

# **Brighton Rock Study Guide**

## **Brighton Rock by Graham Greene**

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# Plot Summary

Brighton Rock is a murder mystery set in Brighton, England, in the 1930s. This story of a series of gang murders takes the tone of a morality play, concerning a clash between two characters equally obsessed with the relationship of good and evil.

The novel begins with the arrival of Fred Hale in Brighton. He has been sent there by his employer, The Daily Messenger, as part of a summer promotional contest. There, he meets Ida Arnold, a vivacious middle-aged Londoner on holiday, and confides that he is in danger. Moments later, he disappears. Back in London, Ida learns that he has died and suspects foul play. After receiving an invite back to Brighton from a friend, she resolves to investigate further.

Hale has been killed, it turns out, by Pinkie, a sixteen-year-old sociopathic leader of a gang. The authorities have deemed the death one of natural causes, but Pinkie is concerned because a waitress at Snow's saw one of his men, Spicer, planting evidence that Hale ate lunch there. In order to keep Rose quiet, Pinkie takes her on a date and threatens her with acid. As Ida arrives in town and begins questioning Rose, however, Pinkie decides the best course of action is to marry her.

Meanwhile, Spicer is beginning to lose his mind and wants to leave Brighton. Pinkie is also facing challenges from Colleoni, the wealthy new mob boss in Brighton. Fearing Spicer's loyalty, Pinkie arranges with Colleoni to have Spicer killed at the racetrack. On the day of the ambush, though, Colleoni's men also try to kill Pinkie. Pinkie returns home to find Spicer has survived the attack. Pinkie proceeds to push him down a flight of stairs to his death.

Pinkie is a Roman Catholic, haunted by memories of his parents having sex and of his mentor Kite's death - a death precipitated by Hale's journalism. He is further haunted by the mortal sin he commits by marrying Rose outside of a church and then having sex with her. As this happens, Ida Arnold has won a huge bet on a horse race. She uses the cash to move into the best hotel in Brighton. She begins to pay off disgruntled members of Pinkie's mob like Cubitt and his unstable lawyer Mr. Prewitt. She also intensifies her pursuit of Rose.

Fearing Rose will break, Pinkie resolves to trick Rose into a suicide pact. His right-hand man Dallow tries in vain to convince him to let her live. On the night that Pinkie decides to drive Rose to the country for her suicide, Ida approaches Dallow and convinces him to tip the police off to Pinkie's whereabouts. The police ambush Pinkie and Rose moment before the latter attempts suicide. Pinkie panics and throws himself off a cliff into the sea.

The book ends with Ida Arnold debating whether she should return to her husband Tom, reasoning that humanity needs love above all else. Rose, meanwhile, is embittered by the Pinkie's death, but a priest convinces her that salvation is possible for all people.



# Part 1, Chapter 1

## Part 1, Chapter 1 Summary

Brighton Rock is a murder mystery set in Brighton, England, in the 1930s. This story of a series of gang murders takes the tone of a morality play, concerning a clash between two characters equally obsessed with the relationship of good and evil.

Chapter One focuses on Fred Hale, a journalist for the Daily Messenger. He has come to Brighton as part of one of the popular "scavenger hunts" British papers would sponsor during the summer seasons. Hale, under the name Kolley Kibber, wanders Brighton - and other resort towns - until he is recognized by a Messenger reader and challenged. That reader is given a prize. Hale also leaves cards around town that can be redeemed for smaller prizes.

As Hale arrives in Brighton, he knows his life is in danger. He does not want to shirk his Kibber responsibilities for fear of losing his job, but he wants to stay in crowds and so he drinks throughout the day to keep his nerves. Arriving in a pub at midday, he finds a jovial, inebriated, big-breasted woman singing. As he watches her, a serious young man with a razor scar on his face comes behind him and calls his name. The insinuating boy sits next to Hale - who denies that Fred is his name - and has a soft drink. Hale, nervous and stammering, offers a prize card to the boy. The boy turns him down and leaves the pub. Hale approaches the big-breasted woman and offers to buy her lunch. She is flattered but turns him down. He knows the boy is planning something for him.

Leaving the pub, Hale runs into Cubitt, a local hustler. Hale approaches him and confides that he thinks he will be killed in Brighton. Leaving Cubitt, he finds a fat girl sitting with her pale friend on the boardwalk. Desperate to have someone with him, he implores the girl to join him for a bite. The girl says she couldn't go unless Hale had a male friend to accompany her companion. Suddenly, the boy approaches and offers to join them. Hale panics and leaves.

As he hustles away from the boy, he runs headlong into the big-breasted woman. Her name is Ida, and she is down from London for the holiday. He tells her that his name is Fred - neglecting to use his preferred alias Charles - and gives her a tip on a horse, Black Boy. Ida, a bon vivant who lives day-to-day, readily accepts the tip. He decides to join her as she tours Brighton. As they get in a taxi, Hale kisses Ida and tells her that he is going to die. She attempts to comfort him, and he begs her to stay with him. She says she will, but first she wants to have a shower at the bathing house on one of the piers. Hale lends her money to do so, but after she returns he is gone.

## Part 1, Chapter 1 Analysis

Like many classic whodunits, the first chapter of Brighton Rock focuses on the victim, Hale. However, Greene - never an obvious writer - is subverting the genre immediately.



Firstly, he all but tells us who the victim is in the first sentence: "Hale knew, before he had been in Brighton three hours, that they meant to murder him" (p. 3). Moreover, he denies the reader any fidelity with Hale. The reader is alienated from him in several ways. For one, the reader never learns his actual name and assumes it to be either Fred or Charles. One also never learn the particulars of his betrayal of Pinkie's mob. All one experiences is his panicked final hours, a portrait of a pathetic sniveling creep.

Greene also reveals his killer and heroine from the beginning. When the reader meets Ida Arnold, the hero, she is drunk and flirtatious, more a caricature than a sympathetic character. Pinkie, on the other hand, sidles into Brighton Rock reeking of the unsavory. He antagonizes Hale from the moment he sits next to him in the pub. He seems to materialize like a pure menace everywhere that Hale goes. By the end of Chapter One, the reader is certain that Hale is doomed and the creepy "Boy" is the culprit.

This assumption is correct, meaning that most mystery is drained from Brighton Rock immediately. Greene, after all, is not concerned with puzzles. He is creating a cat and mouse story laid out over a fiercely moral stage.



# Part 1, Chapters 2 and 3

## Part 1, Chapters 2 and 3 Summary

At the beginning of Chapter Two, the boy walks to a carnival pier and speaks to a shooting gallery caller. The caller gives him the time. From there, the boy walks to the pier's tea room and waits for his gang; they are late. After a time, Cubitt and his partner Dallow arrive. Only Spicer, the oldest of the gang, is absent. The boy orders fish and chips, and when Spicer arrives, shaken and nauseous, he forces the old man to eat.

The boy - named Pinkie - begins to grill his men on the murder of Fred Hale. He wants to ensure that no loose ends exist. Pinkie is convince that they do not need to worry about the woman Hale was with, but he is concerned about the Messenger card. Spicer's job was to distribute the rest of the cards, and he is concerned that Hale's body will be found before the end of the day. Pinkie is concerned that Spicer left a card at the restaurant Snow's, where it could be found by someone who could identify him.

Pinkie stalks off to Snow's, where he insists on sitting at the table where Spicer placed the card. There, he is served by Rose, a young woman. She notices him searching under the tablecloth and tells him that she just found a Kolley Kibber card there. She says the man who lift the card (Spicer) did not look like the Kibber pictures in the Messenger. Pinkie gets up to leave, but before he does he tells Rose he will be back. He intends to call on her.

In Chapter Three, Ida Arnold is back in London, where she drops in on her regular pub Henekey's. There, a solemn, tired widower called Clarence gives her the new that the Daily Messenger's Kolley Kimber has died in Brighton. He shows her the picture, and she is shocked to see that it is Fred. Moreover, Ida is confused by the fact that the paper calls him Charles Hale, not Fred. Immediately, she suspects something is amiss. The paper says Fred died of natural causes; Ida suspects suicide or worse. Moreover, she is saddened that he has no family to claim his body and has already been replaced by another Kolley Kibber.

Ida rushes out to catch Hale's funeral, which is not far off. Arriving, the church is nearly empty, and the clergyman is preaching that man's modern belief in salvation does not imply an equal belief in hell. Nor is the old notion of heaven as Elysian fields necessarily true. The clergyman says that Hale is united with God, and the casket is sent to the flames for cremation.

As she leaves the church, Ida is swept with emotion and weeps. She decides to investigate the matter further. The only person she can think to see is the fat girl from the boardwalk who was interviewed for the inquest. The woman's name is Molly Pink, and she is a secretary for Messrs, Carter, & Galloway. On her way in she passes an old Irishman named Moyne. Moyne chats with her a moment and asks her for money.



