

The Chocolate Money Study Guide

The Chocolate Money by Ashley Prentice Norton

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Plot Summary

The Chocolate Money is a novel by author Ashley Prentice Norton. In this novel, Bettina Ballentyne is the only child of a chocolate heiress, Tabitha "Babs" Ballentyne, of Ballentyne Chocolate. Babs is not a typical mother. From a young age, Babs talks to and treats Bettina as if she is an adult. While in some respects, this prepares Bettina for the ups and downs that life has to offer, on the other hand, Bettina doesn't have a loving and caring mother who emotionally cares for her just as much as she provides for her in material items.

The novel follows Bettina from the time she is about ten years old until she turns twenty-six. As the story unfolds, Bettina fits into her mother's social life when, where, and how Babs chooses for Bettina to be there. At fifteen, Bettina starts to spend time with other girls her age when she starts to attend boarding school in New Hampshire. Not only does Bettina get herself into a situation where the other kids don't know how wealthy her family is, but she ends up getting caught having sex with the son of one of her mother's former lovers.

By the end of the novel, Babs has been hit and killed by a car, leaving Bettina with millions of dollars. In spite of now taking her place as the chocolate heiress, Bettina still longs for the simple things in life—a job and people in her life she loves and who love her back.



Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

It's the summer of 1978 and Bettina Ballentyne is in the apartment with her mother, Babs Ballentyne, and Babs's friend, Andie. Bettina is an only child, she's ten years old and she is reading the subscription of Tiger Beat her mother got her for her birthday. When Babs sends Bettina out of the room, Bettina decides to play on the spiral staircase that goes from her mother's room down into the living room.

In the process, Bettina comes across her mother's scrapbook scissors. Bettina presses the cold blades on her cheek. As she is opening and closing the scissors, she accidentally cuts some of her own hair. Bettina tries to cut more of her hair to fix it. When Bettina goes back into the kitchen, Babs asks her what she did to her hair. Babs calls her hair stylist to see if he can fix it because they have their pictures for their holiday card the following day.

Babs summons Bettina's nanny, Stacey, to take Bettina to the salon, even though it is Stacey's day off. When Stacey and Bettina arrive at the salon, they end up having to wait all afternoon for Geoff to finish with his other clients. Geoff ends up cutting off almost all of Bettina's hair and Stacey laughs at Bettina when she sees the results of the haircut.

Babs loves the haircut and calls Geoff to tell him. Bettina can't help but wonder if Babs loves the do so much because Bettina is maimed by it.

In February 1979, Bettina meets Mack. He's her mother's boyfriend and the only man she ends up being with for more than a month. Bettina walks in on them talking and kissing after a charity function. Bettina overhears Mack talking about his wife. When he introduces himself to Bettina, he tells her to call him Mack.

Mack says he's known Babs since before they were eleven. He says that he and his wife bought the house Babs grew up in. Later that night, Babs wakes Bettina up and tells her not to flirt with her beau because it just makes Bettina look stupid. Bettina just nods.

Bettina says Babs had her tubes tied right after she was born. While the doctor didn't want to perform the procedure because Babs was young, Babs donated a million dollars to redo the maternity ward of the hospital, so the doctor performed the procedure.

Later in November, Mack and Babs get into a fight. Babs says it's because of a pearl necklace Mack bought for his wife, Mags. Babs says talking about the gift makes Mack lose his erection. Babs goes out to buy herself a huge pearl and diamond necklace. She tells Bettina that men should stick to floral arrangements if they can't afford to buy the right type of pearls.



The next morning, Bettina comes down to breakfast. Lily, the cook, tells Bettina Babs went to Paris with her friend, Tally, who replaced Andie. Bettina loves Lily and would choose her as another mother if she could. When Bettina asks when Babs will be back, Lily says she doesn't know. Bettina thinks about how relaxed everything and everyone is when Babs is on vacation.

Bettina goes into Babs's room to rub her hands on her expensive sheets and comforter. She falls asleep and Mack wakes her up. Mack asks where Babs is because she hasn't been returning his phone calls. Bettina says she was upset about the gift and shows him the necklace Babs bought and left behind.

Bettina asks to try on Mack's watch. She sees the inscription on the back and Mack says it was a wedding present from his wife. When Mack leaves, Bettina finds a quarter that must have fallen out of his pocket when he was sitting on the bed. She keeps it for six months until she loses it.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

Bettina mentions that Babs and Babs's cousin, Lucas, both have the chocolate money. Bettina also says that her grandparents died in a tragic boating accident before Bettina was born. This suggests that Babs and Lucas are so rich because they are heirs to a chocolate fortune. In Babs's case, since her parents are already dead, she received their fortune as well.

Babs seems to be very self-absorbed. This is what causes Bettina to cut her own hair to start. While it was subconscious, Bettina cuts off her hair to get Babs's attention. In Bettina's case, even negative attention is better than not having Babs's attention at all.

Babs is definitely not cut out to raise a child. She tells Bettina things that are inappropriate for children Bettina's age. For example, Babs tells Bettina that fags are men who take turns putting their penises into each other's butts. Babs also tells Bettina that Mack gave her a gift when he was about to have sex with Babs from behind.

Bettina longs for attention. She seeks attention from Babs and she even seeks attention from Mack.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

In December 1979, Bettina's class is working on invitations for the annual father's breakfast. When Ms. Henderson, the teacher, notices Bettina isn't working on her invite, Bettina explains that she doesn't have a father and her mother's never told her anything about her father. Ms. Henderson suggests Bettina invite her mother instead. Bettina decides not to tell Ms. Henderson her mother doesn't get up before noon, certainly not to have breakfast in a school cafeteria. When the teacher isn't looking, Bettina throws her invitation away.

When Bettina gets home from school, Babs asks about her day, which Bettina enjoys. Bettina tells Babs about what happened and asks about her father. Babs says they promised to keep his identity a secret. In a moment of compassion, Babs gives Bettina a silver coin that her father won at a Latin tournament in high school.

Bettina asks if Babs will go to the breakfast. Babs says no. Bettina asks if she can ask Mack, but Babs says no. Then, Babs suggests Bettina take Stacey. Stacey goes dressed in a hand-me-down dress from Babs. Ms. Henderson seems to feel sorry for Bettina when she sees Stacey there instead of one of Bettina's parents.

