

After the Dancing Days Study Guide

After the Dancing Days by Margaret I. Rostkowski

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Plot Summary

After the Dancing Days is the story of Annie Metcalf and her family, who live in Kansas City, Kansas, at the end of World War I. Annie's father, Larry, has served as a physician at a military hospital in New York City during the war. He returns to find Annie a more mature young lady of thirteen. Annie adapts to her father's homecoming amidst her mother, Katherine's, refusal to acknowledge the war or its horrible aftermath. Katherine's brother and Annie's favorite uncle, Paul, had died in the war; and Annie still struggles to accept that Uncle Paul is gone.

Uncle Paul was the first person to have acknowledged that Annie is growing up; and Annie clings to memories of accompanying her uncle to the opera and riding as a passenger on his new motorcycle. Annie recalls the day that the family was informed that Uncle Paul had died. Annie's grandparents, especially her grandmother, have never been the same since.

Grandfather chooses to address his grief directly and visits St. John's Veterans Hospital, where wounded soldiers are treated in Kansas City, to spend time and read to the patients, especially a local boy named Timothy. One day, Annie accompanies her grandfather to St. John's and meets a badly disfigured young man named Andrew, whose body is badly scarred as a result of mustard gas poisoning. Andrew's bitterness about his disfigurement threatens to frighten Annie away. Yet she is drawn to Andrew; and the unlikely two form a friendship over the summer months as Annie visits every day. Annie's mother is opposed to Annie's visits to St. John's, because she wants to protect Annie from the harsh realities of the ravages of war.

Katherine forbids Annie to visit the hospital anymore. However when Katherine accompanies her own parents on a health sojourn to Colorado, for Grandfather's recuperation from a heart attack, Annie visits the hospital every day. Soon Andrew anticipates Annie's visits. Annie instills in Andrew a new interest in life and exploring the world again. Andrew also helps Annie discover the mysterious events of her Uncle Paul's death in the war. This means Annie and her family must acknowledge some unsettling facts.

Ultimately, Andrew accepts a job assisting other wounded soldiers at a hospital in Topeka; and Annie is heartbroken at the thought of losing Andrew. Katherine accepts Annie's friendship with Andrew and invites Andrew to dinner at the Metcalf home the night before he leaves for Topeka. Annie learns that she has helped Andrew to accept his life and begin to make plans for his future, even though she is sad to see him leave. The lessons for Annie and her family include acceptance and letting go of preconceived ideas about heroism, as well as the inevitability of change for each of them.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Annie Metcalf and her mother, Katherine, drive from their Kansas City home to the train station to meet Annie's father, Larry, who is returning from New York City. Larry has served as a physician treating American soldiers wounded in World War I. Annie's father has been gone for a year and a half; and although Annie knows that her father did not engage in any battles, she is still apprehensive about seeing him again and hopes that the war did not change him too much.

When the troop train arrives, Annie is horror stricken by the wounded men and their vacant stares, as they are wheeled to waiting ambulances that will take them to St. John's Veterans Hospital. Annie thinks about her Uncle Paul, who was killed in the war, and wishes that he could be one of the men arriving at the station today. Annie recalls the day the telegram came announcing Uncle Paul's death. Annie and her Grandmother had been making raspberry jam when the telegram deliveryman arrived with the fateful news.

Annie continues to watch the men in various stages of disfigurement and healing, and is struck by one man in particular whose eyes lock with Annie's as his stretcher is carried forward. Annie notices that her mother is visibly disturbed by the wounded men being carried from the train, and she is relieved when Dr. Metcalf appears at the train door. Annie is thrilled to see her father, but cannot erase the images of the men she has seen this morning.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The setting for the story is Kansas City, Kansas, in the year 1918, just after the end of World War I. Most of the action occurs either in the Metcalf household or at St. John's Hospital; but this scene at the train station is critical because it is Annie's first experience with the ravages of war, and she will be forever changed. The author also uses foreshadowing when a terribly disfigured soldier, whose eyes follow her as his stretcher is born along the platform, mesmerizes Annie. This is Andrew, who Annie will meet at St. John's Hospital, and with whom she will develop a friendship very soon.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

As Annie's mother drives the family home from the station, Annie thinks again of the day the family learned of Uncle Paul's death. Grandfather chopped wood for an hour after the news came, and Grandmother took to her room in grief for several days.

During Mr. Metcalf's absence, Annie and her mother did not talk of war, but kept to their routine. Annie had grown closer to her mother during this time, and wonders how she will adapt to her father's return. When they arrive home, the family is greeted by Grandfather, Grandmother, Aunt Felicia, Uncle Mark, Uncle John, and Annie's cousins, Frances and Charlie. Aunt Felicia has prepared a wonderful dinner. After the celebratory meal, the family retires to the front porch and to games of croquet. Later that evening, after the guests have departed, Dr. Metcalf and Annie sit close on the sofa as Mrs. Metcalf plays the piano.

Chapter 2 Analysis

This chapter introduces Annie's extended family in the characters of her grandparents, uncles, aunt, and cousins. Annie is an only child, and lives a relatively solitary existence. She is overwhelmed by the activities and the attentions showered on her father at his return. Annie feels much more comfortable when the nuclear family, herself, her mother and father, are in place once more and her security returns.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

When Annie awakens the next morning, she learns that her father is out for a walk with Grandfather. Annie questions her mother about the wounded men at the train station, but her mother squelches any dialogue on the subject. Annie rushes out to find her father and Grandfather. She finds them engaged in conversation about a young man named Timothy Lewis, who has been blinded by his war injuries. Grandfather has been visiting Timothy and reading *Ivanhoe*, to help pass the time with the young man. Annie's mother does not approve of Grandfather spending so much time at St. John's, and will not allow Annie to visit the soldiers at the hospital. Annie's mother also prefers that her husband would return to work at the County Hospital; but Dr. Metcalf feels compelled to work at St. John's to help the veterans in any way he can.

Chapter 3 Analysis

The author uses the literary technique of conflict in this chapter when further describing Mrs. Metcalf's aversion to anything related to the war. Mrs. Metcalf would prefer that her husband work at the regular hospital, and not the veteran's hospital, and forbids Annie to visit St. Johns or interact with the wounded men. This conflict will become a major theme in the book, as both her husband and her daughter ignore Mrs. Metcalf's desires.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Mrs. Metcalf devotes herself to music, which she writes and plays on the piano. Annie knows not to interrupt her mother when she is working or playing. This leaves Annie with much time on her hands and, being an only child, Annie learns to play alone or spend time at her grandparents' home across the street. Annie is also shut out of her mother's world by her mother's two groups of friends. One group is from the academy where Mrs. Metcalf had attended school. This group of women is concerned with voting rights for women, as well as many other political and social issues. Mrs. Metcalf's other group of friends includes young people introduced to Mrs. Metcalf by her brother Paul. This group is livelier, and includes young men who enjoy laughing, singing, and smoking cigars on the front porch. Since the war, this group, which Annie calls "Mother's boys," has essentially disbanded because the young men had gone away to war.

