

The Catalogue of the Universe Study Guide

The Catalogue of the Universe by Margaret Mahy

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Overview

The Catalogue of the Universe, one of the most realistic of Mahy's novels, follows high school senior Angela May's search for her father, a man who has assumed a romantic aura in Angela's mind as a result of the stories her mother Dido has concocted. Dido wishes to protect Angela from the fact that Roland Chase, Angela's father, never really cared about them. Angela is determined to confront him, believing in the romantic notion that he and her mother will be reunited and that she will have a real family again.

She and her friend Tycho Potter forge an increasingly strong relationship with one another, each complementing and reinforcing the other's strengths and weaknesses. In marvelously evocative prose, Mahy provides a mythological and scientific framework for a work about a young woman and a young man who are confronting the issues of growing up, of becoming independent, and of forming relationships outside of family. They find sources of inspiration in the ancient Greek Ionian philosophers, romantic books and films, Greek myths, and the wonders of the universe. Science is not a dry, fact-filled exercise, but an adventure in imagination as Tycho and Angela search for clues to solve the mysteries they face in the world around them.

About the Author

Prolific New Zealand author Margaret Mahy was born in Whakatane, New Zealand, on March 21, 1936. She has spent most of her life in New Zealand, graduating from the University of New Zealand in 1958 with a bachelor's degree and a Diploma of Librarianship. In addition to being a writer, Mahy has worked primarily as a librarian in various public, school, and university libraries in New Zealand and Australia. Mahy recalls inventing and telling stories before she could read and traces her evolution as a writer in the following way: "I began as a listener, became a teller, then a reader, and then a writer in that order." Half-seriously, she describes the dilemma she faces as a librarian, "the ultimate result of this evolutionary process," in being forced to impose an order on books that defy her attempts at definition. As she explains, "Making books available in the most sensible way makes us, aware that in serving one function we are distorting others."

Dislocation appears as a key aspect both in Mahy's life and in her career.

She describes herself as growing up "with a fault line running through me," where the child growing up in New Zealand shared equal time with the child who was immersed in British books because New Zealand had few of its own to offer. Her sense of dislocation extends to the complexities she discovers in trying to reconcile such seeming polarities as science and art, fantasy and reality, truth and fiction, and adult and child. For Mahy, these polarities become, instead, syntheses, just as her very life and work has become a synthesis of New Zealand and Great Britain.

Mahy's writing reflects this same synthesis of seemingly diverse elements, not only in the motifs she introduces in her work but also in the diversity of genres she has chosen. Since her first picture book, *A Lion in the Meadow* (1969), Mahy has written over one hundred works (including a handful of children's works in collaboration with Joy Cowley and June Melser).

They range from such delightful picture books as the popular *17 Kings and 42 Elephants* (1972) to children's fiction, short story collections, and nonfiction (*New Zealand: Yesterday and Today*, 1975).

Perhaps the most widely praised of Mahy's work, however, has been her young adult fiction. In five novels, *The Haunting* (1982), *The Changeover* (1984), *The Catalogue of the Universe* (1985), *The Tricksters* (1987), and *Memory* (1988), Mahy established an international reputation as an author whose work for young adults is both stylistically dazzling and thematically complex. Mahy has received the prestigious Carnegie Medal three times (for *The Haunting*, *The Changeover*, and *Memory*), and her works are frequently cited in a variety of Best Book lists. The best of Mahy's work explores the "dislocations" she acknowledges in her own life and consistently employs underpinnings of fantasy and folk tales not only in those works that most directly deal with supernatural elements, but also in realistic works like *The Catalogue of the Universe* and *Memory*.



Plot Summary

Life is full of challenges, and this is never truer than during the turbulent times of adolescence. In *Catalogue of the Universe*, Margaret Mahy explores the tribulations associated with trying to navigate the often-indecipherable maze of being a teenager. The principle characters in the novel are iconic representations of two ends of the social spectrum during this period of one's life: at one end is the brainy, introverted geek who pines for the person at the other end, the attractive, popular girl who seems to have the world by its horns. Upon closer examination, however, it becomes evident that nothing is as it seems and that no matter where on the social spectrum one sits, life is never without problems. Margaret Mahy tackles these issues, which in this case include the search for one's past and the struggle to become who one really is, head-on and in an approachable way in this novel.

The central characters of *Catalogue of the Universe* are Angela May and Tycho Potter. It is the story of the journey each of these adolescents takes on the road to self-discovery. Along the way, each uncovers truths about the world and about themselves that force their images of themselves, of the world, and of their relationship to each other to evolve.

Angela May has spent her life as the child of a single parent. Throughout her life, she has composed a mind-picture of her father based on the information given to her by her mother, Dido. As a child, Angela convinced herself that being from a broken home was simply a fact of life. As she approaches adolescence, however, she begins to question her origins more deeply. Not satisfied with just the information given by her mother, she decides to conduct her own research into her father's life. What she uncovers unleashes an unexpected reaction.

Tycho, Angela's intellectual and introverted best friend since childhood, is also struggling to find his place. His is a traditional family in many ways, consisting of two parents and three children, each with his or her issues and problems. Tycho has a crush on Angela, but at the same time, he understands that she is in a different league than he. *Catalogue of the Universe* is also the story of the evolution of the relationship between Tycho and Angela, as each makes the transition from childhood to adolescence and into burgeoning adulthood.

Catalogue of the Universe is about family in all its forms. Tycho and Angela's families stand in stark contrast to one another. Tycho's family, although traditional as outlined above, is disjointed. The members of Tycho Potter's family all seem to be moving in separate directions, functioning as independent parts of a whole, joined only by genetics. Tycho's mother is controlling and judgmental. She attempts to orchestrate every aspect of her children's lives, including the day on which they are permitted to use clean towels. Theirs is a house of rules and protocol.

Angela's family, consisting only of her and Dido, takes on a different persona. They are more like roommates than mother and daughter. Dido takes a much more hands-off



approach to parenting than does Mrs. Potter. *Catalogue of the Universe* reveals that both family models - indeed *all* family models - have inherent problems and, no matter how much each of us wishes our families were different than they are, even the greenest grass has an unseen ugly side.

Catalogue of the Universe is about the search for self. It explores the universal quest for belonging, self-realization, and love. Tycho and Angela make this journey alongside one another, although each takes a very different path. One thing remains consistent throughout the novel: these two characters always find their way back to each other, even when the reunion between them takes different forms.



Chapter 1, Moonshine

Chapter 1, Moonshine Summary

Life is full of challenges, and this is never truer than during the turbulent times of adolescence. In *Catalogue of the Universe*, Margaret Mahy explores the tribulations associated with trying to navigate the often-indecipherable maze of being a teenager. The principle characters in the novel are iconic representations of two ends of the social spectrum during this period of one's life: at one end is the brainy, introverted geek who pines for the person at the other end, the attractive, popular girl who seems to have the world by its horns. Upon closer examination, however, it becomes evident that nothing is as it seems and that no matter where on the social spectrum one sits, life is never without problems. Margaret Mahy tackles these issues, which in this case include the search for one's past and the struggle to become who one really is, head-on and in an approachable way in this novel.

The story opens with Angela, one of the principal characters, waking up in the middle of the night, thanks to the stream of moonlight filling her bedroom. She hears a strange sound and decides after hearing it for a third time that she must find out what is making the noise. Going to the window, she sees Dido, her mother, standing in the yard in her nightgown, scything the grass. Dido appears to be in something of a trance, with the motion of the scythe almost an autonomic action, requiring no thought or effort.

Dido turns and looks toward the house, but the awning of the house hides Angela from her mother's view. Dido continues her work in the yard and Angela continues to watch, unseen, while she pulls on her nightgown. Moments later, while Dido stops working to inspect what she has done so far, Angela leans out the window and calls to her mother, "Are you OK?" Dido is not fazed to hear a voice calling to her at this unusual hour, but is surprised to see her daughter awake. The two women discuss how the "devil moon" woke them up with its intrusive light, and then the conversation turns to a discussion of Angela's father, a man she has never known.

Angela asks her mother to tell her the story of how Dido and her father met and fell in love. Dido tells her that it was a "fairy tale" and, at Angela's prodding, she retells the story, despite having done so numerous times before. Dido tells Angela that although she did love Angela's father madly, she "didn't know how long forever was going to be," and that although they were in love Angela was born out of an affair. Because her father was married, he could not be with them and had to err on the side of discretion by staying with his wife and family. Dido further explains that she did not want the relationship with Angela's father to end with their breakup, and so she chose to have Angela instead of ending the pregnancy. This is this part that Angela most wants to hear: that she was *chosen*.

Angela decides to prod her mother further, asking about the possibility of reconciliation between her parents. Dido quickly dismisses the thought, saying that they have



probably both changed too much since they were together and that besides, Dido is "too tired" to put in the effort to pursue a relationship with him. Angela explains that she and her best friend, a boy named Tycho, are "making a list of romantic ideas, mostly from books" and that Dido's life of sacrifice in the name of her daughter's well-being ranks among them. Dido refutes this point, saying that she although she had to put off going to university while she raised her daughter, she doesn't consider herself as having sacrificed anything. Dido prefers to view her life situation as having gained more than she lost.

Deciding to push the issue even more, Angela asks her mother what she would think about the idea of Angela herself trying to get her parents together. Dido again dismisses the notion, saying that she wouldn't know what to talk about with him if they were to be reunited. She tells Angela that a reunion is a lost cause, because she values only two things in life: Angela and solitude. There is little room in her life for anything - or anyone - else. She adds, after Angela gets upset about her refusal to help her meet her father, that even if he did want to meet his daughter, he is "too fond of his first family to run any risks."

Finally, giving up the struggle with her mother for now, Angela goes to bed. Laying staring at the ceiling, Angela thinks about her boyfriend, Robin, and Tycho, her best friend. Her thoughts finally return to her father, and about how she knows where he works and lives, although these are facts she has kept from her mother. Her father was, by all appearances, very wealthy. He lives in a large house on a large property with tennis courts and a swimming pool. Angela compares in her mind her father's fancy house to her own home at 1000 Dry Creek Road, "a house linked to the rest of the world by a snaky road."

Eventually, she drifts off to sleep, with all of these thoughts carrying over into the land of dreams.

Chapter 1, Moonshine Analysis

Although this chapter is short, it sets the stage for the rest of the novel very well. The reader meets, either directly or through the musings of other characters, many of the principal characters in the book, including Dido, Angela, Tycho, Robin, and Angela's father, whose name one does not know at this point in the story. Angela introduces the reader to Tycho Potter, her best friend and of whose affection she is the object. Tycho and Angela will become the central characters of the story, and the persons on which the events of the story will center in one way or another.

By introducing the character of Tycho in the first chapter through Angela's thoughts, despite his not actually appearing in the book until the next chapter, the author is giving texture to Angela's character. By the end of the chapter the reader knows not only that Angela wants to find her father, where she lives with her eccentric mother, but also some of the other important people in her life. In one sentence, the author reveals not only that Tycho and Angela are very close friends but also that Tycho has a crush on



Angela and she knows it. This revelation sets the stage for future events in the story. The reader learns, too, that Tycho is likely not a very attractive boy and, as a result, is something of an intellectual introvert.

The main conflicts of the novel are set up in this chapter. Angela comes from a single-parent household and she has never met her father. In an effort to connect herself to that missing part of her life, Angela asks her mother to regale her with the story of the love affair between her and Angela's father, a story that includes Dido's decision to keep her baby despite knowing that the baby's father had decided not to be a part of the child's life even before she born. Angela is desperately seeking a way to fill the void she feels by not having ever known her father, and she just as desperately wants to cling to the "romantic notion" that her parents' relationship was a thing of romance. She wants to hear that the reason her father is not in her life is because he had the honor to stay with his "other family," not that he did not want to be a part of her life. Dido indulges her daughter in this fantasy.

Angela wants her parents to be reunited, to be a complete family unit, like many other children of broken homes. There is a seemingly natural tendency for many children to desire the "accepted" model of a two-parent family, and Angela is no different. She continually peppers her mother with "what if" questions, testing how her mother feels about the possibility of a reunion with her former lover. Dido dismisses the thought out of hand, by saying that she doesn't have room in her life for a romance, and that anyway they've probably both changed too much to be the couple they once were. There is a sense in this chapter, though, that what Dido says is not entirely true, and that she perhaps is hiding something from her daughter. What Dido does not realize is that her daughter, too, is hiding something from her.

There is a duality between what Angela appears to want to accomplish when she asks her mother a litany of question about the possibility of a reunion with Angela's father, and what Angela's inner thoughts reveal. On the one hand, she wants to mastermind a reunion between her parents, but on the other, she wants only to know what her father is like and what he thinks of her. In essence, she wants answers. It is unclear at this stage, however, what answers she is looking for. Does she truly want a two-parent family, or merely a relationship with her father? Would she be settling for one if she did not get the other? The answers to these questions are revealed later in the book.

In this chapter, Dido begins to reveal the very beginnings of a plan to meet her father. She has found out where he lives and where he works, information that she has kept from her mother, probably because she knows her mother would not approve of her quest to meet her father. Angela's musings hint that she knows that what her mother is telling her is not entirely true, a realization that is likely at least partly behind her desire to find out for herself what kind of person her father is.

The relationship between Dido and Angela begins to take shape in the first chapter of this book. Theirs is not a typical relationship, as evidenced first by the fact that Angela refers to her mother by her first name, a practice that indicates a certain distance between the two, a sort of verbal expression of the formality of their relationship. By the

same token, Dido does not parent her child in a traditional way, which is seen even in this opening chapter. Many mothers, upon seeing their daughter up at such a late hour, would insist that she go back to bed. Dido, however, reacts more like a woman enjoying the unexpected company of a night owl roommate.



Chapter 2, Threats of Invasion

Chapter 2, Threats of Invasion Summary

It is in the early morning hours that the telephone rings at Tycho Potter's house. The ringing telephone wakes up the entire Potter household, including Tycho, his parents, and his brother, Richard. In a sleepy haze, Mrs. Potter answers the phone. It is Tycho's older sister, Africa, in hysterics. It is a phone call they have received before: Africa has had a fight with her husband, and she wants her parents to rescue her. Richard is fed up with his sister's drama, saying, "She's always in trouble. That's why she had to get married, remember?" Further, Richard does not want his sister to return to their family home with her baby, invading his space and disrupting their lives. Richard now resides in Africa's old room, and if she returns home, she will want her room back, forcing Richard and Tycho to once again share a bedroom, a situation neither of them wants.

Despite Richard's protests, Mr. and Mrs. Potter agree to drive to their daughter's house and get her, after reminding her to pack enough diapers for Hamish, her son.

The two boys commiserate about the prospect of having their world turned upside down by their sister. Neither can reason why Africa is the favorite child of the three of them, although Tycho theorizes that it is because she is both the oldest child and the only girl in the family. Overhearing the boys' conversation, Mrs. Potter tries to convince the boys that she does not have any favorites among her children, and that she would be just as upset if either of the boys called her saying he had been struck by his spouse. At that, Richard jokes that striking Africa is the only sensible thing Hudson (Africa's husband) has ever done. If Richard had struck his sister, he says, she'd have "stayed unconscious for hours."

When Richard mocks his father's dress, insinuating that he was far too dressed up for the occasion, Mrs. Potter recognizes that the boy's sarcastic behavior is covering up jealousy toward his sister. It is a sentiment that Richard does not deny; he and Tycho are both jealous of Africa, he says.

Just as Mr. and Mrs. Potter are about to walk through the door to retrieve Africa, the phone rings again. From the relief in their mother's voice, Richard and Tycho discern that whatever blow up Africa and Hudson had endured earlier has now passed. Upon hanging up the phone, Mrs. Potter confirms the boys' suspicions, explaining, "They made it up again." She reassures Richard that his dramatic display over his sister's possible return to the house was for naught, and she points out that Tycho did not complain about it.

