

Atlas Shrugged Study Guide

Atlas Shrugged by Ayn Rand

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Plot Summary

The society of Atlas Shrugged is one of worsening economic conditions, and Dagny Taggart, who is vice president of operations, is working to repair Taggart Transcontinental's Rio Norte Line to service Colorado. This is the last booming industrial area in the country. Her efforts are hampered because many of the country's most talented entrepreneurs are retiring and disappearing. The crisis worsens when the Mexican government nationalizes Taggart's San Sebastian Line, which had been built for Francisco d'Anconia's copper mills, which turned out to be worthless. Francisco, who had been Dagny's lover, was once a successful industrialist but is now a worthless playboy. In an attempt to solve the railroad's financial problems, Dagny's brother Jim uses his political influence to pass legislation that leads to the destruction of Taggart's only competition in Colorado. The Rio Norte Line has to be fixed immediately, and Dagny plans to use a new alloy created by Hank Rearden of Rearden Metal. When Francisco is confronted about the San Sebastian mines, he tells Dagny he is deliberately destroying d'Anconia Cooper. Later he is at Rearden's anniversary party, and urges Rearden to reject the freeloaders who live off him.

The State Science Institute denounces Rearden metal, and Taggart's stock crashes. Dagny creates her own company to rebuild the line, which is a huge success. Dagny and Rearden become lovers. Together, they discover a motor in an abandoned factory that runs on static electricity. They try to find its inventor. New legislation is passed that destroys industry in Colorado. Ellis Wyatt, an oil tycoon, suddenly disappears after setting fire to his oil wells. Dagny has no choice but to cut trains, which causes the situation to worsen. More industrialists disappear. Dagny believes someone is sabotaging things by taking men away when they are needed the most. Francisco visits Rearden and asks him why he is staying in business with the conditions as repressive as they are. When a fire breaks out and they work to put it out, Francisco understands Rearden's love for his mills.

Rearden goes on trial for breaking one of the new laws. He refuses to participate in the proceedings. He tells the judges they can coerce him by force, but that it will not help them convict him. They do not want to be seen as thugs, so they let him go. Wesley Mouch needs Rearden's cooperation for a new set of socialist laws, and Jim needs economic favors that will keep his railroad running after the collapse in Colorado. Jim appeals to Lillian Rearden, who wants to destroy her husband. She tells him that Rearden and Dagny are having an affair, and he uses this information in a trade. The new set of laws, called Directive 10-289, is irrational and repressive. Included in the directive is a ruling that requires all patents be signed over to the government. Rearden is blackmailed into signing over his metal in order to protect Dagny's reputation.

The new directive causes Dagny to quit, and she retreats to a mountain lodge. She hears about a massive accident at the Taggart Tunnel, and returns to her job. The scientist she hired to help rebuild the motor sends her a letter indicating he fears he will be the next target of the destroyer. To stop him from disappearing, she follows him in an airplane and crashes in the mountains. She wakes up in a valley among all the retired



industrialists. They are on a strike, which they call a strike of the mind. She meets John Galt, who turns out to be both the destroyer and the inventor of the motor. She falls in love with him, but is unable to give up her railroad, so she leaves the valley. When she returns to work, she finds that the government has nationalized the railroad industry. Government leaders want her to give a speech that reassures the public about the new laws. She refuses until she is blackmailed by Lillian. On the air, she announces her affair with Rearden and reveals the blackmail. She warns the people about the repressive government.

The economy is on the verge of collapse. Francisco destroys the rest of his holdings and disappears. By this point, the politicians are not even pretending to work for the public good anymore. They peddle influence which creates more chaos. Crops rot while they wait for freight trains that are diverted for personal favors. In an attempt to get control of Francisco's mills, the government stages a riot at Rearden Steel. Led by Francisco, who has been working undercover at the mills, the steelworkers organize and fight back. Francisco saves Rearden's life and convinces him to join the strike.

The head of state prepares to give a speech about the economic situation, and John Galt takes over the airwaves. He gives a lengthy speech to the country, giving the terms of the strike. The government is desperate, and seeks to make Galt their economic dictator. Dagny inadvertently leads them to him, and they take him prisoner. Galt refuses to help them, even under torture. Finally, Dagny and the strikers rescue him in an armed confrontation with guards. They return to the valley, and Dagny joins the strike. Soon, the country's collapse is complete, and the strikers prepare to return.



Non-Contradiction, Chapters 1-2

Summary

Chapter 1: "The Theme"

Chapter one opens with Eddie Willers walking toward his New York office. He sees the businesses failing all around him and is reminded of an oak tree that was struck by lightning when he was younger. Eddie gives an anonymous homeless man some money, and the man asks him "Who is John Galt?" The question disturbs him. It is a slang reference to everything hopeless and unknowable. He sees businesses failing everywhere.

Eddie meets with Jim Taggart. They talk about another wreck on the Rio Norte Line. They argue, with Eddie trying to convince Jim of how it should be handled in order to save the railroad and their customers. Jim says that nothing can be done.

Dagny Taggart sits aboard a train after examining the Rio Norte Line. She is listening to beautiful music that turns out to be a brakeman whistling. He tells her the tune is Richard Halley's Fifth Concerto. To her knowledge, Halley only wrote four concertos, and when she mentions this, the brakeman becomes evasive. Dagny later awakes to find the train has stopped. When she investigates, she finds that the engineer refuses to take responsibility for moving the train. She tells him who she is and orders him to move the train. She makes a note to herself to promote Owen Kellogg.

Dagny tells her brother, Jim, that the problems with the Rio Norte are worse than they thought, so she has canceled the order with Orren Boyle to place an order with Rearden Steel for a new alloy. Jim complains that she had no authority from the Board, but finally agrees to let the order go through.

Dagny calls the Music Publishing Company and asks about Halley's Fifth Concerto. She is told he has dropped out of public life, and has not published anything in eight years. Owen Kellogg quits before Dagny can offer him a promotion. He does not give her a reason. She offers him anything he wants, but he refuses to stay. She asks why he is quitting if he likes his job, and he simply says, "Who is John Galt?"

Chapter 2: "The Chain"

Hank Rearden watches the first heat for the first order of Rearden Metal, the new alloy, being poured. He walks home and thinks of the ten years of trial and effort that led to the new alloy. At home he finds his wife talking to his mother, his brother Philip, and Paul Larkin. He apologizes for being late, but does not share his excitement for Rearden Metal, knowing they will not share his joy. His family insults him and his devotion to his work, scolding him for his long hours at work, and for not caring about them. He gives his wife, Lillian, a bracelet made with the first order of Rearden Metal. His mother reprimands him for thinking his metal would equate to diamonds to his wife.



Rearden feels only exhaustion and confusion when it comes to his family, not knowing what they want from him. Paul Larkin approaches Rearden and advises him to ease up on his individualism, reminding Rearden that he should pay attention to “his man in Washington.” Rearden knows that every day it is more important to have a strong lobbyist and protection against legislation.

Analysis

Chapters 1 and 2 place heavy emphasis on establishing the status quo, which is a declining economic state. Businesses are failing and the companies still in business are facing shortages and delays. There is a sense of hopelessness among the people, which is epitomized in the rhetorical question “Who is John Galt?” It is a way for people to express their feelings of defenselessness and broken spirits. The oak tree Eddie remembers is a symbol of the decay going on around him. After the lightning struck he looked inside to find the interior of the tree already dead, and it rotted from the inside out. This parallels society, which is also rotting from the inside out.

The first two chapters also set Dagny and Jim against each other in the story's central conflict. They are on opposite ends of the spectrum: Dagny is strong and confident in making decisions based on what is best and needed, while Jim is weak and relies on public opinion to make decisions.

Rand also addresses the issues of personal responsibility and commitment or loyalty to work. Some characters, such as Eddie and Dagny, do what is necessary for the railroad company. Dagny knows the new alloy will be better even though others are not using it. On the other hand, characters such as Owen and the train engineer do not seem to have loyalty to the railroad. The engineer refuses to move the train, even when faced with his boss. He has no sense of personal responsibility to compel him to do his job. Though Owen is a promising employee, he quits without giving a reason. He also seems to have no loyalty to the company. Jim also seems to have a poor sense of personal responsibility in respect to Taggart Transcontinental. He is more concerned with doing favors and having the right connections than doing what is best for the company.

Hank Rearden is a self-made man. He works hard for the love of the work, and is motivated by a love of what he does rather than what he gets from other people or connections he has or needs in order to be successful. The decisions he makes are for himself, and not for anyone else, even though his family criticizes him for his decisions. They stand in contrast to Rearden, representing those who would benefit from others' hard work without giving those people the respect they deserve for that work.

The conversation between Rearden and Larkin foreshadows political events to come. Rearden does not like political games; he simply wants to work and earn a living. Since he has been more involved in his work than the activities of “his man in Washington,” he is out of the loop in terms of politics and legislation, which will prove a grave mistake.



Vocabulary

cynical, diffused, conscientious, pinnacles, mechanism, scrupulous, decentralized, lout, obstinate, ruffian, incongruous, premonitory, inconsequential, alloy, trusses, annihilate, prodigality, ingenuity, indulgence, hovels, austere, gangling, precarious, spurned



Non-Contradiction, Chapters 3-4

Summary

Chapter 3: "The Top and the Bottom"

Four men sit in a bar discussing the nation's economy. The men present are Orren Boyle, Jim Taggart, Paul Larkin, and Wesley Mouch. Boyle claims that Rearden Steel has an unfair advantage because it owns iron mines. Taggart agrees to use his influence in Washington to force Rearden into giving up the mines. In return, he wants Boyle to get Dan Conway forced out of Colorado. Jim agrees to find Mouch a bureaucratic post in Washington. Their conversation shifts to Mexico, where Jim has built the San Sebastian Line. There are rumors that Mexico is going to nationalize the line, but Boyle refutes them.

Back at the office, Jim confronts Dagny about the shoddy trains in Mexico. She explains that she removed everything of value from the San Sebastian Line to protect the company if Mexico nationalizes the line. Jim reminds her that Mexico guaranteed their property rights for two hundred years, and says he built it for the people. Jim also built the line to get a profit from the d'Anconia Copper mines, but in recent years Francisco d'Anconia has become a playboy, and the company has yet to see any copper from the mines.

Eddie Willers sits in the cafeteria of the Taggart Terminal with a grease-stained worker. He is familiar with this worker even though he doesn't know his name. He complains to the worker about the world decaying around him, but says he has hope in Dagny's efforts to fix the Rio Norte Line. The worker asks about Dagny's personal life, which surprises Eddie.

Chapter 4: "The Immovable Movers"

Eddie tells Dagny that McNamara, their new contractor, has quit, giving no reasons, and has disappeared. The People's State of Mexico nationalizes the San Sebastian Line and the d'Anconia copper mines. When speaking with the Board, Jim takes full credit for Dagny's decision to remove the valuable equipment from the San Sebastian Line before it was nationalized.