By January 1980, Mack comes to the apartment late at night and leaves early in the morning. Bettina sits at her bedroom door listening to Mack and Babs have sex all the way up the stairs and into her mother's bedroom. When Stacey and Lily aren't around, Babs tells Bettina vivid details about having sex. Babs says it is educational for Bettina.

By eleven, Bettina knows all about sex and has even read the Joy of Sex cover to cover. She's also masturbating in the bathtub because she sleeps better if she masturbates. If she doesn't masturbate, Bettina says she has nightmares instead.

After her bath, Bettina goes to her room. Lily always leaves her a Splush, which is a top-of-the-line Ballentyne chocolate on her pillow. She never eats it though because Babs forbids Bettina to eat anything that can make her fat. Bettina hurls the chocolates out her window each night, but leaves the purple foil balled up on her nightstand so Lily can find it the next morning.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Since Babs and Mack knew each other growing up and Bettina's father is someone Babs knows from high school, it suggests that Mack is Babs's father. This would also explain why they would have to keep it a secret because Mack would have been married to a pregnant Mags about the same time Babs was pregnant since Bettina and Mack's son are the same age.



It's ironic that Bettina comes from a family with a lot of money but attends a normal school. None of her other classmates have the same wealth that Babs has. It suggests that although Babs spends a lot of money on her, and even buys expensive clothes for Bettina to wear, Babs doesn't spend a lot of money on Bettina when it comes to providing her with an education.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

Bettina is reading *Madame Bovary* for school. Bettina knows some French because she spends every summer in France with Babs's cousin, Cecile, because Babs needs a break. Babs comes into Bettina's room with a stack of magazines. Bettina hides the book because when Babs catches her reading, Babs says Bettina is showing off.

Babs says they should go shoe shopping for Bettina tomorrow. She shows Bettina some of the shoes she's already picked out. Even though Bettina doesn't like any of the shoes, she's excited to spend the day shopping with her mother. When the book slides off the bed and knocks over a hidden ginger ale can under Bettina's bed, Babs goes crazy.

Babs starts calling Bettina a sneak and rummaging through all of Bettina's things to see what she's hidden. Babs makes a huge mess pulling everything out of drawers and closets searching for hidden items until three in the morning. Then, she destroys the autographed napkin and picture of Brooke Shields that Bettina loves.

When Babs leaves, Bettina notices she left behind her pack of cigarettes. Bettina lights one of the cigarettes. She chooses a place Babs won't notice and burns herself with the lit cigarette.

The affair between Mack and Babs continues, but Mack stops coming to the apartment as often as before. Babs gets bored and starts to plan a party. Even though Babs doesn't drink, she decides to throw a hangover cruise party. The invitations are so intricate that she and Bettina stay up all hours of the night to put them together. Each invitation is hand-delivered in Babs's new stretch limo. Out-of-town guests receive their invitations in wrapped boxes. Bettina notices that Mack and his wife are on the guest list.

Bettina misses school helping Babs put the invitations together and deliver them. Babs even suggests Bettina do one of her singing routines at the party that Bettina has been practicing with the pink boombox Babs gave Bettina as a gift. On the night of the party, Geoff and Jasper are there to get Babs ready for the party. The décor is something Bettina talks about for years to come.

The floor to ceiling window in the living room is removed by helicopters and flown for storage in a warehouse for two days. This leaves the living room completely exposed to the elements, although it doesn't rain. Years later, when Bettina tells the story they say it sounds crazy.

As the guests start to arrive, Bettina orders two alcoholic drinks from the waiter—one for her and one for Frances. Frances refuses to drink hers so Bettina drinks both. Bettina starts the job Babs gave her, which is to hand out prescriptions for drinks to people who



look sober or as if they aren't having fun. The first couple Bettina ends up greeting turns out to be her mother's cousin, Lucas, and his wife, Poppy.

Babs tells Bettina it's time for her to do her dance and lip sync number. Bettina goes upstairs to get ready. She starts singing and dancing down the spiral staircase. When she almost reaches the bottom, she falls and cracks her head open. Mack shows up at this point and helps Bettina. Then Babs pulls Bettina away from Mack and drags Bettina into the kitchen.

In the kitchen, Babs tells Bettina she messed up and smacks her across the face twice. Mack stands back in the kitchen while Lucas tries to talk to Babs, saying to stop hitting Bettina and that she's only a kid. All of the adults return to the party after Babs sends Bettina upstairs with Lily to clean up and change.

Lily gives Bettina a bath. She puts her in a pair of jeans and a t-shirt. Then, Lily takes Bettina to the hospital to get fifteen stitches in her head. The next night, Babs and Bettina go out to dinner alone. Babs doesn't say anything and even allows Bettina to get dessert without saying anything about her getting fat.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Babs is emotionally abusive to Bettina. While Babs never hits Bettina, Babs talks down to Bettina until she makes Bettina feel as if she is worthless. With her self-confidence as low as possible, this propels Bettina to start hurting herself. In this case, she burns herself with a lit cigarette.

It is possible that Babs is mentally unstable. She seems to have suffered some traumatic experiences growing up that made her the way that she is. Additionally, her parents being killed in such a tragic boating accident likely contributed to Babs's strange behavior.

There is some foreshadowing that Babs might send Bettina to live with Lucas and Poppy in New York. The first hint of this is that Babs tells Lucas that he should take Bettina back to New York with him so that he can see what it's like to raise a twelve year old. This statement also suggests that Lucas can be Bettina's father. Since he and Babs are cousins, this could be one of the reasons they agreed to keep it a secret.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

It's two weeks after the party when Mack shows up at the apartment. He tells Babs it's over and that he wants the cufflinks Mags gave him for his birthday that he thinks he left in her room. She says she doesn't have them and sends him away. After he leaves, she throws the cufflinks into the ashtray and puts her cigarette ashes on top.

Then, she walks with Bettina to the bathroom, throws the ashtray contents into the toilet and flushes them. Babs assures Bettina that Mack will come back but that you have to get rid of their things so the men know that they can't just do what they want to do.

Two weeks after this, Mack still hasn't returned. Babs packs Bettina into her Jaguar and they drive to Tea House, where Babs grew up, and where Mack and Mags now live with their son, Hailer. On the way, Babs even allows Bettina to drink as much Ginger Ale as she wants. When Bettina has to use the bathroom, Babs sends her up to the house.

