

The Accidental Billionaires: The Founding of Facebook Study Guide

The Accidental Billionaires: The Founding of Facebook by Ben Mezrich

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Plot Summary

"The Accidental Billionaires - The Founding of Facebook," by Ben Mezrich, is the story of boy genius and computer whiz Mark Zuckerberg and how he took the idea of a social networking site to heights that no one else ever imagined. Eduardo Saverin was a senior at Harvard when he met a young sophomore with a mop of curly hair, a faraway look in his eyes and regardless of weather or occasion, always wore cargo shorts, a hoodie, and Adidas flip-flops. The kid already had a reputation as a computer genius. He had created an Internet version of the board game Risk and a program for Harvard students called Cross-Match which would allow students to find out who was registered for what classes.

Zuckerberg had been thinking about social networking site for some time but so had dozens of other Harvard students. After being rejected by a girl one night, a slightly inebriated Zuckerberg logged onto his Kirkland dormitory facebook, which contained photos of all the students in his dorm. Out of creativity and a little anger, he created Facemash.com. To do so, he hacked into the Harvard University computer system and gathered the photos of all the students at Harvard. Perhaps to get back at the girls who had rejected him, Zuckerberg featured photos of pairs of girls, asking users to vote on who was the best-looking. In his blog, he admitted that he first was going to feature photos of girls against farm animals for the contest. The site launched before he had anticipated and was so popular that the traffic proved to be too much for Harvard's bandwidth. Zuckerberg was in trouble with Harvard for hacking their system and with feminist groups and female students for his blog comments and his misogynistic contest. He was told to behave and was placed on probation until his graduation.

Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss and Divya Narendra recruited Zuckerberg to do the programming for a social networking site, The Harvard Connection, later called Connect U, that they had partially developed. The Harvard Connection guys thought they had brought Zuckerberg on board while Zuckerberg claimed later there was no firm agreement. However, he did admit to leading them on. He was developing thefacebook at the time and by delaying the launch of the Harvard Connection, he would be at the advantage. When Zuckerberg launched his site, the twins and Divya were outraged. They later sued him and accused him of stealing their idea.

As Facebook began to grow in popularity, it expanded to other universities and was taking on thousands of new members a day, it was obvious that the funding initially provided by Saverin could not keep up with the expenses required to keep the site growing and functioning. A savvy Californian, Sean Parker, who had created Napster as a high school student, caught the whiff of success in the air when he spotted facebook. He came on board and was able to introduce Zuckerberg to investors who saw dollar signs when they realized the rapid and unstoppable growth of Facebook.

After Zuckerberg, who quit Harvard, moved his operation to the San Francisco area and teamed up with Parker, it wasn't long before Saverin was squeezed out. Jeff Thiel, who had developed PayPal, invested \$500,000 in Facebook just to keep it above water. By

its fourteenth month of operation, Facebook had millions of members and was worth over \$100 million. When Parker was arrested at a party, Zuckerberg fired him as Facebook's president. Zuckerberg would not let anyone or anything damage Facebook.

Eventually, the Connect U team and Eduardo brought separate lawsuits against Mark Zuckerberg. It was publicized that the twins received \$65 million but were still determined to gain even more monetary awards from Zuckerberg. Saverin's settlement was not publicized but his name suddenly appeared back on Facebook as a co-founder. By 2009, Facebook had over 200 million members. No one knows what Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook, is worth but it is accepted as fact that he is the youngest self-made billionaire ever.

Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 1: October 2003

Eduardo Saverin was one of several hundred Harvard college students gathered as guests of the Phoenix-S K. He was identified a young black man, who looked to be a senior, as a Phoenix member. He introduced himself. The man, Darron recognized Eduardo's last name as "the hedge fund owner." Eduardo and his brother didn't really have a hedge fund but he and his brother invested in one. They bet against the trend in oil futures and earned a \$300,000 profit. Eduardo was excited about the possibility of membership in the Phoenix, something that would be important for his future.

Eduardo noticed an awkward looking geeky young man who remained remote from the group most of the evening. He was a mop-haired kid who looked like a duck out of water. There was no way this kid had the social networking skills to gain membership in a prestigious club like the Phoenix. Eduardo had no way of knowing what impact the awkward kid in the corner would have on social networking and how much his own life would change as a result.

Chapter 2: Harvard Yard

Eduardo attended a gathering of the predominantly Jewish Epsilon Pi fraternity. One kid stood out, Mark Zuckerberg, a sophomore, for his awkwardness. Eduardo remembered seeing him at the recent Phoenix event but really didn't know him well. Mark was a computer science major who had grown up in an upper middle-class town in New York. He had a reputation as a hacker in high school, even gaining a spot on an FBI list. Mark was considered a computer genius. He created a computerized version of Risk and a Course Match program that allowed Harvard students to find out what students had signed up for what courses. Apparently Microsoft had offered seventeen-year-old Mark over a million dollars to work for them—an offer he reportedly turned down. Coming from a family of businessmen, Eduardo was stunned by Mark's rejection of that kind of money. Eduardo was intrigued by the computer genius and wanted to get to know him better.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 3: On the Charles

In the early morning, a sleek skiff traveled down the Charles River, steered by a two-man Harvard team. The Winklevoss brothers, Cameron and Tyler—both muscular and 6'5" with blond hair and blue eyes were often seen working out in the morning. The hard work of the brothers had placed them on the track to the Olympics. After hours of practice, the brothers were hungry and went to the dining hall at Pforzheimer House for breakfast.

At a nearby table was another student, Divya Narendra, who had his nose stuck in a copy of the Harvard Crimson. The two brothers and Divya had been involved in a secret project for quite some time. The three young men discussed their venture. Divya told the twins that Victor was out and that they needed to bring on a new programmer.

Divya had the original idea for the project and the twins help to hone it but none of them had the computer skills necessary to bring it to fruition. It was tentatively named the Harvard Connection, a web site where male students could meet girls. There would be two sections on the site for dating and connecting. If the site was a success at Harvard, the guys would try to move it to other campuses. All this was great but they needed a computer genius to get them there.

Chapter 4: Cannibalistic Chickens

Eduardo sneaked in the back door of a large hall where a lecture was already underway. He didn't recognize the chubby little lecturer but Eduardo had to attend the lecture because it was a Core class and thus considered mandatory. The Core class program was established with the goal of developing well-rounded scholars. The problem was that no one took the courses because they wanted to and the courses themselves were bizarre in nature including subjects as off-beat as physics for poets, mythology and the study of remote Amazonian tribes.

Eduardo had a large, heavy crate with him. Inside was a chicken! He was being initiated into Phoenix and as part of the process, he was required to carry the chicken with him no matter where he went and had to keep it alive during the initiation period. He was reported for animal abuse when he was observed feeding some of his friend chicken to the chicken.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 5: The Last Week of October 2003

After being rejected by a girl at a party and having too much to drink, Mark was angry when he returned to his room and logged onto his computer. Girls often rejected him but on this night, it really struck him to the core. He scanned the pictures of the guys and girls in Kirkland, his dormitory building. He opened a new blog writing that he was thinking about holding an on-line contest in which the photos of female students would be paired with those of farm animals and students would then vote for the "best looking" between the pairs.

