

The Cider House Rules Study Guide

The Cider House Rules by John Irving

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Contents

The Cider House Rules Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapter 1.....	4
Chapter 2.....	5
Chapter 3.....	7
Chapter 4.....	9
Chapter 5.....	11
Chapter 6.....	13
Chapter 7.....	16
Chapter 8.....	19
Chapter 9.....	21
Chapter 10.....	23
Chapter 11.....	26
Characters.....	28
Objects/Places.....	32
Themes.....	35
Style.....	37
Quotes.....	38
Topics for Discussion.....	39



Plot Summary

The Cider House Rules is John Irving's sixth novel. The story follows two main characters, Dr. Wilbur Larch and Homer Wells. Dr. Wilbur Larch is an ether addict, the founder of the St. Cloud's orphanage, and an undercover abortionist. Dr. Wilbur Larch offers his services to women who are giving up their babies for adoption, as well as providing safe abortion services to women who are early enough on in their pregnancy to abort the baby. The second primary character of the novel is one of the orphans, Homer Wells, who is never adopted by a permanent family.

Although Homer Wells has the opportunity to go home with several families during his time at the orphanage, something always happens to draw him back to the orphanage. His attraction to the orphanage is partially explained by Homer's relationship with Dr. Larch; he sees Dr. Larch as a father figure, and Dr. Larch considers Homer, who is the oldest child at the orphanage, his son. Each time a family tries to adopt him, Homer finds some peculiarity in the family that draws him back to St. Cloud's orphanage. In the end, Homer Wells returns for good to what has become his familiar home, the St. Cloud's orphanage.

During his years growing up the orphanage, Dr. Larch teaches Homer everything he needs to know to become a medical doctor. By the time Homer reaches the age of 18, he has an opportunity to spend the summer working on an apple orchard when a couple his age comes to St. Cloud's from the orchard to have an abortion. While Homer intends on being away for only a few weeks, he ends up staying away from St. Cloud's until after Dr. Larch passes away, decades later.

In the end, Homer comes full circle. After living the first 18 years of his life at St. Cloud's, he adventures beyond the orphanage, eventually traveling to Maine. When Homer is an adult and a father, he returns to St. Cloud's to take over the role of Dr. Larch. Homer is able to take over Dr. Larch's role because Homer assumes the identity and credentials of a fake doctor, which Dr. Larch created in honor of one of the orphans who passed away at the orphanage—Fuzzy Stone.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 1. The chapter introduces the St. Cloud's orphanage in St. Cloud's, Maine. The founder and doctor of the hospital who runs the orphanage is Dr. Wilbur Larch. Set in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the women who come to the orphanage arrive pregnant, leave their unwanted children for adoption, and leave the orphanage after giving birth. The chapter introduces four of the main characters, which include Dr. Larch, his two nurses, Edna and Angela, and Homer Wells, an orphan adopted by four families that always returns to the orphanage.

Analysis Chapter 1. The orphanage stands as a symbol for safety and hope to the women who come pregnant and give up their babies for adoption and to Homer Wells, who becomes the mascot of the orphanage. While Dr. Larch believes the children at the orphanage should be safe and cared for, he also believes in creating an environment that fosters hope—hope that makes the children want to go out and be part of a real family.

The fact that St. Cloud's is an abandoned logging town is a fitting symbol. In a sense, the majority of the children at the orphanage are abandoned or unwanted as well, which ironically makes St. Cloud the perfect place for these children and their mothers to find a new beginning.

The nurses, Edna and Angela, call the good doctor a saint. Saint Larch, as the nurses call him, represents the doctor as a religious figure. This is fitting because he founded an orphanage that helps orphans find loving and caring families. Ironically, even in his saint-like state, the good doctor also sees fit to perform abortions when and if necessary, which is against the law at the time. Some might see this as another reason for his sainthood because the women he performs abortions on are in the hands of a safe and competent doctor and obstetrician, which is better than going to someone on the black market who doesn't know what they're doing, which might put the women in danger.

The nurses keep mentioning in the novel that Dr. Wilbur Larch is named after a tree. This, too, is symbolic of Dr. Larch's strength.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 2. Wilbur Larch was born in the 1860's to a mother who worked for the mayor of Maine and a father who was a drunk. While Wilbur's beginnings were meek, he sought comfort in his studies, which led him to attend Bowdoin College and Harvard Medical School. As a graduation gift from high school, Wilbur's father bought him a night with a whore. The whore gave Wilbur gonorrhea. Gonorrhea leads Wilbur to using ether as a way to dull the burning pain of the disease while he is studying bacteria at medical school. This leads to Wilbur's ether addiction.

After graduating from medical school, Dr. Larch delivers babies in the South End of Boston. At the time, this area of Boston is where the poor and the prostitutes live. One night, the prostitute Wilbur lost his virginity to comes into the emergency room where Dr. Larch is working, and he has to perform emergency surgery to remove a still-born from the prostitute's uterus. He has to remove the uterus, as well, because it's too damaged; the prostitute's other organs are like jelly, as well. She dies, and the autopsy reveals the prostitute died of scurvy.

After the prostitute dies, her daughter comes to see Dr. Larch. She hands him a brown bottle that contains a solution promising to cause miscarriages, which is why her mother drank it and subsequently died. The daughter of the prostitute, who is the same age as Wilbur, is also pregnant; she asks Wilbur to perform an abortion, which is illegal at the time. There is a place off Harrison Street that performs the illegal abortions but without a medical doctor. When the daughter has her abortion there, she comes down with an infection that lands her in the hospital where Dr. Larch works. She dies of the infection from the illegal and wrongly performed abortion. Dr. Larch goes to the illegal clinic to offer his free medical advice to the patients.

Dr. Larch returns to the hospital with a 13-year-old girl who is pregnant by her father and performs her abortion. From that point on, the word spreads that the doctor can give proper abortions, and women approach him on the street for his services.

Dr. Larch decides to leave Boston, so he applies for an obstetrics position in his home town of Portland, Maine. While waiting for a position to open, Mrs. Channing-Peabody, a woman from a high-society family in Boston, invites him to a croquet party. Her ultimate motive, however, is to have the doctor give her youngest daughter, Missy, an abortion.

The first week the doctor is in St. Cloud, he founds the orphanage and decides to deliver babies and perform abortions. The doctor and the nurses agree that both procedures are the Lord's work. The problem is that, as Homer reaches 13, they fear he will learn about the abortions, which he does one day when a fetus falls from a wastebasket Homer is carrying to the incinerator. When Homer takes the fetus to Dr. Larch, the doctor explains.



Analysis Chapter 2. It's ironic that Wilbur's father is a drunk, because Wilbur's mother works for Neal Dow, the mayor who is responsible for supporting the prohibition laws. Wilbur's one-time sexual encounter with a whore leads him to a life of sexual abstinence and eventually forms the foundation for his becoming an obstetrician and an abortion doctor. After his mother dies, Wilbur's father sells all of their belongings and takes the train out of town. The same train returns his dead body after he dies from cirrhosis of the liver, which is symbolic of his father coming full circle in life.

While Wilbur despises the fact that his father was a drunk, Wilbur ironically follows in his father's footsteps by becoming addicted, in his case, to ether rather than alcohol. Dr. Larch starting his career by delivering unwanted babies for prostitutes foreshadows Dr. Larch opening a home for these unwanted babies later in his life. Dr. Larch witnessing the harm and death of women from illegal abortions is another factor that leads him to perform the illegal act but in the right manner.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 3. Dr. Larch makes it Homer's responsibility to read to the orphans for 20 minutes each night. The first book Homer reads to the boys is David Copperfield. By the time Homer Wells is 15, Dr. Larch assigns him to read to the girls at the orphanage, as well. Dr. Larch chooses Jane Eyre, so that the girls can hear stories about girl orphans.

One night, when Homer sneaks into the baby room, he finds one of the expectant mothers standing there. Homer escorts the mother back to the mother's room. The mother asks him to sleep with his hand and ear on her belly because a baby should not be born without someone who wants to do that. Homer complies. The mother gives birth to a baby girl the next morning, but Homer doesn't know which one she is at the orphanage.

Melony suggests to Homer that Dr. Larch is gay and that he is an ether addict. The latter is true, but the former is not true as of yet in the novel. Melony also tells Homer that if Homer was born at the orphanage then there is a record of who his real mother is. Melony picks up a snake while she and Homer are hanging out in one of the abandoned buildings by the river. When she sees a hawk in the air, she flings the snake toward the river, and the hawk swoops down, picks the snake up in his talons, and flies away with it. Then Melony leads him to a picture on the wall where a woman is putting her mouth on the penis of a pony. Melony tells Homer that she will do to him what the woman is doing to the pony if he gets her file from the orphanage office.

