

# **Edie, an American Biography Study Guide**

**Edie, an American Biography by Jean Stein**

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# Contents

<a href="#">Edie, an American Biography Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 1-4.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 5-9.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 10-13.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 14-19.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 20-26.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 27-34.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 35-45.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">28</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">32</a>



# Plot Summary

"Edie: An American Biography" by Jean Stein is a non-fiction account of the life of Edie Sedgwick, an actress, model and socialite who came into prominence in the 1960s. Edie was one of the most popular women in the world for a time, although her psychological problems and drug addictions made her "reign" turbulent and short.

Many people associate Edie Sedgwick with The Factory, Andy Warhol's trendy art studio in Manhattan. Edie was a fixture at The Factory for less than two years, although her presence and status as one of Warhol's superstars is legendary. Edie Sedgwick grew up on a ranch near Santa Barbara, California and was the seventh of eight children born to Alice de Forest and Francis Sedgwick. The Sedgwick family was affluent and recognized as a force in art and politics. Many believe that Edie's privileged childhood allowed the heiress and socialite an excessive amount of freedom, which may have caused her downfall.

The Sedgwicks were well educated and artistic people. Francis Sedgwick was obsessed with conformity and success, a trait that caused a great deal of grief for several of his children. Although the Sedgwicks were known as charismatic, fun loving and intelligent people, it was also well known that many of the family members suffered from emotional and psychological problems.

The book starts off with a rather detailed history of the Sedgwick and Minturn families. The illustrious history of the families, particularly the Sedgwicks, is a vital piece to the puzzle when one considers how Edie was raised, and the stress on her and the other Sedgwick children in regards to status, money, politics, and education. There may be slightly more than what is necessary about the family history, especially when it comes to those who are not featured in the book. The book is designed to appear as though many of the interviewed subjects are sitting in a room conversing about the Sedgwicks and Edie's rise and fall. The editing is clever and confusion minimal. The people who agreed to be interviewed by Stein are those who were intimately involved in some aspect of the lives of the Sedgwick family or had personal knowledge of Edie and her various activities.

While the format of the book is clear, there are several conflicting stories, ones in which an accurate time frame are important. The best example of this is the story of Edie's abortion. Although the facts surrounding the abortion were never proved nor disproved, the timing makes a difference regarding Edie's claim that the baby she was carrying belonged to Bob Dylan. Overall, "Edie" is an insightful look into the life of a famous young woman who ended her life all too soon through drug addiction and excess.



# Chapters 1-4

## Chapters 1-4 Summary and Analysis

"Edie: An American Biography" by Jean Stein starts out with a detailed history of the illustrious Sedgwick family. Although a long description of the Sedgwick ancestry may seem superfluous, Stein shows that it is important to understand the mentality and social standing of the Sedgwick family of which Edie Sedgwick was a member. As it is throughout the entire book, the story of the Sedgwick family is told by various family members in a conversational manner. The first Sedgwick on record is Robert Sedgwick, who served as the first Major General of the Massachusetts Bay colony. The ancestor most referred to, however, is Judge Theodore Sedgwick, a man who was intimately involved in the American Revolution. Judge Sedgwick was also the first man to battle in court for a black woman's freedom. Eventually, Judge Sedgwick became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts. Judge Sedgwick resided in Boston, although members of the family migrated to Stockbridge, Connecticut. It is in Stockbridge that Judge Sedgwick is buried in a most elaborate and unusual fashion. Judge Sedgwick is at the center of what is called the Sedgwick Pie, adorned with an obelisk that is surrounded by the judge's ancestors. Any of Judge Sedgwick's ancestors may be buried at the Pie; however, it is imperative that the ancestors form a circle around the obelisk with their feet facing the judge's tomb. It is said that when Judgment Day comes, all the Sedgwicks will stand and face the judge so that the only people they will be looking at are other Sedgwicks.

The Sedgwick-Minturn legacy began when Sarah May Minturn married Henry Dwight (Babbo) Sedgwick in 1895. Sarah and Babbo had four children, among them, Francis Minturn (Duke, Fuzzy) Sedgwick, born in 1904. Like other members of the family, Francis Minturn attended the Groton School and Harvard yet seemed to be plagued with phobias and the darkness that eventually caused him to have a nervous breakdown after the death of his mother.

In 1929, Francis Sedgwick married Alice Delano de Forest. Francis and Alice had eight children: Alice (Saucie), Robert Minturn (Bobby), Pamela, Francis Minturn (Minty), Jonathan, Katharine (Kate), Edith Minturn (Edie), and Susanna (Suky).

Overall, the Sedgwick family seems to be very close-knit. There are many references to grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins throughout the work. Along with the Sedgwick children, there is ample commentary from other family members, particularly cousins as well as family friends and observers.



# Chapters 5-9

## Chapters 5-9 Summary and Analysis

Alice "Saucie" Sedgwick was born in 1931, the first child of Francis and Alice. Saucie got her nickname because when she was born her father said she looked like a sausage. At the time, the family divided their time between the Cold Spring Harbor on Long Island and Santa Barbara.

Because of Francis' poor nervous system, his professors at Harvard Business School encouraged him to develop his artistic side. The Sedgwick children believe that their father carried a sense of shame for not becoming a banker, as was popular in the day. Instead Francis Sedgwick devoted himself to becoming a sculptor. He was also well known for being obsessive about physical fitness and appearances. According to Saucie, Francis Sedgwick never wanted to have children and seems to have little interest in their activities. Minturn Sedgwick, Francis' brother, relays a story about the number of Alice and Francis' children. Francis once made a comment that Alice continued to have children just to prove that she could have more than anybody else. In 1943, the Sedgwicks moved to California permanently, and the children viewed it as pure paradise. Francis was an avid rancher and the family would first live on a 50 acre fruit ranch in Goleta. Saucie's memories of life at the fruit ranch were filled with light and music. Saucie refers to her parents as Renaissance people, although they tended to be more cultivated than intellectual.

During the Second World War, the Sedgwicks bought another ranch in California called Corral de Quati. This ranch was a 3,000 acre, working cattle ranch. Francis thought ranching was a suitable alternative to military service for which he was rejected. Francis desperately wanted to be in the military, especially since his brother Minturn was serving in the intelligence branch of the eighth Air Force stationed in Europe. However, Francis was rejected, most likely due to bronchial asthma, as well as the fact that at the time he had Alice had six children. Although Alice had increasing difficulties with the birth of each child, she continued to get pregnant. Alice had become allergic to anesthetic and when she delivered Edie, she nearly died.

