

Chatterton Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Chatterton begins in modern time, following a young English poet into an antique shop where he hopes to make a little extra cash for his financially struggling family. Instead he finds a portrait of a middle-aged gentleman that catches his attention so completely that he forgets the money he came to earn and instead makes an even trade for the portrait. Charles Wychwood, the poet, quickly becomes obsessed with the portrait when he discovers, with the help of a friend, that it resembles the poet Thomas Chatterton, who reportedly died when he was only seventeen.

Charles travels to meet the original owner of the painting and receives a set of documents from the owner's lover. While sorting these documents, Charles discovers a manuscript with the initials T.C. signed across the bottom. The manuscript appears to be a confession of sorts, Chatterton's confession of having faked his own death and continuing to write under the guise of many famous poets of the time period, including William Blake. Charles takes these documents to an old friend of his from college and asks him to examine them and determine when the documents were written. His friend confirms that the documents were written around the turn of the century, which was more than thirty years after Chatterton's death.

Charles's employer, an elderly novelist, learns of these documents and makes it her single-minded mission to get possession of them and write a book about them. It is the discovery of the century, she believes, one that will change the world of literature and poetry forever. This novelist, Harriet Scrope, goes to Charles's wife to plant the seeds of her deception and finds a woman deeply troubled. Charles has been sick, she confesses. Charles's wife, Vivien, is terribly afraid for his health.

It is not long after this conversation between Harriet Scrope and Vivien that Charles invites his closest friends to dinner: Harriet, the manuscript expert, Andrew Flint, Charles's old college chum Phillip, and his wife Vivien. Dinner becomes a discussion of poetry and the state of modern literature. With the aid of wine and gin, the arguments become heated until Charles suddenly rises from the table clutching his head. He returns after a moment to resume the conversation, only to mumble a few syllables and collapse on the floor. Soon after, Charles dies from a brain tumor.

All through Charles's obsession with the painting and the manuscript, the reader is also allowed little peeks into the creation of the only known portrait of Chatterton, which in reality is a portrait of George Meredith, another poet, pretending to be Chatterton. During these flashbacks, the reader watches the artist, Henry Wallis, grow increasingly fascinated with Meredith's wife, Mary Ellen Meredith. This fascination grows while Wallis works on the portrait, culminating in an affair between the two when the portrait is completed. It is later rumored that Meredith was so distraught over his wife's betrayal that he attempted to commit suicide inside the church where Chatterton grew up and is saved by Chatterton's ghost.



Throughout the end of the novel, the narration also visits Chatterton's last day of life. Chatterton was an intelligent young man, full of life and enthusiasm for his chosen profession. It is only a bad decision and a night of too much drink that causes him to take an overdose of a homemade medical remedy that results in his death.

Phillip, Charles's best friend, returns to the home of the gentlemen who gave Charles the Chatterton manuscripts shortly after Charles's death and asks about their true origin. Phillip learns that the manuscripts were a joke written by the man who published the majority of Chatterton's work during his life and many years afterward, a Mr. Joynson. He apparently became upset when a rival book publisher published some of Chatterton's letters that accused Joynson of taking his manuscripts and then abandoning him. Joynson believed should his joke ever become public it would humiliate Chatterton's reputation and save his own. Phillip returns the manuscripts to the original owner. The painting, however, is destroyed when an artist attempts to restore it.



Part 1, Chapter 1

Part 1, Chapter 1 Summary

Charles Wychwood goes to an antique store to sell some classic books on flutes to help his family through a tight financial situation. While attempting to talk the owner of the store into giving him more for the books than she thinks they are worth, Charles spots a painting abandoned in a corner. Charles rescues the painting from its hiding place and studies it, suddenly fascinated by the mysterious man it portrays. Forgetting about his family's precarious financial state, Charles trades the books for the portrait.

At home, Charles finds his son waiting for him on the front stoop, unable to go inside since he gave his keys to his father the day before because he had lost his own. Edward, Charles's son, does not share his father's fascination with the painting. Despite his father's belief that the portrait is some great work of art that will make them all rich, Edward believes the painting is a fake. When Vivien, Charles's wife comes home, her only concern is how much money it cost and whether or not Charles worked on his poems that day. Vivien also asks Charles if he had a headache that day. Apparently, Charles had been suffering from headaches quite frequently until he went to a doctor and received medication that relieved them.

That night, an old college friend of Charles's comes to dinner, a weekly ritual in the Wychwood household. After dinner, Charles shows Phillip, his friend, the painting. Phillip studies it, certain he has seen the man before just as Charles had been sure he had seen him before. Soon, Phillip remembers from where he knows the man and becomes very animated, a state that is unusual for him. The man, he says, is Thomas Chatterton. Phillip is positive of this fact because he has a reproduction of a painting hanging in his own house of Chatterton at the time of his death. The only problem is that Chatterton died in 1770, a very young man, and the man in the portrait is middle aged. Not only that, but when Charles cleans the dust off the painting, they find the date 1802 printed on it. However, the man in the portrait sits before a shelf of books and the names of those books are all volumes that Chatterton wrote.

The two men decide they must investigate further. However, before they can make any definitive plans, the phone rings. The caller is Harriet Scrope, a novelist Charles once worked for asking to see him.

Part 1, Chapter 1 Analysis

Charles is a writer who spends more time finding excuses not to write than writing. The portrait he finds becomes a symbol of this procrastination. Charles is fascinated with the portrait, and fascinated with whom it might portray and how much money it will bring him when he learns the truth about its existence. It is ironic that he finds hope and fortune in



someone else's work when he is a writer attempting to make a career for himself with his own artful talent.

There is a lot of foreshadowing in this chapter, beginning with the portrait. Charles has decided by the end of the chapter that he will find out who the man in it may be. This foreshadows the search the reader can see coming in the next few chapters. Also foreshadowed here is Vivien's concern for Charles's health. Charles waves off her concerns for his health by saying he was sick once but is no more. However, the mere mention of the headaches warns the reader that this may become a more significant part of the plot. Finally, there is the phone call from Ms. Scrope. This call sets the reader up for the introduction of another character and a path in which the plot may follow next.



Part 1, Chapter 2

Part 1, Chapter 2 Summary

Harriet Scrope is trying to write her memoirs but cannot put them together on her own. Harriet asks her new assistant, Mary Wilson, to fill in the spots between her memories and proper narration, but Mary refuses, telling Harriet that it would be lying. Harriet sends Mary away and spends a few minutes talking to her cat, Mr. Gaskell, and drinking gin from a teaspoon. Finally Harriet decides she will go visit a friend of hers, Sarah Tilt.

On the walk to Sarah's house, Harriet runs into a blind man and makes up a story about who she is. Harriet likes to tell stories, it seems, and enjoys tricking people into believing them. At Sarah's, they discuss Harriet's own writing, her advanced age, and Sarah's writing. Sarah is writing a book about death in art. Sarah is very afraid of death, but the work of putting together this book makes it easier for her to face her own mortality. It is Sarah who suggests to Harriet that she should hire someone who knows how to write to help her put together her memoirs. It is then that Harriet remembers Charles Wychwood and gives him a call the moment she returns home.

