

Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age Study Guide

Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age by Kevin Boyle

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Plot Summary

Arc of Justice by Kevin Boyle is a book about race relations during the Roaring Twenties. Ossian Sweet, sent away from his family home in Bartow, Florida, at the age of thirteen, buys a house in an all-white neighborhood in Detroit. Sweet had spent his summers working in Detroit while putting himself through college - first Wilberforce University in Xenia, Ohio and then Howard University Medical School in Washington, D.C. His parents send him away from the Jim Crow South to Wilberforce where he completes high school and college. They worry about his safety and want him to have a better life. The promised scholarship does not materialize at Wilberforce, however, so at just thirteen years of age, Sweet works odd jobs to pay his own way. He is attracted to Detroit's high paying auto-industry, thinking he will be able to secure a good job that will help him pay his expenses at Wilberforce. He takes whatever menial jobs he can find.

Through Ossian Sweet, the reader is exposed to the situation of the African-American population in 1920s Detroit. Sweet and his wife, Gladys, live with her parents after they are married and after spending a year overseas. They save for the down payment on a house and try to find an area to where they can relocate. Color lines are drawn to keep the African-Americans in the Black Bottom ghetto area, with a few other places available. They buy a house on Garland Avenue in Detroit, an all-white working class area. The couple can't get a bank mortgage because of the color of their skin, so they arrange to pay the sellers a monthly payment plus eighteen percent interest. Before they move in, there are incidents in other all-white neighborhoods in which blacks have taken residence. Sweet arranges to have several other men stay with him and his wife for the first few days in the house and he possesses guns for protection. The neighborhood organizes a plan to expel Sweet and his wife from the neighborhood through the formation of the Waterworks Park Improvement Association. The group will use violence if it gets to that point. On the second night, the mob pelts the house with stones, breaking a window. Henry Sweet opens fire and kills a white man named Leon Breiner. All of the people in the house are arrested, including Gladys. Gladys is later released, but the others stand trial.

The NAACP comes to the family's aid with the provision of a big-name legal defense team of Clarence Darrow and Arthur Garfield Hays. This event happens in the early days of the NAACP and becomes a national rallying cause for the organization in its fight against housing discrimination. The organization provides the high-priced, big-name, white defense lawyers to chip away at the cover-up and the lies of the witnesses who have been coached by certain police officers and by the Waterworks Park Improvement Association people. Detroit at this time is a Klan stronghold, and the events unfold against the backdrop of the Klan fighting for election to city offices.

Arc of Justice is the powerful story of the blacks' fight for equal rights and their willingness to stand up for their rights. Ossian Sweet's struggle represents that of many other blacks during the period of racial prejudice and tension.



Chapter 1 "Where Death Waits"

Chapter 1 "Where Death Waits" Summary

The book opens in 1925 Detroit during a hot late summer in the city. The auto industry is rapidly expanding as more factories have opened. The auto industry and all of its peripheral industries are evident all over the city and suburbs. Detroit experiences an influx of people looking for work in the high paying auto industry, making Detroit the fourth largest city by 1925. Garland Avenue, a white working-class neighborhood, is located halfway between downtown Detroit and Grosse Pointe. In 1925, colored people begin to move into the area.

When the Sweets move in, the police surround the house and take up positions in various parts of the neighborhood the day the family moves in. On the evening of September 9, 1925, the Garland area residents pile into the streets. Many adults are as curious as the children are about the colored family. The police tell them to keep moving to keep them away from the house.

Dr. Ossian Sweet is the resident of the house. Originally from central Florida where his family owns a farm, Sweet is a medical doctor with a practice in Black Bottom, the ghetto district of Detroit. His wife, Gladys, likes the Garland Avenue house from the first time she sees it. The yard is perfect for their fourteen-month-old daughter, Iva, to play in. Sweet thinks the house is appropriate for his family given his position as a physician. Sweet is nervous about moving into a white neighborhood for he remembers the atrocities in Florida and other places.

At this time, in 1925, Detroit is a big center for the Ku Klux Klan and 1925 is an election year. That summer blacks who had moved into white neighborhoods are attacked five times. One of the men attacked, Dr. Alexander Turner, had been in his new home only five hours. He signed the title over to the neighborhood improvement committee that same night.

Sweet delays the move until after the beginning of the school year, thinking there will be less people to see them move. The baby is with the grandparents because Sweet doesn't want her around in case something happens. Sweet's two brothers, Otis and Henry, agree to spend the first few nights in the house with him. He also has four other men stay there: Edward Carter, a colleague; Julian Perry, a friend and lawyer; William Davis a friend; and John Latting, a cousin.

When the Sweets move, they have their chauffeur, Joe Mack, and Otis, Henry, Latting and a hired hand, Norris Murray, helping. Among the belongings they move into the Garland Avenue house are a package with a shotgun, six pistols and two rifles and another package with four hundred rounds of ammunition. After thirty minutes in the house, and after the Sweets request protection, a police officer arrives and introduces himself as Inspector McPherson. Friends and colleagues drop by the house that



afternoon to present housewarming gifts and good cheer. Gladys prepares dinner for everyone and by the time the party finishes it is 8:00. Outside, in spite of the police protection, a white crowd has gathered and the Sweet's visitors can't leave and are understandably afraid of the crowd.

Sweet passes out the guns and the group agrees to keep a watch in case there is trouble. As time goes on, a few men throw stones at the house and then disappear. Eventually, the Sweets and their guests doze off. Gladys awakes at 4 a.m. and finds no one outside but the police.

In the morning the group goes their separate ways while Henry and Lattin stay to watch the house. Sweet and Gladys buy furniture then go to see Iva. Afterward, Sweet goes to work in Black Bottom and Gladys goes grocery shopping.

The house insurance agent calls Sweet at his office to tell him about an error in the house insurance policy. The insurance agent, Watson, comes to the office to correct the policy and Sweet tells him the story of Garland Avenue and begs him to come that night with friends to help him. Watson comes back with two friends, Leonard Morse and Charles Washington. They all agree to help out at night. After this, Mack drives Sweet home. There are still police officers on duty in front of the house but all is quiet. Inside, Gladys tells him what her friend, Edna Butler, heard on the bus that morning. "... Butler had overheard the conductor ask a white woman about the previous night's disturbance on Garland. 'Some "niggers" have moved in and we're going to get rid of them,' the white woman had said. 'They stayed there last night but they will be put out tonight.'" (pg. 32)

Sweet tells Henry and John Lattin and they tell him that the police have said the same thing. Sweet orders them all inside the house and bolts the door. He sends Mack to Black Bottom to bring Norris Murray out to Garland Avenue.

As Sweet's nervousness increases, reinforcements arrive as Mack, Murray, Watson, Washington and Morse all arrive within a short time of each other. Sweet shows them around the house, shows them where the guns are and explains their defense plans based on the previous night are. As they settle down, there is suddenly a loud crash on the roof. Outside they see the police and a large crowd of white people. Sweet checks to be sure all of the doors are locked and runs upstairs to get the guns and the men arm themselves. Sweet lies down on the bed to calm himself and Gladys comes up to talk to him. Just then, a rock comes through the window. They go downstairs as they hear knocking at the front door. Sweet opens it to admit Otis and William Davis. Upstairs, they hear more glass shattering and then the sound of gunshots. The shooting is coming from the upstairs bedrooms. Several white people are shot.

The police call for reinforcements. Inspector Orton Schuknecht goes across the street to the house and rings the bell. Sweet lets the inspector in. The inspector wants to know why they are shooting. The inspector says he didn't see anything happen and that he and the other officers are there to protect them. Sweet assures him there will be no more shooting. As Schuknecht leaves, he sees the crowd getting larger and growing



more restless. He is told that two men have been shot, one of whom is apparently dead. He can't go in and arrest them now or the white crowd will kill them. He orders a perimeter set up around the house until the reinforcements arrive. The white crowd continues to grow and they begin to attack blacks who are driving by in cars. When the reinforcements arrive, Schuknecht and a group go to the house and arrest the group inside. They are put in a paddy wagon and driven away.

Chapter 1 "Where Death Waits" Analysis

Dr. Ossian Sweet and his wife buy a house in an all white neighborhood and become worried about the hostility from whites. The family brings guns and ammunition with them and arms the six men that agree to spend the first few days in the house with them. Even though the police are on duty outside, a white crowd still forms. The dinner guests don't dare leave the Sweet's house, given the situation. They go upstairs and Sweet hands out the guns, just in case anything happens. They are all very nervous, but the night passes without incident.

Sweet is still very nervous and tries to bring more people to the house for protection, especially when he hears from Gladys, Henry and John that trouble is expected that night. The people Sweet asked to come over and help arrive. Sweet doesn't know anything about Watson, Washington or Morse. As the evening progresses, stones are thrown on the roof and the group inside discovers there is a crowd of whites outside, along with the police. The white crowd begins throwing rocks through the upstairs windows and the blacks upstairs begin firing back. They hit two people, killing one. The police call for reinforcements and arrest the group inside.

Sweet should never have brought so many people in, supplying them with arms, waiting for trouble because they made the trouble themselves. It is easy to understand Sweet's way of thinking. He knows what happens to blacks who move into white neighborhoods. He is nervous because of what Edna heard on the bus and what the police told Henry and John. The group of people upstairs panics and starts shooting when they don't have to and kills a man.



Chapter 2 "Ain't No Slavery No More"

Chapter 2 "Ain't No Slavery No More" Summary

As the paddy wagon is driving to the police station, Sweet still has the ammo in his pocket. He knows that the bullets will be evidence and that he has to present a coherent story of what he was planning when he moved into the neighborhood. Sweet also knows that he doesn't have a coherent story to tell. All the fear relates back to his childhood.

