A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century Study Guide

A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century by Barbara Tuchman

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Plot Summary

The castle of Coucy is a huge building on a hilltop in Picardy. There are five towers and a donjon—a central citadel—capable of housing a thousand people, even for a prolonged period such as during a siege. The castle is built in 1223 while there are many great buildings being constructed. Most take many years for completion but the castle at Coucy is finished in seven years. It is said there is a famous motto attached to the castle that reads: "Not king nor prince, Duke nor count am I; I am the lord of Coucy."

Into this life Enguerrand VII is born as ruler of Coucy. He is, by most accounts, an honorable man who is anxious to serve his country. It is that trait which puts him among several noblemen held as hostages in England after King Jean—then King of France—is captured by English forces. Jean is released with the agreement that France will pay a ransom. Enguerrand and other noblemen are held hostage until the ransom is paid. Collecting taxes sufficient to pay the ransom takes years and during that time Enguerrand meets Isabella, the adult daughter of the King of England. Isabella is an independent woman who has narrowly avoided several marriages. It seems likely that she and Enguerrand come to the conclusion to marry of their own free will, though the King of England is in favor of the match. They are married in England and the King grants Enguerrand his freedom upon that event. In addition, Enguerrand is given English lands that had been the property of his mother but withheld from the Coucys for many years.

Enguerrand and Isabella soon travel to France and there their first daughter, Philippa is born. The couple go back to England while the child is an infant and Isabella later gives birth to another daughter, Marie. Enguerrand is torn by his loyalty to France—the country of his birth—and to England, the country of his wife's birth and family. Isabella soon returns to England for good where she dies. Enguerrand has limited contact with Philippa but arranges for the marriage of Marie to Robert de Bar and that couple have a child before Robert falls victim to the Black Death. After Isabella's death, Enguerrand remarries and fathers another daughter. Enguerrand also fathers an illegitimate son, Perceval, who is formally recognized by Enguerrand and is known as the "Bastard of Coucy."

Enguerrand remains active in the business of France until well into his fifties when he serves in a campaign to oust the Turks from Hungary. He is captured and held prisoner. Though France is working to raise the money to ransom those captured, Enguerrand does not live to see France again. His wife and daughter Marie fight over the Coucy estate which is later sold off and eventually becomes property of the crown. King Henry IV is a direct descendant of Enguerrand's daughter, Marie.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

The castle of Coucy is a huge building on a hilltop in Picardy. There are five towers and a donjon—a central citadel—capable of housing a thousand people, even for a prolonged period such as during a siege. The castle is built in 1223 while there are many great buildings being constructed. Most take many years for completion but the castle at Coucy is finished in seven years. That includes a subterranean network that allows passages to various parts of the buildings from the compound and even from outside the walls—a way to provide for the needs of those inside in case of a siege. In fact, there is little about the castle intended solely for the comfort of the inhabitants. Everything is created with the idea of defending the property and those within its walls. Even the placement is selected with defense in mind and the surrounding countryside is an ideal position to ward off attack. Because of its centralized location, Coucy is called "one of the keys of the kingdom." At the opening of the 14th century, there are a quarter of a million households. It is said there is a famous motto attached to the castle that reads: "Not king nor prince, Duke nor count am I; I am the lord of Coucy."

It is during this time that some enterprising men begin to organize and to "sell their support" to the wealthy landowners. They are in turn allowed to create a base of commerce for themselves. While economics become more stable for this class, the political situation is constantly in a state of unrest. The king depends entirely on the feudal obligations of landowners for an armed force, meaning he can never truly depend on their loyalty unless he has the loyalty of the landowner as well. The church is important but the people are constantly struggling between the desire for earthly things and the spiritual.

Herve, Archbishop of Reims, builds the first castle around 910. It is a "primitive" building with a chapel. In 975, the Comte d'Eudes becomes the first "lord of Coucy." His descendants will be known for their "extraordinary strength and fury." Aubry de Coucy founds a Benedictine monastery and some say it is intended to assure his salvation. Enguerrand I divorces his wife when another woman catches his eye. She is married and said to be "of dissolute morals." Enguerrand's son, Thomas, is a brigand and is eventually excommunicated from the church. Despite this, he leaves generous bequests to abbeys. Abbot Guibert is quoted as saying Thomas is "the wickedest man of his generation." It is noted that his violence continues because there is no restraint against it.

Thomas's son, Enguerrand II, is succeeded by his son, Raoul I, and each dies in the Holy Land. Raoul's widow sells Coucy as a commune in 1197. The goal is financial rather than democratic. Participation in wars is expensive. Enguerrand III builds or reconstructs buildings in the region but is accused of pillaging the land and is excommunicated. He performs appropriate penance and is absolved, but continues to build.

The generosity of the nobleman is his most widely-known characteristic because his followers live off this. It is required that the nobility have great feasts, hold hunts and parties. Meanwhile, taxation supports the king and there are few hard and fast rules to govern how taxes are collected. One is that men who live by the sword are exempt. Noblemen are typically among those, not only to avoid taxation but as a matter of honor. These nobles have authority over everyone except those who live in free towns and members of the clergy. About one percent of the population of France of this era are considered noble—some 40,000 families. This includes those like the holders of Coucy as well as some bachelor knights with a single manor "and a bony nag," though the status of these two extremes are not the same. There are many laws that govern the life of the French of the day. It is unlawful for a nobleman to be an innkeeper, possibly so that the knight will not drop his sword on the battlefield in his quest for wealth. There is a limit to the number of costumes a person of any given rank may order in a single year and how those clothes are made. The non-noble people are allowed only to wear brown or black, for example. The laws are impossible to enforce. Meanwhile, it is possible for the noble to lose their rank. If there is insufficient money to operate a fief, for example, the landowner may be reduced to doing manual labor himself, effectively losing his rank as noble. Meanwhile, an enterprising young man may make lots of money in a business venture, marry the daughter of a poor squire and gain noble standing himself.

The Coucy estate collects rent, tolls on bridges, fees for use of the mill and wine press and feudal dues to keep the estate operating. The vassals present their payment and "pay homage" by placing their dues on a platform at the castle itself. Three times each year, an elaborate ceremony takes place in which the abbot or his representative pays homage for the land granted to Aubrey de Coucy.

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Everything about the castle seems oversized. The window seats are three and a half feet high. This means people seated there would be dangling their legs above the floor. While it is said that the interior appears to have been made for a "race of titans," it seems likely it was simply intended to dwarf those who lived within its walls.

Often, the wars of the Fourteenth Century are vicious and attackers feel they are damaging their opponents if they kill as many of the peasants as possible, and damage crops, tools and property. Though there are many among the non-noble class that are vital to the live of the nobles, the non-nobles are typically lumped together. As one writer indicates, "no long description is necessary" because they are all servants. The technological advances of the day further the social gap. The development of the chimney over a single hole in the roof for smoke to escape means that individual rooms can be warmed and there is no longer a need for everyone to gather in a single room. This is an advance in "refinement," but means that nobles and their retainers are no longer forced to gather together for warmth.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

The 14th century is off to a rough start with a population increase. The farming methods of the day are operating at maximum capacity and the need to feed these additional people is a problem. Meanwhile, there are political conflicts and arguments between rulers and the clergy. Under Pope Clement V, the church sells offices freely and uses the threat of excommunication as a way to make the reluctant person pay specific fees. Money can buy almost anything. Many men—including members of the clergy—purchase papers of legitimacy for their bastard sons. Others buy offices for men who are not eligible to hold them, often because of age restrictions. There are illiterate priests who hold office by virtue of a payment. Penance for specific wrongs might be a pilgrimage to Rome or Jerusalem, but simply calculate the cost of the trip and pay that amount instead. Members of the clergy purchase elaborate gifts for themselves and hold banquets, balls and hunts just as the nobles. Their excesses are not condemned by the kings because kings and clergy need each other and typically find some balance. While it may seem that people would want to dissolve the church, its power and roots in the day's society are complete. In fact, people believe that paying alms is a way to gain a foothold in Heaven. Their gifts are self-serving, but there results wealth for the church.

Despite these excesses, the Church plays two important roles—comforter and teacher. Most people and groups have a patron saint and all may draw near the Virgin Mary for comfort. The Church teaches that life on earth is merely a passage. For the poor, the Church is a source of beauty, ceremony and dignity.

Then comes the day when the people begin to rebel. Papal tax collectors and even bishops are attacked and there is dissent among the church's members themselves. As the gap between poor and wealthy increases, the poor cease to see the wealthy as their benefactors and the wealthy take advantage of the labor available. This is especially true in the textile industry because of the demand. A sure sign of wealth is the display of elaborate tapestries. Despite the sense of injustice the poor hold against the rich, they combine in brotherhoods, often made up of those who share a common industry. There is little privacy for those of the era and apparently little desire for it.

During this age, there becomes a commonly-accepted prophecy of an uprising of the peasants to overthrow the Church, the monarchy and the powerful. A group called the Pastoureaux—so named for the shepherds who began the movement—march south, burning buildings and records and opening prison doors as they go. They also attack Jews in force, citing their constant indebtedness to the Jewish lenders. Pope John XXII calls for penalties for anyone aiding the Pastoureaux and the use of force to quell the rebellion, which effectively puts an end to it.

An organization called the Templars becomes wealthy and in 1307 Phillip the Fair accuses them of heresy, proving the claims by playing upon the superstitions of the day.

That the accusations are sufficient to seize their property is proved when the case holds up in court and becomes a popular method of bringing down one's enemies. It is noted that cases are "proved" by confession and confessions typically gained by torture. Over the next thirty-five years, the Inquisition burns six hundred people, laying the foundation for the persecution of witches. To further the belief in witchcraft, one of the Templars who is supposed to make a public confession instead calls down a curse on Phillip, Pope Clement and their heirs. Phillip and Clement die in the following months and Phillip's three sons each reign only six years and die at young ages without an heir. During the reign of Phillip's brother, Phillip of Valois, the realm prospers though this Phillip never expects to be king and lacks the regal bearing typical of the throne. During his rule in 1338 the Councy becomes connected by marriage to the Hapsburgs of Austria, resulting in the birth of Enguerrand VII. The King arranges the alliance in an effort to gain the support of the Councys and the Hapsburgs in the coming war against England.

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The clerical vows of chastity are a mockery and most priests live with mistresses while nuns often bear children. The members of the Order of Francis work as hard as any nobleman to acquire lands and wealth—a direct conflict with their vows of poverty and the founders' intent. They sell items that they claim are relics of various encounters with God or his messengers—a feather from Gabriel and a limb from the burning bush of Moses. It is noted that the clergy are not more "lecherous or greedy or untrustworthy" than others, but only that their deeds attract more attention because they are supposed to be men of God. All this money-making by the church is in direct conflict with canon law which limits the amount of money made by an individual to just that which is necessary to support himself. Working after dark by artificial light is prohibited as are loans and buying items for resale at a higher price. Those who participate in these practices pay fines and continue with their businesses.

Most people of the 14th century believe there will be few saved from damnation in the afterlife. They use the story of Noah's family as an example. Noah, his three sons and their four wives are the only people spared at the time of the flood. The people of the 14th century believe that is an indication that only a small percentage of the population —one in a thousand or even one in ten thousand—will be saved from God's wrath.

Chapter 3 and 4

Chapter 3 and 4 Summary and Analysis

The wealthy tend to marry younger than the poor and to have wet nurses which shortens the time of infertility after pregnancy. They thereby have more children than their poorer counterparts. Until age seven, children are taught manners and sometimes letters by the women. The boys of the wealthy are then sent to a neighboring castle to serve as a page. The sons of the poor are sent to neighboring families to learn a trade. At fourteen, the training in combat intensifies, though a young man might learn some academics. Young women are taught at home or by the Church. At the time of the birth of Enguerrand VII, anything with no other explanation becomes the product of a particular line-up of the planets and astronomy is the "noblest science." Alchemy—the changing of metals into gold—is the most popular applied science. The mechanical clock is very new, bringing an example of stability to a world dominated by the magical and mystical. With the increased production of paper, literature is more widespread and literacy grows with the availability of manuscripts.

Mule trains are the accepted mode of transportation for goods because the poor conditions of roads makes traveling a slow, difficult process. Despite this, travel is common and all know they have the opportunity for food and shelter at monasteries and castles along the way.

People generally accept the world is a sphere, stars are a far distance away and the moon is a near planet with no light of its own. However, most believe the Garden of Eden is an earthly place, cut off from their location by mountains, water or a fiery wall. Distant places are shrouded in myth, including women who cry silver tears, men with the heads of dogs and horned pygmies who travel in herds. There are also questions, including why God allows evil to exist. The common answer to this is that God "owed the Devil his scope." Enguerrand VII is trained in seven basic subjects—grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, theology and music. Music and medicine are lumped together because the "object was the harmony of the human body." The normal chain of events of the youngster's life is interrupted when Enguerrand's father is killed at war. Around 1348, his mother remarries and both she and his stepfather die within a year. Little more is known of his childhood. He becomes a historical figure at age eighteen in 1358.