The National Alliance of Railroads approves a proposal called the "Anti-dog-eat-dog Rule," which is designed to reduce competition among railroads. In the proposal, the interests of the whole industry are to be determined by a majority vote, and each company must submit to the majority's decision. Under the new rule, the Phoenix-Durango railroad will cease to exist. Dagny visits Dan Conway, urging him to fight. He is too tired and has decided to retire. She feels like a looter now that she has beat him in Colorado in this way. Conway tells her to get her Rio Norte Line up and running quickly because the fate of Ellis Wyatt depends on it. Ellis Wyatt visits Dagny and tells her she



has to fix the line immediately, giving her an ultimatum. If she does not give him what he needs, he will take her company down with him. She says he'll have the transportation when he needs it, which catches him off guard.

Dagny visits Hank Rearden. She tells him about the meeting with Wyatt, saying they have to rebuild the line in nine months, not twelve, and he assures her it can be done. He tells her it is people like them who move the world and who will ultimately pull it through.

Analysis

Chapter 3 begins to show the political aspects of the economy. Political influence and the granting of favors has become a form of currency, and the truth is that the society is crumbling because of these back-room deals. Because of this, the weak profit at the expense of the strong. Taggart lost business to the Phoenix-Durango Line because it offered better service, but Conway will ultimately fail because of the influence of the influence peddlers. In the same vein, Boyle will profit at the expense of Rearden despite the superiority of Rearden's product. On the other hand, Dagny, Rearden, and Wyatt are straightforward and honest in their dealings, relying on mutual self-interest. Wyatt and Rearden's surprise at Dagny's response to them shows that this way of doing things is rare in the current business world.

Jim shows the hypocrisy in the supposed altruism of socialist endeavors. He claims to have built the San Sebastian Line for the Mexican people, but in reality, he built it to get profits from the d'Anconia copper mines and to improve his reputation among his Washington friends by helping the government to appear altruistic. These hidden motives appear throughout the novel, and behind them stand looters, ready to gain profit and influence.

Rand begins to show the initial effects of socialism in these chapters. With the passage of the "Anti-dog-eat-dog Rule," the people must submit to the decision of the majority, regardless of how irrational the decision is. Dan Conway knows the rule is wrong, and is suffering for it, but he surrenders his mind to the group and allows his company to be destroyed. It is this idea of the rational person submitting to the irrational group that Rand is warning against.

These chapters also introduce questions that must be answered over the course of the novel. The reader learns that Francisco, now a worthless playboy, was once a successful businessman. We also learn that Dagny knew Francisco very well at one time. The reader asks why a man like Francisco would squander his talents, why so many talented men are continuing to disappear, and who is the man Eddie speaks with in the cafeteria, and why is he interested in Dagny? These questions urge the reader to continue reading in the hopes of getting the answers.

Vocabulary

masonry, swill, wizened, contemptuous, borne, insolent, ineptitude, boudoirs, sundry, ominous, splice, concourse, self-abdication, drudge, phosphorescent, vapid, harlequin, ungainly, equitable, self-immolation, tripe



Non-Contradiction, Chapters 5-6

Summary

Chapter 5: "The Climax of the d'Anconias"

The Mexican government nationalizes Francisco's San Sebastian mines. When the government discovers they are worthless, Dagny is furious. On her way to confront him, she remembers how he used to be. They were friends as children and later became lovers. After a ten-year affair, Francisco left her. He said it was torture for him, but that he had no choice. He warned her not to ask any questions, and that he would do things to make her denounce him. Over the next few years, he became a notorious playboy that squandered his fortune.

When Dagny confronts Francisco, she asks him why he deliberately invested in worthless mines and ruined the fortunes of his stockholders, including Jim. He tells her he is fighting against her and the railroad, which horrifies her, and when she asks what he is trying to do, he tells Dagny she does not have enough courage to hear it yet.

Chapter 6: "The Non-Commercial"

Lillian Rearden throws a party to celebrate her wedding anniversary. Hank agrees to attend out of a sense of duty. Dagny also attends. She feels there is much to celebrate, but Rearden is cold to her. The guests are writers, intellectuals, and other important people of society. The conversations reveal the futility of the times. Dr. Pritchett says man is merely a collection of chemicals, with only instinct to guide him. Eubank contends that true literature is about suffering and defeat because happiness is impossible. The intellectuals agree that need is the only valid consideration, and that whatever is good for society is the right thing.

When Francisco arrives, Hank asks Lillian to keep Francisco away from him. Jim pulls Francisco aside to confront him about the mines, and Francisco responds that he did only what the whole world is preaching. Jim is furious.

After a while, Francisco approaches Hank and tells him he is attending the party only because he wanted to meet him. He approaches Hank with such sincerity that Hank listens. Francisco's message is mysterious, but draws Hank interest. A woman at the party says she knows the identity of John Galt, claiming he is a millionaire who discovered Atlantis. Dagny does not believe the story, but Francisco steps in and says he does believe it.

Dagny admires Lillian's bracelet made of Rearden Metal. Lillian mockingly says she would gladly exchange it for diamonds. Dagny offers Lillian her own diamond bracelet, which Lillian must accept. Rearden watches and is shaken, but stands by his wife, telling Dagny that her action was not necessary.



Analysis

In Chapter 5, more questions are raised when the reader learns more about Francisco. Not only is it revealed that his mines are worthless, but that he once loved Dagny, and chose to leave her to live a playboy lifestyle. Dagny wants to know why he would destroy himself, why he is trying to destroy her railroad, and why he left her, but she says she is not ready to know the answers. This implies that the reader is not ready to know yet, either, and heightens the suspense of the mystery of Francisco.

Lillian's party shows that people are trying to cling to normalcy despite the crumbling economy around them. While businesses fail and leaders disappear, there are parties where people attend and have discussions about the state of things. When Jim confronts Francisco about the worthless mines, he tells Jim he was simply putting society's ideas into action. This is Francisco's attempt to show people the absurdity of socialist ideas in practice, as well as foreshadow the absurdity to come as lawmakers enact policies that are illogical, and then are confused as to why they fail. But Jim does not understand the connection because he is too focused on what he has lost.

The party also brings Hank and Francisco together. The way Francisco approaches Hank disarms him, which opens him to listening to the message. Not only does he approach Hank with dignity, but speaks to him respectfully, which contradicts Hank's perspective of Francisco. This conversation marks the beginning of Hank's transformation and struggle to get through his dual nature. Francisco points out that Hank is an egoist who follows his own rational self-interest at work, but in his personal life, others dictate his morality, and he accepts constant criticism from a family that lives off his work without doing any of their own. When Francisco points out the duality, Hank begins to close the gap between these two selves, but still doesn't understand why Francisco told him all this.

Dagny's appreciation for Lillian's bracelet represents her appreciation for what is important to Hank, and that the same things are important to her. Lillian, on the other hand, hates the bracelet and only wears it to mock Hank. The things that are important to Hank are not important to Lillian. Instead, they are a source for ridicule and mocking.

Hank's reaction to the exchange between Dagny and Lillian shows that he feels obligated to stand by his wife, just as he feels obligated to attend the party when his interests are elsewhere. He assumes the fault in their relationship is his. He treats Dagny coldly because he is attracted to her, but is trying to resist so he can remain loyal to his wife. This further expresses the theme of personal responsibility and a sense of loyalty. Hank feels a personal responsibility to his marriage, even if it is loveless.

The mystery of John Galt continues as the party guests speculate about him. When Francisco says he believes the story that Galt discovered Atlantis, there is the implication that he is somehow connected to Galt, or that he knows the answer to the rhetorical question "Who is John Galt?"



Vocabulary

aristocracy, caste, derelicts, derisively, brusquely, drivel, balustrade, exultant, etude, implacable, indolent, ermine, gauntness, superfluous, inviolate, hovels, axiom, ostentatious, canapé, aggregates, incredulous



Non-Contradiction, Chapters 7-8

Summary

Chapter 7: "The Exploiters and the Exploited"

Hank and Dagny manage to keep the Rio Norte Line repairs on schedule, despite the many problems they face. Ellis Wyatt has been helping behind the scenes, and he appears at the construction site. Hank suggests replacing an old bridge in Colorado with one made entirely of Rearden Metal, and Dagny agrees.

In New York, Dagny has coffee at a diner. A man sitting next to her complains that there is no human spirit, and another man shrugs, saying, "Who is John Galt?" A small, shriveled tramp says he knows that Galt was a great explorer who found the fountain of youth.

Dr. Potter of the State Science Institute visits Hank and tells him society is not ready for Rearden Metal. He explains that it could hurt competitors, and asks him to wait a few years. Hank refuses, and Dr. Potter offers to buy rights to the metal, which Hank also refuses. Dr. Potter threatens Hank, warning him about some pending legislation. Later, the State Science Institute issues a formal warning about Rearden Metal. Though there is no scientific information given, it warns about dangers. As a result of the warning, Taggart stock falls, Ben Nealy quits, the Brotherhood of Road and Track Workers refuses to work with the metal, and Jim leaves town.

Dagny visits the State Science Institute in New Hampshire to find the once-great scientist, Dr. Stadler, completely disillusioned. He explains that the Institute will not support Rearden Metal because it would mean that a private citizen succeeded where a government-funded institution failed.

When Dagny finds Jim, he is desperate. He wants to save the railroad but is at a loss as to what to do. Dagny says she will resign from Taggart Transcontinental and start her own company. After she can prove Rearden Metal works, she will return to Taggart and bring the line with her. She decides to name her company the John Galt Line. Francisco refuses to give Dagny money and is shocked at her choice of company name. Despite this, Dagny finds the investors she needs, with Hank among them.

The Legislature passes the Equalization of Opportunity Bill, which will force Hank to give up his mines. Wesley Mouch did not tell Hank the bill was being considered, and cannot be reached by phone.

Chapter 8: "The John Galt Line"

Hank sells his mines to Paul Larkin and Ken Dannager. With the money he gets from the sales, he offers Taggart Transcontinental a moratorium on its debt to Rearden Metal so Taggart can survive to be a customer. Hank is still unable to reach Wesley Mouch,



but reads in the papers that Wesley has been appointed assistant coordinator of the Bureau of Economic Planning and National Resources.

The public is critical of the John Galt Line as its opening day approaches. When Dagny asks for volunteers to run the first train, every engineer at the company offers. At a press conference, Dagny says she expects the line to be very successful. Dagny and Hank ride together in the engine of the first locomotive to ride the John Galt Line. The first trip is successful and gives people something to celebrate. That night, at Ellis Wyatt's house, Dagny and Hank make love for the first time.

Analysis

Rand uses physical descriptions of her characters to emphasize their roles in the story. The industrialists who use their minds as power and who find happiness in producing are described as young, beautiful, and vital. On the other hand, looters and moochers are sullen and formless. In the second John Galt story, he is described as having discovered the fountain of youth. This is a symbol of youth and vitality, implying he is a producer who relies on his mind.

The State Science Institute's reaction to Rearden Metal reveals an effect of socialism in practice. When the government controls innovation, it will quash private discoveries so the government will continue to be powerful and in control. This slows innovation in society, and can pave the way for corruption and politics to rule rather than the good of the people. Dr. Stadler is the representation of disillusionment that develops when the scientific mind surrenders to the state. Dr. Stadler knows Rearden Metal would be good for society, but backs the Institute's position anyway.

The success of the John Galt Line created by Dagny and Hank stands in stark contrast to the corruption and mediocrity of the socialist economy. The line represents the success of hard work and skill, making decisions based on logic and what is best for the company and people. When Hank and Dagny make love for the first time, it is the physical celebration of the triumph of the line's success. This shows how important the work is to both of them. The sexual encounter they have is merely an extension of their work on the John Galt Line, and is natural for them.

