Dorothy Parker: What Fresh Hell Is This? Study Guide

Dorothy Parker: What Fresh Hell Is This? by Marion Meade

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

Dorothy Parker, What Fresh Hell is This, A Biography by Marion Meade is a book written to chronicle the life and times of American writer Dorothy Parker. With a career that spanned over 5 decades, Parker wrote everything from soft verse to major motion picture movie scripts to short story fiction and was hailed as a legend within her own time.

Born into affluence, Parker grew up in New Jersey and New York and began working at a young age for magazines such as Vogue and Vanity Fair. She quickly established herself as a quick wit and garnered a reputation for herself as a sharp-tongued, wisecracking, and merciless observer and critic. She harnessed her talents and worked for much of her career as a theatre critic, but was most well-known for her poetry and fiction, much of which was cleverly disguised autobiography.

Rebellious by nature from a young age, Parker balked against the idea of her destiny being written for her. She was a woman ahead of her time who insisted upon grasping the pen for herself and carving out her own path. As such, she succeeded in creating her own niche in American Literature. She was called everything from the "brightest girl in America" to "the greatest female satirist of her age." Much of her material is feminist in nature, far before the notion of feminism or women's liberation was popular.

Parker was one of the founders of the legendary Algonquin Round Table, a gathering of the noteworthy literary personalities of the time. Most of the Round Tablers went on to great notoriety and were the elite crowd of writers, actors, artists and theatre critics of their time. Dorothy's crowd included names like F. Scott Fitzgerald, Robert Benchley, Earnest Hemingway, Aleck Woolcott, and Lillian Hellman. Dorothy spent most of the 1920's carousing with these characters, and in many cases, their antics were as legendary as their art.

Like many of the Round Table members, Dorothy developed a life-long love affair with alcohol and was a substance abuser for most of her life. She dealt with depression and attempted suicide on several occasions. Her first marriage to Eddie Parker was practically a study in co-dependency, but her second marriage to actor Alan Campbell was far healthier. Dorothy and Alan made their way from the East Coast to the West Coast and began a career as a husband and wife writing team for Hollywood. Although they married and divorced twice, Alan and Dorothy lived and worked together for the rest of their lives.

During their time in Hollywood, Dorothy became involved with many political causes and was a fierce advocate against fascism. Unwittingly, Dorothy fell into ties with the Communist Party just before the age of McCarthyism, and was blacklisted from Hollywood for a time. She was eventually absolved of all incrimination, and was through the whole of her life an intense defender against all forms of injustice.

Dorothy outlived Alan by 5 years, and continued to work up until the end of her life. When she died, she willed her estate to Martin Luther King, Jr. and the NAACP, most likely because she felt the civil rights movement was the best fight against injustice of the age. Dorothy received countless awards through her life, and even fifty years after her death, the numbers of her fan base continue to increase. Her work perhaps continues to sell in a contemporary market because her writings are timeless and her messages universal.

Chapter 1, The Events Leading up to the Tragedy 1893-1903

Chapter 1, The Events Leading up to the Tragedy 1893-1903 Summary and Analysis

Dorothy Rothschild is born into upper-class Jewish affluence to Henry and Eliza Rothschild on August 22, 1893. The first chapter begins with the chronicles of her childhood in New Jersey and New York, with her siblings, Harold, Bertram and Helen, aged 12, 9 and 6, respectively, at the time of her birth.

Dorothy's paternal grandparents, Samson and Mary Rothschild, come from Prussia, immigrating after the 1848 revolution. They settle in small town Selma, Alabama where they sell upscale and fancy wares to the townsfolk and produce a troupe of offspring. They are Henry, Jacob, Simon, Samuel, Hannah, and Martin. Dorothy would, in her life and times, refer to these relations as the "folk of mud and flame" (pg. 5) and they are greatly credited towards her disposition for speedy repartee later in her life. Samson and Mary uproot their family in 1860 and moved to New York City.

Henry "Jacob" Rothschild, Samson's eldest son, is 18 in 1868 when he meets Eliza Annie Marston, who is 19 at the time. Eliza comes from a family of proud English gunsmiths, who produce firearms for the Civil War. Her family is not interested in seeing her marry a German Jew, but Eliza is an independent woman of iron will and defiantly marries Henry in the summer of 1880. She is 42 years old when Dorothy is born and dies suddenly in 1898 when Dorothy is just 5 years old. Her mother's death is an event that greatly influences Dorothy throughout her life and career, shaping the use of matriarchs in her writing.

On January 3, 1900, Henry remarries. His bride is forty-eight-year-old Eleanor Frances Lewis and the same age as her groom. All of the Rothschild children dislike Eleanor but none more than Dorothy. Dorothy and her sister Helen begin attending the private parochial institution Blessed Sacrament Academy during this period. Helen fits in easily as is her way. Dorothy does not. She has very few friends and is quickly labeled a troublemaker and a rebel. These are traits that she retains and fosters through her adult life.

On the surface, Dorothy has everything a young girl at the turn of the century could wish for, but she is dissatisfied with her life. As such, she makes it her personal mission to make her parents' lives as difficult as possible, especially the life of her stepmother. In April of 1903, Eleanor dies suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage.

Dorothy had somehow felt responsible for her mother's death, and now she feels as though she has two murders on her conscience. These early traumas in her young life are to her, permission to feel sorry for herself as well as hate herself at the same time.

She carries with her the rest of her life the conviction that she deserves punishment, which is "the source of negativity with which she grappled so unhappily-and so happily -thereafter." She also decides that the world is a cruel place where "people keeled over and died without warning" (pg. 16.)

Dorothy proves later in her life to be much like her mother, Eliza, in that she has the same iron will, and spirit of defiance. She starts shaping her rebellious nature, even as young as a five-year-old, that carries with her through her adult life. She also, unfortunately, never is quite able to shake the feeling that she deserves to be unhappy, deserves to be punished, notions that lead to a theme later in her life and her tendency towards co-dependency.

In truth, Dorothy would not have ended up the person that she was without the tragedies that she endured, and as horrific as it was for a little girl to have to deal with the idea that she was at fault for the deaths of the matriarchs in her life, these events helped to shape her into the prolific writer she was. Dorothy took her pain and did an extraordinary thing with it. She used it, as good writers do and it was even said of her later in life that she produced work of real quality when she was at her most miserable, which was an affliction shared by many writers. Dorothy perhaps even found comfort in her pain. She felt that it set her apart somehow and gave her the right to have something to stew over.

It is also interesting to note that Dorothy calls her aunt and uncles the "folk of mud and flame." She is labeling herself by labeling them this way, saying that she is proud of her heritage and at the same time she also recognizes it for what it is. She feels a connection all her life to these people, because they essentially taught her what it meant to banter, to argue affectionately, to sharpen her tongue and spin clever remarks from it. She will take with her this arsenal as she steps forth into her legendary life.

Chapter 2, Palimpsest 1903-1914

Chapter 2, Palimpsest 1903-1914 Summary and Analysis

Henry is 52 years old when his second wife dies, and he is determined to give his children a happy life. The now motherless Rothschilds move into a typical New York City brownstone and start collecting dogs since they are the most "aggressively spoiled dogs in New York" (pg. 18.) Dorothy is an avid animal lover throughout the rest of her life.

Dorothy's brothers, Harry and Bert, are now approaching adulthood and work in wholesale garment houses. Bert is engaged to his soon-to-be wife. Helen, Dorothy's sister, is also growing up. She is a socialite and a beauty. Dorothy adores and admires her sister. Dorothy begins to realize that while Helen is the beauty of the family, she is plain and even sickly, and destined to remain so. She is, however, the artistic one in the family, and she takes delight in writing verse, a passion shared by her father.

Henry is a very affectionate, indulgent, doting father to Dorothy, as his verses that he call "pomes" would indicate. In contrast, Dorothy paints a much gloomier portrait of a deprived childhood and proven to be largely false. She is a self-conscious pre-adolescent who feels she needs to invent a more likable self.

Dorothy first reads William Thackeray's Vanity Fair at age 11, and its influence resonates through the rest of her life, choosing anti-heroine Becky Sharp as a lifelong role model. She thinks of Sharpe as an alter-ego. While Sharp is far from a shining example of how to behave in polite society, she proves to be a robust paradigm for Dorothy's burgeoning psyche. Antisocial and courageous, Becky helps Dorothy to see that it is possible to face adversity head-on. Becky's experiences seem like literary parallels to Dorothy's, and if Becky can triumph over them, perhaps Dorothy can, too. It takes some practice, but Dorothy is learning how to be mentally tough.

In June of 1905, Helen takes Dorothy to the Wyandotte Hotel in Bellport on the south shore of Long Island. Dorothy fears that in her absence, her dogs will miss her and in consequence, she begins a rigorous correspondence with her father. The letters are of an affectionate nature, full of playful verse and banter. Dorothy turns twelve years old during this summer.

In 1906, the following summer, she and Helen vacation at the Wyandotte again and Helen becomes engaged to George Droste. By 1907, Dorothy is 14, and the Rothschild children are all grown up and geographically scattered. Dorothy is eager for her turn at adventure. She is enrolled at Mrs. Dana's Boarding school in Morristown, New Jersey, where she studies Greek, French, Latin, history, English, and philosophy. In 1908 however, her education abruptly ends inexplicably. She never elaborates on the subject to anyone and there are no records indicating why she drops out and fails to complete

High School. All she has to say on the matter is "because of circumstances, I didn't finish high school. But by God, I read" (pg. 28.)

Dorothy and her father are living alone now, on West Eightieth Street, and this period of her life lasts from age 14 to age 20. Her father suffers from heart disease, and Dorothy finds herself in the position of caretaker for someone who is totally dependent on her.

In 1911, a succession of tragedies occur to the Rothschild family. Henry's brother Sam dies in a sanatorium, and then his sister Hannah dies of a cerebral hemorrhage at age 50. In 1912, Martin and his wife Lizzie are to return home from Europe on the maiden voyage of the Titanic. Lizzie survives, but Martin, a third sibling of Henry's, perishes. Henry is 60 years old, and the loss of his brothers and sister send him into a rapid decline. He dies at the end of 1913.

1914 is the dawn of a new era for Dorothy. She gets a job at a dance studio playing the piano, and her old life rapidly vanishes. She finds herself falling into writing, inventing herself as a writer as she goes along. She finds that she also has a keen interest in the theatre. She is having fun writing light-verse poetry, poking fun at the upper middle class. She sells her poem "Any Porch" for $12 to Vanity Fair Magazine, and subsequently asks Editor Frank "Crownie" Crowninshield for a job. He is instantly charmed and impressed by her, and promises to keep her in mind. A few months pass, and he makes good on his promise. When a job at Vanity Fair's sister magazine Vogue becomes available, he offers it to her for $10 a week and she promptly accepts.

Dorothy moves to a boarding house at 103rd St. and Broadway for $8 a week. This is a dream come true. She fancies herself to be the next Edith Sitwell.

A palimpsest is a parchment from which the original writing has been removed to make room for fresh text. This is a perfect metaphor for Dorothy at this time of her life; she decided that she held the power, and would simply re-write her own story and her own character to her liking. It is not surprising that Dorothy identified with Becky Sharp because Thackeray's feminist anti-hero is just the sort of girl that Dorothy would be, if she could be anyone in the world. She would not be one to boringly sit properly, display perfect table manners, and speak demurely. She would be a rebel who was not afraid to face anguish, torment and calamity with her teeth bared and her sword held high. She would never be a helpless victim who took life lying down, accepting her fate as it was dealt to her.

Soon after discovering who she wanted to be, however, Dorothy was forced at a young age to deal with an ailing father, and had to put her own life on hold for a while. Once her father had passed, it began a new era for Dorothy where she could finally begin to live the life she wanted to live. She could release her internal Becky Sharp finally and take the world by storm. This is a series of events inevitable to the human condition - the passing of the torch from parent to child. It is the classic theme of coming of age and rite of passage. Dorothy was ready now to put her childhood behind her and come into her own.

A less head-strong person would have probably just sent a note to Frank Crowninshield thanking him for purchasing her poem, but not Dorothy. She marched right into his office and made herself heard and seen. She told him what she wanted, and she was charming and impressive. A less forward individual would not have achieved what Dorothy did in her life, because they would have been too afraid to stand up and make it happen for themselves. Dorothy, in this way, is an endearing symbol of feminism because at this time in history, the early 1900s, it was simply not allowed for a girl of affluence or any girl really, to behave in such a forward and modern way. Dorothy proves herself time and again to be anything but typical.

Chapter 3, Vanity Fair 1915-1919

Chapter 3, Vanity Fair 1915-1919 Summary and Analysis

The unfortunate reality for Dorothy is that it is nearly impossible at this time for her to achieve literary grandeur at Vogue. Dorothy works in the copy department captioning artwork. Producing such drivel proves to be a tedious, thankless task. To make matters worse, the Editor of Vogue is notorious tightwad and autocrat Edna Woolman Chase, whose standards of conduct are extremely strict. Dorothy's job is to fact-check and proofread, tasks that could be performed by anyone with a general knowledge of the English language, and Vogue soon becomes a target for her sarcasm. She continues during this time to submit verses to Vanity Fair, including A Musical Comedy Thought, Why I Haven't Married, and Women: A Hate Song, which is an abuse of the domesticated American woman, and scathing enough that she is advised to publish it under pseudonym Henriette Rousseau.

In 1916, Dorothy meets Edwin (Eddie) Pond Parker II. He is 23, and a stock broker at Paine Webber. His family arrived in Hartford from England in 1693. Eddie is the descendant of a long line of clergymen, but is himself an atheist and a rebel. Dorothy is drawn to him. Dorothy and Eddie spend most evenings together, dining, drinking and enjoying theater. Eddie is a heavy drinker but at this stage of her life, Dorothy never touches alcohol, claiming that she loathes the taste.

She fears that because she is Jewish, Eddie's family will disapprove of her. In the spring of 1917, she travels with him to Hartford to meet his family, and to have her suspicions confirmed. They treat her "like a New York Jew on the make" (pg. 41.) Indeed, upon meeting Eddie's 81-year-old Grandfather, he intones "Oh Lord, grant to the unbeliever in our midst the light to see the error of her ways..." referring to her as "a stranger within our gates"(pg. 41.)

Nevertheless, in June of 1917, Eddie and Dorothy are married in Yonkers, New York with neither of their families in attendance. Shortly thereafter, Eddie enlists in the service, joining the 33rd Ambulance Corps, 4th division and promptly departed for Summit New Jersey. She has been a bride "for about five minutes before her husband had gone off and she found herself alone again" (pg. 42.)

Despite the loneliness of her personal life, Dorothy is developing a scathing wit, with a talent for clever observation. She begins working as a special features writer for Vogue, still trying to infiltrate Vanity Fair. She volunteers for every project she can get her hands on. Her formula for writing is dubbed, by Robert Benchley, the Elevated Eyebrow School of Journalism.

Crownie is so taken with her sharp tongue and sense of mockery and sarcasm, that in the fall of 1917 he arranges for her transfer from Vogue to Vanity Fair. Here she is given

routine editorial tasks, and publishes more of her hate songs. Before long, she succeeds P.G. Wodehouse as the magazine's drama critic and New York's only female drama critic, whereupon she proceeds to slice up Broadway with a "poison stiletto" (pg. 45.)

In April of 1918, Dorothy is 24 and she begins to attract a broader audience than just the average fashion magazine reader. She is rejecting the standards of female writing and thinking and manages to pull it off with unsurpassed style and humor.

She writes to Eddie daily, but is largely unsatisfied with his responses - as they are brief and dry and could as well have been written to anyone. When Eddie is occasionally based near New York, Dorothy often rushes to see him, but the reunions are clumsy and uncomfortable, causing her great sadness. Eddie has become an excessively heavy drinker, due partly to the horrors he has encountered at the front, and subsequently becomes addicted to morphine as well.

Professionally, Dorothy is gaining prestige as a critic, while also gaining a public following. Theater producers dread her attendance at their shows, knowing her reputation for cynicism. She is living the life she dreamed of, and is learning that reviewing plays gives her unlimited opportunities to bellyache, one of her favorite pastimes. She worries constantly about Eddie, and this worry is not only a distraction, but a constant source of irritation. Eddie is reassigned to occupation duty in Germany, and she is terribly disappointed. Never in his letters does he mention missing her, and instead sounds absurdly cheerful. It is 7 months before the couple is to be reunited.

The writing that Dorothy was producing during this time was considered unorthodox, bordering on impolite, and unfailingly feminist in nature. Her free verse poem, Women, A Hate Song, was her way of discussing what it was about the women of that era that was all wrong to her. It was the women who obeyed their husbands, did their own sewing, tended their houses and raised their babies that disgusted Dorothy, not necessarily because what they were doing was wrong, but because they were programmed by society to behave this way and they were too timid to step off the path laid down for them.

This was not the life Dorothy would lead, and indeed she abhorred housekeeping and any sort of personal domestication all of her life. Dorothy's writings began to attract an audience of more than just the typical magazine reader. The public was eager for her style of wit, humor and scathing reproach. Her observations were not met with resistance. Though polite society continued its normal day to day operations, Dorothy was busily chipping away at the foundations of it, and her timing as always was impeccable. The climate of American thinking was about to drastically change from the decidedly patriarchal turn of the century idealist views to the liberal feminism of the roaring 20's.

Chapter 4, Cub Lions 1919 and Chapter 5, The Algonquin Round Table, 1920-1921

Chapter 4, Cub Lions 1919 and Chapter 5, The Algonquin Round Table, 1920-1921 Summary and Analysis

Dorothy is given the additional duty of reading manuscript submissions, of which there are endless stacks. Albert Lee used to have this job where his system of elimination was to simply attach rejection slips to all submissions and return them unread to the authors. Dorothy feels obliged to actually read the pieces and occasionally encounters writing that shows promise.

Changes are in the works at Vanity Fair. Crowninshield is considering offering the managing Editorship to humor writer Robert Charles Benchley. Publisher Conde Nash decides to interview him, insisting that changes are needed at Vanity Fair. Benchley agrees and is hired at $100 a week.