In Messrs, Carter, & Galloway, Ida questions Molly, who describes her interaction with Fred - whom she knows as Charles - and the boy who made him so nervous. After Ida leaves, she wonders what went through Fred's mind on his final days. After receiving a Brighton postcard from her friend Phil Corkery, she decides to consult her Ouija board with her neighbor, Old Crowe. After three tries, she gets two separate, enigmatic words: SUKILL and FRESUICILLEYE. At the end of the chapter, Ida decides she has to find Fred's killer; it is a matter of right and wrong.

## Part 1, Chapters 2 and 3 Analysis

The reader's suspicions that Hale is to die at the hands of the malevolent boy are confirmed in Chapter Two. The reader is informed of the boy's name, Pinkie. Pinkie is the leader of a gang of Brighton hoods. Brighton is a summer resort town on the southern coast of England, and its racetrack is a profitable commodity for bookies and gamblers. Pinkie's gang takes a cut of the track action. Somehow, Hale is a threat to this.

One of the strangest things about his gang is how much younger Pinkie is than the hoods he commands. He seems to hold a spell over them, a combination of authority, arrogance, and utter weirdness. There is no telling what he might do, and from the demeanor of Cubitt, Dallow, and Spicer after the killing, these men are not accustomed to murder.

At the end of Chapter Three, Greene seemingly delineates why Ida Arnold is the hero of Brighton Rock. This unemployed lush becomes obsessed with the death of Hale for no reason other than he seemed to like her. She has little evidence that he didn't die of natural causes, but she is determined to return to Brighton and uncover the truth. The reason, she states, is a simple moral imperative. A man like Fred Hale deserves some justice. Greene's admiration for Ida is her simple - and secular - commitment to good.



## Part 2, Chapters 1 and 2

### Part 2, Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

At the beginning of Chapter One, Pinkie runs into Spicer at a pier; he is about to meet Rose for a date. Spicer warns Pinkie that the mob will not do any more killing, and Pinkie brushes off the possibility of more death as impossible, since the verdict has come in that Hale had died naturally.

Rose arrives as Spicer leaves, and for a moment she thinks she recognizes him as the man who left the Kibber card. She and Pinkie make their way to Sherry's for supper, and on the way Pinkie warns her that Fred Hale was into some bad business with some dangerous people. He intimates that women who interfere with this mob get their faces burned with acid. To punctuate his point, he pulls out a bottle of vitriol.

They arrive at the Sherry, but neither drinks, so ordering is an awkward process. Pinkie doesn't like to dance, so they simply sit and listen to the music. As the talk, Pinkie mocks Rose for being "green" and naïve (p. 53). Pinkie is pleasantly surprised to find that she, like he, is a Roman Catholic. Pinkie tells her that, though he never attends mass, he believes in the fires of Hell. Heaven, he is not so sure about.

As he arrives back to his boarding house, Frank's, Pinkie loudly complains the banister on the stairs is loose. As he comes to his room, Pinkie finds Cubitt, Dallow, and Spicer meeting in his room. Dallow - the most loyal of Pinkie's men - is ready to deal with Rose with a razor. Cubitt begins mocking the boy that he will be marrying Rose soon. Pinkie, annoyed, takes account of which bookies have paid their dues to the gang. Two have not, and Pinkie decides to make an example of one, Brewer. He and Dallow get their razors and head out into the rainy night.

At Brewer's door, Pinkie holds down the bell until the bookie answers. Evidently, Brewer's wife is sick and cannot be disturbed. Brewer, sitting with Pinkie and Dallow in his main room, explains that he has to pay off the new boss of Brighton - a wealthy, older gangster called Colleoni - and he cannot afford to pay twice. Recently, the old head of Pinkie's gang, Kite, was murdered, so Brewer thought he had to pay Colleoni. Pinkie proceeds to cut Brewer's face with a razor and demand his money. As he and Dallow leave, Pinkie wonders aloud if he can stand up to Colleoni. Kite had tried to bring automatic batting machines to the track and Colleoni had him killed.

In Chapter Two, Pinkie receives a letter from Colleoni asking to meet at the Cosmopolitan, Brighton's finest hotel. He has his shabby clothes pressed and heads over. Colleoni, a commanding figure, is surprised to find a child of sixteen leading Kite's old mob. Pinkie says that he has dealt with the journalist who brought about Hale's death, but he has no interest in introducing automatic machines to the track. He goes on to warn Colleoni that infringing on his territory will be bad. Colleoni is amused and offers Pinkie a job. Pinkie declines.





As Pinkie leaves the Cosmopolitan, he is picked up by the police. At the station, the chief inspector warns him that with the races beginning next week, he does not want any turf wars that could endanger innocent people. Pinkie is certain that is the work of Colleoni.

## Part 2, Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

In this section, the reader is presented the dynamics of the Brighton underworld. Pinkie, as it turns out, has recently taken over the gang from a man named Kite, who was killed. The central business of the Brighton gangs involves the racetrack. Mobs like Pinkie's shake down bookies like Brewer and Tate, threatening them with razors.

Evidently, Kite's death left a power vacuum that has been quickly filled by the dapper Londoner Colleoni, who has absorbed most of the competition. Only Pinkie remains as a thorn in Colleoni's side, but Pinkie is clearly outmatched, a fact that seems plain to everyone in his gang except Dallow. Colleoni lives in the most exclusive hotel in town and collects tribute from every bookie of note. He even has Pinkie arrested. At no point does Greene imply that Pinkie has a chance against this much more powerful enemy.

This fatalism pervades the ensuing action. The reader feels that only death - most likely a violent one - awaits the boy. He has committed murder to intimidate Colleoni, and it has not worked. Already his gang is breaking apart, with Spicer clearly preparing to break ranks. Only Dallow and Rose stand by him. The remaining chapters will deal with the slow disintegration of this small mob.



## Part 3, Chapters 1 and 2

### Part 3, Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

In Chapter One, Ida Arnold wakes up in Brighton with a horrid hangover. She recalls very little of her night at Sherry's, except some advances from his pal Phil Corkery, whom she is meeting for lunch at Snow's. She knows a waitress at Snow's found the Kibber card. On her way to the restaurant she runs into the bookie Tate and places a bet on Black Boy. Tate mentions the name Colleoni to her in passing; she has never heard it before. He also mentions the kid who carved up Brewer last night.

Arriving at Snow's, Ida manages to get Rose as a waitress. Phil has not yet arrived, so Ida grills the young waitress regarding the Kibber card. Rose nearly lets slip that the man who left the card did not look like Hale's picture in the paper, but she catches herself. When Phil arrives, they drink Guinness and have lunch. After eating, Ida tells Phil that the waitress said something fishy, and she wants to go down to the police and inquire into Fred Hale.

Ida and Phil arrive at the station more than a little tipsy. Ida loudly demands to see the inspector regarding a suicide. The inspector is unimpressed with her assertions about the Hale case, which is closed. He does agree to let her see the file, though. She is shocked by all the personal information contained in it. She is certain that someone drove Fred to kill himself. After leaving the station, Ida and Phil go to the pier where she last saw Fred. Ida cannot bring herself to go through the turnstile as she did the day he was murdered.

Chapter Two opens on Spicer, who is sick and nervous following the murder. He walks about Brighton, pained by a corn on his foot. On the boardwalk, he runs into Crab, a competing hood who now works for Colleoni. Crab cheerfully informs Spicer that Pinkie has been taken in by the police. Spicer, panicked, returns to Frank's, where the telephone rings. It is Rose, wanting to inform Pinkie that a woman from London has been asking questions about Hale. Spicer is confused by the call, but he agrees to pass the message to Pinkie. Hanging up, he wonders what he should do. He won't turn himself into the police. He feels he is too old for the game, and he needs to get out.

### Part 3, Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

Ida Arnold is the most unlikely of heroines, and Graham Greene seems to be having an awful lot of fun constructing her investigation. At the beginning of Chapter 1, Ida is hung over after a largely forgotten first night in Brighton. Over the course she will be drunk as she travels a largely accurate path to the most important evidence that Hale's death: Rose. She stalks into the Brighton police headquarters and demands to see the file on Hale, all the while dragging poor, put-upon Phil Corkery behind her. They are merry wanderers in a land of death, seeking to do right between drinks and stolen kisses.



Greene is clearly juxtaposing the world of Ida Arnold, full of joy and hedonism, and that of Pinkie, rife with guilt and horror. The author's argument would seem to be that good is not necessarily the path of self-flagellation. A person enjoys life more if she refuses to allow evil to enter her heart but rather moves forward in defense of the weak with a love of life.



## Part 3, Chapters 3 and 4

### Part 3, Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

At the beginning of Chapter Three, Pinkie has been released from police custody and is fuming from the insult. He stalks over to Snow's and loudly demands a table, though there are none left. Rose hears him and runs to calm him down. She asks if his friend - whom she recognizes as the man who left the card - gave him her message. Pinkie chastises her, saying the man who left the card is dead.