Realizing that Angela will be around to meet him in "six and a half hours" and with the Africa situation now at least temporarily resolved, Tycho goes to bed. Soon, the Potter house is once again peaceful.



Chapter 2, Threats of Invasion Analysis

This chapter stands in stark contrast to the first. In Chapter 1, the author introduces the reader to the world of Angela May and Dido, her mother. They live in a ramshackle house in a remote part of the town, separated from the town itself by a long, winding road. Their relationship is somewhat distant and yet there is an undercurrent of understanding between them. In Chapter 2, the world of Tycho Potter and his family is brought into focus. The Potter household is much more traditional than Angela's family, with two parents and three children, each with his or her own insecurities and issues.

Tycho, although introduced in the first chapter through Angela's thoughts, appears for the first time in this chapter. Angela's thoughts about Tycho's lack of self-esteem are reaffirmed in this chapter when, in response to Richard's declaration that, "A girl like Angela May wants a bit more than stars and books," Tycho realizes that Angela does not want those things from him. A further indication of romantic feelings toward Angela is evident in Tycho's ability to calculate exactly when he will see Angela again, even in the midst of the excitement created by Africa's late-night phone call.

There is an element of sibling rivalry between the boys and their sister; a rivalry that neither of the boys denies. When they commiserate about why Africa is their parents' favorite among the three Potter children, the only reasons they can find are that she is the oldest ("she has the advantage of being first," says Richard) and that she is a girl. They do not speculate that she might be smarter, more sensible, or more talented than they; they are content instead to believe that their perceived inferior state is no fault of their own.

The phone call from Africa to her parents illuminates a number of things about both the girl herself and about the Potter family as a whole. Africa is portrayed as something of a "drama queen." She appears to be in need of attention from her parents. From Richard's reaction to the phone call, it can be assumed that this is not the first time Africa has made a dramatic gesture such as this. Further, although Richard's remark that Hudson should have struck her may seem clearly inappropriate, it reveals a certain opinion about Africa. Clearly, Richard feels that his sister is a foolish girl who has gotten herself into a situation that she cannot handle on her own. Richard seems to be insinuating with his comments that Africa has had a history of such behavior, and that their parents always bail her out when she cannot handle matters herself.

When Africa makes the second phone call to tell her parents that she and Hudson have made amends, the reconciliation comes as little surprise to Richard, as though it was expected based on prior experiences. Africa is testing her parents in an effort to reaffirm their opinion of her. She knows she has made a mistake (by getting pregnant out of wedlock) and now she needs to be sure of her place in the family unit. When it is made clear that her parents will in fact rescue her yet again, Africa somehow finds the strength to resolve her "lover's tiff" on her own. Suddenly, now knowing that her parents still support her, Africa changes the details of the story she had previously told her parents: Hudson didn't actually strike her, he just threatened to do so. More than that, she

indicates that they are looking forward to seeing her parents and brothers the following night at a celebration in honor of their first anniversary. Essentially, Africa does a complete about turn, from being on the verge of leaving Hudson to looking forward to a family celebration of their anniversary.



Chapter 3, Family Matters

Chapter 3, Family Matters Summary

Tycho awakens the following morning, and moments later Richard enters Tycho's bedroom - where many of Richard's clothes still reside - to get dressed for the day. Tycho watches in wonder as his brother puts on a pair of perfectly good briefs and then, on top, another pair full of holes. The rest of Richard's outfit is just as odd, consisting of "dirty and frayed" jeans patched in several places and a sky-blue jerkin.

Still upset at the threat of Africa's near return, Richard tries to drag Tycho into commiserating with him. Tycho wants no part of it, saying that Richard shouldn't worry about it because it didn't happen "this time." Richard is intrigued by this statement and questions his brother about its meaning. Tycho theorizes that Africa is bound to return home to their parents' house sooner or later, a thought that makes Richard consider the feasibility of moving out before that eventuality comes to be. To further make his point, Richard adds that it wouldn't be right for Africa to return home, preventing their parents from getting on with the next phase of their lives, for they would certainly be used as "built-in babysitters" in Richard's estimation.

After getting dressed, Tycho adds a piece of paper bearing a quote to the collection of quotations above his bed, this one reading, "Nothing exists but atoms and the void." Seeing what Tycho is doing, Richard erupts in a fit of disgust, accusing his brother of being "so middle class" and saying that Tycho's "girlfriend" Angela was not going to be impressed by it. Richard's insistence on referring to Angela as his girlfriend angers Tycho, which prompts him to set the record straight yet again. "She's not my girlfriend!" he shouts. "Just a good friend who comes to call!"

A few minutes later, after the boys verbally volley back and forth, Richard offering jabs about Angela and Tycho throwing up verbal blocks, Mrs. Potter calls the boys downstairs to breakfast. After a few minutes, the boys compose themselves and head in the direction of their mother's voice.

After breakfast, Tycho is back in his room when he hears his mother say, "Angela! Lovely to see you." Angela is directed to Tycho's room, although it is a route she knows well. When she reaches his room, she suggests that they skip out on a community-service project in which they were scheduled to participate that day. They wouldn't get expelled on the last day of school, she reasons. Even if they did, she says, they would get "ten out of ten for style" for having done the impossible. She tempts Tycho with an offer to go see *Gone With the Wind* at the local theatre, something she knows Tycho will likely go for.

Angela and Tycho say goodbye to the Potter family and, after being issued a reminder by his mother to buy a present for Africa, they are on their way.



Chapter 3, Family Matters Analysis

The main purpose of Chapter 3 is to give the reader more insight into the characters and their perceptions of themselves and each other. The plot is not significantly furthered in this chapter, allowing the characters and the relationships between them to take center stage.

At the beginning of the chapter, the interaction between Tycho and Richard in Tycho's bedroom reveals a great deal about both of the boys. Tycho is an introvert, interested in books, history, words, and the organization of the universe. Richard, in contrast, is a rebel, whose goal is to fly in the face of conventionality, of which his choice of clothing is an outward sign. Richard criticizes Tycho for being the type of boy to whom Angela would never give a second glance. According to Richard, Tycho should spend more time working on his appearance and less time on intellectual pursuits. Richard can see through Tycho's insistence that Angela is "just a friend who comes to call," and he plays into Tycho's vulnerability on the subject.

Both boys exhibit similar feelings about Africa, although each manifests his feelings in different ways. Richard, still reeling from the drama of the previous night, views his sister as a threat in many ways: a threat to the family balance and a threat to his personal space. Tycho, on the other hand, realizes that Africa's return to the family home is inevitable and he has accepted it. Both boys realize that their mother will end up, if Africa and Hamish do move back into the family home, serving as a "built-in babysitter," and each realizes this is not fair to their parents.

Mrs. Potter, Tycho's mother, has had to pull the bulk of the family weight because of an accident that has left Mr. Potter with a disability. Although his disability is controllable by drugs, Mr. Potter has symbolically lost his position as head of the household. He can no longer drive the family car and must rely on his wife and Tycho to drive everywhere. More than that, Mr. Potter's self esteem is diminished by his employer's report that he is "unable to handle stress."

Mr. Potter's injury has left him feeling inadequate or broken in some fundamental way, a feeling with which Tycho can sympathize. Tycho feels that because he is perhaps neither the most attractive kind of person nor the most popular, then he will never turn Angela's head in any way other than in friendship. He is not the type of person she would ever desire, just as Mr. Potter's shortcomings make him the type of person his children would never aspire to be, at least in his own opinion. Although Richard is the older of the two boys, there is a sense in this chapter that Tycho is the man of the house, having taken over for his ailing father. Richard is viewed as a rebellious teenager with no sense of responsibility and no desire to conform. He is too self-absorbed to take charge of the house. Tycho, on the other hand, is clearly the responsible one, as evidenced by his being given the keys to the family car. In contrast, however, he is still a typical teenager in many ways: he leaves the car out of the garage against his parents' wishes, for example.



Angela's arrival at the Potter house brings into sharp focus the difference between the Potter world and the world of Angela May. Angela senses that Mrs. Potter does not like her, and she goes out of her way to be excessively polite to avoid giving Mrs. Potter a reason not to like her. Angela is like a bright spot in the somewhat oppressive daily life of the Potters. She is unique, and she comes from an unconventional household. Mr. Potter understands this allure, and he engages in repartee with Angela that borders on flirting, which can be viewed as a way for a middle-aged man to get back the self-esteem his disability has taken away from him. Another indication of Angela's wilder side is the fact that she wants to skip the community service project which they are expected to attend that day in favor of going to a movie she and Tycho have seen before. Her choice of footwear flies in the face of practicality and conventionality, too. Angela is a girl who believes that fashion comes before practicality. She agrees to meet somewhere in the middle though, by wearing socks with her sandals.

When Tycho and Angela leave, Mr. Potter reminds Tycho to thank his mother for letting him use the car, further exhibiting that Mrs. Potter is the one at the parental helm.

At this point in the story, the reader has been given a glimpse into the conflicts that will unfold in the subsequent chapters, and a sense of the relationships between most of the principal characters. The first two chapters do not advance the plot in any significant way, but rather lay the groundwork for what is to come.



Chapter 4, The Wobble in the Cemetery of the World

Chapter 4, The Wobble in the Cemetery of the World Summary

As the chapter opens, Tycho and Angela are being dismissed with their class from the community service work site: Tycho's will won over Angela's, and they did not skip school. Angela approaches Robin, her boyfriend, and tells him that she and Tycho (or, "Tyke," as she calls him) are going to spend the rest of the afternoon together. She and Robin plan to meet later in the day at the "usual time." Robin offers to pick Angela up this time, but she refuses because she knows that if Robin comes to call on her, Dido may not give Angela the car.

Once Robin is out of earshot, Angela reveals that she has a secret to tell Tycho. She has something she wants to do that afternoon, and she wants only Tycho to be with her. Angela promises to reveal her plan later that day, and the two pass the next few hours sitting in a "shallow gully." There, Tycho reveals that people used to think he was "subnormal," at least in part because of his father's disability. People did not want to get to know him, preferring instead to make judgments about him on their own. Even Angela did not want to get to know Tycho at that time and, although she cannot deny the truth in the statement, Angela feels badly for Tycho having had to endure that feeling.

Tycho turns the conversation toward Angela and her decision to keep her eccentric home life a secret from Robin. Although Tycho does not think it should matter to Angela what Robin thinks, he understands that "common sense and truth don't match - not all the time." They return to the car and Tycho continues his line of thought, without regard to whether Angela is listening, comparing common sense and truth. For Tycho, common sense moves in a straight, symmetrical line, whereas truth wobbles. Angela chimes in, agreeing, supporting Tycho's thesis, and inspired by his enthusiasm.

After awhile, Angela declares that they will be late for where they need to go, but will not reveal where it is they are going, only that they are going to be late for "a wobble in the cemetery of the world." The chapter ends with Tycho's question: "Where do we go from here?"

Chapter 4, The Wobble in the Cemetery of the World Analysis

Chapter four is a pivotal chapter in the book, despite its shorter length. The fact that Tycho and Angela find themselves at the community service project site indicates Tycho's influence over Angela. She is a free spirit who wants to live life on her own



terms, but his sense of responsibility balances Angela and they end up doing the right thing. There is a sense that Angela knows all along that they will opt to go to the school event in the end and that she knows Tycho will keep her in line.

When Angela chooses Tycho instead of her boyfriend as the person with whom to share her secret (which the reader knows is regarding her father), she is revealing something significant about her relationship with Tycho. Although she values her relationship with Robin, she will choose Tycho with whom to trust the big events in her life, and her deepest secrets. Angela and Robin have their dating rituals, to which they both look forward, as evidenced in their plans to meet at their "usual spot" later that day. However, Angela turns to Tycho to share something more meaningful. The point is further made by Angela's refusal to allow Robin to see where she lives. Interestingly, Angela is quick to point out that she is not ashamed of her home; she is trying to protect it from being criticized. Angela rejoices in her eccentricity and she does not want anyone's opinion of it to tarnish the way she feels. It is as though her strange house is a child with some disfiguring ailment that only makes a parent love the child more and that makes the parent want to protect the child from the opinions of others who perhaps do not view the child in such a favorable light.

The same could be said about Angela's friendship with Tycho. There is an element of protection in her affection for the boy, like an older sibling to a younger one. When Tycho expresses the remnants of a former sadness over his being judged unfairly, even by Angela, she is quick to assuage these feelings. Even if Tycho is no longer feeling this way, Angela carries a certain amount of guilt about being one of those people who had formerly judged Tycho based on outward appearances.

Tycho further reveals to the reader his feelings of jealousy toward Angela's relationship with Tycho when she talks about what she perceives to be Robin's shortcomings. He does not, however, reveal these feelings to Angela. Like many boys his age, Tycho is content just to be near the object of his affection. He does not want to anything to risk that relationship, even if being near her causes both pleasure and pain. The reader gains insight into Tycho's true feelings about Angela through the third-person narrative, although Richard's teasing (and Tycho's reaction to it) indicate that perhaps he is not hiding his feelings as well as he should. Richard's observation that Tycho is not the type of boy whom a girl like Angela May would give a second glance to is a mirror held up to the way Tycho feels about him. Richard can see through Tycho's defiance.

Tycho tries to psychoanalyze Angela when he brings up the topic of why she does not want Robin to see the type of house she lives in. On the one hand, her reluctance to reveal where she lives to her boyfriend does not make sense, and on the other, it does, he says. For Tycho, truth and common sense represent two opposites, in a way: truth is messy, complicated, hard to compartmentalize. Common sense, on the other hand, is much more easily put into neat packages. This revelation foreshadows the "truth" that Angela will discover about her father, in contrast to what Dido has been telling her for her entire life. Tycho's discussion of Pythagoras furthers this idea by putting forth the idea that the world, to some, is symmetrical. The events that will follow in the story prove otherwise, however.

Tycho's love of other people's words and theories could be construed as an inability to form his own thoughts out of fear of them being criticized. Tycho indicates in this chapter that he used to try to make people believe he was smart by telling them about things he had read - another indication of his tendency to try to impress people with his knowledge of other people's ideas.

Tycho speaks the very last sentence of the chapter, "Where do we go from here?," which serves as a gateway to the rest of the story. Tycho is not merely asking where Angela wants to physically take him that afternoon: he is posing the question in regard to their relationship, their individual maturing process, and the story as a whole. Each of these questions will be answered as the story unfolds.



Chapter 5, Encounters in a Changing Street

Chapter 5, Encounters in a Changing Street Summary

Tycho pulls the car into a metered parking spot and stops, still unsure as to where Angela is taking him. They walk down the street, "past a second-hand clothes shop, and a book shop, mostly paperbacks and magazines." They come to a particular doorway that frames a gang of misfits, their parade of motorcycles nearby. Tycho is afraid to make eye contact with these men, but Angela shows no fear. Tycho and Angela eventually come to a spot where three roads converge, and Angela asks Tycho if he has any money on him. Despite him only having two dollars, Angela is determined to go into a swanky coffee bar nearby. Tycho acquiesces and the two enter the coffee bar.

After a few minutes, Angela touches Tycho's arm and implores him to look out the window at a building across the road. The sign in front reads "Roland Chase Agencies." A moment later, two men emerge from the building and head across the street toward the coffee shop in which they are sitting. Still puzzled as to what Angela is up to, Tycho asks who the men are, to which Angela responds that she is having an affair with a man quite a bit older than she. The two men enter the coffee shop, and Tycho instantly knows that Angela's explanation is a lie - the resemblance between the taller of the two men and Angela is striking.

