

A Dance to the Music of Time: A Question of Upbringing. a Buyer's Market. the Acceptance World Study Guide

A Dance to the Music of Time: A Question of Upbringing. a Buyer's Market. the Acceptance World by Anthony Powell

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Contents

[A Dance to the Music of Time: A Question of Upbringing. a Buyer's Market. the Acceptance World Study Guide.....](#) 1

[Contents.....](#) 2

[Plot Summary.....](#) 3

[A Question of Upbringing.....](#) 4

[A Buyer's Market.....](#) 9

[An Acceptance World.....](#) 14

[Characters.....](#) 18

[Objects/Places.....](#) 21

[Themes.....](#) 23

[Style.....](#) 25

[Quotes.....](#) 28

[Topics for Discussion.....](#) 30



Plot Summary

Nicholas Jenkins is in school as the story opens. He lives in a house with two friends, Peter Templer and Charles Stringham. Among the other members of the house is an older student named Kenneth Widmerpool and the house master named Le Bas. Widmerpool is always at the edge of the group, not quite fitting in with any group though he constantly works at trying to make himself fit for teams in season. On a particular day, Jenkins encounters Widmerpool out for a run. His dedication attracts the attention of team leaders even though he lacks the skills to be a good athlete. Widmerpool is plagued by a tendency to always be somewhat lacking in appearance. A coat that he wears prompts other members of the house to refer to clothing that does not quite seem "right" as "a Widmerpool."

Templer and Stringham are two very different people. Nicholas likes them both despite their differences. When they leave school, the boys go somewhat different directions. Jenkins begins college and the following semester he is joined by Stringham. One day Templer arrives with two friends and takes Stringham and Jenkins for a ride. They pick up two young girls and Stringham has an accident, stranding the group on the side of the road until a bus happens along. Jenkins notes that the incident was something of a signal that the friendship between Stringham and Templer has come to an end as each move into their respective futures far apart from each other.

Stringham marries first and Templer begins a job while Jenkins finishes college. Over the coming years, the men meet only occasionally though Jenkins continues to bump into them and into Widmerpool. In London during a social season, Jenkins and Widmerpool arrive at the same party and Jenkins has become interested in a young girl, though he loses interest when she pours sugar on Widmerpool's head.

Jenkins begins work in a publishing house and continues to work on his own writing. One night he meets up with a family friend from his childhood, Mr. Deacon, who introduces him to a young artist named Barnby. On another occasion, he meets with his Uncle Giles who introduces him to a woman named Myra Erdleigh, a woman who tells fortunes and who will reappear in Jenkins' life in the future.

Jenkins meets the sister of his friend Templer as a young student and reconnects with her long after her marriage. Over the years, this kind of reconnection is common for Jenkins who finds himself encountering people from his past in what seems a series of unrelated events.



A Question of Upbringing

A Question of Upbringing Summary

As the story opens, Nick Jenkins is staring into a fire. He reverts to memories of school and says that looking back he can see the associations of seemingly unconnected people and events that came together to make his life. One day Jenkins is walking along when he encounters a young man, a fellow student, named Widmerpool. He is running in an effort to become an athlete with some particular team and Jenkins notes that Widmerpool runs daily. Widmerpool is somewhat older than Jenkins and Jenkins knows details about Widmerpool mostly through stories that are passed down to him. They live in the same house at school. Widmerpool is often alone and Jenkins says that even when he is with a group, he seems somehow separate. It is about this time that someone points out that a particular coat worn by Widmerpool looks oddly out of date and out of place. This prompts the other students, including Peter Templer, to begin referring to pieces of clothing as "a Widmerpool." Nick notes that there is not really any indication of Widmerpool being seriously "ragged" or harassed though he never quite fits in. One day the students are called to a meeting in which Parkinson, the director of games, says that it is a shame other members of the athletic teams are not willing to train as diligently as Widmerpool.

That evening, Jenkins goes to the room where he always eats with two students, Stringham and Templer. On this particular evening, Templer has not yet returned from London and Stringham's first words to Jenkins are that there is "a jam crisis." They borrow a pan and cook sausages for dinner. Jenkins notes that Stringham's mother is beautiful, that she is "parted" from his father, that she is South African and that she is remarried. The family seems to have money.

Jenkins is visited by his uncle, Giles Jenkins. The younger Jenkins notes that he seldom sees his Uncle Giles. Giles is about fifty and Jenkins notes that Giles and Jenkins' father, who are brothers, have been out of touch for some time. They argued over a small inheritance set aside as a trust which eventually severs the relationship between the two men. Giles starts up a cigarette and Jenkins asks that he put it out, going into detailed explanations. Jenkins says that the house master, Le Bas, will believe that one of the boys have been smoking and Giles takes some time to extinguish the cigarette which leaves the room reeking of smoke. Giles leaves and Jenkins goes downstairs with him, arranging to get the door open to allow him to leave.

Le Bas arrives in the room a short time later and demands to know why he can smell cigarette smoke. Jenkins and Stringham try to explain but Le Bas is not convinced and tells Jenkins that both are going to be in trouble unless Jenkins gets his uncle to write a letter admitting that he had smoked the cigarette. Templer arrives and Le Bas turns his attention to him, asking Templer where he had been since he got back from London. After Le Bas leaves the room, the others talk about him and agree that he will not let up on the smoking or the arrival time of the train from London. Stringham says that Le Bas



had written poetry and that it was very bad. Templer tells the others that he was late returning from London because he had been with a girl. Being urged by the others, Templer says that the "accommodations" were squalid and indicates that he paid for the service, and that he had been afraid that the woman's cloying scent had remained on his clothes and that Le Bas would have noticed. Templer's story proves the catalyst that opens "the door" that had previously been closed to the young men. After this discussion, Jenkins admits that he likes Templer better but has more in common with Stringham. Jenkins says that Stringham is more of a romantic and shows his eccentricity while Templer is more of an earthy personality. Jenkins says that he does not have the direction of either and compared to both, seems to be floundering.

One day Stringham, Templer and Jenkins are out walking and pass the police station where they see a wanted poster with an image that looks somewhat like Le Bas. The boys go on for a walk in the country when they happen upon Le Bas who tells them that he goes into the country to get away from his charges. He recites poetry and asks the boys to try to identify the author. He finally tells them it is Andrew Lang. They go on to talk about poetry, including authors such as Oscar Wilde. The boys continue to walk another direction but Stringham asks them to stop in at a remote tea room. There Stringham calls authorities, telling them that a man wanted for fraud is in a nearby field, describing where they had seen Le Bas. The boys decide that they need to return to the house in order to supply themselves with alibis. They learn from Widmerpool that Le Bas was picked up by the police. Widmerpool leaves school a short time later.

