

A Fall of Marigolds Study Guide

A Fall of Marigolds by Susan Meissner

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Plot Summary

A Fall of Marigolds focuses on two characters living in the New York City area separated by 100 years (1911-2011) but linked by traumatic events. The characters' storylines will be discussed separately in this plot summary to keep their stories linear, though they converge in the end, as will be discussed. Both characters' stories are written in the first person in past tense. The novel does include several sections in both Taryn and Clara's narrative where the characters remember past events. These passages are also written in the past tense.

The novel opens with Taryn Michaels in September 11, 2011. Taryn, a textile restorer, notes how she was bewitched and haunted by a scarf with a pattern of marigolds that she only saw for one day, September 11, 2001. Taryn lost her husband in the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, a loss she has never processed but was reminded of when a photograph of her and a florist from that morning was published in a magazine to commemorate the ten year anniversary of the attacks.

Throughout Taryn's chapters she reminisces about the attacks and that morning and about the guilt she feels for her husband's death. She had been set to meet him that morning at the restaurant on the top floor of one of the buildings. She was going to tell him she was pregnant, a fact she had waited to tell him. She was in Lower Manhattan that day to meet a wealthy client who wanted a copy of a marigold scarf. When she got out of the building, Clara was shocked at the chaos outside. She asked a man, Mick Demetriou, to use his cell phone to try to get through to Kent since she had forgotten her phone at home. Mick said sure, but Kent did not answer her texts. Mick stayed with Taryn for much of the morning but they were separated at one point.

Ten years later, Taryn heard from Mick, who called her at the florist shop to say that he has her scarf, which she left near his van, and he wished to return it to her. Taryn was initially cold to Mick but eventually relented and joined up with him. They helped each other process the trauma of the day and became friends. Mick showed her a text from Kent asking him to tell Taryn to "Be happy."

Taryn tried to return the scarf to its owner, but the woman asked her to keep the scarf since it meant more to Taryn than it does to her. She showed Taryn a letter from Clara Wood to her aunt in which Clara gave the scarf to her aunt to help her move on from heartbreak, telling her to be happy. Taryn realized that the message all along was that she had control over her life and had free will to choose who she loved even if it turns out badly.

Interspersed with Taryn's chapters are Clara Wood's. Clara was a nurse working on Ellis Island in September 1911. Clara came to the island after experiencing a heartbreaking loss in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in Lower Manhattan in March of that year. Clara had met a man, Edward Brim, in the building when she worked as a nurse in a clinic there. Clara fell in love with Edward and believed he loved her, too. He asked her to meet him on the ninth floor so he could show her the factory, but there was a terrible



fire and he perished when he jumped from one of the windows. Clara went to Ellis because it was an "in-between place." There she made friends with her roommate, Dolly.

One day a Welsh man was admitted to the hospital. He was wearing a marigold-patterned scarf and asked Clara to save his wife's things from the incinerator. The man, Andrew Gwynn, had lost his wife, Lily Ravenhouse Gwynn, to disease on the passage over to America. Clara discovered a certificate of annulment and realized that Lily had meant to abandon Andrew when they got to New York. Lily had been married to another man, Angus Ravenhouse, who was horrible and she was afraid he would hurt her. As the story progressed, Clara realized that Andrew and Lily married in haste. Lily's deceit haunted Clara, and she decided not to tell Andrew about it.

Meanwhile, a new doctor, Ethan Randall, joined the staff. He took a liking to Clara and had a crush on her. Ethan and Dolly were concerned about Clara's growing attachment to Andrew, even wondering if it was inappropriate. Clara agreed to change wards. They discussed poetry one night. He accompanied her to Manhattan to meet her father, who told her of a job offer for her to accompany a man and his ailing wife on their trip to Scotland. That same trip to Manhattan, Clara looked up Edward's obituary and realized that he was engaged at the time of his death. Furious, Clara took the ferry back to Ellis and discovered that Andrew, who had been discharged that day, did not take Lily's scarf and letter with him when he left. Clara had given it to Dolly to give to him, but he gave it to Clara as a memento.

Clara, determined to leave Ellis, traveled back to her home in Pennsylvania and accepted the traveling nurse position. Back on Ellis, a detective came looking for Andrew saying he had stolen a valuable necklace from Lily and the Ravenhouses. Clara traveled to Manhattan on her own and found Lily's necklace in a trunk in a boarding house room she had rented. She then tracked down Andrew's brother, Nigel, and read Lily's letter to him and to the detective who arrived at the same time. She left and waved to Andrew from a trolley car. She went back to the newspaper and read about the fire, learning that Edward's fiancée had already married someone else. Clara then went to Edward's parents to tell him that he was a hero for jumping out of the building with a young girl during the fire. She left a letter telling them this, and then she went to his grave, telling him, "Thank you."

Clara returned to Ellis and realized that Ethan was in love with her. She told him she needed time before she could love again. He kissed her and they walked back to the building together. From the letter that Taryn read in the final chapter, the reader learns Clara's fate; she took the traveling nurse position but left it early to return to New York to be with the man who loved her and who she loved, presumably Ethan.



Chapter 1: Taryn - Chapter 5: Clara

Summary

Chapter 1: Taryn—Manhattan, September 2011

In Chapter 1, Taryn Michaels, a textile restoration expert, writes in first person in past tense. Taryn had a conversation with a customer at the fabric store she worked at, the Heirloom Yard. Taryn wondered briefly at a fabric she came across many years ago but only got to see for one morning. It haunted her ever since. Taryn went to pick up her nine-year-old daughter, Kendal, from her school. Kendal hinted that her mother was overprotective, and Taryn said that bad things can happen in daylight. She noted how Kendal reminded her of her late husband.

When the two reunite with Celine, Taryn's best friend and the Heirloom Yard shop owner, Taryn was shown a picture of herself and a man, Mick Demetrou the florist, on the morning of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. In the picture the scarf she was clutching is the marigold-patterned one she was wondering about earlier. Kendal was not aware her mother was there that day. Taryn began to have a panic attack. In the photograph Taryn was unidentified, but Celine worried that their customers might recognize her. At the close of the chapter, Taryn began to flash back to the morning of the tragedy.

Chapter 2: Clara—Ellis Island, August 1911

Moving back in time to August 1911, the novel focuses on a new narrator, Clara Wood, who writes in the first person past tense. Clara was a young nurse working in the infirmary at Ellis Island's customs and immigration facility. She had not been to Manhattan or stepped foot off of Ellis Island for five months. Other nurses, like her friend and roommate, Dolly McLeod, would go to Manhattan on their days off, but Clara never accompanied them.

Clara remembered the tragic fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in Lower Manhattan. She did not flash back to these events, but narrated them in past tense. Clara was working as a nurse in the building at the time and had struck up a friendship, which she believed had the potential to turn into a romance, with a man, Edward Brim, who worked on the tenth floor for the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. Clara returned to the building to meet with Edward, but a terrible fire engulfed the building, and he leaped to his death. Clara blamed herself and began a self-imposed exile to Ellis Island, an "in-between place."

Chapter 3: Clara—Ellis Island, August 1911

Clara describes Ellis Island and her family's experience there, her parents being European immigrants. Clara confesses that she had always been drawn to colors, and that to her even the color of blood symbolized life. One morning in August a new boat



arrived, and Clara noticed a man who was wearing a copper-colored scarf with the pattern of marigold flowers on it. The man was then detained in the infirmary because there was a case of scarlet fever on his ship. The man's name was revealed to be Andrew Gwynn, a Welshman who did not speak good English, and he said that his wife, Lily, died of fever on the way over. After escorting Andrew to the ward, Clara asked if she could do anything else for him. He asked for his trunk and a pattern-book within it. Clara said she would retrieve the pattern book. Andrew then told her he had only known his wife 12 days before they married. Clara told him she did not think he was a fool.

