died, but he has faded away.

His intelligence is often a source of discomfort. He is too smart to bear his father's nostalgia and advice easily. Stephen is regaled with his father's pat wisdom, but he has become increasingly aware of his father's many failures. Stephen is also torn by the intensity of his sexual longing. He is honest enough with himself to know that his feelings are a far cry from

romance or love as it is taught in the Church. His decision to go with the prostitute is a major turning point in his life.

3.3 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 3

Chapter 3

Summary:

Stephen continues to see prostitutes, and enters a period of deep confusion and spiritual paralysis. He considers his actions to be terribly sinful, but he becomes strangely indifferent toward the idea of eternal damnation. He continues his studies and his duties in the society of the Blessed Virgin, strangely numb towards his own hypocrisy. He finds himself an altogether less pleasant person, as if his violation of one rule has led to a complete loss of self-control; although he began with Lust, he lately finds himself tainted by all of the Seven Deadly Sins. St. Francis Xavier's Feast Day approaches, and every year for three days before the feast day the boys of Belvedere have a spiritual retreat.

On each of the three days of the retreat, Stephen hears a fiery sermon on the torments of hell and the punishments meted out by the just but stern God. The first day's sermon is on the inevitability of judgment. God, who gave many opportunities for repentance during life, will be transformed from God the Merciful to God the Just. Stephen is made sick with fear; the sermons seem as though they were written specifically for him. He thinks about his sins, and is too fearful to confess to God, who seems too fearsome, or the Blessed Virgin, who seems too pure. He imagines being brought back to God through Emma, the girl to whom he tried to write

a poem. She seems approachable enough. The second day's sermon is on the incredible physical torment of hell. Stephen feels that he must confess, but he is too ashamed to do so. The third day's sermon elaborates on hell's tortures, the greatest of which is being cut off from God. That night, Stephen has terrible nightmares about hell; the dreams are so intense that he wakes and vomits. He searches for a church where he can go and make his confession with true anonymity. He finally finds one, and he confesses all. The world seems born anew when he steps out of the church. He resolves to live a new life of piety.

Analysis:

All of Chapter 3 deals with the results of Stephen's first rebellion against Catholic values. At first, he enters a state of moral paralysis and confusion. Having broken one rule, he seems to lose the ability to maintain any kind of moral structure or self-discipline. His deep unrest manifests itself as a general souring of his whole personality. His situation is difficult. He is indulging in the pleasures of the flesh for the first time, but he soon learns that to abandon the moral order in which one was raised is no easy thing.

Stephen will eventually prove to be too independent a thinker for Catholic doctrine. His love for beauty and for the particular pleasures offered by the human body do not necessarily mean that he is destined for a life of carnal decadence; even before he is terrified by Father Arnall's sermons, his period of whoring brings much discontent and restlessness. This period foreshadows difficulties he will have later on: if and when he rejects the Catholic Church and its teachings, he will have to find a new ethical system on his own.

His sense of being lost makes it possible for Father Arnall's sermons to bring him back to the Church. The sermons are very well written, and are a famous part of the novel. Full of vivid imagery and sensual description, they prey perfectly on Stephen's active imagination and sensitive nature. He is unable, at this point, to assert his independence from the religion in which he has been raised. Fear drives him back. The themes of independence and entrapment by Ireland are central to Chapter 3. We see Stephen's first revolt, and his subsequent repentance and return.

3.4 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 4

Summary:

Stephen becomes almost fanatically pious, devoting himself daily to prayer and contemplation of Catholic doctrines. He sweeps away any doubts or misgivings he has with the idea that at a later stage of his spiritual development, all will be clear. He forces different forms of unpleasantness on himself to punish each of his five senses. He prays fervently, and attends mass every day. At times, he is gripped by a great, spiritual love for God and His Creation.

But before long, Stephen's old independence begins to reassert itself. He finds it difficult to maintain a state of saintly serenity. If anything, his various methods of self-discipline make him more irritable. He does not grow more charitable or kind to his family or his peers. He thinks of the various clergymen he knows, and how they seem just as subject to human pettiness and irritability as everyone else; he also has some doubts about the rather rigid Catholic compartmentalization of different virtues and wisdoms.

The director of the school asks Stephen to his office. Having noticed Stephen's piety and his academic talent, the director wants Stephen to consider the priesthood. The director tries to draw Stephen to the calling by describing the incredible responsibility and power of a priest. The idea is not without its appeal for Stephen. But after he leaves the rector's office, he continues to reflect on the life of a priest. He thinks about a long life of pondering obscure questions of Catholic doctrine. Even more vividly, he imagines the stale odour in halls of Clongowes, and of spending his life wandering through corridors such as these; in the end, he realizes that such a life repulses him. The life of a priest would be contrary to Stephen's desire for freedom and independence. On the way home, he sees a tidy shrine to the Virgin; walking in a lane that leads to his home, he notices the faint smell of rotting cabbages coming from the kitchen gardens down by the river. He realizes that his soul belongs to this kind of disorder rather than to the tidiness of the shrine to Mary: he prefers the simple smells and sensations of life and living.

Back home, he looks at his brothers and sisters, reflecting on how everything that has been denied to them has been given freely to him. Yet they do not hate him for it. We learn that the Dedalus family will be moving again, no doubt because of another blunder of Stephen's father. The children begin to sing, and behind the hope and innocence of their voices Stephen feels a weariness and a deep sorrow.

Later, Stephen waits for his father and a school tutor, who have gone into a building in the city on Stephen' behalf to get some information regarding university. Stephen grows impatient and takes off for a walk. The idea of going to university thrills him, although he is not

sure yet what his calling is. He encounters some school chums, who are swimming in the sea; the sight of their spindly teenage bodies makes him somewhat anxious, reminding him of his discomfort with his own half-grown body. They call out to him, inviting him to swim, but he does not come. As they call his name, he thinks of Greek myth's great artificer, Dedalus, who fashioned a pair of wings that enabled him to escape from his island prison. He has a sort of vision of the flight, imagining himself as the one who soars through the air.

He continues to walk along the beach. He comes across a beautiful girl, near his own age, wading in the water. The vision of her makes him feel something akin to divine revelation. He continues on his week, and settles down to take a long nap on the beach. When he wakes up, it is night.

Analysis:

Almost as soon as Stephen begins his new regimen of spiritual self-discipline, his nature begins to rebel. The movement from Catholic piety to an acceptance of the physical as part of beauty is central to this chapter. The central themes of entrapment by Ireland and escape are key. Stephen, having given in to carnal pleasure, is made to fear for his soul. He returns, feverishly, to the Church. He tries to stifle the very impulses that distinguish him as an individual: sensitivity to sensation, interest in beauty. But the sensual world of real living wins: ironically, it is the suggestion of the priest that Stephen consider the clergy which sets Stephen back on the path to his destiny.

And when Stephen imagines the life of a priest, his repulsion is grounded in the physical senses: it is the stale odour of Clongowes that strikes him as he considers the rector's suggestion. Stephen prefers another odour: the sour smell of overripe cabbages in the path leading home. It is the world of life and living, with it's mess and shear physicality, that interests Stephen. He realizes that he will "sin" again; he accepts that he was not made to live a spotless life. Rather, he will live life to the fullest and accept that part of his growth will include making great mistakes. The shrine of the Blessed Virgin is too tidy, too sterile. Stephen prefers mess, and he will live his life accordingly.

But it should be noted that Stephen is not without his anxieties regarding the world of the body. The sight of the other boys reminds him of how embarrassed he is by his own half-grown body. This moment reminds us that Stephen's growth is incomplete, both physically and spiritually. Though drawn to the sensual and the physical, shame still manages to stick to him at unexpected times.

Joyce calls our attention to the symbolism of Stephen's name. Stephen, in a vision that he does not completely comprehend, envisions himself as the winged Dedalus. Stephen's destiny is foreshadowed: as Dedalus escaped from his island prison, Stephen will escape from the island prison of Ireland.

The girl wading in the ocean water gives Stephen a revelation of great strength. In looking at her beauty, he feels "an outburst of profane joy" (195). "Profane," because in the Catholicism of Stephen's upbringing, his spiritual reaction to a girl's physical beauty is alien. He realizes that his fate is to "live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to create life out of life" (196). In

allowing himself to enjoy the beauty of the girl, to believe in her beauty, Stephen accepts his own nature. Here is the theme of growing up as accepting one's own character and destiny.

This acceptance will allow Stephen to escape. He comes to look at the priest's suggestion as a kind of trap, a way for the Jesuits to take Stephen from his own fate and make him serve their ends. Escape becomes a powerful motif towards the end of the chapter. Joyce uses Dedalus, Stephen's mythical namesake, as a symbol for what Stephen was born to do. He must escape Ireland, which constricts his freedom.

3.5 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 5

Summary:

Years have passed. Stephen is at university. It is morning; he is in the kitchen with his mother, who worries that he has been changed by university. He looks at the pawn tickets that have been necessary for his family's subsistence. He is also late for class; from upstairs, he hears his father ask one of his sisters if her "lazy bitch of a brother" has gone out yet. Stephen sets out for class, unhurt by his father's comment. In other ways, he is deeply fatigued by his family's increasingly desperate financial situation.

We see a day in the life of a university student: Stephen goes to lectures, usually bored by them, and interacts with peers one by one. We meet a large number of his friends: Cranly, one of his best friends; Lynch, a good natured boy who listens to Stephen's theory of aesthetics; Davin, a simple boy from the country with a great love for Ireland; Temple, a somewhat pretentious boy who admires Stephen; and McCann, a friend of Stephen's who tells Stephen he

is antisocial and antidemocratic and who tries to get Stephen to sign a petition for universal peace. The university is a natural place for boys to agitate themselves over politics and Irish nationalism; Stephen wants no part of it. He refuses to sign MacCann's petition, and he will not be cowed by anyone. He is increasingly absorbed in his ideas about aesthetics, ideas influenced by Aristotle's Poetics and the works of Thomas Aquinas. From his morning classes, we see that he has grown somewhat frustrated by the routine of college life. During lecture, attention wanders back to his ideas about art.

Later, during a hurling match, his friend Davin tries to get Stephen to be more sociable. He also tries to get Stephen to be a more patriotic Irishmen. Stephen has a deep scepticism of Irish politics: he points out that the Irish have never had a hero whom they didn't betray or leave for another. Davin continues to implore Stephen to be one of them. Stephen finds Davin's limitations frustrating, but something about Davin touches him. Later on in the match, Stephen explains his theories of aesthetics to an obliging Lynch. Although too complicated and lengthy to summarize in a satisfactory way here, this passage (pages 232-45) merits a close look for readers who want a deeper understanding of Joyce. Highlights include Stephen's definitions of pity and terror; his delineation between static art (the sublime art that invites contemplation without spurring the viewer to action) and kinetic art (art that moves the viewer to do something); his definitions of lyrical, epic, and dramatic form. He hails the dramatic form as superior because the artist refines his personality out of the work, leaving just the object for the contemplation of the audience. As the head toward the library, he sees Emma. Stephen is speechless as always. He feels somewhat cross towards her because he thinks she flirted with a priest and mocked him behind his back. Even his anger feels like a kind of homage.

But he dreams about her that night, and is inspired to write another poem to her. It is ten years since he failed in the writing of his first poem to Emma. This time he succeeds, but he does not send it.

Later, Stephen sits on the library steps. He dreamily watches birds flying through the air. Some nearby boys begin to argue about politics. Stephen goes to look for Cranley; he finds him in the library, puzzling over chess problems with a medical student named Dixon. Stephen makes clear that he wants to speak to Cranley, but Cranley seems in no hurry.

On the porch, a long conversation between the boys takes place. The boys gathered include Temple, O'Keefe, Goggins, Dixon, Cranly, and a few others. Stephen says nothing throughout the whole talk. The boys TRADE insults and bluster; Stephen becomes distracted from their talk when Emma walks by. Once again, he is torn between worshipping her and damning her. In her wake, she leaves Stephen thoughts of poetry and beauty. Meanwhile, Temple and Cranly are getting involved in a war of insults, culminating in Cranly chasing Temple with a stick. Stephen asks Cranly to come away with him on a walk, so that they can talk. This time, Cranly obliges him.

Stephen asks Cranly's advice. He is involved in a fight with his mother, who wants him to participate in the Easter rituals. Stephen no longer considers himself a Catholic. Cranly advices him to go ahead with, belief or no belief. He should do it to because it costs him nothing and will please his mother; but for Stephen, Cranly's suggestion seems like a compromise of his integrity. Stephen and Cranly have a long conversation about religion, politics, family, and Ireland. Stephen admits, under Cranly's intelligent questioning, that sometimes he fears that

the Catholic Church is right and he'll be damned and sent to hell. But he still must choose as he will choose. He realizes with sadness that after he leaves Ireland his friendship with Cranly will come to an end; he accepts that he may be alone. He must be independent. He is not afraid to be alone. He is not afraid of making a mistake, even if that mistake sends him to hell.

The novel closes with a series of diary entries chronicling Stephen's last days in Ireland. He describes a meeting with Emma, in which they actually talk; he is surprised that he likes her that evening, which is a new feeling. Stephen is thrilled by the idea of leaving Ireland. His journal entries include small experiments in writing. Before he leaves, his mother tells him she hopes he'll learn something of the human heart; it is his wish as well. He resolves "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (288). He invokes Dedalus, the mythical artificer, as he makes his way into the world.

Analysis:

The theme of entrapment and escape develops in this final chapter, and Stephen becomes aware that Ireland is a trap. In his discussion with Davin, he calls Ireland the sow that devours its own offspring. Ireland is a trap, restricting Stephen's independence from two many directions.

We open looking at his family, and, as always, they are more destitute than when we left them. Stephen can do little to help them. Sacrifices have been made for his education, but there is nothing he can really do to alleviate the poverty of his parents and his siblings. He feels removed from them, and through his mother continues to be loving, his father seems to have

developed a certain amount of animosity against Stephen (as seen when he refers to Stephen as a "lazy bitch of a brother").

University has provided crucial intellectual material for Stephen's growth. His aesthetic theory, very sophisticated for a college student, is deeply indebted to Aristotle and Aquinas. Stephen's methods and manner of reasoning also shows the influence of the Jesuits and the education he received from them. The kinds of questions he poses about beauty have a similar character as questions he posed about theology in early chapters; Lynch tells him that his methods have "the scholastic stink" (244) which refers to the Catholic philosophy, first developed in the Middle Ages, that synthesizes Greek philosophy with Christian teaching.

At the same time, Stephen has gotten everything that he can out of university. We see him bored in lectures; he also has a very unsatisfactory conversation about beauty with his Dean of Studies. We see Stephen as a very isolated young man, too individualistic and critical to remain happily in Ireland, even in an intellectual community. He feels trapped. In the long conversation between the boys on the steps of the library, he says nothing. And even with Cranly, an intelligent and challenging friend, Stephen realizes that their days of friendship or coming to an end.

His new ideas about beauty are his obsession. This chapter shows the growth that Stephen has undergone; he has moved from sensitivity and unfocused love of beauty to an obsessive and methodical contemplation of aesthetics. His obsession with Emma is more aesthetic and abstract; he has admired her from afar for ten years, but in truth he does not know her that well. His contemplation of her is based on a very abstract idea of woman. He can

only damn her or worship. His ideas about woman are actually very shallow. Emma exists more as Stephen's muse than as a flesh and blood woman. In his diary entry, we finally see a conversation between the two of them: Stephen warms up and feels "like" for her, which is new. It hints at the growth that he still has to undergo, which is reiterated in his mother's wish that Stephen learn something of the human heart.

Worth noting is that Stephen is still concerned with questioned of Irish identity. He does not seek to involve himself in politics, but his goal is to forge the conscience of his race. He will help Ireland as an artist, and he can only be an artist if he is independent. Paradoxically, he must leave Ireland to gain his independence. He will do his nation a great service by leaving her. But his need to leave should not be mistaken for a desire to become foreign: he is insulted when Cranly asks him if he is going to become a Protestant.

Escape as a theme is powerfully woven through the chapter, and the idea of escape is most often symbolized by flight. On the library steps, Stephen watches dreamily as the birds fly above him. Stephen's name refers to the flight of Dedalus, and it is on Dedalus that he calls when he leaves Ireland. He has become a self-assured and courageous young man, willing even to risk hell for his convictions.

4. Character Analysis

4.1 Stephen Dedalus

Modeled after Joyce himself, Stephen is a sensitive, thoughtful boy who reappears in Joyce's later masterpiece, Ulysses. In A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, though Stephen's

large family runs into deepening financial difficulties, his parents manage to send him to prestigious schools and eventually to a university. As he grows up, Stephen grapples with his nationality, religion, family, and morality, and finally decides to reject all socially imposed bonds and instead live freely as an artist.

Stephen undergoes several crucial transformations over the course of the novel. The first, which occurs during his first years as Clongowes, is from a sheltered little boy to a bright student who understands social interactions and can begin to make sense of the world around him. The second, which occurs when Stephen sleeps with the Dublin prostitute, is from innocence to debauchery. The third, which occurs when Stephen hears Father Arnall's speech on death and hell, is from an unrepentant sinner to a devout Catholic. Finally, Stephen's greatest transformation is from near fanatical religiousness to a new devotion to art and beauty. This transition takes place in Chapter 4, when he is OFFERED entry to the Jesuit order but refuses it in order to attend university. Stephen's refusal and his subsequent epiphany on the beach mark his transition from belief in God to belief in aesthetic beauty. This transformation continues through his college years. By the end of his time in college, Stephen has become a fully formed artist, and his diary entries reflect the independent individual he has become.

