

# **Cannery Row Study Guide**

## **Cannery Row by John Steinbeck**

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## Plot Summary

Cannery Row depicts life in a depressed California fishing town, with the story culminating with the owner of a Chinese grocery, ladies in a civic-minded bordello, a household of grown-up delinquents, and assorted other characters coming together to give lonely Doc, owner/operator of a marine research facility, a tremendous birthday party.

Lee Chong owns a general grocery store that extends credit to most of the poor residents of Cannery Row. His neighbor, the flamboyant and caring Dora Flood, runs a curiously named bordello, the Bear Flag Restaurant, which plays a vital role in the community. A middle-aged tough guy, Mack, pressures Lee into renting a building to him and his homeless "boys". They christen it the "Palace Flophouse and Grill". The boys sometimes earn money by collecting specimens for Doc and his Western Biological Laboratories. In the vacant lot central to the grocery, warehouse, and lab, the Malloys set up house in a discarded boiler and rent sleeping space in large pipes to cannery workers. The boys transform the Palace into a home, expand their numbers, and plot to throw Doc an excellent party. For this, they need to raise money.

Doc allows dim Frankie to hang around the laboratory and lets the boys talk him into finding him frogs for his research while he is busy in La Jolla. They borrow Lee's neglected Model T Ford on the condition that they get it running. They succeed, but lose the talents of their best mechanic, Gay, through the course of bizarre events. Mack is at his sharpest, finessing a conceited "captain" into letting them hunt frogs on his property. The boys enjoy themselves, collect massive numbers of frogs, and are given a gallon of good whiskey and a cute puppy to take home.

Mack perceives more quickly than others that Doc is lonely. Doc drives alone to La Jolla, and at the end of his successful octopus hunt, shockingly finds the drowned body of a beautiful woman in the surf. In Monterey, a pole skater hired as a promotion by a department store holds everyone mesmerized, and this entrepreneurial spirit is carried over to Cannery Row as Lee accepts frogs as inflated currency as they boys stock up for the party. Their new puppy takes over the household. They decide to hold the party at the lab, and while decorating, everything gets drunkenly out of hand. Doc arrives to find his home wrecked. His temper flares and he beats Mack. Doc knows better than to accept Mack's offers of clean up or restitution.

A "black gloom" descends on Mack and the boys. Doc has forgiven and forgotten, but the boys do not know this. All of Cannery Row shuns the boys and is drawn into the malaise. The boys' beloved puppy bears the brunt of it, falling ill with distemper. Her recovery, which Doc facilitates with surprising coldness, snaps the spell and the community recovers.

Planning a new party gets underway, scheduled for Doc's supposed birthday. The community-wide event requires much secrecy and care in selecting or making gifts. Doc learns of it, wisely provides for it, and leaves exposed nothing valuable or lethal. Frankie



tries to steal an expensive gift and Doc cannot keep him out of prison. Suspense builds. The party begins awkwardly, warms up slowly, includes two fights: a small one that makes Mack and the boys feel useful, and a massive brawl that reinvigorates the party after Doc reads movingly from the poem "Black Marigolds", in which the heroine resembles the drowned girl in La Jolla. Doc cleans up the devastation during the "hour of the pearl", just before sunrise.



# Chapters 1-4

## Chapters 1-4 Summary

Lee Chong's small, crowded grocery, open from dawn until the last vagrant goes to sleep, largely runs on credit. Lee is prosperous, respected, and bounces back from business errors. He stations himself behind the cigar counter and in front of the liquor shelves, his fingers drumming and eyes watchful. One evening he contemplates a business deal he had consummated earlier with Horace Abbeville, one of his debtors. To clear himself and his children, Abbeville signs over a building storing fishmeal. If the cannery expands, the lot will be valuable. Abbeville walks home with dignity and shoots himself. While Abbeville is being embalmed, his two wives mourn. Lee, wishing he could have prevented the tragedy, underwrites the funeral and sends groceries to the bereaved. Storing groceries in the distant building would only invite thievery.

Lee's quandary is settled by Mack, the leader of a small group of homeless men dedicated to food, drink, and quiet contentment. Hearing about the Abbeville place, they want to live there, maintaining it and protecting it against vandalism. Feeling surrounded and foreseeing refusal will mean broken windows and fire, Lee asks \$5 a week in rent. He never sees a penny, but the boys become regular customers, never again steal from him, and protect him against toughs from New Monterey. Mack, Hazel, Eddie, Hugie, and Jones clean out the pungent fishmeal, fill the newly named "Palace Flophouse and Grill" with stolen pieces of furniture disguised red with stolen paint, and consider doing something good for Doc, a fine fellow at Western Biological.

Words become symbols and Things become Word, which sucks up Cannery Row, digests it, and spews it out. Lee is more than a tough-minded Chinese grocer; his soft heart inspires him to dig up his grandfather's remains and pack them for reburial in sacred Chinese soil. Mack and his boys are the Virtues, Graces, and Beauties in Monterey, where crazy people "gain the whole world" at the cost of ulcers, blown prostates, and bifocals. They avoid the trap that poisons those who call them no-goods and bums. "Our Father who art in nature" has given them, like coyotes, rats, sparrows, flies, and moths, and ability to survive.

To the left of the junk-cluttered vacant lot behind Lee's store stands an old-fashioned, honest, decent whorehouse run by Dora Flood. In the business for fifty years, she is loved by the intelligent, the learned, and the kind, but hated by "married spinsters" whose husbands are attracted. Those who visit the Bear Flag Restaurant looking for a sandwich are surprised. The house normally employs twelve working girls, a Greek cook, and a knowing "watchman," Alfred. Flood stays in her illegal business by keeping order and giving generously to every charity that asks (or in her case, demands). During two years of Depression, she nearly bankrupts herself helping needy families survive. Alfred's predecessor is a dark, lonesome man named William, who had tried to befriend Mack and the boys but was rebuffed (inaccurately) as a pimp. When even bums reject him, William decides suicide is the only option. The Greek cook does not disagree—or



believe he will go through with it—and William drives an ice pick into his own heart. Everyone likes Alfred.

No one knows what goes on with an unnamed old, lean, wizened Chinaman who each sunset flip-flops his way through Cannery Row carrying an empty wicker basket, disappears beneath the piers for the entire day, and wends his way back up the hill at dawn with his basket heavy and ripping. He slips through a gate and is not seen again. He has been doing this for years. Some say he is God or Death. Children find him funny, but only a brave ten-year-old visitor from Salinas, Andy, ever dares taunt him. Andy sees in the old man's eyes something mysterious, a feeling of loneliness, that never leaves him.

## Chapters 1-4 Analysis

The opening chapters establish Lee Chong as a major character and through him indicate how impoverished life in Cannery Row is. The way that the flamboyant, caring madam, Dora Flood, is introduced confirms this and shows how important a place the curiously named bordello plays in the life of the community. This will be developed in detail throughout the book. It also introduces a gang of five homeless toughs, two "watchmen" (bouncers), and a Greek cook. "Tong wars" are mentioned in passing—occasional violent feuds among Chinese-American gangs dealing in opium, gambling, prostitution, and selling protection to merchants—suggesting Lee might be less than honest, but this is not pursued. Instead, he is pressured into renting his newly acquired building to Mack, leader of the boys. The deal they strike works out well for all.

Densely packed with figurative language, brief Chapter 2 makes Lao Tze, an ancient Chinese philosopher credited with writing the central work of Taoism, into a force of cultural gravity holding Lee to his homeland and inspiring ancestral loyalty. Two familiar Christian sayings then show Mack's boys standing out from establishment types, whose goal of getting ahead only ruins their health. Unlike the two suicides shown in the opening pages, the boys are survivors. This theme is picked up twice more in the course of the novel.



# Chapters 5-9

## Chapters 5-9 Summary

Western Biological Laboratories is located catty-cornered to Lee's and Flood's. The basement of the low building is both a storeroom for preserved animals and a preparation area, the backyard hold tanks for larger sea animals, upstairs is a crowded office, aquaria, and a laboratory smelling of chemicals, machinery, animals, and the sea. Beside the office is a library filled with papers, books, and phonograph records, and walls lined with reproductions of great masterpieces at eye level. Behind it are a kitchen, toilet, and shower.

Doc is the owner/operator. He is deceptively small, wiry, strong, sometimes fearsome, with a truthful face bearded like Christ or a satyr, the hands of a brain surgeon, and has but one fear: getting his head wet. He helps girls out of and into trouble, can kill anything for need and nothing for pleasure. Over the years, he becomes Cannery Row's foundation of philosophy, science, and art. Flood's girls hear music in his lab, Lee studies English, and Henri the painter hears of the Book of the Dead and changes his medium. Doc can turn any nonsense into wisdom. His mind and sympathy are boundless. When he talks to children, they understand profound things. He lives in a world of wonders and excitement. He is concupiscent and gentle. People want to do nice things for Doc.

Doc collects marine animals in the Great Tide Pool at the tip of the Monterey Peninsula, a wave-churned basin at high tide, and a clear battleground for survival at low tide. Beautiful crabs, starfish, sea slugs, eels, shrimp, and anemones are all voracious predators. The octopus is a "creeping murderer", oozing along, watching coldly with "evil goat eyes" and, spotting prey, moving fast as a cat. Black flies eat anything above water level. The exposed rocks smell of iodine, sperm, and ova as starfish mate, and of death, digestion, decay, and birth. With an order from Northwestern University for three hundred starfish, Doc takes Hazel along to help. At twenty-six, the dark-haired, pleasant, strong, willing, loyal Hazel loves to hear conversations but follows nothing. He is good at collecting specimens, surefooted, and loves to hunt. He gets his name when his mother, worn out by her seventh pregnancy in eight years, names the newborn after her Great Aunt Hazel. By the time she realizes Hazel's sex, the name has stuck. The boy spends four years in grammar school, four years in reform school, and learns nothing, including viciousness.

As he has a dozen times before, Hazel wonders what they do with starfish, which cannot be eaten. Hazel never forgets anything, but his mind is unorganized, like the snarl of fishing tackle in the bottom of a boat. Doc asks how things are going at the Palace and learns Gay is moving in to avoid being beaten by his wife; he used to hit back and get thrown into jail, but the new jail is so nice he likes it, so the wife no longer swears out warrants. Doc knows that Hazel has hidden six to seven undersized abalones in his sack and does not want the suspicious game warden to blame him.



Hazel reports the "painter guy" is back at the Palace, redoing all of their pictures in nutshells, his new medium. He is also taking his boat apart and starting again. He is nuts. Doc explains that Henri loves boats but is afraid of the water, so he does not want to finish building. Hazel cannot follow the logic. Amidst the ice plant, they see hundreds of stink bugs, and Hazel asks why they always have their tails in the air. Doc says they are probably praying.

Mack and the boys look at the bare, smelly Palace Flophouse as just a shelter until Mack decides the "ravening individualists" need some organization. He draws chalk outlines for five bedrooms that become each person's inviolable space. They sleep on the floor until a month-long rain gets them restless. Hughie drags in a torn army cot and Mack drags in a rusty set of springs. Thereafter, the boys outdo one another in beautifying the place until it is overfurnished with junk. They find a monstrous floriated stove too big to steal and talk the owner down from \$3.50 to an IOU for 8¢. It takes three days to drag it five miles from Seaside, but it becomes the glory, hearth, and center of the Palace, which becomes a real home. The boys even clean it sometimes.

Eddie is an understudy at La Ida to the bartender, Whitey, who is absent as often as possible. Whitey knows Eddie does not want his job permanently. While he sometimes steals bottles of liquor, Eddie mostly settles for draining the remains of patrons' glasses into a gallon jug beneath the bar. He carries the resulting "punch" back to the boys, happy that no one is out anything. The boys never ask Eddie to clean house. On the afternoon Hazel is collecting with Doc, Eddie notes that there has been a run on Manhattans lately, giving the jug a distinctive taste. Gay has joined the group. Mack wants to do something nice for Doc. They cannot buy him a woman; he has three or four that visit regularly. Pulled curtains and "church music" on the phonograph are the signs. They settle on throwing Doc a party, but will need money. Being college-educated and visited by dames in fur coats, he will not drink their swill (which tastes good after a third glass). Doc buys beer regularly at Lee's, but Mack figures eight percent beer is ninety-two percent water and other wasteful ingredients. Eddie cannot risk stealing whiskey; the owner is already suspicious and they do not want him to lose his job. Hughie never buys more than a half pint, because more than that draws friends. Mack decides they need a big cake. They cannot take a job at the Hediondo Cannery to raise \$10-\$12, as quitting in under a month would spoil their reputations next time they really need employment, like around Christmas. Hughie recalls catching animals for Doc in Carmel Valley, getting 5¢ apiece for frogs. They decide getting Doc to pay for an expedition will let them give him "one hell of a party". Mack decides to make arrangements alone.