Annie recalls one evening when Uncle Paul arrives at the Metcalf home to speak to Mrs. Metcalf, but not finding her at home. He invites Annie instead to take a ride on his new motorcycle. Annie found the event exhilarating, not only for the speed, but also because of the special attention bestowed on her by Uncle Paul. This budding relationship further develops when Uncle Paul invites Annie to accompany him to the opera to see *La Boheme*.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The author incorporates cultural elements into the story to provide some historical accuracy. For example, when "Mother's Boys" spend time at the Metcalf home, they sing songs such as "Over There," "It's a Long Way to Tipperary," and "Smile, Smile, Smile." These are all songs made popular during the period of World War I. The author also uses references to classical works, such as the book *Ivanhoe* and the opera *La Boheme*. These works establish the Metcalf home as one immersed in artistic and cultural pursuits, and defines the family as one with professional and social concerns.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Summer arrives and Annie's interests move away from her neighborhood friends, Emily and Darby. Annie finds herself spending much time alone. One of Annie's favorite pastimes is to visit the library where Mrs. Metcalf's friend, Ruth, who is a librarian, introduces Annie to all the beautiful maps available for view. Annie is fascinated by the countries, with their exotic-sounding names and the lure of potentially visiting them someday.

One afternoon, Annie plays checkers with her Grandfather, who shares his experience of visiting the soldiers at St. John's. In the evenings, Dr. Metcalf also tells Annie about the hospital, but mostly talks about the nuns who actually run St. John's. Reluctantly, Dr. Metcalf tells Annie little stories about some of the wounded soldiers; and Mrs. Metcalf almost always leaves the room when the conversation turns to the subject of the injured men. Contrary to her mother's position, Annie is very interested in her father's work, and in the men he treats, and asks if she may visit the hospital sometime. She soon does, in the company of her grandfather.

Annie and her grandfather join Dr. Metcalf for lunch at the hospital; and then Annie tours the grounds by herself, where she encounters a sullen patient whose face has been horribly disfigured. Annie runs away and realizes that she has dropped her book. She returns to the spot where the soldier still stands. The two engage in a brief conversation, and Annie once again leaves abruptly.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The author introduces the element of maps into Annie's life, to symbolize Annie's burgeoning maturity and the course her life will soon take. The maps, and what they represent to Annie, also will provide her with the dreams and energy to instill enthusiasm into Andrew's life. It is important to note that Ruth shows the maps to Annie. She is an important woman in Mrs. Metcalf's life for her independence, professional career, and dedication to women's rights. The sharing of knowledge from Ruth to Annie symbolizes the imparting of new ways of thinking, and exploring the world so different from Annie's limited perspective to this point.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Later that evening, Dr. Metcalf asks Annie about her experience at St. John's. She tells him about her encounter with the man with the severely burned face. Dr. Metcalf tells Annie that most of the burned soldiers experienced their injuries as a result of mustard gas, used by both armies during the war.

Later that week, Annie attends a movie with her Sunday School class. Afterwards, the students are treated to ice cream by their teacher, Miss Peterson, at Blair's Ice Cream and Candy Parlor. Annie is shocked by Miss Peterson's comments that Dr. Metcalf should not be associating with the Catholics at St. John's. Miss Peterson is also disgusted by the disfigured and injured men at St. John's; and Annie defends both the men and her father for his continuing service to those who need him. Annie determines that she will spend her time in pursuits other than Bible School this summer.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The author establishes conflict with Annie's core beliefs and inclinations, with those of her Sunday School teacher, Miss Peterson. Miss Peterson has little tolerance for those of different religions or those who are imperfect, such as the men wounded in the war. This position is a major element of irony for a religious education instructor, who should teach acceptance of all people, yet voices intolerance of those different from herself.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

Later that evening, Annie tells her parents of her wish not to attend Sunday School this summer. Mrs. Metcalf is concerned that Annie will get bored without this summer ritual. Annie assures her mother that she will find enough to keep her busy during summer vacation. She accompanies her father to her grandfather's home so that Dr. Metcalf can inspect Uncle Paul's motorcycle, which Dr. Metcalf plans to drive to work each day. Annie's heart is saddened at the sight of the abandoned motorcycle, and she remembers the joyful ride she shared with Uncle Paul just a year ago. Grandfather invites Annie to accompany him to St. John's again, and she reluctantly agrees to go.

Annie celebrates the Fourth of July with her family in a downtown park, among other picnicking families. Annie revels in her grandmother's home-cooked dishes, because her own mother has no real interest or talent for cooking. Annie thinks about the difference in her grandmother since Uncle Paul died, and Annie misses her happy moods and perpetual singing. Mrs. Metcalf's friend, Ruth, who reluctantly agrees to attend the festivities, also joins the family.

After the picnic lunches are consumed, the townspeople gather on the square to listen to a speech by the mayor, who announces a monument to be erected in honor of the soldiers of the war. The mayor invites public opinion on the monument; and Annie's family gathers around to view the plans, with the exception of Dr. Metcalf and Ruth, who feel that the monument will glorify an unnecessary loss of life. The evening's fireworks lose their appeal, as Annie dreads her upcoming return visit to St. John's with her grandfather.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

The author continues to use historically pertinent information to mark the period in time and to create historical relevance. For instance, in this chapter Dr. Metcalf reads the headlines of the local paper declaring *World Peace Signed and Sealed at Versailles* and *League of Nations Denounced in Senate*. The author allows the character of Dr. Metcalf to explain the significance of this news, and how the actual ending of the war extended far past the date of Germany's surrender many months ago. The author also continues to weave the historically important topic of women's voting rights into the story, through Mrs. Metcalf's interests and friends.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

A few days later, Annie accompanies her grandfather to St. John's. She is concerned because Grandfather seems to be unsteady on his feet, and has a hard time breathing during the trolley ride to the hospital. Nevertheless, the old man keeps his commitment to visit Timothy again, to continue the reading of *Ivanhoe*. Timothy introduces Annie and her grandfather to Andrew Crayton, the man with the severely burned face, whom Annie had met before. Andrew gruffly acknowledges Annie before Grandfather begins his reading; and Annie sits uncomfortably by the wounded man on a bench until Grandfather pauses. Annie takes the opportunity to find her father and tell him about Grandfather's health, then returns to Andrew and Grandfather still sitting on the bench.

Annie shares her books of maps with Andrew while Grandfather naps; and Andrew sarcastically comments on the books, proclaiming the beauty of Europe. Andrew shares with Annie the horrors he encountered in France during the war. Annie has no words of consolation, but offers the oatmeal cookies she brought with her. During Grandfather's resumed reading, Annie is startled to find that her mother has arrived to take her home; and Mrs. Metcalf's horror at finding Annie in Andrew's company is obvious. Andrew realizes Mrs. Metcalf's disdain for him and immediately returns to the hospital building without saying goodbye.

Annie is appalled by her mother's behavior in front of Andrew; and even Grandfather cannot believe Mrs. Metcalf's rudeness. Mrs. Metcalf forbids Annie to visit the hospital again in spite of Annie's protests and Grandfather's attempts at intervention.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

The author utilizes the literary technique of foreshadowing with Grandfather's faltering moments on the trolley. Foreshadowing means that the author suggests an event or outcome before the event happens. Grandfather's inherent illness will soon resurface with serious results, which no one could predict.

This section also represents a turning point in the relationship between Annie and her mother. Up until this point, Annie has been in awe of her beautiful, artistic mother. But now that Annie is maturing and forming her own opinions on matters, Annie can see how differently she and her mother think on certain issues. The incident at the hospital, where Mrs. Metcalf behaves rudely toward Andrew, both embarrasses and inflames Annie. This sets up new conflict between mother and daughter.



Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

Later that night Annie and her mother eat dinner in silence; and Annie wonders to herself why her mother is so opposed to hospital life, especially in light of Dr. Metcalf's dedication to his work. Annie retires to her bedroom for some private thoughts, and rationalizes that her mother's distaste for anything related to the war must be the reason for her mother's odd behavior. Annie's reverie is interrupted by her mother's voice and a sense of commotion in the house. Annie learns that her grandfather is very ill; and Annie's mother and Uncle John rush the elderly man to the hospital.

Mrs. Metcalf's friend, Ruth, stays with Annie and Grandmother until the morning, when they receive news that Grandfather has had a heart attack, but will live. Mrs. Metcalf returns from the hospital, telling Annie that Mrs. Metcalf and Grandmother will be taking Grandfather on a recuperative trip to Estes Park, Colorado.

Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

Annie's burgeoning maturity allows her to project herself into her mother's situation and speculate why her mother has unusually high aversions to the war and its aftermath. This ability to project into another person's state of mind is a sign of a person who is empathetic, caring, and intelligent. These qualities will continue to grow in importance during this summer. Although Annie is gaining emotional strength in some ways, she is also very vulnerable with grief for Uncle Paul and now her Grandfather's heart attack. These are all elements that add to Annie's personal growth and character building.



Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

Annie is pleased that she is not forced to accompany her mother and grandparents on the trip to Colorado, but is allowed to remain at home for the last month of her summer vacation. This new freedom allows Annie to take care of fundamental domestic tasks, as well as visit Timothy and Andrew at St. John's.

On one occasion, Annie attempts to apologize for her mother's rude behavior in front of Andrew, who dismisses Annie's apology. Andrew questions Annie about Uncle Paul; and Annie tells Andrew about Uncle Paul's medals earned for gallantry. Annie shares the details of the day an officer came to Grandfather's home to relate the details of Uncle Paul's death. The soldier tells the family that Uncle Paul died a hero, because he was an exemplary leader for his men.

Andrew is quiet during Annie's story. He then shows her the Purple Heart medal he had been awarded, even though Andrew holds little regard for it now. Andrew tells Annie that Uncle Paul must have received one posthumously. Annie vows to do some research into the issue because she has never seen one in all of Uncle Paul's items.

Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

The author uses the technique of sarcasm in this section to indicate Andrew's view of the world, due to his disfigured condition. Sarcasm is typically communicated in conversation where one person mocks another person, or says something ironic, in a jeering tone. For example, when Andrew responds to Dr. Metcalf, who wants to know about Andrew's condition, Andrew responds, "Oh, just great. Fine and dandy." Andrew is obviously not fine; and he chooses his sarcastic words and tone to indicate his anger and frustration with Dr. Metcalf, as well as his own personal circumstances.



Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

Later that night, Annie investigates Uncle Paul's medals at her grandparents' home and discovers no Purple Heart among them. Annie determines that her grandfather is the only person to ask about the absence of this distinguished medal. So Annie writes a letter to Grandfather, recuperating in Colorado.

As the days pass, Annie continues to visit St. John's every day to spend time with Andrew, and to help the nuns with small tasks and errands. One day, Andrew reveals to Annie that he had considered killing himself, shortly after his injuries, because he had been in such excruciating pain. Now Andrew wants to die because of his horribly disfigured and scarred face and upper body. Andrew appreciates Annie's willingness to befriend him and not look away when she sees him now.

Annie summons the courage to ask Andrew how he sustained his injuries. Andrew tells her of the day the mustard gas rolled over the trench where he waited. Andrew lost his gas mask while trying to escape, which resulted in his not being able to protect himself from the insidious substance.

A few days later, Annie receives a reply from Grandfather, who tells her that Uncle Paul had received no Purple Heart and that Annie could ask her father to review the telegram announcing Uncle Paul's death to verify that there had been a mistake. Dr. Metcalf reads the telegram which states "I regret to inform you that your son, 1st Lieutenant Paul MacLeod, died in the service of his country in France on June 6, 1918. Please accept my deepest sympathies. Newton Baker, Secretary of War." (Page 122) Dr. Metcalf determines that Uncle Paul did not receive a Purple Heart, although he may have been entitled to one, and Annie secretly vows to find out more information regarding her uncle's death and the missing hero's honor.

The next day, Annie meets Andrew's mother, Mrs. Crayton, when she visits him at St. John's. Annie learns that Andrew's family lives on a farm in a town nearby, and that Andrew's father does not visit Andrew because he feels that Andrew did not have to enlist in the army, and therefore could have avoided his life-altering disabilities. Annie also learns that Timothy's bandages will be removed soon, in the hopes that his eyesight has returned.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

The author uses symbolism in the scene of Andrew using Annie's checkers and checkerboard to illustrate the story of his war experience in France. "He set the checkers in two rows, facing black to red. 'The trenches lay out like this across the fields. Used to be farmers' fields, but by the time we saw them, they were ruined. Probably never be good again. So much poison... Anyway, we lived inside the trenches,

like earthworms hiding from robins." (Page 117) The global strategy of war is determined by political and government officials; and the lives and fates of young men are moved as if they are pieces on a game board. The author uses this situation to poignantly deliver this message, as Andrew tells Annie about the day his life changed forever when he was injured.



Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

Annie learns that Andrew is to have surgery soon, so she does not visit the hospital the next morning while Andrew undergoes some medical tests. Later that evening Annie accompanies her father to St. John's so that he may tend to a dying patient. Annie is able to spend a little time with Andrew, discussing Uncle Paul and the missing Purple Heart medal. Andrew questions the June 6 date of Uncle Paul's death, because there had been no front line fighting on that day to his recollection, but promises to ask some of the men at St. John's who had been in Uncle Paul's unit.

Before they part for the evening, Andrew affectionately kisses Annie on the top of her head, and Annie is exhilarated all the way home. Dr. Metcalf tells Annie that Andrew's upcoming surgery is an attempt to repair Andrew's damaged mouth, and promises to phone Annie the next morning from the hospital with the outcome of Andrew's procedure.

Andrew's surgery is a success; and Annie is immensely relieved that Andrew came through the procedure with no complications. Annie's days are a flurry of completing her domestic tasks and hurrying to St. John's to spend as much time as possible with Andrew. Although she cherishes the time spent with Andrew, Annie secretly harbors guilt about disobeying her mother's orders not to visit St. John's anymore.

About a week after Andrew's surgery, Andrew tells Annie that he has talked to a soldier who had served with Uncle Paul, and that the unit had not been in action until June 14, eight days after Uncle Paul's death. Annie wants to pursue the issue in spite of the fact that Andrew advises that Annie may learn some unpleasant things related to Uncle Paul's death.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

The author uses the literary technique of personification in this section when describing Annie's mother's music. "I missed the sound of Mother's piano in the morning, the music that used to creep up the steps and under my door to tickle me awake." (Page 135) Obviously, music cannot creep or tickle; but this figurative language lets the reader understand the joy Annie feels when listening to the sound of her mother's piano. Personification means that inanimate objects or concepts are given human characteristics to help enhance the author's intent and meaning.



Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

The end of summer approaches. While Annie dreads her mother's return, there is good news that Timothy's eyesight has been restored. Andrew introduces Annie to a man who had served with Uncle Paul; and the man confirms that Uncle Paul had not been killed in battle on June 6, because the company did not engage in fighting until June 14. The man advises Annie to let the issue drop; but Annie resolves to discover the truth about her uncle's death.

