

Eventide Study Guide

Eventide by Kent Haruf

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Plot Summary

The following version of this book was used to create this study guide: Haruf, Kent. *Eventide*. Vintage Contemporaries. First Vintage Contemporaries Edition. May 2005.

Eventide, a novel by Kent Haruf, follows the intersecting lives of residents in Holt, Colorado, over the course of three seasons. Character-driven, the novel is more focused on the human condition as opposed to plot. As a result, not much is said about the past lives of many of the characters. However, enough information is presented so that readers have a basic understanding of how each character arrived at their present situation.

Readers first meet the elderly McPherson brothers, Harold and Raymond, who are cattle ranchers. Both men are bachelors. In his youth, Harold was left with a broken heart by a girl he wanted. Less information is shared about Raymond's early bachelorhood. Both Harold and Raymond have good hearts. They are traditional men who have taken in a nineteen year-old African-American (Victoria Roubideaux) and her young daughter (Katie). Victoria is from Denver. After leaving a bad relationship, Victoria asked the brothers for help. They have given her and Katie a home and treated her like a daughter. The brothers make sure that Victoria goes to college in Fort Collins. But, tragedy strikes when Harold is mauled to death by a bull, leaving Victoria saddened and Raymond heartbroken and alone.

Readers also meet Betty and Luther Wallace, who are both on disability. With the help of receiving food stamps, they are trying to care for their two children, eleven year-old Joy Rae and six year-old Richie, as best they can. Betty is constantly plagued by a pain in her stomach which no pills can help, while Luther is something of a passive bumbler. They are supervised by their case worker, Rose Tyler, who is a dark-haired, kind, and pretty middle-aged woman. Luther and Betty have their lives turned upside down when Betty's abusive, alcoholic uncle, Hoyt Raines, insists on coming to stay with them. He becomes physically abusive toward the children. He also cows Betty and Luther into backing down from defending their children. When the abuse is discovered at school, Betty and Luther are put on notice. Hoyt is arrested, only later to be freed on a plea bargain.

Readers next meet DJ, whose parents are dead. DJ lives with his grandfather. DJ comes to develop a crush on his neighbor, Dena, who is the daughter of Mary Wells. Mary's husband is away working in Alaska. Mary falls apart when her husband leaves her, and a car accident leaves Dena and Mary's other daughter, Emma, severely hurt. The accident prompts Mary's decision to start life over again in a city two hours away. DJ is heartbroken by Dena's departure. While at the local tavern with his grandfather, DJ is demeaned by Hoyt. When Hoyt cruelly hits on the barmaid, DJ smashes a glass bottle over Hoyt's face. This leads to Hoyt returning to Luther's and Betty's house. Hoyt threatens to kill Luther and Betty if they do not let him in and leave him alone. He then proceeds to viciously beat up Joy Rae and Richie.



Meanwhile, Victoria and some mutual friends set up Raymond on a date with Rose. Raymond and Rose hit things off and begin dating. Rose is later horrified by what Hoyt has done. He is now wanted by the police. However, until he is caught, Joy Rae and Richie are temporarily placed in foster care, which breaks the hearts of Luther and Betty.

Raymond is able to comfort Rose, telling her there was nothing more she could do. Raymond tells Rose that sometimes things are simply out of people's hands. As the novel ends, Raymond continues to hold Rose, with neither one knowing what the future will bring.



Chapters 1 – 9

Summary

Part One

In Chapter 1, the elderly McPheron brothers, Harold and Raymond of Holt, Colorado, return from the barn to their house where nineteen year-old Victoria Roubideaux is feeding her young daughter, Katie. Victoria and her daughter will be leaving for Fort Collins for college the following day. Katie gets along well with Harold and Raymond, and always eats for them, prompting Victoria to wonder what she will do without the McPherons. Victoria tears up, saying she will miss them. They reassure her she will always be welcome back, and that they will always be there for her. Both brothers drive Katie to college. Moving into college, the girl overseeing move-in day asks Victoria who the men are in relation to her. Victoria tells the girl they were the men who saved her. They help Victoria unpack and settle in, then say their goodbyes and head home. At home, the brothers feel lonely and as if the house is empty without Victoria.

In Chapter 2, the bus driver who picks up kids for school on the east side of Holt is not happy with Betty June Wallace, who is late in getting her children, Richie and Joy Rae, out. June's husband, Luther, is annoyed to hear about the driver. They then go and meet with Rose Tyler at Holt County Social Services. Betty explains the pills she has received from the doctor are not making the pain in her stomach go away. Betty and Luther complain about the bus driver, but Rose reminds them the bus driver is doing the best she can and has eighteen kids to pick up. Rose gives Betty and Luther their food stamps for the month, and checks to make sure their disability checks arrived on time. Betty says she wants to call her daughter, but Rose reminds her the court said there could be no such contact. Betty goes on to say that Richie has been being bullied at school. Betty does not know what they will do. Luther says that they, as a family, have been doing alright, that people get what they get and should not have a fit.

In Chapter 3, DJ Kephart never knew his mother or his father. He has grown up under the care of his maternal grandfather, Walter Kephart, a quiet, kind man living on pension checks. Though Walter rarely drinks, he enjoys reminiscing about the old times with friends at the local tavern. DJ takes care of his grandfather, cooking and cleaning for him. Their neighbor, Mary Wells, a thin, pretty, thirty year-old mother of two daughters, Dena and Emma. Her husband is away working in Alaska, so Mary often hires DJ to do yardwork for her not because she cannot do it herself, but as a matter of kindness. DJ sets to work, weeding, pulling cucumbers, and pulling beans. Dena and Emma bring him out water and cookies. DJ accepts the water but gently turns down the cookies. At home, Walter urges DJ to keep saving his money, as he might want to buy something someday.

In Chapter 4, Harold and Raymond bring their yearling steers into town for auction, then go to get lunch at the sale barn diner. They are joined by their friend, Bob Schramm,



who explains that old John Torres died the night before of cancer. Harold and Raymond are sad to hear this. Everyone thinks a lot of John, and Harold, Raymond, and Bob agree he had a good run. Harold and Raymond then head next door to the sale barn where the auctioneer begins the sale of animals, including their yearlings. Raymond is perplexed when Harold begins bidding on animals, saying they do not need any more cows. Harold explains he is merely helping to raise the prices for the other ranchers. Their own cattle sell well enough to prompt Harold and Raymond to say they have never lost money, at least not this time. At home, they eat canned soup for dinner, watch the news, and go to bed.

In Chapter 5, Betty June and Luther go food shopping. Most of what they buy is frozen. They cannot find a certain kind of cereal they are looking for, so a kid working at the store suggests buying a different kind of cereal, and simply adding raisins to it. Betty and Luther decide they will not do this because it will not taste the same. Betty and Luther then go through the checkout. After they leave, the man on line behind them shakes his head, saying to the cashier that Betty and Luther are on food stamps and eat better than he does. The man stands in line with a can of beans and a carton of cigarettes. The cashier tells the man to leave them alone, asking him if he would want to be them. Betty and Luther, meanwhile, head home, stopping every block or two to rest in the heat as they push their grocery cart home.

In Chapter 6, as DJ leaves school, he sees two first graders squaring off against one another, surrounded by kids of all ages. DJ recognizes one of the boys as Joy Rae's little brother, Richie, while the other kid is called Lonnie and is egged on by others. DJ begins to intervene, recognizing Richie wants no part of what is going on, but Joy Rae moves forward to help. Two kids hold Joy Rae back. A sixth grade teacher, Mrs. Harris, appears, demanding to know what is going on and breaking up the group. Mrs. Harris demands to know who started things, and Joy Rae says she knows. The teacher tells her and Richie to head inside. On the way home, DJ is confronted by two boys, including one who was egging on the fight. DJ denies turning the boy in, who then demands to know why he received hell from Mrs. Harris and Mr. Bradbury. The two boys attack and beat DJ. After they leave, DJ gets up and heads home.

In Chapter 7, on Saturday evening, Victoria calls Harold and Raymond from college. Victoria is happy to hear the yearling sale went well. Harold and Raymond are interested to learn how Victoria is getting on at college. They admit things are not the same without Victoria around anymore, and they are curious to know how Katie is getting along. Victoria denies needing any money, even though Harold and Raymond know she would never ask. She explains she just wanted to hear their voices, as she was feeling homesick. Off the phone, the brothers agree that Victoria sounds lonesome and that they must send her some money. Autumn is coming.

In Chapter 8, Betty appears at Rose's house. She asks Rose to drive her and her kids to her sister's house, as Luther is being mean to her. Rose has both Betty and Luther come inside. An argument apparently started between Betty and Luther when Luther became angry with Joy Rae for not eating. The argument led to Luther slapping Betty in the face (according to Betty) and Luther pushing Betty (according to Luther). Betty



explains she would have called her aunt, but the phone is not working. Rose agrees to drive Betty and the kids, who seem unfazed by what is going on. Along the way, Rose stops at a store so Betty can buy some tampons. Rose must loan Betty money to do so. Joy Rae tells Rose their aunt will not want them, as she has previously told them never to come back. When Rose drops them off, the aunt reluctantly lets them in and urges Betty to leave Luther. It begins to rain. When Rose returns home, Luther is still there. He asks for a quarter to make a call to apologize to Betty. Rose offers the use of her own phone, but Luther says he has been rained on already.

In Chapter 9, Dena and Emma are riding their new bike. They ask DJ to ride, but DJ says he does not know how to ride. They offer to teach him, so DJ agrees. When DJ hurts his knee, the girls bring him inside to have Mary handle it. There, DJ finds Mary fighting back tears. DJ learns from Emma that their dad told Mary the night before he is not coming home from Alaska. DJ and Dena go for a walk and go exploring. They come to an old shed in an alley near the vacant lot. There are old tools and equipment inside the shed, as well as old junk like a red coffee can. Dena suggests making something of the place and bringing things there. DJ is interested in this idea.