Part 1, Chapter 2 Analysis

Harriet Scrope appears to be a fascinating character. She is a writer and, like Charles, she is having trouble sitting down to her own writing. Harriet is somewhat afraid to deal with her memories. It seems her memories are a symbol of her old age and her own mortality. Not only that, but there are times when she cannot remember clearly exactly what happened at certain moments of her life. There are also a few things about her life she would not like to reveal to the general public.

There is foreshadowing in this chapter. The reader must wonder if Sarah's book subject might come into play with Charles's search of who the man in his portrait may be since he closely resembles the man in another portrait in which Chatterton is shown in his death bed. The reader must also wonder if Charles will accept the job Harriet is to offer him, and if together they will get her memoirs written.



Part 1, Chapter 3

Part 1, Chapter 3 Summary

Harriet Scrope is fixing herself lunch when Charles Wychwood appears on her front door step for the requested meeting. Harriet quickly tells Charles about the project she is working on and asks if he will be willing to ghost write with her. Charles hesitates, not because of his own writing as Harriet assumes, but because of the portrait and his new obsession in finding out who it portrays. However, he does agree to take the job.

Charles takes Edward and goes back to the antique store where he traded his books for the painting. Charles wants to know who sold the antique dealer the painting. She tells him the seller was a Joynson from Bristol. Charles goes home and calls the only Joynson he finds listed in Bristol. An elderly gentleman, who says Charles should come and visit him, answers the phone. Charles and Phillip plan to go to Bristol the following Saturday.

The next morning, Charles oversleeps and wakes with a disorienting illness. At first, he is in bed with a swollen tongue and a terrible headache. Later, he finds himself in an outdoor cafe barely able to walk. Finally he ends up in a park passed out beside a fountain.

Part 1, Chapter 3 Analysis

Charles agrees to work with Harriet, even though he cannot force himself to work on his own writing. This is irony to a small degree. Charles is willing to do almost anything rather than do his own writing. At least now he will be making a little money to help support his family.

There is some foreshadowing in Charles's attempt to trace the owner of the painting before the antique store. This is another path the plot will take the reader along. There is also more foreshadowing in Charles's illness. The reader must wonder if this illness has anything to do with the headaches he had been having and if it will continue to grow worse through the course of the novel.



Part 1, Chapter 4

Part 1, Chapter 4 Summary

Charles and Phillip board a train that Saturday to see original owner of the portrait. Charles is in high spirits, acting almost bizarrely as he rips pages of a copy of *Great Expectations* and eats them. Phillip, as he normally can be, is quiet and reserved, bordering on pathological shyness. When they arrive in Bristol, Charles rushes recklessly through town with Phillip close behind him until they reach the house they are looking for. Charles decides to go on himself and asks Phillip to wait for him at the church. The church is St. Mary Redcliffe Church, where Chatterton's father worked before his death and the place where Chatterton's inspiration for his writing was discovered.

Charles goes to the house and finds an old man dressed in tights and a jogging suit jacket. This man, who introduces himself as Pat, is more eccentric than Charles himself, talking quickly about odd things and asking Charles, a complete stranger, to massage his neck. Pat tells Charles the painting belonged to his lover and that he gave it away out of spite. He then tells Charles of a couple of bags of papers that he is welcome to take as well. Charles takes these things and quickly leaves.

In the meantime, Phillip is exploring the inside of the church. Here he finds a plaque dedicated to Thomas Chatterton. While reading the inscription, an old man comes over and starts to talk to Phillip about Chatterton. The man tells Phillip that Chatterton's body was never buried, that it is gone. He then sells Phillip a brochure about Chatterton and points out the front facade of the house that was once Chatterton's. Phillip leaves quickly, disturbed by this man's attitude, and runs into Charles.

Charles and Phillip board the train and Charles immediately begins sorting through the papers while Phillip reads aloud from the brochure. Phillip discovers in the pamphlet that the man who originally owned the manuscripts Charles's is sorting through has the same name as the publisher, who published Chatterton's original manuscripts and a compilation of his poetry twenty years after his death. Charles also discovers several handwritten pages of poetry that have the initials T.C. on them, though they are clearly recognizable as William Blake's poetry.

Part 1, Chapter 4 Analysis

Charles seems healthy once more at the beginning of this chapter despite his odd behavior. The reader could assume it is only his natural peculiarities that cause this behavior, but again, the reader must wonder if this might be a little more foreshadowing into his precarious health. When Charles meets up with Pat, however, the eccentricities of this man make Charles appear to be the more mature of the two men. This might mislead the reader into believing all people in this book are simply odd.

The reader is also served several small tidbits of information regarding Chatterton in this chapter. The reader now knows where Chatterton was born, about the mystery surrounding the burial of his body, and the influence of his work on later poets. The most exciting part of this information, however, is the discovery of the manuscripts. The idea that Chatterton authored the poetry that was credited to William Blake opens many doors that could turn the world of literature on its ear. Charles might have indeed found the treasure he had been seeking. This is foreshadowing. It also touches on one of the themes of the book, forgery.



Part 1, Chapter 5

Part 1, Chapter 5 Summary

Charles is sick again when he returns that night, however he is recovered by the next morning. Vivien goes to the art gallery where she works and tries not to think about how sick her husband might be. Charles calls her soon after she arrives and asks if it would be all right for him to have dinner with a friend from college, Andrew Flint. Vivien assures him it will be fine. Cumberland, one of the owners of the gallery, shows Vivien some paintings he has recently bought at auction after she finishes on the phone. The paintings are by Joseph Seymour, a famous artist who recently passed away. His last assistant, Stewart Merk has set a meeting with Cumberland and his partner, Maitland, to sell them other paintings he inherited after the artist's death.

Phillip Slack is at work at the library that morning. He has gone down to the basement to look through the stacks of old and neglected books hoping to find something that might help Charles in his search for information about Chatterton. Phillip slips his fingers over the spines of the books, lifting one or two off the shelves and replacing them. When he comes to a novel by Harrison Bentley, he reads through the chapters quickly, picking at the plot of the story. It sounds very familiar to him. Then he reads the end page and finds a summary for Mr. Bentley's next novel and finds this story line familiar as well. Then he remembers from where he recognizes the stories. Harriet Scrope has written two novels very similar to these plot lines.

Charles meets with Flint that evening; he an old school chum who is now a successful fiction writer and biographer. Flint is currently at work on a biography of George Meredith. Charles shows Flint one of the handwritten manuscripts he found that he believes to have been written by Chatterton and asks his opinion of it without telling him what it is. In college, Flint always liked to look at handwriting and figure out when and where it was written. He looks at this paper and guesses it was written sometime between 1790 and 1830. Charles is elated, since this lends credence to his theory that Chatterton did not die in 1770.

