Brideshead Revisited Study Guide

Brideshead Revisited by Evelyn Waugh

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BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

Evelyn Waugh's novels written before 1945 are typically satiric and filled with dry humor and sarcasm, and many critics view *Brideshead Revisited* as heralding a change in Waugh's writing style. *Brideshead Revisited* presents a more nostalgic story based on the main character's memories of a wealthy English Catholic family he befriended before World War II. In an England where most people are Protestant, being Catholic makes the family □despite their land ownership and high social status□a minority, subject to a degree of prejudice. Many of the characters and events in the novel reflect Waugh's life when he was in school and later as an adult.

Brideshead Revisited was the first of Waugh's novels to come to the attention of the American public. In fact, soon after the publication of *Brideshead Revisited, Life* magazine printed an interview with Waugh. But critics were split over the quality of the novel, and some have criticized it for being too romantic and lacking the brilliance of Waugh's other novels. James Carens in *The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh* notes that even though the critic and author Edmund Wilson was an admirer of Waugh's earlier works, he condemned *Brideshead Revisited* as a "disastrous" novel. In contrast, Carens notes that the review in *Catholic World* magazine praised the novel, calling it "a work of art."

Author Biography

The religious issues appearing in *Brideshead Revisited* concerned Evelyn Waugh from a relatively young age. Born Evelyn Arthur St. John Waugh on October 28, 1903, in the comfortable London suburb of Hampstead, England, Evelyn was the youngest son of Arthur Waugh, a devout member of the Anglican Church. He was educated at Lancing, a preparatory school that specialized in educating the sons of Anglican clergy. Like all students at Lancing, Evelyn was required to attend chapel every morning and evening and three times on Sundays. According to Waugh in his unfinished autobiography, *A Little Learning: The Early Years*, he does not remember thinking that these requirements were unreasonable.

Arthur Waugh worked as a publisher, critic, author, and editor, which provided Evelyn with daily exposure to books and writing. In addition, Evelyn's father, together with his mother, Catherine Charlotte Raban Waugh, regularly read aloud to both their sons. At age seven, Evelyn had already written a short story, and by age nine, with a group of friends, he had produced a magazine. Eventually, his older brother, Alec, went on to write best-selling novels and travel books.

Waugh's years as an adult were remarkably similar to the experiences of Charles Ryder, the protagonist in *Brideshead Revisited.* By the time Waugh left Lancing for Oxford, he reported that he was no longer a Christian, thanks in part to an instructor who encouraged him to think skeptically about religion, as well as to his extensive reading of philosophers of the Enlightenment (a movement in the eighteenth century that advocated the use of reason in the reappraisal of accepted ideas and social institutions). While at Oxford, Waugh studied some and drank and socialized a great deal with an artistic and literary crowd. He left Oxford before receiving a degree to attend art school.

The next few years saw Waugh drinking too much. He was unhappy and unsure as to his life's calling. He left art school to become a teacher but was fired from three schools in less than two years. Finally, in 1927, he began to write on a regular basis and a year later published his first novel, *Decline and Fall.* The book, a humorous and satiric look at a young man's efforts to find his way in a world where evil is rewarded and good is punished, was a controversial success. That same year he married, but the marriage soon broke up because of his wife's infidelity.

In 1930, Waugh became a Roman Catholic, his conversion brought about by his wife's unfaithfulness and by his disenchantment with modern society. In 1936, he received an annulment of his marriage and the next year married Laura Herbert, a member of a prominent Catholic family. They had six children. Just as his character Ryder does, Waugh traveled extensively to exotic places during the 1930s and 1940s, including Africa and Central America. His travels provided fuel for many of his books.

By the time Europe was preparing for the second world war, Waugh was a well-respected author. But his patriotism, along with a sense that his life had become too

comfortable, prompted him to pull some strings to receive a post with the Royal Marines in 1939□not an easy accomplishment at the age of thirty-six. According to Paul S. Burdett, Jr., in *World War II,* Waugh's health was suspect, his eyesight was limited, and "his physique tended toward the pudgy," but he showed himself to be an eager soldier. His wartime experiences informed his later novels, including *Brideshead Revisited.*

When he died in Somerset, England, in 1966, Waugh had published more than thirty books, fourteen of which were novels. He also published travel books, biographies, short stories, and essays, securing his position as one of the most respected English authors of the twentieth century. His reputation as a man with a bitingly sharp wit gave many people the impression that he was an uncaring person; but those who knew him tell of a man who was exceedingly generous with his money and time, especially to those in financial need and to aspiring writers.

Plot Summary

Prologue

In *Brideshead Revisited,* Charles Ryder is a middle-aged captain in the British Army during World War II, stationed in the Scottish countryside in 1942. He organizes his troops to move them to another location via train overnight. When the sun comes up, he realizes that the new encampment is in England near a mansion whose owners he once knew.

Book One

Chapters One-Four

In 1923, Charles is at Oxford studying history, and in his third term he meets fellow student Sebastian Flyte, the son of a wealthy Catholic family, who carries around a stuffed bear named Al. Sebastian asks Charles to lunch with his friends (including Anthony Blanche), who are witty and worldly. Sebastian later takes Charles on a day trip to the countryside, where they have a picnic. On this excursion, Sebastian brings Charles to his family's home, a mansion named Brideshead. Charles is very impressed with Sebastian.

The following year, after Charles has been associating with Sebastian and his friends for a while, Charles' cousin Jasper scolds him for hanging around with a bad set of people. Charles is not swayed. Anthony Blanche invites Charles to dinner, where Anthony discusses in great detail the members of Sebastian's family and their peculiarities.

Charles travels to London to spend the summer vacation with his father. Their time together is uncomfortable, and Charles refers to it as a "war." Sebastian sends Charles a telegram stating that he is gravely injured, and that Charles must come to his aid at once. When Charles arrives at Brideshead, he discovers that Sebastian has merely cracked a small bone in his foot. Charles meets Julia, Sebastian's sister.

Charles spends the rest of summer break with Sebastian, and he later recalls having a wonderful time, "very near heaven during those languid days." They stay at the Brideshead mansion, where Charles begins to paint a mural in one of the rooms. He meets Cordelia, Sebastian's youngest sister, and his brother, Brideshead. The issue of the family's Catholicism comes up in conversations a number of times. The two friends also travel to Venice, Italy, to visit Sebastian's father, Lord Marchmain, and his mistress, Cara.

Chapters Five-Eight

Charles and Sebastian return to Oxford in the fall, where they discover that Anthony Blanche has failed his classes and has moved to Munich. The two friends begin to feel older and less like pursuing their frivolous lifestyle of the previous year, and Sebastian puts away his stuffed bear. Charles begins to take art classes. Rex Mottram, Julia's boyfriend, invites them to a party in London, and they end up at a whorehouse. Later that evening, the police stop Sebastian while he is driving drunk, and everyone, including Charles, is sent to the jail. Rex bails them out. Charles goes to Brideshead mansion for the Christmas holidays, and Lady Marchmain talks to him about becoming a Catholic. Sebastian is drinking even more heavily and is worried that Charles is watching his behavior at his mother's request.

There is an ugly scene at Brideshead mansion during the Easter break in which Sebastian is drunk and then leaves. There is another drunken scene at school later. Sebastian fails his classes at Oxford, and Lady Marchmain warns him that she will send him to live with an old priest if he does not straighten up. Sebastian goes to Venice to be with his father, instead, and Lady Marchmain plans to have Mr. Samgrass, a history don (tutor), watch over him and take him on a vacation to the Middle East when he returns from Italy. Charles tells his father that he wants to leave Oxford to attend art school.

Charles does, in fact, go to Paris to attend art school. Sebastian and Mr. Samgrass return from their trip. Charles comes to Brideshead mansion for Christmas and sees that Sebastian is drinking even more and looks ill. Everyone discovers that Sebastian left Mr. Samgrass during the trip and wandered about on his own for a time. Sebastian was found only after he couldn't pay his hotel bill, and the hotel management called his family. The whole family is on edge about Sebastian's depression and drinking, but he agrees to go on a hunt, which encourages Lady Marchmain. They make sure he has no money so he cannot stop and get a drink at a pub, but Charles gives him money in secret. Sebastian is found later that day, at a pub, drunk. Lady Marchmain finds out and is very angry with Charles. Rex attempts to take Sebastian to a doctor he knows in Zurich who can help him with his alcoholism, but Sebastian gives him the slip and disappears. Rex visits Charles, looking for Sebastian. Charles and Rex go out to dinner, where Rex tells Charles of Lady Marchmain's illness and the Flyte family's money troubles. Rex and Julia get married in a small ceremony. Sebastian is not present.

Charles recalls the story of Rex and Julia: when Julia was a debutante, how she and Rex met, their courtship, and the problems with their engagement and marriage ceremony. Lady Marchmain believes that Rex is beneath Julia and demands that their engagement remain a secret although their news gets out. Rex wants a very fancy wedding, with important guests and at an important cathedral, but because he is not Catholic, this is not possible. He takes classes with a priest to become a Catholic, but he is not terribly bright. The Catholic wedding is eventually called off because Julia's brother, Brideshead, discovers that Rex has been divorced. The wedding finally takes place at a Protestant church known for marrying couples in Rex and Julia's situation.

The spring of 1926 sees Charles leaving Paris for London because he feels he must be in his country of birth during its difficult economic times. The General Strike occurs, and Charles signs up to help distribute food. One evening he goes to a jazz bar and runs into Anthony Blanche, who reports having allowed Sebastian to stay with him in Marseilles. He says that Sebastian was still drinking heavily and was stealing things from him to sell and pawn. Julia asks Charles to come to see Lady Marchmain at the family's London house, as she is dying. Charles does so, then goes to Morocco to find Sebastian, as Lady Marchmain has asked to see him one last time before she dies. He finds Sebastian in a hospital in Fez, very ill from his drinking. He is with a German named Kurt, who is also ill. Sebastian cannot travel to England because of his poor health, so Charles stays for a week and helps him settle his financial affairs. Charles returns to England and agrees to paint four oils of the soon-to-be torn down Marchmain house in London, as requested by Brideshead. Lady Marchmain dies. Cordelia later tells Charles that Lady Marchmain's funeral mass was the last event at the family chapel at Brideshead before it was closed up.

Book Two

Chapters One-Five

The story now moves to the late 1930s, when Charles is a painter of some repute, primarily of buildings about to be razed. He is married to Celia, the sister of a fellow Oxford student, and they have two young children. He is returning from a two-year trip to Mexico and Central America, where he was drawing ruins. He meets Celia in New York City, and they leave for London on a ship. They seem to have a cool relationship although Celia is a very friendly woman who loves to entertain. They give a cocktail party on board the ship the first night and also discover that Julia is on board. A storm hits the ship, and Celia retires, seasick, to her room throughout the storm's duration, about three days. Charles and Julia get reacquainted during this time, and they eventually make love in Julia's stateroom. Charles recalls that Celia once had an affair, and Julia tells Charles of her failed marriage with Rex and of her stillborn daughter. Charles sends Celia to their home while he stays in London to set up his next art show and to see Julia.

Charles and Julia continue their affair in London, and his art show is a success. There is talk of war at the show. Anthony Blanche appears at the show's opening, and he and Charles go to a bar to talk about old times. He knows about Julia and Charles's affair, having heard people speak of it at a luncheon that day.

Charles and Julia have been together for two years but haven't sought divorces from their spouses. They are now at Brideshead, as is Rex. One evening, Brideshead arrives from London with the sudden news that he is getting married to Beryl Muspratt, a widow with three children. He also mentions that his fiancee probably will not come to Brideshead to see Charles and Julia, as she is a very proper Catholic woman and would disapprove of their living arrangements. He also expects that Julia and Rex and Charles

will leave the mansion to make room for his new family. This greatly upsets Julia, and she begins to question whether she is a sinner in the eyes of her God. Rex arrives with his political friends and there is more talk of war.

Both Charles and Julia begin the process of divorcing their spouses. Rex gives patriotic speeches in the House of Commons, and the country is full of the talk of avoiding war with the Germans. Cordelia shows up at Brideshead after years as a nurse and aid worker in Spain. She has seen Sebastian; he is living in Tunis, still drinking heavily and ill but living at a monastery.

Brideshead marries Beryl. Given the increasing political tensions in Europe, Lord Marchmain decides to return to England and the Brideshead mansion with his mistress in the winter. He arrives seriously ill. Julia and Charles, who had moved out of Brideshead, move back to the mansion to be with Lord Marchmain. He tells Julia and Charles that he dislikes Brideshead's new wife, Beryl, and cannot imagine her as the lady of the manor after he dies. He says he is seriously considering leaving the estate to Julia and Charles, which stuns them.

By Easter, Lord Marchmain is getting sicker and closer to death, and Brideshead demands that a priest be sent for. The priest comes, but Lord Marchmain sends him away because he is a nonpracticing Catholic. Charles is very disdainful of Brideshead's bringing in the priest. In June, Charles and Celia's divorce is final, and she marries again. In July, Lord Marchmain is unconscious, and Julia brings back the priest. Charles disagrees with this but is not surprised at her actions - he has seen her becoming more religious during the summer. The priest arrives, gives Lord Marchmain the final blessing, and he responds when the priest asks him if he is sorry for his sins. This apparent sign that Lord Marchmain has accepted Catholicism again overwhelms Charles, who kneels and says a short prayer. Julia decides that she can no longer be with Charles, in what she now sees as a sinful relationship.

Epilogue

The story ends where it began, with Charles as a captain in the British Army, encamped near the Brideshead mansion during World War II. Julia, who is overseas with Cordelia helping with the war effort, now owns the mansion. Brideshead is serving with the British cavalry in Palestine. Charles wanders around the old place, reminiscing, and bumps into a few of the staff still there. The family chapel is open, with a light burning upon the altar. Charles says a short prayer and leaves.

Prologue

Prologue Summary

Brideshead Revisited is the chronicle of a man named Charles Ryder and his association with an aristocratic English family over the period of about twenty years in the time period spanning World War I and World War II.

As the novel begins Captain Charles Ryder of the British Army is organizing his troops to move out to an undisclosed location. It is 1943 and Ryder is a man with little enthusiasm for his mission or his life in general and does not even question the destination toward which he and his men now mobilize. An overnight train trip from Scotland positions Ryder and his men in England and at a location which Charles has visited before. The troops are to set up camp near an estate called Brideshead Castle and Charles is roused from his ennui by the recollection of having been here before.

Prologue Analysis

Charles is a man plagued by melancholy and although committed to performing his military duties takes no interest in strategy or tactics and compares his service to that of a husband who no longer has any affection or interest in a once-beloved wife. Charles gives the army the human characteristics of a woman when he describes it as, "I learned her as one must learn a woman one has kept house with day in and day out for three and a half years. I learned her slatternly ways, the routine and mechanism of her charm, her jealousy and self-seeking, and her nervous tick with the fingers when she was lying." Of course an institution like the army cannot have these attributes but the author makes the comparison so that the reader can quickly and easily grasp the meaning and the depth of the protagonist's dissatisfaction.