Analysis

Early in Kent Haruf's novel, readers come to realize that the novel is less plot-driven than it is a portrait of the human condition, of the trials and tribulations, large and small, of everyday life. There is nothing extraordinary about any of his characters—they are simple, everyday, poor, working class and rural Americans simply going about their lives. The simple, gentle, almost poetic nature of Haruf's language reflects the people he writes about. The McPheron brothers are ranchers. They have become the father figure to Victoria, who is a young single mother. Luther and Betty, both disabled and on public assistance, are doing their best to care for their children; Rose is doing her best to handle her workload for county Social Services; DJ, without parents, is struggling to get along with his grandfather; and Mary Wells is attempting to handle caring for her two daughters while her husband is away at work in Alaska.

Beginning with Part 1, the author asserts that the working class or poverty stricken people should not be looked down upon or stereotyped. Just because someone works with cows or because someone is on public welfare does not mean they are necessarily bad people. Everyone should be treated with respect, regardless of their status. In most situations, these people have good hearts. They are doing their best to get along in life. Their station in life could be beyond their control for the moment. In other situations, the person is actively seeking to overcome their plight. Note the poignant scene in which a man buying a can of beans and a carton of cigarettes looks down on Luther and Betty for their shopping cart full of frozen food purchased with food stamps. The man is wasting a large sum of money on a carton of cigarettes, while Luther and Betty must push their own shopping cart all the way home. Luther and Betty receive public assistance, but their day to day life is filled with struggles that the man who is buying the cigarettes will never understand.



The struggle to do better in life can be seen in this section of the novel. With the help of Harold and Raymond, Victoria is seeking a new life through college, refusing to only be a single mom. The death of DJ's parents and the abandonment by Dena's father draw them closer together. Their heartbreaks lead them to want to make good of something bad. Note their decision to fix up the shed. The shed is symbolic of how they want to take the tragedies, sadness, mistakes, and heartache that they have already faced in their young lives and make it all new. They will take what they are heirs to in life and work to make it better.

Haruf demonstrates that people in difficult situations often have difficulty accepting help or kindness from others. This is not because they are looked down upon by others. It is because rural and working class people hold on to what little independence they are able to gain. Readers should especially pay attention to the scene where DJ cannot even accept cookies from Mary for doing work in her garden. To do so would be to accept a gift of kindness—a gift that DJ does not believe he warrants, because he is not actually “in need” of such a gift. Also, to do so would be to admit a kind of defeat, a relinquishing of what little self-sufficiency he has. The same is true of Luther when he asks for a quarter from Rose to make a call at a pay phone downtown. He can repay the quarter—proof of his reliability and his ability to make good on a loan—but he cannot allow himself to accept the kindness of using Rose's phone for a free phone call. Luther is already accepting enough help from the public because of his disability. What little capability he has left to take care of himself, he is determined to preserve.

Strangely enough, readers will note a kind of inconsistency in this behavior. In rural and working class areas, people depend on and help one another in times of real trouble. While such people are reluctant at best to accept a helping hand, they are often happy to give it. Raymond and Harold have no qualms about taking in Victoria and Katie. Furthermore, the brothers are happy to support them when Victoria enrolls in college to better her life and the life of her young daughter. Victoria refuses to allow Harold and Raymond to help her when she is at home with them. Instead, she wants to take care of the elderly brothers as they have had no female to nurture or love them throughout their lives.

Mary and her family do not have much money, and she can easily take care of her own gardens. However, Mary pays DJ what she can to tend to the gardens for her because she knows DJ and his grandfather are on a fixed income. All of these acts form the foundation of Haruf's related theme, that the truly important things in life have nothing to do with money or material wealth. The familial love shared between Harold, Raymond, Victoria, and Katie has nothing to do with financial arrangements, but everything to do with human compassion and family.

Readers should also note an emerging theme in this section of the novel: that loss is the only guarantee in life. When Victoria and Katie leave for college, Raymond and Harold have absolutely no idea what to do with themselves. They realize how lonely their lives are without anyone in them. Though Victoria is only two hours away, and comes back to visit as often as she can, their lives are just not the same without her there. Victoria herself feels adrift without Harold and Raymond there at college with her. Mary is



always lonely when her husband goes away to work, but when he actually abandons him, she feels his loss acutely. When an argument and physical shoving between Luther and Betty threatens to break up the family, Luther and Betty both feel the potential for loss deeply. Additionally, the community as a whole is shaken by the death of Old John Torres, a local character who is fondly reflected upon.

Discussion Question 1

Why have Harold, Victoria, Raymond, and Katie come to mean so much to one another? Why is Victoria's going away to college as hard on Harold and Raymond as it is on Victoria and Katie? What does this demonstrate about their nature as human beings?

Discussion Question 2

Haruf chooses to focus specifically on a shopping trip and an altercation between Luther and Betty, as a way to make a number of points about people on public welfare. What are some of these points? Why does Haruf make these points?

Discussion Question 3

In what ways are the lives of DJ and Dena similar? How does the similarity of their lives help them to connect with one another? Why does their discovery of the shed fill them with a kind of potential hope for the future?

Vocabulary

elaborately, dilapidated, denominations, stipulated, impassively, forlornly



Chapters 10 – 18

Summary

Part Two

In Chapter 10, when Betty and her family come home from Duckwall's, her uncle, Hoyt Raines, is waiting at their trailer. Hoyt, though he lives in town, is a seasonal worker who drifts along with his jobs, then lives off his earned money until he must go back to work to earn more. For the past six months, Hoyt has been milking cows, but he has lost his job because he milked a sick cow which ruined fourteen hundred gallons of fresh milk. Also, Hoyt is drunk most of the time.

Luther tells Hoyt he is beginning a home-based, mail-order business and that the family had purchased a new phone at Duckwalls. Betty reveals her stomach continues to hurt her. Hoyt explains he wants to move in. Betty and Luther both oppose this idea. Hoyt continues to insist, saying the two kids can sleep together, and he can take one of their bedrooms. Betty and Luther want their children to have their own rooms. Hoyt continues insisting, and Luther caves in. Joy Rae is forced to move in with Richie, who wets the bed.

In Chapter 11, DJ and Dena clean out the old shed and fill it with things like an old table and chairs, discarded dinner plates, silverware, carpets, and so on. An old lady accuses them of stealing things, so DJ and Dena simply run around her. Back in their shed, Dena and DJ sit across from one another at the table. DJ says he must go. Dena tells him he does not have to go yet. DJ says he has to go pretty soon.

In Chapter 12, Harold and Raymond feel listless and strange without Victoria around even through October. Their routine has changed, and they have difficulty adjusting. They try to remain focused on their cattle and their ranch. A nervous bull rams Harold and knocks him onto the ground. Raymond tries to intervene, but the bull knocks him back before turning back to Harold. Raymond continues to try to stop the bull while Harold rolls to safety. Raymond manages to gate the bull, but Harold is in bad shape. Raymond says he will call someone, but Harold says he is all busted up inside and won't be going anywhere. Harold asks Raymond to get his hat, which Raymond does. Raymond puts his jacket over Harold, and they hold hands. Harold tells Raymond he has got to take care of himself and the little girl now. His breathing grows shallow, and eventually stops. Raymond covers up Harold with his jacket.

In Chapter 13, Raymond sits with Harold's body for an hour before going in to make the necessary calls. Harold's body and Raymond are taken to the hospital. Raymond has his own injuries which must be dealt with. He asks for calls to be made to Tom Guthrie, a teacher, and Victoria Roubideaux. Harold then explains to Victoria what has happened.



In Chapter 14, Tom Guthrie and his girlfriend, a fellow teacher named Maggie Jones, come to see Raymond. Raymond is heartbroken over Harold's death, but Guthrie reminds Raymond that in such a situation, no one could have stopped a raging bull. Tom agrees to keep watch over the ranch for the next few days until Raymond is back on his feet. A short time later, Victoria and Katie arrive and rush in to see Raymond. Raymond tells Victoria that the last thing Harold had on his mind were her and her baby girl. Meanwhile, Tom and Maggie tend to the ranch and to the house. Maggie takes care of some chores, such as dishes, and makes a bed in the downstairs bedroom for Raymond on the couch so he will not have to climb the stairs when he is released from the hospital. Because that bedroom is Victoria's, she sets up the living room as a bedroom for Victoria and Katie. Maggie is worried about Raymond now being alone, and how Victoria will want to stay with him, even despite college.

In Chapter 15, Victoria stays with Raymond until visiting hours are over, then agrees to spend the night at Maggie's. Raymond worries about Victoria missing school, but Victoria says missing a little time will not hurt, and being with Raymond is more important. Victoria asks Raymond if he has ever thought of doing something else, such as getting married. Raymond explains that Harold once had a girl who chose someone else over him. Raymond says you don't get over certain things, and he doubts he will ever get over his brother.

In Chapter 16, DJ's grandfather is not feeling very well. He does not get much sleep that night, and when DJ gets him coffee in the morning, Walter is still awake. DJ realizes he is sick, and offers to stay home. Walter tells him to go to school. At school, the teacher sees that something is troubling DJ, but DJ will not explain. During lunch, Walter runs home. Grandpa looks worse. DJ encourages a doctor's visit. Walter refuses and tells DJ to get back to school. Instead, DJ goes over to see Mary to explain the situation. Mary immediately agrees to go and tend to Walter. Walter tells Mary she is meddling, but Mary insists on going to see the doctor. Walter realizes he has no alternative. Dr. Martin examines Walter and explains Walter has pneumonia. Walter has no choice but to go into the hospital.