Part 1, Chapter 5 Analysis

Vivien has become quite concerned with her husband's health. The author mentions Charles's latest illness as almost an afterthought, but the level of Vivien's concern is like an underscore to the foreshadowing this latest illness offers the reader. Be on the watch out it seems to say. This illness also can be viewed as a symbol of one of the minor themes of the work, procrastination. The illness is yet another reason why Charles cannot work at his own writings.

The writer, in the meantime, uses Phillip to stumble onto another theme of the novel: forgery. Phillip has discovered that Harriet more than likely stole the plot of two old



novels to write her own novels. The foreshadowing here begs the question, what will Harriet do when she discovers she has been caught. Charles also finds more evidence of the theme when he visits his old friend Flint. Is it possible Chatterton lived another fifty or sixty years after his reported death to write under the guise of other poets? The seed of foreshadowing planted here asks the more serious question who really wrote the poetry society has assigned to William Blake and others.



Part 2, Chapter 6

Part 2, Chapter 6 Summary

Thomas Chatterton wrote a history of his life in one of the manuscripts Charles found. Chatterton was born on Pile Street in Bristol three months after his father died, who had been the singing master of St. Mary Redcliffe church. Chatterton was very close to his mother, though he was a sort of outcast among the children his own age. He was fascinated with the church where his father worked and was often there, playing inside it and exploring its many rooms. When he wasn't at the church, he was at home going through his father's old books or at Mr. Joynson's publishers borrowing his books. One day Chatterton found some old parchments among his father's things and asked his mother where they had come from. His mother told him they were in a room at the church. Chatterton went to that room and found many more parchments that fueled the young man's imagination.

On these parchments, Chatterton could read snippets of poetry written in medieval times when the church was newly built. Chatterton took these snippets and added his own words to finish them and then sold them to the townspeople under the guise of being histories written by their own ancestors. Then Chatterton invented a monk named Thomas Rowley and wrote songs and ballads and elegies under his name and gave them to Joynson to print and sell. They sold well at first, giving the young poet a taste of success. Chatterton decided then to move to London and find success under his own name.

Chatterton sold many pieces to the local magazines in London. However, he quickly became frustrated with his lack of funds. He lived in a room at the home of Joynson's sister. Joynson came to see him one day and made a proposal that would help them both become very rich. Joynson suggested that Chatterton fake his own death and continue to write poetry under the names of other famous poets who had also died in recent years.

Charles finishes reading the manuscript to Phillip and Vivien and suggests to them that these words would turn the world of poetry on its ear. Charles wants to write a book with Phillip and publish these manuscripts. They will all be rich and famous he tells them. Phillip suggests that Chatterton was a forger and therefore not worthy of the fame he already had. Charles argues that he was not a forger but a great poet. It is then that Phillip tells Charles about the novels he discovered with the same plots as Harriet's novels.

Charles is ill again that night with a bad headache. He goes into the living room and reads through the poems in the Chatterton manuscripts. After a while the pain is too strong for him to read and he begins to cry. This is how Vivien finds him.



Part 2, Chapter 6 Analysis

Again the theme of forgery jumps out here in several places. First there is the flashback of the young, brilliant Chatterton who uses writing from the past to create his own incredible works of poetry. The writer of this novel has already told the reader through the biography of Chatterton at the beginning of the book that Chatterton did in fact create the Rowley papers that were a sort of forgery of medieval writings. This truth adds fuel to the fiction written in the Chatterton manuscripts that Charles has found.

The theme of forgery is discussed with heated passion between Charles and Phillip. It seems here the theme has switched from the idea of forgery itself to what forgery is defined as and whether or not the form Chatterton and Harriet Scrope practiced is really forgery or simple imitation. Finally, we see more foreshadowing with Charles's illness. Even Charles appears to have become quite concerned with his own health.



Part 2, Chapter 7

Part 2, Chapter 7 Summary

Charles goes to work at Harriet Scrope's the next day and takes her the manuscripts and the painting. Charles tells Harriet his theory that Chatterton did not die but carried on writing under the names of others. At first she does not believe him, but begins to when he shows her the papers. Soon after she's read them, Harriet tries several times to nonchalantly take the papers from Charles, supposedly for safekeeping.

Harriet distracts Charles by turning his attention to her memoirs. Harriet hands him the notes her last assistant typed up and tells him to ask her any questions. Charles begins by asking her about her relationship with T.S Eliot, who helped her to get her first two novels published. When he quotes Eliot, she puts it down as Shakespeare and he corrects her. Harriet then says maybe Eliot stole the line from Shakespeare since she does not like to be corrected. This reminds Charles of what Phillip said about Harriet borrowing her plots from Bentley and he comments on this. Harriet, suddenly in a panic, runs from the room claiming a female problem.

Harriet, alone in her room, recalls a time shortly after her first novel was published when she was unable to write a single word. Her success left her frozen and unable to create a plot of her own. One day she was in an old bookstore and picked up at random a book by Harrison Bentley. After reading the novel, it occurred to her that she could simply borrow the plot and no one would ever know as long as she made a few changes. Harriet's second novel was a success and no one seemed to notice the forgery. Harriet took another of Bentley's novels and did the same, without relying on the older plot as much as she had the first time around, and found her own voice and was able to write the rest of her novels completely on her own. This is why she had been so afraid to write her memoirs; she was afraid the truth would come out and place her later novels and her first under a shadow they did not deserve.

Harriet returns to Charles in the sitting room and carefully questions him about his reference to Bentley without giving herself away and is satisfied when Charles seems unconcerned with her possible forgery. Sarah Tilt arrives a few minutes later and Charles announces he must leave, taking the manuscripts with him much to Harriet's regret. Then Sarah, who is an art critic, tells Harriet that the Seymour painting she had admired before was on sale at Cumberland and Maitland. Harriet demands they go and see it, not for the painting, but because she is aware Charles's wife works there.

Part 2, Chapter 7 Analysis

The theme of forgery is touched upon again in this chapter. Harriet offers the reader an excuse for her own choice to steal a plot from another writer and it is left to the reader to decide if what she has done is unethical or simply imitation, which can be construed as



high praise. Harriet also opens up more foreshadowing in her attempt to steal the Chatterton papers and in her plan to go see Charles's wife. Harriet believes that she would have a better chance to get them published as a real writer. The reader might also see here a little ego. Harriet wants the fame of publishing papers that will turn the literary world on its ear.



Part 2, Chapter 8

Part 2, Chapter 8 Summary

Mr. Sadlier, Seymour's old dealer, calls on Cumberland and Maitland that morning. Sadlier claims the Seymours that the gallery is trying to sell are fakes. Cumberland calls in Merk and invites them both to a meeting.