Mags allows Bettina to use the bathroom. When she finds out Bettina's name, Mags's entire demeanor changes. Bettina returns to her mother's car and then Babs says she's going to take Bettina around town to see how ordinary the women in the suburbs are, and how Bettina should never live like they do.

Two months later, Mack dies in a drunk driving accident. The day of the funeral, Babs puts on a black dress and the pearl necklace she bought to make Mack mad. She dresses Bettina in a pink dress and hands her a bouquet of white roses. Babs has the driver pull the stretch limo up to the church and sends Bettina down the aisle.

A man that looks like Mack approaches Bettina and steers her out of the back door of the church. When she gets back to the limo with the flowers, Babs gets mad. They drive to the cemetery. Babs approaches and greets the man, Carl, standing by the hole in the ground with the tarp stretched over it. She tells Carl she and Bettina want to pay their last respects, so he steps away for a few moments. Babs makes Bettina throw the roses in the bottom of the hole. Babs throws her pearls in after the flowers. And then they leave.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

For one of the first times in her life, Babs is not in control of the situation. Mack has ended their affair, but Babs is the one who insists that an affair only ends when she says it is over. When Mack doesn't return, as Babs predicts he will, Babs takes Bettina to Tea House under the guise of showing Bettina where she grew up.

Babs's true plan is to get under Mags's skin, which she accomplishes when Mags realizes that the little girl asking to use her bathroom is Bettina, Babs's daughter. Mags

obviously knows Mack and Babs were having an affair. She might even know the true identity of Bettina's father, who can be Mack.

Babs continues to make a statement to everyone in Mack's community. This is especially true for Mags herself. Babs is trying to show everyone that she was in Mack's life. Additionally, she might be flaunting Bettina in the community because she is Mack's biological daughter.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In September 1983, Bettina is fifteen. She's arriving to Cardiss, a New Hampshire boarding school. She flies directly from France to Boston and then into New Hampshire, rather than going home to Chicago first. She's the only one of her classmates to arrive by taxi and without their parents.

When she meets her roommate, Holly, and Holly's parents, they give her a handmade rug for the side of her bed. It's a rug that matches Holly's. They tell her at first they thought she was related to the chocolate family because of her last name. When they get ready to leave, they take a photo of the girls together and Holly's father gives them each a ten dollar bill.

When Holly and Bettina go back upstairs, they see the door to the room next to theirs is open. Two girls are sitting on the floor talking and they invite Bettina and Holly to join them. The girls turn out to be Meredith and Jess. They both have money, but not as much money as Babs.

Meredith is talking about her boyfriend, Cape, giving him blowjobs and having sex in the shower. While Holly seems terrified, Bettina plays along, giving the girls advice that is passed down from Babs, rather than Bettina's own experiences with boys. When Meredith pulls out her smoking kit, Bettina pulls out her cigarettes and Cartier lighter. Meredith recognizes the brand of the lighter. Eventually, Bettina and Holly return to their room to get ready for dinner. Meredith and Jess stop by to pick them up but Bettina says she'll be down in a little while.

Bettina goes to the bathroom and lights up a cigarette while she's waiting for the water to get hot. Someone bangs on the door and when she opens it half naked, it's the housemother, Ms. McSoren. The woman puts out the cigarette and tells Bettina to finish getting ready and go to dinner. At the time, Bettina doesn't realize that getting caught smoking can get you kicked out school and that Ms. McSoren sort of does her a favor.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Because of the way Babs raises Bettina, Bettina has a warped sense of normalcy. While girls her age are more typically like Holly, Bettina smokes, drinks and isn't close to her mother at all. Subconsciously, Bettina wants to be like a normal fifteen year old. She wants her mother to be there buying new things for her room and helping her to put away her stuff.

Bettina knows how to play the game while she is way at boarding school. Rather than from her own experiences, however, what Bettina knows is what Babs has told Bettina her whole life. Bettina still has a constant need for people to like her and to fit in with

other people. Since Bettina doesn't know how to do this, she does it the way she thinks she should do it, based on what Babs does and what Babs has taught Bettina to do.

In some ways Bettina is still a very innocent child. On the other hand, Bettina is wise beyond her years. Since she never really had a childhood, Babs has always treated Bettina as if she is a fellow adult instead of treating Bettina as a daughter and a child.

Bettina thinks of Meredith as being similar to Babs. Because of their similarities, Bettina feels the need to please Meredith, just as she always feels the need to please Babs. This is why Bettina tries to get Meredith on her good side, even though it slightly ostracizes Holly because Holly is at Cardiss on a scholarship.



Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

Bettina joins her other three housemates downstairs for the nightly meeting with Ms. McSoren. Ms. McSoren goes over the house rules and answers the girls' questions. The following morning is the first day of classes. At breakfast, Bettina gets her first glimpse of Cape. Bettina can see that he's very attractive.

In her English class, she has to write something embarrassing that happened to her over the summer on to an index card and pass it to the boy next to her. He has to do the same. Then they have to write something positive on the card and hand it back. This is how Bettina meets Lowell. After English, Bettina takes a smoke break, where she meets Jake.

Jake is also smoking. He calls Bettina beautiful and starts pushing his hand up her skirt. Bettina stops him when he reaches her underwear. When Bettina joins Holly, Meredith and Jess for dinner, Jake says hi to Bettina. Meredith warns Bettina that Jake is Jewish and that he's slept with fifteen girls.

Bettina leaves dinner early to take a shower and masturbate. While Bettina is masturbating in the shower, Meredith throws open the curtain and catches her. Bettina says it's a good way to get ready for being with Jake.

Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

Bettina finds herself being combative with Meredith rather than trying to be her friend. This is likely because Meredith reminds Bettina of Babs. Since Bettina cannot talk back to Babs and be combative directly with Babs, Bettina is using Meredith as a substitute. Bettina also questions why she is jealous of the relationship Meredith and Cape have.

It can be that Bettina is jealous because she has never even kissed a boy before. It can also reveal that Bettina is struggling with her own sexuality. She seems to have an attraction to boys, but also has homosexual thoughts about Meredith, such as licking Meredith's breasts when Bettina sees Meredith with her shirt off and wearing her bra.



Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

Bettina gets dressed after the shower incident. She goes down to the bench, where she finds Jake again smoking a cigarette. Bettina tells Jake about Meredith catching her masturbating in the shower. Jake tells her to come to his dorm room at midnight. Bettina sneaks out of Bright House and goes to Jake's dorm room.