In Chapter 17, DJ and Walter are placed in the same hospital room as Raymond and Victoria, though neither knows the other. They introduce themselves with Walter saying he had read about Raymond and Harold in the paper. Victoria and DJ also introduce themselves. Raymond and Walter quickly set to complaining about wearing hospital gowns. Tom Guthrie and Maggie Jones come in to visit that evening, along with Ike and Bobby, Tom's two sons. The boys are helping Tom out, and Raymond gently reminds them to be careful around animals. DJ turns his back on Ike and Bobby and does not speak to them. Victoria gives DJ a ride home when visiting hours are over, worried about DJ staying home alone by himself. She suggests befriending Ike and Bobby, but DJ is noncommittal. Victoria explains where DJ lives used to be her old neighborhood. Linda May, a nurse, comes in to tend to Raymond after visiting hours. Raymond inquires about the sleeping Walter's health. Linda explains he is strong enough to pull through, the pneumonia can indeed kill older people. Raymond tells Linda he will be leaving in the morning to attend his brother's burial, but Linda tells him it must be



cleared with the doctor. As Raymond goes to sleep, he contemplates how his brother would say a blizzard was due with how things have been going.

In Chapter 18, the doctor consents to Raymond leaving in the morning when Raymond declares he will leave with or without permission. Victoria picks him up. They meet Tom Guthrie at the Methodist Church on Gum Street. Tom helps Raymond to a seat while Victoria goes to check on Maggie, who has been watching Katie in the nursery. Raymond struggles to the front of the Church where he asks Tom to open the coffin. Inside is Harold, but Raymond says it is not him. Soon after, people arrive for the service, and the service ends quickly. Raymond asks Victoria to bring him home, refusing to return to the hospital. Victoria agrees to do so. Back home, Raymond wonders how Harold is getting along in Heaven, and hopes there are cattle there to be tended after, for Harold would never be satisfied otherwise.

Analysis

As the novel continues, Haruf maintains his structure and method. The novel remains character-driven, filled with the daily struggles every reader can relate to in some way. The author continues to be told in simple, gentle language, reflecting the generally simple and gentle lives of these people. If there is something that stands out in particular in this section of the novel, however, it is the theme of loss. The greatest loss suffered by anyone in the novel is the loss suffered by both Raymond and Victoria through the tragic and sudden death of Harold. Indeed, Harold's death becomes the major event of this section of the novel. To a lesser extent, but by no means to a lesser sense of feeling, DJ and Dena continue to deal with their own losses by focusing on building something together in the shed.

Many people often forget that rural and working class Americans, so easily, commonly, and viciously stereotyped are human beings. They have feelings, too. The rural working class and poor should not be stereotyped or looked down upon, Haruf continues to argue through his presentation of the losses suffered by those in this section of the novel. Victoria understands this firsthand, and avoids college in order to be with Raymond. They draw strength from each other. DJ himself feels great fear and concern when his grandfather appears to be in serious physical ill-health, which when diagnosed by a doctor, turns out to be pneumonia. DJ's only saving grace between foster care and orphanhood is his grandfather.

Only in the character of Hoyt does the reader meet a truly horrendous low-class individual, who essentially bullies his way into living with Luther and Betty. Luther and Betty are passive by nature, but also feeling toward a family member in need. However, readers should carefully note one thing: they are reluctant to let Hoyt move in not because of themselves, but for the sake of their children. They have so little that having one's own bedroom is a luxury that they do not want taken away from their children. As Haruf again notes here, to rural and working class people, what little independence they have means everything. Yet, again, in rural and working class areas, people depend on and help one another in times of real trouble. Hoyt promises not to stay for long, but his



presence upsets the household. Hoyt is the individual by which many judge the entire class of working and rural Americans.

Haruf continues to explore the thematic idea that in rural and working class areas, people depend on and help one another in times of real trouble. The death of Harold prompts Victoria to return from college not only out of heartache, but a genuine love and concern for Raymond. Raymond must reluctantly admit he needs some help on his ranch, but calls only one person –a good, trust friend in Tom Guthrie, who brings along Maggie. People are quickly rallying around Raymond in his greatest hour of need. They do so without complaint or expectation of reward or anything of the sort. They are Americans, they are human beings, and they take care of one another in whatever way that they can. It is a model for readers that Haruf venerates. Oftentimes, a helping hand is the only thing that can be given –and often a helping hand means more than anything else imaginable.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Harold's tragic and sudden death so devastating to both Raymond and Victoria? How do their friends come to rally around them? Why do they do this? Why does this matter so much?

Discussion Question 2

When Raymond is brought into the hospital, he specifically asks for two people to be called. Who are these people? Why does Raymond insist on only these two people to be called?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Hoyt go to stay with Betty and Luther? Why are Betty and Luther reluctant to let Hoyt move in with their family? What causes them to allow Hoyt to do so?

Vocabulary

stupefied, vaguely, abruptly, unaccustomed, listlessness, meddling



Chapters 19 – 27

Summary

Part Two, continued

In Chapter 19, a week passes after the funeral. Richie's teacher sees that something is wrong with Richie, who is unfocused, sits strangely at his desk, and slouches. He refuses to say what is bothering him, so the teacher takes him to the nurse. The nurse finds terrible welts and bruises all over Richie's back and backside. The nurse immediately shows the principal. Joy Rae is called in, and she blames the bruises on a playground accident. Joy Rae refuses to allow the nurse to check her, but the nurse insists. The bruising and welts on Joy Rae are even worse. Rose Tyler is then called in, as well as a sheriff's deputy. At last, Joy Rae confesses they were beaten by their uncle for not cleaning the trailer. Though their parents were shouting and yelling, they did not intervene.

Rose and the deputy then go to the Wallace trailer. Betty is on the couch under a blanket, saying she feels ill. Hoyt is asked for, but Luther explains he spends most days at the tavern. The deputy then excuses himself to go find Hoyt. Betty and Luther feel horrible about what has happened to their children, that Hoyt would not listen to them and threatened them if they intervened. Betty does not want her children taken away, saying her Donna has already been taken away. Rose says they will need to attend some parenting classes at Social Services. Meanwhile, the deputy tracks down Hoyt at Holt Tavern. Hoyt is arrested and taken to the county courthouse jail. Hoyt does not deny hitting the children, but argues he was merely teaching them discipline. He says he has used his belt and fists to administer punishments more than once. Unable to make bail, Hoyt will be in jail until the court date in a month.

Part Three

In Chapter 20, Raymond now feels more alone than he ever has in his whole life without his brother. Raymond reflects on how he and Harold have lived together and depended on one another since they were teenagers when their parents were both killed in an auto accident. Raymond continues to urge Victoria to return to school and have her own life. She says she does have her own life already, thanks to Raymond and Harold. She explains she would still be in Denver, or on the street, or even worse still with Dwayne had it not been for Harold and Raymond. She insists Howard's death has changed her plans in life. Victoria even becomes angered when Raymond continues to insist she follow through with her own life. She breaks a glass when she brings the dishes to the sink after dinner, and begins crying. Victoria hates the idea of returning to college, but she eventually consents. When she leaves after Thanksgiving, Raymond misses her already.



In Chapter 21, Mary Wells is getting worse. She has taken to smoking cigarettes and sitting in bed all day, staring out through the window. DJ and Dena continue to spend time together in their shed, talking about life, playing board games, and simply being with each other. Dena tells DJ that her mom's smoking stinks up the house, and she never wants to smoke herself. Eventually, Mary Wells begins to date again. She introduces Dena and DJ to the man she is dating, Bob Jeter, who has a dark goatee and mustache and works as a bank vice president. When Dena talks to her father on the phone that night, Mary insists Dena tell him that she has had a friend over.

In Chapter 22, Hoyt is to be represented by a young woman with red hair, three years out of law school and a public defender. She secures him a plea deal where he pleads guilty to misdemeanor child abuse. He receives no more jail time; but, he must stay away and never again have any contact with the children or their parents. The other option is to go to court and try to reduce the charge to attempt to commit child abuse. Hoyt moves for the first option, and agrees to sign the necessary papers. Hoyt then goes to the courtroom with a deputy to await to be called by the judge. He is released from custody upon agreeing to the terms of the plea deal and will be placed on probation. Hoyt now has twenty-four hours to report to the probation officer.

In Chapter 23, Tom Guthrie and his two sons, Ike and Bobby, meet Raymond at his ranch on a December Saturday morning. There, they help Raymond bring in the cattle for separating calves. Raymond then makes hamburgers for everyone, but he overcooks them. Tom encourages Raymond to come into town every once in a while to avoid getting lonely. On the way home, the boys comment to their dad about the noise the calves make. Tom explains it has to be done, either by them or by the mother. He explains that everyone gets weaned in life eventually.

In Chapter 24, DJ walks with his grandfather to the bank so his grandfather can cash his railroad at the tavern. There, he has some drinks with his friends and checks out the new, pretty, blonde barmaid, Tammy. Tammy takes orders and agrees to bring DJ some coffee while seeing to the pension check. Tammy watches over Tammy explains her son is living with her ex until she gets settled. The nurse from the hospital, Linda May, says hello to DJ, then points out that Raymond has also come into the tavern. Linda invites Raymond to join her and DJ. He does so. Raymond is glad to hear Walter is doing better. As DJ and Walter prepare to leave, Raymond offers them a ride home. Raymond returns to the bar to continue talking with Linda. They enjoy themselves and talk late into the night. When Raymond goes to sleep, he dreams of Victoria and Katie knocking on a house in a town he has never seen before.

In Chapter 25, Luther, Betty, Joy Rae, and Richie head home from their parenting class at Social Services in the courthouse. It is snowing as they leave. When they get home, they have a snack of microwave lasagna together before going to bed. Betty calls Donna to say hello, but the woman who answers says she has enough trouble with Donna without Betty messing things up more. This deeply worries Betty.