In April 1932, the Hediondo Cannery blows a tube in its boiler once too often and Mr. Randolph decides to replace it. The old one is dumped in the vacant lot where it is gradually gutted for parts and surrounded by fragrant bushes and trees. In 1935, Mrs. and Mrs. Sam Malloy move into the boiler as a roomy, dry, safe apartment. Below the boiler, Hediondo dumps many large pipes. At the end of 1937, there is a housing shortage during peak times in the canneries, and Malloy rents out the larger pipes to single men for a nominal fee. Mrs. Malloy begins acquiring household items and grows hysterical when her husband does not agree immediately to spending \$1.98 on a set of





curtains for their windowless abode. She sobs that men simply do not understand women's feelings, and Sam patiently rubs her back a long time.

When Doc returns to the lab, Mack teeters down past Malloy's to see him. Doc is laying out the starfish and flattening them. He looks up nervously as Mack enters, and opens with news of Phyllis Mae getting her arm infected after punching a customer at the Bear Flag and getting his false tooth embedded in her fist. Both know Mack has a reason for visiting and Doc is guarded when Mack gets to the point: the boys need money for a good purpose. Doc needs three to four hundred frogs, but must drive to La Jolla to collect octopi. He will pay the usual price but cannot lend them his car. Instead he writes a note to Red Williams at the gas station, authorizing ten gallons of gas for Lee's truck. Doc watches Mack leave, recalling how he once paid for fifteen tom cats whose owners later retrieved them; Mack had explained how to use a female cat as bait to trap toms. Lee's tapping finger speeds up when he sees Mack enter. Mack gets immediately to the point: good old Doc needs a lot of frogs for a New York museum and the boys want to help, but need Lee's truck. Mack shows Lee the gas voucher and offers Gay's expertise to put the truck in running order. Lee sees no way out and agrees, but refuses a pint of Old Tennis Shoe for the road.

## Chapters 5-9 Analysis

These chapters introduce Doc and his laboratory and link him to Mack and the boys, who serve as occasional mercenary specimen collectors. Mack does not bring trouble everywhere he goes, but everyone is wary of him, no matter how well meaning he is. This follows him throughout the novel. Eddie and Hazel's characters are filled in. The Hediondo Cannery and the Malloys are introduced in a short caesura, reminiscent of Chapter 2's discussion of the Tao of the boys' survival. The boys transform the Palace into a home, expand their numbers, and plot to throw Doc an excellent party.



# Chapters 10-13

## Chapters 10-13 Summary

Large-eyed, dark-haired eleven-year-old Frankie takes three weeks to inch his way into the basement of Western Biological before he and Doc speak. Frankie lives up the street with his widowed mother and abusive "uncles", and is too dim to attend school. Doc gets him to wash, rids him of lice, and clothes him, and lets him try to help by sweeping and grading crayfish, but Frankie cannot get these right. Frankie enjoys watching and listening to Doc's parties. During one, Frankie delivers a glass of beer to a woman guest who thanks him and earns Doc's praise. He decides to help more at the next gathering. When the kitchen is empty, Frankie fills glasses, carries the tray successfully into the next room, but in front of the same woman, his coordination falters. He spills the tray in her lap and flees to the cellar, where he whimpers in a crate. Doc can do nothing to comfort him.

Lee's Model T Ford has a dignified history of owners who gradually batter and modify it until it comes to Lee as payment for a grocery bill. It stands in the midst of weeds in the empty field, its front wheels on blocks. Any of the boys could make it run, but Gay is an inspired mechanic. If there were a term for mechanics akin to "green thumb", it would apply to Gay. He could work constantly, keeping the machines in the canneries humming, if the owners were not so cheap. They make do in order to maximize profits.

Mack awakens the boys early to work on Lee's truck under Gay's supervision. The front tires need air, the engine components need cleaning and adjustment, and a dry cell must be stolen from his basement without his wife's knowledge. Eddie gets that assignment. The brakes are shot and the forward bands are worn, but reverse works. Gay is the "St. Francis" of all things moving, and if the world's broken down jalopies ever form a chorus to praise God, it will be thanks to him and his brotherhood. He gets the engine to start and keep running. Because the truck has expired license plates and no headlights, they must avoid the police. The "city hunters" want to load up on food and liquor, but Mack knows the country can provide everything but bread, salt, pepper, and Eddie's jug. Gay drives gingerly over to the service station, where Doc has phoned ahead and alerted Williams to likely scams. They gas up and head out along back streets towards Carmel.

The Model T cannot make it up Carmel Hill going forward but succeeds in reverse, with the radiator boiling. Someone should write an "erudite essay" on how the Model T has changed America in two generations. Males know more about its coil than the clitoris, more about its gears than about the solar system, have abandoned the concept of private ownership on equipment relating to it, and conceive most babies in it. The truck crests the hill and another steeper one before coasting downhill and turning off onto Jack's Peak, hissing steam. Finding the needle valve broken, Gay sets off to find a replacement. The boys do not see him again for 180 days. Through a series of random



events, he ends up arrested in Salinas for stealing shoes. By the truck, the remaining boys shiver as the sun goes down. At 10 PM, Eddie goes off to find another Model T.

Monterey prides itself on being a literary town, home to Robert Louis Stevenson and place of death to humorist Josh Billings. On the night of Billings' death some years back, elderly Mr. Carriaga comes upon a small boy and his dog each carrying a quantity of innards that appear human. The boy politely says he has found them in a gulch and he intends to go chumming for mackerel. Carriaga spreads the story in the Adobe Bar and an ad hoc committee confronts the town doctor, who also sacrilegiously practices embalming. When he admits to disposing of Billings' "tripas" as usual in the gulch, he is made to recover them, wash them reverently, and bury them in Billing's coffin.

Mack and the boys sleep peacefully through Eddie's return with a carburetor he steals. When he wakes up, Mack admires the view of the bay and dune country around Seaside, Eddie installs the part, and they set off again toward Carmel Valley. At the turn-off, Eddie manages to hit a fat rooster, which Hazel plucks as they drive on. The lovely Carmel has everything a river should: rapids, shallows, an artificial lake, and pools. It is fierce in winter and placid in summer. Frogs abound among its varied wildlife. A few miles up the valley, the boys find a place to cook their dinner, beneath a high cliff, beside a deep, green pool that is perfect for frogs. Along the way, they have "found" bags of carrots and onions and set the rooster to boiling gently over a small fire. The boys stretch out and sleep until dark, when the frogs come out. As the sun goes down, the smell of chicken stew is "heartbreaking". Coffee is simmering in a can. Mack gets up and goes through the usual male routines, with the boys following suit.

They enjoy a pleasant meal until Jones awkwardly suggests Eddie keep three jugs behind the bar to keep separate the whiskey, wine, and beer. As he tries to recover, Mack recalls a hard-drinking deep sea diver named McKinley Moran who, during Prohibition, gets \$25 a day from the government to search for liquor on the bottom and \$3 a case from Louie for not finding it. Hughie recalls he gets married three times before his money runs out and he disappears. Wondering if Gay has gone back to his wife, Mack says one cannot trust married guys. As they pass around the coffee can, Mack laments that they are taking money from Doc to give him a party. This seems unfair. He has lied to Doc once before and been caught in it. If they just buy Doc whiskey, Henri and the Carmel people will flock to it. Hazel is sure Doc would not like anything like cuff links.

Mack is mulling this over when he hears footsteps and sees a large, stooped figure carrying a shotgun and walking a pointer. The man orders them to leave his posted land. Mack asks if the man is ex-military, like himself and apologizes profusely. They are trying to fight cancer by catching frogs for experimentation. Mack observes that the fine-looking dog looks like Virginia champion named Nola but appears lame. As the boys stamp out the fire and clean up, Mack investigates an evil-looking wound on Nola's shoulder and offers to treat it with an Epsom salt poultice. The grateful Captain invites them to hunt frogs in the pond near his house; they keep him awake at night. Hazel believes Mack could be President of the US if he wanted, but Jones sees no fun in that.



## Chapters 10-13 Analysis

Doc allows dim Frankie to hang around the laboratory and hires the boys to catch frogs for him while he is busy elsewhere. He proves sharper than Mack hopes in negotiating the deal. The need for transportation brings them to Lee's neglected Model T Ford, a subject the author obviously holds in reverence. In considerable detail, Steinbeck describes how the boys get it on the road and keeping it moving, including a number of illegal actions. Unfortunately, they lose the talents of Gay, the St. Francis of machinery, who disappears in a comic chain of events worthy of the famed humorist Josh Billings (the pen name of Henry Wheeler Shaw), who died in Monterey in 1885. That event serves as the now expected brief aside. Note Mack's vehemence about married men. It will be explained directly. Finally, Mack is shown at his sharpest, finessing a conceited tough guy into letting them hunt frogs on his property.



# Chapters 14-16

## Chapters 14-16 Summary

Early morning is a time of peace, magic, and silvery light in Cannery Row. Cats, dogs, gulls, sea lions, and gophers are afoot, but few humans. One of Flood's girls comes back disheveled from a house call. Lee hauls garbage to the curb. The old Chinaman flap-flaps by. The cannery watchman and Bear Flag bouncer look out. Malloy's tenants snore. "Time stops and examines itself". Two soldiers in the company of two girls leave La Ida, tired, and happy, and walk. The girls are hefty and full-lipped, and dressed in wrinkled, clinging party dresses. They walk hand-in-hand, wearing one another's hats, the length of Cannery Row, down the railroad track, to a tiny beach in front of Hopkins Marine Station. As the sun rises, the girls sit primly in the sand and the soldiers lie down with their heads in the girls' laps, gazing at each other. A watchman and his surly cocker spaniel try to shoo them off, but are ignored.

By the time the boys reach the farmhouse, Mack is treating the dog. Mack says the pups ought to be weaned. The captain laments not drowning all but one, since people no longer want bird dogs. He complains that since his wife got elected to the Assembly she is always giving speeches or writing bills. He offers Mack his pick of the litter. In the kitchen, the boys see clearly that the wife is away but has left her mark with curtains and towels; they know instinctively she would disapprove of the freedom and companionship they represent. Mack declines the captain's first offer of a drink before the frog hunt, since this is a scientific expedition, but then relents. The captain rummages in the cellar, brings up a five-gallon keg of Prohibition-vintage corn whiskey, knocks out the oak plug, and pours a little in glasses. Mack has never tasted its equal. When the captain offers another round, Mack suggests filling a pitcher to avoid spilling. Two hours later, they remember why they have come.

The frog pool is fifty by seventy feet and four feet deep. Thousands croak and sing. The captain carries a pitcher of whiskey and each of the boys has his own glass and a flashlight. Hughie and Jones carry gunnysacks. As they approach, the frogs grow silent. The boys have a last short one before executing a bold and radical plan. For millennia, frogs and humans have obeyed strict rules: as the hunter approaches noiselessly, the frog waits until the last second, then bounds away and hides on the bottom. Fairly, a few frogs get killed but most escape. Mack's method brings unforeseen horror for the frogs: the humans wade in, shouting, thrashing, lights flashing, and form a line to herd the panicky frogs ahead of them. Frogs of every size and color break over the grassy bank only to face flashlights and be gathered up like berries or potatoes. Fifty pounds worth of disillusioned frogs are stuffed into gunnysacks—perhaps six to seven hundred of them.

The captain thanks Mack and the boys for the fun and hours later, when the curtains catch fire and are extinguished, tells them not to worry. His wife is wonderful, but should have been a man; of course, then he would not have married her. He is tickled by his



own words. Before passing out on the filthy floor amidst the puppies, the captain fills a jug for Mack and wishes he could live with them. Mack has never rolled a drunk and does not intend to start with the captain, but selects a puppy, blows out the lamp, and shivers at the thought of the wife returning to this mess. It looks like Doc is "a pretty lucky guy".

The Bear Flag experiences its busiest time ever during the big sardine catch, which coincides with the arrival of a new bunch of soldiers at the Presidio. Three girls are out of action, so Flood is short-handed. The fishermen come in afternoons while the soldiers prefer evenings. Flood is having income tax troubles on her illegal but taxable business. Regular customers also show up, the commoners by the front door and prominent citizens through the rear. In the middle of the terrific month, influenza breaks out and all of Monterey comes down with it. The city has enough doctors to handle ordinary business, but go crazy during the epidemic, slighting those who cannot pay—and Cannery Row is not considered a good financial risk.

While not a medical doctor, Doc finds himself dispensing advice, running about treating people, and delivering food. He phones doctors to handle true emergencies. He sleeps little and lives on beer and canned sardines. Buying beer in Lee's, he meets Flood and asks if her girls could sit with people who feel scared and hopeless being alone. It is a bad time for Flood, but she agrees. The Greek cook keeps his cauldron filled with strong soup and the girls, while never neglecting their booming business, go in shifts to deliver soup and sit with ailing families. Fishermen and soldiers stand in line at the Bear Flag; Fleet believes she could have pressed into service everyone in the old ladies' home and heard no complaints. Everyone is glad when things quiet.

