

# **Binocular Vision: New & Selected Stories Study Guide**

**Binocular Vision: New & Selected Stories by Edith Pearlman**

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## Plot Summary

What they lack in length, Edith Pearlman's stories make up for in depth and richness of characters. Her collection of stories "Binocular Vision: New and Selected Stories" includes a parade of fully developed characters who learn to deal with a shortcoming they have encountered in their lives. Most of us can relate to at least one of the characters in these stories.

Pearlman's stories most often deal with problems that people deal with on a day to day basis. One of the recurring themes in the stories is that of relationships. Husbands and wives struggle as they choose to remain faithful or give into their desires. Other characters, such as Sophie in "Inbound," discover how a relative's illness will affect their lives. Some characters, like Henry and Dorothy in "Capers," try to find some way to bring excitement back to their lives as they age and their bodies no longer allow them the pleasures of the past. People of a variety of sexual orientations are included in the novel. Homosexuals, bisexuals, and asexuals are included as characters. One story mentions a character believed by others to lean toward interspecies relationships. In the same story, two teen cousins experiment with incest.

One of the most common settings in the novel is the city of Boston, Massachusetts. Often seen is Godolphin, a fictional suburb of Boston. Other settings range from places like London to Central America. Many of the stories are set against the backdrop of World War II. Jews and the Jewish faith are commonly incorporated into the stories. Through the stories, Pearlman demonstrates that even though these people were persecuted, many managed to make good lives for themselves in the United States after World War II. One story "Relic and Type" includes a description of the Jewish children of a Jewish man and Japanese woman. Children, particularly those with a mental or physical defect, are common characters in the novel. One story that addresses the theme of handicapped children is "Tess."



# “Inbound”

## Summary

In the story "Inbound," highly intelligent Sophie became separated from her parents and younger sister Lily during a trip to Harvard Square. Sophie realized that she would never have a life apart from her younger sister who had Down's Syndrome. Sophie had a vision that showed her that while Lily would always be different, Sophie would always be different, too. It was at this point that Sophie becomes aware that she and her sister would be like the inbound and outbound subways, always coextensive. Coextensive was a word that her father had just taught her. When Sophie was rejoined with her parents, two-year-old Lily waved at Sophie and said her name for the first time.

## Analysis

The theme of relationships as well as the theme of children are dealt with in this story. Having a child with disabilities affects not only the parents and the child's siblings. The older sister in the story is Sophie. Her younger sister Lily was born with Down's Syndrome. It was during a family trip to Harvard that Sophie had a vision of what her future would be like. She realized that one day her parents would no longer be strong enough to care for Lily and that her care would fall to Sophie. Notice that as Sophie thought about her future, she imagined that she would try to read as many books as her parents had. She would be as smart as her parents. She would get married and have a family just like they did. She also realized that since Lily was different because of her disability, Sophie and her life would also always be different because Sophie would be needed to help care for her sister.

## Discussion Question 1

Consider Sophie's reaction to the library. Do you think she hated it as much as her parents thought she did?

## Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Sophie denied remembering her trip to the library in France?

## Discussion Question 3

Do you think a highly intelligent child has an easier life than a disabled child? Why or why not? What are some of the challenges faced by each type of child?



## Vocabulary

outbound, coextensive, prodigious, terminus, vertically, concourse, rucksacks, excursion, placidity, erect, quadrangle, colonnade, nave, perimeter, haphazardly, averted, maneuvered, incandescence, kiosk, inquisitive, facsimile, canted, descent



# “Day of Awe”

## Summary

Robert Katz, a Jew, visited his son in Central America to meet the boy who would soon be his adopted grandson in “Day of Awe.” Robert’s visit took place during the time of Yom Kippur. He was grieved not only because he didn’t like Mexico but also because he could not even find nine Jews with whom he could pray the prayers of forgiveness for the Jewish holiday. Although he’d practiced his Spanish before his visit, Robert still had difficulty communicating with his new grandson. The boy was hard to understand because he often dropped consonants from his words. Robert felt frustrated as he tried to communicate with the child.

During a weekend visit, Robert went with Lex, Jaime and Janet, a nurse, to visit local orphanages. Robert was touched by the way the boys at the orphanage looked at him as if he were worthy of great respect because of his age. He later ate dinner with the nurse who told him that she was part-Jewish. He wondered if he had really put his efforts into looking if he could have found more people in the area that were of Jewish descent. The next morning Robert listened to Mass in a small Catholic Church. He thought about how foolish it was to desire to be the father of many nations. He realized it would be better to be known as a country that took care of its own, even if those that needed care the most were not the most desirable.

## Analysis

Robert Katz learned that true religion and religious compassion was more than just having a family of descendants that followed in one’s religious footsteps. He was at odds with his gay son who was in the process of adopting a small, backward boy from Central America. To make matters worse, he went to visit the two in a town that didn’t even have a Jewish population big enough for the required ten to gather so Yom Kippur prayers for forgiveness could be said. Robert thought of God’s promise to Abraham that he would be made the father of many nations. Even though Robert had hoped to have descendants who were spotless Jews, it hadn’t turned out that way. With the help of the boy who will soon become his grandson by adoption Robert came to realize that being the father of a nation might not necessarily be the ideal proposition.

This story also addresses the theme of children, particularly children who are difficult to love. Robert found his new grandson unappealing at first. Even though he’d tried to brush up on his Spanish skills, he still found it difficult to communicate with the backward boy. Before the end of his trip, however, Robert found a level on which he could relate to Jamie. He also realized it was perhaps more of a blessing to help those who were not perfect and unappealing by the world’s standards.



## Discussion Question 1

How did Robert's opinion of Jamie change through the course of the story?

## Discussion Question 2

How did Robert's visit to the orphanage change him?

## Discussion Question 3

Why was Robert so upset that he was the only Jew in the town where he traveled to visit his son?

## Vocabulary

deception, reconciled, insatiable, unambitious, indulgent, bilingual, austere, incarnation, edifice, dissension, taut, sallow, retool, transliteration, indigenous, belatedly, fronds, androgyny, ascertained, aperitif, forlorn, adroit, refectory, deprived, patriarch, lisp, nomads, pious,





# “Settlers”

## Summary

Retired teacher Peter Loy boarded a bus early one Saturday morning in the story “Settlers” to visit the family of a former student. He was so close to the family that Meg, the mother in the family, had even offered to let Peter live with them. Peter was happy on his way to the Wren’s house. He liked Meg and enjoyed talking to her even though he wasn’t sure if she understood literature to the extent he did. He considered their family as his own. He even thought about the ways in which he could help them if he were to live with them. He would be able to drive the children to school, freeing up Meg so she could work at home. Peter even envisioned leaving the money he had inherited from his aunt to Jack and Meg’s children.

The day of the Wren’s annual afternoon party, Peter helped out in the kitchen. Peter had gone to each of these parties and was remembered from year to year. This year Geronimus Barron, the Jew who had bought Peter’s townhouse, was in attendance. He told Peter he wanted him on his staff because “Margaret,” which was Geronimus’ name for Meg, had bragged about Peter’s lucidity. Later that year, Peter watched as the Cambodians who lived near him were evacuated from their house because of a small fire. He wished Meg was there beside him.

Jack told Peter that he and Meg were separating on the Friday night before Christmas. Jack complained to him about how Jews were taking over everything now, even the women. Peter reminded him they hadn’t taken over all of their houses yet. Jack responded by telling Peter he wished he hadn’t tried to provide so much for his children and insisted that they go to private school because his wife wouldn’t have met Geronimus, the man for whom she was leaving Jack. Peter realized that the Wren’s divorce meant his family was dissolving as well. He knew even if Jack did remarry, his new wife wouldn’t like the idea of an old bachelor visiting each week or even moving in with them. He hoped he could remain friends with Meg.

## Analysis

One of the themes addressed in this novel is that of relationships. In the story, home is used metaphorically to represent the relationships in the story. A variety of homes are discussed. Peter did not like his aunt’s townhouse so he sold it to a man who remodeled it into a glamorous abode. A couple who lived on Peter’s street had bought a home in hopes of renovating it. Also, near where Peter lived was a huge house that was an overcrowded home filled with what Peter described as “an entire village of Cambodians” (p. 26). Another important home, relationship, in the novel is the one in which Jack lived with his wife, Meg. This house had been in Jack’s family for years. The author’s description of the house gives it personality as she describes it as being old, yet fresh. The home seemed to enjoy listening to Peter. When Jack learned that Meg was leaving



him, he told Peter that Meg had never really liked the house anyway. He seemed to be saying to Peter that Meg had never liked him, using his house to represent himself. Then, at the conclusion of the novel Peter notes that houses, like women, allow themselves to be taken over by whoever lives inside.

Notice that Peter picked up on some clues that foreshadow the coming split between Jack and Meg. One of these was the way Meg responded to Peter's comment that Jews were complicated. She seemed noncommittal, perhaps an intentional lack of interest since the man with whom she was in love was Jewish. Another clue that something wasn't right in the family was that the youngest child's hair was red, a color that Meg said came from her side of family even though she had brown hair. Notice also that during the afternoon party some of Meg's friends referred to her as Peggy. Geronimus called her Margaret.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss Peter's relationship with Meg. How is the relationship different from the way Peter would like for it to be?

## Discussion Question 2

Why did the author include information about the house where the Cambodians lived? How was this information significant to the story?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss how Jews were portrayed in the story.

## Vocabulary

capelet, dowager, edifice, legatee, garrulous, philanthropy, remedial, noncommittally, ingenues, hooligans, genteel, subletting, litheness, lucid, abstemious, tycoon, innovative, inevitable, commencement, misogyny



# “The Noncombatant”

## Summary

In “The Noncombatant,” forty-nine-year old Richard has rented a beach house from a war widow during the final months of World War II. Richard was suffering with metastatic cancer. He would soon be part of a trial study using cobalt. For the time being, he was resting at the house near the beach in Cape Cod with his family. He grew stronger during his time there and soon began visiting a bar on occasion. He was at this bar when he heard news that the war was officially over. Since the bar was so crowded, Richard went outside the bar and happened to see Mrs. Hazelton, the woman from whom his family was renting the house, running toward him. He recognized the rage he saw in her face and actions. She had finally been able to show her anger that her husband was dead. Richard dealt with the same rage because he knew his cancer would eventually kill him. Richard took her in his arms. They comforted one another; but, Mrs. Hazelton sensed what he wanted. She shook her head and ran away.

## Analysis

The themes of relationships and World War II are both addressed in this short story. The story is set during the time of World War II. Richard compared the lessening of his pain associated with his cancer to the lessening of the stress on the faces of the soldiers because the war was coming to a conclusion. “Within his body there seemed to be a temporary lull in combat” (p. 36) the author wrote as she compared Richard’s cancer to the war that had affected the entire world.

Richard considered his participation in the test study as a battle in itself. He told his friend Mac, “The war will stop, and my battle will begin” (p. 39). Notice that when Mrs. Hazelton shook her head at Richard, indicating that she did not want to have an affair with him, Richard was described as not yet being defeated. It’s left to the reader to decide if this meant that Richard intended to approach Mrs. Hazelton again or if he was feeling more hopeful about his cancer prognosis.

Notice also that Richard’s wife is described as being 15 years younger than he and extremely attractive. She contrasts greatly with the war widow who was the family’s landlady. Mrs. Hazelton wore the clothes that had belonged to her husband and always seemed to look unkempt with wild, graying hair. However, it was to this lady’s deep anger to which Richard was attracted. When the end of the war was announced, she was finally able to accept and show the rage she felt because of her husband’s death. Richard felt this same rage because he knew he was dying. His wife didn’t share this feeling of rage with him because she was still in denial that he would die. For a moment Richard believed that he and the widow’s shared rage could cure his cancer. She shook her head, though, refusing to give in to him.



## Discussion Question 1

At the conclusion of the novel, on what level do you think Richard did not consider himself defeated?

## Discussion Question 2

Compare and contrast Catherine and Mrs. Hazelton.

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the title of the story. Although Richard wasn't fighting in the war, he was fighting a battle of sorts. Why, then, do you think the story was titled the "The Noncombatant"?

## Vocabulary

metastatic, uncompromising, exultation, spindly, perpetually, arabesque, protocol, subsequent, consecutive, concessionaire, buoyantly, breach, inebriates



# "Vaquita"

## Summary

Señora Marta Perera de Lefkowitz, minister of health, listened as her deputy assistant told her the medical problems facing the village where Señora Perera would be visiting the following day. She told her deputy assistant, Caroline, she feared she'd be arrested at some point that day. Caroline suggested she leave willingly, but Señora Perera did not wish to do so. She felt that some of the troubles her country was facing were because of baby formula. Before formula was invented, lactation had kept the population in check. Now there were new babies everywhere, as well as an increase in cases of malnourished children because of the growing population.

Señora Perera rode the bus home. She enjoyed the ride because it made her feel like she did as a young medical student in Prague before she had to go into hiding from the Nazis for a year. She'd spent a year hiding in a barn with only a cow for company. When she arrived at her house, she greeted her pouting parrot and had dinner before preparing for bed. Part of the preparation included pinning the spray of diamonds her husband had given her to the lapel of the jacket she would wear the following day. This spray of diamonds was one of her trademarks.

Although she'd told the press a good deal about her life, she had never told them that she'd gotten pregnant by a married lover. That lover had paid for an abortion and she'd never been able to get pregnant since then. Her husband had cheated on her many times. He gave her jewelry to make up for his straying, but the diamond pin was the only piece of jewelry that was real.

The next day Señora Perera borrowed a motorbike at Campo del Norte and rode to a lake where she found a young Indian nursing her child. She praised the mother, telling her the child would be a great man and ordered her to continue to breastfeed him. She showed the girl how to teach him to cover his teeth with his tongue so he could continue to feed without biting her. Before she left the young girl, Señora Perera gave her the diamond pin. Señora Perera had intended to sell the pin to pay for her own retirement once she was deported. Instead, she told the girl to keep it until the boy was an adult. Later, Señora Perera considered what she had done might be considered foolish but realized that she'd had a long life. She knew that the time she'd had since she'd hidden from the Nazis was a gift from God.

## Analysis

As she faced deportation by her own government, Señora Perera considered the impact of her own life. Her campaign against baby formula had failed. The population was raging out of control. She believed this explosion in population was because lactation had once held the population in check. If a mother wasn't able to produce milk, the baby



died. Since formula was now available, there was an overpopulation of children with no way to properly feed them all.

Señora Perera is an interesting character. She was a Jew living in Russia at the time of World War II. She had been studying to be a doctor but her studies were cut short when the Nazis began persecuting the Jewish people. Her father died in a concentration camp. Her mother died shortly after she and Señora Perera moved from Russia to Central America. Señora Perera indicated that her mother grieved herself to death.

Before moving to Central America, Señora Perera had been sheltered by Gentiles. These people had given her a place to stay in their barn to keep her safe from the Nazis. Her only company during that time was a cow. This cow is one of two symbols used for Señora Perera during the course of the novel. The reporters who interviewed her seemed most interested about the cow when they talked to her about her past. In caricatures, she was drawn to look like a cow. During her campaign against the formula companies, she was called “the cow.” Another symbol that represents Señora Perera is the diamond pin that she always wore. This diamond pin was a gift from her husband during one of his many periods of infidelity. Señora Perera wore it always. At the end of the novel, however, she gave the pin, which she’d planned on selling to finance her retirement, to a young Indian mother and her infant son.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the significance of the diamond pin. Do you think Señora Perera was foolish for giving it to the Indian girl? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 2

Why did Señora Perera tell the Indian girl to hold onto the diamond pin until the boy was older?