He notices Bettina's scar from the time she burned herself with a cigarette after Babs searched Bettina's room. Jake gives her another cigarette burn to match it. He slaps her a couple of times in the face. Bettina gets mad and leaves. She starts to yearn for Jake, however, so she starts making it a ritual to sneak into his dorm room at night. They make out and Jake fondles Bettina. Even though she wants him to, he doesn't hit her anymore.

One night, they are studying in the library. He puts Bettina on the study carrel, puts on a condom and enters her under her skirt. As Bettina cries, Jake tells her that she won't cry the next time.

When Bettina goes to her campus post office box, she finds a slip saying she has a package. She also sees Cape. Bettina feels as if she knows him from somewhere else.

As they start to talk, Bettina figures out that Cape is in fact Hailer. She mentions their parents know each other. When Bettina takes her huge package back to her room, she finds a note that Babs wrote saying she misses her. The box contains clothes, shoes and jewelry too expensive for Bettina to wear, along with cigarettes and bottles of alcohol.

When Bettina sees Meredith later, she realizes she wants to be friends with her. She doesn't want to be friends in the way the other girls are with Meredith, however. Bettina wants to be holding Meredith's hand.

Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

Similar to how Bettina loves to get attention from Babs, even if it is negative attention, she's repeating the same behavior with Jake. Bettina would rather feel the pain of him slapping her, or the pain she feels from sex and intercourse with Jake, than to feel nothing at all.

Bettina feeling as if she knows Cape from somewhere else suggests that it might be Hailer, Mack's son. Since Cape is a nickname, she doesn't know what his real name is. Since it's been several years since she saw Hailer at the funeral, it is possible that Cape is Hailer but Bettina doesn't realize it.

Bettina is definitely struggling with her sexuality. She fantasizes about holding Meredith's hand.



Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

Bettina takes the bottle of vodka into Meredith and Jess's room where Holly is. They all start drinking vodka and orange juice. Meredith has plans to go to Cape's dorm room that night. She drinks too much, however, and vomits all over herself.

Bettina knocks on Jake's window. She tells him she needs to go upstairs to give a message to Cape. Bettina tells Cape Meredith got drunk and sick. She also tells him what Meredith said about him crying during blowjobs and that his poems are stupid. Bettina makes a deal with Cape to give him a blowjob so he can prove he doesn't cry during blowjobs. When Bettina is done, Cape's roommate, Lowell walks in, but he doesn't see anything.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

Bettina is purposely trying to sabotage the relationship between Meredith and Cape. Part of this is because Bettina has always wanted to be with Hailer and with Mack. This is her opportunity to have what she has wanted for so long. On the other hand, Bettina is sabotaging the relationship because she wants to have Meredith to herself. Ironically, if and when Meredith finds out that Bettina betrayed her, Meredith isn't going to want to have anything to do with Bettina. In fact, Meredith is likely to make Bettina's life at school a living hell.



Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

Meredith has a hangover the next day. That night, Cape comes to Bright House during visiting hours. When Meredith returns to her room, she says she's decided to take a break from Cape.

Two weeks later, Cape has not returned to Bright House to visit Meredith again. Cape sends a note to Bettina, telling her to meet him in his room at midnight. As the note tells her to do, Bettina tells Lowell to tell Cape yes. Bettina crawls through Jake's window to get into Cape's room.

Cape says he wants to pay her back for the other night. They talk about his father and a couple of the times Bettina met him. She tells Cape half-truths. He admits to telling his mother that Bettina is at his school and his mom admits to knowing who Bettina is. Cape performs oral sex on Bettina but she stops him when it turns out to be a disaster.

Bettina suggests anal sex to Cape. While Cape is performing, Bettina is thinking about Meredith. When Cape pulls out and comes on Bettina's back, Cape calls out Meredith's name. He apologizes to Bettina, but she says it's alright, gets dressed and goes back through Jake's room to climb out of the dorm.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

Meredith is lying. Cape has broken up with her. While Bettina knows this, Holly and Jess believe it is Meredith's idea to break up. Bettina continues to do things on purpose that cause her pain. This includes allowing Jake to hit her with a belt, tie her up and even choke her when they are having sex. This is also why she allows Cape to perform anal sex with her. She knows it will hurt and it hurts very badly, but she allows him to continue because she would rather feel pain and have his attention than not have his attention at all.



Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

The big dance is coming up at school. Holly and Jess have dates. Bettina is going to a place to do drugs and drink with Jake and his friends. Meredith says the dance is lame, so she's going on a trip to NYC to go to a party with her friends. During visiting hours, Cape goes to Meredith's room and spends an hour in there.

When he leaves, Meredith tells them that she's cancelling her trip to NYC because Cape begged her to go to the dance with him. The girls then talk about trimming their pubic hair so it'll be neater down there when their guys perform oral sex on them.

Even though she's not going to the dance, Bettina buys a new dress, shoes, and a necklace. She also decides to get her hair cut. When she returns to school, everyone is shocked that Bettina has cut her hair into a bob. Lowell and Cape stare at Bettina. Meredith notices them looking at Bettina and Meredith pouts.

As Bettina goes off to smoke, Cape follows her. He apologizes again about saying Meredith's name. He says he would have asked Bettina to the dance but he was afraid Meredith would be mean to her. He kisses Bettina on the lips, but Bettina snaps back that she is with Jake. Cape tries to convince Bettina to come by the dorm that night.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

For a brief moment, Bettina hopes Cape will ask her to the dance. Even though she is always turning her nose up at the norm, she secretly wants to be normal and do normal things. Bettina truly cares what Cape says and does, but she acts as if she doesn't.

Even though Cape likes Bettina, he's trying to hide their relationship. He says it's because of Meredith being mean to Bettina, which probably is true to some extent.



Chapters 21 and 22

Chapters 21 and 22 Summary

Bettina receives a postcard from Lucas. It's a charcoal drawing of her on one side. Lucas writes a note on the back saying he drew it a long time ago but that Babs told him not to send it to her until she was older.

Bettina wears her new dress, heels and her father's medallion to Cape's room. They end up exchanging Mack's special pennies from Cape's penny loafers for the medallion. Cape tells Bettina she can call the school to find out who won a medallion that year so she can figure out who her father is.

They agree to trade back the next time they see each other. Bettina convinces Cape to have sex without a condom, but the head of Cape's dorm walks in on them before they completely recover. They know they are both in trouble.