In Chapter 26, Christmas Eve arrives. Hoyt Raines is at the Chute Bar and Grill on US Highway 34 with a divorcee named Laverne Griffith, chubby and twenty years older. At



midnight, the bartender, Monroe, announces it is Christmas. Hoyt and Laverne kiss. Then, Hoyt goes home with Laverne where they get into bed. By February, they are still together, and Hoyt has taken on work at riding cattle pens at a feedlot while Laverne goes to work in a nursing home.

In Chapter 27, DJ and Dena continue to meet in their shed. They take to cuddling and kissing, and reading in the shed. They allow Emma to join in reading, but only so long as Dena sits next to DJ.

Analysis

To rural and working class people, the small amount of independence they have means everything to them. Sometimes, it works against them. Joy Rae and Richie have a difficult enough time as it is at school without having their home life exposed to others. Only because Richie sits strangely and acts more sullenly than usual is it learned that Joy Rae and Richie are being abused. Even then, they are initially reluctant to talk about it not only as a matter of fear, but as a matter of feeling as if they cannot handle the situation themselves, and that someone else has to come in and handle things. Their courage is admirable, but misplaced in this particular situation.

When the beatings of the children are unveiled, the concern of everyone touches on the theme that in rural and working class areas, people depend on and help one another in times of real trouble. The abuse of the children precipitates an outpouring of love and comfort from teachers, from Rose, and from law enforcement on behalf of the children.

It is through Joy Rae, Richie, and Raymond that the theme of loss is again explored in this section of the novel. Loss, Haruf argues, is the only kind of guarantee one has in life. Raymond is still reeling from the death of his brother. The loss has understandably upset him tremendously, and he is struggling to find a balance once again in his life, as his life has been changed yet again in just a few short months. Meanwhile, Haruf explores a different kind of loss, but a loss nonetheless, with Joy Rae and Richie. With them, Haruf explores a loss of innocence. While their childhoods may not have been stellar, they were still good enough to make the children happy. Hoyt's physical abuse, however, has forced them to deal with things no child should ever have to deal with, and has awakened them to the cruelty of the adult world. The innocence of their childhood is over. The bruises and welts on their bodies thus are the physical manifestation of the symbolic loss of innocence. Their bodies have been scarred, and so have their souls.

While Rose, the deputies, and Social Services attempt to handle the situation with Joy Rae, Richie, their parents, and Hoyt, Raymond continues to resettle his life. His friendship with Tom Guthrie and Maggie Jones remains utterly important, and demonstrative of the fact that in rural and working class areas, people depend on and help one another in times of real trouble. Tom insists that Raymond get out once in a while. By point of analogy, Haruf argues through Tom explaining to his sons that calves –everyone –gets weaned eventually, that Raymond must himself essentially be “weaned” from his current state of life which he is living in sadness, loneliness, and a



routine devoid of Harold, Victoria, and Katie. Here, Haruf expands his argument into another thematic demonstration, that the truly important things in life have nothing to do with money or material wealth. Raymond is not lamenting cattle prices or the size of his ranch, but heartache over the death of his brother. Likewise, it is not money or material possessions that helps begin to right Raymond, but the friendship of Tom and his family, far more important than anything.

The rural working class and poor should not be stereotyped or looked down upon, Haruf also continues to argue through this section of the novel. Working class and rural Americans also have lives and feelings worthy of respect and understanding. Just because Raymond is a cattle rancher who is tough and traditional does not mean he does not experience loss and heartache from the death of his brother. Just because Luther and Betty are on assistance and are bumbling, passive personalities does not mean they are not entitled to respect or have concern for their children. Even Tom's sons, who may be recognized by readers as the kids who beat up DJ in the previous section of the novel (recall how DJ turns his back on them and refuses to deal with them) are not without compassion: they voluntarily choose to help their father make things right for Raymond. They too have feelings, and feel compassion for someone like Raymond, even if they still have compassion to learn for others. But yet once again, Hoyt emerges as the individual by which all other working and rural class Americans are judged in stereotypes, something which Haruf continues to dismantle thematically.

Discussion Question 1

Why do Betty and Luther not intervene on behalf of Joy Rae and Richie when the two children are brutally beaten by Hoyt? Are Betty and Luther to be blamed for their nonintervention? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

What is the experience of Hoyt's abuse like for Joy Rae and Richie? How does it affect them? Why do the children refuse to say anything to anyone about their experience?

Discussion Question 3

How does Raymond continue to attempt to cope with his brother's death? How do Tom Guthrie and his sons assist in this process? Why does it matter so much to Tom how Raymond is getting along? What does this say about the rural and working class population of Americans? Why does this matter?

Vocabulary

peculiarly, happenstance, nicker, remanded, bawling, tedious



Chapters 28 – 36

Summary

Part Three, continued

In Chapter 28, Victoria is happy to be home for Christmas. She and Raymond prepare for dinner, and Raymond belatedly tells Victoria that Linda will also be coming. Victoria wants to know why Raymond did not tell her sooner, but Raymond explains it is just the mistake of an old man. When Linda arrives, Raymond introduces her to Victoria and Katie. As they sit down for dinner, Victoria asks Raymond to say Grace, and he does. Linda is interested to learn about Victoria and ranching. Raymond explains he has three 640-acre sections. Linda explains she is originally from Cedar Rapids, but left when her life fell apart. She explains she would like to go on to Denver someday. When she leaves, her car won't start, so Raymond has to give her a jump. When she leaves, Raymond returns inside. Victoria has waited up for him with coffee to help warm him up.

In Chapter 29, Rose pays a surprise visit to Luther and Betty. Luther explains Betty is not awake yet, that she did not sleep well the night before, and that she is continuing to feel poorly. Luther awakens Betty, who looks horrible. They explain that since the incident, they have only seen Hoyt once in a grocery store, but they turned around and went the other way without speaking to him. They want nothing to do with him. Rose encourages Luther and Betty to be more proactive about keeping clean, and asks them how they are doing financially. Rose is otherwise glad to see things are going well, and then she heads out.

In Chapter 30, a week after Victoria and Katie leave for college, Raymond calls on Linda at home, bringing her the gift of a brand new car battery. Linda is deeply touched. She invites him in for tea since she only has instant coffee otherwise. Linda must then head out for work. Raymond takes his leave and stops for food at Shattuck's Café on the way home.

In Chapter 31, on Valentine's Day, on the way home from work, Hoyt stops with his work buddies for some beer before going home to see Laverne. By then, she is drunk and angry, having wanted to go out with him for the occasion, and angry he did not even bother to bring her chocolates. Hoyt tells her she needs to lay off the alcohol, but this angers her even more. Hoyt backhands her. She then attacks him with a kitchen spoon, leading him to shove her into the bathtub. When she tells him to get out, he punches her in the face. She then throws him out and locks him out, threatening to call the police. Hoyt then goes to the bar where a buddy named Billy Coates gives him a place to stay for the night.

In Chapter 32, the calves are born in February. Raymond frequently checks on them to see that they are doing well. Raymond heads out to the tavern to see Linda, who seems distracted this evening. A moment later, Cecil Walton of the Ford dealership sits down



beside Linda, dressed in red, putting his arm around her. Raymond leaves not long after, realizing that Linda did not have any romantic interest in him after all.

Part Four

In Chapter 33, Donna Lawson shows up at the trailer at the end of March. She is now sixteen, is pretty and blonde, and is Betty's daughter by another man before Luther. Betty is delighted to see Donna. Luther heads to bed so Betty and Donna can stay up and talk. They allow her to move in. Donna immediately moves to get to know her siblings, helping Joy Rae to try on makeup for the first time. All the girls at school are interested to learn about Joy Rae's red lipstick and Donna. Donna, however, is caught trying to shoplift from Duckwall's. When the responding deputy learns that she is staying with Betty and Luther, he decides to give her a break. He drops her off at home where he says Donna needs a better eye kept on her, and that she should be in school. When he leaves, Donna decides to leave too. She calls Raydell to come and pick her up, declaring she has no family.

In Chapter 34, Mary has begun sleeping with Bob Jeter, but he never spends the night in order to avoid town gossiping. He soon distances himself from Mary, who in turn breaks up with him. She returns to smoking and begins drinking.

In Chapter 35, Victoria brings home a boy named Del Gutierrez with her on spring break. Del is from Denver. Del takes Harold's old room. Del wakes up early and makes coffee, offering to help Raymond out around the ranch however needed. Raymond gives Del some warmer clothing for working outside, and they do everything from moving hay to feeding the cattle. When they head back inside, Victoria has breakfast ready for them. On Friday, Del and Victoria go to see a movie. Raymond tells Victoria he approves of Del, but Victoria is sad to learn about what happened with Linda.

Analysis

It would appear as if Linda's entry into Raymond's life has given him a chance for stability in this section of the novel. Victoria is glad to know that Raymond is dating, and is showing an interest in life once more. Victoria's life has been made possible and been made happy by Raymond, and now she wants him to have the same kind of happiness in his life. However, this is not to be: Linda almost mocks Raymond for thinking romance was possible with her. The night of their meeting at the bar, readers should note she is wearing red. Red becomes a color symbolic of crushed hopes. Raymond has hope that romance will be possible with Linda, but Linda in red clearly explains this is not the case. Raymond is, once again, staggered by life –and Victoria feels horribly that this has happened. Interestingly enough, Raymond in turn plays a father/grandfather figure in his vetting of Del as someone worth dating for Victoria.

The loss of Linda for Raymond demonstrates once more Haruf's thematic argument that the only thing guaranteed in life is loss. Haruf uses this particular argument as a symbiotic foundation for another thematic argument, namely that the rural working class



and poor should not be stereotyped or looked down upon. They, like all Americans, have their own heartaches, tragedies, setbacks, and losses. They are all too human, too, especially when it comes to loss. Luther and Betty must deal with almost losing their children for what Hoyt did to them. Mary must deal with the loss of her boyfriend, Bob Jeter, who clearly sees her only as a sexual escape rather than a woman worthy of love. Mary has lost her husband, and now she has lost what she had hoped to be the next and last man in her life. Betty must deal with the return, and then the departure of her daughter, Donna, whose loss she deeply feels.

