

Home to Harlem Study Guide

Home to Harlem by Claude McKay

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Plot Summary

Jake enlists in the US army but deserts after it is clear that his role there is purely menial. After going to England and living with a white woman, he gets on a freighter to go back home. In Harlem, Jake picks up an attractive brown woman, who demands fifty dollars. After sleeping with this woman, outside Jake finds out that she has given him the money back. Jake, to his dismay, finds out that he has lost the woman's address.

Jake is with his old buddy from the army, Zeddy at the Congo cabaret. He is selected for attention by the attractive singer, Rose. Jake goes to live with Rose, but does not feel true love for her. Zeddy gets Jake a job on the docks, but Jake quits when he finds out that he is a strikebreaker. A couple of days later, at a gambling den, Zeddy is attacked by Nije for not paying his debt, and Zeddy almost knifes Nije before Jake stops Zeddy.

Zeddy gets his chance at Ginhead Susy's place on Myrtle Avenue. Zeddy ends up living with Susy, but soon resents that Susy has control over him because she pays his bills. Zeddy goes chasing after another woman, Susy finds out, and he is thrown out by her. Jake enjoys being with Rose, and gets the prestige to go to a buffet den connected to the owner of the Baltimore cabaret. Unfortunately, this illegal club is soon shut down by the Vice Squad, along with the Baltimore itself. Jake has his own problems, with evidence of Rose's lovers. Rose senses Jake's resentment and scratches at him. Jake slaps her and is disgusted by his own behavior, so he leaves Rose.

Jake gets a job on the railroad as a cook. There Jake meets the black Haitian intellectual, Ray who is now a waiter. Jake gets to have women in places like Pittsburgh, and also takes drugs, but Ray inadvertently overdoses and is sent to the hospital, though soon recovers. There is tension between Jake's chef and a pantryman. Ultimately, the pantryman gets the chef to have a hysterical breakdown in front of the white steward and be demoted from his post as chef. Ray tries to enjoy a stop at Madame Laura's in Philadelphia along with Jake, but cannot be with women that he sees as prostitutes. Back in New York, Jake becomes sick from drinking too much liquor. He drinks again one day and has a relapse. Jake gets visitors including Ray's girlfriend, and later a man called Yaller Prince, who is actually a pimp. Ray tells the story there of a pimp named Jerco who loved his woman and commits suicide after her death.

Jake is still on leave from the railroad and sees Yaller Prince assaulted by a man who backs up one of Yaller's former girls. Billy the Wolf tells Jake that he will give Jake a gun to defend himself. Then, Jake goes out to a cabaret, where the crowd dances to a wild jazz song. There to his surprise, Jake sees his long lost brown woman. Her name is Felice, and Jake and Felice spend a quiet week together. The next Saturday they go to a cabaret, but when Jake is busy, he hears Zeddy, her old boyfriend, trying to drag her away until Jake intervenes. Zeddy pulls out a razor, but is stopped by Jake's gun. Zeddy declares publicly that Jake is a deserter, and Felice is afraid that Jake will get in trouble. The reunited couple decides to immediately resettle in Chicago.



Chapter I and II

Chapter I and II Summary

In chapter one, Jake is a black sailor on a ship with many Arab sailors. The Arab sailors are resented by Jake and his fellow American sailors for not keeping clean. Jake had been a longshoreman, but enlisted in the US Army in 1917 when war is declared against Germany. At Brest, France, Jake sees that he is only going to work on the supply depot and he is not going to fight on the front. All the fights are between mostly black and white American soldiers. Jake goes on leave to the port of Le Harve and meets an English sailor. Jake resents the English sailor, calling him a darkie, but decides to desert the Army and go with the English sailor's boat to London, England. In London, Jake gets a job as a dock worker and makes friends with white and black people in London's East End. Jake lives with a white woman, but things get ugly after the war is won. There is a huge fight between whites and blacks in the East End, and Jake's woman keeps him indoors for three days. Then Jake decides that he has to get back to the United States and to Harlem, NY.

In chapter two, Jake arrives in New York City and gets paid. He puts his suitcase behind a bar in a saloon for safe keeping, and then he hits the streets of Harlem. Soon, in a cabaret, Jake makes eye contact with an attractive brown woman and approaches her. He orders her a drink, and soon the woman has him take her to another place. On the way, the woman gets Jake to agree to pay her \$50 for her entertaining him and going to bed with him. To Jake this is all right, because the woman is very responsive and it seems to him like a romantic evening.

Jake and the woman go to a so-called buffet flat, a private club, where they dance and drink. After a while, Jake gives the woman all of his money and they go to her place to go to bed. In the morning, the woman serves Jake breakfast, and when he leaves and is out on the street Jake notices that the \$50 bill is back in his pocket. A note clipped to it says that the woman gives the money to him as a present.

Chapter I and II Analysis

In chapter one, the Arabs stoke coal like Jake does, but eat with their hands dirty and wash after they eat. Jake refuses to eat with them and pays the cook to prepare his food separately. Jake keeps his mind on returning to Harlem, since he has been overseas for years. Jake thinks back to his friendship with an Irishman supervisor on the longshoreman docks. This is why he enlisted in the army, but he is dismayed when he finds that he and hundreds of other black soldiers have no chance of fighting on the front lines. All Jake gets is the usually racist confrontations between soldiers. So, Jake feels no guilt when he gets a chance to desert and go to London. In London, Jake is in a relationship with a white woman, but is again dismayed when there is mass fights between whites and blacks on the East End of London. Jake wonders why he got



involved in the white man's war and is living with a white woman. Now Jake is on the ship sailing back to New York and Harlem.

In chapter two, it is somewhat shocking how thin the lines are between Jake having a relationship with this woman, and prostitution. In a sense, Jake does not consider the brown woman to be a prostitute. He is not just going to a bordello and getting a half-an-hour with her. Instead, he meets her and spends the day with her. She asks for fifty dollars, but seems very attracted to Jake and very responsive. The thing at the end where the woman gives Jake back the money covertly and he discovers the money is like the punch line of a joke. Jake paid the woman, and now she is paying him back for having the pleasure of being with him.



Chapters III and IV

Chapters III and IV Summary

In chapter three, Jake wanders around on the streets of Harlem and goes into Uncle Doc's saloon. There he sees Zeddy Plummer, a man he knows from the US Army in France. Zeddy has not seen Jake since Jake deserted in Brest, France. Zeddy understands why Jake deserted, since Zeddy also only did menial work and did not get to fight the Germans. Jake and Zeddy play pool and then go to Aunt Hattie's joint to eat. The men talk more about their experiences in Europe, and Jake tells of how he ended up in England before returning home. Zeddy admits that the only men he fought were the white soldiers from his own army. Jake tells how he worked on the West India Docks in London and lived with a white woman. Zeddy warns Jake to keep quiet about the fact that Jake deserted during the war. Jake wants to return to the lovely brown woman, but forgets which street she lives on.

In chapter four, some of the old cabarets that Jake used to know are still running in Harlem. The new, hot cabaret is Goldgraber's, which is run by a Jewish man but is open to Negroes. Jake's favorite cabaret is the Congo, which is the most African in spirit. Jake is at the Baltimore again, looking for his honey-gal, the woman he met on his first night in Harlem. The cabaret singer is drawn to Jake and he gives her a tip.

The cabaret singer sings a song with the chorus being that she is crazy about a man. Just then a light-skinned woman attacks the cabaret singer. Two men are also wrestling. The proprietor of the cabaret is angry over the fighting and disruption. He has all the troublemakers thrown out and fires the cabaret singer. Jake meets Zeddy and complains that he lost the location of his new girlfriend's house. Zeddy has Jake go with him to the Congo cabaret. A fairly obscene song is playing, including the lyrics that they cannot understand a so-called bull-dyke woman and a faggoty man. Jake and Zeddy find women to dance with and then return to their table. At this point, Rose, the singer at the Congo, comes over to their table and sings for Jake. Rose is attracted to the tall, charming Jake and soon becomes his woman.

Chapters III and IV Analysis

In chapter three, Jake and Zeddy meet, and Zeddy makes clear that he is not mad at Jake for deserting the army. It is understood that the American army did not treat most black soldiers right. Both men brag about enjoying white women in Europe but longing for the black and brown women of Harlem. Jake mentions the woman he just slept with, but then realizes that he cannot remember where she lives. He has lost her due to his drunken confusion and carelessness.

In chapter four, Zeddy is somewhat envious of Jake's easy conquests of women. When Rose comes up to Jake in the Congo, Zeddy sees again that Jake has bested him. This



is a foreshadowing of the deep resentment of Zeddy for Jake, which later comes bubbling to the surface. Zeddy is jealous that Jake is getting this attention, but says nothing and leaves. Jake ends up leaving the club with Rose on his arm. She calls Jake her brown one, and brings him to her room to go to bed. Later, they go out to eat. Rose offers to support Jake as her so-called sweet man, but he protests that he always works. Jake moves in with Rose, but refuses to allow her to support him as a sweet man. A sweet man is a man who is supported by his lover. Later, in the book, some sweet men have several women in relationships with them and working for them. In effect, a sweet man can turn into a pimp.



Chapter V

Chapter V Summary

In chapter five, Jake lives with Rose and enjoys her company and her body. Nevertheless, he still dreams of the woman that he met when first returning to New York, at the Baltimore cabaret. Jake works as a longshoreman and spends his free time gambling. He refuses to take money from Rose, and sometimes borrows money from Nije Gridley. Nije has some money and makes more by loaning money at a high interest rate.

Zeddy gets Jake a high paying job unloading fruit at a dock. Then Jake finds out that there is a strike of white workers going on and that he is a scab. Jake meets a white union organizer who tells Jake about the strike and offers to let Jake join the union. Zeddy disagrees with Jake and says he does not care if he scabs, because he needs the work. Jake loses his job and by the end of the week ends up borrowing money from Nije Gridley. Nije is interested in finding out where Jake is going to gamble and very interested when he hears that Zeddy goes there to gamble too. That night, Nije shows up at the buffet flat where Zeddy is expected to go to gamble. Nije challenges Zeddy by stepping on his foot and then punches Zeddy. Zeddy is the better fighter and gets the upper hand. He takes out his knife and is ready to cut Nije's throat, but Jake stops him.