The knights of the day have no work other than fighting. There is a need to combine the fighting with the dictates of the Church, prompting the ideals of chivalry. By having a knight pledge his loyalty to his king, the helpless and oppressed, his fighting is justified, the Church can condone knighthood and the knights need not fear for their salvation. Still, many knights enjoy the fight simply for the fight's sake. When there is no battle for knights to participate in, they gather for tournaments. Kings and the Church denounce tournaments for they are expensive and take money from the kings and Church, but the practice continues.

The longbow and gun have a tremendous impact on wars fought at this time though firing of guns and cannons is an inexact science and projectiles do little damage in most cases. Edward III makes a claim to the French throne. There are meanwhile battles for dukedoms and in Flanders there is an uprising by the textile workers. In that altercation, hundreds of knights rushed upon the Flemish infantry but failed to notice the canals. As horses lost footing and knights plunged into the water, the infantry "speared them like fish" and won the battle. The French seek out rich peasants who might be willing to pay for nobility in an effort to repopulate the noble class. There is soon an offer of the people of Flanders to create an alliance with Edward, who sits on the throne of England. They suggest the marriage of Edward's thirteen-year-old daughter to the fourteen-year-old son of the Count of Flanders, Louis. Louis cites his loyalty to France and escapes the agreement. Edward's foothold in France remains shaky and his efforts at war costly but he passes along those costs through loans and taxation. By now, soldiers are paid in currency and kings take out loans to meet the demands for money. However, the practice of pillaging is also common and used to entice reluctant knights and foot soldiers into service. The English are more ready to obey the call because of the ever-present threat of French invasion. The English invade, pillaging, killing and taking captives as they go.

Phillip VI of France issues a call for soldiers through heralds that run through the cities with the news. When the French and English meet, the French are outmanned simply because the English are willing to use bowmen, pikemen and yeomen which the French believe are not in keeping with their vows of chivalry. Phillip escapes, is forced into excessive taxation to recover, and Edward does not pursue. Edward continues to be interested in the alliance between his daughter, Isabella, and the young Flemish count, Louis. Louis continues to decline until he is placed in "a courteous prison," where he finally relents. One day, while hunting by the river, he flees across the border to France where he tells Phillip of his escape. Phillip arranges for Louis to marry Margaret of Brabant, daughter of a duke. Isabella later jilts her second intended husband and is still unmarried when she meets Enguerrand de Coucy VII some thirteen years later. Edward conducts a year-long siege against the French town Calais. When he finally wins the city, it is because the inhabitants have been starved into submission and it sparks within the French a desire for the recovery of the town.

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There is a lack of expressions of love for children in art or literature during this time. Even the Virgin Mary is seen as an aloof mother, never cuddling the child in her arms but holding him stiffly away from her body or looking disinterestedly at him from a distance. Women are typically depicted as bawdy, desired by men, but not as loving, caring mothers. There are a few exceptions but this author points out that those exceptions seem to point out the huge gaps in what is often considered the caring role of a mother. Some believe the attitude is prompted by the high mortality rate of infants which makes loving a child a risky proposition. It is also noted that "love and lullabies and cradle-rocking did exist," though probably not in profusion. This lack of nurturing as a child may have prompted the medieval man's general lack of concern toward life.

The marriages of wealthy are seldom based on love. "Courtly love" is therefore reserved for relationships outside marriage. It is love for love's sake with no other objectives. Courtly love is encouraged because the knights, in order to win their lady's affection, are better groomed, well-mannered and more anxious to win glory on the battlefield. It is impossible to combine this adulterous love with the teachings of the Church. Nonetheless, chivalry and courtly love remain ideals, just as the teachings of Christ-like behavior remain ideals that none can truly attain.

The people are required to answer the summons for men to fight for France in various ways. Those who are able to fight are called upon to do so. These hastily-gathered regiments are typically ill-equipped and untrained, making them virtually useless on the battlefield. Towns are then taxed according to their numbers and wealth. For example, a particular town may be required to pay one year's wages for a soldier for every "one hundred hearths" in that town. The cost may be lower for less prosperous towns. Even in battle, class distinctions are prevalent. The knights are contemptuous of the foot soldiers and chivalrous combat is to be personal, so archers are considered somewhat cowardly. However, it is accepted that archers and foot soldiers have their places, though knights would never concede their true usefulness in battle.

Chapter 5 and 6

Chapter 5 and 6 Summary and Analysis

That the black plague spread quickly is an accepted fact but there is no way to determine the number of deaths associated with the disease. The plague is actually present in two forms—one is evidenced by boils at various places on the body and the other is internal. Either is fatal with the length of time before death as the only variable. The poor are more susceptible though the powerful and wealthy are not immune by any stretch of the imagination. It is common knowledge that the poor are more prone to many diseases because of their inadequate diets and generally run-down condition. In fact, their lack of sanitary facilities and practices are also likely to blame.

There are numerous misconceptions about the plague. Many believe it to be a sign of the wrath of God. There are various attempts to soothe God—some order parades that last for days, others are dressed in sackcloth and ashes, tearing their hair and crying in prayer. It becomes a common belief that invoking the name of St. Roch will save a person from the plague, but only those who are devout. In some places, it becomes accepted that the disease is airborne and some believe that breathing in the vicinity of the sick is sufficient exposure to contract the disease. Others take it a step farther with the idea that a person can catch the plague by simply looking upon one who is ill or dying. Disposal of the bodies is a horrendous chore. Families pile their dead at the doorstep for collection or take them to pits for shallow burial—in some cases so shallow that wild animals or dogs dig up the bodies. Animals also die at an alarming rate and some wild wolves take one sniff of the carrion and rush back to their woods, far from the diseased carcasses.

Remedies and explanations range from a particular line-up of planets to magic to some reasonable treatments. When the physicians have no explanation, they fall back on the supernatural and the cures become elaborate and often noxious. At some point, the idea of quarantine begins to catch on. When towns become infected, neighboring towns refuse to allow visitors or to import specific goods from those towns. Eventually, Jews are accused of poisoning the wells and many are burned alive while others are taxed for their crimes. The confessions, as always during this period, are extracted under torture and considered adequate proof for judgment. In an apparent effort to stop the harassment of Jews that follows, Pope Clement writes in 1348 that even Jews are stricken with the plague and that people in areas with no Jewish population are also dying. Just months later, a large wooden house is constructed in Basle and several hundred Jews are burned alive inside the structure. Other Jews burn themselves rather than to submit to the enemy while some protect themselves, killing their attackers. This only provokes additional wrath and the Jews are attacked with renewed force.

The loss of life means there are fewer to teach but many men who have lost families flock to the church and are ordained "in batches." Fewer workers for fields mean landowners are willing to lessen rent levels or eliminate it altogether, hoping renters will

produce something rather than allowing the wilderness to reclaim the land. Only the fertile areas are planted with the rest turned over to sheep or other endeavors.

During the worst of the plague, many priests die and others refuse to give sacraments upon death for fear of catching the disease. Though the Church and clergy are unpopular following this period, there are many bequests—an apparent effort by many to gain heavenly favor in case of their own deaths. As distrust and dissatisfaction grows, people who need answers and solace seek it elsewhere, prompting an increase in mystical sects and movements. Over the next fifty years, people fail to find any reason for the horrible scourge of the Black Plague. These are the years of the youth and adult life of Enguerrand de Coucy.

Jean II, son of Phillip, takes the throne in 1350 and immediately beheads the cousin of Enguerrand, Comte d'Eu, for allegedly giving Edward of England lands bordering Calais in return for his freedom. Jean then appoints his relative to the post and alienates much of the nobility with these two moves. Jean wants to return to the battle his father lost but lacks money and soldiers. He increases wages to entice soldiers but still has no money to pay them. His next step is to effectively devalue money so he is able to pay. Though his methods may not be the best, he is trying to raise a dependable army in a time when feudal fealty is failing. Charles, direct heir to the French throne through his mother, serves as king of Navarre—a smallish land given as a reward for his dedication to England—but is unhappy with his lot in life. He marries Jean II's daughter but Jean II then withholds her dowry. Using his brother and other henchmen, Charles arranges the murder of Jean II's relative who was appointed to Comte d'Eu's position. He is eventually arrested by Jean.

In 1355, Jean faces another English invasion. He manages to raise troops, though with difficulty, and Enguerrand is among those. Jean's plan is to take everything that might be used for food by the English army, even at the risk of starving the French populace. The French people meet their own armed soldiers, not as protectors but as "ravagers." The English, hungry and without the accustomed beer and wine, withdraw. When Jean is looking for ways to raise funds to pay his soldiers, the Assembly of the Three Estates agrees but insists they make the payments to the soldiers directly. When Jean next calls for men to fight, the French presence in the midst of the country prompts a great number of volunteers but they arrive in their own time with their own interests at heart. English troops, loaded with booty pillaged from the many villages, are ready to head back to England but the French pursue them. The English decline the opportunity to call a truce, apparently because they believe they can avoid an encounter. The two forces meet just west of Poitiers. There is a brief encounter and fighting is suspended the following day—Sunday. The two sides talk but do not reach an agreement. Jean has his men busily arranging themselves in the best position for an all-out battle on the following day. It is suggested that the French circle the English forces and starve them into submission but this plan goes against the ideals of chivalry. The battle is fierce but ends with King Jean yielding himself to the English commander, the Prince of Wales.

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Though the workers of the day are not well-versed in the art of negotiation, at least some recognize an opportunity and are willing to seize it. As workers drop dead by the thousands, those remaining realize the demand for workers far exceeds the workers available and band together for higher wages. There is no real indication of the extent of this effort or if it truly worked, but it shows a level of initiative that might surprise some.

The cures offered up by the doctors of the time were sometimes made of "potable gold." Wealthy patients may have believed these expensive cures better for them than less expensive options. Doctors say that vinegar and rosewater should be sprinkled on the floors of a home and that the mixture be used to wash out the nostrils. The technology of the day is adequate for proper sewage disposal but many systems are not sufficient and sewer sometimes leaks into wells. As those responsible for cleaning streets and removing garbage die of the plague, the likelihood for diseases spreading increases.

Flagellates appear, putting on performances in an effort to salve the wrath of God that brings the plague. These people tour towns, whipping themselves and re-enacting the life of Jesus. The Church objects because these groups are offering absolution, meaning priests cannot collect fees for this service.

Jean establishes the "Order of the Star," based on the ideals of the Knights of the Round Table. They are five hundred knights who pledge they will not run away during a battle and are to gather annually for a banquet and to share their adventures. During the initial gathering, the English seize the castles of Guines without a fight because the knights are all away. While the idea of the Order of the Star is solid—the creation of a brotherhood based on chivalry—it is already outdated. In the end, a large group of the knights, taking seriously their oath not to run, are killed or captured when they might have fled and saved their lives. Their loss creates a hold on the Order of the Star.

There is an extensive discussion on the horrible ways people entertain themselves. Young men nail a cat to a post, and with hands tied behind their backs attempt to kill the cat by butting it with their heads—all at the risk of clawed eyes, bites and scratches from the furious cat. People may be acting on their own "untender medieval infancies" by becoming adults who have no concern for the value of life.

It is unclear just how the French lose the battle at Poitiers because they are a superior force. The men who are killed and most who are captured at Poitiers are mourned greatly, including King Jean. However, those who escape are generally scorned. They are called cowards because they run away from the fighting. Many of those captured are released with the admonition that they pay their own ransom. However, they face public ridicule and are hard-pressed to raise the necessary money. In some cases, they sell serfs their freedom or sell furnishings in order to gather sufficient money for the payment.

Chapter 7 and 8

Chapter 7 and 8 Summary and Analysis

With King Jean held captive, the Third Estate of Paris—led by the Provost of Merchants Etienne Marcel—seeks to gain some sort of control over the monarchy. They insist there be a council formed in the place of the current councillors, agree to help fund the war and demand the release of Charles of Navarre. Jean's son, Dauphin Charles, declines and though he orders the Estate member to disburse, they meet the following day. He tries to raise money by devaluing the coinage but meets with threats. An ordinance outlines the agreement reached between the Estate and the Dauphin which is designed to correct a series of problems. The king is to live more frugally, a Grand Council will have the power to reject a king's proposed tax increase, members of this council will be well paid but must go to work—a change from the habits of previous royal advisors—and the Estates makes plans to raise money to pay soldiers for a year's service with the agreement that the money be handled by the Estate rather than the crown. Prior to being carried off to London, King Jean denounces the ordinance.

Meanwhile, groups of mercenaries populate the countryside, wreaking havoc on the population. With no organized national army, these companies become accepted and are paid for service by Phillip VI. Many of the knights disgraced by the battle at Poitiers join up, now resorting to ravaging their own country. Fallen noble people find this a way to make money, forming companies of their own. Amongst the English, Sir Robert Knollys leads an army to take control of forty castles in the valley of the Loire, despite the existence of a truce between France and England. When he puts all the booty he gathers at the disposal of King Edward, he is immediately pardoned for violating the treaty. Charles of Navarre remains in prison but his brother, acting on his behalf, ravages the land, apparently hoping to effect Charles' release. Many villages set up a system of alarm and make forts of their churches.