Haruf, overall, continues in this section of the novel his ongoing method of writing. His language remains simple and gentle, reflecting the lives of the majority of his characters (except Hoyt); and the novel itself remains character-driven rather than plot-focused. This continues to create a relatability between characters and readers. The things faced by Haruf's residents of Holt –heartbreak, love lost, life lost, innocence lost, readjusting in life –are things that all readers face at some point or another. These simple, everyday – but no less important –problems faced by characters and readers alike further underscore Haruf's argument that working and rural Americans are not to be stereotyped and looked down upon, but respected and understood.

Discussion Question 1

How does Linda bring hope and the possibility of love into Raymond's life? How does Raymond react to her being in his life? What ultimately happens between the two? Why? How does Raymond react to this development? Why?

Discussion Question 2

When Victoria brings Del home, how does Raymond respond? What becomes his opinion of Del? Why does this opinion mean so much to Victoria?

Discussion Question 3

How does Haruf use the losses experienced by Raymond and Mary and the near-loss experienced by Betty and Luther to demonstrate that working and rural class Americans are to be respected and understood, rather than stereotyped and looked down upon? Why does Haruf choose loss as the primary means of making this argument in this section of the novel?

Vocabulary

tentative, loitered, obstinate, ignorant, ancient



Chapters 36 – 46

Summary

Part Four, continued

In Chapter 36, Mary and her daughters go to the Highway 34 Grocery Store. There, she sees Bob Jeter with his arm around a blonde woman. Mary decides to leave quickly. She drives out in front of a Ford pickup and stock trailer full of bulls, and they hit. Dena ends up requiring seventeen stitches for a gash on her face. Mary has injured her arm. Emma is knocked unconscious. Mary blames herself for what has happened. The bulls from the trailer are loose. They are corralled by helpful strangers and passers-by, but one injured bull is shot and put down.

In Chapter 37, Victoria makes Raymond and Del shower and change before dinner. Tom Guthrie and Maggie Jones arrive to take Raymond to the fireman's ball at the Legion in town. This catches Raymond by surprise. Everyone insists on his going, so Raymond agrees to change into nice clothes. At the Legion, Raymond sees some other ranchers and farmers that he knows. Maggie introduces Raymond to her good friend, who is dark-haired and middle-aged, Rose Tyler. Raymond and Rose are interested to learn about one another. Rose convinces Raymond to dance with her. Raymond agrees, but he worries he will step all over her toes. The evening goes so well that Raymond asks Rose out to dinner, and Rose happily agrees. At home, Victoria is interested to know how the night went. Raymond realizes she had her hand in making sure the evening went as it did. Victoria asks Raymond to show her how he danced, and he does. He kisses her on the forehead in gratitude.

In Chapter 38, Raymond takes Rose out to dinner at the Wagon Wheel Café on Highway 34. There, Raymond introduces Rose to Bob Schramm when he walks by; and Rose and Raymond get to know more about each other. Rose explains she is already a grandmother; and Raymond says he feels lucky to have Victoria and Katie in his life. They enjoy themselves. Rose invites Raymond over for coffee after dinner, and Raymond accepts. He compliments her place, then moves to leave. As he does, he and Rose kiss. Rose invites him into the bedroom, but Raymond worries he is too old for her. Rose dismisses this and takes him back. They sleep together, prompting Rose to explain it is proof that Raymond is not old. Raymond finally leaves at midnight. As he drives home, he considers how lucky he is to have Victoria, Katie, and now Rose in his life.

In Chapter 39, DJ and his grandfather are at the tavern again. DJ notices a drunk and dirty man hitting on the barmaid, and the barmaid does not look happy. He overhears the old men tell a story about a farmer and his wife in Nebraska who owed \$250,000 in loans to the bank. Suddenly, the couple decided to leave one day, right in the middle of a meal. They left everything half-eaten and left as if they would be back in a minute.



After hearing the old man's story, DJ goes to the bathroom. The drunk man from before is in there. He tells DJ to get out because the bathroom is for men, not little kids. DJ is embarrassed and angered, and he heads back out. When the man grasps the barmaid's wrist, DJ intervenes. He tells the man to leave her alone, but the man slaps him away twice. The bartender identifies the man as Hoyt Raines. She tells Hoyt to cut it out. Walter is already on the way to defend his grandson, and he grapples with Hoyt. Then, Walter hits his head on a table. The barmaid jumps in to help, but her blouse is torn open. DJ grabs a bottle and smashes it across Hoyt's face, bloodying him up and causing him to fall to his knees. The bartender now gets involved, telling Hoyt he is not coming back. He forces Hoyt out. DJ is embarrassed. Kind strangers seek to assist him. DJ and his grandfather then walk home. DJ sees his grandfather to sleep, then walks to the south side of Holt.

In Chapter 40, after another evening with Rose, Raymond is on his way home when he comes across DJ walking alone. DJ says he is not going home yet, so Raymond says they can just drive around for a bit. DJ gets in. Raymond asks what is wrong. With a little prodding, DJ explains what happened at the bar. DJ cries by the end of the story. Raymond is comforting, but he reminds DJ to stay away from Hoyt. He then goes to Shattuck's to order burgers and coffee for himself and DJ before dropping DJ off at home. DJ offers himself for work on the ranch. Raymond accepts, and promises to call the following week.

In Chapter 41, Luther and Betty are awakened by pounding on the door. Hopeful that Donna has returned, they are stunned to see a bloodied Hoyt standing at their door. When Luther tries to block Hoyt from coming in, Hoyt hits Luther, forcing him onto the couch. He does the same to Betty, and orders them to remain on the couch. He announces he is staying there for the night, and begins to rinse his face in the kitchen sink. Betty refuses to let him stay. Hoyt tells them he will kill them if they try to stop him or call anyone. He then forces Luther and Betty into their bedroom. He slaps Joy Rae and forces her into Richie's bedroom. Richie immediately wets himself. Hoyt slaps Richie for this, then proceeds to begin whipping Joy Rae and Richie with his belt in a fury, drawing blood from them both. In the morning, he forces everyone to be silent when a deputy arrives, preventing anyone from answering. Hoyt leaves the following morning, demanding his last paycheck in case from Elton Chatfields for his work in riding pens. Hoyt then hitches rides toward Denver.

In Chapter 42, bruises on Joy Rae and Richie that were caused by Hoyt's beatings are discovered by the nurse at school. Law enforcement is immediately notified. Deputies are dispatched. Questions are asked of the children, and of Luther and Betty to learn what has happened. Rose ensures the children receive proper medical care, then brings them to her house to make food. The county now intervenes, conducting meetings, interviews, and a Petition of Dependency and Neglect is drawn up and filed with the court. A Shelter Hearing is held. Because Luther and Betty are found to be unable to protect their children, Joy Rae and Richie will go into foster care until their uncle is apprehended. They will be allowed visits under supervision until such time. Betty screams and his heartbroken, falling back and hitting her head on a bench.



In Chapter 43, Raymond and Victoria catch up by phone. She hopes to be home by Memorial Day weekend. Victoria is glad to hear Raymond and Rose are going together, now. Victoria reminds Raymond to take care of himself and to watch what he eats.

In Chapter 44, Mary Wells feels better as time passes. She begins applying for jobs and takes one in Greeley at an insurance office. This means the family will have to move. Dena does not want to move, but Mary says it will be a fresh start. Mary also buys concealer for Dena to help cover the scar on her face from the accident.

In Chapter 45, Rose brings Luther and Betty to visit Joy Rae and Richie at the foster home where they are living. They do not get along well with the other foster children. Betty later explains to Rose that her stomach is still bothering her, prompting Rose to decide to make a doctor's appointment.

In Chapter 46, Raymond comes over to comfort Rose, who is deeply upset by the situation Hoyt has caused. She thanks Raymond for just listening to her, and Raymond holds her close. The evening comes on, and Raymond and Rose wait for what comes next.

Analysis

The rural working class and poor should not be stereotyped or looked down upon.. All of the novel's characters, except Hoyt, are generous. They have the best of intentions, and they are always looking for tomorrow to be a better day. The brothers are ranchers; Luther and Betty survive on disability payments; and, Victoria is a single mother. However, they all share the common trait of being good people. They experience loss and love the same way as other people in the country, or in the world.

Readers should note that Haruf's language remains gentle and simple even through the end of the novel, and the ending itself seems anticlimactic, but very real: Raymond and Rose have no idea what is coming next, but at least they have each other. (Readers should also note a strange kind of balancing here at the end of the novel. The accident into which Mary gets leads to the killing of a bull, whereas early in the novel, a bull killed Harold.)

Haruf's realism is likewise reflected through his thematic assertion that loss is the only guarantee in life. By the end of the novel, all characters have experienced a kind of loss. Some have only recently experienced loss. Luther and Betty, despite their best efforts, simply find themselves overwhelmed –and have their lives threatened –by Hoyt. Disabled, they are unable to more actively try to stop Hoyt, who in turn savages Joy Rae and Richie once more. Joy Rae and Richie, who believed they were safe, find out this is not the case –and their innocence is further eroded. As if the initial beatings were not enough, the second spate of beatings demolishes what little hope Joy Rae and Richie have had for safety going forward. Their trust as children in adults making things right is gone. The result is that both children are taken away from their parents until Hoyt can be caught. This might be never, as Rose sadly notes. Readers should note the



symbolic importance of the concealer purchased to cover up Dena's scar caused by the car accident. The concealer can help cover the scar, but the scar will always remain. No move can change the past. No amount of time can change the past. The beatings will always be a scar carried by Joy Rae and Richie.