Pinkie takes Rose with him out to the country and has her describe the inquisitive woman to him. Rose speaks disparagingly of Ida, saying she does not know right from wrong and lives too freely. As Rose talks, Pinkie recalls being younger and being forced to watch his parents have sex in the next room. He looks on Rose now as just another disgusting carnal temptation. Indeed, she is even from the same neighborhood as he. Rose, it appears, is falling for Pinkie, though she clearly knows every malefaction he has committed. As they return to town, Rose notices, at a photographer's stand, a photo of Spicer. Pinkie is enraged and demands the print. The photographer refuses.

In Chapter Four, Pinkie returns to Frank's and immediately wakes Spicer. Spicer asks him what happened at the police, but Pinkie blows him off. Pinkie tells Spicer he needs to take a holiday and clear out of Brighton for a bit. Spicer says he has a pal in Nottingham with a pub where he can stay. Pinkie asks Spicer to do one last favor for him before leaving, to come with him to the track in the morning. After Spicer goes back to sleep, Pinkie calls Colleoni and makes a request to him.

### Part 3, Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Danger is palpable in Chapters Three and Four as Pinkie speaks to both Rose and Spicer. The reader is uncertain whether Pinkie will kill either of them; he seems to be weighing his options in both cases. At one point, while in the country with Rose, the two stand close the cliff overlooking the sea, foreshadowing the climax. In this passage, Greene offers a window into the wounded psyche of Pinkie Brown. Staring into Rose's eyes, Pinkie recalls watching his parents have sex in front of him, illustrating his disdain for sex as a sin comparable to murder. This extends to all physical pleasure, including drinking.

In Chapter Four, Pinkie delicately suggests to Spicer that he take a holiday. The old thug seems grateful, as he desperately wants to run off to Nottingham. The reader sides with Spicer, hoping will let him disappear into another life. Still, Pinkie states to himself that he is looking at a "dying man" (p. 102). Spicer's days are numbered, and this realization is excruciating.



# Part 4, Chapter 1

## Part 4, Chapter 1 Summary

The chapter begins at the race track on the first day of the races. The track is packed with spectators, including Ida and Phil Corkery. Black Boy is looking like a long shot. Spicer and Pinkie arrive at the track, without Dallow and Cubitt. Spicer speaks wistfully of the pub to which he is heading. Pinkie - though he detests his companion's weakness - acts conciliatory. He offers Spicer a drink and invites him to place a bet on the next race.

The race is run, and Black Boy comes in first. Spicer wins on a place bet and goes to collect from the bookie Tate. When he returns, ten pound note in hand, Pinkie tells him that they don't need to go do anything at the track after all and says his goodbyes. As they part ways, Colleoni's men ambush Spicer and beat him. However, as Pinkie leaves the scene, he is surprised as Colleoni's men chase after him with razors drawn. They cut his face and hand, and he tries to fend them off. Relenting, he flees the track, managing to evade them.

By the time he reaches Snow's, he detests himself for running away. He understands now that his deepest fear is a quick death that leaves his soul to perdition. He catches Rose's attention, and she meets him around the back. In the old wine cellar, Rose attempts to bind Pinkie's wounds with napkins and towels. Evidently, Ida has returned and is in the dining room. Rose is worried for him, and she assures him she will do anything to protect him. She is not afraid of committing a mortal sin. For this, Pinkie's opinion of her changes somewhat; in a certain respect, they are kindred souls. The manageress begins calling for Rose and soon enters the cellar, telling Pinkie to leave.

When Pinkie returns home, he finds Cubitt asking where Spicer is. Apparently, his girl has been around. Pinkie tells Cubitt that Colleoni's men have killed Spicer. He says it is for the best, since Spicer was getting soft. Now, Pinkie feels the best way to silence Rose is to marry her, since wives cannot be forced to testify against their husbands in court. He calls up Mr. Prewitt, the lawyer.

Mr. Prewitt - a slick down-rent fellow - arrives with congratulations to Pinkie. They discuss the issue with marrying. Pinkie can claim to be eighteen and without a guardian. Rose, meanwhile, is sixteen and has living parents: Pinkie will need to secure their permission. Also, the marriage cannot happen in a church. Pinkie gives Mr. Prewitt a small fee for his trouble. On their way out, Pinkie is shocked to see Spicer in his room. He has survived the ambush.

## Part 4, Chapter 1 Analysis

The murder of Fred Hale happens offstage, as it were. The reader is aware that Pinkie Brown exists in the violent underbelly of polite society; one gets a taste of this



viciousness in the previous section when he and Dallow intimidate Brewer with a razor. This chapter, however, is the first that the reader experiences the mad violence the about which chief inspector was concerned. Colleoni's men attack Spicer, as per Pinkie's request, but in a frantic double-cross, they turn their blades on the Boy as well.

This near-death experience is also the first mention made by Pinkie of "the stirrup and the ground," a phrase that will become a mantra of sorts for him (p. 116). This phrase is a reference to the second before death, when a sinner still has chance at salvation by confessing in his heart to God. Pinkie doubts the validity of this, and the experience proves to him the peril of a violent death, which would send his soul to Hell, with all his sins intact.

This chapter also contains the decision by Pinkie to marry Rose, which he reaches through a compellingly introspective process. Rose, he understands, is aware of his villainy and still wants him. Her naïve goodness is somehow the flip-side of his self-aware evil. He decides that marrying her - while expedient for him - is also somehow spiritually necessary.



## Part 4, Chapters 2 and 3

### Part 4, Chapters 2 and 3 Summary

In Chapter Two, Ida Arnold is once again quite inebriated, and she has determined to do everything in her power to get through to Rose. She sits in Snow's with Phil Corkery. Rose approaches her and demands to be left alone, but Ida insists. Rose says that they should go to her upstairs room to talk. Walking upstairs, Rose shuts a door on Ida, and Ida begs her to hear reason. She warns Rose that the boy is wicked and that he does not truly care for her. She tells her that she is blinded by love and lust, as all youth is.

As Chapter Three opens, Pinkie has pushed Spicer down the stairs to his death. He is in the process of breaking the already-rickety banister to make it look like an accident. Mr. Prewitt is horrified. Pinkie orders the lawyer to stick around and testify to the police. Pinkie leaves to talk to Rose.

When Pinkie arrives at Snow's, Rose is still in her room talking to Ida. Pinkie bursts in on them and demands that Ida leave. After she is gone, Rose and Pinkie try to figure out what she could want. Finally, in a nondescript manner, Pinkie asks Rose to marry him. She agrees and promises never to let him down.

### Part 4, Chapters 2 and 3 Analysis

These chapters are both concerned with Rose, her romantic heart, and how her naïveté is somehow the vessel for a self-destructive fanaticism. Ida tries to explain to her that because she has never experienced love before, she wants to be with a man undeserving of her. She does not care, though. She will marry the murderer Pinkie because he seems to want her. The reader recognizes this terrible decision as part of growing up, made awful because of Pinkie's nature. One cannot help but think of the young and inexperienced who, trained by fanatics today, choose a similarly destructive path.



## Part 5, Chapters 1-6

### Part 5, Chapters 1-6 Summary

At the beginning of Part Five, Dallow and Pinkie are walking down the street. Spicer's death has by now been deemed an accident. Pinkie is becoming more aggressive and more paranoid. He is haunted by the memory of Kite's dying breath, and he suspects more killing may be on the way. Dallow convinces his teetotaling boss to join him and Cubitt at the Queen of Hearts for a drink. They take a car out to the country and sit down with Cubitt and Sylvie, Spicer's old girl. After a fair amount of prodding from the boys, Pinkie orders a drink. Sylvie seems less than distraught by Spicer's death, referring to everyone by a pet name and asking Pinkie to dance. The two dance, and Pinkie - determined to push himself over the edge - invites her back to the parked cars for sex. She puts up a small amount of resistance, but they eventually leave. Slipping into the back of a stranger's car, Pinkie cannot bring himself to have sex with Sylvie. He flees back to the pub to find Cubitt.

Pinkie, Dallow, and Cubitt are riding back to Brighton in Chapter Two, and the older men are giving the boy a hard time about marrying. Eventually, Pinkie lashes out that he is not going to marry Rose. When they arrive back at Frank's, Rose is waiting for him with a copy of the paper, announcing Spicer's death. She is frightened, dreaming of Pinkie dying. Pinkie awkwardly tells her that they cannot marry. She responds by accusing him of seeing other girls and implying that she might tell others what she knows about him. He is taken aback, and realizes she controls him as much as he her. Pinkie says they could marry if her father signs a letter agreeing to it.

In Chapter Three, Pinkie goes back to his childhood stomping ground to meet Rose's parents and secure their permission for the marriage. He arrives at their flat, where the two parents refuse to allow Rose to marry. The prickly Pinkie offers them ten pounds for her. Her father demands more, and he eventually gives them fifteen, securing the permission.