Annie's mother and grandparents return from Colorado. Annie can no longer hide the fact that she has been deceiving her mother, by visiting St. John's every day after her mother had forbidden Annie to do so. Tensions increase between Annie and her mother; and Mrs. Metcalf extends her anger to Dr. Metcalf, for his allowing Annie to visit the hospital all summer. Dr. Metcalf supports Annie's decision to visit Andrew, whose condition is improved due to Annie's companionship. Mrs. Metcalf would prefer to bury her hurt over losing Uncle Paul, and never discuss the war or its aftermath again.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

The author uses the literary technique of irony to show Annie's private distress against the lush bloom of this wonderful summer. Irony means that events unfold in an opposite manner to which the reader thinks is appropriate or expected. In her mother's absence, Annie tends to her mother's roses, fills the Metcalf home with lush arrangements, and even takes some bouquets to St. John's. In stark contrast, Annie flirts with deception, as she deliberately disobeys her mother's orders not to visit St. John's Hospital. The irony in this chapter is Annie is doing a good thing, by visiting the wounded soldiers, and so beautiful a summer, yet being shrouded in guilt by the deception to her mother.



Chapters 21 and 22

Chapters 21 and 22 Summary

Later that evening, Annie and her parents visit her grandparents; but Annie cannot shake the anger she feels over her mother's reaction to the visits to St. John's. The cool mood between Annie and her mother flows into the next day; and the two try to avoid each other in the house, as each goes about her daily routine. Eventually, Mrs. Metcalf agrees to let Annie continue her visits to the hospital. Dr. Metcalf has convinced his wife of the importance of Annie's visits to Andrew and the others.

When Annie visits Andrew later that day, Andrew reveals that he has found a lieutenant who had served in the war under Uncle Paul's leadership. Annie is shocked by the lieutenant's revelation that Uncle Paul had died of measles, and had not died in battle or suffered any battle wounds.

Andrew attempts to console Annie and assuage her disappointment that Uncle Paul did not die a hero's death; but Annie cannot take any comfort in the senseless death of her favorite relative. Annie shares this news about Uncle Paul with her father, who tells Mrs. Metcalf later that evening. Mrs. Metcalf and Annie comfort each other in their grief, and mother and daughter are again reunited.

Chapters 21 and 22 Analysis

Annie has two emotional crises in this section, which the author uses as critical plot elements. Annie's disobeying her mother during the summer is taxing to the young girl, who normally idolizes her mother and obeys her without fail. However, this summer, Annie is beginning to mature and develop her own opinions on important issues, exerting her independence. This separation from her mother, both physically and emotionally, is a rite of passage of sorts for Annie and for her mother, who must address Annie's burgeoning maturity and strong personality. Both mother and daughter are devastated by the news of how Uncle Paul died. Their images of him dying a hero's death are destroyed, leaving them even more devastated by the futility of his death.



Chapters 23 and 24

Chapters 23 and 24 Summary

The next morning Mrs. Metcalf tells Annie not to tell her grandparents about the details of Uncle Paul's death; and Annie feels guilty for causing so much pain due to her investigation of the lack of a Purple Heart for Uncle Paul. Annie visits St. John's and learns that Andrew has begun helping out in the hospital, doing physical therapy with some of the patients. This is in preparation for a new job. Andrew phones Annie later in the day to ask her to attend a baseball game at St. John's, as part of Timothy's going away celebration.

Annie and her grandfather attend the baseball game and are pleased to see the completely recovered Timothy playing with gusto. After the game, Andrew admires Dr. Metcalf's motorcycle. Andrew and Timothy take a few spins on the bike before Annie, her father, and grandfather bid Timothy farewell.

Summer ends and Annie returns to school, finding it difficult to transition from the summer months spent with Andrew at St. John's. Annie is surprised by a visit from Andrew's mother, Mrs. Crayton, one Saturday morning in September. Mrs. Crayton stops at the Metcalf home to thank Annie personally for her help in Andrew's recovery over the summer months. Mrs. Crayton also gives Annie a photograph of Andrew taken before the war, so that Annie may see what Andrew looked like before his injuries. Annie's momentary discomfort at looking at the photo is displaced by the unsettling news that Andrew will soon be moving to Topeka to work with wounded veterans in a hospital.

Chapters 23 and 24 Analysis

Annie faces more internal conflict in this section, first by returning to school and then by learning that Andrew will soon leave St. John's. Even though Annie begins high school, she does not feel the same trepidation as her friends, because the summer with Andrew has taught her so much about real fear. Annie is both shocked and hurt at the news that Andrew will be leaving the hospital, and interprets the news as a personal affront. The author uses this as the climax of the story, which means it is the turning point in the plot with an inevitable conclusion.



Chapters 25, 26, and 27

Chapters 25, 26, and 27 Summary

Mrs. Metcalf takes Annie to St. John's to visit Andrew, who regrets that Annie has learned the news of his leaving from someone other than himself. Annie shares her distress about the news; but Andrew assures Annie that his leaving is a good idea, because he has made a choice to continue his life and not stay hidden in the hospital any longer. Andrew also tells Annie that he owes his new sense of self-confidence to Annie. Her friendship inspired him to be able to take chances again and to want to be part of the world. He is also indebted to Dr. Metcalf, who helped Andrew secure his new job.

When Annie returns home that evening, Dr. Metcalf tells Annie that Andrew is making an important step in his recovery by accepting the hospital job in Topeka. Annie still wishes that Andrew could stay at St. John's forever. Mrs. Metcalf offers to invite Andrew to dinner before he leaves Kansas City; and Andrew happily accepts the invitation the next day.

Annie visits Mrs. Metcalf's friend, Ruth, to invite her to the dinner for Andrew. Ruth is pleased to learn that Mrs. Metcalf has had a change of heart about Andrew. Ruth provides some perspective on the war for Annie, by telling her that young men like Andrew and Uncle Paul enlisted because it had been an exciting prospect to be a soldier. Unfortunately for Uncle Paul, Andrew, and many other young men, the glory of war was not in their favor. Ruth encourages Annie to remember Uncle Paul as the vibrant person he had been, instead of focusing on the way he died.

Finally, it is the night of the dinner party. Andrew arrives with a little trepidation about seeing Mrs. Metcalf again; but Mrs. Metcalf graciously greets Andrew and the party is a success. Andrew invites Mrs. Metcalf to play the piano at an Armistice Day celebration at St. John's, and Mrs. Metcalf happily accepts.

A week later, the Metcalfs learn from a newspaper article that the plans for the city's war memorial will be placed on display at a special ceremony to be held on Armistice Day. When Andrew learns of the ceremony, he is perplexed and annoyed that none of the veterans at St. John's has been asked to participate. Annie also feels secret shame that Uncle Paul's name will be chiseled on the monument as a hero, when she knows that is not the truth.

Chapters 25, 26, and 27 Analysis

The author uses the literary technique of irony in several instances in this section. Irony means that an event occurs, which is the opposite of what is the expected behavior or plot extension. First, Mrs. Metcalf, who had been repulsed by Andrew's physical presence and had treated him with cold disrespect earlier in the story, invites Andrew to



a dinner party in his honor. In an overriding sense of irony for the whole story, Ruth informs Annie of the grand dreams of glory expected by Andrew and Uncle Paul when enlisting in the army, but whose dreams were shattered by the realities of war. It is also ironic that Uncle Paul will be recognized at the war ceremony, while Andrew has not been invited. Finally, Annie understands the secret irony of Uncle Paul's name being etched into the war memorial as a hero, when he did not die a hero's death.