## Chapters 14-16 Analysis

Chapter 14 describes "the hour of the pearl", that period after the streetlights go out and before the sun comes up, when "time stops and examines itself". It has earlier been mentioned, but not turned into a palpable entity. It provides the time frame for a number of scenes going forward and has been so well established that just the phrase evokes it all. The surly captain turns out to be a good-natured, lonely man, who not only lets the boys catch frogs, but also gives them a gallon of whiskey for the road and Mack a puppy. The puppy is destined to rule the Palace in future chapters. The frogs are anthropomorphized and the hunt turned into a timeless struggle heretofore waged by set rules. The boys break the rules and commit genocide. The hordes of frogs—far more than Doc needs—are destined to upset life in Cannery Row. The small kitchen fire presages Mack's later lamentations about all of his best efforts coming to nothing. He appears a much more benevolent figure than his reputation belies. The Bear Flag demonstrates the community spirit it is earlier said, academically, to put forth, by helping out during the epidemic. Its normal clientèle appears to be drawn from most of the community and it is so flooded with extras that the prostitutes do not even bother to pretty themselves up. Doc, who will be examined closely in the next few chapters, is indefatigable in helping them help others.



# Chapters 17-21

## Chapters 17-21 Summary

At heart, Doc is a lonely man. Mack sees this quicker than others, watching the lab from his doorstep, hearing the phonograph music play, sensing he is lonely even when he has a girl inside. Doc knows the seacoast well, where every specimen is to be found. His only problem is reaching them when nature makes them available. He must be at a particular place at low tide to collect. Needing small octopi, he must drive five hundred miles to La Jolla's "boulder-strewn inter-tidal zone". Sea cradles like the same environment, so Doc can replenish his stock of them at the same time. Low tide is at 5:17 AM on Thursday, so Doc must leave Wednesday morning. He wishes he had some company on the long ride, but Mack and the boys are collecting frogs and three young women he knows work days. Henri refuses to stop watching a flagpole sitter/skater intent on breaking the world record on a tall mast outside Holman's Department Store. Henri sits at Williams' gas station, fascinated, and contemplates the philosophic implications of this activity.

Doc works through the "pearly time" getting his gear together and sets off. He does not drive fast and stops very often. He stops for a hamburger and beer before getting out of Monterey and recalls Blaisedell the poet once remarking he loves beer so much that one day he will order a beer milk shake. The idea gags Doc, but he cannot get it out of his mind. If he chooses to order the drink, he will order it out of town where no one knows him. He recalls how, having worked too hard and experiencing love trouble at the University of Chicago, he treats himself to a walking tour from Indiana to Florida. People everywhere are suspicious of him, walking through the country. They cannot accept the truth—that he loves living things and wants to savor the countryside, not attack their daughters or pigs—so he makes up a story: he is walking to collect a \$100 bet. People then invite him to dinner, spend the night, provision him, and proclaim him "a hell of a fine fellow". Truth is a dangerous mistress.

Doc stops for hamburgers and beer a few times before having a square meal in Santa Barbara. As he emerges, several potential hitchhikers await. Doc has traveled the highways enough to know one picks hitchhikers carefully, to avoid those who talk one's leg off. He sees a thin-faced salesman type with deep lines and brooding eyes, figures he will keep silent, and invites him to ride. In Ventura, Doc offers the man a beer and receives a temperance lecture. He violently orders the man out of his car. He returns to the counter and orders a beer milkshake. The beautiful blonde waitress figures he is kidding, but makes one when he says it is doctor's orders for a bad bladder ailment. It is not bad. He claims to have been drinking them for seventeen years.

Doc stops only once, briefly, before Los Angeles, where he orders a hearty chicken dinner and loads up on coffee, sandwiches, and beer for breakfast in the morning. Night driving is boring, so Doc speeds up and reaches La Jolla at 2 AM. He drives to the cliffs above the tidal flat, eats, drinks, and sleeps in the car. Doc has been working in a "tidal





pattern" so long he can sense the change in his sleep. He has sandwiches, coffee, and a quart of beer for breakfast and watches the tide go out, leaving colorful little pools. He dons boots and rain hat, gathers equipment and provisions, and climbs down the cliffs to follow the retreating sea. Overturning boulders with a crowbar, he collects angry, squirming octopi, which often attack their fellows when put into a jar of seawater. He harvests twenty-two plus several hundred sea cradles. It is a good day.

Doc walks out to the drop off into deep water, marked by long, leathery brown algae. Seeing a flash of white, Doc parts the algae and is shocked to see the face of a beautiful, dark-haired girl staring blankly up at him below water. She is wedged in a crevice. Her face is burned into his memory. Heart pounding, Doc collects his gear and heads to the beach. He hears the high, thin, piercingly sweet notes of a flute in his head while the surf pounds like woodwinds. He shivers. A man asks if he has been fishing and is surprised to learn he has been collecting "devilfish". As the music in his head swells, Doc asks the location of a police station. He has found a body on the reef. The man says there is a bounty for finding bodies and Doc asks him to report it and collect. He does not want it. As he reaches the car, only a flute plays in his head.

The flagpole skater is Holman's best promotion ever. People come from all around to watch him and Salinas wants to hire him to break his own record as soon as he sets it. Holman's runs sales of all sorts. On the second day, the skater complains someone is shooting at him with an air rifle. The display department calculates the angles and disarms old Dr. Merrivale, too prominent a Mason to involve the police. Henri sits at the service station pondering and decides he must build such a platform at home and try it himself. Mack and the boys cannot be bothered with the spectacle. The whole town is intrigued by one question no one dares to ask. Richard Frost, a high-strung, brilliant young man is particularly haunted. After two days and nights of fidgeting, he gets drunk, picks a fight with his emotional wife, sneaks out late (leaving her to fear he is going to the Bear Flag), and walks into town. At the base of the mast, he calls up to ask how the skater goes to the toilet. Frost brings home to his wife the news: he has a can up there.

Lee's Model T rolls in mid-morning and is returned to the vacant field. The boys take the frogs home while Mack pays a "ceremonious visit" to Lee, who knows what is coming. Mack tells of their wonderful whiskey but laments a lack of steak and other groceries to make a fine party for Doc. Mack reminds Lee of how Doc provides laudanum to ease his wife's toothache and invites him to the soiree, provided he accepts frogs in payment. Both know the standard price, which Mack sweetens by five frogs per dollar. Lee demands to see the frogs, stipulates no dead ones, and sells them \$2 worth of bacon, eggs, and bread for fifty frogs. Anticipating brisk business, Lee moves a packing case into the vegetable section. Eddie buys two frogs' worth of Bull Durham. Jones is outraged when the price of Coca Cola doubles to two frogs. Prices on steak and canned peaches are marked up sharply, for Lee has no competition willing to accept this currency. Bitterness piles up as the packing case fills. Once they eat and drink their fill, however, the boys are only mildly irritated at being taken for an economic ride. They are not mercantile men.





Darling, the puppy, distracts them. Five men with five clashing theories on dog training guarantee no training. The "precocious bitch" sleeps on the bed of whoever bribes her last. They woo her from one another (as she in turn plays them off one against the other), laugh at her puddles, bore acquaintances with stories about her, and would have fed her to death if she had not had more sense than they.

As they sit that afternoon digesting their meal, they warn themselves not to drink up all the whiskey for Doc's party. He usually comes home at eight or nine o'clock, tired from the long drive, but nothing rests a person better than a good party. Since Doc likes music, they must hold it at his place. It should be a surprise, with lots of decorations. Mack's eyes glaze over as he pictures it and praises Hughie for the inspiration. Unlike storekeepers who only stock the current season's merchandise, Lee keeps everything from decades back, and never has a sale, reduces prices, or remains anything. Lee has everything they need except a big cake. Hughie suggests Eddie, the one-time fry cook, make one, which Mack sees as more personal than a store-bought cake. The boys make endless trips to Lee's, spending their frogs on Old Tennis Shoes and miles of assorted crepe paper at inflated prices. Eddie minds the stove and the cake he is baking in a washbasin. It writhes and pants, forms a great bubble that collapses with a hiss, leaving a crater that Eddie fills with new batter. The bottom burns and smokes while the top rises and falls in a series of explosions. While the boys are decorating the lab, Darling eats as much of it as she can, throws up on the rest, curls up on top, and goes to sleep.

Doc never locks the lab, figuring anyone who wants to break in will and doubting any burglar wants the items that have any value. "Friends" regularly borrow books and food and sometimes sleep in his bed uninvited. Reasoning that Doc will want to see his frogs immediately, they talk a suspicious Lee into letting them have the packing case, which they decorate with bunting and a "Welcome Home, Doc" sign. Passers-by hear the festive noise and join in. At 11 PM, they fry the steaks and eat them. A Count Basie album plays. Customers at the Bear Flag start a bloody battle that smashes the front door and windows. At 1:30 AM, a rude drunk is thrown through the pack case and the record player is ruined. The party dies. The frogs hop out tentatively and are drawn by the smell of cool damp air into the street. By dawn, they inhabit sewer, reservoir, culverts, and weeds. The devastated lab is quiet, lights blazing.

The animals caged in the back room are on edge as the hour of the pearl arrives and the few humans stirring do their normal things. Doc drives up, red-eyed with fatigue, climbs out, sees the damaged door and windows, steps inside, and walks through the destruction. Enraged, he discovers the record player is ruined. When Max comes in, red-faced, and tries to explain, Doc punches him twice, knocking him down, drawing blood, and demanding he fight back. Mack refuses, saying he has it coming. Doc hits him again, breaking teeth. Doc hears Monteverdi in his head, looks for the album, but remembers the phonograph is broken. Telling Mack to wash his face, Doc buys beer, and as they drink together, hears how everything gets out of hand preparing for his party, as things always do. Mack reveals having had a wife who leaves when she can stand his failures no more. Now he just makes the boys laugh by clowning. Doc understands, denies Mack will learn anything, and declines his offer to clean up and



repay. Doc knows where everything goes. Some \$300 worth of museum glass is broken. Doc watches Mack walk home and spends the day cleaning the mess.

## Chapters 17-21 Analysis

These chapters show Doc as a lonely man, which Mack perceives more quickly than others. The collection trip to La Jolla includes more description of tide pools and the enigmatic finding of a beautiful woman's body. As events going forward will, this evokes music in Doc's head. The expected comic aside comes in the form of the pole skater and Richard Frost's quest for truth, which centers on scatology. The department store's entrepreneurial spirit is continued as Lee accepts frogs as inflated currency. Greed, supply, and demand lead to no more than resentment because the boys are so laid back. They are seen in somewhat new light when they adopt the puppy, which takes over the household, Eddie's adventure in baking, and the desire to do something really nice for Doc.

Steinbeck for the second time suggests an academic study of a phenomenon: how an impromptu party that gets out of hand suddenly dies. Note that Doc arrives at the "hour of the pearl", to which his lab animals react per the earlier description. Doc's temper flares twice in the chapter: throwing the hitchhiker out and administering a cathartic beating to Mack. This allows Mack to tell the pathetic story of his marriage and explain why he now acts the clown. Doc knows better than to accept Mack's offers of clean up or restitution. Perhaps Doc is lonely because he always knows best where things go.



# Chapters 22-26

## Chapters 22-26 Summary

Henri the Painter is not French, not a painter, and not born Henri. He has so steeped himself in stories of the Left Bank in Paris, which he has never visited, that he lives there in imagination, studying in magazines the latest artistic movements and regularly changing his techniques and materials, which include not paint but colored chicken feathers and nutshells. He is a superb craftsman. He lives on his unfinished thirty-five-foot boat, whose design has been in flux over the last ten years. Lacking money, Henri scrounges materials and wants never to finish the craft. He houses it on a wooded lot rented for \$5. The compact cabin is where he sleeps and entertains friends. Swarthy and morose, he wears a beret long after they are out of fashion, and smokes a calabash pipe. He has married twice and had numerous live-in girlfriends, but all leave because of the tight quarters and lack of a toilet. Henri then combined formal mourning with exulting in his regained freedom.

After losing Alice, he settles down to get drunk but is interrupted by the visage of a handsome, devilish young man and laughing little boy. The boy continues laughing after the man slits his throat. Henri howls in terror and seeks Doc's advice. Doc is working on cats when Henri bursts in. He studies the painter carefully to see if his panic is true fear or theatrics. It appears mostly fear. Henri asks if this is a ghost, a reflection of something that has happened, some "Freudian horror", or him simply being "nuts". Doc does not know and declines to accompany Henri back to the boat. Doc is neither a psychiatrist nor a witch hunter. Henri knows that if he sees the hallucination again, he will die. A girl calls to Doc and asks to come into the basement. Doc introduces her and explains Henri's problem. The pretty girl's eyes sparkle as Henri retells the story. She wants to see for herself. Doc watches his date depart. She never sees a ghost but lives with Henri five months before lack of a toilet drives her out.