Sweet's grandfathers and his brothers all worked the land as slaves. Their father, Edmund, came to Florida when the son of a North Carolina plantation owner moved there and took the slave with him. The son came looking for land and bought 1,300 acres. Leon County is rough on slaves which leads to problems like runaways and rebellion. Edmund marries Gilla and the couple have children - seven sons. The sons are the property of the slave-owner, Alexander Cromartie. They are just children when the Civil War breaks out and the troops don't reach Florida until 1865, after Robert E. Lee's surrender. "Word had passed through the plantations that when the slaves heard a gunshot, they were free. The shot came at midday, when they were in the fields. They dropped their plows and hoes where they stood, returned to their cabins to dress in their Sunday best, then joined the flood of black men, women, and children on the road to Tallahassee, hurrying, a participant said, 'to go see the Yankees.'" (pg. 48)

Edmond dies before the end of the Civil War and never sees the end of slavery. Leon County slaves are in a different position than most slaves. They are farmers so they know they can support themselves even if they just have a little piece of land. The southern plantation owners try to tie the former slaves to the area by forcing them to sign work contracts for one year, but all their plans are trashed by Reconstruction. During this period, ministers of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, a church based on racism, go to the south. They want to force the whites to accept the blacks as equals. The AME ministers travel around the south, preaching. The DeV Vaughn brothers become a part of the AME movement.

Gilla and her sons become sharecroppers and pool their earnings. The sons attend the AME school, but attempts to buy land from the plantations are blocked. During this time various organization form, like the Regulators, the Whitecappers and the Ku Klux Klan. These groups are particularly strong in Columbia County, just East of Leon County. When violence breaks out, Florida Governor Hart sends black troops in to quell the problem, has civil rights legislation enacted and names Hubert DeV Vaughn as Justice of the Peace. This makes him Leon County's primary law enforcement agent.

When Hart dies, AME loses its backing. The Florida democrats impose a poll tax and impose a series of regulations that make it impossible for an African-American to vote in Florida. They carry the segregation even further by requiring blacks and whites to ride in separate railroad cars, eat in different restaurants or different sections of restaurants or



drink from different drinking fountains. The blacks in Leon County watch all their hopes disintegrate. Hubert is removed from his Justice of the Peace position. Sweet's ancestors make their way to the Orlando area. His parents, Dora and Henry, marry in 1890 or 1891 and Sweet is born in 1895.

Henry buys a plot of land in 1898 in Bartow, Florida. Bartow uses the railroad tracks as the dividing line between the black and white sections. The blacks develop their own thriving community on their side of the tracks. The Sweets become well established in the community, opening various business ventures to support themselves and their large family of ten children. Blacks and whites have separate schools in the community. There is a great deal of racial tension in Bartow which leads to a mine foreman shooting a black worker. The foreman turns himself in and is released and told to go back to work. The racial tension escalates and when a black man kills a white man and is tracked down, the crowd overcomes the police and takes the black man and kills him. After more deaths, the situation erupts in violence.

A young white woman is killed near a river. A young black man hears her screams and summons help but he ends up being accused of the murder and has to flee the town. He is found and returned to Bartow. The crowd ties him to a tree and burns him to death. A young Sweet is hiding in the trees watching the events. When Sweet is thirteen and has finished eighth grade, his parents decide to send him away from the violence of the Jim Crow environment.

Chapter 2 "Ain't No Slavery No More" Analysis

Sweet has acted out of fear, a fear instilled in him as a child growing up in central Florida and the Jim Crow South. This chapter is historical in explaining the background of the Sweet family and how Sweet's ancestors were slaves and what they went through during the days of Reconstruction and after that. Sweet's father is the first one of the family to buy land in the town of Bartow, a town near Orlando that is segregated with the railroad tracks separating the black and white communities. The town is plagued by racial violence as a part of the Jim Crow South. As the violence escalates, Henry and Dora decide to send Sweet away, when he finishes eighth grade. Like parents everywhere, they fear for their son's safety and think it best to remove him from the situation.



Chapter 3 "Migration"

Chapter 3 "Migration" Summary

Sweet arrives in the town of Xenia and attends Wilberforce University. Sweet isn't the only one who was sent away by parents to live in another part of the country. "When the politicians and businessmen extended rail lines into the smallest of southern hamlets in the years after Reconstruction, they had wanted simply to connect the region's fields and forests to the North's great factories. But the process also provided Negroes with a thousand escape routes. It was never easy to leave, to slip free of piles of debts, to shutter homes and abandon lands, to say good-bye to family and friends. But a hundred thousand colored people did just that between 1900 and 1915, many of them, like Sweet, very young and very scared." (pg. 71) The Negroes that migrated to the North hoped for equality in terms of rights and pay. Instead, they were offered the least desirable jobs that whites didn't want.

The Sweets decide to send Sweet to Wilberforce University. It is not the best black school, but it is removed from Bartow and the Jim Crow South. Sweet is thirteen and must complete preparatory school before attending the university. The school is an AME owned school, so to Dora and Henry it is the only school they will consider for Sweet. The Sweets can't afford the tuition but Sweet has a scholarship. When Sweet arrives there, he finds the school has no money. Instead of returning to Bartow, Sweet finds a job. Even though the job places demands on his time, he successfully completes his studies. He becomes a member of the Cadets since Wilberforce is the only black school in the country to have a military program.

As the Negro migration to the North continues, the North becomes more racially tense and develops more segregation and separatism. The town of Xenia that was once friendly to the college is now closing off its facilities to the college population of Wilberforce. Xenia has experienced its share of race riots, just as other parts of the country have, before Sweet arrives. Since the Wilberforce president, Scarborough, is a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Sweet and other students are continually exposed to the organization's philosophy of uncompromising opposition to segregation.

Sweet doesn't return to Bartow after the end of the school year. Instead, he goes to Detroit to find a job for the summer, at just fourteen years of age. He continues to return to Detroit to work during the summers at whatever jobs he can find. He also decides to become a physician since it will give him the status he wants as well as a good income. As Sweet is finishing his undergraduate work, World War I begins. Sweet isn't accepted into the armed forces because of his poor eyesight. With many men away at war, Sweet is accepted into Howard University medical school.

During the war, racial separatism and segregation eases since workers are needed for the war effort. Southern blacks flood the North looking for jobs, which increases racial



tensions and eventually leads to the outbreak of violence and riots. This is the atmosphere when Sweet arrives in Washington, D.C. in 1917 for his first year of medical school. As he learns the proper demeanor for a doctor, he becomes arrogant. During this time, racial violence erupts in D.C. and Sweet's arrogance and confidence melt into fear.

When the war ends there is a big movement to break up the labor unions. There is also a growing movement against socialism and communism, which is growing elsewhere in the world. Racial violence sweeps across the nation including Washington, D.C. It begins with a rumor that a soldier's wife was raped. Armed forces personnel, who were waiting to return to their homes, enter the black neighborhood and attack anyone on the streets. On the third night, they reach the Northwest quadrant area of Howard, where residents have organized a defense. The people of the area are armed. When the whites arrive at nightfall, violence erupts and continues throughout the night. On the fourth day, Wilson orders federal troops to quiet the city. Sweet does not take part in the incident and the violence has rekindled the fears of his childhood.

Racial violence continues until 1920 and then abates. Racial tension is still high as segregation intensifies. In spite of all this, the Negro migration to the North continues. During this time, Sweet is doing his clinical work at Freedmen's Hospital, gaining a medical background that most students don't have the opportunity to experience because of the conditions of the poor. He graduates medical school in 1921. He doesn't receive a year-long internship at Freedmen's but he does receive a two-month abbreviated internship there. Sweet now has to find a place for himself; he decides on Detroit.

Chapter 3 "Migration" Analysis

Sweet hopes the new town of Xenia will be different than the Jim Crow South. He hopes it will be free of oppression, as he, like the thousands of other who migrate to the North, he is looking for equality. The Sweets' decision to send Sweet north to Wilberforce is their way of trying to give him a better life and to get him out of dangerous Bartow. Sweet, who has to pay his own way through school since Wilberforce didn't have money for his scholarship, works at school and spends his summers working in Detroit. He does not return to Bartow, as he feels that his chances of succeeding are better in Detroit. "But, at some point in his Wilberforce years, Sweet decided that he wanted more than a solid living and a few creature comforts. He made it is goal, he told a reporter years later, 'to rise in his profession and to amass a substantial fortune.'" (pg. 85)

Sweet decides to go into medicine, a profession that would give him the status he wants and a good income. He also wants the things that money can buy, like clothes and homes. If World War I hadn't begun, it is doubtful that Sweet would have been admitted to Howard University's medical school. There are open slots at the school since many men from better black schools are in the armed forces. Howard doesn't condone its medical students working, but Sweet has to work to pay his tuition and expenses. His

years at Howard solidify his determination to gain status and money. When he graduates he decides not to return to Xenia or Bartow where he knows he could have a good life. Instead, he decides to go to Detroit.



Chapter 4 "Uplift Me, Pride"

Chapter 4 "Uplift Me, Pride" Summary

Sweet arrives in Detroit with \$200 and his diplomas. Detroit's population has grown due to the expansion of the auto industry. Speakeasies and liquor abound. The city is a battleground for gangsters. Sweet finds a room in the middle of the city in the black area, near the area he lived in the summers he spent there, an area known as Black Bottom. The area has changed since Sweet first arrived to work as a student. The war years saw a massive influx of Negroes looking for jobs. The influx continues after the war's end. It is the fastest growing black population in America which brings on increased segregation. The convention of charging blacks premium prices for real estate develops. In addition, there is the action of white mobs to keep them in Black Bottom. Rents are high in Black Bottom because there is no other place for the people to go.

Black Bottom does not have indoor plumbing. Because of the unsanitary conditions, there is a lot of disease. There is little medical care available. Sweet spends the first few months studying for the state medical exam so he can get a license and begin to practice medicine. He won't have the money to open an office so he makes a deal with the corner pharmacy, Palace Drugs. He invests \$100 in the business and he has an office in the backroom. Sweet's practice grows as word spreads by word of mouth. Sweet saves his money even though he joins various social organizations and clubs. He also joins the Ebenezer AME Church not only for religious reasons but because he knows it will help his practice.