Loss is also reflected elsewhere in the characters of DJ and Dena. The bar altercation begun by DJ in defense of Tammy the barmaid escalates into the bar turning against Hoyt –but DJ refusing help from anyone else and walking home with his grandfather afterwards. (To rural and working class people, what little independence they have means everything, Haruf here notes.) As if the bar situation was not enough for DJ to have to handle, he and Dena also experience heartbreak not long after. Mary has taken a job over in Greeley, meaning the family will be moving –and what gentle romance existed between both DJ and Dena will not be ripped away. Loss, Haruf argues, is the only guarantee in life. Life itself, he argues as the novel closes, is uncertain at best.

Discussion Question 1

Do you believe Luther and Betty should be held to account for their inability to stop Hoyt from reentering their home and savagely beating Joy Rae and Richie? Why or why not? Regardless as to your opinion on this, do you believe it was right and just for Joy Rae and Richie to be placed in foster care? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Mary Wells determine that leaving Holt will be the best way to begin a new life? Why does Raymond alternately believe remaining in Holt on his ranch is the best way to begin his new life? What accounts for their difference in opinion?

Discussion Question 3

Haruf chooses a bittersweet, uncertain ending to his novel, rather than a happy ending that provides real closure. Why does he do this?

Vocabulary

lurching, indiscriminate, fury, everlasting, pronouncements, unassailable, peculiarly, circumspection



Characters

Raymond

Raymond McPheron is the brother of Harold, and he serves to be something of a father and grandfather figure to Victoria and Katie. While his age is never given, he refers to himself as old. The author describes him as having gray hair.

Raymond is a very traditional and kindhearted man who deeply loves his family. He feels lonely when Victoria goes to college, and he is devastated when Harold is killed. However, Raymond's family and friends rally around him and help him to adjust following Harold's death. Ultimately, Raymond comes to offer comfort and advice to DJ. Also, Raymond begins dating Rose.

Harold

Harold McPheron is the brother of Raymond. He deeply loves Raymond, Victoria, and Katie. Early in the novel, Harold dies suddenly when he is mauled to death by a nervous bull. Before he dies, he tells his brother Raymond that now Raymond must take care of himself.

Victoria

Victoria Roubideaux is a nineteen year-old African American girl who is the mother of Katie. Victoria is something of an adopted daughter to Raymond and Harold, who have taken her into their home.

How Victoria came to stay with Raymond and Harold is not revealed. However, it is known that she is from Denver. Also, prior to her coming to live safely and happily at the McPheron ranch, Victoria was in a bad relationship with a man named Dwayne.

At the beginning of the novel, Victoria has left the ranch to go to college. Since arriving at college, she misses the two men who have become her family., Raymond and Harold. She thinks of them as her family, and she deeply loves both of them.

After Harold's death, Victoria helps Raymond. Then, she begins dating a boy named Del. She wants Raymond to approve of Del.

Later, Victoria encourages Raymond to get on with life and to find love.



Betty

Betty June Wallace is the wife of Luther and the mother of Joy Rae and Richie. Betty is a sweet but bumbling woman. She is on disability and food stamps. Betty is troubled by a horrible pain in her stomach which seems to have no diagnosis. The doctor is treating the pain with pills that do not work.

Betty loves her family, and regrets the loss of her first daughter (by another man), Donna, to a foster family years before. Betty is powerless to stop her Uncle Hoyt from moving in and abusing her children. This ultimately leads to Betty losing her children to foster care until Hoyt is arrested.

Luther

Luther Wallace is the husband of Betty and the father of Joy Rae and Richie. Overweight, bumbling, and passive, Luther is on disability and food stamps. He struggles to provide however he can for his family. Luther is powerless to stop Hoyt from abusing his children. He sees his children go into foster care until such time as Hoyt is captured.

DJ

Following the death of his parents, DJ Kephart moved in with his grandfather, Walter Kephart. DJ is about eleven or twelve years of age. He is kind, thoughtful, and protective of his grandfather.

DJ befriends Dena Wells, which leads to something of a romance between them. Later, he is heartbroken when Dena and her family move away.

Walter

Walter Kephart is the grandfather of DJ. Defensive of his grandson and defensive of his own independence, Walter nearly dies of pneumonia because he is too stubborn to go to the doctor until Walter and Mary Wells insist.

Later, Walter comes to the defense of DJ at the bar when Hoyt goes after DJ.

Hoyt

Hoyt Raines is the antagonist of the novel. He is the uncle of Betty and a horrible man. He is a seasonal worker who is often fired for drunkenness and mistakes made because of his drinking. He is crude, dirty, and physically abusive toward women and children alike.



Hoyt is a dangerous man who is arrested for abusing his niece and nephew, Joy Rae and Richie, whom he savagely beats with a belt. Hoyt is released on a plea bargain and under the condition that he stays away from the Wallace family. However, his bar fight leads him back to their door and back to his abusive ways.

By the end of the novel, Hoyt is headed to Denver. He is running from the law.

Rose

Rose Tyler is a Holt County Social Services worker. She is middle-aged, dark-haired, beautiful, kind, sympathetic, and intelligent. She is specifically the caseworker for the Wallaces, and her heart breaks over their unfolding situation. In the novel, Rose meets and romantically falls for Raymond, and the two ultimately come to be in a relationship and depend on one another for strength, support, and love.

Joy Rae

Joy Rae Wallace is the daughter of Luther and Betty. She is the older sister of Richie. At eleven years old, Joy Rae is very self-aware of her home life and situation. She defends her brother from bullying and relishes her limited independence.

Joy Rae abhors that her family is reliant on help from others. This helps to fuel her refusal to tell her teachers or others in authority about the physical abuse she and her brother have suffered at the hands of Hoyt.

As the situation with Hoyt unfolds, Joy Rae is crushed by it. She must be placed in foster care for her own protection until Hoyt is caught.

Mary

Mary Wells is the mother of Dena and Emma and a neighbor to the Kepharts. Kind, compassionate, and gentle, Mary is in her early thirties and beautiful. She is a stay-at-home mom. Mary comes to the assistance of DJ and Walter when Walter contracts pneumonia.

Mary is devastated when her husband, who is away working in Alaska, leaves her. Mary descends into a stupor of alcohol and cigarettes. She goes through a bad relationship with Bob Jeter. Later, she gets into a car accident that injures her and her children. Eventually, Mary cleans up her act and decides the family will have a fresh start in Greeley, located two hours away.

Dena

Dena Wells is the daughter of Mary and the older sister of Emma. Dena is about 11 years old, and she is gentle and kind. She remains hopeful for the future despite the abandonment of the family by her father.

Dena begins something of a romance with DJ and turns an abandoned shed into a house with him. Dena is injured in a car accident that leaves her with a facial laceration that requires stitches. The laceration leaves a scar.

Dena is heartbroken when she learns the family will be moving two hours away to Greeley, meaning she must leave DJ behind.



Symbols and Symbolism

Cookies

The cookies from Mary Wells symbolize a kind of rugged independence. When DJ is hired by Mary to do work on her garden, she sends out water and cookies for DJ. DJ accepts the water, but he will not accept the cookies. He sees them as a kind of handout. He believes that he is more than capable of caring for and feeding himself. Accepting a gift, no matter how freely given, would be like admitting defeat and admitting he could not take care of himself.

Food stamps

Food stamps symbolize misunderstanding. Betty and Luther, both disabled, receive food stamps. At the food store, a man looks down on them for eating better than he does while being on food stamps when he is not. The man does not know that Betty and Luther must walk home in the horrible heat, pushing their cart the whole way. They have to stop every block or two to rest.

Just because someone is on food stamps does not necessarily mean that person is benefiting when others are not. Ironically, the man looking down on Betty and Luther seems to have no issue spending more money on cigarettes than he does on food.

Rain

The rain symbolizes the weariness and trials of life. The rain comes down on the night that Harold and Raymond speak to Victoria by phone and on the night Luther and Betty have a fight.

Harold, Raymond, and Victoria are lonely without one another; and Luther is apologetic for what has happened with Betty. When Rose offers to let Luther use her phone, he refuses, asking to borrow a quarter to use a payphone to call and apologize to Betty because he has been rained on already. In other words, apart from actually being soaked, he does not want to involve Rose any more than necessary in his own problems (his own rain). His ability to pay back the quarter and make a phone call on his own without accepting a gesture of goodwill from Rose is a mild assertion of what little independence Luther has left in his life. Rain has fallen on his life.

Separate bedrooms

Separate trailer bedrooms represent a small, precious luxury that Luther and Betty can afford for their children. Hoyt's insistence that the kids sleep together in the same room is met with resistance by Betty and Luther. They know their two children have so little,



so having their own room matters greatly to the children. However, Luther reluctantly caves in to Hoyt.

Raymond's jacket

Raymond's jacket symbolizes comfort and respect. When Harold is mauled by a bull and begins to die, Raymond covers Harold up in his final moments to keep him warm and provide some small comfort. When Harold dies, Raymond covers Harold with the jacket out of respect and love.

Bruises and welts

The bruises and welts on Joy Rae and Richie symbolize a loss of innocence and an end to childhood. Joy Rae and Richie are physically abused by their horrible uncle, who beats them for things like not cleaning the trailer. At ages eleven and six, respectively, Joy Rae and Richie are cruelly introduced to the reality of the world of adults. They learn that not all people are kind or good. Joy Rae and Richie have been exposed to horrors no child should ever see, and their childhoods will forever be marred by these beatings.

Red

Red is an omen for crushed hopes. Red appears in numerous places, always having a negative connotation in the story. A red coffee can is found in the shed that DJ and Dena hope to fix up and make their safe place. But, Dena must move away, dooming the romance and safety shared by DJ and Dena. Linda wears a red dress the night Raymond finds her at the bar. On that night, Raymond learns that Linda does not want a romance with him and has passed him over for someone else. The confidence Joy Rae experiences wearing red lipstick is quickly overshadowed by abuse from her uncle.

