

The Eye in the Door Study Guide

The Eye in the Door by Pat Barker

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Plot Summary

The Eye in the Door is a story of fragmentation and the dualities that exist in the minds and lives of its characters. Much of the novel takes place in London during World War I from 1914 to 1918. The infamous Pemberton Billing trial provides a backdrop and several historical figures of the time play key roles in the fictional narrative. The horrors of mechanized war, rigid class divisions, and sexual ambiguity comprise the thematic foundation of this novel.

Billy Prior, the main protagonist, is an only child from a violent, working class home in northern England. He earned an officer's commission and fought in the muddy trenches at the Front until he was wounded. The physical injury heals, but Prior is severely traumatized by his combat experience. Billy Prior, like many of the characters in the novel, is haunted by his recollections of the war. One particularly disturbing memory entails the dislodged eyeball of Towers, one of Billy's comrades. After a stay at Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh, Billy returns to London where he works for the domestic Intelligence Unit of the Ministry of Munitions.

When the novel begins, Billy Prior is already a divided self. He is neither for nor against the war. He neither loves nor hates his parents. Billy straddles the line between pacifism and a commitment to war as well as between loyalty to his friends and loyalty to his profession. He also struggles between heterosexuality and bisexuality and between darkness and light. The state of suspended ambiguity in which Billy Prior lives only becomes uncomfortable when its validity is challenged by external events. Billy is a patient of Dr. William Rivers, a renown social anthropologist and psychiatrist who treats men suffering from shell-shock and war-related nervous disorders.

One evening, Billy has a casual encounter with Charles Manning, another of Dr. Rivers' patients and a fellow officer. Manning is a closeted homosexual who leads a double life. Manning, too, has been deeply affected by the war. Physically, Manning is forever altered. Emotionally, he is in tatters. When Manning receives an invitation to a play from an anonymous source, his fear of exposure leads Manning to the desperate brink of obsession.

Things take a turn for the worse, however, when Billy Prior begins to lose time. The Eye in the Door is a novel of epiphany, deep reflection and ultimately, reclamation. Dr. Rivers and his patients explore the layers and textures of what it means to be a whole, integrated person.

Billy Prior, Charles Manning, and Dr. Rivers' other patients stand as witnesses while they break down, break apart, and are finally reunited with themselves.



Part 1: Chapters 1 - 9

Part 1: Chapters 1 - 9 Summary

The Eye in the Door is the story of a young army lieutenant named Billy Prior. Prior lives in London during WWI. After being discharged from Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh, Billy is assigned to the domestic Intelligence Unit of the Ministry of Munitions. Billy is under the care of psychiatrist William Rivers. Billy, like so many other soldiers at the time, suffers from shell-shock and anxiety. The novel chronicles Billy's journey from fragmentation and uncertainty to wholeness and a semblance of acceptance. Billy Prior learns that the war in the trenches is not the only battle he will fight.

In Chapter 1, Billy and Myra take a walk along the Serpentine. Myra is a married woman whose husband is fighting on the French Front. Billy tries to convince Myra to have sex with him in a thicket of trees by the river. Myra refuses. Billy wanders the streets of London alone, bored, after seeing Myra off at the train station.

The previous year, Billy Prior was a patient in Craiglockhart War Hospital. At this point, it is unclear exactly why Billy was sent to Craiglockhart. Billy's psychotherapist is Dr. William Rivers.

Billy meets Charles Manning, another army officer, while sitting on a bench by the river. The two men go back to Manning's flat. There is discernible sexual tension between the two men. Billy is uncomfortable with the small talk and he becomes flirtatious with Manning in order to move things along more quickly. During their conversation, Billy notices signs of war-related trauma in Manning.

Billy and Manning go upstairs to a bedroom in the servants' quarters. When the two men are undressing, Billy sees that Manning's leg has been badly injured. It happens that Manning and Prior know each other, but only by sight. Manning was arrested for homosexual acts, but served no prison time. Billy tells Manning that he works for the Intelligence Unit.

In Chapter 2, it is revealed that both Charles Manning and Billy Prior work for the Ministry of Munitions. Manning is a snob who thinks of Billy Prior as a "temporary gentleman" or someone from the lower class who tries to imitate his social betters (pg. 20.)

Before the end of their encounter the night before, Manning invited Billy to visit him at home again. Billy agreed but not enthusiastically. Manning has a wife, Jane, and two sons named Robert and James. Manning receives a notice in the mail. It is an informal invitation to an underground performance of Oscar Wilde's play Salome. The notice unnerves Manning. No one in his social circle would send a notice to his home as



Manning has recently been staying at his gentleman's club. Manning leaves the house and promptly has a severe anxiety attack as a result of shell-shock.

In Chapter 3, Billy Prior visits Aylesbury Prison for women. Prior does not think much of the female warden, but he behaves politely nonetheless. He does not want the prisoner he has come to visit to suffer because of anything he might do to displease the warden.

Billy has come to visit Beatrice "Beattie" Roper, someone he knows from back home in Salford. Beattie is on hunger strike. Beattie tells Billy Prior that her son, William, was put into a detention facility for being a conscientious objector to the war. Beattie has been at Aylesbury or over a year ago after being found guilty of conspiring to poison the Prime Minister.

Beattie tells Billy that one evening a man named Spragge came to her house looking for lodging for the night. Spragge and Beattie begin drinking and Spragge begins railing against the Prime Minister. Spragge tells Beattie that he has a contact in a detention center which houses conscientious objectors. Spragge says his contact has a plan to free a few of the prisoners. The only problem, Spragge says, is the guard dogs.

Beattie suggests poisoning the dogs with curare, a South American poison. After Spragge leaves, he and Beattie correspond for a time and Beattie tells Spragge that she can help him get the curare. Spragge later uses Beattie's letters against her in court. Beattie is an avowed pacifist.

There is a large eye painted around the peephole in the door of Beattie Roper's cell door. The eye disturbs Billy Prior greatly. It reminds him of looking out of the trenches. Prior promises Beattie Roper that he will try to get permission for her to have visitors at Aylesbury.

In Chapter 4, Billy speaks to his supervisor, Major Lode, at the Ministry of Munitions. Lode authorizes Billy to talk to Hettie Roper, Beattie's daughter. Most recently, Hettie was involved with Patrick "Mac" MacDowell, the leader of a pacifist movement.

Prior despises Major Lode because of Lode's condescension.

Billy returns to his office and prepares for a meeting with Lionel Arthur Mortimer Spragge. Billy reads Spragge's official report on Beattie Roper. Spragge works as an informal investigator for the Ministry of Munitions.

Billy Prior grills Spragge about his encounter with Beattie Roper.

When Billy leaves his office and heads downstairs, he sees Charles Manning waiting for the elevator. Manning is chatting casually with Winston Churchill and Edward March.

Alone with his thoughts, Billy remembers being in the trenches in France during the winter. The memory of one of his comrade's "convulsed and screaming face" continues to haunt him (pg. 54.)



Billy thinks of Beattie Roper's shop in Tite Street where he would go to buy candy as a young child. Billy recalls buying jaw breakers or "gob stoppers" for half a penny. The thought of jaw breakers leads Prior to recollect holding Towers' eye in the palm of his hand. For a time, Billy lived with Beattie Roper and her daughters Hettie and Winnie.

Billy awakens on the floor the next morning. The night before, he dreamed about the eye in the door of Beattie Roper's cell.

In Chapter 5, Dr. Rivers and Dundas, a Royal Flight Corp pilot, meet at an airstrip. Dundas suffers from severe flight anxiety. He and Rivers are at the airstrip because Rivers believes that Dundas can conquer his fear by flying an airplane.

Rivers and Dundas suit up and climb into the plane. Rivers admits to himself that he is definitely afraid. Once they are airborne, Dundas makes loops, dives, and downward spirals. Dundas vomits twice. At one point, Rivers notices that Dundas appears to be quite disoriented. Dundas lands the plane and takes some moments to compose himself before climbing out of the cockpit. The two men return to the hospital and Rivers goes to his office. Dr. Rivers is annoyed with himself for trying to repress his fear of being in the plane with Dundas or something he tells his patients not to do.

Rivers lives on the top floor of a house close to Hampstead Heath, just one hundred yards from "the great gun" (pg. 67.) Rivers has an 8pm appointment with Billy Prior.

On this particular evening, Billy Prior is experiencing a great deal of anxiety. Prior tells Rivers about visiting Beattie Roper and the eye in the door. Prior also tells Rivers about the nightmare he had the night before in which he remembered holding Towers' eyeball in his hand.

When Prior goes to the bathroom to be sick, Dr. Rivers remembers Prior's arrival at Craiglockhart. Prior had to be hypnotized in order to remember picking up Towers' eye. When Prior first arrived at Craiglockhart, he did not speak for quite some time. When Dr. Rivers began treating Billy Prior for trauma, Prior had insisted on a "two-way relationship," insisting that Rivers disclose details of his personal life during their sessions. Billy Prior also accused Dr. Rivers of being nothing more than "a strip of empathic wallpaper" (pg. 70.) It also unnerved Rivers that Billy Prior was rather flirtatious with him in the beginning.

Billy Prior's nightmares often entail mutilation and other acts of cruelty which occasionally produce feelings of sexual arousal in Billy.

Prior tells Dr. Rivers that he met Charles Manning. Manning is also one of Rivers' patients. Billy continues talking about Charles Manning in an effort to goad Rivers into responding. Prior then goes on to tell Dr. Rivers that he and Manning had sex. Prior informs Rivers that he feels no sexual guilt or any guilt, for that matter. Rivers knows that this is not true. Billy tells Dr. Rivers that the eye in the door is significant for Beattie Roper and her son because it represents the constant scrutiny that pacifists are subjected to during wartime. Prior admits that he visited Beattie Roper not out of friendship, but because it is his job.



