The Death of the Heart Study Guide

The Death of the Heart by Elizabeth Bowen

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Published in 1938, *The Death of the Heart* is Elizabeth Bowen's most well-known and popular novel. She was a prolific writer, and by the time she had published this, her sixth novel, her writing career had been fifteen years in the making. By this time, Bowen had nine other published books, the Irish Academy of Letters had elected her a member, and critics were comparing her to such celebrated writers as Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, Henry James, and Jane Austen.

The Death of the Heart is the story of an orphaned sixteen-year-old girl, Portia, whose halfbrother and his wife reluctantly take her into their luxurious but emotionally sterile London home after the deaths of her parents. Bowen exposes a segment of English society between World War I and World War II that is stifling and almost completely lacking in compassion. Portia is lost in Thomas and Anna Quayne's world so she seeks solace and love in Eddie, Anna's ne'er-do-well friend and protégé. Her innocence and naiveté are a challenge to the Quaynes and their friends, who find her eagerness to fit in and her keen observations unsettling.

Critics note that Bowen's background is reflected in many of her books, including *The Death of the Heart.* She was born in Ireland but to landed gentry with strong ties to Protestant England and spent much of her childhood moving from place to place and living with a variety of relatives. Her formative experiences as an outsider gave her a platform from which she could tell, with particularly keen perception, the story of a girl who is never quite at home.

Author Biography

Elizabeth Bowen's early years□while not quite as grim as those of Portia, the main character in her most well-regarded novel, *The Death of the Heart*□were unstable. She found herself at various times being raised by a group of aunts. On occasion, Bowen moved from house to house, similar to the treks from hotel to hotel that Portia and her parents make across France and Switzerland.

Bowen was born June 7, 1899, in Dublin, Ireland, into a wealthy and socially prominent family with ties to England. She was her parents' only child. When Bowen was seven, her father was hospitalized for a mental condition. She and her mother moved to England and spent the next five years moving from villa to villa on the Kent coast. While this could have been a lonely existence, both her parents came from large extended families, and an Anglo-Irish network of adults and children surrounded Bowen during this period in her life. One of her closest relatives was Audrey Fiennes, a cousin about her age. Together with Fiennes, Bowen began to express her imaginative gifts, creating stories about make-believe families.

By 1912, Bowen's father had recuperated enough that he was making regular visits to Kent to see his wife and daughter. Later that year, however, tragedy struck the family when Bowen's mother was diagnosed with cancer and died. Once again, the extended family helped take care of Bowen.

In 1918, Bowen's father remarried, and his new wife's brother, who was in the publishing industry, gave Bowen insight and help with her nascent writing efforts. In 1923, she published her first collection of short stories, *Encounters,* to high praise and married Alan Cameron. Bowen and Cameron's marriage was, by all accounts, caring but not passionate, and she allegedly engaged in a number of affairs during her twenty-eight-year marriage. In 1925, the couple moved to Oxford, where Bowen met a number of intellectuals, as well as the novelist Rose Macaulay, who took the young writer under her wing and introduced her to editors, publishers, and literary agents. In 1926, Bowen published a second volume of short stories, and by 1929 Bowen had published her first two novels.

By the early 1930s, Bowen was well on her way to a hugely successful literary career. She became friends with such luminaries as Virginia Woolf, and in 1937, the Irish Academy of Letters elected her to its ranks. By the time *The Death of the Heart* was published in 1938, critics were comparing Bowen to such celebrated writers as Woolf, E. M. Forster, Henry James, and Jane Austen.

After her husband's death, Bowen spent much time in the United States, teaching at universities and lecturing. During the last years of her life, she suffered from various respiratory illnesses, and on February 22, 1973, she died in London of lung cancer.

Plot Summary

Part One: The World

In the opening of *The Death of the Heart,* Anna and her good friend St. Quentin walk through the park in the winter while Anna relates the story of how sixteen-year-old Portia has come to live with her and her husband, Portia's older half-brother, Thomas. Anna is especially vexed because she has found Portia's diary and read some of it, and it is not complimentary to Anna. The arrangement made by Portia's father, Mr. Quayne, that Anna and Thomas should take care of Portia, is not going well.

Portia's background is then revealed. She is the love child of Mr. Quayne and his former mistress, Irene. When Mr. Quayne told his first wife about Irene and the child, she insisted that he marry Irene. He did so, and they moved to southern France, where Portia was born.

Anna and Thomas take Portia out to watch a Marx Brothers film. Portia does not find it very amusing but is grateful for the evening out with them. As they wait for a taxi home, they run into Major Brutt, a friend of Anna's former lover, Robert Pidgeon.

Portia and her classmate Lilian walk to school together, as they usually do. At the school, Portia secretly reads a letter given to her by Eddie, a friend of Anna's. The school head disciplines her when she is caught reading the letter. Portia obviously feels out of place at this school and worries about making mistakes. Lilian shows Portia the letters she still gets from the cello teacher, Miss Hebner, with whom she fell in love the previous year.

Anna has convinced Thomas to give Eddie a job because she feels that it will help to settle him. But she has to tell Eddie to stop sending her flowers and coming by the house, especially now that he is working for Thomas' firm.

The servant Matchett goes up to Portia's room, after she's turned off the lights, to talk with her and say good night. She tells Portia about the day Portia was born, and that Mrs. Quayne meant "to do right" as opposed to doing good when she kicked Mr. Quayne out of the house and made him marry Irene. Matchett finds Eddie's letter under Portia's pillow and warns Portia that Eddie is usually up to no good.

Major Brutt is lonely, so he decides to drop by Thomas and Anna's. They are not the type to encourage drop-ins, so Thomas is quite taken aback when he sees Brutt in his front hall but invites him in anyway. Portia and Eddie come home from a trip to the zoo together; they have started seeing each other but are trying to keep this a secret. Thomas notices their demeanor but says nothing.

Portia and Eddie go to have tea after running into Major Brutt and Thomas at the Windsor Terrace house. Eddie stresses to Portia that no one should know of her

relationship with him. She gives her diary to Eddie at tea. He makes her promise never to write anything about them in her diary because he knows that Anna reads the diary.

In her diary, Portia writes mostly of her school and of the various things that happen around the household. She leaves out a few visits with Eddie but includes the time she goes over to his flat and shares dinner with him. Matchett acts coolly toward Portia probably because of her relationship with Eddie. Thomas asks Portia a few probing questions about Eddie, but she doesn't say much.

Thomas and Anna are leaving soon for a vacation in Capri, but they wait awhile before telling Portia about it because they don't want her with them and haven't figured out what to do with her. Eventually, Portia hears from Matchett that she will be staying at the seashore with Anna's former nanny, Mrs. Heccomb, while Thomas and Anna are in Capri, and the staff spring-cleans the house.

Part Two: The Flesh

Portia arrives in Seale-on-Sea where she will stay with Mrs. Heccomb while Thomas and Anna are in Capri. Mrs. Heccomb's seaside house is called Waikiki, and the household is comprised of her stepson Dickie, stepdaughter Daphne, and their many friends.

Portia receives three letters her second day at Seale-on-Sea, one of which is from Eddie, who says he misses her and muses about coming to see her at the Heccombs' house. Portia goes shopping with Mrs. Heccomb and enjoys herself immensely. She investigates which room in the house might be suitable for Eddie if he comes to visit. She writes him to say she has found a good room and will ask about his visit in the next day or so. On Saturday night, the family holds one of its frequent parties. Portia dances with a number of men□something new for her.

Portia becomes aware of how stifling London and her half-brother's home are. Waikiki seems to be filled with "spontaneous living." She asks Daphne, while a group is out walking, if she may invite Eddie to Seale-on-Sea for the weekend. The group is immediately impressed that she has a boyfriend, and Daphne agrees to ask her mother about the arrangements. Mrs. Heccomb agrees and begins to fix up a room for Eddie. Eddie's letter to Portia tells her that he is unsure about when he can make it to Seale-on-Sea and that he will not be sure until the last moment.

On Friday morning, Portia receives a letter from Eddie saying that he will be there Saturday. When he arrives, Mrs. Heccomb has tea ready; she is obviously a bit disappointed in Eddie's countenance, but he is polite and charming. He and Portia take a walk, and he reports that she should be frightened of him because of his bad behavior. Later that evening, Portia and Eddie accompany Daphne and Dickie and their dates to the movies where, when Dickie ignites his cigarette lighter, they can all see that Eddie and Daphne are holding hands.

The next day, Portia asks Eddie about the night before when he was holding Daphne's hand. He responds that it didn't mean anything. They have an argument, but Portia tries to make up with him, apologizing for being a "disappointment." Later, Portia talks with Daphne about Eddie's behavior at the movies. Daphne is intent on warning her about just what kind of person Eddie is, but Portia does not want to hear this. Later, Portia and Eddie take a walk in the woods. They have a conversation about how they feel about each other. He says he has been accused of being a vicious person, and she immediately begs him not to feel that way. She begins frantically to kiss him, and he warns her about himself, that he will "drown" her.

They take a bus to the Pavilion for tea where they meet with Daphne and Dickie and all of the friends Portia has made while at Seale-on-Sea. Eventually, Eddie gets very drunk and must figure out a way to get back to Waikiki to get his luggage and then find his way back to the train station. Dickie becomes angered by Eddie's behavior, and gathers everyone up to leave. Eddie follows Portia out onto the balcony where he begins to sob uncontrollably. In her diary, Portia relates that Waikiki is tense after Eddie's departure. She asks Dickie what he thinks of Eddie, and he replies that he is "something of a Lothario."

Part Three: The Devil

Portia returns from Seale-on-Sea to London. Matchett comments on Portia's "color" and that she seems to be speaking up more than before she went away. Portia is frantic when Matchett tells her that Eddie called the day before.

The next afternoon, Anna and Thomas return from Capri. Anna thinks about the cache of letters she still keeps from when she and Robert Pidgeon were lovers. Also, she thinks about how Portia makes her feel "like a tap that won't turn on."

A week later, Portia comes home to find Eddie and Anna having tea. They invite her to join them and bring up the subject of her time spent at Seale-on-Sea, but she spends the tea daydreaming and remembering when she ran into St. Quentin Miller on the street a few days prior. Miller let drop that Anna has been reading Portia's diary, news that stunned Portia. Ever since then, she has not been able to "confront anyone with candor."

Eddie calls Anna to say that Portia has told him that Anna has read her diary. Anna is furious, primarily because she is entertaining Major Brutt and a couple she thinks might be able to help him find a job. After the couple leaves, she confides in Major Brutt her concerns about Eddie and his becoming close to Portia, asking Major Brutt if he thinks Portia is happy. He says yes but suggests that Anna might have a word with Portia about Eddie and tell Eddie to leave Portia alone.

Later that same afternoon, Eddie and Portia meet at Covent Gardens. Portia is upset that Anna knows about her diary and is convinced that Eddie is the one who told Anna

about it; Eddie says he did not. He is upset because Portia admits that the diary does contain some writing about their relationship, and Anna has probably read about them.

After Eddie tells Portia that she has changed and that he is no longer happy being with her, she flees his apartment and ends up at the Karachi Hotel where Major Brutt is staying. She tells him that she is never returning to Anna and Thomas' household. She asks Major Brut if she can marry him, stressing that she could cook and clean for him, and that they would not have to live in a hotel. He says he is flattered, but convinces Portia to let him call the Quaynes to arrange for her to return to them.

Back at the house, Anna, Thomas, and St. Quentin Miller are having dinner, aware that Portia is late. Anna takes a call in the middle of dinner from Major Brutt, who tells her that Portia is with him but does not wish to come home. The three adults continue to sit around the table, arguing about Portia, until St. Quentin admits telling Portia about Anna reading her diary, and Anna admits reading the diary as well as discussing it with Eddie. They must decide what is the best way to pick up Portia and eventually hit upon the idea of having Matchett fetch her from Major Brutt's hotel. Matchett leaves in a taxi, and the book ends with her entering the Hotel Karachi to bring Portia back home to the Quaynes.

Part 1, Chapter 1

Part 1, Chapter 1 Summary

It is January in 1930s London. We meet two characters, Anna and St. Quentin, who are deep in conversation while walking across an icy footbridge in Regent's Park.

As they stroll, Anna tells St. Quentin a story of how she accidentally came across the diary of a girl living with her, Portia. She is unsettled and annoyed by the situation because she didn't mean to find the diary; she had found it while putting a dress away in Portia's room after it had come back from the cleaners.

Perhaps even more importantly, Anna says that she is annoyed with Portia's mere presence, although she isn't sure what she can do about it, being that Portia is her husband Thomas's sister.

When Anna runs through the circumstances yet again, there seems to have been no alternative but for Portia to come stay in their home: Thomas's father, Mr. Quayne, had dictated a letter in which he stated that upon his death, Portia was to live with Thomas and Anna. He had given the letter to his wife Irene, yet since Irene didn't like Thomas and Anna one bit, she hid the letter away. The letter didn't reemerge until Irene's death years later and once it was finally discovered, Mr. Quayne's wishes were finally carried out. According to Mr. Quayne's wishes, Portia was to stay with Thomas and Anna for one year.

As Anna and St. Quentin round Regent's Park one more time, Anna, in an effort to put off the eventuality of having to return home and face Portia, tells yet another story. It seems that Mr. Quayne had been married to a delightful, patient woman who took care of him and nurtured his inner boy. She encouraged him to retire at a young age and the two of them moved to Dorset. He adored his wife and easily took up a leisurely life filled with golf, gardening and social outings. Yet he still missed London and would occasionally travel into the city without his wife, to attend social meetings, club outings and the like.

While on one of these journeys, Mr. Quayne met a woman, Irene, and the two were quite taken with one another. He got into the habit of making an excuse to travel to London every so often, and they continued their torrid affair throughout the summer months.

One night, in the fall, Mr. Quayne's guilt got the best of him. He woke his wife in the middle of the night to confess about what he'd done with Irene. See, he had received word from Irene that she was pregnant—with Portia.

Mr. Quayne had come to realize that he adored his wife and didn't want to leave her; in fact, he wished he had never started up anything with Irene. He cried about what he'd

done, but Mrs. Quayne insisted that he do the right thing, calmly telling him that he of course had to marry Irene. Mrs. Quayne then filed for divorce.

Mr. Quayne begged and pleaded but Mrs. Quayne stood her ground. She had Thomas drive his father to the train station, where he was to travel and meet Irene. He did marry her and they, not having much money of their own, were destined to move a lot, always living in dark, dreary places. Thomas only saw them rarely, and only enough to know that the lifestyle would surely end up killing his father, which it did.

By now, the conversation has brought St. Quentin and Anna back around the park, where the "All Out whistles were blowing," and the park's gate is about to close. The two hurry through and head toward Anna's home. She isn't so upset about having to go inside anymore.

Part 1, Chapter 1 Analysis

The purpose of the first chapter is not only to give us the setting (London, England; 1930s; a cold January winter) but also to introduce us to the key characters. We have met Anna, and through her storytelling, as well as the slight perspective from St. Quentin, gain a glimpse into the talkative and charming, yet perhaps unconventional, woman she is. St. Quentin is introduced as a family friend, a kind gentleman who seems to have many secrets of his own.

We are also, by the way of Anna's stories, introduced to her husband Thomas, his mother, father and stepmother (who have each passed away), as well as his sister, Portia, who is currently living with them.

Essentially, we have been set up for the plot to really kick in. Several questions are brought up, like: Who, exactly, is this Portia? How old is she? What is her point of view in all of this? Is Anna telling the entire story? Is she going to be our main character, our narrator, or is this first chapter, told from her point of view, simply setting us up with something entirely different to come?

The majority of the first chapter is made up of dialogue between Anna and St. Quentin, specifically stories told from Anna's point of view. This makes for an interesting literary choice; Bowen has obviously chosen to introduce her characters and the central plot in this fashion for a reason—and that reason, it could be supposed, is because when storytelling comes directly from a character, as opposed to the author telling the story from a third person narrative, it makes the plot development that much more engaging for the reader. If the story had simply been introduced from a narrator's standpoint, it certainly wouldn't have had the impact that hearing it from Anna's mouth surely does. Plus, we get to see something in Anna's character that we wouldn't have necessarily seen otherwise: Her propensity for discussion, her need to express herself and receive validation for her opinions and, perhaps most of all, her friendship with St. Quentin.