Sweet's efforts pay off. He becomes the doctor for Liberty Life Insurance which gives him a steady income. He makes friends through these organizations. He meets Julian Perry, a graduate of Howard Law who is setting up his legal practice in Black Bottom. Dr. Edward Carter is a fellow physician with an office several blocks from Sweet's. Several years earlier the city's black physician bought a building and turned it into Dunbar Memorial hospital to service the black community since they weren't allowed admittance to white hospitals.

Sweet doesn't like the discrimination that is growing in the city but he doesn't get involved in the fight against it. He does subscribe to publications that reflect the Talented Tenth's views and keeps abreast of all of racial violence and riots in various parts of the nation.

Sweet meets Gladys in 1922 at a YWCA dance. He never had much time for dating or marriage because he always had to work, study or establish himself. Gladys' mother and stepfather did everything they could to give Gladys every social advantage. She is raised in a white working class neighborhood and feels comfortable in the presence of whites, something that Sweet can't do. They are married in December 1922 and Sweet moves into her parents' house in the white neighborhood. They can save money on the



rent and he can save for his dream of studying in Europe. Their first baby is born prematurely and dies. Within a month, they get ready to leave for Europe. They sail for Europe, with plans to go to Vienna and Paris. He studies with Eiselsberg and Curie. He knows he will never use the knowledge that he learns, but he wants the impressive credentials. Gladys learns she is pregnant again.

Sweet and Gladys revel in the lack of racial discrimination in Vienna and Paris. The only time they experience it is when Sweet tries to make arrangements for Gladys to deliver her baby at the white American Hospital and is denied. Baby Marguerite is born on May 29, 1924, less than a month before they sail for the United States.

Chapter 4 "Uplift Me, Pride" Analysis

Sweet goes to Detroit because he thinks it will offer him the kind of life he wants. He takes a room in Black Bottom because that is the neighborhood he always lived in when he spent his summers in Detroit. He doesn't have the money to open an office so he makes a deal that gives him office space in the neighborhood pharmacy. He does the right things to establish himself in the community as a professional; he joins clubs, organizations and the Ebenezer AME Church, not wanting to wander too far from the Talented Tenth and his Wilberforce religious training. He subscribes to publications consistent with their philosophies and avoids involvement in anything racial. He is still afraid due to his upbringing in the Jim Crow South.

Sweet meets Gladys and marries her several months later. They leave for Europe for a year where Sweet can study with famous names in medicine, Eiselsberg and Curie. Sweet isn't interested in the knowledge; he is interested in the credentials. He is also in an environment where there is no racial discrimination. For the first time in his life, he is not treated as an inferior. The only time they face discrimination is when they try to make arrangements for Gladys to delivery the baby at the American Hospital and are denied because the white patients wouldn't feel comfortable. As their year in Europe comes to an end, Sweet wonders what faces his family when they return to America.



Chapter 5 "White Houses"

Chapter 5 "White Houses" Summary

In July of 1925, posters appear in the Garland Avenue neighborhood promoting the Waterworks Park Improvement Association. There is a meeting scheduled in two days and all concerned parties are invited to attend. The signs caused a panic because people know that a black family was moving into the neighborhood. "In the privacy of their flats, husbands and wives talked nervously of fragile family budgets, mortgages years from being repaid, and the specter of plummeting property values. Children heard the fear in their parents' hushed voices and spun out of the horrors that the Negroes would bring to their homes would bring to their homes, terrifying and thrilling themselves with thoughts of assault and pillage. Out on the streets, there was rage at the audacity of the coloreds, moving where they didn't belong, buying the best goddamned house of the block." (pg. 134) Seven hundred people attend the Tuesday night meeting and a hard-core agitator has the main speaker telling them to put the coloreds out when they move in.

Sweet and Gladys return to the United States on June 29, 1924. They are living with Gladys' parents. Sweet buys a new car and rents office space. Sweet's brothers begin to appear in Detroit. Otis graduates dental school and settles in Detroit. His younger brother Henry is beginning college. Otis has a successful dental practice and doesn't feel the same need to excel as his brother does. He is not concerned with joining the proper organizations or subscribing to the proper publications as Sweet is. Henry is a younger version of Sweet, only more social than Sweet ever was.

Sweet and Gladys begin to look for houses in the spring of 1925, just as racial tensions are beginning to flare up in the city. The democratic candidates for local office are appealing to the voters, including blacks, and organizing voter registration drives, promising them equal rights. "Here was a new kind of politics, centered around an ethnic Democrat, the product of a party that had long championed white supremacy, appealing to the masses, black and white, with promises of equal rights before the law while the most respectable people in the city raged against them. Black Bottom ordinary folks understood. On election day April 2, 1923, Detroit split right down its ethnic, racial and economic fault lines." (pg. 140) This spawns a lot of Klan activity. By 1923, the Klan has more than 22,000 members in Detroit. A special election is held in November 1924 with the Klan opposing the candidate. The Klan write-in candidate wins the election but the election officials throw out all the votes with the name misspelled so his victory is disallowed. As winter passes, the Klan is ready for action. This is the environment into which Sweet and Gladys step when they begin to look for a house.

During the Sweets' time in Europe, the housing market in Detroit becomes very discriminatory. There aren't too many places where blacks can move to and it is very difficult for them to secure mortgages. Sweet learns of the house on Garland Avenue from a patient. The terms of the sales are outrageous because the sellers, the Smiths,



know that the Sweets have no place else to go. The Sweets have to pay the Smiths the monthly installments at 18 percent interest because there is no place they can obtain a mortgage. Sweet is still nervous about the neighborhood after they sign the papers. He is worried about safety and the threat of the Klan. The real estate agent assures him that there is no problem.

At this time, racial trouble is beginning on the west side, where Sweet's colleagues live. Blacks have moved into a white area in each incident. With the first, blacks move into an apartment one block into a white area. There are threats and crowds but nothing happens until a rock is thrown into the bedroom and the wife opens fire. She is acquitted in court. The second incident involved a black doctor who moved into a white neighborhood. Crowds filled the street in front of the house. When the doctor answers the door, the crowd forces its way in and he has to sign the deed over to the Tireman Avenue Improvement Association in order to survive. The police escort them all to the office where the deed is signed. Two weeks later Vollington Bristol is the target of this same group. He owns property in a white neighborhood and is renting the flats to coloreds. He decides to move in himself. He asks for police protection before moving in. The second night, a mob forms and shots are fired. Police reinforcements quell the mob and make 19 arrests, but word of the incident spreads into Black Bottom. Some armed men come to help Bristol and the situation is quieted. A few days later another incident occurs several blocks away in which a white teen is shot.

This is the situation less than a month before Sweet and Gladys are scheduled to move. Sweet doesn't try to back out of the deal. "To back down, though, would be to admit that he wasn't willing to live up to the principles that had been preached to him ever since Wilberforce, that he had no claim to a place among the Talented Tenth. It would have been a very public humiliation. Gladys and Otis would have seen it, of course, as would Henry, who had recently arrived in Detroit for the summer and was rooming at the Mitchells." (pg. 156) He would also be ridiculed by his hospital colleagues. Marie Smith, the seller, calls Gladys to tell her that the neighbors are organizing into a mob. Sweet feels as long as he has his friends at his side, they will be alright.

The organizing begins in the garage of one of the neighbors. Out of this meeting comes the Waterworks Park Improvement Association. They call for a rally on July 14. The rally is well attended and has undercover police in the crowd. They meet with Inspector Schuknecht after the rally and he figures it will be easy to drive the Sweets out of the neighborhood. They'll just let the crowd do it.

Sweet's friends and colleagues admire and respect him when he says he intends to go through with the move. Marie Smith calls to tell them of more threatening phone calls. Bristol advises Sweet to ask for police protection. Otis contacts Inspector McPherson who promises them protection. On Garland Avenue the Waterworks Park Improvement Association is very busy. They are having people add covenants to their deeds so as to not allow blacks into the neighborhood. They have a group talk to Marie Smith to see if she will renege on the Sweet deal and sell the house to the Improvements Association. When she tells them the price is \$30,000 they drop the subject. Schuknecht has twelve hours notice of the Sweets moving plans. The first night passes and the next day there



are rumors all day long. It remains peaceful until a group of teens arrive in a cab and start throwing stones at the windows, which is followed by shooting comes from upstairs.

Chapter 5 "White Houses" Analysis

The Sweets return to Detroit and Gladys' parents' house while they save for a house of their own. Racial tension has been building during this period with most blacks being run out of the white neighborhoods they move into. Sweet is nervous about moving into a white neighborhood but his personality does not let him back down. Even with all of the incidents they have in those few weeks, he still decides to go ahead with the move. He cannot bear the thought of the ridicule he will face at Dunbar if he backs down out of fear. Even the safety of his family does not come before his pride. Bristol is still in his house in the white neighborhood and Sweet draws strength from him. When Marie Smith calls and tells them of the threats, he still decides to go ahead with the move.



Chapter 6 "The Letter of Your Law"

Chapter 6 "The Letter of Your Law" Summary

After the shootings on Garland Avenue, the news quickly spreads around the area. More than 5,000 people cram into the area around the house. Meanwhile, Sweet and the other nine men have been taken to police headquarters. They are seated in a room in the Detective's Bureau. Gladys arrives and Sweet and Watson ask to call their lawyers. Sweet calls Julian Perry and at 10:45 p.m. Sweet's interrogation begins. Sweet is nervous and stumbles over his own words during the interrogation. Kennedy wants to know about the guns and the ammo. How did his guests know where the guns were? Did Sweet prepare for trouble? Kennedy finishes with Sweet around midnight.

Kennedy talks to all of the men. They all claim they were there for different reasons, not to help defend the house. Mack works for the Sweets; Norris was looking for his pay for helping them move; Davis and Latting were looking for rooms to rent and the insurance agents were there to correct an error in the insurance policy. The prosecutor picks away at little details in their stories. He questions Gladys who says she doesn't remember what happened. Henry tells Kennedy that when the stone throwing began, he went upstairs, picked up a gun and looked out the window. Henry fires in self-defense as the stones are hurled at him. He says he tried to fire a foot or two over their heads. Henry says there were three or four others in the room but he doesn't know who because of the darkness.