Homer keeps the photograph hidden between his mattress and the bedsprings. Homer looks at the photograph often. When Dr. Larch catches Homer searching his office, Dr. Larch tells Homer that he doesn't keep records of the mothers that give the babies up for adoption. Dr. Larch says his records start from the day the baby is born. Homer sends a note to Melony to tell her he can't find her record the next time he goes to read to the girls.

One day in one of the old buildings, Melony makes Homer promise that he will stay at the orphanage as long as she is there. Melony tries to perform oral sex on Homer, but Homer's penis softens instead of hardening while Melony is performing. This angers Melony.

One of the other orphan boys finds the picture of the woman with the pony and shows it to some of the other boys. One of the nurses catches the boy and gives the photo to Dr. Larch. Dr. Larch is surprised to see that the woman in the photo is the whore's daughter, the whore he lost his virginity to, and the girl who died when he wouldn't perform an abortion on her. Dr. Larch decides Homer is old enough to learn how to become the doctor's assistant in surgery and other procedures. The doctor keeps the photo as a reminder of how he failed the girl and why he does the work he does.



By the age of 16, Homer is learning to be a doctor, has seen a live birth, has learned how to perform abortions, and is having routine sex with Melony.

Analysis

It is symbolic that Dr. Larch chooses to have Homer read *David Copperfield* to the orphans because part of the story is about being an orphan. It's as if the doctor is choosing stories to show the boys that they can be more in life than just orphans and to tell the boys not allow the fact that their parents left them behind to define them as human beings.

As Homer walks from the girls' division of the orphanage each night to the boys' division, he smells sawdust, cigars, perfume, and a smell coming from the river. Each of these smells are symbolic of ghosts of the past, ghosts of what the town of St. Cloud's used to be—a logging town and a whorehouse; the river was used for sending the logs to the paper mill.

Dr. Larch chooses to keep the expecting women and the women choosing abortions separate because they are going through different types of emotions. While both types of women are leaving their children behind, the women giving their children up for adoption have hope for their children, while the women who choose abortion know that there is no hope for their fetus.

In the girls' division of the orphanage is a girl, Melony, who is about Homer's age, or maybe slightly older. Melony is a very angry person, which Dr. Larch explains to Homer is because of her past experiences. She was left at the orphanage when she was five or six and returned to the orphanage more times than Homer. One night when Homer goes to read to the girls, Melony moons Homer and calls him Sunshine.

Homer finding out that he has a record foreshadows Homer searching the doctor's office to find out who his real mother is.

Melony represents the end of Homer's innocence. She teaches him and tells him things that Homer isn't aware of and has been sheltered from by living in the orphanage for most of his life. Since Melony is older than Homer, Homer believes she knows more than he does and that he should believe what she says is true.

Dr. Larch, Saint Larch, is a symbol of God. He makes and enforces the rules of the St. Cloud orphanage. Dr. Larch sees himself as a God, deciding whether to give abortions or help the mothers give birth to a baby. He also sees himself as a God because he decides what the rules are at St. Cloud's and his rule is to only keep records on the orphan from the day it is born, eliminating information on the parents or the mother who gives the baby up for adoption.

Dr. Larch is also a father figure to Homer. Dr. Larch unofficially becomes a parent to Homer, teaching him life lessons that a father would teach his own biological son. In many ways, Homer's life mimics that of Dr. Larch's life. Homer is a younger version of Dr. Larch.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 4. By this time, Homer and Melony are close to 20 years old. Homer continues to study Gray's Anatomy, the medical textbook Dr. Larch gives him to study. While Dr. Larch permits Homer to deliver babies, he doesn't allow Homer to perform abortions. Dr. Larch believes that Homer should attend medical school and make his own decision as to whether or not to perform abortions before he performs one on his own.

The nearby town of Heart's Haven and Heart's Rock is introduced. One of the owners of the apple orchards in the town is a very wealthy man, Wally Worthing Senior. In addition to being a drunk, but unbeknownst to him and his family, he has Alzheimer's. Both ultimately kill him. His wife, Alice Bean, changes her first and last name after she marries him to Olive Worthington. She is really the brains of the operation, installing big baking ovens to sell apple pies and more during the season. The two have a son, Wally Worthington Junior.

While Dr. Larch is trying to find a cadaver for Homer to learn on, a pregnant woman comes to St. Cloud's and collapses in the dispensary from eclampsia. Homer delivers her baby and saves the woman's life in Dr. Larch's absence. The nurse and the doctor decide that Homer should name the baby, which Homer does. He names him David, after David Copperfield. Dr. Larch goes to the sleeping Homer, kisses Homer on the lips in a fatherly manner, and whispers how proud he is of Homer.

Dr. Larch also has a habit of writing the history at St. Cloud's as a form of fiction. For example, when one of the orphans dies, he writes a history about the child being adopted and even describes his fictional family. In addition, Dr. Larch goes into Homer's history and writes it as if Homer has a heart problem to keep Homer from being drafted into the war. Wally and Candy, the daughter of the local lobsterman and mechanic, fall in love and become engaged. While engaged, Candy also gets pregnant. The couple considers moving up the marriage, but they are also concerned that the U.S. might enter the war, which would mean that Wally would go off to war.

When Wally asks some of the men working at his parents' orchard about abortion, one of the men tells him to talk to Grace Lynch. When Wally asks her where to take Candy, Grace tells him about St. Cloud's. Wally Junior plans to borrow Senior's Cadillac to take what their parents think is a drive up the coast. The couple is really driving to St. Cloud's for an abortion.

Analysis

The introduction of the Worthington family in Heart's Haven and Heart's Rock is to show a parallel world that the family at the orphanage lives in comparison to that of the



Worthington family. Each "family" has its similarities and differences. The introduction of the town also foreshadows that it is a place that Homer Wells might go someday.

Olive Worthington and Dr. Larch are similar. Both understand that there are worlds and things happening outside of their own towns. Both are also concerned that World War II will draft each of their sons. In other words, Dr. Larch and Olive Worthington are living parallel lives.

In addition, Wally Worthington, Junior and Homer Wells are living parallel lives. Wally is a little bit older than Homer, but both are old enough to go to war. Second, both boys experience their first love, although Wally's experience is a positive one, while Homer and Melony's love is a negative one.

Melony continues to relate to Jane Eyre as she gets older and Homer continues to read the book to the girl orphans at the orphanage. When Dr. Larch returns to the orphanage, the nurses tell him how Homer saved the life of the pregnant woman and the baby. The nurses say Homer is an angel, which is fitting as the "son" of a saint.

Ironically, Homer wakes the morning after his birth with the responsibility of naming his third cadaver and the baby boy he delivered the previous night. It is symbolic of the circle of life, when one is born another dies. In this case, the female cadaver will be put to good use—to teach Homer medical procedures.

When Dr. Larch gives Homer the fatherly kisses, Dr. Larch also realizes that one day Homer will leave St. Cloud's and Dr. Larch worries what will happen to him when he no longer has fatherly responsibilities and duties with Homer.

Candy's pregnancy foreshadows the worlds of the Worthington family and the family at St. Cloud's orphanage colliding.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 5. The wind is picking up in St. Cloud's. It even awakens the stationmaster, who thinks it is Judgment Day. Melony watches as a few women walk from the first train of the morning up to St. Cloud's. Melony observes that the women that come on the morning train and leave on the afternoon train walk differently when leaving than when coming, as if they carry a heavier burden when leaving without their baby. Dr. Larch, Melony, and Homer all feel something is different in the air. Unknown to them, the stationmaster lays dead in the weeds.

Dr. Larch asks Homer to perform an autopsy on a dead fetus. The mother was killed in a stabbing, and the doctor wants a specific cause of death, since the baby was almost fully developed when the doctor tried to deliver it. Homer performs the autopsy and tells the doctor the baby died from a severed artery from the stabbing. Homer also tells the doctor that he won't perform abortions. The doctor says it's his choice. Two boys from the orphanage playing outside fall over the dead and frozen body of the stationmaster and start screaming for the adults in the orphanage.

The two boys from the orphanage are sent to tell the assistant stationmaster that the stationmaster is dead. At the same time, Wally and Candy pull up to the station to ask directions to the orphanage. The older of the two orphans thinks the couple is there to adopt a child and hopes it will be him. The two boys get in the couple's car, and the older boy gives them directions to the orphanage. When Wally sees Candy with the younger boy in her lap, he begs her not to have the abortion, but Candy tells him it's not the right time for them to have a baby.