Sadlier confronts Merk and tells him they had to be fakes because Seymour was too ill in his last days to have been so prolific and produce so many paintings. Merk shows him the canvass numbers that prove they belonged to Seymour and then shows him a painting that is at that moment hanging in Sadlier's own gallery. The painting has all the same identification marks as the one Sadlier has. It would not be possible to prove it is a fake except that Merk admits it and all the others he sold to Cumberland are fakes. Merk painted them himself and because he has all the identification information he needs to mark the canvasses, and there is nothing Sadlier can do to prove they are fakes.

Harriet Scrope and Sarah Tilt arrive at the gallery a few hours after the meeting with Merk and Sadlier. Harriet is shown the painting by Seymour she had admired before but is reluctant to purchase it and is not persuaded to by Cumberland. On the way out of the gallery, she realizes she has left her purse. Harriet goes back alone and runs into Vivien. She can tell Vivien is upset and suggests they go on a walk.

Vivien confesses to Harriet that Charles has been very ill but refuses to go to a doctor. Harriet says she will not have Charles work anymore but she will continue to pay him. Then, with Vivien in grateful spirits, she casually asks about the Chatterton papers. Vivien dislikes the papers, dislikes that they take her husband away from his own work. Therefore, when Harriet suggests that Vivien persuade Charles to give her the papers, Vivien agrees. Then she accidentally tells Harriet the Seymours are fakes.

Part 2, Chapter 8 Analysis

Forgery is a huge theme in this novel. Again we touch on this theme with Merk admitting that he forged his employer's final few paintings. This time, however, the reader is faced with outright forgery rather than the innocent imitations of Harriet Scrope. However, is there a difference? This seems to be the question the writer is attempting to ask the reader.

Harriet desperately wants the Chatterton papers, desperately enough to put an anxious wife in an awkward position. These papers seem to symbolize the ultimate fame for Harriet. With Charles they symbolize riches for his family. To Vivien the papers symbolize a distraction for Charles, an obsession that she sees as an obstacle to his health and his work. There is also more about Charles's illness here, more foreshadowing into what the reader must realize is soon to play out.



Part 2, Chapter 9

Part 2, Chapter 9 Summary

Charles is having trouble seeing as he reads a book about Chatterton. Panic rising in his chest, he puts the book down and instead fusses over his son. When his son pushes him away, he goes to his desk and begins work on the preface for the book he will write about the Chatterton manuscripts. Charles continues to work even when his pen runs out of ink, until the phone rings and shatters his concentration. It is Harriet; she has called to tell him he does not need to come to their next appointed meeting time, she is too tired to work. Charles then invites her out to dinner. He returns to his work and cannot concentrate. He looks up and finds Edward watching him. Edward points to the portrait that began Charles's obsession and tells him the man in it is hurting him.

To prove to his son the portrait is not evil, Charles takes Edward to a gallery and shows him the Wallis painting, *Chatterton*. As Charles stands and stares at the painting, he becomes frightened. Edward asks about the man in the painting and Charles explains that the model was George Meredith, another poet.

In a flashback, Meredith and Wallis discuss the portrait Wallis wants to paint. Wallis finds himself watching Mary Ellen Meredith, Meredith's wife, more than Meredith himself. Wallis finds Mary extremely attractive and Meredith too wild and philosophical in his concerns over the idea of modeling for a dead poet. Wallis finds the room where Chatterton died and asks Meredith and his wife to join him there one afternoon so that he can do the preliminary sketches. Meredith comes alone, much to Wallis's disappointment, and chatters non-stop while Wallis sets up the room for his sketches. Finally Wallis sits to his work and asks Meredith to be silent. Just as Wallis is about to finish, the servant girl who lives in the room knocks and says a lady has come to visit.

Mary Ellen Meredith enters the room and walks around, quite interested in the portrait but not the model. Mary and her husband argue in front of Wallis, a fact Wallis finds interesting. When they all leave, it is clear Mary and her husband do not wish to be alone together.

Part 2, Chapter 9 Analysis

Charles has obviously become quite ill, sick enough that even his son sees it. Edward believes it is the painting killing his father, the portrait and the papers then to him a symbol of his father's dire health. Charles takes his son to see the only known portrait of Chatterton, which is actually a portrait of Meredith, to soothe his fears. This painting creates a strong reaction from Charles; the painting itself symbolizes not only Chatterton's death but Charles's impending death as well.

In the flashback, there is foreshadowing in the way Wallis reacts to Mary Ellen Meredith. It is clear Mary is not happy in her marriage and it is also clear that Wallis is aware of

this fact. Whether or not they will act upon these pieces of knowledge is what has been foreshadowed.



Part 2, Chapter 10

Part 2, Chapter 10 Summary

It is Friday night and Charles is in an Indian restaurant with his invited guests. Harriet is there, as well as Vivien, Phillip, and Andrew Flint. While they eat the spicy food, a conversation about the current state of literature erupts. Flint is of the opinion that fiction in today's market is a popularity contest rather than of great intellectual value as it was in the past. Phillip and Charles argue with him, Charles nearly telling him of the Chatterton papers several times. Harriet chimes in, though she is so drunk she has nothing of value to add.

The conversation moves to the value of poetry in modern times. Again Flint's opinion is derogatory and Charles nearly tells him of the Chatterton manuscripts. Charles suddenly announces to the table that he is ill and apologizes to his wife for being stuck with him. Then Charles collapses and falls on the floor.

Henry Wallis invites the Merediths to his studio so he can paint Meredith for the Chatterton portrait. Meredith is in wild spirits again and will hardly sit still. Mary excuses herself after a slow look around the studio where she finds a copy of some of Wallis's more famous works, nudes. While they are working, Wallis and Meredith suddenly realize there is smoke billowing outside their windows. They run out the door to see what is on fire and find a small shed behind a neighbor's house, a female poet, is on fire. Wallis watches Mary Ellen Meredith run out the front door of the poet's house with a child in her arms, unaware that Meredith has left. Wallis speaks to Mary and learns that the child was a servant's child who had become overwhelmed by the smoke.

When Wallis returns to his studio, he finds Meredith dressed in his own clothes rather than the costume he wore for the portrait, ready to leave. Wallis watches Meredith and his wife leave, imagining Mary coming back to him. Wallis begins the painting the next day, pondering Meredith's beliefs that the painting will immortalize them both, but Meredith will be cheated since he is portraying Chatterton rather than himself.

Part 2, Chapter 10 Analysis

Charles invites all his friend's to dinner and never really says why. This final dinner may have been a final farewell for Charles, the symbol of a condemned man's last meal. It foreshadows the collapse that happens at the end of the scene and what may happen in the following chapter.

The discussion about the modern state of poetry is ironic in the idea that if the Chatterton manuscripts are real, it might turn the literary world on its ear as it stood in Chatterton's time. However, the reader must ask in light of this discussion, would it really matter now, in modern times, if dozens of the most brilliant poems and



manuscripts of the past were written not by the person's credited with them but Chatterton.