Black gloom covers the Palace Flophouse when Mack returns from the lab. Mack takes to his bed, bruised more in his heart than in his bloodied mouth. He feels he has never done anything this bad. Hughie and Jones get jobs at the Hediondo Cannery. Trying to feel better, Hazel walks to Monterey, picks a fight, and loses on purpose. Clever, destructive Darling is happy alone, but refuses to be cuddled by a despairing Mack. Eddie spends time at La Ida, talking and playing Melancholy Baby. Now social outcasts, the boys know they deserve the public censure, even though their intentions had been good. Twisted into a malicious break-in and vandalism, the story is told everywhere. Lee resents his financial loss but says nothing. None of the self-righteous gossipers dare avenge Doc, however. They merely shun the boys, who dote on Darling, treat one another more patiently, give the Palace an unprecedented cleaning, and buy groceries at the Thrift Market, being unable to bear Lee's eyes.

On the Fourth of July, Doc sits with Frost in the lab, drinking beer and listening to Scarlatti. He sees Mack and the boys sitting forlornly on the hill. Doc believes Mack is a



true philosopher, capable of surviving while the ambitious, nervous, and covetous tear themselves to pieces. They do what they want and satisfy their appetites. Frost disagrees: they are like everyone else, minus money. Doc insists they are all clever and Mack is a genius. Had Doc known about the ostracism and the boys' sadness, he would not have gone on to bet that when the parade passes them they will not even bother to turn their heads to watch. They have seen parades before, know the order, and do not need to look. Frost cannot believe anyone would fail to watch a parade and takes the bet. Doc observes that the virtues people admire lead to failure and the traits they detest bring success. Mack and the boys are among the few who do not sell their souls to gain the world. Their impulse to give Doc a party is good, but it gets out of hand. Music comes from Lighthouse Avenue. The Mayor's car, Long Bob on his white horse, the band, the soldiers, the Elks, the Knights Templar, and Kings of Columbus, as usual, file by. Mack and the boys, sitting on their log, watching the lab, pay no attention. Frost goes for beer to pay the lost bet. Not knowing their pain, Doc smiles at the boys. Nor do the boys know how Doc feels about them.

Evil stalks Cannery Row. The Malloys fight. Alfred the bouncer throws out a drunk too forcefully, causing him to break his back. High-minded ladies turn their annual protest against the Bear Flag in to a real crusade. Usually, Flood uses the dead period between the Fourth of July and the County Fair to give the girls a vacation and make repairs, but this year she has to mount a defense and stays closed for two weeks, during convention season. Word of it causes Monterey to lose five conventions the next year. Doc borrows money to make repairs. Elmer Rechatliff loses both legs when he falls asleep on the Southern Pacific tracks. An unexpected storm tears boats loose from the moorings and deposits them on Del Monte beach. Everyone blames him or herself for the series of misfortunes. Even doctors suffer, finding few good-paying illnesses to treat.

Worst of all, fat, lively Darling falls sick and within five days is a feverish, "skin-covered skeleton". The boys panic. Hughie and Jones quit their jobs to sit with her in shifts. Hazel and Jones go to Doc's for help. He is working on a tide chart and eating sea cucumber stew. Doc claims not to be a veterinarian, but agrees to look. All circle him as he confirms distemper and coldly prescribes forced feeding with soup, eggs, and cod liver oil. The boys do so, every two hours, forcing her to swallow or drown in soup. No one sleeps, awaiting the crisis. Early morning, Darling flips her ears, drags herself to the door, drinks some water, and collapses. The boys dance and shout for joy. Lee snorts at the sound. Alfred thinks they are having a party. Within a day, Darling is putting on weight and romping. Within a week, she is well.

This cracks the "wall of evil". The purse-seiner is refloated. The Bear Flag reopens. Earl Wakefield catches and sells to a museum a two-headed sculpin. Doc pulls the curtains at the lab, plays Gregorian music, and when the lights go out at 2 AM, no one leaves. Lee writes off the frog debt and brings the boys a pint of Old Tennis Shoes. Completely spoiled, Darling turns destructive, but everyone applauds. Mack, who patronizes a brothel near the ballpark, feeling it would be incestuous to visit the Bear Flag professionally, goes to see Flood. From a swivel chair in her inner sanctum, the silk-wrapped madam scrutinizes Mack suspiciously. He speaks tentatively about the trouble



at Doc's and their desire to make it up to him. She suggests another party. Amazed at the simple solution, Mack sees why this "hell of a woman" gets to be a madam.

Mary Talbot is a lovely woman, red-haired, golden-skinned, green-eyed, and triangular-faced. She walks with a dancer's grace and flushes whenever she gets excited, which is much of the time. A distant relative is burned as a witch. Mary's great passion is parties. Her husband Tom gets dragged along in her wake. Afternoons, while Tom works, Mary hosts tea parties for the abundant neighborhood cats. These help Mary, who ignores the fact that they are scraping bottom financially, which leaves Tom despondent. She knows he will be a success some day and works hard to keep his spirits up. One month when bills are unpaid, rejections come in from Collier's and the New Yorker, and he is laid out with pleurisy, Tom broods in bed. He is tired of pretending and asks to be left alone. Mary obeys, but continues planning a small party in honor of the founding of the Bloomer League. She decorates, sets water boiling, and goes out into the yard, where she finds Kitty Randolph sunning herself. Mary invites her promptly at 4 PM, and then seeks Kitty Casini, whom she is shocked to find tormenting a mouse. Tom runs to his wife's aid, hearing her scream, puts the mouse out of its misery, and throws a rock at the cat. Tom joins his sobbing wife at the footstool for tea. Mary cannot blame Kitty Casini for acting like a cat, but doubts she will like her for a while. Tom's depression appears relieved. When Mary gives a pregnancy party, people muse about what fun her kid is going to have.

All of Monterey feels the change. Nobody believes in luck and omens, but everyone lives by them. Doc enjoys a series of overnight visitors. Darling grows fast, finds wetting the floor disgusting, and trains herself to go outside. At the Salinas County Jail, Gay quits letting the sheriff beat him at checkers, loses his privileges, but feels whole again. Sea lions bark in a way that would gladden St. Francis' heart. Little girls giggle while studying catechism. The Palace is the source of this spreading happiness. Jones abruptly tap dances. Hazel smiles for no reason. Mack cannot stay centered. Eddie works regularly and omits beer from the jug to improve the flavor. Malloy plants morning glories and sits with his wife evenings as she crochets. At the Bear Flag, business is good, Mae's leg heals, and Flanagan returns disillusioned from her trip.

People learn gradually of the party plans. This time they will not force anything. If they knew Doc's birthday, that would be best, so people could bring presents. Mack visits the lab alone and finds Doc preparing dogfish specimens. Doc asks about the puppy and how things are going at the Palace. Waiting for an opening, Mack says Hazel and Hughie are arguing about astrology. Hazel buys a chart for Mack's birthday, April 12, and the results are accurate. He asks casually when Doc is born. Having known Mack long enough to suspect something, Doc gives October 27 instead of December 18. Mack promises to have Hazel look it up. When Mack leaves, Doc recognizes the build-up, but cannot figure out the reason. Only later, when rumors spread about a party, does he understand and is relieved it does not mean Mack is putting the bite on him.

Willard and Joey play in the boat works yard and down the tracks, throwing rocks at a cat and against the front of Morden's Cannery. They hide from the man who comes out to investigate, lose interest when he fails to pursue them, and then wander down



Cannery Row. They covet items in Lee's window, and then sit on the laboratory's steps. Joey observes that Doc has unborn babies in jars inside. The Sprague kid has seen them. Willard denies it and tries to pick a fight. When Joey cannot be baited, Willard asks where his old man is. Both know he has committed suicide, but Joey is afraid of Willard and must not provoke a fight. Willard goes on and on, laughing about the man's slow, painful death by rat poison. Joey says he kills himself after being out of work for a year; the funny thing is, a job offer comes the morning after. The rat jokes lose their edge and Willard tries to pick a fight over a penny in the gutter.

## Chapters 22-26 Analysis

These chapters finally fill in detail on the enigmatic Henri the Painter, and his story ends with Doc declining to check out his frightening tale—and losing a girlfriend to him. The "black gloom" that descends on Mack and the boys after the abortive party and the community's cruel shunning them spreads to everyone. Doc has forgiven and forgotten, but they do not know it and suffer. The Fourth of July parade provides local color and an opportunity for re-opening the question of the boys' unique survival ability begun in Chapter 2. It is raised once more going forward. All of Cannery Row is drawn into the malaise, and the boys' beloved puppy bears the brunt of it, falling ill with distemper. Her recovery, which Doc facilitates with surprising coldness considering he has forgiven the owners, snaps the spell and the community recovers. Planning a new party gets underway, scheduled for Doc's invented birthday. He cannot bring himself to reveal the real date to someone who regularly uses him. The Talbots provide comic relief. Mary's kitties recall Mack's one-time gift to Doc and anticipate another harvest of tomcats for the party. Willard and Joey show the taunting and bullying of boyhood and the novel's third suicide resulting from economic depression. Tom Talbot could have been such a victim.





# Chapters 27-32

## Chapters 27-32 Summary

Mack and the boys—Cannery Row's Virtues, Beatitudes, and Beauties—affect by their party planning not just the Row but far beyond to Pacific Grove, Monterey, and Carmel. The party must be at Doc's because of the phonograph. Everyone circles October 27 in his or her memory and start considering presents. All of the Bear Flag girls have visited the lab (non-professionally) and seen the worn red blanket on Doc's bed. They decide to make him a silken patchwork quilt from underclothing and evening dresses. They work on it around visits from the fishermen. The effort helps dispel the fights that are always present in warehouses. Lee finds a twenty-five-foot string of firecrackers and a bag of China lily bulbs perfect. Malloy, an antique buff, parts with a polished 1916 Chalmers connecting rod and piston. Mac and the boys decided on tomcats again, bating their double cage with a female "in an interesting condition" and building an indoor cage to hold the angry captives. Jones collects fish heads to feed them. The goal is twenty-five tomcats. They will not decorate this time. It will be a "good solid party with lots of liquor".

Gay learns of the party and arranges an overnight furlough to attend. With an election coming up, the sheriff knows Gay can swing votes or give him a bad name. Henri decides to revive the 1890s art of the decorated pincushion to create a giant one for Doc entitled "Pre-Cambrian Memory". Henri's friend Eric, a barber and book collector, decides on a rowing machine he has obtained through bankruptcy settlement. A great conspiracy of whispers, discussion, and not telling Doc develops. Doc notices that conversations stop when he enters Lee's and a half dozen people ask what he is doing on October 27, whose significance he has forgotten. One evening, having some beers at the Halfway House, Doc overhears a conversation about a party being thrown for him. It warms Doc to think people would do this for him, but he shivers at the memory of the last one. Everything falls into place and Doc plans how to prepare for the party: locking away valuables and laying in at considerable expense adequate food and drink. No one else thinks of this, beyond bringing an odd bottle. The guest list reads like a community census. At the Bear Flag, Flood insists that a skeleton crew remain, but allows them to rotate. At the party, they may wear street clothes. The quilt is finished and framed. Malloy crochets six beer doilies. Fifteen tomcats are missing from the Row and scaring Darling at night.

Frankie hears about the party while drifting like a small cloud. In the window of Jacob's Jewelry Store on Alvarado Street, he sees the most beautiful thing in the world: an onyx clock topped by a bronze of St. George slaying the dragon. Frankie studies it for an hour before stepping inside. Jacobs, who has frisked the boy, tells him the clock costs \$50 and the group \$75. Frankie retreats silently to an overturned rowboat, where the gift burns in his mind. As the crowds thin out, he returns to the window but flees when a policeman asks what he is doing out. At 2:30 AM, Frankie breaks Jacob's window, grabs the fifty-pound objects, and runs. He nearly escapes but blunders into a blind street. Doc is summoned to the police station. Frankie's mother puts the blame on Doc for



anything Frankie does and the judge has obtained a mental report that makes it look like trouble once Frankie reaches puberty. He probably cannot be released in Doc's custody. It will just happen again. When Doc asks why Frankie takes it, the boy says, "I love you". Doc runs out and goes collecting at Pt. Lobos.

At 4 PM on October 27, Doc finishes work, cleans up, feeds the rats, secures all valuables, and tries to anticipate all ways in which the party could turn lethal, while allowing it not to become dull. He makes coffee, listens to the Great Fugue, and takes a quick shower. He does not know who is coming or when, but is conscious of having been watched today. He is prepared to act surprised. Lee says nothing as Doc buys two quarts of beer. The street is deserted and the Palace closed. The boys have all bathed and plan on heading over around 8 PM. They have twenty-one cats, which they will leave at the Palace for Doc to fetch later. They open one of Eddie's jugs to warm up. At 5:30, the old Chinaman flap-flaps by and disappears. At the Bear Flag, the girls draw straws to see who goes to the party first. Flood has freshly dyed her hair, curled, and piled it. She wears her wedding ring and a diamond brooch with a white and black silk dress. Those who stay in don evening dresses while those who go out wear short prints. Alfred grumbles about having to stay behind to watch the house. The girls wait for the sounds of Flood having a snort of whiskey in her locked office before sampling their own pints.