In Chapter Four, Ida is at the Pompadour Boudoir at the Cosmopolitan with Phil Cockery, enjoying an éclair with her Black Boy winnings. As they eat, she notices Colleoni passing by with one of his assistants. Ida goes up to the room and asks Phil to fetch her bag. While he is gone, she decides she will sleep with him and begins to undress, feeling carefree for the first time in a while.

Pinkie arrives back at Frank's in Chapter Five to find Dallow and Cubitt "celebrating" his good fortune (p. 160). Judy, Frank's wife who has been sleeping with Dallow, also offers her congratulations. Pinkie shocks the older men by joining them in bitters. Cubitt begins to mock Pinkie for marrying, saying Rose is not so attractive. He and Dallow have bought their boss some vulgar trinkets as wedding gifts. In his rage, Pinkie lets slip to Cubitt that he killed Spicer. This shocks and disturbs Cubitt, who flees the house.





In Chapter Six, Ida is dressing after brief and unsatisfying sex with Phil Corkery. As he wakes up, she tells him that they need to find a disgruntled associate of Pinkie's and get the truth from him.

## Part 5, Chapters 1-6 Analysis

In Part Five, the outsiders enjoy the best of Brighton, and the Brighton natives return to its decrepit underbelly. Brighton as a setting for this novel is a paradox unto itself. Vacationers love it as a pleasure destination, but the native residents are largely working-class poor. It is comparable, in fact, to an American university town whose economy depends on the wealthier students that arrive every year.

The Brighton of Greene's novel is controlled by outsiders, led by Colleoni and his London gang. They bring money, and they employ the locals. Ida Arnold, another Londoner, comes into money in this section because of her bet on Black Boy. This allows her to move into the Cosmopolitan and continue her investigation into Hale's death. The common theme here is that the natives of Brighton will never hold as much sway as the tourists and the outside investors.

Pinkie, meanwhile, stalks back to the poor neighborhood where he grew up to meet Rose's parents. Here, he barter for their daughter as if she were a rug in a market. In the end, he purchases her life for fifteen pounds.



# Part 6, Chapter 1

## Part 6, Chapter 1 Summary

At the beginning of Chapter One, Cubitt is stalking through the cold, rainy streets of Brighton. He left Frank's without his coat and does not want to go back. After having a whiskey at the Crown, he makes his way to the Cosmopolitan, where he hopes to talk to Colleoni. There, he has another drink and runs into Crab. He begs Crab to get him in to see Colleoni. Crab tells Cubitt that his boss is busy and probably won't give him a job anyway. Crab treats him to a drink and explains how Colleoni demands quality in his crew before excusing himself for a date.

After Crab leaves, Ida Arnold, who has overheard their conversation, approaches the inebriated Cubitt and asks him about Pinkie. He talks about the murder of Hale, how they used Brighton rock candy to kill him. He also mentions that Pinkie is marrying Rose so she can't testify against him. Eventually, Cubitt is overcome and stalks away. Ida tells Phil that they need to save Rose.

## Part 6, Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter relates the second time in the novel that a member of Pinkie's gang becomes disillusioned and tries to flee. Spicer, had Pinkie not recognized his failing sanity, might have made it to Ida with information about Hale's death. Cubitt does. He cannot brook working with a gang in which the leader murders one of his own men, and he cannot secure a place in Colleoni's gang. Drunken and defeated, he ends up in Ida's orbit.



## Part 6, Chapter 2

### Part 6, Chapter 2 Summary

In Chapter Two, Pinkie, Dallow, and Mr. Prewitt are at municipal building waiting for Rose to take care of the marriage. Pinkie is irate both by Rose's and Cubitt's disappearance. He stalks off, with Dallow following him. He is angered that he is being forced into this mortal sin. Rose approaches. She is late because she went to a church to confess her sins. Everyone goes into the municipal building. In a pathetic legal ceremony, Pinkie and Rose are married.

After the ceremony is finished, everyone goes to the pub around the corner for a celebratory drink. Rose remains silent throughout. Clearly this is not what she had in mind for her wedding. After Dallow and Mr. Prewitt leave, Pinkie and Rose talk about where they should go. She no longer has a room at Snow's, and Pinkie does not want to go back to Frank's. He decides to get a room at the Cosmopolitan. On the way there, Rose tells him she is bringing nothing with her from her old life.

At the Cosmopolitan, a clerk informs Pinkie that there are no rooms available. Pinkie shouts that he won't be turned away, and Rose has to draw him out of the hotel to calm him. They walk to the pier where he took her on their first date. As they walk around, Pinkie notices Molly, the fat girl who was with Hale on the day he died. He moves along to get away from her when Rose stops at a kiosk that makes records of people's voices. After some prodding, she convinces Pinkie to record something for her, even though she doesn't own a gramophone. In the recording booth, Pinkie records a harsh message, telling her he hates her and wants her to leave him.

Later, the two take shelter under the pier, and Rose asks for some Brighton rock candy. The request secretly delights Pinkie. As they suck on their candy, Pinkie apologetically says they may have to settle for Frank's for the night. He is scared to consummate the marriage though, so he suggests a movie first. After the movie they go to the room. Pinkie prays everyone will be home and he won't have to have sex, but when they arrive, the house has been emptied for their wedding night.

Pinkie and Rose awkwardly stand in his room until he makes his move and presses her down onto the bed, but a knock comes at the front door. Rose is worried that it is the police, but Pinkie goes ahead and answers the door. It is a very drunk Cubitt, back to collect his things. Cubitt tried to make up with the boy, but Pinkie will not have it. He also refuses to lend Cubitt any money for his trip. Cubitt flies into a rage and storms out into the night.

When Pinkie returns to his room, Rose admits to him that she has always known about his killing of Kolley Kibber. Pinkie is amused, and he proceeds to consummate his marriage as Cubitt shouts from outside. He cannot speak afterward and decides to take a walk. As Pinkie walks through the streets of Brighton in the early morning, he finds a



note from Rose in his coat pocket, promising never to leave him. He nearly throws it away but decides to hold onto it. As he walks, he sees a disgusting, ragged woman praying the rosary, and he wonders if this is what salvation looks like.

## Part 6, Chapter 2 Analysis

Brighton Rock is rife with religious imagery and reference, but Chapter Two of Part Six is the chapter with the most overt Biblical allegory. Pinkie and Rose - for all of their malefactions - are innocents. Their world-view is skewed irrevocably from a perverse understanding of Catholic dogma by which they live their lives. Both have lived hard youths, without pleasure, and so they view pleasure - sex, drinking, and the like - as damnation far worse than any murder.

In this sense, the illegitimate marriage into which they enter in this chapter is the worst sin they can commit. It is an affront to God and can only be sealed with that most disgusting of transgressions, physical pleasure. After the ceremony, Pinkie and Rose become Adam and Eve wandering the wilderness after being cast from the Garden of Eden. They huddle against the elements and wander the night in search of shelter. Finding none, they retire to Pinkie's room to commit the most mortal sin. The final image of the chapter is an illustration of Pinkie's worldview: a wretched, suffering woman, huddled in the filth and praying the rosary. This is salvation, pathetic and miserable.



## Part 7, Chapters 1-3

### Part 7, Chapters 1-3 Summary

In the beginning of Part Seven, Rose wakes at Frank's alone. She dresses, says her morning prayers, and proceeds downstairs to make tea. The filthy kitchen stove has not been lit in some time, and as she goes about lighting it Dallow enters behind her. He is looking for Frank's wife Judy. He tells Rose there is no need for her to make tea or breakfast. After Dallow leaves, Judy pokes her head into the kitchen to say hello. Dallow, meanwhile, has seen the damage done by Cubitt and feels they need to have a talk with Pinkie about how to deal with things. Rose, all the while, feels a sense of pride having entered the world of sin and worldliness. She decides to take half a crown from Pinkie and go to Snow's to show off her success. As she leaves Frank's, she realizes it is Sunday.

At Snow's, Rose is approached by her former coworker Maisie. Maisie is surprised to see her and thrilled to see that she has gotten married. Returning to Frank's, Rose is told by Judy that her mother is upstairs. When she gets to her room, Ida is waiting for her. Ida tells Rose that she wants to talk to Pinkie. Ida tries to be calm and gentle, reasoning with Rose, but when Rose refuses to listen, Ida shouts at her that Pinkie only married her to keep her quiet. Rose asks Ida to leave. Before Ida does, she warns Rose that Pinkie will kill her some day.