All of the school's databases, known as facebook, were stagnant and uninteresting. The ideas were forming in Mark's head to create a website for social networking. It would require the kind of mathematical challenge Mark loved—writing a program and creating the appropriate algorithms.

Mark downloaded the entire Kirkland facebook. He began downloading the facebook of other student dorms. What he was doing wasn't exactly legal since he had no right to the photos of other houses. He was hacking into Harvard's computer system. It was child's play for him and he was able to access most of the houses and download their facebook. There were a few downloads that took a little more effort but he was able to write new scripts and easily access the photos. By four in the morning he had downloaded thousands of photos. It took him just a matter of days to write the program and algorithms for the new site which he called Facemash.com. Instead of using farm animals, he paired female against female in a "hottest chick" contest. Those coming on his site would be greeted with this line: "Were we let in for our looks? No. Will we be judged on the? Yes" (pg. 49.)

Chapter 6: Later that Evening

No one knows for sure but Mark, but there was conjecture that he may have physically sneaked into the houses whose facebook he was unable to hack from his dorm room. He wouldn't have had legitimate access to the houses, but could have waited and entered behind someone else. He would have brought his laptop along and sitting alone in the lounge, powered up through a port on the wall and connected to the Ethernet. Using a program he wrote for the house, he would have then been able to download the photos, since his IP address would have then matched the house's parameters and given him access.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 7: What Happens Next

While he was developing Facemash, Mark didn't miss a beat in his regular life. He attended all his classes, studied and hung out with friends. Later, he would tell a reporter that Facemash was just a side project he worked on when he had spare time. Once completed, he emailed the link to a few friends to get their feedback. The friends he emailed the link to apparently passed it on to others who passed it on to others. It picked up a life of its own and suddenly Facemash was everywhere—it had gone viral on campus. The site had logged over 23,000 "hottest chick" votes in under two hours. He had not meant to launch it. He planned to tweak it and understand the legalities of having such a site. He rushed to his laptop, struck a few keys and took it down. He figured he could very well be in big trouble.

Chapter 8: The Quad

Tyler and Cameron were studying in the Quad Library, when Divya joined them. He showed the twins an article in the Harvard Crimson about the Facemash site and the "hot chick" contest. Divya told them that the guy who created the site shut it down. On his blog, the kid said he didn't think anyone would take offense but it had totally outraged feminist groups on campus. Plus there was so much traffic on Facemash that it had bogged down the university's bandwidth. The kid who created it was going to be disciplined by the ad board (an organization comprised of administration reps and students). The three looked at each other with each knowing what the other was thinking. Divya said the kid's name was Mark Zuckerberg. Tyler told Divya to send him an email to ask him if he "wants to be a part of history" (pg. 63.)



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 9: The Connection

Mark appeared before the ad board where he had to explain his actions to three deans and several university computer experts and apologize repeatedly for the mess he had caused. Mark understood the board's anger but he did not understand why feminist groups and female students were so upset with him. The silver lining, he told the board, was that he exposed the lack of security of the school's computer system. He volunteered to help them improve security. Mark's awkwardness helped him escape severe punishment. He did not appear to be a sophisticated or malicious kid. Mark was told to stay out of trouble and was placed on probation for the next two years until he graduated.

Mark had stirred up the pot. Articles appeared in the Crimson about the potential popularity of such a site as Facemash, of course, minus its negative attitude toward women. Mark received an email from Divya telling him that a he and his team needed a developer for a project they were working on. Tyler Winklevoss was cc'd on the email. Mark showed the email to Eduardo asking him if he knew Divya or Tyler. Eduardo didn't know them but knew that Tyler was a senior and an athlete. Eduardo was skeptical but Mark thought it might be interesting.

Chapter 10: November 25, 2003

Tyler and Cameron came to Kirkland to meet with Mark. Emails exchanged in the past few days between Mark and Divya confirmed Mark's interest in their secret project. Tyler told Mark that they were planning to call their site Harvard Connection. It would be an online meeting place where Harvard guys and girls could connect. Students would be able to update their own profiles. Part of the programming was already done. Mark could have access to Victor's work. There was probably only ten or fifteen hours of work left to complete it. The twins told Mark that he would be a full partner and share in the credit and in any profits the site earned plus by creating a legitimate site, he would be able to redeem himself after the Facemash debacle. The twins had the impression that Mark was interested in joining their team.



Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 11: Cambridge, 1.

After the winter break, Eduardo very hung over, was at the Cambridge, 1 restaurant and about to leave when he saw Mark strolling in. Mark's wheels had been turning. After the popularity of Facemash, he started thinking about developing a social network, an online community of people who would provide their own photos, profiles, and whatever information they wanted to post. One caveat, visitors would have to know a person in order to have access to his or her page. The people on the network could invite people to their sites. People would be able to create their own personalized social network on the site. Mark thought it should simply be called thefacebook.

Eduardo thought the idea sounded "big." There was a site called "Friendster" but it wasn't popular and didn't provide the exclusivity that Mark described. Mark's idea was different—his concept was to move a person's entire social network online. The school was working on an online repository for photos but it wouldn't be interactive. Mark described his meeting with the Winklevoss twins. Their idea was more like a dating sight. After looking at their site, Mark claimed he turned them down. Eduardo figured that the twins thought Mark would jump at the chance to make a name for himself by creating the jocks' website; but, the twins apparently had misread Mark. The only thing that interested Mark was proving he was smarter than everyone.

To get started, Mark told Eduardo he would need his help. He needed money for servers and to get online—Mark knew Eduardo's family was wealthy. Eduardo was wealthy himself having made the \$300,000 profit in oil futures. Eduardo didn't hesitate. He told Mark, "I'm in." In addition to money, Eduardo could contribute business advice and even social advice since Mark possessed skills in neither area. Mark probably had more business sense than Mark thought—the deal would be 70-30 - 70 percent of the business for Mark and 30 percent for Eduardo who would be the CFO.

Chapter 12: January 14, 2004

Tyler, Cameron and Divya met at the Porcellian club which was located in a large, ancient building on Mass Avenue. After their initial meeting, Mark had looked over Victor's code and was ready to do his part to launch the site. In the months following, he exchanged emails with them which they took as progress reports on how the programming was coming along. Mark's progress had been much slower than they had imagined. They had hoped to launch the site by the holidays. Cameron sent Mark an email asking him to complete it as soon as possible. Mark was slow to respond but told Cameron that he was bogged down with school work and final papers. He did tell Cameron he had made some changes but had not tried them out live as yet. Tyler was upset at Mark's sudden concern that there would not be enough functionality and

bandwidth for the site. It was the first time Mark had mentioned a problem with functionality and up to that time, he had seemed thrilled with the project. They had been after Mark to meet with them but he kept making excuses.