As dusk comes, the girls watch Doc reading in his front window, holding a glass of beer. They debate why he never comes in for a trick and never makes passes at them when they visit. Doris says some men just do not like prostitutes' attitudes. They have another drink. Flood swallows another, locks her desk, checks herself in the mirror, and heads to the bar to deal with the sulking bouncer. She reminds him he is lucky to have this job, then softens and allows him to come over after a while, while keeping an eye on the place. She mentions hiring Mack to spell Alfred for a week or two so he can recover his lost nerve. In the lab, Doc switches from beer to whiskey and begins feeling mellow. He listens to sentimental music, which he feels entitled to enjoy as a free man. Drinking another whiskey, he sees the streetlight come on and get attacked by brown beetles. A lonely lady cat wanders by, wondering where all the toms have gone. Malloy watches to see if anyone is going over yet, and the boys watch the hands of their alarm clock.

The nature of parties has not been adequately studied, but it is generally understood they have a pathology. Unless professionally organized and run, they rarely go as planned or intended. Everyone in Cannery Row has an idea how Doc's party should be, but it does not start out with shouts, noise, and good feeling. Mack and the boys, combed, clean, and embarrassed, set out with jugs promptly at 8 PM. Mack delivers a birthday speech at the door and tells him twenty-one cats await him as a present. Doc acts surprised, invites them in, and they sit formally and in silence until Mack suggests a little snort. They sip delicately until the girls arrive with their quilt. They too accept a drink, and then the Malloys arrive. People show up in droves: Henri, Mr. and Mrs. Gay, Lee, and a group of strangers from La Ida. The stiffness leaves the party.

Flood sits enthroned, drinking daintily and watching the girls' conduct. Doc puts on dance music and goes to the kitchen to prepare food. The first fight, in which the boys





defend the girls' honor, is short and breaks nothing. The boys feel like they are contributing. Doc fries steaks in three skillets and feels good. Guests dance to Benny Goodman. Everyone is surprised that Doc serves meat, but they polish it off instantly. Digestion calms the party. With whiskey drunk, Doc brings out gallons of wine. When Flood asks Doc to put on some nice music, he chooses Monteverdi, and everyone listens quietly. When the music stops, Doc disclaims a poem about a lost love. Mae is weeping by the end and Flood dabs her eyes. Hazel enjoys the sounds without understanding the meaning. All are filled with "world-sadness". No one can speak.

They sip wine silently as the party slips away until a taxi full of fishermen are dropped off, looking for the whorehouse. A good fight breaks out, with spike heels, a meat grinder, and Chalmers 1916 piston and connecting rod. The Franklin stove topples, books are used as shields, the front windows are broken, Alfred races over with a baseball bat, and the door hangs on one hinge as the battle moves into the street and vacant lot. Hearing police sirens, they all rush back inside and giggle with the lights out until they leave. The shift changes at the Bear Flag and the party gets new life. The cops return and join in. Mack and the boys use the squad car to fetch more liquor. The fishermen join the party and are admired. Noise complaints to the police do not get through. The police report their own car stolen and later find it on the beach. Doc is happy. The firecrackers are lit.

A beautiful male gopher in the prime of life establishes residence in the vacant lot amidst luscious, crisp mallows in dirt easily dug but not subject to cave in. He expands his burrow to provide for the many families he will sire. He stocks his great chamber with mallow stems. As there are no gardens nearby, no one sets traps for him and the cats overfed on cannery trimmings do not bother to hunt. As time goes by, the gopher grows impatient for a mate, but no females answer his calls. Impatiently, he crosses the track and squeaks down a hole, only to be mauled and bitten by a battle-torn bull gopher. Eventually, the gopher abandons his beautiful location and perfect burrow for a dahlia garden two block away, where traps are set out every night.

Doc awakens and gets up like a fat man easing out of a swimming pool. He sees the desolation. Outside, Cannery Row is quiet and sunny. He lights the water heater and surveys the wreckage while the church bells ring. He takes a shower, dresses, and buys a quart of beer from Lee, even though the grocery is closed. Over peanut butter and beer, Doc listens to soothing music in his head, then sets about washing everything that is not broken. He unlocks the back room and retrieves Gregorian records to listen to; nothing to him is as pure and sweet. When the music ends, Doc sees a book lying half under his bed and reads to himself a bit, then out loud. Waves splash against the piers in an exceptionally high tide. Doc closes the book, listens to the rats scampering in their cages, and runs hot water into the tepid sink. He disclaims to all the ending of the poem, about having his full of white, eternal light from a girl. As Doc wipes his eyes, the rats scamper, and the rattlesnakes stare into space with dusty, frowning eyes.



## Chapters 27-32 Analysis

The final chapters deal with the community-wide October 27 birthday party for Doc. Care is taken that he not learn of it as people discuss their gifts. Doc finally learns of it, wisely provides for it, and takes no chances with anything valuable or potentially lethal. Party gifts lead to the sad ending of Frankie's story, condemned to prison in an era that makes no provision for mental illness. Suspense builds as Doc and the guests await the event. Another academic consideration is proposed: how parties operate. The tentative hypothesis is demonstrated in the gradual warming up, two fights, a small one that makes Mack and the boys feel useful, and a great brawl that reinvigorates the party that Doc brings down by reading moving passages from "Black Marigolds". A footnote says simply that the text is translated from the Sanskrit by E. Powys Mathers. The original, fifty stanzas long, dates from the eleventh century. Written by Bilhana Kavi, it tells the story of a Brahman's love affair with a princess which leads to his condemnation. The princess is described in the effusive Eastern style in much the same way as Doc sees the drowned girl in La Jolla. The gopher interlude takes a last look at the well-traveled vacant lot, from a unique perspective. The beautiful creature cannot live in his perfect, safe location because no female gophers will come to him. This may be a commentary on the lives of all the non-married males or simply a rather charming vignette. The clean up takes place during the hour of the pearl, which the caged animals feel arrive.

# Characters

## Doc

The owner/operator of Western Biological Laboratories, Doc collects and preserves sea creatures for shipping to research facilities nationwide. He is "deceptively small", strong, passionate, and charismatic. He wears a beard in an era when facial hair is rare and, fearing water on his head, normally wears a rain hat. Doc is interested in everything, makes wisdom out of nonsense, and is the source of philosophy, science, and art. He rushes about helping epidemic victims, delivering food, and enlisting Dora Flood's girls to sit with the scared and hopeless. Doc sleeps little during this time, and lives on beer and canned sardines.

Doc loves his record collection, particularly Gregorian chants and Monteverdi. When he is away from his phonograph, music runs through his head spontaneously. Doc brings girls home, but cannot form relationships. From time to time, he hires Mack and the boys to gather specimens. Doc knows both the seacoast and the tide charts well, and must time his collecting expeditions for low tides. Once this means a five hundred-mile drive to La Jolla. Doc does not drive fast, stops often, and is selective when picking up hitchhikers. Years earlier, on a walking tour from Indiana to Florida, Doc learns people do not want to hear the truth, so he is able to lie as needed.

Doc never locks the lab. After discovering the drowned body of a beautiful woman in La Jolla, Doc drives home somberly, arrives late, and finds that while decorating, Mack and the boys have wrecked his home. His temper flares and he beats Mack. Doc forgives and forgets, but the rest of Cannery Row shuns the boys, bringing bad luck to all. When the malaise lifts, Mack and the boys plan another party for Doc's birthday. Suspicious, Doc gives Mack a fictitious date, which everyone reserves. Doc learns about the secret event and wisely makes preparations that the organizers overlook. He thoroughly enjoys the party, reads somber poetry to the guests, takes part in the inevitable brawl, and the next morning he cleans up the mess that is left behind.

## Mack

The forty-eight-year-old leader and mentor of a group of men who seek no more in life than food, drink, and contentment, Mack is intelligent and amoral about lying, stealing, and swindling, believing the ends justify the means. After Mack subtly intimidates Lee Chong into renting an abandoned storage shed with an implicit promise to protect it from vandalism, Mack and the boys occupy "The Palace Flophouse and Grill". After hanging out a while, Mack decides the "ravening individualists" need organization and starts a fix-up that leaves it overfurnished and homey. Mack wants to do something nice for Doc, whom he perceives is lonely. He visits the lab to talk Doc into letting them collect frogs at 5¢, negotiates with Lee the use of his truck, and wins over the owner of posted land on which they are camping before the hunt. Mack asks if "the captain" is ex-



military, apologizes, explains they are fighting cancer, and offers to put a poultice on his dog's shoulder wound. Hazel believes Mack could be President of the US if he wanted. They enjoy the captain's fine whiskey for hours before using Mack's unorthodox method to capture hundreds of frogs. The captain sends them on their way with a jug and a puppy.

Back home, Mack reminds Lee of Doc's past helpfulness to convince him to accept frogs as payment for party fixings. The boys consume too much alcohol while decorating, leaving the lab devastated for Doc to discover coming home late at night and fatigued. Doc punches Max three times and demands he fight back, but Mack recognizes he has it coming. Over beer, Mack reveals that he had a wife leave him when she could not stand his failures. Now he makes the boys laugh by clowning. Doc understands, denies Mack will learn anything, and declines his offer to clean up and repay. Black gloom covers the Palace when Mack returns and takes to his bed. Doc accepts that their impulse to give him a party is good, but Mack does not know this. Dora Flood suggests they throw another party. Pretending to be interested in astrology, Mack obtains Doc's birthday and planning gets under way. Combed, clean, and embarrassed, Mack delivers a speech and tells Doc that twenty-one tomcats await as a present. When a small fight breaks out, Mack and the boys feel useful, and later borrow a squad car to fetch additional liquor.

## Lee Chong

A shrewd Chinese grocer resident, Lee owns and operates from dawn until the last vagrant goes to sleep. With a round face, friendly but attentive brown eyes that peer out under reading glasses, delicate fat hands with fingers that constantly drum, and a full, benevolent mouth that flashes gold teeth, Lee is courteous, well-spoken in heavily-accented English, and not avaricious; rather, he is merely available for people to spend money whenever they wish. Lee extends credit readily, never presses for repayment, but eventually cuts off delinquents when their bills grow too large. He lives well and is respected by the residents of Cannery Row, most of whom are indebted to him. Lee stations himself behind the cigar counter with a cash register to his left, abacus to his right, and a rack of liquor behind. Lee constantly taps a finger on the change pad, the speed changing to reflect his mood. It speeds up whenever Mack enters, harboring a new scheme. Lee says "no" with ease and never changes his mind. He never discounts or remainders.

Lee generally recovers from bad investments like the Palace Flophouse and Grill. He accepts a decrepit Model T Ford truck as payment of a grocery bill and, rather than put money into repairing it, lets it sit in the vacant lot. Lee lends it to Mack and the boys if they can get it running again. They take it on an expedition to catch frogs for Doc in order to finance a nice party for him. Lee sells them party fixings at twenty-five frogs to the dollar (rather than Doc's standard rate of twenty) and inflates the prices. He unadvisedly allows the boys to take the crate of frogs to the lab as the party centerpiece, and in the ensuing fight, all of the amphibians escape. Lee eventually forgives the boys and writes off the debt. He brings firecrackers to Doc's second party.



## Dora Flood

The large, orange-haired, strong-spirited owner/operator of a twelve-girl whorehouse confusingly named the Bear Flag Restaurant, Flood runs it as a respectable business. She sells no hard liquor, charges an honest set price, and forbids vulgar language. She is careful to be more law abiding and philanthropic than anyone else in Cannery Row, lest she be shut down. She takes care of her aging "girls", feeding them after they cease to be productive. In the business for fifty years, she is loved by the intelligent, the learned, and the kind, but hated by "married spinsters" whose husbands visit the institution through the back door. Following Doc's abortive party, when evil stalks all of Cannery Row, the high-minded ladies turn their annual protest into a real crusade. Usually, Flood uses the dead period between the Fourth of July and the County Fair to give the girls a vacation and make repairs, but this year she must mount a serious defense and stays closed for two weeks, during convention season. Shorthanded when a big sardine catch and a new contingent of soldiers at the Presidio produce an abnormally busy season, and beset by income tax troubles, Flood responds to Doc's request to have her girls sit with scared influenza victims during an epidemic.

Mack sees why this "hell of a woman" gets to be a madam after Flood suggests another party to make up for the boys' earlier disaster. She insists that a skeleton crew remain at the Bear Flag during the soirée, but allows them to rotate. She freshly dyes and curls her hair for the occasion, wears her wedding ring, a diamond brooch, and a white and black silk dress. Before going over, Flood enjoys a few snorts of whiskey in her locked office, locks her desk, checks herself in the mirror, and deals with the sulking bouncer, reminding him he is lucky to have this job, and then softens to allow him to come over after a while, while keeping an eye on the place. At the party, Flood sits enthroned, drinking daintily, and watching the girls' conduct.

