

Crossing to Safety Study Guide

Crossing to Safety by Wallace Stegner

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Plot Summary

Two young ambitious couples become friends in Madison, Wisconsin, when the two husbands begin their academic careers as professors at the University of Wisconsin in the 1930s. The novel follows their friendship through forty years of career ups-and-downs, health problems, children, successes, and failures.

Sally and Larry Morgan come from the West, and they have no family or money, but Larry has talent and burning ambition. He knows how to set goals and accomplish them. Although his friends' connections and backgrounds make him jealous at times, he knows he can attain what he wishes. Sally is shy, sweet, and loyal. She withholds judgment and makes a family of her friends, for she has no family of her own.

Sid and Charity Lang were born to Harvard. They have come to Wisconsin in a pioneering spirit, seeking to spread a little of the culture that has inherently been theirs. Sid has as much talent as any of his peers, but he lacks Larry's confidence and drive. He fears that he won't be accepted for who he is, and he leans on his wife and caves to her iron will. Charity is as bright and beautiful as a goddess. Her Harvard professor father has been bossed around all his life by Charity's mother, and Charity very much takes after her. With all the goodness in her heart, Charity makes plans for others, wanting to do what's best for them, but not always seeing that sometimes they need to do things for themselves.

Sally and Charity are both expecting children when the story opens, and they bond as they prepare for the babies. The Langs take the money-poor Morgans under their wing and provide luxuries for them that they otherwise wouldn't have known. They have parties, vacations at Charity's family cabin, and picnics on the lake. Sid and Larry develop their friendship as they struggle through work, both being the youngest and least published faculty on the staff.

Larry's ambition earns him quick publications, and Sid finds himself without a job as cuts are made to the faculty. They part ways several times, but their binding friendship always brings them together, especially to Battell Pond, the cabin where they have shared so many summer memories.

During one of these summer outings, Sally is struck by polio, and she is disabled for the rest of her life. This is a kink in the plans that Charity, with all her contacts and resources, cannot fix. Although Sally weathers her trial with endless patience, Larry must learn some patience and resignation himself. Sally can no longer get around by herself and must rely on others for even small tasks such as getting herself dressed in the morning.

In the end, it is Charity, the master planner, who succumbs to death first. From the time of his marriage, Sid has relied on her to plan everything for him, from his career to his family. At times he has resented her constant interference, but now that she is leaving

him, he must learn to alter a lifetime of habits and stand on his own. Luckily, he has his lifetime friends with him.



Part 1: Chapter 1

Part 1: Chapter 1 Summary

Larry wakes up in a cabin at Sid and Charity's vacation property in Massachusetts. He seems to have a difficult time pulling out of sleep, commenting on his cataracts and tiredness. It's clear that Larry is aged. Everything around him is as familiar as home can be, though this is his friends' summer home. He thinks about his many years of memories in this spot, how they always seem to come back to Sid and Charity.

It is 1972, but as Larry gets up and walks around the forest feeling the cool morning air, he feels that it could just as easily be 1938. The Lang compound is quiet, not a soul is stirring, so Larry has the place to himself. He walks down a dirt road and listens to the birds as he watches the sun rise.

Larry returns to the cottage and finds his wife Sally sitting up, drinking a cup of coffee and eating a banana. Sid and Charity's daughter Hallie is with her, explaining the plans for the day. Charity has planned a picnic on Folsom Hill. Larry and Sally have arrived from New Mexico late the evening before and haven't yet seen their hosts.

Larry and Sally talk with Hallie for a while, trying to get a feel for Charity's health. They have come because Charity is suffering from cancer and her health has been rapidly declining. Sally has just dreamed that she had a fight with Charity and it makes her feel guilty. Sally credits Charity with saving her life. Sally is now disabled. She cannot walk by herself or even get herself dressed. This morning she feels that she is a nuisance to Larry because he always has to take care of her. The bad news about Charity has put her in a bad mood.

Larry contemplates his life. He has been busy for virtually all of his sixty-four years, but he wonders now if all that busyness has been worth it, if perhaps all the degrees and awards and money is just tinsel, not what a mature man should find contentment in. In their youth they wanted to leave a mark on the world, but now in their declining years they find that the world has left its mark on them. They feel old, and they're about to lose their dearest friend.

Part 1: Chapter 1 Analysis

Stegner begins this novel at the end of the story, signifying that he will make great use of the literary device of flashback. At the beginning, the main character and narrator Larry reflects on his life and where he is now. We know from his reflections that his career has certainly been successful. He mentions awards, honorary degrees, and a comfortable income. But he wonders whether or not the pursuit of all these things has been honorable, or if he has fulfilled his youthful ambitions.



The reader is also introduced to Sally through Larry's eyes. Life has definitely taken its toll on Sally. Whereas Larry can take a barefooted stroll through the woods in the morning, Sally must lie in bed and wait for someone to come along and help her up just to go to the bathroom. She wears braces on her legs and seems distraught at Charity's illness. Nonetheless, Larry points out that suffering has made a saint of Sally, that she has always been concerned about human suffering and frailties.

The reader has yet to meet the other half of this most important friendship, the Langs. But it is clear from Larry's reflections in this first chapter that the Morgans' friendship with the Langs has been perhaps the most influential force on their lives. And here, at the end of Charity's life, all of their lives will be changed. Charity's death will be the final crisis in their friendship.



Part 1: Chapter 2

Part 1: Chapter 2 Summary

Larry and Sally are driving to Wisconsin where Larry has just taken a position as a professor at the University of Wisconsin. They have been driving for days, and they are so glad to be almost there. They have \$125 to last them until his first payday, so Sally doesn't want to spend much on a hotel and dinner. They find a place to stay for the night that includes breakfast for \$1.50.

In the morning they try to find permanent housing, but they are disappointed when they find that the selection is slim and the rents are high. They find a poorly furnished basement apartment, but are charmed by it because its back lawn slopes down into Lake Monona with its pretty sailboats. When they do the calculations, though, they are very discouraged. They don't see how they're going to make ends meet. Sally is expecting a baby, and they were hoping to be able to save money for the delivery and pediatrician.

They're happy, though. They have a wonderful marriage and a good work ethic. With some ingenuity and work they turn their apartment into comfortable place to live. Larry settles down in his job and spends his off-hours writing short stories to send to magazines. He feels lucky to have his job because during the Depression most universities gave up hiring. One of his own professors let him know when Wisconsin had a last-minute job opening, and it worked out.

Larry doesn't feel that he fits in with the other professors. He didn't go to an Ivy League school, and most of the other professors seem pretty uptight in their tweeds and flannels. His supposed office mate, William Ellery, never shows up at the office, so he doesn't have anyone to talk to.

At the end of two isolated weeks, Larry and Sally go to a faculty reception. They enjoy the sociality and try to be charming, but they don't make any friends there. They go home feeling a little scared and a little lost, but they have each other.

Part 1: Chapter 2 Analysis

The flashback foreshadowed in the last chapter begins here. Larry and Sally, feeling so old in 1972, are just starting out in 1938. They are young, ambitious, and grateful for any opportunities they can get. They feel excited and nervous about life, but they have the energy and will to face it head on.

The contrast between Larry at the end of his career and Larry at the beginning of his career is extreme but fitting. At the end of his career Larry has earned accolades and prestige, and it's clear that the work ethic he exhibits at the beginning of his career pays off. But at the end of his career he wonders if his efforts have been misplaced a little. It



appears that he only got what he wanted, but in the end he wonders if he wanted the wrong thing.

Sally, on the other hand, seems to have not had as straight a journey through life. At the beginning of life she seems an ordinary, perhaps particularly intelligent, young woman. She is careful and cautious with decisions and money, but she is excited about the future. She wants to make friends and enjoy herself, but she's practical as well. The mournfulness exhibited in Chapter 1 has no apparent precursor in Chapter 2, but that's because her life was drastically altered in the middle.



Part 1: Chapter 3

Part 1: Chapter 3 Summary

The next week, Larry comes home late in the afternoon to find another woman in their apartment with Sally. It is a beautiful, radiant woman with a personality to match. The woman claims to have met them at the reception, but Larry can't see how he could have missed such a person. She flatters Larry by saying that her husband brought home a magazine with one of Larry's stories in it and that they read it together in bed. She called it "Splendid".

This is Charity Lang, and she chatters on and on, but the chatter is intriguing to Sally and Larry. Charity and her husband come from Harvard where Charity's father teaches and where she met Sid while he was in graduate school. To Sally and Larry, Charity represents culture, education, good manners, and civilization. Through their conversation, they find out that the Langs have been to the Sahara and lived in Paris, and that her uncle was an ambassador under Roosevelt.

Charity and Sally are both expecting and are due around the same time. Charity and Sid already have two children, so Sally looks at her as wisdom incarnate. Charity will help her find an obstetrician and help her with the details. They talk about Sally and Larry, about how they met in the library at Berkeley where she worked and Larry studied.

Charity wants to know about their families, and they reply that their families are all dead, that they haven't got any family. Charity is more than impressed that they've been able to make it all on their own and she wants to know how they've done it. At this prying, however, Larry begins to get defensive and Sally gets quiet. It's a touchy subject for them. They tell her about how they worked their way through school, studying whenever they weren't working. Charity thinks they are admirable, having done it all themselves and not having been put through the assembly line like the Langs.

Sally lets her defenses completely down and tells Charity about how Larry's parents were killed. A friend of Larry's offered to take his parents on an airplane ride for their anniversary and ended up crashing the plane and orphaning him while he was at home making their anniversary dinner. Larry also tells her that his father was a mechanic. Charity invites them to dinner Friday evening and they accept.