In chapter two, the winter after Le Bas's arrest arrives and Stringham is planning to go to Kenya to visit his father at Christmas. He invites Jenkins to visit at his house first and Jenkins does, meeting Stringham's mother and his stepfather, Buster. Jenkins talks then of his Uncle Giles, including a term in the military for which he claims unsuited. When the boys return to school, there is only Stringham and Jenkins, a fact that Jenkins had expected to be a problem but which turns out to be very easy.

Templer continues to be at odds with Le Bas and when Le Bas finds a tobacco pouch, complete with Templer's initials, he convinces the headmaster that Templer should leave the school. They hear from Stringham and learn that he is happier in Kenya than he had expected. Jenkins is invited to Templer's home where he meets Templer's unmarried sister, Jean, They then meet Sunderland "Sunny" Farebrother, a friend of Templer's father, who is here to "talk business." Jenkins is taken by Sunny and believes that the threadbare suits are part of Sunny's persona. Templer's married sister, Babs Striping, arrives with her husband Jimmy. One evening, Sunny questions Jenkins about the military activities of Jenkins' father, questioning whether the two men might have been in the same place at some point.

Jenkins attends a dance and decides he is very attracted to Jean but does not tell her. Jenkins learns that his friend Templer had spent the night with Lady Gwen McReith, a friend of Babs and her husband. Jenkins leaves by train with Sunny and on the train Sunny questions Jenkins' plans for his future. He admits that he no concrete plans.



In chapter three, Jenkins heads for Touraine where he is to spend some time at La Grenadiere which is something like a resort. He is ill when he arrives, probably from something he ate. His hostess, Madame Leroy, is introducing him to the other guests when he encounters Widmerpool, who says that his mother had always felt that he should "perfect his French." The two boys pair off some and at one point Jenkins tells him about the role of Templer, Stringham and himself in the arrest of Le Bas. Widmerpool does not laugh and Jenkins wonders if he is going to rush upstairs and write a letter informing the school officials of the matter in order to get long-awaited justice for Le Bas. It is from Widmerpool that Jenkins learns that Templer's family is wealthy from "South African gold holdings." Widmerpool says that he plans to become a solicitor but says that he takes time out of his studies for fun, such as dances.

Jenkins is attracted to one of the young girls of the house and plans an elaborate good-bye speech. He then tries to figure out how to make it to her, knowing that there will be too many people around as he is actually leaving and so decides that he has to catch her alone ahead of time. Seeing that her sun hat is missing from its usual place, he goes outside and finds a woman he believes to be her, based on the hat. He begins his speech but when the woman turns around, it is not the young lady. Jenkins says that he is so caught off guard that he simply goes on with the rest of his speech anyway.

In chapter four, Jenkins has returned to school where he sometimes attends afternoon teas given by a man named Sillers who serves as something of an informal counselor, with his teas as an informal gathering place for students. Stringham's arrival at college is delayed because he has an accident and he arrives long after Jenkins is fully ensconced in college life. One day Jenkins convinces Stringham to attend one of Sillers' teas and he does so. At this same event is a young man named Quiggin, whom Sillers says is attending college on scholarships. Sillers beseeches the other young men to be mindful of Quiggin's circumstances. As the afternoon progresses, another guest arrives. He is a man named Bill Truscot who says that he works for Sir Magnus Donner and that he is looking for another assistant for Donner. Stringham is eventually offered the position and agrees to leave college to take it though it takes Sillers to help convince Stringham's mother and stepfather that it is a good idea.

Prior to Stringham's departure, Templer arrives with two of his friends. They go for a ride in the country and encounter two young girls who they pick up for a ride. Templer is driving rather fast when the car skids into a ditch. The group tries to get the car out but it is hopeless. Just when they are considering walking back to town—about twelve miles—a bus comes along and they catch a ride.

Jenkins receives a letter from his Uncle Giles, asking that Jenkins join him for dinner some evening in London. Jenkins says it is typical of Giles not to consider whether Jenkins would want to visit nor whether he is going to be in London, and Jenkins makes no plans to see Giles though he is planning a trip to London soon. When he gets there, he makes plans to meet up with Templer, but Templer says that he has to leave their evening early because he has been invited to a party. He says he did not think Jenkins would mind because it is supposed to be a "good" party. Jenkins pretends not to mind but is really put out. After he leaves Templer, he goes to visit his Uncle Giles and they



talk about the family and—as always—about the trust fund. As Jenkins leaves, he says that he suddenly realizes that the trust may be important enough to Giles to create all the problems he has created over the years.

A Question of Upbringing Analysis

Nick Jenkins is in a room staring into a fire. He says that the vision of snow falling into the fire prompts thoughts of "the ancient world." He goes on to describe what could be a painting of the ancient world, describing legionnaires that might be there and going on to talk about the "classical projections" saying that it is a small step from there to the suggestion of Poussin's scene of the Seasons. This famous painting of the Seasons becomes the cover of this book and the sequels.

While having tea, Stringham relates the story of Widmerpool having been hit by a banana, spilling his lemonade. Stringham says that when Widmerpool is cleaning up the mess, the student who threw the banana says that he is sorry, Widmerpool does not act angry at all. This is an example of how desperately Widmerpool wants to fit in, however, he is destined to remain on the edges of every activity. What is interesting is that Widmerpool is also destined to excel in adulthood while some of the others flounder. This seems typical of real life. Those who excel in school are sometimes lost after school when their reputations carry little weight. Jenkins says that hearing about the incident does not really make a great impression on him as he hears it and that it is much later that he gives the idea more thought.

They later see Widmerpool who tells them that he had been walking in the countryside and that he had seen police take Le Bas into custody. Stringham hints to Widmerpool that he has information about Le Bas. Stringham does not do anything more than hint and Widmerpool bites.

Soon after Stringham's departure for Kenya, Jenkins comes to realize that people enter into situations he calls "voluntary segregation." He says that people do this all through their lives and that it starts incredibly early in life.

Jenkins is fully taken by Stringham's mother and when Templer asks about her, says that she is "nice" though he immediately admits that it is an inadequate term. Jenkins is, however, not especially impressed by Stringham's stepfather, Buster Foxe. Jenkins says that he is something of "an ass." It is not clear how much of this is Stringham's influence and how much is based only on Jenkins' own impressions.