Rivers tells Billy to record his dreams without trying to interpret them. Prior tells Rivers that he is planning a visit to Salford to speak with Hettie Roper. Prior goes on to say that he will be staying with his parents. Rivers does not think this is a good idea, but he does not express his concern to Billy. For the first time, Rivers sees "Prior's public face" and he is somewhat startled (pg. 76.)

In Chapter 6, Charles Manning watches the performance of *Salome*. A woman in veils of yellow and green is doing an exotic dance. Her skin under the yellow veil reminds Manning of the young women who work in Munitions factories.

Manning attends the play as a guest of Robert Ross, a known homosexual. Manning is bored with the performance. His mind begins to wander and suddenly Manning remembers crawling through muddy trenches in France, wearing a respirator. Manning recalls finding body parts in the deep, thick mud. His knee then begins to spasm, causing Manning a great deal of pain.

In the restroom, Manning has a strange encounter with a slightly eccentric man. The strange man informs Manning that he, too, works for the Ministry of Munitions. Robert Ross tells Manning that the strange man is Captain Spencer. Spencer claims to know the names of all the prominent homosexuals in London. Ross also says that Spencer is a dangerous man. As Manning and Ross are leaving the theater, Manning notices Captain Spencer watching them from across the street.

In Chapter 7, Billy Prior is on a train heading to Manchester in the north of England and then on to Salford. He reads a letter from Beattie Roper to her daughter Hettie. The letter mentions a man name Alf who is supposed to send the curare to Beattie. Beattie does not use the word poison, however, and makes no mention of who will be using the poison.

Prior then reads Hettie's response to her mother's letter. Hettie's letter is full of family gossip and anti-monarchical pacifist rhetoric. Hettie is a schoolteacher.

The final letter Billy Prior reads is from Patrick "Mac" MacDowell to Hettie Roper. Billy feels a slight twinge of guilt for reading his friends' once-private correspondence. all three letters were read in court at Beattie Roper's conspiracy trial.

In Chapter 8, Billy is sitting in his parents' kitchen in Salford, drinking tea with his mother. Billy's father, Harry, is preparing to go out. Harry Prior is a boorish man who physically abuses his wife. It has been this way ever since Billy was a child. Billy is reluctant to blame the violence either of his parents singularly. Violence notwithstanding, Billy Prior hates his father. Billy's mother is rather passive, which Billy finds both pathetic and irritating. Billy does not discuss the war with his mother and he chooses not to tell either of his parents about the time he spent at Craiglockhart. Billy and his mother talk, instead, about boys Billy went to school with and what has happened to them. Some are dead, others are wounded. Some, like his former schoolmate Eddie Wilson, are deserters.



When he was seventeen, Billy Prior and Hettie Roper dated informally for a short time. Mrs. Prior hates Hettie Roper.

On the way to Hettie's, Billy runs into Mrs. Thorpe and Mrs. Riley. Billy remembers that both women had wet-nursed him as a very young boy. The remembrance embarrasses him somewhat, and Billy finds himself blushing.

Hettie and Billy talk about how the war has changed everyone. Because of Hettie's outspoken pacifism, most of the neighbors will have nothing to do with her. The only people who offer her any assistance are Harry Prior and Mrs. Riley. Hettie tells Billy that before the war, her mother helped many of their neighbors unselfishly. Hettie then tells Billy that Beattie even performed abortions for local women who needed them. Both Hettie and Billy agree that the war has made a significant impact on the lives of Britain's women. Because the men are away at the Front, women are able to work at nontraditional jobs or in factories, enabling them to earn money of their own.

Hettie tells Billy that her brother William is being held at Dartmoor Prison doing hard labor. Hettie does not know that Billy works for the domestic Intelligence Unit and that he is there in an official capacity to investigate the details of her mother's trial and imprisonment.

Billy believes that Mac is hiding in the shop, but Hettie denies it. Billy tells Hettie that he wants to talk to Mac about Lionel Spragge, the man who turned Beattie in for conspiracy. Billy tells Hettie a rather off-color story about Mac's mother, thinking it will draw Mac out. Hettie once again denies that Mac is in the shop and Billy decides to leave. Before exiting the shop, however, Billy announces that he is going for a walk near the cattle pens. Billy and Mac spent a great deal of time at the cattle pens when they were boys.

Billie walks from Hettie Roper's shop to the cattle pens. Once there, Billy reminisces about his and Mac's boyhood friendship.

Mac's mother had, indeed, been a prostitute. Lizzie MacDowell was a heavy drinker in those days and Mac was severely neglected as a child.

Mac was beaten by the teachers on a regular basis. He was always dirty and he often had lice. Mac would give the other boys piggyback rides in exchange for bread crusts.

Mac finally arrives at the cattle pens to meet Billy Prior in Chapter 9. Although there is still a bond between the two men, their old friendship is strained because Mac and Billy are on opposite sides of the war issue. Mac is a pacifist on the run. Prior is an officer who works for government intelligence.

Billy and Mac talk about Beattie Roper's imprisonment. Mac feels guilty for sending Spragge to talk to Beattie in the first place. Mac does not believe that Beattie Roper would willingly do harm to anyone. Mac tells Billy that prior to Spragge visiting Beattie, Spragge approached two local men, saying that he needed help to blow up a Munitions manufacturing facility. When the two men refused to help, Spragge backed off.



Billy asks Mac to get written statements from the two men. Mac says he will try, even though he no longer knows where the men might be. Mac tells Billy that it may take several weeks to locate the men. He leaves Billy alone at the cattle pens.

On his way back to his parents' house, Billy inadvertently falls into a trench. He is shaken by the shock of it, but manages to find his way out. For a moment, Billy feels as though he is back in France.

Billy is not what one would call a gentleman officer. He is from the working class. For this reason, he feels somewhat uncomfortable in the company of other officers. At the same time, he experiences a similar type of discomfort around Mac and Hettie. They view his commission as a betrayal of sorts.

Billy decides to go to the Rose and Crown for a drink. Upon entering the pub, he sees Mrs. Riley and Mrs. Thorne with a group of other women and buys them all a drink.

On his way home from the Rose and Crown, Harry Prior stops on a bridge to relieve himself under the bright full moon. Looking down, Harry sees a man's naked bottom. It is obvious to Harry that there are two people below and Harry thinks about shouting something crude at the couple but changes his mind and continues toward home.

The couple below is Billy Prior and Mrs. Riley.

Part 1: Chapters 1 - 9 Analysis

Part 1 introduces the reader to Lt. Billy Prior and offers some background on Billy's war experience. Dr. William Rivers is the first historical character introduced in the novel.

Billy's acquaintanceship with Charles Manning begins in Chapter 2. Billy and Manning are polar opposites. Manning is from the upper crust, Billy is working class. Manning is a closeted homosexual, Billy is a bisexual who feels no guilt over the sexual choices he makes. Billy's bisexuality is the first element contributing to Billy as a dualistic character.

When Manning receives the announcement about Oscar Wilde's play at his home, his paranoia is put into play. Manning's paranoia is compounded and worsened by shell-shock. Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900) was a famous Irish playwright, poet and essayist.

Beattie Roper enters the narrative for the first time in Chapter 3. Beattie is the first character from Billy's past to be introduced. The interaction that Billy has with Beattie introduces the reader to the second aspect of the character's duality. Although Billy is an officer, his roots are unquestionably working class. That being said, Billy's background and history with Beattie Roper necessarily prompts the character to question where his loyalties lie. Beattie even goes so far as to ask Billy whose "side" Billy is on. Is it on the government's or the pacifists' side?



Lionel Spragge enters the narrative in Chapter 3, by way of Beattie's recollection of Spragge's visit to her home. The narrative gives the impression that Billy is already aware of the type of man Spragge is.

In this chapter, the narrative explains its own title. The eye in the door represents different things to different characters. To Beattie Roper, the eye symbolizes the scrutiny under which she continues to live. As a pacifist, Beattie Roper is, by this time, accustomed to being watched by the government. To Billy Prior, the eye represents the self looking inward. That is to say, Billy sees the eye as a part of himself which observes and insinuates itself into his mind as a separate entity. The "eye" that watches Billy Prior is his own subconscious.

Major Lode represents the old guard, the party line and Billy detests his supervisor.

An example of the extent of Billy Prior's war trauma enters the narrative in Chapter 4 when Billy remembers the job stoppers from Beattie Roper's store. Interestingly, Towers, the man whose eye ends up in Billy's hand, is never featured in the narrative. His name is mentioned only in connection with Billy's trauma.

Dr. William Rivers enters the narrative in Chapter 5 when he flies with Dundas. The episode with Dundas establishes Dr. Rivers as fallible. Rivers' admission that he is afraid while Dundas is flying the plane gives the reader some insight into the psychiatrist's personality. It becomes clear that Rivers is well aware of his own humanity. This, in turn, establishes Rivers as a sympathetic character. Conversely, Rivers' conversation with Dr. Henry Head positions Rivers as a man of science and intellect. These two events place Dr. Rivers in the category of characters who are dealing with the duality of the self.

In Chapter 5, Henry Head, another historical figure, is introduced into the narrative.