Part 1: Chapter 3 Analysis

Like a 1,000-watt bulb, Charity enters the story. The author has teased the reader about her for two chapters, holding her out as the center of the universe, and now one understands why. Charity Lang is a goddess. She is beautiful, intelligent, kind, cultured, and concerned about other people. More than that, she is as interesting person as the



Morgans have ever met. From their brief conversation, they find that she has traveled the world, met famous people, and been given every advantage they can think of.

Sally is so flattered by Charity's attentions that she lets her guard down and talks about her own life as if she were talking to a very old friend. From this the reader can see that Sally is hungry for female companionship. She has no mother or sister to talk to, and while her marriage with Larry is strong and loving, she needs a woman to befriend, especially while she's expecting this first child.

Even Larry lets his defenses down, admitting that he speaks of his parents' death with a sort of bravado. He may not have a sparkling pedigree, but he has stories of the wild west that just may shock Charity Lang. This period in the Morgans' lives is marked by beginnings: the beginning of Larry's career and the beginning of a lifetime friendship.



Part 1: Chapter 4

Part 1: Chapter 4 Summary

Friday evening finally arrives, and the Morgans drive to the Langs' house. It is a large house with a big lawn, "ample and careless", in Sally's words. They are nervous and don't know what to expect, but they so want the Langs to like them. Sally is afraid that her dress isn't right and they're both afraid that they're too early, so they drive around the block until another car is there.

Larry knows the other three men in the party. They make up the younger faculty in the English department. He doesn't know any of the wives, though they all claim to have met him at the departmental reception. The other three couples, the Abbots, the Stones, and the Ehrlichs are friendly and impressive, but they do not hold a candle to Sid and Charity Lang. Charity is exotic and beautiful, and Sid is "Michelangelo out of Carrara, a giant evoked from the rock".

Larry and Sally are introduced to Aunt Emily, who praises Sally's beauty and Larry's literary talents. Larry and Sally are high on both the praise and the welcome they receive. Their loneliness of the past few weeks seems far away, and they enjoy themselves immensely. The Morgans are amazed at the wealth displayed in the Langs' home. They indulge in original oil paintings by Hayloft School artists, expensive liquor, gourmet food, delightful conversation, and lovely music.

The conversation turns to the English Department, and Marvin Ehrlich comes across as difficult and a little superior, which annoys Larry. Charity gathers the group together around the piano and passes out songbooks. So accustomed to being ultra-conscious of their money, the Morgans can't help but notice the price on the songbooks, \$7.50 each. That makes \$75 for the songbooks, just for one evening. They cannot fathom the wealth bestowed upon these good people.

Then the group takes turns reciting poetry and analyzing it, and Sally astonishes them all by reading *The Odyssey* in Greek. The party breaks up soon afterwards, and Sid and Charity persuade Larry and Sally to stay just a little longer. They suggest a walk under the stars and bundle everyone up in floor-length down coats. As they walk in the cold autumn air, they talk about the possibilities before them all, here in a young mid-western town, so full of promise. When they return to the Langs' house, it feels like home to Sally and Larry.

Part 1: Chapter 4 Analysis

After weeks of feeling poor and alone, the Morgans' lives are changed with their intimate introduction to Sid and Charity Lang. Not only do the Langs welcome them into their lives with open arms, but they also praise and adore them. Larry and Sally, who felt like lost babes in the woods, now feel confident and happy because of this new friendship.



One of Larry's character traits is more fully developed in this chapter when he interacts with Marvin Ehrlich at the party. Larry is very competitive and aware of social standing and rank, and Marvin is, too. Larry and Marvin compete on a social level at the party, and Larry wins. Marvin is crushed, and Larry revels in the win. This competitiveness seems to be non-existent in the other characters, so it is interesting that the main character possesses this character trait, which could be called a character flaw.



Part 1: Chapter 5

Part 1: Chapter 5 Summary

One afternoon as Larry grades papers and Sally reads, the mailman arrives with news that one of Larry's short stories has sold to Atlantic for \$200. Sid and Charity have just arrived to take them on a picnic, and the foursome celebrates Larry's success with screaming and jumping. They get in the car and drive out to the country for their picnic.

The women talk about how their pregnancies are going, and the men talk about their careers. Sid confesses that he doesn't feel that he has what it takes to attain Larry's level of success. Sid's father discouraged him from pursuing literature, and Sid studied economics until his father's death, whereupon he switched to English. Sid asks about Larry's father, a mechanic. Larry's father encouraged him to do whatever he liked best.

Sid has not been without success. As an undergraduate, his poems were published in *The Nation* and *The Saturday Review of Literature*, but he doesn't count these successes for much. Larry tries to get Sid to talk about his poems, but Sid keeps changing the subject. He professes that much of the writing out there, especially the writing that is considered "good", is really just what a particular editor thought was good, and because of its appearance in a well-known publication, the public thinks it is good as well. Larry, more of a capitalist, claims that there are lots of masterpieces in the library that were written solely for money, not out of altruism or a desire to educate the human race.

Sid talks about Charity's ambitions, and about how last year she made a study of ranking professors and associate professors to predict which ones would get promoted to tenure. She then told Sid what he needed to do to move up in the rankings. She thought a scholarly book would be best. The next thing would be to write articles. Publishing poetry was pretty far down on her list, but that's what Sid likes to do.

It is Sid and Charity's fourth anniversary, but as they toast, Charity insists that they toast all of them. Sid changes the mood when he says, "To all of us. May we all survive the departmental axe". Sid is confident that some of the professors will be laid off, and he's even more confident that he'll be first. Charity scolds him for lacking confidence, and then Sid and Charity invite the Morgans to Folsom Hill for the next summer. Larry is sure that he'll be teaching summer school, but they agree to try it some other summer.

Larry skips ahead to another memory from Madison. He remembers a snowy afternoon, probably in January, when Charity and Sally are both quite pregnant. They are ice skating, and Sally is nervous about hurting the baby, but Charity convinces her that if she falls she's going to fall on her bum, and that certainly won't hurt the baby. Only a week previously, Larry had seen Charity and the "blue-blooded wife of a visiting Irish professor" sledding down a snowy hill. Charity didn't have the sense not to sled, even after watching the Irish woman belly flop at the bottom of the hill.



Part 1: Chapter 5 Analysis

Chapter 5 introduces readers to two of the major conflicts of the story. The first is the conflict within the Langs' marriage. Although Sid wants to be successful, he is not as ambitious as Charity. Charity comes from a family where success is a given, and she cannot understand why Sid doesn't do everything within his power to ensure his own career success. She makes rankings of all the professors in the department and figures out what Sid needs to do in order to move up in the ranks. Obviously, Sid resents this interference, and Charity's pushiness hurts his confidence. He feels that he is never good enough to meet her expectations.

Also introduced in this chapter is Sid's perceived inadequacy when compared to Larry. As good friends in the same department at the same school, they can't help but compare themselves against each other, and Larry always comes out on top. Larry publishes much more than Sid and works harder than Sid. Sid knows that Charity can see the difference, but he can't seem to make himself work harder. Larry's story for the Atlantic was written in one week. Upon hearing this Sid says, "it takes me a week to get my pencils sharpened and my rump comfortable in the chair. I envy you. You're an instrument that blows no blue notes. You're on your way". Larry feels this as well, but he doesn't know what to do to help Sid.



Part 1: Chapter 6

Part 1: Chapter 6 Summary

This chapter is a flashback to Sid and Charity's courtship. Larry has heard the story so many times that he feels it is a part of his memory, even though he didn't know them at the time. Charity as a young woman claims to have gone up to Folsom Hill to get away from Sid, but at the same time Charity tells her mother and aunt that Sid is a pushover. Sid has sent a letter saying he will be passing through and would like to drop in. Her mother tells her that if she doesn't want him around she should discourage him immediately and firmly.

Sid is at the end of his first year as an English graduate student when he arrives at Battell Pond to meet Charity's family. He stumbles across Charity's father's think house, a shack in the woods lighted by a single hanging light bulb. In his think house, George Barnwell Ellis has spent ten summers working on a book about a twelfth century heretical sect. He will spend the next fifteen summers working on it, and it won't be finished when he dies.

Charity's mother Emily handles her family like a commander. She keeps everyone busy and occupied and manages their schedules completely, although she believes that summer is a time for freedom. However, everyone must be doing something; they cannot be idle. When Sid arrives at the house, she is reading *Hiawatha* to a bunch of children on the porch. He doesn't say anything but takes his place among the children and listens to the rest of the reading.

When she is done, Emily asks him to bring in his things, but he protests and says he is just stopping by and has to get going. Charity doesn't believe him. But he says he really does have to get to Montreal to visit a friend. The women will not allow for this. It's four hours to Montreal and it's raining. They refuse to let him leave, and Sid and Charity go for a walk.

Sid loves Battell Pond from the first time he sees it, saying that it's the most beautiful place on earth. They argue about why Charity "ran away" up here without telling him where she was going. He had to find out from someone else where she was. He confesses that his friend in Montreal isn't expecting him. He says he loves her and wants to marry her. She says that would be crazy, what with people standing in breadlines and Sid still in school. They argue and then Charity looks at her watch, says they're late, and starts running back home. They run all the way home and make it to dinner just in time. Emily gives them a sharp look and Charity's sister Comfort already has her head bowed for the prayer.

During dinner, George Barnwell grills Sid on his family and background and education. The conversation turns to proposed development across the pond. The entire family is



against the development, but none so much as Comfort. The farmer across the way is poor, and he will probably sell the land for about \$8,000.

Over the next several days, the family watches Sid and Charity as they canoe, hike, swim, and picnic. They talk more about getting married and acquire Emily's blessing, but only after Sid has finished his degree and found a good job. Emily is sure that their infatuation will not last that long, so she is surprised when, on Sid's last morning, they tell her at breakfast once more that they want to get married. Emily reiterates that her concern is the economics of the matter.