Chapter V Analysis

Jake does his best to preserve his independence by making his own money. His gambling and drinking can get him in debt to people like Nije, the loan shark. Jake works intermittently as a longshoreman and is glad to get a high paying job unloading pineapples, but then finds out there is an ongoing strike. He is a former union man, but found out that the unions in New York are prejudiced against blacks. Jake agrees to stop working and to not scab, but does not want to join the union, saying that the union favors white workers. At this point, white men attack a strikebreaker until Jake forces them to run away. Later, Jake goes to Dixie Red's poolroom and finds out that other black men have been injured in the labor dispute because they were accused by whites of scabbing. Jake is mad at Zeddy for getting him to scab. Zeddy declares that he wants a good life and to make money. Therefore, Zeddy does not mind being a scab, and unlike Jake has no principles at all.

Nije finds out from Jake where Zeddy goes to gamble, because apparently Zeddy owes Nije some money. Nije attacks Zeddy, but Zeddy is armed with a knife and about to stab Nije until Jake intervenes. Jake actually saves Zeddy from possibly killing Nije and then being sent to jail for murder. Nije is declared a nuisance by the people running the buffet flat and is thrown out. Then the women running the place are too nervous to allow gambling to continue. Someone starts to play a blues on the piano and people dance.

Zeddy is quick to take out his knife or razor and cut someone up. This is a foreshadowing of what happens at the end of the book between Jake and Zeddy.



Chapter VI

Chapter VI Summary

In chapter six, Zeddy is jealous that Jake is in a long-term relationship with Rose and wants to find a regular woman. Zeddy gets his chance when he is invited to Ginhead Susy's party. Susy is a dark-skinned black woman who is heavily built, though well-dressed. Susy had been married at an early age to a light-skinned Negro man who left her at the age of eighteen. Since then, Susy has been trying to get a new man who is yellow-skinned, but has met little success. Susy is driven crazy when a yellow-skinned lover leaves her after a while and even steals her oven range.

Susy starts to change under the influence of her new woman friend, named Lavinia Curdy, and usually called Miss Curdy. Miss Curdy is thin and not too attractive, with a purplish streak across her face, and missing two front teeth. Jake and Zeddy are taken down to Susy's place by a dark black man called Strawberry Lips. At Susy's place, Susy and Miss Curdy are dancing with men, while other men drink and gamble.

Miss Curdy is first attracted to Jake, who is a fairly dark color. Miss Curdy tries to get Jake alone, but he recoils from her advances, since he considers her ugly. Jake marvels on how aggressive women can be in sexual matters, and thinks of the lost brown woman he met at the Baltimore. At this point, a chocolate colored man gets into a fight with a light-brown fellow over a betting pot. Susy throws out the two men, threatening them with her big dog. A blues record is put on the record player and Miss Curdy starts dancing with Strawberry Lips while Susy dances with Zeddy. Jake has had enough of this scene and takes the train home to Harlem.

Chapter VI Analysis

Zeddy's problem is that he does not have Jake's good looks or charm, plus he gambles away his wages when he makes money. Zeddy's fortune changes when he is invited to Ginhead Susy's party on Myrtle Avenue, in Brooklyn. Susy has parties that are attended by only men, where she serves lots of gin and looks for mainly light-skinned, yellow Negro men. Susy is unsuccessful in keeping a yellow-skinned lover because they either find her unattractive or tire of her quickly. They often steal her money, or they make jokes about her after they break up with her. Susy is typical of many characters that have complexes because they are dark and wish to be yellow-skinned, that is, a light-skinned Negro.

Other men talk gossip about knowing black actors and actresses and other famous people. Miss Curdy brags that in the good-old days she met Congressmen as friends in Washington DC. Miss Curdy is described as missing teeth and having a purple streak on her face. She is not attractive, but tries to make up for this by being an interesting conversationalist. There is dancing and poker playing while Susy tries to get the



attention of the yellow fellow who brought Zeddy there, again chasing yellow men who reject her. Somehow the fight breaking out destabilizes the two women. Susy grabs Zeddy, though he is not light-skinned enough, and Miss Curdy also grabs the dark-skinned Strawberry Lips.



Chapter VII

Chapter VII Summary

In chapter seven, Zeddy is missing from his usual hangouts in Harlem for a week. When he appears in Harlem, he announces that he has moved in with Susy on Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn, while Miss Curdy has a thing going with Strawberry Lips. Zeddy admits that Susy is not good-looking but treats him right and gives him great pork chops and fried chicken. On Sunday night, Jake goes to another gin party at Susy's. Susy's food is wonderful and includes fried chicken and stewed corn. She is well-dressed and enjoys the compliments that her cooking draws. After the meal, Zeddy wants to go and hang out in Harlem, but Susy insists that she will throw him out if he goes out.

For a while Zeddy enjoys the sweet life at Susy's house. The Saturday night parties continue and Zeddy is Susy's assistant in providing for the needs of the guests. When Zeddy goes to Harlem in the daytime, some of his friends laugh at him for being under Susy's control. Billy Biasse, also known as Billy the Wolf, teases Zeddy. Then one night Zeddy stays out very late at the Congo cabaret in Harlem with his friends. One Saturday night, no one shows up at Susy's gin party except for Miss Curdy and Strawberry Lips. Susy gets the idea to go a Harlem cabaret. That night, Zeddy is at the Congo with a young brown woman and spending lots of money. Jake is there too with Rose, who spends time away from his table when she performs her act.

Rose and her pretty boy are dancing a partner dance to a song on the piano, which is a wild number about listening to a wailing saxophone. There is a crazy rhythm to the dance, which has steps carefully choreographed for Rose and the pretty boy. Between sets, Strawberry Lips walks in, followed by Miss Curdy and Susy. Susy is enraged to see Zeddy with another girl but refuses to create a scene at the club. Just then, two West Indian girls get into a fight because one of them stole the other's man. Susy is disgusted at the public display of the women and leads her group back to Brooklyn. When Zeddy gets back to Brooklyn, his things are already packed in a suitcase outside her door. He yells, but Susy tells him to go back to Harlem for good.

Chapter VII Analysis

Zeddy admits that Susy is not good-looking, but treats him right and gives him great pork chops and fried chicken. For a while, Zeddy is overwhelmed by the sensual pleasure that Susy gives him at the dining table and in bed. Then, he gets upset because he is not living the fantasy life of the Harlem sweet man who can hold a woman and also play around with other women. Zeddy has to behave properly, because Susy is paying Zeddy's bills now and wants to keep him away from other women. Zeddy realizes that as a sweet, he is dependent on Susy and must obey her. Free love ends for him when Zeddy becomes Susy's man. Instead of being Susy's pimp, Zeddy is the one who is dependent. Now that Susy and Zeddy are a couple, other men find Susy



more attractive. Susy knows that she needs a man, and that is why she buys Zeddy's favor. Susy and Miss Curdy realize that similar sexual games go on in polite white society. They see this from their jobs as cooks and servants.

Susy knows that Zeddy is going astray but does not kick him out immediately. If Susy did not see Zeddy wasting her money on another girl, she may have kept him on for quite a while longer. The author writes quite a bit about the jazz music and the songs that are sung. The wild music about fights over love is a metaphor about what happens to Susy and Zeddy. Unlike the West Indian women who fight over a man, Susy refused to degrade herself and soon leaves the club. Even Zeddy, who knows his probable fate with Susy, laughs at the fighting West Indian girls and calls them monkey-chasers. Foreign blacks are considered savages by the American blacks. Susy argues that Harlem is full of wild people and she would rather go to the midtown segregated theaters than go to Harlem. Zeddy says goodbye to the girl he was with and gets very drunk, preparing to go home to Susy. When he gets there, he is of course thrown out by Susy.



Chapters VIII and IX

Chapters VIII and IX Summary

In chapter eight, the Baltimore cabaret is shut down by police, though it was thought to be protected. Jake is somewhat involved in the Baltimore affair. Due to his living with Rose, Jake has become popular and is invited to Madame Adeline Suarez's buffet flat. Then three young white men come to the flat after becoming acquaintances to the owner of the Baltimore. They spend lots of money, dance, and one of them plays the blues on the piano. The trio comes back next week and everyone at the flat is going mad over the new jazz tune. A singer sings about cocktails and cherries as a metaphor for the rich and varied life of jazz, drinking and romance. Even prostitutes at the place abandon themselves to the jazz until the white men bust the place, revealing that they are with the Vice Squad. Only Madame Suarez is actually sent to prison, though the judge regrets that he could not send the white women there to be whipped. The boss of the Baltimore is indicted as being an accessory to the operation of Madame Suarez's flat, and as a result, the Baltimore is shut down.

In chapter nine, Jake comes home and senses that a white man has just been with Rose. Jake has always known that Rose is not only his, but before he had ignored this aspect of her life. Rose is used to having her man find out about her other lovers, and then being beaten in revenge. She even relishes these painful episodes. Jake's feelings for Rose are not strong, because it was just convenient for him to move in with her. Jake still yearns for the way he felt with the brown woman he met at the Baltimore.

A week later, again Jake senses that she has been with the same man. Rose is there, looking lovely in a kimono, but she rebuffs Jake's sexual advances. The couple argues and Jake admits that he is tired of her. Rose scratches at Jake, and he slaps her hard, causing her to black out for a few moments. Jake leaves the apartment, determined to break up with Rose. When he comes back, Jake overhears Rose talking to Gertie Black on how excited she is that Jake hit her. Jake hears this and goes out again, feeling disgusted. He actually feels very bad about hitting her.

Jake comes home and begins to pack his things, much to Rose's surprise. She seduces him once more, but Jake leaves the apartment for good a few moments after she goes out.