Wallis has grown more attracted to Mary by this chapter. The progression of the painting seems to symbolize a time frame that counts down the deterioration of the Meredith marriage and the growth of Wallis's obsession with Mary, not to mention a countdown of sorts on Charles's health. The painting also symbolizes infamy for both Wallis and Meredith, it is a fame that Meredith is concerned will be shadowed by the fact that he is pretending to be someone else. He need not have worried.



Part 2, Chapter 11

Part 2, Chapter 11 Summary

Charles wakes in the hospital with Vivien and Edward by his side. Vivien went to the hospital with Charles and Phillip, and Flint went to the apartment to retrieve Edward. The doctors did a brain scan on Charles and found the source of his illness, a large brain tumor. Charles attempts to say goodbye to his family, but he cannot speak. Quietly, unlike the horrible death Chatterton experienced, Charles dies as life around him goes on.

Wallis has finished "Chatterton." Meredith and his wife, in the meantime, are at a fair to keep the boredom and tension of their marriage at bay. However, Mary can no longer fight what she sees is true. Mary begins to cry and when Meredith forces her to tell her troubles, she announces that she has decided to leave him. Weeks later, Mary goes to Wallis to see the painting. It is then that their affair begins.

Part 2, Chapter 11 Analysis

All of the allusions to Charles's illness have finally come to a head. The headaches and blind spots and dizzy spells foreshadowed a battle with a brain tumor and possible death, which is exactly what has happened. Without finding out the truth about Chatterton in a cruel and ironic fashion, Charles has died.

The foreshadowing of Mary's unhappiness and Wallis's attraction to the young bride have also come together to the affair the reader could see whispered about throughout the previous chapters. The symbolism of Wallis's painting has also burst upon the reader here. The deaths of Meredith's marriage and Charles, are both interlaced with the symbol of the death scene Wallis has spent several months painting. It is not a coincidence that Ackroyd chose this chapter for the culmination of Wallis's portrait.



Part 2, Chapter 12

Part 2, Chapter 12 Summary

The funeral is held at a crematorium. Flint and Harriet attend among Charles's family and close friends. Phillip remains at Vivien's side throughout. Through the weeks after, Phillip remains a close friend of the family, purchasing a car to take Vivien and Edward on rides on Sundays to keep their minds off their grief.

One rainy afternoon shortly after the funeral, Harriet stops by the Wychwood's to discuss Charles's papers with Vivien. Harriet convinces Vivien she would like to have her publisher look at the poems Charles wrote and she would also like to unburden Vivien of the Chatterton manuscripts. Harriet even manages to talk Vivien out of the portrait of the unknown gentleman.

Part 2, Chapter 12 Analysis

The funeral is somber. However, Ackroyd tells the story through Flint's eyes, making it almost comical as he watches Harriet steal a geranium from the crematorium grounds and make rude comments about Charles's family. This touches on a theme of the book, family. Harriet and Flint are not related, but they might as well be for the way they act together. They are like two peas in a pod, both hypocrites who attend the funeral not out of respect for Charles but for their own amusement.

Harriet desperately wants the Chatterton manuscripts, sure in her own mind that she is the only one who could possibly have them published with the authority they deserve. To Charles they represented wealth and fame. To Harriet they are the symbol of a mystery waiting to be solved, a distraction for a bored old woman.



Part 3, Chapter 13

Part 3, Chapter 13 Summary

Thomas Chatterton is a happy young man, excited about where his life is going and how well his writing has been accepted so far. Chatterton lost his virginity a few nights before, a fact that both excites and surprises him. However, he is afraid the experience has left him with a sexually transmitted disease. Chatterton talks to an older friend about his situation and is told of a kill-or-cure that will help him. Four grains of arsenic and a dessert-spoon of opium will cure his problem.

Chatterton goes out that morning and buys the ingredients for his cure, intent on taking it before he goes to bed that night. Then he spends his day in pursuits of his work, writing an elegy about a benefactor and preparing to deliver it to the magazine that has agreed to publish it.

Vivien is still on leave from the gallery when Harriet shows up to have her new painting authenticated, so it is Vivien's assistant who shows Harriet to Cumberland's office. Cumberland tells her immediately that the painting is a fake. Harriet slyly allows him to know that she is aware the Seymour's are fakes as well. Cumberland immediately agrees to find an artist who can restore the painting to make it appear that it is a genuine work of art. Cumberland decides to call Merk, certain he is the one who allowed Harriet to find out about the Seymour's.

Chatterton walks to his publishers and passes a construction site. Just as a building is about to be demolished, Chatterton sees a child walk into it. Chatterton screams for help, but the construction workers assure him there could be no one in the building. Chatterton runs toward it anyway.

Part 3, Chapter 13 Analysis

Chatterton is seen on his last day of life, clearly different than the young man described in history. Historically, it is believed that Chatterton was severely depressed on his last day of life and that is why he took his own life. However, the reader sees some obvious foreshadowing that suggests not only did Chatterton not commit suicide, but also that his death might have in fact been accidental.

Harriet, in the meantime, is attempting once more to fake her way into fame. Harriet wants the portrait authenticated to prove what the manuscripts say and to give more credence to any book she might write about the manuscripts. The portrait is a symbol of fortune to Charles, honest fortune. To Harriet, it has become another physical symbol of the depths of dishonesty she will go to, to make money and become even more famous.



Part 3, Chapter 14

Part 3, Chapter 14 Summary

Chatterton pulls a boy from the wrecked house and discovers he is a street urchin who has a birth defect called hydrocephalus. Chatterton saves him and gives him a coin to buy some food with and promises to return to him the next day. Chatterton never returns.

Edward, Phillip, and Vivien are in the country on one of their Sunday drives. Phillip and Vivien discuss the portrait and Chatterton manuscripts Vivien gave to Harriet. Vivien regrets having given them away now and wants to set things right. Phillip decides to go back to Bristol and talk with the owner of the papers and try to find out the truth. Then he will convince Harriet to give him the papers so he can return them to the owner.

Chatterton goes out with his friend that night and tells him of the simple boy he met. They discuss poetry and legend, the fact that Chatterton still has his whole life ahead of him and his friend is near the end. They shake hands and his friend comments on how it is the past touching the future. Chatterton walks home drunk.

Phillip goes to Bristol and meets the eccentric gentleman who originally owned the Chatterton manuscripts. The man tells Phillip that twenty years after Chatterton's death, his poetry became in demand again. During this time, Joynson, Chatterton's original publisher, created a compilation of the poems Chatterton left him and sold some of the manuscripts he had left from when Chatterton was alive. However, a rival bookseller began publishing some of Chatterton's letters that claimed Joynson bought up Chatterton's work and then abandoned him. So Joynson forged the Chatterton manuscripts Charles had found in the hopes that when Joynson died they would be discovered and would tarnish Chatterton's reputation and save Joynson's. Phillip is not surprised by this truth and agrees to return the papers to Joynson's relative. Phillip is glad Charles did not learn the truth.

Part 3, Chapter 14 Analysis

Chatterton saves a boy from certain death only to face his own death later that night with no one around to save him. This is irony and perhaps a little symbolism. The boy saves a boy but cannot save himself.