After the interrogations, all of the men and Gladys are taken to the Wayne County Jail.

Attorneys Perry, Rowlette and Mahoney rush to police headquarters but aren't allowed to be present during the interrogation. They never see their clients that night. The lawyers decide to mount a joint defense.

On Garland Avenue, Inspector Schuknecht is faced with a crowd of 4,000 or 5,000 people. The 200 reinforcements hold back the crowd, which disintegrates by midnight. A reporter from the Detroit News finds Schuknecht, who shows him through the Sweet's house. He tells the reporter that there was no stone-throwing, which is how the reporter writes the story for the news. The other newspapers report the story the same way. One reporter, Philip Adler, was present at the scene that night and saw the mob and the stone throwing and heard the shots fired. His employer isn't interested in what he saw there, even though he was an eyewitness.

The country prosecutor, Robert Toms, knows that he has to try the 11 men for political reasons, but all of them say that the house was being attacked and that there was a mob of several hundred people and there is a broken window in the upper level of the house. Toms knows he will have a problem trying to claim that it was not self-defense. Toms sends Kennedy to the Garland Avenue house where he finds stones all over the front porch and roof. He questions Schuknecht about this and the Inspector lies about



the number of people in front of the house and says that the stones weren't thrown until after the shooting. Kennedy questions the neighbors. He doesn't like all of the answers he receives because they undermine the state's case regarding the number of people in front of the house and whether or not stones were thrown. Under Michigan law, a mob is defined either by 12 or more armed people or 30 or more armed or unarmed people.

The 11 men and Gladys are still being held in Wayne County jail and their attorneys still have not seen them. Davis, the narcotics agent, decides to try to extricate himself from the situation. He talks to Kennedy again and tells him that he was there the first night with Otis, Henry, John, Norris and Joe Mack to help protect the house. Davis says he heard Morse say that Henry was shooting and that Joe Mack was firing a pistol.

Attorneys Perry, Rowlette and Mahoney file for a writ of habeas corpus and obtain one from a circuit court judge. They then find that all 11 men are being charged with assault to commit murder in the first degree. This news appears in the papers. That night the Waterworks Park Improvement Association calls for a rally to be held on September 10. Members of the Klan are featured speakers on the podium. The Klan also holds a rally in Waterworks Park.

The attorneys are finally allowed to see their clients on the following Saturday. They arrive with W. Hayes McKinney of the NAACP, who has agreed to pay for the defense of the Sweet group. They will hold fund-raisers. The attorneys' request for bail is denied, even for Gladys. The racial situation in Detroit is very tense with acts of violence beginning to occur. The situation is fueled by a statement by Mayor Smith who blames the Klan and says that the Negroes shouldn't demand their full rights to live wherever they want to. He basically endorses segregation and says the Negroes that move into white areas are the tools of the Klan. The NAACP rally at the Second Baptist church is now gearing up to fight more than just the Sweets' battle.

Chapter 6 "The Letter of Your Law" Analysis

The Detroit Police have many Klansmen among their members. They are known for their discrimination. Because of this, the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office has prosecuting attorney Ted Kennedy at police headquarters to handle the initial interrogations of Sweet and the rest of the group. The group is not allowed to speak to their attorneys or to have their attorneys present at their interrogations.

As Kennedy questions the neighbors it becomes obvious what the situation really is. He doesn't want the truth about what happened at the house. He wants a story that is consistent with Michigan law. He doesn't want the neighbors to say that there were enough people present in front of the house to legally constitute a mob and he doesn't want them to say that stones were being thrown at the house. The truth gives the Sweets a legal definition cause of self-defense and this is the last thing that Kennedy wants. The mayor's comments further fuel the situation. What he says basically endorses segregation and says the blacks shouldn't demand full legal and civil rights. Blacks that move into white neighborhoods are tools of the Klan. This is the state of the

legal system of 1925 Detroit. The Klan is also looking for a reason to act because they were "robbed" of the write-in election campaign because of misspellings of their candidate's name.



Chapter 7 "Freedman, Sons of God, Americans"

Chapter 7 "Freedman, Sons of God, Americans" Summary

In Manhattan, an official of the NAACP, James Weldon Johnson, reads the news stories about the events in Detroit. It is a good opportunity and cause for his organization. Johnson also grew up in Florida and he was the first black to be admitted to the Florida bar. He is also an accomplished musician and writer and has served in the consular service. Johnson is the Executive Secretary of the NAACP and manages its day-to-day operations. Johnson wires the Detroit's branch for information about the Sweet case. McKinney wires back for assistance and asks for Walter White to immediately come to Detroit. The NAACP has its next national campaign, the cause of the Sweets.

Under Johnson's leadership the NAACP has won major victories in the courts against the practice of segregation. He tries to solidify other ethnic groups with the cause but can't get them to participate. They find the cause they need to rally around in the Sweet case, which is why Walter White is sent to Detroit. White is a white man who can go places where Johnson can't go. He can also find out information that Johnson or other blacks wouldn't be able to. White arrives in Detroit on September 15 with the responsibility of investigating.

White is briefed on the situation in Detroit. White tells the three Sweet group lawyers that they are not the primary lawyers since the national NAACP is taking over and bringing in a big-name white lawyer. Rowlette and Mahoney threaten to resign. White agrees to wait until after the hearing to be held the following day. White sends Johnson a letter condemning Perry, Rowlette and Mahoney. White attends the hearing. "But it was Assistant Prosecutor Lester Moll's masterful manipulation of the proceedings that truly caught White's attention. Technically, the prosecutor's job was to establish that he had a strong-enough case to take to trial. But Moll nearly sidestepped the state's central assertion of whether Sweet and the other conspired to shoot into the crowd, which he had no way of proving. Instead, he zeroed in on the technical question of whether the Negroes had cause to open fire, assuming that once he'd established the peacefulness of Garland Avenue, the judge would make the critical connection on his own. If the coloreds were in no danger, they must have moved into the neighborhood looking for a confrontation: conspiracy by implication, conviction by assumption." (pg. 214-215)

The neighbors who testify have changed their stories as to the number of people in front of the house and that they did not hear or see stones thrown. The defense cannot present evidence of its own, according to the rules of the hearing. Rowlette questions Schuknecht about who fired the shots. Schuknecht replies that he does not know who. Rowlette questions Garland Avenue resident Ray Dove about the number of people that gathered. In the end, the judge, John Faust, rules that the case can proceed to trial.



After the ruling White argues with Rowlette, Perry and Mahoney over the change of lawyers. White has a document for the defendants to sign giving the NAACP the right to choose the lawyers. The three lawyers want more money than White is willing to give them. White returns to New York without reaching an agreement with them. Johnson is busy raising funds for the defense. They plan weekly meetings that will result in contributions but contributions don't match expenses.

White pressures Mahoney, Perry and Rowlette from New York. They agree to a white attorney but let it be known in the local community that there is outside pressure from the NAACP. This leads to a rift in the community. The minister of the Bethel AME, Joseph Gomez, begins a movement to provide a local defense for the Sweets and to raise money. This is money that won't go to the NAACP for the cause. Rowlette threatens to resign. Finally the NAACP agrees to let Rowlette handle the case through the arraignment and to leave the selection of attorney's up to the defendants.

The local NAACP brings catered meals to the group in prison and pays some of their bills, like the monthly payment on the house. The Sweets are now allowed to receive visitors. Their father comes to see them. On the choice of attorneys, Otis and three others want the NAACP while the others don't all agree. They have Morse's wife wire the Manhattan office. Meanwhile, the KKK is planning a huge rally on the day of the arraignment. At the arraignment the judge allows the case to proceed. The following day is an election day and the Klan wins strongly almost every primary held across the city.

A letter arrives at NAACP headquarters from N.K. McGill, the general counsel for the Chicago Defender newspaper, offering his services and the advice of Clarence Darrow. Walter White is slow to react.

Chapter 7 "Freedman, Sons of God, Americans" Analysis

The national NAACP handles big cases involving civil rights and legal challenges. They find the issue they are looking for in the Sweet case. The Manhattan office sends Walter White, their top investigator, to Detroit. White is in Detroit for the hearing and watches how the prosecutor handles the case. It is obvious that the case isn't about facts or law, but rather is all about politics. To observers, it is obvious that the witnesses have been coached. The judge rules to allow the case to proceed.

The attorneys are fighting with the NAACP over who is to control the case. The NAACP wants to bring in their own white attorneys but is being fought by Mahoney, Perry and Rowlette. The three attorneys see the case through the arraignment. Since the defense effort is so busy fighting among themselves for control, the question has to be asked if they missed anything that could have been done for the defendants up to this point. Since the case is purely political, it is also rather doubtful that anything could have been done to change the outcome up to this point.



Chapter 8 "The Prodigal Son"

Chapter 8 "The Prodigal Son" Summary

James Weldon Johnson responds to Darrow's offer. Darrow, he finds, is in New York and they arrange a meeting with him. Later that day, Johnson, White and Arthur Springarn meet with Darrow. Springarn, head of the NAACP National Legal Committee, presents the facts of the case at the meeting. Darrow agrees to take the case. The fees of Darrow and Hay are minimal but more than the NAACP has available. The board has to approve the expense. White travels to Detroit to secure the agreement of Mahoney, Perry and Rowlette, who welcome Darrow and Hays. White smoothes things over with the local branch and with Rev. Gomez and when he leaves Detroit for Chicago, they are a united front. On Thursday, October 15, Johnson announces that Darrow and Hays are the lead defense attorneys in the case that opens the following Monday. Darrow appears to request a two-week continuance. The case is delayed until October 30.

Darrow's taking the case seems to have changed the tune of the national press. They start to write of Sweet's right to protect his home and the way the prosecution has presented its case. In October Gladys is released on bail. On October 15, White and Darrow meet with the defendants. Darrow hears their story of that night on Garland Avenue. The Darrow name results in a great deal of publicity for the case. The publicity results in more contributions. "The reluctant hero standing for principle when all others had failed: it was a worthy image for a man who so desperately wanted to make his life exemplary and a comforting thought when the light of day faded and Sweet was forced to contemplate the weeks ahead, when his future would depend on Clarence Darrow's ability to tell a story as inspiring as the one Sweet had come to believe." (pg. 248)

The flurry continues. The election campaign has the Klan fighting the mayor during this time. The Case begins on October 30 with Toms and Kennedy on the prosecution team, Darrow et al on the defense team and Judge Frank Murphy on the bench.