It also sets up a bit of empathy toward the character of Portia, even though we have never been introduced to her. We know that she is not necessarily well-thought of; that

she has had a tough and socially outcast upbringing and that she is living in a forced living situation. It makes us want to get to know her even more.

Part 1, Chapter 2

Part 1, Chapter 2 Summary

Portia walks in from the cold and stamps her feet in the entryway. She strains to hear if anyone is home, but the silence emanating from the upper level of the large house tells her exactly what she had been hoping to find—she is alone.

Matchett then enters from the lower level, telling Portia that she heard her come in. Portia wonders if she and Matchett may have tea together while Anna is out, but purposefully Matchett does not reply.

Portia asks what is wrong and Matchett says that Anna has been talking about the messy condition of Portia's bedroom. She says that she doesn't really care what Portia does with her stuff, but she might want to keep things tidied up a bit for a while until Anna's mood wears off.

The young girl is upset, and asks Matchett whether Anna touched anything. Matchett says she doesn't know, but that a girl her age shouldn't have secrets anyway. Portia sighs and goes upstairs.

When Anna and St. Quentin return, Portia is sitting in the dark drawing room. Anna is nervous to talk to—not to mention be in the same room—with Portia, although she does manage to ask her if she had a nice day.

When Thomas gets home, Anna suggests to Portia that she go visit him. When Portia goes down to his study, Thomas is standing in his study, gazing into the fire and thinking about his long day. Portia walks in and is obviously uncomfortable but says that Anna advised that she should come and see how he's doing. She walks over to a chair by the fire, curling her legs under her and staring into it. Thomas stares as well, but at nothing in particular, feeling a bit violated and upset that she entered his space. At the end of a long day, he usually can't stand the company of anyone but Anna, and so having Portia so close by is unnerving. They each sit there awkwardly, lost in their own thoughts.

Portia's mind wanders to a time she was in Switzerland, in the rain, with her mother. Memories overwhelm her; memories of sharing tea, of decorating walls with sketches the two of them had made, of gazing into the distance at palatial estates atop grassy knolls and then, finally, of the tearful journey toward the Lucerne Clinic—Portia at the wheel, and Irene clutching her stomach—which fatefully ended in Irene's death.

Then, in walks Anna, remarking that St. Quentin has left. She turns to Portia and asks her if she has homework to do, to which she replies that she does have an essay she needs to do. Portia leaves the room and shuts the door.

Anna asks Thomas if he'd been making her cry, as it looked to her as if Portia's eyes were tearful. Thomas says that he didn't notice, but he suspects that she's missing her mother.

Anna doesn't like hearing this one bit, saying to Thomas that it's terrible having someone in the house that she must pity but can't truly—or even half-heartedly pretend to—love.

Then she suggests that the three of them go to a movie. Thomas wants nothing more than to just stay at home but she says to him that she simply can't stand the idea of the three of them just sitting around with nothing to do. In addition, she says, Portia just sits and stares at them and it's unnerving.

Thomas tells her not to be so neurotic, then quotes something he recently read: "We are minor in everything but our passions."

Part 1, Chapter 2 Analysis

Now we're getting to the part of the story in which all of the main characters intentions and personality traits are beginning to unfold.

In addition to Anna and St. Thomas, who we already learned a bit about in Chapter 1, there are now other key characters that we begin to meet from a very direct viewpoint—as opposed through the opinions of other characters.

There is Portia, the tragically misunderstood teenager; Matchett, the opinionated servant; and Thomas, the sad, lonely, anti-social and sullen businessman.

It's also interesting how at this point in the story the reader is given insight into something that the characters have not yet seen: the similarities between Portia and her half-brother Thomas. They are lonely, depressed, anti-social and unsure of themselves. They both seem to hold secrets, lost dreams and wish for something more. Interesting how Thomas, however, seems to think that he barely knows this girl, that he has little more in common with her than a shared gene pool.

We've also been thrown into the middle of the Anna vs. Portia plot line, now given the opportunity to make an opinion about the situation for ourselves. Is Portia really an out-of-control teenager, or is Anna misreading everything? Is Portia really that difficult to get along with or is Anna merely uncomfortable with children, having none of her own? Is Anna really a snob or is it something more?

Part 1, Chapter 3

Part 1, Chapter 3 Summary

The chapter opens with some background on Thomas and Anna's marriage. They married when Anna was 26-years old; she was unhappy, just having come out of a failed relationship. Thomas had been attracted to her melancholy. She seemed to him to be a much more complex, dark woman than any other fair-skinned blonde he'd ever met. He also liked that she seemed experienced and was older than many other girls. His past relationships were mostly carried on with married women so he had little time or patience for young girls. He didn't want the attachment or co-dependence that a young girl so usually craves; he valued his independence. Therefore, when he and Anna decided that they would marry, it was based more out of simple happiness with one another than it was out of passion and romance.

After they had married, Thomas invested money given to him by his mother into an advertising agency which he now owned, Quayne and Merrett. He and Anna had expected that they would have a family, but Anna suffered from several miscarriages. The resulting sadness—and pitiable reactions from friends—now meant that she no longer wanted kids. As a result, she turned to hobbies she had mildly pursued before they were married; Thomas became even more reclusive and depressed, and didn't have the slightest inkling toward wanting a child.

When his parents—and Irene—died, Thomas had no desire to get to know Portia, much less have her come live with them. But he did what he thought was right, telling himself that it was only for one year. He didn't feel kindly toward her; he had always felt a kind of dirty shame over what his father had done. She was, obviously, the embodiment of all of that shame.

Now, Thomas, Anna and Portia are at the cinema, watching a Marx Brothers film. Portia is obviously not enjoying herself and she and Anna both leave the movie feeling down—Portia because she hated the movie and Anna because she hated that they couldn't just all have a good time together.

As they hail a taxi, Anna runs into an old acquaintance, Major Brutt, who she hasn't seen in nearly a decade. She invites him to join them for a drink back at their home, and he agrees.

When they reach home, Anna turns on lights and prepares drinks. She is purposefully busying herself, because as she turns to Major Brutt she can't help but think of Robert Pidgeon. She admits to herself that the reason she invited Major Brutt back to their home is because of memories she had of she and Robert being perfect lovers. Now, the mere presence of Thomas in the room makes her feel guilty for even thinking it.

Portia and Major Brutt become acquainted and she goes to sit by the fire. Anna goes and sits on the sofa, and they all relax and chat a bit. Suddenly, Thomas asks Major Brutt if he knew Robert Pidgeon. Brutt says yes, that he is a wonderful man and goes on to say that he and Pidgeon got to know each other best after each of them had been wounded and had been on leave together.

Anna and Brutt then start to discuss the fabulous character of Pidgeon, and Anna finally says to give him her love should he see him again soon. Thomas says to yes, please do the same, and Brutt says he will.

Part 1, Chapter 3 Analysis

Again, the characters and their motivations begin to unfold as we are first given a glimpse as to the relationship between Anna and Thomas. It seems as if they are comfortable with one another but not necessarily in love, and that their hopes for happiness may have been quashed with the event of Anna's miscarriages. There is an unhappiness there that kicks off its own subplot in the story.

Another subplot begins with the introduction of Major Brutt and the resulting discussion of a man named Robert Pidgeon, who is obviously part of Anna's past. Anna's obvious emotional reaction at the thought of him brings up all sorts of questions: Is this the man that Anna broke up with shortly before meeting Thomas? If so, why? Moreover, what does this mean for her relationship with Thomas?

As for Portia and the rest of the subplots, Bowen continues to reiterate the characterization of the young girl, Portia. She is, so far, a typical teenager, with all of the emotional ups-and-downs that come with the territory.

Part 1, Chapter 4

Part 1, Chapter 4 Summary

Nearly every morning, Portia and her friend Lilian take the way through the cemetery on the way to class at Miss Paullie's in Cavendish Square. Miss Paullie's is an expensive, exclusive school for girls who are—in one reason or another—unconventional. A dozen girls take classes there in the mornings; in the afternoons, they take a variety of different field trips in order to further their social and creative learning.

Portia doesn't like class much. In fact, before staying with Anna and Thomas she really had no use for formal learning. As such, she always seems to be in trouble for one reason or another, usually for not paying attention in class.

This morning, she sets her bag on her lap, under the table, and gets ready for the lecture on economics. Instead of listening, she slides a letter out of her bag and silently begins to read it to herself.

She's read the letter before. It's a love letter from an unknown young man, and Portia is positively glowing from the letter's contents.

It's not long, though, before Miss Paullie discovers that she's not paying attention to the lesson. The other girls stare as Portia gets reprimanded for reading a personal letter in class and is mortified by the attention. Once again it reinforces to Portia that she is not of the class that these other girls are, that she is less than they are.

At lunch, Lilian can hardly wait to ask Anna about the letter. She asks Portia why she hadn't yet told her about it, and then asks who it's from. Portia remarks that it's a letter from a friend of Anna's. His name is Eddie; he works in Thomas's office and is much different than any other man she knows—even St. Quentin or Major Brutt.

Part 1, Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter begins to set up the scene for Portia's social life. We see that Portia is, essentially, an outsider, alone in a new city with guardians who would rather she didn't exist than have to live with them. It's a lonely existence.

But Bowen introduces new characters: Lilian and Eddie, as well as a host of secondary characters at Miss Paullie's school, which gives Portia's life more depth and realism. Through this, we are able to gain insight into Portia's day-to-day routine and her personal thoughts.

Part 1, Chapter 5

Part 1, Chapter 5 Summary

Everyone in town knew of Eddie, of his dark moods, his ability to be incredibly charming one minute and incredibly down, even scary, the next—and Anna had heard it too.

She had been introduced to Eddie through her cousin, Denis. Not long after, Eddie ended up having a very bad, very public breakup with a girl. When it happened, the family that Eddie had been staying with, the Monkshoods—along with nearly everyone else in town—took the girl's side. The Monkshoods were soon ready to get rid of him. Instead, they left themselves, leaving him alone at their house with, really, nowhere else to go.

Later, Anna got a call that Eddie was staying with Denis. Denis was leaving for Turkey soon and Eddie, he said, was welcome to stay in his flat while he was away. After all, said Denis, Eddie managed to get rid of that girl who was so much trouble. However, he was worried that Eddie would get lonely. He asked if Anna might check in on him.

Anna and Eddie did begin to see one another regularly. For about six weeks, Anna felt wonderfully worshipped around him; Eddie found that Anna could bring him out of any potentially dark mood. All was going well until one day in which Eddie tried to kiss her.

Anna became furiously embarrassed that he could be so presumptuous. Eddie, for his part, became tired of Anna, thinking she was "silly" for acting so offended. From that point forward, Anna and Eddie did their best to anger, insult and annoy each other.

The time came when Anna could no longer stand Eddie's presence and so she went to Thomas and asked if he could perhaps find him a job at his firm, a position that would keep him busy and out of the way. Thomas liked the idea and so it was arranged that Eddie was to have an interview.

The interview went well and Quayne and Merrett decided to give Eddie a three-month trial, to see how he'd do. The morning Eddie got the news, he went to Anna and told her that he was appreciative of her arranging this possibility for a job, that he hadn't had much to eat and was in debt with Denis's landlord. He went apologized for his recent behavior and said that he was simply upset over money and didn't mean to take it out on her. Anna was surprised, but responded that she was glad that their issues weren't personal, and that she was happy that everything now was alright.

As he went to leave, the two of them agreed that it was best to close the door and say "goodbye" to their former, informal relationship—or at least put on that impression for everyone else.

After that, Eddie quit coming around to Anna and Thomas's for the most part. He relegated communication to sending flowers and phone calls. When Denis returned,

Anna told Eddie to quit sending flowers because he now needed to spend his money on rent. However, without that line of communication, Eddie somehow felt that he needed to start stopping by yet again. Sure enough, once Portia came to live with Anna and Thomas, Eddie's visits became much more regular.

Part 1, Chapter 5 Analysis

In one of the most insightful chapters yet, we are now introduced to some behind-the-scenes knowledge about Portia's love interest, Eddie. He seems foreboding, mentally unstable and even a bit dangerous.

Is that true, or is there another side of the story?

We've already learned in this book that Anna's side of the story isn't necessarily the *only* side of the story. We, at first, thought Portia was nothing short of a juvenile delinquent until we got to know her a bit more from her own perspective. Will we find out that Eddie is much the same? Has Anna painted a much darker picture than how the young man truly is? Will he create trouble in Portia's life the way he seemingly has with other girls in town?

Each of these questions have of course been carefully thought out and planned by Bowen, who has quite purposefully introduced the story from a variety of viewpoints. Since the story has no central narrator, we are given several versions of each circumstance, of each character's disposition, and are therefore left to create our own final impression.

Part 1, Chapter 6

Part 1, Chapter 6 Summary

It is 10:30 p.m. and Anna and Thomas are out at the theatre. Matchett slowly creeps into Portia's room; she is awake. Nights like these, when the Quayne's are out, are the only nights in which Matchett dares to come up and wish Portia goodnight.

Matchett crosses the room and opens the curtains; the park is eerily silent, as if it is unaccustomed to being soundless. Portia asks Matchett: What was it like the day that she was born?

Matchett replies that it was a clear and sunny day when she heard from Mrs. Quayne that Portia had been born, and that she said something appropriately neutral. See, on that day, no one—not Thomas nor Matchett—really knew what to say or how to react. They each waited for a clue as to an appropriate reaction from Mrs. Quayne herself, but all she did was sit down and play the piano until it was time to eat dinner.

Matchett remembers that she felt was bad for Mrs. Quayne—and not because of Portia's birth, but because Matchett simply couldn't forgive her for what she had done to Mr. Quayne. In Matchett's mind, sending Mr. Quayne away the way she did was unforgivable and that she must have known, in some way, that by pushing away Mr. Quayne she was sending him to his death.

But Portia passionately declares that they were happy as a family, that her father enjoyed moving from place to place, even despite the fact that her mother wanted a stable home. She exclaims that they were happy as a family, simply having each other, and that Matchett shouldn't be so angry with Mrs. Quayne for what she had done.

Matchett says that there was obviously a purpose to Portia's birth, and that if it was meant to be, well then it was simply meant to be.

Portia begins to get upset and Matchett says she shouldn't have even asked about her birth anyway because this house, she says, has no past. This home has no memories, and Anna and Thomas have tried hard to make it so.

Portia says that her father used to always talk about Anna and Thomas, and their lovely home. He probably never even saw the inside of it, but he imagined that it was regal and gorgeous. He wanted his daughter to know the two of them and to experience, just for a little while, the happy, blessed home that he was sure Anna and Thomas had.

Irene had always said, though, that Anna disliked all of them, and laughed at the way they lived. Matchett says to Portia that Anna wouldn't even take the time to laugh, that she had much better things to do. Then Portia wonders aloud if Anna will ever like her.

Matchett gets up to leave and tries to fluff Portia's pillow, to which she is answered with a hasty objection. Matchett wonders what she's trying to hide, then notices that Portia has a letter under her pillow. She asks her about it.

Instead of responding, Portia pretends to sleep. When she reaches under her pillow, though, she notices the letter is gone. Matchett tells her that the proper place for a letter is in her desk, and, by the way, who wrote the letter anyway?

Portia reluctantly tells her that the letter is from Eddie. Matchett is surprised, saying that the boy has no manners and no class and that she better listen, because she knows better.

When Portia doesn't respond, Matchett turns on the lamp to get her attention. She looks her square in the eye and tells Portia that she better not trust him. Portia says that all she knows—and all that matters—is that she's happy.

Part 1, Chapter 6 Analysis

Now, Bowen is introducing a second opinion about the history of Mr. and Mrs. Quayne and, curiously, it's delivered with a similar tone and perspective as we first heard it in Chapter 1 from Anna.

Both of the ladies seem to hold a sort of distaste for Mrs. Quayne while revering, in a way, Mr. Quayne and his strength for moving on in his life. They pity him, and are sad for Thomas who was left with the burden of being stuck in the middle of it all.

We also learn this chapter of the circumstances surrounding Portia's birth. In doing so, we also see how intensely insecure and vulnerable Portia really is. She tries to put on airs that she is strong, but really she wants to fit in. She wants to believe that her birth wasn't a mistake, that she and her mother and father made a happy family. Most importantly for now, she wants Anna to like her.

Ultimately, this chapter's purpose is to create within the reader some emotional attachment toward Portia as a character. We want her to be loved; we want her to be happy, to feel safe. We want Matchett's ominous warning that Eddie is simply bad news to be untrue.