Edith Minturn Sedgwick was born in Santa Barbara on April 20, 1943. She was the seventh child of Francis and Alice and was named after Francis' favorite aunt Edith Minturn Stokes. Edie was only six months old when Jane Wilson became the Sedgwick children's nurse. Even from such an early age, Jane claims that Edie was a headstrong little girl. Francis and Alice spoiled Edie and did not discipline her. Jane was stricter with Edie, yet she never spanked her or any of the other Sedgwick children. When Edie was five, a new nurse came to work at the Sedgwick home.

In keeping with the conversational manner, several entries from the Sedgwick children discuss family pets and life on the ranch. One very important person who lived on the ranch with the children was Francis' father Babbo. Babbo was a well-educated man,



and, although he loved to read classic literature, he was often seen as being more modern than most of the family, even the children. By this time, Babbo was quite old, and many members of the family worried that he might die on the ranch. Things changed dramatically when Babbo met and married Gabriella Ladd, a woman who was a great deal younger than he. Francis was outraged at the thought of another woman taking the place of his mother and consequently tightened his reign on his own children.

In the 1950s, oil wells became increasingly prevalent near the ranch. Francis and Alice were horrified. Both felt that the presence of oil wells near their property was obscene, although the money generated by the wells enabled the Sedgwicks to move to a third ranch called Rancho la Laguna de San Francisco. The new ranch was a dream come true for Francis. Laguna consisted of 6,000 acres and was much more dramatic in appearance than the previous ranch. The ranch may have seemed even larger considering there were no dairy cows or pigs. It was at the new home that the lifestyle of the Sedgwicks began to change. Francis and Alice began drinking with dinner, and the family butler began dressing in a white coat and serving the family at the table. The three youngest children also moved into the main house next to their parents' bedroom.

There was more entertaining at Laguna than at the previous homes. The parties became more frequent and often consisted of outdoor picnics they referred to as "round ups." The children tell of discovering their father's infidelities and how their mother managed to not take it out on them. Francis' studio was filled with sculptures, many of which were busts of his conquests. Although Alice remained silent about the affairs, she began to become down with new allergies and low-grade fevers, which often sent her to the hospital. Francis would then repent for fear of losing the person who loved him the most. Despite the drama in the marriage, life at Laguna seemed to be ideal for all involved.



# Chapters 10-13

## Chapters 10-13 Summary and Analysis

Life began to change at Laguna. Saucie recounts her rebellion against her parents. Francis and Saucie had a volatile relationship. As the oldest daughter, Saucie was the first to stand up to Francis, telling him that she needed to have her own life. Francis attempted to keep control over Saucie and tried to have her thrown out of Radcliffe by telling the Dean she was promiscuous. The final straw for Saucie was one night when the family was out on Long Island, and Francis made what Saucie consider to be a pass at her. Saucie claims that was the last time she ever had any feelings for her father.

Francis put a lot of pressure on the children, particularly Minty and Bobby. When they were at school at Groton, Minty began to avoid Francis after Francis insisted that Minty play football, a sport for which he was not built. Francis resented Minty's refusal to come home and telegraphed every family member on the East Coast, ordering them to deny shelter to Minty, should he ask.

When Groton decided to admit blacks to the student body, Francis went berserk. He wrote letters to the school and the alumni protesting the integration. Francis had a great deal of prejudice in him, and while he believed it was acceptable for blacks to go to Harvard, Groton was like a family to him, and blacks were not acceptable in his family. According to Saucie, "My father's view of blacks was: "The Negro is first cousin to the monkey and that is a fact." Saucie believed that the rage had more to do with Francis not getting his own way rather than his feelings about blacks. Francis couldn't stand it when something went against him or refused to conform to his wishes. This can be seen clearly in his reaction to Babbo and Gabriella's marriage. It was about this time that Babbo died. He was 95 years old.

Due to immense psychological pressure, Minty began drinking and sought psychiatric treatment, which he thought should be paid for by Francis. Minty had a great deal of trouble, first at Groton when he refused to play football, and then he was turned down by Harvard for difficulties in facing challenges. Minty went into the Army where he served for three years before finally entering Harvard in 1959. Shortly after entering Harvard, Minty began taking pills, drinking heavily, and spending a great deal of money. According to Saucie, Minty just got "crazier and crazier." Eventually, Saucie convinced Minty to commit himself to the psychiatric division of New York Hospital.

Eddie started at the Katharine Branson boarding school at age 13, which was about the time Babbo died. Eddie did not do well at boarding school and told Suky that she had been having nightmares about their mother. Eddie was eventually taken out of school. There were many rumors about her leaving, including rumors that she'd contracted mononucleosis or leukemia. It was obvious to everyone close to the Sedgwicks that Eddie suffered from anorexia.



A pivotal incident during Edie's formative years was when she discovered Francis having sex with another woman. Francis was furious at being found out and slapped Edie, telling her that no one would ever believe her. A doctor was called and Edie was given a large amount of tranquilizers. Alice was in deep denial about the affairs. From that moment on, Edie seemed to believe that everything that went on around her was nothing more than an act.

Edie went to St. Timothy's in 1958. St. Timothy's was a small, exclusive school, located on a secluded Maryland State. At first she made a good impression, but soon it became apparent that Edie was intent on creating relationships filled with drama, jealousy, and rivalry. Edie began flirting with seniors at the school and became quite bold in her actions. She started to get into trouble by wearing the wrong clothing and provoking her teachers. Edie also began to exhibit almost manic behavior, going back and forth between happy, magical moods and times when her life seemed incredibly dark.

Saucie recalls a conversation she had with Edie shortly after she left St. Timothy's in 1960. Edie had returned to the ranch and it upset Saucie to see that her baby sister got everything she wanted, including the use of Francis' prized Mercedes. Edie had developed a way about her that was self-righteous and arrogant. The sisters had a conversation in which Edie wanted Saucie to say she was the most beautiful of the Sedgwick children. Saucie refused. The comment wasn't meant to be mean, but Saucie believed that Pamela was the prettiest, had the most beautiful legs, and was the most special. It was the only conversation Saucie could recall having with Edie, and as Saucie would later say, "I disliked her heartily."