Charity laughs and tells Emily that until the past few days she didn't even know that Sid has three or four million dollars in the bank, left to him when his father died. He hasn't wanted anyone to know about it, so he draws only \$100 a month to live on and leaves the rest in the bank. During his stay, Sid has managed to buy the land across the pond from the farmer, so there will be no development. The wedding plans are on.

Part 1: Chapter 6 Analysis

Even in the earliest stages of their relationship, Sid and Charity have issues with control. Sid feels that Charity leaves him without notice to make him chase her, and Charity finds him predictable and slightly annoying. Their conversation as they walk in the rain foreshadows many events later in their marriage, with Sid making concessions and yielding to her but not without frustration.

Charity views Emily and George's marriage as the ideal. Emily controls and runs the family, while George putters around in his think house, writing scholarly books that ensure his tenure at the university. However, Sid has a different ideal, and Charity does not compromise to fit Sid's view in with her own. George is basically a nonentity in the Ellis household. He is coddled and fed and loved, but no one asks him his advice or bothers to ask how he feels. George puts up with it, but Sid cannot live in such a way.



Part 1: Chapter 7

Part 1: Chapter 7 Summary

During that first year, Larry teaches four large classes and writes in his spare time because he doesn't plan on being laid off for lack of publications. One of the professors, who has been working for six years on one book, calls Larry a hack. Sally is not lonely because she always has Charity to talk to while Larry is busy.

Larry puts a chart up on their concrete wall graphing his time: how much time there is to sleep, to eat, to teach, to write, etc. He uses every spare minute, a "pathological beaver of a boy who chewed continually because his teeth kept growing". Sally helps him with everything he writes, criticizing, editing, typing, deciding which pieces are good enough to send out, which need rewriting, and which to toss.

Sid is getting worried about appearances. He feels that Charity is spending too much and that senior members of the department will think he takes too much for granted. He doesn't want others to think he's trying to buy his way to a promotion. Charity has an architect drawing up plans for a new house. Charity's always busy, out in the community promoting music and taking lessons; a nanny takes care of her children most of the time.

Sally and Larry have long talks about the Langs in bed at night. Larry has heard Sid's point of view and Sally has heard Charity's point of view. At times, it seems that the Morgans work out their arguments for them, but unfortunately, the resolutions never make it back to the Langs.

In November, Larry begins working on a novel. He works on it obsessively and sends it off to a publisher two days after New Year's. As soon as he gets home from the post office, he begins work on a book review instead of taking a few minutes to rest. He is a workaholic, but he finds great satisfaction in his productivity.

Part 1: Chapter 7 Analysis

Chapter 7 is short and doesn't contain any significant plot elements, but it serves to enrich the background and develop the characters more fully. Larry is truly a workaholic at this point of the story. With his time-graphing charts on the wall and his need to fill every spare minute with work, he is moving ahead in his career and finding self-satisfaction. Like Larry, Charity is schizophrenically busy, pulling herself in a dozen directions at once. She is meeting with architects, attending concerts and plays, supporting musicians and educational projects, and managing everyone's lives.

On the other end of the spectrum, Sid is trying to calm his wife down. He is afraid of what others will think of their excessive spending. He doesn't want to be seen as overly ambitious, but he does want to please his loved ones. He can't manage to publish much



of anything, so he fears that his job will be lost. Sally is ever supportive of Larry, finishing the tasks he doesn't have time to do and being his sounding board as he produces piece after piece.

Interestingly, each couple has a dominant person. Charity dominates in the Langs' marriage, and Larry dominates in the Morgans' marriage. The difference is that Sally doesn't mind her supportive role because it suits her quiet and nurturing personality, whereas Larry minds very much because he is more independent. Having stood up (sort of) to his father, he feels that he needs to stand up to his wife, but she is extremely difficult to stand up to, probably more so even than his father.

Part 1: Chapter 8

Part 1: Chapter 8 Summary

It is March, and Charity has just delivered her baby, David Hamilton Lang. Sally is restless and uncomfortable, wishing that her baby would come, too. They are walking home from a visit at the hospital when Larry reads a letter from Harcourt Brace and Company, saying that they want to publish his novel in the fall and they are offering a \$500 advance against royalties.

They call Sid and all their other friends and Larry goes downtown to buy alcohol and party food for the celebration. People keep arriving at their little apartment, and they are so happy and excited. After several hours, the landlord calls and tells them to quiet down. Larry puts Sally to bed and goes out to say good-bye to his guests. Two of the women kiss Larry on the lips before they leave. Then Sid and Larry go for a walk.

Sid wants to know how it feels to have a book due for publication. Larry tells him it's part of the job. He needs the paycheck, unlike Sid. Sid says that's not exactly true. Charity has made him promise to commit to teaching, either until he's promoted or until he's bounced. Larry tells Sid he could probably write a few poems in his spare time without getting in trouble with Charity. Sid enjoys teaching and he puts a lot of time and effort into it. He writes comments on his students' papers that are longer than the papers themselves. He has long office hours and invites his students to his house. When Sid and Larry return to the Morgans' apartment, Larry expects to find Sally asleep, but she is awake. Her water broke and he needs to get her to the hospital.

Part 1: Chapter 8 Analysis

After a lull in the action during Chapter 7, big events occur in Chapter 8. First, Charity has her baby. Like everything in Charity's life, this seems to happen effortlessly. The baby is delivered, and she is immediately writing notes to her friends and looking beautiful and intact.

Also seemingly effortlessly, Larry reaches another milestone in his rapidly progressing career: he sells his first novel, a book he wrote in less than two months. During the celebration and hullabaloo of the news, Sally isn't feeling well. When Larry realizes that he needs to get his wife to the hospital, he says he has a terrible premonition. Things don't happen as effortlessly for Sally, and this, too, will be a struggle.



Part 1: Chapter 9

Part 1: Chapter 9 Summary

Larry monitors Sally's contractions with his watch and a notebook while Sid sits in the other room reading, hoping to be helpful in some way. At two in the morning, Sid drives them to the hospital. In the morning, Sid brings breakfast for Larry. Sid and Charity keep track of Sally from Charity's room down the hall, and Larry tries to convince the doctor that Sally can't take any more. Charity convinces the doctor to let Larry into Sally's room.

The doctor has Sally's blood all over his gloves and says he'll have to go in and get the baby. During the anesthesia they nearly lose Sally. Larry staggers into the hallway where he collapses in a chair and nearly faints. The nurse brings out a baby girl and tells Larry that they're doing "some repairs" on Sally. Charity takes the baby in her arms and fawns over her, saying that she's beautiful. Larry is so concerned about Sally that he barely notices the baby.

The doors open and Sally is wheeled out. She is white and unconscious. One of the nurses tells Larry that she's had a transfusion and that she'll be all right. She also tells Larry that the baby has a broken arm and a sore mouth. Larry is furious at that "butcher of a doctor". Sid and Charity take care of Larry the rest of the day while Sally is asleep at the hospital. The Morgans name their baby girl Lang.

Part 1: Chapter 9 Analysis

Larry sees the contrast between Sally and Charity after their respective deliveries and comments, "I felt envious for Sally, ghastly and etherized and patched together with twine. Good fortune was like money; those who had, got". Sally, with her orphan background and frail little body, seems to have bad fortune. Everything is so difficult for her while Charity breezes through life.

This chapter is full of pathos and polarizations. Larry has just experienced an emotional high when he finds out his novel is to be published. His friends celebrate his success and his financial situation is rapidly improving. Within hours, however, he finds himself in an emotional low with his wife unconscious and battered and his baby girl injured. His dear friends the Langs are able to smooth out the wildness of the day.



Part 1: Chapter 10

Part 1: Chapter 10 Summary

In May, Sid peeks in to Larry's office at school. He looks distressed, and Larry is afraid that Sid has lost his job. Sid tells him that they've renewed his contract for three more years. Sid talks about the department heads being out of their minds, and then Larry understands that he's the one who's been axed. He tries to act as though he doesn't mind, but he's already worried about telling Sally because she has been happier here in Madison than at any other time in her life.

Larry is glad to hear that they've given him some summer classes, though, because the medical bills and the hired nurse to help Sally have eaten up the rest of their savings. Sid goes on and on about how the department heads feel threatened by Larry's successes, but Larry knows that Sid is just trying to make him feel better. Sid suggests that they go sailing after their afternoon classes, but Larry wants to work on a story he's writing. He does, however, give in.

They pick up their wives and rent a boat. Charity thinks it's wonderful to be outside and free and not pregnant. The girls look so happy out on the boat, their husbands decide to not tell them the bad news right away. They talk about stories they've heard about the lake, about a couple of professors whose boat capsized and one of them drowned. Sally looks nervous in the boat because the clouds and wind are beginning to threaten.

Charity gets nervous, too, and she tells Sid to turn back. Sid bristles, but takes her advice. "Only I, who am facing the stern, see the resistance, the active rebellion, in his face. But he obediently prepares the boat to come about", recounts Larry. They're headed back to the shore, but the rain begins to pound. Larry begins to bail with a coffee can. A gust of wind comes up and Larry asks Sid if he should lower the sail. Sally interprets this question as admission of a crisis, and Charity takes it as a challenge to her authority. Larry can't bail fast enough, and the ship sinks lower and lower, so he throws life preservers to Sally and Charity.

Soon they are in the ice water, waiting for rescue. They remain in the water about ten minutes before the Chriscraft comes and throws them a line. They drive home where their hired girl Ellen is holding a screaming Lang. Ellen draws them a bath and Larry, Sally, and Lang all three climb into the warm water. They all feel so safe and warm there together that Larry still doesn't have the heart to tell Sally about his job.