Chapter 4: Clara—Ellis Island, August 1911

Clara talks about how her father, a doctor, would tell her she was a good nurse because she never panicked. As Clara walked to the baggage room she felt glad that Andrew needed someone to let his brother, Nigel, know he was detained on the island. Clara welcomed this as an opportunity to leave the island. In the luggage room, Clara opened Lily Gwynn's trunk and saw a tiny book of poetry by John Keats. She opened the other trunk and took out Andrew's pattern book. A Certificate of Annulment for Lily and Andrew fell out of the book. It had only been signed by Lily. Clara also found a letter from Lily to Andrew in the poetry book.

Chapter 5: Clara—Ellis Island, August 1911

Clara read the letter, which revealed that Lily was already married to a man named Angus Ravenhouse. Angus was a "monster" who Lily married to restore her mother's name after ruin. Angus seized her property and was a controlling man. Lily flirted with Andrew and seduced him so he would marry her, and she could escape Wales and move to America. Lily apologized to Andrew in the letter, which she hoped he would find after she fled for the American West. Clara was shocked at these revelations, and she soon learned that Lily's trunk would be incinerated because of the illness on board. Clara made a split-second decision to take the papers and books for safekeeping so they would not be destroyed.

Analysis

In Chapter 1, the reader is introduced to Taryn Michaels, one of the two main characters and the first narrator in the novel. Taryn is excellent at her job as a textile restorer, and the shop is quite famous. Taryn seems content to have a quiet life away from the spotlight, however, which is one reason the photograph of her and Mick Demetrou bothers her so much. Taryn only alludes to the events of September 11, 2001, in her references to her husband.

Early on in the chapter she makes reference to the beautiful scarf with the marigolds that she only got to hold for one morning and which has haunted her ever since. The scarf later makes an appearance in the photograph, so the reader learns that Taryn's experience with the scarf is tied to that horrible day. Taryn clearly experiences some kind of panic attack or difficulty processing the appearance of the photograph. She is



still grieving for that day and is dealing with the aftereffects of the 9/11 attacks, thereby introducing one of the novel's themes, Trauma.

Taryn's chapter serves as a kind of framing device since it introduces a scarf that even in the twenty-first century has an enduring impact. This foreshadows Clara Wood's experience with the scarf which soon appears in the novel. Additionally, this touches on the novel's theme of Foils and Parallelism. In literature, foils are characters that complement each other. As the reader will see, Taryn's foil is Clara, introduced in Chapter 2. Over the course of the novel, these two characters' lives interact in many parallel ways. For example, the other main character and narrator in the novel, Clara Wood, also experiences trauma. In Chapter 2, Clara describes some of her anguish after the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire that led to the death of a man, Edward Brim, whom she thought she loved. In reality the reader might pick up that Edward was friendly if not overly forward with Clara, but there's a chance he was just being outgoing. Still, his death wounded Clara's conscious, and she feels tremendously guilty to the point where she is refusing to continue living her life, so she moves to Ellis Island. Clara seems angry at herself because she blames herself for Edward's death. She, too, is experiencing Trauma.

The reader will want to note how quickly Clara's ideas about Lily and Andrew are changed after she reads Lily's letter. Clara rushes to judge Lily for her actions even though clearly Lily feared for her life. This sets up one of the novel's frequent motifs of things not always being what they appear, or misleading appearances. Clara is also very preoccupied with love and romanticizes the smallest interaction or hint of a relationship often at the sake of reality. The reader will soon find that Clara's journey to find closure and recover from the trauma of the fire is intertwined with her need to recognize that love comes in many degrees and appearances do not always reflect reality.

Discussion Question 1

How does Taryn describe the fabric she is infatuated with? Through her description, what does the reader know about the fabric so far?

Discussion Question 2

Based on what the reader has seen so far, how is Clara affected by the fire she saw? What are some of the lingering effects of this trauma?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Clara take the letter and book? Is this ethically the right thing to do? If not, what kind of ethics does Clara seem to be operating under?



Vocabulary

vermilion, challis, aniline, pixie, swatch, harrowing, tagalong, flagging, feeble-minded, contagious, stippled, reprimand, trachoma, impassioned, entreaty, brogue, dialect, pavilions, cordial, tendril, billowed, cascaded, affinity, infirm, adamant, palatial, spectrum, cumbersome, hoisted



Chapter 6: Clara - Chapter 10: Taryn

Summary

Chapter 6: Clara—Ellis Island, August 1911

In Chapter 6 Clara describes the course of the illness scarlet fever in detail using the technique of personification. Clara reflects on how she could have given Lily's book and annulment letter to the incinerator, yet she chose not to and instead felt the burden of guilt for knowing Lily's secret when her husband, Andrew, did not. Clara caught up with Dolly and told her she had something to tell her later. She apologized to Mrs. Crowley, the warden, for being distracted. Clara returned to Andrew in the infirmary and reassured him that she saved the sketchbook and that she was going to store it in her nurse's quarters. Andrew asked her to give his brother the book if he did not survive the fever. She gave him the keys to the trunk and told him that his wife's belongings were going to the incinerator, which he said he expected. He then told her that she had a kind heart.

Chapter 7: Clara—Ellis Island, August 1911

That night, Clara showed Dolly the letter and book and explained the situation. Dolly took the opposite view of Clara. She thought that Andrew should not have married Lily having only known her two weeks. She began to be suspicious of Andrew's motives. Through their arguing, Clara and Dolly saw they had differences, such as Clara believed that you could know and love someone you had only just met. Clara began to tell Dolly about Edward Brim and how she lost him in the fire, something she had never told Dolly about before. Dolly observed that Clara never came ashore with her or the other nurses because she was scared of what she lost, not the fire she escaped. Clara insisted that she was not stuck, and the chapter ends with Dolly inviting her to go dancing on the mainland with some of the nurses on Saturday.

Chapter 8: Clara—Ellis Island, August 1911

Clara narrates the history of the men she had fallen in love with over the years. This section is not a flashback, but rather Clara describing in first person past tense the men she had loved and her interactions with them. She had a tendency to fall in love at first sight with men who led her on or never really had feelings for her, that she had just misinterpreted kindness for romantic attraction. Ultimately, the failed courtship with the last man she fell in love with in her hometown back in Pennsylvania left her so shaken that she moved to New York City where she fell for Edward Brim.

On Saturday, the next day after her late night chat with Dolly, Clara woke up and Dolly asked her if she had decided what to do about the letter. Clara said she was not sure, and Dolly offered to give Andrew the news. Clara said no, and then Dolly said she



hoped Clara would come with her and the other women to the main island that night. On Sunday night Clara dreamed of Edward.

Chapter 9: Clara—Ellis Island, August 1911

The next day Clara and Dolly switched assignments so Clara could work in the same ward as Andrew. When Clara went to check in with him, she realized that he was quickly becoming sick with the fever. Since he had not eaten anything, she fed him a bowl of soup. They talked about their backgrounds, Clara with her family's background in medicine and Andrew with his family's background in tailoring. At midmorning, Dr. Treavor, the kindly older doctor who reminded Clara of her father, made the rounds with a new intern, Dr. Randall. During the day, Dr. Randall observed Clara. He told her that he had heard she survived the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. Clara asked him who told him, and he revealed it was Ivy Carter, another nurse.