Vocabulary

derricks, gorge, abutments, famine, excavation, metallurgists, belligerent, chromium, esthetics, bulbous, anteroom, fissure, zest, ingratiatingly, unbridled, stranglehold, earnest, monotonous, inasmuch, malevolence, volition, scornful



Non-Contradiction, Chapters 9-10

Summary

Chapter 9: "The Sacred and the Profane"

Dagny and Hank awake together. Hank is angry because he sees sex as an obscene impulse, and believes they are both worthy of contempt. Dagny disagrees. She is proud to have made love with him and share her physical desire with someone she respects. She says she makes no claims on him except that he comes to her with his lowest physical desires.

Jim meets Cheryl Brooks. She thinks he is responsible for the success of the John Galt Line, which he lets her believe. She worships people she sees as heroes, and Jim enjoys the attention he is getting, so he invites her to his apartment for a drink.

Hank and Dagny take a vacation together. They stop at the site of the Twentieth Century Motor Company manufacturing plant in the hopes of finding some scarce machine tools. They find the plant is closed, having been ruined, and the town is in poverty. In the plant's lab they find the remnants of a motor designed to run on static electricity, which would revolutionize industrial production. They decide to find the motor's inventor and rebuild the motor.

Chapter 10: "Wyatt's Torch"

Wesley issues statements urging the use of emergency powers to help balance the economy. The Union of Locomotive Engineers demands the maximum speed of all trains be reduced to sixty miles per hour. The Union of Railway Conductors and Brakemen demands the length of all freight trains be reduced to sixty cars. The states of Wyoming, New Mexico, Utah, and Arizona demand that the number of trains in Colorado not exceed the number running in each of these states. A group led by Orren Boyle demands the passage of a law limiting the production of Rearden Metal so it will not exceed competitors. Another group demands a law giving every customer who wants it an equal supply of Rearden Metal. Another group wants to prevent eastern businesses from moving out of state, hoping to stop companies from moving to Colorado.

Hank discovers that Paul Larkin sent his supply of ore to Orren Boyle as a term of the deal arranged earlier by Jim. Hank begins getting his ore illegally, which is the only option left to him.

As Dagny searches for the motor's inventor she is led to Lee Hunsacker, who tells her he purchased the factory from heirs to Jed Starnes. Over the course of Hunsacker acquiring the factory, Midas Mulligan and Judge Narragansett, both involved in the process, disappeared. When Dagny finds Starnes's heirs, she finds that the factory failed because the workers were paid according to their proclaimed needs, and those



who worked hard were required to support those who did not. The chaos that ensued ruined the factory. Dagny is led to a man who may know the name of the inventor, who is working as a cook in a Wyoming diner. He knows the inventor of the motor, but will not give the name. Dagny learns that the cook is Hugh Akston, who is a retired philosopher of great fame. He gives her a mysterious cigarette stamped with the sign of the dollar.

Dagny returns to New York to find that all the laws the looters were seeking have been passed, and a special tax was imposed on Colorado. Dagny tries to reach Ellis Wyatt, but when she gets to Colorado, he has set fire to all his oil fields and disappeared.

Analysis

Hank's reaction to his sexual encounter with Dagny shows the typical perspective that separates mind and body, with the idea that the desires of the body are base while the desires of the mind are noble. Dagny's rejection of this reaction represents Rand's attitude that the two cannot be separated, and that the desires of the body stem from the mind. For Dagny, the physical relationship arose out of the intellectual relationship, while for Hank; the physical relationship was "giving in" to his physical desires.

The relationship of Jim and Cherryl shows the other end of the spectrum for a relationship in Rand's society. Cherryl wants to be with Jim because of what she believes he represents, and Jim chooses her because of his need to destroy. Cherryl is an easy target for Jim because she worships him as the hero she believes he is.

In his conversation with Cherryl, Jim complains about his sister, saying that she has no right to think she's any good, and that she has no basis to say that Rearden Metal is any good. This exchange serves two purposes. The first is to emphasize Jim's position that public opinion determines worth, which was shown earlier in the story during a conversation with Dagny.

The conversation between Jim and Cherryl also touches on gender issues in the society of Atlas Shrugged. Rand's book was published in 1957, and during this time, women were only beginning to venture into the work force, and a woman of Dagny's position and reputation would be virtually unheard of in those days. Dagny's position as vice president of Taggart Transcontinental reflects this. Though she is the brains and action of the railroad, and works tirelessly to save it while Jim flounders and escapes to his estate, she is not the president. Instead, Jim is the president simply because he is a man. It is likely the Board would simply not recognize Dagny's authority if she had been president.

Chapter 10 presents a shift in Dagny's story and motivation. Until this point in the story, her motivation has been in the preservation of Taggart Transcontinental. However, with the discovery of the motor, her new motivation is to find its inventor and rebuild the motor. Dagny knows how important this motor would be to industry, and it has the potential to salvage a crumbling economy. As she attempts to unravel the mystery, it is



becoming more important than saving the railroad. This reveals Dagny's character and sense of loyalty and responsibility. While she is loyal to her company, she has a greater sense of responsibility to her country. She realizes if she saves her railroad but society falls, it would have been for naught. The motor itself symbolizes the mind. Just as a motor powers and drives a locomotive, the mind powers and drives individuals and societies. This suggests that it is the mind that will save society.

Chapter 10 further illustrates socialism in action. The laws passed and the story of the ruined factory show the chaos that comes from socialist ideas in practice due to the corruption of the people who lead the society or company.

Finally, Dagny gets more clues about the disappearances when she finds Hugh Akston. He retired because he could not longer practice philosophy. Since his philosophy is that of reason, it follows that only reason could have pulled him away from it. This suggests that the motivation behind the disappearances is reason itself.

Vocabulary

mimeographed, brusqueness, gob, smelting, irrefutably, amalgamated, dubiously, grimy, bilge, squalid, cornices, charwoman, reprieve, chartreuse, niche, piecemeal, stupor, obsequiousness, pallid, moratorium

Either-Or, Chapters 1-2

Summary

Chapter 1: "The Man Who Belonged on Earth"

Dagny must cut trains from her schedules as Colorado's economy collapses. No one can get oil from Wyatt's wells, so the companies that depended on that oil go out of business. The oil shortage forces much of the country to turn to coal. Andrew Stockton and Lawrence Hammond have mysteriously vanished. Ken Dannager is one of the few industrialists who remain.

The only Taggart train running on oil is the Taggart Comet. Taggart is pulling less and less every day, but Jim has acquired a stream of subsidies from Washington that manage to keep Taggart profits at an all-time high.

Dagny has intensified her goal to rebuild the motor. She calls Dr. Stadler, who is amazed at what he sees and wonders why a mind that could create it would bother with something as mundane as a motor. He gives Dagny the name Quentin Daniels, a brilliant man who refused to work at the State Science Institute.

The Fair Share Law causes problems for Hank, who is unable to meet demands. There are some who get more than their "fair share" while other orders go unfilled. The government sends a man to oversee distribution, who is called "the Wet Nurse" by the steelworkers. Hank ignores a request to work on something for the State Science Institute called Project X, even when a man from the Institute comes to speak with him. Hank tells the representative to steal as much metal as the Institute needs, but he will not help Washington pretend that he is a willing seller, and the man seems frightened. Hank realizes the looters need his sanction, which he must never give.

Chapter 2: "The Aristocracy of Pull"

Dagny begins to believe a destroyer is at work, removing the best of the industrialists. Nearly every Colorado businessman is gone. Dagny feels compelled to fight this force, whatever it is. She hires Quentin Daniels to reconstruct the motor. Hank arranges to sell Ken a larger order of Rearden Metal than the law allows.

Jim marries Cherryl at a gala wedding party. Hank does not want to go, but agrees to accompany his wife. Lillian tells Jim her gift is bringing Hank because now others will think he is afraid of Jim, which will help Jim's reputation. Lillian sees Dagny wearing the Rearden Metal bracelet and asks for it back, but Dagny refuses. Lillian suggests that Dagny may be inviting conjecture by wearing it, and when Dagny presses her about what she means, Lillian denies that she is implying that Dagny and Hank are having an affair. Hank demands that Lillian apologize to Dagny, which shocks both women. Lillian does apologize.



Francisco is also at the party. He hears someone say that money is the root of all-evil, and d'Anconia is its typical product. He replies with a surprising speech about the true role of money in society. Francisco tells Hank there is no evil except the refusal to think, and that this is the mistake Hank is making by the life he is living. He wants to show Hank the alternative. He also says that tomorrow, d'Anconia stockholders will learn that nearly every mine has been destroyed due to poor management. This causes a panic in the room since many guests, including Jim, will lose a great deal of money.

Analysis

Though Dr. Stadler and Dagny both admire the inventor of the motor, they react differently based on their perspectives. Dr. Stadler sees science as the realm of thought, while Dagny sees science as the means to serve the practical needs of life. Dr. Stadler does not understand why a mind so brilliant would take the time and energy to create something so mundane as a motor, while Dagny thinks the inventor invented a practical tool because he believes in the integration of the mind and body. The integration of mind and body is a key idea in *Atlas Shrugged*. Rand's philosophy states that rational thought cannot be separated from the things it creates.

The Wet Nurse shows the reader that bureaucracy feeds into itself, and the waste and absurdity needed to keep an artificial system running. The Wet Nurse's job is to determine Hank's output to ensure it complies with laws, but without those laws, there would be no need for his job. Though he has a degree in metallurgy, he has no skills because his job is based on bureaucracy.

Francisco's address to the guests brings up some important ideas in Rand's philosophy. In it, he says that money is not the root of all-evil. Instead, it is the manifestation of good. Money is exchanged for the things created by man, which makes survival and prosperity possible. If a man's ability to be productive is represented in his ability to make money, then money is a tool used to indicate a man's value. Another important point made by the speech itself is the importance of accepting and stating what is real. For Francisco, the only evil is the refusal to think. The looters' success depends on their victims refusing to see what is happening. But the heroes, such as Dagny, Hank, and Francisco, will not acquiesce.

The confrontation between Lillian and Dagny shows a change in Hank. In the first confrontation between the two women, he stood by his wife. This time, however, he stands by Dagny. He has already begun to understand that he cannot be victimized without giving his sanction to his victimizers. He has slowly begun to integrate his public and private selves, and to understand his power.

Vocabulary

exorbitant, syllogism, rancorous, solicitous, lout, mysticism, demarcation, repudiate, foundries, plausible, kinetic, atonement, cardinal, fastidious, sanction, lanky, reproach, illustrious, bromide, shellac, arbitrary



Either-Or, Chapters 3-4

Summary

Chapter 3: "White Blackmail"

Hank asks Dagny's forgiveness for going to Jim's party with Lillian. Meanwhile, Lillian discovers Hank has a mistress, but does not know who it is. Dr. Ferris tells Hank that if he does not fill the order for Project X, he will be arrested for his illegal deal with Ken. Hank refuses, leading to both Hank and Ken being indicted.