Larry and Sally put Lang down to sleep and go to the kitchen to eat, and Sid and Charity arrive to make sure they're okay. Charity expresses disbelief at what the department has done, but stops short when she sees Sally's reaction. Sally is very disappointed because she doesn't want to leave the Langs. The Morgans have already concocted a plan. They're going to be in Vermont all summer, so it would be doing them a great favor if the Langs would move into their house and take care of it. Then Charity suggests that



a summer of loafing around in Vermont would do wonders for Sally, so Larry ought to let her and Lang go with them while he stays in their house and teaches the summer classes

Part 1: Chapter 10 Analysis

The theme of rescue is never so clear as it is in Chapter 10. This chapter covers two different rescues. The first rescue is a literal rescue after the shipwreck on the lake. Sid has led them all into a dangerous situation, and they are all four rescued by an outside source. The Langs feel terribly that they have led their friends into a dangerous situation, so they perform a superhuman feat in getting dry, dressed, and across town very quickly in order to perform another rescue.

Both couples are heartbroken at the loss of Larry's job because it means that they probably won't be near each other anymore. But the Langs come up with a plan to keep their friends close while rescuing them financially. They offer their home for the summer and want to take Sally to Vermont with them so she can recover from her difficult labor and delivery. This isn't the first time the Langs have rescued the Morgans. At the beginning of the story, they rescue them from loneliness.



Part 1: Chapter 11

Part 1: Chapter 11 Summary

Early in June, Larry sends his wife off to Vermont with the Langs. As soon as the station wagon pulls away, he goes to Sid's study and starts a novel. After five days Larry receives a letter so full of happiness that he ceases feeling badly for Sally and starts to pity himself. Sally reports that every morning Charity lays in bed for half an hour with a pad and pencil and organizes the day. She calls it constructive daydreaming.

Sally's letters are frequent, long, and very descriptive. Larry feels as though he knows everyone at Folsom Hill. Sally shares a cabin with Sid's mother when she comes to visit. Larry begins to worry about the future. His applications for posts at other schools yield only one unappealing nibble. He also finds himself worrying about Sid and Sally when Sally writes about a midnight swim, one of Sid's ideas.

At the end of August, Larry leaves the Langs' house and sets off for Folsom Hill. He drives the most direct route to save \$10, and he nearly goes out of his mind with boredom, but he arrives in the black woods around 11:00. After a night of groggy sleep, he gets to see Sally first thing in the morning, and they spend the next three weeks in Vermont with the Langs.

Part 1: Chapter 11 Analysis

Without Sally's pacifying influence, Larry's punishing work ethic maddens even him. By the end of that lonely summer, even Larry is ready for a vacation, so much so that he calls his time at Folsom Hill "paradise". In his loneliness, he begins to worry. He worries about money, his future, Sally's faithfulness, anything.

Sally's letters to Larry reveal that Charity is taking over where her mother left off. Every morning Charity sends Sid out to his study, exactly as Emily sends George out to his think house. Charity will do everything in her power to make sure he writes something during the summer that will make the department promote him next year: "She bosses him like mad. He grumbles, but he goes". Charity tries to mold people to match her view instead of molding her view to match the people.



Part 1: Chapter 12

Part 1: Chapter 12 Summary

Larry thrives in the laid back schedule at Battell Pond. With his meals provided and his solitude enforced, Larry feels like he can accomplish anything. The mandatory recreation and leisure in the afternoon is something entirely new to Larry, but he finds that it's good for his soul and his health. The children are all whisked away before dinner, fed separately from the adults, and put to bed while the adults enjoy good food and conversation in the evenings.

The Langs and Morgans take long walks at night, and Sid becomes the talkative one. Larry describes their foursome as two Adams and two Eves, and he thinks it's an improvement to God's plan. Larry and Sally love being around the thick web of relatives, the cousins, grandparents, brothers and sisters, because neither of them has experienced such familiarity before.

They take part in an Ellis family tradition, a picnic for the entire clan. They load up a 1931 Marmon, an enormous old vehicle, with food, flashlights, boxes, blankets, and games, and head up the hill where they eat and sit around a campfire and sing. During this time, Larry and Sally forget about the future for a few weeks. They relish in the good times and love the Ellises and Langs for including them in their family.

While Sally and Larry are enjoying themselves, Charity conspires to take care of their future for them. She invites her Uncle Richard, a publisher, and seats Larry next to him at dinner. After dinner, Charity implores Larry to read a chapter or two from his novel; a copy of the galleys has arrived just the day before. Afterwards, Charity makes sure that Larry and Richard have time to talk privately. Richard suggests that Larry settle down somewhere and write another novel, which he would like a shot at. He then offers Larry a job in Boston working in publishing. That night Sally and Larry decide to go to Boston. Only later does Larry realize that Charity was behind the scenes creating this opportunity for him.

Part 1: Chapter 12 Analysis

The theme of rescue continues as the Langs provide a landing spot for the Morgans after their loss in Wisconsin. During the three weeks they all spend at Battell Pond, Larry and Sally relax so fully that they're able to forget their worries and just enjoy the pleasures of friendship and good living. While they're relaxing, Charity works her magic and opens a door for future successes. Larry becomes her protégé of sorts. She wants to further Sid's career, but Sid resists her control. Larry, on the other hand, doesn't even realize what she's trying to do for him, and because he is unencumbered by feelings of entitlement and wealth, he is grateful for every break he gets.

The biblical allusion to Adam and Eve is interesting because the narrator, Larry, offers an improvement to God's plan. In the woods with his wife and friends, Larry feels like Adam and Eve. He is young and full of possibilities. Like Adam, everything is before him. But the friendship between the Langs and the Morgans is so strong and important that he feels that life in Eden would be incomplete without his friends, and now that he has experienced the Ellis clan, he thinks Adam and Eve should have had an extended family with them as well, that life in paradise would be incomplete without all of these connections.



Part 1: Chapter 13

Part 1: Chapter 13 Summary

Alluding again to Eden, Larry remarks that Eden wouldn't be complete without its serpent, and he recounts several experiences explaining their serpent in Eden. Before Sid and Charity return to Wisconsin and Larry and Sally head for Boston, the foursome decide to take a one hundred-mile walking trip in the area. They will take a pack mule to carry their things and sleep under the stars at night. The trip is the climax of their summer. They enjoy the beauties of nature and the warmth of their friendship.

But at the beginning of the trip, as Sid is packing their gear, Charity and Sid have an argument. Charity has read a travel book written by one Pritchard, and she follows it religiously. After Sid has finished the monumental task of packing their gear, she tells him that Pritchard says to always double check. She wants him to take everything out and pack it again. The confrontation becomes heated, with neither of them wanting to back down.

This recalls to mind a memory Charity's sister Comfort related to Larry about a day she spent with Sid and Charity during their honeymoon in Greece. They have been on their honeymoon for two months. The three of them are the only guests at a small restaurant for breakfast. Sid is suffering from allergies, and Charity makes fun of him for being such a baby. She wants to take his picture so he can see what he looks like with his watery eyes and red nose. He doesn't want his picture taken and it turns into an argument. She takes his picture anyway, and he is so furious that he leaves the restaurant and returns to their room.

Now that same sort of confrontation is clouding the beginning of their journey as the yard is littered with camping equipment, which Sid must pack once more. Charity stands beside the men and checks items off on her list as they pack again. Once finished, they argue about whether or not the tea was packed. The argument is so ridiculous that Larry feels someone ought to laugh, but instead Sally goes inside to get some tea to end the argument.

Their journey begins in silence and doesn't end until Larry makes a conciliatory apology. Things lighten up and Larry tells Sid he was secretly hoping Charity was wrong. Sid says that Charity is never wrong. They are traveling exactly as British Pritchard has advised, and they look crazy to passersby. Sid gets impatient and throws the book fifty yards into the brush. Larry comments that he rather likes the cane he has been advised to carry, but then again, no one is forcing him to use it.

When Sally and Larry find themselves alone, Sally tells Larry about Charity's feelings. Charity has told Sally that her father advised her against marrying Larry, that George thought Larry wasn't strong enough for Charity. Two of Sid's papers for journal articles have been rejected, and Charity is upset with him for not doing better. Sally makes Larry



promise not to challenge Charity on anything during their week-long trip. Sally knows Larry likes to goad her.

One day, as they are getting ready to cook dinner, Charity jumps up to get her Pritchard book. She insists that they cook their chicken exactly as Pritchard advises and it ends up being completely raw. She apologizes and cooks everyone's chicken one more time until it's done. Another morning, Larry is waking up, stiff and achy from sleeping on the ground, when he sees Sid and Charity, absolutely naked, gathering berries. Sid looks like Michelangelo's Adam, strong and muscled, and Charity looks like the docile female, following behind.

On another day, Charity suggests that Larry and Sally stay in Vermont while Larry finishes his second novel. No one else will be using the main house and they can comfortably stay until spring. That way they won't have to worry about finding a place to live in Boston, and they won't have to pay rent while they're waiting for royalties to come in. They like the idea and begin to plan on it, but then everything changes.

They come across some gorgeous waterfalls. It seems too beautiful to be real, and they spend the day there playing in the water and sunning on the cliffs. But then Sally develops a splitting headache and fever. Sid rides the donkey out to the nearest village to get help. Larry expects the worst and is right.

Part 1: Chapter 13 Analysis

The Adam and Eve allusion expands in this chapter. Not only do the characters spend the entire chapter in Paradise, but Stegner expands the allusion by introducing the serpent. The serpent is the conflict within the Langs' marriage. From the very beginning, even before their honeymoon, their headstrong ways lead to arguments within the marriage and discomfort for those close to them. Charity's sister Comfort recounts an argument she witnessed on their honeymoon, and Larry gives examples of arguments and conflict during the walking trip.

