

The Blue Girl Study Guide

The Blue Girl by Charles de Lint

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Plot Summary

The Blue Girl by Charles de Lint is a modern day fairy tale or 'urban fantasy' that examines the themes of courage, fear, and independence through the remarkable adventures of two seventeen-year-old girls attending Redding High School in the magical town of Newford.

The story begins as we meet the character of Imogene Yeck who has only just recently moved to Newford away from her old home of Tyson because of the trouble that she was continually running into there. A toughened survivor, Imogene Yeck has to learn to let go of her aggressive, stubborn ways and to put her trust in her friends, notably her best friend, Maxine Tatrie. For Maxine, the shy, nerdy girl at Redding High, Newford, her new best friend Imogene with her dyed hair, piercings, and tattoos represents the freedom and independence, which she is never allowed to have due to her controlling mother and the bullies at school. Imogene and Maxine strike up a friendship and together learn to use the best of their strengths to combat the magical creatures that threaten them through the course of the book.

Unknown to either of the girls, Redding High School is infested with brownies or fairies who will stop at nothing for their amusement, including mistakenly killing Adrian Drumbrell (who is now a ghost). Adrian takes a liking to Imogene's fierce attitude and defiant spirit and as he tries to get to know her, he unwittingly draws the attention of the soul-eaters.

Thrown into this turmoil, the two teenage girls have to learn how to navigate the school bullies and over-protective parents, confronting their own issues as much as the foes about them. As the darkness draws its net around Imogene, the girls have to learn how courageous they really are and what they are willing to do in order to save their souls.



Pages 1-22

Pages 1-22 Summary

At the start of 'The Blue Girl' by Charles De Lint, we meet a seventeen-year-old girl with a troubled past called Imogene Yeck. The Yeck family have recently moved to the town of Newford to start a new life, new jobs and for the two children Jared and Imogene; a new school. They live with their divorced mother and are all trying to get to grips with the very different town of Newford compared to their old home town of Tyson. The Yeck family (and Imogene in particular) are different from most ordinary families in that the children were brought up on a hippy commune with a strong anti-authoritarian principles. Perhaps this is one of the reasons we discover that Imogene is so strong willed and individualistic, in Tyson she eschewed their old High School in favour of joining a dangerous street gang and is perhaps part of the reason why the whole family started again here in Newford.

In the first section, 'Now: Imogene' we find Imogene asleep in her new room as she dreams strange and vivid dreams. Her bedroom becomes filled with fantastic pixie-like creatures that parade from her closet door and, following close behind them is her childhood imaginary friend: Pell-Mell (or Pelly). He lays a caring hand on her arm and tells her that he has missed her and she suddenly wakes up.

The next section 'Then: Imogene' carries on with her story as she meets her first friend at her new school. Maxine is a nerd or appears to be who sits all alone during recess and break times. Thinking that this would be interesting, and not really wanting to try and be friends with any particular clique or in-crowd Imogene approaches her and strikes up a conversation. They hit it off, Maxine responding to Imogene's quirky and sardonic humour, and Imogene liking the fact that Maxine is another intelligent outsider. Her new friendship immediately lands her in problems however, as Imogene is singled out by the head girl and captain of the cheer leading squad Valerie Clarke for being the New girl and immediately befriendng a dork. Imogene doesn't rise to the bait, but the bullying and gossip continues the next day to the extent that Imogene takes Valerie aside to make her an offer; she can continue to gossip about her in school but, if the cheer leader was nasty to her outside of school she would find that Imogene is not so reserved at all.

Imogene likes having her new friend Maxine; who is intelligent enough to understand Imogene's humour, and who also seems unconcerned with the peer groups and popularity contests of the school. To her own surprise she finds that she has actually missed having a best friend, and decides to try and stick by Maxine and stand up for her at school if she can.

The very next day Imogene is cornered by Valerie's boyfriend, the star of the football team Brent Calder who tries to push her around and intimidate her. Even though Brent is far bigger than her Imogene doesn't back down, instead remaining defiant even as he



shoves her cruelly against the wall. The seventeen year old girl is angry, but not overly upset as she considers whether next time she will be able to hold her cool, and whether it is worth appearing to be doing well, and being normal.

This section ends with 'Then: Adrian' and is from the point of view of another boy in the school who sees the little Imogene standing up to the bully Brent Calder. He suddenly believes that he has fallen in love with her at that moment and takes to following her around at school.

Pages 1-22 Analysis

In this first section of the book, we meet Imogene, the main heroine of *The Blue Girl*, and to whom most of the action happens around. The author presents Imogene as a tough, independent and strong willed personality (not afraid of Brent Calder and immediately stepping up to Valerie's barbs on the very first day of school). This tells the reader that we are not reading a 'normal' children's book where the heroine might be in need of saving, but rather a strong heroine who might only be needed to be saved from herself. We immediately see her independent and quirky spirit as she chooses to befriend one other interesting-looking girl in the school - Maxine Tatrie purely for the fact that she is alone and seems to have removed herself from all of the other cliques and social circles; a fact that Imogene likes.

In reality, we can see that Imogene is in sore need of a friend when she decides to phone Maxine later that night after school. We suddenly see a vulnerable side to the Blue Girl, a character who is externally tough, but still needs a female best friend.



Pages 23- 62

Pages 23- 62 Summary

The narrative continues with 'Then: Imogene' as she sits on the steps of Crowsea Public Library with her new best friend Maxine. They are talking about Imogene's new found enemies in Brent and Valerie, and Maxine tells her that everyone knows that Brent and Valerie are bullies and jerks, but that isn't stopping the gossip starting to fly about 'the new girl.'

Maxine confides in her friend that she isn't able to go to the little coffee shops after school or go out in the evening just yet as her own Mother is so protective and controlling. Most of the reason why Maxine looks the way she does is her Mother's doing: telling her what to wear and what to do and expecting good grades from her little daughter. Maxine, it turns out is also from a divorced family who really wants to live with her businessman father but knows that this would be impossible at the moment. Imogene comes up with a plan to get to know Maxine's mum (Mrs Tatrie) and hopefully convince her that Maxine's new friend will be a positive influence on her beloved daughter.

The very next day, Imogene dresses up especially for the occasion in clothes brought from a thrift store (second hand shop); long pleated dresses and blouses, removing her piercings and covering up her tattoo's. When she gets to Maxine's she finds Mrs Tatrie friendly, but very conservative and decorous; her home is organised and presented to make the best impression whilst Maxine's own room with its Doll collection and 'girly' decoration is another creation of her mother's.

Imogene appears to impress Mrs Tatrie with her prim demeanour, and it isn't until Imogene and Maxine are alone in Maxine's room that her friend tells her that she hates her life. Maxine asks how her friend can be so casual and so strong-willed, not giving in to bullies and having tattoo's and being the exact opposite of everything that Maxine's life is at the moment. Maxine shows her new friend her secret stash of books and CD's; all the things that her Mother doesn't know that she has.

'Now Maxine' takes the story once again to the steps outside of the public library, where Imogene is telling her friend about her having these weird dreams about her imaginary childhood friend Pell-Mell again, and the fact that she is being stalked at school. Imogene describes to her the boy who is always following her around but disappearing whenever she gets close; a thin nerd sort of boy with thick glasses, and Maxine tells her about Ghost, the school's resident phantasm.

The next few days at school Imogene tries to follow her stalker and ends up in a broom closet after 'Ghost' disappears into thin air. Where she is found by Brent Calder and his bully buddies. The incident causes such a stir that even her brother Jared hears about how his sister was found talking to thin air in a broom closet, and asks her if she is okay



or needs help dealing with Brent. Imogene quickly says no, realising that this would only become violent and anyway, she knew her own fair share of violence running with the gang back in Tyson. That was when Imogene and Jared see Mrs Tatrie walking towards them down the street and instantly Imogene tries to hide the fact that she knows Maxine, stopping and pretending to tie her laces and walking the other way (she is wearing her more punk casual clothes completely the opposite version of what Mrs Tatrie expects from her daughter's friends). She seems to get away with it as she sees Maxine later in the week where Imogene starts taking Maxine out buying new, cooler and funkier clothes from thrift stores and secretly storing them at Imogene's house.

Pages 23- 62 Analysis

In this section, we can begin to see the contrast between Maxine and Imogene's character's. Imogene is unafraid of the bullies that surround them at school and Maxine is wondering how she can be so strong willed. Imogene is presented as a strong, brave young woman compared to the character of Maxine, and we can understand that both have found each other the things that they most need. For Maxine, Imogene represents freedom and confidence, whereas for Imogene Maxine offers acceptance and calmness from her previously chaotic lifestyle.