Later, Clara described her experience the night of the fire, including watching people inside the building jump to their death and not being able to tend to anyone because the first responders did not want her help. Narrating the events in the first person past tense, Clara described hearing that the owners of the store were on the tenth floor, the top floor, when the fire broke out and escaped through a door onto the roof. Clara thought that maybe since Edward was a bookkeeper, he would have been on the tenth floor, but he had been on the ninth floor because that is where he was supposed to meet her. The ninth floor was where he had jumped, so Clara blamed herself for causing his death.

Chapter 10: Taryn—Manhattan, September 2011 and September 2001

Taryn notes that it had only taken two days after she had seen the photograph of her in People magazine for a reporter to call her and request an interview, which she turned down. Kendal had also been pestering her about this unknown major day of her mother's life. Taryn then flashed back to the day of September 11, 2001. This flashback is in first person past tense. She described the day—the bright sky, Kent's green shirt, the brilliant gold of the marigold scarf—and wished that she could rewrite that day in colors. She believed that that day was defined by two phone calls: one from her to Kent asking if he could meet her at the Windows on the World restaurant at the top of one of the towers, and the other from the fabric store's wealthy patron, Rosalynn Stauer, who wanted her to come to Lower Manhattan to pick up a fabric she wanted matched. Taryn was excited to meet Kent because she was eager to tell him that she was pregnant and had kept it from him, waiting for the right moment. They had been trying to conceive for a few years. Taryn agreed to meet Rosalynn at a hotel, just a five minute walk to the Twin Towers.

Taryn went to meet Mrs. Stauer in the hotel and received the marigolds scarf, which she admitted was stunning. As she left the building she heard people talking about an airplane crash. After she heard more rumors, Taryn reached inside her purse to find her phone to call Kent, but it was not there. She went to the lobby and heard more people talking about the plane crashes, how they had seen people jump from the tops of the



towers. Taryn loudly asked to borrow someone's phone, and a florist offered her his, but his phone wouldn't get through. He suggested that Taryn text her husband, which she did. After the South Tower fell, Taryn and the florist evacuated the hotel. Taryn was shocked and horrified, but she knew Kent would want her to live, especially now that she was pregnant.

Analysis

In this section the reader sees more of Clara's experience with love and attraction. She admits a tendency to fall in love with men and assume they are attracted to her. One example is how she feels about Andrew Gwynn. It is quite clear that she feels some sort of intimacy and attraction to him. She also feels betrayal and heartbreak very deeply, so much so that she left Pennsylvania to move to New York and avoid a man she felt she was destined to marry but who rejected her. The author is deliberately setting up Clara's profound naiveté and innocence because a twist in the story later will allow Clara to learn from her mistakes and grow into a more mature person. Her friend and roommate Dolly tries to help Clara be a little more cognizant of other people's motives, but Clara does not listen to her.

In Taryn's section note the elaborate descriptions of colors, which fits into one of the novel's overall themes, Color. For Taryn, a textile restorer, colors are how she paints the world and arranges it in her mind. Certainly it makes the day of September 11, 2001, which she recounts here, much more vivid. Clara is also prone to use descriptive language to describe abstract concepts, such as in Chapter 6 when she personifies scarlet fever. Note that for Clara, the theme of Color is tied to the illness she is treating, scarlet fever. This marks the beginning of Taryn's middle section of the novel that is events told in first person past tense flashbacks. In these sections, the events in 2011 are almost entirely off screen as the events of 2001 take center stage.

One of the novel's themes is Foils and Parallelism. This section demonstrates parallels between Taryn and Clara's stories. A way that Taryn's story differentiates from Clara's story is the distance of time that each character feels from a traumatic event. Clara witnessed the factory fire only a few months before the start of the narrative. She is still dealing with the immediate aftereffects of the shock and trauma. The emotional wounds are still fresh in her mind. Taryn, however, is looking back in Chapter 10 at the events of September 11 from a distance of 10 years. She has had that time to process the events, wondering what she could have done differently to prevent her husband's death and if it was his destiny to die and hers to live. That being said, she suffered from a panic attack earlier in the novel. She hasn't quite gotten over the shocking events of the terrorist attacks. The novel frequently looks at the theme of Closure, and the reader will observe Taryn and Clara's parallel stories of finding closure in the wake of traumatic events.



Discussion Question 1

How does Clara justify her decision to keep Lily's things? What would you have done if you were in her position?

Discussion Question 2

What are some patterns you see in how Clara falls in love and who she falls in love with?

Discussion Question 3

What are some of the parallels you see between Clara and Taryn even though they are 100 years apart? How are they similar and how are they different?

Vocabulary

consternation, hoisted, haversacks, careworn, anxious, contingent, geyser, indignation, chagrin, effusive, prudent, abysmally, dissipate, poised, embolden, contagious, don, particles, obeyed, intricate, stoic, conferred, composure, audacity, fluke, rendezvous, evacuee,



Chapter 11: Clara - Chapter 15: Clara

Summary

Chapter 11: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Clara explains that she found solace in the monotony of the routine that all the Ellis Island nurses followed. At the end of her shift, Clara noticed that Andrew needed to use the bathroom. His pride pushed against her desire to help him. After the lunch break, Clara met up with her fellow nurses. She was cold to Ivy since Ivy told Dr. Randall about the fire and told him her first name. Nellie, another nurse, said she thought Dr. Randall had "taken a shine" to Clara, who denied it. Clara coolly walked away from the conversation after it turned back to Ivy telling Dr. Randall about the fire.

Chapter 12: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Clara opens the chapter by telling the reader about how she was trained by her father and at nursing school on how to treat illness. Andrew and the other passengers from his ship eventually develop the illness. Clara knew she had to cool him from the hot fever so she gave him a bath. Andrew was delirious and kept talking to Clara as if she were Lily.

Dr. Randall was the only doctor on the ward that day, and he and Clara got a chance to talk. Dr. Randall observed that Clara calmed Andrew down and had a compassionate way about her. Clara brushed off the compliment. As they made their way through the rounds, Clara and Dr. Randall talked some more, and he asked her if she enjoyed reading. Thinking of Lily's book of Keats poems, Clara said that she likes poetry, and when pressed further she said John Keats was her favorite poet. Dr. Randall asked her to spend an evening discussing poetry with him, but Clara said she was not ready and shied away.

Chapter 13: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Clara reflects on the days after the fire. Clara's parents came to New York to see her three days after the fire. As her mother comforted her, Clara noticed that her mother was wearing a dress that she had not seen before. This made her think that if she went home everything would be changed and that she would not recognize her home and surroundings, yet she would not be the same person she was before she met Edward. Her mother was shocked and saddened by what happened with the fire, and Clara snapped at her but then apologized. Her parents then told her that everything was kept as she left it so she could come back home. Clara replied that she was staying in New York. Clara decided that she would move to Ellis Island for a nursing position because, as another nurse told her, "No one stays there for long. It's a place for the next thing to happen. It's Ellis. People don't live there. It's nobody's address" (124). Clara was attracted to this idea of an "in-between place" (125). Her parents were concerned



because of the diseases nurses were exposed to on Ellis, but Clara was not afraid. Her father saw her determination and supported her decision. Clara went with them to the train station and bade goodbye.