4.2 Simon Dedalus

Simon Dedalus spends a great DEAL of his time reliving past experiences, lost in his own sentimental nostalgia. Joyce often uses Simon to symbolize the bonds and burdens that Stephen's family and nationality place upon him as he grows up. Simon is a nostalgic, tragic

figure: he has a deep pride in tradition, but he is unable to keep his own affairs in order. To Stephen, his father Simon represents the parts of family, nation, and tradition that hold him back, and against which he feels he must rebel. The closest look we get at Simon is on the visit to Cork with Stephen, during which Simon gets drunk and sentimentalizes about his past. Joyce paints a picture of a man who has ruined himself and, instead of facing his problems, drowns them in alcohol and nostalgia.

4.3 Mary Dedalus

Stephen's mother, wife to Simon. Mary is quite religious, and is deeply concerned when Stephen, during his college days, develops an increasingly hostile attitude toward the Roman Catholic Church. She is burdened with the raising of ten children, with financial circumstances always becoming worse.

4.4. Dedalus Children

No child manages to stick out. They are minor characters in the novel, usually lumped together as a group. They have been denied many of the privileges that Stephen has had.

4.5 Eileen Vance

A young Protestant girl, neighbour to the Dedalus. Stephen and Eileen play together when both are still too young to be in school. When young Stephen says he will marry her when he grows up, Dante is infuriated because Eileen is Protestant.

4.6 Uncle Charles

Stephen's great uncle, lively in Stephen's youth but dead before Stephen is a teenager. Stephen's fondest childhood memories are of long walks with Uncle Charles, who lives with the family.

4.7 Dante

Governess to the Dedalus children. Dante works for the Dedalus family during the years when the family's financial situation is better. She is deeply religious, and puts the Catholic faith and loyalty to the Church above all else. When Stephen is a young boy, the first Christmas dinner he sits with the adults, Dante becomes involved in a terrible argument with Mr. Casey and Simon Dedalus over the death of Irish nationalist Charles Parnell.

4.8 Wells

Young boy, student at Clongowes. Bully who pushes Stephen into the cesspool, which leads to Stephen becoming very ill. Stephen earns a little of the other boys' respect when he does not rat on wells.

4.9 Brother Michael

Monk who works in the Clongowes infirmary. Kindly and gentle, who reassures Stephen and Athy, the other sick boy, and reads to them from the paper. From the article in the paper, Stephen learns of the death of Irish politician Charles Parnell.

4.10 Athy

Young boy, student at Clongowes. Stephen is sick with Athy in the Clongowes infirmary.

4.11 Mr. John Casey

Simon Dedalus's friend and Irish nationalist. When Stephen is a young boy, the first Christmas dinner he sits with the adults, Mr. Casey becomes involved in a terrible argument with Dante over the death of Irish nationalist Charles Parnell.

4.12 Father Conmee

The rector of Clongowes Wood College, where the child Stephen goes to school. He later helps to arrange Stephen's attendance at Belvedere college.

4.13 Father Dolan

Prefect at Clongowes. He unjustly punishes Stephen with a smacking from the pandybat. Young Stephen screws up the courage to complain about the incident to Father Conmee.

4.14 Father Arnall

Latin teacher at Clongowes Wood College. Later, when Stephen is a teenager at Belvedere, Father Arnall delivers three fiery sermons on the tortures of hell. Stephen, who has taken to using prostitutes, is frightened back into faith.

4.15 Mike Flynn

A friend of Simon Dedalus. After the Dedalus family moves to Blackrock, he agrees, at Simon's request, to train Stephen in running.

4.16 Aubrey Mills

A neighbouring young boy who becomes Stephen's best friend in Blackrock. They plays at having adventures, leading the other boys of the neighbourhood on imaginary quests.

4.17 Emma Clere

Stephen's love interest. She makes Stephen ridiculously shy, and usually he is unable to work up the courage to talk to her. Stephen has somewhat superficial ideas about women; for Stephen, Emma is more like a muse than a flesh-and-blood person. Since all characters and events of the book are filtered through Stephen, we knew almost nothing about her. While still a boy, he writes his first poem to her ("To E----- C----- -"); the poem is a failure. Ten years later, he is inspired by her again and writes a poem that is a success.

4.18 Cranly

One of Stephen's best friends at university. Stephen trusts and respects him enough to share all of his fears and feelings with him. Intelligent and sensible, his questions help Stephen to understand himself. In the end, Stephen realizes that Cranly belongs in Ireland in a way that he doesn't; at this point, he realizes that their friendship will inevitably end.

4.19 Davin

Stephen's friend at university. Davin comes from good Irish peasant STOCK. He is simple and pleasant. Stephen is frustrated by Davin's unimaginativeness and his thick-skulled Irish patriotism, but something about Davin's nature touches him.

4.20 Lynch

Stephen's friend at university. During a hurling match, Lynch obligingly listens to Stephen's theories about aesthetics.

4.21 McCann

Stephen's peer at university. McCann is deeply involved in politics and tries to get Stephen to sign a petition.

4.22 Temple

Stephen's peer at university. Temple is somewhat tiresome, sometimes self-deprecating but often abrasive or pretentious. He admires Stephen.

5. Stylistic Devices of the Novel

5.1 Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

The Development of Individual Consciousness

Perhaps the most famous aspect of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is Joyce's innovative use of stream of consciousness, a style in which the author directly transcribes the thoughts and sensations that go through a character's mind, rather than simply describing those sensations from the external standpoint of an observer. Joyce's use of stream of consciousness makes *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* a story of the development of Stephen's mind. In the first chapter, the very young Stephen is only capable of describing his world in simple words and phrases. The sensations that he experiences are all jumbled together with a child's lack of attention to cause and effect. Later, when Stephen is a teenager obsessed with religion, he is able to think in a clearer, more adult manner. Paragraphs are more logically ordered than in the opening sections of the novel, and thoughts progress logically. Stephen's mind is more mature and he is now more coherently aware of his surroundings. Nonetheless, he still trusts blindly in the church, and his passionate emotions of guilt and religious ecstasy are so strong that they get in the way of rational thought. It is only in the final chapter, when Stephen is in the university, that he seems truly rational. By the end of the novel, Joyce renders a portrait of a mind that has achieved emotional, intellectual, and artistic adulthood.

The development of Stephen's consciousness in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is particularly interesting because, insofar as Stephen is a portrait of Joyce himself, Stephen's development gives us insight into the development of a literary genius. Stephen's experiences hint at the influences that transformed Joyce himself into the great writer he is considered today: Stephen's obsession with language; his strained relations with religion, family, and

culture; and his dedication to forging an aesthetic of his own mirror the ways in which Joyce related to the various tensions in his life during his formative years. In the last chapter of the novel, we also learn that genius, though in many ways a calling, also requires great work and considerable sacrifice. Watching Stephen's daily struggle to puzzle out his aesthetic philosophy, we get a sense of the great task that awaits him.

The Pitfalls of Religious Extremism

Brought up in a devout Catholic family, Stephen initially ascribes to an absolute belief in the morals of the church. As a teenager, this belief leads him to two opposite extremes, both of which are harmful. At first, he falls into the extreme of sin, repeatedly sleeping with prostitutes and deliberately turning his back on religion. Though Stephen sins willfully, he is always aware that he acts in violation of the church's rules. Then, when Father Arnall's speech prompts him to return to Catholicism, he bounces to the other extreme, becoming a perfect, near fanatical model of religious devotion and obedience. Eventually, however, Stephen realizes that both of these lifestyles—the completely sinful and the completely devout—are extremes that have been false and harmful. He does not want to lead a completely debauched life, but also rejects austere Catholicism because he feels that it does not permit him the full experience of being human. Stephen ultimately reaches a decision to embrace life and celebrate humanity after seeing a young girl wading at a beach. To him, the girl is a symbol of pure goodness and of life lived to the fullest.

The Role of the Artist

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man explores what it means to become an artist. Stephen's decision at the end of the novel—to leave his family and friends behind and go into exile in order to become an artist—suggests that Joyce sees the artist as a necessarily isolated figure. In his decision, Stephen turns his back on his community, refusing to accept the constraints of political involvement, religious devotion, and family commitment that the community places on its members.

However, though the artist is an isolated figure, Stephen's ultimate goal is to give a voice to the very community that he is leaving. In the last few lines of the novel, Stephen expresses his desire to "forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." He recognizes that his community will always be a part of him, as it has created and shaped his identity. When he creatively expresses his own ideas, he will also convey the voice of his entire community. Even as Stephen turns his back on the traditional forms of participation and membership in a community, he envisions his writing as a service to the community.

The Need for Irish Autonomy

Despite his desire to steer clear of politics, Stephen constantly ponders Ireland's place in the world. He concludes that the Irish have always been a subservient people, allowing outsiders to control them. In his conversation with the dean of studies at the university, he realizes that even the language of the Irish people really belongs to the English. Stephen's perception of Ireland's subservience has two effects on his development as an artist. First, it

makes him determined to escape the bonds that his Irish ancestors have accepted. As we see in his conversation with Davin, Stephen feels an anxious need to emerge from his Irish heritage as his own person, free from the shackles that have traditionally confined his country: "Do you fancy I am going to pay in my own life and person debts they made?" Second, Stephen's perception makes him determined to use his art to reclaim autonomy for Ireland. Using the borrowed language of English, he plans to write in a style that will be both autonomous from England and true to the Irish people.

5.2 Motifs

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Music

Music, especially singing, appears repeatedly throughout A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Stephen's appreciation of music is closely tied to his love for the sounds of language. As a very young child, he turns Dante's threats into a song, " [A]pologise, pull out his eyes, pull out his eyes, apologise." Singing is more than just language, however—it is language transformed by vibrant humanity. Indeed, music appeals to the part of Stephen that wants to live life to the fullest. We see this aspect of music near the end of the novel, when Stephen suddenly feels at peace upon hearing a woman singing. Her voice prompts him to recall his resolution to leave Ireland and become a writer, reinforcing his determination to celebrate life through writing.

Flight

Stephen Dedalus's very name embodies the idea of flight. Stephen's namesake, Daedalus, is a figure from Greek mythology, a renowned craftsman who designs the famed Labyrinth of Crete for King Minos. Minos keeps Daedalus and his son Icarus imprisoned on Crete, but Daedalus makes plans to escape by using feathers, twine, and wax to fashion a set of wings for himself and his son. Daedalus escapes successfully, but Icarus flies too high. The sun's heat melts the wax holding Icarus's wings together, and he plummets to his death in the sea.

In the context of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, we can see Stephen as representative of both Daedalus and Icarus, as Stephen's father also has the last name of Dedalus. With this mythological reference, Joyce implies that Stephen must always balance his desire to flee Ireland with the danger of overestimating his own abilities—the intellectual equivalent of Icarus's flight too close to the sun. To diminish the dangers of attempting too much too soon, Stephen bides his time at the university, developing his aesthetic theory fully before attempting to leave Ireland and write seriously. The birds that appear to Stephen in the third section of Chapter 5 signal that it is finally time for Stephen, now fully formed as an artist, to take flight himself.

Prayers, Secular Songs, and Latin Phrases

We can often tell Stephen's state of mind by looking at the fragments of prayers, songs, and Latin phrases that Joyce inserts into the text. When Stephen is a schoolboy, Joyce includes childish, sincere prayers that mirror the manner in which a child might devoutly believe in the church, even without understanding the meaning of its religious doctrine. When Stephen prays

in church despite the fact that he has committed a mortal sin, Joyce transcribes a long passage of the Latin prayer, but it is clear that Stephen merely speaks the words without believing them. Then, when Stephen is at the university, Latin is used as a joke—his friends translate colloquial phrases like "peace over the whole bloody globe" into Latin because they find the academic sound of the translation amusing. This jocular use of Latin mocks both the young men's education and the stern, serious manner in which Latin is used in the church. These linguistic jokes demonstrate that Stephen is no longer serious about religion. Finally, Joyce includes a few lines from the Irish folk song "Rosie O'Grady" near the end of the novel. These simple lines reflect the peaceful feeling that the song brings to Stephen and Cranly, as well as the traditional Irish culture that Stephen plans to leave behind. Throughout the novel, such prayers, songs, and phrases form the background of Stephen's life.

5.3 Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

Green and Maroon

Stephen associates the colors green and maroon with his governess, Dante, and with two leaders of the Irish resistance, Charles Parnell and Michael Davitt. In a dream after Parnell's death, Stephen sees Dante dressed in green and maroon as the Irish people mourn their fallen leader. This vision indicates that Stephen associates the two colors with the way Irish politics are played out among the members of his own family.

Emma

Emma appears only in glimpses throughout most of Stephen's young life, and he never gets to know her as a person. Instead, she becomes a symbol of pure love, untainted by sexuality or reality. Stephen worships Emma as the ideal of feminine purity. When he goes through his devoutly religious phase, he imagines his REWARD for his piety as a union with Emma in heaven. It is only later, when he is at the university, that we finally see a real conversation between Stephen and Emma. Stephen's diary entry regarding this conversation portrays Emma as a real, friendly, and somewhat ordinary girl, but certainly not the goddess Stephen earlier makes her out to be. This more balanced view of Emma mirrors Stephen's abandonment of the extremes of complete sin and complete devotion in favor of a middle path, the devotion to the appreciation of beauty.

6. Study Questions

6.1 Important Quotations Explained

a) ***Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo. . . . His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face. He was a baby tuckoo. The moocow came down the road where Betty Byrne lived: she sold lemon platt.***

O, the wild rose blossoms On the little green place.

He sang that song. That was his song.

O, the green wothe botheth.

When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold. His mother put on the oilsheet. That had the queer smell.

Answer:

These first lines of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* represent Joyce's attempt to capture the perceptions of a very young boy. The language is childish: "moocow," "tuckoo," and "nicens" are words a child might say, or words that an adult might say to a child. In addition to using childlike speech, Joyce tries to emulate a child's thought processes through the syntax of his sentences and paragraphs. He jumps from thought to thought with no apparent motivation or sense of time. We have no idea how much time goes by between Stephen's father telling him the story and Stephen wetting the bed. Moreover, the way Stephen's thoughts turn inward reflects the way children see themselves as the center of the universe. Stephen is the same Baby Tuckoo as the one in the story his father tells, and the song Stephen hears is "his song." As Stephen ages, Joyce's style becomes less childish, tracking and emulating the thoughts and feelings of the maturing Stephen as closely as possible.

b) ***—Corpus Domini nostri. Could it be? He knelt there sinless and timid: and he would hold upon his tongue the host and God would enter his purified body.—In vitam eternam. Amen. Another life! A life of grace and virtue and happiness! It was true. It was not a dream from***

which he would wake. The past was past.—Corpus Domini nostri. The ciborium had come to him.

Answer:

One technique Joyce uses to indicate the development of Stephen's consciousness is to end each of the five chapters with a moment of epiphany in which Stephen recognizes the fallacy of one way of life and the truth of another. This passage is the epiphany that ends Chapter 3, the moment in which Stephen understands that he must turn to a religious life. The passage demonstrates one of the most revolutionary aspects of Joyce's narrative style: whereas other confessional novels usually involve narrators looking back at the events of their youth with an adult perspective, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is not mediated by such a detached voice. When Stephen declares, "Another life!" and "The past was past," we are given no indication that Stephen's religious life is eventually replaced by a calling to an artistic life. Rather, just like Stephen, we are led to believe that he will remain religious for the rest of his life and that the arrival of the ciborium symbolizes the arrival of his true calling. In this sense, we experience the successive epiphanies in Stephen's life just as he experiences them, knowing that a change is being made to life as he has lived it up to this point, but not knowing where this change will take him in the future.

c) ***His throat ached with a desire to cry aloud, the cry of a hawk or eagle on high, to cry piercingly of his deliverance to the winds. This was the call of life to his soul not the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair, not the inhuman voice that had called him to the***

pale service of the altar. An instant of wild flight had delivered him and the cry of triumph which his lips withheld cleft his brain.