## Discussion Question 3

Do you agree with Señora Perera’s belief that formula companies were responsible for the population explosion in Central America? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

caricatured, inquisitive, oblongs, lactation, deport, inaudible, conflation, defected, affectation, indulgence, partisans, fetidness, rabbinic, stanchions, reminisce, besotted, honorific, orations, dullard, ingratiating, piously



# “Allog”

## Summary

The story “Allog” details the way Joe, a man from Southeast Asia hired by Mrs. Goldfanger to care for her ailing husband, became a benefit not only to the Goldfangers, but also to all the five families living in an apartment building on Deronda Street. During Joe’s time there, one of the residents who was a singer, died. Joe was called to help her, but she was already dead when he got there. The soprano singer bequeathed her apartment to Joe’s wife. Her kindness allowed Joe’s wife and daughter to come to Israel to live with Joe. Joe continued to take care of Mr. Goldfanger even though his family had joined him. During a talk with Tamar, a teenage girl who lived in the same apartment building as the Goldfangers and Joe, Joe called Mr. Goldfanger an allog. An allog, he said, was an elderly man who was no longer able to work but was still revered. Eventually, the term allog began to be used to refer to people like Joe who came to help the elderly.

## Analysis

The theme of relationships is the major theme of this novel which deals with the lives of several families who inhabit the same apartment building. Mrs. Goldfanger asked an Asian man name Joe to help her with her ailing husband because she could care for him alone. Joe not only made friends with Mr. Goldfanger and eased Mrs. Goldfanger’s burden, but he also provided assistance and friendship to the others who lived in the building as well. The story provides an example of the way that one person can change an entire atmosphere.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss what life was like in the Deronda Street apartment house before Joe came to live there. How did his presence change the atmosphere of the house?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the relationship between Joe and Mr. Goldfanger.

## Discussion Question 3

Why do you think the soprano bequeathed her apartment to Joe’s wife?



## Vocabulary

vestibule, missive, sabbatical, transcend, deciphered, impropriety, impoverished, sagacity, schnorrer, indentured, epithet, languid, indolent, mercenaries, fiefdom, crucible, spiel, newel, aslant, carnage, bequeathed, connotation, indispensable





# “Chance”

## Summary

In the story “Chance,” the synagogue attended by a young girl had been chosen to be the new home of a Torah from Czechoslovakia. The village in which the Torah had resided had been obliterated. A ceremony was scheduled on a Sunday two weeks from the day the Torah arrived at the synagogue. Before the Torah arrived, a study group that met in homes to play poker had a meeting at the narrator’s house. While playing poker, the narrator noticed the rabbi checking out her mother in a sexual manner. Later, during the service to accept the new Torah, the narrator realized that there were probably similarities between the congregation that had been obliterated and the congregation that she attended. Not only were there those who were deeply religious, there were also those who acted sinfully.

## Analysis

This coming of age story addresses the lives of a group of Jews. The particular synagogue at which the people worship had been chosen to be the new home to the Torah from a Czechoslovakian village that had been destroyed. Although it was considered a great honor for the synagogue to be chosen to house the Torah, a young girl came to realize that the destroyed village, just like her own, had residents who did not necessarily live up to the expectations God had for them. This young girl came to this realization when she noticed her rabbi looking at her mother in a sexual way during a poker game. Notice that the girl’s thoughts went to the Torah which was waiting to be formally accepted by the synagogue when she saw this man of God eyeing her mother. Later in the poker game the narrator looked at the rabbis’ cards and realized the rabbi was lying about the cards he had. She was shocked and disappointed that a man of God was able to lie so easily and convincingly.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is it significant that the Torah study group was really a poker club?

## Discussion Question 2

What did the narrator learn during her experience?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the way the Torah is used as a symbol in the story. What does it symbolize to the narrator? What does it symbolize to the congregation as a whole?

## Vocabulary

obliterated, chafed, sexton, premises, nuptials, impassivity, impudent, goy, eponymously, diffidently, nomenclature, ardor, usurer, permutations, behest, vamp, vivacity, imploded, unmediated, provost, numeracy, rueful



# “ToyFolk”

## Summary

In "ToyFolk," Fergus, a division head for the toy making company ToyFolk, was sent to a new town to open a toy factory. While there he wandered into an old-fashioned toy store and met the owners, Anna and Bernard. He visited their home and he saw pictures of a girl. He assumed she was their daughter. Since there were no more pictures of the girl after the age of eight, Fergus thought she could have died at an early age. He later learned that Anna was married to another man before Bernard. The daughter was her child by her first husband. Anna had moved in with Bernard and the child's father had kidnapped the daughter and taken her away. Anna had punished Bernard for her own sorrow by swearing she would not have children by him until her own daughter had been returned to her. While discussing the situation between Anna and Bernard with his own wife, Fergus learned that his wife had not been as excited about having children or as fulfilled by them as he had been.

## Analysis

Evil and cruelty linger in a picturesque village in which Fergus has been sent to open a new toy factory. Notice the way that behind the facade of the toys and toy factory, there are images of cruelty. When Fergus first wandered into Anna's and Bernard's toy store Anna had told him the town had no secrets. Later, she shared with him that the news vendor had missing fingers because his father had chopped the fingers off during a fit when the vendor was only a boy. She also shared with him the story of her kidnapped daughter and her refusal to have any more children until her first child was returned to her. It was almost as if she blamed Bernard for her daughter's disappearance. Fergus was stunned that anyone could be so cruel as to refuse to allow anyone the pleasure that he had found in raising children. The ending of the novel is significant as he waited for his wife to agree with him that they knew that treating others' children as their own was not a reasonable alternative of personal parenthood. His wife never gave him the answer for which he waited.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the way in which the image of the clock is used in this novel.

## Discussion Question 2

How did Fergus' first impressions of Bernard and Anna prove wrong? How did he try to color their relationship based on his own beliefs about life?



## Discussion Question 3

What did Fergus learn about his wife in this story? Had she been giving him hints all along that she was relieved her stint as a parent was finished? Use examples from the book to support your answer.

## Vocabulary

rudimentary, censure, aslant, rigors, collaborators, pensioners, geisha, affability, epaulets, harlequin, enumerated, decamped, aggrieved, repose, milieus



# “Tess”

## Summary

In the story “Tess,” Tess was a mentally and physically handicapped baby girl born to a single waitress. At age two Tess still required round the clock hospital care in order to keep her alive. She would never be able to have any sort of life beyond her crib or padded chair in the hospital. The staff at the hospital had varied opinions of Tess. To the accounting department she was a burden because of the cost of her care. The hospital counsel was working on suing the state in order to get some reimbursement for the money spent on Tess’ care. The nurses who took care of Tess loved her because of her angelic beauty. One resident imagined the damage in Tess’ brain being able to reverse itself and allow the child to be whole.

A cleaning man from Asia wondered why the Americans had even allowed the child to stay alive once they realized her deformed state and her life's bleak future. He stroked her cheek even though he knew it was against the rules. After the cleaning man left, the hospital counsel visited Tess. As he looked at her he thought to himself that if they were to continue to provide for Tess, there must be some financial reimbursement. After he left, Tess’ mother visited. She unscrewed the line from Tess’ heart, knowing the child would bleed to death.

## Analysis

The story of Tess is a story of the conundrum created by modern medicine. When a child like Tess is born, should it be allowed to survive even though it will have no productive future? Who is responsible for paying for the care that child will require throughout its life? The American opinion of Tess differs greatly from that of the Asian. The Asian man who was tasked with cleaning the bathroom in Tess’ hospital room wondered why the baby had been allowed to survive. He knew that in his country a child like Tess would have been helped by the doctors to die instead of using drastic measures to keep the infant alive. Americans, however, believe that every life is valuable. They cared for and tended to Tess even though she would never have a future. One optimistic resident imagined Tess’ brain fixing itself and the child eventually showing signs that she understood what was going on around her. Most were realistic and knew they were only keeping the child alive until she was killed by some disease that invaded her system and her immunity was not able to fight it.

Notice this story is written a style different from the book's previous stories. This story opens in the present tense with a third person point of view. The narration is focused on the hospital counsel preparing to sue the state for reimbursement for the care of Tess. The tense and point of view switch between the third person narrator to a first person narration by Tess’ mother. Tess’ mother tells her story in the past tense. The two stories



converge after the hospital counsel left Tess' room after he began the process of suing the state. Tess entered her daughter's room to disconnect the tube leading to her heart.

## Discussion Question 1

Do you think the actions of Tess' mother were cruel? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 2

In cases like that of Tess, who should be responsible to pay the medical bills?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the idea of beauty as it is presented in the story. Do you think we as humans are tuned to take better care of things are beautiful? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

reimbursement, translucent, pallor, quotient, innumerable, aslant, plateau, sanguine, agglomeration, frieze



# “Fidelity”

## Summary

In the story “Fidelity,” the writer Victor Cullen fabricated stories he wrote for the magazine “World Enough.” Greg, the magazine’s editor, noticed the fabrication, but he published the story anyway. After the first story was published, Nora (Victor’s wife) called Greg to tell him that the place Victor had written about in his story didn’t exist. Greg cut her off. He figured it was just a prank by Victor. Victor, however, continued to send in fictional articles. One contained a description of an armoire. According to the description, the armoire matched the one in Greg’s bedroom. Greg briefly wondered if Nora had described it to Victor.

On the day that Greg got his last article from Victor, he also received news from Victor’s and Nora’s daughter that the couple had died within twelve hours of each other. The daughter suspected that her mother had committed suicide. Victor’s final story not only suggested that one day the two would die, but it also indicated that he knew of Nora’s act of cheating on him with Greg. He referred to Greg by name in the article and called him a bastard. Instead of choosing not to publish this final article, Greg published it, including a picture of Nora as Victor had directed. Greg changed his name at the end of the article so that it would appear that Nora had cheated with some man other than him. For this article, he paid photojournalists to travel out to take pictures of things Victor had described in the article. He even had pictures taken of the sky that he and Nora could see through the skylight in Greg’s apartment while they had their affair because Victor had described the sky in the article.

## Analysis

Victor Cullen, a writer for “World Enough,” used a series of fictitious magazine articles to determine that his wife (Nora) was having an affair with the editor of the magazine (Greg). Notice that Greg fell right into Victor’s trap when Victor described the armoire in Greg’s bedroom and then Greg photographed the armoire as an illustration for the article. It was almost as if Greg was admitting to the affair with Nora without even knowing that he was substantiating Victor’s suspicions. The reader must wonder under what circumstances Nora told Victor about the affair and if she was trying to warn Greg about what was happening when she called him about the first fictitious article that her husband submitted. Greg seemed to think his act of publishing Victor’s articles, even though they were lies, was an attempt to appease the old man. Note that he also believed that he was the one who was actually the hero in the affair. He didn’t see himself as being guilty of anything. Instead, he believed he was providing Victor with a service by keeping Nora happy.



## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the meaning of the strange articles that Victor was sending to his editor. Do you think Victor was really losing his mind, or was he leading Greg into a trap?

## Discussion Question 2

Do you think both Victor and Nora committed suicide, or did Nora die alone after her husband's death? Why would she commit suicide?

## Discussion Question 3

What might have happened if the readers of Greg's magazine learned that he was printing articles about fictitious places?

## Vocabulary

composited, impoverished, liquefy, derelict, monarch, retainers, consecutive, conglomerate, purveyors, exuberant, abode, convention, char, discrepancy, indulgent, demographic, rogue, cassowaries, beauteous, paladin, chivalrous





# “If Love Were All”

## Summary

In the story “If Love Were All,” Sonya Sofrankovitch took a job in London with the American Joint Distribution Committee. Her beach house had been destroyed by a hurricane. Sonya feared that without the distraction her visits to this house gave her, someone would ask her to marry him. She suspected it might be the aging tenor with whom she shared the house. She was hired to help place Jewish children displaced by the war. At the boarding house where she rented a room she met a man named Eugene. He played piano and gave piano lessons. He took her to a concert in a church during her lunch break one day. The twins who performed were from Czechoslovakia. With the memory of this concert fresh in her mind, Sonya returned to work where she and Mrs. Levinger were sent to take care of a group of French children who were being evacuated. A girl with a violin case approached Sonya and begged not to be sent to the country. Sonya learned the girl’s name was Lotte. She gave Lotte the address of her boarding house. About the same time, Eugene gave Sonya his mother’s ring for safekeeping in case he was arrested. Sonya told him he wouldn’t be arrested, but two weeks later he was taken away.

In the second section of this short story, Sonya learned about two years into her stay in London that the tenor with whom she had shared her beach house had died. She cried for him that night. That same night Lotte, who had run away from the home to which she had been assigned, found Sonya’s room in the boardinghouse. Lotte promised to pay her way. She found jobs that allowed her to pay the amount Sonya’s rent had increased as a result of the double occupancy. She also played on street corners for the money people would give her. Lotte was even able to provide some small luxuries for Sonya whom she called her benefactor and angel. Lotte was finally hired to play in a restaurant, a full time position. When Eugene was released from prison, he would often join the musicians she had found to play with her. They practiced at the same church where Sonya and Eugene had once attended the concert given by the Czech twins.

In the third section of this story, bombings of London began the week after D-day. One day as Sonya was in the park, a bomb hit in the same area as the church where Lotte and Eugene practiced. Sonya ran for the building fearing that her friends had been killed. The two were safe because they were late leaving the boarding house for practice. Lotte began sharing Eugene’s bed after that experience. Five weeks before the conclusion of the war Lotte was offered a job in Manchester. Eugene went along to teach piano lessons. Sonya wondered how long Lotte would stay with Eugene and when she would leave him for someone else. Eugene told Sonya to keep his mother’s ring. She sold it and purchased herself some clothing. She kept the remainder of the money she got from the sale of the ring.

In the fourth section of this story, Sonya met with Roland Rosenberg, the man who hired her for the job with the American Joint Distribution Committee, at a pub. He asked her to



go with him to work at a displaced persons camp in Oberammergau. She could tell that he loved her. She agreed to go.

## Analysis

The author includes information about the mechanics of World War II. She particularly focuses on the treatment of the Jewish children. Groups, one of which Sonya worked for, were sent overseas to help settle these Jewish children who had been separated from their families because of death or imprisonment into families who volunteered to take care of the children in lieu of their own families.

The story also addresses how innocent people were jailed along with those who had actually committed crimes. Eugene was one of the people who was put in jail even though he had done nothing wrong. Later, after Eugene was released from jail, Sonya thought someone was pulling strings to help Eugene get work because he had been put in prison even though he'd done nothing wrong. Meanwhile, another man who lived in the same boarding house with Sonya and Eugene was arrested on suspicion that he was a spy. Sonya had often visited this man's news stand and on each visit had felt the man could ask questions and make statements that would easily encourage her to open up to him.

In the story the author also includes information about the bombings of London. Sonya lived through the air raid sirens and nights of staying awake in bomb shelters. She also faced the fear of seeing a building in which she believed two of the people she loved were practicing music. Luckily for her, however, it turned out that her friends had been delayed in reaching the church and were not injured.

Notice also the theme of love as it is described in the story. Sonya indicated that she loved people, but doesn't have a deep rooted love. It was her inability to put down deep roots that Sonya believed caused her husband to divorce her. Even though she loved the tenor and cried for him when he died, she did not want to marry him. She loved Eugene but managed to stay friends with both he and Lotte when those two became a couple.

Finally, notice that since the beginning of the story the author dropped signs that Roland loved Sonya. First, he brought flowers to her the day she was to leave on the ship to London. He even made a point of telling her the gesture was not common. After Roland met Sonya, he began losing weight. Each time she saw Roland he was thinner. Finally, Roland asked her to go along with him to a displaced persons camp where he would be working. The author portrays Sonya's acceptance of Roland's invitation as a woman would accept a proposal of marriage.



## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the image of the parishioner hitting his head on the pew. Why does the author include this image? Why did Sonya copy his actions later when she learned that Eugene and Lotte were attracted to each other?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the way the author describes the mechanics of the war in this short story.

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss Sonya's failed love affairs. Why do you think she was so unlucky in love?