Book 1, Chapters 1 and 2

Book 1, Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Charles remembers his first visit to Brideshead over twenty years ago in 1923, when he was invited by his new friend, Sebastian Flyte, a fellow student attending a school near Oxford University, which Charles attended. Brideshead is the home of Sebastian's aristocratic family. Charles had noticed Sebastian in a group of other young men at school and had been struck by his affable manner and the fact he always carried a big teddy bear.

Charles formally meets Sebastian who seriously drunk one evening enters Charles' room unceremoniously and proceeds to be sick. Charles is too serious to engage in the drinking games of Sebastian and his friends preferring history and art studies. The day after Sebastian's indiscretion in Charles' room Charles returns from class to find his room filled with flowers and an invitation to lunch with Sebastian as a form of apology. Charles of course accepts the invitation and has his first encounter with the sober Sebastian in addition to meeting some of Sebastian's friends including Viscount "Boy" Mulcaster and Anthony Blanche.

Charles is struck by the exceptionally privileged lifestyles led by the boys who prefer to indulge whims instead of invest time in their studies. This carefree attitude is very appealing to Charles who strikes up an immediate friendship with Sebastian and the two become inseparable. Sebastian invites Charles for a day trip to Brideshead where Charles is introduced to Sebastian's childhood nurse Nanny Hawkins. Charles is overwhelmed by the scope of Brideshead but Sebastian will not conduct a tour and escorts Charles out almost as quickly as they had arrived. Sebastian does not want Charles to meet any members of his family but the two boys pass Sebastian's sister Julia in an oncoming car, on their way out of the estate.

As is the custom of the time young men are provided with advice from family members about working hard at the university in order to prepare for important lives in public service but Charles has an inclination toward art. Charles receives a visit from his cousin Jasper who chastises Charles on his new set of friends whom Jasper thinks are bad influences on Charles because of their financial irresponsibility and inappropriate social behavior.

Jasper is not the only person concerned about Charles' choice of friends. A mutual friend of Charles' and Sebastian's Anthony Blanche also warns Charles of Sebastian's negative influence and cautions Charles not to get caught up in Sebastian's charm and forget his own talent as an artist. According to Anthony the rest of Sebastian's family should also be avoided for their destructive tendencies. The next day Sebastian negates all of Anthony's charges and the friendship between Charles and Sebastian is unmarred.

Book 1, Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

The story is written from the first person point of view of Charles Ryder who recalls events from his life twenty years ago in the time period between World War I and World War II England. Charles relates the events and his observations to the reader and his is the only view presented throughout the book. The writing style is engaging and even lyrical at points such as when Charles describes an afternoon picnic with Sebastian with, "sweet summer scents around us and the fumes of the sweet, golden wine seemed to lift us a finger's breadth above the turf and hold us suspended." There is an insinuation in these situations that the relationship between Charles and Sebastian is a romantic one although no intimate encounters are described.

Anthony behaves in a more overt homosexual manner and it is obvious that Anthony would like a relationship with Charles and invents negative stories about Sebastian to drive a wedge between Charles and Sebastian. Sebastian's coyness and charm easily supersede Anthony's maneuvers and Charles is never again swayed by anything that Anthony says. The author provides some foreshadowing in the scenario when Julia sees Sebastian and Charles leaving Brideshead establishing the possibility for future encounters between Julia and Charles.

Book 1, Chapters 3 and 4

Book 1, Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

The end of the school term arrives and Charles returns to his London home to spend the summer with his reclusive father. Charles would prefer to go on holiday with friends but has overspent the annual allowance provided from his father and is doomed to a summer at home until a telegram from Sebastian arrives urgently requesting that Charles visit Brideshead due to a serious injury Sebastian has sustained.

Charles' father is mildly relieved to be rid of Charles who leaves for Brideshead immediately. Julia picks up Charles at the train station and shares that Sebastian's injury is merely a small crack in the bone of his foot caused during a temper tantrum during a game of croquet. Charles' arrival means that Julia is now free of her duties keeping Sebastian company and can leave for London and her debutante activities.

After Charles recovers from the deceit of the extent of Sebastian's injury he and Sebastian settle in to life at Brideshead mansion by drinking the fine wine, being served gourmet meals and luxuriating in conversations on lazy afternoons. Charles is able to indulge his passion for painting and begins a mural on one of the interior walls of the mansion.

During this time Sebastian shares his family's history and the most shocking revelation for Charles is the family's Catholic beliefs although Sebastian is not devout like some of the other members. Sebastian's parents, Lord and Lady Marchmain have four children but have been separated for several years. Lord Marchmain left the home when he turned fifty-years-old and now lives in Italy with a mistress although the Marchmains have never divorced due to their religious beliefs.

The Marchmains' eldest child, Lord Brideshead also known as Bridey had a slight interest in the priesthood but never pursued it and now lives a reclusive life in London. Sebastian has two sisters, Julia who is closest to Sebastian's age and is pretty and intelligent and Cordelia, a girl of twelve who terrorizes the teachers at her convent school.

One day Sebastian and Charles are sunbathing nude on the roof of the mansion and viewing the activities of the local Agricultural Show when they are surprised by the appearance of Cordelia who is unfazed by their state of undress and is anxious for some company and urges Sebastian and Charles to join her inside. Charles also meets Bridey for the first time on this day and finds him to be rather stuffy and distant, however cordial.

Sebastian's foot has healed nicely by now and he and Charles decide to travel to Venice to see Lord Marchmain. Charles still financially embarrassed accepts Sebastian's offer to pay and the two young men travel third class in order to afford the trip for both of

them. Lord Marchmain is delighted to see Sebastian and Charles finds the elder gentleman to by quite dignified and mysterious especially in light of the elegant woman, Cara who is Marchmain's mistress.

Cara is happy to provide Sebastian and Charles with sightseeing guides and insures that their visit is a pleasant one. One afternoon Cara confides in Charles that Lord Marchmain no longer loves his wife because he had fallen in love with her as a boy and everyone knows that every boy should love a boy before falling into a mature love relationship with a woman. Cara also warns Charles about Sebastian's immature behavior and tendencies toward alcoholism.

Book 1, Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

The topic of homosexuality is a prevalent one in Waugh's books and the relationship between Charles and Sebastian is in question. Although there is no recounting of any intimate encounters the insinuation of a relationship that extends beyond a friendly scope is prevalent. The descriptions of the relationships of the boys at Oxford and the blatant homosexuality of Anthony imply that the lifestyle is common and quite acceptable. This is verified by Cara's explanation to Charles that each boy must first love another boy in order to love a woman later in life. It is expected that this type of relationship will take place among the boys in this social strata and Charles in nonplussed by the discussion. The issue of Catholicism is first raised in this section too and will become an important topic throughout the novel. Charles is surprised by the family's religious convictions because there are so few Catholics in England at this time.

Book 1, Chapters 5 and 6

Book 1, Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

The summer holiday is over and Sebastian and Charles return to Oxford to begin the next year of schooling although their fervor from previous years seems to have dissipated partly because some friends have graduated. Anthony has moved to Munich to live with a new lover and Sebastian and Charles just feel older and less inclined toward frivolous activities. Sebastian even puts away Aloysius his teddy bear.

Charles begins his art studies in earnest yet Sebastian becomes more introverted and the two young men do not seek out the companionship of others. One day Lady Marchmain arrives unannounced at Oxford with the purpose of getting to know Charles better much to Sebastian's chagrin. Lady Marchmain is quite charmed by Charles and accepts him into her son's life and also announces that she has hired a man named Mr. Samgrass to monitor Sebastian's activities and prevent any further inappropriate behavior.

A week later Charles is visited unexpectedly by Julia and her new boyfriend Rex Mottram a wealthy London businessman. Rex is quite smitten with Julia and is looking for ways to ingratiate himself with her and her family and invites Sebastian and Charles to a charity ball in London with which Julia is associated. The boys accept the invitation, which is also extended to their friend Boy Mulcaster.

The ball is extremely boring for the young men and Boy suggests that Sebastian and Charles join him at a club called the Old Hundredth, a gentleman's club where Boy claims to have a regular girl named Effie. Despite having drunk too much, Boy insists on driving instead of taking a cab to the club. Effie does not know Boy and his claims to be a regular are diminished but Sebastian and Charles do manage to strike up relationships with two young women who invite the young men to a private party.

Sebastian decides to drive to the party and is stopped by the police for erratic driving due to drunkenness. Charles and Sebastian try to placate the officers but Boy makes an offensive comment about police corruption, which lands all three of the boys in jail. Rex is able to post bail for the boys but they are each charged. Sebastian is given the heaviest charge for driving drunk. Charles and Boy pay their fines but Sebastian goes to trial where he receives a stiff fine with severe restrictions on his activities compounded by the ever-present Mr. Samgrass whose mission now is to monitor Sebastian even more closely.

Charles spends the New Year holiday at Brideshead where he strengthens a friendly relationship with Lady Marchmain who is concerned for Sebastian's health and future. After the holidays Sebastian and Charles return to Oxford where Sebastian sinks even deeper into depression and finds solace in alcohol throughout the months leading to the Easter holiday.

Charles again joins the Marchmain family at Brideshead for Easter when Sebastian's drinking reaches a climax and the family becomes aware for the first time of the disastrous state of Sebastian's drinking. Lady Marchmain wants Sebastian to spend the next school year with a Catholic chaplain a fact that completely upsets Sebastian who is ultimately removed from Oxford by his mother for his uncontrolled alcohol consumption.

Charles is at a loss without Sebastian but decides this is a pivotal point in his own life and announces to his father his intent to forego a business degree in favor of studying art. Charles also learns from Lady Marchmain that Sebastian has gone on a tour of the Middle East accompanied by Mr. Samgrass and will be home for Christmas with the hopes that Charles will again visit Brideshead.

Charles does make the trip to Brideshead for the Christmas holiday and is surprised to find Sebastian and Mr. Samgrass on the same train. Charles had expected that Sebastian would already be at Brideshead by now but apparently Sebastian had become inebriated became lost and was unable to be found by the long-suffering Mr. Samgrass. Sebastian's absences and escapes from Mr. Samgrass are evidenced by his lack of appearing in any of Mr. Samgrass' photos of the trip.

Sebastian's sloppy appearance disturbs Charles who realizes that Sebastian is still drinking too heavily. Lady Marchmain restricts access to alcohol in the house but Sebastian finds sources for his liquor. Sometimes even Charles provides the alcohol Sebastian needs by providing money so that Sebastian can ride into town to drink instead of participating in a foxhunt with the others.

Charles is not happy contributing to Sebastian's decline and asks his friend the next day if he even wants Charles around anymore and Sebastian states that he does not. Charles accepts the end of the friendship and explains to Lady Marchmain his own role in Sebastian's situation a fact that outrages Lady Marchmain who asks Charles to leave and not return to Brideshead. Charles returns to his art studies in Paris and goes for many months without any information about the Marchmain family until one day a letter arrives from Cordelia who spills all the latest family secrets. Cordelia has admitted to also providing alcohol for Sebastian who is being taken to Zurich by Rex to see a famous doctor.

One day Rex surprises Charles by showing up at Charles' apartment. Apparently, Sebastian has escaped from Rex during their trip to Zurich. Rex treats Charles to a nice dinner and shares the information that Mr. Samgrass has been dismissed and that Lady Marchmain is terminally ill. One of Rex's other objectives for this trip is to visit Lord Marchmain to obtain permission to marry Julia an act that Lady Marchmain is trying to prevent because Rex is not Catholic. Rex obtains the approval, Sebastian does not surface, and Charles soon reads the news of the marriage of Rex and Julia in a civil ceremony in London.

Book 1, Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

The theme of alcoholism becomes prevalent in this section with Sebastian's descent into the illness as his family watches unable to help him. Part of the family's impotence is their denial of Sebastian's alcoholism and then later their hope that someone else can take on the problem, which they do not know how to manage. The secondary theme of religion emerges at the same time and Charles does not understand the Marchmains' devotion when nothing about their faith seems to be able to help Sebastian. To Charles religion is an unnecessary complication based on unfounded principles and therefore useless in everyday practice.

The friendship between Charles and Sebastian comes to an abrupt halt even though Charles has tried to encourage Sebastian during his troubles because he realized when no one else could that Sebastian requires love not deprivation. The typical Marchmain solution is to deny and rely on religion instead of addressing situations with love. This is the reason Sebastian had been so attached to his nanny and refused to part with his teddy bear. Growing up means the abdication of love in the Marchmain household a fact that Sebastian cannot face so he drowns in liquor.

Book 1, Chapters 7 and 8

Book 1, Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

The story now changes to Charles' perceptions of Julia who has up till now been an ancillary character to Charles' relationship with Sebastian. Charles remembers meeting Julia for the first time at Brideshead when she was concerned about making the correct choices for her future. Julia had been in her debutante year and was concerned over the selection of an appropriate husband.

Meeting Rex Mottram had been good for Julia who was bored by the young men her own age. Rex was already established and had the sophistication and experience Julia demanded in a long-term relationship. Rex was also quite taken with Julia in whom he could have a society wife, which would help to advance his own career. Eventually the couple becomes engaged and Lady Marchmain insists on secrecy because Rex is not a Catholic.

Rex takes instructions in the Catholic religion in order to marry Julia but ultimately it is learned that Rex had been married before a fact, which prohibits his marriage to Julia. Rex will not be deterred however, and ultimately approaches Lord Marchmain to obtain approval to marry Julia in a civil ceremony, which ultimately takes place. A year and a half have passed since Charles has seen Sebastian and he learns about his old friend from Anthony Blanche and Boy Mulcaster who tell Charles that Sebastian is living in Tangiers with a German boy who has avoided service in the army by shooting off his toe.

The only other word Charles receives of the Marchmain family is when Julia calls to tell Charles that Lady Marchmain is very ill now and would like to see Charles. When Charles arrives at Brideshead Lady Marchmain is too sick to speak to Charles but Julia tells Charles that Lady Marchmain is sorry for her treatment of Charles over the issue of Sebastian's alcoholism. Charles is touched by the gracious gesture and agrees to go abroad in search of Sebastian so that he may return to see Lady Marchmain before she dies.

Eventually Charles finds Sebastian's house in Morocco where the injured German tells Charles that Sebastian is in the hospital. Sebastian's alcoholism has reduced his resistance to infection and he is fighting a breathing disorder, which renders him too weak to travel back to Brideshead to see his dying mother. Charles telegraphs this information to Julia and learns soon after that Lady Marchmain has died.

After Sebastian's release from the hospital Charles makes financial arrangements at a local bank for Sebastian's provisions and leaves to return home to England where Bridey commissions him to paint some pictures of Brideshead, which will be sold to pay some debts. The paintings evoke much memory for Charles and they become his most notable works catapulting him to notoriety in the area of architectural art.