Wally starts handing out the jellies he brought for the orphans while Dr. Larch approaches the two young people. As soon as Homer looks into Candy's eyes, Homer falls in love with her and can instantly see why she is there. Homer escorts Candy inside and Dr. Larch and Wally follow. Dr. Larch tries to get Candy alone to explain the procedure to her, and Homer escorts Wally outside in time to throw up. While Homer tries to explain the procedure to Wally, Wally keeps talking about the apple trees the orphanage should plant on the hill. Wally also invites Homer to return to the shore with them so they can pack up a truck and bring the trees back to the orphanage for planting.

After the abortion, Wally comes into the recovery room to be with Candy. Homer tells Dr. Larch about the trip, saying he'll only be gone for a couple of days. Dr. Larch tells Wally and Candy about Homer's "heart condition," but he also tells them that Homer doesn't know about it. Homer packs his bag and says goodbye to the two nurses, while Dr. Larch starts the autopsy on the stationmaster. When Homer says goodbye to Dr. Larch, they tell each other they love each other for the first time. Homer, Candy, and Wally

drive away. Melony is looking out the window when the car drives by, and she thinks Homer broke his promise to stay at the orphanage as long as she stays.

Analysis

The wind is a symbol of something blowing into town, a change coming to St. Cloud's. It might be foreshadowing the arrival of Wally Junior and Candy for the abortion. Ironically, when Homer turns to *Gray's Anatomy* for additional information on the fetus, the fetus information is at the end of the book rather than the beginning of the book. In another twist of irony, Homer learns from *Gray's Anatomy* that the baby has an expression as early as eight weeks, which to Homer means they have a soul as early as eight weeks. This foreshadows Homer's refusal to provide abortions to mothers who are farther along than eight weeks.

Dr. Larch encourages Homer to stay gone as long as he wishes, seeing an opportunity for Homer to experience a normal life with young people his own age—Wally and Candy. When Homer leaves, the nurses and the doctor say it is only for a couple of days, but there is foreshadowing that Homer might never return to the orphanage once Homer experiences the world outside of St. Cloud's.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 6. Homer Wells has been away from St. Cloud's for two weeks. Dr. Larch is allowing the mail to pile up, Melony is reading to the girl orphans, and Nurse Angela is reading to the boy orphans. When Homer is gone for three weeks, Dr. Larch says he doesn't care about who does what, so Melony starts reading to the boy orphans, too.

By the time Homer Wells is gone for six weeks, Dr. Larch hasn't even heard from him. Dr. Larch agrees to meet with Melony to see if she is interested in helping at the hospital, and Dr. Larch starts to take care of the mail again. Olive Worthington, Wally Junior's mother, sends a sizable donation to the orphanage. The letter also tells Dr. Larch they are happy to employ Homer for the summer on the apple orchard, and she thinks Homer is a good influence on Wally. She also tells Dr. Larch that Homer's request is to have his earnings sent to the orphanage, minus any of his expenses.

Dr. Larch writes a letter back to Olive Worthington, complimenting Wally and Candy. He tells Olive about Homer's "heart condition" and asks her to have Homer write a letter to the orphanage.

Melony meets with Dr. Larch but tells him that she isn't interested in working in the hospital. When she returns to the girls' division, Melony packs some of her belongings into her pillowcase, steals money and a coat from Mrs. Grogan, and buys a train ticket to Livermore Falls. As Melony boards the train, she remembers reading on the emblem of Wally's car, Ocean View Orchards, and Melony vows to find "Sunshine," her nickname for Homer.

When Mrs. Grogan discovers Melony is gone, she is upset rather than angry that Melony stole from her. Mrs. Grogan is concerned about Melony's well-being, but Dr. Larch assures her that Melony is an adult. Dr. Larch resumes his responsibility of reading to the boys and girls, separately, at the orphanage.

Dr. Larch writes a letter to Olive Worthington to tell Homer that Melony left the orphanage and that she took with her the only copy of *Jane Eyre* that Homer once read to the girl orphans. The doctor knows that this will notify Homer that Melony might be looking for him and that Mrs. Worthington will send a replacement copy of the book as a gift to the orphanage.

When Homer reaches the town where Candy and Wally live, Homer takes to spending time with Candy's father, Ray Kendall. On Sundays, Homer works with Ray on his boat pulling lobster pots. Homer doesn't work for money, but rather to be out on the open sea.

It takes six weeks for Homer to write his first letter to Dr. Larch. He tells Dr. Larch he is learning to swim and drive. He also tells him about Ray, Candy, Wally Junior, Wally



Senior and Olive. After this, Homer writes about every other week, but Dr. Larch always writes back and mails a letter the day after he receives one from Homer.

One day, some of the workers take Homer to the cider house, which is a barracks where the apple pickers live during picking season. The farm workers tell Homer that the pickers are negroes and that the workers prepare the cider house for them each year before they arrive. The cider house living quarters remind Homer of the abandoned building where the old saw workers lived on the orphanage property. The cider house, however, is much cleaner, nicer, and homier than those buildings. When the rest of the workers pile into a work van to have lunch at the local diner, Homer stays in the cider house and eats the lunch Olive packs for him and Wally every day. Homer then lies on one of the beds and masturbates. It's not until he's finished that he realizes Grace Lynch, one of the other workers, is there.

Wally and Candy double date with Homer and Debra Pettigrew, one of the workers at the apple orchard who is the same age as Homer, at the drive-in movie. Not only is it Homer's first drive-in movie, but it's also his first movie. As the movie ends, Homer bursts into tears because he realizes that he misses Dr. Larch, Nurse Edna and Nurse Angela.

In the end, Melony and Fuzzy Stone, a former orphan and now a doctor, is looking for Homer Wells.

Analysis

The head of the girls' division, Mrs. Grogan, can see that when Melony reads, she is analyzing the words at the same time. Mrs. Grogan believes that Melony is on the threshold of a transition in her life and that increasing her responsibilities at the orphanage will lead her in the direction she should take. Dr. Larch sees giving Melony more responsibility as replacing Homer, but Nurse Edna points out that if Melony were a boy, Dr. Larch would have already given Melony more responsibility.

Dr. Larch sees one connection between Melony and himself at this point, even though he detests the girl in every other way. He sees that Melony is now 24 or 25 years old and shouldn't be at the orphanage anymore, but that Dr. Larch is older, and doesn't have any other place to go either.

Homer sees Ray Kendall as a replacement for Dr. Larch. Ray Kendall is a lobsterman, but he is also a wizard with mechanics. Homer sees a mechanic as the doctor of machinery and equipment, and therefore, he relates Ray in his mind to Dr. Larch.

At the same time Homer realizes he misses the people who raised him at St. Cloud's, he also realizes that he never wants to step foot at St. Cloud's again. Homer relates to the negro nomad on the camel at the beginning of the movie in that Homer doesn't have a real home, either—he doesn't have a place where he comes from and he doesn't have a place to go.



When two new board members come to the orphanage, they hint that Dr. Larch, the nurses, and Mrs. Grogan are getting older and need to start bringing in new and younger people to help take over the orphanage. Even one of the former orphans, Fuzzy Stone, who is now a doctor, writes a letter to Dr. Larch, suggesting he should take over when the doctor is ready to retire.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 7. By August, Melony has been travelling to all of the apple orchards in Maine she can find, looking for Homer. When she reaches York Farm, the foreman sees that Melony picks apples so well he tells her to come back in three weeks when the season starts so she can work for him. Melony declines and walks away. As she walks past the orchard fields, two men working get in their truck and run after her. Melony beats one of them up with her fists and feet and the other with the buckle end of the man's belt. She takes their truck back to where the foreman is and blackmails him into giving her a place to stay in the cider house, so she can work and try to find out from the other pickers where Ocean View Orchards is, so she can find Homer.

Thousands of miles away, Homer is also in the cider house, helping the other workers paint and prepare the cider house for the arrival of the pickers. Homer notices a piece of old paper tacked to the wall, which contains the cider house rules. Homer notices the majority of the rules have to do with being on the tin roof of the cider house. When he asks some of the women workers, they explain that Olive writes the rules every year. Each rule exists because one or another of them has done something that caused them pain.

When the other workers leave for lunch, Grace Lynch stays behind, cleaning a big vat, and Homer stays behind to climb up on to the tin roof of the cider house. It's raining, so Homer can't see the ferris wheel or the ocean, but he does find that someone has nailed wooden slats to create benches to sit on when on the roof. When Grace hears him, she calls for Homer to help her out of the vat. When Homer goes to the vat, Grace is naked and tries to get Homer to have sex with her. Homer is saved by Wally honking the horn outside because he needs Homer's help to get his father out of trouble in town.