It is noted that Widmerpool is still somewhat awkward, still wants to be part of the group but, as was the case in school, is almost always just outside the center of activity. Widmerpool, and apparently others of the guests, are visiting France in order to learn proper French and to hone their language skills. Jenkins seems barely interested in this and is actually visiting because the Leroy's are friends of his parents. Widmerpool, however, attacks the learning exactly as he had sought to find athletic skills in school.



He insists that he and Jenkins speak in French and allows only brief exceptions, apparently feeling that anything less is cheating.

There is an interesting conversation between Widmerpool and Jenkins as Widmerpool talks about Templer's financial situation. Widmerpool himself insinuates that his family is very poor but Jenkins learns later that Widmerpool had probably exaggerated the severity of this. Ironically, Widmerpool also talks about his social life, hinting that he is invited to dances during "the season" in London. When Jenkins questions him more, Widmerpool puts the conversation aside rather quickly, seemingly unwilling to make up any stories about the parties he has attended.

From Widmerpool, Jenkins learns that he may not be in the majority with regard to having not settled on a career. While Jenkins' close friends, Templer and Stringham, have apparently not yet made any firm decisions with regard to a future, Widmerpool seems to think that Jenkins should have decided by this point in his life. He offers a sort of counseling session, questioning Jenkins about what he enjoys and what skills he possesses. While Widmerpool outwardly seems to have gained nothing on this point, it is evident that he has planted the seed of an idea in Jenkins' head.

Jenkins seems interested in Quiggins, though he does not fully explain why. He does say that it is during this first meeting with Quiggins that he believes he might be "getting in touch with the submerged element of the university, which I had sometimes suspected might have more to offer than was to be found in the conventional undergraduate circles."

Jenkins, Templer and Stringham are brought face-to-face with the fact that their lives have changed when they have the accident. It seems that Stringham is completely put out with Templer's nonchalant attitude, which is likely an example of the coming of age theme. Jenkins says that Stringham tells Templer goodbye with the feeling that they will never meet again. It is noted that it is not because Stringham is angry but merely because he realizes that their lives are changing. Jenkins says he does not feel this for himself because he knows that he will encounter Templer again, but realizes Stringham's attitude on the subject.



A Buyer's Market

A Buyer's Market Summary

Jenkins attends an estate sale at the home of Mr. Deacon, a man who lived in the same neighborhood with the Jenkinses when Nicholas Jenkins was a small boy. Jenkins notes that Deacon had not particularly liked children but that he had had occasional conversations with his parents. Jenkins describes some aspects of the sale at Deacon's house, including the presence of several paintings. Though they are not very good, Jenkins is relieved when no one laughs or makes derogatory remarks. Jenkins compares Deacon with his Uncle Giles, saying that they are somewhat alike in some aspects of temperament. Jenkins then skips back in time to when Deacon was alive and the Jenkins family encounter him at the Louvre. Some six years after that encounter at the Louvre, Jenkins sees a painting at the home of Sir Gavin Walpole-Wilson on Eaton Square.

Lady Walpole-Wilson's niece is Barbara Goring and Lady Walpole-Wilson says that Barbara is "noisy." Barbara's cousin, Eleanor Walpole-Wilson, introduces Jenkins to Barbara at a dance and Barbara cuts through any shyness Jenkins might have felt, verbally urging him to hurry and ask her to dance, which he does. He is quite taken with her and encounters the two girls later in a park. He notes that there is soon little reason for him to attend any dance unless Barbara is going to be there and that he worries incessantly about what she is doing and who she is spending time with when they are not together. Jenkins says that it is obvious that he will not ever be fully in control of Barbara's time unless he marries her and that he still might not even then.

One day Barbara calls Jenkins at work and asks that he come to dinner that night. Even on such short notice, he breaks other plans for the evening and decides that he will go with Barbara. He finds a young man named Archie Gilbert already there and shortly after arriving, Jenkins is offered an introduction to another guest who turns out to be Windmerpool. Windmerpool says that he now works at the law firm of Turnbull, Welford and Puckering as a solicitor. A late guest arrives after Lady Walpole-Wilson calls the guests to dinner. His name is Thompsitt and Jenkins realizes that his feelings for Barbara must be cooling some because he feels only a slight twinge of dismay at learning that Thompsitt is invited, in direct conflict with the jealousy that had been typical.

The dinner conversation is somewhat tedious with the talk turning on several topics, including plans to build a statue in a busy part of town. The group then leaves to attend a dance. On the way, Jenkins believes that Barbara's foot is pressed against his but discovers that it is actually a young lady named Rosie Manasch. He does not know whether her foot moving away is because she also realized the contact or if it was all by chance.



During the dance, Windmerpool has asked for a specific dance with Barbara and she puts him off, saying she promised it to several partners and asking that he become part of a small group to eat something in the dining room instead. There, Windmerpool is obviously put out that Barbara is paying so little attention to him. She tells him that he needs to be "sweetened up" and holds a sugar container over his head, which breaks open and empties on Windmerpool in a matter of seconds. Barbara tries to cover up her role in the situation, saying that their hosts should have made sure the lid was securely on the container. Windmerpool leaves the room and gets most of the sugar off. Barbara is embarrassed and Jenkins notes that this is the kind of horseplay that will result in her exclusion from other parties. He also realizes that a girl who could take this action is not the kind of girl he wants to spend time with. He prepares to leave as does Thompsitt, who asks Jenkins what he knows about Windmerpool. Jenkins says that it seems that Thompsitt recognizes a level of promise about Windmerpool that Jenkins himself has not yet come to appreciate. Windmerpool comes out of the house as Jenkins is leaving and, from Windmerpool's questions, Jenkins tells him that he has a room on Shepherd's Market and that he is employed with a firm that buys art books, a fact that Windmerpool says does not seem to hold a very promising future. Windmerpool then says that he had held Barbara in high regard but after the evening's events is going to break off seeing her.

As Windmerpool and Jenkins are leaving the party they encounter Mr. Deacon with a young woman who is introduced as Gypsy Jones. Deacon and Gypsy have been distributing anti-war flyers and Deacon, after asking Jenkins about his parents and the two catching up briefly on the lives of the other, says that he and Gypsy are planning to go to a nearby café for coffee. He invites Jenkins along. When Jenkins sees Windmerpool looking at a passing taxi, he suggests that Windmerpool might want to catch a ride. Windmerpool, after apparently considering the subject for a few minutes, decides to go with them. While they are having coffee, they encounter Stringham who says that he is going to a late party at a home on Hill Street and says that Deacon, Windmerpool, Jenkins and Gypsy would be welcome.