Mr. Carlson escorts Bettina back to Bright House. He rings the doorbell to wake Ms. McSoren up and tell her what happened.

Chapters 21 and 22 Analysis

Bettina is worrying about getting kicked out of school. Additionally, she is worried about how Meredith will react when she finds out Bettina was having sex with Cape. Finally, if Mack is Bettina's biological father, she and Cape have unknowingly been involved in incest.



Chapters 23 and 24

Chapters 23 and 24 Summary

Bettina confesses to Meredith that she won't be going to the dance with Cape because they are on probation. Bettina tells her they got caught having sex. Bettina even shows Meredith that she has Cape's coins from his penny loafers. Then, Bettina has to confess to Jake what happened.

Lowell ends up taking Meredith to the dance. After everyone is gone, Bettina puts the coins inside of her while she masturbates. She doesn't plan on washing the coins before giving them back to Cape.

Chapters 23 and 24 Analysis

Now, the secret is out. Bettina does the right thing by confessing to Meredith and Jake before they hear it around campus from someone else first. She seems to have an obsession with Cape that stems back to when Mack was having sex with Babs.



Chapters 25 and 26

Chapters 25 and 26 Summary

Ms. McSoren wakes Bettina up for a phone call from Babs. Babs is angry that Bettina got caught having sex with Hailer Morse and that now she'll have to come to school for a meeting with the dean and Mags. When Bettina sees Cape in the lunchroom, they plan to meet at the boathouse.

They talk about their strategy for not getting kicked out of school. This is when Cape finds out Bettina's mother is a chocolate heiress and that his father was having an affair with her mother. He asks if his mother knew and accuses Bettina of purposely seeking him out at school.

Chapters 25 and 26 Analysis

Bettina has things on her side that might keep her from getting kicked out of school. Her mother's money is definitely a positive factor. Cape's sports ability and the fact that his father went to the school is on his side.



Chapters 27 and 28

Chapters 27 and 28 Summary

As the word spreads, all of Meredith's friends stop talking to Bettina. Even Holly writes liar and slut on Bettina's wall in chocolate. Holly moves out of their room.

Babs calls again a couple days later to apologize to Bettina for getting mad. She says she's flying into town and she wants Bettina to come stay with her at the Ritz in town. Babs talks to Ms. McSoren but the house head says Bettina cannot be out past seven o'clock.

When Bettina gets back on the phone, she says she's still sending the limo to get her. Bettina says no, so Babs calls her a chicken and hangs up the phone.

Chapters 27 and 28 Analysis

Bettina has been trying to escape her life by not telling everyone at school the entire truth. Now, her lies are catching up with her. Babs, which is typical, thinks that rules don't apply to her or to Bettina, so even after she is told that Bettina cannot leave, she plans to send a limo to pick Bettina up.



Chapters 29 and 30

Chapters 29 and 30 Summary

Bettina shops for a dress and shoes for the trial. She runs into Cape having lunch with Mags. Bettina apologizes to Mags, but Mags says it's too late and she's not surprised if Babs put her up to all of this.

The morning of the trial, Bettina wakes up early in the morning. She goes down to the boathouse to smoke some cigarettes. When she gets back, she calls Babs at the hotel to let her know that she has a better chance of getting through the trial without getting kicked out of school if Babs comes. Babs doesn't say if she'll attend either way when she hangs up the phone.

Chapters 29 and 30 Analysis

Ironically, Bettina ponders how she managed to mess up her life so badly. On some level, Bettina realizes that her own life is messed up because of the way Babs is.



Chapters 31, 32 and 33

Chapters 31, 32 and 33 Summary

At three o'clock, Bettina starts to get dressed for the trial. Babs knocks on Bettina's door. She makes Bettina put on the same black dress she got caught in when she was having sex with Cape. She also makes Bettina wear heels and put on some makeup.

When Babs and Bettina arrive in front of the student judiciary committee, Mags and Cape are already there. Meredith is one of the students on the judicial committee. After the student committee hears the charges, the faculty hearing the case comes into the room. The case is presented to them, along with the achievements of each student. Cape then speaks and then Bettina speaks to the committee.

Babs speaks, offering to donate money to the school. Then, she leaves and doesn't come back for the verdicts. Bettina is kicked out of school and Cape is permitted to stay. Bettina returns to her room to pack. She tries to give Meredith, Holly and Jess the alcohol left in the care package from Babs.

Meredith says she has to get ready to go out to dinner with Cape and his mom. Holly tells Bettina she's sorry about the verdict. When Bettina returns to her room, she finds an envelope from Cape with her medallion in it. Bettina drinks some bourbon and then goes down to the river to throw Cape's pennies into it.

Chapters 31, 32 and 33 Analysis

Ironically, even though Babs has a lot more money than Cape's family, it doesn't allow Bettina to remain at Cardiss. Bettina realizes that she could have had a good friend in Holly but that she blew it by not telling Holly the truth from the start. Even though Cape kept his promise to return Bettina's father's medallion, Bettina does not hold up her end of the bargain.



Chapters 34 and 35

Chapters 34 and 35 Summary

The next morning, Bettina wakes up and goes to the dean's office. She uses the phone to make her taxi reservations and flight arrangements. Then, she calls the Ryder school to find out who the medallion belongs to so she can figure out who her father is.

Bettina is at the apartment having dinner with Babs. She doesn't tell Babs she knows who her father is. Babs gives Bettina a project of putting her matchbooks together so she can create a book. Later, Bettina overhears Babs talking bad about her on the phone. Bettina dumps the three bags full of matchbooks over the balcony.

Chapters 34 and 35 Analysis

Bettina finally realizes the truth about Babs. While she's subconsciously known it all along, Babs has confirmed for Bettina how Babs really feels. Babs doesn't care about Bettina. Babs only cares about herself. Bettina knows that if Babs loses something that is important to her, such as the chronology of her life through her matchbooks, that this will hit Babs where it really hurts.



Chapters 36 and 37

Chapters 36 and 37 Summary

Babs gets run over and killed by a car one week after Bettina throws away the matchbooks. Bettina calls Lucas and he comes to help her make the arrangements. Lucas meets with the lawyer with Bettina. Bettina finds out she has about three million dollars in a trust and that Lucas is the executor.

Per her request, they scatter Babs's ashes in Lake Michigan. Over dinner, Bettina confronts Lucas about being her father. Bettina returns to New York to live with Lucas and Poppy and their child, JoJo.