Homer confirms what Wally says by saying that he described the symptoms to Dr. Larch, and Dr. Larch thinks Wally Senior has a neurological problem called Alzheimer's. When they take Wally Senior to the neurologist, the doctor confirms Dr. Larch's diagnosis. Later that summer, Wally Senior dies, but he dies with his dignity back because everyone now knows the reason for his bizarre behavior was that he had a disease.

As the summer ends and Wally prepares to go back to college, Olive offers Homer an opportunity to stay in Wally's room, go to high school, work on the farm, and then go on to college. Homer writes a letter to Dr. Larch to ask for his permission to stay.

In response to the request of the new board members, Dr. Larch starts writing follow-up descriptions for each orphan. Homer is one of the orphans the report contains information on, and Dr. Larch describes his "heart condition" as one that starts out worse as a child and progressively gets harder to see on an X-ray as Homer gets older.



Dr. Larch even goes out of his way to set up a P.O. Box for "Fuzzy Stone" to receive his mail. After Dr. Larch submits his report to the board, the board sends a survey to Fuzzy Stone's P.O. Box, which is forwarded to St. Cloud's, just as Dr. Larch suspected. Dr. Larch completes the questionnaire on behalf of Fuzzy Stone and returns it to the board.

Dr. Larch starts exhibiting unusual behavior around the orphanage. The nurses attribute it to old age, Homer Wells, the new board members, the ether use, and the life at St. Cloud's causing Dr. Larch to lose his mind. Dr. Larch even goes around now and kisses each of the boys good night, which is Dr. Larch's way of making up for not kissing Homer Wells more when he was living at the orphanage.

The night before Wally goes back to college, he takes Homer to the fair. While they are riding the ferris wheel, Wally talks about being a pilot and flying in the war in Europe. After the fair, Homer drops Wally off at Candy's house so they can have a private night together, and Homer picks Debra up for a night at the drive-in movie. Even though they are alone at the drive-in, Debra still does not allow Homer to have sex with her.

When Homer Wells receives his survey from the board, he tucks it away. It is the same day the pickers arrive for harvest, so Homer doesn't have time to complete the survey and send it back when he receives it.

Homer and Melony both start out picking apples during the harvest. Both also witness and help with making cider in the cider house. Melony lives in the cider house on her farm, while Homer lives in the main house with Mrs. Worthington. Melony makes up a story about having a knife in her pocket, which keeps the men from bothering her. One night, the other occupants of the cider house ask her to read *Jane Eyre* to them, and she does. Melony cries herself to sleep that night, and one of the other women, Sandra, tells Melony she should give up on her boyfriend since he isn't worth it if he didn't tell Melony where he was.

The same night, Homer goes up on the roof of the cider house to hang out with the other workers. The workers are trying to figure out what the ferris wheel is. When Homer tries to explain it's a ride, Mr. Rose, the foreman stops him. The men don't believe it's a ride, and Mr. Rose says it doesn't do the men any good to know what it is. Mr. Rose then asks Homer to take him to see the ferris wheel. Homer and Mr. Rose ride it, and Mr. Rose vomits on the crowd.

Analysis

One of the people in town suggests to Wally Junior that something is wrong with Wally Senior that doesn't have anything to do with alcohol. Wally tells his mother the same thing when she meets the three men in the driveway after they pick up Wally Senior from the store.

Dr. Larch seems to be setting the scene for the board members to replace him at the orphanage with Fuzzy Stone, but Fuzzy Stone is dead, so it appears as if Dr. Larch is setting the stage for Homer to practice under Dr. Fuzzy Stone's fake credentials. Homer

approaches everything in life with a very practical approach. He has a lack of emotion and feelings when it comes to everything he learns, except his forbidden love for Candy.

It is foreshadowed that, after completing medical school, Homer will take over St. Cloud's from Dr. Larch, just as a son might take over the family business from his father.

During harvest, Homer and Melony are living parallel lives on separate apple orchard farms. As Melony reads *Jane Eyre* out loud to her fellow occupants of the cider house, she feels as if she has come full circle in life—back to the girls' division of St. Cloud's.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 8. When the apple picking season ends, the farmer asks Melony to stay on for mousing. When Melony finishes mousing, she decides to head to a bigger city in Maine for the winter.

It's Thanksgiving, and Wally and Candy are home from school for the holidays. The Worthingtons are hosting the dinner, which includes Candy and her father, Ray. Wally is talking about how he wants to be a pilot so he can serve his country in the war. Candy says Wally is selfish because he only wants to serve in the war so he can experience flying.

Homer knows more than his biology teacher about the female reproduction system. One day in biology class, Homer embarrasses his teacher by telling him he has the sheep and the rabbit uteri mixed up.

The board starts to send the responses of the orphan surveys to Dr. Larch. Nurse Edna writes Homer a letter to find out why he hasn't filled out his questionnaire yet. Dr. Larch writes a letter to Homer to tell him about his heart condition. While everything seems to be changing in Ocean View because of the war, nothing seems to be changing at the orphanage.

Before biology class one day, Homer goes to the classroom early to ask for his own rabbit cadaver because his partner is obsessed with vaginas. The geography teacher has the maps of the world pulled down, and Homer asks if he can look at the maps if he rolls them back up for the teacher. It's Homer's first real look at the world, and it allows him to gain perspective on how big the oceans are, how little Maine is, and where Germany (and the war) is. While Homer doesn't want to take Debra Pettigrew to Bath to see the Fred Astaire movie, when Candy wants to see it, Homer takes her.

When Melony gets to Bath, she finds a job working in the shipyards. Melony befriends a girl about her age, whose name is Lorna. Lorna asks Melony if she wants to see the new Fred Astaire movie about the same time that Homer and Candy arrive in Bath. At the same time, the adoptive family of Mary Agnes, an orphan from St. Cloud's whose collarbone Melony once broke, is also heading to the Fred Astaire movie in Bath. Mary Agnes slips and falls on a van that has the same emblem as the car that brought Wally and Candy to St. Cloud's, and Mary Agnes recognizes it immediately.

When Homer opens his wallet in front of the movie theater, the wind blows out a clump of Candy's pubic hair that Homer kept when he was cleaning up after her abortion. Candy realizes what it is, and then Homer confesses his love for Candy. Candy tells Homer that everyone loves him— she and Wally. They decide to skip the movie.



When Mary Agnes scans the movie audience for Candy, Wally, and possibly Homer, she sees Melony. Mary Agnes talks to Melony and tells her she saw a van with the Ocean View orchard emblem on it. Back on Ray Kendall's dock, Candy and Homer are talking about what to do about the fact that they love each other, and Candy says they just have to wait and see what happens. Simultaneously, Olive and Ray both realize that Candy and Homer are in love, but that Wally, Candy and Homer are three great kids, and they have to work out the situation on their own.

The day after the movies is the day that the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor. Wally enlists and goes away for training. Before he goes, he asks Candy to marry him, but she says she won't be his widow. Homer confronts her about this, but she says waiting and seeing includes the war, too. Candy and Homer kiss and lay with each other, but they don't go all the way. When the farm workers find out about Homer's heart, they all start to treat him differently, trying to protect him. Melony decides it's time to leave Bath.

Melony moves five times looking for the Ocean View orchard. Melony heads back to Bath, and now there are four people looking for Homer, including Melony. Melony goes back to Bath to see if she can get her old job back at the shipyards.

Each person gives what they can to the war effort. Homer becomes a nurse's aide at the hospital, along with Candy. Olive is a plane spotter for two hours a day at her club. Ray makes torpedoes at the Navy shipyard, and Wally is still going through flight training. Wally comes home for 48 hours at Christmas and then goes back to flight training. Eventually, he starts flying and dropping bombs in the war effort. On the way to take Wally back to the airport, Homer asks if Wally and Candy had sex, and Candy says they did. A few months later, Candy drives on to the orchard to tell Homer that Wally was shot down over Burma.

Analysis

Homer takes offense to Dr. Larch telling Homer he can live a normal life. Homer doesn't consider anything about his life to be normal. Starting with being an orphan and ending with the fact that he is in love with his best friend's girlfriend, Homer doesn't have much hope that he can live a life of normalcy, even away from St. Cloud's.

The bare winter trees on the apple orchard at Ocean View are a metaphor for the soldiers at war shaking their sabers. While Olive sees and hears the rattling of the trees as a solitary winter, her first without Senior, Homer sees the future for all of them in those wintery trees.