Jean is treated well but Edward is determined that the French will pay the highest ransom he can extract. Jean is allowed guests, even visitors from France, but is well guarded. He receives money from France and maintains a rather elaborate household, purchasing fur-lined hats for his minstrel and retaining a trained astrologer. Those working to secure his release never considered the possibility of leaving him in the hands of the English for two reasons. The king is a symbol of order and without an agreement, France will not have peace, which is desperately needed.

In 1357, the Dauphin reinstates the chancillors and dismisses the recently-formed council. Marcel arranges for the release of Charles of Navarre who immediately announces that he has a right to the crown. Marcel leads a group of men against the Dauphin, killing those who protect him and saying that it is the "will of the people"—retaliation for acts of the Dauphin's men. Marcel's goal is to force the Dauphin to allow the Estates to regain control of the country. He agrees, removing himself and his family

from the city and out of harm's way, but the actions harden his resolve to rule without the Estates.

In this century, the peasants are required to pay rent and to work a specific number of days in the landowner's fields. There are some who barely subsist while others live quite well, though life spans for all are short due to rampant diseases and hard work. They are scorned by the other classes and believed to be incapable of understanding honor, therefore untrustworthy. They are often tortured until they pay more money to the upper classes. Robbery and murder are common. They pay taxes and see the landowner waste the money on ornamentation rather than protection of their vassals. While there is no serious plan for revolt, their hatred grows. This class of people are called the Jacquerie. On May 28, 1358, a group of these people hold an "indignation meeting." They whip themselves into a frenzy and armed only with the staves and tools carried by a few, rush the nearest manor, killing the entire family and burning the building. Some reports indicate as many as four knights, five squires and their families are killed the first night, and the success ignites a flurry of similar attacks on about one hundred castles across the country, resulting in thirty deaths. The attacks are vicious and in one case a knight is reportedly roasted, his wife forced to eat some of the meat of her husband's body, then she too is killed.

The rebels become more organized, often attacking hated clergy as well as the nobles, and select Guillaume Karle (or Cale) as their leader. They make it clear that they are warring against the nobles, not the king, and the movement is soon joined by the bourgeois. In some towns, nobles are executed or condemned in absentia. Other towns protect those who take refuge inside. The peasants, numbering in the thousands, gather at Meaux just as cousins Captal de Buch and Gaston Phoebus return from a crusade in Prussia. The cousins, with one hundred and twenty men, slaughter the peasants to protect the nobility within, then kill the people of the town—including the mayor—who opened the gates to the peasants. Charles of Navarre, hoping to gain favor among his own kind, marches against the peasants. Karle accepts an invitation to parley with Charles and is captured, then executed. The peasants, seeing the ease with which they are deceived, seem to lose their will and are slaughtered.

Coucy is at the heart of the rebellion and Enguerrand gathers gentlemen to put a halt to the uprising. Though he is young, he assumes the role of leader. Enguerrand has been a supporter of Charles of Navarre, but now Charles resumes his quest for the throne of France and Enguerrand comes out in opposition to the Navarrese party. Marcel backs Charles but his demands that Paris be relinquished to Charles is met by resistance and Marcel is killed in the melee. When the Regent takes control of Paris, he orders all pardoned except the close associates of Marcel and Charles. He then orders all back to work for the loss of so many of the peasantry in the uprising is being felt in the form of uncultivated fields. Enguerrand continues to protect his castle with the help of his former guardian, Matthieu de Roye and the governor of Coucy's domain, Chanoine de Robersart.

In 1358, King Jean yields to Edward's demands and negotiates a treaty in exchange for his release. He gives up about half of France to the English and agrees to pay an

exorbitant ransom over a period of several years. Back in France, the Dauphin is becoming an adept ruler and calls the Estates in for a conference on the matter. They immediately reject the treaty and call for war on England. There follows an effort by England to gather everything needed to wage war and the preparations are completed in time for a winter campaign—not a positive move for the English who will be far from home under harsh winter conditions, but impossible to change. The French simply choose the most defensible sites, burn everything else including provisions the English might use for themselves, and watch as the English troops starve. While Edward is in France, French forces invade England, pillaging and destroying everything in their path. The action infuriates Edward. Then a horrific hailstorm strikes and when temperatures plummet the English encounter serious loss of property and life. It is immediately seen as an act of God. England and France enter into a peace treaty. Taxes are levied across the land in an effort to raise money to pay the king's ransom—part of the treaty—and Jean sells his eleven-year-old daughter, Isabelle, into marriage with the son of "an upstart Italian tyrant." A recurrence of the Black Plague crops up but Isabelle is sent to be married despite the risk. The first payment on the ransom is made and Jean is returned to France.

As one of the terms of the treaty, some thirty hostages of noble blood are sent to England to ensure further payments on the king's ransom. Enguerrand is among them. Geoffrey Chaucer travels to France with Edward's second son, Lionel, and is captured during a foraging trip in that country. The ransom paid to return Chaucer "compared favorably" with that paid for Lord Andrew Lutterall's dead horse or the amount paid to ransom an archer of the army. It is likely that Chaucer travels back to England with Enguerrand and notes that the two become friends. Enguerrand also meets Jean Froissart. Chaucer might very well have had Enguerrand in mind when he writes about the knight in the Canterbury Tales. The captives live at their own expense and are free to move about, enjoy banquets, hunt and flirt.

A new wave of the plague strikes, claiming Jean's wife and several of the captives among the victims. The Dauphin loses his two small daughters though it is not certain it is the plague that claims the girls' lives. The Dauphin himself is ill and some believe it might be an attempt at arsenic poisoning plotted by Charles of Navarre. The new attack of the plague means people are in constant fear for their lives—never knowing when the next attack will occur. There is another problem. The continually reduced population of France means there are fewer people to tax and the ransom payments lag. Owners of property ceded to England beg the French rulers not to give them up, saying they will pay high taxes rather than be under English rule. One owner throws himself from a cliff, choosing death over an oath of loyalty to England.

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There is an extensive description of Paris of the 14th century. The many college students are seldom punished for their misdeeds, often accused of deeds they do not commit, overcharged for dingy rooms and sit on hard benches with only a candle to light their way during lectures. There are dozens of booksellers including open air vendors. Aqueducts bring water into the city while all but main streets have gutters running down

the center. Streets are paved and main streets are sufficiently wide for two carts to meet. People—even kings—often entertain from a seat on a bed. There are few chairs with most using benches. The wealthy scatter flowers and rushes on the floors, changing them four times each year. The poor can usually afford to change them only once. Houses have few rooms and guests often sleep in the room with the hosts.

A Benedictine monk writes a scolding review of the attitudes and situation in France. He asks what makes a people stand by while their king is captured and taken from the country. He wonders if the knights learn anything from their youth, spent in games and hunts. Finally, he accuses the peasants of serving only their bellies, with women as their gods.

As the uprising of the peasants grows, the captains of the peasantry militia have little or no control. One captain faces a mob calling for the head of a captured squire with the admonition that killing the man would be a crime. He seems to fear the killing of a noble, even under the current circumstances. The mob decapitates the man on the spot despite the captain's attempts at control. Many peasants have no idea why they are fighting. Some seem to have the idea that if they kill all the nobles, there will simply be no more nobility.

The English want to take France by laying siege and forcing the surrender of one city at a time. The French select only defensible sites to hold and refuse to submit to open warfare with Edward. The result is that the medieval armies simply have no way to force an unconditional surrender and no means for major damage except by a "fluke," such as the capture of King Jean. When England and France enter into a new treaty, France gives up some lands and agrees to pay Jean's ransom, though the amount is now somewhat less than originally agreed to.

In 1364, after taking time out for a crusade, Jean addresses the issue of the hostages still being held by England. He hands himself over to the English and dies just a few months later. There is an elaborate funeral service in England and then his body is shipped home. Several hostages remain in England though some find ways to leave on their own by paying personal ransoms or ceding specific lands. Enguerrand remains in England until 1365. There is no real reason for Jean to go back to England. He claims it is his duty but then the question arises, what of his duties as king? It is suggested by the author that Jean simply felt incapable of performing the duties of king and preferred the "forced passivity" of prison. That idea is borne out by his decision to take time out of pressing business to go on a crusade just before turning himself over to England.

Chapter 9 through 11

Chapter 9 through 11 Summary and Analysis

In 1365, Isabelle is the 33-year-old, single, willful and over-indulged second child of King Edward and Queen Philippa. She has been promised in marriage five times but never married. Her younger sister Joanna is to take her place in one of these marriages but Joanna dies of the plague before the event. At nineteen, she is betrothed to the son of a landowner with property in both England and France—an apparent effort to sway the landowner's loyalties to England. Just as she is boarding the boat for the voyage to her wedding, she changes her mind. Her reasoning is unclear though it could be the thought of Joanna's death on her own wedding voyage, that she does not want to marry beneath her station or that she simply wants a new wardrobe. The jilted landowner's fate is uncertain. Some say he renounces his inheritance and becomes a monk but others say he marries well.

Isabelle lives the life of a single woman in an independent household but it is unlikely she is ignorant of sexual encounters. Though any exploits of her own are sufficiently discreet that they are not recorded, there is little privacy in this time and literature—especially ballads and poems performed aloud—often speak frankly of sex. As always, there are conflicts between the teachings of the Church and the realities of everyday life. Sex is accepted but only for the purpose of procreation. So what of a man who has sex with his wife after menopause or while she is pregnant? Or what of the man who is enticed by a woman other than his wife and has sex with his wife in order to "cool off?" Sodomy becomes a term used for any "unfit" position or spilling the seed. In literature, men become able to see women for what they are as they age—unclean and deceptive. Men's desire typically cools and in their advanced years he begins to worry more about the possibility of eternity in hell. Women may often be scolding toward their husbands as an only recourse against domination. There then arises the question of a queen's dominion over a knight when the king is absent. The answer is apparently that the knight remains superior because she is of inferior virtue. It is not explained how she is expected to rule in that situation. Husbands are often absent—fighting, tending the king's business or being held for ransom. Wives in these situations often manage well, in some cases as well as their husbands. One is said to have held out for days against an assault, negotiated a favorable treaty and to have feared no one other than her husband. Spousal battery is common.

Many women earn a wage, though commonly less than their male counterparts. There are few trades commanded by women and only one woman—Christine de Pisan—earns her living in this time as a writer. She writes of her joys as a wife and mother and her sorrow as a widow, and she writes of Joan of Arc.

Isabella and Enguerrand are married July 27, 1365, at Windsor Castle. As a wedding gift, Isabella receives jewels and Enguerrand is released from captivity with no payment required. The couple travel to France where Isabella bears a daughter, Marie. While the

child is still in infancy, they return to England—a hazardous, rough journey that seems hasty and is not explained. It is suggested that Isabella finds she is not at home in France or simply cannot live without the constant indulgence paid to her at court in England. Enguerrand is soon named Earl of Bedford and then Count of Soissons, receiving money and lands in England. The couple have a second daughter, named Philippa for her grandmother, the queen. In 1367, they return to England.

Companies of brigands continue to roam the countryside, taking what they want and creating a sense of perpetual fear among the people. These companies are made up of the lowest of people though their commanders might be misplaced nobility. It is not uncommon for a knight who loses his holdings to these brigands to become one himself. Sir John Hawkwood, second son of a landowner who is landless himself at thirty-five, becomes a feared commander. He lends his fighters to anyone who can pay, often switching sides when the opposition offers a higher price. He dies wealthy and famous.

It is said that a war erupts in Spain and several of the companies are offered "high pay" for their participation. Though they prepare to make the trip, the men have no intention of following their commanders without some pay in advance. They stop in Avignon and camp near the papal palace at Villeneuve. The Pope sends a messenger to tell them to leave. The commander demands absolution for the deeds of his men so that any who die in the upcoming battles will be allowed into heaven, and two hundred thousand francs to pay for their trip to Spain. They are promised absolution but not the money. The commander says that most of the men care only for the money. The money is raised through a hasty tax but the commander of the brigands refuses it, saying that the money must come from the papal treasury and the tax collected returned to the people. This is immediately accomplished but the Pope then attaches a tax to the clergy to make up the money. Over the coming years, France and England enter the struggles with varying results. The turmoil takes an exacting toll on the people who are often forced to transfer allegiances when their property is ceded in battles.

Coucy returns to France in 1367 to find he has few workers remaining on his estate. The Black Death has taken its toll but other workers flee in search of freedom. According to the law of the day, a serf who lives off his owner's land for one year is freed. In an effort to find willing workers, Coucy follows the example of many other landowners and in 1368 grants freedom to twenty-two towns in his region. In return, they are to pay rent "in perpetuity." Those with smaller and less profitable holdings are hit harder by the situation than Coucy. In addition, many of those who were held hostage face the drain of the cost of living in England and of paying ransom added to their financial woes. Coucy pays no ransom and is even granted money by the king of England for his expense while living as a hostage.