The allusion to Adam and Eve is explicitly illustrated when Larry sees Sid and Charity gathering berries naked early one morning. In fact, he even compares Sid to Michelangelo's Adam, the quintessential man. Larry sees Sid as the perfect man, physically and intellectually, and although at the beginning of their friendship he saw Charity as the perfect woman, he now sees her flaws as she is annoying him. Sally is a more feminine woman than Charity, and Larry notices that when Sid is put off by Charity he leans toward Sally, as when one day after an argument with Charity Sid says about Sally, "What a dainty, feminine little foot!"

At the end of the chapter Sally becomes ill, and Larry fears that their paradise is over. This represents expulsion from Eden. Up until now Larry has felt that life is too good to be true. Things have been going so well for him in his publishing and friendships and marriage, but now real life is about to hit. Their stay in Eden is about to end, and the end comes quickly and unexpectedly.



Part 2: Chapter 1

Part 2: Chapter 1 Summary

The story returns to 1972. Sally is calling Larry from inside. He goes in and helps her dress and then brings her folding chair out onto the porch. They sit together on the cabin porch. Sid and Charity's daughter Hallie and her husband Moe come up to the porch and kiss Sally. They chat and then turn the conversation to Charity and her health. Today is Charity's birthday, and Sally and Larry have forgotten. Hallie thinks that Charity only has a week or two left, that she's holding herself together with willpower.

Charity has been preparing for the end. She's been having the grandchildren come to her bedside for individual visits, and she's given each of her children books she has kept about each of them since birth. One of Charity's sons is going through a breakup with his wife, which is making everyone miserable. Larry asks how Sid is holding up. Hallie says he's about as expected but doesn't offer any more information.

Hallie and Larry step into Sid's barn. Everything is organized and meticulously clean. There are mason jars full of wood screws, staples, string, and other small items, all labeled. Hallie thinks that Larry has become miserly over the years, making up for times when Charity has been extravagant. He saves little bits of food in the refrigerator that in former years he would have thrown away. He keeps the barn like a lab. It never has wood shavings lying about because he never uses it to make anything. Hallie wishes that Sid would get some gumption and make Charity behave. She has flitted from psychology to women's lib to Quakerism to socialism. As their conversation continues, Larry finds himself getting impatient with Hallie, saying, "The women in that family are too judgmental".

The conversation reveals the details of the rest of Sid's career. He stayed on at Wisconsin until World War II, when he was cut. Charity was so desolated by the loss that she had to go to a sanatorium for two months. Then Larry got him a job at Dartmouth, where he was teaching. Dartmouth gave him its Distinguished Teacher award and promoted him to full professor one year before his retirement. Instead of congratulating her husband, Charity told him it was a little like charity, a sort of booby prize.

Larry also looks in on Sid's office. It is as neat as his workshop. There is a jar of sharpened pencils on the desk, a typewriter with its lid on, a complete set of dictionaries, and a squared stack of yellow pads. Larry notices one book on the shelf that is turned around backwards. He pulls it out to find that it's a rhyming dictionary.

Part 2: Chapter 1 Analysis

The first major flashback has ended and the reader returns to the present, to 1972. Sally is crippled, and the Morgans have returned to Folsom Hill to visit Sid and Charity.



Charity is dying, but they haven't yet seen her or Sid. Hallie gives them an update about what has been going on .

Last time the reader saw Sid, he was the pinnacle of manhood, Michelangelo's Adam in the wilderness. The contrast between the youthful Sid and the aged Sid is extreme. After years of Charity's punishing ambition, Sid is a shell of a man, too afraid of his wife's criticism to try anything. His workshop and his study symbolize this. They are perfectly equipped for good, hard work, but no work is done in them. Years of the same pattern in their relationship have augmented their embryonic rolls of 1938. Charity has become a tyrant and Sid has become a mouse. He has wearied of fighting back.

On the other hand, Larry and Sally have a wonderful interdependent relationship. Sally is physically dependent on Larry for her very survival. She cannot get around without him. But she is his emotional support. Without her, his successes may have been meager. She supports and applauds him, and this support allows him to accomplish whatever he wants to. She has given him confidence all these years.



Part 2: Chapter 2

Part 2: Chapter 2 Summary

Chapter 2 begins another flashback. Charity is pregnant again, and she has been overseeing Sally's therapy and care as well as all the details of taking care of Lang and their household. Lang and David have a joint first birthday party. The Langs loan the Morgans enough money to pay for Sally's medical bills and get them established in Massachusetts. Larry is now an editor at Phoenix Books, and his salary is almost twice what it had been in Wisconsin. They are settled in an apartment in Cambridge and have a nurse who comes over to help Sally with her therapy. They don't see Charity and Sid for two years. Living is all they can manage.

By 1941, Sally can get around on canes pretty well, Lang is three years old, and they decide to go to Battell Pond for three weeks that summer. They pay off the first \$2,000 of their debt to the Langs. Things are mostly the same at Battell Pond, though the foursome cannot enjoy their shared canoe rides, hikes, and swims as before. However, they make up for it with music and after-dinner talks on the porch.

The Langs have become more comfortable in Madison. Their house is the center of the English department's social life, and Charity has begun to think that publications may not be as important as she once thought. During the time they've been apart, Charity has changed a little. Her clothing resembles a fortune teller's. Sid looks more fit than he ever has.

On December 7 of that year, Pearl Harbor is bombed, and by May, Larry takes leave from Phoenix Books to go to Washington, D.C., for the duration of the war to work as a writer and journalist. At about this same time, Sid is told by an almost tearful department head that they cannot promote him or even retain him. Sid and Charity drop out of sight, not even returning phone calls and letters from the Morgans.

They don't see each other until 1945, when the serpent in Eden rears its ugly head several times during their ten day visit. They have a lovely dinner, and when the Morgans' nanny offers to do the dishes, Charity refuses and makes Sid do the dishes. Larry offers to help Sid do them and Charity won't let him. The rest of them are sitting in the dark, listening to Beethoven's 9th Symphony. Finally Larry can't stand it any longer and gets up to go help Sid with the dishes. Sid is upset that Larry has defied Charity. Normally they have hired help for such things, but they have dismissed hired help because of the war. While they talk, Larry tells Sid that he'd like to arrange a meeting between Sid and the English department head at Dartmouth, a friend of his. They finish the dishes and return to the girls, with Sally rueful and Charity upset. They listen to Ode to Joy in uncomfortable silence.



Part 2: Chapter 2 Analysis

Now that the characters and conflict are well established, the flashbacks become more frequent and the action of the past slides over many years. In this chapter, for example, nearly ten years go by. The distance between Sid and Charity widens, and Sally and Larry become more uncomfortable in their presence during the frequent and heated conflicts.

In the beginning of the chapter, the Langs rescue the Morgans once again, this time lending them money for Sally's medical bills and helping them get established in Cambridge with the publishing job. But at the end of the chapter, years later, the Morgans get a turn to rescue the Langs when Sid is dismissed from his prized job as a professor at the University of Wisconsin. Using Larry's own connections, he gets Sid a job as a professor at Dartmouth. Charity doesn't like to be rescued as much as she likes performing the rescue, so she has a hard time accepting this. Their friendship is so well established by this point, however, that she can abide it.



Part 2, Chapter 3

Part 2, Chapter 3 Summary

Back to 1972, Sally and Larry walk up to the Big House. They still haven't seen Sid and Charity but talk with Moe and Hallie on the porch. Hallie is a securities analyst, married to a man named Jim. The reader gets a feel for how close the two families have been over the years, almost like one family. Hallie looks up to Lang as a big sister. Moe relates to Sally, as he didn't have much of a family growing up, and then he married into the extensive Ellis clan.

Sally and Larry tell stories about how Charity cared for them when Sally was stricken with polio. She paid the bills and made arrangements with the doctors. She wrote lengthy letters to Sally in the hospital so she would know about Lang's development and know what was going on at home. She made Sally try hard in therapy to regain as much muscle control as she could. Hallie feels ashamed for being so critical of her mother, having not seen so much of her generosity.

Sally reminisces about the year she and Larry spent in Florence: "You did flee, too, but that year we were young—that was the second year. The first was Madison. Before that it was all kind of gray, and since then it's been mainly hanging on. But that year in Florence we were young. Youth hasn't got anything to do with chronological age. It's times of hope and happiness".

Part 2, Chapter 3 Analysis

Chapter 3 doesn't further the plot. It is a collection of memories from different sources: Larry, Sally, Hallie, and Moe. The older Charity and Sid still have not made their way onto the scene, and this develops a sense of tension and curiosity. But in the meantime, their characters are further developed by memories, especially by Sally's memories.

Sally also puts the memories into perspective when she divides them. Before Madison, all was gray. Before her friendship with the Langs, she feels that she wasn't quite living. Crippled by polio at such a young age, she has felt old for a good part of her life, but there are times when she has felt young, and these times are marked by hope and happiness.

This conversation offers perspective to Hallie, who wasn't even born during the action of the first part of the book. She missed out on the happy carefree days of her parents' lives and has seen more of the serpent and less of Eden. She is critical of her mother for the way she treats Sid, and she doesn't know about all the kindness and generosity her mother is capable of, so Sally's memories help her to understand Charity and maybe love her a little more before the crisis of her imminent death.



Part 2: Chapter 4

Part 2: Chapter 4 Summary

This chapter is a flashback to the Guggenheim year the Morgans spent in Florence, Italy. This year was important to Larry because he realized there, most specifically on one September morning, that the place he had been striving so to get to he had finally arrived at. In detail, he recalls that morning in September. The church bells wake him at 6:00 like usual. He hears unusual sounds and goes to the French doors opening onto the terrace above their street. He sees a procession of people with swinging lanterns, donkeys, people laughing and holding cigarettes.