Angela stands up and, removing the dark glasses she had been wearing, she stares directly into the eyes of the taller man. The man reacts with a gaping mouth, but no words - he recognizes her, but turns away and continues conversing with the members of his party, his back to Angela. Angela fights back tears at her father's reaction to her, and Tycho is unable to adequately comfort her.

Chapter 5, Encounters in a Changing Street Analysis

Although it is one of the shortest chapters in the book, chapter 5 represents a major turning point in the novel. Up until this point, Angela's suspicions about Roland Chase were just speculation: now they are all but confirmed. Her father eliminates with one look the confidence Angela exhibits when they walk past the group of guys along the way to the coffee shop. The reunion she imagined in her head is nothing like the actual experience of it, which makes the rejection all the more painful.

The description of both the coffee shop and Roland's clothing serves to illuminate the two worlds that Roland and Angela inhabit, and the vast differences between Roland and Dido. Roland's is a high-powered world of business, expensive suits, and daily trips to a posh coffee bar. Angela lives in a ramshackle house with an outdoor lavatory, and she can scarcely afford to dine at the coffee bar even once - she has to split a single



piece of pizza with Tycho. Despite their obvious lifestyle differences, though, the physical resemblance between the two of them is unmistakable. It is a physical manifestation of their unbreakable connection. It is the truth in their common sense.

In this chapter, the reader witnesses a different side of Angela. In the first four chapters, she is portrayed as somewhat guarded in her emotions, choosing instead to take a common-sense approach to life. In this chapter, however, Angela confronts her father and is met with shocked silence. When she sits back down at the table with Tycho, Angela can barely fight back the tears that threaten to come. Until that day, Angela has lived her life without her father and fantasized about the day she would be reunited with him.

The location of Roland's office (at the convergence of three roads) is very symbolic, too. The three roads - or rather the convergence of them - symbolize the significance of what is about to happen to Angela. The three roads symbolize Angela's past, her present, and her future. Angela's past includes a version of her father that has lived only in her imagination: a romantic notion created by her mother. In the present, Angela is consumed with questions and curiosity about her father, and she is in search of answers, starting with the orchestration of this meeting. The future of Angela's relationship with her father depends, at least in Angela's mind, on how this day turns out. This convergence is also symbolic of the coming together of Angela's world with that of Roland, a man she believes to be her father. The roads represent, in this sense, their separate worlds and the world that includes both of them, if such a life can be created through this meeting.

This chapter best illustrates what Tycho refers to as the "wobble in the symmetry of the world." Until now, Angela's world was missing something and yet it was stable, unchanging, and symmetrical. Paradoxically, Angela's attempt to find her father is an attempt to fill a void in her life - to correct a certain asymmetry - that results in a "wobble." Her attempts to connect her with father causes a reaction in Roland that Angela did not expect. This reaction causes a disruption in Angela's psyche and in her plan for the way her life would change after introducing herself to her father.



Chapter 6, On Being a Child of Love

Chapter 6, On Being a Child of Love Summary

Tycho tries to make sense of what has just happened. He asks Angela how she found her father, which prompts Angela to recount a story that Dido used to tell her, about a girl named Angela Roland, entitled "The Great Chase." For a long time, she did not care about not knowing her father; She was just one of the "broken-home gang." She considered Roland to be dead; at least, on many meaningful levels. Then one day, Angela had awakened to realize that her father was real and that a relationship was, theoretically, attainable. She decided to find him and discover for herself that which Dido would not tell her.

When Angela asks Tycho for his confirmation that her feelings of curiosity are natural and understandable, Tycho cannot help but think of his own feelings for her, and how "natural things, given into" did not necessarily garner the results for which one hopes, no matter how good the intentions are.

Angela continues to recount the story of how she ended up at this point. She had found Roland's address in the phone book, after which she went to his house and, although she did not go in, she stood on the sidewalk and looked up at Roland's expansive home.

Tycho points out that Roland is less than thrilled to see his daughter, which prompts Angela to defend her father, saying that it is expected that he would not show any positive emotion toward her in public. She also reveals to Tycho that it is not, in fact, the first encounter she had had with her father; she had previously seen him walking across the road with a girl she assumes must be her half-sister (the child of Roland and his wife). She confesses to Tycho that although she had originally only wanted to see what Roland looked like, once she had attained that goal it was not enough for her - she needed him to see her. It was this realization that led her to this day, to this coffee shop, and to this encounter. Angela feels that her wanting to meet her father is reasonable, a declaration to which Tycho responds with the question, "What's the use of being reasonable when no one else is?" Angela once again defends him, reminding Tycho that Roland had three kids and a wife at the time Dido became pregnant with her. He had no choice, according to Angela, but to try to keep his "other" family in tact. As she has done before, Angela romanticizes Roland and Dido's relationship by saying, "They would be married in every cell" of Angela's body.

Chapter 6, On Being a Child of Love Analysis

Angela's world had just come crashing into reality. In her head, up until now, Angela has romanticized her father and the choice he made to stay with his real family. This "romantic notion" has been perpetuated by Dido, who has tried for all of Angela's life to



allay her concerns or criticisms of her father's choices. Angela continues to defend a man she does not know, even to her best friend Tycho. She does not want to believe that Roland does not want to meet her or to be a part of her life; it is easier for her to defend him by saying that his reaction is normal. In this way, she is making his reaction "fit," finding a place for it in the picture she has created in her mind, with Dido's help. Angela had envisioned her father's reaction to be something quite different from the reaction she received. In an effort to avoid being faced with the possibility that her father is not who she has been led to believe he is, she assimilates his reaction to seeing her into the picture she has drawn.

More than being an easy way to maintain a certain ideal about her father, though, Angela's need to defend Roland is also a way for her to defend Dido. Angela needs to believe that what her mother told her about Roland is true. She needs to hold on to the ideal that Dido has created because she cannot handle the reality that both puts her father in a less-than-ideal light and makes her mother's words untrue. She has grown up with only one parent with whom she could rely, and she cannot face the possibility that what her mother has told her for her entire life is untrue.

For much of her life, Angela accepted her lot in life as the child of a single-family home. To her, it was simply a fact that she had accepted - she was just part of the "broken-home gang." A common tendency for children of single-parent homes is to try to view their situation in terms of belonging in some way. To compensate for that which is "missing" from their lives, according to accepted stereotypes of the family unit, these children tend to frame their situations in terms of belonging to a group by virtue of their single-parent status. Angela does this, too. Rather than seeing herself as being different and on the outside of the dual-parent family gang, she creates an elite group in her mind, one to which she can belong.

From being content with her lot in life, Angela moved toward wanting to know about her father. Once she knew his name and address, she had to see where he lived, and what kind of life he lived. As she gains more information about her father, her desire to know more about him grows. She is now not content to know his name and where he lives; she wants to see him. After seeing him walking across the street with a young girl (whom Angela assumes must be her half sister), Angela thought she would be content - she would then know his name, his address, and his face - but this proved not to be enough. She wanted Roland to see *her*. In wanting her father to see her, Angela is exhibiting a desire for a reciprocal relationship, even on this basic level. One can assume that once this happens, she will want to take her relationship with her father to yet another level, perhaps to include a conversation with him. From there, she may find she wants to foster a relationship with him that includes the kind of outings that a typical father may make with his daughter.



Chapter 7, A Road of Blood and Flowers

Chapter 7, A Road of Blood and Flowers Summary

The following day, Angela wakes up and decides this is the day she will "call her father by name." She wants to meet him face to face, and plans to go to his office to make that happens. She is tired of waiting for fate to take its course on the matter; she is going to "go to his office, call him by his name and give him hers so that he must speak to her." She is not giving him the out to ignore her this time.

Angela fantasizes about how her plan would end up, imagining a variety of different endings. She begins to run through possibilities for dialogue between her and her father, and is prepared to both ask and answer a variety of questions. She is going to be prepared for this meeting, whatever eventuality it might bring about. Suddenly, she starts to cry, a reaction that surprises her. She hears footsteps coming toward her bedroom. It is Dido.

Dido suggests that she and Angela get up early and have a breakfast picnic as a change of pace from the usual mundane morning routine, where "early morning was a time for arguments and recrimination and blaming each other . . ." Dido sets the table on the veranda with an antique tablecloth, apple and orange juices, cereal and milk. Over breakfast, Dido interrogates Angela about where she was the previous night, and what time she had gotten in. Angela confesses, quite nonchalantly, that she had gone to The Gladstone to hear a band, and that she and Robin then went to the Victoria Coffee Club. A discussion ensues about whether loud music is a good thing or a bad thing. Dido claims that it is a test only of stamina, not of intelligence, and then changes the subject to the beautiful day that is unfolding before them.

Soon, the topic turns back to the previous night. Dido asks Angela if she drank too much when she was out with Robin. This angers Angela, who accuses her mother of masterminding the special breakfast as a means through which to "inquisit" her about her activities the previous night. Dido defends herself, saying that she merely worries about her daughter. She says she worries about Angela driving on the winding road that leads to their house. Dido feels the road "wants blood." More than that, Dido is worried about the car giving out on that road, especially when it is not insured.

Angela explodes at her mother after this comment, accusing Dido of preferring to live her life with difficulties and inefficiencies. Angela knows her mother will not insure the car, and believes this to be because Dido would rather have to go through the trouble of fixing the car if it gets broken than do the usual, expecting thing by getting the car insured. Dido refutes the point, but Angela continues to give examples of this trait in her mother. Angela points out that Dido could afford to renovate their house so that one does not have to go outside to pass from room to room, and that she could afford to have a septic tank put in so that they would not have to use the outdoor washroom facilities. In response to this, Dido says simply, "I'm so used to it, I forget it can be



changed." Angela is not buying it. She believes that her mother clings to disadvantages because she is so used to them, that the struggles she has had to endure are now ingrained in her being.

This turns the conversation toward Tycho, who shares Angela's view of why Dido does not make the effort to improve their lifestyle. Dido asks Angela why she does not date Tycho. Dido views Tycho as a safer match for Angela, saying that she would worry less about her daughter if she knew she was out with Tycho. Angela responds that she wants "lightheartedness" in a mate. For her, Tycho is too serious. At the same time, however, Angela recalls Tycho's advice regarding Roland, wherein he had advised her to "write him off." To Angela, this shows a different - and more attractive - side of Tycho.

Angela and Dido pack up the car and head into town, ready to start another day. Along the way, Angela questions her mother about why she doesn't forbid her to stay out late, or to frequent places that are perhaps inappropriate. She asks Dido why she doesn't do what a responsible mother would do. Dido says she stopped giving advice and being motherly because it caused fights between the two of them.

As they travel down Dry Creek road, they start to talk about the road itself. Dido says that the road seems like a "more powerful force than a mere road," recalling all the times she and Angela have traveled this treacherous road toward their quirky home. This prompts Angela to ask why they were so poor while she was growing up if, as Dido had said, Roland was paying child support. Dido explains that he paid only what he could, which wasn't much. "There weren't any government benefits," she explains.

They proceed into town, and Dido drops Angela off at Tycho's place. Angela and Tycho have plans to participate in "a noble anti-litter thing in the park." As they drive, Angela begins to think once again about her plan to confront her father that day.

Chapter 7, A Road of Blood and Flowers Analysis

Angela has decided to take her quest for a relationship with her father to the next level. She wants to "call him by name." In deciding to do this, Angela is resolving to confront her father in a way that will force him to acknowledge - or reject - her. Either way, she hopes to gain insight into the kind of man he is. At the same time, Angela will discover whether her mother has been entirely truthful with her about Roland. In sum, Angela seeks to create her own version of the truth about her father.

This chapter reveals a great deal about Dido as a person, a parent, and about her relationship with Angela, beginning with the special breakfast she prepares for Angela. The fact that Dido decides to make an event of the morning meal on this particular day is immediately suspect to Angela - and rightfully so. Dido wants to talk to her daughter about some sensitive things, and it appears that she thinks the special breakfast will make Angela more willing to talk. The "motherliness" of this breakfast, the maternal need to provide for her child, a desire to make the mundane into the special, and the subsequent discussion about Angela's whereabouts the previous night are out of



character for Dido, to both the reader and to Angela. Generally, Dido relates to Angela more as a roommate than a parent. Because Dido's behavior on this particular day stands in stark contrast to her usual persona, Angela is prompted to ask Dido why she doesn't forbid her to go out to certain places or require her to be home. In other words, why does she want to be parental now, asking Angela where she was the previous night and offering advice, when she generally plays a very hands-off role in Angela's upbringing? Angela hated when her mother would give her advice. In Angela's eyes, it was a feeble attempt to be parental when generally Dido had not made any such attempts before.

This question, or rather Dido's response to it, brings to the forefront two of Dido's most defining personality traits. Dido responds that she does not "nag" Angela about where she is going, etc., because doing so only caused arguments in the past. Dido does not like conflict. She would rather let Angela parent herself, in a sense, than risk fighting with her daughter and making their living situation tense. Further, Dido explains that she enjoys the solitude that their arrangement has afforded her. Dido is a loner. She has chosen a house at the end of a treacherous road, where they do not receive visitors. Even when she and her daughter are having breakfast together, each woman is reading - a very solitary activity. Dido and Angela are very similar beings in this respect, although Angela is much more social than Dido could ever be.

Dido's eccentricities are revealed, too, in her superstitions about Dry Creek Road. Dido sees the road as alive, like a creature seeking to capture a victim. It is this belief that makes Dido nervous about allowing Angela to travel this road by herself. Angela's response to her mother's fear indicates that this is not the first time Dido has expressed a strange idea such as this. To Angela, these crazy ideas are simply a part of her mother.

Angela reveals to the reader her feelings about Tycho in this chapter. Her mother, who clearly thinks Tycho would be a suitable mate for Angela, asks her why she doesn't date him. Angela responds that she wants "lightheartedness" in a mate. This answer reveals something both about Angela's personality and about Tycho's. She wants someone who does not like life so seriously, someone who rolls with the punches, so to speak. Tycho is clearly not that person. He is book-smart, intellectual, and reasonable. She wants someone more flighty, in a sense. Essentially, Angela wants someone like herself.



Chapter 8, Events Are the Stuff of the World

Chapter 8, Events Are the Stuff of the World Summary

It is the same day as in chapter 7. Angela meets up with Tycho and tells him of her plan to visit her father at his business. As Angela may have expected, Tycho does not like the idea, but Angela tries to defend herself by saying that she only wants to hear him say her name, and nothing more. Tycho knows his friend too well to accept this excuse, and he calls her on it. Tycho knows that Angela is kidding herself and is trying to convince herself that this is all she wants from Roland. He knows that once she reaches this milestone in getting to know her father, she will want more and more. He tries to talk her out of going to his office.

Not content to be diverted from her task, Angela says if she doesn't have Tycho's support on the matter, she will just come back another day without him and meet her father then. Knowing this to be true, Tycho relents and agrees to wait while Angela goes into Roland's office. He finds a parking spot and begins to read a book while he waits for her.

The chapter ends with Angela getting out of the car and heading toward Roland Chase Agencies.

Chapter 8, Events Are the Stuff of the World Analysis

This very short chapter (five pages) serves as a kind of "intermission" in the story. The plot is not significantly furthered in this chapter, except that Tycho is now aware of Angela's plan and he is her means through which to arrive at Roland's office. This chapter does, however, further develop the characters of Angela and Tycho and the relationship between the two of them.

However, from the very beginning of this chapter - in fact from the chapter title itself - it is clear that it is going to contain something important to the story, and it does. Although Angela had decided in the previous chapter to meet her father, she now includes Tycho in the plan. In revealing her plan to her friend, Angela is making the plan more resolute. She is bringing her intentions from hypothetical to reality, which is in itself a big step toward making it happen.