## Vocabulary

cohort, impassivity, besieged, ravaged, dossier, dysentery, unsentimental, proprietor, enfeebled, billets, tenant, honorific, aristocratically, guttural, repatriation, kaiser, pedantry, crypt, mimeographed, detained, feint, sentiment, fervently, contraband, translucent, redolent, reposed, apoplectic, derelict, deranged, supplant, deflected, decamped, forbode, deployed, populace, repudiate, mandate, vivacity, censors, internment, impaled, bedlam, extricate, cordon, municipality, conceded



# “Purim Night”

## Summary

Sonya and Ida tell twelve-year-old Ludwig the story of Purim in “Purim Night.” Ludwig told the two he didn’t believe in miracles, especially not those that came about because of sexual relations. Even if Ida and Sonya hadn’t told him the story of Purim, he would have known about it because of the preparations being made for a Purim party. After Ida quit her work for the day of typing letters requesting requisitions and applications for Jews to take refuge in other countries, Ida went to her quarters where she pulled out a bag of cellophane wrappers and began working on her Purim costume. When Sonya left the office she went to check on some things in the camp and then went to her own room. She put on her black dress and was shocked to see that she looked like a witch when she saw herself in the mirror. She had broken the mirror just as Roland, the man with whom she directed the camp, came into their room. He cleaned up the broken pieces of the mirror. They had sex. Ludwig walked in on them in the process.

Later during the Purim party, three American officers attended the party. One of them, a general, danced with Ida as she wore a hat uniquely decorated with cellophane wrappers so that it appeared to be covered with iridescent bows or birds. Ludwig mentioned to Sonya that Ida and the general were metaphorically having sexual relations. Although Sonya had thought their camp would start getting more rations immediately because of Ida’s dance with the general, there was no immediate increase in requisitions. The one thing that did happen was that the camp was given an increase in the allotment of cigarettes. These cigarettes could be used at the discretion of Sonya and Roland. They were able to use these cigarettes to barter for supplies for the camp. The Americans contributed additional money to the camp so that Ida and another group could be relocated to Palestine. Later, Sonya received a letter from Ludwig indicating that they had made it to Palestine and had been saved again.

## Analysis

This short story is a follow-up to another story by Pearlman entitled “If Love Were All.” It includes the characters Sonya and Roland who had decided in the previous story to work together at a displaced persons camp. This story includes information about some of the work the two did at the camp as well as the way their relationship progressed when they began working together.

Notice that the story of the Purim celebration in Camp Gruenwasser, a displaced persons camp, parallels the original Purim story. As Ludwig said, the story depended on the giving of sex by a woman. In the original Purim story, Esther was given to the king in marriage. It was she who persuaded the king not to allow Haman to kill the Jews. In this story “Purim Night” it was Ida in her hat covered with the cellophane wrappers from cigarettes who metaphorically “had sex” with the American general. Ironically, it was



with cigarettes that the directors of the camp managed to improve conditions for those living in the camp and also send some residents, including Ira and Ludwig, to the Promised Land.

Notice that in this story, like in the story “If Love Were All” the author details the hardships associated with the ending of World War II. Although the fighting was finished at this point in the war, there were still many people without homes or jobs who needed care. Displaced persons camps were opened to try to feed, shelter, and relocate these Jews. Another point of interest about this particular story is the way Pearlman weaved into her story the list of terrible experiences that Ida had during the war. Despite these terrible experiences, the cruelty of war was not able to keep Ida’s springy hair or her buoyant spirit down.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the role of Ludwig in this story.

## Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Sonya instructed Roland to introduce her as his wife to the American military leaders?

## Discussion Question 3

How were Sonya and Roland able to use the extra cigarettes the camp was allotted by the government to make life in the camp better? How did these extra cigarettes turn out to be more valuable than extra requisitions of food or medicines might have been?

## Vocabulary

euphemism, pedantic, precocious, execrable, allotments, milliner, procured, augmented, dreck, atelier, visage, feigning, haranguing, periphery, metaphor, fervent, requisitions, emissary, lout, solicitous, communal, implements, sentient, vitality, coiffure, effeminate, redolent, valise, circlets, pulverized, acquiesce, ecstatic, acceding



# “The Coat”

## Summary

In the short story “The Coat,” Sonya became obsessed with a man’s coat that she found in an armoire in the apartment in which she and Roland lived once they returned to New York from London. They’d visited London to see the destruction done to the city by the war after the displaced persons camp at which they’d worked after the war closed. During their visit to London, Roland suffered a heart attack. Once they were back in America they rented an apartment from a wealthy woman. While hanging up a tuxedo they had bought for Roland to wear when giving speeches about the work he’d done overseas, Sonya found the old fashioned men’s coat. She began pulling it out of the closet and keeping it close to her when Roland was not at the apartment. She also wore it during some of her long walks around town. One day when she returned from a children’s recital, she learned that her husband had suffered another heart attack. She left the coat at home and went to be with him.

Later, after Roland and Sonya moved into their own apartment and the aristocratic lady had come back from California to take charge of her apartment, the lady invited Roland and Sonya back to the apartment to meet them. She told them the coat belonged to her ex-husband. She had kept it after their divorce for spite. When she told Sonya she planned to give it away to a Writers and Artists Thrift Shop Sonya told her that the organization for which she and Roland worked gave clothes to people who needed them. The woman, however, forgot Sonya’s mention and did not offer to give the coat to her. Sonya decided to regularly visit the thrift stores to see if she could buy the coat. She wanted to store it in a trunk she and Roland had bought. She thought the old coat, which represented the Old World to her, might find rest and peace in the trunk.

## Analysis

“The Coat” is the third story in which Sonya and Roland appear as main characters. The previous stories are “If Love Were All” and “Purim Night.” “The Coat” deals with the changes in the world since World War II. Both Sonya and Roland had worked at a displaced persons camp after the war ended. Before that time, Sonya worked in London with children who had been separated from their families. It had been ten years since she’d been in America. She returned as the wife of Roland Rosenberg, the man who had initially hired her for the job with the Joint Distribution Committee.

In this story Sonya focused the disjoint she felt between the old world she left behind and the new world into which she was thrust on an old coat she found in an armoire at the apartment she and her husband were subletting until they could find a place of their own. Sonya seemed to use the coat and the new identity she believed it gave her to hide from her husband’s sickness. At the end of the story, she imagined owning the coat



and being able to lock it in a trunk she and her husband had purchased. She believed that way the Old World would finally be at peace.

## Discussion Question 1

Why did Roland and Sonya decide that a man had lived in the apartment they were subletting?

## Discussion Question 2

What did the coat that Sonya found in the armoire at the apartment symbolize to her?

## Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Sonya lied to the woman who sat next to her at the children's recital and told her she had a grandchild who would be performing in the show?

## Vocabulary

serenity, ravaged, repatriated, polyglots, dalliances, derelict, meandering, aristocrat, asymmetrical, cloches, patronized, ersatz, proprietress, philanthropists, adept, reposed, illicit, personage, burghers, botched, challis, babushka, splurged, guttural, transposition, pensioners, malice, writhe

# “Mates”

## Summary

Keith and Mitsuko Maguire came from Boston with only one hat and two hiker’s back frames with knapsacks and sleeping bags. They rented an apartment on Lewis Street where they lived for 25 years while they raised a family of three boys. They were a typical family who were cordial with their neighbors and shared the produce of their gardens with others. They had few luxuries and even gave haircuts to each other. Although they didn’t go to church, claim a political party, or subscribe to any club, they were active and helped out at their boys’ school. They were known to many, but few people were intimate with them. One day after the youngest boy moved out to become a doctor the couple disappeared. Many gave their opinions about what might have happened to the couple. The narrator believed they chose to go their separate ways.

## Analysis

This story is narrated from the first person point of view from a person outside the main action of the story. The narrator’s only connection to the Maguires was that she lived around the corner from them while she was growing up. A theme discussed in the story is that of relationships. It is apparent that Keith and Mitsuko were of two different cultures. While in the town in which they decided to settle, they made the pretense of being a normal married couple. Although they raised a family of three children in this one town and were active in their boys’ schools, the two adults did not put down any roots for themselves. They didn’t make friends or join clubs. It almost seems like they “borrowed” the town only as a place to raise their children. After their children were well on their way to having their own lives, Keith and Mitsuko disappeared. Notice that the narrator believed that the two had gone their separate ways so they could peruse their solitude. Interesting is that the person who made this supposition was a single woman. She apparently had chosen solitude for herself and assumed that others would want solitude as well. Like some other characters in these short stories, the narrator projected her own desires onto Keith and Mitsuko when she came up with her own version about what happened to them.

## Discussion Question 1

Why were the Maguires such a mystery to the townspeople?

## Discussion Question 2

What do you think might have happened to the Maguires? Do you think they just decided to move on or do you think they parted ways? Explain your answer.





## Discussion Question 3

How does the first person point of view work in this story? Why is it told from the viewpoint of a person only slightly involved in the story?

## Vocabulary

vagabonds, cordial, visage, receding, fibrous, filigreed, recapitulated, venerable, decamped, valedictory, deftly



# “How to Fall”

## Summary

Jocelyn “Joss” Hoyle, the sidekick to the great comic Herschel Bloomberg, began getting fan mail from a person who identified herself as The Lady in Green in the story “How to Fall.” He hid the letters from his wife but wondered why because she wouldn’t have noticed it even if he had left them out in plain sight. She still grieved because their one daughter had been born mentally retarded. They made a trip each Friday to visit the overweight girl at the inpatient facility where she stayed. His wife, Mary, had refused to have another child.

Joss began memorizing each of the letters sent to him by The Lady in Green. In the letters she told him that while the public enjoyed Happy’s jokes, it was Joss that the public needed. She mentioned in one letter that Happy depended on Joss. In another letter, she finally told Joss she would be waiting for him at noon on Monday, April 13, in the lobby of the hotel where the show was practiced. When Joss saw her from behind on that day he was angry because she was young, probably a teenager, and appeared to be wearing an orthopedic shoe. He wondered why he would be the one to get an admirer who was underage and crippled.

During lunch the girl told Joss she sent the letters to him because she thought maybe he’d send some sort of answer to her through the show. She told him she loved his silence and loved the way he fell down, a technique he’d practiced for years to get right without hurting himself. She admitted to him that she’d fallen in love with him. He tweaked her nose. After lunch he walked her to the subway station. He imagined getting a last glimpse of her as she turned to look at him from the bottom of the steps, but a woman stepped in the way. When he had the next opportunity, Joss fell down during a dance number, then smiled at the camera. When his wife asked why he smiled, he told her he was smiling at her.

## Analysis

Note the play on the words of the title. “How to Fall” can refer both to the act of physically falling, as Joss had perfected the art of falling without getting hurt as part of his comedy routine, as well as falling in love, which the young girl claimed she’d done with Joss.

The idea that Mary had refused to have another child because her first one was born mentally retarded mirrors the actions of Anna in the story “ToyFolk.” In that story, Anna refused to have a child with Bernard because her first daughter had been kidnapped. In both cases, this refusal to have another child punished both the mother and father.

Notice that instead of treating his unusual admirer cruelly, Joss let her have her fun. He was disappointed that his one admirer was underage. He even worried he might get in



trouble for buying her a drink. He was angry because she was crippled. Despite these disappointments, Joss greeted the girl and took her to lunch. He seemed to connect with her and was kind even though she was not the sort of admirer for which he had hoped. Notice that Joss' wish for a long last look when the girl walked down the subway steps was even a disappointment as a woman stepped in his way so he wasn't able to see if the girl looked back at him or not.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why does the author include the information about Heschel Bloomberg's faith? Why is this information important to the story?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What does Joss take away from his lunch with Mamie?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss Joss' relationship with Heschel Bloomberg.

## **Vocabulary**

missives, monologue, conferred, improvising, placidly, deferred, avuncular, burlesque, bespectacled, anonymous, sallow, hybrids, subside, plying, prosecution, amiably



# “The Story”

## Summary

Justin and Judith da Costa and another couple, Harry and Lucienne Savitsky, meet for their annual dinner together at a new restaurant, the Hussar. The atmosphere of the restaurant and the conversation between the two very different couples were tense. Harry kept expecting his wife to tell the story of her experience with the Nazi party. Her father had been captured by the SS but had ensured his son was not taken by pretending not to know him. Harry had even heard Lucienne tell the story to perfect strangers. He noticed that she did not tell it to the da Costas, even after they asked about her father. When dinner was finished, Harry noticed how quick Lucienne was ready to leave.

## Analysis

The tension between the parents of both sides of a married couple was described in this short story. The two couples were very different. The only thing they seemed to have in common was that their children were married. Lucienne appeared to be so uncomfortable with the da Costas that she didn't even want to tell them the story of how her father had saved her brother from the concentration camps. It was almost as if she might be afraid that they would not understand or appreciate the circumstances through which her family had lived.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Lucienne chose not to tell the da Costas the story of her father?

## Discussion Question 2

Compare and contrast the da Costas and the Savitskys.

## Discussion Question 3

What impression do you get of the relationship between the da Costas and the Savitskys?

## Vocabulary

haberdashery, corpulence, daunting, syntax, forlorn



# “Rules”

## Summary

Donna's Ladle, a soup kitchen for women, was enjoying an increase in attention as it had suddenly become the town's favorite cause. Donna directed the kitchen while Pam and Beth were full-time employees. They required those who came to the kitchen to follow the rules — no one was allowed to hit or hurt anyone — even though they could do nothing about the abuse they suspected took place outside the soup kitchen. The women who came and brought their children or grandchildren to the kitchen sometimes had been drinking or drug problems as well as communicable diseases. The guardians were often mean to the children.

One day a girl and woman dressed in Puritan clothing entered the kitchen. The staff and volunteers at the kitchen immediately did not like the strange couple. Donna learned that the girl's name was Rhea and her mother's name was Signe. Signe was separated from her husband who was a clergyman. He sent them money, but it didn't cover all their needs. They spent their mornings in the children's room. Rhea read while Signe crocheted. If a child became difficult, the child would immediately be quiet if Signe picked it up. It was not known if it was because the child absorbed Signe's composure or if it was just scared of her. The girls who worked at the soup kitchen shared information about how the mother and her daughter checked books out of the local library, went to debates at the statehouse, and visited museums.

Donna admitted to herself she didn't like the two. One of the other women who visited the kitchen agreed with her calling them the devil and her offspring. On a later day Donna went to the Children's Room to get a mop bucket left behind. Rhea and Signe were there reciting an emotional song with Signe asking questions and Rhea giving responses. Donna was so surprised by the emotion she sensed in their recitation that she started to tell them they couldn't do that there. They both turned to look at Donna as if they were challenging her. They finished shortly and were preparing to leave when Elijah came flying from the bathroom. Signe grabbed him and held him up above her head. Elijah's mother asked for her son back, but Signe handed him to Rhea first who handed him to his mother. The mother and daughter exchanged an intimate look. Donna was angered by the look and went to stew tomatoes.

## Analysis

The idea of the short story “Rules” seems to be that no matter how strange people are, their strangeness is accepted as long as it is familiar. Donna, the director of a soup kitchen for women, was completely unhinged by a Puritan woman and her daughter when they began coming to the kitchen for breakfast and lunch. Even though Donna could handle all types of people including drug addicts, child abusers and the mentally ill, Donna couldn't handle the way the Puritan mother and child kept to themselves and



stayed quiet. At the climax of the story Donna witnessed the mother and daughter reciting some sort of strange recitation. She sensed emotion and harshness in the answers and questions but couldn't tell exactly what they were saying. Donna almost caught herself telling the two that they couldn't practice their recitations there; but, she stopped when she realized she had no really good reason why they couldn't do what they were doing. Notice the challenging look the two give Donna when they realize she is about to criticize them for what they were doing. It was at that point that Donna realized they weren't doing anything wrong. They were just different.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Signe refused so quickly and completely when Donna suggested she go to the government for help?

## Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Signe and Rhea unhinged Donna so badly?