In chapter two, the group arrives at the home of Milly Andriadis and Jenkins notes that it is exactly the kind of place his Uncle Giles would not have liked. At one point, Stringham seems especially well acquainted with the young hostess, Milly. Stringham grows incredibly morose and Milly tries to reason with him though it is obvious that Stringham has had too much to drink. Bill Truscott arrives and meets Windmerpool. Truscott is still involved in the offices of a political official named Sir Magus and expresses an interest in Windmerpool. He suggests that Windmerpool might want to meet the political official who employs both Truscott and Stringham but Windmerpool asks to put the meeting off, saying that he has had too much to drink and is not thinking clearly, obviously fearful of making a poor first impression. Gypsy leaves the party early, a fact that seems to worry Windmerpool.

There is a young pianist at the party named Max Pilgrim who entertains the guests with songs and music. The lyrics seem to aggravate Deacon who says he does not understand the lyrics. Deacon and Gypsy have been distributing flyers titled "War Never Pays." When Jenkins later meets Barnby for the first time, Barnby says that Deacon had



apparently purchased the flyers personally and that he had been upset because he had lost some of them during his argument with Pilgrim.

Jenkins learns that Bob Duport owns the house where they are staying and that he is married to Jean Templer. Deacon argues with another guest and leaves in a huff though Jenkins leaves ahead of him. As Jenkins heads home, he encounters his Uncle Giles who seems surprised at Jenkins' neighborhood and says that he is in town on business.

In chapter three, Jenkins meets Ralph Barnby, a young artist who lives in the building owned by Deacon. Barnby and Jenkins hit it off immediately. Jenkins is invited to visit the Waldpole-Wilson estate and he complies, relieved to learn that Barbara is out of the country and will not be attending. While there, he encounters Jean Templer Duport. It is also while there that Jenkins learns that Stringham's engagement to the young girl named Peggy. Stringham says that they are to be married in October.

While visiting, Jenkins comes to realize that he is somewhat attracted to Barbara's cousin, Eleanor. Eleanor is not quite the gentle young lady typical of the young ladies being presented to society during the season and Jenkins notes that Eleanor sometimes feels that the dances and events are tedious and something to be endured rather than enjoyed. She loves animals. On one occasion, she talks about her plans to see some young hounds and her excitement at the prospect.

While Jenkins is visiting the Waldpole-Wilsons in the country, he encounters Widmerpool again. He says that he is not particularly surprised at encountering Widmerpool here and Widmerpool seems to be anxious to pick up their emerging relationship where he believes it to have left off, though there is obviously a greater feeling of affinity on the part of Widmerpool than of Jenkins. When they first encounter each other, Widmerpool turns the conversation to Gypsy. He says that he helped her through her recent difficulty though does not explain what that was. He does seem angry that Gypsy seems to have taken advantage of him. He is also worried because his role in this seems to have been at least bordering on illegal. Widmerpool says that he has never done anything illegal, even to the point of using someone else's return train ticket.

In chapter four, Stringham marries Peggy Stepney in October, as he planned to do. As it happens, this is also the day of Deacon's death. Deacon holds a birthday party in his own honor. The party ends early when guests decide to visit a new club. There, Deacon points out the unsanitary conditions to the management and falls en route to make that complaint. Nothing much is made of the fall but there are apparently internal injuries and Deacon is in the hospital a few days later and dies a few days after that. Jenkins says that it was during Deacon's party that he again met the young man from college, Quiggin, and learns that Quiggin is now something of a noted author. When Jenkins has a chance to talk with Gypsy, she asks if he has seen Widmerpool. Jenkins says that he has and Gypsy asks if Widmerpool is angry. Jenkins says that Widmerpool is angry and she says that "somebody" had to pay. Jenkins says that Gypsy probably assumes at that moment that Jenkins does not like her and that she is correct.



Jenkins is invited to Widmerpool's house for dinner one evening and it is there that he learns that Widmerpool's first name is Kenneth and that Barbara is to be married to Johnny Pardoe, a young man at the edge of the circle of acquaintances. It is immediately evident that Widmerpool has not heard this news either. While Jenkins has no more interest in Barbara, he cannot help a pang of jealousy at the news. Widmerpool, however, is affected deeply and seems to be angry at himself.

A Buyer's Market Analysis

While Jenkins was not particularly fond of Mr. Deacon as a youngster, the later meeting of the two families makes an indelible impression on Jenkins. It seems likely from the fact that Deacon asks Jenkins a typically adult question that Deacon had probably wanted to connect with Jenkins during Jenkins' childhood but had not known how. The one apparent attempt is seen in the gift of paints that Deacon gave Jenkins as a youngster and the painting advice, which were probably the only way he felt at all able to connect with Jenkins. Ironically, the attempt to connect when Jenkins is older impresses Jenkins more than any childhood conversations or gifts could possibly have mattered.

Jenkins notes that he is not very surprised at the presence of Widmerpool at the dinner party at the home of Sir Walpole-Wilson. He says that a lot of things about Widmerpool have not changed and that he still has the appearance of being not quite on the cutting edge of the social scene, though he has matured somewhat and has traded in his glasses for something modern. An interesting conversation occurs in which Jenkins says it is strange the two young men have not encountered each other at parties before this point and Widmerpool grows exceptionally flustered. It seems likely he has not been attending nearly as many parties as he insinuated to Jenkins during their stay in France, though he puts it off on having been working much too hard recently.

Jenkins recognizes Mr. Deacon upon their chance meeting when Mr. Deacon is with Gypsy Jones; however, Mr. Deacon seems not to know Jenkins. Upon looking back at the situation later, Jenkins comes to realize that it might have been embarrassing for Mr. Deacon to have been seen with Gypsy. Mr. Deacon is older and Gypsy has the appearance of a wild woman. A person seeing them may have believed that there was something not quite appropriate about their being together. Gypsy is in some sort of trouble and though it is never completely spelled out, it seems likely that Gypsy is pregnant and wants to have an abortion.

Jenkins admits to feeling jealous of Jean's marriage though he has given Jean little thought in the years since their lives crossed when Jenkins was still in school. Jenkins realizes that Jean and her husband have amassed enough money to own this house and perhaps this fact and that she is apparently happily married prompts some feelings of inadequacies in Jenkins. Another interesting scene occurs with Jenkins as he meets Jean for the second time. Jenkins looks for Jean, knowing her tendency to avoid the endings of parties, but cannot find her. He later thinks about her newfound maturity and pledges that the next time he encounters her, he will approach her with this in mind. It

seems that he is set on an affair with Jean though he does not elaborate and it could be that he simply wants to be viewed by Jean as being more adult than he feels when he is with her.