At the beginning of Chapter Two, Pinkie is across the street from Frank's, at a newspaper shop. He sees Ida Arnold leave his house. When he enters Frank's he asks Rose about her mother's visit. Rose does not let on that the "mother" Dallow referred to is Ida. Pinkie brings Dallow down to the kitchen, and the two discuss the problems involving Ida, Dallow, and Rose. Pinkie worries that Rose has talked, and he also fears that Mr. Prewitt may give up information to Ida. He implies that maybe he could arrange for Rose to kill herself. As they talk, Rose comes into the kitchen and admits that the woman who came to see her was not her mother but Ida. At the end of the chapter, Pinkie leaves to see Mr. Prewitt.

In Chapter Three, Pinkie pounds on Mr. Prewitt's door until his wife answers. She is annoyed that client has come on Sunday, but she admits Pinkie to see her husband. Mr. Prewitt is in pain from horrid indigestion, and this is not helped by Pinkie's information about Ida's questions. Indeed, Prewitt looks to be at the breaking point: the indigestion, the stress of his work, and his wife's nagging are grinding him down. By the end of the chapter, Pinkie gives him twenty pounds and orders him to go to France for a holiday.

### Part 7, Chapters 1-3 Analysis

The bond between Rose and Pinkie is tenuous, to say the least. Dallow seems content that marriage will silence her, but Pinkie is not so certain. Rose fails her first and only



test in Chapter One, when Ida comes to Frank's and demands that Rose leaves Pinkie. Rose, not wanting to worry her new husband, lies to Pinkie, who knows that Ida has been with her. From his point of view, it is only a matter of time before Rose squeals. The irony is that Rose - in her confrontation with Ida - proves that she can be trusted. Ida lays out for her exactly what is happening: Pinkie does not love her, he is a murderer, he only married her to silence her testifying against him, and he will kill her one day. Rose takes all of this in and promptly says she does not care. She would gladly let herself be killed by Pinkie.

This section, in general, shows the frantic Pinkie losing control of his operation. Cubitt has disappeared, and Rose is no safer than she was before they married. Now, he recognizes that the man with the most incriminating evidence is Prewitt. Mr. Prewitt is cracking up worse than anyone. He rails in Chapter Three that he is living in hell and that one day he wants to reveal everything he has done. Pinkie is genuinely worried for this man's sanity, and he gives all his money to Prewitt to get him out of England. One by one, over the ensuing chapters, Pinkie has destroyed every asset he had - Spicer, Cubitt, Prewitt - in the search of personal safety. He is now largely alone.



## Part 7, Chapters 4-7

### Part 7, Chapters 4-7 Summary

In Chapter Four, Pinkie orders Dallow to watch Mr. Prewitt. He goes up to his room to find that Rose has cleaned. She assures him that everything will be alright now that they are together.

Chapter Five begins the next morning, and Pinkie has not slept. Having Rose in the room with him is ruining his mind. Dallow has put his man Johnnie on the job watching Prewitt. No one has been by his house. Pinkie is talking about a suicide pact with Rose, one that he may not follow through on after she kills herself. Rose steps out, and Dallow talks to Pinkie about a letter that has arrived from Colleoni. It lays out the hopelessness of Pinkie's gang and Colleoni's desire to avoid further bloodshed. He offers Pinkie and Dallow two hundred pounds to leave Brighton. Dallow thinks it would be a good idea to take the offer and move on. The boy admits he has never been outside of Brighton and has no interest in changing that. As Rose returns to Frank's, Dallow gets word that Prewitt has left England.

In Chapter Six, Ida and Phil are sitting at a pub enjoying a Guinness when Pinkie, Dallow, Judy and Rose enter. Seeing each other, Pinkie's gang leaves. Ida, meanwhile, swears not to leave Brighton until she has foiled Pinkie. Phil wishes he has never sent the Brighton postcard to Ida, bringing her back. He begs her to leave her little adventure, saying it has nothing to do with good or evil. She responds that she has her own notion of right and she cannot betray it.

In Chapter Seven, Pinkie, Dallow, Judy, and Rose are at the tea room at which they met after killing Hale. Pinkie asks Rose to go for a stroll with him in the pier. Once they are out of the tea room he tells her that he wants to drive out to the country. He says that Ida will never stop pursuing them and that they need to get out. Rose seems to understand that he means suicide. For safety's sake, Pinkie mentions to the rifle-game proprietor that he and Rose are heading to Hastings. As they get in the car, Rose begs him to leave this plan for one more day. Pinkie says it makes no difference when they do it, it must be done. As they drive, Pinkie wonders how he will ever confess to all his sins. They stop for a drink at a roadhouse, where Pinkie recognizes the waiter as an old schoolmate. They drink, and Pinkie tells Rose to write a suicide note while he goes to the bathroom. In the toilet stall, Pinkie loads Cubitt's revolver.

### Part 7, Chapters 4-7 Analysis

The agonizing dynamic between Rose and Pinkie becomes almost unbearable in this section. Throughout the novel, Pinkie's means of silencing Rose have shifted from marriage to something far more malevolent. In Chapter Five, his idea becomes horribly specific: a suicide pact. If Rose kills herself in a suicide pact and he lives, he will face



some form of censure from the authorities but nothing approaching hanging. This diabolical plan seems to be affecting Dallow, who struggles to convince his leader that Rose will not talk.

This sets up the climax of the novel. The reader may not like Hale, but one definitely cares for Rose. She is young and rash, and her continued affection for Pinkie is mystifying, but she does not want to die. In Chapter Seven, she all but begs Pinkie not to make her go through with it. In the road-house outside of town, he forces her to prepare a suicide note as he prepares the gun. Even the amoral fiend that is Pinkie understands the true ramifications of what he is forcing his wife to do. In Catholic orthodoxy, any sinner can find salvation in the second before death, save for one instance. Suicide is the one unforgiveable sin, and he is forcing her into it.





## Part 7, Chapters 8-11

### Part 7, Chapters 8-11 Summary

At the beginning of Chapter Eight, Dallow and Judy are wondering where Pinkie and Rose have gone. As Dallow looks around the pier, Ida approaches him. She informs him that Prewitt was arrested in France and brought back to England to face fraud charges. She also offers him money for information about Pinkie, warning him the boy is going down anyway. Dallow approaches the rifle-game proprietor and asks if he has seen Pinkie. The man says that Pinkie and his girl left for Hastings. Dallow runs out to the lot to find the car gone. Ida is behind him and tell him she will pay for a car to catch up with them.

Pinkie and Rose are still at the road-house in Chapter Nine. She has written her suicide pact note, which she gives to him. As they leave the establishment, Pinkie tells his old classmate that there is no such thing as salvation. They drive to a secluded spot by the southern cliffs and park. Pinkie gives Rose the gun and tells her how best to kill herself. He leaves her alone in the car and walks off a bit. Rose struggles to shoot herself, but she cannot. She feels she is betraying Pinkie. Suddenly, a police car arrives with Ida and Dallow, and she tosses the gun out the car window. Pinkie attempts to fend off the police with his vitriol, but he is struck by a baton. In his anguish, he looks to Rose like a frightened child. In a second, he throws himself off the cliffs.

In Chapter Ten, Ida is back at Henkey's in London talking to Clarence. Evidently, she had no concrete evidence against Pinkie and lied to Dallow about Mr. Prewitt being arrested. She returns to her flat, thinking of her ex-husband Tom, about how kind their love had been. She calls on Old Crowe to join her at the Ouija board; she wants to ask if she should return to Tom.

Rose is in a confessional in Chapter Eleven. She admits to her sins but only wants to repent not killing herself. She tells the priest she is wicked and does not care that she is. The priest tells her the story of a man who lived his life assuming he was damned, but he died well in a war and found this redeemed him. Perhaps if Pinkie truly loved Rose, redemption is possible for him too, and her. He asks her to think on this and return next week. Rose leaves with a deeper sense of hope. She has reconnected with her parents and works at Snow's. She only wants to go to Frank's, get the record Pinkie recorded for her, and listen to his message to her.

### Part 7, Chapters 8-11 Analysis

Graham Greene's ending is perhaps the most diabolical element of the novel. The evil Pinkie is killed, and Rose is saved. Ida is triumphant, and in her final moments she thinks about getting back together with her husband. Only the last chapter indicates a world where all is not right. Rose is distraught and wants to die, but the kind, honest



words of a priest offer her hope for redemption. His message is simple: no one knows for certain how salvation is found. This, indeed, would be an upbeat ending were it not for the fact that Rose's next stop is to get her record from Pinkie, the record that contains his profane disgust for her.

Greene's message, in the end, seems to be that absolute good and absolute evil are unknowable. We are all sinners, and our lives will be full of suffering and iniquity before God's eyes. The most successful characters of the novel muddle through in the hope that they are doing the right thing. Those who fair worst believe only in a fiery punishment at the end of an agonized life.



# Characters

## Pinkie

Pinkie is the central villain of Brighton Rock and the dominant figure of the novel. Much of Greene's narrative is dedicated to following Pinkie in his struggle to control the ramifications of his first murder. He is a sixteen-year-old thug who leads a much older gang in Brighton and obsesses about eternal damnation.