Billy Prior's first meeting with Dr. Rivers gives some background into their therapeutic relationship. Given Billy's condition upon his arrival at Craiglockhart, it is obvious that even in his present state, Prior has made some improvement. The scene also contrasts a session in Chapter 19 during which Billy's fugue self keeps an appointment with Rivers, in that Billy's true vulnerability is finally exposed. At this point in the narrative, however, Billy Prior still relies on defensive tactics to keep Rivers off balance.

Also, Dr. Rivers' doubts about Billy staying with his parents in Salford foreshadows Billy's visit and lays the groundwork for the character's eventual discovery of his first fugue state.

Billy's declaration that he experiences no sexual guilt foreshadows the sexual encounter with Mrs. Riley, his former wet nurse, at the end of Chapter 9.

Charles Manning's meeting with Captain Spencer in Chapter 6 heightens Manning's obsession with exposure and is the beginning of his downward spiral. However, the spiral has a positive effect, in that it leads Manning in the direction of resolving his inability to discuss the details of his experiences in France.



The three letters that Billy Prior reads on the train are significant because the letters display a difference in education and intellect among people from the same social class.

Beattie's letter is written entirely in the vernacular. Some of the expressions used may be difficult for non-British speakers of English to understand. Beattie is obviously rather illiterate. Her spelling is atrocious and she has no concept of punctuation. Hettie Roper's letter to her mother is, on the other hand, more literate than Beattie's. And although Hettie does speak in the vernacular, the majority of the letter proves that Hettie has at least had some education. In addition, Hettie is a schoolteacher.

Finally, the letter from Patrick MacDowell to Hettie Roper is a model of intellect and education. Interestingly, the narrative never mentions Mac's adolescent and young adult years. What the letter does prove, however, is that Patrick MacDowell is as intelligent and as worldly as Billy Prior. Mac's letter to Hettie positions him and Billy as mirror images. In other words, both Mac and Billy grew up in the same place, around the same people and come from the same social class. What differentiates the two men at this point, however, is that they are on opposite sides of the war question.

Billy Prior's parents enter the narrative at the beginning of Chapter 8. Harry Prior and his wife are introduced. Harry is a crude, brutish man and it is obvious that his wife is not very fond of him. Billy can feel his mother quivering with fear and animosity when sitting next to her at the table. Harry Prior and his wife have been married for twenty-eight years, and it is clear that Mrs. Prior has suffered silently the entire time. The narrator points out that "it takes a great deal of [...] aggression to quiver for twenty-eight years" (pg. 89.)

Also in this chapter, Billy is once again reunited with his childhood friends, Hettie Roper and Patrick "Mac" MacDowell. Both meetings prove to be bittersweet as Hettie and Mac are both pacifists and Billy is in the army. Neither Hettie nor Mac are aware of Billy's job with the Intelligence Unit. Billy does not tell them, which indicates that he is somehow conflicted. If he were to tell Hettie and Mac who he works for, Billy could not know for certain that either of them would be willing to talk to him. It is clear, however, that although Billy feels a certain affection for Hettie and Mac, he no longer has much in common with either of them.

Billy's reaction to falling into the child's trench in Chapter 9 proves pivotal later in the narrative. The fall precipitates the onset of Billy's fugue states.



Part 2: Chapters 10 - 16

Part 2: Chapters 10 - 16 Summary

In Chapter 10, Billy Prior returns to work at the Ministry of Munitions. He learns that the Intelligence Unit is being taken over by the War Office. All Intelligence files are being centralized and Billy is given the task of removing anything from the files which might make the division look bad. Billy decides to use the opportunity to find something that could help him build a case against Lionel Spragge.

While having lunch at a pub, Billy reads the latest casualty list and learns that an acquaintance of his, Jimmy Hore, was killed in action. For some reason, this angers Billy and he imagines that a tank comes crashing through the pub wall. In his mind, Billy can see severed limbs and hear the screams of the other patrons. All of a sudden, Billy is back at his desk, unable to remember the past three hours.

Just before leaving for the day, Billy hears voices coming from the hallway outside his office. He looks out and sees Major Lode having a friendly conversation with Spragge. Shortly thereafter, Lode tells Billy that Spragge claims Billy offered him a job. Billy denies this and Lode tells him that Spragge is holding a grudge against him.

Billy realizes that he has been having headaches ever since he fell into the trench in Salford.

Billy Prior returns home and decides to take an ice cold bath to calm his nerves. He then goes out for a walk. Billy finds that a long evening walk followed by three shots of whiskey keeps his nightmares at bay. He strolls along the Serpentine for a short while and then heads to the Achilles Monument. Suddenly, Lionel Spragge appears, claiming that Billy instructed Spragge to meet him at the monument at 9pm. Furthermore, Spragge claims that Billy offered him a job. Billy denies knowing anything about arranging the meeting and the supposed job offer. Spragge tells Billy that he knows about Billy's friendship with the Ropers and Patrick MacDowell. Billy walks away as Spragge shouts at him.

In Chapter 11, Billy tells Dr. Rivers that his nightmares are still very bad. He then informs Rivers that he has lost time on seven different occasions. Billy says that he feels like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Rivers tries to ease Billy's mind, telling him that patients who experience fugue states are not necessarily acting out their inner darkness. Just then, Billy notices that Rivers often closes his eyes with his hand. When he presses Rivers, the doctor tells Billy he is unaware of doing it. Billy suggests that Rivers' closes his eyes this way because there is something the doctor does not want to see. The two men exchange chairs and for a time Billy acts as the therapist while Rivers plays the role of patient. During their "session," Rivers admits that he began stuttering at the age of five and that he does not have visual memory of any house he ever lived in.



Billy tells Rivers that he believes Rivers was abused as a child. Rivers does not deny this, but he does not believe it, either.

Billy confesses that he was repeatedly molested by Father Mackenzie, the parish priest, when he was just a boy.

After the session with Billy ends, Rivers admits to himself that he feels internally divided, as though he were two distinct people. He further admits that this is helpful when one is a practicing psychotherapist. It is necessary for the therapist to detach if the patient is to benefit from the therapeutic process. Some years ago, Rivers and his colleague, Henry Head, conducted research that sought to uncover the mysteries of dissociation. Rivers is convinced that Billy Prior views his fugue experience as having to do with the more ominous side of himself. Prior is sadistic, this much is true. But Rivers is still not unconvinced that Billy's fugue states are anything to fear.

In Chapter 12, Dr. Henry Head is talking to a patient named Lucas. Lucas was injured when he was hit in the head by shrapnel. Head and Rivers are working with Lucas to determine whether or not Lucas has made any progress. They both agree that he has.

That same day, Dr. Rivers meets with Charles Manning. Manning has been readmitted to the hospital because his anxiety is worsening. Also, Manning is obsessed with the thought of possibly being exposed as a closet homosexual. Rivers and Manning talk about Captain Spencer and a supposed list Spencer has which contains the names of 47,000 British gays and lesbians who were blackmailed into sexual corruption by the German government. Manning is convinced that his name is on the list. Rivers and Manning continue their discussion until Rivers reminds Manning that they never talk about the war. At first, Manning balks. Eventually, however, Manning admits to being afraid of being irredeemably consumed by the horror of his memories.

In Chapter 13, Dr. Rivers dreams that Henry Head is about to drill into the skull of a man who is awake and very much alive, instead of using a cadaver. Rivers wakes in a cold sweat and a few moments later, the alarm sounds. The Germans are bombing again and Rivers goes out into the wards to comfort the patients. Rivers goes to Charles Manning's room because one of the nurses complains that Manning is smoking in his room, which is not allowed. Rivers finds Manning and suggests that they go to Rivers' office, where Manning can smoke.

Manning tells Rivers that he has a recurring nightmare involving Scudder, one of the men under his command. Manning tells Rivers what really happened to Scudder in France.

Manning's unit was ordered to advance the line. Scudder had wandered off and Manning found him and convinced him to return to the unit. On the way back, Scudder fell into a deep and mud-filled trench. The mud in the trenches was very much like quicksand and Manning and the others in the unit all worked together to get Scudder out of the trench but they were unable to reach him. Rather than watch Scudder die



slowly, sucked under by the mud, Manning shot Scudder. By the time Manning finishes the story, the sun has begun to rise over London.

In Chapter 14, Billy meets Sarah at the train station and the two go back to Billy's apartment. Later that day, they decide to visit Kew Gardens. When a downpour begins, Billy and Sarah find shelter in the Palm House. Over Sarah's shoulder, Billy sees Lionel Spragge watching them. They leave the Palm House and board a crowded boat to take them up the Thames to Westminster Bridge. Billy buys them each a cup of tea, after which he sees a man he believes to be Spragge. After discovering that the man is, in fact, Lionel Spragge, Billy warns him to stay away from Sarah. Moments later, Billy Prior goes into another fugue state. When Billy comes out of the fugue, he is standing somewhere in Westminster Abbey. After he locates Sarah, they return to his apartment.

Sarah then tells Billy that he hit Spragge while they were standing on the steps of Westminster Abbey. Billy does not remember the confrontation. Sarah asks about Spragge, but Billy tells her nothing. Sarah says she has witnessed one of Billy's fugues. She tells Billy that when he is in a fugue state, he behaves aggressively and refuses to communicate with her. Billy is terrified to think that he has developed a second personality.

In Chapter 15, Sarah leaves London. Billy's anxiety about his dissociation becomes worse. He wanders the streets of London hoping it will make him tired enough to sleep through the night. As he walks, Billy imagines being back in the trenches at the Front.

Billy convinces himself that he must find Spragge. However, after going to Spragge's last known address, Billy hits a dead end.

Billy Prior begins to lose time more frequently now. He only ventures out at night to meet with Dr. Rivers.