## Horace Abbeville

The owner of a dilapidated storage shed for fishmeal, Abbeville signs it over to Lee Chong as settlement for his debt before committing suicide. It becomes home to Mack and the boys. Abbeville leaves behind two wives and six children. Wishing he could have prevented the tragedy, but recognizing one's right to suicide, Lee underwrites the funeral and sends groceries to the bereaved, who divide the meager estate and never speak to one another again.

## Alfred

The watchman (bouncer) at the deceptively named Bear Flag Restaurant—a whorehouse—Alfred ("Alfie") is, unlike his late predecessor William, liked by everyone. He knows more about everyone's business in town than most, but is discrete. He stops fights, tends bar, gives first aid, keeps the police friendly, and reads Science and Health to the Christian Scientist girls. Late in the novel, while evicting a troublesome drunk, Alfred tosses him too forcefully and the man breaks his back. This causes Alfred to lose



his edge and Madam Dora Flood suggests a vacation. Alfred is moody about missing Doc's birthday party, but Flood allows him to wander over after business slows down. Hearing a fight break out at the party, Alfred wades in with a baseball bat.

## **Andy**

A beautiful ten-year-old boy visiting from Salinas, Andy is the only person who ever taunts the mysterious old Chinaman and receives a terrible, unforgettable fright.

## **Blaisdell**

A "poet" who once tells Doc he loves beer so much he would probably order a beer milkshake. Doc cannot shake the thought, eventually orders one during a road trip, and finds it not bad.

## **Jimmy Brucia**

The driver of a car that picks up Gay while he is hitchhiking on Carmel Hill, Brucia is celebrating his birthday with Sparky Enea and Tiny Colletti. When it gets out of hand, a series of events lands Gay in jail for stealing shoes. The others get away in time.

## **The Captain**

A large, stoop-shouldered owner of posted land on which Mack and the boys camp while waiting for evening to hunt frogs, the captain is won over by smooth-tongued Mack and proves an amiable sort. He is dissatisfied with his marriage to a newly elected Assemblywoman and is fond of whiskey. To thank Mack for treating his dog's infected tick bite, the captain breaks out a cask of Prohibition-vintage whiskey, which they enjoy by the pitcher before systematically emptying the pond of frogs. As a parting gift, the captain gives Mack his choice of puppies and a jug of whiskey.

## **The Chinaman**

A nameless denizen of Cannery Row, the old, lean, wizened unnamed Chinaman flip-flops his way down the street each sunset carrying an empty wicker basket, disappears beneath the piers for the day, and wends his way back up the hill at dawn with his basket heavy and ripping. He slips through a gate and is not seen again. He has been doing this for years. Some say he is God or Death. Children find him funny, but only a brave ten-year-old visitor from Salinas, Andy, ever dares taunt him. Andy sees in the old man's eyes something mysterious, a feeling of loneliness, that never leaves him.



## Darling

A bird dog puppy given to Mack and the boys by the captain during their frog-hunting expedition on his land, Darling quickly has the run of the Palace Flophouse and Grill. With five owners differing on how to train a puppy, Darling goes untrained until she tires of making puddles and begins going outside. Following the abortive party for Doc, Darling comes down with distemper and is saved only by force-feeding. Her recovery seems to snap Cannery Alley out of its general malaise, and Mack and the boys spearhead a second party for Doc, ostensibly on his birthday. Darling gets a bath and red ribbon for the occasion.

## Elsie Doublebottom

One of the prostitutes at the Bear Flag Restaurant, Doublebottom is not available during a rush season because she is saying a novena.

## Eddie

One of "Mack and the boys" who live at the Palace Flophouse and Grill, Eddie is a part-time bartender in Ida's Bar, whence he keeps the boys supplied with the dregs of customers' drinks intermingled into an interesting, sometimes surprising "punch". For this service, Eddie is exempt from housecleaning duties. When the boys repair Lee's Model T Ford to take on their frog-hunting expedition, Eddie steals a dry cell without Gay's wife catching him and later a carburetor while on the road. He takes over driving and manages to hit a fat rooster, which they cook for dinner. For Doc's birthday party, Eddie is selected to bake a cake, having once briefly been a fry cook. The bottom burns and smokes while the top rises and falls in a series of explosions. Eventually, Eddie omits beer from the jug to improve the flavor.

## The Flagpole Skater

The unnamed daredevil is hired to perform outside Holman's Department Store during a promotional campaign. He draws quite a crowd, and air rifle fire from Dr. Merrivale. All of Monterey wonders where he goes to the toilet but only Richard Frost dares ask. He has a can. The flagpole skater is the only one doing this, so he regularly breaks his own record.

## Eva Flanegan

One of the prostitutes at the Bear Flag Restaurant, Flanegan is a pious, red-haired Catholic girl from a big East St. Louis family and an unpredictable drunk. William, the bouncer, talks to her before committing suicide and is told it is a sin. Flanegan visits her





family during the Bear Flag's busy period and returns disappointed in the changes that have occurred in her hometown.

## Frankie

A large-eyed, dark-haired, good-natured, dim, and utterly filthy eleven-year-old, Frankie is befriended and cleaned up by Doc and given sanctuary from an abusive home life. Frankie tries to help around the Western Biological Laboratories, sweeping and grading crayfish, but cannot get either right. Frankie enjoys parties and tries to serve a tray of beer, but spills it in a guest's lap and flees, whimpering inconsolably. Frankie hears about a birthday party for Doc while drifting like a small cloud, sees an onyx clock topped by a bronze of St. George slaying the dragon in the window of Jacob's Jewelry Store, cannot afford it, and at 2:30 AM, breaks the window, and nearly escapes with the fifty-pound object but blunders into a blind street. Doc is summoned to the police station because Frankie's blames him for anything he does. The judge obtains a mental report that suggests he be incarcerated. When Doc asks why Frankie took the item, the boy says, "I love you". Doc runs out and goes collecting at Pt. Lobos.

## Richard Frost

A high-strung, brilliant young man, Frost alone dares ask the flagpole skater how he goes to the toilet. Frost's wife is sure he is visiting the Bear Flag Restaurant when, drunk, he sneaks out at night to settle the burning question. Frost and Doc later discuss the virtues of Mack and the boys during the Fourth of July parade and wager on whether they will bother to look up.

## Gay

Not one of the original "Mack and the boys" that move into the Palace Flophouse and Grill, Gay seeks refuge from marital violence. His wife formerly swears out warrants when he hits back, but he finds the new Salinas County Jail so nice that she quits. Gay is an inspired mechanic and gets Lee Chong's dilapidated Model T Ford in running order for a frog-hunting expedition. If there were a term for mechanics akin to "green thumb", it would apply to Gay. During the trip, the needle valve breaks and Gay sets off hitchhiking to find a replacement. The boys do not see him again for 180 days as a series of random events land him in jail for stealing shoes. Gay lets the sheriff beat him at checkers in exchange for privileges, but eventually quits so he can feel whole again. Gay learns about Doc's birthday party and obtains an overnight furlough, since with an election coming up, the sheriff knows Gay can swing votes or give him a bad name.

## Hazel

One of "Mack and the boys" who live at the Palace Flophouse and Grill, Hazel is, despite his name, a male. His distraught mother attaches to her eighth child in seven





years the name of a great aunt, gets used to it, and keeps it after seeing he is a boy. Neither grammar school nor reform school teaches Hazel anything. Now twenty-six, dark-haired, pleasant, strong, willing, and loyal, Hazel retains everything he hears but understands nothing; his mind is like the snarl of fishing tackle in the bottom of a boat. Because he is surefooted and loves to hunt, Doc takes him to the tide pools when he gets orders for specimens. Trying to feel better after the disastrous party at Doc's, Hazel walks to Monterey, picks a fight, and loses on purpose. Mack paints Hazel as a partisan of astrology when trying to learn Doc's birthday.

## Henri the Painter

Swarthy and morose, wearing a beret long after they are out of fashion, and smoking a calabash pipe, Henri is not French, not a painter, and not born with that name. He is a superb craftsman who, in his imagination, lives in Paris, absorbed in the latest artistic movements, and physically on a thirty-five-foot boat, which, being afraid of the water, he wants never to finish. He has married twice and had numerous live-in girlfriends, but all leave because of the tight quarters and lack of a toilet. When they leave, Henri goes into formal mourning combined with exulting in his regained male freedom. After losing Alice, he settles down to get drunk but is interrupted by a hallucination in which a devilish man slits a boy's throat. Henri howls in terror and seeks out Doc, who cannot help but to inadvertently introduce him to his next short-term lover.

## The Hitchhiker

A scowling, taciturn man who looks like a salesman, the unnamed hitchhiker rides with Doc from Santa Barbara to Ventura, where Doc ejects him for daring to comment on Doc's enjoying a beer at a rest stop. It is one of two instances in which Doc's temper is displayed.

## Hughie and Jones

One of "Mack and the boys" who live at the Palace Flophouse and Grill, Hughie and Jones occasionally collect frogs and cats for Western Biological Laboratory. After the disastrous party there, Hughie and Jones take jobs at the Hediondo Cannery, but quit when Darling the puppy falls sick, and sit with her in shifts. Mack paints Hughie as a detractor of astrology when trying to learn Doc's birthday.

## Joey and Willard

Joey and Willard are boys who are shown playing along the railroad tracks and walking through Cannery Row. Willard is a bully, bored and looking for a fight. He makes fun of the fact that Joey's father at some point back commits suicide by ingesting rat poison, despondent over being out of work for over a year.



## Red Williams

The owner of the gas station that Doc frequents, Williams is alerted to the machinations Mack is likely to try when given a voucher for \$10 worth of gas for Lee Chong's Model T Ford.

## Phyllis Mae

One of the prostitutes at the Bear Flag Restaurant, Mae is laid up by an infection after punching a drunk in the tooth.

## Mr. and Mrs. Sam Malloy

A man and wife who become squatters in the Hediondo Cannery's discarded boiler in 1935 and subsequently rent out large pipes as bedrooms to cannery workers. Mrs. Malloy is given to emotional weeping and desires such creature comforts as curtains, even though the boiler lacks windows.

## McKinley Moran

A deep-sea diver, Moran formerly lived in Cannery Row, making a fortune accepting government stipends for finding dumped liquor during Prohibition and bribes from bootleggers for not finding it. Moran earns enough to marry and drifts away. He offers Mack an opportunity to complain about matrimony, later revealing he is once married.

## Mr. Randolph

The director of the Hediondo Cannery at the time the old boiler wears out, Randolph decides it is cheaper to replace it and dumps the old unit in a vacant lot where, in time, squatters occupy it.

## Tom and Mary Talbot

Mary is a lovely, graceful woman, red-haired, golden-skinned, green-eyed, and triangular-faced. Her great passion is organizing parties for any occasion. Husband Tom, a freelance writer and cartoonist, is depressed that they are scraping bottom financially. Mary knows he will be a success some day and works hard to keep his spirits up. Afternoons, Mary hosts tea parties for the neighborhood cats. One month, when bills are unpaid and rejections come in, Mary decides to cheer Tom with a tea party. She invites Kitty Randolph but finds Kitty Casini tormenting a mouse. Rescuing his wife relieves Tom's depression. When Mary gives a pregnancy party, people muse about what fun her kid is going to have.



## Whitey

The senior bartender at La Ida, Whitey likes having Eddie as his understudy because Eddie has no ambitions to advance himself.

## William

The late watchman (bouncer) at The Bear Flag Restaurant, William is a dark, lonesome man who tries to befriend Mack and the boys but is rebuffed (inaccurately) as a pimp. When even bums reject him, William decides suicide is the only option. The Greek cook does not disagree—or believe he will go through with it—and William drives an ice pick into his own heart. Everyone likes his successor, Alfred.



## Objects/Places

### The Bear Flag Restaurant

Cannery Row's local whorehouse with a confusing name (no sandwiches served), the Bear Flag is located across the lot from Lee Chong's grocery. Owned and operated by Dora Flood, a veteran of fifty years in the business, the Bear Flag is a decent, virtuous, clean, honest, old-fashioned place to drink a beer with friends. Hard liquor and profanity are banned. Neighbors might not like the Bear Flag but depend on its abundant charity. The house normally employs twelve working girls, a Greek cook, and a knowing "watchman". Flood stays in her illegal business by keeping order and giving generously to every charity that asks (or in her case, demands). The Bear Flag experiences its busiest time ever during the big sardine catch, which coincides with the arrival of a new bunch of soldiers at the Presidio. Three girls are out of action. The fishermen come in afternoons while the soldiers prefer evenings. Regular customers also show up, the commoners by the front door and prominent citizens through the rear. In the middle of the terrific month, influenza breaks out and the Greek cook keeps his cauldron filled with strong soup for delivery to sick folk by the girls, who never neglect the booming business. Fishermen and soldiers stand in line at the Bear Flag; Fleet believes she could have pressed into service everyone in the old ladies' home and heard no complaints.