On Monday, May 19th, Dorothy comes to work to find a new man in her office. Benchley is to share the space with her. A third person, Robert Sherwood, is also brought in to share the office, and the three soon become inseparable friends. Together, they behave very badly, and Crowninshield begins to think of the magazine as a lion's den, his editors, amazing whelps. Though they work well together, the trouble is that they sometimes do not work at all. They arrive to work late, take long lunches and go home early. Nast is not amused. He begins to lay down the law, and the battle lines are drawn. Whelps on one side, Nast on the other and Crowninshield placed fretfully in the middle. Nash and Crowninshield decide to take a two month trip abroad, leaving Benchley at the magazine's helm. Dorothy and Benchley are supposed to take charge of publishing the next 2 issues, but predictably, while the cats were away, the mice were wont to play. Rambunctious before, the exploits of the cub lions now take on legendary proportions.

In June, Dorothy is invited to The Algonquin Hotel by New York Times drama critic Alexander Woolcott. Woolcott is an eccentric man who relentlessly questions gender assignments, and whose appointments are highly sought. Flanked as always by Benchley and Sherwood, Dorothy first meets Franklin Pierce Adams (F.P.A) at this, one of Woolcott's most memorable functions. Dorothy regards F.P.A as a mythical figure. He is the publisher of The Conning Tower, and publishes the type of verse she is laboring to write. It is considered a distinction of the highest order to be mentioned in his column.

No one could quite accurately recall exactly what transpires between the unlikely, eccentric, and extraordinary group of people that assemble at the Algonquin Hotel that

summer afternoon in 1919, but the prevailing attitude of the day is of new beginnings and the belief of limitless possibility. The conversation likely revolves around books they want to publish, plays they want to produce, how to become rich and famous, and how to "rise like cream to the top of the New York bottle" (pg. 62.) Someone casually suggests that they meet for lunch and to do this everyday. No one could have accurately predicted the far-reaching implications of that suggestion.

Eddie returns finally in August, but the reunion is far from sweet. Dorothy is now a woman on the go and Eddie finds her to be restless, subdued and indifferent to him. Quarrels inevitably ensue, and the depth of his morphine addiction starts to surface. Dealing with his addiction means an endless parade of sanatoriums and suicide attempts, and it is absolutely harrowing for Dorothy.

To make matters worse, Nast and Crowninshield are back from abroad, and they are far less than amused by the antics of the Cub Lions. Dorothy arrives late for work the next day with Benchley breezing in even later, having spent the morning in the hospital with his wife, Gertrude, who is giving birth to their son. No work is to be done that day or the next. Conversations are of labor room drama and celebration, as the staff is regaled by stories from the delivery room. None of these antics are considered by Nast to be events worthy of missed work.

In the meantime, the Cub Lions grumble loudly about their wages. Nast retaliates with a company-wide memo prohibiting the discussion of one's salary and the penalty being immediate dismissal. Outraged, Dorothy, Bentley and Sherwood protest this "spirit of petty regulation" (pg. 64), and defiantly write their salaries on placards, displaying them proudly through the office.

Crowninshield tries to diffuse the tension by taking the trio often to lunch at the Algonquin or as they came to affectionately call it "The Gonk." Aleck Woolcott regularly lunches there, often inviting a bevy of literary friends, including Marc Connelly, theatre newsman for Morning Telegraph, and George Kaufman, Woolcott's assistant and Times drama reporter. Soon Woolcott is considered an Algonquin fixture, and manager Frank Case begins automatically reserving a large table in the dining room for them.

In the beginning, they are just a penniless, motley gang of writers, and The Gonk is the perfect platform for collaboration and the exchange of literary ideas. The day before Christmas of that year, Dorothy receives a reproach at the hands of Crownie. Not only is she not getting a raise, he is displeased by the quality of her work in general. Crownie is clearly acting as Nast's mouthpiece and Dorothy would recall that day as one of great disappointment and bitterness.

On a cold, snowy Sunday in 1920, Crownie invites Dorothy to tea at the Plaza Hotel, where she is fired. Plum Wodehouse would be returning to Vanity Fair, and thus her services would no longer be required. The real reason for her dismissal remains unspoken but Crownie assures her, as he did with most of the employees that he fired, that she would be famous one day. He tells her that should she wish to contribute to the

magazine on occasion, he would consider accepting her submissions. A livid Dorothy has no recourse but to order the most expensive dessert on the menu.

Robert Sherwood is also fired, and Benchley decided to resign, stating that the job is not attractive enough to keep him there without Sherwood and Dorothy. Crowninshield is stunned by Benchley's resignation, as he will be quite hard to replace. Crownie feels that Benchley has over reacted, and that he carries on absurdly over Mrs. Parker. Dorothy is moved by his act of allegiance and calls it the greatest act of friendship she had ever known.

The Cub Lions gleefully and defiantly advertise their freedom, and rumors fly of a walkout at Vanity Fair. They decide not to worry. Could this be the perfect opportunity to write freelance or to produce the theater that they had always talked about? The trio continues to behave quite badly as they worked through the end of their contracts at Vanity Fair.

That very week, the manufacture, sale, and transport of liquor becomes illegal in America through prohibition. On January 25th, Dorothy and Sherwood clear out their desks at Vanity Fair; Benchley's contract binds him until the end of the month.

In February, Benchley and Dorothy move into a cramped office that was really no more than a triangular section of hallway. It is in Times Square, and they rent it for $30 a month. Neither of these two complicated people is fully satisfied by their spouses, and though there is never a sexual relationship between them, they are more like a couple than most. They completed each other psychologically, and indeed were kindred souls, according to Meade. It is a friendship that Benchley's wife Gertrude will never come to understand.

Dorothy finds another drama critic position at Ainslee's Magazine. Her monthly column is called In Broadway Playhouses and she is given free rein to criticize as harshly as she pleases. Reviews take little thought, and she saves her energies for assignments to more prestigious magazines, such as The Saturday Evening Post and Ladies Home Journal. She even makes up with Crowninshield and occasionally writes for Vanity Fair. He asks her to co-author a book called High Society with him. Despite reconciling with Crownie, Conde Nast she still counts amongst her enemies.

Benchley takes a job with The World, and Sherwood becomes editor of Life. Dorothy's hard work is paying off and she is delighted to be able to loan Benchley $200 towards the purchase of his house. Her relationship with Benchley continues to deepen and although always platonic, it begins to verge on desperate co-dependency. Both agree that as long as they have each other, everything will be alright.

It was around this time that Aleck Woolcott starts to seriously stew over the captivating idea of an exclusive lunch club, whose membership he could control, where he could be the centerpiece. He begins to stir the pot amongst the literary set. The Rose Room is The Algonquin's main restaurant, where the celebrities of the theater often dine but the writer's usually eat in the smaller Pergola Room. It turns out to be of mutual benefit to

the hotel and to the writers, because the Algonquin provides them a free clubhouse, and they provide publicity for the hotel. As more and more members join, Frank Case, manager of the hotel, place them as visibly as possible at a large round table in the Rose Room, and give them their own waiter. Cartoonist Edmund Duffy publishes a caricature of the group and labeled it The Algonquin Round Table. The name sticks.

No one is permitted to join if not invited. The regulars include Dorothy, Franklin Pierce Adams or F.P.A., Henry Wise Miller, Gerald Brooks, Raoul Fleischmann, George Kaufman, Paul Hyde Bonner, Harpo Marx, Alexander Woolcott, Heywood Broun, Robert Benchley, Irving Berlin, Peggy Leech, Harold Ross, Beatrice Kaufman, Alice Duer Miller, Herbert Bayard Swope, George Backer, Joyce Barbour, Crosby Gaige, John Peter Toohey, Marc Connelly, Robert Sherwood, Donald Ogden Stewart, Murdock Pemberton, Deems Taylor, Arthur Samuels, Laurence Stallings, John V. A. Weaver, and Edna Ferber.

Frank Case recalls noticing the young girl who sat with the men always, who "shook wisecracks out of her sleeves" (pg. 74). The group have a riotously good time together, and were called "the greatest collection of unsalable wit in America," (pg. 74) but not for long. The banter between them is termed affectionate abuse and it is understood that you were to give as good as you got. Indeed, a stinging tongue is a prerequisite.

Once, Noel Coward is invited, and he and Edna Ferber both arrive wearing double-breasted suits. "You almost look like a man," he said. "So do you," she replies. (pg. 76.)

It was Marc Connelly who said conversation was like oxygen to them. They breathed each other in their remarks. The gang hates to part so much that they often never do and weekend poker parties start up as well.

On Dorothy's home front, Eddie has kicked his morphine habit, but has doubled his drinking and the marriage is greatly suffering. They move to a mid-town apartment upstairs from the Swiss Alps restaurant. Across the hall lives illustrator Neysa McMein. While she is not quite witty enough to keep up with the Round Tablers, she is an appreciative audience. Neysa's apartment is sky lit, and soon becomes an annex to The Gonk.

In New York City, in the early 1920's, it is becoming quite fashionable to be a quick-to-the-draw wit, and Dorothy is reputed as the mightiest gunslinger in town. Dorothy loves word games and puns. She is also known for her shocking and merciless denunciations of people, a trait she attributes to "not being able to keep my face shut around idiots" (pg. 82.) "As God hears me," she would declare, "I am perfectly justified."

No one was safe, not even Eddie. He is introduced to the Round Tablers by Dorothy as her little husband, and even those in attendance found it a shabby thing to say. The truth is, he simply is not suited to keep up with Dorothy in her element, and very rarely is included. In his absence, Dorothy delights in fabricating slapstick episodes, with Eddie starring. These stories are rooted in reality, not because Eddie is accident prone, but because he is usually drunk enough to actually fall down a man hole in the middle of the

street, which is one of the running jokes. Keeping him on track is exhausting for Dorothy, especially since he can be kind one minute and spitting venom at her the next, blaming her for everything wrong in his life, and calling her a nag. He often threatens to leave, and she does not take him seriously.

In the meantime, the other half of Dorothy's life is the illustrious career that is blossoming. To the old lady in Dubuque, the representative of the average Joe kind of demographic, Dorothy lives the American dream. These are the salad days for the Round Tablers. They are fiercely essential to one another. They are tolerant of each other's neurosis and there is a curious lack of professional rivalry about them. They all hate to be apart as much as before, but it begins to run deeper than that. They are becoming unable to tolerate being alone. Together they can avoid loneliness, and also avoid the far scarier concept of self-examination. For Dorothy, it is an escape from an unhappy home life and a decaying marriage that she seeks, and her Round Table friends make her feel funny and lovable again.

Through 1921, Dorothy wrote froth for the Saturday Evening Post and Life. She considered this work to be inferior, and not to be included in her collected works. Many consider her to be the best woman humorist in the country, and because of this, Editors can overlook her inclination towards procrastination. Tom Masson, Editor of the Saturday Evening Post said that she was a born artist, who could easily win an important place in American literature,if she would just settle down and write.

Dorothy was not receiving the care or nurture that a wife should expect from a husband. Indeed, her husband was perpetually absent either physically or emotionally, and in any case, seldom lucid. She was not terribly close with anyone in her family at this time, as they were leading their own lives, getting married, and having children. Dorothy, never one to be satisfied and always one to forge her own path, sought affection elsewhere.

The inclusion that Dorothy felt at being recognized by men like Benchley, Woolcott, Connelly, Peirce, and Crowninshield certainly provided her with a fierce vindication and offered her a feeling of control over her life, while her home life was out of control. Flanked by her friends, who would unfailingly defend her, Dorothy was able to take her defiance to new levels. She received such great acceptance; the exclusivity of her crowd was good enough that it could become an addiction.

The idea of co-dependency began to surface for the first time, not just for Dorothy but also for everyone involved. Addiction naturally became a prevailing and inevitable theme in Dorothy's life. With this approval and acceptance, Dorothy could - just like the rest of the Round Tablers - stash away the idea of painful self examination, and just let the good times roll all the time.

Chapter 6, Painkillers 1922-1923

Chapter 6, Painkillers 1922-1923 Summary and Analysis

Dorothy never could recall exactly when it was that she discovered that alcohol made her feel better, but at some point during this era, she finds that little sips of scotch throughout the day work well as a tranquilizer. Robert Benchley is an avid non-drinker but be began to partake during this era, experimenting with different liquors until he discovered that rye whiskey was his preference. Dorothy and Benchley become fixtures at Tony Soma's speakeasy, and a bevy of hilarious antics ensued. The two of them become quite rambunctious when they drink together, and are perfectly in sync. Onlookers recall an episode where a fellow customer is boasting about his indestructible watch. Benchley and Dorothy offer to test if for him, proceeding to slam it in the floor and stomp on it. When it's owner is able to rescue it from them, he declares that it's stopped. To which they reply, in perfect unison and without missing a beat, that maybe he wound it too tight.

Drinking with Eddie is never nearly as much fun but he encourages her to partake as it lessens her scolding about his consumption. They will have fun for an hour or two and then things will degenerate into violence. Dorothy often wakes up with bruises and black eyes, with Eddie nowhere to be found. To recover though, all Dorothy needs to do is head down to The Gonk, so she could start up again, banish Eddie from her thoughts, and spontaneously spin clever remarks.

In the spring of 1922, the Round Tablers present an amateur musical called No Sirree. Dorothy writes the lyrics for a musical number called The Everlastin' Ingenue Blues, to be sung by Robert Sherwood. For the play, Benchley improvises a monologue called Treasurers Report that he makes up on his way to the theater. The reviews are harsh but the Round Tablers have a great time making it. Benchley says that after No Sirree, his whole life changed its course. He is shocked when he is asked to repeat his monologue for the Music Box Revue. He has not even written it down. Nevertheless, it is hailed by those who understand the humor as genius comedy. Benchley jokingly asks that he be paid $500 a week and he is stunned when they promise to think it over.

Meanwhile, Benchley and Dorothy's relationship continues to cause stress in both marriages. Eddie makes it clear that he wants to end the marriage, and wants to return to Hartford to begin a new life. She still does not take him seriously, but promises to domesticate herself and learn how to cook. Soon after the 4th of July, the final explosion takes place and Eddie really does leave. Dorothy is bewildered, even though she knows it is for the best, and she represses to the outside world a crushing sadness that surprisingly overtakes her. She drinks more and more to forget her pain. In August she turns 29, feeling that all she has to show for her life is a broken marriage. Though her accomplishments have been tremendous, she is unsatisfied and views them as trivial.

Rather than aiming her wry perceptions inward and exposing herself, she seeks to observe the struggles of others so she can channel their misery into her writing. Benchley's marriage provides the perfect template, and by summer's end, she has finished her short story Such a Pretty Little Picture. It is about a man whose life seems perfect to the outsider, but who in actuality longs to flee. To Dorothy, writing was a torturous process, and she is an obsessive perfectionist. She is often unable to please herself. She sells the story for a modest sum, probably $50 or less, but to Dorothy it is possibly the best thing she has ever written, and it marks the beginning of her literary career. She still feels like a failure, in spite of this, because Eddie is gone. She feels that she needs to immediately replace him and thus begins the revolving door of man after man into and out of her life.

Charles MacArthur is introduced to Dorothy by Woolcott, and a whirlwind affair begins. He is separated from his wife, just as she was separated from Eddie. She is completely smitten with MacArthur, and views him to be the answer to her prayers. The Round Tablers are stunned by her naivety. At first MacArthur finds her fascinating and amusing, but he is just newly single again and wants to have some fun. He quickly begins to lose interest in her, to her great dismay. To make matters worse, she discovers that she is pregnant. She delays the abortion until she can wait no longer. Cruel stories begin to circulate. She is quoted as saying it "served her right for putting all her eggs in one bastard" (pg. 105.) MacArthur gives her $30 towards the cost of the procedure, and she declares that it "was like Judas making a refund" (pg. 105.)

Christmas time brings her no joy, and she makes it through the holiday season by obsessively contemplating suicide. She wonders how people go about it, and begins researching the subject. Even her old friend scotch will not dull her pain and she feels betrayed. On a cloudy Sunday afternoon in January, she takes one of the razors that Eddie has left behind and slashes her wrists. She is rescued in the nick of time when the Swiss Alps delivery person arrives to deliver her dinner.

Once she is recovered enough to see the Round Tablers, she plays her suicide attempt for laughs and lets them off the hook. They feel obliged to chalk it up to her "unpredictable eccentricity" (pg. 107.) She must not have been serious, they decide, since she had ordered dinner first. They can shrug off her unhappiness this way, and Dorothy "discouraged expressions of sympathy" (pg. 107.) Eddie returns from Hartford and quietly moves back in with her, but they both know the marriage is doomed.

Neysa asks if she can paint a portrait of Dorothy, declaring her to be a design, perfect in proportion and linear beauty. Dorothy always considered her figure to be badly proportioned, and figured Neysa is just trying to instill confidence in her. Neysa maintains that maybe 5 out of 100 could be called a design and Dorothy is one of them. She sits for the portrait and the result is exhibited at the Chicago Art Institute. She ends up winning an award. Dorothy looks "at once younger and older than her 29 years. Her eyes seem to be regarding the world with the dulled cynicism of a woman who knows a great deal more than the viewer" (pg. 108.)

1923 is when Dorothy's writing begins to shift from something lighthearted to something darker. Despite her opinion of her work, it never fails to sell, which is a statement of its quality. She begins to become interested in the macabre and Victorian melodrama genre of literature. Sometimes the glimpses are alarming and decomposing corpses watching the activity of worms, the living dead ornamenting themselves with graveyard flowers. Her verse began to acknowledge the timeless subject of female rage.

The act of almost losing her life has somehow purged her of her depression. She begins writing Too Bad and for the first time she starts to examine her own experiences through writing. Like she and Eddie, the couple in the story have totally given up on their marriage. As is typical of Dorothy, her self-loathing surfaces and she blames herself again and again, pushing aside the obvious contributing factors. There are the scars left behind from a war to take into consideration, not to mention morphine addiction and alcoholism.

Despite this, her wrist scars are healing and so is she, slowly. It is around this time that Dorothy begins frequenting the estates of the ultra rich on the North Shore Gold Coast of New Jersey. She is welcomed into the home of Maggie Swope, who has a mansion overlooking the bay, across the street from her is Ring Lardner, and up the street are Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. Dorothy spends nearly every weekend through the 20's here. Maggie and husband Herbert live lavishly and delight in turning their home into a summer playground for their friends. These parties work as inspiration to Scott Fitzgerald as he writes The Great Gatsby during the summer.

Swope refers to her house as an absolutely seething bordello of interesting people, and the house party never stops. She spends a thousand dollars a week on groceries, and hires two shifts of servants. Dorothy never wears out her welcome, because "the only unforgivable sin was dullness," (pg. 115) and therefore Dorothy is the ideal house guest. She also is invited to the home of Ralph Pulitzer, who has a mansion in Manhasset, and Averell Harrman's Arden House on the Hudson River. There is an annual week-long event to which she is invited, at banker Otto Kahn's $9 million French Chateau at Cold Springs Harbor, Long Island. The guests play ping-pong and charades and go on lengthy treasure hunts through the woods. The sport of the day is crochet and they play wild and rowdy games, knocking over garden furniture and breaking greenhouse windows.