Finally, in mid-January he had agreed to a brief meeting at Kirkland. Mark told the three men that he was up to his ears in projects. They assumed he meant school projects but Mark was purposely vague. He also told them there was some "front-end" stuff he couldn't do. They were surprised since he had done a brilliant job with the "front-end" for Facemash. Mark told them they needed more server capacity and that some of the work they wanted him to do was "boring." Cameron, Tyler and Divya felt very disappointed after the meeting. They had thought the site was nearing launching but it wasn't even close at that point. They feared someone else would think of their idea and beat them to the punch. They thought the kid was burned out and that if they would back off for a few weeks, Mark would hopefully get his enthusiasm back and get his act together. If he didn't get it together, they would have to find themselves another developer.



Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 13: February 4, 2004

Mark worked round the clock on thefacebook. Finally, he was adding a final touch to their site—all the debugging had been completed. The design was simple yet alluring. The users would be able to complete their own bios, add their photos, poke into other people's profiles to indicate interest in another person, invite people as friends, list what they were "looking for," their relationship status and what they were interested in. Facebook would mimic college life and just as in college, the site would contain an undercurrent of sex.

Starting out the site would be limited to Harvard students, making it classy, exclusive and a trustworthy place that would insure privacy. Eduardo looked over Mark's shoulder as he worked. The opening page was clean and simplistic - no annoying bells and whistles. "A Mark Zuckerberg Production" appeared on every page. The site had the registered domain name of thefacebook.com. They had enough servers to handle volume traffic and they were were ready to launch. Eduardo first sent the link to his contacts at the Phoenix club. Mark sent it to the Kirkland House e-mail list which he had legal access to. Thefacebook was launched.

Chapter 14: February 9, 2004

Cameron and Tyler were in the midst of working out, rowing down the Charles. Suddenly, from the bank they heard Divya shouting at them. His face was angry as he held up a copy of the Harvard Crimson. There was an article in the paper about Mark launching thefacebook. Mark was quoted in the paper saying that it would have taken Harvard years to do what he could did in a week. Mark finished thefacebook in a week? He hadn't been able to complete their site, the Harvard Connection, in two months! He had lied right to their faces. After just four days, thefacebook had signed up 900 students. They were stunned—how could he have done all this? Mark's site wasn't exactly the same as their concept but it was very similar. Had he just taken their idea and tweaked it? Tyler felt Mark had stolen their idea. The article identified Eduardo as the partner who had financed the site.

Mark knew the twins were wealthy. If Mark had been on the up and up, he would have come to them for the money. But obviously since he planned on stealing their idea, he went to someone else for funding. They had no contract with Mark, just a verbal agreement. They were beginning to realize that they were his competition and that he had purposely stalled them while he worked on his own site. He didn't want thefacebook big-footed by the Harvard Connection. Tyler summed up the feeling of the other two that he wasn't going to get away with it. The twins' father told his sons that he would get them in touch with his company's legal team.



Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 15: American Idol

Mark and Eduardo attended a lecture given by Bill Gates. Mark perked up when Gates commented that artificial intelligence was the future and that the next Bill Gates may be sitting in the room. Mark was also interested when Gates discussed his decision to leave school and start his own company. Five-thousand Harvard students were now signed up on thefacebook. It had become part of everyone's life. It was addictive. The genius of thefacebook was that it allowed students to create a network with people they knew or knew of. On the other dating sites, people were trying to connect with total strangers. The next step for Mark and Eduardo was to determine ways in which they could generate earnings from the site. They needed advertisers and a business plan. That was Eduardo's strength.

Cameron Winklevoss sent Mark a "cease and desist" letter full of legalese and accusations about his unethical behavior in stealing their idea. Mark seemed unconcerned but Eduardo felt the twins were demanding that thefacebook be shut down immediately. Mark admitted he led the twins on but he didn't sign anything. Eduardo thought the ideas behind the two sites were different and given that there were dozens of people developing social networking sites, that their claims were baseless.

Defending himself, Mark had written a letter to the University. In it he claimed that thefacebook was in no way related to the small amount of work he'd done for the Winklevosses. Mark expressed his annoyance at being threatened by the twins from the brief contact he had with them. The popularity of thefacebook was overwhelming Mark and, if it was to be taken to the next level, he needed help. He recruited his two roommates—Dustin Moskovitz to help with the programming and Chris Hughes, a glib talker, was asked to handle publicity and outreach. Eduardo would still handle the business end. They would all have titles of Eduardo, CFO; Chris, director of publicity; Dustin, head of programming; and Mark, "founder, master and commander, and enemy of the state" (pg. 118.) They would all have a percentage of the company. First order of business, according to Mark, was expansion to other schools. They would first try to expand to other elite schools such as Yale and Stanford. Eventually, they'd allow cross-college pollination. Eduardo kept pushing the idea of monetizing thefacebook which Mark seemed to have little or no interest in.

Chapter 16: Veritas

Cameron and Tyler were waiting in the lobby of the University President's office. They were tired of being ignored. The ad board concluded that the Zuckerberg matter was beyond their jurisdiction. Zuckerberg had responded to their cease and desist letter with his claim that their sites were vastly different and he hadn't stolen any ideas from them.

They tried to meet directly with Mark but that never came off. The twins were shown into Larry Summers' office. They were disappointed when Summers picked up the letter they had sent by its corner, like it was garbage, and asked "Why are you here?" It wasn't a good sign. Summers was dismissive. Although the twins cited Harvard's ethics code, Summers concluded that the issue was between them and Mark. The University had no role in resolving the disagreement. Mark had lied and broken Harvard's ethics code and the University was going to let him get away with it.



Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 17: March 2004

Sean Parker lived in a house just off the campus of Stanford. He was not a student there but everyone knew him. In fact, he was idolized by Stanford students. He and his business partner, Shawn Fanning, while still high school, created a website called Napster. The site allowed kids to download their music at no cost. Napster eventually imploded but it had brought fame and fortune to Sean and Fanning. The record industry came down on Napster and the site was brought down. Sean and some friends then created an online business card system called Plaxo. When venture capitalist Michael Moritz of Sequoia Fund was brought into the company, he and Sean butted heads on most every issue. Sean was eventually thrown out of his own company.

Even though Sean had created two of the biggest Internet companies in history, he was broke. He would eventually get big money from Plaxo for his piece of the company but for the time being, he had no money. He focused his attention on the next big life-changing innovation of social networking. He looked at Friendster, created by a friend of his, but it was too far along to be on the ground floor. MySpace was growing but after looking into it, he wasn't interested. To him MySpace wasn't a communications tool it was a place for people to showcase themselves. Sean wanted something that would make him a billion dollars.