Tycho's attempts to talk Angela out of pursuing her plan to meet Roland is indicative of his affectionate feelings toward her (he does not want to see her get hurt). There is something else at work here, too. Up until this point in the story, Tycho has had the lion's share of Angela's attention, perhaps only secondary to her boyfriend, Robin (although even that point is debatable). He wants to maintain this hold on her attention. By "allowing" her to seek a relationship with her father, Tycho is, in a sense, allowing



himself to be replaced. He is essentially creating his own competition for her attentions and affections. Tycho has been the only male constant in Angela's life, and his reluctance to have her meet Roland face to face is at once a fear of her being rejected and a fear of his role in her life being replaced.

Tycho will not let Angela go through with her plan without first forcing her to be honest with herself. He knows that despite what she claims are her intentions, Angela will want more from her father once she hears him say her name (the only thing she claims she is seeking). In imploring Angela to face the truth about her intentions, Tycho is speaking the thoughts of the reader: Angela is kidding herself into thinking that she "only" wants a certain thing from her father when in reality she would take as much as he would be willing to give her.

Tycho knows his friend very well, however. When she says that she will just come back another day without his support, he relents and agrees to wait outside for her while she goes in to meet him. This same instance illustrates Angela's understanding of how Tycho's mind works. She knows that he will not want her to go through this experience alone, and that her threat to come back another day would make him give in.

The book that Tycho reads while he waits for Angela symbolizes the overriding theme of this chapter, as well as the origin of the chapter title itself: that our lives are composed of a series of events, a chain of instances that somehow link together to form the days, weeks, and years. Significant events like Angela being proactive in meeting her father are the milestones that change the way the rest of our lives turn out.



Chapter 9, Foreign Relations

Chapter 9, Foreign Relations Summary

Angela enters her father's office building, which she describes as an "elegant warehouse." Noticing that his office is upstairs, she proceeds in that direction. Once inside the reception area of the office, a receptionist in a pink pantsuit, who looks "like a long, delicious pink drink with rich cream on top," greets her. Angela asks to see Roland, and is told that he is in his office with someone. The receptionist asks her if she wants to wait, and Angela decides that she will, but only for a little while.

While she waits for Roland to be finished with his appointment, Angela takes a seat in the waiting area. There, she notices the receptionist stealing glances at her - she can see the resemblance between Roland and this stranger sitting in the waiting room.

Soon, Roland emerges from an inner office and immediately spots Angela. He begrudgingly indulges Angela's request for a few minutes of his time, and the two go into his office. Roland knows who she is instantly: "I suppose you're Dido May's child, are you?" His demeanor does not get any warmer from there. "Get it off your chest - whatever it is, and then please, please leave me alone," he barks.

Angela is taken aback by this response, and makes a defensive move: she says she wants nothing from him. Roland is incredulous at this response, saying that that he would "hope not." He does not expect Angela to want anything, and even if she did, it is clear he would not be willing to give it. More than that, Roland insinuates that there is no proof of their biological connection. He is not the only red-haired man in town, he says, and implies that Dido may have been somewhat promiscuous in her youth.

Angela tries to appeal to Roland's sense of decency. She tells him that they were very poor when she was young, despite the money he sent to them. This prompts Roland to disclose that he never sent them any money while she was growing up - evidently, Dido had not been telling the truth about that. As they continue to talk, Roland reveals to Angela that, despite what Angela had assumed, he is not married and has no children. He was married, briefly, a few years earlier, but is now single.

Angela begins to reminisce about the struggles she has endured in her life, because of him being an absent father. Suddenly, Roland's affect changes. He becomes less defensive, and more sympathetic to the life Angela has had to lead. In an attempt to lessen the load, he tries to convince her that he "wouldn't have been an asset" to her life and that she was actually better off having Dido as her only parent. Angela resolves not to show weakness in front of Roland, even despite the shocking news she has just received. She will keep her emotions to herself.

Roland and Angela discuss the version of the relationship between Roland and Dido that Angela had come to accept as truth. Just then, their discussion is interrupted by a



visit from Roland's mother, who demands that her son drive her to "the Robinson's house," and that he stay for a drink. Not wanting to explain to his mother who Angela is, Roland dismisses his daughter with the words; "I don't think we need to talk about any of this anymore. You must go."

She will not, however, be dismissed that easily. Angela turns to Roland's mother and says, "He sounds like a real jerk, and that's what he is." Now, Roland had no choice but to make the introduction, which he chooses to do by saying that Angela is Dido May's daughter. Angela is even more puzzled his next words, however. Roland turns to his mother and says, "However, you'll know all about that, won't you?" She is further shocked by the revelation that Roland's mother, this grandmother she has never met, is also named Angela. All of this is too much for her to handle. She runs out into the street.

As she walks toward Tycho's car, Angela decides to phone her mother. She tells Dido that she has met her father, and Angela responds with silence. Angela is furious with her mother over the lies she has told her about her father. In anger, Angela tells Dido she doesn't want any parents and hangs up the phone.

Angela is still in the phone booth when Tycho approaches, wanting to know what is wrong. She does not want to tell Tycho what happened, but eventually she relents and tells him that he was right about her father, and that she has just had a fight with her mother. Tycho offers to take Angela home, but she wants him to "leave [her] to wobble off on [her] own" for a while. She needs to be alone to absorb the magnitude of what has just happened. Desperate to make Angela feel better, Tycho blurts out that her mother loves her and that he is crazy about her. Angela's response is tainted by anger: "What do you want me to do? Blush and fall all over you? Forget it."

Tycho gives Angela ten dollars and tells her to take a taxi home since she will not go with him. He gets in his car and drives away. Angela follows him on foot until he is finally out of sight.

Chapter 9, Foreign Relations Analysis

Angela's entire world comes crashing down around her in this chapter. Until now, she has had a certain understanding of the way in which her parents parted, and of Roland's monetary involvement in her life as a child. In one visit to his office, her reality is fundamentally and permanently changed. She learns that he does not want to be a part of her life. He wants her simply to go away. In telling her to go away, Roland is forcing Angela to face the truth of what her relationship with her father is going to be. He eliminates any ambiguity about his feelings. Prior to this meeting, Angela could fantasize that the meeting could go any way she wanted. Now, however, the reality of it hits her square in the face. He did not and does not want to be a father to her.

In that same moment, Angela knows that Tycho was right about Roland. This realization is another way in which her perception of reality is shaken in this chapter. More than just the fact that her father does not want to be a part of her life, Angela also has to face the



fact that perhaps Tycho knows her better than even she knows herself. Angela is forced to see the value in Tycho's introspective and analytical nature. Had she listened to him, she may have been spared the pain of knowing the truth.

The truth about Roland and Angela's relationship also stands in stark contrast to what Angela has been led to believe. Dido told her that Roland could not be a part of their lives because of his wife and kids. This, in some way, equated in Angela's mind (as was Dido's intention) to mean that Roland was a loyal and virtuous man, not willing to ruin his "real" family. Instead of participating in raising her, Angela thought, he paid Dido money to help in raising Angela. This, too, turns out to be untrue. Dido wanted to protect Angela from the harsh reality: Roland did not even acknowledge Angela as his own and has played no role, financial or otherwise. Despite whatever Dido feels about Roland, she wanted Angela to have a favorable perception of him. There was, in her opinion, no need to make Angela dislike a man she did not know.

Roland forces Angela to consider the possibility that she is not his child, despite the marked physical resemblance between them. Even his choice of words indicates a refusal to accept her. He refers to her several times as "Dido May's child." The formality with which he refers to Dido is a verbal attempt to distance himself from Dido and, consequently, from Angela. Even if he is her biological father, his choice to refer to Angela as Dido's child sends a clear message that she is not, in any meaningful way, his.

In insinuating that perhaps he is not her father, Roland is both denying the obvious truth of the situation and trying to taint Angela's perception of her mother. He tries to make Angela believe that Dido was promiscuous, in an attempt to avoid being the "bad parent." If Dido had lied about Roland having paid them support and about his family, perhaps she also lied about Angela's paternity? If the blame could be deflected onto Dido, the spotlight would temporarily be off of Roland.

Angela's world is further turned upside down when Roland's mother interrupts their conversation. Not only does she meet her father on this day, she also meets his mother - her grandmother. She instantly goes from only having only her mother as family, to having a father who does not want her, to having a grandmother. She is further shocked to find out that Roland's mother is named Angela as well, and that she evidently knew about her. She has been rejected not only by Roland but also by her grandmother, Angela.

Angela is unable to handle the barrage of new truths to which she is exposed during her visit with Roland, and she runs out into the street, a literal and metaphorical escape. She is unable to handle the fact that her father is neither the man she fantasized him to be nor the man Dido had encourage Angela to believe he was. Further, Angela now has to face the reality that Dido lied to her about Roland. She cannot see yet that Dido did it for her protection. Dido did not think there would ever come a time when Angela would want to meet her father, so the vision of him she created for Angela would remain true in Angela's mind forever. Now that she has met Roland, however, Angela wants nothing to



do with Dido. She would rather have no parents than have a mother who lied to her and a father who does not want anything to do with her.

At the end of the chapter, Tycho gives Angela ten dollars to get home. The significance of this gesture is not immediately clear, but the reader learns later that this money was supposed to go towards the purchase of an anniversary gift for Africa. Clearly, Tycho's priorities lay with Angela, not his sister. It is more important to him to ensure Angela's safety than to purchase a gift to commemorate a marriage he knows is doomed to fail. When asked later by his mother what he bought for Africa, however, Tycho does not reveal what happened to the money. Instead, he simply says he didn't think of getting the gift, and that he'd get it the following day.



Chapter 10, Mrs. Potter Rolls a Cigarette

Chapter 10, Mrs. Potter Rolls a Cigarette Summary

After driving away from Angela, Tycho does not go straight home. Instead, he drives into the hills, wanting to be alone with his thoughts for a while. Eventually, he makes his way home, where he finds his family discussing the type of booze they should take to Africa's anniversary party. Richard and Mr. Potter go to the nearest liquor store to make the final decisions, leaving Tycho and Mrs. Potter alone in the kitchen.

Tycho tells his mother he does not want to attend Africa's party that night because there is an "occultation of two of Jupiter's moons" that he wants to see. Mrs. Potter protests Tycho's attitude, but Tycho persists. Besides, he says, he doesn't have a present for Africa. With that, he is forced to confess that he gave to Angela the \$10 his mother gave him to buy a present for his sister. This revelation infuriates Mrs. Potter, who angrily exclaims that her family thinks of no one but themselves. While stewing in her anger and disgust, Mrs. Potter begins to roll a cigarette.

After a few minutes, the tension dies and the conversation turns to a discussion of Angela, and of the nature of love. Mrs. Potter tries to reassure her son, whom she knows has romantic feelings for Angela, a girl she does not like. She tells Tycho that everyone falls for an unsuitable person at some point in his life, and that his feelings for Angela will pass. Anyway, she says, Angela is only using him. Tycho becomes defiant, insisting that Angela genuinely likes him. He further explains that something bigger than all of them has brought Tycho and Angela together as friends. "It's a sort of doom," he explains.

Tycho decides to delve further into the topic of love and relationship with his mother. He asks her "What if only one person is in love?" He wants to hear his mother's theory about whether love is only "half as beautiful" in this instance as she insists it is when both people are in love. Mrs. Potter takes Tycho's question to be an attempt at being "smart," and dismisses the issue out of hand. Tycho, however, persists. He tries to paint a picture for his mother, in words, that would convey to her how profound an effect Angela has had on his life, from the very first day of school when they met.

Tycho knows Angela is in a different league than he. Nevertheless, he is content to be her friend. Mrs. Potter says that Tycho has always been "one of the clever ones," implying that the division between him and Angela is one based on academia. Tycho, however, observes, "most people would want to be beautiful rather than clever though." To him, the line between Angela and himself is based on her beauty and his relative lack of it. Mrs. Potter will not allow her son to think of himself in those terms, and she tries to convince him that beauty is only skin deep, to which Tycho responds that that is "more than deep enough."



The conversation begins to get more heated, with Mrs. Potter pointing out Angela's flaws and Tycho coming up with an excuse for each criticism his mother offers. Finally, Mrs. Potter acquiesces and, with a pat on Tycho's arm, she ends the discussion by saying, "Life's a real old puzzle, isn't it?"

Mr. Potter and Richard return from the store and are engrossed in an argument about Richard's failure to heed a yield sign. Ever since Mr. Potter had lost his driving privileges, he becomes agitated at not being in control of the family car.

Meanwhile, Tycho and his mother are involved in a conversation about happiness. Tycho insists that the quest for happiness is a battle against the universe, not a "smooth and serene" state such as his mother suggests. He cites a book entitled *Catalogue of the Universe*, in which there is not a single mention of the notion of happiness. There are, he points out, two mentions of Tycho - a crater on the moon and a star called Tycho's Star. This prompts Tycho to ask his mother about the origin of his name. Why did she decide to give him this name? Mrs. Potter reveals that she found the name in a magazine she read while at the doctor's office. Realizing the connection between his name and the mention of it in his book, Tycho wishes he had been named something more associated with being suave with the ladies, like Casanova. When his mother insists that such an unusual name would have been troublesome for Tycho at school, he is quick to point out that the famous lover was also a librarian. It is "just his luck" to have gotten stuck with the librarian part without having been bestowed the flair for romance to go with it.

Richard presents their purchases to his mother: a carton containing three liters of wine and another bottle of wine, complete with a gold top, as requested by his mother. While the rest of the family prepares to go to Angela's party, Tycho can think only of whether Angela has gotten herself home safely.

Chapter 10, Mrs. Potter Rolls a Cigarette Analysis

This is the first time the reader sees Tycho interacting with only his mother, an effect that offers further insight into each character. Mrs. Potter's decision to roll a cigarette is jarring to the reader because it seems out of character for a "proper" woman to smoke. The fact that she rolls her own, however, seems to temper this by adding a degree of virtue to the act, however small. It is not something new for Tycho to see his mother do this, however, because he does not remark about the act. Tycho is an outspoken boy on many issues, and if this act was something he had not previously seen his mother do, it is likely he would have spoken up about it.

In preferring to stay at home and look at the stars rather than attending Africa's anniversary party, Tycho is showing his priorities to the reader. He would rather spend time examining things he knows to be true and real, such as science and astronomy, than pretend to support Africa's marriage. Tycho better relates to scientific concepts and phenomena than to his family. Mrs. Potter's only slight degree of opposition to Tycho's decision indicates that, on some level, she believes this to be true of her son. Perhaps,



too, she believes that Africa's marriage is a farce. Perhaps she can see the absurdity of attending a party in celebration of a marriage that only the day before was all but over.

Mrs. Potter's feelings toward Angela are made clear when Tycho confesses that he has spent the money for Africa's gift on Angela. Mrs. Potter views Angela as a paradox: Angela is both out of Tycho's league romantically and is also, in many ways, beneath them. She is further infuriated by Tycho's having given Angela the money because, in her view, it is an action typical of her family, who she believes thinks only of themselves. This revelation gives the reader insight into how Mrs. Potter really feels about her family and, more specifically, her own role in the family. After her husband's accident, Mrs. Potter has had to take over the role of caregiver to both her children and to her husband. This remark reveals a degree of resentment toward her family for putting her in this situation.

