

# **The Boundless Study Guide**

## **The Boundless by Kenneth Oppel**

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## Plot Summary

Will Everett arrives at the train station, Farewell, waiting for his father, James, to return from laying down rails. Will runs into a circus worker, Maren, who notices that he's a skilled artist. She takes a Sasquatch tooth that his father had given him, intending to return it when he sees her at the circus. Will never makes it to the circus though, as he runs into a rich man named Van Horne, who happens to be the owner of the rails that his father is working on. Will is craving adventure, so he goes with Van Horne to surprise his father.

Will meets up with his father who is finishing his last day of work. There's only one final rail spike that needs to be laid, one that Van Horne had made out of solid gold. One of the workers, Brogan, sees the gold spike as an insult, as they have been working for some time without getting paid. A photographer, Mr. Dorian, is there to take pictures of the event. An avalanche interrupts the ceremony, and in the chaos Brogan tries to steal the golden spike. Brogan is stopped by a pair of Sasquatch. The mother is killed, but the child is spared and taken in by Mr. Dorian, who reveals that he owns a circus.

Will fast forwards three years. Van Horne has passed away, but named Will's father as the chief engineer. Before his death he created the world's largest train, the Boundless. He has a special funeral car near the end of the train where many of his treasures rest. Will is having a hard time adjusting to his newfound wealth. He tells his father that he wants to become an artist and go to college in San Francisco, but his father tells him that he's going to work on the rails just like he did.

Mr. Dorian and his circus are performing on the train, where Will runs into Maren again. Even though it has been three years he's still infatuated with her. He doesn't get the chance to speak with her though during the performance. The next day, Will is exploring one of the shanty towns they've stopped at. While there, he witnesses Brogan, disguised as a train worker, killing one of the guards. Will gets the key from the guard that unlocks Van Horne's train car.

Brogan chases after Will, but he escapes and ends up in the circus part of the train. Mr. Dorian helps Will out and decides to disguise him as one of his performers. Will wants to go right to his father, but he knows Brogan has more men scattered throughout the train. He also gets the chance to meet with Maren again which encourages him to stay. He doesn't have many talents, but they realize that he's a skilled artist. They set up an act where he wears a false blindfold and pretends to be a psychic artist.

Will eventually finds out that Mr. Dorian plans to rob the train himself. He wants a canvas inside that had supposedly been soaked in the fountain of youth. Dorian needs it because he only has a few days left to live. Will is hesitant at first, but decides that he owes Dorian his life. Maren also tells him that she's going to be released from her contract and given a substantial sum of money if she helps.



The group has to dodge Brogan while they put on their performances, but eventually end up getting close to the train car containing Van Horne's treasures. They manage to break inside, but Brogan had been tailing them. Mr. Dorian tricks Brogan into setting off the traps, stealing the canvas and leaving Brogan trapped in the car. Unfortunately, Brogan's men are waiting outside. Mr. Dorian also had his circus performers waiting. The two groups face off, with most of Brogan's men being dispatched.

Mr. Dorian feels his heart giving out so he has Will draw his portrait. Will manages to complete the portrait, but it doesn't actually do anything and Mr. Dorian passes away. Brogan and his one remaining man try to steal the train car, but Will manages to stop him. The train gets hit by an avalanche and Brogan is killed by the baby Sasquatch that Mr. Dorian had rescued three years ago. Maren is arrested afterwards, but she manages to use her skills to escape. James tells Will that he'll support him going to art college, but Will changes his mind when he gets a message from Maren. She tells him that Mr. Dorian left the deed to the circus to her. He intends to go to San Francisco and join her.



# Chapters 1-2

## Summary

### Chapter One

The main protagonist, Will Everett, is getting off a train with his mother. Will and his mother have arrived at an unnamed train station, unofficially called "Farewell" by the train conductor. Will meets a circus girl who notices his drawings, commenting on how good of an artist he is. Will reveals that he and his mother have come to Farewell to meet his father, who worked at the nearby rail camp. It has been three years since Will has last seen his father, but the two stay in touch by letters. Will shows her a Sasquatch tooth that his father sent along with one of the others. She seems amused by it and tells Will to come visit her at the circus, giving him a special phrase he can use to get in for free.

Will realizes that she left with the tooth his father gave him. He goes to catch up with her and runs into a large man, Van Horne. Will recognizes him from the newspaper, knowing he's the one in charge of creating the railway that his father was working on. Van Horne is friendly and takes an immediate liking towards Will, offering to take him up to the camp to surprise his father. Will agrees, deciding it would make for a good adventure. He leaves a message for his mother and travels with Van Horne.

On the train, Will feels out of place because everyone is older than him and clearly better off financially. The train is attacked by what Will believes is a Sasquatch, but the men on the train fend it off. Will arrives at the camp and surprises his father, who is happy to see him. He takes Will to attend a ceremony celebrating the last spike being put in the railway. The spike is made out of gold, prompting some of the workers to comment on how Van Borne and the other rich men are making far more than they are. One worker, Brogan, seems to be the main voice of opposition.

The ceremony is interrupted by an avalanche which devastates the camp. Will's father, James, helps out Van Borne. Brogan uses the chaos to steal the golden railway spike, threatening to go after Will and his family if he says anything. Brogan is attacked by a Sasquatch who is trying to get to her child after she's become separated from it. She gets killed by Van Borne, but her child is spared by the photographer, Mr. Dorian, who reveals that he was there to get the Sasquatch as well as to photograph the ceremony.

### Chapter Two

Three years have passed since the avalanche. Will's father, James, has been promoted to the chief engineer of The Boundless, the world's largest train that Van Borne had been engineering. James is addressing the press where he reveals that this is the train's maiden journey, and that it will be carrying the remains of Van Borne. The press asks a few questions about the train, namely addressing criticisms that it is too big to



navigate the rails, but James dismisses those rumors. One reporter asks if it's true that the golden spike is being buried with Van Borne. Will later finds out from his father that it is, in fact, true.

Will starts to explore the train where he thinks about how things have changed in the last three years. Will's father has been gradually promoted by Van Borne. As a result, their family has been living much more lavishly, and his father has been home more since work doesn't require him to be out for so long or so far away. They've also moved around quite a bit, and Will's mother is currently getting their newest home ready for after the maiden voyage of *The Boundless*. Despite enjoying their new wealth, Will feels like something is missing from his life and that's why he decides to make this trip into an adventure.

## Analysis

### Chapter One

Will being poor is initially established in the book, something that serves as a huge motivator for his family during the course of the story. Will's family keeps pushing for him to do something that will lead to a successful career, whether or not he's actually interested in it. Will meets the circus girl, later identified as Maren. He becomes fascinated with her and reveals that he has been thinking about her since their first meeting. He also gives her the Sasquatch tooth from his father.

Several other important characters are introduced, such as Van Horne and Will's father, James. Will also encounters the golden railroad spike for the first time. The golden spike is a source of discomfort for some of the workers, who see it as Van Borne and the other rich men showing off their wealth. Will starts to talk about his desire for adventure, which is part of what motivates him to go and visit his father in the first place. Brogan in particular seems angry with their wealth. His darker nature is revealed when he threatens Will, foreshadowing his eventual desire to steal from Van Borne.

Mr. Dorian also makes an appearance and reveals his skills of subterfuge. His entire motivation for going up to photograph the event was so that he could find and capture a real live Sasquatch. Will's shyness is revealed in these early parts and is something that he finds himself struggling with throughout the course of his journey.