Eddie has lunch with his worker friend and is worried about Dagny. Dagny believes Hank is strong enough to endure the trial, but is worried about Ken. She thinks he is on the verge of breaking, and that the destroyer will take him down. Eddie tells the worker Dagny is going to visit Ken the next afternoon. When Dagny arrives to see Ken, he is with a visitor. When Dagny is able to speak with him, he tells her he is retiring. He assures her that even if she had arrived before the visitor, he would still be retiring. His only regret is leaving Hank behind at such a dangerous time.

Francisco visits Hank at his mills and talks to him about Rearden Metal, pointing out the unfairness of Hank's situation. He then asks him what he would say if he saw Atlas holding the weight of the world, and losing strength. Hank asks Francisco what he would say, and Francisco answers, "To shrug." Hank thinks he begins to understand, but an alarm interrupts the conversation. Hank and Francisco work well together to fix the problem, and Francisco ends the conversation rather than picking it back up.

Chapter 4: "The Sanction of the Victim"

Hank is having Thanksgiving dinner with his family. He is beginning to see them in a new light. He confronts Philip and tells him he no longer cares what happens to him. He will no longer offer his family his sanction by accepting their moral code over his own.

At his trial, Hank refuses to participate. He does not give a defense because it would mean he believes the trial has merit. He says he does not recognize the court's right to control the sale of his metal, and he refuses to apologize for his success, which causes the crowd to burst into applause. The judges are frightened. They fine him \$5,000, but suspend the sentence.

Hank visits Francisco at his hotel in New York. He questions Francisco's promiscuity. Francisco says that a man's lover is the embodiment of his moral code. Though he has purposely fueled the scandals surrounding his love life, Francisco has only loved one woman.

Hank tells Francisco he has decided to sell his metal to whomever he wants, and has ordered copper directly from d'Anconia Copper. Francisco gets upset, saying he had warned Hank about dealing with d'Anconia. He swears by the woman he loves that he is



Hank's friend, but that Hank will soon damn him. A few days later, Hank learns that the ships carrying his copper were seized and sunk by the pirate Ragnar Danneskjold.

Analysis

Hank is Rand's representation of the mythical Atlas in the title, who bears the weight of the world on his shoulders. Hank has been carrying this weight, and is now being punished for it, but is no longer willing to participate in his own victimization. He has rejected the separation of mind and body, and admits to Dagny that his views of sex, particularly after their first sexual encounter, were misguided. He has confronted his family and told them they can no longer use his own sense of honor against him. He has even confronted the politicians who accuse him of breaking an irrational law. He is victorious at his trial because he withdraws his sanction. He will not help the politicians hide the true nature of their power, which is brute force. He exposes them for what they really are, and upsets the system in which looters exploit the victims' refusal to see reality. Though Hank is bucking the system and defying the authority of the system, they are forced to set him free. If he cannot work, they cannot feed off his productivity. This is the central paradox of collectivism. The strong are tyrannized by the weak and made to feel obligated to support them, but only their belief that it must be this way is what keeps it happening. If they refuse to participate, as Hank does in the trial, the weak have no recourse beyond brute strength. And while people can use brute strength to force action, they cannot make someone think or create for them. In a case like Hank's, brute strength has no power.

Francisco continues to guide Hank's transformation. In their conversation at the mills, Hank is very close to understanding what Francisco is saying to him, and Francisco is on the verge of explaining more, but they are interrupted by the alarm. Afterward, Francisco does not continue the conversation because he knows that Hank's love for his work holds him back. Because of this love of work, Hank ends up betrayed by Francisco. Not only does this cause a problem for the company, but Francisco loses Hank's friendship, as well.

When Ken decides to retire, Dagny knows the disappearances of the industrialists are not random coincidences. She realizes the timing is planned, as well. Stockton disappears when the need for his furnaces rises. Ken retires when coal becomes essential. She is convinced there is a destroyer in society, deliberately taking great industrialists when they are needed the most. But there are still many questions. Dagny has to find out who the destroyer is and how he knows which men to take. In addition, if the missing men are alive, where are they? As has happened in the story so far, just as some answers are revealed, more questions take their place. Just as Dagny feels she is making headway in discovering clues, answers are shrouded in further mystery.



Vocabulary

impropriety, ascetic, steadfastness, grandeur, floozy, vaunted, knavery, prodigious, unprecedented, impervious, impregnable, countenance, impertinence, ignominiously, infamy, elation, inordinate, platonic, insinuating



Either-Or, Chapters 5-6

Summary

Chapter 5: "Account Overdrawn"

The order for Taggart is the first failure in the history of Rearden Steel. Without the copper, there is nothing Hank can do, and without the metal, Taggart cannot fix its mainline track, which is crumbling. This causes accidents and shippers to go out of business when they cannot deliver goods. The economy quickly spirals downward.

Colorado is virtually a wasteland, and there are almost no businessmen on the Rio Norte Line. Dagny has no choice but to close the line and use the Rearden Metal to repair the worst problems on the main line. A representative from Washington tells Jim that in order for the permits to go through, Wesley needs to be offered something. After the meeting, Francisco asks Dagny how she can continue working for people who do not deserve her, and she says she cannot abandon the railroad, whatever the cost.

Between looters and politicians, Jim is being pulled in many directions. In order to gain favor, he tries to find information about Hank he can give to the government as they prepare to pass a new law. He asks Lillian to dinner and she agrees to help. Lillian discovers that Dagny is Hank's mistress. When she confronts him, he refuses to end the affair, saying he would sooner see Lillian dead.

Chapter 6: "Miracle Metal"

Wesley, Jim, Orren, Dr. Ferris, Mr. Weatherby, Fred Kinnan, and Mr. Thompson meet to discuss Directive 10-289. This set of laws is designed to freeze the economy in its present state to prevent further decline. They are afraid of the public's reaction, but vote to enact the laws anyway. Dr. Ferris notes that Hank will fight for his patent, but Jim assures Wesley he can control Hank in exchange for Wesley's raising freight rates before the directive freezes the prices.

Like many others around the country, Dagny resigns when she learns about the directive. She goes away to a lodge she owns. Dozens of industrialists disappear, and even the Wet Nurse is outraged by the government's actions. He has begun to take his own stand, not reporting Hank's illegal activities and rejecting ideas he has been taught.

Dr. Ferris visits Hank and demands he sign over the patent for Rearden Metal, which will be called "Miracle Metal." Hank refuses, and Ferris reveals evidence of his affair with Dagny, threatening to go public with the evidence and ruin Hank's reputation. Ferris tells Hank it was Lillian who revealed the affair. Rather than see Dagny ruined, he signs over the patent.



Analysis

The decline of the economy is the logical result of what has been happening in the country and legislature. And there has been a ripple effect, which has compounded problems. No copper for Rearden Steel means Hank cannot make metal. No metal means Taggart Transcontinental cannot fix broken track and must run a limited service. Shippers cannot get their goods delivered, and lose customers, resulting in going out of business. This leaves Taggart with fewer customers, forcing them to make more cuts in their service, continuing the cycle. Everything in an economic system is connected to everything else. Showing this ripple effect in the story, Rand shows just how connected the economy is, and how government interference in one area has a strong effect on another part of the economy. Rand's position is that the only legitimate role for government in economics is noninterference.

The politicians are surprised at the crumbling economy they see, and it does not occur to them that their policies are to blame. However, as bureaucrats, when they see the continuing downward spiral, their response is to enact more policies, which culminates in Directive 10-289. The directive is full of irrational laws and double-speak, and the directive shows that the politicians are unwilling to see the reality in front of them. They are used to feeding off the productive people in society, and have not noticed that the productive aspect of society is not there, let alone that they are the reason it has vanished. Only the Wet Nurse can see how irrational the directive really is. He is beginning to see reality, and changing his stance on what he once believed, recognizing them as absurd. Of all the looters in *Atlas Shrugged*, the Wet Nurse is the only character to have this kind of change of heart and accept reality.

Meanwhile, Hank's transformation is nearly complete. He now understands that he follows the code of life in his devotion to creation and production, while the looters follow a code of death in their devotion to destroying his ability to create. He realizes that he allowed the looters to trap him in their false morality, which ultimately helped them. He is liberated by what he has learned, but there is one more price for him to pay. He does not care about how society sees him, but wants to protect Dagny's reputation, so he signs over the patent in order to protect her. However, this is the last time he will do anything to help the looters.

Vocabulary

Not available



Either-Or, Chapters 7-8

Summary

In Chapter 7, "The Moratorium on Brains"

Eddie meets his worker friend in the cafeteria. He complains about the effect the directive has had on the railroad. Good workers are abandoning their posts, and only unreliable vagrants are taking jobs. A friend of Jim's has been hired to replace Dagny, and his only purpose each day is to avoid making decisions. The worker tells Eddie that he will not be coming back the next week because he is going on vacation for a month.

Hank has moved out of his house and asked his lawyers to do whatever necessary to get a divorce from Lillian with no financial settlement for her. Walking to his apartment one night, Hank is approached by a man and given a bar of solid gold. The man tells him he is a friend to the friendless, and the gold bar represents justice. He says he has been collecting the taxes of many industrialists for years to help them rebuild after the looters force it to collapse. Hank is appalled to learn the man is Ragnar Danneskjold, but then lies to police to protect him.

Taggart's cross-country Comet is stranded in Colorado. Kip Chalmers is aboard and demands the train move ahead. The engine is beyond repair, and the coal-burning replacement cannot be used in the Taggart Tunnel. No one is willing to take responsibility, but Chalmers is finally able to bully the employees into using the coal-burning engine. The engineer resigns in protest, and a drunken engineer volunteers to drive the train. Everyone aboard is killed from the fumes while in the tunnel. The last thing they see is Wyatt's Torch. Later, an army munitions train slams into the Comet, which is stalled in the tunnel, causing an explosion and the destruction of the tunnel.

Chapter 8: "By Our Love"

Francisco visits Dagny. He wants to confess his love to her and tell her everything, thinking her resignation means she is ready to join him. He explains that he is one of the industrialists who have withdrawn from the world, but instead of disappearing, he has stayed to ruin d'Anconia Copper to keep the looters from taking it. Dagny is furious and sees his actions as dishonorable, but he says it was for the sake of his love that he did it. He says that losing her respect was the hardest part.

Dagny begins to see the logic of Francisco's withdrawal and is ready to follow when the radio gives news of the tunnel disaster. Instinctively, Dagny rushes back to her job. She reroutes trains onto other tracks to restore service. Her actions are illegal under the Directive, but she knows the Unification Board will not stop her since they depend on her to fix the problem. She calls Hank and tells him she knows the looters are using her love of the railroad to hold her captive, just as they held Hank captive.



Analysis

Though Chapters 7 and 8 uncloak a lot of the mysteries of the story, there is still mystery surrounding Eddie's worker friend. The story is filled with dialogue, but Eddie's friend has no lines. Everything he says is inferred by what Eddie says. The lack of dialogue from the worker friend only heightens the mystery about him. Who is he? Why is he so interested in Eddie's stories? Once again, Rand uses unanswered questions to emphasize the suspense of the story.