Their two lifestyles are contrasted against each other also; the fact that Maxine's world is full of her controlling mother, and that Imogene's has been based on laid back libertarian attitudes. When Imogene manages to impress Mrs Tatrie (Maxine's mother) we see that Imogene can become for Maxine the key to unlocking her own courage and strength. These ideas are further continued as Imogene relates the story of Emmy Jean Haggerty to Maxine, who once asked if she really cared about what bullies thought of her.

The freedom and the outside nature of both Imogene and Maxine are considered as the author shows the character's considering Imogene's dreams, the Ghost-boy that haunts the school and Imogene's sudden decision to try and track him down. These conversations and action cement their place as being apart from the crowd, and in many ways unique individuals. This ploy of setting them apart adds drama and tension to the story and starts to imply to the reader that the story that these characters are about to become a part of has nothing to do with the ordinary world of high school.



Pages 63 - 99

Pages 63 - 99 Summary

The Blue Girl continues with 'Then: Adrian' as the ghost boy remembers back to his own high school days at Redding High. He had felt sure that High School would be a new start for him, but it turned out that it had only got worse and worse as the school bullies made his life a misery. Even the other nerds and dorks shunned him as he became ever more isolated. Then suddenly, one day in the school library he encountered something strange: he saw his first fairy.

The fairy was little over a foot big, and appeared to be a small wizened man with patchwork clothes. Thinking that he had finally gone mad Adrian was stunned by the sight, but met another fairy immediately after. This was Tommery, the chief of the fairies who lived at Redding High School. What followed was a strange relationship as he got to know the troop of fairies who lived there and they showed him their secret passageways (called Elf bolts) and took him into their confidence. This friendship continued until one day, the fairies tried to teach Adrian how to fly. In a cruel accident - come -joke the fairies let go of Adrian and he died, only to be reawakened almost instantly as a ghost.

The story switches then to 'Then: Imogene' as she learns more about her ghost stalker and her first year at Redding High. Imogene and Maxine are still bullied mercilessly, but their independent attitude has made it easier for them, and for the first time Imogene is doing well at school and getting so good grades that her brother and Mom are actually suspicious of this 'new' Imogene.

During one of the holidays, Maxine goes to stay with her father in Fort Lauderdale. Imogene is left to her own devices for a month. It is now that Imogene decides to confront her ghost stalker once and for all, breaking into the school on a Sunday and waiting for Adrian to turn up.

When Adrian finally appears, Imogene seems nonplussed by his post-vital state and gets the ghost to tell her his story. Adrian confides the sorry story of his death, most of it Imogene believes but finds it very hard to believe in the existence of fairies. They end their conversation with Adrian telling her that fairies are not the only creatures in the spaces between the worlds, and there are in fact 'Angels' (or at least, beings who try to persuade ghosts to move on to the Other Side), and creatures of 'The Darkness' who try to eat souls.

However, even this isn't the strangest thing that happens to Imogene over that summer. She again runs into Mrs Tatrie, Maxine's mum whilst out wearing her tank tops, all of her piercings and dyed blue hair. Thinking that Mrs Tatrie would be shocked, even annoyed Imogene is surprised when Mrs Tatrie takes her out for a cup of coffee and confides that she knows all about Imogene's past life, bad behaviour and run ins with the school



authorities in her previous school, and has known for some while. Mrs Tatrie is instead glad that Imogene is her daughter's friend as it seems that Maxine and her Mother's relationship has improved, and also that Imogene's grades have improved.

Pages 63 - 99 Analysis

In these sections, the author begins to reveal to the reader the magical world that the character's are inhabiting.

Now knowing that Adrian is the dead ghost boy (whom we have already met through his narrative), we are immediately led to understand that Adrian is not overtly malicious or scary, merely another character like Maxine and Imogene. The author uses Adrian's narrative to present the unnatural and abnormal in a very normal way; allowing us into the ghost boys perspective as he tells his story of meeting fairies and his eventual demise as if it were just another episode of school life. This tactic by the author allows the reader to continue to believe all of the events that are happening (as we are seeing them through a rational character's eyes). There is a contrast here however, as the author presents fairies, flying, and angels. He is at once trying to show how normal the magical world is in these series of books (how believable) and simultaneously how removed it is from the everyday world that Imogene and Maxine inhabit.

Adrian's state as a ghost (being isolated from physical contact) is analogous to his recollections of his life and, in part, to the lives of Imogene and Maxine. They are all 'outsiders' who are removed from the normal social order - thus allowing them to interact with the magical world. To a greater degree, the author is using Adrian's ghost-like state as a metaphor for the isolation and loneliness that being bullied can bring.



Pages 99 - 120

Pages 99 - 120 Summary

'Then: Adrian' continues from Imogene's encounter as Adrian tries to make sense of how he feels about the new girl, and talks to the fairies Tommery, Oshtin and Quinty. Adrian mourns the fact that Imogene doesn't seem to believe him when he told her about all of his experiences, and Tommery responds that he knows a way that he can lure Imogene into seeing the fairies. Rather than just appearing to her, the fairies will try to send her dreams to draw her closer to their world, where she will be able to see the fairies and all the other creatures that live in the spaces between the worlds.

In the next instalment of the story, 'Then: Imogene' her friend Maxine arrives back from holidaying with her father in Florida. Imogene finds out that her friend has come out of herself as she spent a lot of time sunbathing on the beach. Imogene adds to the changes in their lives, telling her friend about the meeting with the ghost-boy Adrian, his tale of fairies and angels and finally meeting her mother. Maxine is enthralled by the possibility of actually talking to the ghost, but the fact that grabs the majority of her attention is her mother's relaxed attitude about her 'weird' friend. The fact that Mrs Tatrie is supportive of their friendship even angers Maxine, because she wonders why her mother has been so controlling over the years when she is ready to accept the strange, aggressive punk-girl Imogene. Maxine tells Imogene that even whilst in Florida, with her new found confidence she found it hard to shake off the yoke of her mother's displeasure, unable to wear all of the cool new clothes that she liked all of the time, and instead feeling that she was caught in a game between her father and her mother. Maxine implores her friend to take her to meet the ghost boy the very next time that they go out, and Imogene agrees.

They break into the school (Maxine wondering how Imogene knows how to perform these illegal activities), but no ghost arrives. When they are discovered by the drunkard caretaker and have to run away, they flee to the outskirts of the school grounds where suddenly Adrian appears and greets Imogene and her friend. Maxine is shocked, surprised and entranced by the ghost boy, believing his stories about the fairies, angels and The Darkness. Imogene on the other hand finds Adrian a little pathetic, and only interesting really because he also happens to be dead and talking. After promising to return again and see Adrian (and hear more about the fairies), Maxine and Imogene leave.

This section ends as Imogene reflects on her strange and eventful summer and that she now has a new casual relationship with a boy named Thomas who works at a record store. Jared approves, and it also turns out that Maxine has a crush on her brother Jared. Imogene thinks that it has probably been an okay summer, and looks forward to matchmaking her best friend with her brother



Pages 99 - 120 Analysis

In this section, we begin to see some of the deeper character similarities and differences between Adrian and the two girls Maxine and Imogene.

As Adrian is upset at how his and Imogene's first meeting went, he tries to ask the fairies for help and they reply that there is certainly a way that they can help: by encouraging her to see their world. When this happens the author is revealing to the reader that this is a bad idea - we have already heard how the fairies accidentally killed Adrian and how they gave half the school food poisoning just for fun. This gives us an increasing sense of danger and threat about to fall around Imogene as she and Maxine are blissfully unaware (thinking that they are only investigating a ghost). Adrian on the other hand, is presented as very much a normal teenage boy. He has a crush on Imogene but does not know how to do anything about it and, in many ways has not developed as a character even though he has been a party to some extraordinary things. Adrian is still the fairly scared kid from school, who is trying to manipulate Imogene rather than talk to her.

In this section, we also see some of the most character progression for Maxine, as she goes off to Florida over the holidays to be with her dad and experiences freedom from her mother's controlling attitudes.



Pages 120 - 152

Pages 120 - 152 Summary

The story continues with the narrative of Maxine in 'Now: Maxine' as she thinks about her own summer, her mother and all of the things that she has just been told. Maxine is happy with her time away with her father but is angry with her mother being so blaise about her unconventional new friend Imogene - she wonders if she herself will ever be accepted so unreservedly from her own mother. She then turns to think about all of the strange things that she has been told by Imogene - about the ghost, her dreams and the fairies and discovers that she is not sceptical at all about any of it. Maxine remembers having read some of the other local fairy stories set in her home town of Newford by the writers Coppercorn, Mully and Christy Riddell. The last in particular, she had the opportunity to meet as he came to give a talk at the school a few years ago.