### Chapter Two

Will continues to long for adventure and purpose in his life. The rest of his family seems content with their new-found wealth, but Will is still only interested in pursuing his art. Will discovers the fact that Van Borne's remains are going to be on *The Boundless*, including the golden spike and, as is later revealed, countless other treasures from Borne's collection. Some of the technology of the world is revealed when Will encounters a steam powered mechanical robot on the train that serves drinks. Will hints that he has plans for a future adventure at the end of the chapter, although he hasn't yet revealed just what he has planned.



In this chapter the reader sees the main character, Will, struggling with what he's been told by his parents and the greater reality of the world. In this respect, then, the journey that he is on, while definitely a physical journey by train, is also a journey towards finding himself and his place within the world that he lives in. He is also shown to be slightly resentful and saddened that a career in art isn't supported by his family or society in general. This is a nod to the time period in which this story takes place, a time when strictly regimented codes of behavior and conduct were the norm. The reader can see that Will most likely will be one to challenge these norms.

One should also note that the the author's use of names is purposeful. Will's name indicates that he has a 'will' of his own, even though the doesn't quite realize it yet. Van Borne's name....most notably Borne...alludes to the fact of something being born, or reborn, or borne (as in carried). The astute reader can track how the use of the name is revealed throughout the book.

## Discussion Question 1

What has happened to Will's family as a result of Will's father, James, working for Van Borne?

## Discussion Question 2

Compare and contrast the characters of Van Horne and Van Borne.

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Will seem to thirst and long for adventure?

## Vocabulary

astonished, faltering, ardent, indignation, portly, acrobat, enthralled, aspirations, haughtily, mortified



# Chapters 3-4

## Summary

### Chapter Three

Will speaks with his father about his future. Will says he wants to go to art college in San Francisco, but his father forbids it. Instead, he wants him to do something more fruitful with his life that will lead to a successful job. After their discussion, they go to see a demonstration by Mr. Dorian, the owner of the circus and the photographer when the railway was complete. Mr. Dorian shows off his hypnotism ability and Will is officially introduced to Maren, the girl that took his tooth three years before. Will tries to speak with them, but they're on a separate part of the train he can't access. Will finds out from his father that Van Horne has his own secure car on the train, filled with not only the gold spike, but numerous other treasures from his collection.

### Chapter Four

The Boundless stops at a shanty town where Will is given permission to explore until they are ready to leave. Will is discouraged that his father doesn't want to come with him on this adventure. He attempts to find Maren, strolling through different merchants and crowds trying to find her. He hears one merchant talk about the muskeg. The muskeg is a harsh bog where it was nearly impossible to actually build a railway on because of the difficult terrain. He buys a few different items from merchants that are supposed to protect him from the dangers of the wilds. Will starts to explore in the forest where he runs into Brogan who is in the process of murdering one of the guards to Van Borne's train car. Will grabs the key to the car and runs into the woods, only just managing to get back to the train, jumping onto the last car.

## Analysis

### Chapter Three

Will's father makes it clear that he and his mother don't want Will to pursue a career in art. Will's father even acts ashamed and tries to hide the fact that he and Will used to be poor from everyone else on the train. Will runs into Maren again and reveals that he has strong feelings for her. He's been trying to draw her ever since their first meeting, but he hasn't been able to ever capture her again. Will also goes on to say that he feels like in his art he's only copying things that he sees, but he wants to be able to draw and create his own original pieces. It is notable that Will confesses to trying to draw Maren, but has been unable to do it. This may represent his desire to 'capture' the muse, or to move away from childhood's innocence into a coming of age phase in his life.

Will learns more about Van Borne's special train car which is filled with treasures. He knows that there only a few select keys that can open it, something that Mr. Dorian





seems to be aware of as well as he made a show of taking the key during one of his tricks. This ends up foreshadowing Brogan's plan to rob one of the guards to get into the train car.

#### Chapter Four

Will starts to spend time with the lower class citizens and finds himself more comfortable with them. Will begins to overcome his shyness and starts to interact with the merchants, listening to their stories about the wilds. Will also shows that, despite his shy nature, he can still be brave when he runs along the top of the train and even jumps between two of the cars, just like his father used to do. The person running the event chides him for his fancy clothing, another indicator that Will isn't necessarily happy with his family's newfound wealth. Will encounters Brogan again when he murders the guard, stumbling upon Brogan's plot to break into Van Borne's train car.

### Discussion Question 1

What is Will's relationship like with his father?

### Discussion Question 2

What makes the reader think that Will is more comfortable around those considered 'lower class'?

### Discussion Question 3

Discuss the symbolism of Will's having tried to draw Maren's picture all these years, and failing.

### Vocabulary

wretched, exasperation, recitations, monotony, scarcely, valise, trundles, provisions, festooned, dredged



# Chapters 5-6

## Summary

### Chapter Five

Will is nearly thrown off the train because he didn't think to bring his ticket with him and looks like a stowaway. One of the guards, Paul Chan convinces the other worker, Mackie, not to throw him off the train. He helps nurse Will back to health as he's exhausted and chilled from his run. Will tells his story to the two guards. Chan believes him although Mackie is dismissive of the claims. Given the size of the train, it will take some time to pass along a message all the way up to the front, but they agree to help Will out, and warn the other guards that Brogan is disguised as a brakeman and could be on the train. Will has dinner with the guards and is loaned a bed where he almost immediately falls to sleep.

### Chapter Six

Mackie is taking Will up further so the guards can begin to pass him along to his father. Instead of taking him to the guards, Mackie brings him to Brogan. Brogan demands the key to Van Borne's train car, but Will refuses, knowing that Brogan will just kill him anyway. Will manages to escape, hiding underneath the train and then making his way to the top. He manages to get towards the train cars that belong to the circus. He reaches the cars with animals and ends up getting saved by an elephant, who is interested in the almonds he had in his pocket. Will manages to shake Brogan, but gets grabbed by a caged Sasquatch, Goliath. Fortunately, an assistant comes to investigate the noise and Will reveals that someone is trying to kill him.

## Analysis

### Chapter Five

Will reveals that he feels far more comfortable eating a simple meal on the back of the train. This chapter demonstrates the theme of 'money can't buy happiness'. He compares the soup and bread that he has to the lamb, his favorite meal, which he had on the first class train. He finds that the soup and bread is better because it has more flavor to it. When he goes to sleep on Paul's bed it feels more familiar and he has an easier time falling asleep than he does in his giant first class room. Will's feelings towards wealth are constantly brought up and are very important throughout the story, as unlike the rest of his family Will doesn't believe that wealth automatically equals happiness.

### Chapter Six



Brogan is revealed to not only be disguised on the train as a worker, but also working alongside some of the other staff members in an attempt to rob Van Horne's treasures. Will shows his courage by running from the two men and navigating his way along the tops of the train cars, something which is dangerous even for the experienced workers. Will also shows off his cleverness and quick thinking by feeding and befriending the elephant. Will also accomplished his goal of getting into the train cars owned by the circus, something that he had previously failed at because his first class ticket didn't allow him access into the lower class train cars.

Both Brogan and Mackie demonstrate one of the book's other themes: Greed. Both men are so consumed by it that they will go to great lengths to obtain it. They have not learned the lesson that Will has, which is that money doesn't equate to happiness, always. Instead, they are shown to be twisted and single-minded individuals, whose lives are made flat and listless, dirty and desperate by their need to possess and own material goods.