Ragnar Danneskjold, who was a mystery until now, is revealed when he speaks to Hank, who finds the pirate different from what he expected. Hank imagined Ragnar as a criminal thug, but finds him thoughtful, articulate, and rational. Ragnar represents justice in the story in his quest to right the wrongs committed by the looters. There is irony in the fact that he must break the law in order to right wrongs, but in the chaotic and irrational society in which he lives; robbery is sanctioned by the government, which makes restitution a crime. The fact that Hank protects Ragnar from the police underscores the transformation he underwent. He always hated Ragnar, but he is a different person now, and one who feels compelled to protect this man who is simply trying to do what is right in a world full of wrongs. The gold Ragnar gives Hank becomes a source of strength for Hank as the chaos intensifies.

Francisco's mysteries also become clear to the reader. He is one of the vanished businessmen, but chose to stay in society to push its collapse along, as well as urge others to withdraw. His conversations with Hank and Dagny have been part of his efforts to get them to withdraw. When he confesses all this to Dagny, he nearly succeeds in getting her to leave, but the tunnel collapse draws her back to her railroad. This parallels the conversation between Francisco and Hank in which the fire drew Hank back to his mills. Hank and Dagny both know they are held to the corrupt system by their love of their work. They know they are helping the looters, but their love is too strong.

The tunnel disaster itself shows just how corrupt the society has become. Had Dagny been in charge of Taggart, she never would have allowed the train to enter the tunnel, regardless of the consequences. But Clifton's only concern is his own place in the hierarchy of influence and favor. He will not upset a Washington man, even if it would have meant saving his life, as well as the lives of everyone else on the train. It is important to note that while he never says no to running the coal engine, he never says yes, either. This shows a fear of taking responsibility, which is common among the looters. It also shows the looters' loyalty to the system rather than anything of substance. This is also emphasized in Jim's reaction when Dagny arrives at the office. He blames the tragedy on her because she left. This is irrational, but because he has no sense of personal responsibility, he reaches out to blame anyone he can. This contrasts the sense of responsibility felt by Rand's heroes, who always take decisive action and responsibility when needed, regardless of the consequences that may arise. The two sides of the issue of personal responsibility is an important element in Rand's philosophy.



Rand's explanation of the train disaster addresses the idea of chance versus fate. While, on the surface, all the passengers of the Comet seem innocent and just happened to be on the train when it went through the tunnel that day. However, in the background information given about the characters, they have in one way or another, contributed to the decline of the economy and the stranglehold the government has on the economy and the people. Even the mother who falsely believes only the rich are harmed and does not seem to take a stand implies that she condones the actions of the government by not taking a stand against it.

Vocabulary

semblance, razed, mirthless, subsidy, luminous, exultant, cynicism, dilapidated, capricious, buttressed, vestibule, nasturtiums, raucous, renunciation, unrequited, tacit, somnambulist, innocuous



Either-Or, Chapters 9-10

Summary

Chapter 9: "A Face Without Pain or Fear or Guilt"

Francisco tries to convince Dagny to quit, but she cannot give up the railroad. Suddenly, Hank comes into the room. Hank discovers that Dagny is the one woman Francisco has ever loved and slaps him. When Francisco does not strike back, Hank realizes how much Francisco loves him.

Dagny receives a letter from Quentin Daniels, who is resigning. He says he will still work on the motor, but will not accept money for his work to keep the looters from using it. Dagny calls and makes him promise to wait for her to come and see him. She calls Eddie and tells him to hold the Comet for her so she can go west to look into the tunnel disaster and find Quentin.

Eddie comes to Dagny's apartment to get instructions while she packs. While there, he discovers she is sleeping with Hank. He confesses his own love for her. Later, Eddie meets his worker friend in the cafeteria. He tells his friend about the motor, and that Dagny is going to look for Quentin. When he mentions his love for her and his shock at learning about her relationship with Hank, the worker friend hurries away.

Chapter 10: "The Sign of the Dollar"

Dagny is west. She is disturbed by the desolation she sees as she rides the Comet. As she steps out of her private car, she sees a conductor removing a hobo from the vestibule. Struck by something in the hobo, she invites him to join her. His name is Jeff Allen, and he used to work for the Twentieth Century Motor Company. He tells her the story of what happened to the plant when the Starnes heirs began their policies. Every six months, the workers voted on the needs of each person. Honest men were punished, and the rest manipulated the system. Eventually, all the workers lost their dignity. The first man to quit was named John Galt. He swore he would end the absurdity and stop the motor of the world. After the factory closings, Allen and his coworkers thought John Galt had succeeded, which led to coining the phrase "Who is John Galt?"

The train stops and is deserted by the crew, which is a common occurrence. Dagny finds Owen Kellogg on the train, but he will not help her since he is on his way to a month's vacation. He asks her why she continues to work for the looters, even now. He also smokes a cigarette stamped with a dollar sign. Dagny rents a plane and when she lands, she learns she had just missed Quentin, who took off in another plane. She follows them, fearing the destroyer took him. She crashes in the Colorado Mountains.



Analysis

The conversation between Dagny and Francisco reveals exactly how much he has given up for the cause, and how important it is to him. He not only gave up d'Anconia Copper but also actively destroyed it. He allowed his personal reputation to be destroyed. He gave up the only woman he ever loved—Dagny—and betrayed Hank, who was a much-loved and greatly respected friend.

The moments after Hank slaps Francisco shows the incredible self-control it has taken for him to stay on course. It takes every ounce of energy Francisco has to keep from retaliating against Hank. Instead, he tells Hank that he has the right to renounce him. This emphasizes how important the mission is to Francisco that he would not speak to defend himself in light of what has happened.

Though the identity of Eddie's worker friend is still a mystery, it is clear now that he is connected in some way to the destroyer. This is apparent because Ken and Quentin disappear immediately after Eddie tells his worker friend about Dagny's plans to stop them. It seems that the worker also has some kind of personal interest in Dagny based on his reaction to finding out that she and Hank are lovers.

Jeff Allen's story about the Motor Company emphasizes the effects of collectivism. While it may seem a noble concept for people to work for the good of all people, and to compensate them based on need rather than their work, it can be easy for those in charge to become corrupt, and those working to manipulate the system. Jeff's story shows that eventually, those who are producers lose their dignity while others survive off their work. The system begins to break down as chaos and mistrust increase. The system tries to compensate through policies and adjustments, but this simply adds to the chaos. Eventually, the entire system implodes. Jeff's story foreshadows what will happen to the U.S. economy based on what has been happening. The government is running the economy in a similar fashion to the way the motor company plant was run, so the reader can infer that the story will end in the same way.

Vocabulary

enraptured, vengeance, degradation, stonily, conflux, uninhibited, pittance, privations, prestige, abomination, wistfulness, aghast, thwarting, uncongealed, insolence, relinquished,



A is A, Chapters 1-2

Summary

Chapter 1: "Atlantis"

Dagny opens her eyes and looks into a man's face. The face bears no mark of pain or fear or guilt. The man is John Galt, the pilot of the plane Dagny was following when she crashed. He is also the man that Jeff Allen, the inventor of the static electricity motor, describes as the destroyer. He carries her to his home, which is in a remote mountain valley that is home to all the vanished industrialists. Midas Mulligan owns the valley, and some of the residents include the composer Richard Halley, Judge Narragansett, and Francisco d'Anconia.

The industrialists who live in the valley have all built businesses, and the valley is self-sufficient. Galt's motor provides electricity, as well as a screen that hides the valley from outsiders. An inscription over the door that leads to the motor reads "I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine." This is the oath of the valley, which a person must say and mean in order to join the community.

Galt explains to Dagny that they are all on strike. He says the only men who have never gone on strike are the men who bear the world on their shoulders. All other laborers have, at one point, made demands to the world. This, he says, is the mind on strike.

Chapter 2: "The Utopia of Greed"

Dagny meets Ragnar, who lives in the valley. Many of the strikers live in the valley, but others, like Francisco, go back and forth between the valley and the world. However, every June, all the valley community residents return to spend a month in the valley together. Dagny agrees to stay the month before deciding if she will remain. Ragnar has created an account for Dagny at Midas's bank, but she insists on working as Galt's maid in order to earn her keep.

Owen arrives on Dagny's third day in the valley. He tells her everyone thinks she is dead, including Hank. Francisco arrives the next day. He has been searching for Dagny's plane, and is ecstatic to see her. Galt forbids outside communication, so Dagny cannot tell Hank she is alive and well.

Dagny comes to realize she loves Galt and that he loves her in return. He admits he watched her from afar for years. However, since they are still on opposite sides of the strike, they cannot be together. Francisco wants Dagny to stay with him, and she turns the question to Galt. He tells her he wants her to stay with him. He reminds Dagny that no one stays in the valley under any pretense or emotional shield.



Though Dagny is extremely happy in the valley, she decides she has to return so she can fight for her railroad. Galt decides to go with her, despite warnings from his friends, to watch and wait for her to be ready to return to the valley. She promises to keep the valley a secret. She is escorted out blindfolded and flown to the outside world.

Analysis

The title of Chapter 1, "Atlantis," is a reference to a lost, mythical city. Like the mythical Atlantis, the community of the valley represents the lost world of capitalism. Just as the outside world shows socialism at its worst, the valley shows capitalism at its best. Unlike the story of Atlantis, though, no one seems to be looking for the lost world of capitalism the way they sought Atlantis. This is because those who would seek the lost world of capitalism do not believe they have the power to find it, just as Dagny and Hank initially believed they were trapped in their world of oppression by the looters.

The title of Chapter 2 also makes a reference to a mythical place. Utopia is an ideal world, described as a paradise. However, the word "utopia" can be used to mean "nowhere." By titling the chapter "The Utopia of Greed," Rand suggests that the greed exhibited by the looters gets people nowhere, though many believe the accumulation of wealth and material goods is what brings utopia, or paradise.

Rand presents the community of the valley as her ideal world, which would make it a version of Utopia. In the valley, men and women are productive and creative, living in a community that is totally self-sufficient. It is important to note that the members of the valley community are all egoists. In the community they are focused on themselves and their own interests rather than working for the good of the community. The only obligation they have to each other is to respect the individual rights of the other members of the community. There is no game-playing or social obligation in the community. Everything is, as it appears to be.

The way the strikers live is summed up in the oath they take, which is written over the door to the building that holds Galt's motor. The oath, which states, "I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine," is the cornerstone of the strikers' philosophy, as well as Rand's philosophy. The oath means that each person is responsible for his or her own life, actions, and decisions. No striker lives and works for the benefit of another, and no striker asks anyone to live and work for him or her.

Chapters 1 and 2 reveal many mysteries from the story, and many of the answers come in the form of John Galt. Dagny discovers that the man who invented the motor and the destroyer is John Galt. He is also the worker friend Eddie meets with, which is suggested when Galt tells Dagny he has been watching her for years, and the description Eddie used for his worker friend is the same description used for Galt. However, Dagny does not know that Galt is her employee since she does not know about Eddie's friend. Galt also provides the answer to where the industrialists have disappeared to, since it was he that began the community in the valley. This solves the



mystery of what Francisco has been trying to explain, and Dagny's visit to the valley explains why all the industrialists retreated the way they did.