Bettina is twenty-six now. The money is all hers. She buys an apartment and redecorates it. She gets a job making sixteen thousand dollars a year at a publishing house. One day, she runs into Cape on the street and they have lunch. He apologizes for blaming Bettina for his father's affair. He asks Bettina if she still has his pennies and asks her to send them back if she ever finds them.

Chapters 36 and 37 Analysis

Bettina is still searching for a "normal" life. While normalcy is relative, all she truly wants is to keep her money a secret and surround herself with work she likes and people she loves and who love her back. While Babs was good at teaching Bettina some of the hard lessons life can throw your way, Bettina lacks the typical affection and childlike innocence that most mothers try to provide their children.

In addition to having an alternative lifestyle with her mother, Bettina also doesn't find out the identity of her father until she's fifteen. While she ends up living with her biological father and his family after Babs die, the relationship is not an open and loving one, so Bettina still lacks the loving relationship that can exist between a father and a daughter.



Characters

Bettina Ballentyne

When the novel opens, Bettina Ballentyne is a ten-year-old girl. She is the daughter of a chocolate heiress, Babs Ballentyne, of Ballentyne Chocolate. Bettina describes herself as being thin, but not a pretty child and she doesn't have good hair. Bettina considers herself the direct opposite of her mother.

Bettina is continuously looking for her mother's approval throughout the novel. She never knows what kind of mood Babs is going to be in, so Bettina always seems to be walking on eggshells. Bettina tends to act the way she thinks her mother wants her to act rather than trying to be her own person.

Even after Bettina inherits all of her mother's money, she chooses to live as if she is not a millionaire. While she does use the money to buy and decorate an apartment when she is an adult, Bettina also takes on a low-paying job and continues to live life as if she doesn't have millions of dollars.

Babs Ballentyne

Babs Ballentyne is a chocolate heiress. She has millions of dollars. Babs's real name is Tabitha. Babs is tall and thin. She doesn't have any boobs, but she is very pretty and has, feathery blonde hair. Babs cusses all the time and has weekly manicures and pedicures, as well as weekly waxing sessions.

Babs does not drink alcohol, but she smokes a lot of cigarettes. Babs is a very eccentric person. Every year, she creates a theme for a Christmas card, and then according to the theme, she has a picture taken of herself and Bettina. Babs is very open with Bettina, so she tells Bettina about her sex life, and life in general, in graphic detail.

Babs is not very affectionate with Bettina, so she isn't very motherly. Babs had a sexual affair with her cousin, Lucas, who turns out to be Bettina's biological father. Babs and Lucas keep it a secret and never tell Bettina the truth. Babs dies when she is run over by a pickup truck when crossing the street in Chicago.

Andie

Andie is one of Babs's friends. Compared to Babs, Bettina describes Andie as ugly. Babs only invites Andie over during the day. She's never invited to dinner when other guests are invited. Andie seems to continuously try to seek approval from Babs, so Andie is always agreeing with whatever Babs says and does.



Stacey

Stacey is Bettina's nanny when the novel opens. Stacey has feathered hair and a big nose. Stacey had worked at Dairy Queen before becoming Bettina's nanny. Stacey has been Bettina's nanny for two years, which is the longest any of Bettina's nannies have lasted working for Babs.

Lucas Ballentyne

Lucas Ballentyne is Babs's cousin. He's an artist who lives in New York. Lucas sends paintings to Babs for her to hang in the aпарhouse. He exchanges the paintings periodically. Lucas is married to Poppy and has a son, JoJo. Lucas comes to the aпарhouse for one of Babs's parties.

Later, when Bettina is at boarding school, Lucas sends her a postcard. It has a charcoal drawing of Bettina on the front and a short note to Bettina on the back. Bettina calls Lucas when Babs dies. Lucas goes to Chicago to help Bettina with the arrangements.

Lucas turns out to be Bettina's biological father. Bettina goes to live with Lucas, Poppy and JoJo in New York, after Babs dies. Lucas never admits to Poppy that Bettina is his biological daughter and he and Bettina only discuss it one time.

Mack Morse

Mack Morse is a married man who is also Babs's boyfriend. Mack is tall, standing at about six foot two inches. He has blue eyes and blondish brown hair. Bettina says that Mack is very handsome. He's also very nice to Bettina.

Mack comes from a family with money. He has known Babs since they were young children. Mack bought the house that Babs grew up in, Tea House, so Mack lives in the home now with his wife, Mags, and son, Hailer. His son is the same age as Bettina. Mack dies in a drunk driving accident.

Lily

Lily is a black woman who cooks for Bettina and Babs. Lily is originally from Tennessee. Bettina loves Lily just like Lily is her second mother. Lily's been working for the family since Babs was eighteen. Lily is the only person Bettina knows who isn't afraid of Babs. Bettina thinks Lily isn't afraid of Babs because Lily has faith in Jesus.

Poppy

Poppy is Lucas's wife. She attends Babs's party at the aпарhouse with Lucas. When Babs dies, Bettina goes to live with Lucas and Poppy. Poppy tries to help Bettina feel



welcome in their home. Bettina smokes at the age of fifteen, when she goes to live with Poppy, but Poppy never scolds Bettina or says anything about Bettina smoking. Bettina assumes Poppy thinks this is Bettina's way of dealing with her mother's death.

Mags

Mags is Mack's wife. Bettina meets her for the first time when she asks to use the bathroom in the Tea House. Bettina describes Mags as being attractive. Mags seems to know that Babs is having an affair with Mack, but Mags never comes right out and says anything about it.

Bettina and Mags see each other again at Mack's funeral. Finally, when Bettina is caught having sex with Mags's son, Cape, at boarding school, Mags and Bettina see each other again. Bettina apologizes to Mags for the mess, but Mags says it's too late for apologies. She also suggests that Babs has put Bettina up to apologizing.

Holly

Holly is Bettina's roommate at Cardiss. Holly is a little shorter and fatter than Bettina. Holly is from Iowa and is attending Cardiss on a scholarship that pays for her room and board and tuition. Holly is very innocent and doesn't come from a family with as much money as the other students have, so she is very naïve and has a hard time fitting in at first.



Objects/Places

Chicago

Chicago is the city where Bettina and Babs live. Chicago is the primary setting for the majority of the novel. It is also the city where Babs ends up dying when she is run over by a pickup truck when crossing the street.