Answer:

This passage, from Chapter 4, demonstrates Joyce's contention that becoming a true artist involves a calling, not a conscious decision the artist can make himself. These thoughts fly through Stephen's mind just before he sees a young girl wading at a beach. The sight of her image leads to one of the most important epiphanies in the novel. Stephen sees her not long after he has refused the priesthood, a time when he is unsure of what to do now that he has relinquished his religious devotion. At this moment, Stephen finally feels a strong calling, and determines to celebrate life, humanity, and freedom, ignoring all temptations to turn away from such a celebration. He has already succumbed to temptation twice: first, a "dull gross voice" causes him to sin deeply when he succumbs to the squalor of Dublin; second, an "inhuman voice" invites him into the cold, dull, unfeeling world of the priesthood. Both of these temptations, as well as the calling to become an artist, are forces through which the outside world acts upon Stephen. In this context, the passage suggests that it is as much fate as Stephen's own free will that leads him to become an artist.

d) ***—The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words home,Christ,ale,master, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language.***

Answer:

This quotation, from Chapter 5, indicates the linguistic and historical context of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Stephen makes this comment during his conversation with the dean of studies. The dean, who is English, does not know what "tundish" means, and assumes it is an Irish word. In a moment of patriotism, Stephen sympathizes with the Irish people, whose very language is borrowed from their English conquerors. The words Stephen chooses as examples in this passage are significant. "Ale" and "home" show how a borrowed language can suddenly make even the most familiar things feel foreign. "Christ" alludes to the fact that even the Irish religion has been altered by English occupation. Finally, "master" refers to the subordination of the Irish to the English. Stephen's new awareness of the borrowed nature of his language has a strong effect on him, as he knows that language is central to his artistic mission. By the end of the novel, Stephen acknowledges that Irish English is a borrowed language, and resolves to use that knowledge to shape English into a tool for expressing the soul of the imprisoned Irish race.

e) ***26 April: I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.***

27 April: Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead.

Answer:

These final lines of the novel proclaim Stephen's aim to be an artist for the rest of his life. The phrase "the smithy of my soul" indicates that he strives to be an artist whose individual consciousness is the foundation for all of his work. The reference to "the uncreated conscience

of my race" implies that he strives to be an artist who uses his individual voice to create a voice and conscience for the community into which he has been born. The final diary entry, with its references to "old father" and "old artificer," reinforces Stephen's twofold mission. He invokes his "old father"—which can be read as either Simon Dedalus or Ireland itself—to acknowledge his debt to his past. He invokes the "old artificer"—his namesake, Daedalus, the master craftsman from ancient mythology—to emphasize his role as an artist. It is through his art that Stephen will use his individuality to create a conscience for his community.

6.2 Study Questions

a) How is Stephen influenced by his Irish nationality?

Answer: Stephen has a conflicted relationship to his Irish nationality, largely because of the fact that his family and friends have conflicting political views about Ireland and its independence. On one hand, Stephen's governess, Dante, is proud of the church and disdainful of Irish leaders like Parnell. On the other hand, Mr. Dedalus and John Casey see Parnell as the only hope for a free Ireland. Stephen's friends also stand on opposing sides of the question. Influenced by these divergent opinions, Stephen, though eager to leave Ireland by the end of the novel, is also inextricably tied to it. He feels that Ireland has always been at the mercy of other nations, just as he has always been bound by outside influences. When Stephen leaves, it is to forge the conscience of the Irish race—a project that, ironically, he feels he can accomplish only by leaving his native island behind.

b) Discuss Joyce's use of religious imagery and language. Why are Father Arnall's three sermons so successful in overcoming Stephen's religious doubt?

Answer: Father Arnall's sermons touch Stephen at his core because they resonate with both Stephen's cultural background and his preoccupation with aesthetics. At the time when Father Arnall delivers his sermons, Stephen is struggling with the exact issues the priest addresses: the overwhelming strength of sinful emotions and the fear of being punished for them. When Father Arnall speaks, he validates and solidifies Stephen's vague concerns about morality and heavenly punishment. The cultural context in which Stephen has been raised creates an intolerable tension between his desire for various freedoms and his desire to meet the moral requirements placed upon him.

Additionally, Stephen, who is closely attentive to the sensory world around him, particularly connects with Father Arnall's vivid portraits of the sensory experience of being in hell. In addition to focusing on spiritual tortures, the priest describes the raw pain and grotesqueness of hell, painting a moral and religious punishment in emotional and aesthetic terms. As Stephen is just awakening to the power of such emotions and aesthetics, Father Arnall's sermons have a particular resonance for him. Stephen's conversion to devout religiousness is, however, only temporary. The same tools father Arnall uses to such great effect in his sermons soon convert Stephen from a would-be priest of religion to a confirmed priest of art.

c) What role does Stephen's burgeoning sexuality play in his development as a character? How does his Catholic morality complicate his experience of sexuality?

Answer: Stephen's early life is dominated by moral restrictions embedded in the society and family environment surrounding him, and his coming-of-age process involves confronting and dismantling these restrictions. Stephen grows up enthralled by the hierarchies and rituals of school and church, a structure in which his growing adolescent lust is not acknowledged or validated. His newfound sexuality is so alien, in fact, that he initially fails to recognize it, and it is not until he falls into the arms of the prostitute that he realizes what he has been longing for. The encounter with the prostitute awakens Stephen to a side of his character that has until then been hidden. The encounter symbolizes not only his awakening sexuality, but more generally, his awakening to the power of emotion and art. It also illustrates his extremely polarized conception of women: on the one hand are prostitutes with whom he can express his feelings of sexual desire, and on the other are revered, distant, near saintly figures such as Emma, whom he loves from afar but can never approach.

d) Compare and contrast Stephen's perception of art with his perception of religion, family, school, or country. What makes art such an appealing escape for Stephen?

Answer: For Stephen, art offers an escape from the constraints of religion, family, school, and country. Constrained by his surroundings and even his own self-imposed restraints, he looks to art as an independent, abstract realm where he can create a world that suits him. Stephen's obsession with aesthetic theory indicates that, for him, art is an abstract idea. Unlike the abstractions of religion, however, the abstractions of art are tied to the emotions with which

Stephen struggles. In his love poem "To E— C—," for instance, he finds an outlet both for his aesthetic leanings and for the emotions that he is too restrained—or afraid—to express.

e**) Why does Stephen turn down the offer to become a Jesuit?**

Answer: Religion is Stephen's life up until the point when he is offered the possibility of entering the Jesuit order. After confessing his sins, he has tried to purify himself, and his superiors notice this remarkable devotion. It would seem that an offer to join the Jesuits is the perfect culmination of a life that, aside from occasional lapses such as liaisons with prostitutes, has been destined for religion. Stephen, however, rejects the Jesuit offer as soon as it is made. Joyce suggests that Stephen clings to religion not because it is his calling, but merely as a source of stability within his turbulent life. He uses religion in an attempt to erect a barrier against the emotions that rage within him. Furthermore, Stephen has a strong aesthetic objection to the idea of being a priest, an objection that is emphasized by the washed-out character of the priest who offers him the position. Even if the religious life appeals to Stephen on a religious or abstract level, the idea of walking, dressing, talking, and living like a priest is aesthetically unpleasant. At this point in the novel, Stephen's aesthetic inclinations have become so strong that he almost inevitably rejects anything that contradicts these aesthetic values.

7. Suggested Essay Topics

a) How do Stephen's parents affect his development throughout the novel? How does he react to his father's patriotic nostalgia? To his mother's solemn Catholicism? At the end of the novel, why does Stephen feel he needs to escape from his family?

b) The passages at the very beginning of the novel recreate Stephen's early childhood in a sequence of memories and perceptions. Are these passages effective in recreating the thoughts and feelings of a very young boy? Why or why not?

c) How does Stephen's aesthetic theory relate to the doctrine of Christianity or the behavior of hedonism?

d) Compare and contrast Stephen with some of the other boys and young men with whom he associates. How is he different from them? How does he feel about being different?

e) How does the setting of the novel affect the characters and the plot?

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Paper XI: The 20th Century Unit V

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

Structure

1. Background

1.1 Introduction to the Author

William Gerald Golding was born in Cornwall, England, in 1911. His mother, Mildred, was a strong supporter of the British suffragette movement. His father, Alec, was a schoolteacher and an ardent advocate of rationalism, the idea that reason rather than experience is a necessary and reliable means through which to gain knowledge and understand the world. Alec's anti-religious devotion to reason was the legacy of such scientific rationalists as T.H. Huxley and H.G. Wells. This rationalist viewpoint was not tolerant of emotionally based experiences, such as the fear of the dark that Golding had as a child. His father wielded a tremendous influence over him, and, in fact, until leaving for college, Golding attended the school where his father taught.

Education

Golding began attending Brasenose College at Oxford in 1930 and spent two years studying science, in deference to his father's beliefs. In his third year, however, he switched to the literature program, following his true interests. Although his ultimate medium was fiction, from an early age, Golding dreamed of writing poetry. He began reading Tennyson at age seven and steeped himself in Shakespeare's work. While still at Oxford, a volume of Golding's poems was published as part of Macmillan's Contemporary Poets series. Later in life, Golding dismissed this work as juvenile, but these poems are valuable in that they illustrate his increasing distrust of the rationalism he had been reared on, mocking well-known rationalists and their ideas. In 1935, he graduated from Oxford with a Bachelor of Arts in English and a diploma in education.

Career and Later Years

From 1935 to 1939, Golding worked as a writer, actor, and producer with a small theater in an unfashionable part of London, paying his bills with a job as a social worker. He considered the theater his strongest literary influence, citing Greek tragedians and Shakespeare, rather than other novelists, as his primary influences.

In 1939, Golding began teaching English and philosophy in Salisbury at Bishop Wordsworth's School. That same year, he married Ann Brookfield, with whom he had two children. With the exception of five years he spent in the Royal Navy during World War II, he remained in the teaching position until 1961 when he left Bishop Wordsworth's School to write full time.

Golding died in Cornwall in 1993.

William Golding's Novels

The five years Golding spent in the navy (from 1940 to 1945) made an enormous impact, exposing him to the incredible cruelty and barbarity of which humankind is capable. Writing about his wartime experiences later, he asserted that "man produces evil, as a bee produces honey." Long before, while in college, he had lost faith in the rationalism of his father with its attendant belief in the perfectibility of humankind. While Golding's body of

fiction utilizes a variety of storytelling techniques, the content frequently comes back to the problem of evil, the conflict between reason's civilizing influence, and mankind's innate desire for domination.

In Lord of the Flies, which was published in 1954, Golding combined that perception of humanity with his years of experience with schoolboys. Although not the first novel he wrote, *Lord of the Flies* was the first to be published after having been rejected by 21 publishers. An examination of the duality of savagery and civilization in humanity, Golding uses a pristine tropical island as a protected environment in which a group of marooned British schoolboys act out their worst impulses. The boys loyal to the ways of civilization face persecution by the boys indulging in their innate aggression. As such, the novel illustrates the failure of the rationalism espoused by Golding's father.

A fast, intense writer, Golding quickly followed *Lord of the Flies* with *The Inheritors* (1955), a depiction of how the violent, deceitful Homo sapiens achieved victory over the gentler Neanderthals. Although this novel is the one readers have the most difficulty understanding, it remained Golding'S favorite throughout his life.

Pincher Martin followed in 1956. Like Lord of the Flies, it concerns survival after shipwreck. Navy lieutenant Christopher Martin is thrown from his ship during combat in World War II. He finds a rock to cling to, and the rest of the story is related from this vantage point, detailing his struggle for survival and recounting the details of his life.

Golding uses the flashback technique of Pincher Martin more extensively in his next novel, *Free Fall* (1959). Unlike his first three novels, Free Fall is told with a first person narrator, an artist named Samuel Mountjoy. The novel takes as a model Dante's La Vita Nuova, a collection of love poems interspersed with Dante's own commentary on the poems. Golding uses the character Mountjoy to comment on the conflict between rationalism and faith.

Issues of faith are addressed in *The Spire* (1964) as well. A fourteenth-century Dean of Barchester Cathedral decides that God wants a 400-foot-high spire added to the top of the cathedral, although the cathedral's foundation is not sufficient to hold the weight of the

spire. The novel tells the story of the human costs of the spire's construction and the lessons that the Dean learns too late.

The Pyramid (1967) provides an examination of English social class within the context of a town ironically named Stilbourne. A primary issue in this story is music, and the novel utilizes the same structure as the musical form sonata.

Golding's next publication was a collection entitled The Scorpion God: *Three Short Novels* (1971). Each story explores the negative repercussions of technological progress — an idea that was in sharp contrast to the technology worship of the space age. One of the novellas had been originally published in 1956; Golding then turned the story into a comedic play titled The Brass Butterfly, which was first performed in London in 1958.

Golding's next novel, Darkness Visible, appeared in 1979. It addresses the interdependence of good and evil, exemplified in the two main characters: Sophy, who plots to kidnap a child for ransom, and Matty, who gives his life to prevent it.

Golding's 1984 publication, The Paper Men, was condemned by reviewers as his worst work, partly because the novel seemed to condemn literary critics. The plot concerns an elderly novelist trying to elude a young scholar who wants to write his biography.

One of Golding's most ambitious works is The Sea Trilogy, three full-length novels that follow the emotional education and moral growth of an aristocratic young man named Edmund Talbot during an ocean voyage to Australia in 1812. *Rites of Passage* (1980) shows Talbot's spiritual growth, *Close Quarters* (1987) depicts his emotional and aesthetic development, and Fire Down Below (1989) covers his political enlightenment.

Other Work, and Honors and Awards

Golding's work is not limited to fiction: He published three collections of essays which are often comic and expand upon or illuminate his novels. The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces was published in 1966; A Moving Target appeared in 1982; and An Egyptian Journal followed in 1985.

Following the publication of his best-known work, Lord of the Flies, Golding was granted membership in the Royal Society of Literature in 1955. Ten years later, he received the honorary designation Commander of the British Empire (CBE) and was knighted in 1988. His 1980 novel *Rites of Passage* won the Booker Prize, a prestigious British award. Golding's greatest honor was being awarded the 1983 Nobel Prize for Literature.

1.2 Introduction to the Text

As all authors use their life and times as reference points in their works, William Golding drew heavily on the social-religious-cultural-military ethos of his times. *Lord of the Flies* is an allegorical microcosm of the world Golding knew and participated in. The island and the boys and many other objects and events in the work represent Golding's view of the world and humankind in general and some characteristics or values found in British culture specifically.

Significant personal life experiences shaped the author and therefore his work. Golding spent two years as a science student at Oxford University before he aborted his pursuit of science for a degree in English literature, his first step toward a rejection of the scientific rationalism espoused by his father. Having joined the British Royal Navy when World War II began, Golding was involved in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day. After his military experience, Golding was a schoolteacher and, for 15 years, immersed himself in reading the Greek classics because, according to him, "this is where the meat is." He felt that Greek drama had a great influence on his work; many scholars agree.

As a synthesis of Golding's life experiences, *Lord of the Flies* investigates three key aspects of the human experience that form the basis of the the author wants to convey: (1) The desire for social and political order through parliaments, governments, and legislatures (represented by the platform and the conch). (2) The natural inclination toward evil and violence, manifested in every country's need for a military (represented by the choir-boys-turned-hunters-turned-murderers and in the war going on in the world beyond the island); and (3) The belief in supernatural or divine intervention in human destiny (represented by the ceremonial dances and sacrifices intended to appease the "beast").

By juxtaposing the evil, aggressive nature of the degenerating boys with the proper reserve and civility of the British persona that their cultural background implies, Golding places the boys in a series of life experiences that lead some (like Jack) deeper into their depraved psyche, and some (like Ralph), who recognize the inclination toward evil in themselves, to an epiphany of self-discovery. Such an epiphany is the only hope for humankind to escape from itself.

History of Lord of the Flies

Golding wrote *Lord of the Flies* in 1954, less than a decade after World War II, when the world was in the midst of the Cold War. The atrocities of the Holocaust, the horrific effects of the atomic bomb, and the ominous threat of the Communist demon behind the Iron Curtain were all present in the minds of the western public and the author. This environment of fear combined with technology's rapid advances act as a backdrop to the island experiences: the shot-down plane, for example, and the boys' concern that the "Reds" might find them before the British do.

Historically, in times of widespread socio-economic distress, the general public feels itself vulnerable and turns to the leader who exhibits the most strength or seems to offer the most protection. In Lord of the Flies, Jack and the hunters, who offer the luxury of meat and the comforts of a dictatorship, fill that role. In exchange for his protection, the other boys sacrifice any moral reservations they may have about his policies and enthusiastically persecute the boys who resist joining their tribe. These circumstances somewhat mirror Germany's economic suffering, which paved the way for the radical politics of Adolph Hitler's Nazism in the aftermath of World War I and in the worldwide depression of the 1930s.

Based upon his wartime experiences in the British Navy, Golding asserted that the unlimited brutality shown by the Nazis was a capacity not limited to Germans or indeed to any particular group. While the world was horrified by news of the Nazi death camps, Golding felt that none of the nations was too far from committing atrocities of the same magnitude. According to Golding, humankind's propensity toward evil and violence coupled with the "psychology of fear" motivates humanity to act in unconscionable ways. When the United States used the atomic bomb in Japan, more than 100,000 people were killed in

three days by dropping two bombs. Overall, a total of 55 million people lost their lives in World War II. Such catastrophic violence and loss of life was clearly not lost on Golding: An atomic war causes the boys' evacuation in Lord of the Flies, and the sign from the world of grownups that the boys so wish for turns out to be the body of a dead paratrooper, floating down from an aerial battle.

Sociological/Ideological Concerns

Such a fatalistic view of humanity directly conflicted with the rationalism on which Golding was raised. His father's rationalist optimism held that humankind can be perfected with enough effort, purged of aggressive or anti-social tendencies. Golding's view is much more pessimistic about humankind's true makeup; he perceived human nature as equal parts good and evil, permanently intertwined. Rather than looking to social reform to cure humanity of its cruelty, Golding felt that breakdown in the social order, such as occurs in Lord of the Flies, is directly traceable to moral meltdown at the individual's level.