Melony and Homer are both heading toward the city of Bath, Maine. While it is one of the bigger cities in Maine, it is not a big city. This foreshadows Homer and Melony running into each other while they're there.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor indicates the start of the war, but it also foreshadows Wally enlisting in the military to learn how to fly B-25 bomber planes, just like he has always wanted. It also hints that Wally will die in the war, which will push Candy and Homer together.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 9. Two weeks after Wally's plane goes down, the Army Air Force visits Olive to tell her that it's a good sign that the plane didn't explode in the air because it means the crew might have had a chance to eject. Olive and Candy think Wally is alive, and Ray and Homer think he is dead. Everyone, including the farm workers, see signs of Wally being dead or alive. For example, one of the women has dreams about Wally, which she takes as a sign that Wally is trying to send them a message, which also means he is alive.

A woman whose husband died in the war comes into the hospital for an abortion, but the doctor refuses to give it to her. Homer passes the nurse a note to give to the woman that tells her to go to St. Cloud's and ask for the orphanage. The nurse confesses to Homer and Candy that she gives abortions in her kitchen, makes it look like a miscarriage, and then sends the girls to the hospital for the D and C. The nurse tells Homer he should be careful about giving out the doctor's information because it could get the doctor caught for giving illegal abortions.

Two months after Wally's plane goes down, the three members of his crew return home. None of them know what happened to Wally, though. Instead of sitting on the dock, Candy and Homer sit inside of the cider house when it rains or on the roof when it doesn't rain. The apple pickers are not staying in the cider house because of the war—they don't have enough gas to drive there because of the rationing. One night, Candy and Homer make love on one of the beds in the cider house for the first time. Homer stays inside of Candy too long after he ejaculates, his penis shrinks, and the semen spill out of the condom, so Homer tells Candy to douche to avoid getting pregnant. The only reason Candy doesn't want to get pregnant either is that she doesn't want to tell Olive because telling Olive would admit that Candy thinks Wally is dead.

Homer tells Candy that they'll go to St. Cloud's after the harvest. They'll tell her dad and Olive that it's a war effort. After Candy has the baby, they'll write home or come home and tell everyone they got married and adopted a baby.

Three months after Wally's plane went down, the apple harvest starts, and Candy knows she is pregnant again. Candy suggests they go to St. Cloud's, but Homer suggests they get married and have the baby. After the harvest, Homer and Candy take Wally's Cadillac and make the drive to St. Cloud's; the doctor and nurses debate on where the couple will sleep, but they end up putting the couple in a double-bed room in the girls' division. Candy and Homer work in the hospital, and they spend both Thanksgiving and Christmas at St. Cloud. By Christmas-time, Candy is five months pregnant.



Right before Spring breaks, Melony and Lorna become lovers. Lorna tells Melony the only way they can be lovers is if Melony stops looking for Homer. Around the same time, Homer makes a trip back to Heart's Haven to pick up the baby apple trees for planting at the orphanage. The ground is still too frozen to plant them. About mid-April, the ground is thawed enough to plant the trees; shortly after, Candy's water breaks, and she gives birth to a baby boy, who they name Angel Wells.

In mid-May, while Candy is nursing Angel in the girls' division and Homer is talking with Dr. Larch in the boys' division, the stationmaster brings Candy a telegram. The telegram is from Olive telling Candy that Wally was found alive in Burma, but he's underweight and paralyzed. Candy runs to the boys' division to tell Homer and Dr. Larch the news.

Homer sends a telegram back to Olive telling her that he has adopted a baby boy. Candy calls her father and tells him the same thing. When Candy and Homer go back to Heart's Haven, Homer drops Candy off at her father's house and takes Angel home with him. Olive has stocked Wally and Homer's old room with everything the baby needs and is turning the dining room into a bedroom for Wally.

Homer tells Candy he will only wait for her to choose between him and Wally for so long. Homer says she has until Angel understands who he parents are and that he is not adopted to make her decision.

Analysis

Nurse Caroline's warning is foreshadowing that Dr. Larch will finally get caught as an abortionist. The fact that Dr. Larch keeps writing to the President to make abortion legal is not helping to keep his actions under wraps, either.

Homer can see that not much at St. Cloud's has changed. The only thing is that Dr. Larch seems to have gone crazy in Homer's absence. One night, under the influence of the champagne Olive sends for Thanksgiving, Dr. Larch calls Homer Dr. Fuzzy Stone.

Melony giving up on Homer Wells marks a new beginning for her. The planting of the trees and the coming of the springtime weather marks a new beginning for Candy and Homer as well—as parents to their son. The day after the baby is born, the winter weather returns, as if it took a break only for the birth of Angel.

Ray knows that Candy and Homer had the baby and that Homer didn't adopt the baby. Ray, however, does not tell his daughter this. Candy telling Homer that she needs to see Wally before she decides how she feels makes Homer believe that he and Wally will be in competition for Candy for the rest of their lives. This is ironic because Homer loves Wally like they are brothers, and Wally feels the same way about Homer.

Wally's letter to Candy, which contains his concerns that she won't want to marry a cripple, as well as Homer's ultimatum to Candy, predicts that Candy might choose Wally over Homer.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 10. Fifteen years later, Melony and Lorna are still a couple. Melony and Lorna supervise the boarding house where they live, and they both work at the shipyard. Melony takes on the masculine role in the couple, and Lorna takes on the feminine role. One night, Lorna tells Melony she is pregnant and that she only slept with a guy one time. Melony forces Lorna to go to St. Cloud's to have an abortion and gives Lorna a carton to give to Mrs. Grogan if she is alive. The carton contains a jacket that is too big for Mrs. Grogan, as well as the exact amount of money Melony stole from Mrs. Grogan when she left St. Cloud's. When Lorna returns, Melony has packed Lorna's things and kicks her out. They run into each other once, and Lorna says that Mrs. Grogan and Dr. Larch are both still alive. Melony frames a newspaper article about Wally coming home after missing in action. Now, Melony knows where Ocean View is and where Homer Wells might be living.

For the past 15 years, Homer Wells has been running Ocean View, and he is now responsible for posting the cider house rules. Mr. Rose, the foreman, still brings pickers to the farm every year. Someone writes on the cider house rules every year. Some of the comments are derogatory. The other pickers tell Homer it's Mr. Rose because he knows how to read and write. When Homer tells Mr. Rose that he hopes nobody takes offense to the rules, Mr. Rose tells Homer the pickers have their own set of rules. Even Candy establishes a set of rules for herself, Homer, Angel, and Wally. The night before Wally comes home from the hospital, Candy tells Homer that no matter what happens, they have to promise to always share Angel. Homer promises.

For fifteen years, the board of trustees has been trying to replace Dr. Larch, but they have not been successful. At this point, Dr. Larch is 90 years old. The only change in 15 years is that Homer Wells sends Nurse Caroline to St. Cloud's to get a job "doing the Lord's work." The board of trustees meet at a hotel, which is the same hotel that Candy and Homer escape to when they need to get away with each other for a little while. Two members of the board of trustees see Candy and Homer, and Candy and Homer see the two board members, but neither of them knows who the others are.

One promise that Homer did not make Candy keep was to make a decision about telling Angel who his parents really are before Angel was old enough to know better. By the time Angel is 15, he stills thinks he's adopted and that he has three adoptive parents—Homer, Candy, and Wally. Olive died of cancer before Wally came home from the hospital and before the war ended. Before Olive died, she made it clear to both Homer and Candy that she knew they had deceived Wally and that they shouldn't continue to do so.

By the time Angel is 15, the four of them are living as one, big, happy family. Melony takes a month's vacation each year to return to the apple orchards to pick apples. This



year, she shows up Ocean View asking for Homer, who she finds out is in charge of the farm now. When Melony sees Angel, she immediately notices that he is the spitting image of Homer when Homer was Angel's age. Melony says this, but Homer says that Angel's adopted. When Candy joins the group, Melony recognizes that the rest of Angel's features come from Candy.

Melony knows the truth, and she confronts Homer about everything when they are alone. When Melony leaves, Homer notices the old, blank St. Cloud's questionnaire he had hanging in his bathroom is gone. He calls St. Cloud's to warn them that Melony might complete it and send it in.

Homer tells Candy that it's time they tell everyone the truth. They decide to wait another six weeks until after the harvest is over that night, when they meet in the cider house. The same night, when Homer opens the mail, he finds Dr. Larch's old doctor bag with the letters F.S. on them, standing for Fuzzy Stone. When Candy and Homer see Wally's Cadillac pulling up to the cider house, Homer has a realization.