Book 1, Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

By using the technique of memory the author also implements some foreshadowing in the memories that Charles has of Julia. At the time they first met Charles and Julia did not connect but that will soon change as indicated by Charles' transition to her in his reverie. Julia has married Rex for the correct social reasons but because the marriage is not recognized by the Catholic Church there is dissent in the family. Rex is portrayed as an unsavory character who takes his religious instruction with the same enthusiasm as he would in memorizing a poem. Neither one is of any consequence to this man who lives only for financial gain. Studying the Catholic faith is just a step in the process, which will bring Rex closer to his goal of attaining Julia as his wife.

Book 2, Chapters 1 and 2

Book 2, Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Ten years have now passed and Charles is a renowned architectural artist with several published books and frequent exhibits of his work orchestrated by his wife Celia who is Boy Mulcaster's sister. As this section of the story begins Charles is returning from two years' travel in Mexico and Central America where he has searched for inspiration for a departure from his typical English style.

Charles is to meet Celia in New York where they will return home to England for more exhibitions of Charles' work. Charles and Celia have two children, a boy named JohnJohn and a little girl named Caroline whom Charles has never seen. The marriage between Charles and Celia had been dented when Celia had an extramarital affair and the marriage never regained its initial fervor resulting in the mostly business arrangement it is today.

Celia conducts publicity efforts with finesse on the ocean liner back to England and Charles is pleased to find that Julia is on board. Charles had heard through the social grapevine that Julia's marriage to Rex is strained and Julia is returning from America having followed a man with whom she had an unhappy love affair. Charles and Julia renew their acquaintance and eventually fall in love aboard the ship and consummate the relationship while Celia is confined to her quarters with seasickness.

At the dock in London Charles refuses to return home with Celia declaring that he must remain in London to tend to the exhibitions. Celia accepts the excuse because it is business-related and sets to work inviting notable people to the exhibition including some English royalty. Charles continues to deflect weekend trips home preferring to spend time at Brideshead.

Ultimately Celia acknowledges Charles' affair with Julia, during the next public exhibition and they decide to end the marriage. Charles is pleased to see Anthony Blanche at the exhibition and the two men go to a gay bar to discuss art and their past at Oxford. Anthony reveals that everyone knows about Charles' affair with Julia.

Book 2, Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

It seems as if Charles' fate is inevitably linked with Brideshead even though his attachment has now transitioned from Sebastian to Julia. Charles had always viewed Julia as an accessory to Sebastian but now as a mature man in his forties Charles loves Julia because she reminds him of his old friend. Perhaps Lord Marchmain's mistress' theory is true that a young man must first love another young man before he can truly love a woman. This statement of foreshadowing was provided to Charles many years ago but he is only now in the position to understand its meaning.

Charles was destined to love Sebastian and Julia and married Celia because marriage to his true loves was unattainable at the time. Celia's infidelity just validates Charles' disdain for the match and he does not even make the effort to travel home to see his two-year-old daughter he has never met. The metaphor of the ocean liner is important because it will transport Charles and Julia to the next phase of their life together. The rocky waves and inclement weather symbolize the upcoming personal storm for Celia who is confined to her bed with seasickness while her husband initiates a love affair with Julia.

Book 2, Chapters 3 and 4

Book 2, Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

Two years have passed with Charles and Julia living at Brideshead without initiating divorces from their respective spouses. In fact Rex is still in residence at Brideshead and fills his time with business and political issues. The time that Julia and Charles spend together is idyllic with long walks and romantic moments. Charles spends most of his time painting at Brideshead especially portraits of Julia. The mounting tensions in Europe and the talk of another World War instill in Julia a sense of urgency to bring some stability to their relationship and she begins to push for divorces for both herself and for Charles.

Bridey who appears at Brideshead sporadically arrives unexpectedly at dinner one evening and informs Julia and Charles that he is to be married. Julia is shocked due to Bridey's reclusive nature and wonders where her brother has met a woman who would agree to marry the aging recluse. Bridey tells Julia the woman he loves is a widow named Beryl Muspratt who has two children.

Julia's initial enthusiasm and joy for her brother are diminished when Bridey reveals that Beryl will not come to Brideshead to meet Julia because of her inappropriate living arrangement with Charles. This slight from a woman far beneath Julia's social standing is more than Julia can bear and she runs from the dining room to collect herself outside the mansion.

Charles finds Julia in a state of distress and it is clear their affair has affected Julia to a degree that Charles had not expected. Julia who used to scoff at the tenets of the Catholic religion is now haunted by them and the stress of living in an inappropriate situation has taken an emotional toll on her. Julia can no longer bear the thought of continuing on and moving further away from God. Charles is able to comfort Julia and they discuss their future and how to proceed with the best intentions of all involved.

Julia and Charles return to the dining room and Julia informs Bridey that she and Charles and Rex will move out so that Bridey may bring his new wife to Brideshead. Julia and Charles once more leave the dining room and continue their conversation about their future. Charles does not understand Julia's intensity over the issue of their living arrangement and his insensitivity causes her to lash out at him with a twig she has been holding. Julia longs for stability and convention in her life at this point and the slight from Bridey's fiancee pushes Julia past her point of bearing any more insults or any more acts which diminish her life. Julia asks Charles to marry her so they may have a child and the couple ends the evening reconciled to changing their future to a more positive bent.

Rex and his politician friends again take over Brideshead and there is much discussion of going to war with Germany but Charles and Julia prefer to ignore the conflict and

resume their daily walks and conversations. Charles' old friend and brother-in-law is representing Celia in the divorce case to which Charles puts up no quarrel. Celia will have custody of the two children and will retain the home and Charles agrees to fund the children's educations. The divorce is amicable as the marriage had dissolved years ago and both Charles and Celia are in love with others at this point.

Charles' father thinks a divorce is unnecessary after all this time and does not understand wanting to marry another woman so soon after disposing of the first one. Charles is unfazed by his father's advice to give up on the idea of being happy in marriage but Charles is fixed on marrying Julia. Rex is surprised to find that Julia wants a divorce because he thinks that he and Julia have been happy the way they have been living. If Charles seeks a divorce that is his own business but it should not have any impact on Rex and Julia's marriage. Obviously Rex is out of touch with the situation within his own marriage because of his obsession with business and political issues.

Bridey's imminent marriage and situating his new family in Brideshead warrants that Rex move out which is another cause for concern for the already angst-ridden Rex. Charles and Julia will not allow Rex's objections to deter their focus and continue with their divorces. Julia does the proper social thing and pays a visit to Beryl in advance of the wedding and does not understand Bridey's attraction to this middle-aged woman with crass mannerisms and vulgar ambitions. It is clear to Julia that Beryl has seized an opportunity to situate her children in society by marrying Bridey and is playing up the Irish-Catholic issue to alienate Julia so that she can firmly entrench in Brideshead without any interference from Bridey's sister.

The other Marchmain sister Cordelia has returned to Brideshead after being away for several years serving in the Civil War in Spain. Cordelia turned to a nursing career after a trial period in a convent did not work out. Cordelia shares information about Sebastian whom Cordelia found in a hospital in Carthage. Apparently Sebastian had received a religious surge and tried to enter a monastery there but the brothers denied him entrance due to his drinking problem. The brothers could not bring themselves to turn Sebastian away completely and offered him a position of a porter.

Cordelia shares with Charles the nature of Sebastian's relationship with the injured German soldier Kurt he had met in Tangiers. Sebastian and Kurt had moved to Athens where Kurt was arrested on a minor charge and sent back to Germany. Sebastian is able to track him down after a year and finds his lover in the Nazi German army against his will. Sebastian later hears that Kurt tried to escape and was sent to a concentration camp where he hanged himself after a few days. Sebastian finally moves back to Tangiers and finds himself at the monastery in search of a job and religion.

The nurse in Cordelia takes over and she tells Charles that Sebastian will soon drink himself to death and be found at the gates of the monastery where he will be given the Last Rites. Charles is chilled to think of Sebastian coming to such a dire fate when it could have been avoided had the proper care been taken during Sebastian's early days of drinking at Oxford. Cordelia somehow sees Sebastian's death at a monastery as a

religious ritual of suffering which places her brother in the enviable position of being closer to God.

Book 2, Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Amazingly the characters seem oblivious to the historical events occurring in Europe in the late 1930's the time period for this section of the novel. Julia and Charles live in their own world of art and romance and Bridey is now consumed with his upcoming marriage. Rex is the only one at Brideshead who takes an active interest in the growing German initiatives and the implications on world politics and the economy. The positions of the characters is not really that unusual though as early on Charles declared his intentions to be an artist not a businessman and young women were not schooled in the subject of international relations. The lives of wealth and privilege led by Charles and the Marchmains distances them from the unpleasantries unfolding on the world stage.

Religion becomes even more important in this section as both Julia and Sebastian who once were the least devout members of the Marchmain family rediscover the importance of the Catholic religion. During their youth Julia and Sebastian had a disdain for the organized structure of the religion but as their lives are evolving with less than perfect results there is a strong need for stability and steadiness provided through faith. Julia is intent on making her relationship with Charles legal and right with God and Sebastian has tried to alter his life by working with and supporting the monks and comes as close as he can given the physical limitations of his alcoholism. Even Cordelia has found religion again through her nursing during the war and jokes to Charles about her days of terrorizing the nuns at the convent school when she was younger.

Book 2, Chapter 5

Book 2, Chapter 5 Summary

Charles' divorce and Bridey's marriage are imminent and the family is in transition moving households to accommodate the new arrangements. Suddenly the family receives word that Lord Marchmain will be returning to Brideshead given the increasing distress in Europe. It has been twenty-five years since Lord Marchmain has left Brideshead. Julia had already moved out of the household to make way for Bridey's new wife but the news of her father's return brings Julia back to the mansion so that her father will be comfortable.

Cordelia goes to the train station to meet her father while Charles and Julia remain at Brideshead. It is a dark and gloomy January day but the flag of the manor is flying once again awaiting Lord Marchmain's return. At last the car bearing Lord Marchmain and his mistress Cara arrives at Brideshead and the family is surprised at Lord Marchmain's appearance which is significantly diminished since Charles and Julia last saw him nine months ago.

Lord Marchmain seriously ill with heart problems has come back to Brideshead to die. The household staff has gone to much trouble to prepare the Lord's quarters, but Lord Marchmain's condition prevents his walking upstairs and the elderly gentleman demands that the Queen's Bed in the Chinese Drawing Room be prepared for his stay. While the staff hurriedly responds to this change in the domestic arrangements Lord Marchmain receives his family to catch up on the current situation. Lord Marchmain retires to his bed when the room is finally prepared and Cordelia sits with her father while he sleeps during his first night at the mansion in many years.

Lord Marchmain is vocally forthright about his opinion of Beryl whom he had met when she and Bridey were in Rome for an audience with the Pope. The crass nature of Bridey's new wife prompts Lord Marchmain to change his will and announces that Brideshead will become Julia's and Charles' instead of Bridey's upon Lord Marchmain's death.

Over the summer Lord Marchmain's condition grows much weaker although he does continue to receive guests and move about the ground floor of the mansion on the arm of his valet. A piano and books are brought into the Chinese Drawing Room to make the Lord as comfortable as possible. Bridey and Beryl return from their honeymoon and visit Brideshead in an attempt to visit with Lord Marchmain who refuses to see them. For days Bridey escorts Beryl around the grounds of the mansion as the new bride surveys what she assumes will soon be her own home and Charles is guilt-ridden knowing that the mansion will soon belong not to Bridey and Beryl but to Julia and himself.

Eventually it becomes clear that Lord Marchmain has no intention of seeing Beryl and asks to see Bridey who visits with his father alone for a brief visit at Lord Marchmain's

request. Bridey and Beryl soon leave Brideshead because it is too uncomfortable for them to remain at this awkward time. Lord Marchmain's condition continues to deteriorate with the elderly gentleman being in an almost constant state of pain and fatigue. Two nurses are hired to attend to Lord Marchmain who is now in an almost coma-like state. The family sends for Bridey who arrives without Beryl who is busy with her two children for the Easter holiday.

The family discusses the spiritual aspects of Lord's Marchmain's imminent death and is split on the decision on whether or not to send for a priest. Bridey feels that the Last Rites are essential while Julia has not made up her mind on the matter. Charles does not see the value in introducing a priest in the situation and cannot be convinced on the merits of the religious rites. Charles feels that religious intervention at this time is inappropriate because Lord Marchmain had rejected Catholicism for the last part of his life and it would be wrong to inflict religion on the elderly man who is no longer in his right mind.

After many days of debate on the issue Bridey sends for a local priest Father Mackay to come to administer the last sacraments to Lord Marchmain. Father Mackay is summarily removed from Lord Marchmain's room and the family apologizes for the elderly man's anti-social behavior. Bridey's decision to bring in a priest is not received well by Lord Marchmain who immediately calls for his lawyers so that Lord Marchmain's will can be revised removing Bridey as the one to inherit Brideshead.

Several months pass. It is now June and Lord Marchmain still clings to life. Charles's divorce is final and Julia's will be final in September yet Charles can sense some hesitation on Julia's part regarding marriage plans. Finally in July Lord Marchmain's condition turns grave and the family once again calls in Father Mackay who administers the Last Rites. As the family prays around the bedside Lord Marchmain makes the sign of the cross indicating his acceptance again of the Catholic religion much to the relief of his children. Charles does not understand or approve of the ritual but realizes that it is important to Julia and acknowledges the impact that this small gesture has had. Lord Marchmain dies later that day and Julia finally tells Charles that she cannot marry him because that act would take her further away from God and she cannot live without her religion any longer. Charles accepts the situation and cannot compete for Julia's love, which is now directed to a higher place.

Book 2, Chapter 5 Analysis

The theme of religion is prevalent in this chapter with the symbolism of Lord Marchmain's returning home to Brideshead to die after which he will return to his spiritual home. Each of the family members hangs on to their father's actions in the matter and Lord Marchmain's final acceptance of the Last Rites is the catalyst that will bring his children back to religion and change the courses of their lives. Although Charles is an agnostic and does not believe in religion he must accept Julia's decision not to marry him because he understands that the issue is too big for him to challenge.

The Catholic religion is not a prominent one in England and the Marchmain family is definitely in the minority in spite of their elevated social status. Perhaps it is this precarious position which drives the family members to consult the doctor about the impact that a priest would have on their father. It is as if they feel obliged to take the secular opinion over their instincts for spiritual intervention. It is interesting to note too that the family shows the utmost courtesy to Cara, Lord Marchmain's mistress in spite of their religious convictions, which should not condone the illicit relationship. Lady Marchmain never divorced her husband for religious reasons yet Lord Marchmain lived with Cara quite openly for many years.

Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

The story picks up from the beginning before Charles' reminiscences about his life with the Marchmain family. Charles' assignment is to make Brideshead mansion habitable for his regiment and to establish officer quarters. Charles does not indicate that he is intimately familiar with Brideshead and allows himself to be shown around the mansion by the Quartering Commandant. Charles listens without comment as the Commandant describes the Chinese Drawing Room with one of Charles' painted murals as comparable to a room in a brothel. Charles is appalled by the vandalism inflicted on the mansion by the soldiers who have been here before. Even the majestic fountain in front of the mansion has been fenced in to prevent complete destruction but Charles can see the remnants of floating trash and cigarettes.