While there are difficulties in many parts of the country, there are also banquets, games, hunts and parties. Many carry hooded falcons with them everywhere they go. Oversized pastries are cut open in huge dining halls to release live birds so that falcons can be released to hunt inside. Bathing and hand washing is frequent. Gatherings include the swan festival, held in late summer in which the population chase the young swans still

too young to fly. The event is all about the sport and captured swans are not to be injured or killed. Fashions come and go though there is a particular pointed shoe, the poulaines, which are outlawed but remain in style. In some battles, those wearing the shoes are so hampered by the design that they cut the toes off in order to walk more freely. Most nobles carry the Book of Hours, a specialty book made for individuals containing devotions, psalms and the satire that is so rampant during the period.

Adherence to dictates of the Church varies from one person to the next. Only about ten percent are devout and ten percent negligent with most "wavering" between the two. In 1368, England is ruled by King Charles, a man two years older than Enguerrand and devout in his religious and kingly duties—though he does acquire possession and wealth during his reign. He is devoted to learning and to the spread of knowledge. Sickly as a child, Charles becomes a healthier adult but is warned by a famed physician that he will die within fifteen days if an array of oozing sores should stop oozing. It is noted that he lived "with a sense of urgency."

In 1368, Enguerrand's brother-in-law, Lionel Duke of Clarence, passes through Paris on his way to Milan to wed Violante Visconti, a daughter in a family of cruel men. Her brother Bernabo rules Milan and another brother, Galeazzo, rules Pavia. Lionel's visit to Paris is met with all the pomp the wealthy can provide. He stays in the Louvre in a room decorated especially for his arrival, visiting with his sister and Enguerrand before moving on to Milan where the bride's father holds an elaborate feast that includes gilded meats. These meats are cooked with a paste made of powdered egg yolk, saffron and flour, sometimes with gold leaf cooked in. Lionel dies just a short time later, raising the question of possible poisoning but more likely as a result of the gilded meat served in the heat of summer. Vilante is later married to a sadist who is said to kill young boys with his bare hands. Upon his death she marries a cousin who is killed by her brother. She dies at thirty-one, three times widowed.

A year later Enguerrand serves as envoy for the king at the wedding of Marguerite of Flanders, daughter of Louis who ran away from marriage with Isabella. She is to marry Phillip, brother of King Charles. The union will ultimately provide England "revenge in the darkest stage of war." Literary figure Froissart notes that Enguerrand stands out among those gathered, obviously the reason the king selects him as envoy.

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There is no indication how Isabelle becomes interested in Enguerrand. She may have truly fallen in love or simply be attracted to the younger Frenchman with ancient lineage and an extensive estate. Edward is in favor of the match and it may be at his suggestion that Isabelle takes a liking to Enguerrand. It could also be that her interest in the single life she lives so many years begins to pall, making her susceptible to the charms of Enguerrand. Edward reinstates English lands that belonged to Enguerrand's grandmother but his feelings about the match are unknown.

Isabella has the ability always to spend more money that she has. She is constantly in debt, which her father always pays without seeming to argue. She frequently pawns

items, including jewelry, and her father redeems the items for her. When Isabella and Enguerrand return to England after the birth of their first child, she purchases silk, velvet, taffeta, gold cloth and linens, all paid for by her father. The record-keeping of the day means that these details are carefully set down on parchment.

The treaty that ends the war between England and France holds an order that all English companies of brigands are to stop their tyranny against France. Even when the treaty is signed, Edward has little reason to enforce the rule or to care. Many continue to fight simply because they become accustomed to pillaging and killing during the war between France and England and now do not wish to stop. The one thing they fear is death without absolution for their sins. A soldier who dies in a just war is guaranteed access to heaven. Knowing their fight is not just, these brigands force priests to offer absolution just as they force others to pay "appatis," a fee that permits them to live without attack.

The majority of peasants in the years prior to Enguerrand VI's reign are free. That abolition of serfdom is not accomplished out of any moral obligation on the part of the landowner, but as a matter of financial prudence. The serfs pay no rent and are fed by the landowner. The freed peasants pay rent and are responsible for their own food. The landowner pays them for their work but actually comes out better by hiring freed peasants than by owning serfs.

Despite the great loss and property of life to the Black Death, war, natural diseases and brigands, the wealthy of the time continue to hold ostentatious feasts and events. They present gifts of great value and bestow goods and property freely. It is likely that despite fewer people, there is little want for goods and services because many of the people prior to the Black Death are "surplus." The money remains fairly constant and even that stolen by brigands eventually reenters the economy. Pessimism becomes more intense and many wait—with either hope or dread—for the coming of "the last things."

Chapter 12 through 14

Chapter 12 through 14 Summary and Analysis

King Charles summons Edward, the Black Knight, to Paris, but he replies that if he comes it will be "with helmet on our head and 60,000 men in our company," prompting Charles to declare war in 1369. Enguerrand finds his loyalties torn. He feels he owes allegiance to his father-in-law because of his English holdings but his "natural liege" is the King of France. One suggested solution is that Enguerrand fight for the king to whom he first pledged loyalty and send a replacement to fight for the other king. Just a few months after the declaration of war, Enguerrand leaves for Austria in an attempt to lay claim to disputed land. It is not clear what happens, but he drops the claim, pleads his case for neutrality to both England and France and is heard of only briefly, in Prague, for the next two years. In 1372, Enguerrand is allied with his cousin, the Green Count, in a war against the count's "inexhaustible supply of antagonists." Meanwhile, Isabella goes to England with her daughters.

With the fall of the Roman Empire, Italy falls into a state of chaos while mercenaries rule by force. Some aspects of life continue as normal with artisans and merchants continuing their trades despite attacks but Rome has no commerce to fall back on. Urban sits as Pope, attempting to govern from outside Italy. He determines to return. Urban's attempts to return are not successful and he gives up, returning to Avignon. It is predicted that he will die for betraying "the Mother of Churches," and he does two months later of an unspecified illness. Pope Gregory XI takes his place. A cardinal at nineteen, he has little strength of character but also feels the "call to Rome." Gregory inherits Urban's forces and in 1371 feels a "compelling need for action." In December, Enguerrand is appointed Captain-General of the papal forces and marches against Visconti. However, the Pope tells Enguerrand to provide safe passage for Visconti, allegedly in order to talk over a treaty but ultimately arranged by Visconti to give his own forces time to assemble. When the two forces meet on the battlefield, Enguerrand's men are pushed back but then have a chance to retaliate when Visconti's mercenaries lose interest in the battle and turn to looting. Enguerrand's men regroup and win a decisive victory, prompting the Pope to declare the war a miracle and pushing Enguerrand's name to fame. Enguerrand continues to fight for a time but soon asks to be excused so he can return to his family and business. He is flattered extensively by the Pope—possibly because he is not to be paid for his services for many years.

Upon his return, Enguerrand remains devoutly neutral and is respected for it, so much so that while wars are waged around him none of his property is harmed. A series of events then befall England. The Black Prince is stricken by contagious dysentery and becomes bedridden. In one final battle which he directs from a litter, he orders the town of Limoges destroyed and all its people slaughtered. Unable to govern further, he retires with his wife and son and lives the next six years as an invalid. Meanwhile, a great tactician, Chandos, is struck down in battle and dies. With his death, many lose hope for further peace. Soon after, English vessels—including one carrying money—are

destroyed in a battle at sea. The loss of the currency means England cannot pay troops, therefore has a tenuous hold on Aquitaine. King Edward at sixty years old is determined to go to sea himself. He builds ships and "arrests" merchant ships for the venture but the weather ties them to port until it is too late in the year to begin the voyage. Meanwhile, another important English warrior—the Captal de Buch—is captured and held without ransom. In 1374, King Edward is ready for peace and France is "brought back from ruin."

France and England argue over ownership of particular territories. In June of 1375, the parties—unable to enter into an agreement—agree to a one-year truce. It is known that Enguerrand still wants to claim Hapsburg in Austria and he is offered forces by France. Enguerrand knows that mercenaries are unreliable at best but agrees to the assignment. He recruits many knights who seem to want to serve under the "King of England's son-in-law," and enters into an agreement with a "celebrated warrior," Owen of Wales who agrees to turn all captured land over to Enguerrand if allowed to retain specific prisoners and booty for himself.

It is apparently an effort to distinguish himself as an honorable knight rather than a leader of mercenaries that prompts Enguerrand to notify the officials of Alsace of his intention to reclaim the land and to notify towns not included in this claim that he poses no threat to them. Nonetheless, companies of men ransack towns, including Alsace, killing and plundering as they go. There is an effort to maintain order, but even punishing the disobedient soldiers with hanging fails to stop the chaos. The ruler, Enguerrand's own cousin, is Leopold. He instructs the people of the threatened cities to take everything they can and retreat to defensible cities, burning everything left behind in an effort to deny the armies their necessary supplies. It is not clear how much of these instructions are carried out, but it is noted that Leopold is unable to match Enguerrand's numbers and withdraws across the Rhine in an effort to solicit the help of the Swiss. The Swiss hate the current landowners, the Hapsburg, and have no quarrel with Enguerrand, so offer little aid. Later, Enguerrand's men accuse him of deceiving them because there is so little food and nothing left for forage. There are two versions of what happens next. Froissart says that Enguerrand, knowing he cannot control the mercenary soldiers and fearing he will be turned over as a prisoner, flees in disguise and returns to France. Other historical accounts have him marching forward, scattering forces in order to find plunder and food, and camping eighteen days at the Abbey of St. Urbain. The battles do not go well for Enguerrand. His men are demoralized because of the lack of provisions and Leopold refuses to fight, resulting in Enguerrand's decision to abort the fight and return home though he does gain ownership of the fief of Count Nidau and he in return renounces all other claims in Austria.

Isabella has again returned to England though she leaves Marie—as heiress to the Coucy estate—behind. Isabella and eight-year-old Phillipa are showered with gifts from her father. Phillipa has been betrothed for four years already to then ten-year-old Robert de Vere, ninth Earl of Oxford, and therefore holds the title Countess of Osford. Meanwhile, Enguerrand seems to want to choose between his loyalties to England and France, ending his forced neutrality. He seems to be leaning toward choosing France though Isabella would likely object. Before he makes that decision, the King of France

sends Enguerrand to England in an effort to discover what terms of peace would be acceptable to that country.

Enguerrand and Isabella are welcomed upon their arrival in England in 1376, but there is unrest among the people. Isabella's father is senile and the Duke of Lancaster—Isabella's brother—is being blamed for all the wrongs of the country. There are an array of demands from Parliament—that the king's mistress be dismissed from court on the grounds that she is alleged to be a witch along with a "long list" of governmental restraints. They are also angry over abuses "of a foreign Church hierarchy." A general lawlessness controls the land and the legend of Robin Hood is born. The peasants have learned the art of control, striking whenever wages are not to their expectations and leading a nomadic life. Meanwhile, John Wyclif speaks out against the superiority of the papacy over the throne and against the requirement to make payments to the clergy, going so far as to propose that the clergy should be removed as the "necessary mediator between man and God." He insists priests are not necessary for salvation and his ideas exactly fit the needs of the King. Wyclif is later condemned for his writings.

There are the usual intrigues as several hope for ascension to the throne and a governing body, the Commons, plan to become more than an ad hoc group with only the power to approve taxes. There are allegations that the King's councillors have deceived the King and wasted money. The resulting trials end with the dismissal of several office holders, including two ministers. It is during this time that the Black Prince dies after years of being bedridden. The country is left under the rule of an old man who has lost his faculties, a minor child named Richard as heir apparent, and Lancaster, whom they hate. Parliament immediately confirms Richard. The King is also ailing and it is apparent that the end is near. Enguerrand makes no formal announcement of his decision to commit to loyalty to France over England, but accepts a mission to Flanders, representing France's interests over those of England. There are talks of treaties between France and England but none come to pass. The King dies and ten-year-old Richard takes the throne. The moment the peace treaty between France and England expires, the French invade.

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Enguerrand is serving as Lieutenant-General for the Green Count in nearby Milan. As the war there rages, Enguerrand is an effective leader but the men in power are torn by family loyalties, probably the reason most of the battles are "insubstantial." In addition, many of the soldiers are mercenaries and are often lured to fight for the opposition. Enguerrand remains embroiled in that war for two years and the author notes it is "a snake pit of wriggling fragments."

In 1373 and 1374, the Black Death makes another visit to Italy and France, prompting a further end to the papal war. While the contagion is still not understood, it is better contained this time. Victims are taken from the towns to recover or die. Those who nurse victims are quarantined. Priests are required to report anyone who shows symptoms. Soon after but apparently unrelated, people begin hysterical dancing and

are thought to be possessed. The Pope motivates an Inquisition into sorcery, holding trials that had previously been illegal.

The technology of the day is used to erect buildings two hundred feet high, create looms for patterned cloth and harness air to turn a millstone, but does not extend to knowledge of sailing against unfavorable winds.