At work one day, Major Lode informs Billy that Patrick MacDowell has been apprehended.

That same night, Billy is awakened by a knock on the door. Billy climbs out of bed and dresses, but by the time he reaches the door, there is no one there. Billy realizes he has left the front door open. On the way back to the bedroom, Billy finds Lionel Spragge sitting in his living room. To buy himself some time, Billy offers Spragge a drink and goes into the kitchen to get whiskey and water. Billy can tell from Spragge's demeanor that Spragge is already drunk. When Billy returns to the living room, he sees Spragge returning Sarah's most recent letter to its place on the mantle. Billy head-butts Spragge and Spragge's nose begins to bleed profusely.

After a short while, Billy escorts Spragge out onto the street to catch a taxi. Spragge tells Billy that Major Lode offered to pay Spragge's passage to South Africa. Billy finds out that Lode instructed Spragge to follow him. Billy accuses Spragge of following him to Salford, where Billy met with Hettie Roper and Patrick MacDowell. Spragge denies turning Patrick MacDowell in to the authorities.



In Chapter 16, Charles Manning plays chess with Lucas at the Empire Hospital. Lucas wins, again.

Billy Prior visits Charles Manning and tells Manning that the Intelligence Unit is being closed down. Billy tells Manning that he is uncertain of his future. Manning offers to contact his friend, Charles Moncrieff, about a possible position for Billy.

Billy tells Manning that he has come to talk about Beattie Roper. Billy knows Manning does not care about people from the lower classes, people like Beattie Roper. Manning admits this, but continues to say that he does not want to see anyone wrongly imprisoned. Dr. Rivers enters the room, but leaves quickly when he sees Billy Prior talking to Manning. Charles Manning promises Billy that he pass Beattie Roper's file on to his friend Eddie Marsh. Manning promises to do all he can on Beattie's behalf, but he cautions Billy that Beattie Roper may have to stay in prison until the end of the war.

Billy goes out for a drink that evening and loses five hours.

In their next session, Billy tells Dr. Rivers that the five-hour fugue is his longest to date. When Rivers goes into the next room to take a telephone call, Billy finds a postcard to Rivers from the poet Siegfried Sassoon.

Rivers suggests that Billy go back into the hospital. Billy refuses. He also refuses to take any sick leave.

Billy Prior then visits Beattie Roper in prison a second time. Billy finds out that Beattie is on hunger strike again. She is very weak and is suffering with the flu. Beattie Roper tells Billy that Mac has been place in Wandsworth detention facility. Beattie says that her daughter Hettie believes that Billy is responsible for turning Mac over to the authorities. Billy denies having anything to do with Mac's capture. Hettie is due to visit Beattie that day as well.

As Billy leaves the prison grounds, he sees Hettie Roper, who is on her way to visit her mother. Hettie spits in Billy's face and accuses him of betraying Patrick MacDowell.

Part 2: Chapters 10 - 16 Analysis

The episode at the pub, in which Billy learns of Jimmy Hore's death, is the first of Billy's fugues. Billy does not realize it, but this fugue is not the first one he has experienced.

Spragge's conversation with Major Lode is an indicator that the Major might be working against Billy behind the scenes. It is entirely possible that Lode's announcement that Spragge is carrying a grudge against Billy may be the result of some secret dealings on Lode's part.

Billy's accidental meeting with Spragge at the Achilles Monument places doubt in the character's mind. At this point, Prior begins to question his own sanity. It is unclear how Spragge came to find out about Billy's friendship with Patrick MacDowell.



In Chapter 11, the novel makes its first reference to Robert Louis Stevenson's work *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Stevenson's work impacted society from the day it was published. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are two men living in the same body. Jekyll's evil alter-ego is released as a result of the doctor's experimentation with chemicals. Mr. Hyde, in popular culture, is synonymous with the evil twin; the dark part of the human personality. Billy and Rivers' role reversal further attests to the fact that Rivers is unafraid to expose his humanity to his patients. Billy proves to be a rather astute clinician when he asserts that Rivers experienced some sort of abuse as a child. More of Billy's history is revealed when the character admits to being molested by the parish priest. Billy does not mention dissociating during the abuse at the hands of Father Mackenzie.

This chapter is also the first time that Billy Prior recognizes himself as somehow divided.

Charles Manning's hospitalization in Chapter 12 is what eventually leads the character to face his inner demons. Specifically, Manning avoids talking about his experiences at the Front. At this point, however, Manning is much more concerned with being outed by Spencer. Manning's admission that he will somehow succumb to the terror of his war memories is an important step for him to take.

Rivers' dream about Dr. Head has to do with Rivers' internal conflict. Head attempting to drill into the head of a man who is alive is emblematic of Rivers' hesitation to delve into the psyches of his patients. Treating Prior and Manning is much like drilling into their skulls. When Manning finally reveals what really happened to Scudder in France, he is able to begin the work of putting his anxiety to rest. Manning feels intense guilt over killing Scudder even though he realizes that Scudder would have died anyway.

Sara Lumb enters the narrative in Chapter 10. The history of Billy's relationship with Sarah is never discussed. The reader is never told when or how they first met. It can be assumed, however, that Billy and Sarah have been involved for quite some time. It is not until after the incident with Spragge at Westminster that Sarah tells Billy that she has met his fugue self. This is evidence that Prior was never as in control of himself as he might have thought. Until Sarah tells Billy that she has experienced one of his fugue, Billy Prior had lived a compartmentalized life. His time at the Front and at Craiglockhart were kept separate from his relationship with Sarah. This incident speaks to a deeper duality at work in Billy Prior's life.

The frequency of Prior's going into the fugue state signal the reader that some resolution is in sight. If there is a dramatic arc in the narrative, this is the point at which the pendulum begins to swing in the opposite direction. Billy loss of more and more time is an indication that one of two things will happen. The man Billy knows himself to be will be completely overtaken by his fugue self, or there will be some breaking point and Billy will emerge whole, no longer dissociative.

Billy's confrontation with Spragge in his apartment is significant in that Spragge is exposed as a coward when Billy breaks his nose. Spragge's bark is worse than his bite. Secondly, Spragge's denial that he turned Mac in to the authorities foreshadows what happens the next time Billy meets Hettie Roper.



Billy's next encounter with Charles Manning shows Manning to be a snob. His attitude toward those in the working class is distasteful, to say the least. In the character's defense, however, Manning redeems himself somewhat by agreeing to show Beattie Roper's file to Eddie Marsh. Marsh is also a historical figure.

When Billy next meets with Dr. Rivers, it is clear that Rivers believes Billy's condition is worsening. Billy's refusal to take sick leave is a stubborn and quite possibly dangerous move. Prior is unaware of what happens when he is in a fugue state and to refuse to take Rivers' suggestion is irresponsible. It is as though Billy is daring his fugue self to assume control.

When Billy next meets Beattie and Hettie Roper, he learns that Hettie holds him responsible for MacDowell's apprehension. And although Billy denies having anything to do with Mac's capture, a seed of doubt has nonetheless been planted. Billy is already in a place of self-mistrust. Hettie's reaction to Billy strengthens this mistrust.



Part 3: Chapters 17 - 21

Part 3: Chapters 17 - 21 Summary

In Chapter 17, Dr. Rivers believes that Charles Manning is making good progress and that Manning may soon be discharged from the hospital.

Rivers learns that his friend and patient Siegfried Sassoon suffered a head wound at the Front. Sassoon has been admitted to the American Red Cross Hospital in Lancaster. Outside Sassoon's room, Dr. Rivers meets Dr. Saunders. Saunders shows Rivers an x-ray of Sassoon's skull. The wound is not life-threatening. Saunders tells Dr. Rivers that just after arriving, Sassoon seemed to be doing well emotionally. However, after having a slew of visitors, Sassoon was now quite excited, almost manic. Saunders became concerned and called Rivers.

Rivers finds Siegfried Sassoon in a state of high excitement.

Sassoon's newest book of poetry has just come out. Sassoon tells Rivers that he must see Robert Ross. Sassoon is convinced that the stress of the Pemberton Billing case may be too much for Ross. Sassoon regrets agreeing to return to duty at the Front.

Rivers asks Sassoon how he managed to be wounded wearing a helmet. Sassoon tells Rivers that he was in No Man's Land just before sunrise and that he stood up and took off his helmet because he wanted to look at the German soldiers. Rivers then accuses Sassoon of wanting to die. Sassoon denies this, saying that at the moment the bullet hit him, he was feeling happy. Sassoon says that he had managed to "[cut] off the part of [him] that hates [fighting in the war]" (pg. 223.) Sassoon goes on to say that it was one of his own men who shot him.

It is obvious to Rivers that Sassoon is suffering from shell-shock. When Rivers tells Sassoon to let go of the idea of returning to the Front, Sassoon says he cannot.

In Chapter 18, Rivers talks to Henry Head about Siegfried Sassoon. Dr. Head thinks that Rivers overestimates the amount of influence he has on Sassoon. Ruth Head believes that Dr. Rivers is in love with Siegfried Sassoon.

Rivers returns to the American Red Cross Hospital to visit Sassoon once again.

Rivers and Sassoon discuss Sassoon's perception of himself as a duality. Sassoon is a pacifist and an officer in the army. Sassoon is a poet and a sanctioned killer; a homosexual and comrade-in arms. Sassoon claims he chose to return to the Front to look after the men under his command and not to further the British Army's cause.

It takes Dr. Rivers three hours to calm Sassoon down enough for the patient to finally get to sleep. Rivers stays at Sassoon's bedside and goes over the conversation with Sassoon in his mind.