Christy Riddell is the author is a chronicler of fairy stories and releases books about their nature and ordinary people's experiences of them (particularly here in the magical town of Newford). Maxine asked the author if Christy really believed in fairies himself, to which he replied that he did, but that imagination was probably stronger, and invited her to attend his writing classes at the local County Library at Crowsea. Despite the friendly response, Maxine never went.

In the next section of 'Now: Imogene,' Imogene is asleep, or thinks she is when her dreams start again. Out of her closet comes the tribe of fairy folk followed by her imaginary childhood friend, Pell-Mell. Pell-Mell tells her sadly that she is dreaming and that she should try to stop dreaming about him and these fairies, that she is in danger and that she should wake up. The next day Imogene confronts the ghost boy Adrian that he has been sending her weird fairy dreams to which he denies (already suspecting that it must be Tommery). After she has left, Adrian confronts Tommery who replies that it is the best way for her to get to see the fairy realms and leaves it at that. The next dream that Imogene has is much more direct - she follows Pell-Mell out of her window and into the street, where her imaginary friend tries to warn her once again that this is all a dangerous dream. When she walks back to the house to she finds her brother Jared sitting on the front porch and suddenly realises: she is not dreaming.

In the following section of 'Now Adrian' Adrian again asks what Tommery and his fairy band are doing, and Tommery seriously swears that he is not hurting Imogene, but is only doing what Adrian asked of him to do. Worried, Adrian takes to walking the town where he peers into peoples houses. Here he meets his 'Angel' who appears to be a man who plays the fiddle named John. Adrian tells him that he is still not ready to go on to the Other Side and John tersely replies that he knows, and that he hasn't come for Adrian, but for people like Imogene who are about to get hurt. He tells the ghost boy that Imogene's sliding towards the magical realms has brought her under the attention of an anamathim, the creatures that eat souls made out of darkness. He believes that is is now too late to stop the anamathim from completely destroying Imogene from reality,



and only a trade will stop them. Adrian desperately asks if he has anyone he can trade to take the place of the girl he has a crush on, to which the Angel John just disappears.

Pages 120 - 152 Analysis

This section starts off by concentrating on the character of Maxine, and showing how she is quite strong willed and independent-minded. The author does this by allowing us to see the world from her perspective in her narrative of 'Now: Maxine' as she realises that she is angry at her mother, and she starts to break away from her by going out on a date with Jared (Imogene's brother). By concentrating on Maxine's previous life, we can see that Maxine really needs something fantastical, wondrous and adventurous within her life. She feels so isolated and alone herself that she believes in the supernatural world because the rest of her life before Imogene was so depressing, boring, and constricting.

Also in this section, the author starts to deepen the threat of danger around the character of Imogene as Adrian encounters John Narraway the Angel. When the Angel tells the ghost-boy about the soul-eaters (the darkness or the anamathim) he finally reveals to Adrian just how deeply he has made his mistake, and by allowing the readers to hear this account the author is deliberately keeping Imogene unknowing and in the dark about her situation; which only highlights the tension. At the end of the section, Adrian considers what he can do about this new danger we see him as quite a cowardly figure, who is willing to trade any other soul to the darkness rather than Imogene's. He did not ask how he could fight them or defeat them, but rather how he could appease them. In this way the author shows through the character of Adrian the themes of Courage in the book, and Adrian's lack thereof.



Pages 152 - 183

Pages 152 - 183 Summary

Starting with 'Now: Maxine' the narrative switches to Maxine's perspective as she wonders if she will ever be as cool as her friend Imogene. She is waiting on the steps of her front porch as she considers all of the events of the previous few days; her first date with Jared, and the ghost boy Adrian. When Imogene arrives they tease each other about their respective dates before Maxine informs her that tonight they are going to Crowsea Public Library, there to meet the writer Christy Riddell.

When they arrive at the authors unofficial writing workshops, Christy Riddell appears to be a friendly, earnest older man who listens to Imogene's story about the ghost boy, the fairies, Pell-Mell and her dreams. He insists that all of these things could indeed be real, and that the only way to really find out is to conduct an experiment. He outlines his plan and the girls agree.

Later that night in the narrative 'Now: Imogene,' the girls are holding a sleepover at the Yeck house, where Maxine can stay awake all night and watch over Imogene to see what happens. Maxine informs her mother over the phone where she'll be and her friend Imogene is impressed how calmly she stands up to her mother.

Almost as soon as she goes to bed, Pell-Mell arrives to see Imogene. Not scared at seeing her old friend any more, Imogene quizzes him on the other fairies that are hanging around the school and why she is suddenly having these dreams. Pell-Mell tells her about the Darkness and that he fears that the Redding High fairies were once brownies who have long since grown cruel and amoral through lack of having a proper place in the world.

From Maxine's perspective, she is woken up by Imogene after almost fainting at suddenly seeing the little procession of fairies moving from Imogene's closet to her window. She never saw Pell-Mell, but Imogene tells her everything that he said. Maxine believes the danger that her friend is in, and wonders what the next step must be.

In the final section of 'Now: Imogene,' the next day finds her introspective over what her imaginary friend has told her. Thinking it over she decides that she doesn't want to include Christy Riddell in her investigations (feeling vaguely used as a piece of his research), and tells her friend Maxine that now they need to find out ways to stop the fairies and what they can use to defend themselves against them. That day, much to her mothers' surprise she decides to visit Crowsea Public Library herself, on her own. Here she meets Hilary the Librarian (another character from another of Charles de Lint's Newford series of books), and asks about books that might be about fairy lore and, particularly, how to stop fairies. Hilary the Librarian seems to know more than she is letting on, but helps the young Imogene out as she finds a small cash of books that deal particularly with fairy enchantments and defences against them.



Pages 152 - 183 Analysis

In this section of chapters, we can see the author gradually painting in the danger that surrounds the characters (especially Imogene). By introducing the other characters of Christy Riddell and Hilary the Librarian, the author is insinuating that there is indeed a greater magical world around the two protagonists, and that the girls do not really know how it operates or how real it all can be.

After the girls follow Christy's advice and conduct the experiment, suddenly the reality of their situation hits home; a fact that affects Maxine with the shock that everything is suddenly strange and out of control. What is scaring both of the girls so is that, even though they were social outsiders before, now the normal laws of their previous lives do not apply. They knew ways to negotiate their problems before (Imogene acted tough, Maxine disappeared into the shadows), and now they are facing a strange world for which they do not know the rules. This predicament can be seen as an analogy used by the author to represent the experience of adolescence and growing up to be an adult in general: all of a sudden the youth finds themselves in a stranger, more serious world which does not obey the same rules as the one they have only recently left. With this in mind, these narrative traits can be understood as transforming the fairy story of the Blue Girl into a classic Coming-of-Age tale.

While both girls are scared at this new threat of magic all around them, curiously Imogene also has a sense of comfort by the fact that she now knows that her childhood friend Pell-Mell is actually real (or real for her in some ways). This is because Imogene is now reconnecting with that innocent state in her childhood where she had imaginary friends and anything was possible. Pell-Mell not only represents another character in the story, but the return of Imogene's innocence after her long years having to take care of herself and having to fight her way out of her problems.



Pages 183 - 217

Pages 183 - 217 Summary

'Now: Adrian' begins as we find the ghost boy wandering through the halls of Redding High alone, now avoiding Tommery and the other fairies as he tries to figure out what he is going to do. Seeing the school kids running around him he decides on a course of action: he is going to try and offer another soul in the place of Imogene to the creatures of the darkness.

Meanwhile, in 'Now: Imogene' the girls conduct a war council at school featuring what they have both learnt about the fairies. Imogene reveals that she has been doing some research and found numerous tricks that might help them against the fairies, but that the stories are all conflicting. Apparently the colour blue wards them - or other magical creatures off, whilst sweet things lure them in. They decide to talk later and, after school Imogene decides to go over to the record store where her boyfriend Thomas is working. Knowing that he is part Irish, Imogene figures that his family must have some fairy lore and so she decides to tell him all about her involvement with 'The Good People' (or fairies). To her surprise Thomas is quite accepting of her story, revealing that he himself had seen a magical creature and that his Granny used to tell him stories about them. Thomas had seen a terrifying banshee when his Uncle died - a premonition of a death. He swears to his girlfriend that he will call his Grandmother and try and find out what he can about the trouble that she might be in.