Larry goes back into the bedroom and carries Sally to the terrace so she can see. They guess that the procession is market carts bringing vegetables in from the countryside. They stay outside and watch them from under a quilt on their terrace. After it is all over they have breakfast and Sally expresses regret at being a millstone around Larry's neck. He assures her that she is not a millstone or a cross he bears.

The Langs come to visit and they explore Florence, Charity with lists and lists of things to do and visit and see. Larry has been spending his mornings writing a novel set in New Mexico. He spends his mornings in New Mexico and his afternoons and evenings in Italy. He ponders the necessity of having both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Charity doesn't see the necessity of including all the lugubriousness and blames writers and artists for being too gloomy.

One day the foursome takes the Fiat out for a drive in the country. They see an injured man on the side of the road and try to squeeze him into the tiny car, which is already quite cramped. The man doesn't seem to want to be helped, but Charity insists. The man wants out of the car. He gets out of the car, grunts something, and then cradling his injured hands, scampers up a hill and disappears. Charity tells the men to go get him, but they don't want to tackle him so they let him be.

Part 2: Chapter 4 Analysis

That year in Florence is one of the youthful times of their lives, though their daughter is grown at the time. Like their summer vacations at Battell Pond, the time in Italy is a respite from the world, a time when they can relax and enjoy each other. In fact, Larry mentions that their schedule in Florence mimics their schedule at Battell Pond: work in the morning, relax in the afternoon, play in the evening.

Charity's argument that writers and artists are gloomy reflects that she thinks everyone should be happy all the time and her need to make this so. Larry and Sally, having dealt with so much loss with Sally's polio and difficult childbirth, recognize that life is incomplete with both the good and the bad. This theory alludes once again to Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. In the garden, Adam and Eve experience no pain and

suffering, but their lives are incomplete without the trials and hardships of life that they experience after they are evicted from Paradise. Charity's failure to recognize the need for trials ironically makes her happy and incomplete.



Part 2: Chapter 5

Part 2: Chapter 5 Summary

Back in 1972, Larry and Sally ride in Moe's car up the hill to the Big House and remember the first time they saw it in 1938. At that time, the farm was still changing from farm pasture to woods. Now it is fully wooded with tall thick trees and raspberry bushes. They see the view Charity has created by having certain trees chopped down so she can see the slope down to the water, and then they see Charity and Sid sitting on recliners facing the view. Sid sees them and jumps to his feet, as nimble as a young man.

Upon seeing Charity, Sally lurches forward on her braces. She is almost running on her iron legs to get to Charity who, upon seeing her dearest friend, bursts into that famous smile. This is what they came for.

Part 2: Chapter 5 Analysis

This very short chapter is a climax, for the reader has not been introduced to the 1972 Sid and Charity, though all the talk has been focused on them since the beginning of the book. All the complications of their long friendship lead up to this moment when all the tensions, generosity, conflicts, and rescues lead to "pure delight, uncomplicated love".



Part 3: Chapter 1

Part 3: Chapter 1 Summary

Once together, Charity demands to know everything about Larry and Sally. "Time has not dimmed her, sickness has only increased her wattage". They sit outside and talk and talk. Eventually Sally broaches the topic and asks Charity about her health. Charity says she feels wonderful but Sally doesn't let her get away with it and reports on what Hallie has said, and Charity admits that she's going to die soon. At this Sid begs her to stop.

Charity has no patience with Sid not facing the facts, and they argue until Charity begs him to not make a scene. Sally apologizes for distressing them and then reminds Charity that when she (Sally) was sick and wanting to die it was Charity who stayed by her and made her want to live. Charity thanks her and says that all she needed was for Sally and Larry to come to make it complete, to make her death the way she has envisioned.

Charity has refused to do chemotherapy or any other aggressive treatments because she learned after her surgery that the cancer was already in an advanced stage. Sid has wanted her to pursue treatments, arguing that sometimes they work, but she has refused. Charity comments that there's no decent literature about how to die. She talks on and on about death, and Sally reminds her that she isn't absolutely sure she's going to die. But Charity says she is sure, and this is like twisting a knife into Sid. Charity assures everyone that she's completely peaceful, that this summer has been the happiest of her life, and that all she wants to do is to die right.

She has overtired herself and she begins to vomit. Sid jumps up to help her. He gets her to her feet to take her indoors. Two nurses in white come to his aid and they all go inside. Larry sees that she is the same old Charity. She has not perceived that committing herself to a death sentence would affect Sid as it has. Larry dreads the coming hours he will have alone with Sid.

Part 3: Chapter 1 Analysis

With death upon her, Charity still is not willing to give up on her plans and listen to her husband. She has never operated this way, and it is not in her character to change now. But the effects of her actions are ghastly. Her strong will is manifest in her ability to behave just as before, even as her body is shutting down. Even though she does not have the physical presence she once had, she is still the commander in chief.

The vomiting episode strikes Larry as interesting. He feels as though in those few spasmodic moments she disproved her theory that one cannot rehearse one's own death. "He says, "I could not have been much shakier if I had watched her die." He is disturbed by the way she tries to discipline her dying body and make it bend to her will.

She still forces picnics and outings upon it. She has no Pritchard to count on; now she has to write her own guidebook.



Part 3: Chapter 2

Part 3: Chapter 2 Summary

Sid finally comes out of the house and speaks with Larry. They go down to the garage to prepare the old Marmon for the picnic. Inside it they find relics from the past, trash from previous long-ago picnics. Sid isn't sure if it will even start anymore, but after cranking and coaxing it, the engine rumbles. They roll it out onto the grass and clean it up. Then they put Sally and Charity's chairs into it. They finish packing the picnic hampers and load it up for the picnic. The nurse talks to Sid and tries to persuade him to keep Charity at home, but he knows that bringing it up would only make Charity angry.

Sid considers that if he tries to talk her out of the picnic for Sally's sake she might go for it, but he doesn't want to make Sally the party pooper. The nurse is afraid Charity will do real harm to herself, but Sid rationalizes that Charity is set on dying. There's nothing else to be done. Her pride is at stake.

Charity has planned out the rest of everyone's lives. She has a plan for each child and grandchild, and she's even told Sid that he is to remarry after a suitable amount of time. She's even picked out a few prospects for him, women who will make sure he's taken care of and properly motivated. Larry thinks he's kidding, but Sid has an actual list of prospects to prove it to him.

Sid has felt so constricted and so abased. He wants to stand up to her and make her stay home from the picnic, but he doesn't want to cause more contention, not right before she dies. On the other hand, it's his last chance to take a stand. Sid apologizes for dumping all of this on Larry, but Larry reassures him that this is what friends are for. Sid admits that he has at times taken comfort in Larry's bad luck and then says, "She couldn't survive you. Could you survive her?" Larry says that people are made to survive whatever happens to them.

They go into the house and find Sally, who tells them with her eyes that something grave is happening. Charity wants to see them both.

Part 3: Chapter 2 Analysis

Sid finally opens up and tells Larry what the readers have seen over and over through Larry's memories of Charity and Sid's relationship over the years. Sid confesses all of his frustrations and regrets, that he hasn't had the marriage he'd hoped for, that he has felt oppressed and unappreciated. It is liberating to hear from him what the reader has seen so often.

Although the end (Charity's death) is still yet to happen, this conversation is a kind of denouement, a resolution to the climax from a few chapters ago. Just admitting the

problem seems a resolution, though Sid will have to deal with both the aftermath of his marriage and the mourning of his wife.



Part 3, Chapter 3

Part 3, Chapter 3 Summary

They go through the big house and find Charity in bed. Charity dismisses the nurse and tells them that they'd better talk. Sid warns her that the nurse thinks she's been talking too much, and she scolds him for being wretched at a time when she needs to talk to Sally. He takes it further and tells her the nurse thinks she shouldn't go on the picnic. Expecting a lashing, Sid is surprised to hear her say that she probably shouldn't go on the picnic. But she insists that he go because it's a family picnic. He shakes his head, but she pushes on and on, giving reason after reason why he must go to the picnic with the rest of the family and eat and sing around the campfire.

He says he won't, that he knows she is planning to die while he's gone. He says that it's her plan to die alone but that he never agreed to that. She begins crying, saying that she's trying to die right but that he won't help her do it. He asks why she is shutting him out, and she says he's trying to complicate things. The argument escalates until Sid is shouting, "Why do you hate me?"

Sally and Larry are standing in the doorway, wanting not to hear any of this. Then the pain hits Charity, and Sid jumps to her aid to comfort her. He spreads his arms across her and sobs like a child. She bends down and tries to kiss the top of his head, and he gives in and says he will do whatever she wants. She assures him that that's best.

Sid leaves to get the picnic ready and the nurse calls the doctor who says it's time for Charity to be taken to the hospital. Charity wants to go to the hospital to die while everyone's at the picnic. Sally talks to Larry privately and asks him to stay with Sid and make sure he's okay, that he is going to be very upset after the picnic. Sally makes the wise observation that the reason she treats Sid the way she does is that he's so much of herself.

Part 3, Chapter 3 Analysis

After the emotional openness with Larry in the last chapter, Sid finally speaks his mind openly to Charity, but it comes out rather as an outburst, too full of passion to make sense, and Charity resents such a display. In the end, following the pattern which has taken shape over decades, Sid bends to Charity's will and does what she says. Always conciliatory, Sally finds a quiet way to help, arranging for a comforter for Sid instead of intervening in the dispute. Her years of suffering and her natural nurturing personality give her the gifts to be able to help in such a situation.