Phillip finally learns the truth the reader has been waiting for since the beginning of this journey. It is again ironic that forgery was used to fight forgery, the forger tarnished by a forgery. Again, forgery is a strong theme throughout this book and nothing symbolizes it more than the forged Chatterton manuscripts.



Part 3, Chapter 15

Part 3, Chapter 15 Summary

Chatterton enters his room drunk and begins to drink even more from a bottle he keeps hidden in a chest under his bed. He nearly forgets his kill-or-cure, but remembers just before he climbs into bed. Chatterton cannot remember how much arsenic or opium to use so he simply guesses. Chatterton thinks of the boy with hydrocephalus as he drinks his cure.

Phillip goes to Harriet and tells her the truth about the Chatterton manuscripts. Harriet is no longer interested in the papers now that the mystery has been solved so she gives them back easily. Harriet also returns Charles's poems without having tried to get them published. Stewart Merk, in the meantime, has tried to clean the painting with alcohol so he can get down to the original paint and fix it. However, the alcohol eats through all the layers of paint and destroys the painting.

Chatterton dies a slow, painful death in the throes of the arsenic. Edward goes to the Wallis painting and tries to see it the way his father saw it. Phillip discusses the whole Chatterton mystery with Vivien and decides to write a book about it from Charles's point of reference. Chatterton dies and finds himself with both Charles and George Meredith, a smile on his face when they find him the next day.

Part 3, Chapter 15 Analysis

All the foreshadowing in the previous chapters comes to a conclusion here. Chatterton does not mean to kill himself, according to this version of events. Chatterton takes an overdose of his cure by accident because he is too drunk to remember the portions his friend told him; the conclusion of foreshadowing that took place two chapters ago when Chatterton bought his supplies and had a discussion with the chemist about suicide.

Phillip returns the Chatterton manuscripts to their rightful owner, once again stopping a forgery from becoming public knowledge. This again touches on the theme of forgery that has run through the entire course of the novel. It is a satisfying ending to a unique novel.



Characters

Charles Wychwood

Charles Wychwood is a poet. Charles is married and has a child, but he is immature and lacks the ambition to become a published poet. Charles's wife Vivien works to support the family while Charles stays home to work on his poetry. However, after he finds the painting in the junk shop, he becomes obsessed with the idea that Chatterton continued to live after his reported suicide and puts his own writing aside to find the answers. During this time, Charles has begun to have terrible headaches that only grow worse until the night he collapses in an Indian restaurant.

Charles is a lot like Chatterton in that he is a poet who is obsessed with the idea of success. However, unlike Chatterton, Charles is not prolific with his work and only becomes published in the sense that his wife photocopied his work and stapled it together so they could leave copies in local bookstores. Charles is also like Chatterton in the fact that he died before his poetry could bring him fame. Chatterton had moderate success during his lifetime, but it wasn't until twenty years after his death that a collection of his original poems was published and garnered fame. Similarly with Charles, his wife continues to attempt to have his poetry published, even after his death.

Vivien Wychwood

Vivien is the devoted wife of Charles. Vivien and Charles have been married twelve years and have a child together. Vivien does not mind working to support her family because she believes in her husband's work. There is no doubt in Vivien's mind that Charles will one day be a published poet.

Vivien is a lot like Mary Ellen Wychwood in that she is the long-suffering wife of a young, impetuous poet. Unlike Mary, however, Vivien is not unhappy in her marriage, though there are moments when she clearly is not happy with Charles's behavior. Vivien is also like Mary in the fact that she has a male friend she can turn to in moments of stress. Just as Mary had Henry Wallis, Vivien has Phillip Slack.

Edward Wychwood

Edward is the young son of Charles and Vivien Wychwood. Edward is a child mature beyond his years, more mature in some ways than his father. It is Edward to whom Charles first reveals his beliefs that the painting will change their fortune forever. Edward is his father's confidant, his partner in crime, and one of his closest friends.



Phillip Slack

Phillip Slack is Charles Wychwood's friend from college. Phillip is extremely shy to the point of anti-social behavior. Phillip is the one who convinces Charles the painting he has found looks like Thomas Chatterton as an older man and Phillip who encourages Charles to research the painting to find the truth. Phillip admires his friend and his family. Phillip is a single man who is very nervous around Vivien and in awe of her. When Charles dies, it is Phillip who steps in and helps Vivien and keeps her and Edward from falling too deeply into depression in their grief. Phillip is also the one who steps in and helps Vivien do the right thing with the Chatterton papers.

Harriet Scrope

Harriet Scrope is a novelist with whom Charles once worked as an assistant. Harriet has been asked by her editor to write a memoir but is deathly afraid to do so because she has secrets in her past that she does not want revealed. Harriet hires Charles to be her ghostwriter so that he might fill in the spaces of her memory and hide the truths she does not want revealed. Harriet is an outrageous old woman concerned only with her own well-being. When she discovers what Charles has found in the Chatterton papers, she decides she has to be the one to reveal them to the world, going so far as to con a newly widowed woman into handing them over to her.

Mr. Cumberland and Mr. Maitland

Mr. Cumberland and Mr. Maitland are co-owners of the gallery, Cumberland and Maitland, where Vivien works. Cumberland finds out that the Seymour paintings he has bought to sell in his gallery are fakes and plans to sell them anyway. When Harriet Scrope finds out about this fact, she uses him to help her authenticate the portrait Charles found.

Stewart Merk

Stewart Merk is the attractive, suave final assistant Seymour employed before his death. Merk is a very talented artist who knows Seymour's style so well that he has been able to flawlessly copy it. Merk created a group of paintings and sells them to Cumberland and Maitland as Seymour's and is caught by Seymour's original dealer. It is decided, that because it cannot, beyond a reasonable doubt, be proven the paintings are fakes that they will be sold as the real thing. When Harriet Scrope comes to Cumberland and Maitland and tells them she knows about the fakes, it is Merk they assume told her and Merk they send the Chatterton portrait to so he can restore it and help them authenticate it. Merk is the one who destroys the painting by accident.



Henry Wallis

Henry Wallis was a successful painter who worked in the middle part of the nineteenth century. Henry Wallis painted the only known portrait of Chatterton, a depiction of his death scene that utilized the poet George Meredith as the model. It was during the rendering of this portrait that Henry Wallis met Mary Ellen Meredith and allegedly had an affair with her.

George Meredith

George Meredith was a poet and novelist who lived in the middle part of the nineteenth century. George Meredith posed for Wallis's famous *Chatterton*. Meredith's wife had an affair with the artist. It is said that Meredith went to St. Mary Redcliffe where there is a monument to Chatterton and planned to kill himself in a similar fashion. Chatterton's ghost appeared to Meredith and talked him out of it.

Thomas Chatterton

Thomas Chatterton was a poet who lived from 1752-1770. Chatterton is most well known for his manuscripts that he created to appear to be medieval writings of a fictional monk. Chatterton grew up in Bristol and moved to London a few months before his death. Chatterton committed suicide at the young age of seventeen.