## Discussion Question 3

Do you think Donna and the other workers at the soup kitchen were more critical of Signe and Rhea than any of the other people who came to eat there? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

delicacies, presided, emulate, distortion, fainting, premonition, vantage, addle, brogues, augment, zealots, deigned, dictate, acolyte, emphatic, judicious, imploded, catechism



# “Home Schooling”

## Summary

On the ride to her family's new home in Boston, Harry was plagued by car sickness. She, her fraternal twin sister Willie, and her Aunt Kate went to Boston to join her parents. Her father was undergoing treatments for cancer there because the doctors in Boston were more experienced with her father's disease. They spent their time in Boston visiting with their father in the hospital, at their mother's workplace, or at their Aunt Kate's workplace. Their mother had a Teletype machine she could use to work from home, but she still went to the office twice weekly. One day an elderly secretary stopped the two girls and asked them what grade they were in at school. Even though they were the same age, both girls gave different answers.

In March, the girls went to visit their father at a rehabilitation center. Their parents sent them for dinner at a pizza place. They talked to a group of girls from their neighborhood. They soon understood that the girls didn't plan to see them again unless they met at the pizza place or roller rink.

In the late spring, their father was home. He played for them on his violin one last time. Back home, when they enrolled in school the following year they had to start again in the fifth grade as the principal deemed they had not learned enough at home to skip that grade. Harry indicates that while her sister managed to master long division, she never figured out how to forget.

## Analysis

Like some of her other stories, Pearlman takes a break from her usual routine of narrating the story from the third person point of view and narrates from the first person point of view. "Home Schooling" is narrated by Harriet who was called "Harry" by her fraternal twin sister. Aunt Kate and Harriet's mother lived in Boston for a year while Harriet's father was treated for cancer. Notice how the coming death of the girls' father is included in the story without the author making the story about his death. It is almost an aside as she describes the man walking down the halls of the rehabilitation center as if he didn't want to stop. The children had to watch their father's pain and sickness as a tumor grew larger and caused blindness. He underwent an unsuccessful surgery. The narrator states in the final sentence of the story that she never figured out how to forget, meaning she never figured out how to forget the pain she watched her father go through or his death.

The idea of home schooling comes into play because the twins did not attend school the year their father was so sick. As the principal of their school quizzed them when they returned to school again in the fall, it can be assumed she thought they were being taught at home or at another school. The girls had apparently been told to keep quiet



about the fact they had been out of school for a year. They said little to the principal's questions. They were unable to be placed in the next grade when the new school year started.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Harriet and Wilma were not enrolled in school during the time their family was in Boston?

## Discussion Question 2

What do you think the girls at the pizza place meant when they indicated to Harry and Willy they would see them here, indicating the pizza place?

## Discussion Question 3

What do you think Harry meant when she said at the end of the story that she never learned how to forget?

## Vocabulary

tactfully, atypical, aptitudes, congregation, onslaught, platen, demimondaines, harem, eunuch, insinuate, inquisitorial, ruinously, parochial, truancy, preamble, bilious, feral, bisected, languor, nubile, locution, prejudiced





# “Hanging Fire”

## Summary

Nancy Hoskin returned home to her mother, aunt, and cousin after attending a friend's wedding in the story “Hanging Fire.” She'd recently graduated cum laude from college. As she walked home from the bus stop her tennis coach, a man upon whom she had a crush, asked her if she'd like a ride. Nancy refused. At home, Nancy thought about what she wanted to do with her life. She had only come up with one profession which she thought she would like, a governess. But, she wasn't even sure if people still hired governesses or not. Her friend, Carl, wanted her to marry him. However, Nancy wrote him back telling him she couldn't accept his proposal. She lived with her female relatives for the summer and continued taking tennis lessons. One day she asked the tennis coach to marry her. He refused and suggested that she travel. She took his advice and left the next day on a bus.

## Analysis

When Nancy Hoskin returned home from college, she had no idea what she wanted to do with her life. She was stuck between being a child and an adult. The man she thought she wanted to marry wasn't interested in her, and she didn't want to marry the man who did want to marry her. She felt bound by blood to her family and did not want to abandon them. At the same time, she wondered what her future held and how she would know what it was she was supposed to do with her life.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the images of androgyny that appear in the novel. Why is it significant that Nancy believed she could pass for a boy?

## Discussion Question 2

What does the title of the story mean?

## Discussion Question 3

In the story it is suggested the next step after a woman ended her schooling was marriage. Do you think this is still the case? Why or why not?



## Vocabulary

naiad, frolicked, discreet, vagabond, arrogant, consanguinity, derangement, austerity, piously, inconclusive, lobbed, laxly, syncope, droll, conjured, myopic, raillery, impoverished, paramours, arid, suffice, androgynous



# “Unravished Bride”

## Summary

Marlene Winokaur and Hugh Rafferty meet at a wedding in the story “Unravished Bride.” They happen to run into one another five days later outside the Boston Public Library. They began having lunch together every Thursday for nearly a year. Hugh finally asked Marlene to go to a hotel with him. When they arrived at the hotel, however, Hugh could not go through with the affair.

## Analysis

This short story “Unravished Bride” addresses infidelity, a theme common in Pearlman’s short stories. In this story Marlene and Hugh met at a wedding. They started having lunch together every week. Marlene didn’t believe that their actions actually constituted cheating. Hugh finally asked her to meet him at a hotel. He told her when he arrived that he couldn’t go through with it. He told her they were different from the other people who regularly cheated on their spouses. Marlene recognized that they were different from much of the population which thought nothing of infidelity. She was, however, disappointed that their relationship would remain chaste.

There is always the option to consider that Hugh only wanted to pursue a friendship with Marlene but wasn’t sure how to end the relationship once he got it started. Notice that when she touched his back in the park, he seemed uncomfortable with the familiar gesture. There had also been no lead up to a romantic relationship between the two. There were no hints of love. Hugh might have felt Marlene expected him to have sex with her and felt he must offer in order to keep the friendship alive.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Pearlman titled this story as she did?

## Discussion Question 2

Hugh seemed to be the one who was pursuing Marlene through their relationship. Why did he decide he couldn’t have sex with her? Why do you think he asked her if she wanted to meet him at a hotel?

## Discussion Question 3

At what stage do you think that a friendship between a man and a woman constitutes cheating?

## Vocabulary

savories, avocation, precipitous, recede, temporally, fatale, chagrined, chaste



# “Binocular Vision”

## Summary

In the story “Binocular Vision” a ten-year-old boy used his father’s pair of binoculars to spy on his next door neighbors. He watched the daily routine of Mr. and Mrs. Simon for days on end. One morning a pair of policemen called the boy’s father to help them. It turned out that Mr. Simon had committed suicide. The boy was surprised to read in the obituary that Mr. Simon was survived only by his mother. He commented to his mother that he thought the woman with whom Mr. Simon lived was his wife. His mother told him the woman had also thought she was his wife.

## Analysis

This is a coming of age story as a young boy learned that things aren’t always as they appear. The boy, who also served as the narrator for this story, had been spying on his neighbors using a pair of binoculars. He assumed that the man and woman were married. He learned that they were not. He’d missed clues that would have told him the nature of the relationship like the fact the two had no children. He also hadn’t been able to see into one of the rooms in the apartment and he also had noticed Mr. Simon would sit stiffly in his chair while Mrs. Simon talked to him.

The author often uses personification in her descriptions. For instance, the clock on the mantel in the Simon’s house is described as crouching. The chairs wore lace dollies, which makes the dollies appear to be a piece of clothing and the chairs to be people.

## Discussion Question 1

Why did Mrs. Simon not realize that she was not Mr. Simon’s wife?

## Discussion Question 2

What did the narrator learn about adult life in this short story?

## Discussion Question 3

How are the binoculars an important object in this story?

## Vocabulary

menacing, antimacassar, gratified, mediating, undetectable



# "Granski"

## Summary

In "Granski," cousins Angelica and Toby have the same nose but no other similarities. Both are sixteen and staying with their families during the summer at their grandmother's house in Maine. They are described as being spoiled and self-absorbed. Angelica was the oldest of the grandchildren and had her own room on the third floor of the house. Myrrh, a distant relative, cooked meals and also lived on the third floor.

One day the cousins went out on the boat to a small island. They talked about how their lives were built on sand and that they really didn't belong anywhere. On the island, they had sex with each other. They had both been virgins. They continued the affair through the summer in Angelica's room in the house. One night Toby knocked a brass bowl and peasant figure off a table which then collapsed. A child in the boys' room cried and was told to hush. Shortly after midnight Angelica woke to the sound of Myrrh dragging her suitcase down the hall. Angelica followed her down the stairs. Gran came out of the kitchen to meet them asking Myrrh to stay the final two or three days. Myrrh refused saying that she would not stay there another minute.

Gran told Angelica to put on shoes and threw her the keys to the car. They took Myrrh to a rental cabin to stay until a bus came to pick her up. Myrrh made a comment indicating she knew about the incestuous relationship going on between Angelica and Toby. Back at the house Gran told Angelica that her grandfather had not saved their family from the holocaust to have it intertwined with itself. Although Angelica argued that consensual was not illegal, Gran indicated she should stop the relationship because it was not dutiful. Angelica agreed to do as her Gran asked. That next summer Gran was sick. Toby and Angelica could meet only once in a hotel. As Angelica and her mother flew back home to France after the funeral, she said her goodbye to Gran as well as Toby.

## Analysis

Relationships are a focus of this novel. A variety of atypical relations are included in the novel. The incestuous relationship between two cousins, Toby and Angelica, is explored in "Granski." It was interesting that the children even went far enough to discuss the days they thought Angelica might become pregnant. They took precautions. Angelica, however, seemed very unconcerned about any birth defects if they were to get pregnant. Gran, however, cleared up Angelica's lack of concern about the relationship. She told the girl that while the relationship might not be unlawful, it was irresponsible. Notice that she stressed that even things that weren't "unlawful" were sometimes wrong as well. She reminded Angelica of what her grandfather's family had been through during the holocaust and their perilous journey to America. She indicated all this was not done in order to allow the family to get mixed up in itself.



Another sexual relationship of question was Gran's relationships in her childhood. As a child and young adult, she worked with animals. It was indicated that her family feared that she would announce she wanted to have an inter-species relationship. Apparently, they were relieved when Gran was married to the Jewish man who became Toby's and Angelica's grandfather.

Myrrh seemed to sense the attraction between Toby and Angelica even before their relationship came to light. She foreshadowed it by telling Angelica and Toby to "cut that out" when they were standing next to one another while scraping plates. Myrrh called the two "self-indulged children who lacked self-restraint." She was the one who brought the incestuous relationship to Gran's attention by noisily leaving in the middle of the night declaring that she would not stay in that sinkhole any longer.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss Toby's idea that self-restraint was fear. What do you think he meant by this statement?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss why the author describes the house in such detail. Why is the house important to the story?

## Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Gran's words to Angelica meant so much to her?

## Vocabulary

proboscis, rarefied, disembarkation, prescient, bilingual, renegade, liaison, asymmetrical, reminiscent, garrulous, primate, deigned, soliloquy, converged, decadence, dissolute, consensual, incest, hassock



# “The Little Wife”

## Summary

In "The Little Wife," Gail and Max Chernoff flew to visit Fox Whitelaw, Max's old college roommate who was dying of cancer. On the plane Max practiced a Beethoven piece he and Fox hoped to play together. In the first section of the story, there is an anecdote, supposedly by Beethoven. It compares a woman's behind to that of the "beloved pigs of my youth" (p. 243). Fox told Max not to believe that this saying was one of Beethoven's.

Fox and Max had met when they were roommates in college. Gail had questioned Fox about the match as the two had little in common either in interests, religion, or backgrounds. The roommates had become connected by music when Fox began playing a magnificent cello. Before graduating college, Fox had married the aristocratic Sophia. Sophia and Fox had a daughter, Thea, while Max and Gail had a son. As her daughter got older, Sophia began traveling, spending only about half her time at home.

In the second section of the story, Gail, Max, Sophia, and Fox were getting older. It was believed that Sophia would outlive them all. The Chernoffs had not visited Fox since he had been diagnosed with cancer. They decided to go when Thea called to tell them that her father's life was almost over. She asked them to come and bring music.

In the third section, the Chernoffs arrived at Fox's home. Gail was surprised at how bad Fox looked. Everything he ate or drank, including his medicinal shakes, made him throw up. Since he liked bacon, Sophia had once made it every morning; but, she stopped because she claimed it was making him sick. At the time of the Chernoffs' arrival, Sophia was cooking bacon while Fox slept. Sophia didn't think that Fox knew she was cooking it. Fox had started getting up at night to cook the bacon himself.

One night Gail got up thinking she might take some of Fox's medicines to make her sleep. Downstairs she saw Fox and Sophia sitting up together. She tried to hear their conversation, but she wasn't able to tell what they were saying to one another. She was pretty sure they weren't talking about anything positive. When Fox and Max began playing the next morning the women and Thea went out to ice skate. Hebe, Sophia's sister, went along. Hebe fell and scratched her face, so the ladies had to go back home. Once there, Thea ran outside and got the bacon for Sophia to cook. That night, as Thea and Gail sat on the porch together, they observed as Fox went outside, got the bacon, and went to the kitchen to cook some for himself.

## Analysis

Bacon seems to be a major theme in this short story. The hero of the story was suffering with cancer and on the brink of death. He loved bacon but with his illness, he couldn't eat it without throwing up. He revolted against his wife's belief that the bacon was bad for him. He told her there was no reason for him not to eat bacon. She believed it would





give him gout. He argued gout was the only problem he didn't yet have. Although they weren't Jewish, she also quoted to him the passages from the Bible claiming pigs were unclean animals and shouldn't be eaten. Fox seems to have won the battle. At the end of the story, he discovered where his wife was hiding the bacon and got up during the night to cook it. Thea, Fox and Sophia's daughter, believed that it was the fight over the bacon that was keeping Fox alive. Max made a comment that nothing was bad for Fox any longer.

A secondary theme in the story seems to be a relationship between Fox and his young sister-in-law, Hebe. Hebe was the one who stood up for Fox in the bacon argument. She is also described as being the one who talked to Fox while Sophia worked on the house. Hebe's story adds to the theme of relationships in this novel as she, like Gran in the story "Granski," loved animals. It was indicated that Hebe was, perhaps, more attracted to animals than to people.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the image of the pig as it is presented in this story.

## Discussion Question 2

Compare and contrast the lives and backgrounds of Max and Fox.

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss Fox's act of getting up in the middle of the night and cooking bacon for himself. What does this symbolize? Why is it significant?

## Vocabulary

tome, finale, anecdote, wrathful, succeeding, receding, redoubtable, adept, disparity, flouted, crone, proprietress, vagabondage, cohort, actuary, familial, pathological, satiated, imminent, inevitable, emaciated, spume, fastidious, prosthesis, factoids, salvaged, prattle, capacious, emollient, prolific, noxious, demeaned, ablutions, inanimate, disgorged



# “Capers”

## Summary

In the story “Capers,” an elderly couple started stealing things as a way to bring excitement back to their lives. They began with loose change. Dorothy stole a purse. They stole a library book by not checking it out. The final item they attempted to steal was a silk scarf from a hotel boutique. The wife, Dorothy, made it out of the store with the scarf. Security was following her and her husband. When Dorothy turned around, her husband, Henry, ran into her. The same thing had happened once when they were young. She dropped the scarf, and it was reclaimed by the sales clerk. The two elderly people were not bothered. They went to a restaurant to eat that evening. They talked only about the past.

## Analysis

The main theme of this story, which is one of Pearlman’s newer stories, deals with the idea of dealing with growing old and sick. In this particular story, this couple turned to theft to bring back the excitement they’d known in their younger years. They don’t need the things they steal, they just want the adrenaline rush. The scarf that Dorothy decided to walk out of the store with was different shades of blue that corresponded with different parts of the couple’s life. It reminded her of all that they had lived through together.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Henry and Dorothy began stealing things? What does the act of theft seem to replace in their lives?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the image of the scarf in the story. What different aspects of Henry and Dorothy’s lives does it represent?

## Discussion Question 3

How does Dorothy’s act of stealing the scarf parallel the act of their encounter on the beach before they were married?