Rivers knows that Sassoon's duality serves both sides of his personality well. The poet-soldier is alive and well, if conflicted, in Sassoon's mind.

Rivers admits to himself that he is having difficulty remaining detached and objective where Siegfried Sassoon is concerned. Eventually, Rivers settles into the extra bed in Sassoon's room. Lying in bed, Rivers remembers being a younger man, sailing to Melanesia aboard a steamer carrying missionaries and adventurers. Rivers thoroughly enjoyed his Melanesian days and found it difficult to reconcile this self with his other self, the scientist-doctor.

The next morning, Rivers awakens to find Siegfried Sassoon kneeling beside his bed. Sassoon apologizes for his mania the night before.

A week later, Dr. Rivers sits in his armchair before a fire in Chapter 19. Rivers is tired. Sassoon is getting better. It is Billy Prior who concerns Rivers more. Billy has already missed one appointment, which is something that has never happened before. Just then, a maid knocks on the door and announces that Prior wishes to see Dr. Rivers. Although it is quite late, Rivers tells the maid to show Billy in.

It is immediately apparent to Dr. Rivers that he is meeting Billy Prior's fugue self for the first time. The two men begin to spar verbally. The fugue self tells Rivers that he knows everything Billy Prior knows. The fugue self has access to Billy's memories. He tells Rivers that Billy Prior hates Lionel Spragge because Spragge is exactly like Billy's father, Harry Prior.

The fugue self then informs Rivers that he was born in a shell-hole at the Front when Billy Prior was wounded. The fugue self tells Rivers that he took over at that time because he is better at fighting than Billy.

Rivers challenges Prior's fugue self, asking him how he could be better than Billy when they both inhabit the same body. Billy's fugue self tells Rivers that he neither feels fear nor pain. To prove the point, Prior's fugue self stubs out a lit cigar in the palm of his hand without flinching.

Billy Prior "returns" to the situation shocked and very frightened. Rivers tells Billy that the fugue self chose to keep their appointment. Prior is concerned about how violent and aggressive his fugue self seems to be.

After Rivers finishes bandaging Billy's wound, Rivers convinces Billy to stay the night. After breakfast the following morning, Rivers convinces Billy to stay with him for the next several days. Rivers and Billy begin talking about Billy's childhood and the violence that took place in the Prior home.

Billy tells Dr. Rivers about sitting on the stairs, listening to his parents fight. He tells Rivers that he would look at the barometer hanging on the wall. To Billy, the barometer was a consistent and comforting somehow. Billy says that he found a way to go into the shine on the glass on the barometer face. Even at a young age, Billy Prior knew how to dissociate himself from painful things. Billy tells Rivers that he remembered going into



the fugue state the day he learned that Jimmy Hore had been killed. That day, Billy went into the shine coming off his glass of beer.

Rivers tells Billy that the fugue state is a form of self-hypnosis.

In Chapter 20, Billy Prior has been staying with Dr. Rivers for two weeks.

One evening, Billy awakens with a loud cry. Rivers enters Billy's room and Billy tells Rivers that he had dreamed about Patrick MacDowell. It was a good sign, according to Dr. Rivers, that Billy's nightmares no longer centered on the war. All of Billy's most recent nightmares were about Billy's childhood. Billy, however, believes that even nightmares about his childhood are still nightmares about the war.

Billy begins to think more deeply about his fugue self. It worries Billy that the fugue self denies having a father. Billy consciously uses positive childhood memories to counteract the fugue self's betrayal of Patrick MacDowell. Billy tells Rivers that he will visit Mac at Wandsworth. He does not understand how discussing his parents over and over with Dr. Rivers could possibly help him to get better.

Rivers returns to Sassoon at the American Red Cross Hospital. Outside Sassoon's room, Rivers meets Robert Ross. After Ross leaves, Rivers speaks with Siegfried Sassoon. Sassoon tells Dr. Rivers that he would like to move to Sheffield and work in a factory in order to "find out about ordinary people" (pg. 259.) Rivers promises Sassoon that he will do everything in his power to see to it that Sassoon does not return to the Front.

Billy Prior visits his boyhood friend, Patrick MacDowell, in prison. Mac is suspicious of Billy. He sits on a plank bed, naked and covered by a thin blanket. Pacifist prisoners in detention are given the option of wearing nothing or wearing the army uniform of a conscript.

Billy gives Mac two chocolate bars and denies turning Mac in to the authorities. Mac does not believe him. Billy does not apologize for what happened before he leaves Wandsworth.

In Chapter 21, Dr. Rivers and Siegfried Sassoon go for a walk by the Serpentine. Although Siegfried seems better, Rivers knows that Sassoon is still quite ill. Sassoon is scheduled to enter a convalescent home in a few days. Rivers tells Sassoon that before he can go into a convalescent home, however, that Sassoon will have to accept a Medical Board at Craiglockhart.

Sassoon refuses to return to Craiglockhart, telling Rivers that to do so would be the same as admitting to being a degenerate. Eventually, Sassoon agrees to return to Craiglockhart even though he believes he is being set up to take a fall.

Billy Prior has some time before his next meeting with Dr. Rivers and he decides to pay a visit to Charles Manning at home. Manning appears to be recovering well and he is



very pleased to see Billy Prior again. Manning is no longer afraid that his double life will be exposed.

Billy tells Manning that the Intelligence Unit has been dissolved. Major Lode, Billy's former supervisor, is in Wales training cadets. Lionel Spragge is on his way to South Africa. Billy informs Manning that he will probably return to an army camp in Scarborough, in northern England, so that he can be closer to Sarah. Manning offers Billy a job working for the Department of Health and Safety but Billy refuses.

Billy tells Manning about his fugue states. It seems that now Billy can remember what happens during the fugues. Billy goes on to say that the fugues have ended, for the most part. Billy does admit, though, that he may want to return to the Front one day. He tells Manning that "[the Front] still seems like the only clean place to be" (pg. 275.)

Billy Prior and Charles Manning enjoy a pleasant conversation and after awhile, a cheerful Billy Prior says goodbye.

Part 3: Chapters 17 - 21 Analysis

In the final chapters of the narrative, several matters are resolved. Poet-soldier Siegfried Sassoon plays a prominent role in the final chapters. Sassoon was, in fact, one of Dr. William Rivers' most famous patients. Sassoon is also another character who experiences the duality which permeates the narrative. As a soldier, Sassoon agrees to do his duty to further the British war cause. As a poet, however, Sassoon is a pacifist. The works he creates tell the truth about the brutality of war and its effects on those who engage in combat. Sassoon admits that he dissociates. That is to say, the character admits to doing consciously what Billy Prior does on a subconscious level. Sassoon is proud of his ability to split one part of himself off from the other. However, this dissociation still does nothing to counteract the trauma Sassoon suffers as a result of being at the Front.

Sassoon remains conflicted, however, which is evidenced by his refusal to return to France. Sassoon is given to mania or states of high energy and frenetic excitement.

Sassoon's revelation in Chapter 17 of having been shot by one of the men under his command is rather suspicious, but the matter is not taken any further in the narrative. Rivers only addresses the incident from the standpoint of Sassoon's having a death wish. Neither man addresses the fact that Sassoon's head wound is the result of friendly fire.

Ruth Head's assertion that Rivers is in love with Siegfried Sassoon in Chapter 18 brings Rivers' sexuality into question. It is not known whether Rivers was homosexual. However, Ruth Head's mention of the possibility sheds new light on Rivers' realization that he doubts his objectivity where Sassoon is concerned. Historically, there is only speculation about Rivers' true sexuality. From Ruth Head's comment, however, as well as a passage in Chapter 5 which states that Prior was "flirtatious" with Rivers when he first came to Craiglockhart, it can fairly be assumed that Rivers is homosexual.



Chapter 19 is the turning point for Billy Prior. When Billy's fugue self keeps an appointment with Dr. Rivers and injures Billy, Billy is finally able to admit that his fugue states are well beyond his control and that his fugue self is becoming more prominent. Rivers knew that Billy was heading in this direction all along. When the fugue self stubs out the cigar in Billy's hand, however, the character receives a clear message that the time has come to cease avoiding the inevitable. It is in this chapter that Billy Prior realizes that he has been dissociative for most of his life.

Billy's agreeing to stay with Dr. Rivers for two weeks is emblematic of Billy's vulnerability and something which he had never shown Dr. Rivers. Billy finally accepts help because his defenses are not up to the challenge of reconciling and putting the fugue self to rest. It is not exactly clear in the narrative at which point Billy comes to know for certain that his fugue self betrayed Patrick MacDowell, but by this time, Billy has accepted the fact. Sadly, however, Billy still does not see the connection between his childhood and the recurrence of his fugue states. Billy does not realize the depth of trauma he experienced as a witness to the violence in his home. It is the trauma of Billy's childhood that must be resolved, rather than the trauma of fighting at the Front.

When Billy denies turning Mac over to the police in Chapter 20, he is telling the truth. Billy Prior did not betray Mac, Billy's fugue self did. The fugue self denies any meaningful connection with Billy whatsoever, aside from taking over when Billy is unable to handle pain. That being true, the fugue self would have no reason to feel any loyalty for Mac.

Siegfried Sassoon's reluctance to accept a Medical Board means that he refuses to be found unfit for duty. To Sassoon, there is dishonor in accepting a Medical Board. The knowledge that he is, indeed, unfit to return to the Front does not deter Sassoon from wishing to return to France. In the end, though, Sassoon is forced to admit that returning to the Front would probably be the death of him emotionally and mentally, if not physically.