Chapters VIII and IX Analysis

Both distinguished white and black people go to Madame Suarez's place. The white women go wild listening to the jazz and the prostitutes dance, forgetting their business and why they are there. Jake has tired of the Congo cabaret, but enjoys seeing the surroundings and well-dressed women at Madame Suarez's. The beautifully dressed women drink but are very elegant. Along with the women are black men that are famous



in the sports world. Jake is here only because of the prestige he gets a Congo Rose's man. The scene ends with a raid by the Vice Squad. Part of the motive is legal efforts to stop the mixing of whites and blacks in an intimate setting. The detectives fool everyone, even bringing in white women to drink and dance. The detectives are invited by the owner of the Baltimore, which is how the Baltimore gets involved in the case. Madame Suarez, the women there, and the male clients are brought downtown to the police station. Many black club owner are wary for a while of taking in white customers at all, or even very light-skinned Negroes that they are not familiar with from Harlem.

In chapter nine, Jake claims to himself not to care that Rose has lovers that she meets at her job as a singer at the Congo cabaret. This is not really true, because Jake knows that the other men are getting the attention that is due him. Jake sees that there are many cigarette butts around and that half of his whiskey bottle is empty. He demands sex, when he knows that Rose has just probably had sex with a white man who is a client. Of course Rose is tired and enraged, but also part of her sexual thrills is to be beaten up by her main lover because of her cheating ways. Jake beats her up, but does not like the act of assaulting her. She is turned on, but Jake is very turned off and leaves her. This is another example of racial tensions and rivalry in the sexual area of life.



Chapter X

Chapter X Summary

In chapter ten, Jake is tired of Harlem and takes a job on the railroad, spending only one day a week or so in Harlem. Jake is working on the Pennsylvania Railroad in the kitchen of a dining car, as third cook. He is under a tough chef that the men liken to a rhinoceros. The chef accuses the fourth waiter, also called the mule, of rushing him for an order of lamb chops, beginning a long standing resentment by this and other waiters. Jake borrows some money from a waiter and wins five dollars gambling. Jake goes over to the waiter and inspects a book that the waiter is reading. The book is named Sappho and is in French. The waiter explains that Sappho was an ancient female Greek poet who committed suicide because of her love for a boy. The waiter explains that he is a black man from Haiti and French is his native language. The waiter tells the story of Haiti's successful revolution for independence from France. Jake learns of Toussaint L'Overture, the leader who defeated the slave owners and made them obey his laws. After L'Overture is captured and imprisoned for life, Haiti is still able to keep its independence. The waiter praises the power of the ideas of L'Overture and recites a poem from Wordsworth about the sad fate of the liberation leader and his ultimate triumph.

Jake is impressed that black people in Haiti were able to fight for their freedom. The waiter goes on that Liberia and Ethiopia that are also free, with Ethiopia going back to the ancient Queen of Sheba. This queen was the lover of King Solomon of Israel, and the sire of the royal line of kings of Ethiopia, also known as Abyssinia. The waiter wishes he could know more secrets of ancient Abyssinia and Haiti and wants to write stories about them. The waiter explains that he got some of his knowledge as a student of Howard University. When the United States invaded Haiti during the war, some of the waiter's family members were imprisoned or killed, so the waiter is forced to get a job. The waiter still studies in his free time and says that he does not mind being a waiter.

Chapter X Analysis

Jake escapes Harlem for the most part but finds a new world of problems when working on the railroad. The train's chef is a top chef, but is systematically abusive to the waiters on the train. After psychologically torturing the fourth waiter, finally the chef gives him his order. The chef brags to Jake on how he has the waiters under his power, but Jake refuses to imitate such behavior. As Jake becomes a friend of the waiter from Haiti, Jake grows to resent the nasty behavior of the chef.

There are color and class barriers among the black workers in the dining car. When the railroad travelers have all been served and the cooks can rest in the dining room, they generally keep away from the waiters. Some waiters think they are better than the cooking crew because they are light-skinned, or because they are in contact with the



white passengers. When Ray breaks this rule, he becomes friendly with a Haitian waiter. This Haitian waiter is reading the exotic French book, called Sappho. The waiter mentions the words, Sapphic and lesbian, but Jake uses the usual dirty words to refer to homosexuals, in a little limerick. This comes from Jake's Harlem culture, from a little song he heard in a cabaret. Jake sees that the waiter is educated and the waiter asks if Jake knows French. Jake does know some French from the war, and refers to his desertion from the Army. Obviously, Jake trusts the Haitian waiter, or is in general not too worried about getting in trouble as a deserter. Later in the book, Jake's desertion will come back to haunt him.

Jake learns of the impact of the French Revolution on Haiti, and Haiti's fight for independence. Until then, Jake had thought that all African blacks and Caribbean blacks are savages. The waiter tells Jake that white people have too been slaves, including the Jews in Egypt and Roman slaves. He tells Jake that independent countries exist in Africa. This sounds very romantic to Jake until Jake finds out why the waiter had to leave his studies in Harlem. The US Army had not only fought Germany, but during the war had invaded and subjugated Haiti.



Chapter XI

Chapter XI Summary

In chapter eleven, Jake sees Pittsburgh as a smoky industrial town. He sees men with coal and oil stained clothing in the black section of town. By an eating place, Jake sees a pretty girl and soon becomes friendly with her. At the pool hall, Jake sees the Haitian waiter, and there are men there writing and reading under religious pictures of Negroes. Jake tells the waiter that he is taking his new girlfriend to the show that evening. The waiter plans to go to sleep early, but knows that the railroad men's quarters are filthy. Jake learns that the waiter's name is Ray.

Jake returns to the railroad men's quarters after midnight and his fulfillment of his desires with his new girlfriend. Ray cannot sleep, and Jake and Ray decide to go to an all-night bar with another man there. This light-yellow man has drug connections, and soon goes into a backroom at the bar to smoke what must be opium. Ray decides not to smoke the stuff, but Jake smokes some and buys some extra of the powder wrapped in paper. Jake knows that with the opium and whiskey he is sure to sleep, and falls asleep at once when they return to their quarters. Ray still cannot sleep and listens to men gambling in the distance. After some thinking, Ray remembers Jake's opium and decides to take the stuff out and ends up eating several packets. Ray sleeps, and in a dream he flies around as a hummingbird from Haiti to Washington DC's Howard University. In the midst of the dream, Jake is pulling Ray and calling on him to wake up because the train is leaving soon. Ray cannot move and Jake sees that Ray has eaten the opium. The chef laughs on seeing the drugged Ray, but Jake and another member of the kitchen crew arrange to take Ray to the hospital.

Chapter XI Analysis

Pittsburgh is a dirty industrial town, and the railroad men's quarters are also dirty. Still, Jake has fun, making a new girlfriend in the process. The men stay up partly because it is difficult to sleep. When Jake comes back, some of the men from Jake's crew are sleeping, scratching in their sleep at bedbugs. Ray is awake and killing bedbugs because the bedbugs make it impossible for him to sleep. Jake and Ray go to an all-night place, where Jake procures a drug that must be opium.

Ray thinks of the degraded condition of his fellow black railroad men. Ray imagines how self-assured and arrogant a young US marine who is white must feel. Ray bemoans the said fate of his native Haiti, now occupied by such marines. He cannot sleep as he is overwhelmed by the knowledge of the suffering of black people all over the world. Ray looks at the sleeping railroad men around him and remembers Jake's powder. Ray does not understand what this powder is and takes way too much of it. The opium puts him in a crazy dream. Ray is at a palace served by boys and entertained by naked dancing girls. Ray drifts in a blue background and he becomes a blue bird. Unfortunately, Ray is

badly drugged and cannot get up from his stupor when it is time to go. Jake and another man on the dining crew are at least civil enough to make sure that Ray gets to a hospital to recover from his overdose.



Chapter XII

Chapter XII Summary

In chapter twelve, the chef prides himself as a so-called mean, black nigger. The chef acts like a drill sergeant and is an excellent chef, feeding his passengers well and on time. He is known for being extremely honest and never stealing goods for his wife and child. Jake is quiet at his job as the third cook, but resents that the chef calls Ray the so-called Professor. The targeting of the chef starts when the chef keeps calling the fourth waiter a mule. One day as the train is waiting for its connection, the fourth waiter complains that the chef is giving him ice that is not clean. The chef is enraged and threatens this waiter. Finally, as a crowd gathers, the fourth waiter calls the chef a dirty rhinoceros. At this point the first waiter, also called the pantryman, intervenes to defend the fourth waiter. The dark black-skinned chef calls the pantryman a yellow skinned bastard and dime-snatcher. This hurts, because the pantryman indeed had a white father who quickly abandoned him and his mother. Another day the chef is late in feeding the waiters. There are loud protests for the chef to provide food quickly. The white steward also becomes angry at the chef for being late with the food. The chef loudly exclaims to the pantryman that he can go and spit in the waiters' food. The pantryman runs and complains to the steward, Mr. Farrel. The steward wonders if the chef would dare to spit in the food and the chef is in trouble. With the chef's great food coming out, this is soon forgotten.

In the next days, the pantryman and the chef seem friendly as they arrange the food stores between them. Ray asks the pantryman to forget his grievances against the chef, but the pantryman refuses. He accuses Ray of insulting religion because Ray says that Christ was a bastard too. Despite some pleasant days, the chef is aware that the pantryman is out to get him. The pantryman refuses the special foods that the chef offers him and the chef begins to feel a dark and deep African hate of the pantryman. One day the ice is not supplied to the dining car and the chef refuses to give the pantryman some of his ice. The ice cream starts to melt and there is an ugly incident where the steward reprimands the pantryman for not having ice and forcing the steward to make a special trip to get some.