During the time when evil stalks Cannery Row, Alfred the bouncer throws out a drunk too forcefully, causing him to break his back. High-minded ladies turn their annual protest against the Bear Flag into a real crusade. Usually, Flood uses the dead period between the Fourth of July and the County Fair to give the girls a vacation and make repairs, but this year she has to mount a defense and stays closed for two weeks during convention season. Word of it causes Monterey to lose five conventions the next year. Flood first suggests to Mack another party for Doc, and at the event sits enthroned, drinking daintily and watching the girls' conduct. Flood insists that a skeleton crew remain, but allows the girls to rotate. The arrival of the second wave invigorates the staid gathering across the street.

### Cannery Row

The primary setting for the novel, Cannery Row is seaside strip of Monterey, California, that consists of corrugated iron sardine canneries, honkytonks, restaurants, whore houses, crowded groceries, laboratories, flophouses, chipped pavement, weedy lots, and junk heaps. Its inhabitants are "whores, pimps, gamblers and sons of bitches" — and also "saints and angels and martyrs and holy men".



## Carmel Valley

A secondary locale for the novel, Carmel Valley is an excellent place for catching animals for Doc. When Mack and the boys decide to throw Doc a party, they convince him to fund an expedition for frogs in Carmel Valley. Along the way, they admire the view of the bay and dune country around Seaside. At the turn-off to Carmel Valley, Eddie manages to hit a fat rooster that Hazel plucks as they drive on. The lovely Carmel has everything a river should: rapids, shallows, an artificial lake, and pools. It is fierce in winter and placid in summer. Frogs abound among its varied wildlife. A few miles up the valley, the boys find a place to cook their dinner beneath a high cliff and beside a deep, green pool that is perfect for frogs. The boys stretch out and sleep until dark, when the frogs come out. They enjoy a pleasant meal, talk about a hard-drinking deep sea diver named McKinley Moran and the problems of marriage, and are confronted by a large, stooped figure carrying a shotgun and walking a pointer. The man orders them to leave his posted land. Mack finesses him into an invitation to hunt frogs in the pond near his house. They leave with a gallon of fine whiskey and a cute puppy named Darling.

## The Great Tide Pool

Doc's favorite area for collecting marine animals, the Great Tide Pool is located on the tip of the Monterey Peninsula. It is a wave-churned basin at high tide and a clear battleground for survival at low tide.

## Hediondo Cannery

One of the major sardine-preparation facilities in Cannery Row, Hediondo is the only one developed to any extent. It appears to be constantly looking for workers, and after the disastrous party in Doc's lab, Hughie and Jones briefly take full time jobs there. In April 1932, the cannery's boiler blows a tube once too often and Mr. Randolph decides to replace it. The old boiler is dumped in the vacant lot where it is gradually gutted for parts and surrounded by fragrant bushes and trees. In 1935, Mrs. and Mrs. Sam Malloy move into the boiler as a roomy, dry, safe apartment. Below the boiler, Hediondo also dumps many large pipes; by the end of 1937, during a housing shortage at peak times, Malloy rents out the larger pipes to single men for a nominal fee.

## La Ida

The drinking establishment employing Eddie as a part-time bartender, La Ida supplies "Mack and the boys" with an interesting and sometimes surprising "punch", consisting of whatever liquor he pours off from customers' leftover drinks and intermingles in a jug. Whitey is the chief bartender and likes having Eddie as backup because he knows he has no ambition to take his job. The owner knows Eddie is skimming but says nothing. Still, this keeps the boys from asking for fresh bottles, being unwilling to risk such a good thing.



## La Jolla

The site of tidal pools near San Diego, CA, La Jolla is a five hundred-mile drive for Doc each way, but the best place on the coast for collecting small octopi. Because Mack and the boys are collecting frogs for him in Carmel Valley and his three women friends have daytime jobs, Mack makes the drive alone. Low tide is at 5:17 AM on Thursday, so Doc leaves Wednesday morning, driving slowly as he is accustomed, making many stops, and taking a taciturn hitchhiker part of the way. He stocks up on coffee, sandwiches, and beer in Los Angeles, arrives in La Jolla at 2 AM, and sleeps in the car until he senses the changing tide. He descends the scenic cliffs to overturn boulders in the broad inter-tidal zone with a crowbar, seeking the elusive octopi. Having captured twenty-two and replenished his supply of sea cradles, Doc walks out to the drop off marked by long, leathery brown algae. Seeing a flash of white, he parts the algae and is shocked to see the face of a beautiful, dark-haired girl staring blankly up at him below water. She is wedged in a crevice. Her face is burned into his memory. Heart pounding, Doc collects his gear and heads to the beach. He hears the high, thin, piercingly sweet notes of a flute in his head while the surf pounds like woodwinds. He shivers. A man asks if he has been fishing and is surprised to learn he has been collecting "devilfish". As the music in his head swells, Doc asks the location of a police station. He has found a body on the reef. The man says there is a bounty for finding bodies and Doc asks him to report it and collect. He does not want it. As he reaches the car, only a flute plays in his head.

## Lee Chong's Heavenly Flower Grocery

Lee Chong's small, crowded general store is the hub of life in Canner Row, a place where one can buy anything and everything except sex, which is provided across the lot at the Bear Flag. The store operates from dawn until the last potential customer is asleep. Lee stations himself behind the cigar counter and in front of the liquor to discourage theft. It also serves as his desk. Relatives attend to the rest of the store. Almost everyone is in debt to Lee Chong, but keep coming to him rather than undertake the long trek to the next nearest store in New Monterey. After lending Mack and the boys his dilapidated Model T Ford truck to collect frogs in an effort to raise money to give Doc a fitting party, Lee agrees to sell them party fixings at inflated prices for frogs as currency. He sets up a crate to hold them in the vegetables section. It fills steadily. Lee regrets letting the boys use it as a centerpiece for the party, for during a fight, the crate is destroyed and all the amphibians hop away to safety.

## Old Tennis Shoes

The neighborhood nickname for cheap "Old Tennessee" blended whiskey, Old Tennis Shoes is a best-selling potable in Lee Chong's store.



## The Palace Flophouse and Grill

Home to Mack and the boys, the Palace is originally a long, low storage shed for fishmeal signed over to Lee Chong to clear Horace Abbeville's debt before he committed suicide. Mack convinces Lee to let them move in as guards against vandals and arsonists for \$5 a week rent, which Lee knows he will never collect. Lee retains the right to evict them at any time. In return, the boys do not steal from Lee's general store, located catty-cornered across a grassy lot. The place is called "The Palace" because dim-witted Hazel finds it better than the flophouses he is used to and is unfamiliar with this word that refers to places he has heard about but never seen. Gradually, the boys furnish and paint their home and adopt a puppy, Darling. The Palace sits atop a hill, overlooking Cannery Row and Doc's Western Biological Laboratories. Realizing before others that Doc is a lonely man, Mack sits on a log outside and watches the lab, knowing lights and Gregorian music are a sign Doc is entertaining a woman.

## Salinas

Salinas is mentioned several times in the novel: 1) the hometown of the beautiful boy Andy who taunts the old Chinaman while visiting Cannery Row and receives the fright of his life; 2) the town that wants to rent the service of the unnamed flagpole skater once he breaks the world record in conjunction with a Holman's Department Store promotional campaign, and 3) the location of a new country jail that is so nice Gay likes to be locked up; his wife, therefore stops filing assault charges when he hits her. Fortunately for Gay, he is arrested for stealing shoes after a bizarre series of events that start with his hitchhiking to find a carburetor, and he enjoys its hospitality for eighteen months, with an overnight furlough allowed so he and his wife can attend Doc's birthday party.

## Western Biological Laboratories

Doc's home and office, the Western Biological Laboratories are filled with live and preserved specimens that Doc collects during frequent trips up and down the California coast. He sells them for dissection or observation at institutions nationwide. The lab is located catty-cornered both to Lee Chong's Heavenly Flower Grocery and Dora Flood's Bear Flag Restaurant. The basement of the low building is a storeroom for preserved animals and a preparation area, the backyard hold tanks for larger sea animals, upstairs is a crowded office, aquaria, and a laboratory smelling of chemicals, machinery, animals, and the sea. Beside the office is a library filled with papers, books, and phonograph records, and walls lined with reproductions of great masterpieces at eye level. Behind it are a kitchen, toilet, and shower.

Doc never locks the lab, figuring anyone who wants to break in will and doubting any burglar wants the items that have any value. "Friends" regularly borrow books and food and sometimes sleep in his bed uninvited. While he is away collecting octopi, Mack and the boys let themselves into the lab with a packing case full of frogs, which they



decorate with bunting and a "Welcome Home, Doc" sign. Passers-by hear the festive noise and join in. Customers at the Bear Flag start a bloody battle that smashes the front door and windows. A rude drunk is thrown through the pack case and the record player is ruined. The devastated lab is quiet, with lights blazing, when Doc drives up, red-eyed with fatigue after a five hundred-mile drive from La Jolla. Surveying the destruction and particularly enraged that his record player is ruined, Doc punches Mack three times, demanding he fight back, but Mack refuses, saying he has it coming. Some \$300 worth of museum glass is broken. Doc cleans up, forgives, and forgets, but others ostracize Mack and the boys.

Eventually the trouble blows over and at Flood's suggestion, they throw Doc a surprise birthday party in the lab. Doc learns of it, wisely provides for it, and leaves exposed nothing valuable or lethal. Frankie tries to steal an expensive gift and Doc cannot keep him out of prison. Suspense builds. The party begins awkwardly, warms up slowly, and includes two fights: a small one that makes Mack and the boys feel useful, and a massive brawl that reinvigorates the party after it bogs down when Doc reads poetry. Doc cleans up the devastation during the "hour of the pearl", just before sunrise.



# Themes

## Community

Cannery Row looks at select aspects of community life in the seaside section of Monterey, California, as it rides out the Depression. Financial drives for various charities abound, with Dora Flood, owner/operator of the Bear Flag brothel being squeezed to contribute more than anyone as a condition for the community tolerating her illegal operation. During the worst years of the Depression, Flood nearly bankrupts herself helping families survive, and during an outbreak of influenza, despite a particularly booming business, has her cook prepare cauldrons of soup for distribution to sick folk by her girls. The impetus for this program comes from Doc, the intellectual center of the community, to whom everyone turns for advice and information on every subject. Despite her largesse, Flood is annually accosted by high-minded women demanding the house of ill repute be closed down to protect the morals of young men. She normally uses that time to give the girls a vacation and make repairs.

When Mack and the boys lose control of preparations for the party they intend to throw for Doc in recognition of all the good he does—and inadvertently wreck his home—the community interprets it as outright malice and vandalism and by unspoken consensus shuns them. People shunned, Steinbeck observes, either become better or worse as a result. The boys' hearts are broken and they show both tendencies. The injustice, however, causes a cloud of misfortune to fall upon Cannery Row and everyone suffers bad luck. As the cloud passes, Mack asks Flood's advice on how to atone for the mistake, and she suggests another party. It turns into an enthusiastic community-wide event, spread by word of mouth, and proves a tremendous success. Uninvited fishermen show up, looking for the brothel, and start a fight, but later join the party, as do policemen dispatched to investigate noise complaints.

## Capitalism

Cannery Row shows folks under the stress of bad economic times. Two out of three suicides described in the novel result from despair over debts. Lee Chong extends credit to customers of his grocery store, not demanding repayment until the debt becomes excessive, and then accepting real estate and other property. The canneries are hiring but the owners look closely at the bottom line and refrain from maintaining equipment. As a result, a boiler fails so frequently that it is replaced and becomes a home for squatters, who in turn become landlords, renting sleeping space to cannery workers in large pipes strewn around the field. Times might still be bad, but the local bar and brothel find customers. Even when a happy coincidence of many fishermen and a new contingent of soldiers at the Presidio create lines at the Bear Flag, Madam Dora Flood refrains from price gouging.



By contrast, Lee finds an opportunity to let demand and location work to his advantage. Having lent his Model T Ford truck (obtained as payment for debt) to Mack and the boys to collect frogs for Doc's lab at 20 to the dollar, Lee agrees to accept them at 25 to the dollar to purchase the fixings for a birthday party for Doc. He adjusts prices on food, alcohol, and decorations sharply upward, causing grumbling, but not harming business, for no other establishment is as accessible and certainly will not accept frogs as currency. When his shrewd deal is undone by a freak accident and the amphibians escape, Lee writes off the loss. Mack and the boys are his tenants in a storage unit for fishmeal that Lee obtains as payment for debt. He rents it for \$5 a week, knowing he will never collect a penny, but balancing this against the prospect of the boys become regular customers, never again stealing from him, and protecting him against toughs from New Monterey. Both parties come out winners.