Billy's final meeting with Charles Manning is bittersweet. At this point in the narrative, Manning continues to live a double life. This is evidenced when Billy pinches his cheeks before leaving.

Billy Prior's assertion that "[the Front] still seems like the only clean place to be" is rather puzzling (pg. 275.) It is possible that Billy Prior is referring to the unambiguous nature of combat. A soldier knows who the enemy is, knows what he has to do in order to neutralize that enemy. Billy's comment has to do with the clarity of combat. There are no gray areas, nothing is left to chance.

Billy Prior admits that the fugues have all but stopped happening. In other words, the character realizes that he is not yet cured, but there is hope in his demeanor. It is clear that Billy is no longer afraid of the hidden parts of his personality.



Characters

Lieutenant Billy Prior

Billy Prior is a young working-class man from Salford, England. An only child, Billy was raised in an abusive home by a violent and brutish father and a passive mother. Early on, Billy distinguishes himself because of his intelligence and affability. Billy is the local boy who "made good" when he received an officer's commission. In more ways than one, Billy Prior is someone who lives two distinct lives. Everything about Billy Prior is paradoxical. He is an officer from the working class, a man who develops a second self in order to deal with the trauma of his childhood and the war. Billy is by turns sadistic and tender. Although he has a steady girlfriend, Sarah Lumb, Billy Prior is bisexual. He is a combat veteran with pacifist leanings. Billy's status as a man straddling two sides of every issue places him in the particular position of being able to see both sides of things without feeling it necessary to commit himself to one position or belief in order to feel fulfilled. Billy is loyal to his friends, but remains detached from his mother and father. He does not especially enjoy his job with the Intelligence Unit, but he prefers his job to being on the front lines of battle. Billy's most honest relationship is the one he forms with Dr. Rivers. Billy trusts Dr. Rivers more than he trusts himself or Sarah. Billy Prior is somewhere around twenty-four years old. He has blond hair and high cheekbones. Billy is thin, and the narrator describes him as "blunt-nosed" (pg. 10.)

Dr. William Rivers

Dr. W.H.R. Rivers (1864 - 1922) is a historical figure who is fictionalized in *The Eye in the Door*. Rivers was a well-known social anthropologist and neurologist. In the narrative, Rivers is also a practicing psychiatrist who treats three of the novel's main protagonists for war-related trauma. As a character, Rivers is perceptive and compassionate. He is also aware that he is treating patients who experience a new kind of trauma; that associated with mechanized war. Rivers, while an empathetic figure, is nonetheless also interested in the science of trauma and he moves between emotion and rationality with each of his patients. Rivers is also portrayed in the narrative as someone who is flawed. For instance, Rivers chides himself when he realizes that he tries to repress his own fears, "exactly what he told his patients not to do" (pg. 66.)

Much like the Billy Prior, Charles Manning, and Siegfried Sassoon, Dr. Rivers recognizes that he is also a divided self. He sometimes feels disconnected from a freer, more emotive part of himself and he experiences nostalgia for time in his life when he was fully present. In the novel, Rivers is single and lives alone. No physical description of Dr. Rivers is given in the narrative. However, based on the dates provided by the author, he would have been somewhere between fifty and fifty-four years of age during WWI. In Chapter 18, Ruth Head suggests that Rivers is in love with Sassoon. This assertion serves to complicate the fictional William Rivers by suggesting that he is homosexual or bisexual. Ruth Head's comment is substantiated by Rivers admission



that he is unable to be completely objective in his dealings with Sassoon. If this is the case, it also sheds light on Rivers' dealings with Prior and Manning. There is no information in the narrative to suggest what Rivers' personal stand is regarding homosexuality or bisexuality.

Charles Manning

Manning is also an officer in the British army. Unlike Billy Prior, however, Manning is decidedly upper-crust; a fact which shows in his demeanor. Charles Manning is injured badly in the war. Manning suffers from severe shell-shock, and for a time he is under the care of Dr. Rivers. Manning is married and has two sons. He treasures his children and views his wife, Jane, as a very special woman.

Conversely, Charles Manning is also a homosexual who is leading a double life. Manning sees nothing wrong with being closeted. His rationale is that being a closeted homosexual is much more socially acceptable than living out his true inclinations in full view of other people. A dichotomy exists between the way Manning lives and who he actually knows himself to be. The fact that he is a homosexual with a wife and children does appear to bother Charles Manning. What frightens the character more than anything else, even more than the war, is the possibility of exposure. Everything Manning has established in terms of social position would be immediately forfeited if he were to be found out.

When Billy Prior first meets Charles Manning, he notices that Manning has "a very round head" and full lips (pg. 8.) Manning wears his dark hair slicked back and he wears a mustache. Billy thinks Charles Manning looks somewhat like an otter (pg. 9.) At the French Front, Charles Manning shot one of the men under his command rather than watch the soldier die a slow death from being sucked under by deep trench mud.

Sarah Lumb

Sarah is Billy Prior's steady girlfriend. Sarah lives in northern England and works in a munitions factory, like many young women of the time. Sarah is portrayed as free-spirited and lively as well as very committed to Billy. Sarah is aware of Billy's fugue states and has even experienced one of Billy's fugues firsthand. However, she stays with Billy because she loves him. Sarah does know that Billy is bisexual.

Harry Prior

Harry Prior is Billy Prior's father. Harry is a boorish man who abuses his wife physically and emotionally. Harry is approximately fifty-five years old. Harry Prior is working class and proud of it. He does not trust the government and believes that the war will result in economic ruin for those of the lower classes. Harry Prior is a traditionalist who believes that men and women should adhere to strict gender boundaries.



Dr. Henry Head

Henry Head (1861 - 1940) is another historical figure who was a real-life colleague of Dr. William Rivers. Head was a neurologist who (in collaboration with William Rivers and others) conducted extensive research on the human nervous system. As stated in the narrative, Head and Williams did, in fact, conduct experiments on how sensation actually functions once severed nerves are reattached. Head was also married to Ruth in real life.

Beatrice (Beattie) Roper

Beattie Roper is a friend of Billy's who lives in Salford. Billy spent part of his childhood in Beattie's home. Beattie owns a defunct shop and lives with her daughter Hettie. Beattie has two other children, Winnie and William, who is imprisoned for being a conscientious objector to the war. Beattie Roper is working-class and unapologetic about her views as a pacifist. It is also revealed that Beattie is a proponent of women's suffrage and that she performed abortions for young women in their neighborhood. Beattie is stubborn and unyielding about her pacifist views. After being sent to prison for conspiring to assassinate the Prime Minister, Beattie Roper goes on hunger strike to protest the unfairness of her sentence. Beattie Roper sees Billy Prior as an ally and she refuses to believe that it was Billy who turned in Patrick MacDowell

Hettie Roper

Hettie is the younger daughter of shopkeeper Beattie Roper. Hettie is a schoolteacher. Since her mother's imprisonment, Hettie has lived alone in back of the shop in Salford. Like her mother, Hettie Roper is a pacifist and a believer in women's suffrage. Hettie dated Billy Prior for a short while when she and Billy were teenagers but they are now just friends. Hettie is more literate than her mother, as evidenced in her letter to Beattie in Chapter 7. Hettie is involved with Patrick MacDowell, a conscientious objector. Hettie loses trust and respect for Billy Prior after she finds out that Billy turned MacDowell in to the authorities.

Patrick (Mac) MacDowell

Patrick MacDowell is one of Billy Prior's childhood friends from Salford. Mac's mother, Lizzie, was a heavy drinker and a known prostitute. For much of his childhood, Mac was severely neglected by his mother. Consequently, Mac was eventually taken in by Beattie Roper. Mac's sentiments against the war lead to his being on the run from the authorities. As a conscientious objector, Mac faces prison time if he is caught. Once detained, the only option Mac has is to remain in prison or to put on an army uniform. Mac views the war as the government's betrayal of the common man. He believes that sending young British men to die at the Front against their will is unconscionable. When



he and Billy Prior meet at the cattle pens, Mac realizes that although he and Billy had once been close, their friendship will never be the same.

Siegfried Sassoon

Siegfried Sassoon lived from 1886 to 1967. Sassoon was a renowned English poet whose anti-war writings distinguished him as one of the most important pacifist voices of the WWI era. Sassoon was also a homosexual and a combat veteran who experienced first-hand the trauma of the Front. Siegfried was an actual patient of William Rivers' at Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Mrs. Prior

Mrs. Prior's first name is not revealed in the narrative. Billy's parents have been married for twenty-eight years. Billy's mother is afraid of Harry Prior because he is abusive. No physical details are provided about Mrs. Prior. It is known that Mrs. Prior hates Hettie Roper because Hettie is a pacifist. It is clear that Mrs. Roper is willing to accept her husband's views of her own, since her conversation with Billy in Chapter 8 finds the character simply re-stating her husband's views. There is a passive quality about Mrs. Prior that Billy finds especially repugnant. It is clear, however, that he feels more affection for her than for his father. Mrs. Prior is a nondescript character. This could be due to her status as an abused spouse. It is obvious that Mrs. Prior will never willingly leave Harry Prior. Her acceptance of her situation makes her an object of pity.

Lionel Spragge

Lionel Spragge works as an unofficial investigator for Major Lode and the Intelligence Unit at the Ministry of Munitions. The narrative describes Spragge as "a big, fleshy, floridly handsome man" (46). Spragge has very thick eyebrows and beautiful blue-green eyes. Lionel Spragge has a thick neck and thick jowls. Spragge is tall and burly and has hair growing "from his ears, his nostrils, and from under his shirt cuffs" (46). Spragge is known for his underhanded methods of investigating. Spragge lied to Beattie Roper in order to frame Beattie for conspiring to assassinate Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Spragge drinks quite a lot. And while he is a man of some size, Billy Prior finds out that Spragge is not as menacing as he pretends to be.