It seems accepted that Enguerrand can serve France without going against his vows of fealty to England by waging war in Austria. It is noteworthy that he is thirty-five years old, wealthy enough that he is able to loan money to other nobles in need but not in a position to wage a war without aid. Just before going into battle, Enguerrand grants money for two masses each day forever, an obvious effort to "care for the future of his soul." This is a common practice and provides income for the church and employment for the clergy. It is noted that some bequests are extravagant and that the Princess of Wales "maintained three priests whose only duty was to say prayers for her deceased first husband." Enguerrand does not immediately take command of his forces and contradictions in existing records makes it impossible to determine why.

The questions plaguing the church at this time seem to be centered on the corruption and duplicity of rules. For example, a member of the clergy could purchase a license to hold a concubine. The people argue that makes him no better than the average sinner. Priests are underpaid which leads to their willingness to sell services—another practice that angers the people.

Enguerrand's loyalties are to be tested. He has the option to maintain neutrality, simply remaining out of any wars or conflicts between England and France, such as he has done previously. It seems this course of inaction does not sit well with the warrior and he probably wants to choose a side in order to be involved in the matters of state. His allegiance is for France because that is the country of his home, but he is drawn to England because of his vast holdings there and his connections to the leaders by way of his marriage to Isabella. Enguerrand does renounce his English lands and declares himself loyal to France. With this comes the decision to part with his wife as well.

It is likely that Isabella, in her constant quest for money and power, refuses to give up the English lands. She is given a settlement to be paid only as long as she remains in England and moves there where her youngest daughter, Philippa, has always lived. It is not known what Engurrand thinks of the arrangement. Isabella dies two years later and all Enguerrand's English property goes to Philippa.

Chapters 15 through 17

Chapters 15 through 17 Summary and Analysis

Roman Emperor Charles IV makes a visit to France and Enguerrand is among those sent to welcome him. His entry into Paris is filled with ceremony though he is stricken with gout and forced to ride upon a litter until the final passage. There are eight hundred guests, all served simultaneously and who then adjourn to the Great Hall for a play. Charles addresses an assembly, recounting the decades of an ancient quarrel. He is escorted from the city by an entourage that includes Enguerrand and dies ten months later.

The Italians continue their hatred for the papacy. A member of the Pope's Legate, Robert of Geneva convinces Gregory XI to hire mercenaries. They fail in their objective—Bologna, which is key among the papal states—and suffer a number of defeats. In Cesena, Robert orders a massacre, sending about a thousand women to safety and allowing a few men to escape. Among the mercenaries is Hawkwood who soon leaves the papal employ for better pay in Milan. His loyalty is purchased with his marriage to an illegitimate daughter of Bernabo Visconti.

Meanwhile, Catherine of Siena is pleading with the Pope to signal Church reform. Catherine remains in a perpetual state of discomfort, the better to serve Christ. She seldom eats and when she does, spits out the food or forces herself to vomit. She constantly deprives herself of sleep and claims the stigmata, though it is visible only to Catherine herself. She is the youngest of a family of twenty-three children, has had visions since she was seven and is called upon to settle disputes between her periods of trances. Gregory, under Catherine's influence, declares that "Rome is wherever the Pope happens to be" but soon returns to Rome, despite the unrest there. Gregory enters the city in 1377 and dies fifteen months later. There is a dispute over who should take his place and Archbishop Bari takes over as Urban VI. Some believe his sudden rise to power causes madness and in 1378 there erupt hints of an invalid election that could be used to remove Urban from the papacy. Those seeking to remove him seek the aid of King Charles but he declines on the advice of his counselors, though England remains loyal to Urban. It is hoped that Urban can be forced to resign but he quickly hires mercenaries of his own and sets out to retain his seat by force. There follows a battle of two papacies, one under Urban and a second under Clement.

Charles of Navarre continues to be a problem and is soon charged with treason for allegedly concocting a plot to poison the king. He later plots to poison his brother-in-law but the plot is uncovered and results in the death of Charles' nephew. With Charles of Navarre so deeply involved in the various plots and intrigues, the King sends an army, led by Enguerrand, to "conquer Navaree's towns and castles," with instructions to pay close attention to those near the coast—the key to quelling an English invasion. Enguerrand's forces prepare to attack, warning the inhabitants that they must surrender or face slaughter. However, Navaree's forces cannot give in without losing honor and

facing treason charges by Charles. Soon, the French hold all the Normandy land formerly owned by Charles of Navarre. The French raze the property so that enemies of France cannot use or occupy it.

Enguerrand has no male heir. Marie remains in France, apparently as part of Enguerrand's household, but Philippa remains "irrevocably English." Marie's betrothal is being arranged. She is overlooked as the new wife for the recently widowed son of the King of Aragon. Yolanda de Bar, niece of the French King, is selected and Marie is later betrothed to Yolanda's brother. In 1379 Isabella dies, though it will be seven years before Enguerrand remarries.

Wars continue to rage and King Charles, aware of his own failing health, begins to focus on peace so that he will not hand the throne to his son in the midst of war. Meanwhile, France is enduring internal struggles. Famine, taxes to pay for tournaments and battles with no determinate outcome prompt the peasants to rebel, sometimes with "ruinous" results. The Commons also complain, objecting to spending money by funding battles that are not considered to be in the national interest. Meanwhile, the English claim to be suspicious of French terms of peace, which favor the English, and use that as a reason to continue the war. In truth, it is likely the English simply want to go on fighting and are much less interested in peace than the French.

Shortly before the King's death, Coucy assumes command of forces at Picardy and immediately faces invading forces. The English forces are being paid with "pillage," meaning the army is encouraged to pillage the countryside along the way. Thomas of Buckingham, younger brother of the Black Prince, leads an attack aimed at obtaining a stronghold for England. Buckingham wants war, saying that the knights and their followers who are paid for fighting benefit from continued wars. When the English are unable to forage and pillage necessary supplies, they demand goods from towns, attacking those who decline. Enguerrand and his men are under orders not to attack unless the French gain superior numbers to ensure victory. There are some minor skirmishes but the French seem often to be outmanned and outnumbered. Then Enguerrand is summoned to Paris where the King lies dying. The King is worried he will have no answer when God questions specific actions—including the heavy taxation of the French people. In his last moments of life, the King commends to his brother his son, and urges them to lift taxes. With the King's death, the nation is officially under the rule of a twelve-year-old —just as England is under the rule of a child. Both nations are actually being run by the boys' uncles who are not really responsible but who hold immense power.

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There arises a group of people, mystics, who do not own property, move from town to town where they beg and interrupt church services, and use two major gospels written by women. Gregory pursues the people of this group, calling them mystics and burning some at the cross, often along with their writings. It is noted that those enforcing the laws against heresy are faced with an additional challenge—the need to distinguish between "diabolic and lawful magic powers." As the Inquisition evolves, all signs of

magic and witchcraft imply contact with Satan. Nicolas Oresme, the King's advisor in philosophy, says that these sorcerers cannot conjure demons, though he does not dispute the existence of demons. He also points out that confessions of witchcraft are exacted with torture. While Nicolas presents his views, the King also employs Thomas Pisano who "fashioned wax images to destroy the English." Sorcery remains an important part of life but the real danger to the church will come from within.

When some of the men seem reluctant to participate in the slaughter led by Robert, he insists. He never asks for forgiveness nor does he ever offer excuses for the massacre.

Urban VI comes from humble beginnings and his sudden rise to the papacy goes to his head. In a heartbeat, he is exalted above the high-born cardinals. He is a jealous man who hates those born of privilege, publicly chastises the cardinals for their excessive lifestyles and prohibits the receiving of gifts of money.

Enguerrand is no longer torn by loyalties to both France and England, apparently prompting his willingness to serve "as the King's right arm." Olivier de Clisson is an example of a soldier who switches his allegiance during his lifetime. His father is killed when Clisson is seven and his mother exacts a promise from him to have revenge on the French. He does fight against the French for many years. Then King Charles returns property to Clisson and gives him many gifts. Clisson says he can no longer put up with the "arrogance of the English," but it seems possible that he succumbs to the flattery and gifts presented by the French.

At one point, King Charles is brought face-to-face with the plight of the common people of France. When this happens, Charles is left with a guilty conscience. This could carry serious repercussions. A king on his medieval deathbed could issue binding rules and orders that would greatly limit the crown, in an effort to salve his conscience and to gain a foothold in heaven.

Just two months before his death, Charles finds himself in a position to name a new Constable—the highest and best-paid lay office in the realm at this time. Charles offers it to Enguerrand, who refuses. Enguerrand says someone better known to the area of Brittany should be selected, but it seems likely there were other considerations. It could be that his loyalties continue to be tested because of his marriage to Isabella and the fact that his daughter is living in England. It could also be that he is aware of the King's failing health and that somehow prompts his decision. It may have also seemed "politically dangerous" to Enguerrand, as the holder of this office often collects enemies.

Chapter 18 through 21

Chapter 18 through 21 Summary and Analysis

With the death of the King, the commoners revolt. Workers are required to observe more than one hundred religious holidays annually and have no hope of improving their lives—which are a constant battle to subsist. The workers know of the King's deathbed promise that taxes will no longer be collected and they are anxious for the promise to be fulfilled. Meanwhile, there is a scramble for control of the throne which climaxes with a public argument between two uncles, the convening of the Council, selection of the person to serve as advisor to the underage king, and yet another scramble despite that decision. Anjou wins the seat and it is he who promises that taxes will be abolished. The mobs, apparently keyed up by their threats to the nobility, rush the Jewish quarters of the city, killing several including a rabbi. The government is now faced with the problem of raising money and appeals to the nobility for voluntary submissions but not many answer the call.

The boy-King is not without power himself. He once said the Cardinal was "the Devil." Upon taking the throne, the Cardinal fears retribution, hides his wealth and flees the country, never to return. The others in power in the nation at the time seek Enguerrand's favor and he remains at least somewhat removed from the politics and intrigues. There is a revolt in areas across France, including Paris, where Jews are often targeted and many of the rioters later executed. In Ghent, a militia is organized and the leader—Philip van Artevelde—orders distribution of food and fixing of prices when the populace of the town are facing starvation. The people stand against an army, Philip assumes the title Regent, and offers allegiance to England. Meanwhile, Enguerrand is sent to negotiate with the people of Paris. The people agree to pay a specific amount in taxes rather than the face the erratic taxation typically levied by the King in exchange for a pardon. Their offer is rejected but with a disasterous battle at Ghent, the bourgeois become anxious to come to a peaceful settlement. The upper class come to fear subversion and to feel the source is Ghent.

At fourteen, the King of France is joined by his uncles and French noblemen as the French and Flemish clash at the river Lys. The Flemish trust that the French will not be able to cross the Lys but a bridge is hastily constructed and the French rush the Flemish people, killing and pillaging as they go. Philip van Artevelde moves into position to fight as well. He orders his men to take no prisoners other than the King, and cites the fact that the King is merely a child taking orders from others. On the morning of November 29, 1382, Artevelde rushes the center of the French forces, pushes them back only to be attacked at his own rear by French forces led by Enguerrand. Artevelde is actually trampled by his own men as they try to retreat. The French attempt to parley with Ghent but the efforts fail and with winter upon them, return to handle the continuing problems in Paris. The uprising there is soon quelled and it is noted that the only reason the revolt lasts so long is that there is no national plan of attack for squashing such rebellions.

There are some changes but the plight of the working class goes on much as is has for ages.

Italy is something of a paradise under the rule of Robert, called "the new Solomon," but conflict abounds when a female heir cannot hold the throne and is subsequently imprisoned then strangled to death with Charles of Durazzo taking over. The Duc d'Anjou makes plans to enter the erupting violence on behalf of Joanna after he is named her heir, but he has trouble financing his army. His seven-year-old son, Louis, is betrothed to Lucia the daughter of Bernabo Visconti. Visconti, looking ahead to the day his daughter will be Queen of Naples, pays a significant dowry and Anjou uses it to push his army forward. Anjou sends a challenge to Charles of Durazzo but Charles declines an open battle. Another month passes and Anjou offers to cede Provence in return for safe passage back to France but Charles again declines. Anjou sells everything he has to raise money to support his troops. Anjou continues to plead for supplementary troops under Enguerrand's command. Just as Enguerrand is preparing to leave, his men are forced to defend against another English attack. Then Enguerrand commits his men to help the Duc de Bar, father of his daughter's betrothed. Bar pays for the service and Enguerrand's daughter, Marie, is married later that year. Anjou is robbed by a knight sent to fetch some eighty thousand francs and the French pride comes into play, refusing to allow Anjou to simply languish in failure. Enguerrand's march across Italy is a time-consuming affair and he stops along the way to exact payment in return for his assurances that his soldiers will not attack and pillage. Despite significant wins by Enguerrand's men, it is too late to save Anjou who is already dead. Before his death, Anjou calls for the ascention of his son, Louis II, to the throne of Naples. His wife pushes for that objective on behalf of her son but is denied.

Leaders in Florence complain of Enguerrand's wrongdoings, likely because they themselves pledge neutrality but do not honor that pledge. The eventual terms of the treaty grant more than Enguerrand originally demands, a consideration offered because Enguerrand's men "traversed Florentine territory without causing damage" and will leave the same way. Enguerrand is not wounded during the battles of this trip but a fall from his horse in Avignon causes a serious leg injury that puts him in bed for four months, though he continues his duties—apparently from a litter.