By summer's end, MacArthur is back in New York from Chicago, and Dorothy cannot avoid seeing him, as he has gotten chummy with Benchley. Benchley is enjoying critical success and celebrating his acting celebrity. His schedule is grueling, as he is also still reviewing plays. He suddenly collapses with an arthritic attack that virtually disables him. The pace of his life is putting a dangerous strain on his health, and something has to give.

Dorothy's self-loathing dates all the way back to the death of her mother, and the much lesser event of her stepmother's death, both of which she felt responsible for. She revels in the idea that it is not something anyone can take away from her. In Eddie, she had hoped to find someone who would round her out and complete her, but what she got

was someone too much like herself. What they wound up with for a marriage was a scene of unhealthy co-dependency, and it is certainly not the last time in Dorothy's life that she will attempt a blatantly co-dependent relationship.

The root of her chemical addiction dependencies begins to take hold in this era as well and she forges her life-long love affair with alcohol. Dorothy's self conflict stems from the knowledge that no matter what she does in life, no matter what she achieves, it will never be good enough for her. She is the queen of witty repartee, who can slice a man in two with 5 or 6 words and it is inevitable that this person who can never be satisfied will hate herself as much as she hates the rest of the world that lets her down.

It is little wonder, after the beat down that Dorothy receives at her own hands that she would lend herself to suicidal tendencies. Note how easy it is for her to let her friends off the hook when they pretend her suicide attempt was just her tendency towards the dramatic, yet she refuses to forgive herself. No wonder she escapes to the Gold Coast so she can escape the reality of her life and live a borrowed life of luxury.

Chapter 7, Laughter and Hope and a Sock in the Eye 1923-1924

Chapter 7, Laughter and Hope and a Sock in the Eye 1923-1924 Summary and Analysis

Benchley's doctor tells him that for the sake of his health, he needs to rent an apartment in the city and stop commuting, or he is going to have to slow down the pace of his life. Renting an apartment is a far more attractive idea, as it is the perfect place to take his mistresses. He leaves his wife Gertrude with assurances that he will be home every weekend, and invites her to come visit him in the city in the evenings. He knows full well that she has two small children at home, making commuting to the city nightly an impossibility. She begins to realize that she has been granted a Victorian divorce. She will have the legal rights of a wife, but no privileges of companionship. Benchley agrees to be discreet about his affairs, and she promises to look the other way.

Dorothy enthusiastically approves of the new Benchley, but is dismayed that he has chosen MacArthur as a roommate. It means that there is no escape from MacArthur socially, and the three are now almost always together. Dorothy decides to move into a room at the Algonquin Hotel, and quickly learns that hotel living suits her perfectly. She always has hot water, and there is a front desk for anything she needs, day or night. The Gonk has always been a second home to her anyways, and she is suddenly happier and in a more positive mental condition than she has been in a long time. She settles in and gets to work.

Dorothy is teamed up with experienced playwright Elmer Rice, who says he sees real genius in her writing. The two work beautifully together, and Rice finds her to be unfailingly considerate, amusing and stimulating. He is beguiled by this "tiny creature with big, appealing eyes and upper-class manners" (pg. 125) She is the picture of elegant breeding and he can scarcely believe the rumors of her lethal tongue. They begin a brief but unsatisfying affair, quickly discovering that they are far more compatible artistically than sexually.

Their play is called Soft Music first, but the name is changed to Close Harmony. The story is of a suburban householder who, bedeviled by a sweetly domineering wife and an insufferable brat, finds solace in the companionship of a neighbor. By the end of the play, both of the character's lives have been irrevocably altered because of their involvement, and they are able to forge ahead with their lives now on the right track. The prevailing theme of the work is choice, and it reflects Dorothy's personal life where everyone seems to by trying to figure out what to do next. The play has been called a love letter to Robert Benchley, because his very essence and presence have contributed not only to her professional success, but also inspire her to go on living day to day.

The play is finished and delivered to producer Philip Goodman, who schedules it for production the following summer. She begins working on her third short story called Mr. Durant, whose monstrous main character is a thinly veiled Charles MacArthur.

It is around this time that Harold Ross and Jane Grant have worked themselves into a lather trying to raise money for their pet project, a magazine about New York meant to appeal to the sophisticated metropolitan set. This publication will not be marketed for the old lady in Dubuque. Many names have come and gone including Manhattan, New York Weekly, and Our Town. None seem to fit. John Peter Toohey casually suggests they call it "The New Yorker" and thus the famous and elite publication is born. Unfortunately, investors are starting to get cold feet and the project is in trouble. Dorothy wants to help, but The New Yorker is driven from her mind because of troubles with "Close Harmony." Philip Goodman has had two bombs recently and is reluctant to move forward with Dorothy's project now.

It winds up opening before Christmas to excellent reviews. Dorothy is hailed as "New York's Brightest Girl," (pg. 138) but despite this, ticket sales are slow and the play closes after just 24 performances. It is then reassigned to another producer and the project is re-named "The Lady Next Door," playing the next summer for 25 consecutive weeks in the Midwest to substantial crowds and good reviews.

Dorothy was one of those people who revealed a strength of character and conviction that was also extremely fragile and needed to be handled. It is interesting to contemplate how the Algonquin Hotel comes to fill that role for her eventually. The hotel came to be like an old friend to her and in every way the home that she craved. It was almost like a mother to her. She could live her life there the way she chose to live it, and have someone there to pick up after her to whom she need have no emotional ties. The mother hotel gave to her and she happily suckled.

Dorothy is learning during this period what it means to wield her feminine power, and how to use all of her elegant upper class mannerisms to her greatest advantage. Much like Pretty Little Picture, Close Harmony is an examination of the life of Robert Benchley, and even called a love letter to him because she wants so much for him to be able to examine his own life, which from her point of view must be less than satisfying for him, and be able to change his life the way the male lead in the play changes his. Dorothy never loved Benchley in a passionate way, but he was by far more of a partner to her than any man had been up until this point in her life.

Chapter 8, Yessir, the Whaddycall 'em Blues1925

Chapter 8, Yessir, the Whaddycall 'em Blues1925 Summary and Analysis

After months of constant hard work, Dorothy wants to take some time off, and begin to focus her attention on the male persuasion. The volume of men taxiing through her hotel room becomes staggering. She is becoming a real celebrity, and swarms of men are vying for her attentions. She seldom bothers to pay for her suite at the Algonquin, convincing herself that her presence is excellent publicity for the hotel and that Frank Case should feel fortunate to have her living there.

One unfortunate soul who falls in love with Dorothy is Seward Collins. He is not at all her type but he is eager to throw his wealth around and she is happy to oblige him. He is a nice guy but nice guys do not impress Dorothy. In fact, his attentions quite irritate her, but he pursues her nonetheless. Indeed, he "trailed after her as if he were a beggar at a moveable banquet" (pg. 148.) To Dorothy, he is a fool for whom she has no respect, even though her friends agree that he is just the sort of person she needs; someone who will look after her and take care of her. He showers her with gifts and even pays some of her bills. She is too busy chasing after married men who do not reciprocate her feelings.

In the meantime, the first issue of The New Yorker is published on February 21. It is immediately regarded as a frothy flop, but Dorothy has faith. She contributes works of fiction and drama reviews the first year without being paid, and eventually has a regular column under the pseudonym Constant Reader.

The problem is, she needs to get paid. Writing, she finds, is a nasty profession, and she wishes she knew how to write prose that would earn her more than poetry did, which pays only a dollar a line. She is actually ignorant about money and is often more hard up than she even realizes. She skates by on her charm and wit. She never does pay for her hotel room and no one really takes notice, she is always asked out to dinner and never has to pay, and there is a constant stream of visitors who earn their right to be there by supplying the scotch. Her earnings go towards the necessities only: clothes, perfume, cigarettes and liquor.

F.P.A. marries Esther Root on May 9th, and many of the guests are in low spirits, as it looks like The New Yorker is going to fold. In the midst of the nuptials, however, Raoul Fleischman arrives with the news that his mother will invest enough to get them through the summer at least. It is at this event that Dorothy complains to Ring Lardner that she cannot find the solitude to work on a novel, and that this is her fondest desire. Lardner happily opens his home to her, and she eagerly agrees that she could use some cheering up, as well as privacy to write.

Lardner's home turns out to be far from conducive to productivity, however, as Lardner is constantly drunk and incessantly trying to seduce her. In the end she does end up sleeping with him, and then promptly departs. She tells her friends back in the city what a horrid experience it had been. Soon after, she is invited to the Stamford, Connecticut home of Deems Taylor, one of the men with whom she is involved, and she settles down again to work. She will sit all day at her typewriter, working hard, and then spend her evenings with the Round Tablers who have summer homes in that area. For a change, she is actually making decent money. Close Harmony is doing well.

Benchley has returned from Europe, and they attend shows and carouse at Tony's together. He tells her about the great times he has had in Paris, where he has met Ernest Hemingway. She runs into MacArthur around this time as well, and while things are amiable in the beginning, after many cocktails they begin to quarrel. She soon returns to Stamford and tells Taylor she wants to kill herself. Summer is, unfortunately, drawing to a close, and Taylor's wife has returned from vacation. Dorothy bows out as gracefully as she can, but this turn of events did nothing to help neither her depression nor her self esteem.

The central theme of this time of Dorothy's life seems to be promiscuity. She seeks relations with man after man, many of them married and none of the relationships are emotionally fulfilling. It is no wonder as to why, she is clearly seeking an emotional closeness that has eluded her up to this point of her life, but the curious thing to examine is the relationship she has with Seward Collins. He dutifully worships the ground she walks on, babies her, lavishes his wealth on her, yet she is irritated by his doting. She is only interested in men that she can have physically, but not emotionally, and this speaks volumes about her mental state. Also interesting to note is the fact that Dorothy is living the high life, rubbing elbows with the social elite, but is always broke. She is a selfish person, who as such should closely guard her interests, but somehow she is ignorant about money and the way that sort of thing works. This is true of Dorothy through her entire life. It is an example of how someone with such a genius talent can excel at her art, but be completely incapable of tending to the routine tasks of daily living that an average person would take for granted.

Chapter 9, Global Disasters 1926

Chapter 9, Global Disasters 1926 Summary and Analysis

After returning from Stamford, things do not improve for Dorothy. She swallows scotch at an alarming speed and is uncharacteristically foul-tempered. It takes nothing to unleash her rage. She speaks more and more about wishing she were dead, and when friends try to tell her all of the things she has to live for, she refuses to listen. At a party, she is introduced to psychotherapist Alvan Barach, and she begins making regular appointments for his couch. It is his professional opinion that the matter needing the most immediate attention is her drinking. He is met with total resistance to this notion. Privately, she has to admit that drinking does not produce the high that it used to, and she has to work at it now. Thus, quantities become greater and greater. Dr. Barach is urging her towards sobriety, but it will be a long journey. Dorothy discovers that the sodium-barbital type sedative called Veronal when taken with scotch produces a terrific effect. It is sold without a prescription in New Jersey, and she buys as much as she can. It makes her feel better knowing she has a stash. She does not mention the pills to Dr. Barach.

One night, very drunk, she decides that it is no longer worth the trouble of trying to survive day to day, and she calmly swallows, pill by pill all of the Veronal that she has in her possession. She lies down on her bed and waits, but as she is slipping over the edge, she throws her water glass through the window and is rescued. She does not regain consciousness for two days after the episode. When she comes around, she is enraged at having failed again. The nurses tell her she is lucky to be alive, but she feels the opposite to be true.

Once released from the hospital, she keeps regular appointments with Dr. Barach, who insists that the key to her recovery depends on her ability to control her drinking. Dorothy remains unconvinced that she is indeed an alcoholic, but she begins watering down her scotch and tries to cut back. She tries to make light of her suicide attempt, and decides that suicide is a difficult, messy business and she might as well just focus on living instead of dying.

She transforms her nearly fatal incident into dark humor in short story Resume, which was published in The Conning Tower. It is a work admired by many, though Dr. Barach is not among them. While he enjoys fraternizing with the Round Tablers, he tries to instill in Dorothy his philosophy that "life was not so much what people suffered, but what they missed." (p.162) He maintains that because the Round Tablers spend all of their time together it is a declaration of drastically unhealthy insecurities. They are exerting all of their energies to be entertaining, drinking and partying, and neglecting what is purposeful in their lives. Barach claims that this will eventually damage their writing abilities. More than likely, it is Dr. Barach's influence that causes Dorothy to begin to withdraw from the Round Tablers at this time. She begins to regret the time she has

wasted on witticisms, when there is serious work out there for her to explore. She has to agree with the doctor that she needs to find a new way of life.

Surprisingly, Dorothy turns to Seward Collins and begins an affair with him, most likely because she has begun to realize that he will be willing to coddle her, and this is what she needs at this time more than anything. She is working again, and his ability to market her work is invaluable to her. Plus, he treats her like a duchess, lavishing expensive gifts on her and catering to her every whim.

It is around this time that Dorothy meets Ernest Hemingway. He is in New York on business, but also to drink and carouse with the local literary crowd, so of course Dorothy sees him often. They speak of the process of writing, and she is encouraged to discover that he finds writing just as unpleasant as she does. He tells her that but that it is just something a writer has to accept in order to embrace the craft. He tells her that he sometimes re-writes a single page 60 or 70 times without feeling satisfied. The secret is to work like a dog. She values his views, even if his pronouncements are condescending, and his ideas far from unique. Still, she finds him to be "an especially engaging person whose masculinity was magnificent." (p.164) At this point, Dorothy is like everyone else that pursues a friendship with him, but she would later find that he has an extremely unpleasant side.

Within a few days of meeting Hemingway, Dorothy makes up her mind to go live abroad. Paris is extremely fashionable, and the cost of living makes it even more attractive. Internally, she hopes that a change of scenery will help her heal - and help her become a real writer, like Hemingway. Most likely Seward Collins pays for her passage. Dorothy wastes no time making her arrangements, and books passage on the same ship returning Hemingway to Europe. She decides that she will put together a book of her collected works once she gets to Paris. At the last minute, Benchley books passage as well, and Seward says he will join Dorothy abroad as soon as he is able.

Once they are underway, Dorothy discovers to her dismay that someone has stolen all her scotch and Benchley has become afflicted with pubic lice. Despite this, the trip is a good time. The food on the ship is excellent, and Hemingway, Benchley and Dorothy dine together at the officer's table. Dorothy is amused at the ridiculous production Hemingway makes over eating saltpeter; he says to control his sexual appetites. They arrive in Cherbourg in good spirits.

Hemingway shows them the sights in Paris, Benchley rids himself of lice, buys presents for his family and departs just as Seward Collins is arriving. Seward takes over the duty of tour guide, and insists on footing the bill for everything. They will first tour the south of France, then Spain. Dorothy had listened to Hemingway spout his ringing endorsements of Spain, but she in actuality finds it to be extremely disagreeable. The first event Seward takes her to is a bullfight, where a horse is disemboweled by a bull's horn. Dorothy, appalled, stalks angrily to the exit. The rest of Spain is just as bad. Of particular annoyance to her is Easter in Seville, where she is repulsed by the habit of Spanish men pinching womens' behinds as they walk down the street.

They return to Paris to find that spring has not yet sprung, and Dorothy describes it as "la belle, la brave, la raw, la rainy." (p.169) She begins quarreling with Seward, and he decides to go home. Hemingway comes to visit her, and makes the mistake of asking what she thinks of his beloved Spain. Unable to hold her tongue, Dorothy unleashes a torrent of slurs against Spain. She has deeply insulted Hemingway, and he quietly adds her name to the list of people he dislikes.

Dorothy has been abroad for two months now, and she decides it is time to sit down and focus on her book. She begins pulling together her works that she considers worthy. One of these pieces is a soft poem called News Item that she had effortlessly rolled off her tongue at some point in the past, and it was published in The Conning Tower:

"Men seldom make passes

At Girls who wear glasses."

To her amazement and dismay, people remember this piece of work more than anything else she had written, and she curses the impulse that ever led her to want to republish it.

She also turns out a few pieces for Life and The New Yorker, one of which is titled Oh, He's Charming! The main character is an arrogant celebrity novelist strongly resembling Hemingway. The story shows that while Dorothy feels a sort of professional respect for Hemingway, now that she has gotten to know him, she is beginning to understand his true nature and is less than impressed.

Dorothy spends the summer in Europe carousing with many of her Round Table friends that have come to visit, but soon she is having a hard time disguising the fact that she is lonely. She continues to invest her energies into writing. She writes a story called Lucky Little Curtis about an adopted child, whose matriarchal figure unflatteringly resembles Eleanor Rothschild and her admonitions to count your blessings.

In October, friends of Dorothy's attend a party where Hemingway is in attendance, and he insists on reading a poem about her that everyone considers to be in very bad taste as well as racist and sexist. One verse is:

"Spaniards pinched

the Jewish cheeks of your plump ass

in holy week in Seville

forgetful of our Lord and His passion.

Returned, your ass intact, to Paris

To write more poems for the New Yorker." (p.173)

It is called To a Tragic Poetess - Nothing in her life became her like her almost leaving it. The poem calls Dorothy a coward, ridiculing her affairs, her abortion, as well as her suicide attempts. After reading the poem, which no one had asked him to in the first place, Hemingway then regales the crowd with, in contrast to Dorothy, the real tragedies of the Spaniards, whose courage he claims is to be truly appreciated. The people in attendance at the party are not amused, and in fact more than one of Hemingway's friendships are ended that evening. Dorothy's friends go to great lengths to shield her from what had taken place at the party, and the poem is not published until after her death.

Dorothy decides she has had enough of living abroad, and sails home to New York. She finds that it is good to be home. She slides easily back into the groove of her New York life, her apartment at the Algonquin, her regular table at Tony's. She is offered a job as drama critic for the New York Telegram, which she turns down.

In December, her book of poems is published under the title Enough Rope. Everything begins to change for Dorothy once she reaches this important milestone.

Is it possible that Dorothy clashes so strongly with Hemingway because he unconsciously represents the masculine idealism while she unconsciously represents the feminine? It is interesting to ponder whether or not he would be more sympathetic towards her sufferings if she were a man. Obviously that would negate the issue of abortion, but what about her suicide attempts? Clearly he is quite condescending towards her, cruel even, especially with the writing and public reading of his poem, and it seems quite possible that he would be less inclined to be so if she were a man and not a woman.