One morning Sean happened on thefacebook site and immediately thought that the concept was brilliant—students were continually linked to their own social network—not to strangers. Sean saw that the site was a "Mark Zuckerberg Production" and although it had just recently been launched, already had almost 50,000 members. Sean thought the name should be streamlined and simply be called Facebook. He decided that he would find this Mark Zuckerberg and turn thefacebook into something huge!

Chapter 18: New York City

Eduardo used some of his initial \$1,000 investment to pay for a trip to New York for he and Mark to meet with potential advertisers. The meetings did not go well—Mark seemed to be half asleep through some and remote and distant in others. The advertisers didn't comprehend the potential of thefacebook yet. Mark wore his uniform—a hoodie with Adidas flip-flops—to a restaurant meeting with Sean Parker, a Silicon Valley guy who had contacted them. Mark didn't take the meetings with the advertisers seriously and it showed. But he was excited at the meeting with Sean Parker. To Mark, Sean was an icon because of his association with the gutsy and groundbreaking Napster sight. Sean was very open about his successes and failures with Napster and Plaxo and Mark was eating it all up.



Sean was impressed that thefacebook was in twenty-nine schools and wanted to know their strategy in convincing schools to participate. Eduardo felt ignored at the meeting and viewed Sean as a snake-oil salesman but it was obvious that Sean and Mark had made a connection. Thefacebook was growing at such a pace that they were going to have to hire programmers and purchase larger servers. Eduardo had invested another \$10,000—Mark had no money to contribute. Eduardo knew that other investors had probably taken notice of thefacebook and that they could monetize the site without the help of Sean Parker.



Chapters 19, 20 and 21

Chapters 19, 20 and 21 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 19: Spring Semester

Thefacebook now had 150,000 members and was adding 1,000 per day. Venture capitalists and company reps all hinted at monetary investments in the seven figures but none had made any concrete offers. A few advertisers had placed ads and the site was pulling in a little money but not near enough to support it. The company was registered as a LLC in Florida, with 65 percent ownership to Mark, 30 percent to Eduardo and 5 percent to Dustin. Chris would be figured in later for a percentage. With the semester close to an end, Eduardo landed a job in New York as an intern for an investment banker. Eduardo was a little disturbed when Mark announced that he, Dustin and his other programmers would spend the summer in the Silicon Valley near Stanford working on thefacebook site. Eduardo feared that the guys would have too many distractions in California and would neglect their work. Also, Sean Parker lived in the area and Eduardo felt uncomfortable about any involvement with him. To fund the California venture, Eduardo sunk another \$18,000 into the company.

Chapter 20: May 2004

Tyler, Cameron and Divya launched their site, renamed "ConnectU." The semester was over and the twins' father was on his way to pick them up. They would almost immediately head for Olympic training. While they trained, their site would hopefully be picking up membership among college kids across the country. They knew they were at a serious disadvantage because Mark's site had launched first.

Chapter 21: Serendipity

Sean Parker was looking for a place to live. When he learned that Mark and thefacebook team was in Silicon Valley, he moved in. Sean liked the atmosphere. It was like a frat house. The living room was literally an electronic war room, where work on the site was being done 24/7. To Sean, the work ethics and abilities of the group were beyond compare. Since Eduardo wasn't there, Sean wondered how involved he really was. To make something like this project work, the principals had to be intensely involved at every turn. Sean planned to show these fledglings what it meant to be part of the Silicon Valley revolution as only he could. He knew that Mark would eventually eclipse him and become the toast of the town.



Chapters 22, 23 and 24

Chapters 22, 23 and 24 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 22: California Dreaming

Eduardo quit his internship at the investment banking firm on the first day after which he secured several advertisers for thefacebook. He was concerned about the work taking place in California and wondered why he wasn't consulted more often. Eduardo had learned from Mark that Sean had taken them to high profile parties and other gatherings of IT celebrities. Thefacebook wasn't the biggest thing in town, but it was gathering attention and everyone wanted to meet the whiz kid who developed it. Membership in thefacebook was expected to be at 500,000 by the beginning of the new school year. But growth meant the need for more money, a real office and more employees. The \$18,000 that Eduardo invested was running thin and the advertising money coming in would not be sufficient to keep up with the growth.

Eduardo visited Mark and the team in San Francisco. During those four days, there were endless meetings and strategizing and drinking sessions. The young men were being courted by scores of people who were interested in thefacebook. Figures in the millions were being tossed about. They were wined and dined in the finest San Francisco restaurants, driven there in stretch limos. Eduardo and Mark were in firm agreement that they would never sell thefacebook.

Chapter 23: Henley on the Thames

The twins competed in the Henley Grand Challenge in England. Their team came in two seconds behind the winning Dutch team. The English barrister who hosted the event greeted the twins afterward and congratulated them on their finish. The man said his daughter took wonderful pictures of the race and could email them to the boys or, if they were on thefacebook, they could find her there. She was an Amherst student. The exchange was disturbing, underlining just how powerful and far-reaching thefacebook had become. Their site hadn't been able to keep up with the viral nature of Mark's site. Thefacebook was stomping all its competitors. The twins and Divya were keeping a lawsuit on the table as an option. But because Mark was the "It" boy, if they decided to sue him they would look like the villains.

Chapter 24: July 28, 2004

After Eduardo returned to New York and began working his contacts, he didn't feel he was getting any credit from Mark. Eduardo and Sean did not get along and he resented the constant "advice" he was giving Mark. Eduardo fired off a letter to Mark, reiterating their business agreement. Despite his letter, Mark met with investors who were willing to make an angel investment in the company which would allow them to keep it in operation. To that point, Eduardo had financed the entire venture but Mark was ignoring

him and his concerns. When Mark continued to slough him off, Eduardo froze the bank account and canceled all lines of credit and all outstanding checks.



Chapters 25, 26 and 27

Chapters 25, 26 and 27 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 25: San Francisco

Sean attributed Eduardo's actions over the past several weeks for helping to convince Mark to go ahead and meet with the investors he had recruited. Cutting the credit line and freezing operating money could have destroyed the company. If the servers went down and there was a lapse in service, there could have been an exodus of disaffected users which would serve to ruin the site's reputation. Sean guided Mark in restructuring the company as a Delaware LLC. Mark used money intended for his tuition to keep the company above water. He received another letter from the Winklevoss twins warning him that they planned to file a lawsuit. In Sean's view, the Winklevoss twin's claims were groundless. However, if they filed a lawsuit, Mark would need several hundred thousand dollars to defend himself. It was crucial that the money be raised for a variety of reasons.

Mark and Sean met with Peter Thiel, a potential investor, in a tall skyscraper in the financial district of downtown San Francisco. Thiel was the founding force behind the hugely successful PayPal and was one of the richest men in the country. Thiel was fast-talking and intimidating but he had the same revolutionary spirit as Sean and Mark. With Thiel's support, thefacebook revolution could begin in earnest.