King Charles, at seventeen, is a likable, generous ruler but is unstable. When he is offered Isabeau—granddaughter of Bernabo Visconti—as his wife, he accepts, having been instantly taken by her alluring ways. Tensions between the French and English continue as do problems in Ghent. Perhaps prompted by other notable marriages, Enguerrand marries Isabelle, daughter of the Duc de Lorraine, in February 1386. He is forty-six years old and she is some thirty years younger. It is said she is considered as a bride for the King at one point, and that she is beautiful. Enguerrand immediately remodels the castle at Coucy, adding a wing. The couple have only one child—a daughter named Isabelle for her mother who will eventually marry the second son of the Duke of Burgundy. Enguerrand later sires a son out of wedlock, Perceval who will become known as the Bastard of Coucy and who inherits a fiefdom from Enguerrand.

The King of France is faced with a dilemma when Clisson is taken hostage. The event occurs when Clisson believes himself the guest of another. Clisson and his supporters expect the King to exact revenge for the act but the King's uncles want to ignore the issue. Meanwhile, King Charles is openly challenged by Duke of Guelders who claims to be an ally of Richard II. He is likely paid by the English for his actions, designed merely to antagonize the French. The Council wants to ignore the threats but Enguerrand insists the King's honor be upheld. While this debate rages, Charles of Navarre becomes ill and is sewn into brandy-soaked bandages at night to warm him. The soaked rags catch on fire from a candle flame and Charles dies in agony two weeks later.

Enguerrand begins to put together another campaign and is garnering money in his own name, probably in an effort to gain support that would be withheld otherwise. Charles, now twenty, dismisses his uncles and for the first time truly takes control of the throne. Charles' younger brother, Louis of Orleans, takes a place in the Royal Council.

Meanwhile, there are similar intrigues in England. Philippa's husband, Robert de Vere, is a member of court by virtue of his marriage and has gained "a dominant influence" over King Richard. Robert becomes enamored with a lady-in-waiting of the court and, with Richard's help, sets out to divorce Philippa. Philippa goes to live with Robert's mother—a sign of her condemnation of her son's action. Robert is charged with treason but he has already fled the country. Robert is invited to France, despite Enguerrand's objections, where he stays for a short period before Enguerrand prevails upon the King to expel the man who dishonored his daughter. The divorce is annulled and Philippa remains Countess. About this time, Enguerrand is named "Grand Bouteiller" of France, a position of "domestic steward."

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The commoners begin to gather secretly—a change from the tactics of previous times when open and unorganized revolt was the only option. However, this time the artisans and workers who clamor for changes—including the abolition of taxes—seem to be searching for a way to wage war but want to organize sufficiently to ensure victory. France is not the only country in this situation and an all-out revolt erupts in England. The chief complaint seems to be the rules of peasants and their lack of rights. The young King, Richard II, agrees to all their demands with the hope that a huge gathering outside London will disperse. Richard, by his bearing and attitude, gains the trust of the mob and they believe him to be their protector. He later reneges after a brief scuffle with the peasants, saying they are peasants and will remain so. Nonetheless, the system is on the decline simply because of economic factors. Some liken the uprising to the Black Death.

Just before the battle is expected to commence, the King informs Clisson—who is currently leading his army—that he is to surrender his command. Clisson is to be "near the King's person," and Enguerrand is to replace Clisson on the battlefield. There is no indication what prompts the request but Clisson pleads with the King to allow him to remain in command of the military. Clisson says his men will think him a coward if he

abandons them at this point and the King relents. The King is just a boy—he says Clisson obviously has a greater understanding than he, and a greater understanding than those who suggested Clisson's transfer to the King.

When the French arrive in Paris, they are met by a show of force which is quickly quelled, with Enguerrand among those sent to question the Parisians' motives. While in Paris Enguerrand gains a bit of fame that will follow him throughout history. Though Enguerrand is actually among those who "threw down the gates" to the city and ordered the rioters to cease, the Parisians remember him as being the man who "remonstrated with the King." It is said he tells the young King that he must not destroy his own people, that without these people the King himself will be working his land with a spade. The image of the King doing manual labor—the work of a strikes a chord with the people and endears Enguerrand to them.

The English continue to look at France wistfully and to search for a way to gain a foothold in that country. The French seem uninterested in taking over lands in England but are constantly looking toward Italy. Italy is said to be "something like paradise" with its secure roads, hotels for travelers, stable currency system and just laws.

The English meanwhile are selling clerical favors to finance their war. The clerics go so far as to refuse absolution to anyone who does not pay their dues. The amount due depends on how much the clerics believe that particular person should be able to pay.

The tradition of giving significant dowries at the time of marriages or even betrothals prompts a problem for Bernabo Visconti. His nephew, equal heir to the vast Visconti properties, objects to Bernabo's tendency to settle large amounts of land on the betrothed of his daughters. The nephew, Gian Galeazzo, asks to meet Bernabo outside Milan and Bernabo agrees. Gian is known for having monks accompany him wherever he goes, for carrying a rosary and for consulting astrologers in every matter. Upon their meeting, Gian takes the unsuspecting Bernabo hostage, takes control of Milan and is welcomed by the peasants because his first move is to lower taxes and allow the commoners to ransack Bernabo's home. He is to become "one of the major figures of Europe." Bernabo's granddaughter, Isabeau of Bavaria, will become the Queen of France and pledge revenge for the grandfather she never met.

Though the people loved Enguerrand and he apparently tries to be fair, the author writes that he is not without pride. It could be that he considers himself entitled in some manner because his daughter, Philippa, is cousin to the King of England.

Enguerrand supports the move to oust Charles' uncles. Despite that, he entertains one of them just days after they are removed from their places of importance at Charles' side. The man gives Enguerrand's wife a ring and his baby daughter a brooch. It is likely the gifts are an effort to assure Enguerrand that there are no hard feelings because, as always, Enguerrand's favor is highly sought.

The common people—who ultimately fund the wars—become disenchanted with knights who no longer seem the epitome of chivalry and morality. Wars rage almost

constantly for a century and many are simply tired of it. As some consider waging new battles, there is no support. Finances are not forthcoming and failed attempts have "drained the desire for aggression." Meanwhile, there are other changes afoot. Paper is more accessible and the mercantile class know how to read. This means they suddenly have access to stories—a privilege previously held only for the wealthy who could hear from minstrels. While the wealthy are not spending money on wars, there are civil events that require funding—including the coronation of Queen Isabeau. Those who attend are arrayed in opulent clothing and treated to tournaments and feasts. As soon as it is over, the people are subjected to a tax to pay for it all.

Chapter 22 through 24

Chapter 22 through 24 Summary and Analysis

France and England are not currently at war, prompting Genoa's request that France join them against the Berber Kingdom of Tunis. The conflict is touted as a crusade in hopes of garnering French support but the ministers are reluctant to send French forces out of the country without a permanent peace with England—which is not forthcoming. Enguerrand likely leaves soon afterward for Spain with the intention of arranging the marriage of Louis II to the daughter of the King of Aragon, though the details are unclear. Louis is previously married by proxy to Bernabo Visconti's daughter but that marriage is annulled when Bernabo falls from power. In 1390, Enguerrand testifies on behalf of Pierre de Luxemburg in canonization hearings. Luxemburg reportedly renounces the flesh at age six, requiring that his sister do the same. This wins him appointment as a canon at nine and cardinal at sixteen. He gains a reputation for healing, dies in 1387 and the canonization hearings last six weeks. In Paris, Enguerrand is among those present for an elaborate event at court before being named second in command of a force to join Genoa against Barbary.

There are problems as the two countries join forces, including which papal office should bless the fleet as it sails. In the end, priests representing each of the popes officiate. In July, they reach Tunis and Enguerrand is the first ashore. They are not met by a war party as expected. On the third day, there is a brief skirmish and both sides settle down again to wait. Efforts at parley are unsuccessful and the Saracens suggest that ten men from each camp battle to determine the winner. There erupts another minor skirmish with no clear victor. The idea of a siege throughout winter is unappealing, added to which is the notion that the French fear the Genoese might slip away during the night, leaving the French to deal with the situation. Leaders decide to try to take the walled city by force. The resulting battle reveals what some have said—that the city cannot be taken in that manner. Literary figure Froissart is said to write that knights believe the outcome will be different is Enguerrand is in charge. When the French return, they are greeted as heroes.

Scholar and preacher Jean Gerson gives a twelve-hour sermon to the king in 1391 related to the schism of the age. He believes the Pope should be ruled by the Church Council, believes in demons and is concerned with the development of children. Wenceslas IV accepts the throne as King of Bohemia but is ruling over chaos and the sovereign is destroyed by the constant warring. He is an alcoholic and when there is a public offensive resulting in the deaths of many Jews, Wenceslas says they get what they deserve. He dies in 1419 of an apoplectic fit.

People are largely irreverent, church services avoided by most and indifference an accepted attitude. Gerard Groote founds a movement called the Brethren of the Common—a group who want to live piously without removing themselves from the world into a cloistered life.

While Gerson continues to preach his message, news arrives that the King of France is heading to Rome to reunite the Church. On the verge of peace, England suddenly holds back and the Duke of Brittany becomes quarrelsome—minting his own money and acting as a sovereign nation—which elicits the anger of France. As Enguerrand is helping resolve this issue, the only heir of Count Guy de Blois dies, leaving the Count with extensive debts and no heir. Enguerrand is involved in the purchase of the property. The sale of dynastic property is dishonorable and Froissart condemns Enguerrand's role in the matter, probably because it is equally dishonorable to profit from the situation. During his travels at this time, Enguerrand is with the King when Charles and Isabeau's fifth child is born (though he dies at age nine). Only one of the sons of this union lives to be crowned.

The parley between France and England is in progress and the French give strict orders to the retinue regarding conduct, in an effort to eliminate any chance of an argument erupting. During the meeting, Enguerrand has the opportunity to meet with his daughter, Philippa. The peace talks fall apart long before peace is achieved and in the midst of this King Charles falls ill. He moves to the quiet "episcopal palace at Beauvias," where he soon appears fully recovered.

Pierre de Craon, who steals money from Anjou during his Naples campaign, is summarily dismissed from court after spreading the story of an illicit affair by Louis d'Orleans. Craon immediately sets out for revenge against the man he believes is behind his dismissal—Clisson. Craon waits in the dark with several men to assassinate Clisson, who holds an important government office. However, when the assassins realize they are supposed to attack such an important official, they are reluctant and Clisson, though injured, escapes to name Craon as his attacker. Craon escapes as well and swears Clisson's survival is "diabolical." The Duke of Brittany is ordered to turn over Craon but denies that he knows of Craon's whereabouts, prompting Charles to wage a campaign against Brittany.

Along the road to Brittany, Charles is riding some distance from the main entourage to avoid the excessive dust when he is accosted by a beggar who warns the King to turn back and says he has been betrayed. They continue and emerge onto an open plain. The heat is unbearable and suddenly one of Charles' men drops his lance which clangs against a metal helmet. Charles rushes about, yelling the charge against the traitors and slashing at anyone he can reach. He kills at least one knight but no one dares fight back because he is the king and such an action would be treason. Finally, his chamberlain "clasped him from behind" and Charles is lowered to the ground, apparently out of his mind. Physicians have no idea what to do but Enguerrand's physician, Guillaume de Harsigny, takes over the care of the King who recovers. Whether it is Harsigny's care or coincidence, the ninety-two-year-old doctor is credited with saving the sovereign life. While Charles is out of commission, his uncles take over, arrest two men who are imprisoned for eighteen months until Charles exacts their release, and do away with Clisson's office. The uncles offer the office to Enguerrand who refuses. Over the next thirty years, Charles will have intermittent spells of madness, keeping the government in a constant state of dispute.

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France and England are in the midst of a truce and King Charles - known for his largesse—travels among his people. The main goal of the trip is to give Charles the opportunity to endear himself to his people. The entourage travels to Lyon, then Avignon, where Charles proposes a way for the Pope to gain control of Italy and for Louis of Anjou to gain control of Naples. Charles and his brother enjoy themselves during their travels, at one point engaging in a competition to discover the best song about courtly love. The entourage then moves on to Languedoc where Charles' ministers "order reforms and lifted the heaviest taxes." It seems likely the measures are aimed at gaining public support for Charles.

Wenceslas is in the same predicament as many leaders of his time. There are too many problems, too many factions and insufficient leadership to combat the issues at hand. Attitudes change over the course of the century with many coming to have doubts about Christian beliefs and irreverent actions being common. Nonetheless, there are some things that remain sacred as Jean de Montson finds when he offers the theory that the Virgin was "conceived in original sin"—an idea that prompts official condemnation by the University of Paris. Despite those who are unbelievers or who act rebelliously, all who face death or advanced age are unwilling to take chances and deathbed bequests that further the cause of the clerics are common. Churches use excommunication as a constant threat for those who do not meet specific religious requirements, though even priests shoot dice as they watch their congregation involved in lascivious songs and dances. Some of the irreverence could be caused by the fact that religion at this time is an accepted part of everyday life—familiarity breeds contempt, as the saying goes.