This chapter also reveals further truth about Tycho's feelings about Angela. When Mrs. Potter tries to dissuade Tycho from his romantic feelings about Angela, he is quick to defend her. Mrs. Potter feels that Tycho is being used by Angela, and worries for her son's emotional safety. Tycho, on the other hand, believes that a higher power brought he and Angela together as friends: something that he cannot and should not fight. Tycho believes that the universe works to bring people together - all kinds of people. Mrs. Potter, in contrast, takes a much more pragmatic approach to relationships. When Tycho asks his mother if a situation in which one person's love is unrequited by its object is only half as beautiful as shared love, Mrs. Potter avoids the question, simply dismissing the issue. Her viewpoint does not have room for such a situation, and she cannot answer her son's question.

This polarity between Tycho's view of the world and that of his mother is also evidenced when Tycho asks his mother about the origin of his name. She reveals that she read it in a magazine at the doctor's office. Tycho, who had read the name in *Catalogue of the Universe*, had hoped for a more romantic story behind the selection of his name - perhaps having been named after an ancestor who had done something remarkable. The reality of where he got his name reaffirms in Tycho's mind his station in life: he is destined to be plain, reasonable, clever Tycho. Still, he holds on to romantic notions about the world, including the possibility of something more than friendship between him and Angela.

At the end of the chapter, despite the familial drama that swirls around Tycho, he can think only of Angela. His mother's criticisms of Angela have not achieved her goal. Tycho's thoughts still remain with Angela and he can only think of whether she has gotten home safely, indicating that his priorities lie with Angela more so even than with his own family.



Chapter 11, Midnight Appointments

Chapter 11, Midnight Appointments Summary

Tycho finds himself alone in the house, as the rest of the family has gone to Africa's party. He is uncomfortable with the silence that is surrounding him, and decides to call Angela. When Dido answers, however, Tycho is shocked to learn that Angela has not yet come home. Dido had already called Tycho earlier to ask him if he had seen Angela. Apparently, they surmise, Mrs. Potter had opted not to give Tycho the message. During their conversation, Dido confronts Tycho with a very pointed question: did he know that Angela had gone to see her father? Tycho states that, although he did know about Angela's plan to confront her father, he only learned of it that afternoon. Dido confesses to Tycho that she is worried that Angela might not have returned home because she is hurt, insinuating that she might injure herself intentionally because "it's romantic to write yourself off under certain circumstances." The conversation ends with each promising to phone the other if they hear anything from Angela.

Tycho takes out a primitive telescope that he had built with his father. He gathers the telescope and his copy of *Catalogue of the Universe* out onto the porch, where he studies Jupiter and its moons, marveling at how Amalthea, the innermost moon, is always more red than the others. To him, this is an "irrational variation."

At midnight, Tycho decides to go back inside. As he carries the telescope indoors, the phone rings. Expecting to hear Angela's voice (or at least Dido's, telling him Angela had come home safely), Tycho is surprised to hear Richard's voice instead. Richard tells Tycho that their father has taken ill during their stay at Africa's house, and that they will be staying the night. As he hangs up the phone, Tycho is startled to see Angela standing behind him.

Chapter 11, Midnight Appointments Analysis

This chapter serves as a "bridge" between the previous and following chapters. A relatively short chapter, it also serves to create a sense that something important is going to happen in the following chapter, without revealing what that may be. Without this chapter, the story would not be sufficiently broken, the suspense inadequately created.

With the rest of his family gone to Africa's party, Tycho is alone in the family home. Despite being the kind of adolescent who is comfortable with solitary pursuits like reading or looking at the world through his telescope, Tycho finds himself uncomfortable with the silence that now surrounds him. The first person in whom he seeks comfort is Angela. There is no mention in the book of Tycho having other friends to whom he could turn, but the author creates a sense that it is Angela Tycho that he would have called, even if he did have other friends.



When Dido answers the phone at Angela's house, Tycho is stunned to find out that Angela is not home yet. This assumption that she would be home indicates a personality trait about Angela. Tycho assumed that, despite being upset about the day's events, Angela would have come to her senses by now and gone home. Her failure to do so is out of character for her, it seems. Dido's revelation that she had called Tycho's house earlier that evening asking for Angela solidifies Mrs. Potter's feelings about Angela. She did not want her son getting involved in Angela's affairs, and decided not to give Tycho the message in the hopes that she could, at least temporarily, keep Angela out of Tycho's life.

Dido did not know of Angela's plan to visit her father. Tycho's knowledge of something this significant, knowledge that even Angela's own mother did not have, indicates the type of relationship that exists both between Angela and Tycho and Angela and Dido. Angela could not confess her plan to her mother for fear of her reaction. At the same time, however, she knew Tycho would try to convince her not to execute her plan, although she needed his support to be able to get through her plan. Even when she had threatened to go back and meet her father without Tycho, there is a sense that this was not the option she truly wanted to pursue. She needed the support of her friend. Despite Tycho having knowledge that Dido does not, there is no desire on his part to keep Dido on the outside. He wants Dido to know what has happened with regard to Angela and Roland.

Before Tycho hangs up the phone, he tells Dido that he is alone in the house until late. It is, perhaps even subconsciously, an attempt to receive comfort. Perhaps if Dido knows that Tycho is alone she will take pity on him and be more likely to ensure Angela phones him when she returns home.

The phone call from Richard brings Tycho back into the present. Despite the fact that it is midnight and his family still has not arrived home, Tycho immediately assumes - hopes - that the call is from Angela. Richard's account of the evening's events serves to contrast "real life" against the cosmic world that Tycho was just examining through his telescope and with which he is so absorbed much of the time. Even though Tycho did not attend the anniversary party, he cannot truly escape real life and all of its peculiarities. Tycho is still a part of the Potter family.

Angela's sudden appearance in Tycho's house is full of symbolism. He first becomes aware of someone's presence, although not yet knowing it is she, when he hears his tripod being picked up from the spot where it had fallen when he scrambled for the phone. Once it is revealed that the person is Angela, the significance of this becomes evident: the telescope sprawled on the ground is symbolic of Tycho's world being out of order since Angela's whereabouts were unknown. When she sets the tripod right, making her presence known to Tycho, she is simultaneously setting right his world. He is no longer alone in the house, he is in the company of the one person he had called upon earlier to keep him company, and he knows that she is safe. Further, she is carrying his copy of *Catalogue of the Universe*, which he had left outside. This book contains information that Tycho takes as true and irrefutable - much like his friendship

with Angela. In depicting Angela carrying the book with her into the house, the author is bringing all of Tycho's truths back together. He is whole again.



Chapter 12, A Step Up in the World

Chapter 12, A Step Up in the World Summary

According to Tycho, Angela looks "disreputable." She asks Tycho for a tissue so that she may wipe her runny nose, and then asks Tycho if she may take a shower and borrow some of his clothes. Tycho tries desperately to keep his wits about him at the thought of Angela showering in his house. It is no use, however. Angela can see right through his attempts to veil his arousal. She plays on this knowledge by leaving the bathroom door slightly open while she showers.

While Angela is in the shower, Tycho fixes them a snack. For him, this "early morning domesticity" is something to which he could very easily get accustomed. Soon, Angela invites Tycho to sit on the edge of the bathtub while she washes her hair. She tells him not to be shy - he doesn't have to look at her. While he listens, Angela tells Tycho about the events of her evening. She has been at a bar called Haydon's, drinking "Fallen Angels." She continues to explain that she wanted to do something bad, something rebellious. She had left the bar with a guy who had been buying her drinks, but decided she cannot sleep with him because she doesn't love him.

Angela gets out of the shower and asks to borrow Tycho's toothbrush.

The two take their snack into his bedroom, at Angela's suggestion. While they eat, she tells him what happened when she visited Roland's office. Angela then makes another revelation to Tycho: she is still a virgin. She knows this is a surprise even to Tycho, who had always assumed she was sexually active with Robin and a couple of other boys. With that, Angela leaves the room, ostensibly to call her mother. She returns a moment later carrying a package. She had bought Tycho a present with the ten dollars he had given her. In the package was a t-shirt emblazoned with the words "The Ionions Rule!"

Suddenly, Angela declares that Tycho must never want another girl, just her. If he ever looked at another girl, she says, she'll kill her. Just as suddenly, she drops his copy of *Catalogue of the Universe* on the floor and tells Tycho to stand on it, quoting "Chance favors the prepared mind." Confused, Tycho complies. Now eye-to-eye with him, Angela throws her arms around Tycho and pulls him close to her. They kiss.

Tycho asks Angela to turn out the light, and she complies. Now in the dark, Tycho begins to remove Angela's clothes and they begin to explore each other's bodies.

Chapter 12, A Step Up in the World Analysis

Tycho has never seen Angela look the way she looks at the beginning of this chapter. She is far from the put-together, stylish, confident beautiful image she typically puts forth. Still, the way her clothes are clinging to her stirs within Tycho the same sexual attraction he feels for her when she is fully put together. To him, she is still stunning,



despite her disheveled appearance and the evidence that she has been crying. This vulnerability is, to him, a beautiful quality in her.

The limits of Tycho's tolerance for punishment are further tested when Angela asks if she may take a shower and borrow some clean clothes from him. Thoughts of her naked body being in his shower and of her wearing his clothes are almost too much for him to bear. Still, committed to maintaining an air of nonchalance, Tycho agrees without letting his true feelings betray him.

Tycho's need to adhere to a sense of rule and order, even those rules imposed by his mother and with which he may not necessarily agree, is evident in immediately calculation of when he is "allowed" to use clean towels. Angela understands Tycho's need for order and rules. She reassures him that it is already Saturday, and that he therefore will not be breaking any rules by allowing her to use a clean towel. This is the kind of intimate knowledge of - and acceptance of - a person's quirks. She does not question Tycho for his need to follow the rules or ridicule him; instead, she merely accepts him for who he is and does her best to allay any fears he may have.

Angela knows that Tycho has sexual feelings for him. This is evident in this chapter in Angela's choice of words. While she is in the shower, she asks Tycho to come sit on the edge of the tub while she washes her hair. He doesn't, she points out, have to look at her. In this one phrase, Angela is utilizing her knowledge of Tycho's feelings to her advantage: she knows he will not disobey her. At the same time, this phrase also signifies the very beginning of a turning point in the relationship between Tycho and Angela. She does not say, "And don't look at me." Instead, her choice of words is deliberate: "You don't have to look at me." There is an unspoken meaning here. While Angela is not overtly inviting Tycho to look at her body, she is coyly letting him - and the reader - know that she might be becoming open to the idea of having a physical relationship with Tycho. This change in Angela's perception of Tycho or in the possibilities of their relationship is further developed when Angela reveals to Tycho that she is still a virgin. Until now, she was content to have him believe that she had been sexually active with several of her boyfriends, including Robin, despite knowing this saddened Tycho and made him jealous. Now, however, she wants to convey to Tycho that she is not "spoiled" in that way, that she has not given herself to anyone in the way in which she, at the end of this chapter, gives herself to Tycho.

In having Tycho stand on his copy of *Catalogue of the Universe*, Angela is figuratively and literally assisting Tycho in seeing the situation in which they now find themselves from her perspective. Not only is he now physically eye to eye with her, but also in having her body pressed to him, her eyes staring deeply into his for what could be the first time, he is made aware of her intentions to take their relationship to a new level. Angela has finally found a use for the *Catalogue of the Universe*. Her quote, "Chance favors the prepared mind," hints that perhaps she had been thinking about taking this step for a while.

Finally, the transformation of their relationship is solidified by their lovemaking. It is not just the first time with each other; it is the first time for each of them, ever. They will be forever changed after this night, both separately and together.



Chapter 13, A Leap into the Abyss

Chapter 13, A Leap into the Abyss Summary

Early the next morning, Tycho wakes up with Angela sleeping beside him. He falls asleep once again, and when he awakens for a second time, he finds Angela awake, too. Angela had forgotten to call Dido the previous night! Tycho leaps out of bed and rings Dido's number. There is no answer. Not content that her mother should not be home at that hour, Angela tries the number again and again, no response. Angela needs to get home, but Tycho's family has taken the car to Africa's and, being Saturday, there are no buses until later in the day. They decide to walk.

They make a pot of tea and tidy the house before leaving to walk Angela home. Soon, they are on their way. Along the way, Tycho is a new person, jubilant from the previous night's events. Angela is pleased at the change in Tycho. Moreover, she is pleased that she had been the instrument of that change. She smiles as she watches him become The New Tycho.

After walking for a while, they spot Dido's car coming toward them, down Dry Creek Road. Suddenly, in a terrifying moment, the car veers off the bridge and plummets to the ground below with a "crash of metal, bruising and mangling." Angela lets out a blood-curdling scream and runs toward the spot where the car has taken this dreadful fall.

Chapter 13, A Leap into the Abyss Analysis

Tycho awakens a changed man the morning after having sexual intercourse with Angela. Not only has he just experienced his first sexual experience, but also it was with Angela, his best friend and the long-time object of his affections. This chapter signifies both the end of Tycho and Angela's search for belonging and the bridging of the gap between their respective worlds. They are now forever joined in the moment they shared together the previous night.

Tycho no longer views himself as awkward and as someone Angela would pay no attention to in a romantic way. On this morning, after their first sexual encounter, Tycho is a changed person. He has been brought out of his cerebral past and is beginning to feel more fully things with his heart and body. At the same time, Angela enjoys watching the change emerge in Tycho, and she feels partly responsible for his transformation.

As though they are already a couple, Angela begins trying to further the transformation in Tycho by suggesting that he change his hair and his clothes. Tycho, although he is unquestionably changed by the previous night's events, is content to remain his old self in many ways. He does not want to change. His practical side is still not completely erased. For example, when Angela suggests that he get rid of his vinyl jacket, Tycho protests the sensibility of that suggestion, citing that the jacket is still perfectly useable.



The world no longer "wobbles" for Tycho. Everything is in alignment. He has successfully attained the level of intimacy he sought with Angela. He has become the person his younger self could never that anticipated he could be. For the first time, Tycho is living his life outside of a book.

There is a change in Angela in this chapter, too, concerning her attitude toward her mother. The previous night, Angela had been furious with her mother about the Roland situation. When Angela called Dido from the payphone that evening, she told Dido that she would rather have no parents at all. However, when she sees the car careen off the road ahead, she instantly worries that it is Dido. Frantic, she runs toward the car to help her mother. This reaction clearly indicates a connection between Angela and her mother, despite her words and actions the previous night. This is further reinforced through Angela's inconsolability even after she realizes her mother is okay. She realizes that it *could* have been her, even if this time it was not.



Chapter 14, The Dragon's Cave

Chapter 14, The Dragon's Cave Summary

Angela runs down the bank to where the car lay crumpled and broken. Tycho follows, slightly behind her, taking a more cautious approach to the decline. As they approach the car, they hear a man's painful moan coming from inside the car. At that moment, Angela realizes, with relief, that it is "the Cherrys," and not her mother in the car. Still, they need to help whomever it is. Tycho runs ahead of Angela, who is no longer propelled by "her most personal fear." At the site of the accident, Phil Cherry is sitting in the brush, cradling his injured arm. He yells for Tycho and Angela to help his brother, Jerry, who is still trapped inside the mangled car. The car is still oozing gasoline, but Tycho knows he has to help Jerry escape danger, despite Angela's pleas to stay away, that it is too late.

Tycho crawls on his hands and knees toward the car. Finding Jerry's arm, he pulls but is unable to move Jerry. Suddenly, Tycho feels someone's arms around his waist, helping him pull Jerry to safety. Through an explosion of fire and black fog, Jerry is pulled away from the car, which is now engulfed in flame. Angela and Tycho drag Jerry's limp body into the brush, as far away from the car as possible.

As they watch the car explode, they assess the extent of Jerry's injuries. Noticing that Jerry is bleeding terribly, they scramble to find something to make a tourniquet. Tycho frantically removes his t-shirt, the present from Angela, and holds it against Jerry's wounds. Angela decides they need to call an ambulance, and that her house, although it is a good distance away, is probably the closest phone to where they are. Angela offers to run up the hill to her house. Just then, Tycho hears a car coming toward them. The car stops and someone gets out, looking down at them. It is Dido.