Additionally, the theme of 'not everything is as it seems' is quite evident in this chapter as the reader learns, along with Will, that Mackie is not his friend, but rather, is working with Brogan. What this teaches Will is that he must not always accept what others tell him as the truth.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss how the theme of 'money can't buy happiness' is demonstrated in Chapter Five.

## **Discussion Question 2**

Describe and compare Brogan and Mackie to one another.

## **Discussion Question 3**

What actions taken by Will indicate that he is becoming more confident and outspoken than before?

## **Vocabulary**

stowaway, demeanor, scarcely, exasperation, potent, shunted, glowering, emanates, apprehensive, undulates



# Chapters 7-8

## Summary

### Chapter Seven

Brogan continues to pursue Will, but several of the circus crew bring him to see Mr. Dorian. Mr. Dorian hides Will in one of his trunks when Brogan, now under the name of Brinley, comes in trying to find Will. Brogan gives up on the search and Will has the chance to talk to Mr. Dorian. Mr. Dorian believes that Will couldn't be a murderer and agrees to help hide him. Will gets reunited with Maren, who returns the Sasquatch tooth to him. She reveals that he's the only reason she got the job at the circus, as Will had made mention of her to Mr. Dorian.

Will is nervous, but he's happy to hear that Maren had held onto the tooth for so long, hoping it was because she was thinking of him. She asks about his drawing which also makes him happy. They talk with Mr. Dorian and he tells him about everything that happened with Brogan. Maren suggests that he disguises himself by working in their circus so he can sneak out and make his way towards his father. Elsewhere, Brogan talks with the other brakeman working underneath him to rob the train. He tells them that Will has to be stuck in the circus train and that they're going to find him and stop him from talking.

### Chapter Eight

Will and Maren try to come up for an act he can do in the circus. Will has trouble with the physical acts, but finds he can put his drawing talents to use. The circus helps set him up, giving him a false blindfold he can use when he's drawing to make the act more impressive. Brogan and his men make another attempt to search the train, but Will is able to evade him. One of Maren's brothers, Christian, chases them off with the help of Goliath and Mr. Dorian. Will is given a proper disguise so Brogan and his men won't be able to recognize him.

## Analysis

### Chapter Seven

Will finally gets the chance to speak with Maren, who he finds out remembers him and had been holding onto his Sasquatch tooth this whole time. Maren is clearly interested in Will, and her friendly demeanor gets him to open up. Will noticeably tries to impress Maren by telling his story, something that his shyness would normally have kept him from doing. This is a turning point for Will's character as he never would have been so outspoken and energetic before.



Brogan reveals a bit about himself as well. When he speaks to his men, he brings up the differences between the upper class and the workers. He points out all the injuries that the workers get and argues that none of the upper class will ever help them out. This brings up the idea of class warfare, which is one of the running themes throughout the entirety of the story.

## Chapter Eight

Will starts to bond with all of the circus performers. Maren makes a point of correcting Will when he calls them freaks, making it clear that word isn't accepted and they consider themselves to be marvels. Will starts to recognize the familial feel that the circus performers have for each other. He begins to feel that bond extend to him. This again ties into the theme of differences between the classes. Normally, the upper class are dismissive of the circus performers believing them to be lower class freaks, but the performers show their kinder, more accepting nature by immediately taking Will in and protecting him, even though he's just a stranger to them.

Interestingly enough, the circus people give Will a disguise so that he won't be recognized as easily by Brogan's men. Symbolically, however, the reader can be aware that Will has made inner changes as well. He's getting a taste of what it would be like to be accepted as an artist. Thought they try to find an 'act' that Will can participate in, they finally realize that his true gift is his art. His talent is being acknowledged and it makes him feel 'whole'.

## Discussion Question 1

Compare how the circus people treat Will as opposed to his own family.

## Discussion Question 2

What rationales does Brogan give for doing what he is doing?

## Discussion Question 3

What reasons did Maren give for holding on to Will's Sasquatch tooth?

## Vocabulary

berths, dubiously, cavernous, hooligan, mottled, gawking, wavering, sprawling, jubilation, corroboration



# Chapters 9-10

## Summary

### Chapter Nine

Will goes to his first circus performance. At first, he is incredibly nervous, but after seeing the way the crowd reacts he gets into the act and finds himself enjoying the performance. He is dismayed to see the living conditions of the poorer cabins though. Everyone is crammed together in small spaces, and there's a merchant selling basic goods for well above their value, knowing that on the train there's nowhere else for the lower class citizens to go for food and medicine. Will buys medicine for a young boy whose family can't afford it. He also draws him a picture of a toy that he lost to try and ease his spirits. Will constantly wonders if his father is aware of the poor conditions down here. He decides that he must not be, and Will wants to inform him immediately when he gets back to first class.

### Chapter Ten

Will briefly runs into Samuel Steele, the Mountie that has been assigned to patrol the train. He tries to go to him to warn him about Brogan, but Mr. Dorian stops him. Will is confused by this, and Mr. Dorian reveals that he plans to rob Van Horne's train car, but he only wishes to take a painting and not the gold spike. Maren reveals she knew the whole time. Her father has gotten injured, and Mr. Dorian was going to give her family \$5,000 in exchange for her helping him getting the painting. Will feels hurt and betrayed, but he knows he can't escape. That evening, Brogan finds out that Will is disguised. He goes to confront him, but Will has already been lured into the Muskeg by the hag. Maren comes to his rescue but they run right into Brogan and his men. Fortunately, the hag uses her hypnotism on Brogan and he goes after one of his own men believing it to be Will.

## Analysis

### Chapter Nine

Will begins to see first-hand some of the injustices that the poorer passengers face. Although he convinces himself otherwise, it is clear that he has doubts about how much his father cares for them. This ties into the conversation that Will had with James much earlier. Will might remember where they came from, but it seems like his father has completely forgotten their roots and has turned a blind eye towards others in their former position. All of this again ties into the general theme of class warfare that has been present through the majority of *The Boundless*.

Will continues to grow as a character as he finishes his first performance. Instead of feeling shy and afraid in front of a crowd like he normally does, he embraces the new



character that he gets to play for the circus and finds an indescribable pleasure getting to hear their cheers and seeing how happy his drawing has made them. Will realizes that it isn't just the performance that brought it out, but also just being near Maren.

## Chapter Ten

Will learns the truth about what Mr. Dorian has planned, as well as the fact that Maren has been helping him all this time. When Will encounters the hag, she taunts him about how naïve he had been on his journey. She lures him out by repeating his earlier thoughts about wanting to go on a grand adventure. This parallels his current situation with Mr. Dorian. He thought he was going on an adventure, but he was just being tricked and pulled into danger. Mr. Dorian reveals some of his true colors, not only in his intent to steal, but the fact that he himself is rich and a member of the upper class, even if he doesn't always show it. This continues the theme of rich upper class people caring for their own needs and ignoring the plight of others, as Will is now left to wonder if Mr. Dorian was genuinely helping him, or only doing it because he didn't want Will alerting the guards.

## Discussion Question 1

Give some examples from Chapter Nine that indicate that Will's character is changing.

## Discussion Question 2

What questions does Will have in regards to Mr. Dorian?

## Discussion Question 3

Why might Will's father be unwilling to talk about the plight of the working poor?