An Acceptance World

An Acceptance World Summary

When Uncle Giles stays in London, he tends to stay at a place called Ufford, which strikes Jenkins as the "catacombs of hell," in addition to the fact that it seems to be abandoned with the exception of Uncle Giles. Jenkins says that Giles leads an almost aimless life but that there is a sense of dedication about him. However, Jenkins says that Giles' sense of dedication is difficult to define and might be best described as egotism. He says that Giles also strives to be different from anyone else. By this point in his life, Giles is working for a "charitable organization" that pays Giles a salary but also gives him a "reasonable" expense account. Jenkins notes that Giles has apparently stabilized in both his emotional and financial situation, or that at least the times of crisis are becoming less intense.

As Giles and Jenkins are talking one day, a woman named Myra Erdleigh arrives. Jenkins notes that there seems to be some sort of relationship between Mrs. Erdleigh and Giles, though neither of them say so. Mrs. Erdleigh holds Jenkins' hand, looking at his palm with statements that make it seem she wants to "read" his palm. Giles suggests that she bring out the cards and use them to tell Jenkins' fortune though he seems to worry that someone will happen along and catch them in this act. She is gone for awhile and has changed clothes when she returns.

She has a deck of well-used playing cards and begins by telling Giles' fortune. He watches avidly and points to a particular card, asking if that might be the marriage card. Jenkins notes that he seems anxious to know that it does indicate marriage but she warns that there are other factors to consider as well. She then turns to Jenkins' fortune, tells him about a young lady who is going to return to his life though she is married and her husband often travels abroad. She also mentions that he writes and he confirms that he has recently written a book, then says that he "must make a greater effort in life." As they part, she says that she will see him "in a year." When Jenkins says maybe sooner, she says that it will not be any sooner. As he leaves, Giles says it will be better if Jenkins does not tell his parents either about the fortune telling or the fact that he is spending time with Mrs. Erdleigh.

Jenkins is working in a publishing house while working on writing books of his own. He is currently working to try to bring to conclusion a book about art by a man named Horace Isbister. The book is to have an introduction written by St. John Clarke though Clarke continues to put off the work, which means the book cannot be completed. Mark Members, a young man from Jenkins' days in college, is Clarke's secretary. Clarke had written a newspaper article citing Jenkins' book.

In chapter two, Members arranges to meet Jenkins at the Ritz to talk about Clarke's introduction but does not show up. As he is waiting, he sees Templer. Over the years since school, Templer and Jenkins have seldom managed to meet up, except by



chance. Templer invites Jenkins to join him, his wife Mona and his sister Jean for dinner. Jenkins agrees and they catch up on news while they wait for Mona and Jean to arrive.

Jenkins discovers that Templer has married a young model named Mona and that Jean is separated from her husband and is the mother of a daughter named Polly. Jenkins eventually realizes that he knows the woman who modeled for Barnby and other artists until moving to the more lucrative commercial sector and working in a toothpaste commercial. Jenkins says that Stringham's marriage by now has ended in a quiet divorce though he does not really know what happened.

Templer says that Widmerpool has gone to work at a company called "Acceptance World." The company provides a service to individuals who make sales of goods to foreign countries, basically "accepting the debt" so that the seller gets his money sooner. Jenkins notes that Templer has come to accept Widmerpool as a "ordinary" acquaintance. Templer says that this is quite a change from their school days when Templer had little to say about Widmerpool other than to make fun of him.

While Templer and Jenkins are visiting, Quiggin arrives. Jenkins notes that Quiggin has made something of a name for himself in the literary world though he has never quite completed a manuscript because he worries that there is something not right about the work. Templer and Mona invite Jenkins back to their house to spend the rest of the weekend and he agrees. Jean is staying with them as well. When they reach the house, Templer and Mona get out of the car first and Jenkins and Jean have a moment alone. There is a quick conversation in which they agree to meet about a half hour after everyone goes to bed. Inside, Templer suggests that they have a drink and then prepare for bed. Jenkins notes that he worries for a minute whether Templer might feel the sexual tension in the room, but it is apparently not evident to Templer.

In chapter three, Jenkins recalls a conversation with his friend Barnby. Barnby had told Jenkins about a girl he had met on a train. The girl had refused to tell Barnby her name though she had been to his studio several times and he had painted her. Jenkins realizes that he had seen the girl somewhere but he has to stop and think about where. Jenkins finally remembers that her name is Lady Anne Stepney, sister of the girl named Peggy who married Stringham.

Back in the present, the day Jenkins wakes in the Templer's home after his encounter with Jean is filled with a realization that he is "thoroughly entangled" with Jean. Mona is in a bad mood and takes it out on the entire household, a fact Jenkins puts down to her realization that there is a "love affair in the air."

As the weather is horrible outside, the group tries to find something to do inside. It is decided that they will conduct the Planchette board, a machine holding a pencil placed over a piece of paper and with which, with the fingers of several people lightly touching the machine, writing theoretically occurs. Quiggin seems upset by the plan which is basically an effort to contact the occult. At first, nothing happens. Then the words "Karl is not pleased" is written. Over the course of the coming moments, there are additional words and phrases which only Quiggin realizes to be from "The Communist Manifesto"



by Karl Marx. The writing then changes and the writing says, "He is sick," apparently referring to Clarke. Quiggin is soon upset and goes to call Clarke. Upon his return, he insists that he has to return to the city immediately and because there is no train soon, it is decided that Quiggin will ride with Stripling. As Stripling and Mrs. Erdleigh leave, she takes the opportunity to ask Jenkins if he met "her." He does not have to ask what she means, knowing she is referring to the woman she foretold during their first meeting. He answers that he has.

Mona asks that they go out that evening and Templer says that he would rather stay at home. When he says that it would be nice to stay home, Mona begins to cry and says that he "never wants to do anything" she wants. Templer waits for a moment after Mona rushes from the room then goes after her. Alone, Jenkins asks if he can come to Jean's room that night but she says it is "not a good idea." He asks if they can meet up later in the week and finally agree that they will meet at Jenkins' apartment on Friday.

In chapter four, Jenkins encounters Eleanor's father at an art gallery who says that Eleanor has never been really happy anywhere except in the country and that she is now working at breeding Labradors. He also meets Sillers who says that Stringham's divorce is "a pity" and that he has heard Stringham is now drinking too much. When Jenkins again talks with Quiggin, Quiggin says that Clarke says he will be willing to get started writing the introduction piece that has held up the publishing of the book though he wants to write it with a "Marxist point of view." Jenkins does not say so to Quiggin, but realizes that he is probably never going to get the introduction.