The explanation of the strike reveals the central theme of *Atlas Shrugged*. According to Rand, it is the mind that provides the motivation to power the world. The rational mind allows people to be happy and successful, and every idea or invention created by man arose out of rational thought. Without the mind, there can be only chaos. Though the strike seems that it would be more conceptual, the strikers take actions that have serious consequences on the rest of the world. The withdrawal of the strikers' minds by withdrawing from the world accelerates the breakdown of society that is already in progress. Galt points out to Dagny that all strikers throughout history have been laborers who stood up and made demands, which suggests that manual labor is the source of an economy's stability. The strike of the mind, though, reveals that it is the thinkers who make the world progress and keep turning, since this strike is so devastating to the already-fragile economy. The laborers are still in the world, but since the industrialists are not there to lead and guide them, they do not know what to do, and there is no progress being made.

Despite what Dagny has seen in the world and what she sees in the valley, she remains hopeful that the looters can change. She thinks they are capable of rational thought, and can see the problems they have created. Because of this hope she sees in the looters, she returns to the world to try and save her railroad. Galt and the other strikers know that the looters will never change. They will evade the truth until the inevitable end. When Dagny returns to the world to try and save her railroad, Galt goes with her because he wants to be near her when she finally realizes that the end is coming soon.

Vocabulary

superlative, deliverance, understudy, intractable, unobtrusive, philology, anachronism, conglomerate, monomania, imperceptible, impudent, stagnation, expropriation, meticulous, tremulous, reproach, mawkish, consternation, drudgery, consecration, defamation, abdication, intransigent, tinge



A is A, Chapters 3-4

Summary

Chapter 3: "Anti-Greed"

Chapter 3 opens in rural Iowa. The government reveals the Thompson Harmonizer, which is the result of Project X. The product is a super-weapon, and the government credits Dr. Stadler for its creation, though he knows nothing about it. He is forced to speak at the unveiling event. The weapon uses sound waves to destroy all living things within its radius. Dr. Ferris convinces Stadler the weapon is necessary to control people, who are increasingly hysterical. A demonstration of the weapon destroys a farmhouse and some goats, and the audience watches in horror, but does not comment. Wesley Mouch declares the weapon an instrument of peace.

Dagny calls Hank and tells him she is alive. When she returns to the office, she learns the government has passed the Railroad Unification Plan, which pools railroad profits and distributes them according to track mileage. Under this plan, Taggart stands to make a great profit. Eddie is meeting with Cuffy Meigs. Under his orders, trains are being rerouted and used as favors for influential friends.

Jim wants Dagny to appear on the radio to reassure the public that the railroads are safe, and that she has not deserted. She refuses. Later, Lillian visits her and threatens to expose her affair with Hank if she does not do the radio show. She agrees to go on the radio and, once on the air, announces her affair with Hank and the blackmail that was used to get him to sign over the rights to Rearden Metal. When she sees Hank that night he confesses his love for her, though he knows he has lost her to a true love. He is surprised to hear she is in love with Galt, and suspects where she has been.

Chapter 4: "Anti-Life"

Jim is pleased with a deal he had made. He hopes Cheryl will give him the admiration he wants because of the deal, but in the year since the wedding she has realized his true nature, and suspects evil in him. When he drinks a toast to Francisco's destruction, she leaves in disgust.

Cheryl visits Dagny, offering an apology for accusing Dagny of being the weak and evil one in the company. Dagny accepts the apology and offers to help Cheryl. They talk about the evil of giving to those who do not deserve, and Cheryl finally feels she is understood.

Meanwhile, Lillian arrives at Jim's apartment. She wants to ask Jim to use his influence to keep Hank from divorcing her, but he cannot help her. In a final attempt to hurt Hank, Lillian has emotionless sex with Jim.



Cherryl returns and knows Jim has been unfaithful. He admits it, but says he will never give her a divorce, and she will be stuck with him. She asks why he married her, and he tells her because she was worthless and he wanted her to accept his love as alms. She realizes the real reason he married her was because she was trying to rise above where she was, and he wanted to destroy that. She tells him that he kills for the sake of killing, and he slaps her. Cherryl runs out into the street where a social worker tells her that her unhappiness is because of her own selfishness. This is too much for Cherryl to take, and she jumps off a bridge, killing herself.

Analysis

Project X shows the reader just how much the looters rely on brute force. With the Thompson Harmonizer, the government has become a dictatorship. The unveiling of the weapon marks a transformation in Stadler. He is at first outraged about the weapon, as well as having his name associated with it, but he does as he is told to do, even agreeing to read the prepared speech. He is officially a looter, now unable to think for himself.

The Railroad Unification Plan is the latest policy in the absurd policies set forth by the government. The difference with this plan, however, is that the government is not even pretending that it is for the good of the people. Under this plan, the profits from all railroads will be pooled and distributed to companies based on the mileage of track they use. This plan sets Taggart Transcontinental up to make a great profit because even though they are not using much of the track they own, the sheer mileage of the track under the company's name gives them the money from the pool. Once again, the company that benefits is the one that does little to no work. Taggart is using almost none of its track, but will still benefit the most from the plan.

Dagny's radio address is a triumph of reason and logic. Though she does not want to speak because it would be an endorsement of the Railroad Unification Plan, she decides to use it as an opportunity to avenge Hank for the blackmail that was used against him. She also uses the speech to express her opinions about the unity of mind and body. She is proud of her relationship with Hank. Their physical relationship cannot be separated from their intellectual relationship because the mind and body cannot be separated. They desired each other physically because they respected each other intellectually.

Though Lillian sleeps with Jim as a form of revenge against Hank, the affair they have sharply contrasts the relationship between Dagny and Hank. Lillian and Jim do not care for each other, or even respect each other. In fact, they are not even drawn to each other for physical pleasure. Instead, the only bond they share is the desire to destroy Hank, and that is the motivation behind what they do. The only one hurt by what they do, though, is Cherryl. This act between Lillian and Jim fully opens Cherryl's eyes to who Jim really is. She realizes that his whole purpose of existence is to destroy men of integrity. And when he is unable to do this, he instead turns to Cherryl to destroy her.



Cherryl's character shows a true victim in *Atlas Shrugged*. Though there appear to be other victims throughout the story, many have evil or greedy motivations, while others turn their victimization into motivation to become survivors and heroes. Cherryl, however, is not like them. She always tried to see the best in people, and thought she found it in Jim. When she realizes how evil he truly is, she also realizes she is trapped. She is unable to withdraw the way the strikers have, leaving suicide as her only escape.

Vocabulary

hooligans, deference, rancorous, gangling, shrewdness, periphery, volition, reclamation, antipodal, scare-mongering, purporting, lewd, altruism, venal, inertness, aghast, transcends, presumption, connoisseurs, thoroughfare



A is A, Chapters 5-6

Summary

Chapter 5: "Their Brothers' Keepers"

Copper shortages are making repairs nearly impossible for Taggart Transcontinental. The Unification Plan diverts materials based on influence in Washington. The problem worsens when, at the moment they were to be nationalized, the mines and properties of d'Anconia Copper are blown up. Francisco and his best employees vanish.

Hank's brother, Philip, asks for a job, but Hank refuses since Philip has no useful skills. Later, the Wet Nurse also asks for a job. He finally wants to do something productive. Hank wants to hire the Wet Nurse, but the laws prevent it. The Wet Nurse warns Hank that the Washington men are working on new restrictions, as well as bringing in their own men to the mills.

Minnesota farmers have managed to harvest a huge wheat crop and needs trains to carry it. Dagny learns that the Taggart trains have been diverted to Louisiana by Cuffy Meigs as a favor. The wheat crop rots, which will lead to starvation for many, and the farming industry in Minnesota is destroyed.

The traffic system in the Taggart terminal has short-circuited. Dagny is working on the emergency and sees Galt among the workers. Later, she walks off into the tunnels. He follows and they make love. Afterward, he tells her he has been watching her from the tunnels for ten years. He warns her not to look for him because if the looters were led to him, he could be killed.

Chapter 6: "The Concerto of Deliverance"

Hank's steelworkers ask for a raise, but he is never told about it since the Unification Board rejects the request. A Board-controlled newspaper runs stories about the hardship of the steelworkers and the denial of the raise request without mentioning who rejected it. Later, Hank is given notice that he is paying for phony back taxes. He does not do anything so he can see what the looters are up to. A bureaucrat named Tinky Holloway calls Hank and invites him to a meeting to straighten everything out. Philip has led Tinky to believe that Hank is difficult to deal with in business.

Hank's family summons him to the house and begs him not to disappear. He rejects their apologies. When they ask him to stay, they are asking him to sacrifice himself for them, which is unforgivable to him. Lillian confesses her infidelity with Jim to try and destroy Hank, but he does not care. His family points out that he cannot disappear without money, and he realizes why he is paying phony back taxes.

Hank goes to the meeting to straighten out his situation. Jim, Wesley, and several other looters are there. They tell Hank they are passing a Steel Unification Plan, which is



similar to the design of the Railroad Unification Plan. In this plan, Orren Boyle will make the bulk of the profits and Hank will go bankrupt no matter how much steel he makes. Hank finally understands the looters' game. The entire system is based on the knowledge that he will always continue working, no matter what, because he loves his work.

When Hank returns to the mill, a riot started by the government is already underway. The Wet Nurse has been shot because he refused to let the thugs into the mills. He dies in Hank's arms. Hank is hit on the head and collapses. An unknown worker kills Hank's attacker and organizes the workers to defend themselves. Later, Hank learns this worker is Francisco d'Anconia, who has been secretly working in the mills since he destroyed d'Anconia Copper.

Analysis

Once again Rand uses contrast to emphasize the two extremes found in the economy and society of *Atlas Shrugged*. Two men want a job from Hank. Philip, Hank's brother, is a looter who has no useful skills. Philip's motivation for wanting the job is as a stooge for the looters. He is one of the many in society who benefit from the hard work of others, and seeking the job is no exception. The other is the Wet Nurse who has undergone a transformation and wants to be a producer. Unfortunately, in a society that supports looters, people like the Wet Nurse are limited and punished and unable to get ahead. The laws prevent the Wet Nurse from getting the job he wants.

The perception of reality the looters have is so skewed that they no longer see any consequences at all for their actions. This is underscored in the ruining of the wheat crop. In this event, the consequences go further than economically or financially. Like the tragedy in the tunnel, people die as a result of not getting the wheat crop, but the looters simply do not see this as a consequence of their decisions. All they see and seek is immediate power and instant gratification. Anything beyond that will be addressed when it comes up, if it is addressed at all.

Once again, the looters are after Hank, seeking to destroy him. However, this time, they are unable to hurt him. Now that Hank understands the way things are and sees the looters' games for what they are, he cannot be touched. This is seen in how he reacts to the Steel Unification Plan, as well as how he reacts to his family's attempts to reconcile with him. Perhaps most notably is his reaction to Lillian's confession of her affair with Jim. Like other looters, when Hank refuses to be affected by the efforts at destruction, Lillian has no purpose. She is devastated not because her relationship with Hank is over, but because she is unable to hurt and destroy him.

The riot at Hank's mills is another show of brute force by the government. The riot is the final straw for Hank, and the step that allows him to finally completely break from society and join Francisco and the other strikers. Just as Hank now sees the looters for who they really are, he sees Francisco for who he really is: a true friend and protector of



Hank. Hank's instincts about Francisco were right all along, and Hank now knows that even when he rejected Francisco, his friend was there for him.