Elsewhere in 'Now: Adrian,' we find the ghost boy making his own special plans. He uses the special technique that he was taught to summon the Angel John Narraway to him and questions him about the nature of the anamathim. He asks how he can make a bargain with one, and John reveals that apparently that you can summon them with the gift of unleavened bread whilst remaining within a salt circle. When Adrian reveals that he wants to offer the soul of Brent Calder - the school bully - in Imogene's place the Angel John absolutely refuses to help and warns Adrian that he is treading onto very dark territory indeed.

That night in 'Now Imogene' as Imogene Yeck starts to fall sleep suddenly the shadows in her room start converging on her, threatening her. Just as they are about to overwhelm her Pell-Mell bursts from the closet and throws a handful of blue powder over his friend. The shadows disappear but also, strangely, it has stained her entire body instantly blue. It turns out that this is vervain powder, that Pell-Mell has traded almost all of his stories to get a hold of just to distract the anamathim. They decide to go to Maxine's to warn her, and PellMell takes Imogene through the gateway in her closet to the closet in Maxine's room. Imogene's friend is at first shocked and turned to see her friend and now she can see the small form of Pell-Mell, but recovers as Imogene tells her what has happened. The blue pollen will keep Imogene hidden from the darkness for a few days, enough time to gather everything they know and fight off the fairies.



Imogene agrees to hold off the fight until Maxine has had a chance to do some more research and she hears back from Thomas about what his Grandmother might know.

Pages 183 - 217 Analysis

This collection of sections shows two different story lines (Imogene's and Adrian's) weaving around each other, each racing towards a conclusion. Whilst both characters are unaware of what the other is doing, the reader can see how Adrian's actions are about to put Imogene and Maxine in greater and greater danger as he tries to understand the soul-eaters and bargain with the Angel John Narraway. This fast interweaving of narrative is used to create tension and drama, and heighten the sense of danger.

We can see in these sections that the author is trying to skilfully blend our real world with that of the magical world of Newford, in the use of fairy stories and tales from real-world sources that the girls have to consider in their War Council against the Good Neighbours. This use of 'real' fairy tales adds gravity and seriousness to the story of The Blue Girl, helping the Suspension of Disbelief for the reader.

The theme of courage is presented once again through the character of Adrian as he talks to the Angel about how to deflect the soul-eaters. We can infer that Angel John is actually intrigued or quietly impressed by the ghost boy when he thinks that Adrian is going to offer himself up in the place of the girl he loves, but when he discovers that Adrian actually has in mind offering up the bully Brent Calder the Angel is disgusted. This whole sequence can be seen as one of the pivotal tests of Adrian's character in the book, asking him to become courageous and thus grow as a character. When he fails to do so at this stage we see how Adrian's character hasn't really developed in maturity at all, and we lose respect for him (although the author helps us to empathise with the ghost-boy). If he were to express courage at this stage (just as Maxine and Imogene are doing) then the character of Adrian could be said to grow and to learn new things, rather than staying stylistically and actually in the shadows of the story.



Pages 217 - 249

Pages 217 - 249 Summary

After Imogene and Pell-Mell leave in the section entitled 'Now: Maxine,' Maxine is left considering what the danger that they are all in, and decides to perform some research. She searches on the internet and finds a fairytale site where she leaves a message about her friends predicament, not expecting to get a response. To her surprise she receives a direct email with one of the members of the forum, telling her to be careful. At first cautious, Maxine decides to send her mysterious correspondent a direct mail detailing their problems and goes to bed. The very next day she has a message asking her to chat directly online to 'Esmeralda Foylan' who turns out to be somewhat of an expert on fairies and the hidden world of the supernatural.

Esmeralda, it turns out is a gatekeeper to another magical portal to the other realms living elsewhere in America, who warns Maxine of the dire danger that the anamathim represent, and warns her too that the very next day is Halloween - the time when the veils between the worlds will be at their thinnest and the danger the greatest. She tells the young girl that the creatures can only emerge from the shadows, so Maxine and her friend must remain with all of the lights on for as long as possible, and, if Imogene is caught then Maxine must grab onto her and hold her. The creatures of darkness will try and transform her friend into many different shapes but Maxine must hold on to her with all of her strength as in the fairy story Tam Lin.

That day, as the narrative continues in 'Now: Imogene' we find the Blue Girl at home, avoiding school. Unexpectedly her mother returns home and finds her playing truant (and also blue from head to foot). Imogene informs her of all that is going on about her being cursed by fairies and her mother appears to take it all in her stride, trying to reassure her daughter before she has to go out. Then Imogene phones Thomas, who tells her that he has been talking to his grandmother, who has told him that on Halloween there is a special way to gain access to the fairy realms, and to get rid of fairies you have to give them a new set of clothes and thank them for all of their marvellous work. The very last phone call that Imogene makes that day is to Maxine, who tells her everything that she has found out from Esmeralda.

As Imogene stays home from school, trying to come up with a battle plan to defeat the fairies and to stop the attentions of the soul-eaters, she goes upstairs and finds Adrian the ghost boy hovering outside of her window. She is disgusted with him as he outlines his plan to feed the bully Brent Calder to the anamathim, and tells him to go away.

Pages 217 - 249 Analysis

In this series of sections, the narrative at first switches over to Maxine after her conversation with Pell-Mell and Imogene. In her actions here we can see Maxine



becoming a selfless heroine, displaying bravery and intelligence to solve their problems. Whilst Imogene still appears to be stubborn and reckless to some degree (eventually telling Adrian that she wants to summon the soul eaters with no clear plan, just so she can fight them), Maxine is using her initiative to solve their problems (making contact with Esmeralda Foylan). The two main characters can be contrasted against each other in their reactions to the danger about them: Imogene wants to fight it (alone preferably) and does not want her friend chatting to Christy Riddell or even involved about her problems, whereas Maxine tries to seek help and advice to better understand the nature of the problem.

The author also heightens the sense of horror and danger through the use of the new character Esmeralda Foylan. Esmeralda tells Maxine that the soul-eaters are creatures of darkness, and that the girls are only safe when they are in the light - this device by the author plays to all of our childhood, primordial fears of the dark and the unknown and further highlights the contrast between the 'dangerous' elements being darkness, hunger and all things cruel whilst the 'heroic' elements of the story is encapsulated by Pell-Mell, the wondrous, the free-willed and confident.



Pages 250 - 277

Pages 250 - 277 Summary

Beginning with 'Now:Adrian' the next section in the story follows Adrian the ghost boy as he goes to visit another ghost he knows - a rocker boy named Bobby Novak. Adrian asks him if what he has heard about Halloween - that the dead can walk the earth. Bobby tells him that it is, and that he has to be exactly where he died when the moon rises and that it lasts until sunrise.

Meanwhile Maxine is at school, and finds out from an email that Imogene's shine can repel the soul eaters as much as attract them.

In 'Now: Imogene,' we find the Blue Girl making up stories with Pell-Mell in return for the vervain powder. They spend all day doing that whilst they wait for her mother and brother to return home. When they do, they are shocked to see Pell-Mell themselves, in the real world but recover from their astonishment easily, as if the fact of fairies and imaginary friends is normal. Imogene reassures all of them that she can handle whatever trouble is coming her way from the fairies, and when Maxine gets there after school the three friends hold another 'war council' where Imogene describes her plan. They will banish the fairies from the school through the gift of clothes, and they will use the circle of salt and bread to summon the soul-eater, after that Imogene reveals that she isn't sure what to do. Maxine is scared, thinking that they shouldn't do this now when they don't have all of the facts, and especially at Halloween, but Imogene is adamant.

Elsewhere, the narrative flips to Adrian again as he heads to the place of his death (the school) and awaits moonrise. He does so that night and suddenly, miraculously finds himself physical, real and alive once again. He is overjoyed and eager to try and experience all of the things that he has missed.

On Halloween, Maxine starts to put their plan into action as she goes to school and finds herself being bullied viciously by Valerie. She wishes she was braver, like Imogene, but keeps her head down and gets through the day until the time that she sneaks down and hides in the basement of the school. Here she lays out all of the sets of clothes for the fairies and thanks them for all of their hard work and waits for Imogene to appear.

Pages 250 - 277 Analysis

In these sections, the author is laying out his plot pieces in order for the final showdown between the girls, Pell-Mell, the fairies and the soul-eater's. He adds elements of Imogene's plan and lets the characters talk about their actions in a way to heighten the tension. As the reader is viewing the narrative from outside of the book the author is allowing them to see the faults and problems in the plan - that neither Imogene, Maxine

or Pell-Mell have any thought of how to actually defeat the soul-eater. These elements create the suspicion that the plan will be disastrous, and foreshadows the events later in the book.