Pinkie enters the novel unobtrusively, antagonizing his eventual victim Fred Hale in the first chapter. Hale, a journalist, wrote an article about Brighton crime that somehow led to the killing of Pinkie's crime mentor, Kite. Pinkie and his gang kill Hale and make it look like natural causes. Rose, a waitress at a local restaurant, becomes wise to the killing, but is fascinated by Pinkie's vicious allure. Pinkie takes Rose on a date to feel out her knowledge of the gang. Soon, he resolves to marry her to prevent her being able to testify against him. This idea disgusts him, though: Pinkie has reviled sexuality since he was forced to watch his parents make love as a child.

Meanwhile, Pinkie has difficulty controlling his gang. The oldest thug, Spicer, begins to lose his mind after the murder, and Pinkie has him killed to prevent his talking. Later, he expels another man, Cubitt, from the gang for questioning his methods. All the while, the powerful new underworld boss of Brighton, Colleoni, is consolidating power and pushing Pinkie out. At one point, Colleoni tries to have Pinkie killed at the track.

Pinkie becomes confused as Ida Arnold - an unknown in Brighton - begins asking questions about Hale's murder. Rose, Cubitt, his lawyer Mr. Prewitt - they all become liabilities as Ida makes her rounds. Pinkie - consumed by guilt over marrying Rose and fear of being arrested - begins to lose his mind. He pays off Prewitt and resolves to trick Rose into forming a suicide pact with him. After she kills herself, he will be safe. Pinkie and Rose drive out to the country, but before Rose can shoot herself they are ambushed by Ida and Dallow, Pinkie's once loyal henchman. Pinkie panics and throws himself over a cliff into the sea.

Pinkie is obsessed by hell. He is a Roman Catholic, but he does not believe that salvation exists. As such, he keeps a running tally of his mortal sins. At one point, he records an abusive message on a record for Rose. At the end of the book, after he has died, Rose is about to listen to it for the first time.

## Ida Arnold

Ida Arnold is the unlikely hero of Brighton Rock. If Pinkie represents a perverted form of Catholicism, concerned only with infernal punishment, Ida represents a pragmatic morality, dedicated to a commitment to doing good. She is a jobless, playful lush in her mid-forties, separated from her husband Tom.



Ida first appears in the novel as a full-drinking, ballad-singing bar wench in the first chapter. She finds herself in Brighton and eventually on the arm of the doomed Fred Hale on a bank holiday. She does not discover until she reads the paper in London later that week that he died soon after their glancing liaison. She suspects foul play immediately and is touched by the lack of family and friends at his funeral. Later she consults her Ouija board and determines her suspicions are correct. As luck would have it, she has recently been invited back to Brighton by a friend, Phil Corkery.

Once in Brighton, her agenda is a mixture of drinking, flirting with Phil, and badgering persons-of-interest. The most important person is Rose, whom Ida suspects of knowing Hale's killer. She constantly questions Rose about that day to the point where Rose becomes antagonistic. Soon, Ida's concern shifts from justice for Hale to Rose's safety. Ida is terrified by the prospect of the young girl marrying a monster like Pinkie.

While in Brighton, Ida wins a huge amount at the track on a tip Fred Hale gave her. This finances her throughout the novel. At one point, she decides to have sex with Phil Corkery, who constantly pesters her to give up her search for Hale's killer.

Eventually, Ida gets information about Pinkie from Cubitt, a disgruntled former member of his gang. She convinces Pinkie's right-hand man, Dallow, to help her bring the police to Pinkie before he can kill Rose. She tells Dallow she has several of his accomplices in custody. This is a lie, but she and Dallow do succeed in saving Rose's life as Pinkie kills himself rather than give himself up to the police. At the end of the novel, Ida is back in London, contented and considering getting back with Tom.

## Rose

Rose is a young waitress at Snow's in Brighton. She finds a Kolley Kibber prize card in the restaurant the day Fred Hale is killed, and she is the only person in Brighton who knows that Hale did not place the card himself. The day she finds it, Pinkie arrives and engages her in conversation, trying to glean from her what she does and does not know.

Pinkie later takes her on a date where threatens her with a bottle of acid. She, like him, is a strict Roman Catholic, and both of them fixate on the eternal stain of mortal sin. She knows Pinkie is a killer, but she is irresistibly attracted to him. He is at once disgusted by her sexual allure and compelled by the barely-perceptible worldliness Rose contains. Rose grew up poor in the same neighborhood as Pinkie, and in many ways they are destined for each other.

Eventually, Pinkie marries Rose, paying off her father for his legal assent. On their wedding night they wander Brighton, desperately putting off the consummation of their vows. At one point, Rose asks Pinkie to record a message for her at a record kiosk. He records a vicious, hateful message for her, since she does not have a gramophone to play it. After they have sex, Rose feels freed by her state of mortal sin.



Throughout the novel, Rose is the primary focus of Ida Arnold's inquiries into Fred Hale's death. She admits to Pinkie that she knows about his complicity in that crime, and Pinkie determines that she needs to die. At the climax of the story, Pinkie convinces Rose to join him in a suicide pact, but before she can shoot herself they are ambushed by the police, and Pinkie kills himself. At the end of the novel, Rose is in confession. She hates herself for not committing suicide, but the priest convinces her that salvation is possible. She leaves the church, intending to listen to Pinkie's message to her on the record.

## Fred Hale

Fred Hale, sometimes called Charles Hale, is a journalist for the Daily Messenger. He has written an article on the mob control of Brighton track betting that gets Pinkie's mentor, Kite, killed. Hale is also the Kolley Kibber of the Messenger: he travels through resort towns during the holiday season. The first person to recognize him from the Messenger ad gets a prize. In Brighton, Hale is convinced he will be killed. He is hounded by Pinkie and his men. In desperation, Hale finds Ida Arnold and begs her to stay with him. When she goes to the bathroom, though, he is seized by Pinkie's men and killed - presumably by blocking his airway with Brighton rock candy.

## Spicer

Spicer is the oldest member of Pinkie's gang. He is haunted by the murder of Fred Hale, and this leads him to develop an ulcer and a corn on his foot. Pinkie recognizes this and decides that Spicer has to die. He tells Spicer to take a vacation out of town, and Spicer decides he will move up to Nottingham and join his mate in running a pub. The day he is supposed to leave, Spicer joins Pinkie at the racetrack. Pinkie has arranged an ambush with Colleoni's men. Spicer survives the onslaught, however, and returns to the gang's boarding house. When Pinkie discovers him there, he throws Spicer down the stairs, killing him.

## Cubitt

Cubitt is a hood in Pinkie's gang. He is a wise-cracking thug, constantly needling Pinkie for his youth and his resistance to drink and women. As such, there is much antipathy between two. This reaches a head after Pinkie - wanting to scare Cubitt into cooperation - tells him that he killed Spicer. Cubitt is horrified, and he flees to Colleoni to try to get a job. When he is turned down, he turns to Ida, who gives him money for information on Pinkie's gang. The last time the reader sees Cubitt, he drunkenly interrupts Pinkie's wedding night and demands money. He presumably leaves town soon thereafter.



## Dallow

Dallow is the most loyal thug in Pinkie's gang; he is Pinkie's right-hand man. At first, he seems like a simple yes-man, stroking Pinkie's ego and doing his bidding at a moment's notice. He keeps his mouth shut about Spicer's death. As time goes on and Pinkie loses control of his sanity, however, Dallow tries to become a moderating influence, attempting to convince the boy that Rose can be trusted and further killing is not necessary. At the prodding of Ida Arnold, Dallow tips off the police to Pinkie's whereabouts in order to save Rose's life. Throughout the novel, Dallow is having an affair with Judy, the wife of the blind owner of his boarding house.

## Mr. Prewitt

Mr. Prewitt is an aging, dyspeptic, slick lawyer, the legal aid to Pinkie's gang. He arrives midway through the action to arrange the wedding of Pinkie and Rose. While at Frank's boarding house, Prewitt becomes the unwitting witness to Spicer's murder. He is forced by Pinkie to provide testimony that Spicer's death was an accident. Later, Pinkie becomes convinced that Prewitt is losing control of his sanity and pays his way to a holiday in France. Pinkie has one of his men follow Prewitt to the boat to make sure he board.

## Phil Corkery

Phil Corkery is an old friend and would-be suitor of Ida Arnold. He regularly sends her postcards of resort towns to invite her to join him for holiday. His suggestion that their decision to spend a weekend in Brighton is a sign to her that she needs to investigate Fred Hale's death. Phil becomes Ida's unwilling companion on her inquiries. At one point the two have sex, but by the end of their time together Phil is annoyed that Ida will not let the talk of Fred Hale go.