Dr. Larch spends all day in his office perfecting the history before he makes the announcement to his staff. He writes an obituary for Homer Wells and writes out a glowing description of Fuzzy Stone. He tells Nurse Caroline that she will be the one who recommends Fuzzy Stone, who is really Homer Wells, to take his place. He tells all of the nurses that they have to tell the board they are against abortion. Then he writes a letter to Homer to tell him the truth about everything and beg him to come to work at St. Cloud's as Dr. Fuzzy Stone.

Analysis

While Melony has been distracted for the last 15 years by her loyalty to Lorna, Melony's concentration is now broken. She is refocusing her sights on Homer Wells again. Homer represents the first person to break a promise to Melony, which is what set her sights on finding him in the first place. When Lorna broke her promise to be faithful to Melony, it forces Melony to push Lorna away, which symbolically is punishment for both Homer and Lorna breaking their promises to Melony.

Mr. Rose is telling Homer that African-Americans have their own set of rules to abide by. Mr. Rose also says that white people have their own set of rules that they want the African-Americans to abide by. Mr. Rose insinuates to Homer that the two sets of rules do not mix, but instead exist parallel to each other.

Ironically, it is in the cider house that Candy establishes a set of rules for herself and Homer before Wally comes home from the hospital. It seems as if guilt is what kept Candy and Homer from telling anyone that they are in love and that Angel is their son. Candy and Wally were married one month after he came home from the hospital. Ray accidentally blew himself up in an explosion when Angel was a baby, tinkering with a torpedo he was building in his basement. Grace Lynch also died from an infection when she tried to give herself an abortion.



Over the years, Candy and Homer suspect that Wally knows—knows they are lovers and knows that Angel is their child. Some of the things Wally says hint that he knows, but nobody ever comes right out and says it.

Since Melony knows that Dr. Larch performs abortions, she might be responsible for his downfall. The board is just looking for a reason to replace Dr. Larch and Melony might be the one that finally gives them the reason they need to fire him.

As Wally pulls up to the cider house and Homer is standing there with the doctor's bag in his hands, Homer realizes where he belongs—back at St. Cloud's. It foreshadows Homer taking Dr. Larch's place, but under the identity of Dr. Fuzzy Stone, who is an orphan who died when he was young. When Dr. Larch was trying to fool the board members years ago, he made up college and medical school transcripts for Fuzzy Stone. Dr. Larch slipped the made-up transcripts for Fuzzy Stone in a pile to Harvard Medical School when he was returning transcripts of potential doctors that Harvard had sent to Dr. Larch. For all these years, Dr. Larch has been setting the stage for Homer to take his place, and now Homer realizes what Dr. Larch is up to.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 11. When Melony returns to Bath, she runs into Lorna at the pizza place. Melony tells Lorna what happened with Homer and how disappointed she is in Homer because she thought he was a hero. The guy Lorna is with gets in a fight with Melony, breaking Melony's arm and nose. Lorna takes Melony to the hospital, and they move back in together in the boardinghouse for women.

When the car pulls up to the cider house, it's not Wally, but Mr. Rose who steps out. Mr. Rose arrives with his daughter, Rose, who is about the same age as Angel. Rose has a baby of her own, who doesn't have a name yet. When Angel goes to the cider house the next morning on his mother's behalf to see if Rose needs anything for the baby, Angel falls in love with Rose. Angel starts to make a list of potential names for Rose's baby.

After a woman comes to St. Cloud's and dies because of a botched abortion elsewhere, Dr. Larch blames himself for her death, even though there was nothing he could have done to save her. Nurse Caroline writes Homer a letter, telling him that he needs to come and replace Dr. Larch and that St. Cloud's is where Homer can be of use.

As Angel and Rose get to know each other better, Angel notices that Mr. Rose is abusing Rose. He tells his parents this. Two of the pickers tell Angel that he doesn't want to be in the knife business, which is meant as a warning to Angel against messing with Mr. Rose.

Homer receives three pieces of mail: the letter from Dr. Larch, the letter from Nurse Caroline, and the questionnaire from Melony, telling Homer that she thought he was her hero. When Homer writes a letter back to Dr. Larch and Nurse Caroline declining the doctor's job, Dr. Larch writes one last letter to Homer. Then, Dr. Larch administers too much ether to himself and dies.

When Homer tries to talk to Mr. Rose about Rose getting hurt, Mr. Rose hands Homer the candle that Candy left behind in the cider house the night Mr. Rose almost caught Rose and Homer in it.

Rose tells Angel that she is pregnant again. When Angel tells his parents, Candy goes to the cider house to get Rose and the baby so that Rose can go to St. Cloud's for an abortion. When Candy gets to the cider house, she realizes that Mr. Rose is the father of Rose's second baby, the one Rose is pregnant with now. She takes Rose to the house. When Homer calls to speak to Dr. Larch, Nurse Caroline tells him the doctor is dead, so Homer performs the abortion at home.

Muddy, one of the pickers, brings Rose his knife while she is recovering from the abortion in Homer's house. During the night, Rose runs away with her baby. The next day, they find out that she stabbed Mr. Rose with the knife, and he bleeds to death.



On the cider house roof, Homer tells Angel the whole story about his parentage, and this time he tells Angel the truth. The same night, Candy takes Wally down where her father's dock used to be and tells him the truth, too. Candy and Wally stay together, and Angel continues to live with them. Homer interviews as Dr. Fuzzy Stone with the board to replace Dr. Larch. Fuzzy Stone gets the job and moves to St. Cloud's. Eventually, Homer starts sleeping with Nurse Caroline. Finally, one day a dead body arrives on the train, and it's Melony, who died from an electrical accident.

Analysis

Homer has been keeping track of the number of times he has sex with Candy in pencil on the back of a picture of Wally with his plane, Opportunity Knocks. When they return from the cider house after Mr. Rose arrives, Homer writes over the number in pen, which symbolizes the end of his sexual relationship with Candy and a new beginning for Homer, Angel, Candy, and Wally. Candy keeps track of the same number on the back of the photo of her teaching Homer how to swim. She erases the number altogether as a symbol of the end of her old life and the beginning of her new life.

The scar on Rose's face indicates that Mr. Rose, who is very skilled with a knife, cut his daughter. He probably did so when he found out she was pregnant.

Some believe that Dr. Larch accidentally overdosed, but others believe it was suicide. In anticipation of Melony sending a bad questionnaire to the board, Dr. Larch submitted a packet of evidence against himself to the board so that they would replace him with Dr. Fuzzy Stone, a.k.a Homer Wells. The nurses believe that Dr. Larch took too much ether because he was no longer "of use" to the orphanage.

Mr. Rose handing the candle to Homer and saying that "it's against the rules" tells Homer that Mr. Rose knows Homer is sleeping with Candy. Mr. Rose probably even knows that Angel is their biological son. Handing Homer the candle is a signal to Homer that if Homer minds his own business, Mr. Rose won't expose Homer's business.

In the end, Melony and Homer find homes as orphans, too. They wind up right where they both belong—at St. Cloud's.



Characters

Dr. Wilbur Larch

Dr. Wilbur Larch is the doctor in charge of the boys' division of the hospital orphanage. A doctor who previously worked with soldiers in World War I and II, he requires that all the male babies in the orphanage undergo circumcision. Two nurses work for Dr. Larch. One of the nurses is in love with him.

Dr. Larch is also the founder of the orphanage. In addition, he considers himself the historian for the town of St. Cloud's. Dr. Larch keeps a daily journal to record the happenings at the orphanage and in other parts of the world. The two nurses of St. Cloud's orphanage have a nickname for Dr. Larch: Saint Larch.

Dr. Larch is an obstetrician. However, when it is safe and the situation is appropriate, Dr. Larch is also an abortionist. The doctor was born and raised in Portland, Maine in the 1860s. His mother worked for the mayor of Maine, Neal Dow. Wilbur's father was a drunk.

Dr. Larch is also an ether addict. He uses ether to relax, ease stress, and sleep. Because Dr. Larch has so much on his mind, finding homes for orphans and providing abortions to women, he has a hard time sleeping at night. Each night, Dr. Larch sits in Nurse Angela's office and uses the typewriter to record information about the orphanage and to write letters.

Dr. Larch is the only father figure Homer Wells has for the majority of his life. Until Homer leaves the orphanage to work at the apple orchards, he doesn't really have anything else to compare to Dr. Larch's role as a father figure in his life. When Homer is at the farm, he uses Wally's dad as a point of reference, but in his heart, Dr. Larch always has been and always will be Homer's father.

Homer Wells

Homer Wells is one of the orphans at St. Cloud's. Even when Homer goes to an adoptive home, he keeps returning to the orphanage. Homer returns to the orphanage so many times that the doctor and the nurses consider Homer a part of the orphanage, and the orphanage is Homer's home.