Concealer

Concealer symbolizes a new start. Mary Wells buys concealer for Dena to help cover up her scar after explaining they will be making a fresh start with a move to Greeley, two hours away. The concealer covers the scar, but not completely, just as the move will help to cover their emotional scars, but not completely. DJ is very sad to see Dena go. She kisses him on the cheek when they leave.

Shelter Hearing

The Shelter Hearing symbolizes heartbreak. The Hearing determines that, until Hoyt can be captured, Joy Rae and Richie must go into foster care. This is the last thing that Betty, Luther, Joy Rae, or Richie ever wanted, and it breaks their hearts because not



only are they powerless against Hoyt, but they are powerless against the county and powerless to protect one another.

Raymond's company

Raymond's company symbolizes understanding. Rose is emotionally crushed by the situation with the Wallaces, but there is nothing else that can be done. Raymond comforts her and holds her, telling her that she did all she could. He does his best just to be there for her. His simple company means the world to Rose. It demonstrates Raymond's desire to understand –something Haruf encourages all readers to do where working class and rural Americans are concerned.

Settings

Holt

Holt, Colorado, is a fictional rural-suburban small town (based on Yuma) located along U.S. Highway 34. It is surrounded by sprawling farmland and ranches. The town itself is home to diners, restaurants, stores, taverns, schools, gas stations, the county courthouse, and various other small town businesses, services, and buildings. Holt is populated primarily by working class, impoverished, rural residents (such as ranchers and farmers). Holt serves as the main setting for the novel, from the McPherons who own a ranch seventeen miles outside of town to the Wallaces who own a trailer in the impoverished area of town.

Old shed

The old shed, which symbolizes the potential of the future, is at the end of an alley near an abandoned lot. It is discovered by DJ and Dena. It is full of old equipment, such as a lawnmower, old tools, baskets, and various other things. These things represent the past and what the present generation will inherit. Among these things are the trials, tribulations, mistakes, miseries, and unfortunate circumstances of the past.

Dena insists the shed can be cleaned out and that they can bring their own things to the shed. In other words, Dena will take what previous generations have left behind and make these things better for the future. Dena and DJ set up their own kind of house.

Fort Collins

Fort Collins is where Victoria attends school, bringing Katie along with her. The McPherons travel with Victoria and Katie to Fort Collins to move her in at the start of the school year. There, Victoria feels lonely and out of place in the college town, having come to find the open land around Holt as her home. She feels lonely in Fort Collins not only because of the physical setting itself, but because Harold and Raymond are not there.

Grocery store

The grocery store in Holt is where Luther and Betty shop for their family. Their time at the grocery store is never a joyous event, as they live on frozen foods and must pay with food stamps. They must also walk to and from the store, pushing a shopping cart. Haruf uses the grocery store as the foundation for his argument that people on social services are not necessarily taking advantage of the system. Those who receive public assistance do not necessarily have things easy.

Tavern

The tavern is a regular place for many of the characters in the novel, including DJ and his grandfather. It later becomes host to Hoyt and serves to be the setting for the catalyst to the climax of the novel. It is at the tavern that Hoyt crudely hits on and manhandles Tammy the barmaid. DJ intervenes and smashes a bottle over Hoyt's face. This leads Hoyt to return to the Wallaces' home.



Themes and Motifs

The poor, rural working class should not be stereotyped or looked down upon.

The poor, rural working class should not be stereotyped or looked down upon. Haruf, the author, specifically organizes his cast of rural, working class characters around impoverished circumstances. This demonstrates that they, like all Americans and all people throughout the world, are human. They love deeply, and they suffer tragedies and heartbreaks. The poor working class deserve to be respected and understood.

The McPheron brothers, Harold and Raymond, are elderly, traditional men who have good hearts. As cattle ranchers, they are simple men who work hard and live quiet lives. Working with cattle and horses on a ranch does not mean that they are less intelligent, less kind, or less human than anyone else. Both brothers feel a tremendous loss when Victoria goes away to college. Raymond experiences devastation when Harold is killed. Then, there is more heartache for Raymond when he learns Linda does not want to date him.

Victoria is a single parent in the novel. She had left a bad relationship some years before she comes to live with the McPherons and raise her daughter. But rather than doing nothing with her life, she and the McPherons take on one another as family. Then, Victoria decides to attend college.

Mary becomes a single mother when she is abandoned by her husband. She falls apart for a little while, but she pulls herself back together. She chooses to move herself and her daughters to Greeley where she has taken a job. Mary is trying to begin her life over again.

Haruf's greatest challenge of those who look down on people comes through the Wallaces. Though Betty and Luther may be passive, bumbling people who are on disability and receive food stamps, they also have good hearts. They are struggling to raise their children as best they can. Criticism of them for a shopping cart full of food at the grocery store purchased with food stamps is countered with the fact that Luther and Betty have to walk all the way home with their purchases. Just because someone is on public assistance does not necessarily mean they are merely taking advantage of the system, or that they have life easier than anyone else. Oftentimes, they genuinely have it worse.

To rural and working class people, their limited independence means everything to them.

To rural and working class people, even limited independence means everything to them. In the novel *Eventide*, the extremely poor people are often at the mercy of



circumstances or situations beyond their control. They are dependent on the system for survival. Their resources are limited to food stamps and income from disability or government assistance. Whatever independence they can carve out for themselves is important. Others, such as Raymond and Harold McPherson, have worked hard to establish some semblance of independence to provide for themselves without the system's help. However, it makes no difference if people are surviving by relying on the system or surviving by striving to make ends meet by hard labor, Independence is a matter of pride and honor to every human being.

Harold and Raymond have, for all their lives, managed their own ranch alone, dealing with hundreds of cattle and horses. When they take in Victoria and Katie, their lives all change. Victoria, though a single mother, will not allow herself to be taken care of by others. Instead, she actively contributes to the household, establishing a form of independence by making a home for both men. When Harold is killed, Raymond reluctantly must ask for help on the ranch from Tom Guthrie, something he never would do under normal circumstances.

Luther and Betty feel bad enough as it is that they must be on disability and food stamps. It is not something they are proud of. They are dependent upon the good will and charity of others. As such, where they can, they maintain what little independence they have. They refuse to ask for rides to and from the grocery store. Luther refuses to use Rose's phone, instead asking for a quarter –which means he can pay her back. He opts to walk downtown to use a payphone instead of accepting a gift from another person. Repaying money is independence. Accepting charitable use of a phone is dependency.

Elsewhere in the novel, DJ comes to work for Mary in her gardens. Mary pays DJ for working, and she offers him water and cookies on break. DJ accepts the water, but he refuses the cookies. They represent a gift that challenges his ability to take care of himself and to feed himself. DJ is struggling to get by as it is, and he does not want to accept any kindness from anyone. To him, accepting kindness would undermine his credibility in being able to take care of himself. Likewise, DJ turns down offers of help and statements of concern after the bar incident with Hoyt, determined to head home alone with his grandfather rather than accepting help.

In rural and working class areas, people depend on and help one another in times of real trouble.

In rural and working class areas, people depend on and help one another in times of real trouble. Because money and resources are often scarce in such situations, simple human help and kindness are pivotal. Ironically, people in such areas have difficulty accepting or admitting they need help, but they have no reservations about offering such help.

When Harold is killed and Raymond is injured, Raymond realizes he is in a difficult situation. He admits he needs help. While in the hospital, he asks for Victoria and Tom



Guthrie to be called. Victoria races home to help Raymond out at the house and to comfort him emotionally as well. Tom and his sons come in to help Raymond tend to his cattle. Maggie Jones volunteers herself and comes in to help tend to Raymond's house as well. Without being asked, she willingly commits to helping someone in need.

Mary Wells realizes DJ and his grandfather are in a difficult place in life. Although her husband is away in Alaska, and though her own life can be a challenge, Mary seeks to help. For example, Mary is quite capable of gardening, but she offers DJ a job because she knows that he can use the money. She also rushes to help when DJ finally admits that he needs assistance when his grandfather comes down sick. It is Mary who helps DJ and his grandfather get to the hospital. Mary's help is instrumental in saving DJ's grandfather's life.

There are other instantaneous acts of kindness and dependence in the novel. When Betty has a fight with Luther and wants to spend the night at her house, Rose, without hesitating, drives Betty and the kids to Betty's aunt's house. When Tammy is being manhandled by Hoyt, DJ rushes to her defense, ultimately smashing a bottle over Hoyt's head. When Raymond sees DJ wandering around alone at the night, he picks DJ up, buys him food, and lets DJ talk through his problems. Only a short time before, DJ had refused help from anyone.

The important things in life have nothing to do with money or material wealth.

The important things in life have nothing to do with money or material wealth. In the novel *Eventide*, the author asserts that things like love, friendship, companionship, and understanding matter far more than money or material items. In part, this is because the characters are poor and downtrodden. Since poor people have little or no money, care and concern by others during the hard times are the keys to survival. The most important things in life defy class and circumstance as they are the core of the human experience.

While the work that Harold and Raymond do with cattle earns them a decent enough living, it is still hard work that they could easily give up in favor of doing something else. However, their career in ranching allows them to work together and to spend time together. They are more than just brothers. They are also friends. Victoria, likewise, is grateful far less for the support Harold and Raymond give her and her daughter at home and at college than she is grateful for the sense of love and family she has with them. These are more important to her than anything.

DJ could have an easier life if he lived with a foster family, but he chooses to instead live with his grandfather after the death of DJ's parents. DJ may have to take care of his grandfather a lot of the time, but he values love of family over potential material and financial ease he might have in foster care.



Blood matters more than money. Joy Rae and Richie, who could have life much easier in terms of finances in foster care, choose their blood family over potential ease. Out of family loyalty, they refuse to speak about their beatings from Hoyt. They value family love and loyalty above their own safety.