Golding's representation of humanity's inherent evil is a treatment of the Judeo-Christian concept of original sin. When *Lord of the Flies* was published, many critics were not impressed by it because Golding was not part of one of the contemporary literary movements, which concerned themselves not with theology or mysticism but with existential and sociological themes. Instead Golding was a 43-year-old schoolteacher with a wife and children addressing classic themes of good and evil.

As a schoolteacher, however, Golding experienced the reality of schoolboy behavior and tendencies, which provided him with valuable literary material. That reality was quite different from the picture painted in many children's adventure stories, such as R. M. Ballantyne's classic Victorian tale Coral Island. Coral Island exemplified certain assumptions about English schoolboys and British culture that Golding knew to be false, such as the idea that British Christian children were naturally virtuous and innocent. Golding wrote *Lord of the Flies* as a solemn parody of Coral Island, relocating savagery from the external sources such as heathens and foreigners to residency in each individual's heart.

Another issue Golding addressed was the western world's post-war confidence in technology, another spin on the rationalist idea that human society can be perfected;

rationalism's anti-mystical bent is a part of technology worship. Included in the scientific advances of the first half of the twentieth century was the field of psychiatry, which promised to explain emotional disturbances in a logical way — a technology of the mind. Golding wove in references to technology's influence in *Lord of the Flies* through ">Piggy, who asserts that psychiatry can explain away their fears and that ghosts can't exist because if they did then television and streetlights wouldn't work. While Golding's novel does not prove the existence of ghosts, it does provide a complex commentary on the underlying fears and true demons found in humanity.

2. Plot Overview

In the midst of a raging war, a plane evacuating a group of schoolboys from Britain is shot down over a deserted tropical island. Two of the boys, Ralph and Piggy, discover a conch shell on the beach, and Piggy realizes it could be used as a horn to summon the other boys. Once assembled, the boys set about electing a leader and devising a way to be rescued. They choose Ralph as their leader, and Ralph appoints another boy, Jack, to be in charge of the boys who will hunt food for the entire group.

Ralph, Jack, and another boy, Simon, set off on an expedition to explore the island. When they return, Ralph declares that they must light a signal fire to attract the attention of passing ships. The boys succeed in igniting some dead wood by focusing sunlight through the lenses of Piggy’s eyeglasses. However, the boys pay more attention to playing than to monitoring the fire, and the flames quickly engulf the forest. A large swath of dead wood burns out of control, and one of the youngest boys in the group disappears, presumably having burned to death.

At first, the boys enjoy their life without grown-ups and spend much of their time splashing in the water and playing games. Ralph, however, complains that they should be maintaining the signal fire and building huts for shelter. The hunters fail in their attempt to catch a wild pig, but their leader, Jack, becomes increasingly preoccupied with the act of hunting.

When a ship passes by on the horizon one day, Ralph and Piggy notice, to their horror, that the signal fire—which had been the hunters’ responsibility to maintain—has

burned out. Furious, Ralph accosts Jack, but the hunter has just returned with his first kill, and all the hunters seem gripped with a strange frenzy, reenacting the chase in a kind of wild dance. Piggy criticizes Jack, who hits Piggy across the face. Ralph blows the conch shell and reprimands the boys in a speech intended to restore order. At the meeting, it quickly becomes clear that some of the boys have started to become afraid. The littlest boys, known as “littluns,” have been troubled by nightmares from the beginning, and more and more boys now believe that there is some sort of beast or monster lurking on the island. The older boys try to convince the others at the meeting to think rationally, asking where such a monster could possibly hide during the daytime. One of the littluns suggests that it hides in the sea—a proposition that terrifies the entire group.

Not long after the meeting, some military planes engage in a battle high above the island. The boys, asleep below, do not notice the flashing lights and explosions in the clouds. A parachutist drifts to earth on the signal-fire mountain, dead. Sam and Eric, the twins responsible for watching the fire at night, are asleep and do not see the parachutist land. When the twins wake up, they see the enormous silhouette of his parachute and hear the strange flapping noises it makes. Thinking the island beast is at hand, they rush back to the camp in terror and report that the beast has attacked them.

The boys organize a hunting expedition to search for the monster. Jack and Ralph, who are increasingly at odds, travel up the mountain. They see the silhouette of the parachute from a distance and think that it looks like a huge, deformed ape. The group holds a meeting at which Jack and Ralph tell the others of the sighting. Jack says that Ralph is a coward and that he should be removed from office, but the other boys refuse to vote Ralph out of power. Jack angrily runs away down the beach, calling all the hunters to join him. Ralph rallies the remaining boys to build a new signal fire, this time on the beach rather than on the mountain. They obey, but before they have finished the task, most of them have slipped away to join Jack.

Jack declares himself the leader of the new tribe of hunters and organizes a hunt and a violent, ritual slaughter of a sow to solemnize the occasion. The hunters then decapitate the sow and place its head on a sharpened stake in the jungle as an offering to the beast. Later, encountering the bloody, fly-covered head, Simon has a terrible vision, during which it

seems to him that the head is speaking. The voice, which he imagines as belonging to the Lord of the Flies, says that Simon will never escape him, for he exists within all men. Simon faints. When he wakes up, he goes to the mountain, where he sees the dead parachutist. Understanding then that the beast does not exist externally but rather within each individual boy, Simon travels to the beach to tell the others what he has seen. But the others are in the midst of a chaotic revelry—even Ralph and Piggy have joined Jack's feast—and when they see Simon's shadowy figure emerge from the jungle, they fall upon him and kill him with their bare hands and teeth.

The following morning, Ralph and Piggy discuss what they have done. Jack's hunters attack them and their few followers and steal Piggy's glasses in the process. Ralph's group travels to Jack's stronghold in an attempt to make Jack see reason, but Jack orders Sam and Eric tied up and fights with Ralph. In the ensuing battle, one boy, Roger, rolls a boulder down the mountain, killing Piggy and shattering the conch shell. Ralph barely manages to escape a torrent of spears.

Ralph hides for the rest of the night and the following day, while the others hunt him like an animal. Jack has the other boys ignite the forest in order to smoke Ralph out of his hiding place. Ralph stays in the forest, where he discovers and destroys the sow's head, but eventually, he is forced out onto the beach, where he knows the other boys will soon arrive to kill him. Ralph collapses in exhaustion, but when he looks up, he sees a British naval officer standing over him. The officer's ship noticed the fire raging in the jungle. The other boys reach the beach and stop in their tracks at the sight of the officer. Amazed at the spectacle of this group of bloodthirsty, savage children, the officer asks Ralph to explain. Ralph is overwhelmed by the knowledge that he is safe but, thinking about what has happened on the island, he begins to weep. The other boys begin to sob as well. The officer turns his back so that the boys may regain their composure.

3. Summary and Analysis

3.1 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 1

Summary

A fair-haired boy lowers himself down some rocks toward a lagoon on a beach. At the lagoon, he encounters another boy, who is chubby, intellectual, and wears thick glasses. The fair-haired boy introduces himself as Ralph and the chubby one introduces himself as Piggy. Through their conversation, we learn that in the midst of a war, a transport plane carrying a group of English boys was shot down over the ocean. It crashed in thick jungle on a deserted island. Scattered by the wreck, the surviving boys lost each other and cannot find the pilot.

Ralph and Piggy look around the beach, wondering what has become of the other boys from the plane. They discover a large pink and cream-colored conch shell, which Piggy realizes could be used as a kind of makeshift trumpet. He convinces Ralph to blow through the shell to find the other boys. Summoned by the blast of sound from the shell, boys start to straggle onto the beach. The oldest among them are around twelve; the youngest are around six. Among the group is a boys' choir, dressed in black gowns and led by an older boy named Jack. They march to the beach in two parallel lines, and Jack snaps at them to stand at attention. The boys taunt Piggy and mock his appearance and nickname.

The boys decide to elect a leader. The choirboys vote for Jack, but all the other boys vote for Ralph. Ralph wins the vote, although Jack clearly wants the position. To placate Jack, Ralph asks the choir to serve as the hunters for the band of boys and asks Jack to lead them. Mindful of the need to explore their new environment, Ralph chooses Jack and a choir member named Simon to explore the island, ignoring Piggy's whining requests to be picked. The three explorers leave the meeting place and set off across the island.

The prospect of exploring the island exhilarates the boys, who feel a bond forming among them as they play together in the jungle. Eventually, they reach the end of the jungle, where high, sharp rocks jut toward steep mountains. The boys climb up the side of one of the steep hills. From the peak, they can see that they are on an island with no signs of civilization. The view is stunning, and Ralph feels as though they have discovered their

own land. As they travel back toward the beach, they find a wild pig caught in a tangle of vines. Jack, the newly appointed hunter, draws his knife and steps in to kill it, but hesitates, unable to bring himself to act. The pig frees itself and runs away, and Jack vows that the next time he will not flinch from the act of killing. The three boys make a long trek through dense jungle and eventually emerge near the group of boys waiting for them on the beach.

Analysis

Lord of the Flies dramatizes the conflict between the civilizing instinct and the barbarizing instinct that exist in all human beings. The artistic choices Golding makes in the novel are designed to emphasize the struggle between the ordering elements of society, which include morality, law, and culture, and the chaotic elements of humanity's savage animal instincts, which include anarchy, bloodlust, the desire for power, amorality, selfishness, and violence. Over the course of the novel, Golding portrays the rise and swift fall of an isolated, makeshift civilization, which is torn to pieces by the savage instincts of those who compose it.

In this first chapter, Golding establishes the parameters within which this civilization functions. To begin with, it is populated solely with boys—the group of young English schoolboys shot down over the tropical island where the novel takes place. The fact that the characters are only boys is significant: the young boys are only half formed, perched between civilization and savagery and thus embodying the novel's central conflict. Throughout the novel, Golding's foundation is the idea that moral and societal constraints are learned rather than innate—that the human tendency to obey rules, behave peacefully, and follow orders is imposed by a system that is not in itself a fundamental part of human nature. Young boys are a fitting illustration of this premise, for they live in a constant state of tension with regard to the rules and regulations they are expected to follow. Left to their own devices, they often behave with instinctive cruelty and violence. In this regard, the civilization established in Lord of the Flies—a product of preadolescent boys' social instincts—seems endangered from the beginning.

In Chapter 1, the boys, still unsure of how to behave with no adult presence overseeing them, largely stick to the learned behaviors of civilization and order. They attempt to re-create the structures of society on their deserted island: they elect a leader,

establish a division of labor, and set about systematically exploring the island. But even at this early stage, we see the danger that the boys' innate instincts pose to their civilization: the boys cruelly taunt Piggy, and Jack displays a ferocious desire to be elected the group's leader.

Throughout Lord of the Flies, Golding makes heavy use of symbols to present the themes and dramatic conflicts of the novel. In this chapter, for instance, Golding introduces the bespectacled Piggy as a representative of the scientific and intellectual aspects of civilization. Piggy thinks critically about the conch shell and determines a productive use for it—summoning the other boys to the beach. The conch shell itself is one of the most important symbols in the novel. The conch shell represents law, order, and political legitimacy, as it summons the boys from their scattered positions on the island and grants its holder the right to speak in front of the group. Later in the novel, Golding sharply contrasts the conch shell with another natural object—the sinister pig's head known as the Lord of the Flies, which comes to symbolize primordial chaos and terror.

3.2 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 2

Summary

When the explorers return, Ralph sounds the conch shell, summoning the boys to another meeting on the beach. He tells the group that there are no adults on the island and that they need to organize a few things to look after themselves. Jack reminds Ralph of the pig they found trapped in the vines in the jungle, and Ralph agrees that they will need hunters to kill animals for meat. Ralph declares that, at meetings, the conch shell will be used to determine which boy has the right to speak. Whoever holds the conch shell will speak, and the others will listen silently until they receive the shell in their turn. Jack agrees with this idea.

Piggy yells about the fact that no one knows they have crashed on the island and that they could be stuck there for a long time. The prospect of being stranded for a long period is too harrowing for many of the boys, and the entire group becomes silent and scared. One of the younger children, a small boy with a mulberry-colored mark on his face, claims that he saw a snakelike "beastie" or monster the night before. A wave of fear ripples

through the group at the idea that a monster might be prowling the island. Though they are frightened, the older boys try to reassure the group that there is no monster. The older boys say that the little boy's vision was only a nightmare.

Thinking about the possibility of rescue, Ralph proposes that the group build a large signal fire on top of the island's central mountain, so that any passing ships might see the fire and know that someone is trapped on the island. Excited by the thought, the boys rush off to the mountain, while Ralph and Piggy lag behind. Piggy continues to whine about the childishness and stupidity of the group.

The boys collect a mound of dead wood and use the lenses from Piggy's glasses to focus the sunlight and set the wood on fire. They manage to get a large fire going, but it quickly dies down. Piggy angrily declares that the boys need to act more proficiently if they want to get off the island, but his words carry little weight. Jack volunteers his group of hunters to be responsible for keeping the signal fire going. In their frenzied, disorganized efforts to rekindle the fire, the boys set a swath of trees ablaze. Enraged at the group's reckless disorganization, Piggy tells them furiously that one of the littlest boys—the same boy who told them about the snake-beast—was playing over by the fire and now is missing. The boys are crestfallen and shocked, and Ralph is struck with shame. They pretend that nothing has happened.

Analysis

The conflict between the instincts of civilization and savagery emerges quickly within the group: the boys, especially Piggy, know that they must act with order and forethought if they are to be rescued, but the longer they remain apart from the society of adults, the more difficult it becomes for them to adhere to the disciplined behavior of civilization. In Chapter 1, the boys seem determined to re-create the society they have lost, but as early as Chapter 2, their instinctive drive to play and gratify their immediate desires undermines their ability to act collectively. As a result, the signal fire nearly fails, and a young boy apparently burns to death when the forest catches fire. The constraints of society still linger around the boys, who are confused and ashamed when they learn the young boy is missing—a sign that a sense of morality still guides their behavior at this point.

Golding's portrayals of the main characters among the group of boys contributes to the allegorical quality of Lord of the Flies, as several of the boys stand for larger concepts. Ralph, the protagonist of the novel, stands for civilization, morality, and leadership, while Jack, the antagonist, stands for the desire for power, selfishness, and amorality. Piggy represents the scientific and intellectual aspects of civilization, as his glasses—a symbol of rationality and intellect—enable the boys to light fires. Already the boys' savage instincts lead them to value strength and charisma above intelligence: although Piggy has a great deal to offer the boys' fledgling civilization, they see him as a whiny weakling and therefore despise him and refuse to listen to him, even when his ideas are good. For instance, when Piggy suggests that the boys find a way to improve their chances of being rescued, they ignore him; only when the stronger and more charismatic Ralph suggests the same thing do they agree to make the signal fire.

Apart from the boys themselves, the signal fire and the "beastie" also carry symbolic significance. The signal fire serves as a barometer for the boys' interest in maintaining ties to civilization: as long as it burns, they retain some hope that they will be rescued and returned to society, but as they become increasingly obsessed with power and killing, they lose interest in the fire. When the fire ultimately burns out, the boys' disconnection from the structures of society is complete. Meanwhile, the beast the young boy claims to have seen also emerges as an important symbol in the novel. At this point, the beast is merely an idea that frightens some of the boys. But as the novel progresses, all the boys tacitly accept the beast's existence. The beast comes to represent the instincts of power, violence, and savagery that lurk within each human being.

3.3 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 3

Summary

Carrying a stick sharpened into a makeshift spear, Jack trails a pig through the thick jungle, but it evades him. Irritated, he WALKS back to the beach, where he finds Ralph and Simon at work building huts for the younger boys to live in. Ralph is irritated because the huts keep falling down before they are completed and because, though the huts are vital to the boys' ability to live on the island, none of the other boys besides Simon will help him. As

Ralph and Simon work, most of the other boys splash about and play in the lagoon. Ralph gripes that few of the boys are doing any work. He says that all the boys act excited and energized by the plans they make at meetings, but none of them is willing to work to make the plans successful. Ralph points out that Jack's hunters have failed to catch a single pig. Jack claims that although they have so far failed to bring down a pig, they will soon have more success. Ralph also worries about the smaller children, many of whom have nightmares and are unable to sleep. He tells Jack about his concerns, but Jack, still trying to think of ways to kill a pig, is not interested in Ralph's problems.

Ralph, annoyed that Jack, like all the other boys, is unwilling to work on the huts, implies that Jack and the hunters are using their hunting duties as an excuse to avoid the real work. Jack responds to Ralph's complaints by commenting that the boys want meat. Jack and Ralph continue to bicker and grow increasingly hostile toward each other. Hoping to regain their sense of camaraderie, they go swimming together in the lagoon, but their feelings of mutual dislike remain and fester.

In the meantime, Simon wanders through the jungle alone. He helps some of the younger boys—whom the older boys have started to call "littluns"—reach fruit hanging from a high branch. He WALKS deeper into the forest and eventually finds a thick jungle glade, a peaceful, beautiful open space full of flowers, birds, and butterflies. Simon looks around to make sure that he is alone, then sits down to take in the scene, marveling at the abundance and beauty of life that surrounds him.