Finally, the pantryman has his chance to get revenge when two of the cooks are sick. The chef and the pantryman go out and bring back eggs. Just at the door of the dining-car, the chef is flirting with a yellow-skinned woman. When he is not looking, the pantryman grabs the eggs. When the car is in motion, the chef discovers that the eggs are gone. No egg dishes can be prepared and the chef begs for help from the steward. The steward searches the pantry, but the chef forgets how he was distracted when talking to the girl. The chef is screaming for someone to help him. The pantryman then drives the chef crazy by insinuating that the chef stole the eggs for his wife. The chef loses control and throws a hambone at the pantryman, knocking things down just as Mr. Farrel, the steward walks in. The chef threatens to desert his duty as Mr. Farrel catches him assaulting the pantryman. The result is that after the train reaches its destination,



the chef is demoted to a second cook and transferred to another car. The pantryman never tells Jake how he managed it, but it is clear that the pantryman finally brought down the chef.

Chapter XII Analysis

The story of the demotion of the chef, also known as the rhinoceros, is a side story in the novel. Jake and Ray, main characters in the novel, are only tangentially involved. However, the story of the chef shows the disputes that erupt between blacks in a work environment. The chef prides himself in not indulging in such favorite Negro foods such as pork chops, watermelon, and chicken. The chef tries in this way to separate himself from the other black people he works with there. Actually, this thinking is absurd, since the white Irish steward loves the chef's chicken stew, and other whites love other of these so-called Negro foods. The chef's odd collection of tastes and restraints help give him justifications for being violent and nasty with the kitchen crew and waiters.

Jake is supposed to be aligned with the chef because Jake is the third cook. However, because of his friendship with Ray, Jake is secretly against the chef. Jake is happy to be associated with the educated Ray but does not really understand him. Jake remembers the stories of about educated blacks who covertly chase the opposite sex and live wild lives, at least according to Miss Curdy. Now, Jake has the opportunity to know a real live educated Negro.

The chef insults the pantryman as a bastard son of a white man. Interestingly, being light-skinned has funny connotations. It is praiseworthy among some for being closer to being white. However, it also connotes being a bastard son of a white man, who may have even raped a black woman. The chef is driven crazy by the provocations of the pantryman and threatens to spit in the food. This could get the chef fired, but luckily the food comes out. The chef gets some great pork chops quickly to the waiters, followed by fish and other dishes. Soon everyone is busy eating the fine food and the talk about spitting in the food is forgotten. Ray is still disgusted and goes outside, asking Jake if the chef would really spit in the food. Jake assures Ray that he would not let the chef do such a thing. The chef beams as all the other employees happily feast, and the chef again feels secure in his job.

The pantryman keeps up his resentment at being called a bastard in a serious way by the chef. His chance comes when the chef is attracted to a woman while he is supposed to be getting eggs. While the chef flirts with the girl, the pantryman grabs the eggs and gets rid of them. The reader is never told exactly how the pantryman accomplished this trick, and at the end of the chapter, Jake also wonders how it happened. The pantryman's psychological warfare gets the chef to crack and start to throw things at the pantryman. The pantryman knows that the chef has a wild pride in the fact that he never steals, and accuses the chef of being the egg thief. Before the next trip, Jake asks the pantryman to explain what happened to the chef. The pantryman says that maybe the eggs disappeared by magic from the chef. The pantryman will not tell Jake what really happened, but it is apparent to Jake that the pantryman arranged the chef's downfall.



Chapters XIII and XIV

Chapters XIII and XIV Summary

In chapter thirteen, in Philadelphia, Jake drags Ray out to go to a party on Fifteenth Street. At the house, Jake meets an attractive middle-aged woman at the door, his friend Madame Laura. Ray finds the house amusing, because it looks like a respectable social gathering. Men are playing cards and a few couples are flirting on couches, while a man plays piano. Madame Laura opens up some champagne for Jake, Ray, herself and another woman sitting there.

Ray gets upset when Madame Laura's young son comes out and gets a bit of champagne. A song about a merry cherry is being played on the piano. A girl approaches Ray and asks him to dance. Instead, Ray ends up buying her and another woman a glass of a wine called Virginia Dare. The piano seems to be far away, with the piano player playing a primitive melody and rhythm and people dancing.

There is a scream that the place is being raided by the police. It is only a single Irish policeman who is a friend of Madame Laura and another woman there. Jake, Madame Laura, the lady and the cop sit down for a drink together. It turns out that the cop is in love with the lady at the table and giving protection to Madame Laura's speakeasy. The cop is very friendly and the four drink a toast. Madame Laura proclaims that Niggers and Irish are always happy together. The next day Jake finds out that Ray left the party before the alleged police raid occurred. Ray explains that even though a girl there liked him, he did not like her vibrations or her smelly perfume. Ray basically does not like being in a house that he thinks of as a house of prostitution. Jake explains that Madame Laura's house is a house of looseness and deals, but is not really a straight house of prostitution like those found in Europe.

In chapter fourteen, it's dinnertime on Lenox Avenue in Harlem. Women rush home to cook dinner for their husbands. Others go to restaurants or small eating places. Jake is in his room resting because he is sick. He is waiting for his landlady to bring his dinner, but she is late. He is not supposed to drink any alcohol, but he is still drinking lots of beer. Ray visits Jake and warns him to abide by his medical restrictions. When Ray is out of town, he calls his girlfriend Agatha to come over and visit Jake. Jake is very impressed with the well-spoken and attractive Agatha. Jake thinks about the idea of being with only one woman, and thinks of the women in his family and of the long lost brown woman that he was attracted to so much.

The landlady does not come, so Jake goes out to Uncle Doc's saloon. There he meets Billy Biasse, who urges Jake to drink up plenty of hard liquor at his expense. Billy tells Jake that it is obvious that Rose from the Congo club misses Jake tremendously. After a few drinks, Jake feels a sharp pain and collapses. Instead of an ambulance, Jake has Billy and another fellow help him up and walk him to his room nearby. Jake's landlady has been at a fried chicken dinner while Jake is gone. There she drinks plenty of gin



and when she returns Jake is out. She breaks a dish by accident and thinks that it is a bad omen. When Jake comes in, held standing by two men, she sees that the omen is concerning Jake.

Chapters XIII and XIV Analysis

In chapter thirteen, Ray complains that he has a girlfriend and no need of other girls, but Jake is always looking for more fun. Although the women at such parties are pretty, Ray cannot stand talking to them. At the house, Jake and Madame Laura joke that Ray may be a virgin. This is a thing, where any man that will not sleep with women at random is viewed as being weird. Ray is not strange, but he does not believe in free love. Couples grab each other in the corner and Ray thinks that everyone is drunk. One man is playing around with two women at the same time. Ray feels sad and cannot get into the atmosphere of easy pleasure.

Jake does not understand Ray's point of view, as he reflects on how he enjoyed being with Madame Laura. Jake explains to Ray that Madame Laura's place is not really a house of prostitution. Some of the women there end up prostituting themselves for cash, but others just go there to be social. Jake calls this the black way of doing things, as opposed to the straight whorehouses that he saw when he was in France. Jake enjoys the party life and all its variations, while Ray sort of envies him for being so relaxed about it. Still, Jake knows that he is missing the feeling of being in love, like he felt briefly with his long lost brown woman.

In chapter fourteen, Jake is sick, but he is too wild to obey his doctor's instructions. Jake is drinking beer, and then he goes out to drink more. Jake claims that medical restrictions are only for intellectuals, much to Ray's dismay, and soon Jake will bear the consequences of his behavior. When Ray is gone, his girlfriend Agatha comes over and is a pretty and well-spoken brown woman. Jake now sees why Ray can reject the easy women at places like Madame Laura's. Jake wonders if his sister in Virginia turned out like Agatha. When she leaves, Jake reflects on how much Agatha obviously loves Ray. Jake is getting tired of bragging about all his conquests to his buddies. He wonders if he were with his long lost brown, would she be nice to him and pamper him.

When Jake goes out to the bar and sees Billy the Wolf, he loves the gossip with his friend and starts drinking. Jake hears how Rose is heartbroken that he is gone, but obviously thinks it is a laughing matter. Rose sang a song there about her man who went away and broke down and cried. Jake loves the gossip and drinks more and more alcohol. When Jake collapses, he finds out that medical restrictions are a very serious business for him. Jake is beginning to learn that being a wild man in life and love has real consequences.



Chapters XV and XVI

Chapters XV and XVI Summary

In chapter fifteen, one of the few Negro doctors in Harlem is called and comes to treat Jake. Jake is told in the strongest terms by the doctor to stop drinking. Ray visits after his railroad run and is upset that Jake is sick again. He tells Jake that he met Madame Laurie and gave her Jake's address. Jake normally never gives out his address to his girlfriends. Then, Ray suggests that Jake move into a room in Ray's building. The room is cheap and has steam heat, and Jake plans to move there as soon as possible.

Ray is still agitated because he is thinking of a turn to the worse in events in his native Haiti. Under the surface, Ray is suffering. The chaos of the present is destroying Ray's hopes and dreams. Perhaps he cannot continue his studies and education ever. Ray thinks of the books by his favorite authors, like James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence. Ray is stuck in the working class world of Harlem, filled with people like Jake who are not conscious of their fate. Jake goes wild in the dens of pleasure and then cannot control himself, even when his health is being destroyed.

In chapter sixteen, Madame Laura, Jake's Philadelphia girlfriend, writes a letter to Jake that is brought by Billy to Jake at his new address. In it, Laura promises to visit Jake in New York, where he is resting from his illness. After consulting with Billy, Jake decides to send Madame Laura a postcard, giving his current address as where his former woman, Rose from the Congo cabaret lives. There ends up being a near fight between the two women when Madame Laura visits Congo Rose. The news gets back to Jake through Rose's dancing partner and then to Billy Biasse. When Billy next visits Jake, he is with the Yaller Prince, the same attractive yellow-skinned man who once brought Jake and Zeddy down to Ginhead Susy's party. Yaller Prince and Jake talk about women and old friends. Ray also comes to visit, along with a friend named James Grant.