Charles excuses himself leaving a subordinate in charge of the operation and escapes to the upper floors where he tours alone until encountering a maid who recognizes him. Charles takes the tray of tea the maid is taking to Nanny Hawkins and enters the room of the old nanny who recognizes Charles at the sound of his voice. Nanny Hawkins is pleased to see Charles and talks about the changes the war has brought to all their lives and is particularly impressed with the political position achieved by Rex Mottram and his friends who used to frequent Brideshead. Nanny Hawkins also informs Charles that Julia and Cordelia are serving as nurses in Palestine, which is also where Bridey is stationed. Charles chats with Nanny for a short while and then must return to his duties and finds there has been no progress on the work he had instructed. Instead of getting angry Charles simply instructs his subordinate to renew the work and finish it as quickly as possible.

Charles finds himself led to the Brideshead chapel that seems to be the only part of the mansion left untouched by destruction, natural or man-made. Charles is especially moved that the chapel lamp has been re-lit as a beacon for those who still seek solace in the holy place. Charles takes a few moments to say a prayer and returns to the army camp musing about the fate of the mansion and its inhabitants and Charles' commanding officer comments on his cheerful mood.

Epilogue Analysis

Ironically Sebastian who had been Charles' college friend and entrye to Brideshead is never mentioned at the end of the book. Nanny Hawkins provides details on the other family members but does not mention Sebastian nor does Charles inquire about his old friend. It is as if the author needed the character of Sebastian to intrigue Charles into a relationship which would bring him to Brideshead and his ultimate redemption. Charles had rejected religion all his life even during the times when the Marchmain family tried to convert him but at the end of the story Charles has converted to Catholicism and the

characters were merely tools toward the greater good of Charles' salvation. The symbolism of the chapel lamp is particularly relevant for Charles who notes the light as a beacon for all people through the ages as a guiding light illuminating spiritual hope amid the cold structures and cool hearts of men.

Characters

Mrs. Abel

Mrs. Abel is Edward Ryder's cook. According to Charles, her cooking skills are not very good.

Alfred

Alfred is one of Charles's cousins. Alfred gave advice to Charles's father about how to dress at school, which he steadfastly followed.

Aloysius

Aloysius is the teddy bear that Sebastian carries with him nearly everywhere he goes during his first year at Oxford, contributing to Sebastian's colorful reputation. Sebastian even goes so far as to refer to Aloysius as if he were a living creature, with likes and dislikes and moods. As Sebastian's drinking gets worse, he leaves Aloysius in a dresser drawer.

Antoine

See Anthony Blanche

Monsignor Bell

Lady Marchmain asks Monsignor Bell to give Sebastian a number of firm lectures about his failures at school and his heavy drinking. Sebastian's family later threatens to make him live with the monsignor if he does not straighten up, but Sebastian escapes this fate.

Anthony Blanche

Anthony is a student at Oxford and Sebastian's friend. He is a boisterous character, interested in food, wine, and having a good time. Charles refers to him as an "aesthete par excellence." There are indications that he is homosexual.

Everyone at school is in awe of Anthony. Charles remarks that even though he was barely older, Anthony seemed more mature and knowledgeable about the world than any of his other friends and acquaintances at Oxford. His background and experiences are somewhat romantic and mysterious. His mother lives in Argentina with his Italian stepfather, and Anthony has spent time with them traveling to exotic places. Anthony is

always dropping names of famous people and places in his conversations with Sebastian and Charles.

Lady Brideshead

See Beryl Muspratt

Bridey

See Lord Brideshead Flyte

Cara

Cara is Lord Marchmain's mistress. She is a middle-aged, "well-preserved" woman, who speaks very plainly and honestly about her lover and his family.

Caroline

Caroline is Celia and Charles' infant daughter. She is born while Charles is overseas, and he takes very little interest in seeing her when he returns.

Collins

Collins is one of Charles's earliest friends at Oxford. Charles and Sebastian refer to him a number of times as someone who is studious and a solid person.

Earl of Brideshead

See Lord Brideshead Flyte

Effie

Effie is a prostitute at Ma Mayfield's, a whorehouse. She is with Sebastian, Charles, and Boy Mulcaster when they are stopped by the police for drunken driving.

There is also an "Effie" who works for Nanny when Brideshead is nearly empty and part of an army camp during World War II in the novel's epilogue.

Lord Brideshead Flyte

Brideshead is Sebastian's brother and the eldest son of Lord and Lady Marchmain. He gives the impression of someone who is more mature than his years, even though he is only three years older than Sebastian and Charles. He is very serious and does not have many friends. He is a devout Catholic.

Brideshead is unmarried throughout most of the novel and is searching for a vocation, having thought briefly about becoming a Jesuit priest or a politician. When Charles visits the family about ten years after the novel opens, Brideshead has become a prominent collector of matchbooks and spends most of his time on that hobby.

One day he suddenly announces that he has found a bride, Beryl Muspratt. She is the widow of another prominent matchbook collector and a devout Catholic with children.

Lady Cordelia Flyte

Cordelia is Sebastian's sister, Lord and Lady Marchmain's youngest daughter. When the book opens she is a precocious pre-teen and a serious Catholic. Catholicism is a common topic of her conversation.

Later in the novel, just before the outbreak of World War II, Cordelia works as a nurse in Spain, taking care of soldiers fighting in the Spanish Civil War. When Charles finds himself at Brideshead during World War II, she is reported to be in Palestine with Julia, working in some medical capacity. She never marries.

Lady Julia Flyte

Lady Julia is Sebastian's younger sister by a couple of years and the eldest daughter of Lord and Lady Marchmain. At the beginning of the novel, she is eighteen years old and involved in her debut to English society at parties in London. She is a classic beauty and is charming like her brother Sebastian, and her name appears in the newspapers frequently. She is a non-practicing Catholic, like Sebastian.

She eventually marries Rex Mottram, an aspiring politician, but the marriage is not a solid one. She tries to provide Rex with a child, but the daughter is stillborn. Julia runs into Charles and Celia on a cruise ship crossing the Atlantic from New York, where she has been pursuing a love affair. She and Charles fall in love by the time the ship docks in London. She and Charles seek separations and divorces from their respective spouses, but never marry each other.

Julia, through the death of her father, acquires a stronger sense of her Catholicism. When Charles returns to Brideshead during World War II, he discovers that she is with Cordelia in Palestine, working for the war effort. She never remarries.

Lord Sebastian Flyte

Sebastian is the charming youngest son of Lord and Lady Marchmain and Charles's closest friend at Oxford. They meet when Sebastian is drunk and vomits through Charles's window one night. The next day, Sebastian apologizes and asks Charles to lunch; they and others talk and drink until late in the afternoon.

Sebastian is not only charming; he is, in Charles's words, "magically beautiful." Charles becomes quite taken with Sebastian and even seems to fall in love with him although they do not appear to be lovers in the novel. Charles, while recounting his lonely and serious childhood, credits Sebastian with giving him a second, happier childhood through their joint escapades, even though those escapades include drinking heavily and spending lavish amounts of money on clothes and cigars.

The novel chronicles Sebastian's descent into an alcoholic haze, beginning with a drunk driving incident and ending with him very ill, nearly destitute (despite the money his family sends him), and living with monks in Tunis. Through Cordelia's report, the Brideshead family and Charles learn that Sebastian has become religious.

Hardcastle

A friend of Sebastian's at Oxford, Hardcastle regularly loaned him his convertible, two-seater Morris-Cowley car.

Mrs. Hawkins

Mrs. Hawkins is the childhood nanny to Sebastian, his older brother, and two sisters. She still lives at Brideshead in an out-of-the-way room. Nanny Hawkins is much loved by the four Brideshead children, so much so that Sebastian makes a special trip out to his home to have Charles meet her. She is a devout Catholic.

Mr. Hooper

Mr. Hooper is Charles Ryder's new platoon commander as the novel opens. Charles does not particularly trust Mr. Hooper to accomplish a task but claims to have affection for him because he tolerated being the focus of an embarrassing incident. Charles views Hooper as a symbol of "Young England," with his relaxed dress and attitude.

Jasper

Jasper is Charles's older cousin. He has been at Oxford for a few years and is very fond of giving Charles advice on how he should live his life and spend his money, what classes to take, what clubs to belong to, how to wear his clothes, and whom to

associate with. Charles does not follow any of his suggestions. Jasper visits Charles toward the end of his first year at Oxford and scolds him for hanging out with a "bad set" and getting drunk frequently.

Kurt

Kurt is a young German who lives with Sebastian in Algeria and then follows him to Greece. He left Germany to join the French Foreign Legion but ended up in Fez, sick and apparently living off Sebastian. There is some indication that they may be lovers.

Lunt

Lunt is Charles's valet at Oxford, also referred to as his "scout." He is very patient with Charles concerning his carousing and drinking.

Father MacKay

Father MacKay is the priest brought in by Brideshead to give Lord Marchmain his last rites. Lord Marchmain sends him away, very politely, the first time he shows up. Father MacKay is very eager to give Lord Marchmain his last rites, so he makes a second, successful attempt when Lord Marchmain is semi-conscious.

Lord Alex Marchmain

Lord Marchmain is Sebastian's father. He left the family at the time of World War I, when he went to Italy, and never returned. He lives in Venice with his mistress, Cara.

He and Lady Marchmain have never divorced because of her strong Catholic beliefs, of which he is openly disdainful. Lord Marchmain will agree to nearly anything his children ask of him if he thinks it will upset Lady Marchmain. Cara believes that he truly hates his wife.

Lord Marchmain returns to Brideshead after Lady Marchmain's death when he knows that he himself is near death. His death and his apparent acceptance of last rites have a profound effect on Charles and Julia's feelings about Catholicism and religion.

Lady Teresa Marchmain

Lady Marchmain is Sebastian's mother. She is separated from Lord Marchmain and has a companion, the poet Sir Adrian Porson. She is devoutly Roman Catholic and even has tried to convert Charles. She is very fond of Charles and tries to recruit him to help Sebastian stop drinking. She dies just before World War II.

Marquis of Marchmain

See Lord Alex Marchmain

Marquise of Marchmain

See Lady Teresa Marchmain

Julia Mottram

See Lady Julia Flyte

Rex Mottram

Rex is Lady Julia's boyfriend and eventually her fiancé and husband. He is originally from Canada, which prompts many to see him as an inferior match for Julia. He is presented as somewhat stupid and dull when he takes lessons in Catholicism before marrying Julia. He is handsome and seems very open with information about himself and his business dealings. Ironically, his past catches up with him when he tries to marry Julia in the Catholic Church, and Brideshead discovers that he has been married before.

Rex is a member of Parliament and a businessman who knows all the right people and is always offering to connect friends and colleagues with one another. He bails out Charles, Sebastian, and Boy Mulcaster when they are thrown in jail and suggests a physician he knows for Lady Marchmain and a place where Sebastian can get treatment for alcoholism.

Eventually, Julia separates from Rex, and after two years she secures a divorce. His political power increases during World War II.

Boy Mulcaster

Boy Mulcaster is Sebastian and Anthony's friend who seems to always be in trouble. Charles does not like him although he becomes his brotherin- law when Charles marries Celia, Boy's sister.

Celia Mulcaster

Celia is Boy Mulcaster's sister and, eventually, Charles' wife. She has two children with Charles before they agree to a separation and eventual divorce.

Celia is charming, loves to give parties, and easily makes friends. She is unfaithful to Charles just before he leaves for Mexico and Central America for a two-year working trip. They separate when Charles returns, and he falls in love with Julia; they eventually divorce. Celia then marries Robin, a man who is seven years her junior.

Viscount Mulcaster

See Boy Mulcaster

Beryl Muspratt

Beryl Muspratt is Brideshead's fiancée and eventually his wife toward the end of the novel. She is the widow of Admiral Muspratt, a collector of matchboxes, and has three children. Beryl is a devout Catholic, and Brideshead is worried that she will be offended if she is asked to come to Brideshead Castle while Julia and Charles are there, living together outside of marriage.

Father Phipps

Father Phipps is a priest brought to Brideshead to conduct mass. He appears to be somewhat a fool because he believes that Sebastian and Charles are interested in cricket even when they keep telling him that they know nothing about the sport.

Charles Ryder

Charles Ryder is the novel's narrator: everything the reader sees and knows is told through his eyes. He first appears as a captain in the English army during World War II, stationed in the Scottish countryside. He is a man who is filled with memories, a bit nostalgic for an earlier time in his life.

Later in the novel, Charles is in his first year at Oxford, studying history. He is very eager to do the right things in this new environment. When he meets Sebastian, he is swept off his feet by his charm and immediately becomes deeply and exclusively involved with his new friend. He feels that, as child who had a grim, rather serious childhood, he is finally being given a chance to have fun. He and Sebastian spend time together drinking, attending parties, and avoiding their studies.

Charles is a budding artist and painter and occasionally works on a mural at Brideshead Castle, Sebastian's home. Eventually he leaves Oxford, sensing that he is not accomplishing much, and attends art school in Paris. He becomes a relatively well-known painter of buildings and architectural subjects.

Charles at one point declares himself an agnostic, but he is curious about what it means to be a Catholic. Lady Marchmain has many talks with him in her attempt to convert him

to Roman Catholicism, but Charles steadfastly believes religion to be useless. At the end of the novel, at Lord Marchmain's death, he seems to have a sort of religious epiphany when he kneels and prays for the dying man.

His marriage to Celia ends in divorce when he meets Julia, after not seeing her for a number of years, and falls in love with her.

Edward Ryder

Edward Ryder is Charles's father, who lives with his household staff in London. He is in his late fifties, but Charles says that he could be mistaken for a man in his seventies or even eighties.

Edward and Charles have a distant relationship. Charles seems to rely on his father for money and not much else. He mentions that his father gave him no advice on being at Oxford. Edward has an odd sense of humor, and people around him often find it difficult to know if he is making an obscure joke or simply behaving strangely.

Mr. Sammy Samgrass

Mr. Samgrass is an Oxford don originally hired by Lady Marchmain to pull together a memoir of her three dead brothers. He is asked to keep an eye on Sebastian when he returns to school for his second year. He appears to be a man who wants only to help the family set their drunken son straight but is ultimately revealed to have taken advantage of their generosity and faith in him. On a foreign trip with Sebastian he is asked to keep track of Sebastian but loses him and tries to hide this fact from Lady Marchmain.

Themes

Religion and Catholicism

Brideshead Revisited is filled with references to its characters' views on religion. Charles Ryder is an agnostic, having received little or no religious training as a child, and each member of the Flyte family presents a different image of a Catholic. Charles' cousin Jasper advises him in book one, chapter one, "Beware of the Anglo-Catholics they're all sodomites with unpleasant accents. In fact, steer clear of all the religious groups; they do nothing but harm." Throughout the novel, Charles questions members of the Flyte family about their beliefs and even makes light of religion until his epiphany at the end of the book.