The meeting was successful. Thiel agreed to invest \$500,000. It wasn't a fortune but it would keep thefacebook alive, or as the company was now called Facebook. In exchange, Thiel would get seven percent of the company and a seat on its board of directors. Sean, Dustin and Chris were also included in the reorganization of the company. Eduardo would receive an appropriate percentage based on his production and contribution to the company—he'd be paid according to the success of his efforts in New York. If he didn't produce, his share would be diluted. Mark was not returning to Harvard but Eduardo was. To Sean, it was obvious that Eduardo didn't have the same passion for Facebook as the others.

Chapter 26: October 2004

The guys were kicked out of the rental house in Palo Alto due to complaints by neighbors. They then rented a five-bedroom house in Los Altos, California. Eduardo flew out on a break from school to sign some paperwork. He had a light class load at Harvard so he could devote more time to Facebook. After a rugged summer and screaming fights on the phone, Mark and Eduardo had reached a détente. Mark asked Eduardo not to be territorial about the business end of it—the company was getting too big for one person to handle any aspect of it. There were 750,000 members by this time and there was a need to hire a sales executive. Mark had developed new innovations

about to be launched on Facebook, including a "wall" where open communications could be conducted.

Eduardo looked over the four legal documents he was asked to sign. His shares had gone up to 34 percent which would allow for future dilution when new investors would come on. This agreement would supersede any agreement he and Mark had in the past. He had understood that Mark would allow him to work less and let a new sales team take over some of his responsibilities while he finished school. Eduardo trusted the situation and, at 34 percent ownership, nothing had really changed.

Chapter 27: December 3, 2004

Eduardo was back in San Francisco to celebrate the one millionth Facebook member. Peter Thiel threw a huge party at a San Francisco club he owned called Frisson. Eduardo was looking forward to his last five months of school, graduation and then moving out to California where he would resume his responsibilities with Facebook. Sean was happy. Everything had gone as he thought it would. Eduardo had signed the necessary paperwork, Facebook was growing by leaps and bounds and Peter and Mark were talking about innovation after innovation that they planned to add to Facebook.



Chapters 28, 29 and 30

Chapters 28, 29 and 30 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 28: April 3, 2005

Eduardo was looking forward to the end of school. With less than two months to go, he had it very easy. He didn't even have to go to class, merely had to pass the finals. Then he'd be ready for the real world. Of course, what Mark and the others were doing in California didn't seem like the real world. Facebook was now on its way to three million members. Facebook was everywhere in all the schools, in the newspapers, and on TV. Mark hadn't contacted him much over the last few months. Eduardo developed a job-hunting website called Jaboozle in his free time. Mark sent an email asking Eduardo to attend an important meeting with a new hire that he was supposed to train. Mark also mentioned in his message that some big-name venture capital funds had been circling the company, interested in investing. Eduardo was stunned by Mark's comment that he and Dustin were thinking about selling their shares. How could they? According to the documents he signed, he would not be allowed to sell shares for quite a while. Hadn't they signed the same type of agreement?

Chapter 29: April 4, 2005

It was an ambush. As soon as Eduardo arrived at the new Facebook offices, he was met by an attorney. He was given new stock authorization papers to sign. Over the next several months, millions of shares would be issued to Mark, Dustin and Sean—no new ones to him—which would dilute his share of the company to under ten percent. Mark had betrayed him. He was effectively being diluted out of the company. Eduardo refused to sign. He demanded that he would retain his co-founder status with Mark and 30 percent ownership. The lawyer told him that he was no longer part of Facebook—not a partner, employee or in any way connected with it. The decision had been made by Mark as CEO and by the new president.

Chapter 30: What Goes Around

Sean was euphoric. The venture capitalists were begging him to invest instead of the other way around. Facebook had gotten Yahoo's attention—even Microsoft kept a watchful eye on the company. He and Mark were scheduled to meet with Sequoia Capital, the fund that had booted him out of Plaxo, courtesy of Mike Moritz. Mark showed up in pajamas, uncombed hair and a lap top under his arm. He was meeting with them alone. He would make their mouths water with the special PowerPoint presentation that had been created just for Sequoia. And when Mark had worked them up into a lather, Mark would walk right out. Sean and Peter agreed about Sequoia. They had screwed him too during his PayPal days. The Washington Post Company had been courting Mark and Accel Partners had been after Sean for weeks. Accel was on the

verge of investing \$13 million which would put Facebook's overall value at \$100 million after only fourteen months in operation.



Chapters 31, 32 and 33

Chapters 31, 32 and 33 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 31: June 2005

Eduardo received his degree during the graduation ceremony at Harvard. He was happy and elated, in spite of everything that had happened over the last few months. His family was there and everyone was in a relaxed and festive mood. Larry Summers was handing out the diplomas and John Lithgow was speaking. At 2 am the next morning, Eduardo was sitting on a leather couch in a posh VIP room at Phoenix. On the floors below, a party was in full swing. Eduardo's lawyers were currently at work on a lawsuit against Mark and Facebook. Mark probably thought that he hadn't done anything wrong. Facebook was his idea, he developed it, he postponed his college education and landed big investors. He probably thought Eduardo was a hanger-on like the twins. He probably hadn't gotten over Eduardo freezing the operating funds. Mark resented Eduardo's development of Jabozle and going after Facebook investors for it. But from Eduardo's point of view, he had put up the initial funding, had been there at the beginning and had put in his time. Besides, he and Mark had an agreement.

Chapter 32: Three Months Later

The rental house in Los Altos was raided by the cops during a big party. Sean couldn't figure out why the police had been called in—it was just a typical party. Everything had been going great. He and Mark were running Facebook as responsible executives and its membership now numbered in the neighborhood of eight to ten million. They both estimated that the company would eventually be worth billions. They were still planning on adding more innovations like a live news feed that would constantly update profiles. There were plans to open Facebook up to the general public and to international users. Facebook had the potential of being as big as Google and Microsoft. Many thoughts went through Sean's mind as he was cuffed and arrested. One thing he knew for sure, Mark was going to be very upset.

Chapter 33: CEO

Mark's decided that after his arrest, Sean had to go because the arrest was a threat to Facebook. Mark's had only two priorities in life. The first was his computer and second was Facebook. He would do what was necessary to protect his company. His protective stance wasn't based personal feelings since it was business. His sentiment is best represented by his business card, which he personally created that said, "I'm CEO—Bitch."



Chapter 34 and Epilogue

Chapter 34 and Epilogue Summary and Analysis

Chapter 34: May 2008

Eduardo was alone and drunk in a New York club. Eduardo wasn't just drunk he was fatigued. It had been weeks that he'd stayed up until 4 am, working on a new start-up that would involve health care, social networks and everything in between. The lawsuit was taking up a lot of his time during the day and sometimes having to travel to the west coast. He recalled being at the club in 2004 when he spotted one of the twins and he didn't know which one it was. He made his way over to him and blurted out, "I'm sorry. He screwed me like he screwed you guys" (pg. 252.)