During this time in her life, Dorothy is very angry and drinking a lot. Eventually this leads to more suicide attempts and the issue of her own self-worth is brought to the forefront again. Why is she so self-destructive? Is it because of the death of her mother again, or is there something more to it? It is clear that at this time, a very positive step for Dorothy was to become involved with Dr. Barach, and his recommendations to drink less and invest less value in the merits of the Round Table. Indeed, he is instrumental in helping her to separate from the people she regards as her closest friends, who in the long run may have been more detrimental to her than she realized. Coming of Age seems to be the theme of Dorothy's gradual severance from the Round Table, as it is time for her to depart the safe womb that has been created there. The time had come for her to grow up and be her own person, rather than just the girl who sits with the men at the Round Table and makes everyone laugh.

Chapter 10, Big Blonde 1927-1928

Chapter 10, Big Blonde 1927-1928 Summary and Analysis

By spring of 1927, Enough Rope is in its third printing, with no end to the demand for it in sight. In short, publishing history is being made. Enough Rope is a best seller, an unheard of achievement for a book of poetry. Part of the reason for its success is that Dorothy's sense of humor and talent for keen observation perfectly suits the tastes of the 1927 American reader. One review said it is "caked with salty humor, rough with splinters of disillusion, and tarred with a bright black authenticity." (p.177) It is said that with this work, Dorothy has carved out her own unique niche in American literature. Dorothy is extremely gratified by the success of her book, but all the praise makes her uncomfortable. She feels the need to downplay her sudden stardom, though no one, even herself can reasonably deny it.

In the summer of 1927, Dorothy becomes involved in the case of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian-American anarchists who have been convicted of murder and are sentenced to death. She enters into the cause intending to assist in stopping these executions, believing the men to be innocent, but the experience in the end thoroughly radicalizes her. She is exposed during this time to her first inklings of the Communist Party. Dorothy is arrested during the protest and taken to jail. Her arrest is very visible to the public, and she may have helped the men receive a last minute reprieve. They are eventually executed, but not that day. Soon thereafter, Dorothy starts calling herself a socialist. She begins to meet other socialites who have grown up with money, who, like here, are interested in making a difference, of having a cause. The presence of charming, amusing, and most importantly, well-known writers like herself is just what the cause needs.

Around this time, Dorothy breaks off romantically with Seward, and begins seeing investment broker John Garrett. Dorothy immediately begins ushering all other men out of her life, expecting the affair with Garrett to be an exclusive one, but this is the farthest thing from his mind. In fact, at the age of 35, he prides himself on being a bachelor and finds great amusement in playing one woman off another. The reality is that Dorothy and Garret have absolutely nothing in common. His routine is to make promises to her, and then callously break them, leaving her infuriated. Inevitably, the fighting begins and escalates to epic proportions.

In October she takes over the Recent Books column in The New Yorker, using the pseudonym Constant Reader again. Her very best-known review comes soon thereafter, when she reviews A.A. Milne's The House at Pooh Corner. Milne's whimsy utterly nauseates Dorothy, and when she comes to the word hummy, she writes: "And it is that word 'hummy,' my darlings, that marks the first place in The House at Pooh Corner at which Tonstant Weader Fwowed up." (p.188)

In the winter of 1928, she finally files for divorce from Eddie. The divorce is granted to her on grounds of intolerable cruelty. She and Eddie are never to meet again. The day the divorce becomes final, Dorothy reportedly went to pieces, a reaction to which she feels she is entitled. By spring, she has recovered, and publishes her second volume of verse, Sunset Gun, named in reference to the cannon that is fired at the end of the day as the flag is lowered. All anyone wants to know is whether or not it will be as good as Enough Rope. The reviews are good, calling the volume "a moth-gray cloak of demureness hiding spangled ribaldry, a razor-keen intellect mocking a head dark with desperation," and as for its author, "long may she wave!" (p. 193)

She moves out of the Algonquin, where Round Table lunches have become less frequent, in favor of an apartment on East Fifty-Fourth Street, where the nightly cocktail parties quickly commence. Soon thereafter she is diagnosed with acute appendicitis and is hospitalized. She tells everyone that she will, for a short while, be residing at "bedpan alley," (p.194) and requests that she be brought a typewriter. She is miserably bored during her month of recovery, and spends her time reading fiction. She feels more than ever that she needs to prove herself as a real writer.

She begins working on a novella, which turns out to be, according to most, the finest thing she has ever written. "To read it is to envisage her laying down a sentence, laboriously shaping it until it seemed simple, then going on to the next sentence and doing likewise, so carefully crafted is this story." (p. 195) Big Blonde is the most autobiographical work Dorothy has ever produced. After tinkering with it for a year, she feels satisfied enough to allow Seward Collins to publish it in The Bookman, and it brings her unanimous praise. It is selected in the prestigious O. Henry competition as the best short story of 1929. The publication of Big Blonde is a huge leap forward in her literary career, and it is also the end of her relationship with Collins. He and his magazine continue to gain respect for a few years, until a rumor begins circulating that he is a Nazi sympathizer and a fascist. He also becomes heavily involved in psychic research and tells people he has been receiving messages from other worlds, essentially committing professional suicide.

Soon, Dorothy's need of money lures her to Hollywood. MGM offers her $300 a week for three months, an offer she simply cannot refuse. Her first job is to write dialogue for the melodrama Madame X. Things start off on the wrong foot with MGM when a publicity release referred to her as the internationally known author of Too Much Rope. Further disturbing is her first meeting of the production head who has no idea who she was or why she has been hired.

Every bad thing she has heard about Hollywood turns out to be true. Living is insanely expensive. Parties are pompous affairs with "old fogies who had to be in bed by 10:30." (p. 198) She quickly becomes homesick, but hopes that a three-month stint in Hollywood will cure her of her obsession with John Garrett. She phones him periodically, and he pretends they have a bad connection to get her to hang up.

In early December, Benchley arrives to act in three pictures at Fox, and is prompt to declare that he hates Hollywood, too. Two months have passed, and Dorothy has yet to

write anything for Madame X, for the simple reason that no one has told her what to write. Despite her frustrations, she inexplicably signs on for two more films in January: Five O'clock Girl and Dynamite. Her frustrations grow to the point where she informs MGM that she is going home, and demands train fare. She says goodbye to no one in her haste to leave town.

When she arrives back in New York, it is clear that her relationship with John is over. She is suddenly being showered with attentions from the founders of The Viking Press, Harold Guinzburg and George Oppenheimer. They tell her it would be a crime if she does not write a novel. Dorothy agrees to the project, claiming it will be possible only if she goes abroad again for a while. She would set sail again in April.

The attention Dorothy receives as a result of her recent fame made her uncomfortable because she is torn between feeling like she deserves it, but doesn't. It makes sense that she would want to get herself involved in as many causes as possible because internally she can absolve herself from the crimes committed against herself by doing these good deeds. Dorothy is a fierce defender against injustice for this reason. She has been through so much in her life up to this point. She has made some really bad choices, particularly with the male companionship she has chosen. The men in her life have damaged her deeply enough that she has been driven to repeated suicide attempts, so it is extremely unfortunate that she would make the same mistake yet again with someone like John Garrett.

Is she getting involved with men like him to punish herself, or is she still really that naïve after all the affairs? When she wrote Big Blonde, it autobiographically chronicled the end of her marriage to Eddie, an event that was said to have plunged her into a deep depression. In the end, however, it was ultimately cathartic for her because the process of writing the story helped to purge her, and though she found the process torturous, it brought her the closure she needed. It also marked the point in her career where she went from soft verse satirist to serious writer.

Chapter 11, Sonnets in Suicide, or the Life of John Knox 1929-1932

Chapter 11, Sonnets in Suicide, or the Life of John Knox 1929-1932 Summary and Analysis

Dorothy travels first to London for a brief stay where she buys a 14-month-old Dandie Dinmont Terrier named Timothy. Dorothy's need for canine companionship has always been severe, but perhaps now more than ever. Dorothy and her new friend travel to Paris, where she promptly falls ill due to liver trouble. When she feels better, she goes on a shopping spree where she orders lingerie and stylish French chiffon dresses for herself and her sister, Helen.

Benchley and his family arrive at the end of June, and they rent a car and drive to Antibes to visit the Murphys, a wealthy American couple with three young children whom Dorothy had met on several occasions and likes very much. The trip to Antibes is an unpleasant and grueling one, and Dorothy is thrilled to finally arrive. Villa America is a picture-book estate where Dorothy thrives. She loves the Murphy children; Honoria, 11, Patrick, 8 and Baoth, 10, and she is content to live quietly and dutifully cut back her drinking. She and Benchley give Gertrude and the children the slip once or twice so they can go into the town of Cannes and get properly drunk.

She works a bit during this time, but much of what she produces, she tears up, declaring it inadequate. She, unfortunately, begins to pine after John Garrett when she reads of his arrival in the Paris Herald. She wires him to say she wishes they could be friends. He responds with a telegram sent collect that says "DELIGHTED WIRE ALWAYS," three words "whose studied ambiguity seemed downright spooky to her." (p. 204) She plunges into depression over the idea that Garrett is so close but choosing to ignore her. She rushes back to Paris to ask for an advance from Guinzburg, and finds herself gazing from her hotel room down at the river Seine, contemplating suicide by drowning. She makes the mistake of sending Garrett a letter pleading to see him. His reply could not have been more insulting. He wires collect: "LOVED LETTER DEAR SO HAPPY YOU ARE WELL." (p. 205)

Dorothy prepares to return home to New York, though she dreads the thought. While still in Paris, she interviews Ernest Hemingway for the New Yorker, as A Farewell to Arms has just been published. To her disgust, he places a bevy of restrictions on the topics of discussion, including anything about his family or background or personal life, and she is forced to fill her space with nothing of content, just frothy compliments about his writing.

In Dorothy's absence from Villa America, young Patrick Murphy has fallen gravely ill with tuberculosis. At once, Gerald and Sara Murphy dismantle their estate and plan to transplant their family to Montana-Vermala, a tuberculosis health resort in the Swiss

Alps. Dorothy's plans are suddenly revised when the Murphys ask if she would accompany them. It is probably not the wisest choice she could make professionally, but she loves the Murphys and wants to help them in any way she can. Sara had persuaded her by saying she found Dorothy a comfort to have around.

The atmosphere at the resort is less than cheerful. Surrounded by the sick and dying, she turns to her old friend liquor to help lighten her mood. Hard liquor is not recommended at such a high altitude, but drinking, she insists is a necessity. When she talks of going home for a while, the Murphys do not try to dissuade her.

Dorothy is irritated by the bombardment she receives from the press upon her return. It takes her a little while to reacquaint herself with the fast pace of New York.

She spends the winter drinking with Benchley at Tony's, and frolicking once again with her Round Table chums. To say she is far behind on the novel she promised to Oppenheimer and Guinzburg, ironically titled Sonnets in Suicide, is a massive understatement. She works herself into enough of a panic that she actually tries to kill herself again, this time by drinking a bottle of shoe polish. While it fails to kill her, it does land her in the hospital. She manages to pull together thirteen of her short stories, and in June publishes the work instead under the title Laments for the Living.

She returns to Switzerland to find that Patrick's condition has improved so greatly that the Murphys are able to leave the resort. They move to a nearby town where they refurbish a night club that they call Harry's, after Harry's American Bar in Paris. In July, Benchley arrives and further brightens everyone's spirits. Dorothy and Benchley fall back into their old routine of drinking and talking until dawn. She is working on a piece for Cosmopolitan, and so she works during the afternoons, and spends her evenings with Benchley. They travel to Venice and then on to Munich where Dorothy purchases a dachshund of elite heritage named Eiko von Blutenberg, whose name is changed to Robinson. The world seems like a less lonely place with him at her heels.

Laments for the Living is published and is doing well, but of course this is not enough to satisfy Dorothy. Benchley leaves for home, and the Fitzgeralds come to Switzerland, where Zelda is entering treatment at a psychiatric hospital. Eventually, Dorothy decides, it is fine to get away from it all, but when you have to tie a string around your finger to remind yourself of what it was you were forgetting, it is time for you to go back home.

Soon after her return to New York, Dorothy begins an affair with yet another ill-advised lover. This one is named John McCain. He is an unabashedly notorious social climber who realizes the best way to infiltrate the elite literary circles of New York is on the arm of a well-known woman. As soon as he meets Dorothy, he immediately begins to court her. Dorothy, predictably, assumes his affections are genuine, while he boasts his success to his friends. In truth, he is star-struck by her, impressed by the glamour of her life and anxious to be introduced to New York's elite. Not surprisingly, the relationship disintegrates quickly, and she again tries to kill herself, this time with barbiturates. Dr. Barach tries to downplay the incident with the press, who of course are not fooled, and have a field day with the overdose. Dorothy dreads the public attention and retreats to a

friend's country estate to recover. Not long afterward, she goes back to Manhattan and breaks for good with John McCain.

Things are tough all over, what with the Wall Street crash but you would not know it the way Dorothy's friends continue to carouse. She ridicules them in a short story called From the Diary of a New York Lady, subtitled During Days of Horror, Despair and World Change.

"Can't face deciding whether to wear the blue with the white jacket or the purple with the beige roses. Every time I look at those revolting black nails, I want to absolutely yip. I really have the most horrible things happen to me of anybody in the entire world. Damn Miss Rose." (p. 221)

Dorothy is flat broke, but decides to move from her suite at the Algonquin to the Lowell, a residential hotel decorated in the fashionable Art Deco style, which is far beyond her means. She begins to give diligent attention to her financial situation. The problem is, she has a serious case of writer's block, and decides to enlist the help of her friends. They are to come to her apartment and watch her work, so she will not feel inclined to be lazy.

To her dismay, George Oppenheimer decides to write a play called Here Today subtitled A Comedy of Bad Manners, with one of the central characters not merely resembling but practically chronicling Dorothy to the letter. This is a blow to her ego, and the last thing she needs at that point in her life is the opportunity for internal examination - something that has always made her uncomfortable. To make matters worse, Robinson is attacked by a large dog and after a brief hospitalization, is unable to pull through. Dorothy is utterly inconsolable. Sara Murphy (she and Gerald and family had moved back stateside) proposes a trip to Paris.

Though they are traveling first class, Dorothy spends most of her time in third class, speaking to fellow passenger Mary Mooney, mother of Tom Mooney, the West Coast labor leader who has been convicted of a bombing and is serving a 23-year sentence. Mary is traveling to Russia with a delegation of American Communists. She is a big, sturdy Irish woman, age 84, who Dorothy feels has the manners and dignity of a queen. A few days after they meet, the Communists call a meeting in the third class dining hall, which Dorothy decides to attend. She finds herself to be in total agreement with the content of their speech. She immediately writes a letter to The New Yorker declaring that she thinks Tom Mooney is innocent. This exposure to the Communist Party has significantly affected her.

The trip to Paris does her good, and when she gets home, she finds herself over the writer's block and spending many hours a day at her typewriter. It is during this time that Dorothy is said to be one of the two most sought-after women in New York. The other is Fanny Brice. Everyone wants Dorothy at their cocktail party. She is a legend in her own time in 1932.

It seems ironic that Dorothy would pray to stop writing like a woman when she actually symbolizes advocacy towards feminism, but it actually makes perfect sense. Dorothy is looking to differentiate herself from the women of the time, and is a feminist before she really understands what feminism is. Of interesting note is the interview she does with Hemingway, where he limits her subject matter so severely that in the end, all she is able to produce is an article overflowing with nauseatingly saccharine praise bordering on worship of him.

It brings to mind the question: was Hemingway trying to force her to praise him in this way and why? Again we have to ponder the masculine vs. feminine idealisms, and wonder if Hemingway was taking a tyrannically patriarchal stance with her in order to bend her writing into feminine subservience. Yet again Dorothy submits herself to an unsatisfactory and ultimately harmful relationship, this time with John McCain.

Is she just like any other woman, repeatedly putting herself out there in hopes that one day it will pay off and she will find one good man, or is it more of a self punishment thing? Everyone around her seemed able to see through the scoundrels she chose. Why is she unable?

Another thought to ponder is the question of Dorothy's need for canine companionship. It seems almost reasonable that she is seeking to express her matriarchal desires through the love and protective instinct she lavishes on her dogs and through her entire life, she is never without at least one, often several. Also interesting is the relationship that she has with the Murphy family as another outlet for her mothering needs. She is naturally drawn to Mary Mooney, a kind of hero to Dorothy, and the epitome of the ideal mother. Indeed, Mooney is the sort of mother Dorothy would wish to be.

Chapter 12, You Might as Well Live 1933-1935

Chapter 12, You Might as Well Live 1933-1935 Summary and Analysis

Dorothy has made the wise decision to put her love life on the shelf. She turns 40 in August of 1933, and she faces the prospect of all the lonely years to come with despair. It is an unexpected delight to meet the young, dashing actor Alan Campbell. He is 29, eleven years her junior, but their Jewish-Gentile heritage is similar, and they are completely attuned to each other right from the start. She makes him laugh more than anyone ever has before, and she clearly needs someone to look after her. He steps in and immediately helps her maintain the mundane aspects of her life such as cooking, shopping, and managing her bank account. He feels that a woman of her stature should always look elegant and he immediately instigates a total wardrobe, makeup and hairstyle makeover for Dorothy, down to details as minute as her perfume. She is delighted to have him around.

Another volume of Dorothy's collected works is published under the title After Such Pleasures, and again the reviews are excellent. Dorothy, unfortunately, is known during this time to be constantly ensconced in her scotch mist. Prohibition is repealed after 13 years on December 5, 1933, and the speakeasy era is about to become a memory. This, of course, gives Dorothy a new freedom with her drinking and she enjoys it to the fullest. Alan grew up with parents who drank heavily, so he instinctively knows how to handle Dorothy. He steps into the role of her manager in every possible way and he takes great pleasure in doing so. It is mutually beneficial for both parties, as being on the arm of Mrs. Dorothy Parker exposes him to the most elite of the theatrical and literary crowds, and his career begins to benefit. By spring, Dorothy has moved out of the Lowell and into an apartment, and she and Alan are more or less living together.