As time went on, Edie became more dramatic and obsessed with being glamorous and privileged. When things started to go poorly, Francis and Alice decided to take Edie to Austria. After an argument in a hotel room in Vienna, Francis declared that Edie was very sick, and if Edie didn't go into a mental institution, he would leave the family. It was a very difficult decision for Alice, who was obsessed with Edie yet could not imagine life without Francis.

Edie was sent to Silver Hill, a psychiatric hospital where Minty had been a patient. Silver Hill was lush and posh enough to be a private country club. While in residence, Edie was fond of saying she was the only person they couldn't figure out, and she took great pride in that. Regardless, Edie was the subject of as many as 20 shock treatments. Eventually, Edie was sent to Bloomingdale, a strict, closed hospital that wouldn't tolerate any of Edie's antics. Many people declared Bloomingdale to be the type of hospital that cures people; once a patient had been in the facility, they never wanted to go back again. Toward the end of Edie's stay at Bloomingdale's she was granted a visitor's pass, which allowed her to leave the grounds. While she was out on the pass, Edie became pregnant and has an abortion. This was met with great anger and hostility from various members of the family. The story around the abortion varies with some believing that Edie requested the abortion, while others believe that the doctors at Bloomingdale arranged the abortion because they were fearful of Edie's deteriorating mental and physical states.





Edie moved to Cambridge in 1963, with a plan to study art with a cousin, Lily Saarinen. The would-be artist took great pride in being elegant in her gray Mercedes and in her sculpting. Lily considered Edie to be "the most talented young person I've ever taught art to." Edie's mania seemed to increase around this time. She became very high strung and erratic, often working frantically on her sculptures through all hours of the night. She also took great delight in becoming chameleon-like in her behavior. According to friends and family, Edie developed a type of charisma that stopped the world whenever she entered the room.

Edie became obsessed with the intellectual life at Harvard and fell in with a group of gays often referred to as "nitroglycerin queens." She wanted to have sophisticated intellectual friends who had no problem acting in an outrageous manner. Things began to change when Edie turned 21 on April 20, 1964. All her friends were excited that she would finally be able to drink legally. Plus, at age 21, she was eligible to receive the inheritance given to her by her grandmother. Although Edie enjoyed being around intellectuals, she purposely avoided reading newspapers or taking any interest whatsoever in current events.

Suky also lived in Cambridge that year but rarely saw Edie unless she was in trouble. Minty finally had a complete nervous breakdown in Central Park and was admitted to Bellevue. According to Harry Sedgwick, Minty quickly became nothing more than a name on the patient roster. Nobody cared if he screamed or yelled for help. Eventually, Minty was transferred to Manhattan State and then was sent back once again to Silver Hill. Minty had objected to returning to Silver Hill, but Alice liked the doctor at the facility and Minty was taken on as the patient. It wasn't long before Minty committed suicide. He was 25 years old. Edie was devastated by Minty's death. She blamed Francis for ridiculing Minty over the fact that he was gay and for practically disowning him. Later, Edie revealed that Minty had called her shortly before his death. He told Edie that she was the only person he could talk to and the only Sedgwick for whom could he has any hope.



# Chapters 14-19

## Chapters 14-19 Summary and Analysis

Bobby was in a hospital in Connecticut when Minty died. Unlike Minty, Bobby was unpredictable in his behavior. Like Edie, Bobby took great pleasure in being a chameleon. According to family friend, George Plimpton, Bobby was the only person he ever knew who was afflicted by complete narcissism. Bobby was known as being intelligent and charming and was admired by his professors at Harvard. Bobby and Francis had a volatile relationship because Bobby believed that Francis' ways were "Boy Scout-ish." The relationship deteriorated and every time Bobby visited the ranch, Francis ridiculed him saying he was stupid and his only hope was to marry a rich girl. Bobby eventually had a nervous breakdown. He began to see a psychiatrist who continually told him that he was doing fine, yet his friends and family saw him as being lost and confused.

Alice Sedgwick's main concern about Bobby was that his hair was too long and people at Harvard would think he was a homosexual. Bobby's behavior became more radical and perhaps his political activities were to distract himself and his family from his homosexuality.

Cambridge became suffocating to Edie and she decided to move to New York in 1964. She went to live at her grandmother's apartment at 71st St and Park Avenue. Edie took great pleasure in living the rich life, although it was awkward at her grandmother's apartment. The grandmother rarely left her bed and kept the apartment very dark. Edie's bizarre habits turned the household upside down and drove the servants crazy.

It was about this time that Edie began to change, including discarding her previously conservative dress in favor of more fashionable outfits. She decided that she wanted to become a model and started attending parties and social events. Edie entered the New York scene just as many of the old rules were being broken, and the people and clubs became more liberated. Eventually, Edie moved out of her grandmother's apartment into her own place, located in the East 60s. Although the apartment was elaborately decorated, Edie had a tendency to let it become unbearably messy. She began to take acid and surround herself with bizarre people while spending her inheritance in a frivolous manner. It was about this time that she met Bob Dylan and Bob Neuwirth. Although Edie was spending money rapidly, she often neglected to pay her bills and was routinely cut off from limousine companies and marketplaces. In six months time she spent her total inheritance of \$80,000.

Francis heard about Edie's shenanigans and insisted she fly to California for Christmas. Edie and Bobby wanted to spend Christmas together in New York, but Edie was required to go to California and Bobby was not welcome. Like Edie, Bobby had spent all his money and continued to be self-destructive. On New Year's Eve, Bobby went to visit his friend Peter Sourian and wanted to have a drink. Peter had a party to go to and



since Bobby didn't want to go, the two went their separate ways. That night, Bobby wrecked his Harley-Davidson and never regained consciousness. Bobby Sedgwick died on January 12, 1965; he was only 31 years old. There was never a funeral and Francis and Alice Sedgwick never flew east to see their son. About the same time Bobby had his accident, Edie was in a serious car crash in California. Later, Edie told a friend that she knew Bobby was going to die, that in some way he was going to kill himself.

Edie met Andy Warhol in early 1965, through a mutual friend named Lester Perskey. Andy already had an entourage and was known for his parties and artistic success. Edie and Andy developed an immediate rapport and became inseparable. Many people believe that Andy was so fascinated with Edie because he longed to be like her.