Yet, the idea that Eddie will be nothing but trouble for Portia is clearly being foreshadowed again and again.

Part 1, Chapter 7

Part 1, Chapter 7 Summary

It is a Saturday and Major Brutt has decided to stop by Anna and Thomas's home. When he left last, they had told him to "come again," and so he took it very literally to mean just that.

Phyllis answered the door and was surprised to see Major Brutt; the Quayne's rarely get casual visitors. Thomas is home alone and he is just as surprised; he's used to his privacy. Thomas looks at Major Brutt and wonders what, exactly, the man is after. He must want something: a job, perhaps? Thomas feels a twinge of shame that he would feel that way but still wonders what Brutt might want.

As for Brutt, he accepts a cigarette from Thomas as a means to steady himself. He is having a hard time accepting the fact that Anna had married Thomas. Brutt could only remember Anna as a lover to Robert Pidgeon. The fact that she had married Thomas was nothing less that completely shocking.

The visit is a bit awkward and neither man really knows what to say. Suddenly, Brutt says that Portia seems like a sweet girl. Thomas agrees, and then lets him know that she's his half-sister and that she's staying with them for a year. He shares a bit of Portia's story with Brutt: that she's sixteen, an orphan and is going to a good school. Major Brutt says that she must make for great company for Anna.

As they chat, they hear a key in the door, then voices in the hallway. Thomas thinks it might be Anna, but instead it's Portia and Eddie. Thomas insists that the two of them come in and meet Major Brutt. When they do, he notices that they stand so near one another they're almost holding hands.

Thomas is taken aback by the fact that Eddie is spending time with Portia and he wonders what in the world Anna will think about it all.

Part 1, Chapter 7 Analysis

Although much of this chapter's plot centers on Major Brutt's visit with Thomas and the awkward tension resulting from the unsaid stories of Robert Pidgeon and Anna, the true action comes just at the end, when Thomas discovers that Eddie and Portia are spending time together.

Finally, their friendship is out in the open at the Quayne house. Thomas brings up a good question: What will Anna think? However, just from his wondering, we as readers begin to question exactly how much Thomas knows about Anna's past relationship with Eddie. Why would he be wondering what Anna will think? Why should Anna care? Once

again, the mysterious subplot about Anna and her relationships—past and present—begins to surface.

Part 1, Chapter 8

Part 1, Chapter 8 Summary

Eddie and Portia are having tea at Madame Tussaud's. He turns to her and asks who the old man was. She tells him that it's Major Brutt, an old friend of someone Anna once knew, a man named Pidgeon. Eddie seems disgruntled that he'd never heard of Pidgeon before and Portia wonders why.

Eddie says that Anna is a cynic and Portia wonders why. He cryptically responds that it's because she does nice things for the wrong reasons. Then, he says that his character has worsened since he met her and that he wishes he had met Portia first.

He says to Portia, urgently, that it's important to him that she always understands him. Portia says that she does understand *him*, but she doesn't always understand *what* he is talking about. He says that doesn't matter, because there obviously isn't an intellectual attraction between them. In fact, he says, he doesn't even know why he talks to her about anything.

The tea arrives and he asks Portia to pour it before it gets cold. She does, nervously, because she's never been out to tea before. This knowledge makes Eddie happy, because he feels like she's the only person on earth with whom he doesn't have to put on any airs. Besides, he says, she's just like he is: at once wicked and innocent.

As they eat, he asks if he is boring her and she says no, that she's valuing this conversation. He asks about Matchett and she says that she's a nice companion at times but she's been mad with her lately. Eddie asks if it's about him and she avoids answering, although he knows that it's true. He angrily responds that Portia shouldn't talk to her anyway.

Portia tells him to calm down; all Matchett knows is that he wrote her a letter. Eddie is angry that she found it and tells Portia to be sure that it doesn't happen again. He says that in order to keep the two of them safe from the sure conspiracy that is conjuring up among Matchett, Anna and all the other adults, that they must keep everything between the two of them completely secret.

Portia thinks that Thomas and Brutt surely saw something between them, and she reminds Eddie that it's his fault that he pushed for them to go back and retrieve her diary in the first place. She says she knew that something bad would happen if they came back to the house.

The subject then veers back to Anna. Eddie does an impersonation of her, and then says that the problem with Anna is that she likes nothing more than to make a joke of another person. Portia says that she thought he liked her, and he says he does, but that she's also quite annoying.

As she listens to Eddie's tirade about Anna's character, Portia doesn't know what to think. She has never heard such things about her sister-in-law and isn't sure how to respond. Yet, as she meets his eyes, she thinks that she hasn't known someone so like her since the death of her mother. While their glances may not be filled with love, they are at least filled with a mutual understanding. Eddie, lost in his own thoughts, suddenly notices Portia's diary and remarks how thick it is. He asks if he may borrow it and she lets him slip it into his coat pocket.

Portia says that it will now be weird to write in her diary, knowing that he will be reading it. He says that it's all the better, because he doesn't want her to write about him at all. He asks her to promise that she'll never mention the two of them in her diary, that she'll never write of her feelings. She asks why not and he convinces her by saying that he doesn't like the idea of her choosing words to describe him; he hates words born from retrospect.

Part 1, Chapter 8 Analysis

The plot is now really building momentum toward the idea of Eddie and Portia as a couple and we are given an insight into the nature of their relationship.

He is almost creepy, manipulative in the way he coerces emotion and responses from this young girl who is seven years his junior. Yet just as we're not feeling very good about the way he's treating her, we get a glimpse into her thoughts, which is that she still very much cares for him. She doesn't mind that he calls all the shots; she likes that she has found someone—for once—in this new city that she can relate to.

Yet whether or not Portia likes him, we finally see that what we've heard from Matchett's and Anna's points of view is seemingly true: the young man is troubled. He's insecure and while he may be misunderstood, he still has some dark moods.

We wonder now: What does he want with Portia's diary? What, for that matter, does he want with Portia herself?

Part 1, Chapter 9

Part 1, Chapter 9 Summary

This chapter is full of one entry after another from Portia's diary.

For the first day, Monday, Portia writes that she just received the diary back from Eddie. He has had it for nine days and so she now has her work cut out for her in order to catch up. She wonders what he thought of her writing but is too nervous to ask him outright.

On Thursday, Portia receives a letter from Eddie, but he doesn't mention the diary. He does say in the letter that he went to lunch with Anna and, cryptically, that he feels he is "starting a new life."

On Sunday, she meets Eddie although the entry mentions no particulars, saying only that Eddie wouldn't want her to write anything about their day.

Tuesday brings a larger entry. It's about a conversation Portia had with Thomas. He asked her if she liked Eddie and if they were friends and she answered yes. He seemed a bit distracted, and then asked if Eddie was polite to her. She said yes. Then, he said suddenly that love is a mistake. Portia asked if it's okay to love if you're married. He hurriedly said that oh yes, he supposed then in that case it's okay.

Thursday brought a letter from Eddie, in which he was sure to ask if anyone had found out about their visit last Sunday.

On Saturday nothing happened, and Portia says so in her diary. She writes that she doesn't feel like anything is happening, in fact, unless she has plans with Eddie. Today she doesn't.

Sunday arrives and Portia goes with Matchett to an afternoon church service. On the way home, Matchett mentions that Thomas and Anna want to go abroad in April. Portia wonders where she would go. After all, Matchett says she couldn't stay at the house because she'd be in the middle of spring cleaning. Then, she outlines a list of things that she knows about Eddie, like the fact that he is afraid of the dark and that he owns 36 ties.

The next day, Monday, Portia receives another letter from Eddie. He wants her to let him know the next time Anna is gone, but Portia is unsure how to find out when she'll be out.

On Tuesday, Major Brutt sends Portia a puzzle as a gift. It's too big to fit on her table, and so she wonders if Matchett would be upset if she did it on the floor.

In Thursday's entry, Portia writes that she'll be lying to Anna and Thomas about being at Lilian's, when really she'll be going out with Eddie. She'll be careful to make sure that

they don't find out what they're doing, but she's worried that she won't have enough money to make it back home—after all, Eddie lives a while away.

The next day though, on Friday, she says nothing about her escapade with Eddie other than it was "quite all right."

On Saturday, Anna takes Portia shopping. Then, on Sunday, Anna and Thomas take Portia out to lunch with them to meet some people that live in a nearby town. When they return, she thinks about last Thursday with Eddie:

When she got to his house, she could tell that he didn't like his room. There were books everywhere and he was quick to say that he was glad that she didn't like to read much. They had coffee and cookies, plus some ham for dinner. Then he showed her around his things and he ran around the room playing pretend. Later, he said to her that it was too bad that they were too young to get married—then he laughed. She didn't see what was funny; she thought it was sweet. After a while, she took a taxi home.

She feels bad that she hasn't had much time to work on the puzzle from Major Brutt.

Monday, when she returns from classes, Portia discovers Anna in her room, doing her puzzle. Anna apologizes but says she couldn't stop herself, and so Portia sits down and the two of them work on it together. Then, the next day on Tuesday, Portia overhears Anna and Thomas talking about her, although she doesn't hear much other than a reference to her mother Irene.

On Wednesday, Portia receives another letter from Eddie, in which he reminds her to be sure not to mention anything about him to Anna. Portia is a bit offended; after all, why in the world would she talk to Anna? Later, Anna takes Portia to a party. A lady mentions to Anna that she heard she was going abroad and Anna only says that she's not sure, and then gives Portia an odd look.

Thursday evening, Thomas and Portia have dinner just the two of them, as Anna is out somewhere. He mentions in passing that he and Anna are going to go to Capri and are unsure what to do with Portia.

On Saturday, Eddie calls for Portia and she is surprised. When she gets on the phone, Eddie asks Portia to go for a walk in the park.

In the last entry, Sunday, Portia writes that Thomas and Anna took her out for lunch. Then, she and Thomas went for a walk in the woods while Anna stayed in the car and read a book. Thomas told Portia, while they were out, that he and Anna had arranged for her to stay at the coast while they're gone in Capri. Portia said it sounded like fun and Thomas gave her an odd look.

Part 1, Chapter 9 Analysis

Interesting how, in this chapter, a few weeks pass, yet we don't get much in terms of plot substance. Sure, we learn that Portia is, essentially, being manipulated and controlled by Eddie, not even allowed to write her personal thoughts down in her own diary for fear that it would upset him. This alone is cause for worry.

But the only really pressing detail that is brought up this chapter is the idea that Thomas and Anna are planning on going to Capri in April, yet had been reluctant to tell Portia.

Yet it's important to keep in mind here that, yet again, Bowen is purposefully only giving us the story from one character's perspective at a time. This chapter we learn the story from Portia's diary—but is that the *entire* story?

At this point it's especially fascinating to note that Bowen has yet to delegate a single narrator to guide her readers through the story. Instead, she reveals the 'truth' in careful stages, one character at a time. The tactic is unique, but does help the plot of the story unfold in a rather dramatic fashion.

Part 2, Chapter 1

Part 2, Chapter 1 Summary

It is now March, Portia's first spring in London. She is riding the train to meet Mrs. Heccomb, the woman who she is going to stay with while Thomas and Anna are away in Capri. She is happy to be on her own; she has never traveled by herself before.

Mrs. Heccomb is a retired widow and had been Anna's governess until Anna turned nineteen. Later, when she had married, she and her husband moved to a little town by the sea, Seale, about 70 miles outside of London. The couple lived there, along with Mr. Heccomb's children from his first marriage, throughout most of the year. In the summer months, they moved to a farm further inland while they rented out their beach home.

It turned out that Mr. Heccomb's children from his first marriage, Daphne and Dickie, were living on with Mrs. Heccomb. The two grown children continued to do their part to help pay for the house and its upkeep and had no plans of moving on anytime soon.

Mrs. Heccomb meets Portia at the train station and then takes her home. As they travel, Portia thinks that she might have a wonderful time here; the shops are charming, the view of the sea is welcoming and she feels good about this new experience.

When they enter Mrs. Heccomb's tattered home, which has been named 'Waikiki,' they sit down for tea. Mrs. Heccomb chats away, which makes Portia nervous, because it's so unlike the behavior at Anna and Thomas's. She's afraid that if Mrs. Heccomb keeps talking about everything that they'll run out of things to say after just a few days.

After tea, Portia goes up to unpack and see her new room and she soon hears Daphne, Mrs. Heccomb's stepdaughter, comes home. Portia is apparently to learn that nothing goes unheard in Waikiki; it's much too drafty to keep the noise out.

Part 2, Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter, the beginning of Part 2, is setting up an entirely new version of Portia's life. Here, in Mrs. Heccomb's tired house by the sea, we are lent to believe that Portia will be much more at home here, that her imagination won't be encumbered by societal expectations.

The way that Bowen has set up this chapter, and the history of Mrs. Heccomb, also leads us to believe that she and Portia may be able to find some common ground, a friendship even. Both have known about loss and financial struggle. This trip may be exactly what Portia needs to 'find herself' once and for all, to develop into a more mature version of sixteen.

As always, though, Bowen throws in a wild card. This time, it's Mrs. Heccomb's step-children Daphne and Dickie. Although they are grown adults, will they behave as such? Will they become friends, enemies or perhaps a combination of the two with Portia?

Part 2, Chapter 2

Part 2, Chapter 2 Summary

When Portia finally comes downstairs, Daphne doesn't greet her with words but instead turns off the radio she's been listening to and shakes her hand. Mrs. Heccomb is painting a lamp shade and she tells Daphne that she could probably leave her music on. Daphne starts it back up, then kicks back and haves a cigarette. She's a person who enjoys having a lot of noise around her home, which Portia eventually learns is because she works all day in a deathly quiet library. Portia doesn't seem to mind any of this, but Mrs. Heccomb does worry that Portia might pick up some of Daphne's bad habits and take them back to Anna's with her. She might have learned to deal with Daphne's brashness, but she'd hate Anna to have to witness it.

Portia sits on the couch and opens up a magazine. She wishes she'd been able to bring the puzzle from Major Brutt, but seeing as how it's mostly done, it had been impossible. For a minute, she looks around the room, seeing the items and the burning fire, and she realizes that she isn't quite comfortable yet. It's odd, she thinks to herself, but she actually misses some of the *things* from Anna and Thomas's house, like the rug in her room. She thinks it's interesting how in her loneliness there she built attachments to material items instead of people.

Later that night, Portia is lying awake in bed and hears hear Dickie coming home and Mrs. Heccomb hushing him. She thinks to herself that she needs to meet him in the morning—mostly because she's heard that he's the same age as Eddie: twenty-three.

When Portia wakes up, she goes downstairs to see Dickie getting ready to leave for work. She has already heard him get ready; after all, the house has no secrets. Instead of greeting her though, he pretty much looks right through her, nodding a goodbye to both she and Mrs. Heccomb at once, as he exits to go to work.

Daphne comes downstairs for breakfast once Dickie has left. She doesn't have to be at her job at the library until later and so this getting up late is part of her routine. Yet as she sits and eats breakfast, she can't help but think of Anna. The entire idea of the woman, who she really can't stand, makes her grumpy. In her mind, Portia is an extension of Anna, and so she feels grumpy toward her as well.

She gets up and leaves, angrily telling Mrs. Heccomb to be sure that the house is in order by the evening, as she's having a party. She turns to Portia before she leaves and asks her if she dances. Then, she tells Mrs. Heccomb to have Dickie call Cecil, apparently to be a dancing partner for Portia.

Portia isn't sure what to think about Daphne and Dickie, other than their behavior is so volatile that she can't imagine Mrs. Heccomb dealing with them every day. She decides

to go outside and takes a walk down the esplanade in front of the house, where she strolls and enjoys the seaside.

Part 2, Chapter 2 Analysis

This chapter is continuing to introduce a new set of characters in Portia's new surroundings. Dickie and Daphne represent the opposite of what she's become accustomed to in Thomas and Anna, just as Mrs. Heccomb's disheveled home, Waikiki, is in most senses the opposite of Thomas and Anna's structured house.

It's an interesting tool to show development in our protagonist, Portia. In the first part of the book we witnessed her trying to belong and thrive with Thomas and Anna in London; now, in this second part, we're reading along as she does the same, this time at the sea with Mrs. Heccomb, Dickie and Daphne. The only constant, it seems, is Eddie.

It's clear that Bowen is now beginning to build momentum toward a new chapter in Portia's life. The scene is being set. She's painting a picture of the home-- scenery and people that we suspect will be come a powerfully important part of Portia's human development. However, there's a battle of interests here, within Portia, as we wonder which side of the coin she'll ultimately most relate to.