## Vocabulary

spindlier, cohort, brazen, uproariously, gangly, scarcely, reprimanded, lunacy, imperceptible



# Chapters 11-12

## Summary

### Chapter Eleven

Will and Maren manage to make it back onto the train after dealing with the hag and Brogan. Will is upset they had been keeping such a tight watch on him. Mr. Dorian starts to talk about the hag, how many think she's a magical creature but he believes she is just something that science hasn't figured out how to explain yet. He tells Will that he needs to steal the painting because the canvas was supposedly blessed by waters from the fountain of youth, so anyone who is drawn on it won't age. Mr. Dorian is expected to die within the next two weeks, so if he can halt his aging he believes he will be safe. This leaves Will feeling conflicted, as the painting will just otherwise be sitting unseen in the train car, but at least this way it could be used to save a life.

### Chapter Twelve

Will briefly discusses with Maren how it isn't necessarily fair that Mr. Dorian is the one who gets the portrait when there are so many other people who could benefit from it. Maren gives him a little more information about Mr. Dorian, how he started poor and rose up in prominence. He has a rough reputation because his contracts last for so long and he seems to keep the majority of wages. The conversation is interrupted as their next performance is about to begin. Brogan is in attendance and tries to trick Will, using his own blindfold and switching places with the lady he was supposed to draw. Maren alerts Will to the trick and he is able to draw Brogan from memory.

The performers travel further down the train towards the shooting car. Mr. Dorian is upset to see people shooting at buffalo for sport. A group of Native Americans try to get them to stop, but the passengers open fire on them. Again, Mr. Dorian is angered as he is half Native American. In the chaos, one of Brogan's men tries to kill Will, but Mr. Dorian is able to stop him and get Will to safety. Later that night, Mr. Dorian is getting ready to perform the robbery and Will decides he would be safer going with him instead of staying alone where Brogan can find him.

## Analysis

### Chapter Eleven

One of the reasons that Will protests is because he's worried about Maren's safety. Mr. Dorian remarks that he is being chivalrous, but he does so in almost a jesting fashion. Maren seems annoyed and makes it clear that she isn't someone that needs protection. Will has been struggling with this notion since he's been with her. He admitted earlier that she was the one that had been protecting him, but he still feels because of his gender he has to be the one to save her. This is the first time that he vocalized his





thoughts and in their own way both Maren and Mr. Dorian got him to stop thinking that Maren was someone who couldn't handle her own.

It is interesting to note the allusion to another literary work, here: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde. Here, the name Mr. Dorian and his obsession with finding and utilizing a canvas that will postpone death and prolong young, parallel the earlier work by Mr. Wilde.

## Chapter Twelve

The stage is set for the robbery, and more details about Mr. Dorian are revealed. Up until this point he's been very calm and collected, but when the Native Americans are threatened he takes on a much more hostile and aggressive persona, something that up until now Maren had only hinted at. For Will, he also gets to see that Mr. Dorian does seem to genuinely care about what happens to Will, as at this point he didn't need to keep him alive. He already has his own key, and so far his sole motivation for protecting Will had been to keep him from revealing his plan to Samuel Steele or one of the other guards.

Maren reveals that she always carries her tightrope wire with her because it makes her feel safe, like she is able to escape from any situation just by having it there. This serves almost the same purpose as Will's sketch pads and pencils which he always keeps on hand. The attack on the Native Americans can be seen as another example of class warfare, as the men firing at the Native Americans clearly believe that their wealth and technology makes them superior, not even considering that the Native Americans are people as well.

## Discussion Question 1

How does Will feel about Mr. Dorian?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the items that both Maren and Will carry with them to feel 'safe' and 'anchored' to safety.

## Discussion Question 3

What is most likely one of the reasons Mr. Dorian is upset with the passengers when they open fire on the buffalo?

## Vocabulary

inquires, vigor, thwart, jubilantly, solemnly, maelstrom, fragrance, belligerently



# Chapters 13-14

## Summary

### Chapter Thirteen

Will, Mr. Dorian and Maren begin their robbery. They spot some of Brogan's men patrolling along the train, but manage to avoid all of them. Maren uses her tightrope walking to get to Van Horne's train door and unlock it. Mr. Dorian reveals that he made the other timed lock, which will incorrectly open as they cross into the next time zone because it will think they're actually an hour ahead of where they are. Brogan makes his presence known at this point. He and two of his men had been following the group. Mr. Dorian asks what they're looking for, hoping to strike a deal as he just wants the painting.

Brogan reveals that Van Horne was desperate three years ago and was secretly searching for gold while building the railroad. He found the gold, but didn't share it with anyone else. Mr. Dorian agrees to give them the gold as long as he can get the painting. Brogan and his men are taken out by another trap that Mr. Dorian tricks them into activating. He steals the painting, but they can't lock Brogan and the others inside as the door lock has retriggered, making it impossible to close. They start to make their way back along the train, but find the rest of Brogan's men waiting for them.

### Chapter Fourteen

Will and the others start to fight off Brogan's men, before Brogan himself makes another appearance. He and his men have freed himself from the train car and are determined to get Mr. Dorian since they were unable to get the gold thanks to all of the traps. Things look grim, but the rest of the circus performers show up just as Mr. Dorian had planned. The groups works together to defeat Brogan's men, but one of the circus performers is stabbed and thrown off the train in the resulting chaos. Once Brogan and his men are dispatched, Mr. Dorian insists that Will needs to draw his portrait on the canvas immediately because his heart is already starting to fail him.

## Analysis

### Chapter Thirteen

Will gets to see another instance of someone who is rich taking advantage of the lower class. Van Horne decided to not only keep his gold, but hide it from the existence of everyone else. Meanwhile, his workers had gone two months without any pay. Even after the success of the railway, Van Horne decided to keep the gold and not share it with his workers. As Brogan points out, not everyone was as lucky as James with promotions.



Mr. Dorian continues to show a more sinister side, keeping everyone else in the dark about his knowledge of the traps. At the same time, Will continues to show his growing courage as he's willing to leap along the top of the train roof without any safety walkways.

#### Chapter Fourteen

Will's courage is fully displayed as he helps the circus performers fight off Brogan's men on top of the train. His merciful side is also shown, along with Maren. Neither one is trying to outright kill any of Brogan's men, just stop them from fighting. Mr. Dorian continues to show a more ruthless side and Will outright finds himself questioning whether or not he should trust Mr. Dorian. He wonders if he even cares that one of his performers died while trying to get the painting. Mr. Dorian comments on how much he spent trying to get the painting, but doesn't specifically mention the fact that people have died for him. He does at least show some sympathy for the lost performer, but it's hard for Will to tell if that was genuine or just a result of his heart failing. This continues the theme of the wealthy being obsessed with their own wealth and personal gain and caring little for the needs of anyone beneath them.

### Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of plight of the working class in both chapters (give examples).

### Discussion Question 2

How does Will show courage in Chapter Fourteen?

### Discussion Question 3

Describe Maren's character.

### Vocabulary

murmuring, miffed, plush, cloying, retches, revulsion, gingerly, taut, bewildered



# Chapters 15-16

## Summary

### Chapter Fifteen

Will begins to paint Mr. Dorian's portrait, something that he has always struggled with. He can't quite get the portrait right, but Mr. Dorian and Maren encourage him. Will begins to truly see Mr. Dorian for the man that he is, which inspires him to create a quality portrait. Despite finishing the portrait, Mr. Dorian still dies, realizing that he must have been tricked about the canvas. Brogan and his one remaining man use explosives to separate the train, planning on stealing the funeral car for themselves. Will panics because his father is still on that part of the train. He and Maren tightrope walk across using her trusty wire. Will manages to disarm Brogan. The train drives into an avalanche, sending everyone scattering. Will and the others work together to free themselves from the snow. Brogan is killed by a free Goliath, who remembers him from the first time they met when, when Brogan had attacked him and his mother.