## Vocabulary

misdemeanor, relinquished, devolve, retribution, amorous, progeny, melancholy, indigenous, plundered, utility, redistribution, duped, tangential, illogical, expedition, austere, versatility, intoned, placidly



# “The Ministry of Restraint”

## Summary

Alain, the minister of gambling, and Dea, a weaver, happen to meet on a train caught in a tunnel collapse in the story “The Ministry of Restraint.” They spend the night together. The two happen to meet three more times during the course of their lives, each time about ten years apart. They admire one another and try to look into the eyes of each other during each meeting. Alain remained the minister of gambling, while Dea became a famous weaver.

Later, Dea made a woven sculpture of a man and woman embracing. She sold it to a museum. As her husband aged, Dea got her pharmacy degree so she could help him in his store. One day when Dea’s husband was upstairs, sick, Alain visited the pharmacy. Dea could tell he was dying. She promised him her next lifetime. Going back in time, it is described how Dea and Alain had chosen to stay in Dea’s room after the collapse of the train tunnel. They had held one another, just like the couple in the sculpture that Dea had woven. They had not had sexual relations because they felt they owed their responsibility to their families and jobs.

## Analysis

While many of Pearlman’s stories have been about infidelity, this story is about a man and a woman who were attracted to one another. However, they decided to remain faithful to their spouses. Again, this story brings to mind the question: When does a friendship between members of the opposite sexes become an affair? Even though Alain and Dea withheld from each other sexually, they promised other aspects of themselves to one another. Notice also that even without them trying, Alain and Dea continued to bump into one another several different times through the course of their lives. Of special importance is the woven sculpture that Dea made. It seemed that she put the passion and energy that she felt for Alain into making the sculpture that was the image of them holding each other the one night that they spent together.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the circumstances under which Dea and Alain see each other in the years after they had originally met.

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the meaning of the title of this short story “The Ministry of Restraint.”



## Discussion Question 3

Why is it significant that even after so many years, Alain still sought out Dea as he was dying? What does it mean that she promised him her next lifetime?

## Vocabulary

perspicacity, lout, physique, scrupulously, croupiers, convexity, vetting, disembark, epaulets, embryonic, circumnavigation, artisan, slewing, dais, proficient, fibrous, reticence



# “On Junius Bridge”

## Summary

In the story “On Junius Bridge,” people in a village claimed an ogre lived under Junius Bridge. The stone bridge was eventually replaced by an iron one. A drawing and a photograph of the original stone bridge was hanging on the wall in Miss Huk’s inn. Mr. and Mrs. Albrecht brought their son Lars to stay at Miss Huk’s inn. The parents spoke to Miss Huk while their son crawled behind a chair, looking at a carpet beetle. Although he referred to the beetle only by its scientific name, Miss Huk knew what creature he was talking about. That night at dinner, Miss Huk requested for the Albrecht’s to sit at her table. They did so. Miss Huk noticed Lars ate very little. After dinner, she tried to strike up a conversation with Lars about a species of people who ate beetles. His only contribution was the scientific name of the beetles the people ate.

In the second section of the story, Miss Huk told Mr. Albrecht she did not plan to sell the hotel. He told her instead he was interested in giving her a job. She refused without hearing the details. She had inherited the inn from her aunt and uncle and intended to stay there the rest of her life. Even though the aunt and uncle had paid for her to go to school, Miss Huk had returned to the inn after getting her degree. She felt it was the only place she could be herself. She turned it into a sort of retreat where other solitaires like her could also feel at home.

In the third section of this short story, Miss Huk looked out the window in the handyman’s upstairs room while she was delivering some laundry. She noticed Lars talking to a man who appeared to be a fake scientist. She saw Lars follow the man off the property. At first Miss Huk did nothing. Then, she ran downstairs telling the staff that Lars had been kidnapped. They grabbed makeshift weapons and ran for the bridge where they saw one of the Brazilians who had been staying at the hotel. He had caught the fake scientist and had him tied up. Despite the excitement, Lars was studying the cocoon of a moth on the railing of the bridge. After everyone else had left the scene of the attempted kidnapping, Miss Huk looked underneath the bridge and discovered the handyman there. He told her he wasn’t involved in what had just happened. She reassured him that she was aware he wasn’t involved. She noticed Lars had lagged behind the others. She waited until he met her eyes to tell him the scientific name of the species.

In the fourth section of this story, Mr. Albrecht spoke with Miss Huk privately about what had happened. He told her they were used to the kidnapping attempts. He explained that Lars was not exceptionally smart and he was interested only in entomology. His brother was the same way, he said. Miss Huk offered to keep Lars, but his father would not allow it.



## Analysis

The protection of those who are different is one of the major themes of this novel. Miss Huk related to people who were different because she was odd, too. She would rather be alone and in familiar circumstances than earning money at a good job, as her aunt and uncle had hoped that she'd do. When Miss Huk began to get to know Lars, she seemed to have a special connection with him. The boy's behavior — his obsession with etymology and his unwillingness to make eye contact with others — indicated that he might have been autistic. For this reason, the boy would always be different from other children. Miss Huk had been offered a job by Lars' parents, the Albrechts. The reader wonders if this job might include care of the boy. Miss Huk, however, refused to leave her hotel. Similarly, Lars' parents refused to leave him with Miss Huk.

Notice that Miss Huk believed there was something strange about the story that the Belgians who visited the hotel were hikers. The hikers did nothing to indicate to Miss Huk, or anyone else, why they were at the hotel. There were no interactions between the Albrechts and the Belgians. Just as Miss Huk sensed there was something strange about the Belgians, she also sensed there was something wrong when she saw Lars with the strange looking scientist in the parking lot. Even though it wasn't her way to meddle in other people's affairs, she seemed to sense the boy was in trouble and went into action.

Another aspect of note in the story is the reference to the ogre that was said to live under the bridge. After everyone had left the bridge with the exception of Miss Huk, she looked under the bridge and found the handyman there. He promised her that he had been doing nothing wrong. It appeared from the way the man was described in earlier parts of the novel that he had been under suspicion of being a pedophile. Is he the ogre under the bridge? Does a person who is suspected of harming others, especially children, deserve to be allowed to live as he wants to? Just as she informed the other misfits in her company, Miss Huk told the handyman that she knew he meant no harm.

The ending of the story presents a dilemma for the reader. It is indicated that Mr. Albrecht's decision not to allow Lars to stay with Miss Huk, perhaps, spared her and turned the rest of her life to ash. The reader must decide if Miss Huk's life would have been fulfilled by Lars or would have been destroyed by him.

### Discussion Question 1

Discuss the way the author develops her characters. How is she able to develop such full characters in such short stories?

### Discussion Question 2

What do you think is the purpose of the mention of the ogre under the bridge at the beginning of the story?



## Discussion Question 3

Why do you think that Miss Huk offered to keep Lars at the inn?

## Vocabulary

trestles, robust, deigned, tycoons, drudgery, rudiments, patronage, pensioned, samovar, thrall, communed, turret, cosset, compatriot, precocious, entomology, eccentric





# “Relic and Type”

## Summary

In the story “Relic and Type” Jay decided to learn Japanese because his grandson had married a Japanese woman. He was attracted to Japanese not only because he wanted to be able to talk to his grandchildren but also because he wanted something to keep him busy. Jay’s daughter did not think he was well enough to undertake learning the language, but she didn’t share that with her father. Jay not only had a bad memory, he also had a blood disease.

When Jay’s grandson and new wife came to America the following July, Jay was pleased with himself that he was able to speak to his new granddaughter in Japanese. When Jay took the next class to learn more Japanese, he had a teacher who reminded him of a fellow student from eighth grade. Although Jay had been able to ignore Feivel, he could not ignore his teacher. That year Jay’s disease had also begun bothering him again. Jay thought of how Feivel had worked to become less offensive. He’d changed his name to Phil, gotten married and gone to graduate school. Jay was most offended to learn that his Japanese teacher, Yamamoto, was also a practicing Jew. He learned that Yamamoto would conduct the seder while his wife would prepare the traditional meal.

Jay used his sources to find out about Yamamoto’s background. He was married to a dentist, Jay learned from Carol Glickman. Yamamoto’s Japanese wife had converted to Judaism, Carol told Jay. She also told him about Phil’s death. Carol asked how Jay was and because he believed he wasn’t going to live another year, he ended the conversation abruptly. More and more Jay found himself not interested in doing anything. Chicken soup, made at Wulf’s, was the only thing that seemed to suit his stomach. Jay bought a jar each week. It was while he was buying his weekly jar of soup that Jay happened to see Yamamoto and his family come into the store. He noticed the half Japanese children were wearing yarmulkes. He thought of how immigrants had once fought for years to blend in with American society. Now they seemed to want to stand out. As Jay purchased his jar of soup, he told the clerk he’d be back the following week. He hoped he would be back.

## Analysis

Relationships are important in this novel. The relationship of most importance is that between Jay, his grandson, his grandson’s wife and future great grandchildren. Because of the promise of these great-grandchildren, who will be born to a Japanese mother, Jay wanted to learn how to speak to his granddaughter in law as well as his great grandchildren in Japanese. Jay had a second reason that he wanted to learn Japanese. He had become sick and was growing older. He believed learning Japanese was something that would keep him occupied to distract him from his age and disease.



In another theme in this novel the reader soon learns that Jay had an unusual opinion of the Jewish. He was Jewish but had fallen away from his faith. He remembered a student who had been in his class at school. This student, a Jew, had been irritating but as he had gotten older he had managed to make himself into a productive member of society. Feivel had changed his name to Phil and had gotten a job at a university. Jay's third year Japanese teacher reminded him of Feivel. Even the man's marriage was contradictory as he was married to a Jewish woman. They were raising their children in the Jewish faith. Jay observed the couple through old fashioned eyes as he thought about how Jews would generally try to hide their true beliefs in order to be accepted. He was shocked as the way the professor, representing the Japanese, and his wife, representing the Jews, did not try to hide their strange relationship in any way. Notice that Jay also thought about the way that the Jews and the Japanese were two cultures that had at one time or another been shunned in the United States.

## Discussion Question 1

Why did Jay decide to learn Japanese?

## Discussion Question 2

Why was Yamamoto and his wife's relationship such a difficult pairing for Jay to understand?

## Discussion Question 3

How is the title of the novel "Relic and Type" relevant to the novel?

## Vocabulary

tactful, fluently, hale, indolent, actuary, immigrant, impertinence, assimilation, obliterate



# “Lineage”

## Summary

In "Lineage," after suffering a neurological event, Professor Lubin spoke to her doctors in Russian telling them she was the daughter of the tsar of Russia. After she finished her tale, she told the doctors in English that her mother had been crazy when she'd told Lubin that story. By saying that the story was not true, Lubin was covering herself and her less than respectable birth. In the hallway, one doctor asked the other, who knew Russian, what the professor had been talking about. The doctor who spoke Russian said that the professor had been talking about a folk tale.

## Analysis

Pearlman takes a break from her usual style to present a very different type of story. The story is told almost entirely by Professor Lubin, a patient who has had some sort of neurological attack similar to a stroke. As the doctors are trying to determine if her brain is functioning properly, Lubin breaks off into a tale, told in Russian about being the tsar's illegitimate daughter. What little she said in English was misunderstood by the doctors. The one doctor who did understand a bit of Russian believed Lubin was just repeating a folklore story. At the conclusion of the story, both the doctors and the reader are left wondering if Lubin was telling a true story or if she was truly having some sort of neurological failing.

## Discussion Question 1

Do you think that Professor Lubin was telling the truth about her ancestry?

## Discussion Question 2

Do you think the doctors will diagnose Lubin with a mental breakdown after one of the doctors who understood Russian said that Lubin's story was only a folktale?

## Discussion Question 3

Why is it significant that the only words of English that Lubin spoke during her conversation with the doctors were ones that seemed to indicate she was not in her right mind?

## Vocabulary

contemptuous, strenuous, transient, ischemic, collateral, copulated, fornicating, assignation, seigneurial, impoverished, verbosity



# “Girl in Blue with Brown Bag”

## Summary

In the story “Girl in Blue with Brown Bag,” a high school student from Russia studying American history made a tutoring arrangement with a former senator who lived next door to her. When Louanne, the student, learned that her tutor enjoyed art, she stole a painting from the home of a corrupt lawyer whom she tutored in the Russian language. Francis first hung the painting in his apartment but soon told Louanne he could not keep it. He devised a plan for them to sneak the painting into the museum where he served as a trustee so it could be found years later and seen as an anonymous donation.

## Analysis

Loyalty is a theme in “Girl in Blue with Brown Bag.” The story tells about an unusual friendship between a young girl, who is just learning about American history, and an older man, who has been responsible for helping to make American history. Despite the disparity of their ages, the two have a good deal in common. Francis was not completely truthful when Louanne asked him his transcendent values. He lied and said they included truth and beauty. In reality, he thought loyalty was one of the most important values, second to honesty.

## Discussion Question 1

Explain why Francis does not criticize Louanne for having stolen the painting from the corrupt lawyers.

## Discussion Question 2

Do you consider Louanne’s act of taking the painting, which Francis thought was probably stolen anyway, theft? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

Do you think that Louanne and Francis’ decision to sneak the painting into the museum where it could be found at a later time and taken as a donation was the right way to handle the painting? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

sartorial, embodiment, imperious, trustee, pedagogy, celibate, paradigm, bourgeois, dubious, sojourner, rudimentary, rancid, tactile, transcendent, officious, relegated, bestowal, antiquated, provenance, feigning, acquisitions



# “Jan Term”

## Summary

The first letter in the story “Jan Term” is from Josephine’s employer at a store called Forget Me No. It is written to Eleanor Jenkins, Josephine’s teacher. In this letter Josephine’s employer explained Josephine would be late turning in her term paper because her stepmother had walked out on the family and had been gone two months. When she had returned, Josephine’s father had thrown a fit, which included throwing dishes as well as destroying the computer.

The second letter in this story is from Josephine. It describes how she went about putting together her term paper and not having to turn it in as late as she thought she would. She dedicates her paper to her late mother.

In her term paper, Josephine describes her duties at the antique store Forget Me Not. She had wanted to base her project on reading to the blind because her mother had suffered blindness because of a tumor. However, Josephine was not able to follow her desire to read because she had to have a job near her brother’s day care. Josephine discussed in her paper how she took care of chores and cleaning in the antique store and also learned the basics of different styles of jewelry. She learned from Rennie, her boss, the importance of just being there for someone. Josephine compared the shop to a village well because all sorts of women would come there to receive comfort and compassion from Rennie.

## Analysis

The style of this story is unique to the stories in this collection. The story is told through two letters — one to Josephine’s teacher from her employer and one from Josephine to her teacher — and Josephine’s Jan Term paper.

The story’s language uses words like crockery makes a reference to telephone books. The usage gives the stories an old fashioned feel. At the same time, the reader can tell the stories were written recently as there are also uses of the term “on the spectrum” referring to a boy’s autism as well as computers.

Relationships are important in this short story. The reader can tell from Josephine’s term paper that she very much enjoyed working with Rennie and that the lady, in turn, became protective of Josephine. One customer who said bad things to Josephine about her family was quickly, but not rudely, hurried out of the shop by Rennie. Although Josephine’s family could best be termed dysfunctional, it was clear by the way that Josephine was quick to correct the discrepancies she believed the woman had made in talking about her family, that Josephine loved all the members of her family. She missed her mother, but she knew that she was no saint. Josephine also stood up for her step mother, whom she described as being disorganized, when the lady in the shop had



categorized as being a slattern, or dirty. Josephine mentioned her father did have a habit of being irritable but that he was trying to do better.

## Discussion Question 1

By reading her letter and term paper, how would you describe Josephine? Include examples from the text to support your answer.

## Discussion Question 2

How is the style of this story different from the other stories included in this collection? Include things like voice, point of view, style of writing and structure.

## Discussion Question 3

Why did Josephine dedicate her term paper to her mother? Why was she unable to do the volunteer work she had hoped to be able to do?