The drama is further increased by the way the plot switches quickly between the actions of Imogene and Maxine, and the ghost-boy Adrian as he learns how to become physical for one night and further complicates the plot. Whilst Imogene is bravely trying her best to face her problems, we can hear the voice of reason in what Maxine is worried about, and we see in this section how brave and resilient Maxine herself is as she endures the bullying at school and still sneaks down on her own, in the dark to deal with the fairy menace.



Pages 277 - 305

Pages 277 - 305 Summary

That afternoon whilst Maxine is at school the narrative continues with 'Now: Imogene' as she finishes up her preparations with Pell-Mell. Imogene apologises to her childhood friend that she abandoned him, not believing in him any more and wishing that they could stay in each other's lives. What follows is a philosophical conversation about God, Fate and life.

Imogene then decides to go to the school to meet Maxine whilst Pell-Mell uses his fairy doors to travel there, carrying the rucksack of equipment that Imogene has packed. As she approaches, and just as she is about to break into the school Imogene is confronted by the bully Brent Calder, who starts to shove her around. What she doesn't know is that the football team had lost the game, that it was actually Brent's fault and that he had lost his chance at a scholarship. Imogene sees that Valerie is near by and is hurt after Brent has turned his anger against her, and fights Brent. She manages to cut him with her pocket knife, scaring the bully and proceeds to take Valerie - even though they are enemies - to the nearest hospital. There Valerie asks her why she protected her, and warns her that Brent will come after her and Imogene reassures Valerie that she is not scared of Brent Calder. Imogene reveals that she is not unused to violence or protecting herself, and reminds her old tormentor of the very first time they had met a year ago, and that she had warned the bullies to stay away from her outside of school. After this, hurrying, Imogene leaves to try and get to the school in time to meet Maxine and face the soul-eater.

Meanwhile in 'Now; Maxine' we find Maxine still hiding in the basement, awaiting the fairies, or Imogene and Pell-Mell. She gets a phone-call from Imogene telling her everything that has happened and, worried, realises that everything that they are doing is actually, really dangerous.

The narrative switches to what Adrian has been doing now in his physical body. We find that he is tired and feeling sick after eating too much chocolate and sweets for the first time. He arrives back at the school to find Tommery and the other fairies departing. Tommery reveals to him that the fairies have been thanked for their efforts and have been given the gift of clothes - which means that they are now free to leave and go back to fairyland. Adrian is sad to see the only people he counted as his friends leaving, and is reminded by Tommery of the only thing that he can really do if he wants to save his friend from the soul-eater. Adrian agrees, and decides passionately that he is going to enjoy this one last night that he has left before giving himself over to the soul eater for good.



Pages 277 - 305 Analysis

In the crescendo of action that makes up these sections, we see all of the character reacting to the subject of fear and how they relate to the book's theme of Courage. We can use the events of these sections to compare each of the characters and their motivations in relation to that theme.

For Imogene, when she is tested by the fight with Brent Calder we see that, although she is afraid she fights back, returning to the previous habits that she had developed in Tyson as a toughened, fighting street kid. Imogene shows bravery in doing this, but we are left feeling as though her actions may have been unwise (in cutting the bully Brent Calder with a knife). Although she does show toughness, in this trial the character of Imogene hasn't shown the sort of true courage that Maxine and Adrian do these sections - as Imogene is acting as she knows how to, and not pushing herself beyond her normal limits.

Maxine on the other hand, is mortally scared of what is happening, especially after her phone call from Imogene but shows courage in her decision to stay and help her friend anyway - even if there is the very real possibility that any one of them could die.

Adrian too shows courage for the first time in the story of The Blue Girl. Adrian the ghost boy realises that his un-life up until now has not really been a 'life' at all, and that for long periods of days and weeks he cannot even remember what he was doing or whether he existed at all. In this monologue, we see Adrian finally come to terms with what he actually is (dead), and decide to hand himself over to the soul-eaters as a replacement for Imogene.



Pages 305 - 333

Pages 305 - 333 Summary

When Imogene finally arrives back at the school, she is cautious but relieved to find that there are no bullies or police waiting for her there. She tries to phone Maxine but cannot get in touch with her on the phone. As Pell-Mell arrives she tells him that Maxine has disappeared, and that they have to head down to the basement immediately - with no time to set up the lights. Thinking quickly, Imogene sees that the door to the art rooms are open and she tells Pell-Mell her plan of attack.

Meanwhile in the section entitled 'Now: Maxine' Maxine has been hiding the basement waiting for Imogene and Pell-Mell when Adrian turns up. Maxine is shocked that she can touch him, and that for this one night of Halloween Adrian is in fact a real human being again. Adrian quizzes her as to why she made the fairies leaves, but understands when Maxine is annoyed with both him and the fairies. The ghost-boy tells her that he has come to give himself over to the soul-eaters and announces the sort of thing that he will say to them when he sees them. Suddenly, immediately they start to appear out of the shadows, and enchant Maxine and Adrian so that slowly, against their will start moving towards the anamathim and to their doom.

The next section of 'Now: Imogene' continues as Imogene and Pelly burst into the scene, see Maxine and Adrian about to be eaten by the soul-eaters and use their special weapon - tubs of blue poster paint to fling all over the creatures. Because the creatures have taken physical form they are hurt by the paint and by the flying tins, and Imogene sees her chance to attack them. The soul-eaters retreat back from The Blue Girl (as they are physical they can be hurt and they cannot touch Imogene in her current blue-skinned state) as Imogene draws her knife.

Maxine manages to stop her friend, reminding her that if she kills the creatures she will be no better than a murderer, and instead calls out a bargain with them. She tells them that they can live if they leave them alone, to which they give their solemn word.

This section ends as Imogene finds out that Adrian the ghost boy was about to sacrifice himself for her well being and gives him a friendly kiss in thanks, and then phones her mum to tell her that she is all-right and will be going to Jared's Halloween party.

Pages 305 - 333 Analysis

In this finale to The Blue Girl, we finally see the different sorts of courage of each of the main characters portrayed and tested by their encounter with the soul-eaters. For Imogene she is challenged not to fight and defeat the soul-eaters through physical strength, but is challenged in the way that she has to learn to be different than the person she used to be in Tyson. In a horrible similarity to the bullies that have plagued

her over the years Imogene finds herself in a position of power over her enemies, and struggles to hold back her anger and to let them go peacefully.

We see the most Courage coming from Maxine, as she stands up for what she believes in and challenges the soul-eater's directly, seeking to save Adrian the ghost-boy (even though she doesn't like him) and her friend Imogene at the same time. The character of Maxine has finally found her courage in this scene and, we can argue is much more of a heroine than Imogene is in this dramatic conclusion to *The Blue Girl*.

The final decision of the two girls to go out to the party (and for Maxine to dress in blue paint like her friend's blue skin) is a celebration of their difference and their courage. Both Maxine and Imogene decide to go out to the party to celebrate their survival and their individuality by stepping out from the shadows and being different from the rest of the crowd.



Pages 333 - 368

Pages 333 - 368 Summary

In the final sections of *The Blue Girl*, we see Imogene being taken to talk to the police department about the attack on Brent Calder, and her mother strongly defending her actions. Imogene is forced to lie, hoping that Valerie - her enemy - has seen the light about her abusive boyfriend and has helped her with her own testimonial. The police do not press charges and Imogene is free to return home (her skin still blue) to her family, where she talks with her mother, apologising for being such a bad daughter and getting into so much trouble and danger.

Maxine, on the other hand, has returned home after the club much to her mother's amazement at being blue, and is further surprised when she finds that her mother isn't so oppressive as she was at the start of the story. She receives an email from Esmeralda Foylan detailing the kind of work that she does and Maxine realises that what she wants to do is to become a professional investigator of the unknown after her recent experiences. Maxine meets up with her friend Imogene and together they review all of the events of the past few days, and Imogene thanks her friend for saving her soul - not just her life. Imogene announces that she knows what Maxine did; she saved her from herself.

In the final part of the chapter, Imogene is preparing once again for bed when Adrian the ghost-boy appears at her window. He seems to be a different person, and asks Imogene to help him cross over to the Other Side. This she does, meeting John Narraway in the process, and, a little tearful returns home to phone her boyfriend Thomas as the story ends.