Epilogue: Where Are They Now?

Sean Parker remains a dynamic source in Silicon Valley and works with Peter Thiel on early-stage investments. Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss made the 2008 Olympic team and came in fifth in men's pair competition. They reportedly settled for \$65 million with Mark but were not happy and were pursuing other avenues for additional monetary awards. The details of Eduardo Saverin's lawsuit against Facebook have remained secret. However, his name suddenly appeared back on the sight as co-founder. Facebook continues to grow and by the end of 2009 was expected to have well over two hundred million users, gaining as many as five million a week. Mark Zuckerberg's exact worth is unknown; however, he is considered to be the youngest self-made billionaire of all time.



Characters

Mark Zuckerberg

Mark Zuckerberg was a sophomore and a computer major at Harvard University when he met senior Eduardo Saverin who together eventually co-founded Facebook. Zuckerberg already had a reputation around campus as a computer genius. There was a rumor that Microsoft offered him a million dollars to come and work for them when he was a high school student. He had developed an on-line version of the board game Risk. Amazingly, Zuckerberg turned the offer down. He had other ideas for his future. Zuckerberg was known for his mop of curly hair, blue eyes that seemed to gaze in places that no one else could see, and for always wearing the same "uniform" of a hoodie, Adidas flip-flop sandals, and cargo shorts, not matter what the weather or the occasion.

After misfiring with his first social networking site, Facemash.com, two Harvard jocks, the Winklevoss twins, and their partner Divya Narendra recruited the young genius to do the programming for their partially developed social networking site, The Harvard Connection. Zuckerberg was vague and nuanced in his exchanges with the Harvard Connection team. They thought he was on board but he was stalling them while he worked on his on site, thefacebook.com. He wanted to delay their launch so that his site would be at the advantage when it launched. The Harvard Connection guys later sued Zuckerberg for stealing their idea. There was a settlement of at least \$65 million but apparently, the twins are seeking more damages.

Eventually, Zuckerberg teamed up with a savvy Silicon Valley dynamo, Sean Parker, who had created Napster while he was a high school student. After Parker came on board, it wasn't long before Saverin was out. When Parker was arrested, Zuckerberg fired him. Zuckerberg would allow nothing or no one to tarnish the reputation of Facebook. Zuckerberg is the youngest self-made billionaire in the history of the world.

Eduardo Saverin

Eduardo Saverin was a Harvard senior when he met sophomore Mark Zuckerberg. Eduardo was born in Brazil to a wealthy family and was raised in Miami. Saverin was a business major and very much admired by many of his peers for his savvy investment in a hedge fund. He and his brother outguessed the oil futures and earned a \$300,000 profit. This accomplishment helped Saverin win membership in the exclusive Phoenix club at Harvard. At a "punch" party to which Saverin was invited, he noticed the mop-haired, slender boy genius Mark Zuckerberg. The two young men became friends and soon began to plan a social network. There were many Harvard students with the same goal but Zuckerberg and Saverin had ideas and features that were unique and, they determined, potentially very popular.



Zuckerberg was to be the creative force of the partnership and Saverin would run the business end. In order to launch the site, money was needed to purchase the servers that were necessary for it to function. Saverin tapped his oil futures earnings and provided an initial \$1,000. After the site was launched, it was quickly apparent that its popularity would require additional servers and more programmers—both of which would need funding. Saverin provided another \$10,000 and a short while later another \$18,000. Saverin was annoyed when he felt that he was being left out of the loop on the business decisions and froze the account that Facebook was surviving on. Zuckerberg was introduced by new team member, Sean Parker, to wealthy investors who saw dollar signs in Facebook's future and soon there was no problem in keeping the company afloat.

Zuckerberg quit school and worked on the site in California. Saverin would not think of leaving school and stayed on until he graduated. With Saverin out of the picture in California, Zuckerberg and Parker quickly devised a way to squeeze Saverin out. After Saverin realized that he had been cheated out of a percentage of Facebook, a company that was destined to make billions, he filed a lawsuit against Zuckerberg. The details of the lawsuit were kept secret; however, Saverin's name suddenly reappeared on Facebook's site as co-founder.

Sean Parker

As a high school student, Sean Parker created the web site Napster that allowed users to download music free. The site was shut down but Parker became an icon to young kids, including Mark Zuckerberg. Parker eventually became president of Facebook.

Winklevoss Twins

Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss were Harvard seniors and were bound for the Olympics in the two-man rowing competition when they recruited Mark Zuckerberg to do the programming for their partially developed social networking site. The twins would eventually sue Zuckerberg for stealing their ideas.

Divya Narendra

Divya Narendra was a partner in the site being developed by the Winklevoss twins. It was Divya who recommended Mark Zuckerberg as a possible programmer for their social networking site called the "Harvard Connection."

Jeff Thiel

Jeff Thiel was the creator of the popular Internet company, PayPal. He was the first big investor in Facebook. He contributed \$500,000 for which he was given a seven percent interest.



Dustin Moskovitz

Dustin Moskovitz was one of Mark Zuckerberg's roommates at Harvard. After Facebook took off, Zuckerberg recruited Moskovitz to be director of programming. For his efforts, he was given a percentage of the company.

Chris Hughes

Chris Hughes was one of Mark Zuckerberg's roommates at Harvard. After Facebook took off, Hughes was recruited by Zuckerberg to handle publicity and the media. For his efforts, Hughes was given a percentage of the company.

Bill Gates

Bill Gates gave a lecture at Harvard's computer science school. Mark Zuckerberg was in attendance and was particularly intrigued by two things in the lecture: Bill Gates had dropped out of college to develop his business; and, the future was in AI and that the next "Bill Gates" might be sitting in the room.

Larry Summers

Larry Summers was the President of Harvard when the Winklevoss twins wrote a letter of complaint to the university about Mark Zuckerberg's violation of the school's ethics standards. Summers was dismissive of the twins and told them the matters was between them and Zuckerberg.



Objects/Places

Harvard University

The co-founders of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin, were students at Harvard University when they met in 2003.

Facemash.com

Mark Zuckerberg took a stab at a social networking site he called Facemash.com. The site was populated with photos he obtained by hacking into Harvard's computer system and downloading photos of all the students.

Thefacebook

Eduardo Saverin invested \$1,000 into the social networking site, called thefacebook.com, created by Mark Zuckerberg. It was the first iteration of the site that would eventually become Facebook.

Facebook

Facebook was created by Mark Zuckerberg in his dorm room at Harvard University. The social networking site expanded so rapidly that it became a genuine phenomenon and was worth hundreds of millions of dollars after just one year of operation.

The Harvard Connection

The Winklevoss twins recruited Mark Zuckerberg to develop their social networking site called the Harvard Connection, later changed to ConnectU. The twins eventually filed a lawsuit against Zuckerberg for stealing their ideas in the development of Facebook.