Homer's first foster family returns him to the orphanage because he never cries. His second family returns him because they beat him and he never stops crying. For a year after he is returned to the orphanage by his second family, he cries at any noise that might mean someone is approaching him. The third family adopts Homer when he is 10. Homer runs away back to the orphanage when one of the adoptive parent's grandchildren fondles his penis and then accuses Homer of fondling his penis. The fourth and final family to adopt Homer is a couple who provides adventure tours to their



clients. This couple dies by drowning as a result of logs the Ramses Paper Company are transporting on the river when the couple is swimming in it.

When Homer returns to the orphanage for the final time, Dr. Larch permits Homer to stay as long as he wants. Dr. Larch also says he expects Homer "to be of good use," so when Homer becomes a teenager, Dr. Larch starts to train Homer as a doctor.

Eventually, Homer becomes an assistant to Dr. Larch, even delivering babies without Dr. Larch's help. Around the age of 20, Homer learns that a fetus is a living being and from that point on decides he will never perform an abortion. Around the same time, a young couple comes to the hospital from another town in Maine to have an abortion. The couple invites Homer to come back to their town for a few days so Homer can bring back some apple trees to plant at the orphanage. Homer ends up staying at the orchard for decades—even having a son with the young woman, Candy, he met when she came to have an abortion at St. Cloud's. Homer then returns to the orphanage after Dr. Larch dies to fill the role as doctor. To satisfy the board, however, Homer practices under the name of Dr. Fuzzy Stone with credentials Dr. Larch made up before dying.

Nurse Angela

Nurse Angela is one of the nurses who works in the boys' division of the hospital orphanage under Dr. Larch. She is also one of the nurses in charge of naming the babies. When Nurse Angela names the babies, she tries to never repeat names. She also chooses names from her own family tree and previous pets as first and last names for the boys. Nurse Angela, for example, is the one responsible for naming Fuzzy Stone when he is born at the orphanage.

Nurse Angela hates cigarettes, and she hates smoking. She gets mad at Nurse Edna for various things because she knows Nurse Edna is in love with Dr. Larch.

Nurse Edna

Nurse Edna is the other nurse who works for Dr. Larch. She is the nurse who is in love with the doctor. When Nurse Edna is in charge of naming the babies, she often repeats names. She chooses to give the majority of the babies John or Wilbur as either their first or last names.

Fuzzy Stone

Fuzzy Stone is one of the orphans at the orphanage. Fuzzy has respiratory problems, so he sleeps in a special tent to help him with his breathing. Fuzzy Stone dies when he is a child, but Dr. Larch tells the other children at the orphanage that Fuzzy was adopted by a family. Decades later, when the board members are trying to replace Dr. Larch, Dr. Larch makes up medical school credentials for Fuzzy Stone, so Homer Wells can use these credentials to replace him at the orphanage after Dr. Larch dies.



Wally

Wally is about the same age as Homer. Wally brings his teenage girlfriend, Candy, to St. Cloud's to have an abortion. Wally and Candy invite Homer to come back to the orchard with them. Wally suggests that Homer should bring back a bunch of apple trees to plant at the orphanage. Wally ends up going off to college. When the war breaks out after the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor, Wally enlists in the military as bomber pilot. Wally ends up missing in action when his plane is shot down over the jungle. Months later, Wally returns to the apple farm, after his mother dies, but he is paralyzed and sterile. Wally marries Candy, but they are never able to have children of their own.

Candy

Candy is Wally's girlfriend. She is also the one who goes to St. Cloud's to have an abortion, which is how she and Wally meet Homer. Homer falls in love with Candy the moment he meets her. While Wally is away at war, Candy becomes Homer's lover. Candy and Homer end up having a son. Candy and Homer go to live and work at St. Cloud's when Candy starts showing so that nobody will know. After Candy gives birth to their son, Homer and Candy return to the apple orchard, saying they adopted a baby from St. Cloud's. Eventually, when their son is 16, Candy and Homer tell everyone the truth—that he is their biological son.

Melony

Melony is one of the orphans who lives in the girls' division at St. Cloud's. Melony is the only other orphan who is the same age as Homer and who also never gets adopted. Melony introduces Homer to sex for the first time. Melony makes Homer promise that he will never leave her at the orphanage. When Homer runs off with Candy and Wally, Melony runs away and spends most of the rest of her life trying to track Homer down.

Nurse Caroline

During the war, Candy and Homer work as nurses' aides at the local hospital. One of the nurses they meet there is Nurse Caroline. Nurse Caroline helps the women who come in for abortions to have some, but illegal abortions. When Homer sees what she does, he provides the nurse with information about St. Cloud's and Dr. Larch to pass on to the pregnant woman. Eventually, Nurse Caroline ends up going to St. Cloud's to work for Dr. Larch. Nurse Caroline is still there when Homer Wells, a.k.a. Dr. Fuzzy Stone, takes Dr. Larch's place.

Angel

Angel is the secret son who Candy has with Homer. They raise Angel together, but Angel thinks Candy and Homer are his adoptive parents. When Wally returns from the war, Wally helps raise Angel, too. It isn't until Angel is 16 that Homer tells Angel the truth—that he and Candy are his biological parents.



Objects/Places

St. Cloud's

St. Cloud's is a small town, as well as the name of an orphanage in Maine. The hospital of the boys' and girls' divisions of the orphanage is run by Dr. Wilbur Larch. While the orphanage has a boys and a girls' division, the boys' division has a higher placement rate for babies than the girls' division.

St. Cloud's is also a safe haven for women in need of secret, illegal abortions. Dr. Larch secretly performs these illegal procedures so that women do not have to risk their lives by going to someone who doesn't know what they are doing.

In addition, St. Cloud's is the only true home Homer Wells knows until he leaves the orphanage with Wally and Candy. Ultimately, Homer Wells returns to St. Cloud's to work as Dr. Fuzzy Stone and carry on Dr. Larch's work after Dr. Larch dies.

David Copperfield

David Copperfield is one of the books that Dr. Larch reads to the boys each night before they go to bed. Dr. Larch reads exactly 20 minutes' worth of the book each night. Dr. Larch chooses this as one of the books because it is about a male orphan, so he feels the boys he's reading the book to can relate. When Homer starts to work at the orphanage, one of the roles Homer takes on is reading the book for Dr. Larch.

Jane Eyre

After Homer reading to the boys' division is so successful, Dr. Larch decides Homer should also read to the girls' division. The book he chooses to read to the girls is Jane Eyre. Again, Dr. Larch chooses the book because it is about a girl orphan so that the girls can relate to the story. When Melony runs away from the orphanage, she steals the copy of Jane Eyre and carries it around with her for years.

Gray's Anatomy

Gray's Anatomy is a medical reference book that Dr. Larch gives to Homer. Dr. Larch wants Homer to learn everything there is to know about being a doctor, even if Homer never goes to medical school. Homer takes the copy of Gray's Anatomy with him when he leaves the orphanage. Homer continues to read and learn from the book for the rest of his life.



Ocean's View Orchard

Ocean's View Orchard is the apple orchard that Wally's family owns. Homer, Wally and Candy work at the orchard during the summers when they are young. When they are adults, they continue to work on and run the farm. For 16 years, Angel, Candy and Homer's son lives and works at the orchard. The orchard is the only real home Homer has, except for the time he lived at the orphanage. Melony spends all of the time looking for the orchard so she can find Homer after he leaves the orphanage. Eventually, Melony does locate Ocean's View Orchard—seeing Homer for the last time before she ends up dying in an electrical accident.

The Cider House

The cider house is the home on Ocean's View Orchard where the workers live during the harvest season. Each year, Mrs. Worthington, who is Wally's mom, types up rules and posts them on the inside of the cider house. When Homer takes over managing the orchard after Mrs. Worthington dies, he takes on the role of writing and posting the rules in the cider house.

During the off-season, the cider house becomes the love nest for Candy and Wally. Even though Candy is married to Wally, she and Homer meet in the cider house for their trysts. It's on the roof of the cider house where Homer eventually tells Angel that he and Candy are Angel's biological parents.

Ray Kendall's Dock

Ray Kendall is Candy's father. Ray is a lobsterman, and he has a dock on the water that sits in the back of his house. Candy and Wally spend a lot of time on the dock as boyfriend and girlfriend. When Homer comes into the picture, he and Candy also spend a lot of time sitting and talking on the dock. It's the place where the two first confess their love for each other and where Ray Kendall notices that Homer and his daughter are in love.

Lock of Candy's Pubic Hair

After Candy has her abortion at St. Cloud's, Homer goes into the room to clean up. It is Dr. Larch's practice to shave the women before performing the procedure. Because Homer knows instantly that he loves Candy, he picks up a lock of her blonde pubic hair.