Chapter 14, The Dragon's Cave Analysis

This chapter is very short, serving once again as a kind of literary "deep breath" between the chapters that surround it. The chapter is, nonetheless, an important one, revealing much about the evolution of the characters and the relationships between them.

Tycho's transformation is made even more evident in this chapter. When he learns that the Cherry boy is trapped inside the car, he does not think twice about putting himself in danger in order to save him. Even at Angela's pleadings, he ventures forward to free the boy from the car, which is on the verge of explosion. Glimmers of the old Tycho still remain, however. When Angela scrambles down the hill toward the car, Tycho follows, too, but he is most reserved, more cautious in his approach. This is symbolic of the pair's approaches to romance and to life: Angela has lived life in the fast lane, making her own rules. Tycho, on the other hand, has approached life in an analytical way,



internalizing decisions before making them. His trepidation and need to ensure his safety while trying to descend the hill is an outward expression of this.

He further exhibits his ability to think fast and to come through in a clutch when he uses his t-shirt, a gift from Angela, to stop Jerry's bleeding. As much as the t-shirt had meant to him, Tycho is able to rise to the occasion and do what is necessary in the moment. This action is also symbolic of the deepening of Tycho's relationship with Tycho. He does not need the materialistic symbols of their connection; they shared something much deeper the previous night.



Chapter 15, Three-Minute Hero

Chapter 15, Three-Minute Hero Summary

Dido runs down the hill toward them. Still reeling from the realization that it was not, in fact, her mother in the crashed-up car, Angela cries out to her mother. The sight of her mother reassures Angela further that she is safe.

Dido kneels beside Jerry. Someone has seen the accident and has already called an ambulance. She asks Phil if he was okay, and Phil explains that he had fallen out of the car - they were not wearing seatbelts. Dido offers to take over holding the t-shirt over Jerry's wounds, but Angela steps in. Seeing her daughter is still visibly shaken, Dido intervenes and takes over while Angela uses Phil's knife to cut off his own shirt. In the distance, the whine of the ambulance could be heard.

While they wait for the ambulance, Tycho tells Dido that they had phoned her the night before, and Dido confesses to having grown tired of waiting for them to call. She had gone outside for a walk, which, she surmises, is likely why she did not hear the call.

After a few minutes, the ambulance still has not arrived, and Jerry's condition is worsening. As they wait, Phil recounts the details of the accident. Soon, the screech of the ambulance can be heard overhead, where the vehicle parks "nose to nose" with Dido's car. Two attendants scramble down the hill toward the injured men. While the attendants care for Jerry and Phil, Angela once again tells Dido that she thought it had been Dido in the accident, not the Cherry boys. Still shaken, she tells Dido she wants to go home, and she begins to cry.

Dido tells the paramedics that theirs is the nearest phone, and asks if they should phone the police. After being reassured that they need not do anything further, Dido and Angela head for home, Angela slinging a promise over her shoulder to call Tycho.

A tow truck arrives to take the smashed car away, although Tycho cannot imagine what use it would be to anyone now. The police arrive just as the two injured men are being taken up the hill to the ambulance, with the assistance of the tow-truck driver. Suddenly, Tycho becomes aware of someone beside him, asking him if he is all right. As a precaution, Tycho is taken in the ambulance as well, to be checked out for damage from the blast.

Some time later, Tycho is once again back at home, wearing clothes that are not his own. He is carrying his own clothes in a bag. As Tycho opens the gate to his house Hamish, his nephew, greets him. Tycho picks up the child and begins to walk toward the house. The two are met by Richard, who declares that the family has "just had the most incredible twenty-four hours."

Once they are inside the kitchen, Tycho realizes that his prediction has come true: Africa has left Hudson and has returned home to her parents' house.



Suddenly noticing that Tycho is wearing strange, foreign clothing, and that his hair is singed, the family asks Tycho what has happened to him, to which Tycho responds simply "It's a long story." With that, he goes to his bedroom to clean himself up. He will regale the family with the story of the accident once he is more presentable. For now, he simply wants to get washed and into his own clothes.

Richard follows Tycho into his bedroom, where Tycho asks his brother if Hudson was having an affair on Africa. Richard reveals that in fact, Africa is the one having the affair. She has, Richard explains, fallen in love with a university professor. Tycho is astonished by the news. Richard proceeds to tell Tycho about the events of the past twenty-four hours. There was a terrible fight at Africa's house the night before, just before Richard had called to say they would be spending the night. During the anniversary party, Africa's "fling" called the house and Hudson answered the phone. Furious, Hudson had begun packing up a few of his belongings and left when his mother came to pick him up. Afterwards, Africa had phoned the professor, who came around to the house and with whom Africa sat in the car until after 3 am.

The topic turns to what Tycho has been doing for the past day. His story is cut off before it begins by the sound of Africa feverishly defending herself to her parents. Just then, Tycho and Richard see who they assume to be Hudson's lawyer walking up the drive. Tycho soon learns that the man is, in fact, from the local newspaper. He has brought with him a photographer. Mrs. Potter tells Tycho she doesn't want such people coming around the house, and Tycho tells her to send them away. Africa, however, comes running down the hall into Tycho's room, declaring that Tycho's public is waiting. Apparently, she has let the reporter in and has heard the story of her brother's bravery. Africa pleads to her mother to let Tycho talk to them - they don't, after all, want to talk about Africa's marriage. They are here to talk to Tycho. Africa ushers Tycho out of the room and toward his destiny as a "three-minute hero."

Chapter 15, Three-Minute Hero Analysis

Angela exhibits in this chapter the most extreme degree of emotion toward her mother. When she realized that the person trapped inside the car was not Dido, a sense of relief washed over her. However, upon seeing her mother for the first time after this realization, a new emotion comes upon her: she is shaken by the realization that it *could* have been Dido. The only family she has could have been lost in an instant. It is this reality that Angela cannot get over.

Angela's reaction to the events in the chapter reveal, too, her feelings of guilt about the way she had treated her mother, both in the phone call the previous night and during their tumultuous lifelong relationship. Had the person in the car actually been Dido, the last words Angela had spoken to her mother would have been to express that she did not want any parents at all. Angela's inability to contain her emotions is the result of a lifetime of suppressing her true feelings. Recently, she had experienced a whirlwind of new emotions, from meeting her father and learning the truth about him to her newfound feelings for Tycho. In this chapter, all of those feelings come bubbling to the surface.



In this chapter, Dido's premonition about the road has come true. Earlier in the story, Dido expresses concern about Angela's driving on Dry Creek Road, saying that the road was looking for blood. Jerry is the road's eventual victim.

As Tycho watches Angela walk away with her mother, he is a changed man. His standing on the physical *Catalogue of the Universe* is a symbol of the new perspective he has gained over the previous day and night. More than just being sexually initiated, Tycho is now experiencing a requiting of the love his has felt for Angela for as long as he can remember.

When Tycho returns home after a stint in the emergency room, he is in another man's clothes, literally and symbolically. The events of the previous day have forever changed him. He is now a person he does not recognize, and the borrowed clothes he is wearing are an outward symbol of this change. When he approaches his house, Tycho's world comes crashing into the events that have happened to his other family members during his absence. The author brings into focus the fact that, although the previous couple of chapters have focused only on Tycho, the rest of the Potter family has undergone a shift in the balance of their lives as well.

When the reporter shows up at the Potters' door, the family assumes it is someone who has come to talk to Africa about her divorce (an interesting choice of words, as Africa had only just left her husband that day). They cannot imagine that anyone would want to report on anything to do with Tycho. Even Richard's choice of words, encouraging Tycho to be a "three-minute hero," indicates the family's general feeling that Tycho's ability to be in the familial spotlight is limited to short, insignificant bursts.



Chapter 16, The Catalogue of the Universe

Chapter 16, The Catalogue of the Universe Summary

When the phone rings at Angela's house, she excitedly answers it, expecting to hear Tycho's voice on the other end. Instead, she is greeted by a woman's voice asking, "Am I speaking to Angela May?" It is Roland's mother, "the other Angela." It is the second time this day that the elder Angela has called her granddaughter. The first time, Dido answered the phone and, although she gave her daughter the message, Angela had no inclination to return the woman's call. Angela May tells Angela Chase that she doubts she is really her grandmother, quickly adding that she doesn't really care now, anyway.

They begin to discuss Roland. The elder woman defends her son, saying that he "lives under a lot of pressure these days," but Angela refuses to believe that he could not have found her if he had wanted to. The elder Angela suggests that it may be possible for the two of them to convince Roland to change his position about his role in his daughter's life. With that, Angela becomes furious and begins to shout at her grandmother, accusing her of never wondering about her granddaughter before, something the elder Angela admits is the truth.

The elder Angela asks her granddaughter if Dido ever told her that she had stopped by to visit her when she was expecting her baby. Angela confesses that Dido had, in fact, told her this, just that afternoon. The truth was, Mrs. Chase had given Dido money to have an abortion. Despite her grandmother's attempts, Angela will not be consoled. She angrily hangs up the phone in a desperate attempt to close a chapter she should never have opened.

Hearing the heated conversation, Dido asks to whom Angela had been talking. Angela professes that she does not want a granny, and that her "grandmother" had tried to take some of the blame for her son's behavior. At this, Dido finally tells Angela the truth about how she and Roland parted. Roland had promised to marry Dido, but soon after he disappeared to Australia, never to be seen by Dido again. Dido had no idea that Roland's mother was named Angela. She simply named Angela based on Roland's preference for the name, without questioning why he had chosen it.

That night, Angela begins to realize she has fallen in love with Tycho. After having a heartfelt discussion with Dido about her father, Angela sees headlights coming up the road. She knows it will be Tycho. Angela starts out to go meet him; a reaction that immediately sparks suspicion in Dido, as Angela has never gone out to meet Tycho before. He always came right up to the house. Angela runs down the hill in the dark to meet Tycho, and the two sit together on the bottom step. There, Angela lists all the good things that have happened that day: she had made amends with Dido, she had learned



that the lies Dido told her about Roland here to protect her from the truth, and she is "having a little go at being in love" with Tycho.

Tycho explains that he, too, has had an eventful day. He tells Angela about Africa's affair, and that she has moved back home. He explains that his mother had taken the phone off the hook to avoid the reporters (and Tycho's grandmother).

The two resolve not to tell anyone of their relationship yet - they are content to keep each other to themselves for now. They reminisce about a time during an eclipse when "the moon's shadow" shone on them and joined them into an irrevocable bond. This "romantic notion" seems to have created the perfect moment for a kiss, and they seize the moment. Then, Angela pulls Tycho into the house; worried that Dido will become suspicious.

After visiting with Angela for a while, Tycho leaves, with Angela offering to walk him down to the track. The two make their way to Tycho's car, with warnings from Dido to be careful - before they get to the car. Apparently, their secret is not invisible to a mother's intuition.

Chapter 16, The Catalogue of the Universe Analysis

Angela is exposed to her father once again in this chapter, this time through his mother, when she phones Angela. By now, Angela realizes that uniting with her father and his family is not as vital a part of her future as she had previously thought. Angela's having nearly lost her mother (at least in her mind) has given rise within her a renewed sense of value for her mother. She no longer so passionately seeks love from external sources; she is beginning to realize just how much Dido means to her.

That day, Angela realizes that she is in love with Tycho, a boy for whom she would never have pictured having those romantic feelings. To her, he has always just been "Big Science," her intellectual friend. Their relationship is now irreversibly changed, and it is a change with which she is surprisingly comfortable. The change in their relationship is further exhibited when Tycho approaches Angela's home in his car. Normally, she would wait for him to drive up to the house to get her, but this time she runs out to meet the car. Dido immediately notices the difference in her daughter's behavior. Earlier in the novel, Dido asks Angela why she doesn't fall in love with Tycho; now, it has become obvious that she has done just that.

Angela and Tycho vow to keep their new relationship a secret for a while. It is a vow made partly out of a desire to harbor a romantic secret between themselves, and partly out of fear. Kept between only them, the relationship is perfect, untouched, without outside influence. If they were to reveal the relationship to others while it is still in its infancy, they risk having people put their influence on it, forcing it to mutate into something it is not.

When Dido warns Angela to "be careful" on her way to the car with Tycho, the reader is reminded of a conversation earlier in the book wherein Angela asks Dido why she never

gives her any motherly advice, or warns her to stay out of certain situations. Here, there is a certain irony to Dido's words: she is warning Angela not to get into trouble with the very person Dido had spent so much time hoping her daughter would end up with.



Characters

Tycho

Tycho Potter is one of the central characters of this story. Introverted and intellectual, Tycho is the youngest of three children. To his parents and siblings, Tycho is a bookish, unworldly boy for whom the world is merely a defined set of rules and indisputable truths. In a sense, his family has pushed Tycho aside emotionally.

Tycho undergoes many dramatic personal changes by the end of the novel. Among these is the loss of his virginity, a moment made even more significant by the fact that the moment was shared with Angela, a girl with whom he has had a crush on for as long as he can remember. In that moment, Tycho becomes more confident and more drawn out of his shell than he has ever been.

The day after that momentous night with Angela, Tycho becomes a different person, more fully alive

Angela May

Angela May is Tycho's best friend, and the long-time object of his affections. She is a child of a single-parent family, and has spent the whole of her young life living in a quirky old house with her mother, Dido. The story revolves around Angela's search for the truth about her father, and for the resolutions to the unanswered questions about her mother's past.

Angela is the tall, beautiful, and popular girl to whom many people can relate, whether as the boy who pines for her attention, the ones who get to date her, or the girl who envies her. Inside, she is a misguided girl who feels a hole in her life as the result of not knowing the truth about her father.

After Angela confronts her father at his office, the reader sees a different, more rebellious side of Angela. When she meets up with Tycho at his house later that night, she recounts a story of how she went into a rather seedy-sounding bar and let a strange man buy her drinks. Angela is not yet of legal drinking age, a point that is made by her decision to order a drink based on something she read, rather than on experience or her personal taste for it. On the same night, Angela buys Tycho a t-shirt with the money he had given her earlier in the day, a decision that shows that Tycho is a priority to her.

When Tycho and Angela decide to be intimate together, Angela is exhibiting a change, too. She is opening her heart to the possibility that Tycho is perhaps the right choice for her, as her mother suggested. Further, she reveals to the reader (through a revelation to Tycho) that she is still a virgin. This is surprising both to Tycho and to the reader, given her relationship with Robin and the impression given to the reader through Tycho's assertions about Angela. At this point in the story, Angela exhibits a vulnerability that



was previously covered up by her devil-may-care facade. Because of her mother's hands-off approach to child rearing, Angela has essentially had to raise herself, and has grown up faster than she should. At this point in the story, though, she reveals that she is not nearly as capable of navigating an adult world as well as she had been letting on.

Dido May

Dido is an unconventional mother, a free spirit. The very first example of this occurs in the first chapter when her daughter, Angela, awakens in the pre-dawn hours to find her scything the grass by moonlight. She is a very hands-off mother, too. She does not set out rules for her daughter's behavior, which is Dido's way of avoiding the inevitable power struggle and arguments that result from a parent's assertion of authority. As Dido finds out, however, Angela does not want a mother who lets her do whatever she wants.

Dido is a loner, enjoying solitude and solitary activities such as reading. Even when Dido and Angela stage a special outdoor breakfast one day, Dido is engrossed in a book during the meal. Her choice of residence is also indicative of this trait: she lives in a ramshackle, quirky home high atop a curving, treacherous road that is rarely visited by anyone. Were she a more social person, this location would not likely have been satisfactory.