## Survival

Cannery Row examines survival in two ways. First, it shows three people who despair and commit suicide, two for economic reasons and one who is so lonely he cannot bear to live. They contrast with Mack and the boys, a small group of no longer young derelicts dedicated to food, drink, and quiet contentment. Hearing about the place signed over to Lee Chong by one of the suicides, they convince Lee it is in his best interests—having the property maintained and protected against vandalism—to rent it to them. Both parties know he will never see a penny in rent, but their becoming regular customers, never again stealing from Lee, and protecting him against outside toughs offset this. Mack and the boys furnish it by thievery, which is also how they feed themselves. One of the boys, Eddie, keeps them supplied with liquor by draining the dregs of customers' drinks into a jug at the bar he sometimes works in.

Steinbeck early on describes Mack and the boys as the Virtues, Graces, and Beauties in a town where crazy folk "gain the whole world" at the cost of ulcers, blown prostates, and bifocals. The boys avoid the trap that poisons those who call them no-goods and bums. They have the survival skills of coyotes, rats, sparrows, flies, and moths. After they become outcasts for inadvertently destroying Doc's home, Doc observes that the virtues people admire most often lead to failure while the traits they detest bring success. Mack and the boys are among the few who do not sell their souls to gain the world.

The second view of survival is in nature. Several times Steinbeck describes the life and death struggle in tide pools, where predators stalk prey amidst the shells and bones of earlier victims. The pools are places of great beauty, the water glasslike, allowing the drama to be seen. Towards the end of the novel in an enigmatic vignette, a male gopher digs and stocks a perfect burrow in an ideal, safe location but cannot attract a mate. He finally gives up and moves to a garden where the homeowner sets out traps every night.

# Style

## Point of View

*Cannery Row*, a novel by Nobel Prize-winning author John Steinbeck, is first published in 1945. It is narrated in the third person past tense by an anonymous, neutral storyteller who is privy to the characters' thoughts and feelings. Born and raised in Salinas, the county seat of Monterey County, California, and educated at nearby Stanford University, the author settles in Salinas after an unsuccessful attempt at writing in New York City. The physical beauty of this area of central California coast fills the novel, and the description is almost entirely through the author's eyes rather than any character. (At one point, Mack does admire a sunset overlooking the bay and dune country around Seaside.) He waxes particularly eloquent on the lovely Carmel, which has everything a river should: rapids, shallows, an artificial lake, and pools, and on the lush life in tide pools at the tip of the peninsula and in La Jolla. It is worth noting that Doc is based on Steinbeck's friend, Ed Ricketts, to whom the novel is dedicated. Steinbeck helps Ricketts collect sea creatures for the real-life Pacific Biological Laboratories on Cannery Row, while his interest in marine biology grows.

With less enthusiasm perhaps but as sharp an eye for detail, Steinbeck also describes the interiors of prominent buildings in Cannery Row, again through his own eyes. Once scenes are thus set, the novel moves forward by means of dialog among the characters. Each has a distinctive voice that establishes his or her cultural level. Steinbeck paints lush word portraits of their appearance and behavior early on, but provides rather meager information about backgrounds. Snippets of background appear in various contexts throughout the book.

## Setting

*Cannery Row* deals with folks living around a series of sardine fisheries in Monterey, California. The time frame must be around the end of 1937, because it chronicles the growth of an ad hoc housing complex in the vacant lot: the Hediondo Cannery discards an aged boiler in 1932, it becomes home to squatters in 1935, who in 1937 rent out large pipes as sleeping spots for workers during a housing shortage at peak times. The economic suffering of the Great Depression is vividly remembered but the pinch is past, and Prohibition has been happily repealed (1933). Although the Presidio is armed, a second world war does not appear in the offing. Historical reference is made to the death of Josh Billings in 1885; enough time has gone by for a post office to be erected on the site of the gully in which his innards are found, but the story has not faded from memory.

Most of the action takes place on Cannery Row, its beaches, and railroad tracks, but Mack and the boys take a "road trip" to Carmel Valley in search of frogs, and Doc drives five hundred miles south to the boulder-strewn beaches of La Jolla, north of San Diego,



to collect octopi for medical research. The Salinas County Jail is touched upon several times. The business area of Monterey is several times lightly treated. Lee Chong's grocery store, Mack and the boys' Palace Flophouse and Grill, Dora Flood's Bear Flag Restaurant, and Doc's Western Biological Laboratories are described in intricate detail.

## Language and Meaning

Cannery Row is narrated in standard American English except in dialog, where the characters speak according to type: workers, immigrants, soldiers, prostitutes, and one college-trained professional. Author John Steinbeck is meticulous in setting up scenes, describing in rich detail the interiors of a cluttered general store, a reeking storage shed as it is transformed into a home for wayward grown boys, a bordello, and a laboratory for collecting and processing marine animals. The vacant lot located between three of the main settings is rendered in such detail—several times over—that a reader could walk it with eyes closed. A last look is given from a gopher's vantage point. He describes as closely as the hilly ride from Monterey to Carmel Valley and the idyllic spot the boys camp in as they wait to hunt for frogs.

Even when not arguing a point, Steinbeck often generalizes about a situation or the qualities of a given setting, then develops the generalization in rich detail, and finally returns to the original statement by way of conclusion. He generally mentions minor characters in passing a few times before properly introducing them and filling in the sketch with vivid details. Some characters are just vignettes contributing to the atmosphere of Cannery Row.

Steinbeck uses metaphor and simile freely and brilliantly, particularly in describing the richness of nature in the California tide pools. During the collecting trip to La Jolla, a tide pool is shown to be a cemetery in which the living struggle for survival. At the end of the trip, Doc discovers the body of a beautiful woman, the ocean having become her grave. He anthropomorphizes the denizens of the tide pools, the cats, and particularly a pond full of frogs, shocked that humans would break the age-old rules governing frog hunting.

## Structure

After an evocative opening description entitled simply "Cannery Row", the author talks about the portion of Monterey, California as being "a poem, a stink, a grating noise, a quality of light, a tone, a habit, a nostalgia, a dream", and describing life there, Cannery Row consists of thirty-two numbered but untitled chapters, most short, developing one or two scenarios. Many scenarios flow directly into the continuation, rendering the break dubious. Every few chapters, Steinbeck inserts a very brief interlude of a more philosophical bent. Some are independent vignettes, contributing to the overall picture of Cannery Row but little more. Some are more closely tied to the story. The musing on how Mack and the boys embody a liberating freedom from the ailments of society is sustained over several such interludes.



The story generally moves in chronological order. It drops in on Lee Chong's grocery store, Dora Flood's Bear Flag Restaurant, and Doc's Western Biological Laboratories to introduce major characters and establish the layout of Cannery Row, and then fans out to take in more of the countryside. When the story begins is unclear. It reaches the crisis point, the first disastrous party for Doc some time in June, after which a general malaise falls over the community as it shuns Mack and the boys. The nadir falls between the Fourth of July and the Country Fair. After the boys' puppy survives a health crisis, they decide to throw another party for Doc, ostensibly for his birthday on October 27. The novel ends with Doc cleaning up the mess left behind and meditating over a touching eleventh-century Kashmiri love poem.



## Quotes

"Cannery Row in Monterey in California is a poem, a stink, a grating noise, a quality of light, a tone, a habit, a nostalgia, a dream. Cannery Row is the gathered and scattered, tin and iron and rust and splintered wood, chipped pavement and weedy lots and junk heaps, sardine canneries of corrugated iron, honky-tonks, restaurants and whore-houses, and little crowded groceries, and laboratories and flop-houses." Prologue, p. 1

"Lee Chong's grocery, while not a model of neatness, was a miracle of supply. It was small and crowded but within a single room a man could find everything he needed or wanted to live and to be happy - clothes, food, both fresh and canned, liquor, tobacco, fishing equipment, machinery, boats, cordage, caps, pork chops. You could buy at Lee Chong's a pair of slippers, a silk kimono, a quart pint of whiskey and a cigar. You could work out combinations to fit almost any mood. The one commodity Lee Chong did not keep could be had across the lot at Dora's." Chap. 1, p. 5

"Mack and the boys are the Beauties, the Virtues, the Graces. In the world ruled by tigers with ulcers, rutted by strictured bulls, scavenged by blind jackals, Mack and the boys dine delicately with the tigers, fondle the frantic heifers, and wrap up the crumbs to feed the sea gulls of Cannery Row. What can it profit a man to gain the whole world and come to his property with a gastric ulcer, a blown prostate, and bifocals?" Chap. 2, p. 15

"Over a period of years Doc dug himself into Cannery Row to an extent not even he suspected. He became the foundation of philosophy and science and art. In the laboratory the girls from Dora's heard the Plain Songs and Gregorian music for the first time. Lee Chong listened while Li Po was read to him in English. Henri the painter heard for the first time the Book of the Dead and was so moved that he changed his medium." Chap. 5, p. 28

"Then the creeping murderer, the octopus, steals out, slowly, moving like a gray mist, pretending now to be a bit of weed, now a rock, now a lump of decaying meat while its evil goat eyes watch coldly. It oozes and flows toward a feeding crab, and as it comes close its yellow eyes burn and its body turns rosy with the pulsing color of anticipation and rage. Then suddenly it runs lightly on the tips of its arms, as ferociously as a charging cat. It leaps savagely on the crab, there is a puff of black fluid, and the struggling mass is obscured in the sepia cloud while the octopus murders the crab." Chap. 6, p. 31

"The Palace Flophouse was no sudden development. Indeed when Mack and Hazel and Eddie and Hughie and Jones moved into it, they look upon it as little more than shelter from the wind and the rain, as a place to go when everything else had closed or when their welcome was thin and sere with overuse. Then the Palace was only a long bare room, lit dimly by two small windows, walled with unpainted wood smelling strongly of fish meal. They had not loved it then. But Mack knew that some kind of organization was necessary particularly among such a group of ravening individuals." Chap. 7, p. 39



"The starfish were twisted and knotted up for a starfish loves to hang onto something and for an hour these had found only each other. Doc arranged them in long lines and very slowly they straightened out until they lay in symmetrical stars on the concrete floor. Doc's pointed brown beard was damp with perspiration as he worked. He looked up a little nervously as Mack entered. It was not that trouble always came in with Mack but something always entered with him." Chap. 9, p. 51

"He was such a wonder, Gay was - the little mechanic of God, the St. Francis of all things that turn and twist and explode, the St. Francis of coils and armatures and gears. And if at some time all the heaps of jalopies, cut-down Dusenburgs, Buicks, De Sotos and Plymouths, American Austins and Isotta-Fraschinis praise God in a great chorus - it will be largely due to Gay and his brotherhood." Chap. 11, p. 65

"Men all do about the same things when they wake up. Mack's process was loosely the one all of them followed. And soon they had all come to the fire and complimented Hazel. Hazel stuck his pocket knife into the muscles of the chicken.

" 'He ain't going to be what you'd call tender,' said Hazel. 'You'd have to cook him about two weeks to get him tender. How old about do you judge he was Mack?'

" 'I'm forty-eight and I ain't as touch as he is,' said Mack." Chap. 13, p. 78

"It is the hour of the pearl - the interval between day and night when time stops and examines itself." Chap. 14, p. 86

"Hughie blushed. His conception had been much more conservative, based in fact on the New Year's party at La Ida, but if it was going to be like that why Hughie was willing to take credit. 'I just thought it would be nice,' he said." Chapter 20, pg. 121.

"'It has always seemed strange to me', said Doc. 'The things we admire in men, kindness and generosity, openness, honesty, understanding and feeling are the concomitants of failure in our system. And those traits we detest, sharpness, greed, acquisitiveness, meanness, egotism and self-interest are the traits of success. And while men admire the quality of the first they love the product of the second.'" Chapter 23, pg. 143.

"The nature of parties has been imperfectly studied. It is, however, generally understood that a party has a pathology, that it is a kind of an individual and that it is likely to be a very perverse individual. And it is also generally understood that a party hardly ever goes the way it is planned or intended. This last, of course, excludes those dismal slave parties, whipped and controlled and dominated, given by ogreish professional hostesses. These are not parties at all but acts and demonstrations, about as spontaneous as peristalsis and as interesting as its end product." Chapter 30, pg. 182.





## Topics for Discussion

How do cats figure in Cannery Row?

Does the lonely bachelor gopher at the end of the novel say anything about the human relationships portrayed?

Why would Doc read from "Black Marigolds" at his birthday party?

What does the passing mention of "tong wars" say about Lee Chong's character? Does it fit his general depiction? Why would Steinbeck include this tidbit?

Is Mack truly a philosopher? If so, what is his philosophy? If not, what is he and why would learned Doc call him one?

How is suicide dealt with in the novel?

How is luck dealt with in the novel?