### Chapter Sixteen

Samuel Steele arrests Maren for her involvement in the robbery. Maren doesn't resist, but ends up escaping thanks to her escape artist skills. Will is sad and worried that he will never see her again. His father is trying to get the charges dropped, but he knows that Samuel Steele won't go after her right now since they have to work on digging the train out from the avalanche. Will's father reveals that he never stole gold like Brogan said, and Will believes him. He also says that he'll support Will and pay for his art school. Will isn't as excited as he thought it would be and doesn't feel like he's still interested in that. He gets a message from Maren, telling him that Mr. Dorian left the deed to the circus to her, and she plans on opening it up in two weeks. Will decides that he is going to San Francisco, but not for art school, he wants to join Maren at the circus.

## Analysis

### Chapter Fifteen

James shows how much he cares about Will, revealing that he had been carrying his sketchbook around with him for the last few years. This surprises Will since his father didn't initially seem that excited when he gave it to him, plus he hadn't been very supportive of his dreams in pursuing a career as an artist. Will finally manages to create what he considers an original portrait. Instead of just copying whatever he saw, he truly sees everything about Mr. Dorian, managing to draw not only his physical appearance, but also capturing his spirit and emotions in the drawing. Brogan's cruelty finally catches up with him as Goliath gets his revenge for what happened at the site of the original avalanche three years ago.



## Chapter Sixteen

James's shows that he really does care about his son and will support him in whatever he wants to do. Not only does he agree to pay for his art college, but he's also supportive of Maren, telling how much Will cares for her. Maren shows that she returns his feelings by openly inviting him to join her at the circus. James takes his support even further by arguing that the charges against Maren should be dropped as Mr. Dorian was clearly the mastermind behind the robbery. Will finally got his adventure and realizes that art college isn't quite what he wants in life. He enjoys the thrill of performing for a crowd too much. In addition, part of his motivation for wanting to go to art college was to learn how to properly draw portraits and create art that felt alive. After painting Mr. Dorian he's managed to create a masterpiece and feels like he doesn't need the additional education.

### **Discussion Question 1**

What shows Will how much his father cares?

### **Discussion Question 2**

By the end of the novel, how has Will's father changed towards him?

### **Discussion Question 3**

What change of heart does Will have at the end of the novel towards his art?

### **Vocabulary**

rummaging, haste, dignified, obliterates, compunction, counters, magistrate, drapes



# Characters

## Will Everett

Will grows up as a poor teenager and aspiring artist. When he was younger, his father spent all of his time working on the rails. For all of his life, Will has been craving adventure. He finally gets the chance to go on his own adventure when he visits his father at the rail camp. His adventure is short lived and the next few years are spent living a life of luxury. Will isn't comfortable with his newfound wealth and just cares about pursuing a career in art and going on adventures, but his family is determined to turn him into a high class citizen.

Will finally gets the chance to go on an adventure when he boards the Boundless with his father. Up until that point, Will has been very shy and reserved. Getting to meet Maren and work in the circus opens up a new side of his personality though, and by the end of the book he becomes very brave and outspoken. He also learns how to create his own original art pieces that feel like they have life to them, something that he had been struggling with throughout the book.

Will is a very kind character that doesn't believe people should be separated by their wealth. He treats everyone equally, whether they are rich or poor. Will shows that he values life, trying to keep Brogan's men alive even when they are determined to kill him. By the end of the book Will has decided that he wants to follow his dreams and continue to go on adventures with the circus, which now belongs to Maren.

## Maren

Maren is a circus worker who specializes as an escape artist and tight rope walker. She initially meets Will when he was young and still poor. The two are later reunited on the Boundless. Maren considers herself to be very strong and dislikes when other people try to protect her, especially if they are doing it just because they think she is a girl. Throughout the book she shows herself to be very intelligent and light hearted. Just like with Will, she doesn't concern herself with how much money someone has and just wants to see everyone treated equally. She displays a strong trust for Mr. Dorian, despite the fact that he has her roped into an unfair contract. She treats everyone in the circus like they are her family.

## James Everett

James is Will's father and starts off working at Van Horne's rail camp. He is an honest man and refused to take any gold, even when the other workers around him were helping themselves. He admires Van Horne and stands up for him when Brogan initially badmouths him. James clearly cares for his family, although his stubbornness initially makes it so he doesn't want Will to become an artist because he's afraid he won't be



successful. James is a hard worker and takes his job very seriously, whether he's laying down rails or working as the chief engineer.

## Van Horne

Van Horne is a rich rail owner responsible for creating the Boundless as well as the track that it runs on. Van Horne has a reputation as being a very strict business owner, and was later revealed to be hoarding money that should have been going to his workers. He is a very proud man and a collector of many exotic treasures. Van Horne is only alive for a short period during the book. When he dies, his final wish is to be on the maiden voyage of the Boundless.

## Mr. Dorian

Mr. Dorian is the owner of the circus that performs on the Boundless. He is a rich man, although he doesn't normally display this. He takes care of his performers, but also has a reputation for giving unfair wages and contracts. Mr. Dorian is a collector of many treasures, especially ones with supernatural reputations. He doesn't believe in the supernatural though, he thinks they are just objects that science hasn't been able to explain yet. Mr. Dorian is a skilled performer, being able to perform many sleight of hand tricks as well as even hypnotizing people.

Mr. Dorian is half Native American, which is a very sensitive subject for him. He's normally in control of his emotions, but when Native American's are insulted or threatened he lets his anger show. Outside of that, he's normally very polite and seems impossible to phase. Mr. Dorian is a skilled manipulator, having tricked the majority of the characters at least once throughout the course of the book. He's desperate to find something that will make him immortal as he only has a few days left to live when he boards the Boundless. He ultimately ends up dying after being tricked into stealing a canvas that was supposedly soaked in the fountain of youth.

## Brogan

Brogan is one of the rail workers alongside James. Brogan is a cutthroat man who isn't afraid to hurt people to get what he wants. He's also willing to blackmail people into working for him, which is why he knows that his men on the boundless won't betray him. Brogan hates the upper class and frequently rants about how poorly they treat anyone they consider beneath them. His whole motivation for wanting to steal from Van Horne comes from the fact that he feels like Van Horne owes them money because they were the ones that did all of his work. Brogan is cunning and surprisingly intelligent. He comes up with several creative plans throughout the book to break into Van Horne's railcar, ultimately only failing because he was stopped by Will and Mr. Dorian.



## Samuel Steele

Samuel is the Mountry guard in charge of security on the Boundless. He only appears a few times throughout the story, but he's frequently mentioned. Samuel is an imposing and very well respected man. He is shown to be very fair and takes his job seriously. Even when James tries to argue that Maren should be set free he sticks to the law and arrests her. He does show her at least a little leniency at the end of the book since he chooses not to go after her, although it's never officially made clear if it was out of kindness or because he was needed more at the train.

## Goliath

Goliath is the Sasquatch that is a part of Dorian's circus. Originally, this Sasquatch was orphaned when the initial avalanche occurred at the beginning of the novel. Later on in the novel, Goliath has grown up and helps Dorian keep Will and the others safe when Brogan tries to take them. Goliath has his revenge and kills Brogan at the end of the novel for causing the avalanche that killed his mother and family.

## Will's Mother

The reader doesn't see much of Will's mother except at the very beginning and the end. She is shown to be supportive and loving. Along with Will's father, and in accordance with Victorian society, Will is expected to grow up and be a businessman instead of being an artist. While Will's mother praises his art work, she also takes every opportunity to encourage him to find something that he will be able to do for a 'real' living.