## Vocabulary

asset, devious, onerous, deployed, artifacts, proprietor, sinuous, altruistic, inevitability, emulate, verisimilitude, placard, pandering, narcissism





# “Elder Jinks”

## Summary

In the story “Elder Jinks,” Grace and Gustave get married after meeting one another at Bosky’s Wild Animal Preserve on Cape Cod. After the wedding Gustave’s sister had hinted to Grace that she seemed the type who would easily overlook Gustave’s tantrums. When Grace asked for details, the sister would not elaborate. The two were alone for the first time in their short married life when Gustave went to a conference in Chicago and left Grace behind. She had surprise visitors Lee, Lee, and Hal Karsh. They had brought their instruments, and all four enjoyed playing together. Grace cooked chili and left the pan unwashed. Hal, who had been an old friend of Grace’s, wondered if Gustave really knew all about her. Lee and Lee had brought marijuana, and the next day the four smoked together. They were playing charades when Gustave arrived home unexpectedly early.

He had placed his jacket on the hall chair and his briefcase on the floor and was standing in front of Grace as she lay on the floor in a charades pose. He recognized Lee and Lee from the wedding, but he didn’t know Hal. Grace tried to introduce Hal to Gustave, but Gustave ordered them all out. Hal tried again. He attempted to introduce himself, but Gustave ordered him out. Grace left with Hal. After they left, Hal checked out the damage to the house and cleaned. He looked for more weed to smoke but couldn’t find any. Meanwhile, Grace was happy she had not yet sold her house. She refused to go to Barcelona with Hal. She wished she’d never met Gustave, especially since he’d turned out to be so boring and strict.

On Sunday, Gustave watched a football game, thought about his class the following day, and went to bed. He could only see half the moon but could imagine the rest. Grace bought herself a yellow sweater and returned to Hal at the hotel. She developed a headache that lasted until he was finally in a taxi on his way to the airport. Back at the hotel she watched the football game and then went to bed.

The next day Grace went to Gustave’s lecture. After class was finished, Gustave went and sat next to Grace. They introduced themselves to one another. Then, just as they had on the first day they met, they said they wanted to get to know each other.

## Analysis

This short story addresses the challenges of a relationship. Grace and Gustave learn that even in their advanced years, they still must learn to accept and forgive the other person’s faults in order to sustain a relationship. Even though Gustave’s sister had predicted that Grace would be able to easily overlook Gustave’s tantrums, it turned out she was unable to do so as she walked out on him the first time there was friction between the two.



During their honeymoon, things were beginning to be mentioned that bothered the other. Gustave was irritated by Grace's messiness. Grace was irritated by Gustave's questions about the contents of his meals. The two do, however, have similarities. They both say they hate football. After their short time apart, they both watch part of a game and determine the game was not as bad as they thought. Later that night after Gustave took out the garbage, he chided himself for marrying Grace because he was attracted to her eyes. He now believed she was frivolous. Grace felt the same way about Gustave when she wished they had never met.

## Discussion Question 1

Compare and contrast Grace and Gustave.

## Discussion Question 2

On one of the nights that they are apart, Gustave can see only part of the moon from his bedroom window while Grace can see only a curve of the Massachusetts State House from her hotel. It is indicated even from these partial images, they can deduce the whole. Why are these images important to the novel?

## Discussion Question 3

How was Gustave wrong in his response to finding Grace with her friends when he returned home unexpectedly early? What fault did Grace have in the misunderstanding?

## Vocabulary

impulsive, rhetorical, locution, advocates, holistic, pomposity, falsities, promenade, demurred, traversed, demeaning, pedantic, sanctimonious, apex, concentric, dispersed



# “Vallies”

## Summary

In the short story “Vallies,” Valerie Gordon was first hired as a nanny for Desmond Chapin and his family. They wanted Valerie to live with them, but she refused. Even when she had to stay late at night, she insisted on walking home herself. Though he probably couldn’t see it, Val would give Desmond the same impish grin each night when she left. Val worked for the Chapins for five years until they went bankrupt. They got her a position working with the Greens which lasted several years until that family moved.

The next family for whom Val worked insisted that she live with them. Val finally agreed because her apartment building had been purchased and might be turned into condominiums. The family was very severe and distant but enjoyed the stories she told. In these stories she presented dilemmas in which those listening would invent acceptable resolutions. In her final story, Val told a tale of a set of twins one of whom got pregnant. It was understood in the large family, of which she was a part, that the child would be kept and cared for by the entire family. When the baby was born it was deformed and defective. Even though witches offered to do away with the baby and a priest offered to raise it with its own kind, the laziest sister said that she would keep the child. One twin was unhappy with the family’s decision. The family members indicated that girl should have run away.

A few weeks later Val saw Desmond Chapin again. He told her that when he first saw her it was not Mary Poppins she reminded him of but a party girl. He suggested that her hair, now that it was cut, reminded her of the girl she was. She told him it reminded her of the girl she left behind.

## Analysis

Relationships are again a theme in this story. Val wanted a life from herself away from the complex and strangling relationships of her family. If the Vallie, or the story, she told the children of the professor was true, she ran away from her family because she didn’t want to be the one to have to take care of her deformed and disabled daughter. It appeared from the story she told that it had been a group decision to keep the baby, but Val knew care of the child wouldn’t be a group project. As she proposed the quandary to the professor and his family, all five members of the family told Val at the same time that the mother in story she told had no choice but to run away from the responsibility that was being forced on her.

Val had apparently gone in search of the man who had gotten her pregnant in the first place. She worked for him as a nanny for years. It was not until the two met several years after Val was no longer employed by that man that he admitted he knew her. Even after he correctly identified her, however, Val did not tell Desmond that they had a



daughter together. It seemed strange that she would seek out the baby's father, yet not let him know the end result of their affair. Val does hint at the presence of a daughter when Desmond asked Val if she reminded herself of the girl she once was with her hair cut shorter. Val told him that she reminded herself of the girl she left behind. Val, of course, was referring to her daughter while Desmond probably thought she was referring to the girl she used to be.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Do you agree with Val's differentiation between courtesy and manners? Why or why not?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Who was Desmond Chaplain?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why do you think that Val didn't tell Desmond about Hope?

## **Vocabulary**

rapport, repetitive, penitential, irrepressible, concocted, sanctimony, impeccable, perilous, servitude, indulged, scrupulously, incompetent, whimsical, penance, embellishments, misbegotten, euthanasia, ingenu



# “Aunt Telephone”

## Summary

In the story “Aunt Telephone” Susan revered Milo, a psychiatrist and friend of the family. She had hoped she would develop some sort of psychological condition so that Milo would have to work with her and, perhaps, write a paper about her condition. Since her babysitter was sick, Susan had to attend an adult party with her mother. While there, Susan was stopped by a lady on the patio who made a comment about Susan’s attentive aunt, referring to Milo. Susan went inside and loudly told her mother what had happened even though her mother hushed her and then dragged her out of the room. Susan’s mother told her to stop talking about the encounter as it would hurt Milo’s feelings. At that point, Susan didn’t want to do anything to hurt Milo’s feelings.

Susan relates that Milo was her aunt, as well as aunt to many other children in the neighborhood because he was always ready to talk on the phone to parents about trouble they might be having with their offspring. The children all had learned how to listen in on the conversations on the extension lines. Susan remembered a call she had overheard after she had run away from an overnight camp. Her mother had told Milo she wanted Susan to go back to the camp because it was hard having her there. Susan realized from this phone call how careless she was with the house she lived in with her parents. She hadn’t thought of the house as being her mother’s house as well.

In school the following year, Susan made friends with Anjali, whose parents had come from India. Their walk home from school took them past Milo’s home. One day Milo happened to be outside so Susan introduced Anjali and Milo. As the two talked, Susan became jealous. During the family’s next trip to Cape Cod Anjali spent some time with them. Susan was jealous and really angry with Milo after he dropped Anjali off at the bus station and invited her to an art exhibition. Milo asked if they could go to Bosky’s on the way home. Susan at first made fun of the idea but relented. While he was telling her about one of the animals, Susan made a snide remark that the sociable animal with its burrow system was like Milo. Milo indicated he knew what had gone on between Susan and her mother during the party and that he wanted to know how she had insulted him. She told him she had said he was a rat but had really said that he exchanged his information for friendship but didn’t know how to handle strong emotions.

Susan noticed that her mother had stopped calling Milo almost entirely. Meanwhile, Susan started a rumor that Milo was paying so much attention to Anjali that her parents had to make him leave her alone. The parents began to think Milo was nosey, rather than helpful, when he called wanting to know about their children. Susan narrates that when she and the other children with whom she grew up had their own children they did not consult Milo. Susan still kept in touch with him. He still visited with them at Cape Cod. Their visits included trips to Bosky’s where Susan wanted to strangle her boys when they made fun of Milo for riding one of the ponies.



## Analysis

The changing roles of a neighborhood icon and his relationship with those in his neighborhood are among the themes of the short story "Aunt Telephone." Milo had once been a treasured member of his neighborhood because he was the one whom mothers called for advice about their children. As the children grew and the mothers no longer needed Milo's advice, he became an unnecessary part of the neighborhood. Mothers ignored and avoided him. The children he'd helped raise shunned him because his ideas about child rearing were no longer popular. Besides, he knew too much about them.

Susan's relationship with Milo is featured. She admired Milo. She, like her friend Anjali, admired Milo because he lived alone. As Susan grew and became frustrated with Milo and his way of life, she came to the decision that even though Milo gave advice to others, he had no idea what real life was like. He lived alone and for that reason knew nothing about strong emotions, Susan decided.

Susan was jealous of his friendship with her friend Anjali. In fact, Susan was so jealous that she arranged for a lie to be spread about Milo. She fabricated a lie that Anjali's parents had to warn Milo to leave Anjali alone because he'd been spending so much time with her. This lie and rumor was hurtful to Milo both personally and professionally.

Milo is an interesting character. He is described as the typical nosey aunt. However, Milo is no one's aunt. First, he's a guy and second, he's asexual. The friction between Susan and Milo began when a woman at a party referred to Milo as Susan's aunt. Susan was unaware of how the comment might affect Milo because of her age; but, it seemed to affect the relationship. Notice also at the end of the story that Susan indicated that just like his parents, Milo had adjusted to a new life when he was forced out of his old one. The adjustment was slightly different as Milo's parents had to adjust to life in a new country because they fled from Budapest to America just before World War II began. Milo's adjustment was more of an emotional adjustment, as he had once been a central feature in his neighborhood until he outlived his usefulness.

## Discussion Question 1

What role did Milo fill in his community? How did he come to lose the role?

## Discussion Question 2

What did Susan seem to like most about Milo? What caused her to become so angry with him?



## Discussion Question 3

Why did Susan spread the rumors about Milo and Anjali? What do you think she hoped to prove?

## Vocabulary

rambunctious, mutism, surname, appellation, asexuality, pathological, cachet, feral, recrimination, desecrate, acoustics, monogamy, impotent, languid, herbivorous,



# “Self-reliance”

## Summary

In the story “Self-Reliance,” Cornelia Finch learned her cancer had come back. She went to her cottage beside the spring fed pond in New Hampshire that she’d bought for herself when she retired. She knew what she faced with her new case of cancer. She’d mixed up pain and sleeping pills into a cocktail in her thermos that she took with her when she went for a ride in her canoe. She drank the cocktail as she floated on the pond. As she died she imagined her canoe had gone over a waterfall. She imagined a group of people in evening clothes, those who had died before her. She saw visions of her life including the birth of her daughter. She was hugged by Aunt Shelley, her favorite aunt. Even though she wanted to stay in Aunt Shelley’s forgiving hug, Cornelia felt a hint of regret that she wished would go away. Suddenly, she was alone and spent. A short time later Cornelia’s neighbor rowed out to her floating canoe. He saw she was dead. He pulled the craft ashore.

## Analysis

“Self-reliance” is the final short story in the book. It addresses the theme of what a person does when one learns that they are terminally ill. Cornelia learned that her cancer had returned. She did not want to go through another series of treatments and sickness knowing the disease would probably return again. Cornelia went to her favorite place and killed herself by making a cocktail of pain and sleeping medicines.

The images the author shares of Cornelia’s last moments include the canoe going over a nonexistent waterfall, a point of no return where the waterfall signifies Cornelia’s death. Notice that among the emotions she felt as she saw those who had died before including her favorite aunt was regret. She pushed feelings of guilt away as she enjoyed the hug she had missed for sixty years.

The title “Self-Reliance” is significant as suicide can not necessarily be termed as being self-reliant. In this case Cornelia did not want to come to the point that she would have to rely on others. She wanted to be self-reliant and thought the only way she could do this was by taking her future into her own hands. By doing so she ended her own pain, but left those who loved her in pain wondering why she couldn’t trust them to help her.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the images of death and the afterlife that the author includes in the short story.





## Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Cornelia felt the only answer to the problems she faced was suicide?

## Discussion Question 3

Why do you think the cabin on the pond appealed to Cornelia so much?

## Vocabulary

judicious, personage, bumptious, emaciation, insidious, austerity, lethargy, cleavage, resplendent, deportation, rapturous, orifices



# Characters

## Sophie

Sophie is the main character in the story “Inbound.” She was the daughter of Ken and Joanna and the older sister of Lily. Lily had Down’s Syndrome. Sophie, however, was extremely intelligent. Her father often quizzed her about things he believed she should know. Sophie had realized that since Lily had been born, the members of her family had not been individuals. Instead, they had become stuck together. She sensed it would be like that for the rest of their lives. She had a vision of her future, one in which she and her sister’s lives were coextensive, always running side by side, just like her father’s description of the subway.

## Robert Katz

Robert Katz, a Jew, is the main character in “Day of Awe.” He had gone to Central America to visit his son, Lex, and the Mexican boy, Jamie, whom Lex was preparing to adopt. Robert did not like the boy at first. He was small for his age. His Spanish was difficult to understand. Even his hand gestures seemed to indicate the opposite of what he was trying to communicate. As he spent time with the boy as well as other boys at orphanages in the area, Robert began to have a new appreciation for his own son and his newly adopted grandson. He realized that even though his family was not made up of wealthy, influential, or perfect people, he was still the father of great people. He wished more people would come to realize the importance of taking care of one’s own people, even if they weren’t the most perfect.

## Peter Loy

Peter Loy is the main character of the story “Settlers.” He was a retired school teacher who has been adopted by the family of one of his former students. He had never been married and appeared to have no family of his own. Peter often visited with this family on a weekly basis and had even been invited by Meg, the wife and mother, to live with them. He was obsessed with the work of Charles Dickens and was researching the writer. His latest project involved finding the eight levels of charity as outlined by Maimonides, a Jewish philosopher in Dickens’ work. When Meg and Jack decided to divorce, Peter realized he would be losing a family just as Meg’s and Jack’s children would be losing a family unit. Even though he never mentioned it, Peter had secret fantasies of Meg choosing him as a husband.

## Richard

Richard is a forty-nine-year old suffering with metastatic cancer. He and his family are renting a house near the beach from a war widow toward the end of World War II. Even



though he doesn't know her story, Richard is drawn to this widow as if she had some sort of answer that would cure his disease. He understands the rage she feels when the war ends. It is at this time that she finally lets herself be angry because her husband has been killed. Richard relates to her because he feels the same rage when he thinks of the way he will die because of cancer. He wants to have an affair with her, but she will not allow it.

## Señora Marta Perera de Lefkowitz

Señora Marta Perera de Lefkowitz is the main character in the story "Vaquita." She was referred to as a cow because in some caricatures she looked like an inquisitive cow. She also told a story about how a peasant family had sheltered her in a barn inhabited by a cow. During her time as the minister of health, she had launched a campaign against formula companies. She believed the inability of some women to produce enough milk to keep their babies alive had been a form of population control. Since formula was readily available, she blamed these companies on the overwhelming population in her country as well as the inability to feed all of the people.