Chapter 14: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Back in September 1911, Clara's narrative picks up in first person past tense describing the fever raging on in Andrew's ward, but Clara observed that he seemed to be doing better. Andrew began to talk about his wife, and Clara asked how they met. Andrew told her how they met when she was his waitress at a restaurant near the a ship's ticketing office in Liverpool. Clara asked if that was when he fell in love with her, and Andrew dodged the question to say that was when Lily fell in love with him. Instead of feeling incredulous at Lily and Andrew's instant attraction and quick marriage, Clara understood since she felt a similar way toward Edward Brim. Andrew saw on Clara's face that something was wrong, so he asked her what she lost in the fire, and she told him about Edward Brim. When Andrew asked if Edward loved Clara she said, "He was destined to love me" (132). At lunch, Dolly and Clara argued over whether or not Clara should tell Andrew about Lily's secret. Dr. Randall spotted them eating and asked if Clara would consider discussing Keats with him one night, and they settled on the next evening.

Chapter 15: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Friday after supper Clara skimmed the Keats poem, "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Clara did not understand any of it, especially the lines, "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'"--That it all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to/know" (139). Clara retrieved Andrew's suitcase from the luggage room despite someone trying to steal it, and she returned it to him. Lily gave Andrew a bath and, with Dr. Randall nearby, the three of them discussed poetry. When Dr. Randall moved on to another bed, Andrew gave her some tips on the poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn," saying that the poem was about "...expectation and fulfillment" and that "Sometimes the expectation is better than the fulfillment" (147). Clara had to move on from Andrew's bed, but she was struck by his interpretation.

Analysis

In this section the reader learns how Clara came to move to Ellis Island. She was attracted to the idea of an "in-between place," and moved there to process her grief and deal with the guilt she felt for what she felt was causing Edward's death. Clara's relationship to Ellis Island is continually explored throughout the novel. Even though Clara sees it as a place of transition, she nonetheless finds herself stuck there. In fact, she has not been off the island yet since arriving there to take up her job as a nurse. Clara seems to think it is punishment because of the guilt she feels for Edward's death. Getting Clara off the island unites Dolly and Ethan in a mission to help Clara move on.

Andrew and Clara's relationship is close, perhaps more close than a patient and nurse relationship should be. Clara certainly identifies with Andrew since he has recently lost his wife and she recently lost Edward. She equates their grief as the same, even though



Andrew and Lily were actually married while she and Edward merely had a friendly rapport. Clara takes a special interest in Andrew, and he connects with her as well. Their budding intimacy will soon become evident—and questioned—by others around Clara.

Another thing to note in this section is the continuing idea of instant attraction. As noted in previous chapters, Clara has a tendency to fall in love with men at first sight or soon thereafter. Clara, a true romantic at heart, would believe that these men had feelings for her. By this point the reader might be a little skeptical that Edward Brim truly did love her like she believed he was destined to do. Even Andrew admits that his relationship with Lily was rushed and that he did not quite think that she loved him when they married. Yet Andrew did not seem to mind, for he loved her. A possible suitor, Dr. Randall, seems to take a shine to Clara early on in their relationship, and while he invites her to discuss poetry with him as a friendly gesture everyone, including the other nurses, seems to think he has romantic feelings towards Clara except her. The author is drawing an almost comical portrait of Clara's inability to recognize when a man really likes her.

The book of poetry by John Keats and his poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn" have prominence in this section. The poem is significant in this novel so much so that the author includes the poem in full after the novel's final pages. Andrew's interpretation that "Sometimes the expectation is better than the fulfillment" could be read as relevant for Clara's life as well. Clara romanticized falling in love to the point where she was not looking at relationships rationally. Clara's quest for love—the fulfillment of her desire to fall in love—does not come until later in the novel and it feels very differently than she thought it would.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the way Clara behaves around other men like Andrew and Dr. Randall. Who does she feel comfortable speaking to and why? Why does she seem so distant to Dr. Randall?

Discussion Question 2

Andrew Gwynn offers an idea on why Clara is on Ellis Island—Edward Brim. But from what you've seen so far, is that really the case? What is the true thing stopping Clara from leaving Ellis Island?

Discussion Question 3

How is the Keats poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn" significant in this section? Do you agree with Andrew's interpretation?



Vocabulary

solace, equilibrium, lilt, alluring, aghast, cognizance, dousing, agitated, rote, palpated, blunt, aloof, insidious, stilted, gauging, tethered, congenially, providential, piqued



Chapter 16: Clara - Chapter 20: Clara

Summary

Chapter 16: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

After their shift was over, Clara and Dolly returned to their room. Dolly helped Clara get ready for her date with Dr. Randall by offering styling and wardrobe assistance. Dolly paid her lots of complements, especially about her hair. Dolly, hoping to encourage Clara to embrace the possibility to move on from Edward, told her "You're in love with a dream, Clara. Sooner or later you're going to wake up from it and you'll be glad I didn't coddle you while you slept" (152). Clara did not appreciate Dolly's meddling, but Dolly was only trying to help Clara move on from the fire and move on from Ellis Island. Dolly told Clara that she was in love with a fantasy and that she did not even know Edward, that if she wanted to learn more about him she could look him up. Clara reflected on this until it was time to meet Dr. Randall.

Chapter 17: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

When Clara went to meet Ethan, she admitted that she did not like John Keats' poetry, that her book was not even her own, that it belonged to a friend, and that she had only read one poem by him, "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Ethan offended her when he said he did not know how she could stand it living on the island which was so quiet and dull. He said that he could not wait to leave after his internship. Clara defended Ellis and also her choice to live there. Dr. Randall, "Ethan" as he encouraged Clara to call him, steered the conversation back towards poetry, and they analyzed "Ode on a Grecian Urn" together. Clara saw that it was about an "in-between place" (161). Ethan mentioned that he heard there was to be a trial for the owners of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, and Clara felt uncomfortable and light-headed, so Ethan walked her outside.

Chapter 18: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

While they were strolling outside, Clara admitted that she had not been off the island since she first got there, that she was traumatized by what she saw at the fire. Ethan asked if he could accompany her on a trip to the mainland. She refused and said she would go when she felt ready. Knowing she was fearful, Ethan told her that, "Sometimes fear of a thing is worse than the thing itself" (166). After they said goodnight, Clara went to Andrew's ward to try to return his Keats book to him. Andrew was awake, and they conversed. Andrew was surprised since it was his mother's book. Clara put two and two together from Lily's note and realized she meant for Andrew to discover her letter in the book within her luggage after she escaped when they got to America. Lily had stolen the book, which upset Andrew, but he was ultimately grateful that Clara recovered it from the incinerator. Back in her room, Clara decided to give Andrew the gift when he left, to wrap it in Lily's scarf. Clara discovered a key with a Manhattan address sewed into the scarf. Clara kept it for herself, admitting that she was not a brave person.



Chapter 19: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Sunday morning, the night after Clara and Ethan's talk, Clara had to give Andrew and the other patients on the scarlet fever ward descaling baths. Andrew insisted on bathing himself but eventually relented and let Clara bathe him. It was awkward between them, but Andrew expressed that Clara had been nothing but kind to him. Clara thought that she was getting too emotionally attached to a patient as a way to cope with her grief at losing Edward. She ran into Ethan and he asked her to go on a walk with him after dinner that night. He told her he was not trying to court her. At Andrew's bed, Clara noticed Ethan might have seen the Keats book on Andrew's bedside table. At the end of the chapter, Clara agreed to walk with him.