Sebastian is a believer but has trouble staying within the rules and strictures of Catholicism. "Oh dear, it's very difficult being a Catholic," he notes in book one, chapter four. In that same chapter, he and Charles have their first discussion, of many, about Catholicism, and Charles expresses great amazement that Sebastian believes the "awful lot of nonsense" that Catholics ascribe to, such as the story of Christ's birth. "Is it nonsense? I wish it were. It sometimes sounds terribly sensible to me," answers Sebastian. His life is a struggle between what he wants to do and what he believes his church requires him to do. After years of drunkenness and wandering around the world, Sebastian ends up as an aide at a monastery in Tunis, in a sense returning to his religion while still being very much a worldly man.

Lord Marchmain is openly disdainful of Catholicism, having rejected the Church when he left Lady Marchmain. Like Sebastian, he appears to come back to his religion in book two, chapter five when, on his deathbed, he mutely signals that he is sorry for his sins in response to a priest's questions. Charles's response upon witnessing this, despite his previous dismissal of religion and Catholicism, is to say a brief prayer under his breath. Lady Marchmain is adamantly Catholic and in book one, chapter five announces that the Flyte family "must make a Catholic of Charles." The fact that she will not give Lord Marchmain a divorce is attributed to her being a devout Catholic.

When Cordelia is young, she attends a convent, and she tells Charles that because he is an agnostic she will pray for him. Her love of religion at that age takes typically childlike forms, such as saying a novena (a series of prayers recited for nine days) for a dead pet, but as an adult, her love of God is manifested in pursuing good works as a nurse during wartime. She is the only Catholic character who truly seems to enjoy her religion and her relationship with God. Brideshead is a Catholic strictly because he was born one he has no real interest in or passion for the subject. Most of his utterances about religion are legalistic, such as when he discovers that Rex cannot marry Julia in the Catholic Church because he is divorced.

Julia appears throughout most of the book to be uninterested in her Catholicism, except as it is a barrier to marrying her social equal. Only toward the end of the novel, after she

has started her affair with Charles and divorces Rex, does she begin to think about being a Catholic. Even though she loves Charles, she expresses concern that her behavior her "waywardness and wilfulness, a less disciplined habit than most of her contemporaries" when she was a young girl, as well as her illicit affair with Charles has filled her with sin. When she tells Charles after her father's death that she can no longer see him, she admits, "I've always been bad. Probably I shall be bad again, punished again. But the worse I am, the more I need God." The Epilogue finds Charles saying a small prayer in the chapel at Brideshead, and he is pleased that the chapel is open years after he has last seen the family.

Alcoholism

The novel provides an overview of how Sebastian's family and friends react to his increasingly destructive reliance on alcohol. At first, Sebastian seems to be a typical college student, drinking frequently, but always with friends and never suffering an unhappy consequence. Charles notices that the amount of Sebastian's drinking, as well as his generally happy demeanor, changes when they return to Oxford after their blissful summer at Brideshead mansion.

A number of incidents follow that mark the beginning of the end of the close friendship between Charles and Sebastian. After a party in London, Sebastian drives drunk with other people in the car, including Charles, and is stopped by the police. They are all taken to jail. During Easter at Brideshead, Sebastian is drinking heavily, missing meals, and treating Charles badly. He accuses Charles of spying on him for the family and eventually leaves for London.

The family's response to Sebastian's drinking is a classic case of denial. At Easter, no one in the family is willing to face what is happening to Sebastian, instead seeking out Charles to fix it for them. Lady Marchmain asks Charles about Sebastian's behavior. Charles covers for his friend, saying that Sebastian is getting a cold. Julia acknowledges to Charles that she knows of her brother's drinking but tells Charles that he must take care of Sebastian. "Well, you must deal with him. It's no business of mine," she says. Brideshead also asks Charles to help Sebastian stop drinking, and Lady Marchmain expects Charles to keep an eye on Sebastian. "You've got to help him. I can't," she pleads.

Eventually, a dean finds Sebastian wandering around the university drunk. The school agrees to allow him to stay if he moves in with a monsignor (a member of the Roman Catholic clergy), something that Sebastian absolutely refuses to do. Sebastian leaves Oxford and sets out on a trip to the Middle East with Mr. Samgrass as his guardian, as arranged by his mother. This trip, rather than helping Sebastian, launches him on a lifetime of drinking and wandering around the Middle East and North Africa. Charles and Sebastian see each other only briefly after Sebastian leaves Oxford.

Male Friendship

Sebastian and Charles's friendship is an intense one. In fact, while their relationship appears to be platonic, the words Charles uses to describe their relationship border on the romantic. The picnic they take together in book one, chapter one is portrayed in dreamy and romantic terms:

> We lay on our backs, Sebastian's eyes on the leaves above him, mine on his profile... and the sweet scent of the tobacco merged with the sweet summer scents around us and the fumes of the sweet, golden wine seemed to lift us a finger's breadth above the turf and hold us suspended.

Cara, Lord Marchmain's mistress, notes the closeness between the two friends and surprises Charles by asking him about it in book one, chapter four. She approves of relationships between young men, "if they do not go on too long," and adds that at their young age it is better "to have that kind of love for another boy than for a girl."

The intensity of Charles and Sebastian's friendship transforms Charles. He changes his group of friends at Oxford after meeting Sebastian, and he even alters how his room is decorated and the books he reads based on what Sebastian and his friends like. Charles also becomes deeply involved with Sebastian's family, and they come to think of him almost as one of their own. When Charles is later involved in his love affair with Julia, Sebastian's sister, he indicates that Sebastian was the "forerunner," the first person in the Flyte family with whom he fell in love. This all-encompassing friendship makes Sebastian's eventual drunkenness and depression especially painful for Charles.

Memories and Reminiscences

The entire novel is drawn as a series of Charles's memories; indeed, the novel's subtitle, *The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder,* makes this clear. The book opens in the present with Charles surprised to discover that he is encamped near Brideshead mansion, which sets off the memories that make up the body of the book. The novel closes with him in the present again and briefly walking through the house, running into Nanny Hawkins and savoring a few more memories about his friendship with the Flyte family.

As well, Charles is a man who values the past, whether imagined or real. Book one is entitled "Et In Arcadia Ego," which is Latin for "I, too, lived in Arcadia," referring to a pastoral and mountainous region of ancient Greece used extensively in painting and literature to denote a sort of Utopia, or a place where life is wonderful and well lived. Book one tells the story of meeting Sebastian, and the blissful time they spent together.

Throughout the novel, Charles believes that what *was* is preferable to what *is;* in the Prologue he complains about the current behavior of "Young England." He bemoans

young people's lack of an education, their dress, and their manner of speech. Even as a student at Oxford, he complains, as book one opens, when women arrive for a week of dances and parties. The change in atmosphere at his school upsets him.

All of Charles' memories of Sebastian during their first year as friends are romanticized. In book one, chapter four, for example, Charles fondly remembers a summer, spent almost always alone with Sebastian, when, "I, at any rate, believed myself to be very near heaven, during those languid days at Brideshead." And Sebastian, as well, realizes that this summer of their youth will be something they always look back on: "If it could only be like this always□always summer, always alone, the fruit always ripe."

Style

Point of View

Brideshead Revisited is written completely from the first person point-of-view; that is, solely through the eyes of Charles Ryder. Charles is the only one telling the story, so the reader must decide whether he is a reliable or an unreliable narrator. Are his impressions of the events and characters in the story to be believed?

In general, Charles is a trustworthy narrator. He does not obviously exaggerate or provide unbelievable information. But, when only one person is telling a story, that person's background and experiences color the telling of the tale. In Charles' case, his childhood was a serious one, with very little happiness. His mother died when he was young and his father pays little attention to him. The absence of his own family may have made it easy for him to become intimately involved with the Flyte family, and because of this closeness he may be blind to some of their faults. A number of times other characters refer to the less-than-wonderful characteristics of the Flytes, including Sebastian, and this either confuses or upsets Charles.

Charles tells the story of his relationship with the Flytes and Sebastian with the benefit of hindsight. He has had time during the intervening fifteen to twenty years to reconsider events. The story is framed by the present, with a Prologue and an Epilogue, but takes place primarily in the past.

Satire

Waugh is well-known for his satirical novels, books that make fun of social customs and the people who participate in them. While *Brideshead Revisited* is not truly a satirical work and marks a change in Waugh's writing style, he does not completely abandon this favored technique. Satire is found in the book, particularly where religion is concerned. Depictions of priests are not always complementary. For example, the priest who visits Brideshead during Charles and Sebastian's summer vacation can't seem to understand that the two friends know nothing about cricket, even though they tell him this repeatedly. In addition to making subtle fun of Rex Mottram and his eagerness to be an important political player, Rex is made to look dim-witted when he takes classes to convert to Catholicism. And when issues of Catholic doctrine are discussed, such as how the final rites should be given to Lord Marchmain, everyone in the Flyte family seems to have a different and confused impression as to the correct way.

Romance

Romantic settings and events are prevalent in *Brideshead Revisited.* Romantic technique in a work of fiction refers to the use of language that is flowery or characters

and events that are idealized. Waugh employs what critic James F. Carens calls "purple" language and draws almost fantasy images of a number of characters.

Charles's two most serious relationships, with Sebastian and his sister Julia, are pursued in the countryside, in idealized pastoral settings. Charles and Sebastian have a picnic early in their relationship, and at Brideshead they spend a summer that is described as "near heaven." He and Julia move to Brideshead to continue their love affair in the country. In book two, chapter three, for example, one evening at Brideshead is remembered as "tranquil, lime-scented," and Julia is pictured "in a tight little gold tunic and a white gown, one hand in the water idly turning an emerald ring to catch the fire of the sunset." Waugh's language here is almost dreamlike.

Setting in Time

The novel's main action takes place in England between World War I and World War II. While international events barely impact the story line, Waugh drops numerous hints in the narrative to help the reader know what is happening outside of the characters' immediate surroundings.

The Prologue and the Epilogue take place in a wartime encampment in the English countryside. When women are part of an event at Oxford early in the novel, Charles's servant comments that such a thing would not have happened before World War I. Numerous hints are given that war with Germany and Italy is on the horizon. When Rex returns to Brideshead with his political friends, the conversation is filled with references to running into fake tanks in the Black Forest and to leaders such as Franco and Chamberlain. One of the reasons Lord Marchmain gives for moving back to England is the "international situation."

Simile

Augmenting the relatively rich language in *Brideshead Revisited,* Waugh occasionally uses similes. These are phrases that compare two seemingly unlike things. For example, in book one, chapter five, Charles compares Sebastian to "a Polynesian," happy when left alone but threatened when "the big ship dropped anchor beyond the coral reef." In book two, chapter one, Charles remarks that bats in a cave "hung in the dome like dry seed-pods." These images contribute to the nostalgic and lush tone of the novel's language.

Historical Context

The Pre-War Years and World War II

The book's events take place between 1922 and World War II. Charles Ryder's generation at Oxford was one that found itself too young to fight in the first war but well into its thirties by the time the Second World War erupted. Throughout the body of *Brideshead Revisited,* Waugh indicates that something is brewing outside the walls of the stately mansions and colleges where most of the novel's actions take place. Europe between World War I and World War II was a place of both great prosperity and dismal poverty, of social innovations and political disarray.

As an adult, Cordelia serves as a nurse during the Spanish Civil War, which lasted from 1936 to 1939. This war was fought between the Nationalists, who were fascists supported by the Italian and German governments, and the Loyalists, who were supported by many thousands of volunteers from other nations. When it was all over, hundreds of thousands were dead, and a fascist regime held power in Spain. The Nazis in Germany took note that other European governments were reluctant to step into the fray; this isolationism indicated that Europe might not interfere in the Nazis' own plans for world domination.

Germany suffered great losses during the First World War and was in political and economic disarray after the war. By the early 1930s, Germany's military and economic might began to recover under Adolf Hitler. By the middle of the 1930s, Hitler's political party, the Nazi Party, was firmly in command. Germany began to make territorial claims on other parts of Europe in the late 1930s. European leaders, including those of England, desperately wanted to avoid another world war, so they capitulated to Germany's demands. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain signed the Munich Pact, hoping that Germany would hold to its promise that the Sudetenland, a part of Czechoslovakia, would be its last aggressive territorial claim. The effort at appeasing the Nazi government did not work, and Germany continued to invade other countries. In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland, and Great Britain and France jointly declared war on Germany. The war spread to nearly every corner of the globe, including Africa and Asia, and ultimately involved the United States, Russia, Japan, Italy, and others. By the time the war ended in 1945, a year after Waugh finished writing *Brideshead Revisited,* the United Kingdom alone had sustained more than nine hundred thousand military and civilian casualties.

Economic Depression

After World War I, England suffered serious economic decline, yet the privileged classes continued to consume at a fever pitch. The Flytes are a fabulously wealthy family, although by the late 1920s Rex reports that the family is having some money difficulties.

England's coal, steel, cotton, and shipping industries were in serious financial trouble by the mid-1920s. Coal miners initiated incidences of labor unrest and struck for improvements in their working situations in 1925. The following year, England's General Strike involved some six million union workers. This event prompts Charles and several fellow English art students to leave Paris for their homeland, to see how they can be of help. However, the strike lasted only six days. The economic bad news continued, however, and 1929 brought a stock market crash. The crash and the resulting Great Depression had global effects, and the misery spawned by the worldwide economic downturn contributed to the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany.

Literature

English and American literature from World War I to 1944, when Waugh finished writing *Brideshead Revisited,* was very diverse. Authors experimented with a variety of forms and styles and dealt with subjects formerly considered risqué, such as sex; D. H. Lawrence's novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is one example. The horrors of the First World War and the Great Depression prompted writers to consider a world where the old rules had failed, and many traditional religious, political, and social institutions no longer held the authority they once did. Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck were two American writers who captured these feelings of disillusionment, and in 1932 British author Aldous Huxley published his futuristic novel, *Brave New World,* in which he expresses a deep-seated suspicion of totalitarian government and societal uniformity.

In *Brideshead Revisited,* Anthony Blanche, as a student at Oxford, recites a passage from T. S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land.* This work, published in 1922, focused on loss of faith and on the destruction of civilization as previously understood. It was a huge hit with the post-World War I generation that had witnessed how far human nature could degenerate. The poem questions the premise that civilization is progressing. So ingrained did this work become in that generation's consciousness that college students everywhere, like Anthony Blanche, memorized its lines.

Critical Overview

The reviews of *Brideshead Revisited* ranged from adoring to condemning when the book was first published in 1945. James F. Carens in *The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh* notes that while the magazine *Catholic World* raved about the novel and called it "a work of art," critic Edmund Wilson (as quoted by Carens) was less positive. Even though Wilson was an admirer of Waugh's earlier, more satirical works, he called *Brideshead Revisited* "disastrous" and declared that the author "no longer knows his way." John K. Hutchens, reviewing the novel in 1945 for the *New York Times,* wrote that the novel "has the depth and weight that are found in a writer working in his prime."

Carens encourages readers to weigh the book carefully, advising, "A novel that has provoked such diverse views deserves consideration. It may be an imperfect work; it can scarcely be a vapid one." Indeed, despite many critics' disappointment with the book's lack of satirical sharpness, *Brideshead Revisited* is the book that introduced American audiences to Waugh.