Objects/Places

Bristol

Bristol is the small town where Thomas Chatterton was born and raised.

St. Mary Redcliffe Church

This is the church where Chatterton's father worked until three months before Chatterton was born. It is also where Chatterton found fragments of manuscripts that inspired his "Rowley" sequence.

The Garret on Brooke Street, Holborn

This garret is where Chatterton committed suicide.

Arsenic and opium

This is the cure Chatterton took to cure his clap and in his drunken state accidentally overdosed with.

Leno Antiques

Leno Antiques is the junk store where Charles traded his books on flutes for the portrait of the unknown gentleman.

The Cumberland and Maitland Gallery

This is the art gallery where Vivien works and where Harriet Scrope takes the painting to have it authenticated.

Painting of an Unknown Gentleman

This is the painting Charles Wychwood finds that leads him to research Thomas Chatterton, and is later destroyed when an artist attempts to restore it.

Henry Wallis's painting, Chatterton

This is the only known portrait of the poet, though the model was actually George Meredith, another poet.



The Chatterton Manuscripts

These are the papers Pat gives to Charles that confirm his idea that Chatterton did not die at the age of seventeen as originally believed.

The Last Testament by Harrison Bentley

This is Bentley's novel that Harriet Scrope plagiarized for her second novel.



Themes

Forgery in Art and Literature

Forgery is a huge theme in this book. It seems every character is involved in it in one way or another. Chatterton created medieval documents and passed them off as genuine, even going so far as creating a fake monk to act as the writer. Stewart Merk copied his boss's painting style to copy his previous works and create a few of his own. Harriet Scrope took the plot of someone else's novel to create a new work of her own. All three of these people created these works in order to make money, as the definition states. Merk and Chatterton were honest about their creations to at least a few people and did not go out of their way to hide their actions. Harriet strove to create a work of fiction of her own memoirs rather than admit the truth.

Throughout the novel, the reader reads of these deceptions and finds regret from only one participant. Merk is proud of what he has done, as is the young Chatterton. Chatterton is even praised for what he has done. At one point, Phillip points out to Charles that if he had lived and created works under the names of other poets, he is a fraud. Charles argues that not only is he not a fraud, but he is the best poet to ever have lived. Imagine, he explains, how much talent it must have taken to copy those other poets so completely, so accurately. No one ever had a clue until now and that makes him a genius. Harriet is the only person who seems to realize how shameful her actions are. However, even she is not ashamed of the actual act of forgery; instead she is afraid it will tarnish the truth of her real work. It is readily accepted that forgery is wrong, though, in the course of the novel, it is left to the reader to determine what is truly right and what is wrong.

Suicide

Suicide is another theme of this novel. The title character, Chatterton, reportedly committed suicide at the age of seventeen. According to historical accounts, Chatterton was despondent over the lack of money and fame he had acquired through his writing and drank a phial of arsenic and opium. The writer of this novel, however, fictionalizes what is known about the poet's death and what can be assumed by knowledge of the time period and suggests that Chatterton's death was an accident. Chatterton mixed and drank the poison himself, however he was drunk and could not remember the proper dosage. This death, whether it was an accident or not, can, however, still be labeled a suicide.

Another historic character in the novel also attempted suicide by similar means, however, it is reported that Chatterton himself talked him out of the act. George Meredith, the model for the Wallis portrait, *Chatterton*, supposedly attempted to commit suicide in the church where Chatterton spent most of his youth over an affair between



his wife and the artist. Chatterton then appeared to him and told him he still had more work to do, effectively ending the attempt.

Finally there is the main character of the novel, Charles Wychwood. Though he does not commit suicide in the traditional sense, his death is a sort of suicide in the fact that he never went to a doctor to help him with the illness he suffers through the majority of the book.

Family

Family is another theme of this novel. Charles Wychwood is a family man. If not for the support of his wife, he might never have had the chance to work as a poet or the opportunity to find the portrait that began his journey to find the truth about Chatterton. However, this obvious family unit is not the only family in the novel.

Family is traditionally defined as parents and children, or persons who are related and live in the same household. However, this definition broadens every day. In this novel, the theme of family extends from the Wychwood household to their good friend Phillip who steps in and takes care of Vivien and Edward when Charles dies. It also extends to Harriet and the cat she dislikes most of the time but cannot live without, and to her dear friend Sarah who would rather not go out in public with her but still remains her good friend. Family is also present in Chatterton's time, through the friend he has made in the local publisher and his sister with who Chatterton lives with when he moves to London. And it is Meredith's family that drives him to nearly commit suicide when he discovers his wife is having an affair with the artist he thought of as a friend.

The theme of family is best illustrated at the end of the novel, however, when Chatterton dies and finds himself accompanied by two other poets, George Meredith and Charles Wychwood. This is a family created despite the distance of time. They are a family because of their poetry and their similarities.

Style

Points of View

The point of view in this novel is third person seen through the eyes of most of the main characters. The narration is omniscient and reliable. The story is told through both dialogue and the inner thoughts of the main characters, relying equally on both.

At first the main character of the story appears to be Charles Wychwood. The reader spends the majority of the first two parts of the book following Charles through his days of obsession as he attempts to discover the true identity of the man in the portrait. However, even in this early part of the novel the writer jumps from character to character sometimes in the middle of a single scene. It is sometimes difficult for the reader to know whose eyes he is viewing the scene through. However, by writing the novel in this fashion, the reader is not left stranded when Charles dies or is the reader forced to get to know a new character as the main narrator.

Setting

The majority of the novel is set in London, England, with the occasional excursion to Bristol. The setting is similar to what one would expect to find when reading about and/or researching Thomas Chatterton. The fact that Charles Wychwood lives in the same city where Chatterton lived adds to the mystery and the curiosity Charles feels toward the man. When you add to it the fact that Charles is a poet like Chatterton, it seems too coincidental that Charles would be the one to expose Chatterton's last secret.

The majority of the novel takes place in either Charles's home or Harriet's and in the flashbacks the setting is either the large studio where Wallis paints or the garret where Chatterton died. The difference between these two settings highlights the difference between the rich, the one who has it all and still wants more and the poor who is fighting for what little he has. The symbolism of the different settings reflects the differences throughout the novel, including the contrast between Meredith and Chatterton, and to some extent, Charles, between Vivien and Mary Ellen Meredith, and between Phillip Slack and Henry Wallis.

Language and Meaning

The language throughout the novel is proper English with a few common words thrown in from time to time. The novel is set in England and the majority of the characters are well-educated people, therefore the language is educated and easy to read. Andrew Flint, one of Charles's friends, often uses Latin phrases to express himself, often phrases that the people around him either do not understand or choose to ignore. Flint



uses these phrases to make himself appear more intelligent than those around him, a fact Charles notes when he discusses the man with Phillip.