Señora Marta had once had a lover who got her pregnant and then paid a good deal of money for an abortion. She never got pregnant again. She believed she was about to get deported from the country, though the story never clarifies exactly why she believed she would be deported. On what she believed was her last day in office, Señora Marta borrowed a motorbike and rode to visit a small lake. There she met a girl who was nursing her baby. She advised the mother to continue nursing and then gave her the diamond pin she always wore. She had believed she'd be able to sell it and live on the profits for several years in Jerusalem where she was planning to live with Olivia, her lover.

## Fergus

Fergus is the main character in the story "ToyFolk." He was a division head for a toy company called ToyFolk. He met an unmarried couple, Anna and Bernard, who ran a toy and repair store in the town in which his company was opening a new factory. He loved his children and was proud of them. When he first visited in Anna's and Bernard's home, he assumed the blonde girl in the photographs was their daughter who had died at an early age. He learned from Anna that the child was her daughter from her marriage to a man she knew before Bernard. The child's father kidnapped the young girl when he became angry over Anna's relationship with Bernard. Anna punished Bernard for her own sorrow by not having a child with him. When Fergus tried to discuss the situation with his own wife and suggested it was sad Bernard hadn't had the pleasure of having his own children, Barbara doesn't answer him. Her silence suggests that she doesn't think his predicament was all that sad.



## Loretta

Loretta is the mother in the story "Tess." Loretta's baby girl, Tess, was born with several neurological and physical defects, though she was an angelic looking child. She was deaf and was dependent on feeding tubes to provide nourishment. At the end of the story, Tess' mother disconnected the tube from Tess' heart knowing that the child would bleed to death.

## Victor Cullen

Victor Cullen is one of the major characters in the story "Fidelity." He was a writer for the travel magazine "World Enough." As he grew older, he began sending in stories with invented datelines, pretending he and his wife had visited the fictional locations of which he wrote. Victor's final article was read by Greg, the magazine's editor, after Victor's death. In the article, Victor informed Greg that he knew of Greg's affair with his wife.

## Sonya Sofrankovitch

Sonya Sofrankovitch is the main character of the stories "If Love Were All," "Purim Night," and "The Coat." In "If Love Were All," Sonya worked with the American Joint Distribution Committee helping relocate children displaced in World War II to families who volunteered to take care of them. Sonya took the job because she did not want to get married even though she was getting past marrying age. She had been married once before. Her husband had left her because he said her love was not deeply rooted enough for his tastes. At the conclusion of this first short story that features Sonya, she was reconnected with Roland Rosenberg, the man who had originally hired her to work with the committee. He asked her to head up a camp for displaced persons. Sonya agreed, and the story "Purim Night" detailed the developing of their relationship. On the night of Purim when the American generals were to visit, Sonya had suggested to Roland that he tell the generals that she and Roland were married. Apparently Sonya and Roland made good on the suggestion as they were husband and wife in the story "The Coat." Although Sonya had been accused of not having a love that was deeply rooted, her love for Roland seemed to be committed as she worried over him through his heart attacks.

## Roland Rosenberg

Roland Rosenberg is one of the main characters in the stories "If Love Were All," "Purim Night," and "The Coat." Roland had a very small role in the story "If Love Were All." He was the person who interviewed Sonya for her job with the American Joint Distribution Committee. He also appeared at the end of the novel to ask Sonya if she would help him operate a camp for displaced persons. During the course of the novel it was noted that Roland had lost quite a bit of weight. In the story "Purim Night" Roland had two



roles, not only of the director of the DP camp but also of Sonya's lover. In the story "The Coat," Roland was Sonya's husband.

## Ludwig

Ludwig is one of the children who took refuge at the displaced persons camp in the story "Purim Night." Although he told Sonya and Ida that he did not believe in miracles, he later wrote to them after he and his uncle had been settled in Palestine. In his letter he referred to his new living arrangements as a miracle. He indicated he felt as if it were Purim and the Jews had been saved all over again.

## Keith and Mitsuko Maguire

Keith and Mitsuko Maguire are the main characters in the story "Mates." They come mysteriously to town like vagabonds, have and raise a family, and then just as mysteriously disappear.

## Nancy Haskin

Nancy Haskin is a young adult fresh out of college trying to decide what to do with her life. After being unable to find a job in the town where she lived, rejected by the man she wanted to marry, and not interested in the man who wanted to marry her, Nancy decided to travel overseas.

## Henry and Dorothy

Henry and Dorothy are the couple in the story "Capers." They start stealing things, beginning with loose change, in an attempt to bring back the excitement they had in their relationship when they were a younger couple.

## Jay

Jay is the main character of the story "Relic and Type." He was the grandson of an immigrant Jew. He remembered his grandfather working hard to fit in with the Americans. He was shocked when he learned his teacher for his third year Japanese class had married a Jew and had converted to Judaism. He felt the relationship between people of two cultures that had once been disdained was shocking and unnatural.



## **Professor Lubin**

While in the hospital following a neurological attack, Professor Lubin told her doctors in Russian that she was the illegitimate daughter of the Russian Tsar. It was never known for certain if Professor Lubin was just talking out of her head because her brain wasn't functioning correctly or if the story was true. She indicated she thought it was just a story her mother had made up to make her feel better about being an illegitimate child.

## **Josephine Dorothy Salter**

Josephine Dorothy Salter is the author of one of the letters and the term paper included in the story "Jan Term." Josephine was a highly intelligent and very mature child. Her mother had died because of a brain tumor. To make matters worse, Josephine's step mother walked out on the family and was gone for two months, leaving Josephine in charge of the family. Although her family could be termed dysfunctional at best, Josephine loved them and provided excuses for their behavior in the footnotes of her research paper after she noted that a customer at the antique store where she had volunteered had cruel things to say about each of the members of her family. Josephine corrected the woman's comment that her mother had been a saint. While Josephine had loved her mother, she knew she wasn't saintly.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Sophie's Backpack

This backpack is an important symbol in the short story "Inbound." The parents had bought Sophie this multi-colored backpack for her birthday. When Joanna spotted a similar backpack on another child she believed she had found Sophie. When she looked closer she realized it was another child. The backpack was symbolic of Sophie.

## A Set of Legos

Robert gave 7 year old adopted grandson Jamie a set of starter Legos as a welcome gift in the story "Day of Awe." The child's undeveloped skills kept him from building anything with the starter set. While riding in a Jeep with his father and grandfather, Jamie began trying to work with this set of blocks. The blocks were a symbol of Robert's attempt to accept his new grandson and the grandson's attempt to please his new grandfather.

## Mrs. Hazelton's Bike

Richard and his family knew that if Mrs. Hazelton's bike was not parked by the shed where she lived, it meant she was not at home. The bike was a symbol to them of Mrs. Hazelton's absence or presence on the property. The bike appeared in the short story "The Noncombatant."

## A Diamond Pin

In the story "Vaquita," Señora Marta Perera de Lefkowitz always wore a diamond pin given to her by her husband, Federico Perera. On the day she believed she was to be deported, she gave it to a young woman whom she discovered nursing a son by a small lake.

## An Automaton

In the story "ToyFolk" Bernard made this automaton which depicted the scene of three executioners shooting a peasant. When Ferguson learned the story behind Anna's and Bernard's relationship, he imagined the toy was fashioned by Bernard based on his frustration with Anna because she would not allow him to have children of his own until her daughter from a former marriage was returned to her.



## Greg's Armoire

Greg used a picture of an armoire in his bedroom to illustrate one of the stories that Victor Cullen wrote for the magazine "World Enough" in the short story "Fidelity." Greg wondered how Victor had been able to describe the armoire so perfectly in his article because Victor had never seen it. He wondered if Victor's wife, Nora, had described the piece of furniture to him. It seems that the photo of this armoire proved that Nora had an affair with Greg because she was so familiar with the furniture in his room.

## Eugene's Mother's Ring

Eugene gave Sonya his mother's ring for safe keeping in the story "If Love Were All." It was assumed Eugene gave her the ring as a sort of promise of engagement. However, after he was released from prison, Eugene took up with Lotte, the teen violin player who had moved in with Sonya. After Eugene and Lotte left London together, Eugene indicated to Sonya he wanted her to keep the ring. She sold the ring but didn't get much out of it as the diamond was flawed, just like the love between Sonya and Eugene had been. The ring was a symbol of Eugene's faith in Sonya.

## Cellophane Wrappers

In the story "Purim Night," Ida used the cellophane wrappers from cigarettes to decorate a hat for the Purim celebration. The use of these wrappers symbolized the way the people in the displaced persons camps would use anything they could get their hands on for a costume. When Sonya saw the hat, she couldn't tell what Ida had used to make the decorations that looked like iridescent butterflies.

## Franz's Old Coat

Sophie found an old coat in an armoire in an apartment that she and Roland were subletting. The coat reminded Sonya of the world she knew before World War II. She hoped if she could store the coat in an old chest she and her husband purchased she could symbolically put the Old World to rest.

## Mitsuko Maguire's Tennis Shoes

Mitsuko's tennis shoes are a symbol of the passage of time in the short story "Mates." The shoes were tied to her bag when she and Keith first came to town. She came into town with a pair of lime green sneakers. When those shoes grew dark, she bought a pair of pink ones. Later, when the couple left town, she was spotted with a pair of cherry red shoes hanging from her pack.





## **A Pair of Binoculars**

A young boy used a pair of binoculars given to his father as a gift to spy on his neighbors. He learned that even though he was able to see clearly their actions, even the binoculars did not give him the ability to see into his neighbors' minds.

## **Child's Coat**

The Jewish family in the story "Granski" was able to bring its riches to America with it because they sewed diamonds into the lining of the coat belonging to one of their little girls. This coat was a symbol of the lengths to which the Jewish people would go in an attempt to bring their possessions to America with them.

## **A Blue Scarf**

A blue scarf is an important image in the story "Capers." It was while trying to steal this silk scarf that was made with different shades of blue that Dorothy and Henry came close to being caught. The scarf and its variety of colors represents the excitement that Dorothy and Henry had lived through during their lives. In essence, Dorothy's theft of the scarf represents her attempt to steal back the vitality of youth that she and her husband once enjoyed.

## **A Woven Sculpture**

This woven sculpture that Dea made of herself and Alain during their one night together was sold to a museum in the story "The Ministry of Restraint." It symbolized their attraction to each other and their ultimate decision to stay faithful to their spouses.

## **A Brown Bag**

In the story "Girl in Blue with Brown Bag" Louanne bought a scarf at a designer store. She later returned it and got a brown paper shopping bag with handles so she could steal the Mme. Vulliard painting from the lawyer's house where she was tutoring the attorney in Russian. The shopping bag was once again employed as a cover when Louanne and Francis sneaked the painting into the museum. The bag was a symbol of Louanne's thievery.

## **The Village Well**

In the story "Jan Term," Josephine compares the antique store at which she volunteered for a month to the village wells in colonial times. She explains women would go to those wells, just as they would visit the antique store, for companionship and encouragement.



# Settings

## The Subway Station at Harvard Square

The subway station is a setting in the story “Inbound.” It was in the subway station at Harvard Square that Sophie met up with her parents and Lily after they’d gotten separated during their visit to Harvard. It was at this same station that Lily called Sophie by name for the first time.

## A Catholic Church

This Catholic Church was a setting in the story “Day of Awe.” Robert, a Jew, was attending Mass at this small Catholic Church in Central America when his adopted grandson beckoned for him to follow him out of the church. It was at this point that Robert realized that being a father to many nations was an unreachable ideal. He decided it might be better just to be a person who took care of others, even if those others weren’t perfect.

## The Wren Home

In the story “Settlers,” Peter often visited in Jack Wren’s home where Jack lived with his wife and three children. The house had been in Jack’s family for years.

## A Street Outside a Bar

In the story “The Noncombatant,” Richard saw Mrs. Hazelton running down this street outside a bar where he’d been drinking. The bar had become crowded, and he had gone outside to finish his drink. She was running in anger as she had finally let go of her anger over the death of her husband now that the war was over. Richard felt desire for her, but she refused him.

## Campo del Norte

In the story “Vaquita,” it was in Campo del Norte that Señora Marta Perera de Lefkowitz, minister of health, came upon the Indian girl nursing near a lake. She told this girl to keep nursing her baby as long as she could. She also gave the girl her iconic diamond pin with instructions to keep it hidden until the boy was older.



## **The House on Deronda Street**

The house on Deronda Street, divided into five apartments, serves as the setting for almost all of the story “Allog.”

## **A Toy and Repair Shop**

An old fashioned toy and repair shop is the setting for the majority of the story “ToyFolk.” It was in this shop that Fergus met the couple Anna and Bernard.

## **A Church**

In the story “If Love Were All,” Eugene and Sonya first went to a church to hear a concert by the Czech twins. Later, Eugene and Lotte began practicing at the church because it had such a good piano. When the bombings began again in London, the church was one of the targets. Sonya was afraid her friends had been killed in a blast. However, they had been late leaving the boarding house for practice.

## **Camp Gruenwasser**

Camp Gruenwasser was the name of the displaced persons camp where Roland and Sonya served as co-directors. It is the setting for the story “Purim Night.”

## **The Hotel Pamona**

The Hotel Pamona is the setting for the majority of the story “How to Fall.” The hotel was the place where The Happy Bloom Hour was taped.

## **The Hussar**

The Hussar is a restaurant in Godolphin, Massachusetts. The restaurant was the setting for “The Story.” It was at this restaurant that the two sets of parents of married children met for dinner.

## **Donna’s Ladle**

Donna's Ladle, a soup kitchen that operated out of the basement of the Godolphin Unitarian Church, is the setting for the story “Rules.”



## **The Boston Public Library**

It was outside the Boston Public Library that Marlene and Hugh happened to run into each other five days after they met at a wedding in the story “The Unravished Bride.”

## **The House in Maine**

It was in this house that Angelica and Toby’s families would get together each summer in the story “Granski.” It had been left to their grandmother by her family. The year that her grandmother got sick and died the family did not even bother to open the house.

## **A Hotel Boutique**

It was from this hotel boutique that sold expensive silk scarves that Dorothy attempted to steal a blue scarf in the story “Capers.” She made it out of the store, but then she dropped the scarf in the lobby when she turned and Henry bumped into her. The sales clerk took the scarf.

## **Muñez Hotel**

It was in the Muñez Hotel in the story “The Ministry of Restraint” where Dea and Alain pledged their love to each other but did not have sexual relations. Instead, they decided to stay faithful to their spouses.

## **Godolphin, Mass.**

Godolphin is a fictional town in Massachusetts that was the setting for several of Pearlman’s short stories.

## **The Museum**

It was into an unspecified museum that Francis and Louanne came up with a plan to sneak the painting of Mme. Vuillard that Louanne had stolen from the house of the corrupt lawyer. They took the painting down to the basement where they locked it in a locker hoping that one day the locker would be opened and the donated painting found.

## **Bosky’s Wild Animal Preserve**

It was at Bosky’s Wild Animal Preserve on Cape Cod that Grace and Gustave met for the first time in the story “Elder Jinks.” The setting also appears in the story “Aunt Telephone.”



# Themes and Motifs

## Relationships

The effect of relationships on lives is a major theme in many of these short stories. Among the relationships explored are those between husband and wife as well as those between parents and children. Infidelity, friendship, incest, and sickness are among the aspects that affect the relationships presented in various short stories.

One of the most common relationship issues discussed is that of infidelity. Unfaithfulness of the husband or wife figures into the stories “Settlers,” “ToyFolk,” and “Fidelity.” In the stories “The Noncombatant,” “The Ministry of Restraint,” and “The Unravished Bride” the characters consider being unfaithful to their spouses but do not follow through with their desires.

In the stories “ToyFolk” and “How to Fall” relationships between spouses with children are discussed. In both of these stories, the mother refused to have more children because of a problem with her first child. In the story “ToyFolk” Anna refused to have more children until her first child was returned to her, a decision that punished the innocent Bernard. In the story “How to Fall,” Joss’ wife refused to have another child because the first one was mentally retarded.

Relationships involving handicapped children are explored as a major theme that recurs in these short stories. In the story “Inbound” Sophie realized she would be bound to her sister, Lily, because of Lily's Down’s Syndrome for the rest of her life.