Robert Ross

In the narrative, Robert Ross is an acquaintance of Charles Manning. In reality and in the novel, Ross was very close friends with Siegfried Sassoon's close friend. Robert Ross was a Canadian journalist who lived from 1869 to 1918. He was also a prominent, openly-gay figure in London who enjoyed close friendships with many literary notables, including the Irish poet/dramatist Oscar Wilde.



Dundas

Dundas is a pilot who is afraid to fly. Dundas is another patient of Dr. Rivers. It is revealed that Dundas has syphilis. Dundas appears briefly in Chapter 5.

Lucas

Lucas is a patient of Drs. Head and Rivers. Lucas' skull was struck by shrapnel during the war. As a result, Lucas suffers from a traumatic brain injury which affects his motor skills and language functions. Lucas is an excellent chess player. Lucas appears in the narrative in Chapter 5.

Edward Marsh

Edward Marsh (1872 - 1953) is another historical figure who makes an appearance in *The Eye in the Door*. In the narrative, Marsh is a professional associate of Charles Manning. In reality, Edward Marsh worked as a civil servant and translator during the period covered in the novel. At one time, Edward Marsh was served as Private Secretary to Winston Churchill. Edward Marsh was also a patron of the arts. Poet Siegfried Sassoon is one of the artists who received support from Marsh.

Winston Churchill

Winston Churchill served as England's Prime Minister from 1940 - 1945 and from 1951 until 1955. Churchill makes one appearance in the novel. In Chapter 4, Billy Prior sees Charles Manning chatting with Churchill and Edward Marsh while waiting for an elevator. In addition, Manning and Prior discuss a possible homosexual connection between Marsh and Churchill in the final chapter of the novel.

Maud Allan

Maud Allan (1873 - 1956) was a Canadian-born dancer and performer. Allan is mentioned in the narrative in reference to a libel suit she filed against MP (Member of Parliament) Noel Pemberton Billing sometime before the end of WWI. The Author's Note which follows *The Eye in the Door* gives details of the trial and the events leading up to it.

Noel Pemberton Billing

Noel Pemberton Billing (1881 - 1948) was a member of the British Parliament and publisher of the journal *Vigilante*. Pemberton Billing was sued by Maud Allan for libel and defamation of character after alleging that Allan was a lesbian conspirator working for the Germans during WWI. Pemberton Billing was a vocal opponent of homosexuality.

as well as a conspiracy theorist. Pemberton Billing published a series of homophobic rants in his journal based on information given to him by Howard Spencer.

Captain Harold Spencer

Spencer was an associate of Noel Pemberton Billing. Captain Spencer worked for the British Secret Service for a brief period of time. Captain Spencer claimed to have a list containing the names of 47,000 British gays and lesbians whom Spencer maintained were led into sexual corruption by the German government in order to undermine British society. Spencer was also a very vocal anti-Semite.



Objects/Places

Amiens

This is a town in northern France.

Isle of Dogs

This is an island located in London's East End.

Etaples

This is a port city located in the north of France.

Nelson's Column

This is a monument in London's Trafalgar Square. The monument commemorates Admiral Horatio Nelson's death at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

Marble Arch

This is a monument in London, England. The arch is located across from Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park.

Hyde Park

This is a large urban park located in central London, England.

Whitechapel

This is a district in London, England. Whitechapel was the site of several murders committed by Jack the Ripper between 1888 and 1891.

Kew Gardens

These are botanical gardens located in southwest London, England.

Melanesia

This is a group of South Pacific Islands located north and northwest of Australia.

Westminster Abbey

This is a church located in the Westminster section of London, England. Westminster Abbey is the site of the coronations of English monarchs.

Themes

Trauma

The theme of trauma runs through the entire narrative. Primarily, combat-related trauma concerns most of the main protagonists in the story. Billy Prior, Charles Manning, and Siegfried Sassoon all suffer from war-related trauma. Each man's symptoms manifest differently, but they all share the experience of having been significantly altered by their combat experiences. Billy is physically wounded. Charles Manning's leg is damaged almost beyond repair in France and Siegfried Sassoon first becomes a victim of shell-shock and is subsequently shot.

What is most important to remember is that the trauma the characters undergo is not just physical. Certainly, each of these men has been wounded. But the psychological effect of war is vividly represented here. Prior develops a second self in order to deal with the brutality of life at the Front. Prior develops becomes aggressive, sadistic tendencies. Charles Manning develops a pronounced stammer. Sassoon's psychological fallout takes the form of an insidious death wish. None of the characters will ever be the same. Each man's psychological make-up is so deeply affected by the war experience that they must all be rebuilt from the inside.

Dr. William Rivers treats each of the characters mentioned above for what we now refer to as PTSD or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Such cases as Manning, Prior and Sassoon had never been seen prior to the advent of the world's first mechanized war. Tanks, airplanes and more sophisticated field artillery (such as the "great gun" mentioned in Chapter 5) depersonalized sanctioned killing. These and other weapons added to the barbarism of war by increasing the potential to cause more devastating harm to larger numbers of people. For the first time in history, those engaged in combat had the capability to drop bombs from the sky and launch projectiles further than ever before. World War I was also the first large-scale conflict in which trench warfare was used. As such, face-to-face combat was no longer necessary in order to subdue an opponent on the battlefield. In addition, chemical warfare became part of the landscape of armed conflict. The soldiers in the trenches at the Front wore respirators to protect them from the noxious, deadly fumes of mustard gas. War became much more highly-developed and as a result, its physical and psychological effects became more complex and much more frightening.

In Billy Prior's case, growing up in a violent home also proves to be traumatic. Harry Prior's long-term spousal abuse leaves his son hating, pitying and avoiding both his parents. Billy's first experience with fugue states occurs when he is just a young boy. It stands to reason that, as a grown man on the front lines of combat, Prior would unknowingly fall back on what for him had become a finely-tuned defense mechanism. Prior's admission that he is a survivor of sexual abuse compounds his trauma. Billy Prior goes off to war with psychological wounds already firmly established. He returns to life in England doubly impacted.



Charles Manning also experiences a type of trauma not associated with the war. Manning's double life and the threat of exposure prove to be traumatic in another way. The constant specter of discovery wears on Manning until he becomes obsessed with being found out. The character chooses to continue engaging in homosexual activity in the face of potential personal and social ruin. The stress of being outed completely consumes Manning until he is able to think of little else. In the end, of course, Manning has nothing to fear. Ironically, Charles Manning is not famous enough to have been listed as one of Captain Spencer's 47,000.

Duality

The theme of duality, or dual selves, underlies much of what takes place in *The Eye in the Door*. Many of the characters are of two minds about themselves and their lives. Billy Prior, Charles Manning, and Dr. Rivers all experience themselves as two separate entities occupying the same body. The same can be said of peripheral characters like Lucas and, to a certain extent, Dundas.

To begin, Billy Prior is a young working class man who has earned an officer's commission. At the time the novel takes place, officers most commonly came from the ruling class, which reflects a sense of entitlement. Billy's position as an officer, however, is more reflective of a conscious choice; not necessarily to rise above his social station, but to live a different sort of life. Billy experiences emotional conflict when he is faced with identifying where his loyalties lie.

In addition, Billy experiences fugue states in which he loses time. The duality here is obvious. Prior's "second self" lives in the same body with him. However, the fugue self seems to have a distinct personality and does not acknowledge Billy's same history. For example, Billy's fugue self does not claim any relation to Billy's father. In keeping with the theme, Billy Prior is also bisexual. This, too, speaks of duality in that Billy experiences attraction to both men and women. Billy's sexual activities with men, however, are underpinned with aggression of some sort.

Duality is played out in Charles Manning's life in a similar way. Manning is a member of the ruling class. He is also a closeted homosexual who fears being exposed for leading a double life. Manning is a father and a husband, and yet he spends his time in the company of men whose lives are much less hetero-normative. Manning realizes that, in terms of prevailing early twentieth-century opinions on homosexuality, he occupies a place at the bottom of the social order. On a deeper level, however, duality manifests itself in Manning's initial unwillingness or inability to discuss the war with Dr. Rivers. For as long as he is able, Manning keeps the war at bay by talking around his traumatic experiences. For a time, Charles Manning is duality personified.

Dr. William Rivers is the third character in *The Eye in the Door* whose life reflects duality. Rivers is a trained psychotherapist and a medical doctor. Another part of the character, however, longs for a time when he was adventurous and carefree.



As a practicing psychotherapist, it is a necessity of the Rivers' profession that some form of detachment takes place. Detaching from a client emotionally enables Rivers to remain objective. Objectivity enables a therapist such as Dr. Rivers to more effectively facilitate a client's emotional progress. On the other hand, Rivers admits to missing his "Melanesian self," remembering the freedom of his experience as a younger man traveling to exotic places half a world away. Part of Rivers' perceived duality is based in nostalgia for a simpler and less demanding kind of life. Dr. Rivers is not completely unable to reconcile the two sides of himself, but the possibility of doing so is daunting.