Chapters 28, 29, and 30

Chapters 28, 29, and 30 Summary

It is now only two days before Andrew departs for Topeka. Annie receives some good advice from her grandfather, who counsels Annie to live her life and not to pine away for Andrew, as Annie's grandmother longs for Uncle Paul. Annie determines that it is unfair that Andrew and the other St. John's veterans have not been invited to the war memorial ceremony. So she phones Andrew to extend an invitation to attend, which Andrew hesitantly accepts.

The next day, Annie does not join her classmates in their concert at the war memorial ceremony, instead standing with Andrew in the midst of the crowd. After the ceremony, Andrew takes Annie for a ride on Dr. Metcalf's motorcycle.

Later that evening, Mrs. Metcalf plays the piano at the concert at St. John's. Afterwards, she invites Andrew to visit the Metcalf family any time he returns to Kansas City. The next day, Dr. Metcalf accompanies Annie to the train station where they wait for Andrew to depart. Andrew gives Annie his Purple Heart medal for safekeeping, and the two friends part vowing never to forget the other.

Chapters 28, 29, and 30 Analysis

The author uses the literary technique of personification when she writes, "Mother played all the pieces she loved - Chopin, Mozart, Brahms and Schumann. The sounds from the piano moved out through the room, reaching down to the men on the stretchers, wrapping around the nuns standing behind the wheelchairs, disappearing into the darkness around us. We were wrapped music and the heavy warmth of the room - nuns, patients, Andrew, Father and I. The silence around the edges of the music deepened and darkened. I was no longer conscious of the music, just the sound that held me." Chapter 30, Pages 213 and 214. Personification means that the author provides human characteristics to inanimate concepts or objects to make the writing more interesting. Obviously, music cannot reach or wrap around things; but this creative technique helps explain the overwhelming feeling of unity and warmth Annie experiences at the concert.

The significance of the book's title stems from Irish folk song lyrics quoted in the book's Foreword. "Where are your legs that used to run; When first you went to carry a gun? I fear your dancing days are done, Johnny, I hardly knew you." The author uses the lyrics to address the issue of all the young men wounded or killed in the war, and whose lives were severely impacted or ended much too soon.



Characters

Annie Metcalf

Annie Metcalf is the thirteen-year-old protagonist of the novel, which tells the story of Annie's emotional growth and maturity during the summer after the end of World War I. Annie, who is the only child of Dr. and Mrs. Metcalf, is sheltered from the world, mostly by her mother's insistence on keeping any news of the war out of the household and out of Annie's world. Annie loves her mother, but is devoted to her father because he acknowledges that Annie is growing up and has a right to her own opinions and feelings, even if they are in conflict with her parents' opinions. Annie also adores her Uncle Paul, who is the first person besides her parents who seems genuinely interested in Annie's thoughts and feelings. Annie's devastation over Uncle Paul's death during the war transfers to an intense friendship with Andrew Crayton, a wounded veteran at the hospital where Dr. Metcalf works. Annie's youthful vision and constant companionship instill new hope and energy in Andrew, who is able to face the balance of his life with self-confidence in spite of devastating facial wounds. Annie learns important lessons about loyalty, discretion and integrity, as she explores her relationship with her Uncle Paul. His confidence in her moves her; and the truth about his death deeply wounds her. Annie matures during the course of the novel, transitioning from a young girl coddled by her doting parents to a young lady projecting herself in the world, and showing compassion for those whose lives have been devastated by the ravages of the war.

Mrs. Katherine Metcalf

Mrs. Metcalf, Annie's mother, lives in a sheltered world of her own making. She cannot bear the hurt and injury prevalent in the world. Mrs. Metcalf pursues artistic interests, such as her music, which she shares and encourages with young people such as Uncle Paul's group of friends. Mrs. Metcalf does not like to spend time merely giving piano lessons. She prefers to devote her time to those with more refined tastes, who will appreciate her skills and her gracious entertaining. Mrs. Metcalf prefers to pursue her musical art. However her domestic skills, especially cooking, leave much to be desired.

In conjunction with her friend, Ruth, Mrs. Metcalf shows active interest in women's issues of the time, especially that of women's voting rights. Choosing to insulate herself and Annie from the pain and heartbreak in the world, Mrs. Metcalf does not allow any news of the war in the house, even though her husband, Dr. Metcalf, is serving as an army physician in New York City. This isolationist position creates conflict between Annie and Mrs. Metcalf when Annie rejects her mother's order not to visit the soldiers at St. John's. Ultimately, Mrs. Metcalf learns from Annie that she must face the reality of what has happened to young men like Uncle Paul, Andrew, and Timothy, because those young men do not have the option of forgetting their sacrifices for the war.



Dr. Larry Metcalf

Dr. Metcalf is Annie's adoring father, who attempts to balance Annie's need to grow and find out about the world with his wife's attempts to keep Annie protected at home. Dr. Metcalf returns to Kansas City from service as a physician during the war. He is committed to helping the wounded veterans at St. John's Hospital, despite his wife's wish that he return to his former position at the county hospital. Dr. Metcalf interacts on a daily basis with the wounded men at St. John's. He encourages Annie's visits to help the men as part of their recovery, as well as part of Annie's personal growth. Dr. Metcalf has a low profile in the novel, although his character is important for what he does not say or do. Dr. Metcalf is always available to support Annie when she visits the hospital, and at home when Annie and Mrs. Metcalf have disagreements or conflicts. It is a source of pride for Dr. Metcalf that Annie shares his compassion for the wounded men, whose lives have been impacted so dramatically. Although Dr. and Mrs. Metcalf do not always agree on the best direction for Annie's growth, Dr. Metcalf always shows tolerance for Mrs. Metcalf's opinions and perspectives, particularly providing Annie with Mrs. Metcalf's wonderful qualities and not focusing on those that are less than attractive.

Uncle Paul

While Uncle Paul has a very limited role as a character in the novel, his memory is a vital, living entity for Annie. Annie's love for Uncle Paul is the undercurrent for the novel; and the discovery of the details surrounding his death in France provide the climax for the story. Uncle Paul, who is Mrs. Metcalf's younger brother, is the first person outside of Annie's parents who treats Annie like a young lady with distinct opinions and ideas. Uncle Paul also has a huge capacity for joy, evidenced by his participation in the singing group and his thrill when he rides his motorcycle. Uncle Paul is also a sophisticated young man. He appreciates the finer things in life, such as the opera, and he escorts Annie to her first operatic production. It is an elegant evening Annie will never forget. Uncle Paul's character takes on an even more important role after his death, as Annie and the rest of the family mourn him and prepare to memorialize him. It is only when Annie discovers the true nature of Uncle Paul's death that he falters temporarily in her eyes, as Annie grapples with the true meaning of heroism. Uncle Paul is also an important character to Grandmother and Grandfather MacLeod, as well as Mrs. Metcalf, who mourn Uncle Paul silently, but whose silence is more eloquent than words.

Grandfather MacLeod

Grandfather is Annie's maternal grandfather, whose stoic but kind nature is evident in his attentions to the wounded soldiers, and also serves as an important lesson to Annie. In spite of his faltering health, Grandfather visits Timothy at the hospital and reads to him, to provide some company during Timothy's convalescence. It is Grandfather who encourages Annie to remember Uncle Paul, but not to let her grief paralyze her from living.