Like many single parents, Dido strove to protect her daughter from the reality of the fact that her father left them before Dido was born. Dido's desire to protect her daughter is evident in the creation of an elaborate story, wherein Roland (Angela's father) paid Dido child support so that they were taken care of, but that he could not be a part of their lives because he was married. This entire story proves to be false, but the fact that Dido created it indicates a strong motherly instinct to protect her child from being hurt, even despite her non-invasive method of parenting.

One personality trait of Dido that remains clear throughout the entire book is her commitment to her originality, which is coupled with a reluctance to change. Although she can afford to renovate her home to include an indoor washroom facility, she chooses not to. She is both proud of her eccentric home and reluctant to admit that she no longer has to endure the adversity to which she has become accustomed.

Mrs. Potter

Mrs. Potter, Tycho's mother, is the antithesis of Dido. She is a hyper-involved, overbearing parent, whose house is run by rules and organization (such as the designated day each week on which the family members may begin to use fresh towels). She is suspicious of anyone whom she deems to be at a lesser station in life, such as Angela. She believes that Angela's lot in life in a single-parent family, living in a less-than-perfect home with very few rules, constitutes her being a lesser quality person than she. Mrs. Potter's judgmental nature and concern with appearances translates to her own family, too. When Africa telephones to say that she is leaving her husband, Mrs. Potter will not allow her sons to speak badly of their sister. Further, when Africa



does actually move home after having an affair, Mrs. Potter takes the telephone off the hook so that her own mother cannot call and question what is going on at the house. When the reporter shows up to talk to Tycho, Mrs. Potter's initial reaction is to dismiss him on the assumption that he is there to probe into Africa's troubles.

Mrs. Potter is the stereotypical Super Mom. She looks after two sons who are still living with her, a husband with a disability, and a daughter who married very young and is struggling to adjust to marriage and motherhood. She expresses to Tycho a certain degree of resentment toward her family for, as she puts it, thinking only of themselves.

Mr. Potter

Mr. Potter is a minor player in the novel. He is not depicted as the head of an otherwise traditional household, due to the disability with which he now suffers. He can no longer drive the family car, and must be driven (or must walk) everywhere, which has somehow emasculated him. He does assert his masculinity on at least one occasion, though. When Angela comes to call on Tycho, Mr. Potter engages her in a little innocent flirting, much to Tycho's chagrin.

In contrast to Tycho's mother, Mr. Potter is very accepting of Angela. He very evidently thinks her attractive, but there is also a sense that he accepts her eccentricities and the differences between her family and theirs.

Angela, Roland's Mother

Angela is the name of Roland's mother and she is, therefore, Angela May's grandmother. Although she does not appear in much of the novel, Angela asserts herself as a bold, opinionated, somewhat meddling character. Her visit to Dido during her pregnancy and the resulting efforts to convince Dido to abort the child are evidence of this, as are the attempts she makes to foster a relationship with her granddaughter once the younger Angela makes her existence known to her and to Roland.

Roland

Roland, a successful businessman, is Angela's biological father. From their first real encounter at his office, Roland treats Angela as a problem that he thought he had swept under the rug. He is very standoffish and is almost cruel to her. His nonchalance toward Angela, however, can also be construed as regret. He likely realizes that his refusal to take responsibility for his daughter and for Dido was an immature decision, on resulting in very real consequences.



Africa

Africa is Tycho's older sister. She is something of a rebel, having gotten married and pregnant at a young age. Africa is also a bit spoiled, it seems, as evidenced by her late-night phone calls to her parents to rescue her from an argument with her husband (and the Potter's unflinching willingness to respond to her request). Her willingness to interrupt her family members' sleep and lives by making the late night phone call to request that she be picked up also indicates a level of self-centeredness.

Africa exhibits a different side, however, when the reporter comes to speak to Tycho. She is excited for her brother, and encourages him to take his moment in the sun.

Richard

Tycho's older brother, Richard, is a typical rebellious, lazy teenager. He wears clothes based on convenience rather than style or appropriateness, and is absolutely disinclined to find a job and move out of the family home. When Africa calls the house late at night with yet another crisis, Richard's response is self-centered and mocking toward his sister. With the threat of Africa moving back into the house on the horizon, Richard again responds with concern only for himself: he is worried about losing his bedroom (he would have to return to sharing a room with Tycho) and suggests that Tycho should get a job and move out in order to avoid that fate, although Tycho is younger brother and still in school.

There is an indication that Richard is jealous of Tycho. He consistently mocks Tycho's intellectual side, and yet suggests that Tycho would be better suited to leave the family home to make room for Africa. This mocking is typical of family members who envy their siblings' advantages: it is an effort to boost one's self-esteem while attempting to lower that of those around one.

Hamish

Hamish is Tycho's nephew, Africa's son. He plays a very minor role in the story as a character (he is just an infant). However, his existence plays a significant role in illustrating character traits in the other members of the family. Similarly, Richard uses Africa's status as a young mother to put her down. Hamish is caught in the middle of a family battle, in many ways.



Objects/Places

Tycho's Quotations

When Tycho comes across a famous quotation he admires or identifies with, he clips it out and pins it up above his bed.

Angela's House

Angela's house, at 1000 Dry Creek Road, is a quirky old house with no indoor plumbing.

Tycho's Telescope

Tycho spends a good deal of time peering through his telescope at the heavens.

The Catalogue of the Universe

This is the real volume on which this book is based. Tycho uses it to make sense of the world, and in a symbolic sense, the book helps Tycho see eye-to-eye with Angela.

Tycho's "Ionians Rule" T-Shirt

When Tycho gives Angela ten dollars to get herself safely home, she purchases the t-shirt for Tycho.

The Family Car

Now that Mr. Potter cannot drive the car, it has become a bone of contention in the family.

The Cherry's Car

When the Cherry's car careens off the road and is threatening to explode, Tycho finds a new courage and is able to pull Jerry Cherry safely from the car.

Dry Creek Road

Dry Creek Road is the winding, twisting road at the top of which Dido and Angela live.



Roland's Office

Angela finally musters the courage to confront her father. When she does, they have their very first conversation in his office.

Angela's Drink in the Bar

Angela is an underage drinker, and therefore does not know what to order. Her order is based upon something she heard about, and not on personal taste. As with the entire night, her ordering a drink with which she is not familiar is indicative of both her naivety and her desire for rebellion.



Setting

The Catalogue of the Universe employs a contemporary urban setting, probably in New Zealand, although specific references to the particular characteristics of New Zealand life are never particularly insistent. Tycho's family lives in the city; Angela's father Roland Chase has his home, office, and warehouse in the city; and it is in the city where Angela goes off to get drunk after her disappointing and humiliating encounter with her father. It is a city like most others in the world, with its mix of schools and shops, bridges and warehouses, traffic and bustle.

Mahy sets the city in striking contrast to the site of Angela's home, which is at the very top of a hill. Her isolated and rather primitive home is linked to the world below by Dry Creek Road, an important image in the novel. The road is treacherous. It winds sharply and steeply up the hill, forcing the sensible driver to be cautious. Dido sees the road as a kind of god, waiting to exact its sacrifice from the unwary. Mahy describes the road early on: "As it climbed, it began to swoop and curve, writhing like a desperate serpent pinned down and anxious to be free. . . . the road claimed victims just as if it were a serpent god." Dido constantly warns Angela to drive slowly and, in an interesting side note, Mahy dedicates the book to her daughter Penny with the injunction to "Drive Carefully!" The road is thus a touchstone of character. Those who drive carefully respect the power of the road and of nature, while those who defy the natural warning are punished for it. In a dramatic scene near the end of the novel, Angela sees a car go off the cliff and assumes that it carries her mother. Instead, the victims are the Cherry brothers, coarse and impatient neighbors who spray herbicide on the lush growth of the hillside and who are suspected of killing the Mays's cat, both crimes against the natural world. The road also literally and symbolically separates Angela and her mother from the rest of the world. Given the difficulty of the ascent, few people ever intrude upon their isolated aerie.

Furthermore, Angela discourages visitors, partly because she resents strangers' invading their private, almost mystical, sphere, and partly because she is ashamed of the primitive quality of their home—no inside plumbing and no way to exit the bedrooms except through the windows!

She forbids her boyfriend Robin to meet her there although, significantly, Tycho is welcome. The two friends joke about driving down the hill every day as going from "nature red in tooth and claw to nature read in truth and law," a movement from the natural world to the world of human society.

The setting underscores the difference between the way Angela and her mother live—and the way they are—by means of physical separation. Furthermore, in a novel that relies heavily on names of people and places to underscore meaning, it seems fitting that Angela, the fiery angel, should live in "a wild place under the sky."

Tycho Potter's home is located more mundanely at the bottom of the hill in a closely clustered neighborhood of small homes, but he is linked with Angela through the image

of the heavens. Tycho, named after famous sixteenth-century Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe, studies the heavens and shares his fascination with Angela. It is through their friendship and interest in the cosmos that the two become lovers.

If we assume that the novel is set in New Zealand, it is perhaps surprising that this New Zealand is not very different from other cities all over the world. Only in infrequent expressions like Robin's being a fast bowler or references to "Mum" or tea does the reader realize that the culture is different from that of the United States and that it is British-influenced.

Social Sensitivity

In a novel which very easily could have promulgated the stereotypes of the beautiful, emotional female and the plain but intellectual male, Mahy has done an admirable job of providing complex portraits of both Angela and Tycho. Both characters combine thinking and feeling in an interesting treatment of the questions of objective validity.

Certain sensitive issues do arise from discussions of drinking, drug use, spousal abuse, and illegitimacy (both as related to Angela's birth and to Africa's pregnancy). With the exception of Angela's illegitimacy, which leads to her quest for her father, these issues are of only minor concern. A more pivotal and potentially more sensitive scene occurs when Angela returns to Tycho's bedroom, bedraggled and disenchanted after her encounter with her father. There, in a sensuous but understated encounter, she and Tycho, both virgins, make love. The actual lovemaking is discreetly left to the imagination, with the two awaking the next day side by side in bed. The scene is handled tactfully and sensitively.

Although the issue of the occult and the supernatural plays a minor role in *The Catalogue of the Universe*, especially when compared to other Mahy novels, Dido and occasionally Angela take on occult dimensions. At one point, for example, Angela is described by Tycho's brother Richard as "that sexy school-girl witch." Dido is described as being more than eccentric, almost like an alien being, and she superstitiously regards the road as an animal waiting for a sacrifice.



Literary Qualities

Margaret Mahy is well known for works that incorporate a substantial amount of fantasy and reference to the supernatural, in *The Changeover*, *The Haunting*, and *The Tricksters*, for instance. *The Catalogue of the Universe* does not rely to any significant degree on the supernatural, but a remark Mahy has made about her novel *Memory* applies equally to *Catalogue*: "The fantasy of earlier books of mine is still present, but in the imaginative subtext rather than explicit in any happenings in the story."

This subtext appears most strongly in the mythical aspects of the story. This mythology is signaled by the choice of character and place names. The name Dido conjures up the myth of Aeneas and Dido, the queen of Carthage. In his adventures en route to the founding of Rome, Aeneas meets and makes love to Dido, whom he then abandons.

Clearly this parallels the relationship between Dido and Roland Chase. Echoes of mythology occur in the references to nature gods (for example, the serpent god of the road). A further reference to Greek mythology occurs in the reference to Centaurus Road, the road of the centaur, where Tycho's family lives. The centaur was a Greek mythological hybrid—part horse, part man. The centaur was traditionally seen as a savage figure, but one centaur, Chiron, was the mentor of a number of Greek heroes including Jason and Achilles. Tycho lives on the road of the centaur—fitting both because he is Angela's mentor but also because he sees himself as a battleground between the forces of thinking and feeling, the human and the animal.

Other names are also significant.

Angela is associated with the angels due to her hilltop home, but she has, as Tycho correctly observes, an equal mix of the other elements as well—earth, water, and fire. She is fiery both in personality and in hair color.

When she goes on her self-destructive journey after the meeting with her father, she drinks Fallen Angels. Folktale motifs echo through the novel as well, the most obvious of which is the beauty and the beast archetype. Angela must look beneath Tycho's "ugly" surface to perceive the beauty within and release him from his spell, his "dislocation." As in many folk tales, the young heroes must separate, at least temporarily, from family, and struggle to find themselves and their individual talents, their areas of competence, independently.

Mahy confers equal importance on Angela and Tycho by alternating narrators. The novel begins and ends at Angela's hilltop home, but a variety of permutations occur in between. Angela and Tycho are each alone in certain chapters, in others they are seen with their mothers (and Angela with her father) and in frequent chapters Angela and Tycho are together. Shifts in the point of view allow the reader to see the perspective each character has on the events that have occurred and to understand the way the two feel about each other long before they actually become lovers.



Mahy has always been regarded as a master stylist. The blend of fantasy and reality is enriched by description and imagery. Dry Creek Road, for instance, becomes a tangible serpent, writhing and struggling in the heat, hungry for a victim. Angela's grandmother, described as "skinny as a whippet," with a "mouth like a scarlet scar" and nails like "oval drops of blood" is the wicked witch incarnate.

Mrs. Potter surprises us with her dexterity in rolling a cigarette. Mahy even calls in Coleridge (and her sense of humor) to describe a refrigerator from a cat's point of view: "It was a miracle of rare device,/ A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice" (from "Kubla Khan: or, A Vision in a Dream" [1798]).

She blends humor with precision of detail, providing startling and intriguing perceptions at every turn. The Catalogue of the Universe is not as complex stylistically and thematically as a work like *The Tricksters*, but it offers rewards and insights for the reader nonetheless.



Themes

Unrequited Feelings

Throughout much of their friendship, Tycho has had romantic feelings toward Angela. Angela, in turn, feels only friendship for Tycho. Tycho watches from the sidelines as Angela dates other boys, while he is left to pine for her affections. In a similar way, Angela feels affection (or at the very least curiosity) about a father she knows only through the stories her mother has told her. When she comes to her father Roland's office, full of expectation of the possibility of a relationship with Roland, his reaction is anything but warm and welcoming. He does not want to be in her life.

Angela's grandmother, on the other hand, desperately tries to foster a relationship with her granddaughter, but Angela does not want to entertain the idea. After finding out what her father is really like, Angela is content to close the door on that chapter in her life. Her curiosity sated and her father's intentions made known, Angela no longer feels a need to fill the void in her life. She has a family - Dido, and now Tycho - and does not need a grandmother who did not try to be a part of her life until now.

Another one-sided relationship in this book is the one between Africa and her husband. Africa has an affair and wants to leave her husband (and eventually does so) despite her husband's feelings toward her.

By the end of the novel, only the relationship between Angela and Tycho has come full circle. They have been sexually intimate together, and are embarking on a kind of romantic relationship that even Tycho could not have fathomed.

Becoming One's True Self

Both Tycho and Angela go through various incarnations of themselves throughout the novel, as everyone does when growing up. At the beginning of the book, Tycho is a reserved, bookish intellectual who has not had much experience in the area of romance. His friends consist of Angela (for whom he pines for a different sort of relationship) and the personas throughout history whose words he has tacked above his bed. His family life is one based on rules and expectations: an environment that stifles the development of one's true self.

By the end of the novel, however, Tycho has had an awakening, both sexually and in maturity. He is not only engaged in a romantic relationship with Angela, but has had his first sexual experience. This accomplishment, this recognition from Angela as a person to whom she should give her heart, brings Tycho out of his shell. He now has a renewed confidence, unhindered by the constraints of his family life and his former insecurities about being short and somewhat unattractive. This molting of his former self is even more fully completed when Tycho summons the courage to save Jerry from a car that is on the verge of explosion. He clearly understands the dangers, but is anxious to prove



his worth. He has already earned the respect of Angela, and is now aiming to earn the respect of the Cherrys and, in doing so, respect for himself.