In the story “Tess,” Tess’ mother disconnected her daughter from the machines that had kept the two-year-old alive. Tess was beautiful but mentally and physically handicapped. She would never have a life outside of the hospital. In the story “How to Fall” Joss and his wife send their retarded daughter to an inpatient facility to live. There is no hope of her ever developing beyond the stage of a child. A final example of a story in which this theme is addressed is the story “Vallies.” In this story Val ran away from her mentally and physically handicapped daughter because her family gave her no choice in the child’s future.

## Children

Children are a common theme in these short stories. Often the stories deal with children who are damaged in some way. Other stories deal with children as they come to terms with the world around them.

The story “Day of Awe” Jay struggled to come to terms with the boy from Central America who was to be his grandson by adoption. The boy was underdeveloped, backward, and had speech difficulties that made his Spanish difficult to understand. In the story “On Junius Bridge” Lars apparently had some form of autism. Despite his



oddities, Miss Huk, the owner of the hotel became attached to the boy to the point she asked if he could stay with her. The story “Tess” focuses on the conundrum that exists when a child who will never be able to take care of itself or even live without feeding tubes and transfusions is born.

Another type of story involving children is that in which the child comes to a realization about the world around him. These stories are often referred to as coming of age stories. In the story “Binocular Vision” the boy thought his binoculars had shown him everything he needed to know about the family that lived in the apartment next to him. He was surprised to learn there were secrets that even binoculars couldn’t reveal. Another coming of age story is “Chance.” In this story the narrator comes to the realization that the leaders of her temple, the men she’d always thought of as holy, were just as flawed and subject to faults as she was.

“Inbound” is a story that includes both a damaged child and a child who has a coming of age experience. Lily had Down’s Syndrome. She was the younger sister of the highly intelligent Sophie. Lily changed her family, Sophie believed, by making them stick together instead of being three separate individuals. As Sophie thought about her sister, she had an image of her future in which she realized she would be responsible for Lily and her care for the rest of her life.

## Age/Sickness

Another common theme in these short stories is that of the affect that coming age or sickness had on the characters. In some stories characters struggle to be useful as they age while other struggle to deal with a disease. On the flip side, some characters face decisions they must make in caring for a person who is aging or struggles with a disease.

The story “Capers” is one in which a couple struggled with the lack of excitement they felt in their lives because their bodies were growing older and were no longer capable of the other pleasures they had once enjoyed. That couple took to stealing things for the adrenaline rush they received. In the story “Relic and Type” Jay decided to learn Japanese because he thought it would be something to take his mind off his progressing age and disease. In “Self-Restraint” Cornelia chose not to fight her disease. She instead killed herself.

In the story “Tess” the author does not go into detail about why Tess’ mother decided to unhook her daughter from the machines keeping her alive. It could not have been an easy decision for that mother to make. She knew, however, her daughter would have no future without the machinery that kept her alive. Similarly, in the story “Inbound” young Sophie came to the realization that her sister, who was afflicted with Down’s Syndrome, would be dependent upon her for the remainder of her life.



## Jews

Judaism or those of the Jewish faith are major facets of some of the stories. Many of the stories deal with the way Jews and their future generations were affected by the holocaust. Some stories deal with the problems and challenges faced by Jews as they try to practice their religion.

One of the stories that deals, at least as a minor theme, with the way that Jews were affected by the holocaust is the story "Granski." Toby told his cousin Angelica that he believed their family had been a fearful one ever since Antwerp. He referred to the way their family had been run from their home during World War II. That family had been lucky as they had managed to sneak much of their wealth to the United States with them in the form of diamonds sew into a daughter's coat. The story "If Love Were All" is set in London during World War II. Sonya and her coworkers were tasked with assigning refugee Jewish children to families who agreed to take care of them. A final story that deals with the treatment of the Jews during the holocaust is the story "Vaquita." Although she'd become a leader in Central America, Señora Marta Perera de Lefkowitz had been a victim of the holocaust. She'd had to spend a year hiding in a barn from Nazi forces. Her life was affected by this experience because she believed her survival of the holocaust and the years that followed were a gift from God.

Notice that many of the characters who appear in these stories are non-practicing Jews, even though their ancestors were killed trying to escape prosecution for practicing Judaism freely. One of the stories that illustrates this most clearly is the story "Relic and Type." Jay was surprised to learn that the Japanese man who taught his language class was a practicing Jew. He saw the family shopping one day and seemed offended that the strange family of Japanese Jews were so comfortable in public.

## World War II

World War II is used as a backdrop for many of these short stories. The stories either take place during the time of World War II or have plots that are affected by World War II. A trio of stories that shares a common theme of World War II is "If Love Were All," "Purim Night," and "The Coat." These stories follow the life a Sonya as she first worked with a group who placed refugee Jewish children with families who could care for them. In "Purim Night," Sonya worked at a camp for displaced persons after the war. The story "The Coat" follows Sonya as she tried to incorporate herself back into life in America after she returned from her work overseas. Another story that uses World War II as a reference point is the story "The Noncombatant." In this story Richard is battling cancer, a fight that he often compares to the battle going on overseas. He indicated, however, as the war was drawing to a close that even though the fighting would stop worldwide, his battle would not be over.



# Styles

## Point of View

The majority of these stories are told from the third person point of view of an omniscient narrator generally with an emphasis on one character in particular. However, the author does experiment with points of view in several of her stories. The story “Inbound,” for instance is written in the third person point of view with an emphasis on Sophie. “The Noncombatant,” a similarly written story is also from the point of view of an omniscient third person narrator with an emphasis on Richard.

One of the stories that doesn't follow the typical point of view used by this author is the story “Chance.” This story is narrated in the first person point of view from a character in the novel. This character, a young girl, is never named. “Tess” is a story in which the author employees a pair of points of view. Some of the story is told from the third person omniscient point of view with an emphasis on the hospital counsel. Some of it is told from this same point of view with an emphasis on the Asian cleaning man. Along with these third person points of view, parts of the story are also told in the first person point of view from the angle of Tess' mother. In the story “Jan Term” the author uses a pair of letters and a term paper to let her characters tell their story from their own points of view. The two first person points of view given are those of Josephine, a student who volunteered in an antique shop for her January term of school, along with Rennie, the woman who owned the shop where Josephine volunteered.

## Language and Meaning

The most interesting aspect of the language Pearlman uses in her novels is that her word choice gives her stories an old fashioned feel, even when the stories are set in modern times. In the story “Jan Term” for instance, eye glasses are called spectacles. There is a reference to a telephone book, a reference book that was once crucial but is losing its popularity because of the Internet and cell phones. It appears that the story is set in modern times, however, because there is also a reference to a computer as well as a mention of Josephine's younger brother being on the autism spectrum, a diagnosis which is fairly modern.

Pearlman's writing is also very concise. Even though the stories are short, Pearlman is able to completely develop her characters and the details of their situation. She chooses and arranges her words so that her reader gets the image she wants them to have in their heads. For instance, it was at Cornelia's happiest point in her death experience that the ideas that she should regret what she had done to herself popped into her mind. This placement leaves the reader with the idea that even in our grandest attempts to avoid pain, there will still be pain and doubt.



## Structure

The overall structure of this collection of short stories is very straightforward. There are 34 stories in the book. The first 21 stories are work by Pearlman that has been published in previous collections. The final 13 stories are being published for the first time in this book.

In the stories themselves, most of the tales are told in a linear fashion. One of the most notable exceptions to this linear style is the story “The Ministry of Restraint.” It was not until after the reader saw Alain and Dea’s final meeting during their lifetime that they were told by the narrator that the two never had sexual relations during the night that they spent together.

Most of these stories are also told in the past tense. One of the stories that varies from this tense use is “Tess.” In this story the author switches between the past and present tense. The parts of the story that focus on the hospital counsel and the Asian janitor are told in the past tense, while those that are narrated by Tess’ mother are told in the present tense. These two tenses converge when the hospital counsel leaves Tess’ room and her mother goes inside to remove the tube from her daughter’s heart.



## Quotes

Lily would learn some things. Mostly she would learn Sophie. They would know each other forward and backward. They would run side by side like subway tracks, inbound and outbound. Coextensive.”

-- Narrator (“Inbound” paragraph 74)

**Importance:** During a visit to Harvard, the university her parents attended, Sophie realized that her younger sister, who had Down’s Syndrome, would be dependent on Sophie for care when the two get older and their parents were no longer able to care for her.

A multitude of nations: what a vainglorious idea. No wonder we are always in trouble. How about a few good-enough places? he said silently to the priest, to the Christ, to the God rustling in his ear. How about a people that takes care of its children, even those springing from unexalted seed ...”

-- Narrator (“Day of Awe” paragraph 103)

**Importance:** Robert Katz, a Jew, realized how unrealistic the idea of being a father of many nations was in one's life. He thought it would be just as good to be the father of a people who took care of their, own even if those children who needed care the most were not the most privileged or perfect.

Homes allowed themselves to be commandeered by whoever came along. Not like cats; cats remain aloof. Not like dogs; dogs remain loyal. Like women, he made himself think, willing misogyny to invade him, to settle in, so that in another few years everybody would assume he had been in its possession forever.”

-- Narrator (Settlers paragraph 79)

**Importance:** In this quote bachelor Peter Loy compared women to houses, as it appeared they both allowed themselves to be taken over by whoever came along. Following his experience with Meg’s decision to leave her husband for the rich Jew, Geronimus Barron, Peter hoped that he could develop a dislike of women to keep him from getting hurt by circumstances again.

Both women rose — the graceful younger one in a dotted dress and the angular older one in her dead husband’s garments — and they turned toward each other, then toward him. For a moment they loomed larger than life: Grave Acceptance and her grim sister Defiance.”

-- Narrator (The Noncombatant paragraph 46)

**Importance:** As Richard watched his landlady help his wife fix the malfunctioning refrigerator he recognized their similarities and differences. Mrs. Hazelton, a war widow, knew what faced Catherine. Catherine, however, refused to accept that the cancer would take her husband as the war had taken Mrs. Hazelton’s.



And now — deportation? Call it retirement. She wondered if the goons had in mind some nastier punishment. That didn't matter, either; she'd been living on God's time since the cow."

-- Narrator ("Vaquita" paragraph 87)

**Importance:** Señora Perera had prepared herself for arrest and deportation. She believed her life had been good especially since she had survived a year hiding in a barn with a cow. She believed the years she'd had since that time had been a gift from God.

He is like one of our allogs, grown too old for council duty, but still to be revered."

-- Joe (Allog paragraph 82)

**Importance:** Joe compared the elderly Mr. Goldfanger, the man who he'd been brought to Israel to care for, to an allog. In Southeast Asia an allog was a chieftain who was too old to be a useful council member but as still revered. Later in the novel it is indicated the term came to describe people like Joe.

Through the medium of the darkened kitchen window, he was feasting his eyes on my mother."

-- Narrator ("Chance" paragraph 85)

**Importance:** The narrator in this story, a young girl, realized that the rabbi at her church was checking out her mother during a poker game at the girl's house. In this coming of age story, she realized that things were not always as they seemed.

To the accounting department Tess is an impressive statistic. To the hospital counsel she is always a worry. And today she is a task."

-- Narrator ("Tess" paragraph 21)

**Importance:** In the story "Tess" the narrator discusses what the handicapped girl represents to the different people who care for her. Tess was a patient, a task, a statistic, a burden, and to some a hopeless case but to no one was she considered a child.

One would think he'd actually seen this unrestrained bit of furniture. But Victor had never laid eyes on the thing, had he; Greg found it on Third Avenue after the Cullens left town."

-- Narrator ("Fidelity" paragraph 14)

**Importance:** It is described how Greg used a picture of the armoire in his bedroom to illustrate one of Victor Cullen's stories in the travel magazine. Greg only briefly wondered how Victor had known what the armoire looked like in such detail as he had never seen it.

He loved learning. He liked to hang around the office because Roland, without making a big thing of it, let fall so many bits of knowledge, farted them out like a horse."



-- Narrator ("Purim Night" paragraph 35)

**Importance:** This quote describes the inquisitive nature of Ludwig. It is also an example of the author's use of unique descriptions in her writing as she credits Roland as farting out knowledge like a horse.

She'd buy it and stash it in the Finnish chest; maybe in that relic the Old World would find repose."

-- Narrator ("The Coat" paragraph 81)

**Importance:** To Sonya the old coat she found in the armoire represented the world she knew before World War II. She hoped if she could purchase the coat and store it in a chest she and her husband had purchased, she could symbolically put the Old World to rest.

Her age had angered him, and now her defect turned anger into fury. It was a familiar tumble."

-- Narrator ("How to Fall" paragraph 61)

**Importance:** When Joss first saw the girl who had been writing him the fan letters, he was angry at first because she was both underage and crippled. He'd been expecting an attractive lady but instead got a child who was not available to him.

How was Donna to finish her admonition — you can't look peculiar? You can't try to save your child from corruption? You can't pray?"

-- Narrator ("Rules" paragraph 115)

**Importance:** Donna, the director of a soup kitchen for women, had taken a dislike to a Puritan women and her daughter who had begun coming to the kitchen. Donna caught them practicing a chanting ritual and almost told them they weren't allowed to do that there but thought better of it when she realized they weren't actually breaking any rules.

Still she wondered: did the present deliver up the future, or must you chase your destiny like a harpoonist?"

-- Narrator ("Hanging Fire" paragraph 59)

**Importance:** Nancy Hasken, freshly graduated from college, wondered how she would know what it was she was intended to do with her life.

But dates were only the beginning, weren't they — the slow beginning of a series that became hurried, became precipitous, came to a head, and ended in either a broken heart or a ceremony in a stone church."

-- Narrator ("The Unravished Bride" paragraph 30)

**Importance:** Marlene thought to herself about the usual progression of the relationship that she and Hugh were beginning. In their case, however, both were already married so she wondered to what end their dates would proceed.



You will tire of this sooner or later,' she said. 'Tire of it now, beloved daughter of my daughter.'"

-- Gran ("Granski" paragraph 92)

**Importance:** Angelica's grandmother ordered her granddaughter to stop the incestual relationship she was having with her cousin. Angelica was most moved by the way her grandmother referred to her during her address. Later at her grandmother's death, Angelica called her grandmother "beloved mother of my mother."

The most important off-label thing I learned was that non-inquisitiveness like Renata McLintock's, along with just plain Being There, beats all the good intentions of friends and neighbors, even the ones who left casseroles on the back porch."

-- Josephine ("Jan Term" paragraph 17)

**Importance:** Josephine explains in her term paper written about her January volunteer project at an antique store that just by not being nosey but being available is the best way a person can help another deal with grief.

They'd endure necessary disappointments, and they'd practice necessary forgivenesses, careful to note which subjects left the other fraught. Grace's mind moved along the same lines. Each elected to take the risk. Gustave showed his willingness by touching the lovely face, Grace hers by disdaining eclipsis."

-- Narrator ("Elder Jinks" paragraph 54)

**Importance:** As Grace and Gustave once again express their desire to get to know one another, this time they accept that each of them is an individual and that they recognize their relationship won't be one made in heaven. This time they make the decision to get to know one another realizing that they may not like what they discover, but they will try to forgive and move on together.

Interactive dilemmas. Together we invent situations that require resolution. Then we invent some resolutions. Then we choose among them, or don't."

-- Val ("Vallies" paragraph 55)

**Importance:** Val described the stories she had told in the past to the new group of children for whom she now worked as a nanny.

So I don't mention that he was once valued and then exploited and then betrayed and finally discarded; that, like his displaced parents, he adjusted gracefully to new circumstances."

-- Narrator ("Aunt Telephone" paragraph 101)

**Importance:** Just as Milo's parents moved to a new land and found a way to adapt to a new culture, so had Milo when he lost his position as neighborhood advice giver after all the children grew up and chose not to call on him. Susan didn't tell her sons how badly she treated Milo and how he chose to act graciously.