New York City

New York is where Lucas Ballentyne lives with his wife and son. Bettina goes to live in New York with Lucas and his family after Babs dies. Bettina also buys her first apartment in New York when she is twenty-six.

Scrapbook Scissors

Babs has a special pair of scissors that she uses to create her scrapbooks. They are decorated with jewels on the handles of the scissors. Bettina is playing with the scrapbook scissors when she accidentally cuts her hair off, right before the Christmas card picture is due to be taken.

Scrapbooks

Babs creates scrapbooks. She keeps these scrapbooks in a closet upstairs in the aparthouse. Babs uses the scrapbooks to log the memories of her life.

Aparthouse

The aparthouse is where Bettina and Babs live. Babs calls it an aparthouse because it is an apartment, but it is so big that it is more like a house. Babs stays in the aparthouse almost all day and all the time. She even has the lady who gives her manicures and pedicures and waxings come to the aparthouse.

When Babs has a party at the aparthouse, this is when Bettina falls and cracks her head open. Mack often comes to the aparthouse to have sex with Babs. He arrives late at night and leaves early in the morning.

Tea House

The Tea House is where Babs grew up. It's the home that her family owned. Mack bought Tea House. He lives there with his wife and son. Bettina uses the bathroom in



Tea House one day when Babs drives Bettina to the area to show Bettina where she grew up.

Cardiss

Cardiss is the boarding school Bettina attends. Cardiss is in a small town in New Hampshire. Cardiss is where Bettina meets Mack's son and ends up having a sexual relationship with him. When they are caught having sex, Bettina is kicked out of Cardiss.

Matchbooks

Babs collects matchbooks. She writes personal information in the matchbook cover. She hands Bettina three bags full of the matchbooks when she gets home from Cardiss. She says she wants to write a book so she needs Bettina to put the matchbooks in order. Bettina ends up throwing away the bags of matchbooks when she overhears Babs talking bad about her on the phone.

Spiral Staircase

The apartment has a marble spiral staircase. It goes from Babs's bedroom down into the living room area of the apartment. Bettina is on the spiral staircase when she cuts her hair with the scrapbook scissors. Bettina is also coming down the stairs when she falls and cracks her head open during the party.

Medallion

Babs gives Bettina a medallion Babs says belongs to Bettina's father. Bettina keeps the medallion, except when she trades it with Cape for a short period. Cape returns the medallion to her. Bettina uses the imprinted information on the medallion to figure out who her biological father is.



Themes

Coming of Age

One of the other primary themes that runs throughout the novel is growing up and coming of age. Bettina struggles with who she is and how she feels on the inside compared to who she is and what other people want her to be on the outside, especially Bettina's mother, Babs. Bettina deals with the consequences in life that come from telling lies and then having to confess the truth, as well as being the daughter of an heiress.

Bettina also faces the rite of passage of having some of her first sexual experiences. While she is not in standard dating situations, Bettina becomes involved sexually with two different boys at her boarding school. Although these are not acts she willingly wants to commit, because of the way she is raised, Bettina believes she must engage in these sexual acts with these two boys.

Truths and Secrets

Another theme throughout the entire novel is that of the truth versus secrets. Bettina continuously struggles with the fact that her mother tells too much of the truth to her. Bettina never enjoys a normal childhood because her mother shares too many sexual experiences and adult topics with Bettina. Additionally, Bettina's mother is so selfish that she even tells Bettina how much of a disappointment Bettina is to her and that she doesn't want Bettina to embarrass her.

Bettina chooses to lie in order to protect herself. She also seems to tell lies to protect the feelings of others. For example, she lies by omission when she meets her roommate, Holly, and Holly's parents at boarding school. She doesn't want to admit to Holly and her parents that she is the daughter of a chocolate heiress because she doesn't want to make them feel uncomfortable since Holly is attending boarding school on a scholarship.

The biggest truth with which Bettina struggles is the truth about who her biological father is. She's been asking her mother who he is, but Babs finally admits that they agreed to keep his identity a secret. At fifteen, Bettina calls the school her father attended, which is imprinted on a medallion her mother given her, telling her it belonged to Bettina's father. Bettina discovers her father is Babs's cousin, Lucas. After Babs dies Bettina confronts Lucas about the truth.

Family

Family is another central theme throughout the entire novel. This is because the storyline is about the lives of this particular family—the Ballentynes. While every family



has their trials and tribulations, Bettina's family has its own family dynamics that are the same and that are different from those of other families. In the end though, they are a family and they will get through it together, one way or the other.

In Bettina's case, she struggles with wanting to have a normal childhood. Her mother is anything but normal. In addition to the amount of money Babs has, Babs is not a typical mother. On most occasions, she is emotionally abusive to Bettina. In a few instances, Babs is even physically abusive to Bettina. Bettina continues to yearn for Babs's love, attention and approval throughout her life. When Bettina overhears her mother talking bad about Bettina on the phone to Lucas, Bettina finally realizes the type of person her mother is. For the first time in her life, Bettina stands up against Babs.

Unfortunately, a few weeks later Babs dies in an accident. For Bettina, she never really has closure with her mother and the relationship they've had over the years. If Bettina doesn't seek professional help to deal with her emotions, she might not be able to recover from her childhood situation.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the first person point of view. The narrator of the novel is also the main character of the novel, Bettina Ballentyne. The narrator is telling the story as an adult, but she starts the story back at the point where she is a ten-year-old girl.

The point of view of this novel is an intimate point of view that allows a reader to connect closely with the main character, who also happens to be the narrator of the story. The point of view also allows the author to inject her own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events happening to her, to the main character's mother and to the other people in Bettina's life, without having to move out of character or interrupt the flow of the narration. For these reasons, the point of view works well with this novel and the author's writing style.

Setting

The novel is primarily set in Chicago, Illinois. The novel covers the period between 1978 and 1991. The setting of this novel is important because it is about the life of Bettina Ballentyne and her life with her heiress mother, who is famous in the Chicago area.

When Bettina goes to boarding school, the setting of the novel changes to a small town in New Hampshire. After Babs dies, Bettina moves to New York City to live with her biological father, Lucas, so the setting briefly changes during this portion of the novel. Ultimately, New York City is where Bettina buys an apartment, lives and works.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. At first, the reader is not aware of Babs's tendencies to be emotionally abusive to Bettina, or that Babs is a chocolate heiress. However, as events unfold, one secret after the next is either explained or inferred.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is modern. The language of the novel is not formal and is set between the late 1970s and 1991. The language is educated, strong and descriptive enough that it creates a flow that leaves the reader impressed with the words as much as the plot when the novel ends.