Pages 333 - 368 Analysis

In the final sections of *The Blue Girl* we see all of the story threads being brought to a resolution by the author as he plays out the plot lines to their inevitable conclusion. It includes a moment of prescience from Imogene as she clearly reviews just how much Maxine has helped her over the course of their friendship so far, and she finally decides to tell her friend everything that she did and what happened to her back in the town of Tyson. This final acceptance of her whole personality (from the bad girl in Tyson to the innocent girl at the commune with Pell-Mell) is the key which allows Imogene to become a fully integrated and full personality.

Similarly for Maxine, in her decision to follow a different course of life for herself (helping Christy and Esmeralda) she now is doing something that she wants to do rather than simply fulfilling her mothers wishes.

The final piece of the puzzle comes from the ghost boy Adrian, who decides to move on to the Other Side after finally accepting that he is actually dead. By turning and asking

for help from Imogene, we can see that Adrian has finally accepted the fact that is scared of death and that he needs help. This step is the key which allows him to deal with his fears and move on to the next phase of his soul.



Characters

Imogene Yeck

Imogene Yeck is, at the start of the story 'The Blue Girl,' a sixteen-year-old girl who has recently moved from her home town of Tyson with her family to a new life in Newford. She is the sister to Jared Yeck, her easy going brother, and daughter to her ex-hippy mother and father (seperated).

Imogene Yeck is a fiercely independent and self-reliant teenager, whose unconventional approach to life has led her into trouble in her previous home of Tyson, where she hung out with a tough gang of street kids under their leader, Frankie. Although she doesn't talk much about these events, it is revealed that Imogene quit school in Tyson after getting into trouble many times over for assault and petty vandalism and moving to Redding High is a new start for her and her whole family.

Imogene has a practical and collected manner in which seeing is believing, and most things aren't worth worrying about. However she doesn't come across as a 'bad' girl in the book, more as someone whose libertarian upbringing and anti-authoritarian nature has forced her to question her values and stand up for herself. For Imogene, her story development is in part her conquering her fears, but is also more about her trying to remain in control and her fear of letting go. Imogene is afraid of returning to the person that she used to be, and now is actually invested in her school life and her friends. This relationship is challenged as she is shown things which cannot exist, which are far outside of her abilities to deal with (the anathamini) and she has to decide whether to admit her fear or lash out at her enemies.

The character of Imogene Yeck is used in contrast to her best friend Maxine, and the character of Imogene in this book is also in part used as a useful role model for her friends and readers. Interestingly, the author has chosen to start his story with a strong female heroine rather than one who becomes strong through the course of the narrative; showcasing that even strong willed people have their weaknesses, and have to confront the issues that all the rest of us have to; confidence, courage, assimilation, and trust.

Maxine Tatrie

Maxine Tatrie is Imogene's best friend at Redding High, and the first friend who befriends the newcomer to the school and the town of Newford. Maxine is of a similar age to her friend (sixteen - seventeen) and in the same year, but not many of the same classes.

Maxine Tatrie is the school 'dork.' She is not quite a nerd, but seriously uncool as she appears in conservative, prim, and proper clothes and studies hard at school. We soon find out that this construction of Maxine's personality is all in fact because of her



controlling mother, who wants the very best for her daughter and wants her to succeed and do well at school. As their parents are divorced, we can see in the narrative that Mrs Tatrie is actually on the verge of obsession over protecting her daughter, and is perhaps using her daughter as an emotional crutch to lean on over the break up with her husband.

Maxine herself is a typical teenage girl, or would be if she were allowed to be. She is a bit shy but is strongly intelligent and witty. When she meets Imogene and they spark a relationship Maxine sees in her friend all of the things that she lacks; confidence, self-assuredness and freedom. Maxine is amazed at how calmly Imogene deals with everything from bullies to ghosts, but is herself more open minded and trusting than her friend.

The character of Maxine is set into contrast and contradiction with Imogene as at first she is the polar opposite of The Blue Girl who gradually starts coming out of her shell enough to ask someone out on a date, and even to eventually defy her mother. The character of Maxine can be said to show the most character progression in the way she changes through the book, and arguable has different if not just as useful traits as Imogene. Maxine reaches out to her acquaintances to seek for help and to gain information - an action Imogene would never do and in doing so, connects the characters of the story together.

Adrian Drumbell

Adrian is the ghost-boy of the story who has been haunting Redding High School in Newford since his unfortunate death at the hands of the fairies Tommery, Oshtin and Quinty. Adrian was always a loser, a nerd and a geek at high school who was routinely bullied every day of his educational life. This forced the boy to become ever more isolated, shy and reclusive; so much so that he became able to see Fairies. His removal from the 'normal world' was complete as he struck up a quasi-friendship with this wild group of creatures, learning all of their secret ways and magical passages through the school.

This new found friendship is short-lived however (well, at least in the physical sense) as one day the fairies try to teach him how to fly, and Adrian plummets to his early demise. Becoming a ghost thereafter Adrian haunts the school and hangs out with the fairies (especially Tommery) before becoming attracted to this strong willed, independent girl named Imogene. He starts stalking her and trying to make contact with her, and when Imogene turns and starts talking to him, Adrian discovers that Imogene doesn't think that much of him. He sets a plan in motion that tries to impress his new found love, using his friends the fairies to draw Imogene deeper into the magical other world but instead placing her in immortal danger as she comes under the attentions of the anamathim - or the creatures of primordial darkness who eat souls. Thinking that he can free her from this mess and become the hero, he tries to find a way in which he can bargain with the creatures of darkness to take the current school bully - Brent Calder in her place.



Adrian is an almost pitiable character in *The Blue Girl*, who shows (at least at the start) the least amount of character progression. His long years as a ghost and his isolated outlook has started to make him see people in a different light (as he finally thinks that it is acceptable to have another human eaten just to save the one he likes). We can see in Adrian the danger that, if he does not pass on to the Other Side or start to stand up for himself and those that he cares about, he will become corrupted and twisted just as the fairies themselves are.

Pell-Mell (Pelly)

Pell-Mell is Imogene's childhood imaginary friend, or at least - he was. Pell-Mell (known as Pelly) is a fairly diminutive creature with elongated limbs and fingers who looks somewhat like a skinny hedgehog with floppy ears and large eyes. Together he and Imogene used to tell each other stories and have adventures when Imogene was growing up in the hippy communes with her family near Tyson. Imogene hadn't thought or dreamed about him for years and years until, one strange night at the very start of the book he appears to her in a waking dream and seems even more real than he ever was back then.

Pell-Mell is a type of fairy or something similar to a fairy who tries to protect his friend Imogene and warn her of the imminent danger that she is in by what she is becoming involved in (through Adrian). He at first tries to draw away Imogene's attention - telling her that he is a phantasm, unreal and a dream, but when the situation becomes too dire he finally agrees to reveal himself to her and explain that she is in dire danger from the creatures of the darkness. Pell-Mell is a stalwart friend to Imogene, who goes to extraordinary lengths to try and save her from herself. As a literary device, Pell-Mell is indicative of all that is good and noble about dreams and our childhood imaginings, and himself encapsulates the magic and mystery at the heart of Charles De Lint's work.

Tommery

Tommery is the leader of the band of fairies that live at Redding High School. He is barely as big as a foot in height with patchwork clothes, crooked features and long dreadlocks bedecked with seashells, beads and buttons. He is a fierce, amoral figure in the book who is somewhere between sympathetic and positively mischievous to the other main characters of Adrian, Imogene, Maxine, and Pell-Mell.

As a hob, house elf, or brownie, we learn that Tommery is one of the 'household spirits' that used to exist in places to look after the dwelling and the people who lived there. A part of the pact was that these brownies were treated with the most utmost of respect. Over the years however, and nature of the school itself has led to the brownies becoming forgotten and, as they are inevitably mistreated so they become crueller, more mischievous versions of their previous selves.

Tommery still has some sense that some things are unhelpful (in feeling sorry for Adrian's death), but we also see he really has little thought to his actions or the dangers



that he puts other people in. Him and his band of fairies live more for the moment and for their own personal enjoyment (not caring if that is at someone else's expense or not). Through their befriending (and accidental death) of Adrian they try to lure the girl he has a crush on into the other world (Imogene) by sending her dreams and visions. This in turn draws her to the attention of The Darkness and thus endangers Imogene, Maxine and anyone that they are close to.

Jared Yeck

Jared Yeck is Imogene's older brother who goes to the same school as his sister and, eventually, ends up dating her best friend Maxine. Jared Yeck is a friendly, likeable person who is very protective of his sister and his family (we find out that he tried to stop her from being bullied at their old school, but in turn just got beaten up himself). An intelligent boy, Jared is truly passionate about music, and especially sixties music which he thinks is the best kind that there is. Through the course of the story he is a constant source of strength to Imogene and Maxine and tries to defend them against their problems.