Homer keeps the lock of hair in his wallet. One night, when Homer takes Candy to the movies, he is pulling out his money when the wind catches the lock of hair. When Candy catches it, she realizes it's her hair and that Homer kept it all this time. It's when Candy first understands that Homer has feelings for her.



Dispensary

The dispensary is where Dr. Larch lies on the examining table to inhale the ether. Everyone who knows or suspects his addiction knows what he is doing when he's in there. When the stationmaster dies, the dispensary is also where they place the body until it can be picked up for burying.

Cadillac

The Cadillac belongs to Wally Sr., who is Wally Jr.'s father. When Wally takes Candy for the abortion, he drives his father's Cadillac, which has the Ocean View Orchard logo on it. The car plays a role in the lives of the teenagers for years to come. It takes them on double dates to drive-in movies. Wally even continues to drive it, equipped with special devices, after he returns paralyzed from the war.



Themes

Good versus Evil

The primary plot throughout the entire novel is that of good versus evil. Biblical symbolism runs throughout the book, exemplified by the nurses' nickname for Dr. Larch, "St. Larch." Homer has an inner struggle with good versus evil when it comes to Dr. Larch performing abortions. Homer doesn't realize that the fetus is a living being until he reads it in *Gray's Anatomy*, and this is when Homer decides that abortion is wrong and vows never to perform one.

Homer and Candy also struggle with good versus evil when they fall in love while Wally is missing in action in the war. The struggles worsen when Candy gets pregnant again and they choose to keep and raise the baby, Angel, as if they adopted him from St. Cloud's instead of telling everyone the truth.

Good versus evil also exists in the cider house rules. Mrs. Worthington and then Homer post the rules each year for the farm workers to follow. Each rule is created because of something the workers have done while staying in the cider house. A struggle exists, however, between the rules the farm owners' posts and the rules which the occupants of the cider house actually follow.

Coming of Age

One of the primary themes running throughout the novel is growing up and coming of age, even against adversity, such as being an orphan, or being faced with teenage pregnancy and illegal abortions. In some way, each of the characters learns lessons about growing up and dealing with responsibilities in life, and how to do so against the adverse affects of the obstacles they encounter in life.

Homer deals a lot with his feelings of turning into a teenage and going through puberty in an orphanage, rather than an adopted home. He especially struggles with forming normal relationships with people his own age until Candy and Wally come along, because before then, everyone he knew was either an orphan or a staff member at St. Cloud's.

Dr. Larch, too, learns a coming of age lesson when Homer doesn't return to the orphanage. Dr. Larch realizes how much he loves Homer now that Homer is no longer around. Dr. Larch realizes he should have told Homer how much he loved him when Homer was still living there. When Dr. Larch has this realization, he starts telling the orphans living there that he loves them and kisses them at night before they go to sleep.



Friendship/Relationships

Friendships and relationships are a third major theme that occurs throughout the novel. The relationships that exist between the orphans are important. Homer seems to have a demeanor allowing him to get along with everyone, from the nurses and the doctor at the orphanage to everyone that works on the apple orchard. Homer also forms close relationships with certain characters and trusts some people more than others, such as Wally and Candy. Even Dr. Larch struggles with his relationships with Homer, the nurses, and the other orphans at St. Cloud's.

Dr. Larch begins to think of Homer as more of a son than as an orphan. In reality, when Dr. Larch finds himself at the end of his career, it might be suicide rather than an accident that causes him to overdose on ether, so that Homer can come and take over the "family business."

Style

Perspective

The novel is in the third person point of view, but at the same time allows the reader into the minds from the perspective of the different characters. For example, at times when the narrator is telling the story, he allows us to hear the thoughts of the character in the first person. The novel swings back and forth between the present and the past. The present represents the time after Dr. Larch founds St. Cloud's. The past represents the time leading up to the founding of St. Cloud's.

The point of view of this novel is intimate, allowing the reader to connect closely with the main characters, Dr. Wilbur Larch and Homer Wells. In this manner, the book allows the reader to get inside Dr. Larch's head, viewing his thoughts and inner struggles. It also allows the reader to get inside of Homer Wells's mind. The reader cares what happens to the characters, even though they both struggle between good and evil. The point of view also allows the author to inject his own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place around the other characters and the occurrences taking place.

Tone

The language of this novel is relatively simple and easy to read. The author, however, interjects many medical terms to set the tone of the novel. The language is from the 20th century, which is when the novel is set. The language is descriptive enough that it helps to explain the situations, but is not always detailed enough for the reader to truly understand.

Structure

The novel contains 11 chapters. The length of each chapter ranges from 2 to 65 pages. The chapters tell the story primarily through exposition and some dialogue. The narrator injects his own voice and thoughts throughout the book, providing his opinions and feelings on the events unfolding in the novel.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot is the struggle of human beings in choosing between good and evil. One subplot is the coming of age of the characters, primarily Homer Wells and Dr. Larch. Another subplot is the relationships that the characters form with each other.



Quotes

"Well, then, Homer, I expect you to be of use."
Chap. 1, p. 36

"Tell him, tell that fool that the work at the orphanage is all the Lord's work—everything you do, you do for the orphans, you deliver them!"
Chap. 2, p. 67

"Good night, you Princes of Maine—you Kings of New England."
Chap. 3, p. 109

"The place is called St. Cloud's, and the doctor's good—he's kinda gentle. he makes it okay. But don't make her go alone—okay, Wally?"
Chap. 4, p. 153

"It's an opportunity for him, don't you see? I don't think he'll be back here in two days. I hope he doesn't come back—at least, not that soon."
Chap. 5, p. 198

"I will go until I drop."
Chap. 6, p. 257

"I must begin a new existence amongst strange faces and strange scenes."
Chap. 7, p. 308

"When you lie, it makes you feel in charge of your life. Telling lies is very seductive to orphans. I know. I know because I tell them, too. I love to lie. When you lie, you feel as if you have cheated your fate—your own, and everybody else's."
Chap. 8, p. 325

"I'm not worried about Angel. Angel will get lots of love. I'm worried about you and me."
Chap. 9, p. 425

"Here is the trap you are in. And it's not my trap—I haven't trapped you. Because abortions are illegal, women who need and want them have no choice in the matter, and you—because you know how to perform them—have no choice, either. What has been violated here is your freedom of choice, and every woman's freedom of choice, too. If abortion is legal, a woman would have a choice—and so would you. You could feel free not to do it because someone else would. But the way it is, you're trapped. Women are trapped. Women are victims, and so are you."
Chap. 10, p. 495

"Tell Dr. Stone there is absolutely nothing wrong with Homer's heart."
Chap. 11, p. 561



Topics for Discussion

Who is the true Dr. Wilbur Larch? Why has he chosen to found St. Cloud's and provide abortions to women even though it is illegal at the time? Do you believe Dr. Larch is a homosexual or that his one sexual experience scarred him for life? If Dr. Larch is not a homosexual, why doesn't he ever have a relationship with a woman? Does Dr. Larch consider himself Homer's father?

Discuss the relationship between Homer and Dr. Larch. Do they have a doctor-orphan, father-son or some other kind of relationship? Is there true competition in their relationship? How does Dr. Larch feel about Homer? How does Homer feel about Dr. Larch? How do Dr. Larch's feelings change after Homer leaves the orphanage? What does he do about it? What happens to Dr. Larch?

Who is Homer Wells? Is he his own person, or does he just follow in the footsteps of the people in his life, such as Dr. Larch and Wally? Why do you think Homer refuses to perform abortions? What role does Dr. Larch play in Homer's decision, if any?

Why do Candy and Homer hide their relationship? Do you think everyone knows that Candy is pregnant with Homer's baby? Why do you think Candy and Homer choose to hide the pregnancy? Why do they continue to hide it from Angel even though they promised each other they wouldn't?

Discuss the war. What impact does the war have on the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them and how does it derail their lives? Does what Wally says in his letter to Candy have anything to do with Candy marrying him and hiding Angel's identity when Wally returns from the war?

Discuss the abortion laws in place during the first half of the 20th century. What impact does the law have on the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them, and how does it derail their lives? Does Candy's abortion change her relationship with Wally? Does her pregnancy with Angel change her relationship with Homer?

When Homer takes Dr. Larch's place, do you think he will start to perform abortions? How will Homer being at St. Cloud's and Angel, Candy, and Wally remaining at Ocean's View affect their relationships? Do you think Angel will one day follow in his father's footsteps, just as Homer is following in the footsteps of Dr. Larch?