Part 3: Chapter 4

Part 3: Chapter 4 Summary

It is 9:45, and Larry has been looking for Sid. He wonders where Sid would have gone. The family is already at the picnic on Folsom Hill. In his wanderings, he comes across Moe who is driving around looking for Sid as well. Larry gets in Moe's car and they drive to town. The longer they look for him the more they worry that he'll do real damage to himself. Then Larry walks all the trails and looks for Sid.

Sally calls from the hospital to check on Larry and Sid. Larry doesn't tell her that Sid is missing. Sally says Charity cried all the way to the hospital. Sally is going to stay at the hospital for the night with Charity. They are both exhausted from the long emotional day, but Larry knows that his day isn't over yet.

In his searches for Sid, Larry comes across a drowning mouse in a pool of water. He gets a net to rescue the mouse and then wonders why he is doing it. If the mouse survives the event, an owl will probably eat him. It looks like the mouse is dead, but then it stirs and then runs into the grass and weeds. For some reason, this episode reminds him of Sally's face as she suffers from polio while they bring her out of the woods. "It was not a rescue according to any Pritchard formula, but a desperate improvisation like much that has followed. And every detail of that long improvisation has tightened the bonds that hold us together".

Larry thinks about making order out of the chaos that is life, and then he sees the cars returning from the picnic. He sees a figure in the moonlight moving toward him, timing himself to meet the family at the end of their picnic. It is Sid.

Part 3: Chapter 4 Analysis

The friendship between the Langs and the Morgans begins with several rescues. The Langs rescue the Morgans more than once in those early years, but as the years go on it is clear that the Langs are in need of rescue because their marriage is faltering, having gotten off on the wrong footing. Now at the end of Charity's life, the Langs need rescue more than ever, and the Morgans are there to help them.

Sally rescues them by trying to fulfill Sid and Charity's individually while restoring their dignity as a couple. Larry rescues them by being a sounding board for Sid when Sid is at his wit's ends and then by searching for Sid, being a support for him when Charity leaves for the hospital without him. Years of trial and struggle have given the Morgans the strength to deal with difficult times, and that experience is exactly what the Langs need as Charity is dying.



Characters

Larry Morgan

Larry Morgan is the narrator of the book. His parents both died in his teen years, and he has had to fight for success, having put himself through college and found a good job during the Depression. He is very smart and a hard worker. Admittedly upwardly mobile, Larry does everything he can to move himself ahead in life. In college, he meets Sally, who doesn't have a family either. Their marriage is a solid, interdependent one, which brings them both peace.

Larry represents the West. He does not have or claim the advantages of family or history. Coming from New Mexico, he must make his way on his merits alone, and this brings him great satisfaction. He compares himself against his Ivy League coworkers and finds that he isn't lacking anything. In fact, he thinks they are stuffy and not as forward thinking as himself.

Larry is confident; as the book progresses, it is clear that his confidence probably has as much to do with his wife as with any natural attribute he has. She is always supportive of his pursuits and helps him any way she can. Larry, in turn, takes care of his crippled wife without complaint, but with inward pity at times. At the end of the story, Larry's best friend Sid comments that Sally has held Sid back in his career, but Larry doesn't agree with him. Because of his wife's disability, Larry's life has turned out different than he imagined, but his career success has not been affected, in his opinion.

Sally Morgan

Sally Morgan, Larry's wife, comes from a Greek background. She is small and pretty, usually quiet, but very loving to those she is close to. She never knew her father and her mother died when Sally was twelve. She meets Larry while she works in the library at Berkeley, and together they make their way through school and beyond.

Sally has a very difficult childbirth with their only child, Lang. The trauma of the labor and delivery keeps her from having more children, but Sally, ever stoic and positive, is uncomplaining and accepts her life for what it is. Three years after Lang is born, Sally is stricken with polio on a week-long camping trip with the Langs. For the rest of her life, Sally walks with canes and braces. She cannot dress herself or even go to the bathroom without help. This suffering further refines her already patient personality, and turns her into someone people can rely on in times of trouble.

Sally and Charity make interesting contrasts. They are both beautiful intelligent women, but Sally is quiet in her strength, whereas Charity is bold and controlling. Sally seems to have poor luck in comparison with her friend, but Sally seems happier through every stage of life, even when tragedy strikes. Her contentment could be attributed to resignation, but it is more likely the result of wisdom born of suffering.



Charity Lang

Charity Lang comes from a distinguished background, her father being a Harvard professor and her mother being well-known and educated. She has grown up with every privilege an American girl could know. She has attended finishing schools in Paris and has gone to college at Smith. In addition to being well-educated and cultured, Charity is strikingly beautiful. She is tall and thin with dark hair and a brilliant smile.

Charity's personality is as forceful as her appearance. She is outgoing and generous, but she can also be controlling, especially with her husband Sid. She feels that she knows what's best for everyone, and she tries to get it for them. Most of the time, this works out well for everyone, but it can feel stifling to her loved ones when she constantly arranges their lives for them. Charity has many children, and she is constantly busy with causes and philanthropies.

Sid Lang

The son of a wealthy businessman, Sid inherits millions of dollars when his father dies. He is a college student at the time he inherits the money and he doesn't want people to think of him as a rich man who doesn't have to earn his way in the world, so he hides his fortune until he realizes that it will help him win the hand of Charity Ellis.

Sid is a handsome, intelligent man, but he resists control, and his wife wants desperately to control him. Sid appreciates Larry's friendship because Larry is a good listener and an ally. Sid is generous and kind, but he grows bitter towards the end of his life as years of being beaten down by Charity have left him feeling impotent and unappreciated.

Emily Ellis

Emily Ellis is Charity's mother. She runs her family from her porch like a commander, making sure that her children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews are always engaged in something productive, and educating them to the best of her ability. She is a good person but controls people too much.

George Barnwell Ellis

George Barnwell Ellis is Charity's father and a Harvard professor. He is ruled completely by his wife. During the summer, she sends him off to his think house after breakfast where he works on scholarly books but rarely finishes anything. He rarely says anything during the novel, but he does warn Charity against marrying Sid, saying that she's too strong for him.



Marvin Ehrlich

A co-worker of Sid's and Larry's at the University of Wisconsin, Marvin Ehrlich is, like Larry, upwardly mobile but without the gifts and talents that push Larry forward. Marvin and his wife are jealous of the Morgans, and their friendship never really takes off.

Comfort Ellis

Charity's younger sister Comfort is a prettier, smaller version of Charity. She is quieter and shows signs of the wear and tear of years of Charity's influence. Comfort tells Larry and Sally stories about Sid and Charity's marital problems, beginning with an episode that happened when she visited them on their honeymoon in Greece.

Hallie

Hallie is Sid and Charity's daughter. Hallie wasn't born until after most of the flashbacks concerning the early years of their friendship, so she is a new character introduced at the end when Charity is dying. Hallie resents her mother's controlling behavior but gains an appreciation for her through Sally's stories.

Moe

Moe is Hallie's husband. He is a good ten years older than her and Jewish, so he is an odd addition to the Ellis clan. Moe stutters when he talks, and he seems a bit submissive, like so many of the men who marry into the Ellis family.



Objects/Places

Folsom Hill

A hill on the Vermont property owned by the Ellis family. They often have picnics on the hill.

Madison, Wisconsin

Madison is the place where the Langs and Morgans meet for the first time.

Battell Pond

A pond on the Ellis's property. The main characters canoe and swim there in the summers.

Dartmouth College

Larry gets Sid a teaching position at Dartmouth after he loses his job at the University of Wisconsin.

New Mexico

Larry grows up in New Mexico, and Sally and Larry return to New Mexico after retirement.

Berkeley library

Sally and Larry meet in the library at Berkeley.

Florence, Italy

During his year in Florence, Italy, Larry realizes that he has attained everything he has wanted.

Sharpened pencils

Sid always has plenty of sharpened pencils but no work to show for them.



Crutches

Sally must always use crutches after she gets polio. They represent her jail or limitations.

The Big House

The Big House at Battell Pond is where the Ellis family spends their summers.



Themes

Rescue

A major theme in *Crossing to Safety* is the idea of rescue, especially as it pertains to friendship. Throughout the story, the Langs and the Morgans rescue one another as they face trials and unexpected tragedies. The first rescue is a literal rescue after the shipwreck on the lake. Sid has led them all into a dangerous situation, and they are all four rescued by an outside source. The Langs feel terribly that they have led their friends into a dangerous situation, so they perform a superhuman feat in getting dry, dressed, and across town very quickly in order to perform another rescue.

Both couples are heartbroken at the loss of Larry's jobs because it means that they probably won't be near each other anymore. But the Langs come up with a plan to keep their friends close while rescuing them financially. They offer their home for the summer and want to take Sally to Vermont with them so she can recover from her difficult labor and delivery. This isn't the first time the Langs have rescued the Morgans. At the beginning of the story, they rescue them from loneliness.

The Langs rescue the Morgans once again, this time lending them money for Sally's medical bills and helping them get established in Cambridge with the publishing job. But years later, the Morgans get a turn to rescue the Langs when Sid is dismissed from his prized job as a professor at the University of Wisconsin. Using his own connections, Larry gets Sid a job as a professor at Dartmouth. Charity doesn't like to be rescued as much as she likes performing the rescue, so she has a hard time accepting this. But their friendship is so well established by this point that she can abide it.

In the last chapter, while Larry is searching for Sid, he comes across a drowning mouse in a pool of water. He gets a net to rescue the mouse and then wonders why he is doing it. If the mouse survives the event, an owl will probably eat him. It looks like the mouse is dead, but then it stirs and then runs into the grass and weeds. For some reason, this episode reminds him of Sally's face as she suffers from polio while they bring her out of the woods. "It was not a rescue according to any Pritchard formula, but a desperate improvisation like much that has followed. And every detail of that long improvisation has tightened the bonds that hold us together". Larry realizes that although they have rescued each other only to be led into another scrape, each successive rescue has bound them together as friends.