Vocabulary

incur, placate, superseding, slipshod, irrevocable, causality, effrontery, surreptitious, tenacious, ponderous, unctuous, pitiless, acrid, furtive, decorous, rajah, semaphores, ascribed, sordid, flophouse, zealot, fervor



A is A, Chapters 7-8

Summary

Chapter 7: "This is John Galt Speaking"

Hank disappears. He sends Dagny a note that says only, "I have met him. I don't blame you." Without him, the steel industry decreases. The country is panicked and violent gangs gain control. Newspapers conflict each other in their stories, and the collapse of society is obvious.

The government announces that Mr. Thompson, the Head of State, will give a speech on all stations to address the crisis. At the moment the speech is about to begin, the airwaves are taken over and Galt addresses the public instead. He gives a long, detailed speech about the way the nation is, as well as explaining the strike of the mind. In the speech, Galt explains the principles that every man should live under: reason, purpose, and self-esteem. He calls for a general strike, asking everyone with any reason to withdraw their sanction and stop supporting their own destroyers.

Chapter 8: "The Egoist"

The Washington men are terrified. Dr. Stadler suggests that they should kill Galt while Mr. Thompson wants to negotiate with Galt to try and get him on their side. After the speech, Eddie tells Dagny that he knows Galt as a worker he spoke to regularly in the Taggart cafeteria. Dagny asks him to keep his knowledge of Galt's employment secret since the government is so desperate to find him.

The country falls deeper into chaos. A steady flow of broadcasts claim Galt will solve the country's problems. Thompson asks Dagny if she knows where to find Galt, hinting that the situation is desperate. He says that if the government finds Galt first, they might kill him. She tells him she doesn't know where he is. After Thompson leaves, Dagny rushes to Galt's apartment, afraid for him. She is followed by government agents. In order to save Dagny, Galt tells her to pretend to be his enemy, and when they arrive to arrest him, that is what she does.

The looters hold Galt prisoner while they try to convince him to become the country's economic dictator. He refuses. He agrees to perform any task they ask of him, but he will not think for them. He asks to see Dr. Stadler, who is shaken by the encounter. To reassure the people, they announce the John Galt Plan for the economy, but at a television appearance, Galt reveals a hidden gun pointed at him while on camera. He then looks at the cameras and says, "Get the hell out of my way!"

Civil war breaks out in California and the Comet is stranded. Eddie leaves to try and restore service. Dagny receives a letter from Francisco telling her to contact him if Galt is in danger.



Analysis

The speech Galt gives on television is the basis of much of Ayn Rand's philosophy, as well as the heart of *Atlas Shrugged*. The central idea is that reason, not faith or emotion, forms the basis of human success. Rationality must be chosen over irrationality and accept objective reality since, as Galt explains, "existence exists." Galt says that men must live for their own self-interests rather than for others. This requires freedom from government interference and the mind must be free since it is the motive power of the world. The ideas presented in Galt's speech have been presented throughout the story, but are given comprehensively by Galt. The speech is an ultimatum for those in power, as well as a recruiting call for those not in power.

The looters mistakenly believe that they can negotiate with Galt, promising him power, which is with all they can bargain. However, this belief that Galt will negotiate with them is founded on the incorrect assumption that he is like them. Dr. Ferris and Cuffy, however, realize that Galt is their enemy, and that if he is put in power, looters will no longer exist. In this instance, killing Galt is the only way they can survive.

The conflict between Galt and the looters is a battle between mind and muscle. The looters rely on brute force as their tool, but Galt has his mind. The looters can use force to command him physically, but, as Galt points out, they cannot make him think for them. However, the looters simply cannot imagine a man who will not eventually give in and accept the power being offered to him, even at gunpoint.

Vocabulary

slandorous, vehemently, secession, martial, grotesquely, exultant, soberly, habitual, greasers, lethargic, resonant, misapprehensions, disquieting, inarticulate, bayonets, mezzanine



A is A, Chapters 9-10

Summary

In Chapter 9: "The Generator"

Dr. Stadler realizes that regardless of whether or not Galt relents, he has no place in Washington. Stadler drives to the site of Project X in an attempt to carve out a place for himself. He is hoping to seize control of the weapon, but is too late. He and Cuffy fight over control of the weapon, detonate it, and the countryside is destroyed for hundreds of miles in all directions.

Dr. Ferris convinces the Washington men to try torturing Galt. Dagny hears about it and calls Francisco. The Taggart Bridge is destroyed in the Project X disaster, and for the first time, she does not run to fix the problem. Instead, she meets Francisco and solemnly recites Galt's oath. Dagny is now on strike.

Galt is tortured with a device called Project F while Dr. Ferris, Wesley, and Jim watch. Galt endures the torture without speaking. When the machine breaks down, Galt tells the operator how to fix it. The operator realizes what is happening and runs out of the room in horror. Jim finally realizes his nihilist nature, which is too much for him to bear. He screams and collapses.

In Chapter 10: "In the Name of the Best within Us"

Galt is rescued in a gunfight by Dagny, Hank, Francisco, and Ragnar. They climb aboard Francisco's plane and head to Colorado. Eddie is on the Comet, which breaks down in Arizona, and nothing can be done. Determined to hold on to the railroad, as well as the faith he has in the world, Eddie refuses to leave the train.

The looters' world has completely collapsed, and the members of the valley community are ready to return to the world, rebuilding it in their own beliefs.

Analysis

Dr. Stadler's death is appropriate because of the transformation he went through over the course of the story. While he initially could have joined the strikers, he surrendered his mind to the government and following what he was told, and this aligned him with the looters. The weapon he goes to take—Project X—is a manifestation of the enslaved mind. The science his mind produced, which could have been used to free him, created a weapon that is used for evil. Since he lived by the enslavement of his mind, it is fitting that he dies because of its manifestation.

Dagny is the last industrialist to join the strike. Until the very end, she continued to believe that the looters would see reality and change their ways. However, she finally



realizes they are willing to sacrifice everything to avoid facing the world that they created. They desperately need Galt and the mind he represents, but they will still risk his life or even kill him. Dagny realizes the strikers were right all along, and she must now withdraw her mind. Choosing not to help with the Taggart Bridge collapse is her resignation.

Eddie, on the other hand, does not have the final realization Dagny does. He continues to believe that the railroad must be saved, even standing by the abandoned train in Arizona, desperate to get it moving, even if it has to be on his own. Eddie is not a looter, but his desperate attempts to cling to the world as he saw it shows a similar mindset to the looters. He will not face reality. Once again, Rand uses contrast to emphasize her points and showing Dagny and Eddie's reactions to the final collapse of society.

The final scene of *Atlas Shrugged* in which the industrialists prepare to return to the world is full of religious imagery. This is especially evident as Galt traces a dollar sign in the air in much the same way a priest traces a cross in the air to give a blessing to a congregation. Using the religious imagery in this way shows the reader how important Galt and his beliefs are to Rand's philosophy. Leaving the reader with the image of the dollar sign in the air imprints the ideas of capitalism and the egoist philosophy on the reader's mind, and this rises above every other image in the story.

Rand leaves the reader with the hope that society is rebuilt by the industrialists. Since Galt and the strikers have been right about everything from the beginning, it stands to reason they will be right about what will come after the collapse of the economy and society. It is not clear exactly how society will be rebuilt in terms of government, but the reader knows that Galt's ideals will be the keystone of the new economy.

Vocabulary

feudal, monomaniac, churning, commandant, occult, clique, perfunctory, porous, diffused, highwaymen, emaciated, automatons, reproof, garrison



Characters

John Galt

John Galt is the most important character in *Atlas Shrugged*, and drives the action of the story. He organized and carried out the strike that is the defining event of the novel. Despite this importance, Galt remains a mystery until two-thirds of the way into the book, which makes him an almost mythical character. He is created as an ideal man. He is attractive, highly intelligent, and very accomplished. He is very rational, dealing only with the facts he faces. In Galt, emotion and reason are completely integrated, which means he is able to express his emotions as easily as he expresses reason. Rand uses Galt to reject the split between reason and emotion that is so often seen in society.

Galt is the manifestation of the idea that a person's mind is only the means by which he or she achieves prosperity. The mind is what drives society just as Galt's motor can drive industry. Galt knows that without his mind, as well as without the minds of the world's thinkers, the world would stop.

Dagny Taggart

Dagny Taggart is beautiful, talented, determined, and a brilliant woman. She is independent and trusts her gut over public opinion. She is passionate about her work and love, but is also rational. She is a very successful woman in a man's world, which shows that rationality and accomplishment are not gender-specific. The defining trait in Dagny is her self-confidence. She knows what she is capable of, and always knows the right action to take. However, this confidence is also a flaw. Her optimism about people is another failing for Dagny.

Hank Rearden

Hank Rearden represents productivity. He is the most successful industrialist in the country because of his dedication to hard work and integrity. His misconceptions about himself keep him from being able to see his own greatness. He allows his family to sponge off him and make him feel guilty about his success. This makes him willing to sacrifice himself for their immorality, which saps his vitality. Rearden believes in the separation of the body and mind, leading him to see physical desires as vulgar, and anything having to do with the mind unrelated to the physical body. When he is able to reject this idea, he finally sees his own value.

Francisco d'Anconia

Francisco's life is a paradox. He is a brilliant businessman, but he deliberately destroys d'Anconia Copper and other businesses. He is the first man to join Galt's strike and



works as its recruiter. He lives in two worlds, trying to bring others to the side of the strikers. He plays the part of a playboy, but this is only a cover for his activities since he has only ever loved Dagny. His motives are benevolent, but others see him as untrustworthy because of his strike-related activities. He genuinely loves Rearden, serving as his protector, even though Rearden is Dagny's lover. He gives Rearden the moral certainty he needs to battle the looters. He shows up when Rearden needs him the most, saving his life in the mill riots.

Francisco is totally committed to the strike, despite how much he suffers for it. He gives up Dagny, endures Rearden's hatred, and destroys the company his family built for generations. All the pain is worth it to Francisco because he is convinced that he is right.

James Taggart

James Taggart (Jim) is Dagny's brother, as well as the president of Taggart Transcontinental. He is not a good businessman, but is very skilled at manipulating the system. He claims to be motivated by personal wealth and public service, but his true motive is to destroy the productive. He represses the nature of his depravity, but in his final encounter with Galt, his illusions are shattered.

Eddie Willers

Eddie is Dagny's assistant. He is dedicated to preserving the railroad, but he unwittingly provides valuable information to the destroyer about Dagny and the railroad through a friendship with the track worker in the cafeteria.

Lillian Rearden

Lillian is Hank Rearden's beautiful wife. She is dominated by a hatred of all things good, and her purpose for life is the destruction of her husband. She does not pretend to have any other motives for her goals.

Ellis Wyatt

Ellis is an oil tycoon whose innovations lead to the growth of Colorado's industry. The government burdens Colorado with many regulations and demands, and Ellis withdraws rather than cooperating. He refuses to leave anything for the looters, so he sets fire to his oil wells, creating Wyatt's Torch.



Ragnar Danneskjold

Ragnar is a pirate, as well as one of the first strikers. He fights the looters on their own terms. He can be seen as a Robin Hood figure, except that he steals from the parasites and gives to the productive.

Dr. Robert Stadler

Dr. Stadler was once a professor at Patrick Henry University, teaching physics to Galt, Ragnar, and Francisco. He is now disillusioned, working as the head scientist at the State Science Institute. He allows the looters to appropriate his mind.