As Jenkins is talking with Mark Members, he sees a parade of sorts coming through a nearby park. He is shocked to see Sillers among the group and then sees a group of three people that shocks him so much that he takes a second look to be certain he has seen correctly. He sees that Clarke is riding in a chair being pushed by Quiggin and Mona Templer. Members seems horrified, not that Clarke is participating in the movement, which is obviously political in nature, but that he is outside in cold weather in his poor health. Jenkins is suddenly certain that Mona has left Templer. Jenkins says that he had heard that Clarke never liked to have women around him. Members says that Quiggin has now got a hold on Clarke so that Quiggin can probably get Clarke to do just about anything.

It is here that Jean indicates that she likes Mona but that she has not been a good wife. They talk about the possibility that Templer and Mona might reunite. They also talk about their earlier meetings and Jenkins admits that he wanted to call her up, prompting her to say that she wishes he had. Jenkins notes that she has a daughter, Polly, at a time when having children is not really "fashionable" and that she spends a great deal of time with Polly. He also notes that he cannot really tell what she feels for her husband, Duport, and whether she might be willing to leave him to marry Jenkins. He notes that he has not yet asked and that he has no idea whether she would agree.

One day Jenkins arrives at Jean's to discover that she is waiting for him without any clothes. After their sexual encounter, Jenkins tells Jean about seeing Mona. She calls the Templers' home and talks to a servant who says that Templer is out of town and that



Mona had left carrying a great deal of luggage and not indicating when she might return. Jenkins says that there is an immediate change in the atmosphere and that he wishes he had not told her but that there really was not any other option.

Jenkins says that he makes a somewhat derogatory remark about Stripling and Jean stands up for him, then says that she had an affair with Stripling after his divorce from her sister. They go out together to a club named Foppa's where they meet Barnby and Lady Anne Stepney. They are joined by a man named Umfraville who says that he had been at Le Bas's house in school as well, though only briefly. Umfraville says that he talked to Milly Andriadis and that they will all be going to her house. There he learns that Quiggin is supposed to "go away soon" to be married and that his intended is apparently Mona Templer.

In chapter five, Jenkins encounters Templer later in the year and learns that Mona has left him. When he meets Quiggin, he learns that Quiggin and Mona are living in Sussex and that he is no longer Clarke's secretary. There is a reunion of sorts of "Le Bas's" boys. Widmerpool is engaged in a rather lengthy speech when Le Bas has a seizure which effectively ends the gathering. As they leave the event, Stringham and Jenkins encounters Widmerpool who helps get Stringham in a cab when he passes out. When Jenkins meets Uncle Giles, he professes no knowledge of Mrs. Erdleigh. He arrives back at home and finds Jean there. He tells her about the meeting with the men from his school days. She says that her husband has returned to England and says that it might "make difficulties," but asks that they not think about it.

An Acceptance World Analysis

Jenkins describes Myra Erdleigh in less-than-glowing terms. He says that she looks rather disreputable and it seems that she has a look about her that makes her seem almost trashy. Her relationship with Giles might be sexual but it is never fully detailed.

Jenkins wonders about the change that he sees in Templer with regard to his new wife, Mona. Templer was the young man who arrived back at the house during school and bragged to the others, including Jenkins, about his encounter with a young girl in the city. Jenkins says that Templer had typically described every situation in these same terms. Now, however, he removes himself from the story of their meeting, downplaying any overt moves that that may have resulted in getting Mona for his wife. It seems possible that Mona is not really that interested in Templer and that he realizes this, making him more conciliatory to her whims and temper. It will not be enough and she is destined to leave him.

The continuing message of Jenkins's story is that people who play a role in one's life may return to impact one's life again and again. There seems to be a series of coincidences that keep these people returning for encounters long past the time that might have been typically expected. However, this is also true of real life because a person tends to notice those with whom he is familiar. For example, a person is more likely to notice someone familiar than a complete stranger.



Characters

Nicholas Jenkins

The narrator of the story, Jenkins is at a boarding school when the story opens and later attends college. He eventually becomes an employee of a publishing house and writes a book of his own. Jenkins' life is punctuated by what seems a series of unconnected events, though in truth the people he meets serve to unite all aspects of his life. He tends to be motivated to greater heights or to coast with little direction based largely on his companions of the moment. As he matures, he learns this about his personality and seems to pay more attention to those with whom he associates and to be more careful about his tendency to follow. Jenkins is greatly impacted by a chance meeting with a young man named Widmerpool who does not fit in with Jenkins and his group of close friends as a student. Jenkins watches with interest and Widmerpool seems to outgrow his reputation from school, though Jenkins finds he has trouble taking Widmerpool seriously. Through a series of relationships that seem on the verge of becoming serious, Jenkins slowly realizes that he might want to grow from his schoolboy interests to become a husband, though he never quite takes that step.

Kenneth Widmerpool

A young man who is slightly older than Jenkins. Widmerpool is something of an unpopular student and never completely fits in with groups, either at school or in social situations later in life. Widmerpool becomes the subject of some "ragging" from other students and Jenkins notes that Widmerpool's personality is augmented by his appearance. He wears a jacket that is sufficiently outdated and strange-looking so that Jenkins' friend begins saying that some particular piece of clothing is looking "very Widmerpool." The first story Jenkins relates about Widmerpool is that he is working at athletics, in spite of the fact that he does not do well in athletics. Though he is not an apt athlete, he is constantly working at honing his skills. He is equally anxious to do well on other fronts. For example, he travels to France where his goal is to learn French and while there, he seems upset any time Jenkins does not work at French. Widmerpool only reluctantly agrees to speak a language other than French because Jenkins wants to. Jenkins notes that, even as an adult, Widmerpool is still something less than outgoing and accepted but Jenkins is surprised when someone else seems to take Widmerpool and his ideas seriously.

Barbara Goring

The niece of a woman named Lady Walpole-Wilson, Barbara is introduced to Jenkins by her cousin, Eleanor Walpole-Wilson. She is described by her aunt as "noisy." Upon their first meeting, she takes control of the situation and asks Jenkins if he is going to hurry



up and ask her to dance. He enjoys her outspoken way but comes to realize that he does not really like her after she pours sugar on Widmerpool's head at a dance.

Jean Templer

Sister of one of Jenkins' best friends from school days, Jenkins is attracted to her from their first meeting. She later marries, but when she and her husband separate, she begins an affair with Jenkins.

Mr. Edgar Deacon

An older gentleman who lives in the neighborhood Jenkins lives in as a child, Jenkins reconnects with Mr. Deacon years later and they attend some social events together.