As soon as Billy and Yaller leave, Ray and James discuss that Yaller is obviously a pimp. Jake insists that Yaller is a good guy. Jake defends Yaller, because women that want to pay for men, and even ending up working as prostitutes for them is just one very common phenomenon in Harlem. Ray intervenes, saying that though being a pimp may sound awful, there are pimps and criminals among all ethnic groups and nations. Ray points out to James that part of the problem is the false ideals of so-called proper education. People like James may want to be civilized, but civilization itself is in the process of rotting, according to Ray. Ray then recalls the story of a pimp who was very human and who felt love and pain.

Chapters XV and XVI Analysis

In chapter fifteen, Jake laughs because now everyone is asking him to stop drinking. Ray reiterates that Jake must do his best to get well. Ray talks of several other railroad



men who have recently become sick because of their wild lifestyle. Ray also has his own troubles, as the situation in Haiti continues to deteriorate. Ray thinks about all the novels he read when he was a boy. His world is also impacted by the post-World War I situation and the Russian Revolution. For Ray, it is the end of an era of secure existence. Now, this world seems dead to him, with the exception of the late Russian works of authors like Tolstoy and Chekhov. Ray feels isolated and naked, though this does not frighten him.

In chapter sixteen, Madame Laura wants to visit Jake because he is sick. Jake will not allow this and sabotages it with the prank of this chapter. Madame Laura makes the trip to New York, and after a heavy day of exclusive shopping, shows up at the front door of Rose's building. Of course Rose is not willing to admit that she has not seen Jake in ages, and claims that Jake, or his full name Jacob Brown, is still her man. This causes a near cat-fight between the two women, until Madame Laura sensibly leaves the building. Rose amplifies the story of the confrontation, claiming to have scratched Madame Laura's face. Again, Rose's desire for the dramatic and violent is shown.

The character Yaller Prince returns, but this time he is not only described as attractive, but also as a pimp. Yaller Prince is the epitome of a Harlem black man living the sweet life, having three women support him. In reality, he is a kind of a pimp, despite all the attempts to camouflage this. Ray is also visiting Jake, along with his fellow railroad car worker and intellectual, James Grant. Ray and Jake discuss the hardships of working in the dining car on the railroad, and at this point Yaller and Billy leave. Ray and James are actually opposite of, and antagonistic to Billy and Yaller. Billy is a gambler and Yaller is a pimp, though like Ray, they are both friends of Jake. Unlike most of the book, the two worlds of Jake are contrasted in a direct way.



Chapters XVII and XVIII

Chapters XVII and XVIII Summary

Chapter seventeen shows Ray, new in New York and not able to pay for his room, but he gets a bed in a room with other male lodgers. At this point, the landlady Ma Lawton moves out of her big room and gives the big room to a couple, Jerco Jones and Ms. Rosalind Whicher. The woman is tall with smooth skin and in the winter is always wearing a mink coat. The couple seems to have a lot of money and takes Ray out to eat. Ray gets a job at the free-lunch counter in the saloon under Ma Lawton's apartment. Then Jerco and the white man are joined by Rosalind, later going up to their room. The implication is that Jerco is Rosalind's pimp. The two elevator men that sleep in the same room as Ray start to get upset and threaten to Ma Lawton that they are going to move out because of strange sounds from Jerco and Rosalind's room.

Suddenly, Rosalind gets very sick, and at this time Jerco and Rosalind run out of money. Jerco refuses to pawn Rosalind's mink coat and ends up pawning his watch and chain in order to get money for a Jewish doctor. Still, Rosalind does not respond to medical treatment and continues to get sicker. Jerco is moping, totally hopeless at the saloon, and then Ma Lawton announces that Rosalind is dead. Jerco is totally paralyzed and cannot even get himself to sell Rosalind's coat to get a decent funeral. The next morning, Ma Lawton runs to Ray and complains that someone is locked in the bathroom. Ray breaks in and finds that Jerco has cut his throat and his blood is dripping down the hallway.

In chapter eighteen, Ray and Grant have had it with working on the railroad and have signed up to be on the crew of a freighter going around the world. This also gives Ray a chance to escape his girlfriend Agatha. Ray refuses to settle down and raise a family in Harlem. He is too sensitive to live a regular life. Ray also is sensitive to the music called the blues. He wonders why it is so difficult for white people to understand blacks, even after five hundred years of contact. Ray feels bad about running away from Harlem, and Jake does his best to make him change his mind. Jake reminds Ray how messy a kitchen can be and how on a ship such a job means dealing with garbage as well. Billy runs a gambling house and is Jake's good friend, also paying for the going away party for Ray. Jake likes to gamble, but avoids becoming a hopeless addict, and it is also appreciated that Billy sometimes gambles at his own gambling house.

The men drink gin and enjoy Aunt Hattie's fine fried chicken. Aunt Hattie misses Jake and gives him the best piece of chicken. Jake warns Ray that it is a hard life working on a ship, and sooner or later you have to return to life on land. Jake likes Ray, and in a way envies him for being educated. In turn, Ray feels angst in that he is educated but has no place really to apply his book learning. Ray envies Jake for being happy and largely content with his lot. He also admires Jake's love of life and times of uncontrolled savagery. The men go celebrating at a few more bars before Ray signs up as a cabin boy on a ship the next day.



Chapters XVII and XVIII Analysis

Chapter seventeen is a story told by Ray in the first person. He is first trying to get a job in New York and he could not even pay the rent for a room. His landlady let him have a cot in a room where other men sleep. Ray only makes tips, but at least he gets two good meals a day. At this time, Jerco and Rosalind have plenty of money, and when they go to eat lunch at the saloon where Ray works, they give him a one-dollar tip. Ray starts to figure out what is going on one day when Jerco brings a white man to the family room of the saloon. The way that the couple gets money is that Jerco sells Rosalind as a prostitute. There are strange noises coming from the couple's room, undoubtedly sexual noises. Jerco seems like a nice and quiet man, but it is said in the saloon that he is a street fighter and he has a scar on his hand. Of course, a pimp's main job is to defend his girls from being attacked by customers and others. When Rosalind becomes ill, all of Jerco's money disappears. Jerco pawns more of his possessions, and is overcome with despair. He is told that he has to get a job, but insists that he is not able to work. Physically he can work, but Jerco is bound to Rosalind in a total way, leading to his suicide after her death.

In chapter eighteen, Ray has been with Agatha for a while and is at the stage where he would marry her and have children. Ray refuses to be chained down to family life and therefore is making his escape. Ray is seeking his escape by a hard job on a ship because he fears a settled job like that of a clerk or bank teller, where he sits in a cage all day. Ray is too tense and sensitive to allow himself to be limited to such a life. Ray is an educated black, but in his life he is made to feel like a misfit. His education cannot be used by him, and only makes him feel bad about the cultural level of people like Jake.



Chapter XIX

Chapter XIX Summary

In chapter nineteen, it is spring in Harlem and Jake looks at pretty brown women and at children playing. Jake walks from Harlem over the bridge to the Bronx. There he sees a park where couples hold hands and dandelions grow wild amid the grass. Jake thinks of spring and love and all the girlfriends he has had since his adolescence, including the long lost brown woman.

On another day in Harlem, Jake and Billy Biasse (the Wolf) walk out of a salon and see their old friend Yaller Prince, who is confronted by a brown woman and black man. The woman used to be a prostitute under the control of Yaller. Yaller, who is a pimp, dropped her in favor of another woman, and now she wants her revenge. She eggs on the other man, Obadiah, to assault Yaller, focusing on Yaller's handsome face. Yaller trips and then Obadiah smashes him in the face with a bottle. Yaller is beat up until a policeman approaches, and an ambulance has to be called.

Billy comments that Yaller's mistake was to be in a dangerous business such as being a pimp without having a gun on him. Jake comments that men fight over women in Europe too. Billy insists that Harlem is so crowded that it is particularly dangerous and thinks that Jake is also making a mistake to not have a gun. Billy tells the story of a leftist educated black who was assaulted on the street for no reason, and how Billy defended the man. So the next day, Jake is out in his American suit with a gun in his pants pocket. Jake thinks about the superiority of the cut of English clothes, but likes the pockets in his American suit and thinks that they are better than French clothes. Jake looks at the women passing him in all sorts of colors and different styles and quality of dress.

Jake stops off at Aunt Hattie's eating place and hears songs sung by Billy Biasse and longshoremen. One bunch sings about a girl back in the South and who is seeing her now. Another one sings about a black sailor who drowned. Jake tries to sing a sea chanty and does his best, but forgets most of the words. Jake feels lonesome and talks with Billy about going to a club. They settle on the Sheba Palace, a large place where Negroes go to dance and hear jazz. The place is decorated in bright gold and green, and people are drinking, flirting and having fun.

A popular song starts with the refrain of, Tell me papa, ise (I am) your mama. There is a bit of racial rivalry in the words, with the brown gal telling the Negro man to stay away from the yellowish girl. Still, people are not offended and scream out the refrain along with the band. Jake is dancing with a yellowish girl, when he looks up and sees his long lost brown woman on the balcony. Jake abandons his dancing partner and runs up to the brown woman, who is alone. The woman knocks over a glass of whiskey, but is happy to see Jake too, calling him her heartbreaking daddy. She tells him they have to leave, because she is with another man that night. Jake explains that he never came



back to her apartment that day long ago because he forgot where she lived. Now, the reunited couple runs outside.

Chapter XIX Analysis

Spring is a time of rebirth for Jake, who apparently is in better health, although he has not returned to his railroad job. Jake thinks of love, and of being lonely. He only dreams of the long lost brown woman that he met when he returned from Europe. Love is beautiful, but it also has a dark side. Yaller Prince has manipulated the love of women to turn them into prostitutes, and now one of them is getting her revenge. She is ironically, mainly angry for losing Yaller's favor. Yaller is beaten badly, and Jake is told by Billy the Wolf that Jake must have a gun. This is important to the book, as Jake will soon confront a jealous lover himself. Soon, Jake is out in his suit, with his gun in his pocket. It is not that he is nervous that he may shoot someone. Jake had military training so knows how to shoot a gun. Jake simply has not thought it necessary before to buy a gun.