Hugh Akston

Hugh Akston is a philosopher and champion of reason. He also taught Galt, Ragnar, and Francisco at Patrick Henry University. He is an early joiner of the strike, when society claims the death of reason. He works in a diner as a short-order cook.

The Wet Nurse (Tony)

The Wet Nurse is a young bureaucrat sent by the government to watch over Rearden's mills. He starts out as a cynical follower of the code of the looters, but his experience at the mills changes him, leading him to respect and even admire the producers.

Dr. Floyd Ferris

Dr. Ferris is the head of the State Science Institute, as well as the author of *Why Do You Think What You Think?* He rejects the mind, recognizing only power. He leads a faction that wants to kill John Galt rather than working with him and jeopardizing its own power.

Wesley Mouch

Wesley is a mediocre businessman who becomes an economic dictator when he betrays Hank Rearden, despite originally being Rearden's "Washington Man."

Orren Boyle

Orren is the corrupt owner of Associated Street. His product is not as good as Rearden's, but his government connections protect his business and allow him to get the rights to make Rearden Metal.



Cherryl Brooks

Cherryl is a young, idealistic hero worshipper who believes Jim is a good man, and marries him. He seeks to destroy her and the good she represents. Ultimately, he is successful.

Owen Kellogg

Owen is a talented employee of Taggart. He is one of the first men in the story who retires mysteriously.

Midas Mulligan

Midas Mulligan is the most successful banker of all time, and owns the valley where the strikers live. He withdrew from society after the realization he could not thrive in a system that rewards need over ability.

Mr. Thompson

Thompson is the Head of State. He is pragmatic and driven by the immediacy of the moment. He believes that everyone, including Galt, is willing to cut a deal in exchange for power. He is genuinely stunned when Galt rejects his offer.

Judge Narragansett

Judge Narragansett champions the freedom of the individuals to produce and trade without government intervention. He is a striker who lives in the valley.

Richard Halley

Halley is a brilliant composer who joins the strike when his work is praised only for having been borne of suffering. His fifth concerto is played throughout the strikers' valley.

Dan Conway

Conway owns the Phoenix-Durango Line in Colorado. He disappears after Taggart uses his influence to destroy the railroad with the Anti-dog-eat-dog Rule.



Ken Dannager

Ken Dannager is a self-made Pennsylvania coal producer, as well as Rearden's friend. He recognizes that the looters' laws are irrational, so he breaks them. He joins the strike after he is arrested for making illegal deals with Rearden.

Philip Rearden

Philip is Hank Rearden's brother, and a parasite. He lives off the accomplishments of his brother and at the same time criticizes him for pursuing them.



Objects/Places

Taggart Transcontinental

Taggart Transcontinental is the railroad owned by siblings Jim and Dagny Taggart. The railroad is central to the action of the story, and is directly affected by the strike, which directly affects the country's economy.

D'Anconia Copper

D'Anconia Copper is the company owned by Francisco d'Anconia, which provides copper to Rearden Steel. Francisco states that his purpose is to destroy the company as a part of the strike.

Rearden Steel

The steel company owned by Hank Rearden that provides steel to Taggart Transcontinental in order to repair its rails. Rearden Steel also sells Rearden Metal.

Rearden Metal

A new alloy created by Hank Rearden that shows great progress in the industry. It is eventually taken over by the government and renamed Magic Metal.

The Valley

The valley is the community in which the strikers hide from the rest of the world. It is a completely self-sufficient community shielded from the outside world by a screen.

The John Galt Line

The John Galt Line is the name given to the railroad created by Dagny Taggart in an attempt to save Taggart Transcontinental.

Wyatt's Torch

Wyatt's Torch is the fire created when Ellis Wyatt set fire to his oil wells before vanishing with the rest of the industrialists.



Directive 10-289

A set of irrational laws that is created in an attempt to help the economy but instead creates further problems. This directive requires that all patents be turned over to the government.

The Railroad Unification Plan

The Railroad Unification Plan is a policy put in place by the government that pools the profits from all the railroads, and then distributes the profits based on the mileage of track owned by each company. Under this plan, Taggart Transcontinental stands to gain considerable wealth.

The Steel Unification Plan

The Steel Unification Plan is a policy put in place by the government that pools the profits from all the steel companies and redistributes it. Orren Boyle stands to gain considerably from this plan, and regardless of how much steel he creates, Hank Rearden will not be successful.



Themes

The Mind

The mind is core to the plot of the story. The strike is a strike of the mind. Rand, through the strikers, contends that without the mind, society cannot function. As the great minds of society withdraw, it becomes more apparent how important the mind is to the function of the world. While laborers take actions that make society keep going, it is under the direction of the thinkers that this happens. Without the great minds, the laborers are at a loss as to what to do, and progress no longer occurs.

Integrating Mind and Body

The dichotomy of the mind and body is continually addressed throughout *Atlas Shrugged*. While many believe that the mind and body are separate, and must be dealt with in different realms, Rand believes the mind and body are inseparable. This is manifested in Dagny, who believes that her physical desires arise out of the intellect. For example, she has a physical desire for Hank because of her intellectual respect for him. At first, Hank believes in the separation of the mind and body, but when he finally integrates the two, his final transformation occurs and he is able to join the strike.

The mind and body dichotomy is also seen in the character of Dr. Stadler. He sees the things of the mind as totally separate from the practical things of the body, which leads him to wonder why a mind that could create Galt's motor would lower himself to creating a simple motor.

The Evils of Collectivism

A main theme of *Atlas Shrugged* is what happens when socialist ideas are put into practice. She contends that when people are forced to sacrifice their needs and desires for the good of their neighbors, chaos ensues. Corruption becomes commonplace since those who feed off the productive members of society will prosper, and those who continue to work hard for the love of what they do will never overcome the "looters." The story of the Twentieth Century Motor Company presents an overview of what happens when socialism is put in practice, and the reader can see the complete course of events, from start to finish. This story foreshadows what happens to the economy of the nation as socialist ideas continue to cause corruption, evil, and chaos. For Rand, any political or economic plan that asks people to sacrifice for others is doomed to fail.

Motives

Characters' motives are often called into question throughout the story. Whether those motives be framed as personal responsibility and loyalty or framed as being evil motives



for the purpose of destruction, the reasons people take certain actions helps explain Rand's philosophy, as well as illustrate the evils of socialist ideas in practice. The looters, for example, take actions in order to preserve their way of life as well as destroy others. The producers, on the other hand, take actions to attempt to benefit society. How different characters react in situations and how they express their motives behind decisions and actions helps to reveal which side of the economy they are on: looters or producers. Motives are also addressed in the valley community. Galt tells Dagny there are no false pretenses in their community. People take actions and make decisions with pure motives: self-interest. There are no ulterior motives or misplaced senses of responsibility among the strikers.

Rhetorical and Unanswered Questions

The action of the story centers around a question used as a rhetorical question: "Who is John Galt?" This question is asked with a shrug to indicate a sense of the hopelessness of a particular discussion or situation. Though there is great mystery surrounding the identity of John Galt, the question has evolved beyond the man and into a rhetorical question. The use of rhetorical questions throughout *Atlas Shrugged* illustrates how many questions characters are or should be asking, and the lack of answers underscores the hopelessness people feel about the economy and society in which they live.



Style

Point of View

The story is told by an omniscient narrator who speaks in third-person. While the narrator focuses on Rearden and Dagny, all the characters are followed. The narrator is subjective in descriptions of characters and actions, and characters' thoughts and emotions are revealed, as well.

Setting

Atlas Shrugged takes place during an unspecified time in the second half of the twentieth century in the United States.

Language and Meaning

Atlas Shrugged uses somewhat formal language, particularly in the narrative descriptions. The dialogue is less formal. The use of more formal language throughout the novel emphasizes its philosophical nature and forces the reader to think about what he or she is reading rather than simply breezing through it. The formal language used in the dialogue helps emphasize the business-minded aspect of the story. The characters often focus on their business relationships, the fragile economy, and the government and political policies being enacted. These kinds of issues call for more formal language. Rand's writing style helps get the reader in the mindset of intellectual industrialists.

Structure

The book is divided into three parts, with each part containing ten chapters. Part 1 is called Non-Contradiction, Part 2 is called Either-Or, and Part 3 is called A is A. Each of the chapters is titled, as well. The story is told chronologically, with occasional flashbacks revealed in the form of characters' memories. The course of the story follows a typical story arc: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.



Quotes

Who is John Galt? (Part I, 1)

But what can you do when you deal with people? (Part I, 7)

Contradictions do not exist. Whenever you think that you are facing a contradiction, check your premises. You will find that one of them is wrong. (Part I, 7)

John Galt is Prometheus who changed his mind. (Part II, 5)

I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine. (Part III, 1)

We are those who do not disconnect the values of their minds from the actions of their bodies. (Part III, 3)

For twelve years, you have been asking: Who is John Galt? This is John Galt speaking. I am the man who loves his life. I am the man who does not sacrifice his love or his values. I am the man who has deprived you of victims and thus has destroyed your world, and if you wish to know why you are perishing—you who dread knowledge—I am the man who will now tell you. (Part III, 7)

Centuries ago, the man who was—no matter what his errors—the greatest of your philosophers, has stated the formula defining the concept of existence and the rule of all knowledge: A is A. A thing is itself. You have never grasped the meaning of his statement. I am here to complete it: Existence is Identity, Consciousness is Identification. (Part III, 7)

To live, man must hold three things as the supreme and ruling values of his life: Reason—Purpose—Self-esteem. (Part III, 7)

The only proper functions of a government are: the police, to protect you from criminals; the army, to protect you from foreign invaders; and the courts, to protect your property and contracts from breach or fraud by others, to settle disputes by rational rules, according to objective law. (Part III, 7)

The road is cleared,' said Galt. 'We are going back to the world. (Part III, 10)



Topics for Discussion

Topic 1

Explain the title of the story. What is the significance of Atlas to Rand's story? What character or characters does Rand connect with the mythical figure of Atlas? Why?

Topic 2

Why is the question "Who is John Galt?" used so casually throughout the story? What does the question represent to people in society?

Topic 3

What role do rhetorical and unanswered questions play in Atlas Shrugged? Why does Rand use rhetorical questions throughout the story? What questions besides "Who is John Galt?" drive the action of the story forward?

Topic 4

Discuss the correlation between characters' personalities and physical appearances. Why does Rand create this correlation? How does this correlation affect the reader's perceptions of the characters?

Topic 5

Why does Rand focus on the railroad in the economy of the story? Could another type of business have been substituted? Why or why not?

Topic 6

Explain the relationships between men and women in Atlas Shrugged. What is Rand's philosophy about relationships? How do you know?

Topic 7

Explain the significance of the dollar sign to the strikers. How did this come to be their symbol? Why is it an appropriate symbol for the strike? How do you think the symbol will be used as the strikers rebuild society?



Topic 8

What role does bureaucracy play in the economy and government of Atlas Shrugged? Why is bureaucracy important to the looters? What happens when the bureaucracy begins to break down? How do the looters react? How do the producers react?

Topic 9

What role does myth or legend play in Atlas Shrugged? Why does Rand make references to myths and legends throughout the story? How does this affect the reader's perception of the story? The characters?