Ralph Barnby

A young artist who lives in Mr. Deacon's house, Barnby becomes a close friend of Jenkins and imparts a great deal of "wisdom," often about women. He meets up with an acquaintance of Jenkins' named Anne but does not know her identity until Jenkins reveals it.

Mona Templer

Wife of Jenkins' friend Templer, Mona is a model and is terribly temperamental. She eventually leaves Templer and is seen in the company of Jenkins' former college colleague, Quiggin, after she and Templer split up.

Giles Jenkins

Jenkins' uncle, he is something of an oddity in the family and his chief complaint seems to be that he wants more than his share of a family trust. This topic arises at almost every meeting between Uncle Giles and Jenkins, though Jenkins admits that Giles' crises must have become less severe over the years and the trust becomes less of an issue.

Myra Erdleigh

A woman introduced to Jenkins by his Uncle Giles, Mrs. Erdleigh offers to read Jenkins' fortune on their first meeting. It is she who predicts that there is to be a love interest in his life and that the woman's husband will be abroad. She also tells Jenkins that they will meet in a year. That meeting occurs a little more than a year later and Jenkins has to admit that he has met the lady, referring to Jean.

Quiggin

A college student on scholarships, Quiggin is an egotist and it is this weakness that Templer uses to encourage Quiggin to attend lunch at the Templer house where Quiggin meets Mona Templer. He later has an affair with her and Jenkins learns that they are to be married.



Objects/Places

Touraine

The location of the La Grenadiere in France where Jenkins is to stay with family friends and where he encounters Widmerpool.

La Grenadiere

The resort in France where Jenkins and Widmerpool meet.

London

Where much of the action takes place and where Jenkins has dinner with Uncle Giles before Jenkins moves there to live.

Louvre

Where Jenkins and his parents encounter Mr. Deacon.

Eaton Square

Where Sir and Lady Walpole-Wilson live.

The Law Firm of Turnbull, Welford and Puckering

Where Widmerpool says he works as a solicitor.

Shepherd's Market

Where Jenkins lives.

Acceptance World

Where Widmerpool finds a job as a broker after leaving the law firm.

Ufford

Where Uncle Giles stays when he is in London.

The Ritz

Where Members arranges to meet Jenkins to talk about Clarke's introduction for a book.



Themes

Coming of Age

There are many examples of the coming of age theme in this book. The characters are school boys as the story opens and they age physically over the course of the events that comprise the story, which makes it natural that they would also age emotionally as well. Jenkins is the most prevalent example and his emerging maturity is seen throughout the course of the story. One example of this is when Jenkins visits Uncle Giles in London. Though Jenkins had no intention of meeting up with Giles, he does so after Templer breaks their evening's plans to go to a party. Jenkins then looks up Giles because he has nothing better to do but over the course of the evening he comes to realize things about his uncle he previously had not known, including that the money from a family trust may be more important to Giles than he had previously realized. Another example is seen when Templer comes to visit Jenkins and Stringham at college. Jenkins notes that the two young men are no longer the best friends that they were while in school and credits the change to the fact that they are growing out of that friendship.

The Influence of Friends and Acquaintances

Jenkins is greatly influenced in his life's direction by Templer and Stringham, though this is not seen clearly until Jenkins travels to France and encounters Widmerpool. There, Widmerpool, who is only slightly older than Jenkins, reveals that he is going to be a solicitor and asks Jenkins what he plans to do for his own future. Jenkins admits that he does not yet know, a fact that had not mattered to him until Widmerpool asked. At this point, Jenkins begins to realize that Templer and Stringham have not been good influences, though he does not put it into such blunt words.

When Templer, Stringham, Jenkins and four other young people are stranded by the accident, Jenkins notes that the friendship between Templer and Stringham has been further severed. The two are maturing and are no longer fully tolerant of the other. It seems that Stringham and Templer simply have different priorities and that they are no longer willing to let the other influence their lives to the extent that had been the case while they were in school. It should be noted that Templer has two friends with him at the time of the accident. Jenkins and Stringham obviously do not care for the two friends but say that they would expect nothing less from Templer. It seems likely that Templer's attempts to show off in front of these friends is the cause of the accident.

Ambition

Ambition remains a theme seen throughout the story, especially in two of the characters. Jenkins comes to realize that his lack of ambition has been a serious fault in his life but it takes some time for him to correct this. It is important to remember that



Jenkins takes a job in a publishing house and that Widmerpool does not think much of this choice though it turns out that the job gives him time to work on a book of his own. Widmerpool is a study in ambition, beginning from his life as a youngster. When he is fighting to fit in at school, he spends a great deal of time working at honing athletic skills that barely exist at all. It is noted that if those with the natural ability dedicated themselves as seriously as Widmerpool, the teams would be in excellent shape. Widmerpool's dedication continues to make a good impression as the group faces life as adults, but his lack of social graces tends to make him less able to succeed than some of his counterparts.



Style

Point of View

The story is written in first person from the perspective of Jenkins, who begins the story as a school boy and ages over the course of the story. Jenkins is relating the story from his personal point of view, which makes this a limited perspective. The limitations are not particularly problematic because of the story's focus, which is solely on Jenkins, his relationship and actions as he matures. The presence of additional characters, such as Templer, Stringham and Widmerpool, are important only in their impact on Jenkins. This makes the first-person limited perspective appropriate and acceptable for this story. The reader must keep in mind that first-person limited perspectives tend to be skewed by the fact that it is human nature to present oneself in the best possible light. This may be seen to some degree in Jenkins' story but he seems to be ultimately honest in most aspects of his story, including faults in his character. For example, when Widmerpool tells Jenkins that he has plans to become a solicitor and asks Jenkins what his own long-term plans are for the future, Jenkins has to admit that he does not have any. He further admits, though privately, that he probably has not thought about it, because his friends, Stringham and Templer, are so willing to coast along without any long-term goals and he has followed their example.

Setting

The story is set in Europe during the early part of the 1900s. The time is between the two World Wars, meaning the characters have the advantages of the technologies of the time period. For example, cars are readily available and there are telephones but no more instant communication. It is noted that letters are still a typical and accepted form of communication. The scenes include a number of specific settings and these are described in great detail. The amount of detail is sometimes distracting. For example, Uncle Giles is staying at the Ufford when he stays in London. The hotel seems to Jenkins to be always abandoned and he likens the hallways to the "catacombs of hell." The detail of this setting goes so far as to describe the palm that is in a brass pot with "ornamental handles" in a corner, small tables "of Moorish design upon each of which had been placed a heavy white globular ash-tray." The level of detail is sometimes overwhelming and some reader may find it easier to skip over these. However, in the midst of these detailed settings are sometimes pieces of information that are vital to the story.