Chapter 20: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Later in the day, Clara asked Andrew if he thought Ethan noticed the Keats book. Andrew said he thought Ethan did but that Clara had been nothing but compassionate to him. That night at dinner, Ethan confronted Clara about the book and his suspicions that she was too attached to Andrew and perhaps even was attracted to him. Clara defended herself by saying Andrew loved his wife and she herself loved someone else. This surprised Ethan. She elaborated that she lost someone in the fire. Ethan said that she was pouring her grief into Andrew's and using it as an excuse not to leave Ellis. Clara tried to cut their conversation short, but Ethan said he was only trying to help her and that he liked her. She agreed to let him help her and privately aspired to ask Mrs. Crowley to give her a different ward in the morning. Back in her room, Clara wrapped the certificate of annulment, Lily's letter, and the scarf in tissue paper.

Analysis

These chapters see two people trying to help Clara: Dolly and Ethan. Dolly and Ethan each have their own style. Dolly is more blunt and honest with Clara about being "in love with a dream" whereas Ethan's approach is more subtle, at least at first. Initially Clara pushes them away. She still shows signs of being in love with Edward Brim despite evidence pointing to the fact that it was a quick attraction that could have just been a meaningless flirtation, for Edward at least. The reader will want to note that Dolly seems to know something when she alludes to Clara looking Edward up.

Ethan's words and indeed Clara's own self-reflection hint at a larger truth: Clara is letting her grief for Edward prevent her from leaving Ellis. In other words, she is blocking her own ability to move on, to gain Closure. Closure is one of the larger themes in the novel. The reader might easily see that Ethan is attracted to Clara, however much he says he is not trying to court her. As Dolly suggests, Clara could try to move on by striking up a romance with Ethan. On the other hand, Clara is attracted to Andrew Gwynn, something that she and Ethan both notice. Clara understands that Andrew's grief for his wife is an excuse for Clara to keep on grieving. Clara's burgeoning intimacy with Andrew alarms Ethan as well, and he confronts her in a stern lecture. When Clara



says that she loved someone and lost him like Andrew lost his wife, Ethan backs off a little, more concerned with Clara having been in love with someone.

Signs are also starting to point to a recurring idea of false appearances or things not being what they may seem. In this section this comes across most apparent in Lily's letter to Andrew which he never got a chance to read and which Clara stole and planned to keep. It truly is an eye opener for Clara to see that Lily did not really love Andrew; she just needed a convenient way to safely get away from her husband. Clara had thought she had found a parallel with Andrew and Lily's romance to hers with Edward Brim. Clara had been charmed by Andrew's story that he had met Lily and just a few weeks later they were married. She took this as comfort, a support for her idea that she and Edward could have been in love even though they had only known each other for a few weeks. Even though Clara finds Andrew and Lily's marriage an unfortunate sham, it is not enough to shake her from her belief that she and Edward were in love. The reader will see Clara realize the truth soon enough.

Discussion Question 1

How does Ethan Randall show his romantic interest for Clara? Why do you think she is not receptive to it?

Discussion Question 2

How does Ethan's observation that, "Sometimes fear of a thing is worse than the thing itself," an apt way to describe Clara's life?

Discussion Question 3

How is Clara's behavior towards Andrew Gwynn inappropriate? How does she rationalize it in her mind? Do you think the explanations she gives in her narrative make a convincing argument?

Vocabulary

cloisonné, integrity, implored, queer, decipher, fissure, compassion, ardor, palpable, reprimand, vehemence, insinuating



Chapter 21: Clara - Chapter 25: Taryn

Summary

Chapter 21: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Back in their room, Clara and Dolly caught up about Clara's evening with Dr. Randall. Dolly admitted that she had told their friends that Clara had lost someone in the fire. Clara and Dolly discussed Andrew Gwynn, and Dolly urged Clara to return the pattern book and letter to him. Since the women were switching rotations, Dolly said she would give Andrew the belongings. Dolly was concerned that Clara was attracted to Andrew, but Clara denied it and also denied having feelings for Ethan.

The next morning, Clara went to say goodbye to Andrew, who was alarmed and worried about Clara leaving him. Clara took a walk outside on the grounds and reflected on how beautiful Manhattan looked. When she got back to the residence, she saw that she had a letter from her father. The letter said that he and her mother were coming to Manhattan that week and wanted to meet her at a restaurant on the mainland.

Chapter 22: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Clara sat on her bed trying to come up with a good excuse to avoid going to see her parents on the mainland. She decided to ask Mrs. Crowley, but remind her that she did not have a day off and thus could not go. Mrs. Crowley ultimately did give her the day off, and at dinner Clara told Dolly about it. Dolly decided she should accompany Clara and would ask for a day off, but she doubted she would get one. Dolly went to her new station in the children's room, and Ethan found her there and told her he could accompany her to Manhattan. He said that Dolly had told him about what had happened. Ethan said he felt sorry for her.

Chapter 23: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Clara could not stay angry with Dolly for telling Ethan about her dilemma. Dolly told Clara that Andrew had asked about her. Clara opened the pattern book for the first time and looked at the inscription from Andrew's father to his two sons. Mr. Gwynn remembered his wife and wrote a stirring testament to her. The morning of her trip to Manhattan, Clara worried about Dolly giving the pattern book and Andrew's other materials to him. Ethan found Clara and they prepared to embark on the ferry.

Chapter 24: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Ethan helped Clara get on the ferry, and she began to feel nervous and lost her confidence. Ethan coached her through a panic attack, guiding her to being more relaxed and able to handle the emotionally trying trip across the river. Clara finally confessed to Ethan the reason why she felt so upset about the fire; she was filled with guilt that Edward had been waiting for her in the factory that night, that he would have



survived if he had not been there to meet her, and that she felt responsible for his death. Ethan sternly yet not unkindly helped her realize these thoughts were irrational. He also told her that Dolly explained to him about Lily's letter to Andrew since Andrew was to be discharged the day Clara and Ethan went to Manhattan. Ethan proposed that he and Clara visit Edward's grave after Clara's lunch. Ethan said they could go to a newspaper and find his obituary to learn the details. Clara closed her eyes for the finally moments of the ferry trip until Ethan guided her off the ferry. She opened her eyes and was struck by the beauty of New York.

Chapter 25: Taryn—Manhattan, September 2001

In this chapter, Taryn picks up where she left off in an earlier chapter when she recalled the morning of September 11, 2001, the day of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Her flashback, written in the first person past tense, continued with when Taryn and Mick were in his florist van, but the chaos of the crowds and the imminent fall of the other tower convinced Mick to move them along. Before they left, Taryn expressed that she knew Ken was dead and that she felt responsible for his death. She also felt remorse that she had not told him that she was pregnant sooner.

Outside the van Mick told Taryn that he thought it would not have hurt for those who jumped from the building. He said it was too fast. Taryn was nearly hysterical. Mick accompanied her to a hospital. After they parted ways, Taryn managed to find her way back to her apartment. She found missed calls and texts from Ken. Increasingly in the calls Ken sounded more desperate to know Taryn was safe, and this plagued her in the days that followed, that he had died thinking she could have been harmed or been in one of the elevators in the tower. Ken made it clear that he intended to jump from the tower. Bringing the narrative back to 2011, Taryn received a call from Mick. Mick told her he had the marigolds scarf that she had lost the morning of the attacks.

Analysis

The theme of Foils and Parallelism can be found in these chapters. One of the recurring motifs in these chapters is the idea of safety. When Clara and Ethan were riding the ferry, Ethan reassured her and calmed her down by saying, "You are safe. You are safe" (221). In the modern story, Taryn was overcome with guilt that she had not been able to get in touch with Kent to tell him that she was late, that she was not in the towers. Mick the florist told Taryn that, "Then I'm sure he died glad that you'd been delayed. If I had been him, that would have been my last thought. That you were safe" (232). Safety is clearly a theme in these chapters and across the centuries that separate these characters.