As Charles lies in a coma for four days, there is much speculation as to the reason for his madness. Some say it is God's wrath and others believe poison is to blame. There is immediate upheaval and Enguerrand plays a crucial role. He is dispatched with a message that the war against Brittany is called off. He is also sent to make two arrests, Riviere and Mercier. Later, Riviere's widow will claim that Enguerrand robbed her estate while on official business, though she will not make that claim until after Enguerrand's death.

Enguerrand does accompany Charles on a pilgrimage of thanks upon his recovery. Harsigny warns that Charles is not strong enough to take on the duties of his office. This suits his uncles. They attempt to retain control for themselves. Faced with all this free time, Charles finds many ways to entertain himself. At one point, the Queen throws a masquerade for her favorite lady-in-waiting who has just married for the third time—an event that invites ribald revelry. Several men are dressed as wolves when someone enters with a torch and many of the costumes are soon ablaze, resulting in several deaths. When the people hear of the debacle, they are angry and say it is foolish for the King's life to be put in danger in such a manner. The common agreement is that, had the King been killed, the commoners would have killed the entire court—including the King's uncles. As a public apology, the King rides in a solemn process to Notre Dame with his uncles and brother following as "barefoot penitents."

In 1388-1390 the Black Death makes another appearance, taking less dramatic toll than previous outbreaks but with a particular and different outcome. Previously, mostly children with no immunity are affected. This time, more adults are victims. While the dwindling population means there is more food per person as well as more money and land, the improved quality of life is likely offset by the constant fear of death. People are preoccupied with dying, with the ghoulish aspects of death such as rotting flesh, and with the fear that death could be just around the next corner.

Chapter 25 through Epilogue

Chapter 25 through Epilogue Summary and Analysis

While Enguerrand is involved in a campaign in Genoa, France is involved in a campaign to end schism. Meanwhile, King Richard II of England is tired of war and proposes an alliance in the form of his marriage to Isabelle—daughter of the King of France. The proposal is made despite the fact that Richard is twenty-nine and Isabelle is six. Richard's wife, Anne, has died and he has no heir but his choice of a six-year-old—who will not be required to take her place as his wife until she is twelve—seems to indicate that he wants peace more than he wants an heir. The marriage takes place the following year, putting the two kings "formally at peace."

With the Turks a constant, if distant, threat, the Duke of Burgundy decides to launch a crusade to Hungary in 1391 but the funding is not readily available. In 1395, Hungarian knights and a bishop arrive, citing the cruelty of the Turks and requesting help. They are actually there at the behest of Burgundy, who sends word that a formal request will be "favorably received," Enguerrand arrives in Paras just as the crusade is about to begin and agrees to serve as counselor to Burgundy's son. The preparations are extensive though not everyone joins in the excitement and readily helps prepare. The French do advance into Hungary and meet the Turks on several occasions, once resulting in a tremendous defeat that includes the capture of Enguerrand who, along with some other captives, are forced to stand by while many of their men are beheaded. Though the French are defeated, the Turks sustain heavy losses and are unable to advance but the prisoners are marched for many miles in horrible conditions. Enguerrand, the oldest of the prisoners, is at the edge of death when a Bulgarian appears and gives Enguerrand a cloak. The "miracle" so revives Enguerrand that he survives the march. The event is witnessed by a physician, Geoffrey Maupoivre, who becomes the executor of Enguerrand's estate.

The prisoners are then held in Brusa and Enguerrand is said to fall into a state of melancholy and dictates a lengthy codicil to his will. Meanwhile in France, officials scramble to collect a new tax to ransom those captured. Enguerrand's wife is inconsolable and urges the ransom be paid. Enguerrand dies on February 18, 1397, though it will be two months before news of his death reaches France. The remaining prisoners are ransomed in June and the crusaders begin to make their way home. Enguerrand's son-in-law, Henri deBar, dies of the Black Death outside Venice, leaving Marie without a husband or father.

Marie and the Dame de Coucy battle for control of the Coucy estate. Queen Isabeau almost immediately begins to work at arranging a marriage between Enguerrand's widow and her own father. Marie gives in to pressure from the Duc d'Orleans and sells the property, but battles to recover it until her sudden death in 1405. When Charles' son becomes King Louis XII, the "barony of Coucy passed, where it had long been desired, to the crown."

After his death, Enguerrand's lineage "hung by the single thread of Maries' son Robert de Bar." His daughter, Philippa, dies with no children. The only child born of Enguerrand's second marriage is a daughter, Isabel, who dies in 1411. Her only child, an infant, dies six months later. Enguerrand does leave behind one male heir, the "Bastard of Coucy," Perceval. Though little is known of Perceval, he leaves a will in 1437, including a bequest to "the daughter of Robert de Bar." That line will eventually produce a king—Henry IV.

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Richard has problems of his own in England. There has recently been a peasants' revolt and a bill presented to Parliament contains "Twelve Conclusions" that Richard is being pressed to commit as law. These contain some old arguments—denouncing specific rituals such as vows of chastity—and some new ones, such as a "virtual denial of the right to kill."

The crusade into Hungary begins with the best intentions—to quash the Turks. However, along the way the ideals of the knights and the need to exert personal prowess takes control. Enguerrand is said to be the oldest prisoner taken to Brusa. He is fifty-six—quite old when one considers the average lifespan of the Middle Ages. However, it is important to note that people who reach their fifties or sixties did not usually consider themselves too old to be of use. Many die young but those who survive often lead full, active lives.

Characters

Enguerrand

Born in France, Enguerrand VII is an honorable man with vast holdings who is often away from home, fighting in a war or handling the business of the King. Enguerrand is among those used as hostages to guarantee the payment of a ransom for the King of France, King Jean. By the terms of that agreement, Enguerrand lives in England for a period of time while the money to pay the ransom is gathered. It is during this stay in England that Enguerrand meets Isabella, the grown daughter of the King of England. Isabella is previously slated to marry but is either refused or herself refuses the unions. So she is single and living independently when Enguerrand becomes a part of the English court. There is no indication of Enguerrand's role in the courtship—if any—but the two marry before Enguerrand's term as hostage is complete. He is released unconditionally upon his marriage and English lands that belonged to his mother are restored to him.

Enguerrand and Isabella have two daughters, Marie and Philippa. The fact that there are only two children could be partly attributed to the fact that Enguerrand is never at home. He leads or participates in many battles, typically leading his men to victory. He fathers another daughter, Isabel, in his second marriage. He also fathers an illegitimate son, Perceval, who is formally recognized by Enguerrand and is known as the "Bastard of Coucy." Enguerrand's line will eventually produce royalty—King Henry IV.

When he is in his fifties, he joins a crusade to Hungary to oust the Turks. He is captured and held by the Turkish Sultan for ransom but falls into a deep melancholy and dies before the ransom can be paid.

King Charles

The ruler of France during the majority of Enguerrand's lifetime. Charles takes the throne when he is just a boy and it seems that as soon as he comes of age he begins to rely on Enguerrand as one of his most trusted advisors. The King and Enguerrand are very close, with Charles often calling on Enguerrand for an array of tasks, including representing France in various battles and in negotiating treaties. Charles' mother suffers from madness and Charles himself is leading his men on a campaign when he is suddenly stricken by an apparent bout of madness himself. As Charles is leading his entourage, an old beggar approaches the King and warns he has been betrayed. Charles and his men continue onward but a short distance later Charles apparently loses control of his sanity. He lashes out at anyone near him, killing at least one of his own knights. No one fights against him because to do so would be treason. Finally, Charles is restrained and he lapses into a coma for four days. Enguerrand is present on that campaign and his physician tends Charles. Charles slowly recovers though his recuperation time leaves the kingdom without effective leadership for more than a year.

During that time, Charles and several young people are attending a masquerade in which some of the young men are disguised as wolves. A torch is brought into the party and costumes catch on fire with several young men dying as the result of their burns. The people of France are incensed that Charles would put himself in danger so carelessly. Charles reponds with public penance.

He is not among the most effective rulers and many of the commoners seem to be well aware of his excesses. As he takes the throne at such an early age, he simply has not grown up with a role model to teach him how a king should act.

Philippa

Second daughter born to Isabella and Engueraand, she is betrothed at age four to Robert de Vere, ninth Earl of Oxford. With that betrothal comes the title "Countess of Oxford." At eight, Philippa "shares with her mother in the bounty of the autumnal monarch." The two are showered with gifts, most from Philippa's grandfather, the King of England. Philippa and Enguerrand meet briefly during one of Enguerrand's trips to England. Philippa dies without a child.

Perceval

Enguerrand's son, born of a woman to whom Enguerrand is not married. Enguerrand formally acknowledges Perceval as his son, possibly because he is the only son Enguerrand sires. Perceval is known as the "Bastard of Coucy," and it is assumed he dies without an heir because in his will he makes a bequest to the daughter of Robert de Bar, his niece.

Isabella

Daughter of the King of England, she is an independent woman who narrowly avoids several marriages before her father allows her to simply live on her own and do as she pleases. She is over-indulged, resulting in excessive spending habits which her father always pays for. She meets Enguerrand when he is being held prisoner in England and the two are wed before Enguerrand's release. She spends much time in England after her marriage, especially when Enguerrand is away at his various battles and tending business for the King of France. Isabella eventually makes the move to England permanent with her daughter, Philippa, where she dies.

Marie

First-born daughter of Enguerrand and Isabella. Soon after her birth in France, she and hear parents travel to England—a treacherous journey that would have been more so with an infant. It is never clear what prompts the travel. Later, Marie's mother returns to England with Marie's younger sister, Philippa, leaving Marie in France because she is

heiress to the Coucy estate. Few details of her life are included in the book but it is noted that her father works to arrange her marriage. Marie's husband, Henri de Bar, dies soon after Enguerrand's death. Henri is said to have fallen victim to the Black Death after being exposed to an outbreak of the plague in Venice. This leaves Marie a widow and fatherless in one fell swoop. Following her father's death, Marie and her step-mother battle over the Coucy estate. Marie eventually agrees to sell but later apparently regrets her decision and fights to regain control. She is not successful and the property eventually reverts to the control of the throne. Marie has one son who is for a period of time the only possible way Enguerrand's lineage will continue. It is through Marie's line that King Henry IV eventually takes the throne in England.

Guillaume de Harsigny

Enguerrand's personal physician and the man summoned to care for King Charles after an apparent bout of madness leaves him in a coma. Charles recovers under Harsigny's care, though whether through anything the ninety-two-year-old doctor does or merely coincidence is unknown. After the King's recovery, Harsigny returns to his home and dies just a few months later. His tomb does not show an effigy of himself at thirty-three years—the ultimate age for resurrection because it is the age of Jesus at his crucifixion—but the image of himself at death, naked and shriveled with age.

Pierre de Craon

The man who is sent by Anjou to retrieve funds meant to pay Anjou's troops. Craon instead spends the money and does not return to Anjou at all. The deception is discovered and Craon orders repaying the money but never complies. He is later banished from court for spreading the story of an illicit affair involving Louis d'Orleans and immediately sets out to ruin Clisson.

Philip van Artevelde

A Flemish warrior who meets Enguerrand and the French forces, including their King, at the river Lys. Artevelde is said to instruct his army to take no prisoners in the coming battle, unless it is the King himself—a "child" who is acting at the advice of others. Artevelde suggests that if the King is captured, he should be taken to Ghent and taught to speak Flemish. Artevelde leads a tremendous push against French forces but his advance allows Enguerrand to attach Artevelde's men from the rear. Artevelde is actually trampled to death by his own forces as they fight to escape the deadly attack of the French.

Geoffrey Maupiovre

A physician who is captured in Hungary along with Enguerrand and who witnesses the miracle of the man giving Enguerrand his cloak. Geoffrey is named executor of Enguerrand's will which includes a bequest to Chartres Cathedral.

Henri de Bar

The man who marries Marie. Little is said of Henri other than the fact that he accompanies Enguerrand on the crusade to Hungary. Henri apparently contracts the Black Death in Venice as the soldiers are returning to France and he dies without reaching home.

The Black Prince

Edward, Prince of Wales, who never holds the throne as King of England. When he is summoned by King Charles to explain the reason for failure to comply with a particular treaty, he replies that he will happily meet the king in Paris, but that he plans to arrive with a helmet of war on his head and accompanied by 60,000 troops. His statement prompts King Charles to declare war in 1369.

Objects/Places

Coucy

Located at the center of Picardy and acknowledged as one of the "keys of the kingdom" of the region of France. It is a well-populated area and is an example of the constant struggle between earthly wealth and the spiritual.

The Castle of Coucy

A castle of "audacious" proportions that features a rainwater fish pond on the roof, underground tunnels so that provisions can be brought inside in the event of a siege, some two acres inside the wall, thick stone walls to stave off attack and space for more than a thousand men-at-arms to assemble. It is built in only seven years—a major feat considering that cathedrals often take more than a hundred years.