Christy Riddell

Christy Riddell is the human chronicler of fairy stories who lives in Newford and studies the many strange occurrences that happen there. He runs a writing workshop from the Crowsea Public Library and befriends the girl Maxine who shows an interest in fairies and also in writing her own stories. Christy is presented as an amiable, friendly but not overly generous or courageous sort of a person who is more scholarly than heroic for the protagonists in this story. He helps Maxine and Imogen out by telling them what he knows of fairy lore, but seems more inclined to write about their story than to help them fight off the fairies or the anamathim.

Brent Calder

Brent Calder is the star quarterback and the toughest school bully at Redding High School. He starts the story by being Valerie's boyfriend and taking Valerie's side to try and frighten Imogene. Through the course of the story we discover that Brent is himself quite a weak character: he knows that his only hope of going to College (University) is to gain a scholarship with his football skills, but his skills aren't good enough. This inner knowledge makes him angrier and angrier as the story goes on, eventually until he gets to the point of beating up his boyfriend.

Thomas

Thomas is Imogene's boyfriend who works at the record store in Newford. He appears to be a sincere and affectionate young man who takes Imogene seriously when she tells

him about her adventures and tries to help her out by revealing his own past involvement with the world of the supernatural.

Esmerelda Foylan

Esmeralda Foylan is a mysterious character who Maxine befriends through an internet forum, who turns out to be very knowledgeable on the subject of the supernatural. She helps Maxine and Imogene in their conflict with the soul-eaters by responding to Maxine's emails and giving her information.



Objects/Places

Redding High School

Redding High is where half of the action takes place in 'The Blue Girl' by Charles de Lint. It is a fairly large High School for the town of Newford, which happens to have an attendant ghost (Adrian) and is home to a tribe of brownies, or fairies. It is here that Imogene and Jared come to finish their schooling before going to College after moving to the town, and where they have to navigate not just the tricky supernatural waters but also the social ones as well as the school is made up of the classic cliques of nerds, dorks, preppies, losers, and football stars.

Vervain Powder

Vervain powder is used by Pell-Mell to discourage the anamathim from finding his friend Imogene, and also has the disturbing effect of turning the girl completely blue. Vervain itself is a real world wild plant, but this particular sort of Blue Vervain is very rare, coming as it does only from one particular hinterland in the realms of faerie and Pell-Mell has to trade many of his stories just for one small dose.

The Closet

Imogene's closet, in her new room in Newford starts for her as a place to dread as she is plagued by dreams of it opening and strange creatures coming spilling out of it. When Imogene finally reconnects with Pell-Mell however, he reveals that at the back of the closet, just as in C.S.Lewis's 'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe' there is a magical fairy door, gateway or elf bolt which he and his other fairy friends use when they are travelling to and from this world and the realms of faerie. Imogene discovers that this is why so many people are afraid of the darkness behind a closed closet door, because the fairies use these spaces as helpful ways to sneak into peoples houses and remain relatively unseen.

The Record Store

The Record Store in Newford is the place Imogene's casual boyfriend Thomas works, and where he reads comics and obsesses about music. It is one of Imogene's favourite hangouts and also the place where Thomas tells her about his own involvement with fairies.



Maxine's Room

Maxine, the best friend of Imogene Yeck has a room which isn't her own. Her room is a very 'girlified' creation of her mothers, decorated with many dolls and closets full of clothes Maxine hates. Within it is one loose floorboard where Maxine hides the things she has managed to acquire that she knows her mother would not approve of; CD's, clothes, an old soft plush toy. Maxine's room comes to represent in the story not only her getaway, but also the extent of control that Maxine's mother has over her daughter's life.

Crowsea Public Library

Crowsea Public Library is the largest public library in Newford, where Imogene and Maxine repeatedly go to find out more about Adrian, the fairies and the anamathim. It is staffed by other characters from Charles de Lint's previous books, and is also where Maxine regularly goes to see the writer Chris Riddell as he holds a workshop on writing and helps the girls out find out more about the supernatural realms.

Tyson

The town of Tyson isn't a visited location in *The Blue Girl*, but occupies an important place in the background to the Yeck family. It was apparently the place where Imogene started 'going off the rails' and hanging out with Frankie's gang, before the family eventually moved.

The Commune

The Commune near Tyson is another place that plays an important role in the story of *The Blue Girl* not for its presence, but in the way it shaped the Yeck family values previous to the beginning of the story. The Commune was a libertarian collection of hippies and alternative thinkers, and was the home of Imogene, Jared, and their parent while the children were growing up.

Newford

The town of Newford is perhaps one of the most important aspects of the story of *The Blue Girl*, existing as it does in the author's canon of written works. A fictional town (or at least, this version of Newford is); Newford is where all of the action of the story takes place after the Yeck family move here to start afresh. Little do they know that Newford is itself a magical hotspot, with attendant families of fairies, ghosts, imaginary creatures, angels, magicians and other strange creatures. As Imogene and Maxine find out more about their own particular problems, they also begin to discover how deeply magical their quiet little town really is. In this way the town of Newford is itself symbolic of the

theme entire of Charles de Lint's works: that magic and excitement can be found everywhere even in the most boring of places and imagination is the key to help unlocking it.



Themes

Magic

One of the biggest themes running throughout the whole book and most of Charles de Lint's published works is that of magic - the fantastical, the weird, wondrous, and terrifying. In the story of *The Blue Girl* this theme is portrayed explicitly through the disbelief and the experiences of one of the main protagonists, Imogene Yeck.

Imogene grew up in a Commune and so was used to talk of spaceships and crop circles and people who could turn into crows and ghosts, but had always regarded this as drug-induced and less practical than the realities of the harsh world that she dealt with everyday. This is the Imogene we meet at the start of the book, and is the Imogene who has to change through the course of the narrative. What we (and Imogene) discovers is that, as a small child she used to have an imaginary friend named Pell-mell and they would tell each other magical stories and go on adventures, this imaginary friend it turns out, was real (or somewhere near real). Imogene has to return to that state of belief in the wondrous and strange, and in her own imagination for her to start seeing the fairies world for what it really is. In short, Imogene has to learn to let go of her walls that keep out the things that might hurt her.

Magic is presented in the narrative as at the same time wondrous, strange, and scary. It is all the things that we remembered it being when we were children: the stuff of nightmares as well as of adventure. Yet, for the author it also seems to have rules. The magical creatures that inhabit it all obey certain restrictions. The magical beings that stand so close in these books aren't truly free like their human counterparts, but operate in different ways with different restrictions.

The magic inherent in the town of Newford can be understood as symbolic for the fact that such things as adventure, joy and excitement can be found anywhere if we look hard enough, and to this end the author does his best to weave magical realms, creatures, and events as close to the normal 'real' world as possible. In the end we have a story that not only is about two worlds (the magical and the normal) but is also about one bigger, stranger place where unexpected things can happen at every turn. It could be said that this feeling of wonder and opportunity is one of the feelings that the author is trying to instil through the medium of his book.

Independence

Independence, self-reliance, and freedom are all central themes that run through *The Blue Girl*, particularly expressed through the character of Maxine and the contrast between Maxine and Imogene.

Maxine starts off the story as a fairly shy and nerdy sort of a girl who has very few friends at Redding High School thanks to her conservative appearance. That all



changes however, upon meeting the confident Imogene as Maxine tries to step outside of her shell and actively defy the wishes of her mother. Mrs Tatrie (Maxine's mother) is portrayed as an overly protective, overly controlling figure who orders Maxine's life to the point of tyranny, deciding what sort of bedroom she should have what clothes she can wear and where she can and cannot go. Maxine gradually starts stepping out of her shell by buying more casual clothes (with the help of her friend Imogene), and stashing them at her friend's house, and then going out on dates and staying over at a friend's all night - things she would never have dreamed of doing.

Independence and freedom is a major feature of her friend Imogene's life who starts the story already with a lot of natural confidence and freedom. For Imogene, the theme affects her by forcing the young girl to start considering what she is willing to fight for, and what she wants to sacrifice for her freedom. As we learn about her past (her violence and exclusions from school), we see that for Imogene her Independence, curiously, is tested by her deciding to remain in school, despite the bullies and the peer group pressures Imogene decides to not throw it all away but try and find other ways of dealing with her problems. In a sense, Imogene's Independence is a strength for her character but now also comes with responsibilities to her friends and, more importantly to herself: she wants to do well with her studies and her friendships, and so decides to use her free thinking attitude to help out her friend Maxine.