At this point, when Jake is slowing down and recovering from his illness, it is ironic that he meets again his lost love. It seems that Jake is not going to clubs and cabarets often at this point. Jake is lucky to meet the woman again, who is snatched away from her lover, then away at the men's room. The identity of this lover and problems with him begin to be foreshadowed when Felice, the long love of Jake has to go back to the former lover's apartment to get her things.



Chapter XX

Chapter XX Summary

In chapter twenty, Jake and the brown woman are walking by a white Presbyterian church that is a symbol of a beautiful block that is still inhabited by whites. The two kiss and the woman explains that she waited for Jake to come back but then went down to Palm Beach for work. The woman elaborates that she is not a prostitute, since when she likes a man she does not take money from him and ends up giving him money. Otherwise, she rejects men she does not like. Jake learns that the woman's name is Felice, and they go together to Jake's room. Felice admires the well-kept room and Jake tells Felice about his friend Ray and about being sick for a while. They embrace, but then Felice yells that she forgot her bag. Felice insists she has to go to where she lived with her boyfriend until now and get her things. The boyfriend is still out drinking, Felice guesses. Jake ends up going with her to a nearby corner and waiting for her.

Felice wants to avoid getting into a fight with her boyfriend because she is rejecting him for Jake. She recalls a woman from Colon and one from Jamaica that strip naked in a building courtyard and fight over the right to a certain man. The Colon laundress wants her man back from the smaller Jamaican girl. The Jamaican girl is faster and beats up the other woman, but they all get dressed before the cops arrive. In the meantime, it is a great spectacle for the people in the building. Felice fears that her boyfriend will end up fighting Jake with disastrous results.

Jake is not afraid of a fight, but anxiously waits for the long lost Felice to return. When she comes back, they go and buy food from a deli and other goodies. Then Felice yells that she still has left a special necklace that she got from her grandmother in her old apartment. Jake calms her down and she does not go for it. For a week, the couple settles down and enjoys each other. Felice cooks meals for Jake, and they go to Van Cortlandt Park and to the Negro Picture Theater.

Chapter XX Analysis

The author runs a bit of a joke with the reader, in that Jake is afraid that he will lose the long-lost brown woman, Felice a second time. This is why Jake is so concerned when Felice goes back to her former lover's apartment to get her things. Jake is very happy to be reunited with this woman, but still has some doubts. Since she asked money from him for their first sexual experience, is she a prostitute? Many women Jake knows are part-time prostitutes. Felice explains that she is not a prostitute, and apparently she was playing a game with Jake when she had asked him for money before they went to bed.

There is tension in this chapter because Felice is focused on some type of fight developing if Jake meets her former lover. This can be dangerous between women fighting over a man, but often is deadly between men fighting over a woman. Felice

stays with Jake and does not get her good luck necklace, but it is assumed that sooner or later she will go back to the lover's apartment and get her necklace.



Chapter XXI

Chapter XXI Summary

In chapter twenty-one, Jake and Felice celebrate Saturday night after being together for a week. They go to a nice restaurant, see a movie in so-called Nigger Heaven and go to a cabaret. This is a new cabaret with a distinguished black and white clientele. The cabaret is gaudy with bright decorations, and Felice walks in wearing an elegant orange dress. She and Jake start to dance, and then a fine singer sings a melancholy blues. He sings about not letting someone break his heart. Billy Biasse is also there and buys some champagne for Jake and Felice. Jake meets other friends from the railroad.

Then Jake hears Felice screaming and runs to see his old friend Zeddy grabbing Felice and calling her his woman. Jake stops Zeddy and declares that he is now Felice's new man. Zeddy takes out a knife and prepares to attack Jake, but is stopped cold when Jake pulls out a gun. Zeddy feels defeated, but resentfully declares to a crowd that Jake deserted the army because he feared to fight the Germans and then leaves. Jake meets Felice again at his building. Both are shaken, but glad that Jake had the gun and was not hurt. Felice thinks that Jake should leave Harlem, but she wants to be with him too. Felice suggests that they go to Chicago.

Suddenly, Zeddy appears, but apologizes for his threat to kill Jake. Still, Jake and Felice decide that to be safe they ought to go to Chicago. The two pack their suitcases, and Felice says they should visit the Baltimore cabaret one more time. It was shut down, but now it is open again. At the end of the night, Jake panics because Felice is gone again. Soon, he sees her again outside, because she had only made a short trip to Zeddy's to grab her good luck charm.

Chapter XXI Analysis

When the couple celebrates their week together, they go to a movie theater and sit in so-called Nigger Heaven. Since this is in a downtown theater, it can be assumed that Negroes must sit in a segregated section in such theaters. The author puts in this detail to remind readers that segregation is something that exists in New York City, not just in the southern United States. After, this the couple returns to their familiar territory in Harlem. Felice decides to go to a new cabaret, known for its friendly service to blacks and whites. It has a bar where men can go for a drink and talk away from the women. Prominent people such as Madame Mulberry, a wife of the proprietor of shows, and Mrs. Mauny Whitewing are there. Mrs. Whitewing is with a young man and is known to be scandalous in her behavior. A famous jazz conductor is there, soon to be assassinated elsewhere. There is tension because prohibition is about to outlaw alcohol sales. Prominent people are subject to violence and quickly rising and falling of their fortune.



Jake and his old buddies talk about Ray taking a job on a ship, and the demoted so-called rhinoceros chef. The men go off to the bar. The reader is not very surprised when another old friend of Jake, Zeddy shows up. The real shock is that Zeddy is Felice's former boyfriend. Jake is saved from injury or death by his gun, but is still publicly exposed as a military deserter. The time now is about three years after the end of the war, so this is still a live issue that can get Jake arrested.

Jake feels sick being involved in a fight over a woman. The incident fills Jake with sadness and reminds him of many other fights over women in Europe and Harlem and among white and black men. Jake goes home, and then Felice appears and asks if Jake is mad at her. They both realize that if Jake did not have the gun, Zeddy would have killed or maimed him.

Felice explains that she did not like Zeddy much, he had gained her favor by being very nice and buying her gifts after meeting her at a buffet flat. Felice's other concern is that people heard Zeddy denounce Jake as a military deserter. Jake explains that he got bored in France because no one from the unit got to fight Germans, they were just cargo hands. Felice adds that in any case the war was of no business for blacks to fight and it is easy to see that she wants to be on Jake's side.

Zeddy's sudden appearance is shocking, but he realizes that hurting Jake will not get Felice back to him. Zeddy promises not to go to the police against Jake as a deserter and leaves in peace, but still the plan is to go to Chicago until things quiet down. The couple go back to their old favorite cabaret, the Baltimore. The Baltimore looks great and Jake and Felice join the crowd of dancing jazz fans. They dance the night away, and then Jake finds that he was distracted or drugged, and is the last one in the club. Felice is not there anymore. To his relief as he walks out, Felice comes running up to Jake. Felice has gone to Zeddy's room and grabbed her good luck necklace that she now uses as a garter belt. Now she feels ready to go to Chicago, and the couple begins their journey.



Characters

Jake, Jake Brown

Jake is the main character of the story. Jake is a fairly young man who enlists in the US Army but deserts during World War I. He returns to his old haunts in Harlem, New York after the war. Jake is a tall and attractive black man who has lots of success with women. He could try to have a woman support him, but insists on working always. Even after Jake leaves Congo Rose, he has many lovers in towns along the railroad. Still, Jake yearns for a full-time lover such as the long-lost brown woman. Jake is not educated and is a manual worker, first as a longshoreman and later as a cook in a dining car. His attraction to the long-lost brown woman, Felice, is not based on intellectual qualities, but on special sensual effects that she creates in him. Jake lives a wild life that involves many women, much alcohol, and sometimes other drugs. Still, especially after his health problems, Jake yearns for a stable relationship with a woman, and for the chance to possibly raise a family.

Zeddy

Zeddy is Jake's friend that Jake knows from the US Army. There are some differences between them, since Zeddy did not like being a menial worker in the army, but did not dare desert as Jake did. Back in Harlem, while Jake works most of the time, Zeddy is often unemployed. This creates the attraction of Zeddy to Susy, who is unattractive but can cook well and support Zeddy financially. Still, Zeddy yearns to be free and to brag to his friends that he can do anything he wants. This makes him rebel against Susy and soon is thrown out of her place. Zeddy disappears from the story for a while and is reported to be living with a woman in Yonkers. Then, Zeddy suddenly reappears as the aggrieved lover of Felice. Zeddy wants to kill Jake with a knife when Jake stops him from grabbing Felice, and only Jake's gun stops this. Zeddy is still angry, and shouts out to the crowd that Jake is a deserter and allegedly was afraid to fight the Germans. Later, Zeddy comes back to apologize for these nasty remarks. Zeddy is a rough and uneducated character, without the idealism of Jake. Unlike Jake, Zeddy is happy to be a scab and to violate a strike.

Ray, the Haitian Waiter

Ray is the Haitian waiter that Jake meets while working in the dining car of the train. Ray is trapped in the United States because he was sent here to be educated at Howard University in Washington DC. After Haiti is invaded during the war by the United States, his family is unable to support him and he is forced to get a job on the railroad. Ray is saddened by the large number of American blacks that are uneducated and unable to think about the rest of the world. Ray is unable to lose himself with the parties and easy women that Jake enjoys. Ray gets a steady girlfriend, Agatha, but also breaks



up with her. He decides to go out to sea working on a ship rather than be tied down to a wife and family. In a sense, the author appears to identify himself with Ray, as a black intellectual who is unable to find his place in white society.

Rose, Congo Rose

Rose is the singer in the Congo cabaret. Rose is attracted to Jake and takes her to live with her and be her man. Rose also attracts men at her job as a singer, and lives a free life. Rose takes some of these men as lovers. Jake seems to not be disturbed by this, but eventually this causes the events leading to Jake leaving Rose.