Analysis

The personal conflict between Ralph and Jack mirrors the overarching thematic conflict of the novel. The conflict between the two boys brews as early as the election in Chapter 1 but remains hidden beneath the surface, masked by the camaraderie the boys feel as they work together to build a community. In this chapter, however, the conflict erupts into verbal argument for the first time, making apparent the divisions undermining the boys' community and setting the stage for further, more violent developments. As Ralph and Jack argue, each boy tries to give voice to his basic conception of human purpose: Ralph advocates building huts, while Jack champions hunting. Ralph, who thinks about the overall good of the group, deems hunting frivolous. Jack, drawn to the exhilaration of hunting by his

bloodlust and desire for power, has no interest in building huts and no concern for what Ralph thinks. But because Ralph and Jack are merely children, they are unable to state their feelings articulately.

At this point in the novel, the conflict between civilization and savagery is still heavily tilted in favor of civilization. Jack, who has no real interest in the welfare of the group, is forced to justify his desire to hunt rather than build huts by claiming that it is for the good of all the boys. Additionally, though most of the boys are more interested in play than in work, they continue to re-create the basic structures of civilization on the island. They even begin to develop their own language, calling the younger children "littluns" and the twins Sam and Eric "Samneric."

Simon, meanwhile, seems to exist outside the conflict between Ralph and Jack, between civilization and savagery. We see Simon's kind and generous nature through his actions in this chapter. He helps Ralph build the huts when the other boys would rather play, indicating his helpfulness, discipline, and dedication to the common good. Simon helps the littluns reach a high branch of fruit, indicating his kindness and sympathy—a sharp contrast to many of the older boys, who would rather torment the littluns than help them. When Simon sits alone in the jungle glade marveling at the beauty of nature, we see that he feels a basic connection with the natural world. On the whole, Simon seems to have a basic goodness and kindness that comes from within him and is tied to his connection with nature. All the other boys, meanwhile, seem to have inherited their ideas of goodness and morality from the external forces of civilization, so that the longer they are away from human society, the more their moral sense erodes. In this regard, Simon emerges as an important figure to contrast with Ralph and Jack. Where Ralph represents the orderly forces of civilization and Jack the primal, instinctual urges that react against such order, Simon represents a third quality—a kind of goodness that is natural or innate rather than taught by human society. In this way, Simon, who cannot be categorized with the other boys, complicates the symbolic structure of Lord of the Flies.

3.4 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 4

Summary

Life on the island soon develops a daily rhythm. Morning is pleasant, with cool air and sweet smells, and the boys are able to play happily. By afternoon, though, the sun becomes oppressively hot, and some of the boys nap, although they are often troubled by bizarre images that seem to flicker over the water. Piggy dismisses these images as mirages caused by sunlight striking the water. Evening brings cooler temperatures again, but darkness falls quickly, and nighttime is frightening and difficult.

The littluns, who spend most of their days eating fruit and playing with one another, are particularly troubled by visions and bad dreams. They continue to talk about the "beastie" and fear that a monster hunts in the darkness. The large amount of fruit that they eat causes them to suffer from diarrhea and stomach ailments. Although the littluns' lives are largely separate from those of the older boys, there are a few instances when the older boys torment the littluns. One vicious boy named Roger joins another boy, Maurice, in cruelly stomping on a sand castle the littluns have built. Roger even throws stones at one of the boys, although he does remain careful enough to avoid actually hitting the boy with his stones.

Jack, obsessed with the idea of killing a pig, camouflages his face with clay and charcoal and enters the jungle to hunt, accompanied by several other boys. On the beach, Ralph and Piggy see a ship on the horizon—but they also see that the signal fire has gone out. They hurry to the top of the hill, but it is too late to rekindle the flame, and the ship does not come for them. Ralph is furious with Jack, because it was the hunters' responsibility to see that the fire was maintained.

Jack and the hunters return from the jungle, covered with blood and chanting a bizarre song. They carry a dead pig on a stake between them. Furious at the hunters' irresponsibility, Ralph accosts Jack about the signal fire. The hunters, having actually managed to catch and kill a pig, are so excited and crazed with bloodlust that they barely hear Ralph's complaints. When Piggy shrilly complains about the hunters' immaturity, Jack slaps him hard, breaking one of the lenses of his glasses. Jack taunts Piggy by mimicking his

whining voice. Ralph and Jack have a heated conversation. At last, Jack admits his responsibility in the failure of the signal fire but never apologizes to Piggy. Ralph goes to Piggy to use his glasses to light a fire, and at that moment, Jack's friendly feelings toward Ralph change to resentment. The boys roast the pig, and the hunters dance wildly around the fire, singing and reenacting the savagery of the hunt. Ralph declares that he is calling a meeting and stalks down the hill toward the beach alone.

Analysis

At this point in the novel, the group of boys has lived on the island for some time, and their society increasingly resembles a political state. Although the issue of power and control is central to the boys' lives from the moment they elect a leader in the first chapter, the dynamics of the society they form take time to develop. By this chapter, the boys' community mirrors a political society, with the faceless and frightened littluns resembling the masses of common people and the various older boys filling positions of power and importance with regard to these underlings. Some of the older boys, including Ralph and especially Simon, are kind to the littluns; others, including Roger and Jack, are cruel to them. In short, two conceptions of power emerge on the island, corresponding to the novel's philosophical poles—civilization and savagery. Simon, Ralph, and Piggy represent the idea that power should be used for the good of the group and the protection of the littluns—a stance representing the instinct toward civilization, order, and morality. Roger and Jack represent the idea that power should enable those who hold it to gratify their own desires and act on their impulses, treating the littluns as servants or objects for their own amusement—a stance representing the instinct toward savagery.

As the tension between Ralph and Jack increases, we see more obvious signs of a potential struggle for power. Although Jack has been deeply envious of Ralph's power from the moment Ralph was elected, the two do not come into open conflict until this chapter, when Jack's irresponsibility leads to the failure of the signal fire. When the fire—a symbol of the boys' connection to civilization—goes out, the boys' first chance of being rescued is thwarted. Ralph flies into a rage, indicating that he is still governed by desire to achieve the good of the whole group. But Jack, having just killed a pig, is too excited by his success to care very much about the missed chance to escape the island. Indeed, Jack's bloodlust and

thirst for power have overwhelmed his interest in civilization. Whereas he previously justified his commitment to hunting by claiming that it was for the good of the group, now he no longer feels the need to justify his behavior at all. Instead, he indicates his new orientation toward savagery by painting his face like a barbarian, leading wild chants among the hunters, and apologizing for his failure to maintain the signal fire only when Ralph seems ready to fight him over it.

The extent to which the strong boys bully the weak mirrors the extent to which the island civilization disintegrates. Since the beginning, the boys have bullied the whiny, intellectual Piggy whenever they needed to feel powerful and important. Now, however, their harassment of Piggy intensifies, and Jack begins to hit him openly. Indeed, despite his position of power and responsibility in the group, Jack shows no qualms about abusing the other boys physically. Some of the other hunters, especially Roger, seem even crueler and less governed by moral impulses. The civilized Ralph, meanwhile, is unable to understand this impulsive and cruel behavior, for he simply cannot conceive of how physical bullying creates a self-gratifying sense of power. The boys' failure to understand each other's points of view creates a gulf between them—one that widens as resentment and open hostility set in.

3.5 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 5

Summary

As Ralph walks along the beach, he thinks about how much of life is an improvisation and about how a considerable part of one's waking life is spent watching one's feet. Ralph is frustrated with his hair, which is now long, mangy, and always manages to fall in front of his eyes. He decides to call a meeting to attempt to bring the group back into line. Late in the evening, he blows the conch shell, and the boys gather on the beach.

At the meeting place, Ralph grips the conch shell and berates the boys for their failure to uphold the group's rules. They have not done anything required of them: they refuse to work at building shelters, they do not gather drinking water, they neglect the signal fire, and they do not even use the designated toilet area. He restates the importance of the signal fire and attempts to allay the group's growing fear of beasts and monsters. The

littluns, in particular, are increasingly plagued by nightmare visions. Ralph says there are no monsters on the island. Jack likewise maintains that there is no beast, saying that everyone gets frightened and it is just a matter of putting up with it. Piggy seconds Ralph's rational claim, but a ripple of fear runs through the group nonetheless.

One of the littluns speaks up and claims that he has actually seen a beast. When the others press him and ask where it could hide during the daytime, he suggests that it might come up from the ocean at night. This previously unthought-of explanation terrifies all the boys, and the meeting plunges into chaos. Suddenly, Jack proclaims that if there is a beast, he and his hunters will hunt it down and kill it. Jack torments Piggy and runs away, and many of the other boys run after him. Eventually, only Ralph, Piggy, and Simon are left. In the distance, the hunters who have followed Jack dance and chant.

Piggy urges Ralph to blow the conch shell and summon the boys back to the group, but Ralph is afraid that the summons will go ignored and that any vestige of order will then disintegrate. He tells Piggy and Simon that he might relinquish leadership of the group, but his friends reassure him that the boys need his guidance. As the group drifts off to sleep, the sound of a littlun crying echoes along the beach.

Analysis

The boys' fear of the beast becomes an increasingly important aspect of their lives, especially at night, from the moment the first littlun claims to have seen a snake-monster in Chapter 2. In this chapter, the fear of the beast finally explodes, ruining Ralph's attempt to restore order to the island and precipitating the final split between Ralph and Jack. At this point, it remains uncertain whether or not the beast actually exists. In any case, the beast serves as one of the most important symbols in the novel, representing both the terror and the allure of the primordial desires for violence, power, and savagery that lurk within every human soul. In keeping with the overall allegorical nature of Lord of the Flies, the beast can be interpreted in a number of different lights. In a religious reading, for instance, the beast recalls the devil; in a Freudian reading, it can represent the id, the instinctual urges and desires of the human unconscious mind. However we interpret the beast, the littlun's idea of the monster rising from the sea terrifies the boys because it represents the beast's

emergence from their own unconscious minds. As Simon realizes later in the novel, the beast is not necessarily something that exists outside in the jungle. Rather, it already exists inside each boy's mind and soul, the capacity for savagery and evil that slowly overwhelms them.

As the idea of the beast increasingly fills the boys with dread, Jack and the hunters manipulate the boys' fear of the beast to their own advantage. Jack continues to hint that the beast exists when he knows that it probably does not—a manipulation that leaves the rest of the group fearful and more willing to cede power to Jack and his hunters, more willing to overlook barbarism on Jack's part for the sake of maintaining the "safety" of the group. In this way, the beast indirectly becomes one of Jack's primary sources of power. At the same time, Jack effectively enables the boys themselves to act as the beast—to express the instinct for savagery that civilization has previously held in check. Because that instinct is natural and present within each human being, Golding asserts that we are all capable of becoming the beast.

3.6 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 6

Summary

In the darkness late that night, Ralph and Simon carry a littlun back to the shelter before going to sleep. As the boys sleep, military airplanes battle fiercely above the island. None of the boys sees the explosions and flashes in the clouds because the twins Sam and Eric, who were supposed to watch the signal fire, have fallen asleep. During the battle, a parachutist drifts down from the sky onto the island, dead. His chute becomes tangled in some rocks and flaps in the wind, while his shape casts fearful shadows on the ground. His head seems to rise and fall as the wind blows.

When Sam and Eric wake up, they tend to the fire to make the flames brighter. In the flickering firelight, they see the twisted form of the dead parachutist and mistake the shadowy image for the figure of the dreaded beast. They rush back to the camp, wake Ralph, and tell him what they have seen. Ralph immediately calls for a meeting, at which the twins reiterate their claim that a monster assaulted them. The boys, electrified and horrified

by the twins' claims, organize an expedition to search the island for monsters. They set out, armed with wooden spears, and only Piggy and the littluns remain behind.

Ralph allows Jack to lead the search as the group sets out. The boys soon reach a part of the island that none of them has ever explored before—a thin walkway that leads to a hill dotted with small caves. The boys are afraid to go across the walkway and around the ledge of the hill, so Ralph goes to investigate alone. He finds that, although he was frightened when with the other boys, he quickly regains his confidence when he explores on his own. Soon, Jack joins Ralph in the cave.

The group climbs the hill, and Ralph and Jack feel the old bond between them rekindling. The other boys begin to play games, pushing rocks into the sea, and many of them lose sight of the purpose of their expedition. Ralph angrily reminds them that they are looking for the beast and says that they must return to the other mountain so that they can rebuild the signal fire. The other boys, lost in whimsical plans to build a fort and do other things on the new hill, are displeased by Ralph's commands but grudgingly obey.

Analysis

As fear about the beast grips the boys, the balance between civilization and savagery on the island shifts, and Ralph's control over the group diminishes. At the beginning of the novel, Ralph's hold on the other boys is quite secure: they all understand the need for order and purposive action, even if they do not always want to be bothered with rules. By this point, however, as the conventions of civilization begin to erode among the boys, Ralph's hold on them slips, while Jack becomes a more powerful and menacing figure in the camp. In Chapter 5, Ralph's attempt to reason with the boys is ineffective; by Chapter 6, Jack is able to manipulate Ralph by asking him, in front of the other boys, whether he is frightened. This question forces Ralph to act irrationally simply for the sake of preserving his status among the other boys. This breakdown in the group's desire for morality, order, and civilization is increasingly enabled—or excused—by the presence of the monster, the beast that has frightened the littluns since the beginning of the novel and that is quickly assuming an almost religious significance in the camp.

The air battle and dead parachutist remind us of the larger setting of Lord of the Flies: though the boys lead an isolated life on the island, we know that a bloody war is being waged elsewhere in the world—a war that apparently is a terrible holocaust. All Golding tells us is that atom bombs have threatened England in a war against “the reds” and that the boys were evacuated just before the impending destruction of their civilization. The war is also responsible for the boys’ crash landing on the island in the first place, because an enemy aircraft gunned down their transport plane. Although the war remains in the background of Lord of the Flies, it is nevertheless an important extension of the main themes of the novel. Just as the boys struggle with the conflict between civilization and savagery on the island, the outside world is gripped in a similar conflict. War represents the savage outbursts of civilization, when the desire for violence and power overwhelms the desire for order and peace. Even though the outside world has bestowed upon the boys a sense of morality and order, the danger of savagery remains real even within the context of that seemingly civilized society that has nurtured them.

3.7 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 7

Summary

The boys stop to eat as they travel toward the mountain. Ralph gazes disconsolately at the choppy ocean and muses on the fact that the boys have become slovenly and undisciplined. As he looks out at the vast expanse of water, he feels that the ocean is like an impenetrable wall blocking any hope the boys have of escaping the island. Simon, however, lifts Ralph’s spirits by reassuring him that he will make it home.

That afternoon, the hunters find pig droppings, and Jack suggests they hunt the pig while they continue to search for the beast. The boys agree and quickly track a large boar, which leads them on a wild chase. Ralph, who has never been on a hunt before, quickly gets caught up in the exhilaration of the chase. He excitedly flings his spear at the boar, and though it glances off the animal’s snout, Ralph is thrilled with his marksmanship nonetheless. Jack holds up his bloodied arm, which he claims the boar grazed with its tusks.

Although the boar escapes, the boys remain in a frenzy in the aftermath of the hunt. Excited, they reenact the chase among themselves with a boy named Robert playing the boar. They dance, chant, and jab Robert with their spears, eventually losing sight of the fact that they are only playing a game. Beaten and in danger, Robert tries to drag himself away. The group nearly kills Robert before they remember themselves. When Robert suggests that they use a real boar in the game next time, Jack replies that they should use a littlun instead. The boys laugh, delighted and stirred up by Jack's audacity. Ralph tries to remind everyone that they were only playing a game. Simon volunteers to return to the beach to tell Piggy and the littluns that the group will not return until late that night.

Darkness falls, and Ralph proposes that they wait until morning to climb the mountain because it will be difficult to hunt the monster at night. Jack challenges Ralph to join the hunt, and Ralph finally agrees to go simply to regain his position in the eyes of the group. Ralph, Roger, and Jack start to climb the mountain, and then Ralph and Roger wait somewhere near the top while Jack climbs alone to the summit. He returns, breathlessly claiming to have seen the monster. Ralph and Roger climb up to have a look and see a terrifying specter, a large, shadowy form with the shape of a giant ape, making a strange flapping sound in the wind. Horrified, the boys hurry down the mountain to warn the group.

Analysis

The boar hunt and the game the boys play afterward provide stark reminders of the power of the human instinct toward savagery. Before this point in the novel, Ralph has been largely baffled about why the other boys were more concerned with hunting, dancing, bullying, and feasting than with building huts, maintaining the signal fire, and trying to be rescued. But when he joins the boar hunt in this chapter, Ralph is unable to avoid the instinctive excitement of the hunt and gets caught up in the other boys' bloodlust. In this scene, Golding implies that every individual, however strong his or her instinct toward civilization and order, has an undeniable, innate drive toward savagery as well. After the hunt, the boys' reenactment of the chase provides a further reminder of the inextricable connection between the thrill of the hunt and the desire for power. Robert, the boy who stands in for the boar in the reenactment, is nearly killed as the other boys again get caught up in their excitement and lose sight of the limits of the game in their mad desire to kill.

Afterward, when Jack suggests killing a littlun in place of a pig, the group laughs. At this point, probably none of them—except possibly Jack and Roger—would go so far as to actually carry out such a plan. Nonetheless, the fact that the boys find the possibility exciting rather than horrifying is rather unsettling.