## Van Borne

Though he is dead when the novel opens, Van Borne's influence can be seen and felt throughout the entire novel as he is the builder of The Boundless. As the story progresses, the reader learns that he promoted James and elevated him from a life of poverty. For this reason, James holds him in high esteem. However, later on in the story, Will learns that Van Borne had a dark side that had little regard for those who worked for him.





# Symbols and Symbolism

## Sasquatch Tooth

The Sasquatch tooth has meaning to several different characters. For James, it was a way of giving his son a unique trinket. This was a big deal for James, since at the time he and the rest of Will's family were struggling for money, so gifts were quite rare for Will. To top it off, James had also been away for three years, meaning he was missing birthdays, holidays, and other gift giving events. For Will it has a similar meaning, representing the fact that his father does care about him, even if he has been away for so long. For Maren, it represents her connection to Will. She carries the tooth for three years, despite having no idea if she would ever even see Will again or not.

## Will's sketchbook/pencils

Will always carries his sketchbook and drawing pencils with him because of how important they are. To Will, they act as an outlet to another world. Will is constantly craving adventure, but feels like he never gets the chance to do anything meaningful. With his sketchbook though he can escape from the real world and create whatever he wants. Will's original sketchbook also represented how supportive his family was at the time, and how much they cared for him. Unlike when they were wealthy, they had to cobble together to make his first sketchbook out of whatever materials they had on hand. He carries it with him, much like Maren carries her tightrope, because it helps remind him of who he is and that his family loves him. It also serves as the bridge between James and Will at the end of the book when Will learns that his father, who had appeared indifferent to his art work, had in fact kept the sketchbook on him at all times.

## Golden Railroad Spike

The golden railroad spike initially just serves as a symbol of wealth and greed. It's an extravagant piece that Van Horne crafted simply to show off. For Brogan though it has a much deeper meaning. Brogan sees it as a declaration of status and everything that is wrong with the upper class. Instead of using the gold to pay the lower class workers who have been slaving at the rail lines, Van Horne decided to craft the spike as a way of displaying his superiority over them. Brogan is motivated to take it not just for the wealth, but also because he feels that he and the other workers deserve it for all their labor.

## Food

Several times throughout the story there's a great emphasis placed on food. Will initially dines on his favorite meal in the first class car and finds that it is good, but ultimately lacking something. Later, when Will is disguised on the lower class cars he finds that the



food is technically lower quality, but it has more flavor to it. He enjoys the fact that the food seems to have a life of its own and each meal tastes unique from one another. This could easily tie into Will's feelings about the upper class. He finds them all to be the same and ultimately without any life of their own, while the lower class seem to live their life with more meaning and truly experience life.

## **Clothing**

When Will first begins his journey on the Boundless he's wearing a very fancy first class outfit. Several times throughout the story he comments on how uncomfortable he feels in it. The clothing doesn't just prove to be uncomfortable to Will, but it also gets in the way of his physical activities. This has a few different meanings. For one, it continues the running theme of the rich being unwilling to perform physical acts of labor. It has a deeper meaning though to Will. As the book goes on, he starts to see the rich as being very flashy, but ultimately lacking any substance. The clothes reflect this. While they might look good, they end up being too impractical, and Will doesn't feel like himself until he gets into something that might be lower class, but ultimately much more comfortable and practical.

## **Maren's Tightrope Wire**

Just like Will's sketchbook and pencils, Maren always carries her tightrope wire with her wherever she goes. For Maren, it makes her feel like she is able to access anything. This is important for her because Maren doesn't have the same opportunities as Will. When they first met they were both part of the lower class. Will got elevated in social status, but Maren didn't. She did get to join Mr. Dorian's circus, but she was trapped in an unfair contract. Having the wire made her feel like she was actually free and could reach anywhere, even though the spool she carried was actually very small.

## **Will's Circus Disguise**

When Will dons his circus disguise it is one of the few times in the book that he ends up wearing something that makes him feel comfortable. Will is someone who struggles with his self-confidence and shyness. With the disguise, he feels like he can be himself because people don't know who he is. He embraces his role in his circus and eventually ends up forgetting that he was wearing the disguise in the first place after all.

## **The Photograph of Will Hammering the Golden Spike**

Will is ultimately the one that is allowed to hammer the golden spike into the railway, as the first attempt simply resulted in the spike getting bent. Despite that, the official photographs that are used neglect Will because he was of the lower class at the time. This represents not only the greed of the upper class in the story, but also shows how much they care about appearances. They are willing to go through great lengths to



make themselves look better, even if it isn't the truth, just like how Van Horne was willing to cover up his financial failures simply for the sake of his pride.

## **Will's Gift Sketchbook**

At the start of the story Will gives his first makeshift sketch book to his father when he surprises him at the rail camp. He is disappointed that his father doesn't initially seem more excited about it. Later on, it seems like the gift meant nothing because of how adamant James is about Will not attending art college. Near the end of the book, it is revealed that James had been holding onto the book. This shows that he truly does care about Will and does want to be supportive of his son.

## **The Avalanche/The Hag**

At both the start and the end of the book there is an avalanche. Each time, the characters that are willing to work together and cast aside their greed ultimately end up surviving, while the greedy and selfish characters are the ones that end up suffering the most. This is clearly shown through Brogan, who both times tries to steal something during an avalanche, only to end up getting nothing. James worked to keep everyone safe during the first avalanche which is part of what led to his eventual promotion through the ranks.

The situation with the Hag shows similar results. Brogan wasn't willing to work alongside his men, so he was able to get deceived by the Hag and lose his chance at capturing Will. Will nearly ended up drowning, but because he and Maren were willing to work together they were able to escape without getting in any trouble.



# Settings

## The Train Station “Farewell”

Farewell is the unofficial name of the train station where Will first arrives to wait for his father. This is an important location for Will, even though he only spends a few moments there. Will first meets both Maren as well as Van Horne in the train station. It's also the first place that Will reveals his love for art. Will also discusses his poverty while he's at the station. Symbolically, this is where Will will say 'goodbye' or 'farewell' to his preconceived notions of the world and of people.

## The Railway Camp “Craigellachie”

The railway camp is the first place that Will runs into Mr. Dorian as well as the future antagonist Brogan. The golden railway spike is introduced at the railway camp as well, which drives Brogan to later try and rob the Boundless. Mr. Dorian acquires his Sasquatch while he's at the rail camp, showing off some of his self-serving and devious nature.

## The Junction

The Junction is the name of the shanty town that the Boundless first stops off at. Will acquires several items which later help him on his adventure. Will also re-encounters Brogan in the town and finds the murdered guard, which sets him off on his adventure with Mr. Dorian and the circus.

## The Muskeg

The Muskeg is a dangerous territory that most of the rail workers are scared of. Rail lines are hard to lay down and the land is generally considered to be haunted. Will runs into a hag which tries to drown him in the swamp land.

## The Boundless

The Boundless (a passenger and cargo train) is where the majority of the action takes place during the book. The Boundless is the largest train in the world, containing a number of different sections. The majority of the sections are separated by class. Will initially starts his journey in the first class section, but during the course of his adventure he ends up on the second and third class sections, as well as the circus section. One of the most important cars on the Boundless is Van Horne's private car where his coffin rests. In addition to his body being stored there, Van Horne has a number of treasures

there, including the gold that Brogan wants as well as the picture that Mr. Dorian was after.