Chapter 8 "The Prodigal Son" Analysis

The NAACP retains the services of Clarence Darrow and Arthur Garfield Hays as defense lawyers for Sweet et al. The addition of Darrow results in a national press writing about the Negro's right to defend his home. It also results in substantial donations to cover the legal expenses. The Sweet case is a part of the NAACP's overall plan in the fight against residential segregation. The Sweet's have also changed their attitude now. Sweet now says it is a battle for the race. The trial begins with Darrow at the helm.



Chapter 9 "Prejudice"

Chapter 9 "Prejudice" Summary

Darrow eliminates Klan members during the jury selection process. The judge allows the challenges to the potential jurors. Darrow and Hays take their time selecting a jury. While this is occurring the election takes place and the Klan is defeated. Darrow never says anything about the elections of the events surrounding it. They finally complete the jury selection process and the case begins with the prosecution calling its witnesses.

Toms' case is that the Negroes came prepared to shoot. They have little furniture in the house but they have 11 men and arms. Sweet moves into the all-white neighborhood knowing there could be trouble and they go there to wait for trouble. Toms then calls witnesses to testify of this contention. The police testify that they had the house cordoned off and the people inside protected. They hear shots fired and call for reinforcements. As the reinforcements arrive they hear that a man has been killed and find Leon Breiner dead. Some of the neighbors slip on the stand and mention great numbers of people present. Another neighbor, Wettlaufer, says he heard glass breaking before the shooting.

Darrow and Hays concentrate on breaking Toms' rhythm with objections and precedents.

Hays handled the precedents and Darrow handles the cross-examination. "Darrow must have been tempted to go for the jugular, to bring down the prosecution's case with a slashing attack on its first significant witness. But this case required a more subtle touch" (pg. 274) Under Darrow's questioning Schuknecht admits he found a small stone and shattered glass in the upstairs bedroom after the shooting. He also has Schuknecht admit that it appeared that the glass was broken from the outside. Darrow cross-examines the other witnesses in the same way. Some say that they were told to say that there were only a few people on the street. Others talk about the cab that drove up with kids getting out and throwing stones at the Sweets' house and hearing the sound of glass breaking.

While the trial is taking place, White is trying to spend time in the court room and taking time off to travel around the country for fund-raisers.

When the prosecution is ready to rest, the defense begins to plan its presentation. They decide to open with a motion for dismissal. If that fails, then they will present their case. Darrow and Hays argue for the motion to dismiss. The jurors are not present in the court room. Hays says that the prosecution's bill of particulars states that the 11 engaged in a conspiracy to kill Breiner and the prosecution has not introduced any evidence supporting this claim. The following Monday, the state notifies Darrow and Hays that they will drop all charges against Gladys Sweet but Murphy does not allow the motion to dismiss. The defense moves on with its case. They have witnesses that confirm the size



of the crowd, Edna and Serena testify to having to spend the night because they were too afraid to leave. They have the Detroit News reporter whose editor ignored his eyewitness account tell his story of what he saw happen. Other people who were driving by the area testify.

On November 18, Sweet is called to testify. He doesn't have to take the stand. "But Sweet didn't refuse. Undoubtedly he agreed out of pride - the intoxicating sense that in the past few weeks he had become the representative of his race and the champion of its rights - and, as always, out of obligation. He would do what his lawyers wanted him to do, what his wife and brothers and friends needed him to do, what his colleagues surely expected him to do. He had no choice, really, but to take the stand." (pg. 288) He and the others go through their testimony. The last witness finishes testifying on November 23. Lester Moll presents closing arguments for the prosecution the next morning with Hays following with the defense's in the afternoon. Darrow begins to speak in mid-afternoon. His oration spills over into the next day and he discusses discrimination, the political situation, and Sweet's terror from growing up in the Jim Crow South. Darrow finishes his closing arguments by mid-morning. Deliberations begin at 3:20 p.m. The defense hopes of a speedy verdict don't come true. After 10 p.m. the jury sends questions to the court. Could they convict some but not all of the defendants, and is the murder justified if the defendant thinks he is in danger? Murphy sends back the answers. The jury deliberates until 2:10 a.m. and then adjourns for the day. The next day is Thanksgiving and the courtroom is packed with people. Gladys is in the court room, but the defendants remain in jail. Those in the courtroom can hear the deliberating jurors shouting at each other. The jurors are sent out for a holiday dinner then return for further deliberations. At 11 p.m. the jury announces that they can't reach an agreement. Murphy orders them to resume at 9:00 the next morning. They still can't agree and the case ends in a mistrial.

Chapter 9 "Prejudice" Analysis

As the case begins, Hays handles issues of precedent and Darrow handles the cross-examination, after Toms finishes his questioning. Darrow's cross-examination brings out what is well known. The witnesses have been coached to say there were only a few people on the street that night. Witnesses saw people throwing stones at the house before the shots were fired. Darrow can only hope that the jury picks up on these facts and realizes their importance.

The defense's motion to dismiss is based on the fact that the prosecution has not presented any evidence to support the conspiracy claim stated in the bill of particulars. The judge agrees that the state hasn't proven conspiracy but the defense hasn't proven that it was necessary for the group to open fire either. The motion to dismiss is denied so the defense goes forward with its case. They present witnesses that testify to the size of the crowd, to the stone throwing, to being assaulted by the mob as they drove through the area in cars. Sweet takes the stand because he feels that he has an obligation to the others to do so. Sweet testifies to events in the Jim Crow South. The defense is letting him tell where his fear comes from. He describes the events of the



night, of the stones hitting the building. Others testify to the events of that night. The last witness finishes testifying on November 23.

The jury cannot agree on a decision. After 46 hours, the case ends in a mistrial. The fact that they can't decide means that they are not basing all of their decisions on race alone, but they did not acquit even when the state didn't prove its case of conspiracy so race is entering into it.



Chapter 10 "Judgment Day"

Chapter 10 "Judgment Day" Summary

Darrow and Hays request that the defendants be released on bail and that they have separate trials. White isn't happy because they have to pay the legal fees for a second trial. They all leave Detroit for their respective homes and a series of rallies begin as the NAACP begins to raise funds for the upcoming trials. Darrow also helps them raise money by appearing in Harlem.

The request for bail made by Darrow and Hayes is granted by Murphy but the bail is set at \$5,000 each. The Sweets can't pay it so Sweet is still in jail. Sweet is finally released on December 3. Hayes wants him to live at Garland Avenue but he doesn't want to. He moves into the apartment that Gladys rented. Sweet and Gladys visit New York for the NAACP annual meeting and they attend fund raising rallies and meetings. Sweet is portrayed as a leader in the fight against segregation. Johnson's Legal Defense Fund now has \$76,000 in it, much more than he had hoped for.

The test case on covenants in deeds comes up before the Supreme Court. At the same time, Sweet and the others are waiting for their trials. There is one delay after another for various reasons. Sweet resumes his medical practice which is very successful. Sweet and his family move to a new apartment located near Dunbar Memorial. "His success led to whispers against him - Sweet was getting too big for himself, some said - but Ossian paid no mind. When a man rose above the average, he had to expect petty jealousy from those he left behind. He moved in different circles now" (pg. 310)

There is still bickering going on between Perry, Mahoney, Rowlette and the NAACP over the Darrow and Hays handling of the defense. The NAACP considers the three local lawyers an unnecessary expense. Toms decides to bring Henry Sweet to trial first, since he confessed to shooting into the crowd. April 1 is the date that jury selection is set to begin. Hays is involved in another case in New York and tells White and Johnston that he can't go to Detroit. Darrow wants Detroit lawyer Thomas Chawke on the team as Hays' replacement. When White talks to Chawke, Chawke lays out his terms. Since they have no time to find anyone else, White has to agree.

After a several week delay, just as the trial opens, it is announced that Toms will not try the other ten defendants unless Henry Sweet is convicted. This is an announcement that Darrow anticipated. As the trial opens, it becomes obvious that Toms is using the same strategy that they used in the first trial: there was no mob, the shooting of Breiner was pre-meditated and that the occupants of the Garland Avenue house were in no danger the night the shooting occurred. It is the defense that has a different strategy, first in jury selections, then in the opening arguments. Each witness is cross-examined relentlessly by Darrow and Chawke as they try to make them deviate from the version of the story they were giving. They all know they are lying on the witness stand. Darrow and Chawke emphasize the contradictions in their testimony. At one point Darrow says



that he believes all of the witnesses are lying. They continue probing into the Waterworks Park Improvement Association and its activities. Eventually, they get the break they are looking for from Alf Andrews, a Garland Avenue resident who tells them that they advocated violence in expelling the Sweets from the neighborhood. When the defense presents their case, they put Sweet on the stand instead of Henry. Sweet says he supplied the guns to the men who were in the house that night on Garland Avenue in order to protect his home. He comes across as acting out of pride, not out of fear. Closing arguments for each side take almost a day for each. The jury begins deliberations on May 13. At 4:00 that afternoon the jury finds Henry Sweet not guilty.

Chapter 10 "Judgment Day" Analysis

When Sweet is finally released on bail he moves into Gladys's apartment. He isn't able to deal with the strain of trying to live at the Garland Avenue house. He and Gladys travel to New York and other places for NAACP fund raisers. Sweet is being portrayed as a leader in the fight against segregation. He is applauded everywhere and becomes more egotistical, which causes numerous fights between him and Gladys. His practice is thriving and they move to a new larger apartment, not to the house on Garland Avenue.