Andy Warhol, grew up in McKeesport, Pennsylvania but always seem to be ashamed of his origins. In interviews Andy routinely lied about his age and his birthplace. Andy also told fabulous stories of being ill as a child and suffering three nervous break downs before the age of 11. At a young age, Andy began to explore commercial art. His teachers at Carnegie Tech disapproved of his work and often considered having him expelled from school. Eventually, Andy moved to New York and after he started making money, he brought his mother to live with him in a one-bedroom apartment. Mrs. Warhola spoke badly broken English and when she spoke to Andy, it was in Czech. Andy would only speak to her in English.

Although Andy was becoming increasingly successful, he was often referred to as a friendless and sad man, who was intimidated by many in the art world. Still, he ingratiated himself to the likes of Truman Capote and drew the attention of artists, Jasper Johns, George Segal, Walter Hopps, and Roy Liechtenstein.



# Chapters 20-26

## Chapters 20-26 Summary and Analysis

At the end of 1963, Andy moved into a loft on East 47th Street that would become known as "The Factory." The floor plan was completely open and filled with musical equipment, photographs, paintings, and cans of film. The furniture mostly came from the Salvation Army. The famous red velvet couch that had been found on the street by Billy Name was an instant attraction, and eventually became a focal point in The Factory and on some of Warhol's films. Some referred to The Factory as a glamorous clubhouse and the people inside would do anything to get Andy's attention.

The central characters at The Factory changed as frequently as Andy's whims and affections. Many of the people who became Warhol's superstars were simply people who went to The Factory and never left. Some of the people were considered to be talented or crazy or bizarre. One such person was Billy Name, a photographer who took up residence and for all intents and purposes lived in a bathroom that he had converted into a dark room. There are a number of conversations and monologues in the book from people who were regular attendants at The Factory. Each one tells of experiments with drugs, pornography, and bizarre relationships.

As much as Andy Warhol was a voyeur, it seems that most of his relationships did not contain great deal of physical interaction. The artist once told someone that he'd had a traumatic experience when he was younger and had decided at that point to withdraw as much as possible.

Although Andy was considered to be a great film director, fellow artist Gerard Malanga insists that Andy never actually directed the film. Instead, he was fond of turning the camera on and allowing anything to happen, after which he would shape the film into whatever format pleased him at the time.

Eddie soon became a hot topic of conversation and began to receive a lot of press. During that time, in 1965, magazines and newspapers were the primary sources of information and trends. Eddie began to believe her own press and became even more bizarre and erratic. Whenever Eddie attended an event or exhibition with Andy, reporters and television cameras followed. Although Eddie loved the attention and publicity, she often couldn't conceive of her own popularity.

Francis was obsessed with Eddie's success. One night Eddie arranged for Francis to meet Andy Warhol at the River club in Manhattan. Andy came in late and barely spoke a word to Francis. Francis was very accommodating, but his charisma and presence intimidated Andy. Eddie was nervous about the meeting and wanted desperately for the two men to get along. There were other father figures in New York at the time, such as the doctors who were in the practice of giving out "vitamin shots" that were liberally laced with Methedrine. Eddie was one of the people who spent a great deal of time with



these doctors and getting shot up. At one time Edie was so thin that she couldn't tolerate the shots standing up and had to lie down. Everyone became obsessed with the vitamin shots, which were sometimes replaced with LSD.

People began to question the Edie's sexuality. Some believed she was romantically involved with Andy Warhol, while others speculated that there were also women in her life. Another popular place to hang out in New York was Max's Kansas City. Getting a back room at Max's was akin to walking on water, and those who could manage it were considered to be some kind of Gods. Max's became the place to be seen.



# Chapters 27-34

## Chapters 27-34 Summary and Analysis

Things began to change with Edie. She began questioning the scripts for Warhol's movies and often refused to act in them. In order to teach her a lesson the Warhol people found a woman who looked similar to Edie but wasn't nearly as pretty. They dressed her up and convinced Edie that she had been replaced by this new girl, who would certainly be the next big star. Eventually, Edie stopped acting in Warhol's films and their relationship deteriorated even further. The final straw seemed to be when Edie decided she wanted to make real movies and considered moving to Hollywood to try to make it in film.

It was Andy that told her about Bob Dylan's marriage, which extremely upset Edie. Dylan had told Edie that he wanted to make a movie and star in it with her. Many have said that Edie took the relationship with Dylan more seriously than he did, that he simply had a fascination for Edie, who wasn't afraid to stand up to him. Shortly after, The Factory was condemned and Warhol and the superstars were left to find a new studio. Not long after taking up residence in the new building, Valerie Salonis shot Andy, Fred Hughes, and another person at the factory. Apparently Valerie was a bad shot and while Andy ended up in critical condition, no one died.

After Edie's relationships with Andy and Dylan dissolved, she turned her focus to becoming a model. The 1960s were a time of being outrageous, of making fashion out of almost anything. It was crucial that models also knew how to dance and be "with it." Betsey Johnson was at the forefront of fashion at the time.

Edie was Betsey's first model and has been credited with starting the unisex trend. Shortly after Edie posed for Vogue and captured the attention of the world. Edie was happy at the time and everyone thought she was wonderful, that she possessed some kind of magic. Edie's relationship with Vogue was short-lived in part due to her connection with the drug scene. Edie would later confess that most things she had done were motivated by "psychological disturbances." She claimed she didn't know how blessed she was and did many things to screw it up. During the filming of Ciao! Manhattan, it was clear that Edie was still bitter about her failed relationship with Andy Warhol. Edie claims that her addiction to heavy drugs was due to her time spent at The Factory. She referred to herself as "a good target for the scene," one that would blossom into "a healthy young drug addict."

One night, Edie's apartment caught fire and she ended up in Lenox Hill. She claimed that the fire started when she was lighting candles, but there were doubts about the fire's origin. Edie told a friend, "I have an accident about every two years, and one day it won't be an accident." After the fire Edie moved into the Chelsea Hotel, a place where she seemed to know everyone and where there was a tremendous amount of freedom. Edie was a star at the Chelsea.



Edie surprised her family when she returned home for Christmas in 1966. According to Jonathan Sedgwick, Edie was like an alien, stick thin with super fake drooping eyelashes. Edie's insecurities came out in full force and she did everything possible to get attention. Jonathan saw his sister as having two selves; he wanted to see the inner self and Francis was angry with the outer self. This new Edie had no problem disagreeing or arguing with her parents, something they weren't used to and didn't appreciate. When Edie tried to have a prescription filled for a form of speed, Alice spoke to her family physician and found out that the drug was harmful. Francis and Alice began giving Edie sedatives. One night they woke her up, told her she was sick, and that she was going to be sent to the hospital. Francis and Alice tried to trick Edie into believing she was going to a regular hospital when in fact it was a psychiatric ward. Bob Neuwirth recounts speaking with Francis, who seemed proud that he'd had Edie committed. The Sedgwicks could not control the Edie any longer.