By this point, the conflict between Ralph and Jack has escalated to a real struggle for power, as Jack's brand of violence and savagery almost completely replaces Ralph's disciplined community in the boys' conception of their lives on the island. Ralph's exhilaration in the hunt and his participation in the ritual that nearly kills Robert is, in a sense, a major victory for Jack, for the experience shakes Ralph's confidence in his own instinct toward morality and order. As befits a power struggle in a savage group, the conflict between Ralph and Jack manifests itself not as a competition to prove who would be the better leader but instead as a competition of sheer strength and courage. Just as Ralph boldly climbed the hill alone to prove his bravery in the previous chapter, Jack goes up the mountain alone now. It is also significant that Ralph discovers nothing, while Jack discovers what he thinks is the beast: while Ralph does not believe in the beast, the beast constitutes a major part of Jack's picture of life on the island.

Jack increases his leverage within the group by goading Ralph into acting rashly and unwisely, against his tendency toward levelheadedness—a manipulation that weakens Ralph's position in the group. Although Ralph realizes that it is foolish to hunt the beast at night, he knows that, in a society that values strength, he cannot risk appearing to be a coward. As a result, he assents to going up the mountainside at night. Ultimately, Ralph's decision to explore the mountain at night costs him the opportunity to prove to the others that Sam and Eric did not see the beast: had the boys climbed the mountain in the daylight as Ralph wished, they would have seen the dead parachutist for what it was. Because they go at night, however, they see the parachutist distorted by shadows and believe it to be the beast. In a sense, the degree to which each boy is prone to see the beast mirrors the degree to which he gives in to his instinct toward savagery. This connection emphasizes the idea that the beast is a symbolic manifestation of the boys' primitive inner instincts.

3.8 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 8

Summary

The next morning, the news of the monster has the boys in a state of uproar as they gather on the beach. Piggy, who was not on the mountain the night before, is baffled by the other boys' claims to have seen the monster. Jack seizes the conch shell and blows into it clumsily, calling for an assembly. Jack tells the others that there is definitely a beast on the mountain and goes on to claim that Ralph is a coward who should be removed from his leadership role. The other boys, however, refuse to vote Ralph out of power. Enraged, Jack storms away from the group, saying that he is leaving and that anyone who likes is welcome to join him.

Deeply troubled, Ralph does not know what to do. Piggy, meanwhile, is thrilled to see Jack go, and Simon suggests that they all return to the mountain to search for the beast. The other boys are too afraid to act on his suggestion, however. Ralph slips into a depression, but Piggy cheers him up with an idea: they should build a new signal fire, on the beach rather than on the mountain. Piggy's idea restores Ralph's hope that they will be rescued. The boys set to work and build a new fire, but many of them sneak away into the night to join Jack's group. Piggy tries to convince Ralph that they are better off without the deserters.

Along another stretch of sand, Jack gathers his new tribe and declares himself the chief. In a savage frenzy, the hunters kill a sow, and Roger drives his spear forcefully into the sow's anus. Then the boys leave the sow's head on a sharpened stake in the jungle as an offering to the beast. As they place the head upright in the forest, the black blood drips down the sow's teeth, and the boys run away.

As Piggy and Ralph sit in the old camp discussing the deserters, the hunters from Jack's tribe descend upon them, shrieking and whooping. The hunters steal burning sticks from the fire on the beach. Jack tells Ralph's followers that they are welcome to come to his feast that night and even to join his tribe. The hungry boys are tempted by the idea of pig's meat.

Just before Jack's tribe raids the beach, Simon slips away from the camp and returns to the jungle glade where he previously sat marveling at the beauty of nature. Now, however, he finds the sow's head impaled on the stake in the middle of the clearing. Simon sits alone in the clearing, staring with rapt attention at the impaled pig's head, which is now swarming with flies. The sight mesmerizes him, and it even seems as if the head comes to life. The head speaks to Simon in the voice of the "Lord of the Flies," ominously declaring that Simon will never be able to escape him, for he lies within all human beings. He also promises to have some "fun" with Simon. Terrified and troubled by the apparition, Simon collapses in a faint.

Analysis

The excitement the boys felt when Jack suggests killing a littlun in Chapter 7 comes to grotesque fruition in Chapter 8, during the vicious and bloody hunt following Jack's rise to power and formation of his new tribe. Jack's ascent arises directly from the supposed confirmation of the existence of the beast. Once the boys, having mistaken the dead parachutist for a monster, come to believe fully in the existence of the beast, all the remaining power of civilization and culture on the island diminishes rapidly. In a world where the beast is real, rules and morals become weak and utterly dispensable. The original democracy Ralph leads devolves into a cult-like totalitarianism, with Jack as a tyrant and the beast as both an enemy and a revered god. We see the depth of the boys' growing devotion to the idea of the beast in their impalement of the sow's head on the stake as an offering to the beast. No longer simply a childish nightmare, the beast assumes a primal, religious importance in the boys' lives. Jack uses the beast ingeniously to rule his savage kingdom, and each important character in *Lord of the Flies* struggle to come to terms with the beast. Piggy, who remains steadfastly scientific and rational at this point in the novel, is simply baffled and disgusted. Ralph, who has seen what he thinks is the beast, is listless and depressed, unsure of how to reconcile his civilized ideals with the sight he saw on the mountaintop. But the most complex reaction of all comes from one of the novel's most complex characters—Simon.

Simon's confrontation with the Lord of the Flies—the sow's head impaled on a stake in the forest glade—is arguably the most important scene in the novel, and one that has

attracted the most attention from critics. Some critics have interpreted the scene as a retelling of Jesus' confrontation with Satan during his forty days in the wilderness, a story originally told in the Gospels of the New Testament. Indeed, many critics have described Simon as a Christ figure, for he has a mystical connection to the environment, possesses a saintly and selfless disposition, and meets a tragic and sacrificial death. Others tie the scene into a larger Freudian reading of Lord of the Flies, claiming that its symbols correspond exactly to the elements of the Freudian unconscious (with Jack as the id, Ralph as the ego, and Piggy as the superego). *Lord of the Flies* may indeed support these and a number of other readings, not necessarily at the exclusion of one another.

Indeed, many differences between Simon and Jesus complicate the comparison between the two and prevent us from seeing Simon as a straightforward Christ figure. Simon, unlike Jesus, is not a supernatural being, and none of the boys could possibly find salvation from the *Lord of the Flies* through faith in Simon. Rather, Simon's terror and fainting spell indicate the horrific, persuasive power of the instinct for chaos and savagery that the *Lord of the Flies* represents. Simon has a deep human insight in the glade, for he realizes that it is not a real, physical beast that inspires the hunters' behavior but rather the barbaric instinct that lies deep within each of them. Fearing that this instinct lies embedded within himself as well, Simon seems to hear the *Lord of the Flies* speaking with him, threatening him with what he fears the most. Unable to stand the sight any longer, Simon collapses into a very human faint.

In all, Simon is a complex figure who does not fit neatly into the matrix framed by Jack at the one end and Ralph at the other. Simon is kindhearted and firmly on the side of order and civilization, but he is also intrigued by the idea of the beast and feels a deep connection with nature and the wilderness on the island. Whereas Jack and Roger connect with the wilderness on a level that plunges them into primal lust and violence, Simon finds it a source of mystical comfort and joy. Simon's closeness with nature and his unwaveringly kind nature throughout the novel make him the only character who does not feel morality as an artificial imposition of society. Instead, we sense that Simon's morality and goodness are a way of life that proceeds directly and easily from nature. *Lord of the Flies* is deeply preoccupied with the problem of fundamental, natural human evil—amid which Simon is

the sole figure of fundamental, natural good. In a wholly nonreligious way, Simon complicates the philosophical statement the novel makes about human beings, for he represents a completely separate alternative to the spectrum between civilization and savagery of which Ralph and Jack are a part. In the end, Simon is both natural and good in a world where such a combination seems impossible.

3.9 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 9

Summary

Simon awakens and finds the air dark and humid with an approaching storm. His nose is bleeding, and he staggers toward the mountain in a daze. He crawls up the hill and, in the failing light, sees the dead pilot with his flapping parachute. Watching the parachute rise and fall with the wind, Simon realizes that the boys have mistaken this harmless object for the deadly beast that has plunged their entire group into chaos. When Simon sees the corpse of the parachutist, he begins to vomit. When he is finished, he untangles the parachute lines, freeing the parachute from the rocks. Anxious to prove to the group that the beast is not real after all, Simon stumbles toward the distant light of the fire at Jack's feast to tell the other boys what he has seen.

Piggy and Ralph go to the feast with the hopes that they will be able to keep some control over events. At the feast, the boys are laughing and eating the roasted pig. Jack sits like a king on a throne, his face painted like a savage, languidly issuing commands, and waited on by boys acting as his servants. After the large meal, Jack extends an invitation to all of Ralph's followers to join his tribe. Most of them accept, despite Ralph's attempts to dissuade them. As it starts to rain, Ralph asks Jack how he plans to weather the storm considering he has not built any shelters. In response, Jack orders his tribe to do its wild hunting dance.

Chanting and dancing in several separate circles along the beach, the boys are caught up in a kind of frenzy. Even Ralph and Piggy, swept away by the excitement, dance on the fringes of the group. The boys again reenact the hunting of the pig and reach a high pitch of frenzied energy as they chant and dance. Suddenly, the boys see a shadowy figure

creep out of the forest—it is Simon. In their wild state, however, the boys do not recognize him. Shouting that he is the beast, the boys descend upon Simon and start to tear him apart with their bare hands and teeth. Simon tries desperately to explain what has happened and to remind them of who he is, but he trips and plunges over the rocks onto the beach. The boys fall on him violently and kill him.

The storm explodes over the island. In the whipping rain, the boys run for shelter. Howling wind and waves wash Simon's mangled corpse into the ocean, where it drifts away, surrounded by glowing fish. At the same time, the wind blows the body of the parachutist off the side of the mountain and onto the beach, sending the boys screaming into the darkness.

Analysis

With the brutal, animalistic murder of Simon, the last vestige of civilized order on the island is stripped away, and brutality and chaos take over. By this point, the boys in Jack's camp are all but inhuman savages, and Ralph's few remaining allies suffer dwindling spirits and consider joining Jack. Even Ralph and Piggy themselves get swept up in the ritual dance around Jack's banquet fire. The storm that batters the island after Simon's death pounds home the catastrophe of the murder and physically embodies the chaos and anarchy that have overtaken the island. Significantly, the storm also washes away the bodies of Simon and the parachutist, eradicating proof that the beast does not exist.

Jack makes the beast into a godlike figure, a kind of totem he uses to rule and manipulate the members of his tribe. He attributes to the beast both immortality and the power to change form, making it an enemy to be feared and an idol to be worshiped. The importance of the figure of the beast in the novel cannot be overstated, for it gives Jack's tribe a common enemy (the beast), a common system of belief (their conviction that the mythical beast exists), a reason to obey Jack (protection from the beast), and even a developing system of primitive symbolism and iconography (face paint and the Lord of the Flies).

In a sense, Simon's murder is an almost inevitable outcome of his encounter with the *Lord of the Flies* in Chapter 8. During the confrontation in the previous chapter, the *Lord of the Flies* foreshadows Simon's death by promising to have some "fun" with him. Although Simon's vision teaches him that the beast exists inside all human beings, his confrontation with the beast is not complete until he comes face-to-face with the beast that exists within the other boys. Indeed, when the boys kill Simon, they are acting on the savage instinct that the beast represents. Additionally, the manner of Simon's death continues the parallels between Simon and Jesus: both die sacrificial deaths after learning profound truths about human morality. But Simon's death differs from Jesus' in ways that complicate the idea that Simon is simply a Christ figure. Although Jesus and Simon both die sacrificial deaths, Jesus was killed for his beliefs, whereas Simon is killed because of the other boys' delusions. Jesus died after conveying his message to the world, whereas Simon dies before he is able to speak to the boys. In the biblical tradition, Jesus dies to alleviate the burden of mankind's sin; Simon's death, on the other hand, simply intensifies the burden of sin pressing down upon the island. According to the Bible, Jesus' death shows others the way to salvation; Simon's death exemplifies the power of evil within the human soul.

3.10 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 10

Summary

The next morning, Ralph and Piggy meet on the beach. They are bruised and sore and feel awkward and deeply ashamed of their behavior the previous night. Piggy, who is unable to confront his role in Simon's death, attributes the tragedy to mere accident. But Ralph, clutching the conch desperately and laughing hysterically, insists that they have been participants in a murder. Piggy whiningly denies the charge. The two are now virtually alone; everyone except Sam and Eric and a handful of littluns has joined Jack's tribe, which is now headquartered at the Castle Rock, the mountain on the island.

At the Castle Rock, Jack rules with absolute power. Boys are punished for no apparent reason. Jack ties up and beats a boy named Wilfred and then warns the boys against Ralph and his small group, saying that they are a danger to the tribe. The entire tribe, including Jack, seems to believe that Simon really was the beast, and that the beast is

capable of assuming any disguise. Jack states that they must continue to guard against the beast, for it is never truly dead. He says that he and two other hunters, Maurice and Roger, should raid Ralph's camp to obtain more fire and that they will hunt again tomorrow.

The boys at Ralph's camp drift off to sleep, depressed and losing interest in the signal fire. Ralph sleeps fitfully, plagued by nightmares. They are awakened by howling and shrieking and are suddenly attacked by a group of Jack's hunters. The hunters badly beat Ralph and his companions, who do not even know why they were assaulted, for they gladly would have shared the fire with the other boys. But Piggy knows why, for the hunters have stolen his glasses, and with them, the power to make fire.

Analysis

In the period of relative calm following Simon's murder, we see that the power dynamic on the island has shifted completely to Jack's camp. The situation that has been slowly brewing now comes to a full boil: Jack's power over the island is complete, and Ralph is left an outcast, subject to Jack's whims. As civilization and order have eroded among the boys, so has Ralph's power and influence, to the extent that none of the boys protests when Jack declares him an enemy of the tribe. As Jack's power reaches its high point, the figures of the beast and the *Lord of the Flies* attain prominence. Similarly, as Ralph's power reaches its low point, the influence and importance of other symbols in the novel—such as the conch shell and Piggy's glasses—decline as well. As Ralph and Piggy discuss Simon's murder the following morning, Ralph clutches the conch shell to him for solace, but the once-potent symbol of order and civilization is now useless. Here, Ralph clings to it as a vestige of civilization, but with its symbolic power fading, the conch shell is merely an object. Like the signal fire, it can no longer give Ralph comfort. Piggy's glasses, the other major symbol of civilization, have fallen into Jack's hands. Jack's new control of the ability to make fire emphasizes his power over the island and the demise of the boys' hopes of being rescued.

We learn a great deal about the different boys' characters through their varying reactions to Simon's death. Piggy, who is used to being right because of his sharp intellect, finds it impossible to accept any guilt for what happened. Instead, he sets his mind to rationalizing his role in the affair. Ralph refuses to accept Piggy's easy rationalization that

Simon's death was accidental and insists that the death was a murder. Yet the word murder, a term associated with the rational system of law and a civilized moral code, now seems strangely at odds with the collective madness of the killing. The foreignness of the word in the context of the savagery on the island reminds us how far the boys have traveled along the moral spectrum since the time when they were forced to follow the rules of adults.

Jack, for his part, has become an expert in using the boys' fear of the beast to enhance his own power. He claims that Simon really was the beast, implying that the boys have a better grasp of the truth in their frenzied bloodlust than in their calmer moments of reflection. This conclusion is not surprising coming from Jack, who seems almost addicted to that state of bloodlust and frenzy. Jack's ability to convince the other boys that the state of bloodlust is a valid way of interacting with the world erodes their sense of morality even further and enables Jack to manipulate them even more.

3.11 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 11

Summary

The next morning, Ralph and his few companions try to light the fire in the cold air, but the attempt is hopeless without Piggy's glasses. Piggy, squinting and barely able to see, suggests that Ralph hold a meeting to discuss their options. Ralph blows the conch shell, and the boys who have not gone to join Jack's tribe assemble on the beach. They decide that their only choice is to travel to the Castle Rock to make Jack and his followers see reason.

Ralph decides to take the conch shell to the Castle Rock, hoping that it will remind Jack's followers of his former authority. Once at Jack's camp, however, Ralph's group encounters armed guards. Ralph blows the conch shell, but the guards tell them to leave and throw stones at them, aiming to miss. Suddenly, Jack and a group of hunters emerge from the forest, dragging a dead pig. Jack and Ralph immediately face off. Jack commands Ralph to leave his camp, and Ralph demands that Jack return Piggy's glasses. Jack attacks Ralph, and they fight. Ralph struggles to make Jack understand the importance of the signal fire to any hope the boys might have of ever being rescued, but Jack orders his hunters to capture Sam and Eric and tie them up. This sends Ralph into a fury, and he lunges at Jack.

Ralph and Jack fight for a second time. Piggy cries out shrilly, struggling to make himself heard over the brawl. As Piggy tries to speak, hoping to remind the group of the importance of rules and rescue, Roger shoves a massive rock down the mountainside. Ralph, who hears the rock falling, dives and dodges it. But the boulder strikes Piggy, shatters the conch shell he is holding, and knocks him off the mountainside to his death on the rocks below. Jack throws his spear at Ralph, and the other boys quickly join in. Ralph escapes into the jungle, and Roger and Jack begin to torture Sam and Eric, forcing them to submit to Jack's authority and join his tribe.