Part 2, Chapter 3

Part 2, Chapter 3 Summary

Portia receives three letters from London, which she finds gratifying yet unusual; she's never had so many letters in one day before. The first is from Matchett, telling her a bit about spring cleaning and how things have changed since she's been gone. The second from Eddie, proclaiming his love for her and his jealousy toward Dickie. He also mentions the possibility of him coming to stay at the sea with her for a while. The third letter is from Major Brutt. He asks if perhaps she'd like a new puzzle to do, seeing as how she must be nearly done with the first one.

That afternoon, while Mrs. Heccomb is napping, Portia sneaks upstairs and looks about the bedrooms, wondering if Eddie came to visit which room would be his. She discovers a little room, facing north, filled with cardboard boxes. She then goes downstairs and writes him a letter, telling him about the room and that she will broach the subject of him staying there later when the timing is right.

When Daphne and Dickie get home from work they all have an early dinner so that things can be cleared away in plenty of time to get ready for Daphne's party. Portia puts on a black velvet dress. This is the first time she's been to a party.

Cecil, Portia's intended date, arrives early and he and Portia have time to talk. They seem to get along well, if only to have interesting conversation.

When the party gets going, Dickie asks Portia to dance—not because he necessarily likes her, but because his sister wants him to be dancing with a girl named Clara and he wants to annoy Daphne. Dickie stops to have some lemonade and tells Portia that he'd like to dance with her again later. Just as she begins to sit down, Cecil asks her to dance but his style doesn't fit Portia's as well. They decide to sit and talk instead.

Mr. Bursely, Daphne's date, then intrudes into the conversation and it's obvious that he's had way too much to drink. His brash manner sends Cecil away to find cigarettes and Mrs. Heccomb rushes in with a 'rescue date,' a man by the name of Mr. Parker. They dance.

Part 2, Chapter 3 Analysis

We learn a lot this chapter about Dickie and Daphne. At the dance, Portia sees how popular they both are, and also how much they like to antagonize each other. They've become somewhat of an interesting spectacle to Portia, if for no other reason than they are so different from what she's used to.

This chapter also marks the first time that Portia is in a social setting with people her age. It is her first dance and the way that she awkwardly gets handed off from partner to partner is a great way for Bowen to indirectly illustrate Portia's naiveté about the world.

There's also a bit of foreshadowing about the similarities between Eddie and Mr. Bursely. The only experience Portia has so far around Mr. Bursely is one in which he's absurdly drunk, calling her a 'girl,' yet for some reason that she can't put her finger on, he reminds Portia of Eddie. This is a very crafty way for Bowen to suggest that Eddie may have a drinking problem as well—or at least that there may be a problem with their relationship.

It's also brought up this chapter that perhaps Eddie will come and stay with Portia for a while at the sea. But with this new circle of acquaintances her own age that Portia is starting to develop, we don't necessarily want to see Eddie come in and start controlling her life yet again. Bowen has certainly set us up for it, though. We now just have to wait and see what happens.

Part 2, Chapter 4

Part 2, Chapter 4 Summary

Portia is at church, daydreaming. Surprisingly, though, she's not thinking about Eddie. In fact, it's disconcerting to her, but it's actually Mr. Bursely that she's thinking of. She wonders why he got under her skin so much the other night, why she was so uncomfortable.

She thinks it's because he had asked her if anyone had ever told her before that she was a 'sweet little kid.' In reality, Eddie calls her that all the time. Having this stranger say it aloud, in a way, shattered her illusion that she and Eddie were alone in their intimacy, that they two were the only individuals who had experienced what the two of them had shared. Today, this realization leaves her uneasy.

Later, she is invited to go on a walk with Daphne and her friends. While they are out, Portia blurts out a question to Daphne, asking if she might have a friend come and stay for a weekend. Daphne is curious to find out if Portia really has a boyfriend—even though Portia does say that yes, her friend is a boy—and says that it's probably okay, although she'll have to first ask her stepmother. Portia asks if Daphne might ask for her.

In the meantime, Daphne and her friends warm up to Portia. It seems that the mention of a boyfriend makes Portia seem less innocent and more on their level of fun. The girls seem to have found a new level of respect for this young, naïve orphan from London.

After the walk, the crowd moves to Daphne's friend Evelyn's house, where they have tea and play badminton. Cecil is in the group of friends and he manages to sit close to Portia; the two of them aren't playing badminton. He ends up asking her on a date and she accepts.

Part 2, Chapter 4 Analysis

The character development is really starting to pick up this chapter, as Bowen begins to show—in dialogue and subtle action—the characteristics of Daphne and her friends. They are a fun-loving, middle-class group, who hold more respect for those who they think are just like them. Up to this point, Daphne has thought Portia must be stuck-up, not unlike Anna, but she's beginning to see a new side to this teenager, and so are Daphne's friends, and they seem to like what they see.

There's also a bit of interest building between Portia and Cecil. Bowen writes of the two of them as if he is much more interested than she is; after all, she is in love with Eddie. Yet she still accepts a date with him, as if she thinks he intends for them to be just friends. For the readers, though, Bowen hasn't yet established what Cecil's intentions are. Therefore, yet another interpersonal subplot begins.

Part 2, Chapter 5

Part 2, Chapter 5 Summary

It is Wednesday and Portia receives a letter in the mail from Eddie, as well as a puzzle from Major Brutt, a postcard from Anna, a short note from Thomas and a letter from Lilian. Eddie's letter leaves Portia feeling a bit unsettled. In it, he says he's not sure whether or not he'll be able to come to visit that weekend, but he'd like to. He also says that he'll play as if he were shy, but if he were to make enemies during his visit that she better stick up for him.

Mrs. Heccomb is looking forward to the prospect of Eddie's visit. She seems to be under the impression that he's a friend of Anna and Thomas's, not unlike Major Brutt, who would be coming by to check on how Portia's doing. Daphne knows better, though, and she looks upon all of Mrs. Heccomb's fussing toward getting the house ready with an amused eye.

Later, Portia went by the library, at Mrs. Heccomb's suggestion, to see Daphne's work. As she watched her alphabetize and work with customers, her respect for her began to grow.

On Thursday, Portia took the train into meet Cecil for their date. They went to the theatre, then out for dinner and dessert. Afterward he squeezed her hand in a friendly way. Portia had a good time, but mostly thought about Eddie and the fact that by the next day she'd know for sure whether or not he'd be coming for the weekend.

Sure enough, Eddie comes for the weekend. Portia meets him at the station and together they make their way back to Waikiki. He is excited to be there, and when he arrives, he is charming and likeable with Mrs. Heccomb, saying all of the right things. After tea, Portia says she'd like to show him the sea and so they go for a walk. The two of them talk and he admits that while he enjoys being with her and that she is a 'dear' girl, he also doesn't feel entirely *happy*.

That night, Portia and Eddie are invited to go to the movies with Dickie, Daphne and their dates Clara and Wallace. Once there, Portia sits between Dickie and Eddie; Daphne and Wallace sit on the other side of Eddie. Every so often Portia feels Eddie's knee touch hers, but what she really notices is Dickie's arm touching hers, when it's clear that on his other side he isn't paying Clara any attention at all. When, in the middle of the movie, Dickie flashes his lighter for a smoke and brings it out for anyone else who may want it, it lights up his or her row. Portia looks over and sees Eddie holding hands with Daphne.

Part 2, Chapter 5 Analysis

Here is where the drama between Portia and Eddie's relationship really climaxes. We've been waiting for such a moment since we first heard of Eddie being a troubled young man from Matchett and Anna. Now, we're seeing first-hand how he's obviously toying with Portia while becoming intimate with Daphne—and who knows how many other women back in London.

The way Bowen has painted the picture thus far, however, could be that Portia has been misled from the start about having any sort of relationship with Eddie. Being that they are so far apart in age, and that nothing physical has ever happened between them, it's possible that Eddie always saw Portia as nothing but a friend, a sweet girl with whom he could share his most intimate thoughts. Likewise, it's possible that Portia could have misread his kindness and attention—both of which she has been so unaccustomed to since her mother's death—for love.

Regardless, we're finally seeing the light with this young man. We're finally seeing him in the way Matchett, and even Anna, has: as trouble.

Part 2, Chapter 6

Part 2, Chapter 6 Summary

On Sunday, Portia confronts Eddie about holding Daphne's hand. He shrugs off her concern by saying that he simply wanted to make friends and that he just likes to touch people. When Portia persists in finding out why he did that, he is condescending, telling her that she's so sweet and is such 'a little girl.'

Then, he says he's sorry and that he didn't mean to do anything to upset her. Ask Daphne, he says, if she doesn't believe that it was just innocent fun. He says that it should be obvious to Portia that he loves her because he came all this way to see her.

Ultimately he acts as if all of this is a misunderstanding and that it's entirely Portia's fault. He accuses her of being too much like all other girls, too expectant that he acts one way or another. He says that it's her fault for not understanding his actions.

He starts to walk away and Portia stops him. Pathetically, she cries out that she hopes this isn't the end of the two of him; she says that he is her entire reason for living and that she promises to try and get used to the way he is.

Later, Eddie convinces Dickie to go out with him and try and find a drink. Daphne and Portia are now alone and Daphne remarks that Eddie sure drinks a lot. She then goes on to advise Portia not to trust Eddie and that it was obvious as soon as he arrived that he was simply playing around with Portia, leading her on.

Portia gets angry with this and confronts her about the hand-holding. Daphne says that there's no reason to get crude about things, that anyone could have seen it coming a mile away. Eddie flirts with everyone.

After dinner, Mr. Bursely shows up unexpectedly. He sits next to Eddie, which gives Portia a chance to look back and forth at the two of their faces. Mr. Bursely asks all of them to go out later.

Part 2, Chapter 6 Analysis

Here's where we really get to see the 'true' Eddie. In his conversation with Portia, Eddie morphs from nonchalance to condescension to outright manipulation. The way that Bowen crafted the dialogue in their conversation made for a subtle shift in the reader's perception of Eddie's character. Up until this point we thought it was possible that he was just a young man whose unconventional actions were often misunderstood. Now, we see that the somewhat low opinions that others have crafted of him may in fact have some validity. It's an interesting twist, shifting Eddie from love interest/hero into loathsome villain.

The disappointment begins when we see how attached Portia still is to Eddie. In her words of desperation we begin to see exactly how controlling and manipulative Eddie has been up to this point. He's practically brainwashed this poor girl, a lonely teenager who so desperately wanted to be loved. Again, it sets up Eddie as the villain in the story and, similarly changes our view of Portia from love interest/heroine into sad victim.

In addition, the foreshadowing that Bowen set up a few chapters ago—about the similarity between Eddie and Mr. Bursely—starts to come full circle this chapter, as we see that Eddie really does seem to have a preoccupation with alcohol. Now we just need to find out how much of his poor behavior has to do with a substance addiction—and how much has to do with some psychological concerns.

Part 2, Chapter 7

Part 2, Chapter 7 Summary

Portia and Eddie go on a walk through the woods. They stop and she says, once more, that she is sorry about their earlier talk and hopes that he'll always love her, no matter what. He says that he will so long as she never changes and never grows up. He doesn't like it when she confronts him and tells her not to do it again. She promises that she'll do her best to always be worthy of him. She tells him he's perfect and he tells her to go away.

He says that she's drowning him and that there's no way he can feel for her what she is obviously feeling for him. He says she's been 'sweet' but that he doesn't want her; he only wants what she 'gives.' She begins to cry and he tells her to stop, but she can't. She wants to know why they can't kiss and he pulls away.

Eventually, he leans forward and brushes her hair away, then leans in for a short kiss. She pulls away at the shock of it, combined with her still overwhelming feelings that she somehow betrayed his confidence by not trusting him with Daphne—and everything else.

Their talk then shifts to the mundane and a bit later, feeling a bit better; they stand up and continue to walk. He says that he'll be leaving that evening to go back to London; he has to work in the morning. However, he tells her that she needs to remember their happiness while he's away.

Portia and Eddie then leave to clean up and meet everyone else at Mr. Bursely's little get-together. When they arrive, Eddie starts drinking and starts to flirt unabashedly with Clara and, a bit later, with Evelyn. He asks Evelyn for a ride to the train station and she hurriedly declines. Eddie gets a bit belligerent then says that Portia will care for him.

Portia heads out to the balcony and Eddie follows. Then, he collapses a bit against the window frame and begins to cry.

Part 2, Chapter 7 Analysis

The full characterization, or development, of Eddie's character is now really beginning to peak. He's even more manipulative than ever with Portia, then, later he proves to be untrustworthy yet again with his actions toward Clara and Evelyn. He's becoming more and more distant and unsavory while Portia is drawn more and more to him through his manipulations. It's a plot that's swirling toward what has clearly been foreshadowed as an unhappy climax in their relationship.

Part 2, Chapter 8

Part 2, Chapter 8 Summary

Here we have another chapter of Portia's diary entries. In them, we learn of the events of several weeks.

Daphne tells Portia that Cecil's feelings are hurt and that he's feeling a bit neglected by her. Later, he comes to visit and Portia doesn't necessarily think that's true, although he does tell her he has an 'internal chill.'

Portia also begins to develop somewhat of a friendship with Clara. She makes a point to tell Dickie how nice she thinks Clara is.

Then there is an entry saying that it is Portia's last Saturday at Waikiki. Before she leaves she has some time to talk with Dickie and he says he'll be sad to see her go, that in some way she had become one of them while she was there, almost a member of the family. She asks him if he liked Eddie and he makes a point to say that a person's *character* is what truly matters and that it will shape their destiny. It doesn't seem as though Portia understands what he means.

Portia doesn't want to write in her diary how she really feels about leaving Waikiki. She says that she's learned from being around Eddie that she should maybe never talk at all; she always says the wrong things.

Part 2, Chapter 8 Analysis

What's particularly notable about this chapter is Bowen's emphasis on discussing the character of a person and how it can shape one's destiny. It could be read that this is one instance in which Bowen's own convictions shine through. She probably very much believes that. In this book, it's also her way of illustrating another subtle clue to Portia—through Dickie—to watch out for Eddie's true character.

Just like in Part 1, this section of the book wraps up with entries from Portia's diary. While they intentionally leave out any mention of Eddie, they are still insightful. It's a clever way for Bowen to cover many weeks of material, only noting here and there, some of the more important events. It's also a great set up for a new chapter, an introduction to a new section of Portia's life.

Part 3, Chapter 1

Part 3, Chapter 1 Summary

When Portia returns to London it is Thursday and Anna and Thomas aren't due back to return until Friday afternoon. Matchett notes that there's definitely something different about her, for one, she's more outspoken. Portia thinks this is interesting and wonders if she really has changed.

Matchett says the change has been good for her. She says that Portia was always eerily quiet before. She also says that she has more color in her cheeks and that Eddie noticed it as well.

Portia starts at the mention of Eddie's name. She asks Matchett what she means and she says that Eddie stopped by the day before looking for Anna and then asking for Portia. While he was there he said that he had gone to the shore to visit Portia and that Matchett would be happy to know that the trip had put some color into Portia's cheeks.

Portia is a bit unsettled that Eddie stopped by but Matchett doesn't want to say anything more.

Thomas and Anna return on Friday and Anna immediately sets in complaining. There are so many letters for her that she gets overwhelmed and then, to top it all off, Major Brutt has sent her a large bouquet of pink carnations and it nearly sets her off into hysterics, saying that they're the wrong color and she wishes she never would have run into him. Anna sends Portia to go write him a thank you note for the flowers, because she can't really bear to do it herself.

Anna and Thomas are both a bit disagreeable to be home and Anna immediately sets off an argument with him. They bicker back and forth about nothing really in particular.

Then, Thomas leaves to go on a walk with Portia. They stroll through the park and when they return toward the house Portia looks up and waves at the window where Anna is standing. In doing so, she steps out into traffic and nearly gets hit by a car; Thomas pushes her out of the way and tells her that she better be more careful.

Part 3, Chapter 1 Analysis

Bowen has yet again chosen to embark upon a rather subtle yet effective means of characterization. In this case, she illustrates yet again Anna's propensity for arguing and disagreement, as well as her generally unapproachable nature—both to her husband and her sister-in-law.