Edie eventually returned to New York. As usual, Edie pretended that nothing bad had happened in California and no one pressed her for details. She tried out for a play written by Norman Mailer but her audition was unsuccessful. Edie began to fear she was losing her edge. Shortly after, Edie and Bob Neuwirth parted company; Edie's addiction became worse, and her behavior more erratic. No one knew what to do with her.

The impetus for *Ciao! Manhattan* picked up around this time. Despite Edie's strange behavior she was the first choice for the movie. Everyone on the set was still getting "vitamin shots," which made the whole process even more unpredictable. Edie took more than most and was reputed to be running at fifteen hundred miles an hour at all times. One of the Warhol's superstars named Paul America was one of the few people who knew how to handle Edie. America had been a heroin addict but had stopped using, and reportedly convinced Edie to stop as well. However, they were still taking a lot of speed.

One of Edie's friends became convinced she should meet the poet Leonard Cohen, who lived down the hall. Cohen was very much into incense and candles and when he went into Edie's rooms, he became alarmed at the pattern in which Edie's candles were arranged. Cohen believed that the arrangement of candles was very significant and relayed to the friend that Edie was unintentionally casting a bad spell of fire and destruction upon herself. Not long after Cohen's remarks, Edie's apartment caught fire. After Edie was released from the hospital, she went to live with a friend because Alice Francis had cut her off financially, and her inheritance was gone. Edie was penniless.

The director of *Ciao! Manhattan* found someone to tend to Edie and watch her to make sure she didn't get injured. Still Edie continued to take drugs at a breakneck speed. The Sedgwicks continued to be concerned about Edie's health and often questioned her friends about their daughter's condition. Edie swore that she no longer used heroin, and one friend said that she did not drink. Despite all the rumors and signs of trouble, the Sedgwicks were in deep denial and believed Edie was fine. *Ciao! Manhattan* became a bigger-than-life project. It was also the end of Edie's relationships with many of the remaining superstars and those on the New York scene. It was said that Edie was at her

peak in some ways, utterly fabulous. However, she was taking so much speed, almost constantly, that her behavior had become unbearable. There was an attempt at reconciliation between Edie and Andy and they shot one more short film together.





# Chapters 35-45

## Chapters 35-45 Summary and Analysis

Edie went back to California and stayed at the Castle, an estate in the Hollywood Hills. As with The Factory, many people stayed at the Castle or visited including Bob Dylan and Jim Morrison. Jim Morrison and Edie seemed to have many things in common since they were both controlled by their demons.

Edie began working on a new film in August 1967, titled Lulu. After the film was finished, Edie returned to New York. By this time, Francis was dying of cancer and Edie was desperate to speak with him. Francis would not see Edie, nor would he speak to her on the phone. It did not matter how much she begged, Francis had disowned her. Shortly before Francis died, he confided to his brother Minturn that all of the Sedgwick children blamed him for their problems and that the children were right. At the very end Francis would see almost no one. Francis Sedgwick died on October 24, 1967. Edie was in the hospital once again when Francis died. Many people thought his death would be a sort of relief for Edie, a removal of some of the immense pressure imposed on her by her father. Edie's behavior continued to be erratic and perhaps became worse as she continued to go in and out of hospitals.

Edie became involved with Kit Carson, a writer, who had a subconscious desire to save Edie from herself. The couple moved into the Warwick Hotel as husband and wife because Edie was convinced she was blacklisted from all New York hotels due to the fires. When Carson found out Edie was still taking speed, he became very angry. Carson tried to get Edie to stop but to no avail. Finally, the writer left Edie in the company of three Warhol superstars and went back to Texas. A few days later the police came to Carson's home with the news that his wife was in Bellevue Hospital. Edie relayed stories about her stay in various psychiatric hospitals. She claimed that her behavior became even more compulsive and she began suffering from physical ailments. Edie would often become hysterical and require sedation. There were drugs available in the psychiatric ward, yet Edie was terrified of being prosecuted and didn't touch any drugs during her three-month stay.

Alice took Edie out of the Manhattan State Hospital and took her back to Laguna in the fall of 1968. Edie was in terrible shape. She had no motor control and could hardly walk without falling over. Her speech was fragmented, and it was soon discovered that oxygen was not getting to her brain. Through a lot of hard work, Edie eventually became well enough to live on her own. One day Edie ran into Jonathan on the street and they went for coffee. Edie confided in Jonathan that the reason she went into Bellevue is because she had been in a motorcycle accident with Bob Dylan. She also said that the doctors at the hospital had forced her to have an abortion. Jonathan never found out if it was true. Edie is on speed again and tries to convince Jonathan to have sex with her. Jonathan refused. Jonathan had been present at one time when Edie overdosed on speed. Although Jonathan helped her through the trauma, he told Edie that he didn't



have the power to save her. Edie eventually decided the only way to deal with her addiction was to get arrested. Jonathan could not talk her out of it. Edie received five years probation after she was arrested for drugs. Edie returned to Cottage Hospital where she had been born. Edie liked the hospital and was happy there, particularly because she could be the center of attention, which she loved.

Michael Post met Edie at Cottage Hospital. Michael had heard of Edie and was attracted to her, but refrained from having any kind of sexual relationship with her. There were many men in Edie's life and Michael refused to be just another person who shared her bed. After Edie got out of the hospital, she became involved with a biker named Preacher Ewing. Edie fell in with the Vikings motorcycle club and tried hard to become a biker chick. She was known for prancing around with no clothes on, as if she was still a model. Many people were not impressed with Edie, and referred to her as a rich hippie, someone who did not belong.

When David Weisman tried to contact Edie regarding *Ciao! Manhattan* in the summer of 1970, he discovered she was back in Cottage Hospital. Much of the film was unfinished and Weisman decided Edie would be the center of the film. Edie received permission from her psychiatrist to leave the hospital to finish the film. Edie became obsessed about her appearance and went so far as to have breast implants. Part of the film revolved around electric shock treatments, something which Edie had intimate knowledge of and was eager to share with the cast and crew of the film.