Analysis

In the chaos that ensues when Ralph's and Jack's camps come into direct conflict, two important symbols in the novel—the conch shell and the Lord of the Flies—are destroyed. Roger, the character least able to understand the civilizing impulse, crushes the conch shell as he looses the boulder and kills Piggy, the character least able to understand the savage impulse. As we see in the next chapter, Ralph, the boy most closely associated with civilization and order, destroys the Lord of the Flies, the governing totem of the dark impulses within each individual. With Piggy's death and Sam and Eric's forced conversion to Jack's tribe, Ralph is left alone on the island, doomed to defeat by the forces of bloodlust and primal chaos.

Appropriately, Ralph's defeat comes in the form of the hunt, which has been closely associated with the savage instinct throughout Lord of the Flies. Ironically, although hunting is necessary to the survival of the group—there is little other food on the island aside from fruit, which has made many of the boys sick—it is also what drives them into deadly barbarism. From the beginning of the novel, the hunters have been the ones who have pioneered the way into the realm of savagery and violence. Furthermore, the conflict between Ralph and Jack has often manifested itself as the conflict between the interests of the hunters and the interests of the rest of the group. In Chapter 3, for instance, the boys argue over whether Jack's followers should be allowed to hunt or forced to build huts with Ralph and Simon. Now that Jack and the forces of savagery have risen to unchallenged prominence on the island, the hunt has thoroughly won out over the more peaceful civilizing instinct. Rather than successfully mitigate the power of the hunt with the rules and

structures of civilization, Ralph becomes a victim of the savage forces the hunt represents—he has literally become the prey.

3.12 Summary and Analysis of Chapter 12

Summary

Ralph hides in the jungle and thinks miserably about the chaos that has overrun the island. He thinks about the deaths of Simon and Piggy and realizes that all vestiges of civilization have been stripped from the island. He stumbles across the sow's head, the Lord of the Flies, now merely a gleaming white skull—as white as the conch shell, he notes. Angry and disgusted, Ralph knocks the skull to the ground and takes the stake it was impaled on to use as a weapon against Jack.

That night, Ralph sneaks down to the camp at the Castle Rock and finds Sam and Eric guarding the entrance. The twins give him food but refuse to join him. They tell him that Jack plans to send the entire tribe after him the next day. Ralph hides in a thicket and falls asleep. In the morning, he hears Jack talking and torturing one of the twins to find out where Ralph is hiding. Several boys try to break into the thicket by rolling a boulder, but the thicket is too dense. A group of boys tries to fight their way into the thicket, but Ralph fends them off. Then Ralph smells smoke and realizes that Jack has set the jungle on fire in order to smoke him out. Ralph abandons his hiding place and fights his way past Jack and a group of his hunters. Chased by a group of body-painted warrior-boys wielding sharp wooden spears, Ralph plunges frantically through the undergrowth, looking for a place to hide. At last, he ends up on the beach, where he collapses in exhaustion, his pursuers close behind.

Suddenly, Ralph looks up to see a naval officer standing over him. The officer tells the boy that his ship has come to the island after seeing the blazing fire in the jungle. Jack's hunters reach the beach and stop in their tracks upon seeing the officer. The officer matter-of-factly assumes the boys are up to, as he puts it, "fun and games." When he learns what has happened on the island, the officer is reproachful: how could this group of boys, he asks—and English boys at that—have lost all reverence for the rules of civilization in so short a time? For his part, Ralph is overwhelmed by the knowledge that he has been rescued, that

he will escape the island after coming so close to a violent death. He begins to sob, as do the other boys. Moved and embarrassed, the naval officer turns his back so that the boys may regain their composure.

Analysis

After Ralph's tense, exciting stand against the hunters, the ending of *Lord of the Flies* is rife with irony. Ralph had thought the signal fire—a symbol of civilization—was the only way to lure rescuers to the island. Ironically, although it is indeed a fire that lures a ship to the island, it is not an ordered, controlled signal fire but rather the haphazard forest fire Jack's hunters set solely for the purpose of killing Ralph. As we have seen, Ralph has worked tirelessly to retain the structure of civilization and maximize the boys' chances of being rescued. Now, when all he can do is struggle to stay alive as long as possible, a deus ex machina (an improbable or unexpected device or character that suddenly appears to resolve a situation) appears, at the last possible moment, in the form of the naval officer who brings the boys back to the world of law, order, and society. Golding's use of irony in the last chapter blurs the boundary between civilization and savagery and implies that the two are more closely connected than the story has illustrated. Ultimately, the boys' appalling savagery brings about the rescue that their coordinated and purposeful efforts were unable to achieve.

Much of the irony at the end of the novel stems from Golding's portrayal of the naval officer. Although the naval officer saves Ralph, the ending of *Lord of the Flies* still is not particularly happy, and the moment in which the officer encounters the boys is not one of untainted joy. The officer says that he is unable to understand how upstanding British lads could have acted with such poor form. Ironically, though, this "civilized" officer is himself part of an adult world in which violence and war go hand in hand with civilization and social order. He reacts to the savage children with disgust, yet this disgust is tinged with hypocrisy. Similarly, the children are so shocked by the officer's presence, and are now psychologically so far removed from his world, that they do not instantly celebrate his arrival. Rather, they stand before him baffled and bewildered. Even Ralph, whose life has literally been saved by the presence of the ship, weeps tears of grief rather than joy. For

Ralph, as for the other boys, nothing can ever be as it was before coming to the island of the Lord of the Flies.

4. Character Analysis

4.1 Ralph

Ralph represents leadership, the properly socialized and civilized young man. He is attractive, charismatic, and decently intelligent. He demonstrates obvious common sense. Ralph is the one who conceives the meeting place, the fire, and the huts. He synthesizes and applies Piggy's intellectualism, and he recognizes the false fears and superstitions as barriers to their survival. He is a diplomat and a natural leader.

Ralph's capacity for leadership is evident from the very beginning (he is the only elected leader of the boys). During the crisis caused by the sight of the dead paratrooper on the mountain, Ralph is able to proceed with both sense and caution. He works vigilantly to keep the group's focus on the hope for rescue. When the time comes to investigate the castle rock, Ralph takes the lead alone, despite his fear of the so-called beast. Even in this tense moment, politeness is his default. When Simon mumbles that he doesn't believe in the beast, Ralph "answered him politely, as if agreeing about the weather." British culture is famed for civilized reserve in emotional times. By the standards of the society he's left behind, Ralph is a gentleman.

Having started with a schoolboy's romantic attitude toward anticipated "adventures" on the island, Ralph eventually loses his excitement about their independence and longs for the comfort of the familiar. He indulges in images of home, recollections of the peaceful life of cereal and cream and children's books he had once known. He fantasizes about bathing and grooming. Ralph's earlier life had been civilized, and he brought to the island innocent expectations and confidence until certain experiences informed his naiveté and destroyed his innocence. As he gains experience with the assemblies, the forum for civilized discourse, he loses faith in them. "Don't we love meetings?" Ralph says bitterly, frustrated that only a few of the boys actually follow through on their plans.

Over time, Ralph starts to lose his power of organized thought, such as when he struggles to develop an agenda for the meeting but finds himself lost in an inarticulate maze of vague thoughts. Ralph's loss of verbal ability bodes ill for the group because his authority lies in the platform, the symbol of collective governance and problem solving where verbal communication is the primary tool. Ralph's mental workings are subject to the same decay as his clothing; both are frayed by the rigors of the primitive life. Yet in response to the crisis of the lost rescue opportunity, Ralph demonstrates his capacities as a conceptual thinker.

When "[w]ith a convulsion of the mind, Ralph discovered dirt and decay," he is symbolically discovering humankind's dark side. At the same time, he has learned that intellect, reason, sensitivity, and empathy are the tools for holding the evil at bay. Ralph's awareness is evident when, realizing the difficulty of this lifestyle in contrast to his initial impression of its glamour, he "smiled jeeringly," as an adult might look back with cynicism on the ideals held as a youth.

Although he becomes worn down by the hardships and fears of primitive life and is gradually infected by the savagery of the other boys, Ralph is the only character who identifies Simon's death as murder and has a realistic, unvarnished view of his participation. He feels both loathing and excitement over the kill he witnessed. Once Ralph becomes prey, he realizes that he is an outcast "Cos I had some sense" — not just common sense but a sense of his identity as a civilized person, a sense of the particular morality that had governed the boys' culture back home.

When Ralph encounters the officer on the beach at the end of the book, he is not relieved at being rescued from a certain grisly death but discomforted over "his filthy appearance," an indication that his civility had endured his ordeal. In exchange for his innocence, he has gained an understanding of humankind's natural character, an understanding not heretofore available to him: that evil is universally present in all people and requires a constant resistance by the intellect that was Piggy, by the mysticism and spiritualism that was Simon, and by the hopes and dreams that are his.

4.2 Jack

Jack represents evil and violence, the dark side of human nature. A former choirmaster and "head boy" at his school, he arrived on the island having experienced some success in exerting control over others by dominating the choir with his militaristic attitude. He is eager to make rules and punish those who break them, although he consistently breaks them himself when he needs to further his own interests. His main interest is hunting, an endeavor that begins with the desire for meat and builds to the overwhelming urge to master and kill other living creatures. Hunting develops the savagery that already ran close to his surface, making him "ape-like" as he prowls through the jungle. His domain is the emotions, which rule and fuel his animal nature.

The conflict on the island begins with Jack attempting to dominate the group rather than working with Ralph to benefit it. He frequently impugns the power of the conch, declaring that the conch rule does not matter on certain parts of the island. Yet he uses the conch to his advantage when possible, such as when he calls his own assembly to impeach Ralph. For him, the conch represents the rules and boundaries that have kept him from acting on the impulses to dominate others. Their entire lives in the other world, the boys had been moderated by rules set by society against physical aggression. On the island, however, that social conditioning fades rapidly from Jack's character. He quickly loses interest in that world of politeness and boundaries, which is why he feels no compunction to keep the fire going or attend to any of the other responsibilities for the betterment or survival of the group.

The dictator in Jack becomes dominant in his personality during the panic over the beast sighting on the mountain. In trying to get Ralph impeached, he uses his rhetorical skills to twist Ralph's words. In defense, he offers to the group a rationale that "He'd never have got us meat," asserting that hunting skills make for an effective leader. Jack assigns a high value only to those who he finds useful or agreeable to his views and looks to silence those who do not please him. Denouncing the rules of order, Jack declares, "We don't need the conch any more. We know who ought to say things." He dictates to his hunters that they forget the beast and that they stop having nightmares.

As Jack strives to establish his leadership, he takes on the title of "chief" and reinforces the illusion of station and power by using the other boys ceremoniously as standard bearers who raise their spears together and announce "The Chief has spoken." This role is no game for him, though; by the night of Simon's death, Jack has clearly gone power-mad, sitting at the pig roast on a large log "painted and garlanded . . . like an idol" while "[p]ower . . . chattered in his ear like an ape." His tribe addresses him as "Chief," indicating a form of more primitive tribal leadership.

True to Piggy's assertion that "It's them that haven't no common sense that make trouble on this island," Jack takes an entirely different direction from logic or common sense. Perhaps acting out of some guilt he is unable to acknowledge, Jack becomes paranoid and begins feeding misinformation to his tribe, a typical practice of dictatorships to control the collective thinking by controlling the information that is disseminated.

Given the thrill of "irresponsible authority" he's experienced on the island, Jack's return to civilization is conflicted. When the naval officer asks who is in charge, Jack starts to step forward to challenge Ralph's claim of leadership but is stopped perhaps by the recognition that now the old rules will be enforced.

4.3 Piggy

Piggy is the intellectual with poor eyesight, a weight problem, and asthma. He is the most physically vulnerable of all the boys, despite his greater intelligence. Piggy represents the rational world. By frequently quoting his aunt, he also provides the only female voice.

Piggy's intellect benefits the group only through Ralph; he acts as Ralph's advisor. He cannot be the leader himself because he lacks leadership qualities and has no rapport with the other boys. Piggy also relies too heavily on the power of social convention. He believes that holding the conch gives him the right to be heard. He believes that upholding social conventions get results.

As the brainy representative of civilization, Piggy asserts that "Life . . . is scientific." Ever the pragmatist, Piggy complains, "What good're your doing talking like that?" when Ralph brings up the highly charged issue of Simon's death at their hands. Piggy tries to keep

life scientific despite the incident, "searching for a formula" to explain the death. He asserts that the assault on Simon was justifiable because Simon asked for it by inexplicably crawling out of the forest into the ring.

Piggy is so intent on preserving some remnant of civilization on the island that he assumes improbably enough that Jack's raiders have attacked Ralph's group so that they can get the conch when of course they have come for fire. Even up to the moment of his death, Piggy's perspective does not shift in response to the reality of their situation. He can't think as others think or value what they value. Because his eminently intellectual approach to life is modeled on the attitudes and rules of the authoritative adult world, he thinks everyone should share his values and attitudes as a matter of course. Speaking of the deaths of Simon and the littlun with the birthmark, he asks "What's grownups goin' to think?" as if he is not so much mourning the boys' deaths as he is mourning the loss of values, ethics, discipline, and decorum that caused those deaths.

4.4 Simon

Simon's role as an artistic, religious visionary is established not only by his hidden place of meditation but also by the description of his eyes: "so bright they had deceived Ralph into thinking him delightfully gay and wicked." While Piggy has the glasses — one symbol of vision and truth — Simon has bright eyes, a symbol of another kind of vision and truth.

Simon is different from the other boys not only due to his physical frailty, manifested in his fainting spells, but also in his consistently expressed concern for the more vulnerable boys. Littluns follow him, and he picks choice fruit for them from spots they can't reach, a saintly or Christ-like image. He stands up for Piggy and helps him get his glasses back when Jack knocks them off his head, another allusion to Simon's visionary bent. In addition, he has a secret place in the jungle, where he spends time alone.

Simon's loner tendencies make the other boys think he's odd, but, for the reader, Simon's credibility as a mystic is established when he prophesies to Ralph "You'll get back to where you came from." Simon reaches an abstract understanding of mankind's latent evil

nature and unthinking urge to dominate as "mankind's essential illness." When Simon tries to visualize what the beast might look like, "there arose before his inward sight the picture of a human at once heroic and sick" — Golding's vision of humanity as flawed by inherent depravity. GOLDING gives this knowledge to an outsider like Simon to reflect the place visionaries or mystics typically hold in society: on the fringes, little understood by the majority, and often feared or disregarded. Like other mystics, Simon asks questions the other boys cannot answer. His questions to them, "What's the dirtiest thing there is?" and "What else is there to do?" require both abstract thought and courageous action to answer.

In contrast to Piggy and Ralph's equating adulthood with knowledge and higher understanding, Simon sees the darker side of knowledge. For him, the staked sow's eyes are "dim with the infinite cynicism of adult life," a view of adults not defined by the civilized politeness and capability the boys imagine. Yet Simon soldiers on in his quest to discover the identity of the beast on the mountaintop because he sees the need for the boys to face their fears, to understand the true identity of the false beast on the mountain, and to get on with the business of facing the beast within themselves.

By courageously seeking to confront the figure on the mountaintop, Simon fulfills his destiny of revelation. He doesn't get to share his revelation with the other boys because they are not ready to accept or understand it. Instead he dies as a result of being made the scapegoat for the boys' unshakeable fear. When Simon's body is carried off by the tide, covered in the jellyfish-like phosphorescent creatures who have come in with the tide, Golding shifts the focus from Simon's body's movements to the much larger progressions of the sun, moon, and earth because Simon represented a knowledge as fundamental as the elements.

4.5 Samneric

Samneric (Sam and Eric) represent totally civilized and socialized persons. As identical twins, they have always been a group, albeit the smallest of groups, but a group nevertheless. They know no other way than to submit to the collective identity and will. They are initially devoted to rescue but easily overwhelmed by the ferocity of tribe. They represent the well-intentioned members of general public who play by the rules of whoever

is in charge. They are easily intimidated by Jack and abandon their fire-tending duties at his command. Seeing Ralph's rage at the resultant loss of a rescue opportunity, Samneric mock him once they are alone, despite the fact that their desertion of duty caused his anger and the loss of possible rescue. On a realistic, perhaps human, level, they may laugh to dispel their guilt or because their childish perspective has already allowed them to forget the loss they caused or because their priority is merely to avoid punishment. On the symbolic level, however, laughter is a totally social act.

After the horror of Simon's death, in which they participate, they fear for their own lives because they have remained loyal to Ralph. As Ralph's group plans to approach Jack's tribe, Samneric want to paint themselves like tribe members, hoping for mercy through assimilation. When the twins are captured by the tribe, Samneric "protested out of the heart of civilization" but abandon their loyalty to that civilization to avoid punishment, betraying Ralph out of concern for their own welfare. Their return to civilization will be fairly easy because they look only to appease whoever is in charge.

4.6 Roger

Roger represents the sadist, the individual who enjoys hurting others. His evil motives are different from Jack's, who pursues leadership and stature and enjoys the thrill of the hunt. Roger just likes to hurt people. He is described in Chapter 1 as a boy "who kept to himself with avoidance and secrecy." His secret is that he is, in some ways, more evil than even Jack. All his life, Roger has been conditioned to leash or mask his impulses. The "irresponsible authority" of Jack's reign offers him the chance to unleash his innate cruelty. Initially, in a mean-spirited prank, Roger throws rocks at the unsuspecting littlun, Henry, but he throws them so that they miss, surrounded as Henry is by "the protection of parents and school and policeman and the law. Roger's arm was conditioned by . . . civilization." Once he joins Jack's tribe, he has lost that conditioning and eventually kills Piggy with one boulder, which was not intended to miss.