This chapter also, just like the first chapter in part 2, sets up yet another new situation for Portia to grow and thrive. Yes, she's back where she started, in London, but she's

also a new person. We wonder if this change that Matchett sees in her will manifest itself in how she relates to Thomas and Anna. We wonder if it will change how she relates to Eddie, or anyone else for that matter, as well.

Part 3, Chapter 2

Part 3, Chapter 2 Summary

Anna is embarrassed to be seen looking from the window. She wasn't spying; she was instead trying to escape from her thoughts about the letter she held in her hand. It wasn't a recent letter; it was one she had come back to after some time. It makes her think of the similarities between Eddie and Pidgeon, how neither one of them are particularly genuine men.

Anna had never shown Thomas these letters. Now, for some reason, she had the urge to run downstairs to Portia and throw them in her face. She sits and wonders why she dislikes Portia so much. She supposes that she blames the girl for her recent poor relationship with Thomas. Having her stare at she and Thomas's actions day in and day out makes her irritable.

Tuesday, Portia went back to school and Thomas went back to the office. Portia had said that she would be having afternoon tea at Lilian's; instead, she came home early unexpected. When she walked in she found Eddie having tea with Anna. He seemed genuinely happy to see her, although Anna seemed a bit shaken.

The chance encounter reminds her of her meeting with St. Quentin just the week before. They had run into one another on the street and had decided to walk together down to Mandeville Place. She asked about his book and he asked about her diary, to which she was shocked that he would even know about it. He said that he simply guessed that a girl her age would keep one, and he was curious as to what she feels. He says, though, that it's not a good idea to write everything down, that it's much more natural to let ourselves forget what should be forgotten.

Portia guesses that all this talk about a diary is because Anna told him about hers. He has no choice but to admit it's true, although he asks her not to say anything to Anna. She wants to know if Anna looks at her diary often and he tells her that he should find a new place, other than her desk, in which to keep it just in case. She thanks him for the advice.

He then tells her that she should be more careful of judging people, of watching them so closely from afar. Friendship, he says, is often about overlooking other's faults—not emphasizing them. He says that there are rules to relationships and that only certain people—like Eddie, he says—consistently break such rules.

It's a lot of information for her to digest, but she thanks him for his candor—even though he says he hardly deserves any thanks.

Later, though, St. Quentin's words reverberate in Portia's mind. As she awkwardly walks in on Eddie and Anna having tea together, she can't help but think to herself of betrayals and wrong-doings and how they might relate to Eddie.

Part 3, Chapter 2 Analysis

In this chapter, Bowen talks a lot about trust, honor, and the importance of being genuine. In a not-so-subtle way, she has each of her main characters: Anna and Portia, in turn, think about falseness and betrayal, honesty and true natures. Anna thinks of it with regard to Eddie and Pidgeon; later, Portia is made aware of it by St. Quentin then later thinks of Eddie with a bit of suspicious interest.

Anna's relationship with Eddie still hasn't been laid out in clear language, but it's implied that they have created a relationship yet again, that there is much more than meets the eye and has been for some time. This mystery, however, really helps move the drama of the story along without having to focus too much on Portia. The focus now is on Eddie; in fact, all eyes are on him. What will he do next? When will these people around him learn what he's *really* up to?

Part 3, Chapter 3

Part 3, Chapter 3 Summary

Eddie calls Anna and admonishes her for reading Portia's diary. Anna gets off the phone hurriedly; she's in the middle of hosting a luncheon with Major Brutt and two other friends, the Peppinghams. Eddie's calling like that really has unsettled her.

When they have a chance, she talks with Major Brutt She tells him that it was Eddie who had called and they talk about him for a bit. Brutt admits that he never really liked Eddie and Anna says that he is a 'bastard,' although she's most concerned of how Portia has become so different. Spending time with Eddie and then coming back from the seaside resulted in a different, more vocal and less impulsive girl. She asks Brutt if he thinks Portia is happy and he says yes, but advises Anna to talk with her anyway.

She agrees and sees him out. Then, she sits down and writes Eddie a letter. In it, she simply tells him that he should be more careful about making personal phone calls at work, because she wouldn't want him to get in trouble. She arranges for a special messenger to deliver the note that afternoon.

In the meantime, Portia is with her friend Lilian. Lilian sees that Portia is a bit upset and insists that the two of them have tea, to calm her nerves. Portia admits that she is going to meet Eddie to confront him about the way he and Anna have been laughing and plotting behind her back about her diary, not to mention the betrayal she's felt since first hearing St. Quentin's words about trust and honor.

Part 3, Chapter 3 Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to further elaborate on the relationship between Anna and Eddie, and to start wrapping up the story. Bowen is winding down Anna's character, as well as Eddie's, giving each of them more depth and substance than ever before. Now, in order to end the story we only need a few more hints, a few more clues as to what is really going on between these two. Besides that, we just need to discover what is to happen to Portia.

In addition, just as Eddie turned a few chapters back into the story's villain, it's true that we now need a hero to fill his shoes. It's perhaps being set up that Major Brutt just might be that hero, the one trusting and solid man to help settle Portia's bad experiences and to make everything okay. By having him partake in such an intimate and emotional scene with Anna, we're beginning to see that his character may have a greater purpose than just as a secondary filler character. He may in fact actually be an integral part of the story.

Part 3, Chapter 4

Part 3, Chapter 4 Summary

Portia and Eddie meet at Covent Garden. She confronts him about telling Anna about the diary and he says that she has it all wrong; that Anna told him of it first. She is so upset, so filled with feelings of betrayal, though, that for all of his words—the words he always says that somehow explain his actions—she can't help but cry and cry.

He suggests that she go back home before someone wonders what has happened to her and she refuses. With little choice, he takes her back to his place, where she notices that he has a letter from Anna that has been delivered by a special messenger. She tells him to open it or she will herself and he refuses. She demands to know what the two of them tell each other in secret and he says she's too young to know, nor to understand.

She asks him if he and Anna are lovers and he finally responds that no, they aren't. Even if they wanted it, he says, he doesn't think that Anna has that kind of passion inside of her.

Portia keeps questioning him, wanting to know why he once said that they loved each other, and that they could trust one another. He answers that he used to feel that way but that she's changed, especially since she came back from the sea. He says, that she doesn't know what she means about 'love,' that they always had fun together and she is a sweet girl, but that he'd never think of anything like taking her to bed with him.

He finally admits, at her prodding, that he feels like he'd be happier without her.

She asks him for money for a taxi and he reluctantly gives it to her, but not before making her promise that she'll pay him back once she gets some money from Thomas. She runs off and he returns to his room, only to notice that she has left her school bag behind. He pours himself a drink as he contemplates how to get it back to her, and then opens the letter from Anna.

Part 3, Chapter 4 Analysis

Here we see, in typical Eddie form, how he is able to turn any argument with Portia around to be her fault. The reality, as the readers know, is that whether or not Portia is in fact too young to understand matters of the heart, Eddie really has acted poorly and has taken advantage of the young girl.

Yet Bowen has done Portia's character an incredible service by giving her the strength to leave, to run back home. She has built up the moment for so many pages, so many chapters, now that we as readers can't help but cheer aloud when she finally turns her back on his manipulations and untruths.

Portia's story is now finally being wrapped up . . . almost.

Part 3, Chapter 5

Part 3, Chapter 5 Summary

Instead of running home, Portia for some reason runs to the hotel where Major Brutt is staying, then asks for him. He is surprised to see Portia. He can tell she's upset, though, and asks her to tell him what's wrong.

He tells her right away that he should take her home but she refuses. He tells her that he would hate for Anna and Thomas, his good friends, to think badly of him and asks Portia not to put him in the middle of any argument. She tells him that he doesn't understand, that Anna and Thomas make fun of him the same way they joke about her.

Major Brutt is obviously hurt by her words and a bit taken aback. Regardless of how he now feels about Anna and Thomas, he insists that she go home. Portia refuses again and begins to cry. She wants to know if there's somewhere else they can talk, and after some begging from Portia, he eventually agrees to take her up to his room for coffee.

When they get to his room, Major Brutt asks her to explain why she has been crying and to tell him what, exactly, is going on. She starts by saying that she can see now that Anna and Thomas have always made fun of her, have always thought of her and her parents as lowly people. She then tells him that she had an argument with Eddie and that he made her see all of her faults.

He tells her that it's just her first time getting her heart broken, and that there will no doubt be more. She is horrified to hear this, and he says it's simply part of growing up. He says that regardless of how horrible it now seems, she really must go home and make things right.

Portia protests that she can't face Anna; that while Thomas may be her brother, there is no love lost between she and her sister-in-law.

Then, she crosses the room and looks up at Major Brutt. She asks him to consider marrying her, because she knows that she can make him happy.

He is shocked, and then tells her that he's sure she'll make a great home someday, just not for him. He is pleased that she would think so highly of him, but he still insists that she go home. She, again, refuses but he finally convinces her that he at least needs to call Anna and Thomas and let them know that she is okay.

As Major Brutt goes downstairs to use the telephone, he thinks that perhaps the last thing on earth he wants to do is to accompany Portia home. He doesn't want to face Anna and Thomas and the laughter that will inevitably follow.

Part 3, Chapter 5 Analysis

Sure enough, here is where the character of Major Brutt finally unfolds, where his purpose becomes clear. His presence helps Portia bloom into understanding as a woman. At the same time, the discussion he has with Portia only accentuates the fact that she really is just a child.

It's the perfect way to juxtapose the dilemma in being a sixteen-year old girl: being hopelessly trapped between childhood and adulthood. It's an artful way for Bowen to really continue to wrap up the several emotional and psychological plots that have been built around and inside the protagonist, Portia.

Part 3, Chapter 6

Part 3, Chapter 6 Summary

It was twenty minutes to eight when Matchett started in with Thomas that he really should find out what has happened to Portia. Annoyed, he asks Anna (who is visiting with St. Quentin) if she knows where Portia is. She doesn't, but suggests they try Lilian's house. When they don't find her there, Thomas thinks Anna should call Eddie. She does in fact call but he's not in.

They're unsure what to do and decide they have two options: to eat dinner or call the police. They decide on the former. As they eat, the phone rings and it's Major Brutt telling them that she is with him, but doesn't really want to come home. Anna hangs up the phone and she and Thomas look at each other, not sure how to handle the situation.

Anna admits that she thinks this is all because Portia found out that she reads her diary. With help from St. Quentin, she starts putting together a timeline to find out what, exactly, has made all of this come to a head on this particular evening, as she found out about Anna and the diary a week before. Anna remembers when Portia came in on she and Eddie having tea and thinks that may have further contributed to her mood.

Anna, Thomas and St. Quentin try and decide upon the 'right' thing to do about Portia. Thomas thinks the answer must be obvious, and at the very least, something that doesn't draw a lot of attention. Then, they all come up with the idea of Matchett going after her.

Anna says that if she were Portia she would want nothing more than to be felt completely loved yet also completely be left alone—and so to send her friend Matchett seems like the perfect solution.

Matchett gets her hat and coat and takes off in a taxi, although all the way there she is unsure as to where exactly she's going; much to her dismay, she didn't hear what Thomas had said to the driver when she was sent off.

When they pull up in front of Major Brutt's hotel, she hopes that they're in the right place, then strolls in the door to find Portia.

Part 3, Chapter 6 Analysis

Having been absent for most of the novel, it's quite a tactic that Bowen brings back St. Quentin in the final chapter of the book to wrap up the situation. As he sits at their dinner table, he is serving as narrator, outlining for Thomas and Anna how Portia must feel from the most objective standpoint as possible. Anna also adds to his narration, pointing out how teenagers always want two things at once: to love but be left alone, to have contempt for both sides of every coin.

This ending is quite appropriate, a brilliant way for Bowen to wrap it all up. After all, a conversation between Anna and St. Quentin is what first introduced the story.

It's also quite significant that in the first chapter, Anna doesn't want to return home because she simply can't bear to face Portia. Then, in the last chapter, it is precisely the reverse: Portia is avoiding going home because she simply can't bear facing Anna. Then, there is the topic of the diary; the subject of which we learn has been the *real* subject of the main plot all along. This has not been a love story so much as a story about the coming of age of a young woman and the role that her diary—and the protection of it—has had in her development.

Characters

Cecil Bowers

Cecil is a friend of the Heccomb family who is brought to Daphne and Dickie's Saturday night party for Portia. Cecil and Portia become good friends while Portia is at Seale-on-Sea.

Major Eric "E. J." Brutt

Major Brutt is a lonely, retired soldier. Anna, along with Thomas and Portia, runs into him after the movies, and he mistakenly calls her Miss Fellowes, her maiden name. Major Brutt remembers Anna from before her marriage when she was with her lover, Robert Pidgeon. The family invites him back to the house for a drink, and he visits them on a number of other occasions although both Anna and Thomas are snippy about him behind his back. Portia likes him a great deal, and he gives her puzzles as gifts. After Eddie rejects her and she runs away from home, Portia ends up at his hotel.

Eddie

Eddie is twenty-three, charming, self-centered, a heavy drinker, and a ladies' man. He can swing from one emotional extreme to the other in a matter of minutes. He encourages Portia to fall in love with him even though he has no intention of honestly returning her affections. Early in the novel he claims to be in love with Anna and constantly visits the house to flirt with her. Anna finds a job for Eddie in Thomas' advertising firm because she believes him to be clever but in need of something to settle him down.

Eddie first encourages Portia's affections when he writes a letter to her, thanking her for an insignificant courtesy and adds that he is lonely and wants to be her friend because he sees that she is lonely, too. They begin to meet secretly because they know that no one approves of the two of them being together. Portia feels that no one understands Eddie. She begins to fall in love and shares her diary with him. She invites him to the seashore while she is there but is shocked when she sees him holding hands with Daphne in the movie theater. He tells her he no longer cares for her, primarily because he is simply overwhelmed by her innocence and eagerness for love. This statement prompts her to run away to Major Brutt's hotel room.

Daphne Heccomb

Daphne is Mrs. Heccomb's stepdaughter and has a job at a library. She lives at home with her brother and Mrs. Heccomb to help with the expenses. She is popular and full of

spontaneity. Portia discovers Daphne and Eddie holding hands at the movie theater, but Daphne assures her that it was nothing—although she warns Portia to beware of Eddie.

Dickie Heccomb

Dickie is Mrs. Heccomb's stepson. He has a job at a bank and lives at home, helping his stepmother with the expenses. It is his cigarette lighter that illuminates Eddie holding hands with Daphne at the move theater.

Mrs. Heccomb

Mrs. Heccomb takes care of Portia at her home in Seale-on-Sea while Thomas and Anna are in Capri. She was once Anna's governess. She married a physician, who died and left her very little to live on. To make a little extra money, she paints lamp shades and rents out her house in the summer. The family life at Waikiki, Mrs. Heccomb's seaside villa, is lively and unrestricted—in stark contrast to Anna and Thomas' grim home in London. Mrs. Heccomb's two children, Daphne and Dickie, are popular and energetic and often have large spontaneous dance parties at the villa.

Lilian

Lilian is Portia's schoolmate, her only friend close to her in age. She has already started to get a womanly figure and to attract looks from men. She is at Miss Paullie's school because she fell in love with the female cello teacher at a previous school.

R. Matchett

Matchett is a servant in Thomas and Anna's house, coming from the first Mrs. Quayne's household after her death. She is very proper and runs the house with a sense of the absolute. But she is also sympathetic to Portia's situation. On evenings when Thomas and Anna are out, Matchett comes up to Portia's room to tuck her in for the night and to share stories about Portia's father when he lived with the first Mrs. Quayne.

One night, Matchett finds one of Eddie's letters to Portia under Portia's pillow. While she does not read the letter, she makes clear to Portia that she disapproves of Eddie and thinks he is nothing but trouble for a girl as inexperienced as Portia. Because of her relationship with Portia, Thomas and Anna choose Matchett to bring Portia back after she has run away.

St. Quentin Miller

St. Quentin Miller is a close friend of Anna's and a writer of some fame. He is aloof and somewhat cold and counts Anna one of his few friends. He makes vague references to

the fact that he is so distant from others because in the past he has found that becoming intimate with another person is too painful. He is responsible for inadvertently telling Portia that Anna has read her diary.

Miss Paullie

Miss Paullie is the head of the school Portia attends. It is a very expensive school but seems to be especially for girls who have not done well at other schools. Miss Paullie holds classes in her father's huge house, where he also sees patients as a physician. She is strict and has very rigid codes of conduct for the girls.