Billy Biasse, Billy the Wolf

Billy Biasse runs a gambling house. He is known as the lone wolf, because he has no steady girlfriend. Indeed, he sits with the pretty boy dancer at the Congo, and there is some question about his personal preferences. Still, Billy is a tough guy who carries a gun. He is Jake's friend because he does some gambling himself at his own gambling house and is less totally business than other such men.

Susy, Ginhead Susy

Susy is a woman who lives on Myrtle Avenue in Brooklyn and holds gin parties. She is a dark black and heavy woman who has a complex around being attracted to light-skinned men. Susy for some odd reason makes an exception in the case of making Zeddy her man for a while.

Miss Curdy

Miss Curdy is Ginhead Susy's friend and sidekick. Miss Curdy also has many lovers and romances, like Susy. Miss Curdy is a couple with Strawberry Lips for a while.

Yaller Prince

Yaller Prince is a handsome, light-skinned black, who turns out to be a pimp. Yaller is the one who first takes Jake and Zeddy down to Susy's gin parties. Yaller later gets in trouble when one of the girls who works for him rebels against him and has another man assault him in the face with a bottle.

Felice, the Long Lost Brown Woman

Felice is the name of the long-lost brown woman that Jake first meets when returning to Harlem. Jake loses her address so she goes to work in Palm Beach. Felice is capable



at playing at being a prostitute, but is actually not one. Felice is attracted to Zeddy for a while, due to his lavish gifts, but quickly runs to Jake when she sees him.

The Chef

The Chef is the nasty chef on Jake's dining car. The Chef gets into a long-standing feud with the light-skinned pantryman on his dining car for calling the pantryman a bastard-begotten dime-snatcher. Later, the chef is made to have an hysterical fit in front of the steward and is demoted.

The Pantryman

The Pantryman, or first waiter, is the antagonist to the chef, who finally arranges to get the chef demoted. The pantryman waits a long time to get the chance to set up the chef for a fall.

Strawberry Lips

Strawberry Lips is a friend of Jake's and he also is the lover of Miss Curdy for a while. He is a dark-skinned black who has bright red lips, the source of his nickname.

Jerco, Jericho Jones

Jerco is the pimp of Miss Rosalind. Jerco loves Rosalind, but has no idea how to live his life other than as Rosalind's pimp. When Rosalind dies, Jerco kills himself.

Rosalind, Miss Rosalind Whitter

Rosalind is the companion and girl of Jerco, who actually works as a prostitute for him. She is tall and lovely, and wears a mink coat during the whole winter. Later, she gets sick and dies.

Madame Laura

Madame Laura is Jake's girlfriend in Philadelphia. Laura is a well-preserved middle-aged woman who runs a social house that is at least partly a speakeasy and house of prostitution.

Agatha

Agatha is Ray's girlfriend. She is an educated, kind and beautiful woman, who visits Jake when he is sick. Agatha would like to settle down with Ray and raise a family.



Nije Gridley

Nije Gridley runs a gambling house and also makes money by lending it at a very high interest rate. Unlike Billy the

Wolf, Nije is all business at his gambling house. Jake borrows money from Nije occasionally. Jake is not a friend of his, especially after Nije makes a confrontation with Zeddy over a debt, and Zeddy nearly stabs him.



Objects/Places

Harlem, Harlem NY

Harlem is the northern part of Manhattan in New York City. Harlem is Jake's adopted hometown. It is an urban area full of cabarets, gambling houses and buffet flats. Jake is eager to return to Harlem after being in Europe during the war.

The Congo

The Congo is the name of a cabaret in Harlem. At the Congo, Jake meets the singer Rose, who becomes his lover. The Congo does not admit curious white people and is known for its strongly African atmosphere.

The Baltimore

The Baltimore is a cabaret in Harlem, where Jake meets his beloved brown woman. This is a cabaret that is popular with both black and white people. For a long time it is closed due to the action of the vice squad.

Yallers, High Yallers, Octoroon, Quadroon

Yallers, high yallers, octoroons and quadroons are terms that refer to Negroes that are light-skinned. These people have lots of white ancestors. In the case of a quadroon, they are one-fourth black, and in the case of an octoroon, they are one-eighth black.

Susy's Parties at Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn

Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn is the location of Susy's house, where she has her gin parties. It can take up to an hour and a half to get to Harlem from Myrtle Avenue, if the subway train is running local. Susy's parties have mostly men attending, with lots of gin flowing and men playing cards.

The Dining Car, the Pennsylvania Railroad

Jake works in the dining car on the Pennsylvania Railroad. There he meets Ray and other people. Jake's train run goes from New York City to Philadelphia to Pittsburgh.



Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh is on the western end of the Pennsylvania Railroad and a stopover for the railroad men. There Jake and his crew stay in filthy, bedbug filled quarters. There is also much club life there, as well as one place where Jake gets some opium.

Philly, or Philadelphia, the House on Fifteenth Street, Mada

Philly is a frequent stop on the railroad route where Jake works. There Jake visits Madame Laura's house on fifteenth street. Madame Laura's house has a social, near respectable atmosphere, but quite a bit of prostitution goes on there as well.

Felice's Necklace

Felice's necklace is a leathery sort of necklace that Felice inherited from her grandma. Now, she wears it as sort of a garter belt on her leg. Felice goes back a second time to Zeddy's apartment to retrieve this necklace.

Buffet Flats

Buffet flats are apartments that have been transformed into small nightclubs. Jake goes to several of these to eat, drink liquor, and meet women.

Madame Suarez's Place

Madame Suarez's place is an especially luxurious buffet flat. Many attractive and well-dressed people go here, and Jake is able to go there while he is living with Congo Rose. It must be quite large because there is a piano playing here and dancing going on. This illegal speakeasy is shut down by a raid of the vice squad.

Billy's Gift

Billy Biasse, the Wolf gives Jake a gun after they both see their old acquaintance Yaller Prince badly beaten with a bottle. The gun saves Jake from death or serious injury, when Jake can use it to stop Zeddy's attack with a knife.

The Railroad Dining Car

The railroad dining car is an interesting place for a confrontation of the races. On one side, white travelers are quickly served excellent meals by polite waiters. In the kitchen,



cooks under a chef work hard to produce this great food under pressure and in a tight space.

Madame Laura's Place

Madame Laura's Place in Philadelphia is surprising to Ray. At first it looks like a homey place for people to meet and be social. Only under close observation is it clear what is going on with prostitution and too much drinking. The key thing to Ray is when the young son of Laura goes to her and drinks champagne.



Themes

The Power of Love

Jake is a young man who is attractive to many women, but he would like to have one special woman. This is difficult because it is easy for Jake to get women as sexual partners that he really does not care for. Soon after the long-lost brown woman cannot be found, Jake makes a quick connection to Congo Rose. This is ironic because Zeddy has been trying to attract Rose, singer at the Congo, for months. In a sense, this may be the root of the resentment that Zeddy holds towards Jake. Jake is successful in love and could be supported by a businesswoman like Rose with ease. In fact, what makes Rose mad at Jake is that he insists on working and will not take her money.

Jake decides to leave Rose, and then he is on the move on the railroad, at his new dining room car job. In this period of his life, Jake has no attachment to women and changes his woman with every town that he is in. Jake brags how fine Madame Laura is, but knows that she is a woman of easy virtue. If she is not a prostitute, she is still running a house that serves as a base for prostitutes. This impacts Jake's soul and helps to make him sick, because he drinks liquor too much. Jake envies Ray for having a relationship with a woman who loves Ray for himself. When the long-lost brown woman appears, Jake seizes this opportunity for happiness. He is nervous that the brown woman, Felice, is just another loose woman. Still, Jake does not succeed in his new love without sacrifice. He unexpectedly has to confront Zeddy, and is saved from injury only because he has a gun.

The Extent of Racial Prejudice

Racial prejudice is found in many places, including unexpected ones in this novel. Jake resents being called a darky in Europe, but readily deserts the army and gets to England with the help of the English sailor calling him this. In London's East End, Jake lives with a white woman, but then is shocked to find race riots going on in his neighborhood. Back in New York, Jake works as a longshoreman, but refuses to join a union. He finds out that the New York union gets jobs only for whites. Jake is still a man of principle and will not become a scab, but cannot go further with the union people.

The big revelation for the general reader is the extent of color prejudice within the black community itself. Light-skinned blacks are envied because many can pass as whites, especially women with lots of make-up. On the train, waiters that are light-skinned blacks only associate with other light-skinned blacks, or so-called yallars. Yet, this is a two-edge sword. A dark skin promises a pure racial line, while a light-skin implies illicit relations with white people, usually white men. Many white men take advantage of black women and leave them with children that are only the responsibility of women. Thus, the cook calls the pantryman on the train a bastard-begotten dime-snatcher. The insult hits home because indeed the pantryman's father was a white man who abandoned the



pantryman's mother. Other characters, such as Ginhead Susy and Miss Curdy also have deep-seated complexes over whether blacks are light or dark.

The Development of the Human Spirit

Jake is an uneducated black man, but is presented as a man with some principles. He is tall and attractive, and easily can get a woman able to support him. Yet, Jake insists on working, even when Congo Rose offers to pay all his bills. Likewise, Jake refuses to take a job once he realizes that it involves union-busting and being a scab. This is a very controversial stance. Zeddy argues that since he is a victim of prejudice and wants to survive, he should be entitled to do anything to make money. This is a position that Jake cannot accept, and it foreshadows the differences between Jake and Zeddy.