Much of the negative criticism of *Brideshead Revisited* has charged that in this book, Waugh leaves his earlier empire of hard-bitten satire and wades into the gentler world of romance. Some critics, such as Paul Fussell in the *New Republic,* appear to suggest that Waugh has become soft in his middle age. Comparing *Brideshead Revisited* with Waugh's short stories written in the 1930s, Fussell argues:

> If in that overripe fantasy, manufactured in the grim 1940s, he seems at pains to register his worshipful intimacy with the aristocracy, in these stories of the 1930s he exhibits for the unearned-income set an intellectual and moral disdain hard to distinguish from that of a contemporary Marxist-Leninist. If he'd conceived Sebastian Flyte in 1935, he'd have little trouble discerning from the start the selfishness, cruelty, and fatuity behind those expensive good looks.

For many critics, *Brideshead Revisited* marks a change in Waugh's style that continues for the rest of his writing life. Richard P. Lynch, in *Papers on Language and Literature,* remarks that Waugh's later novels, except for *The Loved One,* "are more reassuring to readers of conventional romance." The fact that the novel is completely created from the mist of Charles Ryder's memories gives it a certain wistful quality that his earlier novels lack. In fact, Lynch says in his criticism that it is "atypical among Waugh's novels in its triumph of sentiment over satire."

But others argue that *Brideshead Revisited* still has some of the satire and sharpness of the earlier novels, but it is done in a more mature and learned way. Hutchens argues in his *New York Times* review that the story of Charles and the Flyte family contains much of the "deadly use of detail, the scorn of vulgarity, the light summary touch with minor characters," such as Anthony Blanche and Charles's father. But in this new novel there

is now "one sentence and one paragraph after another of reflection and description, [which] could have found no place in the staccato atmosphere of his other works." In Hutchens's eyes, *Brideshead Revisited* is a more fully-grown novel, benefiting from the narrator's years of distance from the story's events and characters and from the author's own maturity.

This assertion of maturity does not sit well, though, with some critics. Barry Ulanov, in *The Vision Obscured: Perceptions of Some Twentieth- Century Catholic Novelists,* cites *Brideshead Revisited* as evidence of Waugh's mid-career decline. Echoing Lynch, Ulanov argues that most of Waugh's books after 1945 "are blighted by the disease of Brideshead, an egregious inclination to take religion seriously, accompanied by a marked distaste for the world that does not share that inclination □the modern world."

In fact, Waugh's own worldview can be seen in such novels as *Brideshead Revisited,* in which there is a sense that the past is preferable to the present and that the current generation has lost touch with the values and graciousness of its history. According to Ulanov, Waugh, in his own life, "became a furious partisan, fighting for the survival of ancient values, ancient worlds, ancient rituals." As a Catholic, he worked against the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, which promoted such changes as translating the Latin of the Mass into English.

Waugh's Catholicism and how it is reflected and used in his novels is a continuing subject for critics. Most agree that the author's conservative and traditional outlook is revealed in his work, but while Carens notes that *Brideshead Revisited* is the first of Waugh's books where his interest in Roman Catholicism is so broadly exhibited, he declares that the novel is not an apology for Catholicism. "It is not a preachy book," he asserts. As Carens points out, readers can see evidence of Waugh's past satiric craftsmanship; satire is blended with religion in the book, specifically where the confused Flyte family is discussing whether the dying Lord Marchmain should receive last rites from a priest. "Over this entire scene Waugh has cast his satirical irony; the scene exists for novelistic purposes rather than dogmatic reasons," writes Carens. And the difficulty of Catholicism in Britain, as portrayed in the novel, might well erase any critic's concerns that the book slips into romance, according to Frank Kermode in *Encounter.* To the Flytes, their religion is a burden to shoulder, for "only in misery, it seems, will the Faith be restored in the great families of England."

Whether *Brideshead Revisited* is a book without any teeth or evidence of a writer's development is a topic that critics will continue to debate. But the novel has withstood the test of time, as it was recently cited by the editorial board of the Modern Library as one of the 100 best English language books of the twentieth century.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Sanderson holds a master of fine arts degree in fiction writing and is an independent writer. In this essay, she examines how Waugh's novel can be read as the author's own fictionalized memories of his steps toward Catholicism and a relationship with God.

Evelyn Waugh was widely known to be a conservative man, a man who felt more comfortable with the warm burnish of tradition than with the bright shine of the modern. Most of his novels written before 1942 are considered masterworks of satire. So the critics' nearly unanimous howl in 1945 upon the publication of *Brideshead Revisited* - a collective complaint that Waugh had lost his spark and had gone soft - should not come as a surprise. The novel was condemned as a romance, even a fantasy, and the knock against Waugh became that he had done his best work before World War II.

But after getting over the expectation that every scene should poke fun at something or someone (while still experiencing the occasional pleasure of Waugh's wit in *Brideshead Revisited*), readers familiar with Waugh's earlier satires need only look to Waugh's life for an explanation of the change in his writing. Even a brief examination of Waugh's background makes clear that many of the elements in *Brideshead Revisited* are taken from his own experiences. Waugh's partiality to traditional institutions and patterns shines through the novel's protagonist, Charles Ryder. Charles is a lover of old buildings, ancient cemeteries, and old wine; he dislikes new styles, be they displayed in a piece of jewelry or through the interior designs of a ship, and he feels that young people are not as attached to their history as they should be. From that common ground, Charles's story can be read as a version of Waugh's story. Each is a story of a young man searching for stability in a world that seems turned upside down by war and the dissolution of established social institutions.

Literature and myth are filled with tales of young men finding their way in the world via circuitous routes, each man descending into a dark wilderness before emerging into the light of his destiny. While this book is certainly not an autobiography, it can be read as Waugh's reflection on how his search for love and constancy brought him through a rambunctious youth, an unhappy marriage, and ultimately to the Catholic Church.

Like Charles, Waugh attended a private English boys' school, then moved on to Oxford to study unsuccessfully for his undergraduate degree. Waugh fell in with a group that was much more interested in drinking and carousing than in studying - not unlike Charles' group of friends at Oxford, which included the charming Sebastian Flyte and the always clever Anthony Blanche. And both the author and his fictional protagonist dabbled in the decorative arts while at the university, eventually quitting to attend art school.

But unlike Waugh, who expressed interest in religion at an early age and found it to be one of the primary themes of his life, Charles is baffled by the Flytes' Catholicism. Early in the novel he asks Sebastian, who is no pillar of Catholic doctrinal behavior, about his religion. Sebastian tells him that he thinks about it all the time, even though it doesn't

show on the outside. Charles is amazed and simply can't believe that his friend actually believes in what he perceives as myths and trickery. In fact, Charles comes from a family that has paid almost no attention to religion, except to warn him of associating with religious groups, especially Catholics.

Waugh uses a present-day, middle-aged Charles, serving as a captain in the British Army during World War II, to frame the story with a prologue and epilogue. Interestingly enough, when Waugh wrote *Brideshead Revisited,* he was on extended leave from the British military, in which he saw quite a bit of action, especially for a man in his late thirties and early forties. Waugh was of the right age and situation to be thinking back on his life, much as Charles does as he narrates the novel. And even though Waugh succeeded in completing a number of hazardous missions for the war effort, his early wartime encounters were remarkably similar to Charles' - waiting around the local countryside, cleaning up military encampments, always thinking the next move would bring him closer to the real action.

Sparked by his troop's new encampment near Brideshead Castle, Charles remembers his friendship with the Flyte family, a wealthy Catholic household whose wayward son, Sebastian, becomes the first real love of his life. Life before Sebastian was passionless and grim for Charles, and Sebastian's appearance offers him a more spontaneous and colorful life. Critics differ on whether their relationship is sexual or not, but the flowery language Waugh uses when the two are together during their first year of friendship (one of the novel's features that drives critics to distraction) leaves no doubt that Charles is smitten; and Sebastian's letters to Charles on vacation indicate that his affections are returned. But Sebastian, for all his magic, is still a fallible human and disappoints Charles with his destructive drinking and lifestyle.

Charles continues to seek out love and stability, but with little success. After Sebastian, to whom he refers as the "forerunner," he tries marriage to a woman too busy with her huge circle of friends and with improving Charles's art career to be a true love interest. In book two, chapter one, when Celia asks Charles if he has fallen in love with anyone during his two-year absence, he assures her flatly, "No. I'm not in love." Like Waugh's first wife, Celia is unfaithful to her marriage vows, and this contributes to Charles's twoyear excursion into the wilds of Mexico and Central America to draw ruins. While Charles sought the wilderness, however, Waugh sought the comfort and discipline of the Catholic Church. Waugh's biographers point to his wife's infidelity as pushing him toward a conversion to Catholicism.

Charles's two years in the "jungle" are a turning point in his understanding of himself. Middle-aged boredom, dissatisfaction with his marriage, and a fear that life is slipping away propel him into the dark "wild lands" of another continent. In chapter one of the second book, Charles admits that before the trip his apparent success masked a hidden withering of his soul. "For nearly ten years I was thus borne along a road, outwardly full of change and incident, but never during that time, except sometimes in my painting - and that at longer and longer intervals - did I come alive as I had been during the time of my friendship with Sebastian." He seems to believe that if he leaves his usual haunts

and goes out into the wilderness to live a simple life among ancient ruins, away from the talk of war and the crush of modernity, he will return a changed man - alive again.

But the trip does not fulfill him in the way he needs. Even though the new paintings he exhibits after returning to England are hailed as dramatically different and more vibrant and passionate than his earlier work, Charles feels as though the wilderness experience has not changed and healed him sufficiently. "There is still a small part of me pretending to be whole," he says. To fill the emptiness, Charles begins a passionate affair with Julia, Sebastian's sister. They both leave their spouses and for two years live together at Brideshead Castle, the scene of Charles's first and only other love, Sebastian. They plan to secure divorces and marry each other.

While Charles's love for Julia is true, it eventually changes and ends, being simply the next step toward a final love. In the last chapter of book two, Lord Marchmain returns to Brideshead and everyone except Sebastian (who is living, ill and nearly destitute, at a monastery in Tunis) has gathered at the ancestral homestead for his impending death. When Julia's brother, Brideshead, asks that a priest be brought for his father's final sacraments, Charles finds the whole effort ridiculous, saying, "It's such a lot of witchcraft and hypocrisy." But Lord Marchmain has not been a practicing Catholic for almost twenty-five years and sends the priest away. Charles's hostility about the priest creates tension between him and Julia and prompts Julia to say, "Oh Charles, don't rant. I shall begin to think you're getting doubts yourself."

Finally, a number of weeks later, when Lord Marchmain is nearly unconscious, Julia brings the priest back for her father's final sacraments. What happens next is so dramatic that it might seem more fit for a scene in an earlier Waugh satire, yet here the intent is not satiric. The priest asks Lord Marchmain if he will give a sign that he is sorry for his sins. Charles suddenly drops to his knees and says a small prayer to "God, if there is a God," longing for such a sign. He cannot decide if he desires this for Julia's sake or for other reasons, but in an instant he gets that prayer answered - Lord Marchmain makes the sign of the cross, and Charles recognizes that this "was not a little thing, not a passing nod of recognition."

After Julia witnesses her father's signal, she decides she cannot go against her religion's doctrines and marry Charles. Her divorce and subsequent marriage to Charles would make her an adulteress in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church; she must live a life that is pleasing to her God. "But the worse I am, the more I need God. I can't shut myself out from His mercy," as she tells Charles.

Given Charles's usual disparaging response to a member of the Flyte family explaining Catholicism to him, his telling Julia that he understands her actions signals a huge step toward his embracing religion and God. And when Charles appears again in the Epilogue, a few years later, he has obviously begun to accept the traditional tenets of religion, if not the Catholic Church. He makes a special trip to Brideshead Castle's chapel, closed after Lady Marchmain's death many years previously. Much to his pleasure, the chapel is open and in respectable shape, with a small lamp burning at the

altar. God is still present and accounted for, unwavering and forever. He kneels and says a prayer, "an ancient, newly learned form of words."

Charles has made a journey similar to the one Waugh made in the first half of his life: from a declared agnostic, educated to believe that religion is all smoke and mirrors, to a middle-aged man believing in the power of God's grace. This is not an easy journey for either man, beset by pains and temptations. Unlike Charles, though, Waugh was able to have his first marriage annulled, making his marriage the very next year to a devout Catholic woman sanctified in the eyes of the church.

When Charles returns from praying at the old Brideshead chapel, his second-in-command comments, "You're looking unusually cheerful today." Charles, the middle-aged, wifeless, and childless child of a grim and unloving family, who once admitted that very few things gave him as much happiness as being with Sebastian, finally seems to have found a constant source of love in his life. Real life, however, rarely produces such neat endings. While Waugh was, by all accounts, very satisfied with his second marriage, stories have emerged that in his later years, well after the writing of *Brideshead Revisited,* he was depressed and drank heavily.

Source: Susan Sanderson, Critical Essay on *Brideshead Revisited,* in *Novels for Students,* The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Rothstein examines "the ways in which Brideshead Revisited *is preoccupied with the issue of preserving Catholic identity and Catholic memory."*

In a 1969 article "The Uses of History in Fiction," based on a panel discussion at a meeting of the Southern Historical Association, C. Van Woodward notes that "Over the last two centuries novels have become increasingly saturated with history, and novelists have been becoming ever more deeply historically conscious. In a sense, all novels are historical novels. They all seek to understand, to describe, to recapture the past, however remote, however recent." Woodward and the other participants in this discussion go on to talk about the relations between storytelling and historiography, examining how both reflect a growing historical consciousness in western society, and how they serve to satisfy a desire for historical understanding. Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* offers an example of this mutual interrelation between fiction and history, demonstrating how both support each other in accomplishing a very specific and, as critics have seen it, politically charged task, namely the preservation and fictional reconstitution of an aristocratic Catholic heritage in England.

Though purely religious and spiritual considerations tend to elide this implicit purpose behind the novel, the task of this essay will be to explicate the ways in which *Brideshead* is preoccupied with the issue of preserving Catholic identity and Catholic memory. More specifically, it will discuss how the novel is about the decline of a family tradition of memory and the emergence of an historical subjectivity that prompts individual characters to recapture their past by "revisiting" or remembering those "sites of memory" containing a family history and identity. Sebastian's wish to "bury something precious in every place where I've been happy" is a perfect example of how sites of memory function within the text.

The term "sites of memory" is borrowed from an article by Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire.*" In this article, Nora develops a philosophical interpretation of what contemporary western society experiences as an increasingly historicized world. Nora states that within modern historical societies, individuals keenly sense their growing distance from traditional societies of the past, with their gradually evolving, self-contained modes of identity realization, resulting in the need to consecrate sites of memory that provide some sense of connection to a collective heritage of the past:

> Our interest in *lieux de memoire* where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn - but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de moire,*

> sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de memoire,* real environments of memory... The "acceleration of history," then, confronts us with the brutal realization of the difference between real memory - social and unviolated, exemplified in but also retained as the secret of so called primitive or archaic societies - and history, which is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past.