Edie began acting erratically again, switching from speed to sodium pentathol. She began to disappear from the set and continually messed up until she drove everyone crazy. She eventually returned to the clinic where she received real shock treatments. Michael Post became the person who would continually watch over Edie and eventually fell in love with her, much to his chagrin. Edie was 28 years old at the time and Michael was only 20. Michael had made a promise to himself that he would not have sex until after he had turned 21 but gave in, for fear of losing Edie. Michael and Edie married at Laguna on July 24, 1971. Jonathan was not invited to the wedding because the majority of the Sedgwicks did not approve of Jonathan's lifestyle. Edie called Jonathan and begged him to come to the wedding along with his wife, Krista.

According to Michael Post, Edie was anxious to get pregnant after the wedding. She stopped drinking and taking drugs and was doing very well. Months later, a physical illness required Edie to take pain medication and once again the pills became part of her life. The doctor, Alice, and Michael became Edie's caretakers and controlled her access to the pills. A friend of Edie's from Cambridge was set up to film a fashion show at the Santa Barbara Museum. Edie was there with her brother-in-law and immediately caught the attention of the star of the show, Lance Loud. Loud was a huge fan of pop art, Andy Warhol, and Edie. Loud had met Andy after sending him a large number of letters, and he was anxious to seize the opportunity to spend time with Edie.

After the show was over, Edie went backstage and introduced herself to the designer. She declared that the show had brought her the happiest moment of her life. Lance and Edie left the museum to go to a party. While at the party, Edie called Michael at home



and asked him to come out. Michael objected because he had an early class the next morning, but Edie convinced him. At the party, there was a group of people talking about drugs, speed and pot and how wonderful it was to use them. Edie told the group that drugs weren't worth it and to stay away. A woman approached Edie, screamed at her and called her a heroin addict. Edie's bare arms showed scratches from two her cats and the woman insisted they were track marks. Edie was devastated by the encounter. The woman continued to bait Edie, saying that both Edie and her marriage were doomed.

On the way home from a party, Edie expressed concerns about the marriage to Michael. Michael had expected that Edie would leave him someday but they had only been married a few months. Things seem to be better later in the evening between Edie and Michael. That night when Edie fell asleep, Michael noticed that she wasn't breathing well but attributed it to her chain smoking habit. The next morning, when Michael woke up, he discovered that Edie was dead. Edie Sedgwick Post died on November 15, 1971. She was 28 years old.

# Characters

## Edith Minturn

Edith Minturn "Edie" Sedgwick (1943 -1971) was a famous model, actress, and socialite who came to prominence in the 1960s. Edie was born into a wealthy family of eight children in Santa Barbara, California, the daughter of sculptor and philanthropist Francis Minturn Sedgwick and Alice de Forest. In addition to fame gained by Edie's father, the Sedgwick family had a long and illustrious history beginning with Edie's seventh great-grandfather, Robert Sedgwick, the first Major General of the Massachusetts colony. Robert Sedgwick's grandson, Judge Theodore Sedgwick, was an integral part of the American Revolution and an abolitionist.

Edie's career began when she met pop artist Andy Warhol at his art studio, The Factory, in 1965. Warhol was in the process of filming an adaptation of Clockwork Orange and decided to cast Edie among the all-male cast. Immediately, Warhol decided that Edie would become a star. She went on to star in a number of Warhol's films, including "Poor Little Rich Girl." Edie's relationship with Warhol deteriorated after she had appeared in several of his films. Eventually, Edie moved into the Chelsea Hotel where she developed a close relationship with Bob Dylan. Edie took the relationship with Dylan more seriously than the musician did and was devastated when she learned he had been married in a secret ceremony in 1966. Many people in the know have stated that Edie had an abortion when she learned she was pregnant with Dylan's child. Edie entered into a long-standing relationship with Dylan's best friend, Bob Neuwirth, who eventually ended the affair due to Edie's drug dependence.

Edie eventually married Michael Post, a man she met while in a psychiatric hospital. Edie had been in a serious motorcycle accident and as a result, she was sent to a mental institution for treatment for drug addiction.

One of Edie's most well known films, "Ciao! Manhattan," is said to be her last. After Edie's marriage to Michael Post, she was allegedly sober until a physical ailment required the use of a pain killer. In November 1971, Edie and Michael attended a televised fashion show at the Santa Barbara Museum. The next morning, Michael found that Edie had died in her sleep. The death was ruled as "undetermined/accident/suicide."

## Andy Warhol

Andy Warhol (1928-1987) was born Andrew Warhola in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, a town on the outskirts of Pittsburgh. Andy showed a great deal of promise as an artist from an early age. He changed his name to Warhol, dropping the vowel at the end of his name, which revealed the Warhola family's Slovak roots. Warhol moved to New York and hit the peak of his fame in the 1960s when he began producing silk screens and



lithographs, including the famous Campbell's soup can and vibrant portraits of famous celebrities, including Jackie O. and Marilyn Monroe. Warhol was known for using bright colors, abstract designs, and capitalizing on his relationships with celebrities and aristocrats.

Warhol turned his first New York art studio into "The Factory," a hangout for artists, musicians, models, writers, and hangers on. The famed pop artist spent most of his considerable income to entertain and indulge his guests, throwing lavish parties known for drugs, music, and sexual experimentation. Later, Warhol would take advantage of the presence of his guests and their activities in his film-making pursuits. The avant-garde films were not critically acclaimed by any means but were often produced for experimental purposes and shock value.

Warhol was also responsible for coining the concept that everyone would be famous for 15 minutes, meaning that everyone will have a chance at fame, but only for a short time until the public trains its eyes on something new. Throughout his life, Warhol experienced a great deal of success as a commercial artist, illustrator, filmmaker, author, and all-around celebrity.

## **Michael Post**

Michael Post is Edie's husband.

## **Jean Stein**

Jean Stein is the author of "Edie: An American Biography" and a friend of Edie's.

## **George Plimpton**

George Plimpton is the editor of "Edie: An American Biography" and a Sedgwick family friend.

## **Francis Minturn**

Francis Minturn "Minty" Sedgwick is Edie's brother.

## **John Marquand, Jr.**

John Marquand, Jr. is Edie's cousin.

## **Susanna**

Susanna "Suky" Sedgwick is Edie's sister.



## **Alice**

Alice "Saucie" Sedgwick is Edie's sister.

## **Harry Sedgwick**

Harry Sedgwick is Edie's first cousin.