## Judy

Judy is the wife of Frank, the never-seen blind owner of the boarding house where Pinkie's gang lives. She is a blowzy, indelicate woman who is present in the final days of Pinkie's gang. She is sleeping with Dallow and is at his side when he realizes that Pinkie is going to kill Rose.

## Colleoni

Colleoni is the wealthy, powerful underground leader in Brighton. He has taken over the racetrack betting in the resort town since the Kite's death and lives in the ritzy Cosmopolitan Hotel. Early in the novel Colleoni is surprised that the boy, Pinkie, has taken over for Kite. He dismisses Pinkie's threat of a gang war and offers him a job.



Later, Pinkie tries to arrange ambush on Spicer with Colleoni's men, and Colleoni uses the opportunity to attempt a hit on Pinkie. The Brighton police are at Colleoni's disposal and arrest Pinkie at one point as a warning. Near the end of the novel, Colleoni offers Pinkie's gang two hundred pounds to leave Brighton.

## **Crab**

Crab is a Brighton thug who has allied himself with Colleoni since Kite's killing. Early in the novel, he informs the nervous Spicer that Colleoni has arranged Pinkie's arrest. Later, he gleefully informs Cubitt that Colleoni will not take him on.



# Objects/Places

## Brighton

Brighton is a resort town on the the southern coast of England. For over a century, upper middle-class vacationers have come to Brighton on holiday for its pebble beaches, carnival piers, and gambling.

## Brighton Rock

Brighton Rock is a type candy sold in Brighton, England. Similar to taffy, it comes in sticks which, no matter where cut, have the word Brighton on either end. This candy is used to murder Fred Hale, presumably by asphyxiation.

## Snow's

Snow's is a restaurant in Brighton. Rose waits tables at it in the novel and lives in a room above it. After killing Fred Hale, Spicer places a Kibber card under that tablecloth of a table in Snow's, and Rose finds it.

## Frank's

Frank's is a boarding house owned by a blind tailor called Frank and his wife Judy. Pinkie's gang lives in rooms rented from Frank. After he marries, Pinkie moves Rose into his room. Spicer dies at Frank's after Pinkie pushes him down the stairs.

## Kolley Kibber Cards

Fred Hale is a journalist for the Daily Messenger, and part of his job is traveling from resort town to resort town under the pseudonym Kolley Kibber is part of a holiday promotion. As Kibber, Hale leaves cards throughout the town which, if found, can be redeemed for a small cash prize. After Hale is murdered, Spicer continues to hide the cards to confuse the time of death for police. Rose finds one of the cards.

## Cubitt's Gun

This is the gun that Pinkie intends to use for his suicide pact with Rose. He loads it with two bullets and gives it to Rose. Before she can shoot herself, though, they are ambushed by Ida, Dallow and the police. She tosses the gun out of the car.





## The Racetrack

The racetrack is the central source of income for the criminal underworld in Brighton. Kite, the former leader of Pinkie's gang, is killed for attempting to introduce automatic betting machines at the track. Pinkie and Spicer are attacked by Colleoni's men at the track, and by the end of the book Colleoni has consolidated all income from the track.

## The Shooting Gallery

The Shooting Gallery on one of Brighton's carnival piers is Pinkie's favorite game. He always asks the proprietor for the time every time he plays, annoying the man. He wins a doll at the game immediately after killing Fred Hale. Before he leaves to kill Rose, Pinkie tells the proprietor he is going to Hastings as an alibi.

## Mortal Sin

Both Pinkie and Rose - being raised Roman Catholic - are obsessed by mortal sins, which are sins that immediately sends a soul to hell if not confessed before death. The fact that all these sins are equally damning means that Pinkie views sex with Rose as equally terrible or worse than murder.

## The Record

After Rose and Pinkie are married, they wander Brighton through the night. Happening upon a kiosk that makes records with personal recordings. Rose asks Pinkie to record something for her, though she does not have a gramophone to listen to it. He records a vicious abusive message and tells her it is a love note. At the end of the book, after Pinkie is dead, Rose plans to listen to his message as soon as possible.

## The Cosmopolitan

The Cosmopolitan Hotel is the most expensive hotel in Brighton. According to Colleoni, Napoleon stayed there at one point. After winning a huge return on a horse race, Ida Arnold and Phil Corkery get a room at the Cosmopolitan. There she meets the drunk and depressed Cubitt, who tells her details of Pinkie's villainy. On his wedding night, Pinkie is denied a room at the Cosmopolitan and causes a scene.

## Newspapers

Ragged newspapers litter the city and decrepit houses of Brighton. All have headlines dealing with murders and kidnappings, an omnipresent reminder of the essential evil of the world.



## The Ouija Board

Ida Arnold consults her Ouija board with her elderly neighbor Old Crowe at the beginning of the book. She asks Fred Hale how he was killed, and she gets a series of cryptic responses that imply foul play or suicide. At the end of the book, she intends to ask the board if she should return to her ex-husband.



# Themes

## Damnation

Graham Greene - though he detested the term - was always a Catholic writer. The sense of being an outsider, of fixation on iniquity, of the tallying of sins permeate works like *The End of the Affair*, *The Power and the Glory*, and, of course, *Brighton Rock*.

At the end of the novel, a priest tells Rose that Catholics "are more in touch with the devil than other people" (p. 268). Indeed, Catholicism is often viewed as bleaker than Protestantism because it does not accept the notion of salvation by faith alone. As such, the idea of Hell is a constant threat. No person is given automatic admittance to paradise. Only constant prayer and confession and good works can ensure passage through the pearly gates. This can offer impetus to strive for righteousness, or despair that damnation is inevitable.

This damnation is personified in the character of Pinkie, a wayward sinner who believes in Hell but not Heaven. The guilt of Catholic orthodox has permeated his soul, but he does not attend services; in fact, he views the idea of even confessing his sin futile. From Pinkie's perspective, his soul was damned when, at a younger age, he watched his parents copulate in the next room. Every other act - the murders of Hale and Spicer, the illegitimate marriage to Rose, the forced suicide - are drops in a bucket that is already full. When he topples over the cliff at the end of the novel, Pinkie knows exactly where he is headed. He has been preparing for it his entire life.

## Hope for Salvation

Of course, the other side of the coin from damnation is the hope for salvation, and the most dynamic character regarding this relationship is Rose. In *Brighton Rock*, she is definitely the most complex and perplexing character. She is young and naïve, but she firmly believes she is already wicked. She is at once frightened by and attracted to Pinkie. This does not, in and of itself, make her so different from other teenage girls, except that she takes these fixations to the brink of suicide.

Late in the novel, Pinkie ruminates on the unforgivable sin: the sin of despair. This is the sin from which suicide is derived. Pinkie engenders this despair in Rose, through his constant insistence that the two of them are incapable of salvation. His reasons are simple: they are complicit in crime and they have copulated in an illegitimate marriage. For Pinkie, the only escape is death, and the only destination after death is Hell.

Ida tries to explain the realities of life to Rose. Her pragmatism and innate sense of right and wrong allows her to accurately assess the situation. Rose is young and infatuated with a deceptive man. Still, Ida's entreaties fall on deaf ears. She is a sinner and has no conception of true grace from Rose's point-of-view. Only at the end of the novel does someone get through to Rose: a priest she does not know. His message is simple: no



one alive knows from whence salvation comes. We must simply muddle on as best we can, striving to be good. This is the rarely-acknowledged humanism of Catholicism, and Greene's eventual defense of it. We are all sinners, and only through our lives can we attain salvation.

## Youth and Age

The conflict between Ida Arnold and Pinkie Brown in *Brighton Rock* is also a conflict between youth and age. In this novel, youth are dangerous and fanatical, and age is pragmatic, methodical, and fearful.

Graham Greene, in this novel, creates two arresting portraits of ill-fated youth in Pinkie and Rose. Both characters are in their mid-teens and both have lived hard lives in poor conditions. Time and again, Rose is told that she is putting herself in Pinkie's hands and she does not recognize it. Indeed, Rose and Pinkie are both consumed by a worldview handed them by the Catholic Church and perverted in the sociopathic mind of Pinkie. This view equates all sins - blasphemy, lechery, murder - as equal and skews the actions of even an essentially good person like Rose, who defends her murderous boyfriend against Ida, who only cares for her safety. This orthodoxy brings poor Rose to a car at night with a pistol to her ear. The modern reader cannot help but think of the modern suicide bomber as he or she reads the loving prodding Pinkie gives to Rose to kill herself.

The heroine of *Brighton Rock*, Ida Arnold, is the picture of secular virtue. She drinks, curses, and has casual sex, but she knows right and wrong. As she says to Rose at one point, "I don't want the Innocent to suffer" (p. 130). The world of the novel is filled with casual violence and suffering, and the older characters know that this is unnecessary. The chief inspector of Brighton and even the mob boss Colleoni preach a doctrine of nonviolence whenever possible.