Nora goes on to outline this key distinction between a "real" or social memory and the modern transformation of memory into an historicized memory:

> Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the present: history is a representation of the past... it is an intellectual and secular production [that] calls for analysis and criticism. Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again. Memory is blind to all but the group it binds - which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs has said, that there are as many memories as there are groups... Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative.

The ideas that Nora articulates here offer a philosophical groundwork for the study of the intimate link between historical and literary modes of memory representation. *Brideshead Revisited* uniquely contains this intimate link within its thematic structure and character development; it represents historically conscious characters (especially Charles the narrator) who are acutely aware of their break with the past and seek to anchor themselves through their active relation to sites of memory.

In many ways, therefore, the novel is about tracing one's history by studying the traces and sites of memory that provide one with a sense of historical identity. This historical identity is uniquely modern and as portrayed in the novel results from an awareness of the distance between a coherent, meaningful past identity, enclosed and enshrined in memory, and a present experience of dislocation, of having been severed from an ancient bond of identity. On one side of this gulf, as we see in the novel, is an intimate link to a tradition of memory, namely the Catholic culture that once gave ground and direction to members of the Marchmain family. On the other side are characters drawn away from this enclosed culture, either willingly or unwillingly, by other relationships, by political forces, and by the broad possibilities for alternate modes of existence in a modern mass culture. Both Sebastian and Lord Marchmain seem desperate to escape the heavy responsibility attendant on maintaining membership in their family's isolated

Catholic culture, and so seek other identities in other relationships: Sebastian, shutting out the world to become the "subject of charity" with Kurt; and Lord Marchmain, the Byronic exile with Cara in Italy. Julia's relationship with Rex offers her a way out of the confinement of family tradition into a world of international, Gatsbyesque play. The Second World War and the strike of 1926 represent the broader political forces that surround and threaten the insular aristocratic paradise at Brideshead. Even Cordelia, who chooses social service over the stability of aristocratic Catholic culture, is drawn away from Brideshead where she experiences a violent modern world and the devastation of war in Spain.

The text represents the experience of modernity as the force of history invading a tradition of memory protected within the Catholic enclave at Brideshead. Pierre Nora describes this living tradition of memory, which we see fading at Brideshead, as "an integrated, dictatorial memory - unselfconscious, commanding, all-powerful, spontaneously actualizing, a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition, linking the history of its ancestors to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins, and myth." On his deathbed, Lord Marchmain nostalgically retraces this link to an ancestral memory, a link that barely survives and that he himself has all but broken: "Those were our roots in the waste hollows of Castle Hill, in the brier and nettle; among the tombs in the old church and the chantrey where no clerk sings... We were knights then, barons since Agincourt." In the novel's epilogue, as Charles reflects on the chapel's beatencopper lamp, he also draws this connection between the house at Brideshead and the ancestral memory contained there: "Something quite remote from anything the builders intended has come out of their work... the flame which the old knights saw from their tombs, which they saw put out; that flame burns again for other soldiers, far from home, farther, in heart, than Acre or Jerusalem. It could not have been lit but for the builders and tragedians, and there I found it this morning, burning anew among the old stones."

Though the burning lamp is often read as the religious focal point of the novel, signifying a rekindling of faith in each of the characters, it is crucial to note that Waugh places this image of faith within a context of a faith tradition stretching back through Marchmain family history to the time of the crusades. Only in this context of tradition, legend, and memory does faith achieve any significance, the text seems to tell us. Through Charles's comprehension and articulation of this vital context, Waugh urges the point that faith needs to be linked simultaneously to the preservation of a Catholic identity, a sense of historical continuity, threatened with extinction by the forces of modern culture.

Waugh demonstrates this point primarily through Charles, who finds a means to understand and redeem his personal history of dislocation ("I'm homeless, childless, middle-aged, loveless") through his newly formed link to an ancient tradition and memory barely surviving among their historical remnants, the sites of memory at Brideshead - the old stones, the chapel, the lamp. Yet despite his intimate bond with this tradition of memory, Charles does not experience it from inside, since it no longer exists either for himself or the other characters as a social, collective, and all encompassing form of subjectivity. Rather, he experiences his bond with Catholic memory indirectly, as a psychological, individual, and subjective phenomenon. What Charles experiences is

an historicized memory, which Pierre Nora defines as "voluntary and deliberate, experienced as a duty, no longer spontaneous." Since he himself was neither born into the Catholic tradition nor sustained within an environment of memory such as Lady Marchmain and her ancestors once were, Charles can only look longingly in on this rapidly disintegrating Catholic society as a double outsider; that is, through his own memory of those whose memories and lives provided him with a record of a more noble and meaningful existence, a grandeur that is lost.

Though a lonely individual believer at the story's end, Charles has interiorized the Catholic memory enshrined at Brideshead and now recognizes his allegiance to this fading Catholic heritage by dutifully maintaining his "ancient, newly learned form of words" (though his conversion to Catholicism is, perhaps necessarily, only hinted at in the epilogue). Moreover, the novel shows us that in being severed from a collective experience of lived memory all of the characters, not only Charles, become in their own degree "memory individuals." No longer on the inside of a tradition of memory, but longing to be there, the characters can only experience it through its outward signs, through rituals, symbols, modes of behavior. The characters become obliged to defend and preserve these markers of identity against the disintegrating power of the modern world.

Waugh portrays his characters in *Brideshead* as modern outsiders, modern misfits, always trying to get inside of a more meaningful existence, always experiencing life on the fringes. Throughout his fictional existence, Charles has always been the outsider lacking an experience of being inside. His childhood has left him without any knowledge of what it means to be *in* a family. Later, we see him as the outsider trying successively in different ways to get inside of Brideshead. At first, his love for Sebastian offers him one level of entry into the world of Brideshead. At Oxford he follows Sebastian through "that low door in the wall... which opened on an enclosed and enchanted garden," an experience leading into other gardens, orchards, and parlors during their languid summer at Brideshead. This first extended stay at Brideshead offers Charles a chance to relive a more meaningful childhood. Brideshead becomes a kind of nursery where he is given an "aesthetic education" simply by living in its environs with Sebastian. Moreover, Charles develops a powerful, art historian's attraction toward all he sees at Brideshead, and he carefully records each detail of landscape, architecture, art work, and interior design. Yet despite his appreciation of the physical environment, Charles's entry into Brideshead at this point goes nowhere beyond a comprehension of its historical and aesthetic significance.

Later still, Charles's expected marriage to Julia renews the promise of entering and possessing Brideshead. However, just as he feels he's about to get inside, the vision eludes him. Through this final disappointment, Waugh tells us that Charles has misunderstood what it means to get inside of Brideshead. For an outsider (or a reader of the novel), getting inside of Brideshead requires more than an understanding of Brideshead as an historical monument dedicated to aristocratic and aesthetic values. Getting inside requires that one understand Brideshead above all as a shrine dedicated to an ancient religious tradition, and more specifically as a refuge or sanctuary where one finds the living heart of a Catholic family memory. As Charles learns later in life, to

truly enter Brideshead would be to merge into this living tradition of memory, like Nanny Hawkins does. But since he arrives at this understanding too late, it seems the low door in the wall is closed to him for good. The closest he can come is to interiorize the memory that Brideshead evokes and preserve it through a personal acceptance of Catholic faith.

One finds this ending somewhat illogical, however, when considering that by becoming a Catholic, Charles eventually could have been reunited with Julia; the two of them could then have returned to inherit Brideshead and there revitalize a Catholic family and tradition. But to go this route, Waugh would have had to make Charles's conversion more obvious, and thus make his theme too exclusive, his appeal too limited. Waugh was obviously writing something more than a simple *Fr. Brown* story of conversion. As it actually stands, the plan of the novel enables Charles to become a broader type of character, a representative modern Western individual. Charles's experience represents the modern experience of human subjectivity in its almost constant state of flux. Early on in Book 2 he expresses this sense of modern existence after having been expelled from the Edenic garden of Book 1: "we are seldom single or unique; we keep company in this world with a hoard of abstractions and reflections and counterfeits of ourselves - the sensual man, the economic man, the man of reason, the beast, the machine and the sleepwalker, and heaven knows what besides, all in our own image, indistinguishable from ourselves to the outward eye."

Sebastian is a more tragic type of modern misfit, torn more radically than Charles between the pull of competing impulses. The spell of memory continually pulls him back toward a primal identity associated with family, ritual, and a specific place: Brideshead. Yet memory more than anything is what Sebastian resists through drink: "I was determined to have a happy Christmas," said Sebastian. "Did you?" asked Charles. "I think so," he replied. "I don't remember it much, and that's always a good sign, isn't it?" Sebastian's life becomes a pattern of weaving in and out of memory, of moving back toward his origins and obliterating the memory of these origins. Cordelia sums up his pattern of existence at the monastery in Morocco in a line that perfectly comprehends his struggle: "He'll live on, half in, half out of the community." Perhaps the main difficulty for Sebastian is mirrored in the situation of the monastery to which he half-attaches himself - it is another ancient community of memory, like the Marchmain family, that is inwardly compelled by the need to remember what it is, and must struggle to maintain its own unique values and identity at the fringes of a modern mass culture. Troubled by similar tensions, Sebastian represents the almost totally fragmented modern subject, torn between the restless search for a meaningful identity and the need for a stable existence, torn between desire and commitment.

Cordelia is a less extreme case; but even she recognizes her own split subjectivity, her misfit nature, which is similar to Sebastian's: "people who can't quite fit in either to the world or the monastic rule. I suppose I'm something of the sort myself." Julia, too, after her own long and restless search, arrives at a sense of split subjectivity which she anticipates will be her continued mode of existence: "I've always been bad. Probably I shall be bad again, punished again. But the worse I am, the more I need God. I can't shut myself out from His mercy."

There is also, however, another critical angle to consider in analyzing these modern misfits, and that involves Waugh's insistence on closing down almost every possible future for his characters which does not smack of a nearly monastic adherence to a traditional Catholic lifestyle, or at least an ambivalent magnetic pull toward such a lifestyle. According to Stephen Spender, this insistence on the part of Waugh indicates his "puzzling ethics" and "lack of sense of moral proportion." Characters like Sebastian, Cordelia, and even Julia "can't quite fit in either to the world or the monastic rule"; no balanced form of life incorporating human desire, love, and religious practice is open to them. Moreover, God's plan regarding Julia and Charles seems to involve separating those who truly love each other on the grounds of religious doctrine.

Critics of *Brideshead* have often sounded similar complaints against Waugh's Catholic self-assuredness and snobbery. Sean O'Faolin argues that "A religious theme given institutional treatment is always liable to get lost in the embroidered folds of ecclesiasticism; and so is the author. The old detachment is sold to loyalty, and while one admires loyalty there is no place for it in art." He goes on to accuse Waugh of lowering his art to the level of a snarling argument about "the superiority of the Catholic squires of England to the non-Catholic salesmen of England." However, aside from the elitist tendencies one finds in the novel, Waugh also chose to portray, in a consistent and fairly accurate manner, the power of Catholic conscience over members of the Catholic faith living in a pre-Vatican II world. Contemporary Catholics and non- Catholics may find the novel's portrayal of dramatic religious acts and extreme religious choices (such as Julia must make about marrying Charles) to be simply contrived; but rather, these reflect with some accuracy an older form of Catholicism fading more and more into the realm of historical otherness. Furthermore, had he not dramatized such extreme choices, Waugh would not have expressed strongly enough what he feels is at stake for the modern reader of *Brideshead.* In *Brideshead,* Waugh resists a prevailing discourse of bourgeois individualism and materialism (most obviously embodied in Rex and Hooper) which he sees beneath the ruinous transformations of the modern world. Waugh resists this discourse by asserting a counter-discourse of rich, vividly realistic prose enshrining aristocratic, aesthetic, and religious values.

Yet, even more radical than a dramatic portrayal of difficult personal choices, more radical than Waugh's intended Catholic apologia, "an attempt to trace the workings of the divine purpose in a pagan world" (Waugh's dust jacket comment), *Brideshead Revisited* represents, through its characters and mode of narration, the awareness of an historical subjectivity brought about by confrontation with the disruptive forces in modern mass culture. Caught in the pull between "monastic rule" and the world, between Catholic family tradition and individual absorption into broader social relations, the Marchmain family represents a site of that unique modern struggle between competing modes of subjectivity. The characters are lured by the world's possibilities, held back by family tradition; they are compelled by the forces of history, haunted by the forces of memory.

In other words, for many of the characters memory is mingled with an historical sensibility, producing a disturbing self-consciousness which they try to suppress and whose roots are fixed deep in the tenacious ground of childhood memory. Michel

Foucault states that "Since memory is actually a very important factor in struggle, if one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism." As we see especially with Julia and Sebastian, a Catholic identity, straining outward from childhood memory, operates as the irrepressible controlling factor in their struggle for self-control. For Julia and Sebastian (and for most of the Marchmain family), these early memories locate their entry into the symbolic realm of their Catholic family heritage where language, behavior patterns, social relations, rituals, are all, in turn, rooted in the ancient collective memory of Catholic culture. As children, their intimate link to this lived tradition of memory was forged by Lady Marchmain and Nanny Hawkins, the two primary preservers of family and faith in the novel. From them, Julia first learns the word that signifies the sundering of this vital link to family tradition - sin: "A word from so long ago, from Nanny Hawkins stitching by the hearth and the nightlight burning before the Sacred Heart. Cordelia and me with the catechism, in Mummy's room, before luncheon on Sundays."

Separated from this context, Julia, Sebastian, and also Lord Marchmain go along rudderless through life, until the "twitch upon the thread," the force of memory, recalls them to a repressed identity firmly interiorized during their youth (though admittedly for Lord Marchmain this identity is not rooted in childhood memory but was simply chosen and later abandoned). Cara's assessment of Sebastian and Lord Marchmain is therefore only half right. Both in a sense refuse to grow up, but Sebastian's is a selective memory of childhood: he suppresses his early bonds of memory to the Catholic tradition and chooses to remember only a time of playful frolic, symbolized by his toy bear. Lord Marchmain avoids more than just a loss of youthful freedom; he specifically avoids any memory of the Catholic identity he chose, with all its resulting obligations. Sebastian, Julia, and Lord Marchmain all know that to maintain their Catholic heritage consciously and deliberately demands a hard sacrifice of personal responsibility. To remember and protect the trappings of their Catholic family identity is an extremely difficult task considering the combined demands of their exclusive religion and their aristocratic status. Together, both of these factors create and intensify the sense of isolation they feel at Brideshead.

When memories finally do resurface, as in Julia's case, they are accompanied by a tremendous weight of self-consciousness, a traumatic awareness of how the modern world has taken its toll on her, sundering her vital link to a meaningful family tradition and leaving her a torn, isolated individual without an identity:

Past and future; the years when I was trying to be a
good wife, in the cigar smoke, while time crept on
and the counters clicked on the backgammon board,
and the man who was 'dummy' at the men's table
filled the glasses; when I was trying to bear his child,
torn in pieces by something already dead; putting him
away, forgetting him, finding you, the past two years
with you, all the future with you, all the future with
or without you, war coming, world ending - sin.