Silicon Valley

After Mark Zuckerberg met Sean Parker, he was convinced that he and the Facebook team needed to relocate to the Silicon Valley, the capital of the AI world.

Napster

While just a high school student, Sean Parker created the popular website, Napster. The site allowed the free download of any and all music. Napster was shut down as it was found to be promoting the pirating of property belonging to others.

PayPal

Jeff Thiel was the creator of the website PayPal. Thiel was the first "big" investor in Facebook. He invested \$500,000 into the fledgling company in return for a seven-percent interest in it.

New York City

The summer after thefacebook was launched, Eduardo Saverin stayed in New York City where he pursued investors and advertisers for the social networking company.

Microsoft

Mark Zuckerberg envisioned Facebook being as successful as stellar companies such as Google and Microsoft. Zuckerberg attended a lecture at Harvard given by Bill Gates. Gates said that AI was the future and that the next "Bill Gates" might be sitting in the room.

Themes

Risk Takers

Today's world could well be very different if it were not for risk-takers. It is not a coincidence that Bill Gates who created Microsoft, Sean Parker who created Napster and Mark Zuckerberg who created Facebook all dropped out of school. Gates and Zuckerberg dropped out of college while Parker was a high school drop-out. These individuals had visions and a drive that compelled them to create and to innovate and the energy they felt within them did not allow for any time to devote to school. They knew where they were going and understood that a formal education would not be essential and in fact would delay their goals. Jeff Thiel, who created PayPal, had a kindred spirit with these men. He had innovated a site that facilitated online business transactions. He was one of the first "big" investors in Facebook.

To create his first social networking site, Zuckerberg took the risk of expulsion from school by hacking into Harvard's computer system to obtain the photos he needed for the site. The site called Facemash.com was the platform from which he developed Facebook. Perhaps history would have been different if Zuckerberg had not taken the risk of hacking into the computer system of the most prestigious university in America.

Sean Parker created Napster, a website that basically allowed users to steal music. Although it was shut down, Parker became a hero and icon to many young people, including Mark Zuckerberg. And although that venture collapsed, Parker earned a reputation and status that others work their lives to achieve. As a result of Napster, Parker became a dynamic presence in the Silicon Valley and ultimately became president of Facebook. Criminal charges could have been brought against him for Napster, but he took the risk and became a legend in his own time.

These risk takers have changed life for the entire planet. The non-risk takers of the world can only sit back and wait to see what's next.

Ethics

The question of ethics is at the heart of the story of the founding of Facebook. Prior to co-founding Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg created a social networking site at Harvard called Facemash.com. In order to gather photos of all the students for this site, Zuckerberg had to hack into Harvard's computer system. This unethical behavior brought him to the attention and admiration of Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss and Divya Narendra who recruited him to do the programming for their social networking site, the Harvard Connection that was partially developed.

Unknown to the Harvard Connection men, Zuckerberg was developing his own social networking site at the same time they thought he was working on their site. He later admitted that he led them to believe he was working on their site but told them his



progress was being delayed due to functionality issues or because his school workload was too demanding. What he was actually doing was purposely delaying the launching of their site so that his site, thefacebook, could launch before the Harvard Connection thus positioning his site at an advantage. The Winklevoss twins complained to the University that Zuckerberg had violated Harvard's ethics standards but the Harvard President dismissed the matter, concluding that it was an issue for them and Zuckerberg to iron out.

Sean Parker who ultimately became the President of Facebook, created the popular website Napster while still in high school. The site enabled users to download music at no cost. The site was found to be illegal as it was promoting the pirating of the property of record companies and recording artists and was shut down. Because of this bold and rebellious move, however, Parker became an icon to many young people including Mark Zuckerberg.

Eduardo Saverin was required to sign legal documents that would allow for additional shares to be issued for Facebook. Since the papers indicated that his shares increased with the new arrangement, he felt it was safe for him to sign them. What Zuckerberg and Parker were really setting up was a way to get rid of Saverin by tying his percentage of the company to his actual production. Since he was still in school and was led to believe by Zuckerberg that his responsibilities would be handled by others until his graduation, he had no idea that his shares would be diluted due to his lack of production. When Saverin realized that he was being diluted out of the company and no longer had co-founder status, he had no choice but to bring a lawsuit against Zuckerberg and Facebook.

Zuckerberg is the youngest self-made billionaire in history; however, when realizing some of the very unethical ways in which he operated, it's impossible to attribute his success to genius alone. As Balzac said, "Behind every great fortune, there lies a great crime."

Sheer Genius

People who were in Mark Zuckerberg's company often noticed a faraway look in the young man's eyes. It was as if he was looking into the far distant future to a place that no one else could see. As it turned out, that observation was right on. Zuckerberg was recognized as a computer genius from the time he was a high school student and created a computerized version of the board game Risk. The rumor was that high school student Zuckerberg was offered a million dollar salary by Microsoft if he would come and work for them. As only a genius would do or understand, Zuckerberg turned the offer down—he probably looked into the future and knew that to him a million dollars would in just a matter of a few years be chunk change.

As a freshman at Harvard, Zuckerberg created a popular site for Harvard students called Cross-Match which allowed the students to find out which students had registered for what classes. Zuckerberg's first foray into the development of a social



network was his Facemash.com. It was a compilation of photos of all Harvard students. Zuckerberg had download rights to only those photos in his own house. To have access and collect photos for the entire school, he had to hack into the supposedly secure Harvard computer system.

As the undisputed top school in the country and one of the most expensive, one would assume that Harvard's computer system would be impenetrable. However, the Harvard system was unable to withstand the attack of a nineteen-year-old and his machine. When simple hacking didn't do the job, Zuckerberg would simply write a program and create algorithms to gain access. On more difficult access barriers, he would physically sneak into the dorm, hook into the Ethernet so his computer would display the appropriate IP address and download the photos.

Having created one of the most innovative and successful Internet companies in history, Zuckerberg is far from satisfied or done. He challenges himself to continue to go to the step beyond. Zuckerberg is relentlessly working on the development of new features for the site. Now he looks out into the distance and sees his company in the same league with Microsoft and Google.

Style

Perspective

The story of the founding of Facebook is written in the third-person narrative. In his "Author's Notes," author Ben Mezrich goes into great detail about the research and the many interviews he conducted and the numerous sources he consulted in writing "Accidental Billionaires." The sources he used for the account included official documents such as those from court proceedings. Mezrich is careful to note that there are points of contention among the principals of the story, especially those between Mark Zuckerberg and the individuals who wound up suing him. He included both sides of these disagreements.

Where it was possible, Mezrich created a fair representation of any disagreement based on documents and interviews. He did not himself enter into the debate by endorsing either point of view. The author presents both sides of the disagreement between Zuckerberg and the Winklevoss twins as to the amount of Zuckerberg's involvement with the twins' social networking site called the "Harvard Connection." Since it is documented by court records that the twins won a \$65 million settlement from Zuckerberg, the author allows the reader to make his own conclusion about which side was the more truthful. The author explains that in order to capsulize an event and streamline it for the sake of clarity and brevity, he, on occasion, compressed several conversations into one.