Grandmother MacLeod

Grandmother is Annie's maternal grandmother, known for her excellent cooking and devotion to Grandfather. Grandmother does not return to her usual self after Uncle Paul dies in the war; and the rest of the family never tells her the specific details surrounding Uncle Paul's death.

Andrew Crayton

Andrew is the severely disfigured young man whom Annie first sees at the train station on the morning that Dr. Metcalf returns from New York City. Annie's apprehension, when first meeting Andrew on the grounds of St. John's Hospital, turns into a friendly bond that alters the course of Andrew's life during the summer of his convalescence. Andrew and his father are estranged because Mr. Crayton believes Andrew should not have enlisted in the army. If Andrew had stayed home to work on the farm, Andrew would never have sustained his disfiguring injuries. Andrew is doubly distressed by his injuries because he will, not only be disfigured for life, but also because it was Andrew's own negligence which precipitated the accident. Andrew was caught off guard when the German gas came rolling into the trenches. Andrew was not able to find his gas mask, which exacerbated the extent of his facial injuries. Andrew forges an unusual friendship with Annie. He is inspired by her compassion and encouragement, which turns his bitterness to hope. Andrew also serves as a lesson for both Annie and Mrs. Metcalf. Annie learns the value of rising above personal trauma, through interacting with Andrew. Mrs. Metcalf, in turn, learns the value of acceptance and tolerance, through the presence of Andrew in the lives of the Metcalf family members. By the end of the novel, Andrew rises above his personal pain to enjoy the success of others. He even decides to move to Topeka, to help with other soldiers still recuperating from their own war injuries.

Timothy Lewis

Timothy is a Kansas City native, who has been temporarily blinded by injuries sustained in the war. Timothy's eyesight returns at the end of the story. He leaves the hospital to live with his sister.

Fidelio

Fidelio is Annie's fun and faithful dog.

Aunt Felicia

Annie's Aunt Felicia is married to Uncle Mark.



Uncle Mark

Uncle Mark is Katherine's brother and Annie's uncle.

Uncle John

Uncle John is Grandmother's youngest child, who was too young to enlist in the army to fight in World War I.

Frances and Charlie

Frances and Charlie are the children of Uncle Mark and Aunt Felicia. They are Annie's cousins.

Emily and Darby

Emily and Darby are Annie's neighborhood friends, whom Annie outgrows during the summer she spends time with Andrew at the hospital.

Mrs. Crayton

Mrs. Crayton is Andrew's mother, whom Annie meets during a visit to St. John's. She gives Annie a photograph of Andrew before he was wounded in the war.

Ruth

Ruth is Mrs. Metcalf's faithful friend who, not only serves as invaluable support during family crises, but also provides Mrs. Metcalf with an outlet for her cultural and political interests.



Objects/Places

Train Station

At the beginning of the novel, Annie and her mother wait for Mr. Metcalf to return from New York City at the Kansas City train station.

Ivanhoe

Ivanhoe is a novel of historical fiction written by Sir Walter Scott in 1819. It is the book read to Timothy Lewis by Grandfather during hospital visits.

St. John's Hospital

St. John's Hospital is the veteran's hospital where Dr. Metcalf practices and where Grandfather visits Timothy Lewis and other wounded soldiers. It is also where Annie meets and establishes a friendship with Andrew.

La Boheme

La Boheme is an Italian opera, written by Puccini, and the first opera production attended by Annie, who is escorted by her Uncle Paul.

Blair's Ice Cream and Candy Parlor

Blair's Ice Cream and Candy Parlor is the site of the Sunday School outing with Miss Peterson, where Annie encounters ignorant and rude treatment from Miss Peterson on the topic of the wounded men at St. John's Hospital.

Uncle Paul's Motorcycle

Uncle Paul takes Annie for a joyous ride on his new motorcycle, shortly before he leaves for the war, and Dr. Metcalf uses the cycle for transportation upon his return from working in New York.

The Library

The library is a haven for Annie. She enjoys visiting Ruth who shares the latest books and maps which are of high importance for Annie.



The City Park

The City Park is the location of the Fourth of July celebration and the monument to the soldiers who served in World War I.

Estes Park, Colorado

Mrs. Metcalf, Grandfather MacLeod and Grandmother MacLeod travel to Estes Park, Colorado, to spend a month while Grandfather MacLeod recovers from his heart attack.

Purple Heart

Andrew's Purple Heart is the source of Annie's investigation into Uncle Paul's not being awarded the same distinction.

Topeka, Kansas

At the end of the story Andrew leaves Kansas City to work at a hospital in Topeka, where he will be able to help other convalescing soldiers.



Themes

Heroism

In the time after the First World War, returning soldiers, and those who had died in battle, were considered heroes. The families of the soldiers needed to think that their sons were not wounded or killed in vain, and assigned their valiant efforts the role of heroism. In the novel, Annie learns the true meaning of heroism through her friendship with Andrew and her altered perception of her Uncle Paul's death. Annie's overwhelming love for her Uncle Paul positions him as heroic, even before Uncle Paul joins the army. Uncle Paul is genuinely interested in Annie. He interacts with her as if she were a young woman instead of a child, as the rest of her family does. Uncle Paul's wit and sophistication also add to his bigger-than-life aura, as far as Annie is concerned. When Annie learns that Uncle Paul has died in the war, Annie's devastation is tempered only by the fact that Uncle Paul died as a hero.

When Annie investigates the circumstances surrounding Uncle Paul's death and determines that he died of measles, and not during battle, Annie's perception of heroism is temporarily shattered. Ultimately, Annie reasons that while Uncle Paul's death is tragic, it is not important whether he died in battle or not. What matters is that Uncle Paul was a good person with magical qualities, who will always be heroic in Annie's eyes. Annie also learns the true meaning of heroism, by watching Andrew progress from bitterness and sullenness to accepting his own fate and moving forward with his life, in spite of his devastating injuries.

Acceptance

There are many lessons of acceptance in the story, the most important being Andrew's ultimate acceptance of his future and his responsibility for his past. Andrew's initial bitterness and anger over his disfigurement eventually give way to acceptance of his physical circumstances with Annie's help and friendship. Andrew pushes past his own guilt about his role in his injuries. He is able to extend help to other wounded soldiers, as part of his acknowledgement of his past fusing with his future. Andrew also plays a critical role in Mrs. Metcalf's acceptance of the war and its aftermath. Mrs. Metcalf does not want Annie exposed to information about the war. She forbids Annie to spend time with the veterans at the hospital, an order which Annie ignores.

During the war, and after it is over, Mrs. Metcalf avoids any discussion of the devastation, especially the loss of her brother, Uncle Paul. It is Annie's friendship with Andrew which forces Mrs. Metcalf to look at the impact the war has had on the lives of many people she knows. Mrs. Metcalf comes to the realization that wounded veterans, like Andrew, will never be able to forget the war. So she must accept the impact on her own life, in order to begin healing her own personal wounds and losses. In conjunction with her mother's acceptance, Annie, too, must accept the reality of Uncle Paul's death



from measles rather than from war wounds. Ultimately, Annie realizes that this manner of dying does not diminish Uncle Paul's memory, but rather makes his death seem even more pointless because of its ordinariness. Nevertheless, Annie begins to accept the facts about Uncle Paul. She can go forward with her own life with fond memories of her favorite uncle.