## **Jonathan Sedgwick**

Jonathan Sedgwick is Edie's brother.

## **Alexander Sedgwick**

Alexander Sedgwick is Edie's cousin.

## **Viva**

Viva is one of the women routinely present at The Factory.

## **Jasper Johns**

Jasper Johns is a famous painter and 1960s icon.

## **Gore Vidal**

Gore Vidal is a famous author and notable celebrity in the 1960s.

## **Ondine**

Ondine is one of the women routinely present at The Factory.

## **Helen Burroughs Stern**

Helen Burroughs Stern is the wife of Harry Sedgwick, Edie's first cousin.



# Objects/Places

## The Factory

The Factory was the first art studio of pop culture artist and icon Andy Warhol as well as the center of the New York scene in the 1960s. The studio was originally named the Silver Factory by Billy Name because the building was covered in tinfoil and silver paint. The interior was much like that of a traditional factory in that those in residence functioned as an assembly line producing various silk screens. At the time, silk screens and lithographs were Warhol's main media. Warhol eventually expanded his production efforts to include movies, music, shoes, and anything else he could sell using his famous name.

Billy Name's other contribution to the Factory was a red velvet couch, which became the focal point of the famous studio. The couch gained fame in its own right by appearing in two Warhol films, "Couch" and "Blow Job."

Although Warhol's subsequent studios would also be referred to as the Factory, the first, located at 231 East 47th Street in New York City, was the center of artsy culture from 1962-68. The Factory became a place for people to gather and experience the latest in music, art, drugs, film, and sexual experimentation.

Many famous people known to hang out at the Factory became known as Warhol's Superstars. The superstars included Edie Sedgwick, Velvet Underground, Allen Ginsberg, Bob Dylan, Mick Jagger, Truman Capote, and Betsey Johnson.

## New York City, New York

Edie Sedgwick moved to New York City in 1964. At the time, New York, particularly Manhattan, was believed to be the center of the artistic universe. It was in New York that Edie was "discovered" by Andy Warhol, the famous pop artist and iconoclast.

Edie was taken to The Factory in 1965 where she met Warhol. The Factory was a haven for artists, musicians, models, actors, and socialites. Edie started her movie career at the Factory when she appeared in Warhol's adaptation of A Clockwork Orange called Vinyl. Edie continued to act in a number of Warhol's films and soon became the "It Girl" of the Manhattan scene.

In addition to The Factory, Edie also lived at the Chelsea Hotel where she began a tumultuous relationship with Bob Dylan. After Dylan married, Edie stayed at the Chelsea and began a relationship with Bob Neuwirth, Dylan's best friend.

Edie's increasing addiction to barbiturates sent her to several psychiatric hospitals including Bellevue. Edie finally left New York for good in 1967.



## **Andy Warhol's Apartment**

Andy Warhol's apartment was also a part of the Factory, the artists' hangout and pop culture scene.

## **Stockbridge, Connecticut**

Stockbridge, Connecticut was the family home of Edie's ancestors.

## **Boston, Massachusetts**

Home of Francis and Alice Sedgwick prior to Edie's birth. Boston is also home to Harvard, Francis Sedgwick's alma mater.

## **Chelsea Hotel**

The Chelsea Hotel is where Edie lived during her relationship with Bob Dylan.

## **Corral de Quati**

Corral de Quati is the Sedgwick family home.

## **Rancho la Laguna**

Rancho la Laguna is the 6,000 acre Sedgwick ranch located in California.

## **McKeesport, Pennsylvania**

McKeesport, Pennsylvania is the birthplace of Andy Warhol.

## **Groton School**

Groton School is a private school attended by the Sedgwick children.

## **Vogue**

Vogue is one of the many magazines that featured Edie's photographs.





## Experimental Film

Experimental film was a genre introduced to Edie by Andy Warhol. Edie made several films with Warhol in the mid-1960s.



# Themes

## Drugs

As with many celebrities and pop culture icons in the 1960s, drugs, played a prevalent role in Edie Sedgwick's life. For many years, there were rumors that Edie was a heroin addict. Some say this allegation is false. Although Edie did use heroin, her main vice was amphetamines, often given to her in the form of a shot. At the time there were many doctors, often referred to as "acid doctors," who did little more than give patients "vitamin shots," which often included large doses of amphetamines, Methedrine or LSD.

Edie first exhibited psychological problems in her preteen years, and drugs only exacerbated the problem. Many of the Sedgwicks seem to have had some form of mental problem, including Francis, Minty, and Bobby, the latter two having died from results of mental trauma.

In later years, Edie blamed her addiction to heavy drugs during her tenure at The Factory, a place where there was always an ample supply of speed, pot, and acid. In some ways, she also held Andy Warhol responsible and often referred to him as a sadistic bastard faggot. Even after Edie left the factory, she continued her drug use, and as it escalated, her behavior became increasingly erratic. Family and friends began to notice changes in Edie as well as the signs of physical and mental damage done by her excessive use of amphetamines. There were a couple of times when she was able to give up drugs for a period of time, but she always fell back into her addiction often blaming relapses on psychological problems.

Edie's death was never officially ruled an overdose. The coroner determined it to be undecided, although there was proof that there were barbiturates in her system.

## Sex

The 1960s was a breakout period in which people began to experience free love. Sexual experimentation was the order of the day. In the pop culture scene in New York, having sex with multiple partners was commonplace and encouraged. Edie seemed to be rather withdrawn sexually speaking until she reached New York. At The Factory, Edie was one to try nearly everything and became involved with a large number of people. She had no qualms about appearing naked in the crowd or on film.

As Edie's addictions grew, her desire and need for sex also escalated to the point of almost becoming another addiction. She went from one relationship to the next with barely a pause in between. The list of Edie's conquests is long and reportedly includes Bob Dylan, Bob Neuwirth, Preacher Ewing, Kit Carson, Michael Post, and many of Warhol's superstars. Some suggested that even though Andy Warhol was gay, there had been some sort of sexual experience between the artist and Edie. Even after Edie

was married to Michael, she mentioned being interested in another man, although it may have been a type of test to gauge the strength of the marriage.

## Fame

Edie Sedgwick seemed to be born prepared for fame. Even as a small child she was well poised and charismatic. Francis and Alice Sedgwick doted on their daughter and spoiled her even after Suky was born. Because several of the children were much older, those children did not know Edie during her childhood. The Sedgwicks were an illustrious family that enjoyed a desirable level of social standing in the art, business, and political communities. Many believe that Edie's privileged lifestyle attributed to her glamour.