Toms announces that the state will try Henry Sweet first. If Sweet isn't convicted, Toms says he will drop all charges against the other defendants. When the trial begins, it becomes obvious that the state's case is the same and so is their strategy. The defense, however, takes a different tactic and relentlessly cross-examines each witness until one finally admits the truth, that the Waterworks Park Improvement Association advocates violence. In the end, Henry Sweet is acquitted which means that charges will be dropped against the others.



Characters

Dr. Ossian Sweet

Ossian Sweet is the main character of the book. He is terrified of moving into an all-white neighborhood in Detroit, but knows his wife likes the house and he feels it is a house that fits his status as a physician. Because of his fear, he brings weapons and ammunition and brings in people for defense and protection. This leads to the murder of a white man in the outside crowd, leading to the arrest of all of them. Sweet and the others stand trial for killing Leon Breiner. The People v. Ossian Sweet et al ends in a mistrial. Sweet becomes a national celebrity and a champion in the fight against housing discrimination. He sees himself as doing this all for his race.

Sweet becomes more egotistical due to all the attention and notoriety he receives after the declaration of the mistrial. He and his wife travel around the country raising funds for the NAACP that provides his defense lawyers. He doesn't face trial again for the charges. The county prosecutor tries his brother Henry who is acquitted of the crime. Charges against all of the others are then dropped. Sweet doesn't move back into the Garland Avenue house until 1928 and remains in the house until he sells it in 1958. Gladys and daughter Iva both die of tuberculosis in the late 1920s. Sweet remarries twice but both marriages end in divorce. He kills himself in 1960 by shooting himself in the head.

Gladys Sweet

Gladys is Sweet's wife and the mother of Iva. Gladys was born in Pittsburgh and grew up in Detroit. She is arrested on the night of the shooting on Garland Avenue. Charges against her are eventually dropped and she is released. While in the Wayne County Jail Gladys contracts tuberculosis, which spreads to daughter Iva. When released from prison, she takes an apartment and continues to fight for the cause of her husband and the others. After the charges against Sweet are dropped, Gladys and Iva move to Tucson, hoping the climate will help their tuberculosis. However, both die from the disease.

Otis Sweet

Otis is Ossian Sweet's brother. He spends the first and second night in the new house with the group and is arrested with them. Otis is a dentist who completes his education and moves to Detroit, because his brother Ossian is there. He is part of the group whose trial ended with a hung jury. He doesn't stand trial again because the Wayne County prosecutor drops all charges against him and the others when Henry is acquitted.



Henry Sweet

Henry is Ossian Sweet's younger brother who comes to help with the move. Henry and John Latting are the ones the police told to expect trouble that second night in the Garland Avenue house. Henry tells prosecutor Ted Kennedy that he fired out the window over the heads of the crowd and wasn't aiming at anybody. Henry is the one who stands trial again after the mistrial. When he is acquitted, the charges are dropped against the others. Henry attends Howard University School of Law and then returns to Detroit to work for the NAACP. He dies of tuberculosis in 1939.

Edward Carter

Carter is a friend and colleague of Sweet's. He says he will spend the first night with them at the new house but then doesn't. He comes to visit and brings a housewarming gift, but doesn't return. He feels he can be of more assistance on the outside.

Julian Perry

Julian is a lawyer and Sweet's friend from their college days. He spends the first night in the house with them. Perry is the one that Sweet calls when he is arrested. Perry is also one of the three attorneys that struggle with the NAACP over the legal defense of the group. The NAACP wants big-name white defense lawyers to handle the case, which they eventually retain.

William Davis

Davis is another friend of Sweet's who comes the day they move. He spends the first night at the house. Davis is a federal narcotics officer who is arrested with the others the night of the shooting. He tries to separate himself from the others by giving the prosecutor a version of the story that they want, but it doesn't do him any good. He stands trial with the rest of them. He is not tried again after the mistrial.

John Latting

Latting is a cousin of Sweet's. He helps them move and spends the first days there. He and Henry are told by the police to expect trouble that night from the white crowd. John is arrested and stands trial with the group. The charges are dropped after Henry's trial ends with acquittal.

Norris Murray

Norris lives in Black Bottom and is a hired hand helping with the move. He spends the first night with them at the house and is paid by Sweet to spend the second night with



them at the house. He is part of the group whose trial ends in a mistrial. Charges against Norris are dropped when Henry is acquitted.

Edna Butler

Edna is a friend of Gladys' and was maid of honor at her wedding. She is a seamstress and comes to visit the first day. She spends the first night since it is dark when they finish dinner. The next morning on a bus, she overhears a conversation about the house of Garland Avenue and how the whites plan to put the Sweets out later that night. She calls Gladys with the information.

Serena Rochelle

Serena is an interior decorator and a friend of Gladys. She comes over that first day and spends the night.

Joe Mack

Mack is the Sweets' chauffeur. He helps them with the move and spends the night at the house. The second night he is sent to Black Bottom to bring Norris out to Garland Avenue. He is also arrested with them but charges against Mack are also dropped after Henry's acquittal.

Hewitt Watson

Watson is the insurance agent who sold Sweet the insurance on his new house. When he discovers a problem with the policy he meets with Sweet to correct the paperwork. The frightened Sweet tells him his story about the new house and asks him if he can find some men and come over that night to help them out in case there is trouble. Watson brings Morse and Washington. He is also arrested with them that night. Charges against Watson are dropped after Henry's acquittal.

Leonard Morse

Morse is one of the men brought to the Garland Avenue house by Watson to help out on the second night. He is arrested with them and goes to trial. Charges against Morse are dropped after Henry's acquittal.



Washington

Washington is the second man recruited by Watson to help out at the house on the second night. He is arrested with them. He also does not face trial after Henry's acquittal.

Inspector Bert McPherson

The inspector is the police officer in charge the first night. He introduces himself to the Sweets since they requested police protection.

Inspector Norton Schuknecht

Schuknecht is the police officer on duty the first and second night. He goes to the house to tell them to stop shooting, which they do. He is also there to arrest them when they find a dead white man. Schuknecht lies on the stand during the trial that there is no mob and that there are no stones thrown.

Henry Sweet

Henry Sweet is the father of Ossian Sweet. He grows up in the post-Civil War South and is the first in the family to buy land. Bartow, Florida is the place where Henry, and wife Dora, settle to raise their family. The atrocities and dangers of the Jim Crow South cause him and Dora to worry about their family and to send Sweet North to Wilberforce when he is thirteen.

Dora Sweet

Dora Sweet is Ossian Sweet's mother. She also fears the dangers of Bartow. Dora and Henry, like all parents, want their children to have a better life and an education.

William Sanders Scarborough

Scarborough is the president of Wilberforce during Sweet's days there. He comes from a slave background and is deeply steeped in AME philosophies. He enforces a strict religious code on the students, requiring attendance at religious services and segregation of men and women on the campus. He is also an outspoken proponent of black equality and black rights. He is married to a white woman, Sarah, and is one of the founding members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.



Vollington Bristol

Bristol is the head bellhop at the Fairfax Hotel where Sweet works one summer. He tells Sweet that it is only in a city like Detroit that Southern blacks could hope to get ahead. He eventually opens a funeral parlor. Bristol owns an apartment building in an all-white neighborhood that he eventually moves into. He faces mob action but stays there.

Ed Smith

Smith is the seller of the house on Garland Avenue. Smith is a light skinned Negro who has always passed for white. He and his wife raise the price of the house by \$5,000 for the Sweets. They also charge an interest rate of 18 percent since they know they can't obtain a conventional mortgage

Marie Smith

Marie is the white wife of Ed Smith. Marie calls Gladys and Sweet several times with news of the neighbors organizing and of the threats she is receiving.

Leon Breiner

Breiner is the Garland Avenue resident who is out on the street at the time of stone throwing incident and is shot and killed by the volley of shots from the Garland Avenue house.

Ted Kennedy

Kennedy is the prosecuting attorney sent by the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office to handle the interrogations of Sweet and the others.

Blondy Hayes

Hayes is a homicide officer present at the interrogation.

William Johnson

The lieutenant is an officer of the Homicide Squad who is present at the initial interrogations.



Cecil Rowlette

Rowlette is a top defense lawyer and a friend of Perry's. Julian calls Cecil as soon as he hears from Sweet. Rowlette is one of the attorney's that fights the NAACP for control of the case until Darrow's services are secured.

Robert Toms

Toms is the Wayne County Prosecutor who wants to bring the Sweet group to trial. It is politically advantageous for him to try the group. After the trials, he goes on to a distinguished career as a judge. He also presides at the Nuremburg Trials, becomes the United States Attorney General and eventually a U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

Mayor Johnny Smith

Smith is mayor of Detroit at the time of the Garland Avenue incident. In Smith's election, the Klan candidate Bowles actually received more votes as a write-in but the votes were disallowed because of misspellings of his name. The Klan is looking for a reason to act after this election.

James Weldon Johnson

Johnson is an official of the NAACP located in Manhattan. He becomes interest in the case as a part of the NAACP's overall plan to fight housing discrimination. He is instrumental in obtaining the service of Clarence Darrow as the defense attorney for the Sweet group. Johnson leads the NAACP's fight against housing discrimination.

Walter White

White is the Assistant Director of the NAACP. His presence is requested in Detroit by McKinney when they learn the charges against the Sweet group. He is white, and the lead investigator for the NAACP. He helps put together the defense team for the Sweets. He succeeds Johnson as executive secretary of the NAACP and holds the position for 26 years helping to knock down the barriers of racial discrimination.

Arthur Springarn

Springarn is the head of the NAACP National Legal Committee and is the one who makes the presentation to Clarence Darrow.



Clarence Darrow

Darrow is a famous defense attorney who offers his services in the case through an intermediary, N.K. McGill of the Chicago Defender. The announcement of his involvement changes the press's reporting from what it originally was. The trial of the 11 individuals results in a mistrial. Darrow returns to defend Henry Sweet and wins acquittal. He goes on to serve on the board of the NAACP until he dies in 1938.

Arthur Garfield Hays

Hays is a friend of Darrow. Darrow is at the Greenwich Village home of Hays when the NAACP group comes to present the facts of the Sweet case to him. He is also a part of the defense team. Hays handles most of the issues that have to do with procedure and precedent. Hays has to withdraw from the defense team for Roger's trial because of another case he is handling. He continues to fight for the civil liberties of the underdogs.