Finally, Lucas is a man with a traumatic brain injury. His powers of speech are affected by the injury, as are certain of his cognitive skills. Lucas cannot remember the word for "trunk" when he draws an elephant, but he is able to solve mathematical equations. He is also a very good chess player. This phenomenon of the brain splitting off from itself is a typical phenomenon which occurs in such injury cases. Dundas, on the other hand, experiences duality in a more complex way. Dundas is afraid to fly. Paradoxically, the only thing that will help Dundas conquer his fear is to do the thing he is most afraid of.

Class Consciousness

The narrative features representations of upper and working-class Britons during WWI.

Beatrice (Beattie) Roper and her daughter Hettie, as well as Patrick MacDowell, are members of the British working class. Charles Manning and Siegfried Sassoon are members of the upper echelon of British society, and as such are members of the ruling class.

Class divisions in early twentieth-century Britain were very well-defined. Generations of Britons born into the working class were expected to accept their social position as simply their lot in life. Those in the ruling class found it in their best interest to perpetuate such a belief, as it insured their own social position and that of their children as well.

Working class Britons found no encouragement within the existing social order to support their efforts to rise above their low station. The Ropers and Patrick MacDowell look upon those belonging to the upper classes as lifelong enemies of the common people. Their decision to stand publicly against the war is seen as subversive and treasonous, even among those of the same class. For Beattie, Hettie, and MacDowell, speaking out against the war is equivalent to speaking out against class tyranny. The characters are suspicious of the ruling class, including the government, and they hold the ruling class personally responsible for the senseless, violent deaths of the young men sent to fight at the Front.

Charles Manning admits that he does not concern himself with people like Beattie Roper, whose social status does not equal his own. As a member of the upper class, Manning is well aware of the social advantages he enjoys. Manning's distrust of O'Brien



(the workman) mirrors his working-class counterparts' distrust of Manning and others like him.

Like Charles Manning, Siegfried Sassoon is another member of Britain's ruling class and an army officer soldier as well. Sassoon sees it as his duty to take care of those under his command on the battlefield. It is interesting that Sassoon does not verbalize this to his men. However, Sassoon, much like the ruling class as a whole, simply assumes the role of the patrician, feeling obligated to protect those less socially fortunate than him.

Billy Prior is an officer, like Manning and Sassoon. However, Billy's background is decidedly working class. Billy, Beattie Roper and Patrick MacDowell are all from the same small town. And although they share the same experience of class, Beattie and MacDowell find it difficult to trust Billy because of his status as an officer. Charles Manning does not think of Billy as a "temporary gentleman," someone pretending to be something he is not. It can be said that Billy Prior belongs to both worlds at once.

Style

Point of View

The entire narrative is told from the point of view of an omniscient narrator. In this instance, the narrator is objective and detached. That is to say, the omniscient narrator offers no opinion concerning the actions of the characters in the story. The use of an omniscient narrator in *The Eye in the Door* allows for a more comprehensive overview of the larger issues at play in the story. As it stands, matters such as homophobia, war trauma, women's suffrage, and class conflict are all given equal weight in the novel because the narrator is not a character in the story. Had the author chosen one of the characters to narrate the story, those issues may have been overshadowed by character development in the form of additional dialogue and back-story.

Furthermore, since the novel deals with a very specific historical moment, the voice of the omniscient narrator keeps the novel from having to declare itself as for or against the events which took place at the time. Narrative objectivity in a novel that deals with well-documented historical events is imperative. Finally, the voice of the omniscient narrator gives the reader an opportunity to view the fictional characters as types or archetypes. This is helpful, in that the reader is then more likely to focus on what is most salient about the narrative, which is the historical period itself. Perhaps most importantly, the use of an omniscient narrator plays very well into the theme of duality. In other words, it is up to the reader to determine exactly which sensibilities underlie the narrative as a whole.

Setting

The majority of the action in this novel occurs in the greater London area. Most of the specific places mentioned in the narrative are well-known locations within London. The places Billy Prior and Sarah Lumb visit, for instance, are familiar to those living in the British Isles as well as those living outside the country. Westminster Abbey, Hyde Park, the Isle of Dogs and Kew Gardens are popular tourism sites, as is the Whitechapel section of London. Specific neighborhoods or districts within London are mentioned throughout the story as well. Billy Prior lives in Bayswater, for example while Dr. Rivers lives not far from Hampstead Heath.

Other locations in England are also mentioned, such as Salford and Manchester, Birmingham. In addition to locations in and around London, all four countries comprising the British Isles are included in the narrative. For example, Craiglockhart War Hospital is located not far from Edinburgh, Scotland. Similarly, Major Lode, Billy Prior's supervisor at the Ministry of Munitions, eventually relocates to Wales. O'Brien, the workman mentioned in Chapter 2, is from Ireland.



By way of character memories, various locations in France (Amiens and Étapes) and the French Front itself play a prominent role in the narrative.

A small portion of the narrative is devoted to Dr. Rivers' remembrances of Melanesia, a geographical region located in the South Pacific. Lionel Spragge eventually travels to South Africa.

Language and Meaning

The *Eye in the Door* is written in British English. This means that there are words and phrases included in the narrative which might be unfamiliar to English speakers from the U.S. or other countries. For example, the word "lift" refers to an elevator and "tab" is used in reference to a cigarette butt. A "gob stopper" is a jaw-breaker and "jelly babies" are similar to gummy bears. In addition, "allotment" refers to a type of government-sponsored social assistance. "Conchie" is a derogatory colloquialism used to describe a conscientious objector.

At other points in the narrative, the written word appears in a variety of forms. The narrative includes lines from Oscar Wilde's play *Salome*, a paragraph from Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, song lyrics, news stories, personal letters, poetry, editorials, political propaganda, a psychotherapeutic report, and a sworn oath.

Beattie Roper's letter to her daughter Hettie which appears in Chapter 7 is written in the vernacular. In other words, Beattie writes to her daughter using the conversational style of those living in a certain region. Hettie's written response to her mother is also written in the vernacular, although Hettie's level of education is also apparent. All of the characters in *The Eye in the Door* speak English. The different types of English featured in the narrative prove the versatility of the language. What adds texture to this narrative is the number of forms the language takes, and what those forms accomplish.

Structure

The Eye in the Door is 280 pages long. This page count includes the Author's Note, which provides a brief historical overview of the time period covered in the narrative. The narrative comprises twenty-one chapters and is divided into three parts. Chapters 1 through 9 constitute Part 1. Part 2 contains Chapters 10 through 16 and the remaining five chapters make up Part 3.

The story itself follows a linear progression. That is to say, there is a discernible beginning, middle, and end to the action which takes place. It should also be noted that while the novel progresses from point A to point B and so forth, the novel departs from the formula at various points in the narrative. These departures take the form of character memory or characters' dreams and nightmares. However, once a memory or a dream comes to an end, the progression returns to its standard trajectory. Given the subject matter of *The Eye in the Door*, it cannot be said to contain a moment at which



the narrative arc takes a downward turn. In other words, there is no specific point at which tension "peaks." Billy Prior, the main protagonist, begins the novel in crisis and continues in crisis mode until the final chapter, when it is made clear that he is no longer experiencing the fugue state.

Finally, although the Author's Note appears after the narrative proper, readers should be advised to read this brief section before beginning the novel to reduce confusion and fill in specific knowledge gaps.



Quotes

"Soldiers home on leave had to be given an good time; they mustn't be allowed to remember what they were going back to, and this gave everybody else a magnificent excuse for never thinking about it at all" (Chapter 1, pg. 6.)

"There were times - and tonight was one of them - when Prior was made physically sick by the sight and sound and smell of civilians" (Chapter 1, pg. 7.)

"A sad smell came from the closet: lavender and sweat, a sad smell. Prior's mother had started her life in service in just such a house as this" (Chapter 1, pg. 12.)

"Everything - the chipped green paint, the scuffed no-color floor, the nailed-down chairs - implied that those who visited criminals were probably criminals themselves" (Chapter 3, pg. 27.)

"[Lionel Spragge] was as unmistakably and crudely potent as a goat" (Chapter 4, pg. 46.)

"It would be very easy, under the pretext of 'even-handedness' to slip too far the other way and blame the violence in the [Prior] home not on [Harry Prior's] brutality, but on [Billy's mother's] failure to manage it" (Chapter 8, pg. 90.)

"One of the more surprising consequences of the war was a shortage of suitable male corpses" (Chapter 12, pg. 146.)

"One began by finding mental illness mystifying, and ended by being still more mystified by health" (Chapter 12, pg. 147.)

"Many of those who pass unscathed through modern warfare do so because of the sluggishness of their imaginations [...]" (Chapter 17, pg. 213.)

"It was not unusual after a dinner with the Heads for [Dr. Rivers] to stay behind enjoying their particular brand of [...] gossip, well aware that his own foibles and frailties would be dissected as soon as he left, and sure enough of their love for him to mind" (Chapter 18, pg. 225.)

"If people are going to have to kill, they need to be brought up to expect to have to do it. They need to be trained not to care [...]" (Chapter 18, pg. 231.)



Topics for Discussion

What frightens Charles Manning the most?

Why does Siegfried Sassoon agree to be sent back to the Front the first time?

Who are the 47,000?

What is "taboo" about the fact that Billy Prior has sex with Mrs. Riley?

Explain the way(s) in which the concept of the "dual self" is manifested in Dr. Rivers. Use specific textual examples to substantiate your claims.

Discuss the novel's title and explain its significance in terms of Billy Prior's experience of war trauma.

What prompts Charles Manning to consider Billy Prior a "temporary gentleman?"

In your opinion, is Billy Prior for or against England's involvement in WWI?

At what age and under what circumstances does Billy Prior first experience dissociation?

Identify the "dual selves" in the narrative and briefly discuss each character's alternate self.