Another parallel is the symbol of people jumping from buildings. Edward Brim and his fellow workers at the factory jumped from the buildings, and in Taryn's life, Kent and other people in the World Trade Center jumped from the top floors. This is discussed more extensively in the Symbols and Symbolism section, but the reader will want to



note that characters in the factory fire and in the modern-day sky scraper were motivated by similar emotions: desperation, distress, and hopelessness.

A third parallel in these chapters which makes Taryn and Clara foils is the guilt they felt. Even though ten years has passed since the 9/11 attacks and the loss of her husband, Taryn still feels just as guilty as she did that day because she believes that she is responsible for Kent's death. Clara expresses her guilt to Ethan, and Ethan tries to reassure her that she has nothing to feel guilty of and no reason to feel responsible. That both of these characters feel guilt for the death of a man who died waiting to meet them is yet another way the author emphasizes the theme of Foils and Parallelism.

The theme of Destiny appears in this section when Taryn reflects that she hadn't taken her phone with her when she went downtown to meet Kent. "Another unfortunate circumstance, that forgotten phone? Or the willful hand of providence?" she wondered (239). Taryn did not like the idea that she and her husband did not get to say goodbye, or even have him know she was safe. To Taryn, the forgotten phone was just another excuse for her to feel guilty.

Not getting a resolution in this sense leads to Taryn not being able to tie up loose ends. This ties into the novel's theme of Closure. Soon the reader will see Taryn find closure when she reunites with Mick. The reader will note that while they were in the van, Mick heard Taryn say her name and mistakenly thought she meant "Karen" because she did not correct him. Clara is also about to get a sense of closure when Ethan suggests they visit Edward's grave. He remarks that he thinks they can find the location of his gravesite in Edward's obituary, which they can find in a newspaper office. Clara will get closure in the coming chapters, and it is painful yet necessary.

Discussion Question 1

Ethan draws comparisons to Clara's behavior and that of someone who is ill. For example, he tells her, "I know you're bound to this weight as much as any sick person is bound to her illness. I know that." If Clara is truly sick, what is she suffering from? What cure would you recommend?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think the author chose to situate Taryn's account of September, 11, 2001 into this section of the novel? What parallels between Taryn and Clara's lives do you think she hopes to underscore by placing them side by side?

Discussion Question 3

What ideas about destiny and fate does Taryn's chapter seem to propose? What is fate that saved Taryn and her child? Or merely coincidence?



Vocabulary

liable, encumbered, penitent, diabolical, tentative, bustle, bravado, pulverized, timbre, guttural, happenstance, impending



Chapter 26: Clara - Chapter 30: Clara

Summary

Chapter 26: Clara—Manhattan, September 1911

Ethan and Clara rode a cab to get to the restaurant where Clara's father would meet her in Greenwich Village. Ethan said he would return to meet her in the lobby at two. Clara's father was happy but surprised to see her, as her mother and sister believed that she would not come on the mainland to meet them. Her father argued that it was time for her to move on to a new position because Ellis Island was trapping her there. He said that she sounded changed in her letters to them since the fire. Clara defended her decisions, but at the end of their lunch her father told her of a nursing position for a professor and his ailing wife. The nurse would accompany them to Scotland. Clara promised that she would think about it but needed time to get back to him.

Chapter 27: Clara—Manhattan, September 1911

In the aftermath of her discussion with her father, Clara believed that she could go to Scotland if she wanted to leave Ellis. She met up with Ethan and told him what had happened and how it was not that unthinkable for her to take the nursing position. In the cab, Clara convinced Ethan to drive by the Asch Building. She believed she needed to overcome her grief and move on from Edward and the fire and to do that near the site of the fire. Clara jumped out of the cab by the building and leaned down by the sidewalk, telling it that she was sorry. Ethan comforted her and then asked if she still wanted to read Edward's obituary. Clara said she did. Ethan asked the driver to take them to the offices of the New York Times. Clara told Ethan that she did not regret meeting Edward. At the newspaper office, Clara read Edward's obituary and was shocked. The last line of the obituary said he was survived by his fiancée.

Chapter 28: Clara—Manhattan, September 1911

In the moments after reading that Edward had been engaged at the time of his death, Clara reeled from the shock. Clara was severely embarrassed and even depressed at the news. Ethan did not act surprised, which clued Clara in that he had known this fact for some time. Indeed, he admitted to Clara that Dolly had told him, that Dolly had looked Edward up a while ago. Clara was furious at Dolly for withholding the truth, but Ethan said she hoped Clara would come to the city and find out for herself. Clara stormed out of the office. Ethan ran after her, and she told the cab driver to take her to the pier. Clara was horrified when she realized that she had dealt Andrew the same crushing deception that Edward had shown her. Clara agreed to have coffee with Ethan when she got back to the library, but Mrs. Crowley stopped her and gave her something that Andrew had left for her: the unopened package containing Lily's scarf and the letter wrapped within it.



Chapter 29: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Clara took the package and read the letter Andrew wrote to her. He thanked her for saving the pattern book and looking after him. He was especially grateful that she saved the book of Keats poetry, since that was his mother's. He gave Clara the scarf to express his gratitude. Clara was overwhelmed by emotion and began to cry. She decided that she would leave Ellis and take the nursing position to go abroad to Scotland. Ethan tried to argue her out of her decision. Clara and Ethan met Dolly, who was overjoyed to hear that Clara would be leaving the island to take another position. She asked Clara to go to the Jersey Shore with her and the other women to celebrate, and Clara said yes. As she left to go lie down and rest, Clara thanked Ethan for all of his help.

Chapter 30: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Clara slept a dreamless sleep and did not wake up until the next day. Clara and Dolly caught up and made their way down to breakfast together. They discussed Ethan's reaction to Clara's decision. Dolly told her outright that Ethan liked her, that he had a crush on her. Clara was puzzled by this and wondered why he liked her. Dolly said he liked her for her. Clara said she was going to try to switch her rotation to the inspection ward. Dolly, sensing that Clara was trying to avoid Ethan, told her that she and Ethan could still keep in touch and write letters to each other while Clara was in Scotland. Clara informed Mrs. Crowley of her decision and her request to switch rotations and also asked for some time off so she could go home and visit her family. Mrs. Crowley agreed. Clara caught up with Ethan and filled him in on her news, and Ethan asked her to say goodbye to him when she left. Clara agreed.

Analysis

This section contains hard truths for Clara. A consistent part of Clara's personality is her capacity and tendency to fall in love early and often when she meets a man. In this section she learns the truth about Edward Brim, and everything she thinks she knows about love is tested. Just before she reads the obituary, Clara and Ethan visit the site of the fire. Clara touches the ground, expresses her grief and apologizes to Edward's spirit. She notes how she does not regret loving Edward, telling Ethan that it was worth it. Clara thinks that, "It should always make us happy to say that loving someone and being loved by someone is worth whatever price is paid" (255). Yet minutes later she learns the truth, that Edward had been engaged. This may or may not come as a shock to the reader, but there have been hints along the way that Clara was being naive about her acquaintanceship with Edward. Dolly in particular had been hinting that perhaps he was not the man Clara thought he was, and the reader now knows that Dolly had looked Edward up a while ago and knew the truth about him. Yet Clara comes to terms with this reality, however harsh it may be and however much she feels embarrassed that both Dolly and Ethan were aware. Clara does not feel ill will toward Edward and concludes that, "[love was]...the most devastating, most spectacular, most desirable force on



earth...It was far too powerful a thing to leave sleeping in an in-between place...Love was both the softest edge and the sharpest edge of what made life real" (271).