Frank Murphy

Murphy is the judge presiding in *The People v. Sweet et al* which begins on October 30. Murphy has let it be known that he is willing to give every advantage he can to the defense. Murphy is elected mayor of Detroit in 1932.

Lester Moll

Moll is with the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office and is the assistant to Kennedy. Moll presents the closing arguments to the jury in the trial.

Thomas Chawke

Chawke is a big-name criminal defense attorney from Detroit. He is known to have mob affiliations. He is requested as co-counsel by Darrow when Hays withdraws just as Henry Sweet's trial begins. After the trial, he shuns the limelight and returns to his practice.



Objects/Places

Detroit

Detroit is the city where the book opens, as the black Sweet family moves into an all-white neighborhood. African-Americans in 1925 Detroit face racial discrimination, as they do in other locations throughout the country. Racial tensions are high when Sweet and Gladys move into the house on Garland Avenue due to other incidents in previous weeks regarding blacks who moved into white neighborhoods.

Detroit is a stronghold of the Ku Klux Klan which has lost a local election due to the misspellings of the name of their write-in candidate. Many of the police are Klan members. They are looking for a cause to rally behind when the Sweet incident occurs. The mayor adds fuel to the fire by calling the Sweets and other blacks who move into all white neighborhoods the tools of the Klan.

Detroit, like other cities, has color lines that try to confine the blacks to certain areas. When they move out of these areas, there is opposition from the white neighborhood that forms "improvement associations." There are several of these incidents in the weeks before Sweet and Gladys move into the Garland Avenue house. Detroit is like other cities of the time. People write covenants into their deeds to prevent the sale of the property to a black which is what many people in the Garland Avenue area did after the Sweets bought the house. The mentality of the time is seen by their coached testimony.

Central Florida

Sweet's ancestry can be traced back to southern slave plantations. His ancestors were slaves and grew up under slavery and Reconstruction. His parents eventually settle in the Florida town of Bartow being the first in the family to buy land. Black Bartow is separated from white Bartow by the railroad tracks. The two communities have separate economies. Bartow is plagued by racial problems from violence by various groups, among them the Klan. As the situation becomes more dangerous and tense in the Jim Crow South, Sweet is sent to the North to school, as are his brothers after him. Sweet doesn't return to Bartow. He eventually buys property there and spends part of his winters there.

Xenia, Ohio

Xenia is the location of Wilberforce University where Sweet is sent at the age of thirteen. He does his secondary level schooling and then college there. Xenia is a town in Ohio near the Kentucky border.



Wilberforce University

Wilberforce University is an all black school owned and operated by AME. Originally the building was a resort for the wealthy southern plantation owners and their families. Eventually, it was turned into a school for the mulatto children of the plantations. It was purchased by AME ministers in the mid 1850s and turned into a college for free blacks.

Washington, D.C.

Washington D.C. is the sight of Howard University's medical school. Howard is easily the nation's most prestigious black medical school at the time. The school is located in the Northwest quadrant of D.C. with the Freedmen's Hospital right next to its campus.

Paris, France

Sweet and Gladys spend a year in Europe so Sweet can study medical techniques. Paris is the only place where Sweet has ever been where he is not victimized by discrimination, until he tries to arrange for Gladys' admission to the American Hospital.

2905 Garland Avenue

This is the address of the bungalow that Gladys and Sweet by from Ed and Marie Smith. It is located in an all-white neighborhood. The neighborhood forms the Waterworks Park Improvement Association to keep the Sweets and other blacks out of their neighborhood. It is the site of the white stone throwing incident that brings on the shooting that kills Leon Breiner, a neighborhood resident. Sweet and Gladys don't live in the house until 1928, right before Gladys dies. Sweet keeps the house and lives in it until he sells it in 1958.

Wayne County Jail

The Wayne County Jail is where the 11 prisoners and Gladys are housed while they await trial. Charges against Gladys are dropped in December and she is released but the others remain in custody until they are granted bail after the mistrial. It is believed that Gladys contracted tuberculosis while incarcerated here.

Wayne County Courthouse

The Wayne County Courthouse is where the trials are held. The first trial of the group ends in a mistrial. The second trial of Roger ends with his acquittal.



Gladys's Apartment

When the charges are dropped against Gladys in December, she takes her own apartment for her and baby Iva. The apartment is in an all-white area, near her parents. When Sweet is released on bail, he moves into the apartment with Gladys and Iva, instead of the house on Garland Avenue.

Sweet's Apartment

Sweet and his family move into a larger apartment within walking distance of Dunbar Memorial. Sweet remains there until moving into the house in 1928.

Garafalo's Drugstore

Sweet buys this property and uses the upstairs as his office and keeps the downstairs as a working pharmacy. When he sells the Garland Avenue property in 1958, he moves into the upstairs area. In 1960, he kills himself in his upstairs apartment.

Themes

Fear

Most of the events of the books take place because of fear. Sweet is raised in the Jim Crow South which is full of hatred and incidents of racial violence. Sweet and his brothers grow up in an atmosphere of violence and fear. It is so dangerous in Bartow, Florida, that his family sends him north to Wilberforce when he is thirteen. They worry about his safety and want him to have a better life.

He confronts discrimination in the North just as he did in the South. The absence of lynching blacks makes the North safer than the South. Sweet's actions leading up to the move to the Garland Avenue house are based on the fear he experienced as a child and this is the point that the defense kept emphasizing in court. He is fearful for the safety of his family. Because of this he buys guns and ammunition and has men stay with them in case they need to defend themselves. The white people of the neighborhood also react out of fear. Much of this fear is based on ignorance and the stereotyping of blacks. They worry about their daughters being raped, or their property values falling. Out of fear they form the Waterworks Parks Improvement Association and are prepared to respond with violence.

Fear on both sides led to the events of that night - the white mob forming, stones being thrown and the shooting that results in the death of Leon Breiner. As the house is being pummeled by stones, a frightened Henry opens fire over the heads of the crowd. He is afraid for his own safety. He is also a product of the Jim Crow South. If there hadn't been so much fear in their background, Sweet would probably not have felt the need to bring guns into the house. After the trial, Sweet and Gladys don't move back into the house until 1928. Sweet is basically afraid to live there because of the possibility of violence.

Pride

Pride is another theme of the book. Much of what Sweet does is based on pride, at least up until the trial. His attitude changes when he is attending Howard University Medical School where he is taught to have the demeanor of a doctor. This demeanor somehow becomes tangled up with pride for him. He wants the status of a doctor and the income that goes with being a physician. He wants the clothes and houses and other things that the money can buy him. When he and Gladys go abroad for a year so he can study with Eiselsberg and Marie Curie, he knows that the knowledge he acquires will never be used. He has no place to use the knowledge. All that he wants are the credentials. He wants his colleagues to be impressed.

It is pride and fear of comments by his colleagues that prevents him from reneging on the deal for the Garland Avenue house. Sweet wants to impress them. He doesn't want



to back down and then have to face their comments. He believes that he has the right to move into the house and that he has the right to protect himself and his property, but there is never any mention of doing it for the cause of the colored people until after his arrest. When the NAACP enters the case, then he and the others talk about what is for the good of the race. As Sweet's fame grows, so does his pride, until he becomes more or less arrogant. This causes many spats between him and Gladys. It also causes him to grab the limelight at many fund-raising events instead of just saying a few words as White had instructed him to. The pride combined with the fear leads to situations like the move to Garland Avenue, when Sweet can't back down.

Principle of Right and Wrong

Confronting the principle of what is morally right and wrong is operative throughout the book as the reader watches various characters make their choices. The Constitution guarantees blacks equality under the law, even though that isn't the practice in America in the 1920s. Sweet and his family have the right to move into the Garland Avenue house and they all have the right to defend themselves when under attack. The Garland Avenue residents had to make the choice between right and wrong when they formed the Waterworks Park Improvement Association and are swayed by the rhetoric of the Klan.

The Detroit mayor, Johnny Smith, makes his choice when he comments on the Sweet case that the Constitution guarantees Negroes the rights but maybe they should choose to exercise those rights. He basically then endorses the de facto color lines established in Detroit. The morals of the Garland Avenue residents and the police are on display in the court room scenes when they openly lie. Some of them testify that their testimony is coached about the number of people on the street and whether or not stones are thrown. Their stories fall apart under the intense cross-examination of Darrow, Hays and Chawke. It is during the trials that these people are confronted with the choices they have made. This is what the defense attorneys emphasize in their closing arguments, especially at Henry Sweet's trial. Where does racial prejudice come from and why does it exist? They show the prosecution's witnesses for what they are. Their actions based on hatred and fear contributed as much to Breiner's death as the actions of the group within the house did. Darrow points out the shortcomings of discrimination in his closing arguments. He says he knows that there is nothing they can do about the hatred but wait for it to abate.

Style

Points of View

The book is written in the third person. The reader has author Kevin Boyle's viewpoints and perceptions seen through the eyes of Ossian Sweet and the others. The events, the fear, the violence are all portrayed in this way. The author's viewpoint comes through several times in the book regarding discrimination and the living conditions in the post-Civil War south and in 1920s Detroit.

The author allows the viewpoints of both sides to come through in the book. The fears of the Garland Avenue whites are expressed very clearly when they are confronted with a black family moving into the area. They are worried about their daughters being raped and they are worried about their property values. Their fears are fed by the Klan and others. Their mentality is revealed during the testimony when they lie under the coaching of certain police and the Waterworks Park Improvement Association. The viewpoint of Darrow and others regarding discrimination and its causes and its effects also is clearly presented. The author does a good job in presenting the different points of view of the different factions involved in the situation.

Setting

Most of the book takes place in the early part of the 1900s although some of the historical background chapters go back to the slave plantations in the south. The author follows Sweet's ancestors from their days as slaves, through the Civil War and into the post-Civil War South. The Jim Crow South is a dangerous place for blacks. Even though Sweet's parents are the first in their family to own their own land in Bartow, Florida, the danger and violence and fear cause them to send their sons north in the hopes of a better life. The lynchings of the Jim Crow South are not prevalent in the North, but the Klan and other groups are quite prevalent.