Clearly the relationship with Alan is excellent progress for Dorothy, given her tendency towards men she loves with all her heart and soul who do not love her back. Alan, it is rumored, is a non-practicing homosexual who prefers the company of older women who he feels compelled to treat like daughters. Whatever the rumor mill chewed on at that time is irrelevant, as it is clear that Dorothy loves Alan, and that he loves her back. They certainly have fun together, once even going as far as to get tattooed together one night - matching blue stars on the insides of their upper arms. In the 1930's, this is considered extremely risqué behavior and the event lands them in the New York Daily Mirror gossip column.

That summer, Alan is offered a job with the Elitch Gardens stock company in Denver. Dorothy decides to accompany him, where they would rent an apartment so she can write during the days while he is at the theatre. The trip west is a howl for Dorothy and Alan, as they had decided to pack up all of their belongings and their two dogs and drive

to Denver from the East Coast. When they arrive in Denver, it was to a swirl of controversy over the two of them living in sin. Morals are different in Colorado than they are in New York. Alan immediately takes a defensive stance and insists that the two were, indeed, married. Lies lead to more lies and the reporters begin demanding details of when and where these supposed nuptials had occurred. Soon, they have no choice. They drive over the state line to Raton, New Mexico on June 18th, find a justice of the peace and make it legal. Dorothy is "in a sort of coma of happiness." (p.239) Being Mrs. Alan Campbell is better than anything she could have ever dreamed. She is surprised to find that she loves living in Denver, where she settles into a little rented bungalow and eats, sleeps, and knits socks for Alan.

Her Round Table friends have a hard time taking the marriage seriously, and await her return to New York. Once again, there is a Dorothy-esque character making waves on Broadway in the new drama Merrily We Roll Along. The character is said to be "a wisecracking alcoholic, a woman you could talk to like a man." (p.241) The portrayal is an uncomfortably accurate portrayal of Dorothy's excesses, showing the character Julia as youthful in 1925, but in a state of extreme decline by 1934. She is never quite sober, and enjoys sleeping with younger men. The play is the work of Moss Hart and George Kaufman. Dorothy had never liked Kaufman, and now she hates him. Unlike the portrayal of her in Here Today, which was more of a comment on her mannerisms, this depiction of her is downright deplorable. It is fortunate that Dorothy has a 1600-mile buffer zone between herself and Broadway at that time because it shields her from the brunt of it, but Alan decides that it is a perfectly opportune time to venture even further west to California for their honeymoon.

There they meet Rosalie Stewart, a former Broadway producer who is now a Hollywood agent. Stewart suggests that Dorothy and Alan stay in Hollywood as a husband and wife writing team, and even promises to arrange a ten-week contract at Paramount. Given Dorothy's previous experience with Hollywood, she is less than enthusiastic, but Alan is elated. Alan convinces her in the end, pointing out that it is only 10 weeks and they can use the money to pay off some of her sizable debt, which he affectionately calls "Dottie's Dowry." (p. 242) The contracts are signed, guaranteeing Alan $250 a week, and Dorothy $1000. Everyone involved agrees that this amount is fair, given Dorothy's position as a noted literary figure. Besides, Paramount never would have spared Alan a second glance if he was not Mr. Dorothy Parker. Much of the East Coast talent is working in Hollywood at this time, and there is no secret as to why: the salaries are astronomical. It is in many cases, far from satisfying work, however. "The relationship between the writer and the studio was more or less sadomasochistic." (p.243) Dorothy and Alan brace themselves for the grueling task ahead.

Alan immediately distinguishes himself in Hollywood as a hard worker. He is not the illustrious writer that Dorothy is, but he can certainly hold his own. It turns out that his strength is in the blocking construction of the scene, and once he has laid the foundation, Dorothy would come in and infuse it with amusing dialogue. They are a perfect complement to one another as a writing team. They are often given the scripts that have been kicking around the studio for ages that no one could make work. Dorothy considers the work to be completely free of creativity, but she certainly cannot complain

about the wages. She writes home telling people that a few months in Hollywood means "no art but can clear up that national debt" (pg. 244.) It is true they are earning a huge amount of money and Dorothy is relieved to be able to pay down her debt. The cost of living in Hollywood is, of course, outrageous as ever. Dorothy says, "Hollywood money isn't money." It is "congealed snow" that "melts in your hand" (pg. 245.)

When they receive assurances that their contracts would be renewed, Dorothy and Alan rent a house in Beverly Hills. They throw an opulent housewarming party, inviting 100 guests. They are surprised when over 300 people showed up. The Campbells are having the time of their lives. Dorothy never speaks of killing herself anymore. She is blissfully happy but faced with the age-old conundrum that lay within such satisfaction: she finds that being in a non-abusive relationship does not inspire brilliant writing. She rarely composes poetry any longer, and indeed, there are only 3 known poems written by her after the year 1935.

Dorothy meets her personal hero, Dashiell Hammett at a party during this time, and introduces herself by dropping to her knees and kissing his hand. She means for the gesture to be funny, but Hammett is horrified, as is his female companion, Lillian Hellman. In the winter of 1935, Dorothy runs into Hellman at another cocktail party, where they engage each other in a glaring contest for the better part of the evening. When they break down and finally decide to talk to one another, they are both surprised to find out that they actually like each other and become friends. The friendship is not the result of their similarities; in fact the two women are about as dissimilar as could be.

Dorothy finds that she misses New York, and all of her old Round Table friends, but no one more than Benchley. Ironically, Benchley is living 6 months out of the year in Hollywood, but he claims that his schedule is hectic. In fact, distance has developed between the old friends, partly because Alan has stepped into the role of confidant, comrade and adviser that was once held by Benchley. The estrangement from Benchley predates Dorothy's marriage to Alan, though, mainly because she had ridiculed Benchley for selling out to Hollywood, a very hypocritical stance to take, as this is the very thing she is now doing. Her contact with him becomes limited to nothing more than social engagements.

Dorothy is becoming more of a West Coaster than an East Coaster, it turns out. She mourns the severance of ties with her old friends, claiming that if you leave New York for any amount of time, everyone just figures you are dead. She does not want to be forgotten, but New York has begun to feel less and less like her home. She is once quoted as saying "rich people should be taxed for being alive." (p. 251) She is having trouble coming to terms with the fact that she is becoming one of the people she has always despised.

The pairing of Dorothy with Alan was a perfect match because he was exactly what she needed at this time in her life, and he was naturally inclined to step into the role of her manager. It is interesting, if not vaguely ironic to think of the role reversal between them: Dorothy assuming a more masculine role, the taker of the care giving, and Alan in the

more feminine role of administering to her appearance, tending to the needs of the household, and behaving in a generally motherly way.

Perhaps this is what was missing from all the men Dorothy had previously dated, as Alan Campbell was a rare and exotic breed of man: all the sensibilities and tendencies of a female, with a distinct inclination toward the feminine, who was able to simultaneously maintain a masculine foothold. Possibly, he was a once-in-a-millennial find for Dorothy.

Chapter 13, Good Fights 1936-1937

Chapter 13, Good Fights 1936-1937 Summary and Analysis

Now that Dorothy and Alan have settled into their lavish Hollywood life, and are quite content, Dorothy becomes compelled to engage herself with political causes. There are plenty to be had, but the one she approaches with the greatest passion, not surprisingly, is the news of the Third Reich's persecution of the Jews. She co-hosts a banquet with Don Stewart in 1936 where she hears firsthand about the situation in Germany. The speaker that evening is professional Communist propagandist Otto Katz, though in Hollywood Katz does not express himself with Communist terminology. Katz is an impressive and elegant speaker, and he speaks of maintaining a friendly relationship with the Soviet Union, but above all, he claims his agenda is combating fascism. Katz claims he is attempting to enlist the cooperation of the film industry in stopping Hitler and to prevent a Second World War. Dorothy jumps at the opportunity to get involved. She subsequently co-founds the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League. After a few months it is rumored that the organization has Communist ties, so some of the initial support wanes, but the League eventually thrives, and the membership blooms to some four thousand.

The whole of Dorothy's existence soon becomes absorbed with anti-fascism, and the house in Beverly Hills soon becomes a headquarters for her cause. She throws what appear to be normal social functions - dinner parties and cocktail hours - where, unfailingly, a German refugee, or a Marxist lecturer, or a trade unionist is introduced, and it is strongly suggested that there is a great need for generous contributions. Many of her friends scoff at her efforts, filing her need to play amateur revolutionary under her tendencies towards theatrics. Dorothy claims that she has always loathed the injustices of the world, and has never known what to do about it. She is amused by the irony of having gone to Hollywood and, of all places in the world, found ways to fight the values she has always most despised. Dorothy begins to divide the world into two categories: those who do not take her cause seriously, and like-minded leftists that she calls "my own people" (pg. 256.)

Her own people include Don Stewart, who has also lost many friends to the cause like Dorothy has, and Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett. Dorothy is the most saddened by the now vast expanse between herself and Benchley, who watches her inching further and further to the left with absolutely no desire to follow. In 1937, Dorothy and Benchley both happen to be in New York at the same time, and they meet up for drinks at their old watering hole, 21. Dorothy so aggressively bombards Benchley with her leftist ideology that he is not only taken aback, but also greatly angered. He counter attacks by telling her "not to make those ingénue eyes at me," (p.256) because she is no longer an ingénue. He cuts her to the quick. They do not speak again for several months.

Dorothy sees that there is also much injustice to be found right under Hollywood's very roof and is soon embracing another cause - writer's rights. It does not take her long to discover that very few actors wield the credentials that she does and are being paid practically slave wages. She begins to support the Screen Writer's Guild, a union that has encountered violent opposition from studios and writers as well. The studios oppose for obvious reasons, but what angers Dorothy the most is the opposition she encounters from the writer's themselves, who consider association with a union to be beneath them, and their art. The Guild disbands in 1936.

Alan and Dorothy are close friends with Sid and Laura Perlman, another husband and wife writing team. The Perlmans have a farm in Pennsylvania that they often escaped to once they finished a project in Hollywood and needed some down time. The idyllic storybook farm that the Perlmans describe intrigues the Campbells. Dorothy is of the opinion that one cannot lay down roots in Beverly Hills, and that she and Alan desperately need to do just that. Alan's enthusiasm comes mainly from a desire to redecorate. They both like the idea of refurbishing a home to suit their tastes, in an old house with character, which is the polar opposite of the pre-decorated mansions of Beverly Hills. The Perlmans accompany the Campbells to Bucks County, PA for a tour of local farms for sale. What they find is a 111-acre estate with a panoramic view of the Delaware River Valley, and an extremely handsome 14-room Pennsylvania Dutch house set on the property, with an astonishing asking price of just $4,500. To say that the interior of the house needs a little work is a massive understatement. This does not deter the Campbells. They decide to spend the rest of the summer purchasing and restoring the property. They call the property Fox House, as does everyone else, for the family that had owned it since the Revolutionary War. They retain an architect for the project, and race back to Hollywood where they are needed at the studio. Alan and Dorothy devote most of their energies towards Fox House - studying blueprints, choosing furniture, toying with color schemes. The completed Fox House will be their dream home.

That autumn, at the age of 43, Dorothy discovers that she is pregnant. She and Alan are overjoyed and regard this turn of events to be an absolute miracle. They are cautious about sharing the news, as there is a great deal of anxiety over Dorothy being able to carry a pregnancy to term. Once she passes the first trimester, however, Dorothy's jubilation bubbles over and she shares the news with everyone. Indeed, she develops an acute case of baby mania. So much publicity whirls around the mother-to-be, that many of her friends deem it inappropriate, and in some cases, downright pathetic. No one doubts that Alan would make an ideal father, but there was much doubt over Dorothy's abilities as a mother. Jokes are made that she would not get along with a baby, because children don't drink. Others say that the baby would emerge from the womb with a hangover needing a cup of coffee. The Campbells fly to New York for the Christmas holidays, and sometime before New Years, Dorothy miscarries. Dorothy is crushed, but hides it well. In her former life, she would have responded with thoughts of suicide, but she is a different person now, much stronger because of her marriage to Alan, and takes the loss in stride.

By spring, Fox House has a new cellar, a well, electricity, and is ready for occupancy. Alan delights in taking over the task of interior design. His home making skills pleases Dorothy and their first few months at Fox House are delightful. Things take a turn for the worse in the winter of 1936, when Dorothy meets Alan's mother. Horte Campbell is a Virginia woman, steeped in southern sensibilities, who is outraged that her son has chosen a bride only 12 years younger than his mother. As soon as the Campbells are settled in at Fox House, Horte begins complaining that she is lonely in Richmond, insisting she could be helpful to Dorothy if she were to live at the farm. She is clearly scheming to stay in the house when Dorothy and Alan return to Hollywood, and essentially is looking to destroy the paradisiacal retreat the couple has worked so hard to create. Alan and Dorothy are not taking the bait. Instead, they offer to purchase a cottage near Fox House in Point Pleasant so she can be nearby. Horte finds the house inadequate and refers to it as her "rotten lil ole shack" (pg. 269.) Having her nearby enables her to drop in whenever she chose, which is an unwelcome interference in Alan and Dorothy's lives. As much as Dorothy dislikes her mother-in-law, it is often Alan who is most annoyed by her.

There is also no escape from politics, even in the country, and the general attitude in America is that there was a war brewing. Dorothy makes it known that she believes that Communism is the great crusade of her time and that from the U.S. Communist Party, great deeds would emerge. She contributes not only money but also the prestige of her name to several Communist-front organizations such as the Southern Conference for Human Welfare and the International Workers Order. She is convinced that these are trustworthy causes, and it never occurs to her to ask questions about their origins or how the collected money is spent. Some claim that Dorothy is a secret member of the Communist Party, and indeed there is much evidence pointing in that direction, but there is no concrete proof. In 1937, she writes that she has no particular political affiliation, other than "that not especially brave little bank that hid its nakedness of heart and mind under the out-of-date garment of a sense of humor" (pg. 273.)

The Campbells continue to live in Pennsylvania and work in Hollywood; an arrangement that is not exactly budget friendly. But no matter, the Hollywood money continues to roll in. In 1937, Dorothy and Alan sign a 5-year contract with Samuel Goldwyn that guarantees a combined salary of $5,200 a week, an amount that is close to the upper limits of salaries amongst the most elite of screenwriters. Again, they are given screenplays that have been worked over by countless screenwriters, and are expected to make magic happen. They work diligently. Dorothy passionately throws herself back into the Screen Writers Guild, a project that is arising again like a phoenix from the ashes.

The Guild drafts a petition for a National Labor Relations Board hearing, insisting that writers, although artists, are eligible to unionize and their work should be considered labor. Dorothy is elected to the board. In June 1938, it is ruled that screenwriters did qualify as laborers, and a certification election held that same month allowed them to choose the Screen Writers Guild, or the more conservative Screen Playwrights as their representative. The Screen Writers Guild wins by a margin of more than four to one.

Dorothy was the ideal planting ground for the Communist Party seed. She was a woman of great influence, who could not ignore a cause when presented to her if there was an injustice being carried out. It is doubtful that she really knew what she was getting herself into, which is further testament to her strange combination of world-weariness and naiveté.

To her credit, few people at that time knew just what it was to become involved with Communism, no matter how expertly masked. Many of Dorothy's friends, however, were smart enough to instinctively shy away whereas she was the type to blindly plow ahead when there was a cause to support. This can cause us to view Dorothy in one of two ways: as intensely gullible, or as a truly fierce defender against injustice. Sometimes the lines between stupidity and courageousness can get blurred.

During this time of her life, Dorothy inherits mother-in-law Horte Campbell. Not since Eleanor Rothschild has the introduction of a new matriarchal figure into her life been less welcome. It is curious that during this time, Dorothy, upon discovering that she is pregnant, develops a fevered case of baby mania. Could this be a reaction in some way to the introduction of Horte Campbell? Could it be partly because Dorothy does not want to be the baby herself anymore, and is eager to join ranks with the motherly set as an equal? She had never wanted children up until that point, so it is a possibility. It is also possible that her biological clock had just inexplicably started to tick, because indeed, Dorothy Parker was just a normal human woman.

Chapter 14, Bad Fights 1937-1941

Chapter 14, Bad Fights 1937-1941 Summary and Analysis

Dorothy's old drinking buddy, F. Scott Fitzgerald, arrives in Hollywood in 1937. He proudly proclaims that he has been on the wagon for 10 months, but sadly his wife Zelda has been pronounced incurable and will remain hospitalized for the rest of her life. MGM offers him a 6-month contract at $1,000 a week. He inspires Dorothy to pick up her fiction writing again. He is extremely suspicious of her ties with her various causes. When she tries to lure him to political functions disguised as social events, his suspicions deepen. He meets Sheilah Graham, up-and-coming Hollywood gossip columnist, and in her he seeks to replace Zelda.

Not long after, Dorothy and Alan depart Hollywood in disgust, after they learn Sam Goldwyn is not planning to extend their contract, and they will not receive writing credit for their prior efforts. They say a bitter farewell to their California life, in favor of Fox House and Bucks County. A few days later, they change their minds and decide they need a European vacation instead. They sail for France on August 18 with Lillian Hellman.

Hellman is a difficult travel companion, to say the least, and she greatly dislikes Alan. She is jealous of Dorothy and Alan's relationship, as it is clear that he worships her, and even seeks out ways to please her - traits Hellman's partner clearly lacks. Once in Paris, they meet up with Hemingway and the Murphys for drinks. Hellman makes no attempt to hide her animosity towards the Murphys, whom she resents for their manners and money. Matters are made much worse with Hellman because important people court Dorothy at every turn, and Hellman is severely jealous. She begins to distance herself from the Campbells after a short while.

Dorothy runs into Pulitzer prize-winning foreign correspondent Leland Stowe, who tells her of the horrors he witnessed in Spain during the war. Dorothy makes the decision to travel there. Valencia is bombed four times during their stay there. The children of Spain make a great impression on her and she says, "They don't cry. Only you see their eyes. While you're there and after you're back, you see their eyes" (pg. 285.) On October 11th they fly back to Paris, which might just as well have been another planet. Once they are back in America, the effects of the trip still resonate strongly with Dorothy. She begins writing about her experiences in Spain in the form of articles and short stories. She receives a letter from Sheelagh Kennedy of the American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy group asking if Dorothy wants to aid in any way a humanitarian effort on behalf of the children of Spain, and of course, Dorothy replies enthusiastically that she is at their disposal. Within two weeks, Dorothy is the national chairman for the cause. She begins giving speeches on behalf of the cause, and is able to raise a good amount of money for Spain.