Ray represents a counterpoint to the wild and natural life of uneducated people like Jake and Zeddy. Ray's biggest impression on Jake is when he talks about the ancient black civilizations of Africa and the successful fight of Toussaint L'Overture and the people of Haiti for independence. In a way, Ray is the voice of the author in his conversation with less educated fellow blacks. It is not enough to be educated, because one could be brainwashed in this way in the decadent principles of a failing civilization, without having an alternative. This is why Ray does not see himself as ready to settle down with his girlfriend Agatha and raise a family. He feels compelled to wander until he can get use his intellect in a positive way, or else he may continue to wander the rest of his life.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is that of third-person narrative, with an emphasis on the viewpoints and feelings of a young black worker, Jake. There is an all seeing narrator who can speak about the internal condition and thoughts of all the characters. In between this overall scheme there are also sections of first person point of view. For example, Ray describes in the chapter "He Also Loved" his own experience meeting the couple Jerco and Rosalind. Jake is the protagonist in the novel, and the novel is upbeat when things are going well for him, and down when they are not. Ray is the voice of the black intellectual who is often an oppressed person, but at least has an idea why he is oppressed. Ray is trying to discover theories and find ideas to change the situation and better the lot of the black community. He relates to the black community in Harlem, but especially to the downtrodden people of Haiti. Haiti is at this time occupied by US troops, but Ray hopes that they will soon leave the island. In contrast to Ray or even Jake, people like Billy the Wolf, Zeddy, Yaller Prince, Susy, and so on, seem to have little recognition of anything beyond their personal desires. They are uneducated people, but also have their own standards. For example Susy may be for free love and sex out of wedlock, but she is not going to let Zeddy fool around with other women while enjoying her financial backing.

Setting

The primary setting for the novel is Harlem New York, though it begins with Jake returning home in Europe and thinking back to his experiences in Europe. In Harlem, part of the setting is in apartments that are often broken up into rooming houses. Single men often live in one room, sometimes comfortable and sometimes not. Different people share kitchens and bathrooms. Other apartments are large and are the place for private parties, like Ginhead Susy's place on Myrtle Avenue in Brooklyn. Larger apartments or small buildings are turned into small clubs and eating places called buffet flats. In the more comfortable ones, there is a piano player and eating, dancing, drinking and gambling going on at the same time. Finally, a larger and more public venue is the cabarets such as the Baltimore and the Congo cabaret. Here flashy decorations, high ceilings with balconies, and central stages enable a serious musical, dance or theatrical exhibition to take place.

Far from the cabarets of Harlem, Jake works on the Pennsylvania Railroad. On the one hand, the dining car is organized to give white passengers the best possible meal they can get on the moving train. On the other, black cooks and waiters work under difficult and tight conditions to produce this food and get it to the passengers. These railroad men have to endure filthy overnight conditions, like in the bedbug infested quarters at Pittsburgh. Still, they get to enjoy clubs and places to drink liquor and sometimes use other drugs.



Language and Meaning

All of the dialogue is rendered in American Negro slang, except for that of Ray and other educated characters. Some of the black characters speak differently because they are from the Caribbean. This can add some difficulty in understanding the dialogue. The reader has to make the effort to sound out the slang or dialect in their head and it is usually soon clear what it means. Other than this difficulty, the language is at the level of an educated high school graduate. For people who know Harlem and New York City, the description of these places is occasionally vivid and recognizable. Many of the descriptions of cabarets are quite vivid, but very few if any of these businesses still exist.

Another dimension of the book is to convey the feeling of jazz music and the words to jazz songs. The author has the words of quite a few different songs written down, and attempts to give to the reader the feeling of excitement associated with these songs. This is difficult, but there is some sense that there is a whole lot more to the lines such as, tell me papa, ise your mama. These are lines sung to a syncopated beat and a jazzy melody, and are the backdrop to the love and entertainment of Harlem blacks.

Structure

The book is divided into three parts and twenty-one chapters. The first part consists of nine chapters and 119 pages. In this part, Jake returns from Europe on a ship, thinking back to his volunteering for the army and why he deserted. He gets to live in London before realizing that he must go home to Harlem. Jake meets his beloved brown woman, but loses her after one night. He gets to live with Congo Rose and involve himself in the Harlem entertainment scene. Finally, he tires of Rose and leaves her. Jake's hopes and desires are presented to the reader.

The Second Part is nine chapters and 152 pages. Jake becomes a third cook in a dining car on the railroad. He becomes friends with the young intellectual Ray, and learns something about the real history of black people and his identity as a human being. In the meantime, Jake becomes run down and finally becomes ill. Ray is Jake's faithful friend, but Ray decides he cannot settle down with his girlfriend, and leaves Harlem on a ship.

The Third Part is only three chapters and sixty-one pages, where Jake is gradually recovering his health. Jake sees his old friend Yaller Prince get smashed in the face, and Jake's friend Billy gets Jake to take a gun for self-defense. Soon after, the lonely Jake is going back to a cabaret when he again sees the long-lost brown woman. Here Jake has his desires fulfilled, but due to his confrontation with Zeddy, Jake must decide to leave his cherished Harlem. Thus, Jake also must make a sacrifice in order to grow.



Quotes

"He was working on a Brooklyn pier, with a score of men under him. He was a little boss and a very good friend of the big boss, who was Irish. Jake thought he would like to have a crack at the Germans... And he enlisted." Chap. 1, p. 4

"A piece of paper was pinned to it on which was scrawled in pencil: 'Just a little gift from a baby girl to a honey boy!'" Chap. 2, p. 16

"'But you must keep it in the dark, buddy,' Zeddy cautioned. 'Don't go shooting off your mouth too free. Gov'mant still smoking out deserters and draft dodgers.'" Chap. 3, p. 22

"'High yallers' were scarce there. Except for such sweetmen that lived off the low-down dark trade." Chap. 4, p. 30

"'Well pardner,' Jake said, 'I've done worked through a tur'ble assortment o' jobs in mah lifetime, but I ain't nevah yet scabbed it on any man.'" Chap. 5, p. 45

"A yellow youngster had married her when she was fifteen and left her before she was eighteen. Since then she had lived with a yellow complex at the core of her heart." Chap. 6, p. 57

"She may be fat and ugly as a turkey, thought Jake, but her eats am sure beautiful." Chap. 7, p. 78

"'Lesh git furthest away from this low-down vice hole,' she said. 'Leave that plug-ugly nigger theah. I ain't got no more use foh him nohow.'" Chap. 7, p. 98

"To the two white girls that were also taken in the raid the judge remarked that it was a pity he had no power to order them whipped." Chap. 8, p. 110

"'I don't like hitting no womens,' returned Jake's hard-breathing muffled voice." Chap. 9, p. 118

"For the first time he heard the name Toussaint L'Overture, the black slave and leader of the Haytian slaves." Chap. 10, p. 132

"Taboos and terrors and penalties were transformed into new pagan delights, orgies of Orient-blue carnival, of rare flowers and red fruits, cherubs and seraphs and fetishes and phalli and all the most-high gods..." Chap. 11, p. 158

"That 'bastard-begotten dime-snatcher' grew a cancer in the heart of the pantryman." Chap. 12, p. 169

"In that moment the pantryman made a lightning-bolt move; and shut down the little glass door between the pantry and the kitchen..." Chap. 12, p. 181



"She toasted: 'Flix, flaxy, fleasy, Make it good and easy, Flix for start and flax for snappy, Niggers and Irish will always be happy.'" Chap. 13, pp. 198-199

"Lay his curly head between her brown breasts and be fondled and be the spoiled child that every man loves sometimes to be when he is all alone with a woman." Chap. 14, p. 212

"But, despite of the general tumults and threats, the perfectly-organized national rages, the ineffectual patching of broken, and hectic rebuilding of shattered, things, he had perception enough to realize that he had lived over the end of an era." Chap. 15, p. 226

"'Good-hearted!' Grant sneered. 'A man's heart is cold dead when he has women doing that for him.'" Chap. 16, p. 240

"But the other elevator fellow said that one day in the tenderloin section he had run up against Rosalind and Jerco together with a petty officer of marines. And that just put the lid on anything favorable that could be said about them." Chap. 17, p. 253

"'Can't you like me just as well as you are?' asked Ray. 'I can't feel any difference at all. If I was famous as Jack Johnson and rich as Madame Walker I'd prefer to have you as my friend than — President Wilson.'" Chap. 18, p. 273

"'It ain't because Yaller was a pi... It coulda been me or anybody else.'" Chap. 19, p. 287

"Tell me, papa, Ise you' ma-ma, Yaller gal can't make you fall, For Ise got some loving pa-pa. Yaller gal ain't got atall." Chap. 19, p. 297

"With Madame Mulberry sat Maunie Whitewing with a dapper cocoa-brown youth by her side, who was very much pleased by his own person and the high circle to which it gained him admission." Chap. 21, p. 318

"'Why, le's go to Chicago, then. I hear it's a mahvelous place foh niggers. Chicago, honey.'" Chap. 21, p. 333



Topics for Discussion

Discuss Jake's trip to France and London, England. How does Jake end up in London's East End? Why does Jake decide to return to Harlem? Could he have had a good life in London?

Discuss Jake's obsession with the brown woman he meets at the Baltimore cabaret. What makes the so-called long-lost brown woman so special to Jake?

Discuss Jake's relationship to Rose. Is Jake ever in love with Rose? Is he just using her?

Discuss Jake and Zeddy's approach to women. Why does Zeddy view Jake as more successful with women? Why does Zeddy's relationship with Susy collapse?

Discuss the use of alcohol by Jake and his friends. Do they drink too much? How does alcohol affect Jake's health?

Discuss violence over sexual affairs. How does violence between women over men differ from violence between men over women? Is it the normal rivalry between men for the attentions of women?

Discuss racial prejudice in Harlem. Is Jake limited in his jobs and activities because he is black, or only because of his lack of education? Is Ray unable to use his education because he is black, or because he is a foreigner without support?

Discuss skin color prejudices within the black community. Why are light-skinned blacks sought after? Why are they shunned? How do these attitudes compare to those concerning dark-skinned blacks, by blacks?

Discuss the chef on the dining car on the railroad. The chef deliberately avoids foods that blacks often are fond of. What is the chef trying to prove? What does the chef's desire for light-skinned black women say about him?