As the setting changes from Bartow, Florida, to Xenia, Ohio, to Washington, D.C., to Detroit, Michigan, Sweet confronts discrimination and violence. Color lines are drawn in cities to keep the blacks confined to ghettos and to keep them out of all-white neighborhoods. The massive migration of blacks from the South to the North results in intensified discrimination in the North, resulting in situations like the Sweet case. As the number of migrants grows, so do the racial barriers, as the whites attempt to confine the migrants to various parts of the city. Detroit is like most other cities in this respect. The only place where Sweet does not experience discrimination and can go where he wants and do what he wants without fear and discrimination is Paris, until he tries to gain admission for Gladys at the American Hospital.



Language and Meaning

Boyle writes the book in a style that is very clear and easy to understand. Because of this the book is readable for all levels. The reader initially takes offense to the use of the words colored, Negro and nigger and must remember the author's note at the beginning of the book. The author wants to create the drama and intensity of the period. Readers who miss this note may feel offended. This is the most vulgar language in the book but the author would not be able to convey the drama of the period without its use. There is no legalese or technical jargon. The book reads like a novel.

It is obvious that a great deal of research went into the writing of this book. There are more than 50 pages of notes and many quotes throughout the book. Boyle uses a variety of sources including books, press releases and newspaper stories, magazine stories, NAACP documents and various court documents and transcripts. The book is factual and written in an easy-to-read manner that makes it easy to understand. It is not boring. There is also the element of suspense as to the outcomes of the trials. Because of this, it is difficult to put the book down.

Structure

Arc of Justice consists of ten chapters with a prologue and an epilogue. There are also several pages of photographs of the major characters, the house on Garland Avenue and other places that help give the reader a better sense of the reality of the situation. The book contains a Table of Contents, Index, Author's Note and more than 50 pages of references and notes. There are also numerous quotes throughout the book.

The book is not completely organized in chronological order. The opening chapter begins with the events at the Garland Avenue house that lead up to the shooting and arrest of the group. Then the chapters become historical to give the reader the background information on Sweet and the Jim Crow South. Sweet's ancestors are slaves and the book explains how they came to settle in Bartow, Florida, where Sweet's parents buy their own land. Successive chapters follow Sweet through his education and his settling in Detroit. The purpose of these chapters is to give the reader insight into Sweet's character and the fear that motivates him and others. These chapters portray the post-Civil War lives of the southern blacks and explain their reasons for migration to the North that leads to the problems of discrimination and violence in the North. These points are also stressed at the trials by the defense team.

In some places within chapters, Boyle jumps around from event to event, making it somewhat difficult for the reader to follow. Sometimes the reader has to look up a character to see exactly where he fits in, but this doesn't happen to often.



Quotes

"White slummers thought black life exciting because it was 'primitive' and vital. Visiting the ghetto's haunts became the era's way to snub mainstream society, to be in the avant-garde." Prologue, pg. 5

"The backlash was fueled by a fear of moral decay. Many native-born whites were appalled by the cities' celebration of immigrant and black cultures, with its implicit condemnation of traditional standards and its unmistakable whiff of amalgamation. Political conflict and economic strain made the backlash even more incendiary. For the better part of a generation, native-born politicians had been trying to check ethnic influence in city governments. Their efforts were driven partly by self-interest, partly by their belief that politicians of immigrant stock simply weren't capable of providing disinterested public service." Prologue, pg. 6

"The cities weren't segregated in one quick rush. White real estate agents, bankers, and homeowners had begun shaping Chicago's ghetto in the first decade of the twentieth century; white Detroiters didn't follow their example until the later 1920s and early 1930s. What's more, no one coordinated the businessmen's practices and the homeowners' actions. They spread by quiet agreement, sealed by a handshake in the boardroom, a directive from the home office, a conversation over coffee in the neighbor's kitchen. But the forces of the market place have a way of imposing discipline on disparate behaviors. By the summer of 1925, racial restrictions were assuming the power of convention across the urban . As they did, the glittering cities of the Jazz Age were inexorably being divided in two." Prologue, pg. 10

"Across Leon County, former slaves tried to shape freedom for themselves. The vast majority of freedmen were farmers, and they knew they could provide for their families if only they had a few acres of their own. They dreamed of land, not row upon row of cotton, just enough to cultivate some crops. Freedmen also desperately wanted to school their children: free people needed to read and write if they were to manage their own affairs. But it was more than that. Everything their masters had denied them - schooling, family, property, freedom of movement - Negroes were now determined to claim for themselves, whatever the consequences." Chapter 2, pg. 48

"'I have three daughters,' proclaimed the most fearsome of the demagogues, South Carolina's one-eyed governor, Ben Tillman, 'but so help me God, I had rather find either one of them killer by a tiger or a bear and gather up her bones and bury them ... than to have her crawl to me and tell me the horrid story that she had been robbed of the jewel of her maidenhood by a black friend.' Facing such an imminent threat, no decent white man could desert the party of white supremacy. It was a wholly irrational appeal, politics in its most degraded form, and it worked. As Populism crumbled, darkness descended on the South. Whites waited in fear and anticipation for outrages to begin. Even the rumor of an incident could drive whites into a frenzy of violence, an orgy of retaliation." Chapter 2, pg. 65



"They were drawn by the promise of equal treatment. In the first few years after the Civil War, when the Republicans' commitment to racial change was still strong, most eastern and midwestern states had passed sweeping civil rights laws that prohibited segregation of public places and opened ballot boxes to colored men. What's more, white northerners didn't expect Negroes to kowtow the way they were forced to do in even the most enlightened portions of the South." Chapter 3, pg. 71

"The American military draft, meanwhile, drained factories of workers at precisely the time industrialists were desperately trying to fill the flood of military orders. Facing a labor shortage of unprecedented proportions, employers sent word south that long-standing racial barriers were being torn down for the duration. The new had an electric effect on sharecroppers, day laborers, and domestics desperate to escape grinding poverty and decades of unrelenting brutality. Almost half a million southern blacks left the South for industrial centers like Detroit, Chicago, and New York in 1917 alone, an exodus so great that southern whites feared the economy of their region might well collapse from want of workers." Chapter 3, pg. 88

"He could bury his past under years of education. He could live hundreds of miles from his parents' home, in the heart of a great city. But no matter what he achieved or where he went, he was never safe from the mindless fury of the mob." Chapter 3, pg. 97

"But it was the marketplace that really induced panic along Garland Avenue. Once the Negroes arrived, real estate agents would start steering white customers elsewhere, banks would downgrade home values, some of the neighbors would try to sell as quickly as they could, and the downward spiral would begin, housing prices tumbling, family budgets crumbling, disaster looming. It was a process shot through with irony, whites suddenly being victimized by the very practices that were supposed to protect them from Negro invasion. The thought was simply terrifying." Chapter 5, pg. 147

"As Ossian and the others uncurled themselves from the wagon's benches and gingerly stepped down to the street, they had only the most basic sense of what was happening. Someone in the mob had been killed and they were in deep, deep trouble." Chapter 6, pg. 170

"But the blacks and the ethnic masses were also divided by decades of fierce competition for a share of industrialism's dregs, a tortured history of mutual distrust, and the poison of the American racial ideal, which made the swarthiest of immigrants desperate to prove himself a white man. For all his optimism, even Du Bois had to admit that the workers of the world showed little inclination to unite across the color line." Chapter 7, pg. 204

"When the guards brought Henry Sweet into the detention pen to talk to his second son, Otis tried to apologize. No explanations, no rationalizations, no appeals to principles that he wanted his father to understand. He simply said he was sorry for the embarrassment he and his brothers had brought to the family." Chapter 7, pg. 224



"When the story finally broke, Ossian - the cowering boy in the bulrushes, the medical student hiding in his rooms as gunfire filled the streets of the capital, the ambitious doctor determined to secure his place among the Talented Tenth - suddenly found himself not simply one of eleven defendants but a national symbol of New Negro militancy, while his charming young wife was swept into the marvels of celebrity." Chapter 8, pg. 245

"When I opened the door and saw the mob,' Ossian said, 'I realized I was facing the same mob that had hounded my people through its entire history. In my mind I was pretty confident of what I was up against, with my back against the wall. I was filled with a peculiar fear, the fear of one who knows the history of my race.'" Chapter 9, pg. 290

"Judging by men and women such as these, Darrow archly asked, wouldn't any reasonable person conclude that it was not the Nordic but the Negro who belonged to the superior race?"

"The question was meant to be shocking, both in its audacity and in the sudden realization that it had to be answered in the affirmative. Darrow had taken on the Sweet case for just this moment of terrible honesty, when with a twist of the evidence and a flash of eloquence, he made the courtroom see that white supremacy was an illusion, a poisonous, ruinous fantasy, just as it was an illusion to believe that capitalism was just, that men were responsible for the evil that they did, and that there was a God in heaven." Chapter 9, pg. 249

"More distressing was the continual criticism of Darrow's decision to seek separate trials for each of the defendants. Almost everyone in Detroit's Talented Tenth said the same thing: as long as the eleven were kept together, the prosecutor would have to confront the conspiracy charge that had tied him into knots during the first trial. Once they were split apart, that pivotal protection would evaporate, leaving the most vulnerable of the defendants dangerously exposed to a jury's whims. And that, said one colleague, 'would be suicidal to the cause.'" Chapter 10, pg. 311



Topics for Discussion

In what ways does the post-Civil War South oppress blacks?

How did Sweet come to attend Wilberforce University? Why did his parents send him away at the age of thirteen?

What is the Talented Tenth?

What is the purpose of the Waterworks Park Improvement Association? What are its tactics?

Why did Darrow and Hays allow a group trial? What is the advantage to them?

What are Darrow's views on discrimination? What does he say the solution is?

What are the Ku Klux Klan's problems with the mayoral election?

What is the political situation and backdrop when the Sweets purchased their house?