Sid and Laura Perelman give up their jobs at MGM because Laura is pregnant, and Dorothy and Alan are hired as their replacements. They are to work on a movie called Sweethearts, and it will take them until July to produce a script that is acceptable. The rumor in Hollywood is that Alan is riding on his famous wife's coattails, but the opposite is true. Alan is a disciplined worker, whereas Dorothy has a tendency to be lazy. Alan does all the typing, and according to some, he does all the work but gets none of the credit. Dorothy is not easy to work with at times, either. She is very critical and complains loudly about money mostly and the ridiculousness of Hollywood. She never seriously considers leaving though.

Madrid falls to the Fascists in1939, and money is needed to aid the refugees. Conditions in Europe worsen and Dorothy is suspicious of Hitler. When she tries to convince others, her enthusiasm tends to come off as paranoid and hysterical. Nevertheless, she is able to raise thousands of dollars in one evening for her causes, by simply throwing a benefit party at her house. Her New York friends are not supportive however, and even ridicule her.

In 1939, Dorothy becomes pregnant again, but does not slow down her drinking. By this time she knows that she probably will never be able to carry a pregnancy to term and decides not to bother. She predictably miscarries, and her marriage to Alan is never the same again after that. Dorothy begins to resent Alan for not having the wealth to take care of her, as well as the fact that his employment always hinges on her name. He cannot get a job in Hollywood without her. Their age difference does not help the situation, and Dorothy is always afraid she will lose Alan to a younger woman. She begins to gain weight, neglects her grooming, and says she longs to shut herself in a room and lock out the world. Alan suggests they go on vacation to Europe.

They sail for Paris on June 17, and a portly Dorothy is dismayed to learn that many of the passengers have mistaken her for Gertrude Stein. The attitude in Paris is that war is coming soon but no one believes it will happen that summer and spoil actual holidays. German planes circle the city every night. Dorothy is said to be wonderfully funny one minute and then bitter and angry the next. Alan however is always right there to handle her. In the fall of 1940, Dorothy has a pelvic examination that reveals uterine tumors and she needs to have a hysterectomy. Alan is bracing himself for the worst, fearing the ordeal will be horrible for Dorothy, but she comes through it without issue. In fact, Alan says she is happy and radiant once it is over. There is speculation that the ease of her recovery is fueled by the relief that her quest for pregnancy is finally over.

By December, Dorothy is fully recovered. On Friday the 13th, she and Alan attend a dinner party at the home of Nathaniel West. The party includes F. Scott Fitzgerald, Elliot Paul, Frances Goodrich, and Albert Hackett. The evening is full of nostalgia for the good old days, and they talk of how great things were back in the 20's. The following Saturday, Fitzgerald falls dead of a heart attack. The next day, Nathaniel West and his wife Eileen are killed in a car accident. The events send Alan into a tailspin, and he convinces himself that death is coming for him next. He asserts that Friday-the-Thirteenth bad luck happened in threes. Alan practically hides under the bed, trembling

with terror. Dorothy, who has always welcomed death as an opportunity to eavesdrop on people gossiping behind her back, finds his behavior to be silly.

Up until this point, Dorothy and Alan are a team, and Dorothy has defended Alan against other people's remarks. As the marriage begins to fail, the atmosphere between them disintegrates into one of disrespect. Dorothy unleashes the full force of her abuse. She knows all of his secrets and vulnerabilities, and her attacks on him are vicious. She belittles his stage career, calls him a homosexual, and delights in berating him in front of their friends. Alan takes it all in stride and remains stoic. Sid Perlman speculates that Alan will snap and "beat the living urine," (p.g 302) out of his wife.

Alan suddenly begins to assert himself when Dorothy goes back to New York for two months and Alan is surprisingly able to get work on his own. The most important factor is that of his salary, which is $1,250 a week. Dorothy returns from the East coast and to her surprise, the studio has decided to retain Alan but release her from the contract instead. Helen Deutsch, a pretty thirty-five-year-old short story writer, whom Dorothy believes is having an affair with Alan, replaces her. It gives her another reason to drink non-stop. Soon after, she checks herself into a rehab clinic for a few days to dry out.

War breaks out in December after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and in the spring of 1942, Alan makes up his mind to enlist. Alan's plans stun his mother, who promptly tries to talk him out of it. When unsuccessful, she fakes a heart attack. Alan does not take the bait, and goes forward with his plans.

It is quite possible that Alan wanted to become a mother as much or more than Dorothy did. It is also possible that he felt betrayed by her inability to carry to term and this may have been the straw that broke the camel's back for the couple. They are both relieved when Dorothy must have a hysterectomy, possibly because they both wanted to be parents badly enough that not being able to achieve it was painful and stressful. This may explain partially why Alan became so terrified by the prospect of dying suddenly - because he is unable to leave his seed on earth, and he knows he will pass on without leaving his mark behind.

Dorothy's eagerness towards death is not necessarily a healthy attitude, but it may have been in response to what she deemed the silliness of Alan's reaction. Besides, her attitude towards death is not original to this situation, again it stems back to her childhood and her belief that she was the bringer of death to the giver of her life. It is difficult not to resent Dorothy when things start to fall apart with Alan, and even more difficult to understand why she becomes so vicious towards him. It reveals even more clearly her attitude towards self-destruction, as Alan was the best thing that happened to her and the healthiest relationship she had by far.

Chapter 15, The Leaking Boat 1942-1947

Chapter 15, The Leaking Boat 1942-1947 Summary and Analysis

Dorothy turns to her family once Alan leaves, hoping they might help to minimize her loneliness. She settles in at Fox House to redesign her life and prove her competency. She toys briefly with the idea of getting a job at a factory, but quickly abandons the notion. What she needs is a job like she once had at Vanity Fair. In September, she moves to the Ritz hotel in New York City, with plans to visit Fox House as often as possible.

Alan is in basic training in Miami Beach, and to his surprise, he is having a good time. The Army Air Corps is a non-stop party. In November he applies for Officer Candidate School. Broadway director Josh Logan is in basic training with him, and he applies, too. They are both accepted. Dorothy visits him in Florida as often as possible. She is alarmed to find that he is very distant and uninterested in her. He no longer goes out of his way to cater to her every whim like he used to. He is becoming his own man again. At one point during a visit they actually have a fistfight, and the next day Dorothy has a black eye. Alan and Dorothy's relationship has never been violent before. She hastily makes her way back to New York.

Aleck Woolcott, 56, dies suddenly in January of 1943 of a heart attack and a cerebral hemorrhage, and Dorothy takes it very hard. After his memorial service a few days later, she and several ghosts from her past gather in the Rose Room of the Algonquin for one last Round Table drink. There is an uneasy silence amongst these once-dear companions, who were in the old days never at a loss for words. The reunion is distressing enough for Dorothy that she flees New York.

Woolcott's death gets Dorothy to thinking about death and aging. She finds that her ideas on the subjects are changing. She hates the idea that she is middle-aged. She decides that people should either be young or old, but revises the notion to something more sensible - young or dead. She suddenly is horrified by the idea of time passing, and begins to wonder if she really does desire death. Dorothy receives a real shock in November of 1945 when Robert Benchley, also 56, dies unexpectedly of cerebral hemorrhage. These events throw into sharp relief for Dorothy her own mortality and get her to thinking about the big questions in life. She wonders if she will ever find happiness. The deaths of so many of her friends bring her to the realization that she could die at any moment, without ever finding it. Round Tablers are literally dropping dead left and right, and at unreasonably young ages such as Ring Lardner at 48, Ruth Hale at 47, and Heywood Broun at 51. They are all substance abusers just like Dorothy.

By 1943, she stops visiting Alan in Florida and seldom sees him anymore. She also seldom visits Fox House either. She has moved into a residence hotel called the New Weston. She works for various causes, the Spanish Refugee Appeal, children's book

week, Yugoslavian relief, and the rescue of European Jews. She is observed at this time by E.J. Kahn, Jr. to be a literary figure from another era, but "small and faded, too world-weary to be witty" (pg. 324.)

Dorothy asks her sister Helen to come for a visit, and outdoes herself showing her a good time. She introduces her to Marlene Dietrich, they eat at Romanoff's, and visit the set of a Joan Crawford movie. She says later of the trip that she found herself continually drinking, which was very unlike her, but that she was proud of herself for being able to keep pace. Helen dies in January 1944, at the age of 57, and three months later, their brother Bert dies as well.

In 1943, Alan is to be sent overseas. Dorothy is miserable with the knowledge that there is no place for her in his new life, while she is stuck with half an old one. He is obviously relived to be free of her, and it makes her furious. He is stationed in London with Air Force Intelligence, and has yet to come anywhere near a battlefield. In his letters to Dorothy, he is exuberant, and Dorothy feels it is just wrong for anyone to enjoy a war so much. While he is stationed in Paris, he writes to Dorothy that he has fallen in love with another woman and that she is in love with him as well. Dorothy has a nervous breakdown and seeks psychotherapy.

By the fall of 1946, Alan writes to her to say that his affair is wearing thin and that he is coming home. Dorothy refuses to forgive him or take him back and announces that she is going to divorce him. Fox House is put up for sale and their belongings are divided. Somehow, the two of them manage to remain cordial to one another.

Dorothy suddenly found herself in the unfortunate position of survivor to many of her friends and family. This event changed her and her attitude towards death. She began to realize that she could die at any time and never reach the happiness that had eluded her. She is never really able in her life to come to the conclusion that happiness is not a destination, but the journey itself. On top of that, she is childless and although she never really admits it, this affects her deeply. Dorothy finds satisfaction in filling her life with her involvement of political causes. She also finds that the unswerving devotion of animal companionship is comforting and will have to serve as a replacement for motherhood. She also finds that it is important for the people around her, particularly her family to see what a great time she is having living the high life of literary glamour in New York City. Upon closer examination, it seems almost as though she might have been trying just a little too hard.

Chapter 16, Toad Time 1948-1955

Chapter 16, Toad Time 1948-1955 Summary and Analysis

In 1948, Dorothy becomes drinking buddies with one of Alan's military chums, Rosser Lynn Evans. It doesn't take long for a romance to ensue and he is soon living with Dorothy at the New Weston. They wind up co-authoring an unremarkable short story for Cosmopolitan. The story is sub-par because Evans is an inexperienced and mediocre writer who does not listen to Dorothy's voice of experience. Dorothy is turning out good work during this time, however, including a film treatment she has concocted with Frank Cavett. The treatment becomes a movie, The Lost Weekend, starring Susan Hayward, which earns Dorothy, Cavett and Hayward Academy Award Nominations. The movie gets exceptionally good reviews, and announces to the film industry that Dorothy Parker still has what it took to turn out great work, even without Alan. Dorothy retains top agent Irving Lazar to negotiate a contract for her with Twentieth Century-Fox. It is not long before she and Evans are headed for the coast.

The couple moves into Chateau Marmont on the Sunset Strip, and Dorothy gets to work on a new play. Through the years 1948 and 1949, Dorothy tries for the same success she and Alan had once enjoyed. She approaches her life with a new enthusiasm. She is back on top, with new job offers, a new man, and money coming in. They are not credited for most of the work they do, nor does much of it make it to the big screen. Dorothy's relationship with Evans works well at this time because he is happy to take a back seat to Dorothy's fame; this is one of the reasons her relationship with Alan ultimately failed. Dorothy writes into her plays a lot of her relationship with Alan. The play that she writes during this time, The Coast of Illyria, is a good example of this. Dorothy is convinced that the play will be a smashing hit, a notion fueled greatly by Margo Jones, head of a Dallas-based repertory theatre company. When the play opens in April of 1949, it is hailed as the best play of the season, and Dorothy is regarded as an object of great curiosity to the actors in the play, and audiences alike. The play never makes it to Broadway, however, nor to the prestigious film festivals, and Dorothy has a difficult time dealing with this reality.

Evans talks Dorothy into a month long vacation to Cuernavaca, Mexico, where they rent a house on the outskirts of town. Evans is entranced by the place; Dorothy, predictably, is not. She would have been interested to know, certainly, that one of the residents of Cuernavaca is keeping tabs on her for the FBI, to see whether or not she will make contact with the Mexican Communists. A month has passed, and Dorothy notices that Evans is paying a lot of attention to a woman who owns a dress shop in town. She decides to leave, and he tells her she should go immediately. He allegedly pulls up at the airport, stops just long enough to allow Dorothy to depart the vehicle, before gunning the engine in his haste to leave. At the airport, Dorothy does not purchase a ticket back to California. She buys one for New York.

She is soon happily installed at the Plaza, and phoning friends, promising exciting stories from south of the border. She decides it is time to swear off men forever.

Three months later, she and Alan re-marry. She feels that their surprise reconciliation is a second chance at life. Dorothy reportedly works her way around the reception saying, "What are you going to do when you love the son of a bitch?" and Alan is quoted as saying "now we can have dinner parties again" (pg. 339.) The three years since their divorce have been rough on Alan, and his prayers are answered when they are offered a job by Fox, to reunite as a writing team. Alan immediately begins working on Dorothy's health and appearance. On the surface, all is well, but both Alan and Dorothy know things will never be the same.

In April, the FBI knocks on Dorothy and Alan's door to begin an interrogation of her. Dorothy terms the anti-Communist inquisition that ensues "the time of the toad" coined by Dalton Trumbo to represent the stool pigeon who plays informer to save his own neck. Dorothy is labeled a "red appeaser," and a traitor, to which she replies that she does not even understand what a Communist organization is. The Age of McCarthyism had come, like it or not, and Dorothy, like many of her friends, is blacklisted. She is subpoenaed in 1955, and she knows she has three choices: she can invoke the first amendment and risk imprisonment, she can plead the Fifth Amendment, or she can become an informant. She makes up her mind long before she gets to the witness stand that she will plead the fifth. The FBI soon closes the file on her, declaring her not dangerous enough to pose a threat.

Alan is briefly on the hot seat as well, and he attributes his inability to find a job to Dorothy's politics. It can be the only explanation. The mood in Hollywood is approaching panic, as everyone fears blacklisting or worse, imprisonment, for his or her alleged ties with Communism. Alan suddenly walks out on Dorothy that summer, and the marriage is over again as abruptly as it had begun. All of the furniture is repossessed, and Dorothy has to take on roommates to survive. The roommates are Jim Agee, a former film critic for the Times and Pat Scallon, the 22-year-old woman with whom he is obsessed. The living conditions deteriorate rapidly, as none of them seem willing or capable of arranging maid or laundry service. Personal hygiene is also of little concern to anyone in the household. It is a situation that is said to cause the squeamish to blanch. The situation ends in October when Agee suffers a second heart attack, and Dorothy has reached her limit for filth. She moves herself back into Chateau Marmont.

By September of 1952, Dorothy is thrilled to be living in New York again. She is living at the Volney, a residential hotel just off of Central Park that is exactly to her taste. Dorothy is relatively young compared to most of the other occupants of the hotel, where most of the guests are fairly wealthy aging widows. She is soon working on a new play featuring characters that live in a hotel much like the Volney. She collaborates with Arnaud d'Usseau on the project, to be called Ladies of the Corridor. Dorothy had met d'Usseau in California and they worked well together. D'Usseau's wife, Susan, enforces strict rules about Dorothy's drinking to ensure that work gets done. The d'Usseaus soon become Alan's replacement as Dorothy's handlers. Dorothy finds that she doesn't mind being bossed around by them, and Susan is successful in keeping her sober. Through

the d'Usseaus, Dorothy also meets Zero and Kate Mostel. Dorothy adores this couple. The couple feels obliged to spoil Dorothy like the aristocrat that she is. Kate describes Dorothy as "a little flower who wasn't like the rest of us. She was a fragile, ladylike lady who had to be protected. Somebody would always do her taxes, always escort her home in a taxi, and always pick up the tab in a restaurant" (pg. 349.) Zero's brother Milton becomes her accountant and Susan runs her errands.

Ladies of the Corridor is completed by the end of the year, and its themes are strongly feminist. The play is to be stocked with a first rate cast, and will be produced by Harold Clurman. It premieres on October 21, 1953 and receives mixed reviews. Some love it, while some hate it. George Jean Nathan finds it to be completely honest, and voted it the best American play of the season. It closes after six weeks. Dorothy and d'Usseau begin collaborating on a second film, The Ice Age, which never advances beyond initial pondering. When they call it quits on the play, they basically do away with the friendship as well. Dorothy had needed the d'Usseaus, but she eventually resents being dependent on anyone. Despite the productivity her temporary sobriety has allowed, she does not feel appreciative any longer for the micro management.

Dorothy and Alan probably reunited out of habit. It seems like they were not quite sure how to proceed with their lives without each other. They were unable to rekindle the old formula, unfortunately, and that's why it did not work the second time. It is interesting to think of Dorothy living in such squalid conditions with roommates, and to contemplate why she would subject herself to that. True, she never was a terribly clean person, but such exaggerated poverty seems to indicate a dangerous mental state.

Handlers who were very protective of her and the management of her affairs again took in Dorothy. They wanted to handle everything in her life that she was unable to deal with so that she can think about writing and nothing else. Again we see people from outside her inner circle who want her to live up to her full talent and potential, which is very great, possibly beyond anything they have seen in anyone before, and are at a loss in the end as to why Dorothy insists on squandering it on her own self-loathing.

Chapter 17, High-Forceps Deliveries 1955-1960

Chapter 17, High-Forceps Deliveries 1955-1960 Summary and Analysis

Broadway fame does not seem to be in the cards, but Dorothy suddenly finds herself writing fiction again. For the first time in years, Dorothy submits a short story to The New Yorker. Harold Ross had died of cancer in 1951, and the editor is now William Shawn. Dorothy no longer looks at The New Yorker the way she once had, and the coolness between author and publication is evident when her fourth short story of the year is rejected. It is sold instead to Esquire magazine, where Dorothy begins writing a monthly column and begins a close friendship with publisher Arnold Gingrich. The magazine is going through a slump, and new life is suddenly breathed into its pages by the efforts of the great Dorothy Parker. She is paid $600 a month, and offered the first financial security she has felt since the 1930's.

Soon her salary is $750 a month, and she can even count on being paid for the months that she misses a submission. In all, she writes a total of 46 columns for Esquire, and reviews over 200 books. Typical for Dorothy, she is often late for deadlines, partially because writing is often a torture for her, but more likely because she enjoys the company that is sent out from the magazine to retrieve her work. Gingrich considers his job of getting work out of Dorothy on time as high-forceps delivery, though he is more successful at it than any other publisher had ever been.