A lot of class issues are also explored while on the Boundless. The differences between the upper and lower classes are made very apparent as Will journeys back towards his father. The lower class cars are crammed full of people and supplies, and there are merchants selling basic products for far more than they are worth.



# Themes and Motifs

## Money Can't Buy Happiness

During the course of the *Boundless* wealthy characters are constantly shown trying to get something that will make them happy. Van Horne starts off the book trying to build his dream railway. When he meets Will he puts on a false happy persona. Will later finds out from Brogan and his father that Van Horne was bankrupt by his venture. He hid this fact from the media though and even from some of his workers. The only reason that he ended up successful was from exploiting his workers and going after gold.

Van Horne got lucky, but not all the wealthy characters were like that. When Will makes the transition from poor to rich he finds himself unhappy with the changes. His parents are forcing him to take lessons that don't interest him. He wants to pursue a career in art, but his father initially won't let him because he doesn't think there is any money in that. Will only truly becomes happy when he goes on his adventure and starts to perform for the circus.

Mr. Dorian is another example of wealth not buying happiness. Over the course of the book, Mr. Dorian is revealed to be a very wealthy character. Despite that, he seems miserable and consumed with the idea of getting the blacksmith painting because he believes it is what he needs in life. Meanwhile, the circus performers and other characters that are considered poor are also some of the few characters that appear to be happy throughout the book.

## Greed

One of the reasons why many of the wealthy characters end up becoming miserable is because they let their greed consume them. Mr. Dorian was very wealthy and successful, but despite everything that he had accomplished in his life, he spent years trying to get his hands on the portrait owned by Van Horne. Out of all the characters, Brogan most embodies this theme. Brogan initially tries to steal the golden spike, even going so far as to threaten Will and his family. Even when they're all hit by an avalanche, he still just wants to get the gold.

Will's father helped out Van Horne and Will, and was rewarded with a series of promotions from Van Horne. Brogan chose to run away, only to resurface after Van Horne had died. His greed drove him towards robbing the train, which ultimately ended in failure and led to him getting killed. Had he simply chose to work with Van Horne initially during the avalanche; he would have likely been promoted along with Will's father and lived a successful life.

Even Will's father falls victim to greed after he's been promoted by Van Horne. James has better intentions compared to some of the other characters, but he still gets blinded by greed. He wants Will to be successful and not have to go through an impoverished



lifestyle again. This is why he doesn't want Will to go to art school. All this really accomplishes though is pushing Will away. By the end of the book though, James realizes the mistake that he makes and is able to salvage his relationship with his son.

## Class Definitions

Throughout the story wealthy characters are frequently treating the lower class characters poorly. Will laments several times how unfair things are in the poorer parts of the train, which don't have the same level of security that the higher class train cars have. Rich merchants are allowed to sell their products at outrageously high prices, knowing that the lower class passengers have nowhere else to go to get them. Van Horne is shown to abuse his workers, denying them pay just because he was too proud to admit that he had become bankrupt during the course of setting up his railway.

Even Mr. Dorian is shown to be unfair to his lower class circus performers. He has a reputation for creating contracts that draft the performers for long stretches of time. In addition, he doesn't pay them as much as their performances are actually worth. At the end of the book, Will is unsure if Mr. Dorian even cares for him and the performers at all, or if he was just keeping them all around because he needed them to pull off the robbery.

Most of the kind people that Will ends up meeting throughout the book are part of the lower class. When Will first boards the lower class trains, he is taken care of by the passengers. They give him a place to stay and food, even though they barely have any room or supplies themselves. In addition, these characters are also shown to be some of the only honest ones. Van Horne lied about his gold and his finances, while Mr. Dorian was consistently lying about his true motives.

The passengers in the shooting gallery also show how little they care about people considered beneath them. They openly start to attack Native American's because they don't consider them to be people. When Mr. Dorian jumps to their defense the passengers start to threaten him. The only reason that the situation doesn't escalate further is because Samuel Steele steps in and keeps the passengers from fighting amongst themselves.

Many characters don't realize how rich Mr. Dorian is. To them, they just see another circus performer. As such, Mr. Dorian is constantly able to manipulate characters because they underestimate him. In his very first performance he is able to dazzle his audience with hypnotism, allowing him to steal a copy of the key that goes to Van Horne's train car.

Characters stop paying attention to Will when he dons his circus disguise. He goes from wearing a high quality outfit to dressing like one of the performers, a member of the lower class. Up until that point, he had been treated differently simply because of his high quality clothing. It was one of the reasons why he wasn't thrown off the Boundless



after he boarded it from The Junction, since the guards believed someone dressed so well must have come from the first class trains.

## Following One's Dreams

At the very start of the book Will starts out by saying that he wants to go on an adventure. He never had the opportunity though until he ran into Van Horne. Van Horne offers to take him on the train and Will accepts, eager to not only go on an adventure, but also to see his father. His adventure is short lived though, but his family does end up achieving a new level of wealth after helping Van Horne. In the following years though, Will is still shown to be unhappy and craving adventure.

Once Will gets on the boundless his true adventure begins when he witnesses Brogan attacking one of the guards to get the key to Van Horne's rail car. Up until this point, Will had been shown as being a very shy and reserved character. Once he gets the chance to join the circus though Will finds himself becoming very outgoing and having a good time doing his performances with Maren. Will is not only having an adventure, but he's also getting the opportunity to follow his dreams of becoming an artist.

By the end of the book, Will is given the chance to join the circus with Maren. He accepts her offer, even though it isn't as successful as the jobs that his father could get for him. James is still an example of a character that decides to follow their dreams. James spent years doing hard work for Van Horne because he wanted to become successful and provide for his family. Out of all of Van Horne's workers, James is the one that gets promoted because he was not only a hard worker, but also an honest one. Will might not enjoy their wealth, but for James he has achieved his dreams and is shown to be a genuinely happy character.

Maren is another character that decided to pursue her dreams and become happy for it. She dreamed of being a famous escape artist and got her chance with Mr. Dorian, even if he was just hiring her on to use for the robbery. In the end, her dedication is rewarded when Mr. Dorian gifts her with the deed to the circus.

## False Appearances

Mr. Dorian is constantly showing Will that not everything is initially what it appears to be. Even before Will meets Mr. Dorian, he is learning this from his father. Van Horne's train car isn't what it appears, being filled with traps and even secret doors and complex lock mechanisms. In his initial appearance, Mr. Dorian is posing as a photographer who is only there to take pictures of the railway being finished. In truth, he was just there because he wanted to get his own Sasquatch, Goliath.

During the circus acts, Will gets a first-hand look at some of the deceptions that the performers put on. Will's own act involves deception, using a false blindfold that he can partially see out of as well as mirrors embedded into Maren's dress so he can actually





see the people that he is supposed to draw. Mr. Dorian uses a false chest to hide Will. If Brogan had simply reached out he would have been able to find and capture Will.

Van Horne puts on an appearance at the start of the book, pretending to be a rich and successful businessman. The truth of the matter though is that he couldn't get anyone to sponsor his project and he ended up spending all of his money. The only reason he was successful is because he also had his workers mining for gold. When he found the gold, he didn't want to be upfront about it because he would have to admit that he was bankrupt before then and he didn't want to give the press that satisfaction.

Even Will manages to hide himself in his performer disguise. This is especially significant because up until that point he had been drawing attention wherever he went because of his rich appearance. He's still the same person when he's wearing the disguise, but he doesn't receive the same attention simply because of his new appearance.