Edie got her first real taste of fame when she was living in Cambridge. Harvard and the surrounding area is small, and it was easy for a beautiful young woman like Edie to be noticed. Eventually, Edie craved more attention that Cambridge could offer and moved to New York. Edie's friend Chuck Wein seemed to take an immediate interest in promoting his friend as a model and actress. Edie was introduced to all the right people and quickly became the darling of New York society. During the first part of Edie's New York stay at her grandmother's apartment, Alice and Francis paid the bills, allowing the would-be actress to pursue any of her many whims.

Edie became internationally known after she made her first film with Andy Warhol. Warhol's status, fame and ownership of the legendary Factory helped boost Edie's fame even further. If there was a place to be seen, Edie was there. As Edie became erratic and more neurotic, her turbulent behavior was fodder for the press and helped her become even more famous. It is clear that Edie could not handle fame. However the more erratic her behavior, the more famous she became.

# Style

## Perspective

There are many perspectives contained in *Edie: An American Biography*. The entire work is made of comments and stories from friends, family and observers of Edie Sedgwick and the culture that created her enormous popularity.

Family members that contributed to the book vary widely in their perspective of events. The two people closest to Edie in the family were Jonathan and Suky. The oldest children, aunts, uncles, and cousins had more objective opinions about Edie and focused most of their comments on the Sedgwick family as a whole. The same can be said about family friends, particularly those who were friends of Alice and Francis Sedgwick.

There are a large number of people from The Factory and like scenarios that had close contact with Edie and, therefore, had stories and insights to share. While many of them liked Edie, she was treated almost as if she was a museum piece rather than a real person. There were very few comments from Andy Warhol, one in which he recounted meeting Francis for the first time.

Edie also added comments to the work, posthumously and via tapes recorded during the making of *Ciao! Manhattan*. Edie's insights reflected many comments made by her friends and family.

The perspective does seem a bit skewed when it comes to certain events but it is easy to attribute that to hearsay, faulty memory, or rumor.

## Tone

The tone of *Edie: An American Biography* is varied, depending on the person speaking and the topic of the conversation. It is not clear exactly how Jean Stein compiled the information, but the reader could easily assume that groups of people were in conversation and their comments were recorded as such.

The people who were part of Warhol's Superstars and The Factory scene seem to have mixed feelings about that particular time period. Some seem to look back with fondness while others share a sense of disbelief at the things that took place during that wild time.

Family members also vary in their tones. Jonathan is supportive of Edie, even when discussing behaviors that were clearly unacceptable. Saucie may be the most critical, perhaps because she was the oldest or because of the way Francis and Alice doted on Edie. It is clear that several family members and friends saw Edie as vain and frivolous and wasting her great potential on drugs and sex.

While the overall tone is subjective, there is enough information that allows readers to draw their own conclusions about Edie Sedgwick's life.

## Structure

"Edie: An American Biography" by Jean Stein is a non-fiction work consisting of 428 pages. There are 45 chapters. The shortest chapter is 3 pages in length; the longest chapter is 15 pages in length. The average chapter length is 7 pages.

The chapters are relatively easy to follow although there are many people making remarks on the same or similar topics. There isn't a lot of repetitive information outside of specific viewpoints. Before each person's comment, there is an entry with the person's full name. This structure keeps the text in an easy-to-read format and allows the reader to understand the entrant's comments and opinions.

Jean Stein interviewed over 250 people for "Edie" and created a Herculean task for herself and the editor, George Plimpton. By the time the interview process was over, there were thousands of pages of transcripts to be transcribed and compiled into a work that was both relevant and coherent.

There were many people who refused to be interviewed for the work, which may be a reason why the comments from Andy Warhol were severely limited and comments from several members of the Sedgwick family are not on record. Overall, the book's structure makes it relatively easy to read and to understand.

In addition to the transcripts from those interviewed, Stein has added a Sedgwick-Minturn family tree. The family tree is a necessary item given the size and detailed history of the family.



## Quotes

"My mother must have seemed a strong, compassionate figure to my father, and her family offered the sense of security and power he was looking for."

Page 48

"My father hadn't really wanted to have children. My mother told me once that he used to break her heart in that he just wasn't interested in the little things she told him about us."

Page 51

"The tragedy was that along with their happiness, and their incredible appetite for life, the forces of darkness were always there, although you would never have known it: the surface looked so good."

Page 57

"There isn't much in common between these cosmetic pictures and the old photos of the earlier Sedgwicks with their amusing, knobby faces... they all looked like a bunch of Jerusalem artichokes."

Page 67

"Summer was the time when all of the children were home, and we rambled around and had games after dinner, and it was light until nine o'clock at night. And that was freedom for us!"

Page 80

"My father's view of blacks was 'the Negro is first cousin to the monkey and that is the fact.'"

Page 98

"The kid was a little snotty, but you don't throw kids down the stairs."

Page 155

"The wild stuff began coming out of the woodwork. People showing off. 'Look at me! I've got something to say! I am something!' And the more freakish you could be about it, so much the better."

Page 163

"She had the ability to relate on all levels...with chauffeurs or ranch hands...understanding the human condition, yet at the same time it goes with that upbringing of hers, rejecting anything less than numeral uno."

Page 166



"Andy's studio was a rather scrumptiously bizarre Victorian setting. The lighting was subdued, the windows all covered, and he himself sort of hovered in the shadow."  
Page 195

"When Edie entered the Factory scene, I thought it was nice that the Cambridge boys had imported their own private princess."  
Page 225

"None of the superstars really had a role in the Factory. Edie, I figured out, who was non-Catholic, was never actually a part of the true family. And, being a woman, she played an inferior role."  
Page 226



## Topics for Discussion

What reaction might Judge Sedgwick have had to Edie's activities?

What actions might Edie's family have taken to save her from her addictions?

Do you think Andy Warhol was to blame for Edie's addictions? Explain.

Do you think it's possible for a place like The Factory to exist in today's world? Discuss.

Do you feel that Edie's contribution to The Factory, film and modeling was justified? Explain.

If Edie hadn't died at such a young age, what do you think her life would have been like at age 40? Age 50?

Why do you think Andy Warhol was so famous?

Do you think Edie's death was an accident or a suicide caused by a deteriorated mental state? Discuss.