Gingrich finds himself to be very protective of Dorothy, and even takes some heat for having hired a blacklisted writer. Gingrich isn't the only one looking out for Dorothy. Leah Salisbury, literary agent, is determined that Dorothy earns a decent living. Dorothy has nothing to show for a lifetime worth of work, and at age 65, it is impossible for her to even think about retiring. She has to keep working to survive, whether she wants to or not. Salisbury begins acting on Dorothy's behalf, and begins cracking down on the frequent pirating of Dorothy's efforts, that sometimes go as far as high school drama productions to network television programs. She also helps Dorothy adapt old writings so they can earn new income, and urges her into new projects as well. Some of the projects just aren't meant to happen, like Dorothy's memoir. She says that rather than write her life story, she would cut her own throat with a dull knife. When Salisbury writes to Dorothy to ask if she will consider discussing a motion picture based on the story of her life, Dorothy does not dignify the letter with a reply.

In 1958, Dorothy receives the Marjorie Peabody Waite Award for achievement and integrity from the National Institute of Arts and Letters. The award gives a cash prize of $1,000. At the awards ceremony, the following, written by Lillian Hellman, is read:

"To Dorothy Parker, born in the West End, New Jersey, because the clean wit of her verse and the sharp perception in her stories have produced a brilliant record of our time. Because Miss Parker has a true talent, even her early work gives us as much pleasure today as it did thirty years ago." (p. 362)

It is not common for standing ovations to occur in 1958, but when Dorothy receives her award, the whole audience is on its feet and the people in the crowd are wiping their eyes. After receiving the award, Dorothy meets Elizabeth Ames who had established the honor in memory of her sister. Ames is eager to help Dorothy and arranges the further honor of an invite to Yaddo, a 400-acre retreat for artists, writers and composers that Ames administrates near Sarasota Springs. Dorothy does not want to insult Ames, but she is less than eager to exile herself in the country, where she cannot bring her dog. She tells Ames that she would prefer to come in the autumn and in September, when she can put Ames off no longer, Dorothy arrives for a two-month stay. The setting of Yaddo was said to by idyllic for writing, although Dorothy as a city gal through and through, finds herself instantly bored. Her writer's block comes back in full force. Dorothy is thrilled when November arrives and she can go home. The whole experience has been a huge waste of her time, but Dorothy nevertheless sends a gracious letter of thanks to Mrs. Ames, because she does not want to seem rude.

The following spring, Dorothy is elected a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. The afternoon of the induction ceremony, Dorothy prepares herself by drinking several cocktails and when it is time to deliver her speech, she is only able to stand briefly and slur that she never thought she would make it. Later, in the middle of the keynote address, she stands and again declares that she never thought she would make it, and has to be shushed. At the reception afterward, Dorothy is thrilled to meet Marilyn Monroe, recently married to Arthur Miller, who is there to accept a prize for drama.

Dorothy spends most of her time with friends Bea Stewart and Lillian Hellman, whom she enjoys making laugh. She is often invited to Hellman's house in Martha's Vineyard where she is reminded of her childhood in the West End. Dorothy's apartment in the city does not have air conditioning, and it is miserable in the heat of summer. The tables have turned with Dorothy and Lillian. Once, Dorothy was the one in the spotlight and Hellman stood jealously aside. Now it is the other way around. Lillian wants just one thing from Dorothy in return for her kindness: she wants Dorothy to not talk badly about her behind her back. This is a nearly impossible thing to ask of her. The only people who Dorothy never says a cross word about are the Murphys, though she very rarely sees them anymore. The truth is, Dorothy craves privacy, which is not an easy thing to achieve in New York, a city full of old acquaintances. It is rumored amongst her old friends that she is becoming a hermit.

Alan is living in Hollywood, and so of course she also seldom sees him, but she receives news of him from friends. Alan is struggling, often staying with friends to survive and unable to find work. He visits Dorothy at the Volney, to find her living in filth with the carpet riddled with dog waste. Their exchange is brief and uncomfortable and Alan quickly makes his exit.

It is interesting that during this time of her life, Dorothy found such kindness from people in the industry who were practically strangers to her. They stepped in on her behalf and worked tirelessly to help her get her career back on track, like Arnold Gingrich, Elizabeth Ames, and Leah Salisbury. It is a testament to Dorothy's talent and reputation that so many people, all through her life, were willing to step up and help her, even fiercely defend her.

It seems that they could see two things about Dorothy. First was Dorothy's ability to produce work of classic quality and the second was Dorothy's inability to handle anything on her own. Further testament to her writing prowess lies in the obvious recognition she garners for her lifetime achievement awards, critical praise, and undying public devotion. Why then is she so reluctant to write her own memoir? Is it because she wants the praise of others and despite all those years and autobiographical stories that she has written, writing a memoir is still far too much self-examination? Perhaps she does want the praise of others, but always on her terms and at arm's length. Perhaps she needs to keep her true self at arm's length as well.

Chapter 18, Ham and Cheese, Hold the Mayo 1961-1964

Chapter 18, Ham and Cheese, Hold the Mayo 1961-1964 Summary and Analysis

In the spring of 1961, though unwilling to reconcile with him, Dorothy agrees to join Alan in Hollywood. Their old friend Charles Brackett is now head of Twentieth Century-Fox and decides to ignore Dorothy's blacklisting, and hires the duo for the film adaptation of a French stage play. Alan has actually sought out the job, and is told he can have it only if Dorothy will be on board. The play is called The Good Soup, and Fox intends it for Marilyn Monroe. Dorothy greatly admires Monroe and is eager to produce a film in which she will star. Still, the prospect of giving up her life in New York and the independence she has created for herself is less than desirable. She agrees in the end, but retains her apartment at the Volney.

She reluctantly moves in with Alan at the home he has purchased on a sociable and colorful street called Norma Place. Many celebrities own homes on the street, and neighbors often dine together, enjoying evening cocktails and walking their dogs down the street. It is a gossip-rich environment. When Alan brings Dorothy home to Norma Place, it is to a grand reception and she is irritated to discover that he has clearly boasted about her "homecoming" in a falsely sentimental way to the neighbors. Indeed, she is a prize to be beheld, and far and away the most famous celebrity in the neighborhood.

In April, they begin twelve weeks of solid and consecutive work, which is followed by sporadic work through Thanksgiving. Dorothy is surprisingly cheerful and sober, and even on good terms with Alan. Suddenly, they are having fun together again, and the good times continue all through the summer and fall of 1961. When Dorothy has to decide if she is going back to New York or not, she decides to give up her apartment at the Volney and stay on with what had, incredibly, become a sweet life in California. For lean times when there is no work, Dorothy and Alan apply for unemployment, and are happy to discover they can make as much as $600 a month that way. It turns out that The Good Soup is not the comeback they had hoped for. Marilyn Monroe is instead assigned to Something's Got to Give, a movie that is never completed. Monroe is fired from Fox because of her inability to work due to her emotional disintegration. The question of whether or not she would return to Fox to make another film is answered when she dies in August of 1962. The Good Soup is never to be produced. Dorothy and Alan know it was going to be hard to find another job.

Dorothy feels like a guest in Alan's house and it makes her uncomfortable. She has a hard time relating to the neighbors of Norma Place because they all regard her as a legend, and their adoration makes her squirm. The neighborhood is largely homosexual, and they go out of their way to be kind to her. It had always been rumored that Alan is a

non-practicing gay man, and never more than when they live at Norma Place. He is never known to act on his homosexual urges, but it is clear that he enjoys the company of young and homosexual males.

Dorothy keeps on with Leah Salisbury and she continually presents her with adaptation projects, none of which ever prove suitable. Alan is also presented with acting jobs that he routinely rejects as well. They continue to collect unemployment, and Dorothy writes for Esquire. Alan collaborates a scheme with Parker Ladd, West Coast editor for Charles Scribner's to land Dorothy a job as English Professor at California State College. They scheme for months before presenting the inflated honor to Dorothy, who quickly agrees to become the distinguished Visiting Professor of English. Her salary for teaching two courses is to be twenty thousand dollars.

Dorothy quickly comes to understand that the students she is to be teaching are in her class just to obtain three credits, and for nothing more. Most of them have never heard of her, nor take any pleasure in literature. She finds that only three of them can construct an acceptable sentence. Dorothy, nearly 70 years old, finds that she is too old for the kind of pressure teaching at a city college presents. It was expected that Alan would take responsibility, as always, for keeping Dorothy on task, but in 1962 he is drinking an unusual amount and she is left on her own. She often does not show up for class. Alan has also become addicted to barbiturates. He acts unlike his usual self. He is aggressive, sloppy, and sullen.

Through the spring, the friction between Alan and Dorothy worsens. Alan has a trap door installed behind a false bookcase, just like he had seen in a movie once, and is often hiding from Dorothy there. On the 14th of June, Alan begins drinking early and then drives to pick up his dry cleaning. When Dorothy arrives home late in the afternoon, there is no response from beyond the bookcase. Dorothy forces her way in, and finds him dead. The coroner says he has died of an overdose of barbiturates No one believes that he intentionally killed himself, although that's what all the evidence alludes to. Alan's sudden passing understandably stuns Dorothy, but she woodenly ships his body off to his mother who joins him in the Hebrew Cemetery in Richmond three years later. Dorothy does not attend the funeral, nor does she arrange for a memorial in Los Angeles. She considers the whole blubbery condolence-filled business of death to be a ridiculous ritual.

That autumn, Dorothy turns seventy, though she says she feels closer to ninety. She tells the Associated Press that if she'd had any decency, she would be dead by now. Most of her friends are. In the months after Alan's death, she is intensely miserable, and many people step up to try and take care of her. She resists their care, predictably. Sally Foster is one of the few Dorothy could stomach, and she comes every day to care for her. She begs Dorothy to abstain from drinking, or at least to wait until the evenings. She often hides Dorothy's liquor from her. Dorothy just goes to the store and buys more. Friends nightly invite her to restaurants to dine, though Dorothy has no interest in food. She soon suffers from malnutrition. All she wants is to be left alone, in peace, so she can drink. She often falls down when trying to walk her dogs, and once breaks her shoulder. On the weekend of JFK's assassination, she is in Cedars of Lebanon hospital,

watching the drama unfold on the television. She has other physical problems including edema; the hospital staff soon discovers that she is a surly patient to look after. Dorothy continues to drink and mourn Alan's death in seclusion. In early 1964, she sells the house and all the furniture and prepares to depart California.

While it is comforting to imagine that Alan reunited with Dorothy because he personally missed her in his life, it is far more likely, based on their history and his situation at the time that his motives were more professionally based. The fact that Dorothy was willing to give up the independence that she had carved out for herself in New York to reunite with him, just as soon as he said the word, tends to indicate that perhaps her dependence on him was just as fierce as his dependence was towards her. While they were happy again for a while, things disintegrated again and it brings to mind the question of Alan's possible suicide. Is it possible that he killed himself because he came to realize that he couldn't live with Dorothy, and he couldn't live without her either? Alan's death marked the loss of Dorothy's counterpart and her lifelong partner. It could be argued that this was the beginning of the end for Dorothy.

Chapter 19, Lady of the Corridor 1964-1967

Chapter 19, Lady of the Corridor 1964-1967 Summary and Analysis

Nothing much was different about the Volney when she moves into an apartment on the eighth floor. For the rest of 1964 and through much of 1965, Dorothy is afflicted with a variety of ailments and is often in and out of the hospital. She is just eighty pounds with poor eyesight and she falls down a lot. She is seldom the center of attention now and so agrees to do most interviews when asked. She is unable to get around without a nurse any longer. It is brought to Dorothy's attention that it is prudent for her to make a will. Her assets are modest, but she decides that everything, including her copyrights and royalties, will go to Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and in the event of his death, be forwarded to the NAACP. She says she wants to be cremated and there are to be no funeral nor memorial services. She jokes that the least she could do now was die, but she still isn't ready.

The thought of dying after a lifetime of mediocre achievement fills her with shame and sadness. By this time, holding her arms up to the typewriter for even a few minutes requires a huge effort, though she still continues to work as much as she can. In her final magazine article, she says:

"For it is the sort of nostalgia that is only a dreamy longing for some places where you never were. And I never will be there. There is no such hour on the present clock as 6:30, New York time. Yet, as only New Yorkers know, if you can get through the twilight, you'll live through the night" (pg. 401.)

In spring of 1965, Dorothy sends the nurse packing because she feels rejuvenated. There are features written about her in Ladies Home Journal, New York Herald Tribune, and she even dolls herself up for an Associated Press photo. For the first time in twenty years, she makes a date at the Algonquin to meet some friends. Around this time she renews her friendship with Wyatt Cooper, who is married to Gloria Vanderbilt. She is eager to get out into society again, and let people know she is still alive. She spends most of her time, however, watching television and reading gossip magazines. She loves soap operas, especially As the World Turns.

For her 72nd birthday, Dorothy is invited to Sid and Laura Perelman's apartment in the Village. Dorothy disdains not being able to drink, but she has promised her doctor that she would refrain because it increases her tendency to fall down. She sourly sips a ginger ale that evening. Her promises to stay on the wagon are always short lived. Bouts with drinking often land her in the hospital. One always leads to too many.

There are few friends remaining to Dorothy, but amongst them are the Mostels, Sara Murphy and the Perelmans and Lillian Hellman, but only in times of crisis. Gerald Murphy had died the fall Dorothy returned to New York, and Sara now lives at the Volney with a nurse. Dorothy's closest companion remains Bea Stewart, who never chastises her when she reaches for the scotch. She has few pleasures left in life, and jokes about death. She tells a friend, "don't feel badly when I die, because I've been dead for a long time" (pg. 407.)

Early in 1967, Marcella Cisney, who operates a theatre company at the University of Michigan, has the idea to produce A Dorothy Parker Portfolio. Dorothy gives the project her full endorsement. Dorothy is given $1000 in advance royalties, and she is asked to attend rehearsals. Her spirits are greatly buoyed by the idea of a Broadway show in her name. In March, Gloria and Wyatt Cooper give a party in Dorothy's honor. When Dorothy discovers that none of her friends have been invited, just the New York elite, as categorized by Gloria Vanderbilt, she declares that she will not attend. The truth is that she cannot wait for the event and despairs at having nothing to wear. "Gloria the Fifth," as Dorothy calls her, has a pearl-beaded gold brocade caftan sent to Dorothy's house. Sara Murphy takes her out and buys her matching shoes and a handbag. The dinner is a huge success, an elegant affair, and Dorothy, in typical fashion, revels in expressing her disdain for the entire event for several days afterward.

Mrs. Dorothy Parker dies the afternoon of June 7th and is discovered by a chambermaid. The cause of death had been a heart attack. Martin Luther King, Jr. is stunned to hear that Dorothy has left her estate, amounting to $20,448.39 to him as he had never met her. Dorothy is laid out in the gold beaded caftan that Gloria Vanderbilt had given her. Lillian Hellman takes charge of the funeral arrangements. Dorothy has asked that there be no memorial service, yet 150 people showed to pay their respects. The obituary in The New York Times takes up almost two whole pages, including almost the entire front page. Lillian Hellman and Zero Mostel deliver eulogies.

Dorothy is cremated on June 9, 1967. Her ashes remain unclaimed until1988, when the NAACP finally claims the ashes and transfers them to a specially designed memorial garden in Baltimore.

To the surprise of Leah Salisbury, Lillian Hellman refuses to allow the production of A Dorothy Parker Portfolio, and has the final say as the executor of the will. When Martin Luther King, Jr. dies in 1968, however, Hellman is outraged to find out that the executorship of Dorothy's estate is passed exclusively to the NAACP. Dorothy outlived all the Round Tablers, except Mark Connelly and Frank Sullivan. Sullivan wrote to a friend shortly after her death:

There really is no way to know for sure why Dorothy bequeathed her estate to MLK, a man she had never met, but it is not hard to imagine her reasoning. She clearly believed strongly in any cause which would fight injustice and what symbolized that more than the American civil rights movement? It was in a way the final snub to Lillian Hellman, who thought she would control the memory of Mrs. Dorothy Parker as distributed to the masses by denying production of A Dorothy Parker Portfolio.

As always, Dorothy got the last laugh and control was ultimately granted to a much greater power than Hellman, the NAACP. It is interesting to ponder why it was that Dorothy, even up until the end of her life, could not resist enjoying herself in the moment, only to turn around and shred the event and all involved the next day. Why did she always resort to this? Was it because she was never satisfied with herself, her writing, and her personal life? Did it make her feel better to berate practically everyone she knew behind their backs? It is practically impossible to be a student of satire, theater, or short story fiction writing and not appreciate the depth of Dorothy's success, yet she always felt that her success was merely mediocre. It's a shame that a writer of her status and talent who absolutely forged a path for feminists and writers of all kinds through history would feel like her accomplishments were second rate. Surely Dorothy would be flattered to know that through her achievements, she set the standard for everyone to hope to achieve. Then again, perhaps such praise would make her uncomfortable.

Characters

Dorothy Parker

Dorothy is the main character and the subject of the biography. The story chronicles her life and work. Dorothy was a complicated person who in many ways was jaded and world-weary but in other ways, was naïve. Dorothy was most well-known for her writing contributions during the 1920's to magazines such as Vogue, Vanity Fair, and The New Yorker. She also was a founding member of the elite literary group known as the Algonquin Round Table. Most well-known for her humor and satire, she also wrote poetry and fiction, much of which was cleverly disguised in the form of an autobiography. She also was well-known for her theater criticisms and eventually movie scripts for Hollywood.

During her time in Hollywood, she was indirectly involved with the Communist Party and was, in consequence, blacklisted for a time during the age of McCarthyism. She was the sort of person who could never turn her back on injustice, and as a well-liked woman of notoriety, was the perfect target for the professional propagandists of that era. She was also greatly affected by the horrors of war that she witnessed during her time in Spain. Dorothy was known as having a mercilessly scathing wit and could be counted upon for a wisecrack and a raucous good time.

Dorothy's life was not all fun and games, however, as she battled depression and chemical addictions, and survived several attempts at suicide. Dorothy was known during the prime of her life to really never quite be sober, and was always ensconced in a "scotch mist." Though she lived on the west coast for part of her life, and even in Europe occasionally, Dorothy Parker is a name synonymous with New York society and the epitome of living the high class literary life, Big Apple and 1920's style.

Eddie Parker

Eddie was Dorothy's first husband. Their relationship was a fairly turbulent one because as soon as they married, Eddie immediately enlisted in the Army and encountered a series of horrors as an ambulance driver on the front lines. The result was a severe addiction to alcohol and morphine, and the marriage was one based largely on emotional and chemical co-dependency. Like Dorothy, he also attempted suicide several times. The marriage ended after only a few years.