In the flashbacks, the reader is taken to place in time when language was more formal than it is in modern times. However, the writer chose not to write in this stiff dialogue, instead remaining with the clear and proper English he has used throughout the novel. Ackroyd more than likely made this choice to keep the transition from past to present less of a jolt to the reader. However, when Charles reads the manuscript where Chatterton confesses to the plot to fake his own death, it is read in old English just as it might have been written. This choice keeps the authenticity of the manuscripts real to the reader.

Structure

The novel consists of three parts and fifteen chapters. There is a brief biography of Thomas Chatterton before the first chapter as well as small samples of the enclosed chapters. There is also a list of other books by the same writer and a brief biography of the writer at the end.

Each part of the book is introduced with different quotes from the works of Thomas Chatterton. Throughout the book there are also many different ways in which the writer introduces a switch in scene. In the first part, each switch in scene throughout the separate chapters is introduced with a snippet of narration contained in the following scene or small phrases that relate to the following text. In the second part, a simple star heralds each change in scene by, except for the sections in which the author writes about Henry Wallis and George Meredith. These scenes are introduced by quotations from Meredith's poetry. In the third part of the book, only a simple star separates the scenes.

The narration throughout the novel is linear, though toward the end of the novel there are many flashbacks to the times of Henry Wallis and Thomas Chatterton. These flashbacks are interwoven into the narration that takes place in modern time in such a way that the reader almost feels as though both stories take place at the same time. This narration plays on the similarities between the stories of the past and the future which again makes the flashback seem more like it has taken place in the same point of time as the modern day narration carrying on the linear aspect of the novel.



Quotes

"'Leno Antiques. Don't Linger. Make Us Very Happy. Walk Up, Do.'" This amused him. He took the two books, which he had been carrying under his arm, and put them upon his head; then he tiptoed across the courtyard, balancing them precariously until they fell, and he caught them."

Part 1, Chapter 1, pg. 8

"Harriet Scrope was not happy. She shifted in her decaying wicker chair as small pieces of its material dug into her back and buttocks: it was uncomfortable but she was used to its particular kind of discomfort, and now even took pleasure in it." Part 1, Chapter 2, pg. 24

"Across each sheet there were many lines of cramped handwriting in brown ink; they had the appearance of having been written at great speed or under the influence of some overpowering emotion, since extra lines had been written vertically down the margin of each page. It was as if the unknown writer had felt compelled to put everything down in the smallest possible space."

Part 1, Chapter 4, pg. 59

"He had come down to see if he could find any references to Thomas Chatterton and, since he suspected in old books forgotten truth might be recovered, he placed his trust in the principle of *sortes Vergilianae*." Part 1, Chapter 5, pg. 68

"It had taken Harriet six years to complete (while working as a secretary for a small literary magazine) since she wrote very slowly, sometimes composing no more than a sentence or even a phrase each day. She told herself that words were 'sacred', however, gradually forming their own associations and gathering in their own clusters of significant sound; when they were ready, they informed Harriet of their presence and she was content to transcribe them. As far as she was concerned, that was all. The only continuity which her novel possessed lay somewhere within the workings of her own consciousness." Part 2, Chapter 7, pgs. 101-102

"'That's not our face,' Edward was saying. 'Our face is different.'

'Oh no.' Charles was swaying slightly, and he held onto his son's shoulder for support. He was finding it difficult to breath and for a moment he could not speak. 'Oh no. That's George Meredith. He was the model. He was pretending to be Chatterton.'

'So he's not dead yet!' Edward was triumphant. 'Chatterton isn't dead! I was right!'

'No,' Charles said softly. 'He's not dead yet.'" Part 2, Chapter 9, pg. 132

"Wallis watched them from the back window of the cab as he was driven away. They seemed to be deep in conversation as they walked down into Holborn, or it may simply



have been that both their heads were bowed. The cab turned the corner into Gray's Inn Lane and, with a great sigh, Wallis took out his last drawing of Chatterton upon the death-bed. But he could not concentrate upon it. He turned back again, but the Merediths were lost from sight." Part 2, Chapter 9, pg. 144

"It was all of a piece and, in his recognition of the complete work, Wallis knew that it could never be as perfect upon the canvas as it now was in his understanding. He did not want to lose that perfect image, and yet he knew that it was only through its fall into the world that it would acquire any reality." Part 2, Chapter 10, pg. 164

"Charles died, and in the library Phillip was writing 'Yes' on a memorandum; Charles died, and Flint was sitting with bowed head over a paperback copy of *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*; Charles died, and Harriet was holding up her cat in triumph; Charles died, and Pat was jogging around St. Mary Redcliffe; Charles died, and Mr. Leno was whistling while dusting a brass figurine of Don Quixote astride Rosinante." Part 2, Chapter 11, pg. 169

"But she was not looking at the canvas; she was looking at him. There was a small nervous movement in his left eye-lid. She wanted to put out her hand and soothe it, to touch his face. And now, across 'Chatterton', this is what she did." Part 2, Chapter 11, pg. 175

"'I'm not really crying, dear,' she whispered. 'It's rheum. Rheum at the top.' With an appropriately mournful expression she was steadily examining Charles's parents, and then whispered to him again, 'Isn't it amazing how many poets are born common?'" Part 2, Chapter 12, pg 179

"And suddenly she felt very tired, tired of Chatterton and tired of herself for pursuing him. At first his memoir, or 'confession' as Charles Wychwood called it in his introduction, had intrigued her, eagerly she had read all the papers which Vivien had given to her. But it was the element of mystery which had appealed to her. Now that everything had been explained, she was losing interest." Part 3, Chapter 13, pg. 208

"Two others have joined him--the young man who passes him on the stairs and the young man who sits with bowed head by the fountain--and they stand silently beside him. I will live for ever, he tells them. They link hands, and bow towards the sun.

And when his body is found the next morning, Chatterton is still smiling." Part 3, Chapter 15, pg. 234



Topics for Discussion

Discuss forgery. What is forgery? Who defines it? Was what Chatterton did with the Rowley documents really forgery? What about the plagiarism in which Harriet engaged? Is that forgery? Was Merk's imitation of Seymour's work forgery? In what way is each of these examples different?

Discuss Charles's obsession with Chatterton. Is his obsession a type of procrastination with regards to his own work? Or is his obsession a symptom of his brain tumor?

Discuss Charles and Chatterton. In what ways are they alike? In what ways are they different?

Discuss the parallels between the modern characters and the Victorian characters. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different?

Discuss why the writer may have chosen to include so many redundant characters. Why is parallelism used in this novel? Does it help the plot or hurt it?

Discuss Chatterton. What would it have meant to the literary community if Chatterton had faked his own death? Would it have been possible for Chatterton to live in secret all those years after his faked death? How would society react to the idea that Chatterton and not Blake or other artists actually had written the poems credited to them?

Discuss reality in fiction. Should writers use real history in fiction works? Is it appropriate for a writer to fictionalize a real event in which true events cannot be determined?