Julia's dilemma can be more clearly defined by a comment from Nicholas Kostis on the force of memory in *Brideshead:* "Memories are but intermittances, momentary enchantments which are less an inner substance or property of the individual than a force from without which imposes itself on the individual and crushes him between past and future, leaving him more with the terror of his own absence than with the presence of a consoling reality." The novel asserts that without the consoling reality of a memorial consciousness linked to a common tradition, the individual is left with an empty personal history of discontinuous attempts to ground identity. Indeed, the possibility of reconstructing a kind of Catholic tribal life with a shared and enduring memory seems closed down for all the characters at the end of the story. Each embarks on a private quest for those sites of memory that re-link them to their origins and allow them to understand their history and their historical subjectivity. These sites of memory represent for the characters an image of historical difference through which they seek to retrace an unrecoverable identity, or as Pierre Nora states, "the decipherment of what we are in the light of what we are no longer."

By "revisiting" these sites, rituals, and trappings of memory, the characters represent those modern historical subjects who perceive their historical progress from ancient communities of memory, bound in devotion to the rituals of tradition, to fragmented modern communities whose individual members must maintain for themselves the historical signs that link present identity to a past communal or traditional identity. However, at the end of the novel, the characters are represented not merely as individuals who now try to comprehend who they are "in the light of what they are no longer," but also as individuals attempting to reinscribe themselves in these sites of memory, seeking to revitalize there a sense of community and tradition that lives on in individual memory. Sebastian tries to re-link himself to past memory at a monastery where a Catholic communal tradition survives. Through Nanny Hawkins we learn that Julia and Cordelia plan to return to Brideshead after the war, and there we expect them to reconstitute what they can of a Catholic family tradition.

In this story about the extinguishing and relighting of a beaten-copper lamp, a story about the gradual extinguishing of a family tradition, a Catholic aristocratic identity, with the religious and aesthetic values they stand for, the power of memory represents the light of the lamp that Waugh will not allow to be extinguished or kept hidden. The power of memory is the primary agent which motivates the characters' lives; memory perpetuates a level of subjectivity that replays itself in their lives, re-emerging in the same and in different contexts uncontrollably.

The novel records, therefore, not just the nostalgia of outsiders trying to get back in and return to a certain origin, but also an obsession with preserving the outward signs and historical traces of this origin. Through Charles we realize how preoccupied the novel is with historicizing memory; that is, making memory the object of historical study, enshrining in an almost fetishistic manner each place, gesture, image, and object that tells the story of memory. One perfectly encapsulated example of this is Charles's reflection on the diamond- studded tortoise Julia receives from Rex:

this slightly obscene object... became a memorable
part of the evening, one of those needle-hooks of experience
which catch the attention when larger matters
are at stake, and remain in the mind when they
are forgotten, so that years later it is a bit of gilding,
or a certain smell, or the tone of a clock's striking
which recalls one to a tragedy.

Charles the artist/storyteller is more accurately Charles the historian who, to preserve textually his own memory and the memory of Brideshead, depends entirely on the materiality of the trace, the visibility of the image. But most especially, to take in Waugh's more specific purposes, Charles's history text depends on the immediacy of those images and signs that sustain a link to a tradition of memory, a religious faith, a cultural heritage. As an example, Charles's paintings of Marchmain House and other doomed old houses represent a type of history writing within his larger historical narrative wherein he records with a fetishistic realism the disappearing sites of aristocratic life and values.

Lord Marchmain's deathbed sign is also a prized piece of historical evidence in Charles's historical narrative. Charles eagerly yearns for this sign, and his anticipation reflects a larger obsession seen throughout the novel with recording all the material indicators of inner dynamics and values, all the scenery and gestures that made the drama real. What is most significant, though, about Lord Marchmain's sign is that he finally gives it only after recounting his memories of Brideshead family history as once told to him by Aunt Julia and the field workers - "unlettered men" with "long memories." Lord Marchmain's deathbed repentance marks his return to an ancient family heritage; the last of the knights of the old guard returns to the historical site of his ancestral memory, stretching back before Henry VIII and the Reformation, back to the time of Agincourt. Lord Marchmain yields to the spell of memory which increasingly takes control of his consciousness, as his broken, spontaneous narrative seems to indicate. In his last remaining days he feels compelled to pass on his family story orally. Yet he fully recognizes his link to family tradition and memory only when he submits to the power of memory by marking himself with a sign of its dominance.

This act, however, does not simply reaffirm the need for a radical relationship to the transcendent. Again, a purely religious interpretation is insufficient to account for what motivates a relighting of the lamp in each of the characters. Religious motivations lose their primacy and autonomy when we consider how they are inextricably tied to the novel's politics of identity preservation. Lord Marchmain's sign expresses his fidelity to a Catholic family identity and history, while it simultaneously refutes his personal history of resistance to the work of sustaining this identity. The sign of the cross which he makes on his deathbed is both a private and a public gesture, a final attempt to reclaim his position as keeper and teacher of a family faith and memory. The sign tells a story of how he personally accepts his subjectivity to tradition and memory, of how through this sign he inscribes himself within the history of his family's faith tradition. He thereby helps to perpetuate a living history marked by similar signs, rituals, symbols, social practices - all maintained as part of a common Catholic memory.

In the task of preserving memory and identity, Charles's narrative performs an archival function: it is absorbed in the work of recording, remembering, and meticulously reconstituting each sign and site of memory that tells of his own story and the story of Brideshead. Moreover, the history recorded in Charles's narrative is about the merging of his personal story with the history of Brideshead. It is this integral bond between storyteller and story, between the archivist and his historical material, that makes Charles a representative of the modern historian as described by Pierre Nora. According to Nora, the role of the old historian was that of "an erudite transparency, a vehicle of transmission, a bridge stretched as lightly as possible between the raw materiality of the document and its inscription in memory - ultimately, an absence obsessed with objectivity. But with the disintegration of history-memory, a new type of historian emerges who, unlike his precursors, is ready to confess the intimate relation he maintains to his subject. Better still, he is ready to proclaim it, deepen it, make of it not the obstacle but the means of his understanding." Accordingly, the fictional history that is *Brideshead Revisited* is also the personalized document of Charles Ryder; it is the historical novel into which he writes himself and records his memories.

Charles preserves and legitimates his memory through an historical narrative that anchors, condenses, and expresses an identity born of these memories, an identity which has intersected with the memory, lives, and religious heritage of the Marchmain family. In addition, Waugh represents both Charles and the Marchmains as having intersected with a modern world that sweeps them up in the historical process summarized so well by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto:*

> All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and men at last are forced to face... the real condition of their lives and their relations with their fellow men.

The novel encloses this moment of intersection where memory and history meet, where an identity once sustained within a living tradition of memory becomes distanced from itself, other than itself - the moment when a subject realizes he is an historical subject, a split, fragmented subject, who must go in search of his origins in memory. Rather, he must preserve those originary sites of memory with all their symbolic excess. These function as the core of an historical subjectivity whose formations and deformations in the modern historical process mark a path of difference along which identity can be traced, represented, and preserved. Like the modern individual, the text of *Brideshead* is preoccupied with the questions of who we once were, what we have become, and how we have changed.

Within the novel we see various historical, literary, and aesthetic modes of preserving memory: the story told by Capt. Ryder, Lord Marchmain's recollections, Charles's architectural paintings, Mr. Samgrass's biography of Lady Marchmain's brothers, the "new house" at Brideshead containing the historical remnants (the original stones) of

the old castle. The realistic, factual quality of these "texts," both in themselves and as the novel presents them, suggests an attempt to materialize the immaterial, to stop time and forgetting through the concretion of memory. At the same time, the living quality of these memory texts entices others to share in their virtual reality. Also, the rich, pictorial language of *Brideshead* attests to this desire to materialize memory, as if Waugh were demanding that each word and image be given visual and audible reality - a feat nearly accomplished in the exhaustive and meticulously exact PBS television version of *Brideshead Revisited.*

Through Charles, the text hearkens back to a time when an aristocratic Catholic culture sustained itself and expressed an identity through a collective memory and through gradually evolving but always self-enclosed, self-referential signs, rituals, images, and structures (such as the house at Brideshead, the chapel, the Catholic Mass, Catholic family life, and the perpetually burning sanctuary lamp). But also, through the two different personae of Charles and Capt. Ryder, the text highlights the historical distancing and rapid transformations wrought by the modern world. As a result of these modern changes, the text gives the central role to the operations of the historian - Charles Ryder - whose intimate involvement with the Marchmain family allows him to record accurately, to take inventory, and thus provide a means to understand the historical transformations of this family and its Catholic heritage. Moreover, because of his intimate relation to his subject, both Charles the historian and his historical narrative represent sites of memory; what Charles records is not merely history, it is the means of his own understanding and the ground of his identity.

Through Charles, the novel suggests that what was once the province of a collective tradition and memory is now dispersed and maintained within individuals who may at times gather to share memory and enact rituals, but are ultimately absorbed by the larger collective of modern society. Tribal life and memory are gone; the modern world sweeps them into its vortex, and the way is marked only by historical traces, by signs and sites of memory, which individuals and protective enclaves must dutifully preserve for themselves to defend and maintain a specific identity.

Source: David Rothstein, "*Brideshead Revisited* and the Modern Historicization of Memory," in *Studies in the Novel,* Vol. 25, No. 3, Fall 1993, pp. 318-31.

Adaptations

Brideshead Revisited was adapted as a television mini-series in 1982, starring Anthony Andrews, Jeremy Irons, Diana Quick, and Laurence Olivier, and produced by Granada Television. A six-volume VHS tape set of the series is available from Anchor Bay Entertainment.

Harper Audio has produced a cassette recording of *Brideshead Revisited,* and Chivers Audio Books has produced a compact disc recording of the unabridged novel. Jeremy Irons narrates both versions, which were released in 2000.

In 1994, Roger Parsley adapted the novel into a play entitled *Brideshead Revisited: A Play.*

Topics for Further Study

Research the Spanish Civil War and how the numerous volunteers from all over the world played a part. Where did they come from, and why did they volunteer for what was often dangerous duty?

How does Charles's college life compare to your school experiences? Write an essay in which you consider the similarities and differences.

Think about how Sebastian's drinking is described and dealt with in the novel. Are attitudes about drinking different today? How do the Flytes handle Sebastian's drinking problem, and how does this compare to the way similar problems are handled today?

If possible, find someone who lived through the Great Depression in the United States or elsewhere. Interview the person to learn what life was like then, and how it was different from life today. If you are unable to interview someone, read first-hand accounts of depression-era people and write an essay describing their way of life during that period.

When Sebastian wants to escape his family, he travels to the Middle East and North Africa. When Charles Ryder leaves his wife to paint and draw for two years, he goes to Mexico and Central America. Why do you think each chose the place he did? Where would you go to if you wanted to get away for a while?

Think about the transatlantic cruise Charles and Celia take from New York to London. Imagine what it would be like to travel with a group of strangers on a ship that takes days to get to Europe. Write a series of diary entries as if you were Charles or Celia describing the trip and your feelings and experiences. You may want to do some historical research to help you make your entries accurate and detailed.

Compare and Contrast

1920s and 1930s: The African-American singer and dancer Josephine Baker creates a sensation in Paris with her risqué nightclub show in which she wears an outfit made primarily of feathers. When Anthony and Charles go to a jazz club in London, Charles alludes to having gone to such clubs in Paris, where this kind of entertainment is more accepted than it is in London.

Today: African American Queen Latifah is one of the most prominent performers in the world. She has starred in a television series, hosted her own talk show, been featured in television commercials, and produced top-selling albums.

1920s and 1930s: Art Deco is the primary artistic style. The name is derived from a 1925 exhibition of decorative and industrial arts in Paris. Art Deco style incorporates straight lines and symmetry using manufactured rather than naturally occurring materials. Charles's art is not influenced by this modern style; he prefers more traditional subjects and styles.

Today: Art Deco is considered a "retro" style but is still widely appreciated and collected. Web sites devoted to preserving and studying Art Deco buildings and decorative objects number in the hundreds and are based around the world, from New Zealand to Washington, D.C., to Miami.

1920s and 1930s: The period between World War I and World War II is marked by both prosperity and economic crisis worldwide. European nations are working to rebuild after the First World War. After the stock market crash of 1929, much of the industrialized world suffers through record high unemployment and inflation. Wealthy families like the Flytes are somewhat insulated from the devastation by their inherited land and capital.

Today: Most of the industrialized world has enjoyed at least four years of unparalleled economic prosperity. Among the wealthiest individuals in the world are those who started innovative companies in the high-technology industry, which is fueling economies worldwide.

What Do I Read Next?

Brideshead Benighted is a collection of politically incorrect satire authored by Evelyn Waugh's son, Auberon. The 1986 book was originally published in England with the title *Another Voice: An Alternative Anatomy of Britain.*

In Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust,* Tony Last's wife grows bored with their country aristocrat lifestyle and takes a lover and a flat in London. Waugh wrote this satiric depiction of life among the English upper crust in 1934.

Anthony Blanche recites from memory part of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922). This is the quintessential poem capturing post-World War I despair.

Graham Greene's 1951 novel *The End of the Affair* uses flashback and memories to return to the events that take place between a married woman and her lover during the German bombardments of World War II London. Greene and Evelyn Waugh are of the same English generation, and Greene is also sometimes considered a "Catholic novelist."

Further Study

Allitt, Patrick, *Catholic Converts,* Cornell University Press, 2000.

Waugh is among a significant group of British and American intellectuals who, during the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, converted to Catholicism. This recently published book is an account of the impact these converts had on the Catholic Church.

Cannadine, David, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy,* Vintage Books, 1999.

This book tracks the British aristocracy from its supremacy in the 1870s to the 1930s, when it had lost a generation of sons to World War I and much of its wealth as well.

Stannard, Martin, ed., *Evelyn Waugh,* Routledge, 1997.

This text is one of the major biographies of Waugh, covering his life from the 1920s through to his death.

Wykes, David, *Evelyn Waugh: A Literary Life,* St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Wykes's book explores how Waugh's life affected his writing, but this is more a work of literary criticism than a biography.

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Fussell, Paul, "The Genesis of a Snob," in *New Republic,* Vol. 187, No. 3542, December 6, 1982, pp. 38-39.

Hutchens, John K., "Evelyn Waugh's Finest Novel," in *New York Times,* December 30, 1945.

Kermode, Frank, "Mr. Waugh's Cities," in *Encounter,* Vol. 15, No. 5, November, 1960, pp. 63-66, 68-70.

Lynch, Richard P., "Evelyn Waugh's Early Novels: the Limits of Fiction," in *Papers on Language and Literature,* Vol. 30, No. 4, Fall 1994, pp. 373-86.

Ulanov, Barry, "The Ordeal of Evelyn Waugh," in *The Vision Obscured: Perceptions of Some Twentieth-Century Catholic Novelists,* edited by Melvin J. Friedman, Fordham University Press, 1970, pp. 79-93.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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