Robert Pidgeon

Robert Pidgeon was a lover of Anna's before she married Thomas. She keeps his letters to her, of which Thomas is aware. The reason for Robert and Anna's breakup is not clear but has something to do with both his and Anna's inability to be truly intimate. Anna and Major Brutt see Robert as exceptionally capable, and he is well thought of. Anna still reads his old love letters.

Anna Quayne

Anna is Thomas' wife and is currently thirtyfour. She and Thomas tried to have children but she miscarried twice, and she has now decided that she doesn't want children. Their relationship seems tense, and she is in control of just how close they are to each other. Anna does not like Portia and is almost cruel to her, but puts up with her living at their house because this is the right thing to do. She is unsympathetic toward everyone, most of all Portia, and is unable to imagine herself in anyone else's place. Both she and Thomas speak ill of many of their friends behind their backs. One of her closest friends is St. Quentin Miller, but she is also very attached to Eddie and has found him a job at Thomas' firm.

Irene Quayne

Irene is Mr. Quayne's second wife, considerably younger than he is, and Portia's mother. She and Mr. Quayne had an affair after being introduced to each other by mutual friends, and they married once she became pregnant with Portia. She dies in Switzerland after Mr. Quayne's death, and her sister sends the letter about Portia to the Quaynes in London. Portia has many memories of moving from one cheap hotel room to another in Switzerland with her mother and of the closeness they shared.

Mr. Quayne

Mr. Quayne is Portia and Thomas' father. He once ran a small business, but the first Mrs. Quayne had money, and she urged him to retire early to a house she had bought. Mr. Quayne is depicted as a weak man who has been led around by his wife. He was about fifty-seven and living a very orderly life when his affair with Irene began in London. At that time, he had had his first child, Thomas, with the first Mrs. Quayne, who, upon being told of the affair, calmly insisted upon a divorce and upon Mr. Quayne's marriage to Irene. Before he dies, Mr. Quayne writes a letter asking that, if Irene should also die before Portia becomes an adult, Anna and Thomas take care of Portia, at least for a year.

Mrs. Quayne

Mrs. Quayne is Thomas' mother and Mr. Quayne's first wife, and she has a substantial amount of money. When Mr. Quayne tells her of his affair with Irene, and that Irene is pregnant, she very calmly arranges the entire series of events that follows: her divorce from Mr. Quayne; the packing of his bags; Thomas' driving him to the train station; and even Mr. Quayne's marriage to Irene. When Matchett speaks of her former employer to Portia, she notes that Mrs. Quayne meant "to do right," as opposed to doing good when she kicked Mr. Quayne out of the house and made him marry Irene.

Portia Quayne

Portia is the sixteen-year-old love child of Mr. Quayne and Irene Quayne (the second Mrs. Quayne), and was born in France soon after their marriage. Her childhood has been spent traveling around Switzerland from one cheap hotel room to another. After her father and mother die, Portia moves to the London house of her half-brother, Thomas, and his wife, Anna. The childless couple takes in the orphan Portia because it is the right thing to do, but they take no joy in her company and find her a disruption to their sterile household. She is as eager as a puppy to fit in and learn the ways of their world, but her innocence startles them.

Portia keeps a diary, which Anna reads, learning that Portia has portrayed her and others in a less than flattering light. Realizing that Anna has read her diary is one of the events that precipitates Portia's running away from home toward the end of the book.

Portia falls in love with Eddie, a friend of Anna's who is a callous, self-centered Lothario (a man who likes to seduce women). He encourages her to consider him the focus of her life, but her innocence and eagerness for love frighten him, and he eventually tells her that he no longer loves her. His rejection of her is one of the other events that launches Portia's desperate attempt to run away.

Thomas Quayne

Thomas is Portia's older half-brother, the son of Mr. Quayne and the first Mrs. Quayne. He has few brotherly feelings toward Portia because he is still hurting from the fracture Portia's birth created in his family. He has been married to Anna for eight years, lives in a nice house in London, and is a partner in his own advertising firm, Quayne and Merrett.

Thomas' marriage to Anna appears, on most occasions, to be very cold and passionless. As well, his character gives the impression of being weak when dealing with his wife. For example, when St. Quentin Miller, a friend of Anna's, comes for tea, Thomas feels that he is not welcome and stays down in his library until Miller has left the house.

Themes

The Outsider

Anna and Thomas Quayne live in an insular world, comfortable knowing what will happen from one day to the next. Into their lives comes Portia, the daughter of Thomas' father and his mistress (later his second wife), Irene. Portia's very presence is a source of discomfort to the couple, and she enters their house as the consummate outsider. She is an orphaned love child in a childless household where two miscarriages have occurred. Even before she came to London, Portia was an outsider, banned to the continent by her father's first wife, doomed to wander from cheap hotel to cheap hotel.

In Anna and Thomas' eyes, Portia is in need of housebreaking, like a young puppy, unschooled in the ways of their society. When Matchett asks Anna where Portia will eat, Anna responds that Portia will eat downstairs with the rest of the family. "Surely. She's got to learn to," Anna says, as if Portia must be trained in how to eat in a familial setting after so many years eating in hotel dining rooms.

Throughout the book, Portia is a keen observer, always on the lookout for clues as to what is the right thing to say and do. Often, she is confused about her position in the Quayne household and is overly deferential in her struggle to know what is correct behavior. For example, when Anna and St. Quentin arrive for tea, Portia behaves almost as though she is the maid, offering to take coats and put away hats. She is desperate to find a place for herself in this new world.

Even the language people speak in London is foreign to Portia. She asks herself, "for what reason people said what they did not mean, and did not say what they meant?"

Family

Portia is an orphan from a family that is barely legitimate, wrapped in shame. Her first sixteen years are hardly what most would call normal, moving from hotel room to hotel room, never attending school or making a steady set of friends. She is more like a mother to her own mother, offering tea and comfort after Irene has a crying spell and helping her mother to the hospital when she becomes ill.

Living with Thomas and Anna does not make Portia part of their family even though Thomas is her half-brother. Bowen describes the Quayne's house in intimidating terms, a large home with gleaming marble and ivory-painted walls, and a fire in the hearth that casts a "hard glow." Portia is glad when she comes back to the house and no one is home yet. Anna, as the woman of the house, could go up to say good-night to Portia, but this small sign of compassion is left up to Matchett, the crusty old servant who knew Portia's father before Portia was born.

Offering normal familial attention and love to Portia is simply beyond the capabilities of Anna and Thomas. Thomas is still stinging from the shame he first felt sixteen years ago when his mother kicked his father out of their house, forcing him to marry Irene, then pregnant with Portia. And Anna never feels close to the girl, asking Thomas, "would you really like me to love her?. . . No, you'd only like me to seem to love her." Instead of taking her with them on their trip to Capri, Anna and Thomas pack her off again, only a few months after she has arrived at their house, to stay with Anna's former nanny at the beach. And their concern about her relationship with Eddie is slight. They seem only to be concerned about how it affects them, and think nothing of her sneaking off to see him. When Portia is very late the final evening of the novel, their response is negligible. Anna responds more forcefully to a perceived slight by Lilian's mother, and the couple is truly baffled as to who should go get Portia when she has been discovered at Major Brutt's hotel.

Coming-of-Age

Portia and the adults around her seem to be from two distinct countries, but this sense can be attributed primarily to their different generations. Portia has seen little of the world while the Quaynes and their friends have lived through World War I, which left millions dead and changed how people thought about society and humanity altogether. Anna does not quite know how to treat Portia, so she enforces her opinions and choices on Portia without much consultation. Surprisingly, Matchett chides Anna when she decides that Portia should not wear the dark clothes she owns when she comes to London and selects brightly colored clothes for her. She also stands up to Anna when she questions the condition and contents of Portia's room.

Portia is struggling to grow up but without much guidance from most of the adults around her. Lacking this guidance, she falls for Eddie, the one person who pays her any attention. Even though he is twenty-three, Eddie is barely an adult himself. He is self-centered and moody, but Portia so desperately wants to please somebody that she ignores this and sees only that Eddie, like her, seems to be misunderstood. This bonds them and fulfills her immature image of what love should be□a relationship that creates an exclusive world of fantasy, away from the realities of the day-to-day. "Oh no!. . . You are my perfect Eddie," she tells him when he begins to talk about his bad side.

As well, Portia is trying to develop her own sense of who she is. Even though Eddie demands that she never change, Portia still has a sense that this cannot be true. "I feel everyone waiting;. . . I cannot stay as I am. They will all expect something in a year or two more." She feels the pressure to become an adult even as she struggles to find her place as an adolescent. And she does change, as Matchett notices, when she returns from Seale-on- Sea more talkative and with more "color."

Death

The Death of the Heart is filled with symbolic deaths, as well as actual deaths. Both of Portia's parents have died, and the first Mrs. Quayne, Thomas' mother, has died, allowing Matchett (who was her servant) to move in with Thomas and his wife as their housekeeper. The novel's title indicates that something will die in the story; indeed, critics have noted that, through the deception of the adults around her, Portia's naiveté and innocence are dead by the end of the book. In one of the novel's final scenes, Portia asks Major Brutt to marry her, assuring him that she can cook and keep a good house. Her romantic ideals of love have been reduced considerably, even killed. At the start of the novel, even nature is pictured as dead. Bowen uses words such as "brittle," "pallid," and "black walks" to describe the park near the Quayne's house, setting the stage for a society where emotion has frozen and died.

Secrets

Secrets play a critical role in *The Death of the Heart.* Portia's life is launched by a secret love affair between Mr. Quayne and Irene, and their marriage remains a secret of sorts due to the fact that they are banished from England and never allowed to establish roots as a real family might. When Anna tells St. Quentin of Portia's origins, she does so in a conspiratorial manner, away from the house. And when Major Brutt asks about Portia's family ("Can your people spare you?"), she stumbles and can't get out the words to describe her situation.

Portia keeps a diary and is horrified when she discovers that Anna has read it and has discussed its contents with others. Her writing was to remain a secret, except to Eddie, to whom she trustingly gives the diary. But even with Eddie she thinks twice about exposing her background and history and wonders what he would think of her unusual vagabond life before she arrived in London. And, of course, her relationship with Eddie is a secret, and he demands that she not include one word of it in her diary, lest Anna discover their secret liaisons at the zoo, the park, and his apartment.

Anna keeps secrets, as well. Thomas knows that she still keeps Robert Pidgeon's letters, but he most likely does not know how she still thinks of him. And her relationships with St. Quentin and Eddie are strictly out-of-bounds for her husband; he is not even welcome to have tea with Anna and St. Quentin and stays hidden in his library until her friend leaves. Questions arise, in fact, about whether these two men are her lovers or have been at some time, but Bowen is somewhat vague about the status of these connections.

Style

Point-of-View

The story in *The Death of the Heart* is told from numerous viewpoints. The primary narrator is generally omniscient, as if looking over the story from above, and speaks with an authoritative voice. This narrator sets the stage, for example, when each of the three parts of the book begins, describing the park in parts one and two, and the Quayne's house in part three. As well, this narrator describes characters' thoughts in a way that is clearer than the characters themselves could. Daphne's first impression of Portia is negatively colored by her association with Anna, and the narrator comments, "It was clear that her manner to Portia could not be less aggressive until she had stopped associating her with Anna." Daphne's thoughts and feelings are available to the narrator, perhaps more so than to Daphne herself.

Much of the story, as well, is told directly through the eyes of many of its characters. For example, parts of the book are Portia's diary entries where the story is told completely through her eyes; everything is filtered through her sensibilities and feelings. Here, Bowen can dabble in a bit of irony, as when Portia writes of Thomas asking her about Eddie. "I hope he is polite.. . . does he try it on?" Thomas asks her. She has no idea that Thomas is asking, in a veiled way, whether Eddie has tried to kiss Portia, or attempted more fondling. Thomas drops that line of questioning when she says she doesn't know what he means.

Occasionally, the narration shifts suddenly from the third-person into the first-person narrative point-of-view. At one point, when Anna is alone, thinking about how she cannot seem to understand people, the story is narrated from the third person omniscient point-of-view: "There seemed to be some way she did not know of by which people managed to understand each other." Then, suddenly, in the next paragraph, the reader is in Anna's head, and the writing has shifted to the first person point-of-view: "All I said to Thomas was, get off my quilt."

Setting

Bowen's descriptions of the novel's various settings contribute to the tone of the story, and she is careful to offer detailed pictures of the characters' surroundings. The house the Quayne's live in is a huge, grand house on Windsor Terrace, filled with the best furniture, drapes, and rugs. Anna is attentive to every detail of how the house looks, complaining when Portia does not maintain her room as Anna believes it should be maintained, and reprimanding Thomas for placing a glass in his library where it does not belong. Everything is "set" in the Quayne household, always in its proper place. Portia is used to the noise of a hotel, and the house is almost too quiet for her.

In contrast, Mrs. Heccomb's house in Sealeon- Sea, named Waikiki, has a much more fluid atmosphere. Its name is informal and exotic, and her children are forever involved in moving the furniture around for a party or other event. The house is right on the beach, with many windows, and is filled with lampshades hand-painted by Mrs. Heccomb and comfortable but aging furniture. A radio is usually playing loudly, and Mrs. Heccomb's two adult children are as rambunctious as puppies, tumbling up and down the stairs. Portia can hear the household in the morning, bathing and getting ready for the day.

Hotels as homes appear in the novel in two important ways: the different hotels that Portia and her parents lived in, and the Karachi Hotel where Major Brutt lives. Portia thinks fondly of the hotels she has lived in even though they offered her a less physically comfortable lifestyle than she now has at the Quayne's. "We used to make up stories about people at dinner, and it was fun to watch people come and go," she tells Thomas. And, when Portia is overwhelmed by Anna and Eddie's deceptions, she ends up at Major Brutt's hotel, maybe because hotels are the settings she knows best and in which she feels the most comfortable.

Structure

The Death of the Heart is divided into three parts of similar length, and each of these parts is, in turn, divided into chapters. Each part takes place where Portia is during a season: Part one is set in London during the winter; in part two, Portia moves to Seale-on-Sea for the spring; and in part three, she is back again in London with summer coming.

The three parts of the book are entitled, "The World," "The Flesh," and "The Devil," considered among Christians to be the three things humans must fight against if they are to remain virtuous. In fact, these three things appear in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. The world signifies those things not associated with religion; the flesh stands for the pursuit of sensual pleasures; and the devil represents temptations to evil, such as theft and lying.

In the novel's three parts, Portia undergoes experiences that can be associated with these three titles. In "The World," she first comes to London, a new and strange world for her. In "The Flesh," she first kisses Eddie and, as well, witnesses him holding hands with Daphne. In "The Devil," further deception is exposed when she finds out about Anna reading her diary and sharing its contents with others.

Historical Context

The Inter-War Years

The period between World War I and World War II (1918-l939) was an era in which many people became disenchanted with society, politics, and traditional institutions. The carnage of the First World War had disillusioned many British, who once felt that the new century would be the start of a fresh and prosperous period for humanity in general and the United Kingdom specifically. This may be one reason why, in *The Death of the Heart,* the Quayne household seems isolated from most of the local and world events occurring in the 1930s.

In the 1930s, under Hitler, Germany was rearming itself in preparation for aggression against its neighbors. But Britain's foreign policy became stagnant and the government was unwilling to address the coming international crises; there were simply too many problems to worry about at home. The working class had begun to unionize, and labor relations had deteriorated. In the 1926 General Strike, two million workers had struck over plans to reduce wages and lengthen working hours. The General Strike itself failed, but the trade unions did realize that winning at the ballot box would give them real power to change the country.

The Depression

The worldwide economic depression, which began with the stock market crash of 1929, had a debilitating affect on Britain's economy. Even though there were signs of recovery by the mid- 1930s, Britain still had an unemployment crisis and was experiencing a decline in its traditional export industries, making it difficult for the country to pay for its imports of foods and raw materials. But, while these traditional export industries, such as coal mining and cotton manufacturing, remained depressed, other industries, such as electrical engineering, automobile manufacture, and industrial chemistry, were strengthening.

The City of London

In the 1930s, the depression and the growing unease about what was happening in Germany had a sobering effect on the atmosphere of the city of London. Dance halls, which were so popular during World War I and immediately afterwards, became less prominent. The skyline of London had changed only gradually since the 1600s, giving London a sense of permanence and history. Public transport expanded a great deal in the first quarter of the century in and around London with the establishment of tramlines and omnibus routes. After World War I, a great expansion in railway lines occurred, making access to London easier for those who lived in the suburban and rural regions around the city.