Language and Meaning

The tone of the book tends to be formal and some readers may have difficulty reading and comprehending the story because of this. However, a reader who continues working at comprehension will likely become accustomed to the tone. There may be



some words readers find unfamiliar and there are entire sentences written in French during the time Jenkins spends in France. These points will become minor issues in overall understanding. An important fact to keep in mind is that the story is written in what seems to be an almost unrelated series of events, tied together only by the presence of Jenkins in each scene. This gives the story something of a disconnected feel that may be unappealing to some readers. Another problem is the tendency of the author to present lengthy sentences with lots of asides and clauses that are sometimes difficult to follow. An example is seen in the sentence, "Her comparative incapacity to control her own dinner parties, at which he was almost always especially discomposed, seemed to me a kind of muter personal protest against circumstances—in the shape of her husband's retirement—having deprived her of the splendours, such as they were, of that position in life owed to her statuesque presence; for in those days I took a highly romantic view, not only of love, but also of such things as politics and government: supposing, for example, that eccentricity and ineptitude were unknown in circles where they might, in fact, be regarded—at least so far as the official entertaining of all countries is concerned—almost as the rule rather than the exception." These long sentences, in addition to being somewhat difficult to follow, are often written about people and events that are not part of the main focus of the story.

There are several instances of foreshadowing. For example, Jenkins says that Eleanor Walpole-Wilson, cousin of Barbara Goring, is the person who introduces Jenkins to Barbara. He says that she is also with Barbara on a later day when Jenkins meets them in the park. Jenkins says that Eleanor is slated to have a front-seat view of his emerging relationship with Barbara.

Another important aspect of the book is that characters are often introduced in an off-hand way. For example, a particular character may be introduced by first or last name only and that person's job, relationship or other aspects of his or her character may be presented much later. This makes it somewhat difficult to track characters, especially those newly-introduced and those who are only mentioned briefly.

Structure

The book is presented in three separate "books," or novellas. While each could theoretically stand alone, there are overlapping characters that are not fully introduced in the second or third book. The three novellas are "A Question of Upbringing," "A Buyer's Market," and "The Ac230 pages in length, the second is 274 pages and the third is 214 pages. Each of the novellas is divided into chapters. The first and second have four chapters each and the third has five chapters. These chapters are presented by number only and are not named. The chapters are rather lengthy and vary only slightly in number of pages. The book, with its three novellas is, one of four books in the series. The book's cover depicts one of the four dancers in Nicolas Poussin's "A Dance to the Music of Time."

The book is presented in chronological order. Historical information is presented mostly as memories or asides presented by Jenkins.

The three novellas are distinguished to some degree by stages in Jenkins' life. In the first part, he begins as a school child and advances on to his college career.

Quotes

"He's so wet you could shoot snipe off him," A Question of Upbringing, Chapter 1, p. 14.

"'I admit the accommodation was a bit on the squalid side,' said Templer. 'You can't have everything for a quid.'" A Question of Upbringing, Chapter 1, p. 33.

"Clearly some complicated process of sorting-out was in progress among those who surrounded me: though only years later did I become aware how early such voluntary segregations begin to develop; and of how they continue throughout life." A Question of Upbringing, Chapter 3, p. 69.

"This favorable opinion came as a something of a surprise to me; because I was accustomed to hear older persons speak of Peter in terms that almost always suggested improvement was absolutely necessary, if he were to come to any good in life at all." A Question of Upbringing, Chapter 2, p. 102.

"Several pillows and bolsters covered with the Union Jack gave a disturbing hint that, somewhere beneath, a corpse awaited burial with military honors." A Buyer's Market, Chapter 1, p. 2.

"For example, to find a white-haired gentleman wandering about the streets in the small hours in the company of a young woman wearing an ample smear of lipstick across her face, and with stockings rolled to the knee, might easily prove a juncture where former meeting in irreproachable surroundings could, without offense, have been tactfully disregarded; although, as it turned out, there was not the smallest breath of scandal at that moment encompassing either of them." A Buyer's Market, Chapter 1, p. 85.

"A sense of isolation, at least when out of the office, had become oppressive, and I began to feel myself a kind of hermit, threading his way eternally through deserted and sultry streets, never again to know a friend." A Buyer's Market, Chapter 3, p. 162.

"There is a strong disposition in youth, from which some individuals never escape, to suppose that everyone else is having a more enjoyable time than we are ourselves; and for some reason, as I moved southwards across London, I was that evening particularly convinced that I had not yet succeeded in striking a satisfactory balance in my manner of conducting life." A Buyer's Market, Chapter 4, p. 260.

"The passages seemed catacombs of a hell assigned to the subdued regret of those who had lacked in life the income to which they felt themselves entitled; this suspicion that the two houses were an abode of the dead being increased by the fact that no one



was ever to be seen about, even at the reception desk." *The Acceptance World*, Chapter 1, p. 2.

"For a few seconds Templer gazed thoughtfully round the room, as if contemplating the deterioration of a landscape, known from youth, once famed for its natural beauty, now ruined beyond recall." *The Acceptance World*, Chapter 2, p. 36.

"At school he had disliked him or, at best, treated him as a harmless figure of fun. Now, however, Widmerpool had clearly crystallized in Templer's mind as an ordinary City acquaintance to be thought of no longer as a subject of laughter, but as a normal vehicle for the transaction of business; perhaps even one particularly useful in that respect on account of former associations." *The Acceptance World*, Chapter 2, p. 46.

"Perhaps all action, even summoning a taxi when none is there, is basically a matter of the will." *The Acceptance World*, Chapter 4, p. 204.

Topics for Discussion

Describe Nicholas Jenkins. What is he like? What are his motivations in life? What are his shortcomings? What are his strengths?

Jenkins describes a series of people who appear in his life then appear again in completely different settings, often with different people present. Describe three of these instances and Jenkins' reactions to them.

Compare the characters of Templer and Stringham. What are the differences in the two characters? The similarities?

There are several young ladies in whom Jenkins believes himself interested over the course of the story. Compare any two of these.

Who is Widmerpool? What does he accomplish in his own life? How do his accomplishments impact Jenkins? What does Jenkins think of Widmerpool? How does his impression change over the course of the story?

Compare the characters of Uncle Giles and Mr. Deacon. Compare the character of Jean Templer and Barbara Goring. Choose two additional characters to compare.

Who is Eleanor? Le Bas? Mona Templer? Babs Stripling? Myra Erdleigh? Barnby? Gypsy Jones? Quiggin? Mark Members?