The language of the novel is appropriate to the plot because it is accurate to the characters in the novel and the education level of the writer. The novel is not in love with its own words, but it is descriptive enough that the reader finds enjoyment in the words as well as the plot. The language is not difficult to understand, however, and everything



is clear in its context. For this reason the language of the novel fits well with the plot of the novel.

Structure

The novel consists of 37 chapters. Each chapter is anywhere from one to 15 pages long. The chapters tell the story both in exposition and dialogue. The author is the narrator and main character of the book, so it seems as if she is injecting her own voice throughout the novel—as if she has become Bettina. This allows the author to provide her own opinions of the events surrounding the setting of the novel, as well as the actions taking place within the plot, but from the eyes and words of Bettina.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows coming of age. The subplots involve truths and secrets and the trials and tribulations of the family.



Quotes

"Bettina clearly cannot be trusted with a moment of unsupervised time without totally fucking up everyone's day."

Chap. 1, p. 13

"Mack's a gentleman so he will put up with your bullshit. But hands off, just so you don't make an ass of yourself. Got it?"

Chap. 2, p. 20

"I can't, Bettina. We promised we would keep it a secret."

Chap. 3, p. 31

"Bettina, what is going on between Mack and me is very educational. You need specifics, not that bland shit they teach you at school."

Chap. 4, p. 35

"I know how sneaks work, Bettina. They pick places where most people would not think to look."

Chap. 5, p. 43

"Fine, take her with you to new York, cuz. I don't really care. See for yourself how much fun a twelve-year-old girl can be."

Chap. 6, p. 68

"But big picture: If a man ever takes a hiatus on you, never give back all his toys."

Chap. 7, p. 74

"Mack and I were close, especially after the sale of the house."

Chap. 8, p. 87

"When we got the card with your name on it, Holly thought you were related to Ballentyne chocolate. That you must have pots of money and live in a fancy apartment."

Chap. 9, p. 97

"Do you miss her? And your dad? I think you were brave to come alone."

Chap. 10, p. 117



"That's it. I'll leave you to get to know one another."
Chap. 11, p. 126

"That game is much more fun with two players!"
Chap. 12, p. 139

"You won't care much next time."
Chap. 13 p. 145

"My mother never really talks about the Grass Woods days."
Chap. 14, p. 150

"I saw Cape at the PO today."
Chap. 15, p. 153

"Umm, she thinks it's stupid you cry during blowjobs, and she hates your poem. She showed it to all of us in Bright and laughed."
Chap. 16, p. 158

"I've decided to take a break from Cape. I just can't deal with his neediness."
Chap. 17, p. 164

"Does that feel good? I've never done this before."
Chap. 18, p. 172

"It makes it easier for a guy to navigate down there."
Chap. 19, p. 179

"I didn't know who else to ask."
Chap. 20, p. 189

"Fair trade?"
Chap. 21, p. 194

"I found Bettina in one of my boys' rooms having sex."
Chap. 22, p. 198



"Because he wanted to have sex with me."
Chap. 23, p. 201

"We have...a history."
Chap. 24, p. 203

"It's your mess and I'm not coming to clean it up."
Chap. 25, p. 208

"My mother is a chocolate heiress."
Chap. 26, p. 211

"I found out the truth about your family."
Chap. 27, p. 215

"Have it your way, you fucking chicken."
Chap. 28, p. 220

"It's really too late for apologies, Bettina. I don't know if your mother put you up to this, but it wouldn't surprise me."
Chap. 29, p. 223

"You flatly refused to come to Boston yesterday after I had gone to all the trouble to plan girlie time, but now you expect me to lug myself up to Cardiss."
Chap. 30, p. 225

"It isn't Deeds but Babs."
Chap. 31, p. 227

"I don't want you to embarrass me."
Chap. 32, p. 229

"But I know Bettina loves Cardiss, so I am willing to pledge a million dollars to the school if you change the policy on sexual practices and allow Bettina to stay."
Chap. 33, p. 237



"Do you want the name or not?"

Chap. 34, p. 245

"Just organizing stuff for me. But I'm sure she's going to fuck that up too. I already hired an assistant to start after Christmas. I just needed to get her out of my hair."

Chap. 35, p. 253

"We always promised we would keep it a secret. Of course, the whole thing was an accident. I had had too much to drink, and you know Babs liked to push the envelope. When she told me, I never thought she would have you. The whole thing was just indecent. In addition to our being cousins, I was married to Poppy with JoJo on the way."

Chap. 36, p. 271

"Listen, Bettina, I owe you an apology."

Chap. 37, p. 277

Topics for Discussion

Who is Bettina Ballentyne? Why does she feel like she is an outsider in her own home? What does Bettina recall about her childhood? What is Bettina's biggest demon that haunts her throughout her life? Why is this important? How does it change her life?

Discuss the relationship between Babs and Mack. Are they really in love? Is there love, guilt or a sense of obligation in their relationship? How does Babs feel about Mack? How does Mack feel about Babs? Why does Mack end the relationship? What does Babs do about it?

Discuss the relationship between Babs and Bettina. Why do you think Babs acts the ways she does with Bettina—telling Bettina adult topics and not being very affectionate with Bettina? Is there love, guilt or a sense of obligation in their relationship? How does Babs feel about Bettina? How does Bettina feel about Babs? Why does Bettina throw away all of her mother's matchbooks at the end of the novel? What does Babs do about it?

Who is Mack? Why do you think he has an affair with Babs? Why does he seem to care so much about Bettina? Why do think Mack doesn't intervene when Babs is being abusive to Bettina? Do you think Mack's death is an accident? What happens to Mags and Hailer after Mack dies?

Who is Cape? Why do you think he gets involved with Bettina? Do you think Babs knew Hailer attended the same boarding school where she sent Bettina?

Who is Babs? Why do you think she had Bettina? Why do think she is so open with Bettina instead of treating Bettina as if she is a child? Do you think Babs deliberately stepped in front of the car, or do you believe it was an accident?

Discuss Bettina's lies about her true background. What impact does it have on the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them or hold them back? Why is it an issue to the characters? Does it have anything to do with the way that relationships develop and evolve? What impact does it have on the overall desire to expose the truth?