In the penultimate chapter of *Brighton Rock*, Ida Arnold begins to consider returning to her husband. They are kind to each other, he reasons. Rose and Pinkie have never experienced simple kindness, and so they replaced it with fiery dogmatism. In Ida's view, a person must find love and safety above all else.

# Style

## Point of View

Brighton Rock is told from a third person omniscient point of view. As such, the narration shifts from person to person, with the narrator always aware of the internal life of the central character in the chapter. Each of the thirty-one chapters of the novel has a central figure to whom the narrator is most privy, though on occasion Greene will provide the thoughts and emotional life of two characters who are closely bound.

By and large, the narrative is told alternately focusing on Ida Arnold, Pinkie, and Rose. Other characters - Spicer, Cubitt, Dallow, Phil Corkery, Hale - sometimes take center stage in moments of great personal peril. This generally involves physical danger, fear, or guilt. At times, the narrator seems to understand, simultaneously, the thought processes of both Rose and Pinky. These two, it seems, feed off each other's overwhelming guilt. The writing, in particular, reflects strong fixations of each character, like Pinkie's obsession with salvation between stirrup and ground or Ida's assertion that right is right.

The overall effect created by this point of view is that of an omnipresent figure observing the deeds of hapless sinners. This is appropriate given the themes of a novel concerned with damnation and salvation. These characters do not merely act, they agonize over the moral ramification of their actions. The narration of Brighton Rock is a reflection of each individual character's wrestling with right and wrong.

## Setting

Brighton Rock takes place nearly entirely in the southern English resort town of Brighton in the mid-1930s. It creates a strange image of a town brimming with both hilarity and menace.

Brighton has long been a destination for upper middle-class vacationers. The town has overly-ornate theatres and hotels that - as typified by Colleoni's gloating - claim to have been the homes of historical figures. It is also a gaudy area, with carnival piers, small games houses, and a racetrack. As such, the town is itself a dichotomy, popular among families and gamblers, lovers and rakes. Greene keeps the focus of Brighton Rock firmly entrenched in the gutter. Pinkie and Cubitt will never be welcome in the Cosmopolitan with Colleoni and his fancy London lawyer. Pinkie, Rose, and Prewitt all grew up in Brighton and, like the famous rock candy, will always have Brighton imprinted on them.

They that antagonize Pinkie's gang are all outsiders, particularly Ida and Colleoni. They are holiday visitors, resented by the locals as students are in a college town. As such, the setting of Greene's novel is rife with hopelessness. The streets of Brighton - not the



Cosmopolitan or the piers - are filthy and infested with death. The town is decaying, and Pinkie's gang can never stand up to Colleoni's London mob.

## Language and Meaning

The language of Brighton Rock is largely straightforward regarding narration, while the dialogue reflects the dialect of working-class England in the south. As such, the dialogue reflects the social reality of the book, while the narration reflects the metaphysical reality that exists beneath the action.

The dialogue of Brighton Rock is like a time-capsule, displaying the hard-boiled slang of the mid-1930s, as such polony, buer, and boggy. Though the profanity in the dialogue is tamer than much of today's language, it contains a certain causticity from Pinkie's mouth in particular. Moreover, the dialogue is clearly the product of an attuned ear. Its cadence is wonderfully naturalistic, with characters interrupting their own thoughts, quickly concealing information, and stumbling over their own ideas.

Conversely, there is no slang, vulgarity, or naturalistic cadence. It reads as the moral agonizing of the characters translated into the modernist eloquence of Graham Greene's voice. One of the interesting choices made in the narration, however is the repetition of one phrase whenever Pinkie is agonizing over his own villainy: between the saddle and the ground. This phrase refers to the second before death, how any repentant sinner can achieve salvation in this second. Pinkie doubts the validity of this idea; thus, he becomes hunted by this strange mantra.

## Structure

Brighton Rock is divided into seven parts; each part containing between two and eleven chapters. The chapters range from two to twenty-four pages. In total there are thirty-one chapters in Graham Greene's novel. The division of the novel is largely purposed toward clarifying the action of the novel.

Each of these seven parts serves as a passage, playing its role in clarifying what begins as a strange, ambiguous story. The first part, for example, is largely concerned with setting up the mystery behind Hale's murder, and the second is concerned with the dynamics of the Brighton criminal underworld. Part Six deals with Pinkie's wedding to Rose and the way he copes with this change in his life. As such, the seven parts of the novel frame the narrative, like the acts of a play.

As stated above, Greene's novel is told from a third-person omniscient perspective. The chapter separations are also separations in perspective. As such, often the chapters alternate between Ida and Pinkie, or someone connected with Pinkie. This drives home the central conflict of the novel, that between a perverse Catholic orthodoxy and a common-sense morality. The reader shifts his focus from one extreme to the other, weighing the moral agony of each. Taken together, the division of the novel into parts serves the narrative, and the division into individual chapters serves the themes.



## Quotes

"When you see [Pinkie's] face he looked older, the slatey eyes were touched with the annihilating eternity from which he had come and to which he went." Part 1, Chap. 2, p. 20

"'Right and wrong' [Ida] said. 'I believe in right and wrong,' and delving a little deeper, with a sigh of happy satiety, she said, 'It's going to be exciting, it's going to be fun, it's going to be a bit of life.'" Part 1, Chap. 3, p. 43

"The races start next week, and I don't want to have any big scale mob fighting in Brighton. I don't mind you carving each other up in a quiet way ... but when two mobs start scrapping people who matter might get hurt." Part 2, Chap. 2, p. 69

"Spicer was restless these days. There was nothing for him to do ... like a with a poisoned body who believes that all will be well when a single tooth is drawn." Part 3, Chap. 2, p. 86

"'Saturday,' he thought, 'today's Saturday, remembering the room at home, the frightening weekly exercise of his parents which he watched from his single bed.'" Part 3, Chap. 3, p. 95

"The Boy said, 'These stairs needed mending a long while. I've told Frank.' ... The rotten wood lay across Spicer's body, a walnut stained eagle couched over the kidneys." Part 4, Chap. 3, p. 132

"He was aware that she belonged to his life, like a room or a chair: she was something which completed him ... What was most evil in him needed her: it couldn't get along without goodness." Part 4, Chap. 3, p. 135

"'There'll be more killing before we're through,' [Cubitt] mysteriously pronounced. He had his wits about him: he wasn't giving anything away; but there was no harm in letting these poor sodden creatures a little way into the secrets of living." Part 6, Chap. 1, p. 170

"Cubitt suddenly, furiously, broke out, 'I can't see a piece of Brighton rock without ...' He belched and said with tears in his voice, 'Carving's different.'" Part 6, Chap. 1, p. 178

"He gave his message up to be graven on vulcanite: 'God damn you, you little bitch, why can't you go home for ever and let me be?'" Part 6, Chap. 2, p. 193

"'You're crazy,' the woman said. 'I don't believe you'd lift a finger if he was killing you.' Rose came slowly back to the outer world. She said, 'Maybe I wouldn't.'" Part 7, Chap. 1, p. 217



"And she - she wouldn't want to live without me. If she thought ... And all the time perhaps it wouldn't be true. They call it - don't they - a suicide pact?" Part 7, Chap. 5, p. 235

"Heaven was a word: hell was something he could trust." Part 7, Chap. 7, p. 248

"It wasn't any good: he was at the edge, he was over: they couldn't even hear a splash. It was as if he had been withdrawn suddenly by a hand of any existence - past or present, whipped away into zero - nothing." Part 7, Chap. 9, p. 264





## Topics for Discussion

How do the young people of Brighton Rock view the world differently than older characters like Spicer and Ida Arnold? What experiences do the older folks have that the youth lack? How does this make youth more dangerous in the novel?

Discuss the idea of mortal sin. How does Rose and Pinkie's shared perspective on sex differ from their perspective on violence? Do you think some religious groups hold similar values regarding the two?

Greene's novel is in large part a conflict between traditional religious thought and secular morality. Which characters represent the extremes of each? How do they come into conflict with each other?

Both Pinkie Brown and Ida Arnold myopically pursue an obsession in Brighton Rock. Discuss the idea of obsession. How can it create great and wonderful things? How can it be dangerous? To what extent does the novel display both extremes?

Ida Arnold's sense of right and wrong derives from a singular love of life. How is respect for life discussed in modern-day America? How do liberals and conservatives view the culture of life?

Pinkie Brown refuses drink and sex on moral grounds. Ida Arnold considers herself moral, but she relishes hedonistic consumption. Discuss with the class to what extent abstinence is integral to living a good life.

Brighton is a city consisting of residents and visitors in equal parts. What is the difference, socio-economically, between these two groups? In what towns does this same dynamic exist in modern America?

The narrative of Brighton Rock largely concern the point at which each person abandons Pinkie Brown. Discuss what each character's breaking point is regarding following Pinkie? How does this point come about? How does Pinkie react to each abandonment? Does anyone stick by his side until the end?