Angela, too, undergoes a self-realization in the novel. Having grown up without a father in her life, Angela feels a curiosity about her origins. Although she does not necessarily feel a void (she had always just considered herself a member of the "broken-home gang"), she can nonetheless not ignore the nagging curiosity about her father. She desperately wants to expand her family beyond just Dido, someone she sees as lacking when it comes to motherhood.

By the end of the novel, however, Angela realizes that the only family she needs is her mother and Tycho. She does not want or need a relationship with Roland or his mother. Further, after a rebellious night following her meeting with Roland, Angela comes to terms with what really matters to her. She sees Tycho in a different light, and the following day, upon recovering from a scare when she thought her mother had been in a terrible auto accident, Angela sees Dido in a different light, too. She realizes that she is not the independent, reckless girl she had been striving to be. Instead, she is just a teenage girl who wants to be loved and to have someone to love.

Familial Roles

The two principle families in *Catalogue of the Universe* are mirror images of each other in many ways. The Potter family, first and foremost, consists of two parents and three siblings. The only daughter, Africa, is married, has a small child, and is living away from the family home. The other two children, both teenage boys, reside in the family home. Mr. Potter, the family patriarch, has lost some of his footing in the family due to a disability that has forced him to change to a job to which he can walk (he is no longer permitted to drive the family car). At the same time, Mrs. Potter has been forced to take on a non-traditional role in the family, a role that requires her to play the role of caregiver and disciplinarian at times.

Africa plays the role of the spoiled child, as evidenced by her frantic late-night phone call to her parents, requesting that they come rescue her, and her parents' reaction to the calls. Richard, Tycho's older brother, plays the role of the lazy teenager, bucking tradition and flying in the face of conventionality. His eccentric choice of wardrobe is an outward expression of his devil-may-care attitude. Richard's perception of his role within the family is evident when he suggests to Tycho that if their sister moves back into the family home, it should be Tycho (who is younger) who should move out of the house and get a job. He feels that, although Tycho is younger, he is better equipped to make something of himself than is Richard. In saying this, Richard is indicating a certain amount about the expectations their parents have for each boy.

The May family, on the other hand, is quite the opposite of the Potters. This family consists only of two persons: Angela, and her mother, Dido. Dido takes a very hands-off role in raising her daughter, imposing very few rules and restrictions on what she does. Angela has essentially taken on the role of being her own parent and, because her



father was never a part of her life, she has had to take on the role of being both her father and her mother. Because of the arm's-length approach taken by Dido, the two women live under the same roof much more like roommates than like mother and daughter. Later in the novel, however, the dynamic shifts when Angela fears that it was her mother who has been in the car accident. In that moment of fear, Angela realizes that, despite her outward air of independence, she is just a little girl who needs her mother. At the same time, Dido realizes that asserting authority over Angela is important for her development and feeling of belonging.

Themes/Characters

The Catalogue of the Universe revolves around the friendship of the two central figures, Angela and Tycho. The characters are introduced in a parallel fashion, both waking at two in the morning of the same day, Angela to witness her mother scything the front lawn and Tycho to overhear a desperate phone call to his parents from his sister Africa.

A more simplistic approach to their friendship, which began in first grade but has become strong in their last years of high school, might cast Angela as the emotional romantic and Tycho as the rational scientist. To Mahy's credit, however, the relationship is much more complex than that.

Angela is described as breathtakingly beautiful and confident in social situations whereas the insecure Tycho sees himself as ugly and ineffectual with women. The two, however, form a friendship around mutual interests which include not only a fascination with ancient Greek philosophers and the imaginative leaps of thought inherent in science, but also an interest in compiling a list of romantic scenes and sayings from works like *The Sheik* and *Gone with the Wind*.

The families of the two central characters act as a constellation around Angela and Tycho. Angela's mother Dido assumes mythic proportions, not only because of the mythological reference to the Greek story of Aeneas and Dido but from other connections she has to the cosmic scheme. When Angela awakens to find her cutting the front lawn at two in the morning with a scythe, Angela envisions her as Mother Time. Dido is a romantic figure, an Earth mother, who worries about her daughter but who also gives Angela freedom to explore.

Tycho's family, on the other hand, is immersed in petty squabbles and misunderstandings. Tycho's father is mildly disabled as a result of an accident, and his mother leads an uncomplicated but circumscribed life revolving around her family and her china painting. Her one vice, detailed in a scene between Mrs. Potter and Tycho, is rolling her own cigarettes. The habit lends a hint of the unexpected to what might otherwise be a fairly predictable character. Sister Africa is embroiled in dispute with her new husband Hudson, and brother Richard, who is unemployed, plays the role of rebellious and sardonic Bohemian. Mahy uses the families as contrasts to one another—one pragmatic, one almost mystic, as a further development of her theme of the combination of the imaginative and the rational.

The two central characters help one another understand the complete range of human possibility. Angela, first introduced as wandering about her bedroom in the middle of the night, refuses "to open her eyes, feeling her way from place to place, choosing to see by touch and memory rather than by an alien light." Angela sees her father in the same way, creating an illusion of the romantic, longsuffering hero. Tycho, in a similar way, refuses to see himself as anything other than ugly, as well as needing to hide his knowledge and his enthusiasm for the wonders of science.



The two help one another shape a view of the world that deflates unrealistic romantic expectations. Instead, the two begin to recognize human imperfection and also the power of human imagination. Angela must replace a sense of having been betrayed by both her mother and her father with a more mature understanding of human nature and of herself. Tycho must reconcile what he calls "the two big dislocations" in his life —the recognition that few people are "amazed by wonderful pieces of information" and that "people thought he was ugly"—with the discovery that Angela both shares his wonder at the insights of ancient Greek Ionians and the Mobius strip and also decidedly does not find him ugly. Tycho must recognize that the worlds of thinking and feeling are not mutually exclusive.

The Catalogue of the Universe thus pursues the complexities of what constitutes truth. On a personal level, Angela discovers that the truth she has relied on for her whole life concerning the relationship between her mother and father has been based upon her mother's attempt to protect her. Tycho must examine the rift between scientific truth and personal truth. His knowledge of the stars as embodied in the book he receives from Angela as a gift, *The Catalogue of the Universe*, also serves as the literal physical means by which he steps up to encounter Angela eye to eye and to kiss her. As Tycho says, "The Ionians lived, but other things lived along with them." Science may be the source of fascination and amazement, but it also has a built-in "wobble." The true observer, as Tycho Brahe was, can always recognize the wobble in the seemingly perfect system and use that information to lead to new truths.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written from a third-person perspective, a technique that allows the author to tell the story of both Tycho and Angela, who essentially inhabit different worlds. The point of view employed also allows a tenderness and empathy for the plight of the characters to bleed through the prose; the author appears to have been writing about some aspect - or a composite of aspects - of her own childhood.

By employing a third-person perspective, the author is also able to oscillate easily between the contrasting worlds in which Tycho and Angela live. More than just simply allowing the author to be a "fly on the wall" in both the Potter and May households, however, the third-person point of view allows the author to create a distance between the authorial voice and the events and emotions that unfold in the story. Because Tycho and Angela are experiencing the world in such different ways, an overly intrusive authorial voice (as would be the case in a first-person perspective, for example) would have prevented the story from ringing as true as it does.

Setting

The novel takes place in an unnamed location; however, it could be assumed that the story takes place in the author's native New Zealand.

The events in the story take place in a variety of settings, which can be distilled to include principally the following: 1000 Dry Creek Road, the Potter residence, and Roland Chase's office. By keeping the list of locales in the story to a minimum, the author is able to keep the focus on the intricate and ever-changing lives of the characters (and the dynamics between them).

Angela lives in a quirky home on 1000 Dry Creek Road, a home that is the only one she has ever known. It has an outdoor washroom facility and also is in desperate need of other renovations and upgrades. The home is the centre of her family, in all of its eccentricity and turbulence. Angela finds little comfort in her crazy home, and cannot understand her mother's reluctance to either upgrade their house or to relocate. The house's remote location at the apex of a winding incline is symbolic, too, and plays a significant role in the story. By choosing to set the May family home in such a remote location (as opposed to the Potter home, which is set in a very typical suburban neighbourhood) the author is able to use the home's location as an outward symbol of both Dido's being a loner and of the deep-seated isolation that Angela feels about being the child of a single-parent family.



Language and Meaning

The author Margaret Mahy employs language in many ways in this story. One of the most prevalent and key among these uses is Tycho Potter's obsession with quotes from historical figures. Through Tycho, the author is able to add another dimension to the narrative without extensive use of expository paragraphs. In doing this, Mahy is, once again, able to maintain the flow of the narrative and the intimacy of the story. Tycho's obsession with language extends into his pre-occupation with the book after which Mahy's novel is named, *Catalogue of the Universe*. Here again, Mahy uses the printed language as a symbol for something larger: near the end of the novel, Tycho comes inside after looking at the stars, with his book at his side. Shortly thereafter, Angela appears after having been missing for several hours. At this time, the book takes on another meaning: the large tome is used so that Tycho can stand upon it and see eye-to-eye with Angela, both figuratively and literally. Mahy creates meaning from an object.

The language tells the story on a number of levels. First, it is important to note that this is a story geared toward a young adult audience. It is a coming-of-age story, to which young people who are going through a similar growth period can relate. On a deeper level, the story is also about one's station in life and the problems or advantages that one's station can afford us. These are themes to which even an adult can relate, and are life lessons that stay with a person throughout his or her life.

Mahy uses language to create meaning through symbolism, thereby adding texture and depth to the story. It can be read on the superficial level, but can also be analyzed in terms of the deeper meaning behind the story.

Structure

Catalogue of the Universe is broken into chapters of varying lengths, from only a couple of pages to significantly more. The varied length of the chapters serves to allow Mahy to control the cadence of the story. At pivotal moments in the story (such as just before Angela goes into Roland's office), Mahy creates tension and an anticipatory excitement for where the story is about to go. This reaction in the reader is a mirror-image of the reactions created in the characters: when Mahy writes about Angela's being on the threshold of meeting her father (a point in the story when Mahy breaks the narrative through a chapter break), the reader takes an anticipatory breath such as one can imagine the character taking at such a pivotal moment in her life (and, consequently, in the story).

The varied lengths of the chapters are also aimed at keeping the attention of the readers who, as mentioned before, are primarily young people. Long chapters would hinder the ability of the story to grip and keep the attention of a young person who is perhaps not accustomed to processing an unbroken storyline (children's literature generally consists of very few words, and a young adult novel may be the young person's first foray into text-driven works).



Mahy has chosen to give the chapters names, rather than just numbers. The names of the chapters directly reflect key concepts within their corresponding chapters. For an example, in the chapter entitled "Mrs Potter Lights a Cigarette," Tycho's mother does just that, a behavior that illustrates an anomaly in her character. Women like Mrs. Potter - wives, mothers, suburbanites, and strict disciplinarians - are not generally depicted as smokers. Before even reading the first word of the chapter, however, it is clear that this behavior will be more than just an action outside of her character; something important will happen in the chapter.

The same is true of the chapter entitled, "The Wobble in the Cemetery of the World." This puzzling quote (or, as is revealed in the chapter, misquote) essentially distills the events of the chapter into one sentence. By the end of the chapter, Angela's world is turned upside down. She comes to realize that nothing is as it seems, that the world is not based on the balance of equalities, and that sometimes things happen that make one's universe "wobble."



Quotes

"A wobble in the cemetery of the world."

"It's like living at a poor address - it marks you off, and every now and then, when people ask you, it's as if you always have to give them too much information about yourself."

"The thing is, common sense and truth don't match - not all the time."

"You go on about nature as if it was just simple. But it's natural for people to be unnatural in some ways. We're nature red in tooth and claw, and nature read in truth and law, both at the same time."

"Matter is not unchanging substance but simply a way of grouping events."

"A right-handed helical twist like honeysuckle."

"Angela had always suspected an oddity in her geography, and knew, because she had access to his ocean, that in a funny way she was bigger inside than out."

"The Ionians rule!"

"You grapple disadvantages to you with hopes of steel!"

"Nothing exists but atoms and the void."

"Early morning was a time for arguments and recrimination and blaming each other."

"like a long, delicious, pink drink with rich cream on the top."

"It is events that are the stuff of the world."

"Big Science!"



Topics for Discussion

1. Why does Angela want to find out about her father? How is what she finds out at odds with what her mother has told her and with Angela's romantic notion about their relationship?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between Angela and Tycho? Why do they become friends in the first place and how does their relationship change as the book progresses? Is this an example of how opposites attract?
3. When you see the car go over the cliff, do you assume with Angela that it is Dido? What leads us to expect this?
4. Why does Tycho leave Angela standing by the telephone booth after her meeting with her father?
5. The novel portrays two different families—Angela's and Tycho's. Describe each family and compare and contrast the two.
6. What role does science play in Tycho's life? How does he use science to help him cope with the world?
7. Does Tycho's attitude toward science change?
8. The road leading up to Angela's house, Dry Creek Road, begins to take on a life of its own. Explore the various ways in which the road is described.
9. Were you surprised that Tycho and Angela became lovers? How does their attitude toward one another change after they make love?
10. What does Tycho mean by his pun of going from "nature red in tooth and claw to nature read in truth and law"?
11. Why is Angela simultaneously both ashamed and proud of her home?
12. What distinction does Angela make between common sense and truth?



Essay Topics

With which character do you identify more: Tycho Potter or Angela May? Explain your reasons.

Why do you think Angela May finally begins to see Tycho in a romantic way? Explain.

What do the quotes Tycho puts above his bed signify? Why are they important to him?

Speculate about why Mahy chose to name the book after an existing volume. What is the significance of the "book within the book"?

Do you think Angela and Roland would have had any kind of relationship after the events of the story? Write an account of how that subsequent meeting or discussion may have happened.

Have you ever experienced something that caused your world to "wobble"? How did you set things right again?

Site an example of each of the following in the story: a) sibling rivalry; b) sexual awakening; c) changing parental roles; and, d) rejection.



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Explore at least two of the Greek philosophers mentioned in the novel.

Discuss whether or not Tycho's representation of them is accurate and how their ideas are used in the story.

2. Research what Tycho and Angela mean when they discuss the "wobble" in the universe? What does this say about the factual truth of scientific discovery?

3. Names of places and characters take on variously a thematic or symbolic significance in the work. How do such names as Angela, Tycho, Africa, Centaurus Road, and Dido, for example, help reinforce the thematic aspects of the novel?

4. Mahy has set the novel in New Zealand, her native country. Explore the ways in which the novel reflects life in that locale.

5. Examine how the image of the stars and the universe assumes significance in the novel, particularly as it is concentrated in Tycho's book, *The Catalogue of the Universe*.

6. Could this novel be read as a variation on the archetype in folk literature of the beauty and the beast?

7. Compare Angela to another of Mahy's strong female protagonists, such as Harry in *The Tricksters*.

8. Angela and Tycho amuse themselves with their romantic notions, particularly referring to such works as *The Sheik* and *Gone with the Wind*. Does Angela and Tycho's relationship resemble the views of romance expressed there?

9. Does Angela change as the novel progresses? Is she still as romantic at the end of the novel as she is at the beginning?

10. Examine one of the scientific concepts presented in the novel (e.g., the Mobius strip, the helix, the elliptical orbit) and discuss how it relates to the book.

11. The novel suggests that things beyond our control—our names, our physical appearance, our families, our economic circumstances—can influence our future lives. Do you agree?



Further Study

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Roback provides a brief commentary on the novel.

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