Jacquerie

The peasantry of the 14th century. They are named this because the peasants wear a padded surplice, called a "Jacque," in the place of armor during a battle.

Notre Dame de Liesse

A small church near Laon, this is where King Charles goes on a pilgrimage after his brief bout of madness and four days in a coma.

Dance of Burning Ones

The name that comes to be used to describe a masquerade ball thrown by Queen Isabeau for her favorite lady-in-waiting during the months of King Charles' recuperation. At the event, someone produces a torch which ignites costumes and results in the deaths of several men. The King's life is in danger and the entire escapade prompts the anger of the people at their King's life and honor being handled so carelessly.

Nicopolis

The city in Hungary where Enguerrand and his fellow Frenchmen are captured by the Turks. Many are slaughtered but Enguerrand is taken prisoner.

Brusa

Where Enguerrand and the other French prisoners are held by the Turks after their capture and where he dies.

Poitiers

The location of a battle in which the French are thoroughly defeated and the King of France taken captive. The battle becomes a sore point with the people as many think the French act in a cowardly fashion.

Paris

The social and governmental center of France where many of the events of the French people occur.

Black Death

A plague of epic proportions that some say depletes the population of France by as much as one half. The people of the day—including physicians—do not know the cause and treatment is erratic at best. At one point, an effort to control the plague results in the rule that anyone infected or showing symptoms is taken out of the city into a field where they are left to die or recover.

Themes

The Importance of Religion

The importance of religion is seen over and over again in the lives of those of the Middle Ages, though sometimes that importance is evidenced by an irreverent attitude. Toward the end of the century some parishioners carry on inside the church while the priests themselves stand by idly or even engage in games of chance with dice. Though the irreverence is unchecked in these cases, it is evidence that people have lived so closely with religion that the familiarity has effectively created a contemptuous attitude.

In most cases, the importance is evidenced by zealously following the dictates of the church. For example, many people on their deathbeds suddenly want to make up for a lifetime of sins. In an effort to gain a foothold in heaven, these people make religious bequests. In some cases, the bequests are exorbitant and may even put families into financial distress. It seems that even when the bequests are outrageous, the families pay them and that is likely a sign that the living are not willing to hamper their own salvation—or that of their dearly departed.

The church knows of the important position it holds in the lives of the people and many of the clerics are not above threats or bribes in order to grant what people seek. A person who does not meet the required payments to the church may be excommunicated until the payments are made. A person who needs absolution for a particular sin may be offered the opportunity to make a donation to the church, after which the requested absolution is granted.

Loyalty

The people of the day consider loyalty an admirable trait and the lack of loyalty for officials such as the king is just cause for execution. Enguerrand finds his own loyalty in question after his marriage to Isabella. As it happens, Enguerrand's loyalty to the King of France is such that he apparently is willing to go to England to serve as a hostage in the place of King Jean after Jean is captured at Poitiers. Enguerrand is not alone though some manage to return to France by various means over the course of the next few years. While in England, the marriage of Enguerrand and Isabella, daughter of the King of England, is arranged. With that marriage, Enguerrand finds his loyalties torn.

France and England are engaged in an on-going war for decades and though there are occasional truces, there is no full peace in sight. Enguerrand has always served France's military, often leading companies of men himself. Now, Enguerrand's participation in a military campaign means that he moves against his father-in-law. He successfully maintains neutrality for some time, until Isabella returns permanently to England and Enguerrand is free to again proclaim his loyalty to France.

Mortality

The lives of those in the Fourteenth Century are filled with heartache as the Black Death sweeps the country, claiming the lives of thousands. The commoners of the day are typically susceptible to disease because of poor diet and living conditions combined with hard work. However, when the Black Death arrives, the rich are not spared either. With the recurrence of the plague at least two more times over the coming years, there is little doubt that people begin to see death as an every-day occurrence. As the plague becomes more common, some cities order that anyone stricken with symptoms be taken outside the city and left alone. Few remain to nurse those people and those who do take on that task are quarantined in an effort to control spread of the disease.

There are fewer people following the Black Death and so, in some ways, the quality of life improves. Prior to that, the agricultural methods of the day are stretched to their limits in an effort to provide food for the entire population. Though there are fewer workers after the plague, there are also fewer mouths to feed which results, in most cases, in an improved diet.

Add to the death by natural causes the sheer number killed as the result of battles. Those struck down on the battlefields often are not given adequate medical treatment. While important leaders may be hastened away to be seen by a physician, the majority are left to live or die with little care. Not only are the men who are fighting at risk, but the rules of conduct for invading armies are hazy. Sometimes, taking prisoners is simply not practical and all men of age to fight are summarily executed while women and children may be left behind or taken prisoner.

Style

Perspective

"The Distant Mirror" is written in third person from an omniscient perspective, the only possible option for this book. The writing is fairly straightforward though the content is often confusing simply because of the amount of information packed into the pages. The book is apparently historically accurate which means a reader who has trouble understanding particular passages has the option to search for information from other sources.

The reader who expects to read the story of Enguerrand of Coucy and his family will be disappointed. Though the life and death of Enguerrand are included in the book, it makes up only a fraction of the information. In fact, the book is basically a historical account of life in France and England during the 14th century. Without the extensive descriptions of the Coucy estate and castle, Enguerrand might actually be considered one of the minor characters of the book. He interacts with important people—including the kings of both England and France—but there are significant sections of information about other people, places and events. In many cases, these descriptions are merely setting the background for the lifestyle of people who live during the lifetime of Enguerrand and his family. These details are only loosely tied to Enguerrand at all with the writer suggesting that these are the things Enguerrand might have seen during his travels to a particular place.

Tone

The names are confusing because sons and nephews are so often named for their fathers and uncles. This means there are other means for identification—Charles the Bad, for example. The author sometimes identifies people early on and later refers to them by a first or last name only, further adding to the confusion. In addition, Enguerrand VI of Coucy, the main character of this book, is referred to by first name only or as Enguerrand VI until chapter eleven when the author suddenly begins referring to him as "Coucy," then reverts back to Enguerrand with no explanation or apparent reason for the change.

The author sometimes seems to contradict herself. For example, she writes at length about the impact of the plague upon the population. She notes there are fewer fields cultivated and that landowners—including Enguerrand—find they are in need of workers. She later notes that the "capacity to produce goods and services was not reduced," and attributes it to an assertion that much of the population prior to the plague was "surplus." She is likely suggesting much of the labor of the first half of the century, prior to the plague, is used merely to feed the many peasants, labor that is no longer needed after the deaths of so many. While that is likely her intention, the point is never spelled out and thus is somewhat difficult to grasp.

It is also often difficult to keep track of the people and places written about. For example, the author writes that Joanna, new heir to the throne in Italy, "named Anjou her heir," but does not identify "Anjou" further at that point.

Structure

The book is divided into two parts and sixty-one chapters. There are a number of maps and illustrations included, designed to give the reader a greater understanding of the world's geography and culture at the time. The book is roughly arranged in chronological order. There are some passages that tell of a particular event and the conclusion of that event—though it is out of chronological order—is sometimes included at that point. This is sometimes confusing for the reader who does not pay particular attention to dates. However, it is ultimately more effective than for the outcome of a particular event to be withheld for many chapters in order that it appear in the correct chronological position. In some cases, the author does hold outcomes until their correct chronological position but gives a hint of the coming event. For example, as the release of the French hostages held in England is described, Enguerrand is not among those released. The author notes he is released in the coming year "under special circumstances," but tells no more. Those "circumstances" actually turn out to be his marriage to the daughter of the English king.

Quotes

"From the top of the donjon an observer could see the whole region as far as the forest of Compiegne thirty miles away, making Coucy proof against surprise. In design and execution the fortress was the most nearly perfect military structure of medieval Europe, and in size the most audacious," Chapter I, p. 5.

"The dynasty's first recorded act of significance, religious rather than bellicose, was the founding by Aubry de Councy in 1059 of the Benedictine Abbey of Nogent at the foot of the hill. Such a gesture, on a larger scale than the usual donation for perpetual prayers, was meant both to display the importance of the donor and to buy merit to assure his salvation," Chapter 1, p. 7.

"Without adequate irrigation and fertilizers, crop yield could not be raised nor poor soils be made productive. Commerce was not equipped to transport grain in bulk from surplus-producing areas except by water. Inland towns and cities lived on local resources, and when these dwindled, the inhabitants starved," Chapter 2, p. 24.

"Though Phillip VI maintained court in great state, he had not grown up expecting to be king and lacked something of the regal character. He seemed troubled by some uneasiness about his right to the crown, which was hardly soothed by his contemporaries' habit of referring to him as le roi trouve (the found king)," Chapter 2, p. 45.

"In the same week that the marriage was to take place, he rode forth as usual with his falconer. Casting his hawk after a heron with the call 'Hoie! Hoie!' he followed the flight until at some distance off he 'dashed his spurs to his horse and galloped forth,' not stopping until he was over the border in France where he joined King Philip and told him how with 'great subtlety' he had escaped the English marriage," Chapter 4, p. 90.

"Paris had six Master Criers appointed by the Provost, each with a number of assistants who were sent out to the crossroads and squares of the various quarters to announce official decrees, taxes, fairs and ceremonies, houses for sale, missing children, marriages, funerals births, and baptisms," Chapter 7, p. 159.

"Black Monday brought to a head all the faults of the six month's campaign—the vulnerability of the English army, the foiling of decisive battle, the incapacity to take a major walled town or capital city, the vaguely perceived knowledge, of which Lancaster had a glimmer, the France could not be conquered by pillage, nor by siege, town by town, fortress by fortress. In the long run, this was what would condemn the war to drag

on for a hundred years—the fact that, short of a fluke like the capture of a king at Pointiers, medieval armies had no means of achieving a decisive result, much less unconditional surrender," Chapter 8, p. 189.

"Not only payment of the ransom but fulfillment of the territorial terms controlled the hostages' fate. Too lightly, as the chronicler said, sovereignties had been disposed of a Bretigny, with no account taken of the fact that the territories on paper represented people on the ground," Chapter 8, p. 199.

"Buffoons and devils curl and twist through flowering vines, rabbits fight with soldiers, trained dogs show their tricks, sacred texts trail off into long-tailed fantastical creatures, bare-bottomed monks climb towers, tonsured heads appear on dragons' bodies. Goat footed priests, monkey, minstrels, flowers, birds, castles, lusting demons, and imaginary beasts twin through the pages in bizarre companionship with the sanctity of prayer," Chapter 10, p. 236 (a description of the Book of the Hours, popular during the Fourteenth Century).

"At the moment of death, however, people took no chances: they confessed, made restitutions, endowed perpetual prayers for their souls, and often deprived their families by bequests to shrines, chapels, convents, hermits, and payments for pilgrimages by proxy," Chapter 10, p. 237.

"Connected by marriage or vassalage or treaty in one way or another, the belligerents shifted in and out of alliances and enmities like chess pieces playing a gigantic game, which may account for the strangely insubstantial nature of the fighting. The war was further conditioned by the use of mercenaries, who, having no loyalties at all, shifted overnight even more easily than their principals," Chapter 12, p. 254.

"Citizens could journey unarmed through Calabria and Apulia 'except for a wooden club to defend themselves against dogs,'" Chapter 19, p. 398.

"Coucy reached the age of fifty in 1390. He was now the leading noble, apart from the King's brother and maternal uncle, in the royal entourage, relied on equally for political mission and military command," Chapter 22, p. 458.

"In the vacuum created by a living but helpless King, France floundered, and the Queen, lacking any capacity to cope, became the tool of the ruthless forces—Burgundy and England—which moved into the vacuum," Chapter 24, p. 516.

"The crusaders of 1396 started out with a strategic purpose in the expulsion of the Turks

from Europe, but their minds were on something else. The young men of Boucicaut's generation, born since the Black Death and Poitiers and the nadir of French fortunes, harked back to pursuit of those strange bewitchments, honor and glory," Chapter 26, p. 563.

"In the next fifty years, the forces set in motion during the 14th century played themselves out, some of them in exaggerated form like human failings in old age," Epilogue, p. 582.

Topics for Discussion

Describe the role of knights in the 14th century. How do attitudes change over the course of the century? Why?

How does Enguerrand come to meet Isabella, his future wife? Describe their marriage. Describe Enguerrand's second marriage. How many children does Enguerrand have? Describe the lives of each.

Describe the circumstances surrounding Enguerrand's death. What is the purpose for the campaign to Hungary? Is it successful?

Describe instances in which someone seeks Enguerrand's favor. Describe instances in which Enguerrand's actions endear him to his people.

What prompts the ongoing war between England and France? What prompts the lessening of hostilities?

How is Enguerrand's loyalty torn between England and France? How does he resolve this conflict?

Describe Enguerrand's second marriage and his life after that point. Based on his life, what are the things Enguerrand values?

Describe the lives of the wealthy of the 14th century and compare them to the lives of the peasants. What prompts peasant revolts? What ends them?

Describe the knowledge base of the 14th century. What are some of the limitations? How do these impact the lives of those who live in the 14th century?