Loyalty

The story is filled with examples of loyalty, and because Annie is the protagonist of the novel, many of the loyalty traits and lessons belong to her. Annie's first real experience with loyalty, beyond the love for her parents, extends to her Uncle Paul. Annie adamantly defends Uncle Paul's decisions and behaviors, in spite of what others may say, because she adores his free spirit and sense of commitment to those he loves. Even after Annie discovers the full details of Uncle Paul's death, her loyalty does not waver. She vows to remember her favorite uncle, as she knew him in life, and remain true to his memory forever. Annie also shows loyalty to her new friend, Andrew, in spite of Mrs. Metcalf's insistence that Annie no longer visit the veterans at St. John's. Annie befriends Andrew, sees the emotional and physical wounds of the young man and will not abandon him during the summer of his convalescence. Annie suffers some temporary pangs of guilt over her new sense of loyalty to Andrew, because it is in conflict with Mrs. Metcalf's orders; but Annie's persistence provides a critical plot line, as well as support to the loyalty theme. Annie also shows newfound maturity and loyalty when she counters the prejudiced thinking of her Sunday School teacher and her classmates about their distaste for the wounded men at St. John's. Distancing herself from any further contact with the organization and its the people is an important step in her growing ability to show devotion and commitment to a cause, as well as to vulnerable people.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the first person point of view, which means that the story is told from the protagonist's or narrator's viewpoint. In this story, Annie is the protagonist; and all activity and personal thoughts are perceived from Annie's perspective. As opposed to a third person point of view, that provides both plot information, as well as thoughts and feelings of other characters, the first person point of view allows the author to share the plot and emotions and feelings of the narrator only. The author chooses this point of view to develop Annie's character in more depth than any of the other characters, providing a deeper sense of intimacy with Annie and her thoughts and emotions.

The author chooses this perspective because the story is about Annie's growth and maturity. The reader can experience her progress as the novel expands through this point of view. This point of view also allows the author to stay focused on Annie's growth, instead of extending to the thoughts and feelings of the other characters. This would distract the reader and dilute the main message of Annie's progression. This perspective allows character information about the other characters to be revealed, only as Annie perceives them, which makes the novel truly about Annie's internal growth as she intuits the world around her.

Setting

In literature, the setting means the place and time when the story takes place. In this novel, the setting is Kansas City, Kansas, in the year 1918 just after the end of World War I. This location is the overall backdrop for the novel; and there are several locations within the novel that are important to the story. At the beginning, the train station is an important location. It is where Annie first sees Andrew, and the other wounded men arriving for transport to the hospital, and where Dr. Metcalf returns to his family after serving as a physician in the war. The Metcalf home is another important location because it is the setting of most of the interactions between Annie and her parents. A major location in the novel is St. John's Hospital where Dr. Metcalf works, and where Annie and Grandfather MacLeod visit Timothy and Lewis. The year that the story takes place is 1918. Aside from being the end of World War I, there is also hastening momentum for the women's voting rights issue, which is a subtle topic in the novel. There is also significance in the months in which the story is told. Annie is first introduced to the issue of the wounded veterans in April of that year; she meets and befriends Andrew that summer; and Andrew leaves to begin his new life in the autumn. These seasonal time periods symbolize the early beginning, the maturation, and the end of Annie's time with Andrew.



Language and Meaning

The character with the most dialogue in the novel is Annie, who seems to have a mature speaking voice for someone of her young age. The conversations between Annie and her parents are almost formal and stilted, which indicates her respect and obedience for them. The language is not at all casual, which is in contrast to the language of young teenagers today. The time period of the novel, during the early twentieth century, was a more formal time in America; and the author reflects this tone in the language. Even the conversations between Annie and Andrew are relatively formal, reflecting the overall formality of the time period. The only real shows of emotion or verbal outbursts are the situations when Annie speaks to herself, or when the author allows the reader to know Annie's thoughts. Annie is especially reserved around her mother. Her thoughts are revealed to the reader but never voiced to Mrs. Metcalf. The author does not use much figurative language or literary techniques in the novel, which also lends to its formal tone.

Structure

The structure of a story means the way various elements come together to form the novel. In some cases, there are letters, songs, or poems that contribute to the plot and break up heavy narrative. Some novels even have flashbacks, to help the author provide information and to fill in important details, explaining a character's behavior or the reasons for a plot line. However, this novel is more simplistic, with a linear plot line with no flashbacks and little foreshadowing. The action is straightforward and follows a logical sequence in its short chapters. Broken into many chapters, the novel should be easily read by young students, without being burdened by plot or dialogue. The author is careful not to build too much drama or plot intensity into each chapter, giving the reader a break from Annie's many emotional hurdles. The narrative moves in a seasonal sequence, encompassing the spring, summer and autumn months of 1918 to mirror Annie's maturing, as well as the progress of her friendship with Andrew.



Quotes

"Where are your legs that used to run; When first you went to carry a gun? I fear your dancing days are done, Johnny, I hardly knew you. *Irish Folk Song*." Foreword

"I had already seen pen drawings in the newspapers of soldiers with bandaged eyes standing in aid stations, of soldiers lying on hospital beds in France. These were the men my father was now going to help. But even though I knew how much he was needed, I clung to him beside the train the day he left and begged him not to go. I was much younger then." Chapter 1, Page 2

"I don't know what my mother played. The notes had no distinct tone but melted together and poured over Father and me as we sat in the evening light. I leaned my head against his shoulder and he held my hand. The silver pitcher of daffodils on the piano held the last light of the day in the warm, darkening room. Mother played until she could no longer see the keys and then she brought a stool to sit by Father's side. We stayed there in the quiet warmth until I fell asleep." Chapter 2, Page 15

"'But they're so badly hurt. That one man...' Mother set her cup down with a clatter. 'Forget about them, Annie. They're not your worry. I want you to put them out of your mind. All right?'" Chapter 3, Page 17

"I wished my father would stay at County too. Didn't he want to get away from those men, now that he could, now that the war was over? My grandfather too. I tried to picture Timothy, blinded. I stooped and picked up a willow branch that had fallen on the sidewalk and I switched the picket fence in front of the Wilsons' yard. Grandfather and Father walked on ahead of me and I looked at their backs. I didn't understand how they could walk through the sunshine laughing and talking when they knew they knew they would have to go out to that hospital and look at that man with no face." Chapter 3, Page 20

"Uncle Paul talked and laughed with them and sang every song. But I watched him all evening and saw him look around the living room several times as if he had never seen it before. I noticed him rub his hand along the black curve of Mother's piano. I watched him pat Fidelio more than he usually did. And he came and sat beside me on the stairs and put his arm around me as he sang. Before he left, he told me to write, to take care of my mother. Then he stooped to kiss me on the cheek and he whispered, 'Good-bye, little Annie.' The screen door banged behind him and he went out with the others, walked out into the night, still singing. From the window by the piano, I saw Uncle Paul turn on the walk and blow me a last kiss." Chapter 4, Page 35

"'This just came into the library today. It's splendid. Look, Annie. Bombay. Ceylon.' She slowly turned the pages. 'Honshu. Chosen.' More pages and she pointed to names on the bright splashes of color. 'Damascus. Constantinople.' She rolled out the name, lingering over every sound. 'Oh, I dream of going to all these places. Do you know' - she laughed and hugged the book to her - 'I even plan how long I'll stay, what I'll take, how