Struggles over Women's Rights

The 1920s introduced major social changes in Britain, including equal rights for women□but only after a long period of struggle.

Emmeline Pankhurst led the fight for women's voting rights in Britain, establishing the Women's Franchise League in 1889 and assisting with the organization in 1903 of the National Women's Social and Political Union. Their bold program, demanding full voting rights for women, led them to stage parades and to engage in such violent forms of protest as window breaking. The police subjected Pankhurst and her followers to rough treatment, and occasionally they found themselves in jail for their activities.

Women in Britain were first granted the right to vote in 1918 but this included only women who were at least 30 years old and householders (meaning "wives"). Women finally received equal voting privileges to men in 1928, the year of Pankhurst's death.

Far more women worked in the 1920s and 1930s than had before World War I, and the average age of marriage rose sharply. Jobs opened up for women in shops and the new light industrial factories. It even became not uncommon to see women smoking in public. While women's colleges had been grudgingly allowed at Oxford and Cambridge since the 1870s, women could not take degrees at Oxford until 1921 and at Cambridge until 1948.

Critical Overview

Critics have responded to *The Death of the Heart* primarily in two ways: by discussing the implications of the author's childhood experiences *vis-àvis* the motherless outsider in the novel; and by examining the conflict between innocence and experience threaded throughout the book.

Bowen grew up in a privileged Anglo-Irish family in Ireland, not really English but isolated by her English ties from the country in which she lived. According to Martha Henn in *Feminist Writers,* "she occupied a class position that put her at odds with most of her fellow Irish." As Richard Tillinghast notes in "The House, the Hotel, & the Child," "the Anglo-Irish were always, from the sixteenth century on, to some degree rootless and insecure in the country they governed." This tension is due to the fact that the Protestant ruling class owned land taken by force from the Irish Catholic population by their ancestors. This sense of uneasiness extends to Bowen's characters, according to Tillinghast. "The attenuation and malaise one feels among Bowen's characters springs, historically, from the growing isolation of the Anglo- Irish." Bowen's relatives are strangers in a country where the Irish, in the early part of the twentieth century, are increasingly focused on struggles for Irish national independence from Britain.

This link between Bowen's own sense of cultural rootlessness and her most prominent character, the outsider, is also echoed by Sean O'Faolain in *The Vanishing Hero,* where he writes, "Elizabeth Bowen is detached by birth from that society she describes. She is an Irishwoman, at least one sea apart from English traditions." Bowen depicts Portia as a young woman without a country, traveling throughout Europe as a vagabond, expelled from England by no fault of her own. While she does have ties to England, as did Bowen, Portia arrives in London a foreigner with the ability and necessity to watch carefully the behavior of those around her. Tillinghast notes, "This outsider's point of view□cold-eyed, unillusioned□places Portia beyond the cozy circle of civilized mutual accommodation practiced by Anna and Thomas, and thus makes their visitor a dangerous presence."

In addition, Bowen's outsider status extended beyond merely the political; she lost her father to mental illness when she was about six years old and her mother to cancer when she was thirteen. The job of raising her fell to a battery of relatives, and home was a series of villas on the English coast. According to Henn, "Bowen believed that fiction is rooted in the experiences of the author's life, but at the same time she rejected the overtly autobiographical or confessional impulse."

However, critics cannot help but notice that a major theme in much of her writing, including *The Death of the Heart,* is of the motherless girl, lacking any guiding adult hands. Edwin J. Kenney, Jr., notes in *Elizabeth Bowen,* that she showed an interest in her own history "as a motherless only child" by writing three nonfiction accounts of her experiences, as well as including in her novels "the dislocated child who is urgently seeking an identity as a means of survival."

Critics have also noted Bowen's efforts to understand the relationship between innocence and experience. Kenney argues that her interest in the role of innocence is clearly seen by the fact that one of her recurring themes is "man's primary need for an illusion" and the eventual "loss of innocence, the acquisition of knowledge through loss, and the entrance into selfhood."

Portia's story in *The Death of the Heart* is one of trying to understand who and what she is, taking on and shedding illusions□such as the illusion of love with Eddie□and moving from one stage of her life to another. According to Robert Rubens in *The Contemporary Review:*

> *The Death of the Heart* is not only a crushing portrayal of the destruction of innocence, but a disillusioned warning that in the modern world innocence must be lost, that we all must compromise.

In 1998, the editorial board of the Modern Library cited *The Death of the Heart* among the one hundred best English language books of the twentieth century.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Sanderson holds a master of fine arts degree in fiction writing and is an independent writer. In this essay, she examines how Bowen uses indoor settings in a particular way to shed light on Portia's frame of mind.

Critics have noticed Elizabeth Bowen's interest in placing her characters in natural and garden-like settings in *The Death of the Heart,* especially to highlight their innocence and naiveté. Paul A. Parrish, in "The Loss of Eden: Four Novels of Elizabeth Bowen," argues that Bowen has Eddie and Portia meet at the seaside and later in the woods because "the country has an obvious unreality because it's not the kind of life they know." Portia finds it easier to maintain her fantasies about the possibilities of Eddie's love in a place that is so different from London and her half-brother's imposing mansion. Parrish adds, in fact, "the scenes which unite the elements of nature, love, and idealism are themselves reminiscent of the Edenic myth and the Garden." Edwin J. Kenney, Jr., in *Elizabeth Bowen,* reiterates the connection between nature and Bowen's concern with loss of innocence as a theme, noting that her concern "often finds its expression in allusions to the story of the early life of man, the story of the fall from the garden of Eden."

But certainly of equal interest are the indoor settings in which Bowen places her characters. In *The Death of the Heart,* there are four primary indoor settings in which Bowen places Portia: her half-brother's house on Windsor Terrace in London; Mrs. Heccomb's seaside villa, Waikiki; movie theaters; and hotels. Bowen allows Portia's character to react differently to each of these settings, further illuminating the young girl's motivations and feelings.

Portia, as the love child of Mr. Quayne and his mistress, Irene (who later became the second Mrs. Quayne), was reared in a series of hotels and other temporary shelters. The only memories of love and familial warmth Portia has are of herself and Irene in these hotels, sharing cups of tea and eating chocolates, pulling an eiderdown comforter over themselves to stay warm, and making up entertaining stories about the other guests while they dine. But the London society she lands in, after the deaths of her parents, disdains hotels and refers to them only in pejorative tones. Anna intimates that Portia will have to be taught how to have dinner in polite company, and when Miss Paullie catches Portia reading Eddie's letter during class, she not only scolds her for the letter but also for keeping her handbag next to her desk instead of leaving it in the cloakroom. "To carry your bag about with you indoors is a hotel habit, you know," she chides.

It should come as no surprise that, after Portia is betrayed by Anna reading her diary, wounded by Eddie's announcement that he no longer loves her, and struck by her realization that most of the adults in her life have been viciously criticizing her, she finds herself at a hotel. Even though she is frightened and upset, looking like "a wild creature just old enough to know that it must dread humans," according to Major Brutt when he sees her in his hotel's lobby, she somehow finds her way to a hotel. With her heart

broken and her innocence shed, Portia speaks openly, unlike she has ever spoken before in London, about Anna and Eddie and all the others who have disappointed her. She has been completely disabused of her fantasies about love so much so that she offers to marry Major Brutt, a man who is a good thirty years older, promising that she would make him a good home. A hotel is where Portia comes to rest for a moment, to feel safe, before she is forced to go back out into the world, back to Anna and Thomas' house.

Movie houses seem to hold a special dread for Portia, almost as if they represent the crassness of the world in conflict with her innocence and inexperience. The first time she goes to a movie theater, she is with Anna and Thomas, and "the screen threw its tricky light on her relaxed profile; she sat almost appalled." This moment, for Portia, with its uncomfortableness, foreshadows an even more horrid evening when she goes to the movies at Sealeon- Sea with Eddie and Daphne and her other friends. There, illuminated for her in the darkness of the theater by a friend's cigarette lighter, is Eddie's mockery of her love for him he and Daphne are holding hands. Eddie later tries to pass it off as just a silly thing he did, but this is the first break in Portia's fantasy about their love. Even as they occur in places that portray fantasy worlds, these experiences in movie houses underscore just how unprepared Portia is for the "real" world.

Thomas and Anna's relationship is tense, and that tension is everywhere in their house on Windsor Terrace. The house is filled with a heavy silence, unlike the chatter and sounds of living Portia is accustomed to hearing through the walls of hotels. This is a home where she feels very much not at home, and Bowen's descriptions of the place and how Portia behaves in it make that perfectly clear. In her diary, Portia writes, "When Thomas comes in he looks as though he was smelling something he thought he might not be let eat. This house makes a smell of feeling." And when the housemaid Matchett, the only person in the house who seems to care for her at all, asks her to share some tea, Portia later remembers that Matchett said she looked like a ghost. Portia writes in her diary, "But really it is this house that is like that."

Further displaying just how uncomfortable she feels at Windsor Terrace, and how much an outsider she thinks she is, Portia behaves in the manner of a skittish cat or of someone who is about to be found out. When Anna and St. Quentin come into the house for tea, Portia offers to take their coats and hats. A few minutes later, to compound this sense of submissiveness, Bowen has Portia slink out of the room:

> Then, holding herself so erect that she quivered, taking long, soft steps on the balls of her feet, and at the same time with an orphaned unostentation, she started making towards the door. She moved crabwise, as though the others were royalty, never quite turning her back on them.

When she visits her brother in his library, she displays no sense of relief being with him, even though he is a blood relative. She offers to refill his cigarette case, as if she were

his valet, and folds herself up in a chair, as if attempting to take up the smallest possible piece of real estate inside the house.

But when Portia goes to stay with Mrs. Heccomb and her adult children at Seale-on-Sea, just after leaving Anna and Thomas's house in London, her entire demeanor changes, reflecting the relaxed, casual air that pervades the house named Waikiki. Over the weeks she spends in the Heccombs' lightfilled home by the sea, she comes out of her shell and discovers new aspects of herself. The first evening Portia is at Waikiki, she is still performing her "crabwise" walk. "Portia, as unostentatiously as possible, edged round the room to stand beside Mrs. Heccomb." And, while she does permit herself to do a little exploring around the house the next morning, she is still cautious. "Before stepping over the wall. . . Portia glanced back at the Waikiki windows. But no one watched her; no one seemed to object."

However, by the time the first week is out, she has helped roll back the carpeting at Waikiki for a party and has danced, for the first time, with a boy. Portia realizes then that "something edited life in the Quayne's house," and that "the uneditedness of life here at Waikiki made for behaviour that was. . . frank." The house is "the fount of spontaneous living." She is beginning to question not only how the new people she is meeting live, but how all of the other people she knows live, including Thomas, Anna, and Eddie.

But all of this does not mean that Portia has shed her naiveté at Waikiki. Indeed, one of her Seale-on-Sea friends, Cecil, comments to her that he can tell she is "so young." And when a family friend of the Heccombs' comes by for a visit, he asks Portia, "How's the child of the house?" Portia is stunned, as well, while in Seale-on-Sea, by Eddie's behavior with Daphne at the movie house, and by Daphne's irritation with her afterwards, when Portia tries to find out what is going on. Even though the atmosphere at Waikiki to Portia is "life at its highest voltage," she still has yet to encounter the complete destruction of her innocence, which will come later, at the hands of Eddie and Anna and St. Quentin.

Source: Susan Sanderson, Critical Essay on *The Death of the Heart,* in *Novels for Students,* The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay excerpt, Austin provides an overview of The Death of the Heart, *and praises Bowen for skillfully blending the maturation of Portia with the revitalization of the Quaynes' marriage.*

No Bowen novel has a more comically dramatic opening situation than *The Death of the Heart.* Into the adjusted, unemotional, childless, eight-year marriage of Anna and Thomas Quayne drops Portia, age fifteen, Thomas's half-sister. The Quaynes open the door of their expensive, overly ordered Regent's Park home with little enthusiasm to this newly orphaned child who was conceived in adultery. They are somewhat sustained by the possibility she may be shifted to other relatives after they have had her a year as the elder Mr. Quayne has beseeched them to do. The narrative culminates in a series of shocks: Portia is galvanized into action which, in turn, rebounds upon the Quaynes. By the end of the novel, considerable readjustment at 2 Windsor Terrace seems to be in the offing, and Portia's visit is quite likely a permanent one.

Though much of this "double-stranded" book records Portia's growth and her necessary loss of innocence, the more basic issue is the revitalization, perhaps simply the vitalization, of the moribund marriage. Much of this novel's brilliance results from the skillful blending of these two concerns and their subsidiary matters. This is Miss Bowen's most successful novel, artistically and commercially; and, along with *The Heat of the Day,* it constitutes the peak of her achievement.

The Quaynes have been living more of an arrangement than a marriage, for each came to it as an emotional cripple. Anna wed on the rebound from the one great love of her life, Robert Pidgeon. Though he dropped her, she has never come to terms with this romantic interlude; she harbors Pidgeon in the recesses of her mind in the same way that she has his letters secreted in a secret drawer of her desk. From her viewpoint, Thomas offered a quiet, undemanding, comfortable marriage, largely because of his passionless nature. Her hopes of establishing a normal role as a mother have long since vanished with her failure to terminate her pregnancies: her disappointment and her consequent adjustment to childlessness contribute to her stiffness toward Portia. She has settled down to find satisfaction in safe male admirers who can entertain and flatter her but who require no physical reward. Three such bachelors are on the scene during the course of the novel: St. Quentin Martin, an urbane novelist; Eddie, a bright young man employed at Thomas's advertising agency; and latterly, Major Brutt, an older gentleman, a friend of Pidgeon, and recently returned to England and out of touch. As with several other characters in the novel, Anna's appearance belies her inner being; for beneath her brittle sophistication lies an insecure woman who has never risked much for fear of being something less than the best. She is a dabbler.

Thomas originally wed Anna because she was pleasant, self-possessed, and seemingly unconcerned with emotion: in short, she was an ideal marital companion for a man who found the opposite sex a source of anxiety and who abhorred thoughts of intimacy. Marriage for both partners, then, came as a source of relief and as an opportunity to live

a quiet life. However, following the ceremony, Thomas experienced the unanticipated; he fell passionately in love with Anna; but assuming her allegiance to their tacit agreement of quietude, he suffers his pent-up feelings privately. In Bowen terms, both are failing to exercise their full emotional potential and will not likely do so unless their current roles are altered. Clearly, this function is to be played by Portia.

The story opens upon Anna and St. Quentin strolling in a winter landscape. She tells him she has been reading Portia's diary which she came across accidentally, for Portia's record of her days at 2 Windsor Terrace has quite unsettled Anna. It is, she says, "completely distorted and distorting. As I read I thought either this girl or I are mad." Portia has seemingly missed nothing, though "There's certainly not a thing she does not misconstruct." Standing on a bridge in Regent's Park, "their figures sexless and stiff," Anna and her companion watch swans "in slow indignation" swim down cracks in the frozen surface of the lake." Fittingly, Portia becomes associated with bird imagery; and her initial condition is not unlike that of the swans. Because Portia does not learn of Anna's acquaintance with her diary until Part III of the novel, repercussions do not come until then. Most of Part I is devoted to characterizing life at Windsor Terrace and to explaining Portia's background.

When Portia's father, the senior Thomas Quayne, was fifty-seven, he had "lost his head completely" and had begun an affair with a woman named Irene, twenty-nine. As Anna explains his situation to St. Quentin: "He and [Mrs. Quayne] had married so young□though Thomas, for some reason, was not born for quite a number of years□that he had almost no time to be silly in. Also, I think, she must have hypnotised him into being a good deal steadier than he felt. At the same time she was a woman who thought all men are great boys at heart, and she took every care to keep him one."

Mr. Quayne is another instance of retarded adult innocence and of the need, at whatever the risk, for youthful excess. When Irene becomes pregnant, Mr. Quayne tells his wife; and "Mrs. Quayne [is] quite as splendid as ever. . ." She becomes "all heroic reserve," calms her husband, packs him off to Irene, starts divorce proceedings, and settles down to enjoy her house and garden in contented peace. Like hopeless babies, Mr. Quayne and his bride retire to the south of France and begin a wandering existence in cheap hotels. He suffers because the growing Portia has no proper life; and during a trip to London, he secretly inspects Windsor Terrace and envisions his daughter sharing the normal family life it suggests to him. After he dies, Portia and her mother continue the transient existence; but, when Irene suddenly dies after an operation, Portia becomes her father's legacy to Regent's Park.