Of the two co-founders of Facebook, only Eduardo Saverin was directly interviewed by Mezrich. Although asked repeatedly, Mark Zuckerberg rejected requests by the author to be interviewed. With that in mind, perhaps one could make the conclusion that Saverin's interpretation of events are better represented in this account than are Zuckerberg's.

Tone

Ben Mezrich's "The Accidental Billionaires - The Founding of Facebook," is an engaging account of the founding of Facebook and is presented with great clarity and detail. The reader can almost imagine being a silent observer of the conversations between the two young Harvard students who would eventually co-found the social networking site. The exchanges between the young men seem very believable and ultimately proved to be part of history. Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin are, in many ways, typical young college students; of course, their accomplishments were anything but typical. Their youthful banter is indicative of their ages and their realistic remarks about classes, other students and girls are all to be expected. A girl's rejection of Mark Zuckerberg was actually the impetus for Zuckerberg's first social networking site at Harvard, called Facemash.com.



The author uses foreshadowing very successfully in keeping the reader on the edge of his seat. The story of the founding of Facebook is one, like Lincoln's assassination, where the reader already knows the ending. However, the author makes the story entertaining and intriguing from beginning to end. Although the reader basically knows how the story turns out such as the account of how Facebook got to be such a success and the people that made it happen is described in rich detail and in an easy to understand manner. Despite the fact that the subject company is an Internet company and tells the story of a computer geek, Mezrich keeps the tech talk to a minimum. He has turned a techie story into a human drama about the journey of a handful of young men in the creation a billion dollar company.

Structure

"The Accidental Billionaires - The Founding of Facebook," by Ben Mezrich, is separated into 34 chapters, followed by an epilogue entitled, "Where Are They Now?" which provides updates of the lives and careers of those involved with Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook during the time he developed the website. The book is laid out in basically a chronological order, covering roughly four years during which time www.thefacebook.com was first developed through the time it became Facebook and an Internet phenomenon that was gaining as many as five million new members each week and was worth billions.

The book starts off with the chapter entitled "October 2003," when Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin, co-founders of Facebook, first met. The reader is then taken through some of Zuckerberg's hits and misses in developing a social network and the first spark of Zuckerberg's idea for Facebook. Several chapters are devoted to his relationship with the Winklevoss twins, two Harvard athletes who thought they had brought Zuckerberg on their team to create a social network called "Harvard Connection." Zuckerberg kept his relationship with the twins nuanced and led them on a bit so that he could launch his site first and thus big-foot their site.

The last section focuses on what some may call ruthless business practices by Zuckerberg, illustrating that he was willing to sacrifice friendships and forsake agreements in order to protect his baby, Facebook. Despite lawsuits filed against him and Facebook by the Winklevoss twins, Divya Narendra and eventually by co-founder Saverin, Zuckerberg stayed focused on his business and on turning Facebook into a venture that belonged in the company of Microsoft and Google.

Quotes

"Behind every great fortune, there lies a great crime" (Chapter 5, pg. 41.)

"Since high school, it could be observed, his [Mark] thoughts had always seemed clearer when he let them come out through his hands. To an outside observer, the relationship he had with his computer seemed much smoother than any relationship he'd ever had with anyone in the outside world" (Chapter 5, pg. 42.)

"I almost want to put some of these faces next to pictures of farm animals and have people vote on which is more attractive" (Chapter 5, pg. 43.)

"During the ad-board meeting, he'd readily admitted his guilt in terms of hacking—but he's also pointed out that his actions had illuminated some serious security flaws in the university's computer system. His stunt had a silver lining, he'd argued, and he'd readily volunteered to help the houses fix up the flaws in their systems" (Chapter 9, pg. 65.)

"Certainly, Mark saw himself as leagues beyond the Winklevoss twins. Who were they to try to harness his abilities. Just a couple of jocks who thought they rules the world. Maybe they did rule the social world, but in the land of Web sites and computers—Mark was king" (Chapter 11, pg. 82.)

"Eduardo sat next to Mark in the back row of the balcony, watching as Bill Gates mesmerized the gathered crowd. Despite Gates' strange, almost autistic mannerisms, he managed to toss off...some pearls of wisdom—that AI was the future, that the next Bill Gates was out there, possibly in that very room" (Chapter 15, pg. 108.)

"Classes are being skipped. Work is being ignored, Students are spending hours in front of the computer in utter fascination. The facebook.com craze has swept through the [Stanford] campus" (Chapter 19, pg. 147.)

"Maybe Facebook would one day be open to everyone. The college format, the exclusivity—it had already worked its magic. People trusted Facebook...people loved Facebook. People were going to want to pay billions for Facebook" (Chapter 27, pg. 221.)

"Eduardo was no longer a member of facebook. He was no longer part of the management team, no longer an employee—no longer connected in any way. He would be expunged from the corporate history. To Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook, Eduardo Saverin no longer existed" (Chapter 29, pg. 229.)

"Sean Parker was like a jittery little comet tearing through the atmosphere; he'd already burned through two start-ups. The question wasn't if he'd burn through Facebook as well, it was when" (Chapter 31, pg. 243.)

"We can picture Mark reading the words on the [business] card aloud to himself, the smallest hint of a grin twitching across his usually impassive face. 'I'm CEO—Bitch'" (Chapter 33, pg. 247.)

"It's unclear how much Mark Zuckerberg is actually worth today, he is certainly one of the richest twenty-five-year-olds on the planet—and has been described as the youngest self-made billionaire of all time" (Epilogue, pg. 255.)



Topics for Discussion

What was the name of the first social network created by Mark Zuckerberg at Harvard? How did Mark get the photos for this site? Why were feminist groups on campus and female students angry over Mark's first attempt at a social network?

What did the Winklevoss twins want Mark to do for them? Why did Mark delay telling the twins that he was creating his own social network? What complaint did the twins have about Facebook? What actions did they take?

What role did Eduardo Saverin play in Facebook? What initial agreement did Eduardo and Mark have on Facebook? How did Eduardo feel betrayed by Mark?

What Internet companies was Sean Parker involved in before joining the Facebook team? Why was Sean an icon and hero of young kids, including Mark Zuckerberg? What happened to the companies that Sean was involved in?

What was Facebook first called and where did Mark get the idea for that name? Who wanted to change the name of the site to Facebook? How much was Facebook worth after the first fourteen months of its operation?

What was innovative about Facebook? How did it differ from the Winklevoss twin's site? How was it different from MySpace and Friendster?

What did Mark decide to do about his education after Facebook took off? What successful college dropout spoke at Harvard? How much schooling did Sean Parker have? What did he develop as a high school student?