This revelation provides Clara the opportunity to move on from Edward and thus highlights the novel's theme of Closure. Now that Clara knows that Ethan was engaged, and that she had been led on or had read into his friendliness and possible flirtation, Clara can let the part of her that was convinced they were destined to fall in love go. Clara's father also offers her another way to find closure; he comes to their lunch with a job offer to care for a frail woman and her professor husband as they spend a year abroad in Scotland. Clara seriously considers this offer, much to Ethan's chagrin, and later, after learning about Edward's engagement, decides that she will definitely take the position. Dolly is overjoyed while Ethan is more hesitant and tries to get her to stay. As Dolly notes, Ethan has a crush on Clara, who is not sure how she returns his feelings. Yet Clara is deeply grateful for Ethan's help in getting her off the island and helping her move on, ultimately helping her find closure. Clara also feels a pang of remorse when she learns that Andrew did not read Lily's letter and that he did not discover the truth about his wife. Clara feels like she denied him that closure, and also that there are parallels with her behavior towards him and the deception she sees all around her. Just as Edward deceived her, just as Dolly and Ethan knew the truth about Edward and did not tell her, Clara feels responsible that she knew the truth about Lily and did not say anything to Andrew about it. This also ties into the novel's theme of Foils and Parallelism, since there are parallels between characters in Clara's life and story.

Discussion Question 1

What are the pros and cons of Clara accepting the private nursing position that would take her to Edinburgh? What would you do?

Discussion Question 2

Are you surprised to learn that Edward was engaged at the time of his death? How has the writer suggested throughout the novel that Clara was being naive?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think leads to Clara's decision to leave Ellis Island and take the private nursing position? Provide examples from the novel to support your answer.

Vocabulary

hansom, gallantly, naïveté, amorous, duped, connived, eluded, foreboding, sanctuary



Chapter 31: Clara - Chapter 34: Clara

Summary

Chapter 31: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

The next morning, Clara woke up ready to move on. She packed her things and prepared to take the ferry to the mainland where she would then make her way back home to Pennsylvania for a few days. Clara took the train home and talked with her mother in the kitchen. Her mother expressed that she wished Clara had never gone to New York. Clara did not regret it but did wish that she could be free of it.

While home, Clara assisted her father in his practice and wrote to Professor Bartlett and his wife to officially take the nursing position. Back at Ellis, Clara avoided Ethan even though Dolly tried to get her not to. On Tuesday afternoon, Clara went to get an interpreter and ran into Mrs. Crowley, who was talking to a man named Chester Hartwell. He was a private detective for Angus Ravenhouse, Lily's first husband, and was sent to America to look for Andrew. Clara tried to dodge his questions. Mr. Hartwell said that Andrew was believed to have married Lily, killed her on the way over, and stolen a very expensive necklace that belonged to the Ravenhouse family. The man threatened Clara. Stalling for time, Clara was shaken from their conversation but she guessed that the necklace might be located at the address Lily's left on a key she sewed in the scarf. She asked for Mr. Hartwell's card and where he was staying in Manhattan in case she remembered something.

Chapter 32: Clara—Ellis Island, September 1911

Clara raced to get the package she intended to give to Andrew. She planned on going to Andrew's brother's tailoring shop to give him Lily's letter once and for all. Clara ran into Ethan and explained what had just occurred. Ethan was firmly against the idea but agreed to stall Hartwell while Clara got on the ferry. He also told her to go back to the newspaper offices and look up the addresses and directions there. He kissed her on the head and bid her well, telling her to please be safe. Clara promised and then left, riding the ferry to the mainland and taking a cab to the address on the key.

Chapter 33: Clara—Manhattan, September 1911

Clara arrived at the address, which turned out to be a boarding house. She paid the cab driver to wait for her. Clara pretended like she was Lily's cousin, and the owner of the boarding house knew which Lily she was talking about. Clara said she had been detained. In Lily's room Clara found a steamer trunk that Lily had sent to New York shortly before leaving for America. At the bottom of one of the trunks, Clara found the necklace that Hartwell must have been talking about. She took it and left the boarding house. Looking in a business directory, Clara found the tailoring shop address. She got back in the cab and left for the shop. She opened the door to the shop and barely got an



introduction out of the way to Andrew's brother, Nigel, when Hartwell stormed in and greeted her as if he had expected to see her there.

Chapter 34: Clara—Manhattan, September 1911

In the confusion that followed, Hartwell introduced himself to Nigel and announced Andrew's crimes. Clara got Nigel to shut down the shop and she explained what happened, from Andrew unknowingly marrying Lily to Lily's deception and jewelry stealing. Clara brought out Lily's letter and read it as proof. Clara explained that she had not told Andrew about it because she wanted to spare him the pain and embarrassment. Clara gave Hartwell the necklace on the condition that he never trouble the Gwynn family again. Before Hartwell left, Nigel and Clara got him to sign a statement saying he received the necklace. After he left, Clara and Nigel talked. He asked her why she went to all this trouble, and she said she did it for love. He asked if she meant that Clara loved his brother. Clara realized that she did, in a way. After leaving the shop, she rode the trolley and saw Andrew walking outside. She waved at him through the window and he waved at her in return. He did not run after her.

Analysis

This section marks the emotional climax for Clara. She is filled with retrospection and insight into her own emotions. Even though she has been through a traumatic time this year, she still recognizes how she has grown. Furthermore, she asks to find closure, one of the novel's themes, in her experiences and their aftermath. Speaking to her mother, who says that she wishes Clara had never moved to New York, Clara thinks to herself that she does not regret moving to New York despite the trauma the place has held for her. As she says, "...I did wish to be free of its dark hold on me. I wanted to bury what had died within me and be done with it so that I could return someday and find only a distant memory of what had happened there" (287). At this point in the novel, Clara is desperately seeking closure and coming to terms with the events of the past year that have shaken her so.

She does not truly get this resolution until her excursion to the mainland when she goes to find Nigel Gwynn and warn him of the private investigator who is after Andrew. When Clara rides the streetcar and sees Andrew, she waves to him and he waves back once, never looking to pursue her further. Crying, Clara realizes that he has moved on. "It took him a second to embrace the notion that in that moment, his two worlds had collided-- the sad life he knew on Ellis with me and the hopeful one he was building here with his brother" (319), Clara observes. In fact, Andrew's capacity to hope for a better life is a preoccupation of Clara's as earlier she was concerned with his ability to hope to fall in love again. Thus when she sees him from the trolley car, Clara has to recognize that in order for Andrew to find hope to live a better life, he has to separate himself from her and his life with her. Because she is so concerned with his ability to move on, Clara is able to let him go and silently wish him well.



Just moments before the trolley car encounter, Clara reflected on her love for Andrew when his brother asked her why she made all those sacrifices for him. She says she did it for love, but when Nigel asks if she loved Andrew she realized that she could never truly love Andrew. This is because she never felt like she could be honest with him: "I could never share with him the terrible thing I knew, nor my own part in shielding him from it. How could I love a man completely to whom I could not bare my soul?" (318). Honesty is clearly important for Clara, especially since she has faced such dishonesty from other people lately. From Dolly and Ethan not telling her that they knew Edward Brim's secret to Edward's deception of leading her on and not telling her that he was engaged, Clara has experienced dishonesty from others. Thus it is only natural that she should feel dishonesty is a crucial part of a loving relationship.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Clara feel like she has to prove Andrew's innocence? Given her judgment of character so far and that the reader has seen Andrew through her eyes, are you suspicious of Andrew's motives? Support your answer with examples from the novel.