An inside view of the Quayne affair is provided by an older servant, Matchett, who had worked for Thomas's mother before coming to Anna along with her mother-in-law's good furniture when she had died. Matchett, stolid and humorless, but Portia's only source of affection, makes a distinction between the right action and the good one. In her view, Mrs. Thomas Quayne "meant to do right." She explains to Portia, "Sacrificers . . . are not the ones to pity. The ones to pity are those that they sacrifice." She has been a great admirer of Portia's father who, in her estimation, was unlike his wife in being honest and natural. She views Mrs. Quayne as a role player who was prepared to

maintain her concept of herself at whatever cost to anyone else. In the light of Matchett's views, we see that Thomas and Anna are also doing the "right" rather than the good thing by Portia.

This background detail helps to account for Anna's report that she and Portia "are on such curious terms□when I ever do take a line, she never knows what it is." Quite evidently, feelings must come to replace manners. That Portia, however, has two left feet because of her inexperience is humorously brought out in scenes at her private school for girls where she is decidedly unsuccessful in coping with the established decorum: "she had not learnt that one must learn. . ." Small wonder she feels all of London threatening her:

> She had watched life, since she came to London, with a sort of despair□motivated and busy always, always progressing: even people pausing on bridges seemed to pause with a purpose; no bird seemed to pursue a quite aimless flight. The spring of the works seemed unfounded only by her. . . . She could not believe there was not a plan of the whole set-up in every head but her own . . . nothing was not weighed down by significance. In her home life (her new home life) with its puzzles, she saw dissimulation always on guard; she asked herself humbly for what reason people said what they did not mean, and did not say what they meant. She felt most certain to find the clue when she felt the frenzy behind the clever remark.

Having a modest relationship with Anna and Thomas, and a closer but milder one with Matchett, Portia grabs rather eagerly at the interest shown in her by the irresponsible Eddie. From the viewpoint of the contemporary British novel, Eddie is an interesting creation because he so evidently anticipates Kingsley Amis's Lucky Jim; for, like him, Eddie comes from a modest background and is seeking to locate himself in the Establishment, in which he does not believe. A very conscious role player, Eddie prefigures Lucky Jim in his habits of face making and mimicry.

The relationship between Portia and Eddie is undemandingly comfortable from his viewpoint. He takes joy in her childlike innocence, and he feels she is the one person with whom he need not assume an interminable pose. Eddie, as it develops, misjudges in assuming that Portia will place no demands upon him. Really a very self-centered being, he is concerned with his welfare and personal freedom; but his surface superciliousness really cloaks despair. An "experienced innocent," Eddie bears a resemblance to Emmeline of *To the North* in his unwillingness to adjust to the nonedenic facts of life, or at least in his unwillingness to adjust without exacting his own price from the world. He seeks to punish and to travesty love because it cannot be what he longs for it to be; he sees only himself as reality since he is the only person he is prepared to trust. Portia, from his viewpoint, is really a new lease on the impossible life; with her, he seeks to sustain the innocence of adolescent love, the state which holds out to him the

possibility of beautiful fulfillment so long as it is never tested. Portia, of course, has no such insight as his; but she discovers soon enough Eddie's unwillingness to allow their affair to progress, and she is left pondering his distress over her unwillingness to sustain their status quo and her desire to grow up.

Part II, "The Flesh," shifts to a contrasting setting, one which offers Portia an alternate kind of life with its own range of new characters and experiences. Anna, feeling the need of a vacation, whisks Thomas to Capri; Portia is sent to the seaside at Seale to live with Anna's one-time governess, the widowed Mrs. Heccomb and her two working step-children, Dickie and Daphne. Home is called Wakiki (which is intended to give this sequence overtones of undemanding, irresponsible Pacific Island life), and the household is the antithesis of the highly mannered Windsor Terrace. Wakiki is sustained by blasting radios and by conversation conducted by shouting above them; all is "pushing and frank," though neurotically proper. Portia discovers "the upright rudeness of the primitive state□than which nothing is more rigid." Life at Windsor Terrace is "edited," but that at Wakiki is the reverse. The contrast recalls that between the stately home in *The Last September* and the huts of the army families.

More at home at Wakiki but still reticent, Portia falls in with the crowd presided over by Daphne and Dickie. Portia soon becomes anxious to invite Eddie for a weekend; and Mrs. Heccomb, assured that Eddie is well known to Anna, assumes his visit will be quite proper. Portia awaits his coming anxiously, for she has decided on the reality of Seale and wishes him to confirm it for her. Eddie has hardly arrived, however, before he declares it "unreal"; for in his self-conscious state he is well aware Wakiki is the unexamined life. The only member of the Seale crown who is at all introspective is barely tolerated□is considered ineffectual and labeled "a cissie."

Unknowingly betrayed in London by Anna, Portia is to know betrayal in Seale through Eddie. Sitting between Portia and Daphne at a Saturday night movie, Eddie ends up, as Portia discovers, holding Daphne's hand. Since Eddie has been introduced into the crowd as Portia's friend, she finds this experience painful. When she is alone with Eddie the next day, she challenges his conduct. The episode, he explains, is innocent enough in his view and was intended to lead to nothing further; but this view is not easily conveyed to Portia. In fairness to Eddie, it must be said that he has warned Portia not to get serious with him and to make demands: "Never *be* potty about me: I can't do anything for you." Furthermore, Eddie anticipates what St. Quentin later elaborates for Portia when he says, "Don't you know how dreadful the things you say are?"

In her diary Portia views Seale to London's disadvantage: "In London I do not know what anybody is doing, there are no things I can watch people do. Though things have hurt me since I was left behind here, I would rather stay with the things here than go back to where I do not know what will happen." Even Portia feels the great temptation of comfort, of seeking out an effortless stasis. However, she must return to London to be greeted by Matchett, who observes, "I can't see that this change has done you harm. Nor the shake-up either; you were getting too quiet."

When Thomas and Anna return, it is evident they have not changed. Having been greeted warmly by Portia in the front hall, Anna cannot wait to go up to her bath; and Thomas, claiming a headache, quickly vanishes into his study. Later, Thomas observes to Anna, "Portia gave us a welcome"; and she replies, "It was we who were not adequate." But Anna remains prepared with her justifications: "let's face it□whoever is adequate? We all create situations each other can't live up to, then break our hearts at them because they don't." This statement proves a telling one in the light of ensuing action. Though aware of their inadequacy in dealing with Portia, the Quaynes seem prepared to let matters drift. In the Bowen world, they are riding for an upset.

Critics generally agree that the "devil" of the final section is St. Quentin since he imparts to Portia the "forbidden" knowledge that Anna has been reading her diary. However, the devil may more properly be viewed as a situation rather than a person; for a comment Major Brutt makes to Anna provides the clue: "that's the devil, you know, about not having a fixed address." This statement assesses the root of the trouble, for what Portia ultimately feels is a lack of any sense of permanency. Her efforts at the close are directed toward finding a sanctuary; and, in a rather roundabout manner, she probably succeeds.

After learning from St. Quentin of Anna's having read the diary, Portia telephones Eddie to tell him, and he in turn calls Anna; and, though his position with both Thomas and Anna is insecure, he conveys his displeasure. When five days later, Portia arrives home to find Anna and Eddie tête-à-tête over tea, she is convinced they have been talking and laughing together about her. Two days later, when Portia walks out on Windsor Terrace, the time lapse, observes the narrator, is "long enough for the sense of two allied betrayals to push up a full growth, like a double tree. . ." Portia leaves her home after having arranged to meet Eddie; and, unbeknownst to him, she is intent on living with him. After Eddie has been more or less forced into taking her to his apartment and after he has reiterated his earlier claim that she does not know the ropes and has "a completely lunatic set of values" and that he simply cannot risk harboring her, she departs prepared to play her final card. She goes to Major Brutt, tells him she has "nowhere to be," and informs the poor dazed man that she wishes to marry him. She rather cruelly seeks to enlist him as an ally by telling him that Anna also laughs at him. When he insists that he must call Windsor Terrace, Portia tells him that Thomas and Anna will not know what to do; and she instructs him to say that her return will depend on their doing "the right thing."

Meanwhile, Portia's absence has been noted by the Quaynes and St. Quentin, their dinner guest. The air is already tense, and Anna and Thomas have already begun unburdening themselves to each other when the Major's call comes. Thomas now learns about the diary, and the scene which this disclosure threatens is just barely avoided as they turn their attention to the question of "the right thing." They quickly enough reject any thoughts of having Portia come across town alone in a taxi or of her being escorted home by Major Brutt. The importance of the issue they do not doubt; Anna points out: "It's not simply a question of getting her home this evening; it's a question of all three going on living here. . . yes, this is a situation. She's created it."

When St. Quentin initiates an important train of thought by suggesting that Anna and Thomas "are both unnaturally conscious of [Portia]. . .", Anna seeks to put herself in Portia's place and to express what her feelings must be: "Frantic, frantic desire to be handled with feeling, and, at the same time, to be let alone. Wish to be asked how I felt, great wish to be taken for granted." The right act, really the good act, the natural thing, they decide is "something quite obvious. Something with no fuss." When Portia is normally brought home, Matchett brings her; so they dispatch Matchett and also decide against calling Major Brutt. Thomas says, "This is a *coup* or nothing."

Miss Bowen implies in her closing passage that life at Windsor Terrace will be better, but she once more avoids suggesting any miraculous change. Anna has already shown a humanitarian side, one that Portia is unaware of, in her efforts to find employment for Major Brutt, whose worth she recognizes. And she has also and most importantly come to terms with her harbored past feelings for Pidgeon. She admits to herself, as she never previously has, and tells Major Brutt as much, that Pidgeon did not really care for her, that their affair came to nothing because neither trusted the other. And she and Thomas have talked, as Thomas earlier complained they never did. Having "saved" Portia by pulling her back from a speeding car on one of their recent strolls in the park, he now appears committed to saving her in another sense. Emphasized at the very close, and clearly intended to contrast with the frigid landscape of the opening, is a description of the spring evening with its "intimation of summer coming. . ." And the piano music issuing from an open window as the curtain falls hints at the new harmony seemingly to be realized at Windsor Terrace.

Source: Allan E. Austin, "The Disruptive Children," in *Elizabeth Bowen,* Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1971, pp. 47-66.

Adaptations

In 1985, Granada Television (United Kingdom) produced a television movie version of *The Death of the Heart,* starring JoJo Cole as Portia, Wendy Hiller as Matchett, Patricia Hodge as Anna, and Miranda Richardson as Daphne.

Topics for Further Study

In *The Death of the Heart,* Anna has a job doing interior design before she is married to Thomas. Research the status of British women in the 1930s and whether it was typical for a young woman from a wealthy background to have a career. What kinds of work did women do in 1930s England? How did this compare to the United States in the 1930s?

In the novel, Portia comes to London with little or no formal education. Anna and Thomas put her in a school that appears to be for wealthy girls who have not done well at school. Investigate how women and girls were educated in England in the 1930s. Were there publicly supported schools for girls or only private and church-supported institutions? What subjects did the schools teach? How many girls continued their education at universities and colleges?

Choose one chapter from *The Death of the Heart* that you find particularly interesting; adapt this chapter as a scene in a play. Act out the scene with a group of students. What insight can be gained about the characters and their dynamics from this exercise? In what ways are the events of this chapter significant to the novel as a whole?

In *The Death of the Heart,* Portia runs away because she is upset by how Anna, Eddie, and others have treated her. Choose another literary work that features a teenage runaway and compare and contrast the works. Possible choices include *The Catcher in the Rye,* by J. D. Salinger; *Rite of Passage,* by Richard Wright; and *A Girl Named Disaster,* by Nancy Farmer. Present your findings in a Venn diagram or an essay.

Compare and Contrast

1930s: Women in England, like Daphne and her friends, are enjoying the first decade of equal voting rights with men, granted to them in 1928.

Today: With the 1997 general election, 120 women are now Members of Parliament, double the number elected in the previous general election in 1992. There are currently 12 women in the Prime Minister's Cabinet and 16 women in ministerial positions.

1930s: Women are just beginning to see the possibilities of working outside the home in England. During World War I, more than a million women took over jobs left vacant by men who were fighting, but the government was under pressure by the unions to see that these jobs reverted to men when the war was over. The 1920s and 1930s, however, saw the increased acceptance of women working in shops, offices, factories, and light industry. By the 1930s, it is common to see young working women, such as Daphne, out on the town for an evening of dining and movies.

Today: Women make up 45 percent of the workforce in the United Kingdom, and Britain employs more women than any other European country. Not only are women in positions throughout government, education, medicine, business, and other professions, but they account for about 35 percent of new business ventures.

1930s: Upper-class women such as Anna regularly have "low tea" with friends in the afternoon each day, a small meal to tide one over until the larger evening meal. In addition to drinking tea, participants eat thin crustless sandwiches, shrimp or fish patés, toasted breads with jams, and pastries such as scones and crumpets. Commercial tea rooms are also increasingly popular, especially among young women such as Portia, who meets with Eddie early in their relationship at Madame Tussaud's for afternoon tea.

Today: Teatime still is observed in England and Commonwealth countries, and the popularity of tea rooms in the United States has blossomed although many label the small afternoon meal incorrectly as "high tea," which is actually a heavier, later meal, meant to pose as dinner. While tea and scones are still served at these tea rooms, some are expanding their menus to include champagne and strawberries, considered an American touch to the meal.

1930s: Only well-to-do families can afford the time and money spent on vacations abroad, such Anna and Thomas Quayne's trip to Capri.

Today: Six in ten British residents take at least one long holiday a year, either in Britain or abroad, and British spending on international vacation travel is increasing.

What Do I Read Next?

Coming Home (1995), by Rosamunde Pilcher, tells the story of fourteen-year-old Judith Dunbar, who stays in England at Saint Ursula's boarding school when her mother and younger sister leave to join her father in Singapore. She and a friend grow up under the looming threat of World War II, which will eventually change their lives and the lives of those they love most.

Muriel Spark's novel *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), tells the World War II story of a boarding house founded for "the Pecuniary Convenience and Social Protection of Ladies of Slender Means below the Age of Thirty Years." The boarding house's residents go to their jobs, dream of marriage, gossip, and maintain a facade that life and the world are still normal despite the war.

Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) tells the story of Stephen Mary Gordon. Given a male name by her father, who had desperately wanted a son, young Stephen learns to hunt and shoot and ride horses. She develops an intimate but disastrous relationship with another woman that challenges an English society that values and reinforces conformity and acceptability. Overwhelmed by grief and loneliness, she seeks escape in her work as a writer and as a World War I ambulance driver.

The Last September (1929), by Elizabeth Bowen, set in 1920, is the story of Lois Farquar, who lives with her uncle and aunt, members of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy in County Cork, in a "big house" modeled on Bowen's own family estate in Ireland. The demise of British rule in Ireland is just around the corner, and the family attempts to deal with the end of an era.

Elizabeth Bowen's *Bowen's Court* (1942) is a nonfiction history of the ancestral house where she spent her summers as a child, and which she inherited after her father died.

Further Study

Bloom, Harold, ed., *Elizabeth Bowen,* Chelsea House Publishers, 1992.

This is a collection of critical essays on the writings of Elizabeth Bowen, edited by the esteemed critic and academician Harold Bloom.

Bowen, Elizabeth, Graham Greene, and V. S. Pritchett, *Why Do I Write?: An Exchange of Views between Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, and V. S. Pritchett,* M. S. G. Haskell House, 1975.

This volume includes letters between these three literary giants on the subject of how writers live and what they think about as they go about their work.

Halperin, John, *Eminent Georgians: The Lives of King George V, Elizabeth Bowen, St. John Philby, and Nancy Astor,* St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998.

John Halperin traces the impact these leading figures had in England between the two great wars, and examines the world of intrigue below the glittering surface of British society in the 1920s and 1930s.

Walshe, Eibhear, ed., *Elizabeth Bowen Remembered: The Farahy Addresses,* Four Courts Press, 1998.

Drawn from the annual lectures at the church in Farahy, in North Cork, where Bowen is buried, these essays provide insight into the life, fiction, and beliefs of the Anglo-Irish writer Elizabeth Bowen.

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Tillinghast, Richard, "Elizabeth Bowen: The House, the Hotel & the Child," in *New Criterion,* Vol. 13, No. 4, December 1994, pp. 24-33.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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