When Mary is abandoned by her husband, money is not the issue. Her heart is broken. When Mary is dumped by her successive boyfriend, she spirals into a downfall until she catches herself. She realizes after the car accident that her family is more important than her romantic interests.

When Harold is killed, Raymond is devastated. Raymond must rely on family –Victoria – and friends –Tom and Maggie –to get by. Raymond is not concerned about things like death benefits or his financial situation, but he is concerned about getting on in life and holding close those who hold him close as well. Family and friendship sustain him.

Loss is the only thing that is guaranteed in life.

Loss is the only thing that is guaranteed in life. Loss takes many forms in the novel, from mere absences to heartbreak and death. It is the one thing which affects all characters in the novel at some point or another. This demonstrates that characters, class, and any manner of circumstance have no bearing or mitigating effect on such things. As such, all readers can relate to Haruf's characters.

When the novel begins, Harold and Raymond must deal with loss in the form of the absence of another. Victoria and Katie are leaving for Fort Collins, where Victoria will attend college. Harold and Raymond are lonely without Victoria around, and miss her deeply. They speak by phone with her as often as they are able to do so to help deal with their sense of loss, but phone calls do not help much.

Victoria herself is also deeply affected by being away from the ranch. She feels at a loss from being so far away from the place she has come to consider home and the men she has come to consider family. When Harold is tragically killed, Raymond and Victoria are devastated by his death. It is a kind of absence that will affect their lives permanently. Death brings a forever kind of absence.

DJ has dealt with the death of loved ones. He lost his parents, and now he is clinging to his grandfather, whose health is failing. At the same time, Dena deals with the loss of her father, who abandons the family. DJ and Dena come to cling to one another through the course of the novel, finding comfort, acceptance, and belonging. Then, Dena and her family move away. Dena and DJ suffer a romantic loss.

Dena's mother must deal with heartbreak and loss not only through the abandonment of her husband (Dena's father) and through the loss of the boyfriend that follows.

Loss also affects the Wallace family, especially. Betty's first daughter (by a different man) was taken into foster care. Betty has not seen her in years. Luther and Betty later lose their two children, Joy Rae and Richie, to foster care following the beatings the



children suffer at the hands of Hoyt. The loss hits them especially hard, because not only are these their children, but because they have struggled so hard to do what they could to provide for them as well. Losing them feels like a loss of their right to be parents. It indicates that they are parents who have failed.

Joy Rae and Richie themselves suffer loss. First, they are separated from their parents. They also suffer s loss of innocence. Their Uncle Hoyt has brutally beaten them multiple times. They have suffered in a way children should never have to suffer, and they have been forever scarred by the experience.

Styles

Point of View

Kent Haruf tells his novel *Eventide* from the third-person, omniscient, narrative mode. The unidentified narrator is given a bird's eye view of events, knowing everything going on at all times. Haruf constructs a sympathetic narrator whose omniscience allows readers a deeper glimpse into the lives of rural and working class people. Haruf intends to defend the American rural and working class.

The omniscient narrative mode allows readers to know what is going on not only with each of his characters, both before and after their appearances as well. This creates a kind of complexity that gives depth to the story and helps Haruf to make his arguments thematically. For example, readers are treated to a conversation between the cashier and a man in line after Luther and Betty have left the grocery store. During the conversation, the cashier defends the honor of the Wallaces. This occurrence allows Haruf to make the point that not all people on welfare are bad or cheating the system.

Language and Meaning

Kent Haruf tells his novel *Eventide* in language that is simple, gentle, and almost poetic. This is done for a number of reasons. First, the simple and gentle nature of the language reflects the people in his story. The characters, except Hoyt, are simple, everyday Americans with good hearts. However, they are looked down upon by others because of their status. Haruf's language accurately, respectfully, and gently portrays them without romanticizing them. The simple, gentle language allows readers to remain focused specifically on the characters themselves. While the language is critical to the novel, Haruf ensures it does not become a distraction from the character-driven story he is trying to tell.

The poetic aspect of the language reflects the beautiful area around the small town of Holt and the inner beauty of the characters. Again, the poetic aspect is not overbearing, overly romanticized, or distracting. It is used for reinforcement. For example, upon discovering the abandoned shed with DJ, Dena is hopeful. Her words are simple and have a poetic aspect when she states, "We could make something of this" (59).

Structure

Kent Haruf divides his novel *Eventide* into four major parts, with each part being divided into forty-six consecutive, linear, and chronological chapters. The setting spans three seasons –autumn, winter, and spring. The characters live in Holt, Colorado. The chapters advance one by one, step by step, reflective of the seasons, months, and lives of the characters.



Each part deals with a major event in the novel. For example, Part 2 deals with the appearance of Hoyt and the death of Harold. Each chapter ranges from a few pages in length to several. Each chapter focuses primarily around one or two characters and the events unfolding in their lives. Raymond and Rose end up dating, while DJ and Dena end up in something resembling a romance. DJ's defense of Tammy at the bar propels Hoyt back to the Wallace trailer where he threatens the Wallaces and beats the children yet again. Each chapter serves as a vehicle for the character-driven story that Haruf tells.



Quotes

It feels empty already, don't it.
-- Harold (Chapter 1)

Importance: After the brothers Harold and Raymond drop Victoria and her daughter off at college, they return home. Immediately, they are struck by how lonely and quiet the house is without her. It was something they were expecting but not really prepared for.

But would you want to be them?
-- Cashier (Chapter 5)

Importance: After leaving the food store, Luther and Betty are looked down upon for their cart full of groceries paid for by food stamps by a man who cannot afford as much and does not live off food stamps. The cashier rebukes him gently, asking the man if he would rather be them. Just because someone is on food stamps does not necessarily mean they are cheating the system. This is demonstrated by Luther and Betty, who must walk home in the terrible heat, pushing their grocery cart the whole way.

It isn't the same around here, I can tell you. Far from it.
-- Raymond (Chapter 7)

Importance: Here, Raymond speaks to Victoria by phone. He admits that things are not the same without her around. Being gone is an adjustment not only for them, but for Victoria as well, who must now attend class and care for a child at the same time. Raymond and Harold can both tell from the sound of Victoria's voice that she is lonely now that she is 125 miles away at school.

"I been rained on already.
-- Luther (Chapter 8)

Importance: Luther asks Rose for a quarter to call Betty to apologize for their fight. Rose offers him the use of her phone, but Luther turns her down. Instead, he goes to a pay phone. He comments that he has already been rained on. This reflects on the fact that Luther is soaked from the rain and that life, in general, has worn him down. Luther borrows a quarter because he knows he can pay Rose back. He refuses the free use of her phone because it is one of the few kinds of independence he still has—to be able to walk to use a phone on his own.

We could make something of this.
-- Dena (Chapter 9)

Importance: Dena and DJ come across an old, abandoned shed they decide they will clean out. They turn it into something of a house. The shed is symbolic of the things inherited from former generations, including heartache, mistakes, and history. Symbolically, the shed becomes a place where the next generation enhances what has



been inherited. Dena's appraisal that they could make something of this refers to transforming the shed and transforming their lives.

I ain't going nowhere.
-- Harold (Chapter 12)

Importance: When Harold is mauled by a nervous bull, Raymond is set to rush inside and call for help. Harold refuses, saying it is only a matter of time before he dies. Shortly thereafter, Harold is correct. But, before he dies, he tells Raymond to take care of himself, Victoria, and her little girl. Raymond stays with Harold's body for an hour before calling for help.

Some things you don't get over. I believe this'll be one of them.
-- Raymond (Chapter 15)

Importance: Here, Raymond speaks to Victoria about the present and the past. When Victoria asks a bit about Raymond and Harold's past lives, Raymond explains Harold was in love once, but the girl chose someone else over him. He explains some things in life people simply cannot get over. Raymond believes Harold's death will be one of them.

So he was alone now, more alone than he had ever been in his life.
-- Narrator (Chapter 20)

Importance: Raymond thinks about life after the death of his brother. He feels more lonely now than ever with Harold gone. However, Victoria remains, insistent on remaining with Raymond and refusing to let him be by himself.

I have my own life, she said. I have it here. Because of you and Harold. Where do you think I would be without the two of you? I might still be in Denver or on the street. Or with Dwayne in his apartment, which would be even worse.
-- Victoria (Chapter 20)

Importance: Here, Victoria explains her reluctance to return to college. She owes her life and the happiness of her daughter to Harold and Raymond, who took her into their home. It is a fact that Victoria's situation would be worse had she not moved in with them.

Out in the flat treeless country he counted himself more than lucky. Victoria and Katie in his life, and now to have whatever was starting with this generous woman, Rose Tyler.
-- Narrator (Chapter 38)

Importance: Despite romantic setbacks and the death of his brother, Raymond comes to consider his life blessed. Despite his suffering and the difficulties of ranching, he looks on the bright side of things and focuses on the good things in his life. He realizes he has a daughter in Victoria and a granddaughter in Katie. Now, it looks like he might



have a girlfriend because a romance with Rosie seems to be unfolding. Raymond is happy as he think about good things on his way home from Rose's house.

There was nothing else to be done about it, was there?
-- Raymond (Chapter 46)

Importance: Here, Raymond comforts Rose when she is confronted by the fact that Luther and Betty will temporarily lose custody of their own children. Raymond tells Rose that sometimes things happen that are beyond one's control. Raymond's philosophical observation may apply to everyone in life, especially those characters in the novel. Lost love, death, and heartache are beyond everyone's control.

And still in the room they sat together quietly, the old man with his arm around this kind woman, waiting for what would come.
-- Narrator (Chapter 46)

Importance: Here, Raymond continues to comfort Rose. There is a tenderness between them that appeals to the reader, but even more so important is what it means. Raymond and Rose do not know what tomorrow holds in store for them, but for now, they are where they are. They know they have each other, and it becomes apparent they are prepared to handle whatever may come.