Alan Campbell

Alan was Dorothy's second husband. He stepped into the role of not only her husband, but her manager and her handler. Alan grew up with alcoholic parents and instinctively knew how to handle Dorothy. When they met, he immediately instigated a makeover for

Dorothy, insisting that a woman of her elegance and stature should always look impeccable.

For many years, the relationship between them was peaceful and happy, but Dorothy was one to never be fully satisfied and soon began to tug at the threads of their lives, causing it to unravel. Alan joined the army and was sent to England where he fell in love with another woman. When that affair ended, he came back to America and discovered that he wanted to reunite with Dorothy. His motivations may have been professional as he found it difficult to find work without her. Alan and Dorothy married and divorce twice. They also lived and worked together off and on through the rest of their lives.

Robert Benchley

Benchley and Dorothy met while working together at Vanity Fair. He was Dorothy's confidant and non-sexual soul mate for much of her adult life. It could be argued that they had an unhealthy co-dependency and it was a relationship that neither of their spouses understood. When Dorothy was fired from Vanity Fair, Benchley quit as well, claiming that the job was not worth it without her there. Dorothy would call this the greatest act of friendship she had ever known.

Those around them could not understand the platonic affection that Dorothy and Benchley felt for one another and indeed felt that he fussed over her to a ridiculous degree. However both Dorothy and Benchley were of the opinion that as long as they had each other, everything else would be alright. Their friendship failed around the time Dorothy married Alan Campbell, possibly because Campbell stepped in and filled the role that Benchley had satisfied and she may simply have not needed him any longer.

Aleck Woolcott

Woolcott was The New York Times' drama critic and original founder of the Algonquin Round Table. Woolcott adored a captive audience and he was extremely famous during his time. He held court with hundreds of devotees ranging from The Marx brothers to Eleanor Roosevelt. To many, he was somewhat of an acquired taste, and was renowned for his bitchiness. It was said that entering into a conversation with him was akin to petting a surly and overfed Persian cat. Woolcott always considered Dorothy the greatest female wit of the age and was delighted to have her as a member of the Round Table.

Lillian Hellman

Hellman met Dorothy while they were working in Hollywood. The two women could not have been more different, yet they formed a love-hate friendship that lasted through the end of Dorothy's life. Hellman was a woman of spirit and independence, which were traits she and Dorothy shared. They both embraced feminist sensibilities before it was fashionable to do so. During the era of Dorothy's extraordinary fame, no one had yet

heard of Hellman, but when Dorothy's fame began to decline later in her life, the tables turned and it was Hellman who was garnering all the praise.

Ernest Hemingway

Possibly the most famous of all Dorothy's acquaintances, Hemingway and Dorothy also had a love-hate relationship because Hemingway was at times deeply offended by her. Hemingway's scathing denouncements of Dorothy were hidden from her all her life and certain poems he wrote about her were not published until after her death.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Dorothy and Fitzgerald worked together in New York and Hollywood and caroused together within the literary circles. Fitzgerald is probably most famous for his work The Great Gatsby, which was inspired by one crazy summer on the Gold Coast of New Jersey amongst the raucous parties Dorothy and Fitzgerald attended together.

John Garrett

John Garret was one of the many affairs that Dorothy had after her marriage to Parker had failed and before she met Alan Campbell. Garrett is one of particular note because Dorothy, despite her considerable experience with men and several painful heartbreaks, still rushed headlong into the affair with Garrett. He was known for his legendary exploits and delighted in playing one woman off another. Still, Dorothy allowed herself to be vulnerable to this man and suffered greatly for it. The relationship between them indicates that Dorothy was more naïve than even her closest friends realized.

Henry Rothschild

Henry Rothschild was Dorothy's father. Her mother, Eliza, died when she was just 5 years old and Henry was left with three children to raise on his own. He married again and his second wife, Eleanor, was thoroughly hated by the Rothschild children, Dorothy especially. Dorothy and her sister often summered at the beach and Henry and Dorothy often corresponded. It is said that he fostered Dorothy's love for poetry and the English language. Their friendship is evident in the letters between them.

Objects/Places

New York

Dorothy is born and raised on the east coast and works for the early part of her career in New York for various magazines and as a film critic. She returns several times through her life to her home town of New York. This is also where she dies.

Hollywood

Dorothy leaves New York in favor of Hollywood, California, the movie capitol of the world, to write film scripts for major motion pictures. The wages Dorothy and husband Alan earn in California are astronomical, even by today's standards.

Paris

When Dorothy first travels abroad, it is with Earnest Hemingway to the fashionable French city of Paris. She travels back to Paris several times through her life and it is often her port of call in Europe.

Spain

Dorothy travels to the country of Spain at least twice in her life. Dorothy is far less than impressed with Spain upon her first visit, despite the ringing endorsements of Hemingway. Upon her second visit, there is a war at hand and she is moved by the devastation she witnesses.

Bucks County, Pennsylvania

Dorothy and Alan purchase and restore their dream home, Fox House, in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. When they look to escape the pressures of Hollywood life, they flee to their Pennsylvania farm.

Denver, Colorado

Dorothy and Alan leave New York so Alan can perform in the Elitch Gardens Repertoire Theatre in Denver, Co, and wind up having to marry amidst a swirl of media pressure due to their living in sin.

Cuernavaca, Mexico

When Dorothy separates from Alan she moves for a brief time to Mexico with a male companion, and is under FBI surveillance due to her possible Communist activity.

Switzerland

Dorothy accompanies the Murphy family to a resort in Switzerland for a time when their son Patrick falls ill with tuberculosis.

The Algonquin Hotel, New York

This is the famous site of the Algonquin Round Table, and home to Dorothy for a time. It was an important object in the story because not only was it a regular watering hole for the Round Tablers, it was their clubhouse as well. It served a deeper purpose for Dorothy in that hotel living suited her perfectly, and she regarded the Gonk as a home - not always an easy thing for her to find. It held an almost motherly quality for Dorothy, providing her every need day or night.

The Volney Hotel, New York

Dorothy lived out the end of her life at the Volney. It was a complex home to many wealthy and aging widows and the source of inspiration for one of Dorothy's last works, a play entitled Ladies of the Corridor.

Themes

Feminism

Feminism is the doctrine advocating social, political, and all other rights of women equal to those of men. Feminism is also an organized movement for the attainment of such rights for women. Dorothy is an advocate of feminism before feminism really is a culturally prominent concept, and long before the movement of women's liberation. Much of Dorothy's writing is thinly masked autobiography and her female characters tend towards the socially disobedient and rebellious.

One of Dorothy's earliest personal influences is Becky Sharp from Thackeray's Vanity Fair, who is critically described as an anti-hero figure yet is a role model and mentor to Dorothy. Sharp is a character that is so rebellious that even her author disapproves of her and to Dorothy, she is divine. It never really occurs to Dorothy that she is a woman living in a man's world and thus should be limited in any way.

During an era where women being subservient to men was the absolute standard, indeed any other idealism was not even a consideration, Dorothy Parker was not afraid to write like a man, cuss like a man, or have almost exclusively male friendships. Broadway characters were based on Dorothy's patriarchal insubordination, and invariably, these characters were wise-cracking, fast-talking, and alcohol-guzzling women who were not afraid to deliver a salty line. Without really knowing that she was a pioneer for women's liberation, Dorothy was exactly that and she forged a pro-feminist path with unerring style and cynicism.

Co-Dependency

Co-dependency pertains to a relationship in which one person is physically or psychologically addicted to alcohol or gambling, and the other person is psychologically dependent on the first in an unhealthy way. Co-dependency is a theme in Dorothy's life not only with her relationships with men but also with alcohol and other substances. As with many artistic geniuses, Dorothy, while capable of producing outstanding writing beyond the capability of regular people, is incapable of handling the mundane aspects of her life such as housekeeping and paying her bills.

Additionally, as is typical with high-strung artistic personalities, Dorothy suffers from the dissatisfaction of her life and is never convinced that her work is worthy. She develops chemical and emotional dependencies while trying to cope on a daily basis. Also interesting to ponder is the idea that it was said of Dorothy that while she was happy, as she was during the early years of her marriage to Alan, she found it difficult to produce quality work. When she was miserable, in an abusive or a co-dependent relationship, she was able to turn out outstanding, classic, timeless work. The question at hand then becomes, "Is it possible that misery was simply necessary?"

Communism

Communism is a system of social organization in which all economic and social activity is controlled by a totalitarian state dominated by a single and self-perpetuating political party. The idea of Communism was introduced to Dorothy prior to the age of McCarthyism, and in her quest against all injustice, Dorothy was taken in by professional Communist propagandist, Otto Katz.

It can be argued that Dorothy honestly did not understand what she was getting herself into but such proclamations held little water during the anti-Communist movement and inquisition that soon followed. Dorothy first sought to fight anti-fascism when she publicly protested the execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. She was arrested for her involvement in the case but was able to at least delay the execution.

This was her first taste of political advocacy and it felt great to her. The catalyst was then a trip to Spain, where she witnessed the horrors of war and decided that she could not, in good conscience, sit back and do nothing. The causes she was subsequently presented with seemed like a way for her to make a difference, but she didn't realize she was actually assisting Communist-fronted causes, rather than legitimate ones. Dorothy was not surprisingly blacklisted from Hollywood in consequence of her ties with the Communist Party. She was subpoenaed to appear in court and defend her actions, and eventually she was absolved of all incrimination during her inquisition. Many of her friends were not as lucky and in some cases were actually imprisoned.

Style

Perspective

This piece is written from a third-person biographical point of view. The observations of the narrator are based on research of the minute details of the life of Dorothy Parker. Beginning before her birth and finishing after her death, the reader is able to build a well-rounded image of this individual based on the biographer's research of the cultural mood of the ages, the settings in which Dorothy lives and works, and the recorded actions that she takes throughout her lifetime. The emotions and ideas of the people involved in Dorothy's life, and those of Dorothy herself, are expressed through observation and quotes, as well as analysis of her life's work.

This biography begins in New Jersey and New York, which is where Dorothy was born and raised. Dorothy lived and worked in New York City for most of her young life, and this is where she gained most of her notoriety. She wrote for magazines like Vogue, Vanity Fair, and The New Yorker, and was a major member of the Algonquin Round Table. Dorothy also lived briefly in Denver, Colorado with her husband Alan while he worked for the Elitch Gardens Theatre Troupe and she spent an uncharacteristic stint in her life homemaking. The couple then went on to live and work in Hollywood, California, where they made an astronomical amount of money writing movie scripts and dialogue.

Other points of interest are Spain, where Dorothy witnessed the horrors of war. She felt compelled to take up with various causes in Paris, Dorothy's port of call when she traveled to Europe, and in Switzerland, where she traveled with the Murphy family to a health resort where she aided in the care of their ailing son who suffered from tuberculosis. Dorothy and husband Alan purchased an estate called Fox House in Bucks County, Pennsylvania while they were married and it served as a retreat to them when the pressures of Hollywood life proved to be too much. Also, Dorothy lived briefly in Cuernavaca, Mexico with male companion Ross Evans after she and Alan separated.

Much of Dorothy's life was spent bouncing back and forth from California to New York. Her residences in New York ranged from the homes she grew up in under her father's care, to various apartments in her adult life, and then finally hotel living, which she discovered was her ultimate preference. All of these locations are richly described, adding to the reader's experience of the biography. One is able to more accurately imagine Dorothy's living experiences because of the descriptive language used with regards to her various homes throughout her life.

Tone

The language of this biography is editorially descriptive, although never unnecessarily flowery. The tone is always matter-of-fact and professional. It is expertly laced with a bevy of vocabulary words. The dialogue, because it is a biography and a record of

someone's life, is in the form of quotes and includes some excerpts from Dorothy's work as well as the work of various artist's within her social circle. The biography reads like a story, narrated by a well informed and omniscient observer who is privy to the minutest details of Dorothy's day-to-day life, as well as the lives of her companions.

Many of the quotes are "witticisms" or spoken pieces that were subsequently recorded to chronicle the banter of the members of the Algonquin Round Table. Other quotes are light verse poems that Dorothy wrote, which depict her creativity and ability to spontaneously compose rhymes on the fly. The biography itself, overall, reads like a story, narrated by a well-informed omniscient observer who is privy to the minutest details of Dorothy's day-to-day-life, as well as the lives of her companions. While it is impossible to paint a completely literal portrait of an individual's life, this biography is nearly as accurate, specific and detailed as one could possibly be, and obviously researched very thoroughly.

Through select quotations from Dorothy Parker, the reader gets to know all sides of her multifaceted character. The tones of the quotes shift, mimicking the mood and emotional shifts of Dorothy during different times in her life. Evidence of Dorothy's life and lifestyle can be found in her own masterpieces; this biography is as close to a memoir as one will read about Dorothy Parker.

Structure

This work is constructed of 19 chapters, which are all approximately 20 pages in length. Each chapter sums up single years or blocks of years as measured out by the stages of Dorothy's life. Some of the chapters are dictated by the work Dorothy is doing at the time, but for the most part, they are indicative of what is happening in her personal life during that phase.

Each chapter is titled according to the theme of that time frame, and in a word or two, sums up the attitude and tone for that year or group of years. The mood is set with an introduction of THE ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 1927, which describes the hotel and the events happening there in that year. It gives us a quick glimpse into the pinnacle of Dorothy's life, a snapshot of the high times of her life, and gives us an idea what to expect as we read on.

The first two chapters, through page 18, are devoted to Dorothy's childhood, detailing her upbringing and laying the foundation for what is to come in her life. The next three chapters, through page 67 are the meat and potatoes of her career, and chronicle the events leading up to the scene described in the introduction. These three chapters detail the events that were to be the framework for her famous career.

The next six chapters, essentially, are a record of her romantic relationships, her problems with alcoholism, her suicide attempts, and the work she was able to complete during this time. The remainder of the book, which consists of chapters 13-19 discusses

the disintegration of her marriage, her involvement with the Communist inquiry and the end of her life and career.

Quotes

"To say of me, and so they should, It's doubtful if I come to good" (pg. xvi.)

"But now I know the things I know, And do the things I do, And if you do not like me so, To hell, my love, with you!" (pg. xvii.)

"Taking her own inventory at the age of thirty, she listed the three things she could count on having until she died. Laughter, hope and there was always a palimpsest memory- 'a sock in the eye'' (pg. 22.)

"Some children here have the whooping cough, If we don't get it, we'll be in soft. The desk clerk's manner is proud and airy, Nevertheless, we think he's a fairy, There are some people right next door, Who turned out to be a terrible bore. There always must be some kind of hitch, Isn't Nature...'finish this line for yourself and get a year's subscription to the Boston Post'" (pg. 79.)

"You can lead a horticulture, but you can't make her think" (pg. 82.)

"At a Halloween party, she hoped they would play ducking for apples. There, but for a typographical error, was the story of her life" (pg. 82.)

"Her tongue seemed born quick and deadly, like a knife already implanted before anyone could catch a glimpse of the blade. She took pleasure in galloping to the punch line before her victims got there" (pg. 82.)

"Wasn't the Yale Prom wonderful? If all the girls in attendance were laid end to end, she wouldn't be at all surprised" (pg. 82.)

"She was the very embodiment of New York sophistication" (pg. 84.)

"Theirs was a special affection. Magical, fierce, childlike" (pg. 85.)

"Their habit was to shove the troublesome parts of life, all the painful stuff they found hard to acknowledge, under Frank Case's big table and pull the cloth down" (pg. 86.)

"The gut-searing loneliness of women who have careers, the women who don't marry, the women who do but divorce, the women deprived of maternal warmth and comfort who are condemned to seek love forever in the barren soil of husbands and children and even animals; women howling primitively for nourishment, flanked on one side by rejecting mothers, and on the other by rejecting lovers" (pg. 109.)

"Drink and dance and laugh and lie, Love the reeling midnight through, For tomorrow we shall die! But, alas, we never do!" (pg. 157.)

"BARTENDER: What are you having? PARKER: Not much fun" (pg. 157.)

"The sun's gone dim and The moon's turned black, For I loved him, and He didn't love back" (pg. 193.)

"Dear God, please make me stop writing like a woman. For Jesus Christ's sake, amen" (pg. 203.)

"Oh come, my love and join with me The oldest infant industry. Come seek the bourne of palm and pearl, The lovely land of Boy-meets-Girl, Come grace this lotus-laden shore, This Isle of Do-What's-Done-Before. Come, curb the new, and watch the old win, Out where the streets are paved with Goldwyn" (pg. 277.)

"Though the world grows darker, And life grows starker, I'm all for a luncheon For Dorothy Parker" (pg. 292.)

"Higgledy Piggledy, my white hen; She lays eggs for gentlemen. You cannot persuade her with gun or lariat, To come across for the proletariat" (pg. 318.)

Topics for Discussion

Discuss the concept of Matriarchy. How does this concept apply to Dorothy and how does it affect her life? Describe different matriarchal figures or objects that Dorothy encounters later in her life, beyond her childhood.

How does Dorothy's own quest for motherhood tie into her involvement in her various causes, and how does it tie into her desperate need for constant canine companionship?

Discuss feminism. How is Dorothy a pioneer for feminism, and does she intentionally seek the cause of feminism? Compare and contrast the ideas of feminism in regards to rebellion, and explore the reasons why Dorothy prays to stop writing like a woman.

Is Dorothy's relationship with Robert Benchley a healthy one? Why or why not? What about her relationships with Eddie Parker or Alan Campbell? Discuss co-dependency with regards to these relationships. Discuss co-dependency in regards to her early involvement with the Algonquin Round Table.

Why does the attention that Dorothy receives as a result of her fame make her uncomfortable? If not, why not?

How do you, as the reader, feel about Dorothy once her marriage to Alan begins to fall apart and do you think she is in any way justified in her cruelty towards Alan? What does this behavior say about her self-destructive nature? Do you find yourself sympathizing with her or with Alan during this era?

How do Dorothy's ideas about aging, death, and dying change as she navigates her life, and do you think her opinion changes because she is destined to remain childless? Why does her second miscarriage so badly damage her relationship with Alan?

Discuss Communism. How is Dorothy involved, or is she? When she is being interrogated, is she justified in "pleading the fifth" and behaving as though she had no idea what she was getting herself into? Did Dorothy deserve to fall prey to the age of McCarthyism, or was her blacklisting from Hollywood unjustified?

Why does Dorothy clash so vehemently with Hemingway? Discuss in terms of masculine versus feminine.