For other characters too (and in particular, Adrian), we see the theme of Independence played out in the fact that although he is invisible, can go anywhere he wants he cannot actually do anything that he wants to do. He is constrained by the fact that he cannot touch the physical world, and is doomed to be a ghost until he decides to make the move to the Other Side. Adrian develops a crush on Imogene, but this only makes his situation worse as he realises that he has no power to act on it.

Over all, the story of *The Blue Girl* is about being responsible, confident, and open-minded. Through the interplay between the two main female protagonists we see that the author is supporting a strong and independent attitude towards life - one which asks us to ignore all the bullies and authoritarian figures who we might let dictate what happens to us.

Courage

Another important theme in the story of *The Blue Girl* by Charles de Lint is that of courage, of the importance of trying to do the right thing even if it scares you, and attempting a dangerous task anyway.

All of the characters in *The Blue Girl* have to find their own courage in their own way. For Imogene, it is the courage to believe in fairies and all of the unnatural things that she finds chaotic whilst for Maxine it is the courage to become herself and do her own thing despite of her mother. Even though Imogene is presented as a brave personality in the book (she stands up to Brent Calder at the start of the story), Imogene has her own weaknesses; her refusal to accept the danger that she is at first in, and her



stubborn attitude that she will face it all on her own. Whilst Imogene might be physically brave this is not the same, the author is telling us, as Courage. Bravery is Imogene's ability to stand up to her tormentors at school and not be worried about the consequences, but Courage is the facing of ones weaknesses - whatever they might be. For Imogene her main weakness is not thinking before she attempts to fight it out alone, and not believing in the danger that she is in. The world of fairies is too chaotic for her and, in a sense we can see that Imogene is scared of dealing with a situation in which she feels out of her depth. For her character to progress through the book, Imogene must learn to trust in the people around her and to accept that she has weaknesses too before she can overcome them. This is the expression of Imogene's courage.

For Maxine however, the theme of courage shows itself in the way that she starts to come out of her shell and stand up to her mother (but not viciously) as the story progresses. Thanks in part to Imogene's influence Maxine feels confident enough to do things on her own and to disagree with her mother, and eventually taking it upon herself to find out about the soul-eaters and try to save her friend herself. For Maxine who has led quite a 'small' life up until now these are all great trials and represent perhaps the greatest character progression of any of the characters within the book.

Style

Point of View

The point of view is divided fairly equally between the three main characters of Imogene, Maxine, and Adrian, with the greatest emphasis placed on Imogene (being the principle actor of *The Blue Girl*), and the smallest narrative space given to Adrian.

The book switches between these three narrators as they take turns speaking in the first person. Each perspective is subjective and unreliable in the sense that each character can only talk about her own feelings, thoughts, and impressions of what is happening around them. The omniscient or 'god's eye view' of the story comes with the participation of the reader as they piece together what each character is doing whilst the others are busy, thus allowing the reader to see what might be happening in the plot before even the characters do.

The majority of the book is devoted to the first-person narrative of Imogene as she moves to Newford and attends for her the new school of Redding High, and encounters fairies, ghosts, and spirits for the first time. This majority of interest in her character allows the author to really describe the town of Newford from fresh eyes.

Setting

The setting for the entirety of the story of *The Blue Girl* is Charles De Lint's magical town of Newford - a setting that the author has been building and adding to over the course of many books which comes to represent an analogy of how our own 'mundane' setting might, in actual fact be.

Newford is a magical place, a hotspot for fairy and other magical creatures in which every supporting actor in the story could turn out to be a shapeshifter, or a wizard or embroiled in their own fairytale. On the surface however, it appears to be just another boring town for the two girls Maxine and Imogene, and we can see in the authors descriptions of Redding High and the neighbourhoods that Newford appears to be as normal as any other quiet, middle American town. In this way the author uses its apparent 'normalcy' to indicate that Newford could be anywhere, and by extension, our own home towns could harbour the fantastical and unreal.

The main action of the book takes place between Redding High School, Imogene and Maxine's houses, and the Crowsea Public Library. These are all depicted on the face of it as exactly the kind of places you would expect; suburban, mundane. The most action takes place in or around Redding High School, and by doing this the author quite aptly depicts school life as being usually one of the most chaotic pieces of adolescence. Redding High School appears to be slightly unnerving, possibly dangerous in an apt metaphor of how the perils of peer groups and 'fitting in' occupy most teenager's lives.



Behind and underneath all of these physical locations however are the more bizarre ones: the Elf Bolts (or fairy passageways), the door through Imogene's Closet and the unreal dead lands that Adrian exists most of the time within. Their unexpected and sudden nature hint at the idea that our mundane world can turn surprisingly strange and unexpected, if we know where to look.

Language and Meaning

The language used throughout the book is straightforward, simple and colloquial - the author does this to better capture the characters of Imogene and Maxine in the book. The flow of description and narration is short and to the point, encouraging the reader to read on as each sentence provides with it new information without any lengthy analysis of the facts.

The author also employs words, languages, and phrases relevant to the realms of the fairy. Here we suddenly find new words - anamathim, bodach, bogart, pookah. Some of these are real words from fairy tales told throughout the world, some are made up words by the author. Due to their archaic old-world sound, their use lends to the story a sense of 'truth' and gravity to the situation that Imogene finds herself confronting. This is a hallmark of Charles de Lint's melding of real world data into his fictional world.

Structure

The Structure of 'The Blue Girl' is designed to appear as a continuous story, without chapter, book, or part breaks in the flow. Instead, we just have the shifting changes of voice split into 'Then' and 'Now' with each one holding one of the main character's name after it. Whilst this can be confusing at first, the meaning for this particular style becomes clear as we see the story presented to us as never-ending, a metaphor for the nature of the stories, myths, and tales that fairies so often belong to.

The switching from one narrative perspective to another also gives the impression of weaving voices - of three different story tellers each weaving a tapestry of tales that together form the tale of 'The Blue Girl.' In this way, even though this book is set in a fictional real-world somewhat like our own, we can see how the author is also trying to present 'The Blue Girl' entire as a modern fairytale similar to those ancient ones as Tam Lin or Rumpelstiltskin, which we may have heard of.



Quotes

"Do you really want to count folk like that as your friends? Do you really care 'bout what they think" (p. 39).

"Well, all I can say...is that just because one weird thing turns out to be true, doesn't mean every weird thing is" (p. 41).

"It just made a difference, having someone I could talk to and hang with - even if they were only a foot high" (p. 75).

"I believed. In fairies, at least. Maybe it's because I had to believe in them. For so long I had to believe in something more than what this world had to offer: my parents divorce, the horror that was high school, the loneliness that hung like a shroud over me every day until Imogene stepped up and tore it away" (p. 121).

"No, you died. You cast off your body and instead of moving on, you wander around in the world pretending you're still alive" (p.150).

"Ghosts, fairies, imaginary childhood companions, these things in the shadows. Do you see where all this is going?'
Maxine shakes her head. "Neither do I... I just know its out of control" (p.178).

"I've gone through the last few years of my life with a who-cares attitude, but right now I find I care very much" (p. 204).

"Everything should be respected...unless they prove they don't deserve it" (p. 248).

"I'll have to carry the weight of what I've done, and the worst-case outcome....will be that the Imogene I've been trying to be, the one Maxine considers her fiend, won't exist anymore" (p. 322).

"Maybe I should dye my hair orange before I go to school. I mean, if you're going to stand out, you might as well really stand out" (p. 367).



Topics for Discussion

Discuss the differences between Courage and Bravery in *The Blue Girl*. How does Imogene show Bravery but not Courage in her confrontations?

Why is Adrian the Ghost unable to move on to the Other Side in the story of *The Blue Girl*?

Consider the character of Tommery and the fairies in *The Blue Girl*. Are they necessarily bad characters or evil? Discuss what the concept of amorality means.

How is the town of Newford used as an analogy by the author of *The Blue Girl* for our own world?

Examine the character of Maxine. What is her greatest weakness and what is her greatest strength? What must she change about herself in order to become a fully rounded character by the end of the book?

Write a character study of Imogene Yeck, with reference to her actions in the story of *The Blue Girl*. What is her greatest strength/ What are her weaknesses? Why is holding back and not being confrontational really a mark of her courage?

Why does Maxine respect and like the character of Imogene Yeck so? What does she represent for her?

Who or what is the scariest, most threatening thing in the book of *The Blue Girl* in your opinion? Consider the soul-eaters, the fairies, Adrian the ghost, Brent Calder, or even Imogene's use of a pocket knife?