I'll get from one place to another. I know it's silly.' She opened the book again and balanced it on her knees. 'And then I go to the newspapers.' She looked at me and grinned. 'And I look up the shipping schedules in *The New York Times*. Just to see when the next boat leaves for Hong Kong.' She pointed to a dot on the underbelly of China. 'Or Madras.' I looked at India where it dipped gracefully into the ocean.'" Chapter 5, Page 37

"The only normal thing about him was his eyes, but even they were pulled out of shape. The rest of his face was red, as if it had been deeply sunburned, and all of his features were pulled downward, as if hot tears had run down and melted his face. His mouth had no lips. It looked as if someone had cut a slit where his mouth should be." Chapter 5, Page 47

"Well, you know I think the world of your father, but I don't see the reason for a good man like Dr. Metcalf to associate with Catholics.' She looked at the others as she spoke and then back at me. 'Aren't the men out there in a lot of pain?' She didn't wait for an answer. 'I don't know but it would have been better if they had died in Europe.' She shook her head. 'And so awful to look at.'" Chapter 6, Page 54

"Yes, but Annie, that was different. That was the war! Now the war is over. We can all forget all those horrible things now. He could be helping normal people who can get better. Mama says those men out there will never get any better. Besides, it's true, those men *are* scary to look at, aren't they?' She gripped my arm as she whispered the last words. I pulled away from her.'" Chapter 6, Page 55

"I wanted to scream, they were so calm. Only the motorcycle, leaning sadly on its kickstand, seemed to remember Uncle Paul. They were chatting as if he had just left town for a vacation." Chapter 7, Page 61

"We have the preliminary plans drawn up, a proposed design for the monument. We invite you all to examine it and let us know if you approve. We are still... ah... gathering the names of those who should be so honored on the monument. We will soon have a final list.' Beside me, Father snorted quietly. 'That'll take a while. They're still dying.' Dying? I'd never thought about it, but men probably did die at St. John's all the time.'" Chapter 8, Page 67

"Then he began again, that slow whisper. 'It had been farmland. When we got there, the barns were gone, fences down. Mud. Mud everywhere. And rats. I can still feel the rats running over my face at night.' I hugged the book to me. 'And then the gas...' He stopped and lifted both hands into the air. I watched him, sick at what I had done with my books. 'I wasn't there long.' He spoke louder now. 'I was there only two months. I didn't see anything beautiful in France.'" Chapter 9, Page 76

"But he had come back. And because he had, I would be sure that we didn't talk again of France, of mud and burned trees and the empty church. The world had other palaces and beautiful cities." Chapter 9, Page 78



"Annie, please try to understand. That war brought so much misery to so many people. I won't have it touching you. We've done our part, giving Paul. That's enough. More than enough. It's bad enough that your father....' She paused and put her hand to her forehead. 'It's over and done with. You should forget it.'" Chapter 10, Page 83

"I tipped my head back and found the first star. My mother, who usually understood me. What had changed her? She said that seeing Andrew would upset and worry me. But she was the one who seemed upset! Yet I had to admit, just to myself, that only a few days ago, I'd wanted to forget St. John's, that I'd been afraid to go back. Oh, how confusing this all was!" Chapter 11, Pages 85-86

"Annie,' Ruth said, reaching across to touch my arm, 'your mother just wants to protect you, to let you be a child as long as possible. You've just run ahead of her and she doesn't realize it. She can't stand the thought of those men so she doesn't see how you can. She doesn't mean to be unfair or unkind.'" Chapter 11, Page 91

"And I felt the silence inside of me. In the quiet, I heard Mother's last words to me. 'Have a good time, Annie.' She looked me in the eye. 'Just remember our talk. I don't want you to go to St. John's again.' I could still smell her powder and feel her veil on my cheek as she kissed me and hugged me to her.'" Chapter 13, Page 101

"I could breathe again. Mother must not have had time to tell him about our argument. And she was out in western Kansas, near Fort Hayes by now, Father had said. He would never know, unless I told him. Was not telling him the same as lying? I had never lied to my parents. They were usually so reasonable that I had no need to. But now I did. And I hated it." Chapter 13, Page 101

"I stared at his back a moment and then got up from the table and walked back along the path, leaving him alone. As I walked through the shadows, I looked at every soldier, wanting to see Uncle Paul. He was there, standing just beyond the corner of my eye, and if I turned suddenly, I thought, I might see him, watching me, his head cocked and the half smile brightening his serious face." Chapter 14, Page 109

"You're the only one, besides the sisters here and the other fellows, you're the only civilian, so to speak, who's ever really looked at me straight on, without turning away. Like you're doing now. Like you did that day when you first saw me. Just looked me in the face." Chapter 15, Page 115

"Father pulled back from me on the swing. 'I haven't been a very good father to you, Annie. I haven't helped you as I should. I'm having trouble with all of this myself, to be quite honest. Seeing all these... seeing how little there is I can do. Maybe your mother is right. Maybe we should just let it all go. Just forget.'" Chapter 17, Page 133

"I also didn't admit to myself that I wasn't being truthful to Father. He still didn't know that I was disobeying Mother by going to the hospital. This summer had brought so many changes that I felt I could take care of only a few of them at a time. Father's return, Andrew, the other men at the hospital, my changed feelings for my friends, Grandfather's illness, Mother not understanding me - if I stopped to think about it all, I



might lose control and spin away like someone thrown off the end of crack-the-whip."
Chapter 18, Page 135

"I tried to ignore the calendar, tried not to notice how fast the time was running. Mother had been gone for a month now and I knew she would be home soon. And soon after that, school would start. Suddenly, school seemed like more of a loss of freedom than it ever had before. Even with all the books and maps and new things I wanted to learn. This summer I resented anything that stood between me and Andrew. I knew I would have to somehow fit my new life in with my old. I wasn't sure how to do that." Chapter 19, Page 140

"'I don't know. I don't know.' Mother stood, her hands pressed to her cheeks. 'It's not that I blame Andrew, as you seem to think I do. That's not it. I do feel terribly sorry for him... and all the others.' She turned around suddenly. 'I just want to forget all of this. It must end sometime. All the pain and hurt. Isn't it enough that we lost Paul?' She turned around suddenly. 'Must we always remember?' Father just looked at her. 'Andrew can't forget.' I spoke so quietly I almost couldn't hear the words myself." Chapter 20, Page 156

"He asked me again, 'Does it matter so much how he died?' 'Yes.' 'Why?' 'Because... then he isn't...' 'A hero?' 'Yes.' 'And if he isn't?' 'It doesn't make any sense.' 'What doesn't?' 'That he died,' I whispered." Chapter 22, Page 165



Topics for Discussion

What is Annie's most important discovery during the summer of 1918?

Explain why Annie is so distraught about learning the details of Uncle Paul's death?

Is the relationship between Annie and Andrew something that is feasible in real life, given the difference in their ages?

What important lessons about tolerance and acceptance does Annie learn from both her father and her mother?

Is Annie more like her parents, or do her personality traits seem more like her grandfather? Explain.

Compare and contrast the situation of returning veterans today, as opposed to those who returned from war in 1918.

What does Annie learn about heroism by the end of the story? What does true heroism mean to you?

How has Annie helped Andrew recuperate, and what impact has she had on Andrew's ability to get back out into the world?

Mrs. Metcalf is not a typical homemaker for the early twentieth century. She is interested in social and political issues including women's rights. Discuss how Mrs. Metcalf would have adapted to twenty first century living.