# Styles

## Point of View

The Boundless is written with a third person omniscient point of view. This allows the author to explore the world through the eyes of different characters. For the most part, this lets the audience to either see things through Will's eyes, or Brogan. Every so often, readers get to see the thoughts of other characters such as Maren or Mr. Dorian. This type of style works well for the book, since it keeps Brogan involved in the plot without outright having him appear besides the rest of the protagonists. Brogan's motivations are also explored in this part, making it clear that he's not just interested in getting wealth, but also that he feels entitled to the gold because he feels he was exploited by Van Horne.

## Language and Meaning

A specific year is never given for when the Boundless takes place, but the dialogue makes it clear that it isn't present day. The characters use language that relates to an earlier time period, most likely the Victorian Era. The distinction between classes is also portrayed in the dialogue. Will starts off as poor and has a habit of talking in a more casual and relaxed fashion. Once his family comes into wealth, though, he is portrayed as more refined, like most of the wealthier characters throughout the book. As he joins up with the circus and spends time with Maren he begins to speak in a much more relaxed fashion, just like before his family had come into money.

## Structure

The novel is primarily split into three different parts. The first is in the introduction, where Will is still poor and craving adventure. This lets the audience get established with Will, and get a glimpse at his true self. It also introduces several of the characters that are going to go on to play larger roles in the story, such as Brogan, Mr. Dorian and Maren. The second part is after the three year time jump where Will's family has become wealthy and the Boundless has been complete. This is when Will really begins to change as a character as his adventure begins.

The third part are the scenes that focus on Brogan. Brogan doesn't get as much attention as the other characters, but his scenes are very important because they explore several different themes. Brogan's scenes address some of the injustices between the wealthier characters and the lower class ones. With the exception of the three year time skip early on, the book is told in a very straight forward fashion, letting the audience experience everything in the present. This gives a clear indication into what exactly the characters are feeling in the moment.



## Quotes

Unlike his father, the only adventures he's ever had have been in his head, or drawn in his sketchbook. This girl seems from another world. Looking at her is like catching a glimpse of an unknown track: and immediately he wants to travel it to the horizon, to know what's at the end.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1 paragraph Page 7)

**Importance:** Part of what motivates Will is his desire for adventure. This quote not only shows that, but it also emphasizes the way that he uses his art to explore. Finally, it also introduces Maren and establishes the infatuation that he has with her.

Something shifts inside Will, like a door opening. Maybe it was meeting the circus girl, maybe it was the view of all these new mountains like a gateway to a new and dangerous world- but he feels like his whole life is about to be upended. His father's had so many adventures-maybe he'd be impressed if Will did something daring.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1 paragraph Page 12)

**Importance:** Throughout the story, Will is shown as being a very shy and reserved character. A large part of why he's never gone on any adventures is because he lacks the courage. Meeting characters like Maren and later Van Horne are enough to encourage him to finally step out into the world and embark on his own adventure.

He spots a boy atop an old rusted boxcar, waving. And for a moment, Will feels like he's waving at himself across time.

-- Narrator (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 46)

**Importance:** In the three year time jump, Will's family has become very wealthy. Will's family is happy with the increase in wealth, but Will feels like it has changed him, and not for the better. When Will spots the young boy on the boxcar he sees the man that he used to be, and starts to realize that he misses that old lifestyle.

He felt then like this life was about to properly start- that he'd finally have adventures of his own, maybe with his father. But then almost right away his story got derailed and he was just watching his father's life trundle merrily along the tracks.

-- Narrator (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 46)

**Importance:** Despite now having wealth, Will is still living an empty life. It isn't just the fact that he has money though, as he still felt that way even before then. Will felt happy when he went with Van Horne and started what he thought would be an adventure, but it ended up being a short lived one as his family became distracted with their new-found wealth, leaving Will unable to follow his dreams. On the Boundless though, Will realizes that he can live the life that he wants and embark on a grand adventure.

You wait you wanted to go to art school in San Francisco. I'm against it. I'll pay for proper training at a university if you mean to study something sensible. But you'll not go



to study art. I forbid it.

-- James (Chapter 3 paragraph Page 72)

**Importance:** James denying Will the chance to go to art school is a huge turning point for Will. It also goes to show just how much wealth has changed the way that his family thinks, as they had previously been very encouraging of his art career. This is just further motivation for Will to go off on his own and experience his own adventures.

Will wipes the bread around and around the bowl and devours it all. He appreciates it with an intensity he didn't feel in the first-class dining car. He notices everything: the grainy texture, the yeasty flavor.

-- Narrator (Chapter 5 paragraph Page 96)

**Importance:** When Will was in first class he had a hard time enjoying his meal even though it was one of his favorites. On the lower class train car, though, he finds that the meal is more enjoyable because it is filled with an intense and unique flavor.

He turns to see Maren standing in the doorway in a simple green dress. Without her makeup or vibrant clothing she looks younger, much more like the girl he met three years ago. He can't help smiling, like he's just found something important that's been lost a very long time.

-- Narrator (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 127)

**Importance:** This quote highlights just how important Maren is to Will, even after three years of being apart. Maren ends up being a very important motivator for Will, and she is ultimately the one at the end of the book that encourages him to pursue his dreams and join the circus as a performing artist.

Or would you all rather keep working the rails? Peck, you lose any more fingers, you're no good for even the mail car. And Richter, remember what happened to your buddy McGovern? Who's gonna take care of your family if your legs get sliced off during a flying switch? No one'll sell us insurance, boys. We got nothing. We're slaves. This is our chance to bust free.

-- Brogan (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 142)

**Importance:** Up until this point in the book, Brogan had come off as just being a selfish thug. In this part, he reveals that greed isn't the only thing driving him. This section also highlights some of the social injustice that the lower class workers have to experience, which is an important theme throughout the book.

It seems incredible to him he hasn't been recognized. His face is the same shape, his eyes the same color. But he supposes people never look that closely at things. As Mr. Dorian might say, we're easily fooled by our eyes.

-- Narrator (Chapter 9 paragraph Page 171)

**Importance:** When Will was a first class citizen people were always noticing him and commenting on the expensive outfits that he wore. When he dons his disguise as a



circus performer nobody seems to give him a second thought until he starts to put on his performance. This again touches on the idea that the upper class citizens are content to ignore the lower class ones.

And suddenly Will beholds Mr. Dorian for what he is, beyond his flesh and bones. It's like his whole life is pouring out of him, and Will sees all the desperation and fear and longing and a terrifying will to live—like a fire that will burn everything in its path.

-- Narrator (Chapter 14 paragraph Page 305)

**Importance:** Will had always felt like his art was lacking something, that he was just copying images and not creating anything unique. That's why he never liked to draw portraits. When it came time to draw Mr. Dorian, though, he looks beyond his physical appearance and manages to create a unique drawing that feels like it has life because it captures the man that Mr. Dorian truly is.

Well, you should arrest me, too!

-- Will (Chapter 16 paragraph Page 324)

**Importance:** At the end Mr. Steele has arrested Maren and Will is arguing that they are treating Maren like a criminal. They offer the justification that she knew about Brogan's plans and didn't tell anyone. Will argues and says that on those grounds he should also be arrested because he did the same thing. This shows, once again, Will's indignation at social injustices as they are in his time period, and how much he cares for Maren.

This is more than just a door opening in his life— it's the door being blasted right off its hinges, and a circus troupe bounding in, picking him up, and carrying him off on its shoulders.

-- Narrator (Chapter 16 paragraph Page 332)

**Importance:** This is an indication of Will's thoughts as he's been offered a chance to be with Maren, continue to perform, and to live his life on his own terms.