Adam and Eve

Stegner refers to Adam and Eve several times, giving the idea that each of us is like Adam and Eve. We each carve out our lives. We each have to start from scratch with what we're given. The Langs and Morgans take long walks at night, and Sid becomes the talkative one. Larry describes their foursome as two Adams and two Eves, and he



thinks it's an improvement to God's plan. Larry and Sally love being around the thick web of relatives, the cousins, grandparents, brothers, and sisters, because neither of them has experienced such familiarity before.

The allusion to Adam and Eve is explicitly illustrated when Larry sees Sid and Charity gathering berries naked early one morning. In fact, he even compares Sid to Michelangelo's Adam, the quintessential man. Larry sees Sid as the perfect man, physically and intellectually, and although at the beginning of their friendship he saw Charity as the perfect woman, he now sees her flaws as she is annoying him. Sally is a more feminine woman than Charity, and Larry notices that when Sid is put off by Charity he leans toward Sally, as when one day after an argument with Charity Sid says about Sally, "What a dainty, feminine little foot!"

The serpent represents the conflict within Charity and Sid's marriage, and they are all expelled from Eden during the trip when Sally is stricken with polio. Stegner expands the allusion by introducing the serpent. The serpent is the conflict within the Langs' marriage. From the very beginning, even before their honeymoon, their headstrong ways leads to arguments within the marriage and discomfort for those close to them. Charity's sister Comfort recounts an argument she witnessed on their honeymoon, and Larry gives examples of arguments and conflict during the walking trip.

Control versus Interdependence

Two models of marriage are shown in this story. Larry and Sally's marriage is a model of interdependence. They rely on each other from the very beginning. When they move to Madison and are scared and lonely, they cling to each other like two babes lost in the forest. They buoy each other up. Sally literally depends on Larry after she is crippled by polio. She cannot even get out of bed without his help. Larry depends on Sally for support and intellectual stimulation. She edits his manuscripts, types them, and helps him decide which ones to send out and which ones need improvement.

Charity and Sid's marriage is an example of a struggle for control. Charity wants to manage Sid all the time, and Sid resists and rebels, resulting in a constant struggle. They argue over insignificant matters because neither of them wants to relinquish control. Charity wants control over Sid, and Sid wants control over himself. This struggle is the serpent in Eden that Larry refers to several times.

Even in the earliest stages of their relationship, Sid and Charity have issues with control. Sid feels that Charity leaves him without notice to make him chase her, and Charity finds him predictable and slightly annoying. Their conversation during their courtship as they walk in the rain foreshadows many events later in their marriage, with Sid making concessions and yielding to her, but not without frustration.

Charity views her parents' marriage as the ideal. Emily controls and runs the family, while George putters around in his think house, writing scholarly books that ensure his tenure at the university. However, Sid has a different ideal, and Charity does not

compromise to fit Sid's view in with her own. George is basically a nonentity in the Ellis household. He is coddled and fed and loved, but no one asks him his advice or bothers to ask how he feels. George puts up with it, but Sid cannot live in such a way.

Style

Point of View

The point of view in this novel is first person from the narrator's point of view. Larry is the narrator, so we get his point of view, but he is a fair narrator and we trust him because he presents stories from multiple sources. For example, he includes entire conversations about Charity and Sid from other people, such as Hallie and Moe.

This first person point of view gives readers a very intimate view of the friendship between the Langs and the Morgans. Because of this point of view, it feels as if the reader is sitting with an elderly man as he recounts his most precious memories of the most important friendship of his life.

Setting

The first half of the book visits two main settings: Madison, Wisconsin, and Battell Pond, Vermont. The Morgans and Langs meet in Madison, Wisconsin, when Sid and Larry are young professors at the university. Madison is a young town, full of possibilities for these couples. The Langs view Madison as the western frontier, and the Morgans view it as the East, having come from the west coast. Battell Pond is a place in Vermont where Charity's family spends their summers. Sid has purchased more property in the area, and it is as much his as hers. Battell Pond is a sort of paradise for all four characters, and they fill it with memories over the years.

The second half of the novel takes place in many different places as the characters' lives take them to new places. One chapter takes place in Florence, Italy, where Sally and Larry spend a year on a Guggenheim fellowship. One chapter takes place in a restaurant in Greece. It is a flashback to Sid and Charity's honeymoon. But they always come back to Battell Pond, where the story ends.

Language and Meaning

The language in *Crossing to Safety* is at the same time straightforward and lyrical. Larry's voice is insightful and natural, full of metaphors and comparisons, which is in character with his vocation as an English professor and writer. The four main characters each have a distinctive voice. Charity's voice is punctuated by italics, showing the definition and enthusiasm in her conversation. Sid's words are simpler and sometimes embarrassingly honest. Sally is timid and sincere, and Larry's voice is somewhat sarcastic.

The novel is full of allusions, from Dante to the Bible to Faulkner, which is also characteristic of English professors and writers. Stegner includes lengthy descriptions of the beauties of the settings, from the sailboats in Madison to the woods in Vermont.

Structure

The novel is structured in three parts. Flashbacks constitute an integral part of the structure of the novel. The novel begins in 1972 and then flashes back to 1938. The action always ends up at 1972, and that's where the novel ends.

The ending of the novel feels abrupt, and the reader is left wondering what will happen to Sid. It ends when Larry finds Sid on the night that Charity leaves for the hospital to die without him. Larry has looked and looked for Sid for most of the night, and then he comes upon him in the woods. Once he recognizes Sid the novel is over. This leads the reader to believe that Sid will be okay because he has Sally and Larry for friends, and we know from their history that they will rescue him as they have done before.



Quotes

"There it was, there it is, the place where during the best time of our lives friendship had its home and happiness its headquarters." Part 1, Chap. 1, pp. 6-7

"I suppose we were both a little depressed at leaving those colleagues, strangers though they were, unknowns with the most profound portent for our future, and going home to our cellar, where we ate stuff that was good for the budget but not especially for the soul. After dinner we sat on the wall above Lake Monona and watched the sunset, and then we went back in and I prepared for my classes and Sally read Jules Romains. We were tender with one another in bed: babes in the woods, lost in a strange indifferent country, a little dispirited, a little scared." Part 1, Chap. 2, p. 19

"All right. I admitted it: a charming woman, a woman we couldn't help liking on sight. She raised the pulse and the spirits, she made Madison a different town, she brought life and anticipation and excitement into a year we had been prepared to endure stoically. Our last impression of her as she turned the corner was that smile, flung backward like a handful of flowers." Part 1, Chap. 3, p. 29

"There sit our two padded wives close together on the couch, whispering and intimate, two months away, rosy with the heat of indoors. Coming from the kitchen bringing the rum bottle and the teakettle for a fresh round of drinks, I see them there, and think how in those two women four hearts are beating, and it awes me." Part 1, Chap. 5, p. 63

"YOU WRETCHED SCENE STEALER! DON'T YOU KNOW THIS IS BABY DERBY WEEK? NOW SALLY WILL HAVE TO HAVE TWINS TO GET EVEN! BUT HOW WONDERFUL IT IS! I WISH I COULD HELP YOU CELEBRATE! MUCH LOVE, AND CONGRATULATIONS GALORE!" Part 1, Chap. 8, p. 117

"He is at once disappointed to have got only a continuance, and miserable to have been continued while I have been rejected. It shocks his whole system of values to think that he should have been preferred over someone he likes and admires. He takes prosperity harder than anyone I ever knew." Part 1, Chap. 10, p. 134

"Naked in Eden, the ultimate atomic family, pink and wet and warm, we lay entangled in the tub, and rescue was so recent, safety so sweet, that I didn't have the heart to tell Sally what had happened to us." Part 1, Chap. 10, p. 143

"Thus to awaken in Paradise. We hadn't earned it, we didn't deserve it, we didn't belong there, it wouldn't last. But how wonderful to have even a taste. I felt like the grubby child in Katherine Mansfield's story when she got a glimpse of the rich girl's dollhouse before being hustled away. I seen the little lamp." Part 1, Chap. 11, p. 159

"It felt like a purification before the next fateful, hopeful chapter of our lives. Up to our chins in the water that foamed through its marble bowl, tiptoeing the smooth bottom to keep our noses above the surface, the light wavering and winking down on us and



flickering of the curved walls, trees overhanging us and the sky beyond those, and all around and through us, a soul-massage, the rush and patter and tinkle of water and the brush and break of bubbles. It was a present that made the future tingle." Part 1, Chap. 13, pp. 204-205

"But I am also aware, even in the violence of his welcome, of the other part of this reunion: Sally floundering forward, all but running on her canes, her uncontrollable iron legs trying to keep up with the crutches; and on the lounge Charity half rising toward their awkward, maimed meeting, her face a thin wedge, and on it that incredible, gleaming, ardent smile, a transfiguration, a bursting to the surface of pure delight, uncomplicated love." Part 2, Chap. 5, p. 284

"If we could have foreseen the future during those good days in Madison where all this began, we might not have had the nerve to venture into it." Part 3, Chap. 4, p. 340



Topics for Discussion

What is the significance of the title "Crossing to Safety"?

Compare and contrast the Langs' and Morgans' marriages.

How is Sid like Sally?

How is Charity like Larry?

Compare and contrast three generations of Ellis women: Emily, Charity, and Hallie.

How does polio change Sally's character?

How does Sally's polio change Larry's character?

What is the most important setting in the story? Why is it the most important?