Roger carves out a distinct niche in the tribe as the hangman, the torturer who plays a key role in all dictatorships, and relishes the role of a killer. From his point of view on top of Castle Rock, "Ralph was a shock of hair and Piggy a bag of FAT" — not other human

beings. Mentally dehumanizing those not in his group frees Roger from the restraints of decency, an effect he feels as "a sense of delirious abandonment" when he releases the rock to kill Piggy.

5. Stylistic Devices of the Novel

5.1 Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

Civilization vs. Savagery

The central concern of *Lord of the Flies* is the conflict between two competing impulses that exist within all human beings: the instinct to live by rules, act peacefully, follow moral commands, and value the good of the group against the instinct to gratify one's immediate desires, act violently to obtain supremacy over others, and enforce one's will. This conflict might be expressed in a number of ways: civilization vs. savagery, order vs. chaos, reason vs. impulse, law vs. anarchy, or the broader heading of good vs. evil. Throughout the novel, Golding associates the instinct of civilization with good and the instinct of savagery with evil.

The conflict between the two instincts is the driving force of the novel, explored through the dissolution of the young English boys' civilized, moral, disciplined behavior as they accustom themselves to a wild, brutal, barbaric life in the jungle. *Lord of the Flies* is an allegorical novel, which means that Golding conveys many of his main ideas and themes through symbolic characters and objects. He represents the conflict between civilization and savagery in the conflict between the novel's two main characters: Ralph, the protagonist, who represents order and leadership; and Jack, the antagonist, who represents savagery and the desire for power.

As the novel progresses, Golding shows how different people feel the influences of the instincts of civilization and savagery to different degrees. Piggy, for instance, has no savage feelings, while Roger seems barely capable of comprehending the rules of civilization. Generally, however, Golding implies that the instinct of savagery is far more

primal and fundamental to the human psyche than the instinct of civilization. Golding sees moral behavior, in many cases, as something that civilization forces upon the individual rather than a natural expression of human individuality. When left to their own devices, Golding implies, people naturally revert to cruelty, savagery, and barbarism. This idea of innate human evil is central to Lord of the Flies, and finds expression in several important symbols, most notably the beast and the sow's head on the stake. Among all the characters, only Simon seems to possess anything like a natural, innate goodness.

Loss of Innocence

As the boys on the island progress from well-behaved, orderly children longing for rescue to cruel, bloodthirsty hunters who have no desire to return to civilization, they naturally lose the sense of innocence that they possessed at the beginning of the novel. The painted savages in Chapter 12 who have hunted, tortured, and killed animals and human beings are a far cry from the guileless children swimming in the lagoon in Chapter 3. But Golding does not portray this loss of innocence as something that is done to the children; rather, it results naturally from their increasing openness to the innate evil and savagery that has always existed within them. Golding implies that civilization can mitigate but never wipe out the innate evil that exists within all human beings. The forest glade in which Simon sits in Chapter 3 symbolizes this loss of innocence. At first, it is a place of natural beauty and peace, but when Simon returns later in the novel, he discovers the bloody sow's head impaled upon a stake in the middle of the clearing. The bloody offering to the beast has disrupted the paradise that existed before—a powerful symbol of innate human evil disrupting childhood innocence.

5.2 Motifs

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Biblical Parallels

Many critics have characterized *Lord of the Flies* as a retelling of episodes from the Bible. While that description may be an oversimplification, the novel does echo certain

Christian images and themes. Golding does not make any explicit or direct connections to Christian symbolism in Lord of the Flies; instead, these biblical parallels function as a kind of subtle motif in the novel, adding thematic resonance to the main ideas of the story. The island itself, particularly Simon's glade in the forest, recalls the Garden of Eden in its status as an originally pristine place that is corrupted by the introduction of evil. Similarly, we may see the *Lord of the Flies* as a representation of the devil, for it works to promote evil among humankind. Furthermore, many critics have drawn strong parallels between Simon and Jesus. Among the boys, Simon is the one who arrives at the moral truth of the novel, and the other boys kill him sacrificially as a consequence of having discovered this truth. Simon's conversation with the *Lord of the Flies* also parallels the confrontation between Jesus and the devil during Jesus' forty days in the wilderness, as told in the Christian Gospels.

However, it is important to remember that the parallels between Simon and Christ are not complete, and that there are limits to reading *Lord of the Flies* purely as a Christian allegory. Save for Simon's two uncanny predictions of the future, he lacks the supernatural connection to God that Jesus has in Christian tradition. Although Simon is wise in many ways, his death does not bring salvation to the island; rather, his death plunges the island deeper into savagery and moral guilt. Moreover, Simon dies before he is able to tell the boys the truth he has discovered. Jesus, in contrast, was killed while spreading his moral philosophy. In this way, Simon—and *Lord of the Flies* as a whole—echoes Christian ideas and themes without developing explicit, precise parallels with them. The novel's biblical parallels enhance its moral themes but are not necessarily the primary key to interpreting the story.

5.3 Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, and colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

The Conch Shell

Ralph and Piggy discover the conch shell on the beach at the start of the novel and use it to summon the boys together after the crash separates them. Used in this capacity, the conch shell becomes a powerful symbol of civilization and order in the novel. The shell

effectively governs the boys' meetings, for the boy who holds the shell holds the right to speak. In this regard, the shell is more than a symbol—it is an actual vessel of political legitimacy and democratic power. As the island civilization erodes and the boys descend into savagery, the conch shell loses its power and influence among them. Ralph clutches the shell desperately when he talks about his role in murdering Simon. Later, the other boys ignore Ralph and throw stones at him when he attempts to blow the conch in Jack's camp. The boulder that Roger rolls onto Piggy also crushes the conch shell, signifying the demise of the civilized instinct among almost all the boys on the island.

Piggy's Glasses

Piggy is the most intelligent, rational boy in the group, and his glasses represent the power of science and intellectual endeavor in society. This symbolic significance is clear from the start of the novel, when the boys use the lenses from Piggy's glasses to focus the sunlight and start a fire. When Jack's hunters raid Ralph's camp and steal the glasses, the savages effectively take the power to make fire, leaving Ralph's group helpless.

The Signal Fire

The signal fire burns on the mountain, and later on the beach, to attract the notice of passing ships that might be able to rescue the boys. As a result, the signal fire becomes a barometer of the boys' connection to civilization. In the early parts of the novel, the fact that the boys maintain the fire is a sign that they want to be rescued and return to society. When the fire burns low or goes out, we realize that the boys have lost sight of their desire to be rescued and have accepted their savage lives on the island. The signal fire thus functions as a kind of measurement of the strength of the civilized instinct remaining on the island. Ironically, at the end of the novel, a fire finally summons a ship to the island, but not the signal fire. Instead, it is the fire of savagery—the forest fire Jack's gang starts as part of his quest to hunt and kill Ralph.

The Beast

The imaginary beast that frightens all the boys stands for the primal instinct of savagery that exists within all human beings. The boys are afraid of the beast, but only

Simon reaches the realization that they fear the beast because it exists within each of them. As the boys grow more savage, their belief in the beast grows stronger. By the end of the novel, the boys are leaving it sacrifices and treating it as a totemic god. The boys' behavior is what brings the beast into existence, so the more savagely the boys act, the more real the beast seems to become.

The Lord of the Flies

The *Lord of the Flies* is the bloody, severed sow's head that Jack impales on a stake in the forest glade as an offering to the beast. This complicated symbol becomes the most important image in the novel when Simon confronts the sow's head in the glade and it seems to speak to him, telling him that evil lies within every human heart and promising to have some "fun" with him. (This "fun" foreshadows Simon's death in the following chapter.) In this way, the *Lord of the Flies* becomes both a physical manifestation of the beast, a symbol of the power of evil, and a kind of Satan figure who evokes the beast within each human being. Looking at the novel in the context of biblical parallels, the *Lord of the Flies* recalls the devil, just as Simon recalls Jesus. In fact, the name "Lord of the Flies" is a literal translation of the name of the biblical name Beelzebub, a powerful demon in hell sometimes thought to be the devil himself.

Ralph, Piggy, Jack, Simon, and Roger

Lord of the Flies is an allegorical novel, and many of its characters signify important ideas or themes. Ralph represents order, leadership, and civilization. Piggy represents the scientific and intellectual aspects of civilization. Jack represents unbridled savagery and the desire for power. Simon represents natural human goodness. Roger represents brutality and bloodlust at their most extreme. To the extent that the boys' society resembles a political state, the littluns might be seen as the common people, while the older boys represent the ruling classes and political leaders. The relationships that develop between the older boys and the younger ones emphasize the older boys' connection to either the civilized or the savage instinct: civilized boys like Ralph and Simon use their power to protect the younger boys and advance the good of the group; savage boys like Jack and Roger use their power to gratify their own desires, treating the littler boys as objects for their own amusement.

6. Study Questions

6.1 Important Quotations Explained

1. Roger gathered a handful of stones and began to throw them. Yet there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law.

Answer: This passage from Chapter 4 describes the beginnings of Roger's cruelty to the littluns, an important early step in the group's decline into savagery. At this point in the novel, the boys are still building their civilization, and the civilized instinct still dominates the savage instinct. The cracks are beginning to show, however, particularly in the willingness of some of the older boys to use physical force and violence to give themselves a sense of superiority over the smaller boys. This quotation shows us the psychological workings behind the beginnings of that willingness. Roger feels the urge to torment Henry, the littlun, by pelting him with stones, but the vestiges of socially imposed standards of behavior are still too strong for him to give in completely to his savage urges. At this point, Roger still feels constrained by "parents and school and policemen and the law"—the figures and institutions that enforce society's moral code. Before long, Roger and most of the other boys lose their respect for these forces, and violence, torture, and murder break out as the savage instinct replaces the instinct for civilization among the group.

2. His mind was crowded with memories; memories of the knowledge that had come to them when they closed in on the struggling pig, knowledge that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink.

Answer: This quotation, also from Chapter 4, explores Jack's mental state in the aftermath of killing his first pig, another milestone in the boys' decline into savage behavior. Jack exults in the kill and is unable to think about anything else because his mind is "crowded with memories" of the hunt. GOLDING explicitly connects Jack's exhilaration with the feelings of power and superiority he experienced in killing the pig. Jack's excitement stems not from pride at having found food and helped the group but from having "outwitted" another

creature and "imposed" his will upon it. Earlier in the novel, Jack claims that hunting is important to provide meat for the group; now, it becomes clear that Jack's obsession with hunting is due to the satisfaction it provides his primal instincts and has nothing to do with contributing to the common good.

3. "What I mean is . . . maybe it's only us"

Answer: Simon speaks these words in Chapter 5, during the meeting in which the boys consider the question of the beast. One littlun has proposed the terrifying idea that the beast may hide in the ocean during the day and emerge only at night, and the boys argue about whether the beast might actually exist. Simon, meanwhile, proposes that perhaps the beast is only the boys themselves. Although the other boys laugh off Simon's suggestion, Simon's words are central to Golding's point that innate human evil exists. Simon is the first character in the novel to see the beast not as an external force but as a component of human nature. Simon does not yet fully understand his own idea, but it becomes clearer to him in Chapter 8, when he has a vision in the glade and confronts the Lord of the Flies.

4. "There isn't anyone to help you. Only me. And I'm the Beast. . . . Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill! . . . You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are the way they are?"

Answer: The *Lord of the Flies* speaks these lines to Simon in Chapter 8, during Simon's vision in the glade. These words confirm Simon's speculation in Chapter 5 that perhaps the beast is only the boys themselves. This idea of the evil on the island being within the boys is central to the novel's exploration of innate human savagery. The *Lord of the Flies* identifies itself as the beast and acknowledges to Simon that it exists within all human beings: "You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you?" The creature's grotesque language and bizarre appropriation of the boys' slang ("I'm the reason why it's no go") makes the creature appear even more hideous and devilish, for he taunts Simon with the same colloquial, familiar language the boys use themselves. Simon, startled by his discovery, tries to convey it to the rest of the boys, but the evil and savagery within them boils to the surface, as they mistake him for the beast itself, set upon him, and kill him.

5. Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of a true, wise friend called Piggy.

Answer: These lines from the end of Chapter 12 occur near the close of the novel, after the boys encounter the naval officer, who appears as if out of nowhere to save them. When Ralph sees the officer, his sudden realization that he is safe and will be returned to civilization plunges him into a reflective despair. The rescue is not a moment of unequivocal joy, for Ralph realizes that, although he is saved from death on the island, he will never be the same. He has lost his innocence and learned about the evil that lurks within all human beings. Here, Golding explicitly connects the sources of Ralph's despair to two of the main themes of the novel: the end of innocence and the "darkness of man's heart," the presence of savage instincts lurking within all human beings, even at the height of civilization.

6.2 Study Questions

1. What does it mean to say that *Lord of the Flies* is an allegorical novel? What are its important symbols?

Answer: *Lord of the Flies* is an allegorical novel in that it contains characters and objects that directly represent the novel's themes and ideas. GOLDING's central point in the novel is that a conflict between the impulse toward civilization and the impulse toward savagery rages within each human individual. Each of the main characters in the novel represents a certain idea or aspect of this spectrum between civilization and savagery. Ralph, for instance, embodies the civilizing impulse, as he strives from the start to create order among the boys and to build a stable society on the island. Piggy, meanwhile, represents the scientific and intellectual aspects of civilization. At the other end of the spectrum, Jack embodies the impulse toward savagery and the unchecked desire for power and domination. Even more extreme is Roger, who represents the drive for violence and bloodlust in its purest form. Furthermore, just as various characters embody thematic concepts in the novel, a number of objects do as well. The conch shell, which is used to summon the boys to gatherings and as a emblem of the right to speak at those gatherings, represents order, civilization, and political legitimacy. Piggy's glasses, which are used to make fire, represent the power of science and intellectual endeavor. The sow's head in the jungle, meanwhile, embodies the

human impulse toward savagery, violence, and barbarism that exists within each person. Throughout Lord of the Flies, Golding uses these characters and objects to represent and emphasize elements of the themes and ideas he explores in the novel.

2. Compare and contrast Ralph and Simon. Both seem to be "good" characters. Is there a difference in their goodness?

Answer: Both Ralph and Simon are motivated toward goodness throughout the novel. Both boys work to establish and maintain order and harmony with the rest of the group and are kind and protective in their interactions with the littluns. However, as the novel progresses, we get the sense that Ralph's and Simon's motivations for doing good stem from different sources. Ralph behaves and acts according to moral guidelines, but this behavior and these guidelines seem learned rather than innate. Ralph seems to have darker instinctual urges beneath: like the other boys, he gets swept up by bloodlust during the hunt and the dance afterward. Simon, on the other hand, displays a goodness and kindness that do not seem to have been forced or imposed upon him by civilization. Instead, Simon's goodness seems to be innate or to flow from his connection to nature. He lives in accordance with the moral regulations of civilization simply because he is temperamentally suited to them: he is kind, thoughtful, and helpful by nature. In the end, though Ralph is capable of leadership, we see that he shares the hidden instinct toward savagery and violence that Jack and his tribe embrace. Although Ralph does prove an effective leader, it is Simon who recognizes the truth that stands at the core of the novel—that the beast does not exist in tangible form on the island but rather exists as an impulse toward evil within each individual.

3. How does Jack use the beast to control the other boys?

Answer: Jack expertly uses the beast to manipulate the other boys by establishing the beast as his tribe's common enemy, common idol, and common system of beliefs all in one. Jack invokes different aspects of the beast depending on which effects he wants to achieve. He uses the boys' fear of the beast to justify his iron-fisted control of the group and the violence he perpetrates. He sets up the beast as a sort of idol in order to fuel the boys' bloodlust and establish a cultlike view toward the hunt. The boys' belief in the monster gives *Lord of the Flies* religious undertones, for the boys' various nightmares about monsters

eventually take the form of a single monster that they all believe in and fear. By leaving the sow's head in the forest as an offering to the beast, Jack's tribe solidifies its collective belief in the reality of the nightmare. The skull becomes a kind of religious totem with extraordinary psychological power, driving the boys to abandon their desire for civilization and order and give in to their violent and savage impulses.

7. Suggested Essay Topics

1. Of all the characters, it is Piggy who most often has useful ideas and sees the correct way for the boys to organize themselves. Yet the other boys rarely listen to him and frequently abuse him. Why do you think this is the case? In what ways does Golding use Piggy to advance the novel's themes?
2. 2.What, if anything, might the dead parachutist symbolize? Does he symbolize something other than what the beast and the *Lord of the Flies* symbolize?
3. The sow's head and the conch shell each wield a certain kind of power over the boys. In what ways do these objects' powers differ? In what way is *Lord of the Flies* a novel about power? About the power of symbols? About the power of a person to use symbols to control a group?
4. What role do the littluns play in the novel? In one respect, they serve as gauges of the older boys' moral positions, for we see whether an older boy is kind or cruel based on how he treats the littluns. But are the littluns important in and of themselves? What might they represent?

8. Suggestions for Further Reading

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