Discussion Question 2

How does Clara's behavior in Manhattan—making bold decisions, fabricating stories—speak to her growth as a character? What do you think was the turning point that made her change from a timid and subdued heroine into one who confidently takes risks?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think is the significance of Clara never getting to talk to Andrew while she is in Manhattan and the rest of the novel? How does this fit into the novel's theme of Closure?

Vocabulary

frivolity, keen, shrewd, liability, surreptitiously, detained, unyielding, disconcerting, proprietor, blatant, virtue, gabardine, genteel



Chapter 35: Taryn - Chapter 38: Taryn

Summary

Chapter 35: Taryn—Manhattan, September 2011

Picking up where Taryn's most recent chapter left off, Taryn was shocked to hear Mick say that he had her scarf since she thought she had lost it the day of the attacks. They briefly reminisced about the events that morning, and Mick asked her if she wanted it back. She answered him with the question, "Do you think everything happens for a reason?" (324). She wanted to know if he thought it was a coincidence that the photographer found their photograph and he found her after all those years. Mick said no but that he had been searching for her for the last decade and he would really like to return the scarf to her. She reacted coldly and said she did not want it but she would try to find the person it did belong to and ask if she wanted it. She told him please do not call her back and then hung up.

That week, Kent's parents came to the city to attend the tenth anniversary service for the 9/11 attacks. Taryn knew it was important to have Kendal experience these services. Lying awake at night, Taryn continued to wonder if the events of 9/11 were coincidence or destiny. Then in the pattern shop she had a revelation when watching a customer make a decision. She realized that we have free will over destiny and that even though the consequences of our choices were sometimes frightening and upsetting, choice was both beautiful and terrifying.

Taryn asked Celine to get in touch with Mrs. Stauer, the original owner of the scarf. Taryn said she wanted to meet with her to understand the scarf's importance. Then she called Mick back. Taryn went to meet Mick in his shop, and Mick confessed that he had split up with his wife partially because of the lingering effects of 9/11. He then said he regretted not tracking her down earlier and that he had received a text message from Kent that day. He showed it to Taryn. Kent's message to Mick were to "Tell her 'Be happy'" (335). Thus, she realized that Kent had gotten her final message and that he knew that Taryn was pregnant.

Chapter 36: Clara—Manhattan, September 1911

Clara arrived back at Lily's rented room. Though she was exhausted, she knew she had to let Ethan and Dolly know she was safe. Clara traded a bracelet to the boarding house matron for a phone call to leave a message for Mrs. Crowley to inform her she was staying in Manhattan overnight. The next morning, Clara went to the newspaper offices again and read articles about the factory fire. Clara told the woman who worked at the newspaper that Edward died a hero and that she wanted to tell his parents and his fiancée. The woman said that she could tell Clara his parents' address, but his fiancée had already married someone else and moved to Chicago. This shocked Clara. Clara went to his parents' house in Brooklyn and left them a letter explaining who she was and



detailing Edward's realism. One of the neighbors talked with Clara and said the neighbors did not have a high opinion of Edward's fiancée and that everyone was hoping he would call it off. He had said he had met someone else in the final weeks of his life. Clara rode to the cemetery and visited Edward's grave saying, "Thank you" (346).

Chapter 37: Clara—Manhattan, September 1911

Later that day, Clara gave Lily's truck to a beggar woman and her child located outside the boarding house. When she got off the ferry at Ellis Island, Ethan was there to meet her. She said that she had found him, and then Clara realized that Ethan thought she meant she found Andrew and stayed the night with him. Based on his reaction, Clara then understood that Ethan was in love with her. She told him that she wanted to be able to love, but she needed time. He kissed her. They walk back toward the building arm in arm.

Chapter 38: Taryn—Manhattan, September 2011

Taryn decided to spend some more time with Mick, and they got a bite to eat. Mick showed her the letter he intended to send with the scarf had he not heard back from her by the first of October. Back in her apartment, Taryn called Celine to fill her in.

The next day, Mrs. Stauer walked in the Heirloom Yard. Taryn invited Mrs. Stauer to the back room to give her the scarf. Mrs. Stauer was overjoyed to see the scarf, but she gave it to Taryn saying it meant something to her that it did not mean to anybody in her family. Then she explained the connection between the scarf and her family. A letter had originally accompanied the scarf, from Mrs. Stauer's Aunt Eleanor, who had been a housemaid. The letter was dated November 16, 1911, and it was from Clara Wood to Eleanor. In the letter, Clara explained that her place was not in Scotland but, "...back home with someone who loves me and with whom I now know I love in return" (361). Clara counseled Eleanor on the pains of loss and gave her the scarf, telling her "Don't despair. Be happy. Choose hope" (362). Taryn returned home and watched her daughter's reaction to the scarf. She told her daughter that she would now tell her the story of the scarf.

Analysis

Chapter 35 represents the emotional climax for Taryn as she comes to grip with her questions of coincidence and destiny. This ties into the novel's theme of Destiny, as these questions plague Taryn when she tries to sleep at night. Wondering if the events of 9/11 were merely coincidence, Taryn decides that, "But I woke every morning hungry for more than a random life for me and my daughter" (327). When she is in the pattern shop watching a customer making a decision, Taryn has a life-altering revelation. "The answer I had been looking for had been right in front of me the whole time...I had the power of choice. I could believe that a photographer had been destined to come upon a lost memory card, or that Mick Demetirou had been destined to find me after a decade,



or that I was destined to be a phone call away from being reunited with that scarf and yet chose to do nothing," Taryn observes (328). She then adds that, "That was the beauty and terror of choice" and that "I chose to love Kent" (328). Here, Taryn is accepting that despite the consequences of loving Kent, meaning losing him that day, she does not regret her choice to love him. It has been worth it to know love for him even if only for a short time. This is a major realization for Taryn, and it shows her newfound feelings on destiny. Taryn is acknowledging the view that we have free will in this world vs. events being preordained. Now Taryn does not feel as helpless as she did before. Everything that happened on 9/11 was a consequence of other people's choices. In that way they were deliberate actions, however horrific and however heroic. Taryn understands now that we live in a world where our ability to choose is a freedom and a risk, but ultimately a power and a gift.

In the final chapter, readers see a continuation of Taryn's emotional realization. Having just learned that Kent had known about her pregnancy and that he had asked Mick to tell her, "Be happy," Taryn finds closure, one of the themes of the novel. This connects with the letter from Clara that Taryn reads in the final scene of the novel. Closing her letter to Eleanor, a housemaid who had recently experienced heartbreak, Clara wrote "Don't despair. Be happy. Choose hope" (362). This directly echoes Kent's words to Taryn, a connection that highlights the novel's theme of Foils and Parallelism. Clara told Eleanor that, "Do not choose to abandon love because you are afraid that it will crush you. Love is the only true constant in a fragile world" (362). This reflects another truth that Taryn realized, that the ability to choose to love is the greatest gift, and that holding fast to love is a precious constant in a fragile or unsteady and uncertain world. Yet while Clara felt that the scarf was destined to find her, Taryn closes the chapter, and the novel, hoping for her daughter to realize the power of choosing who you love: "I had made my peace with destiny. Kendal, on the other hand, was just beginning to understand the freedom to love and be loved, though it shook you to your core, made life exquisite" (364). Taryn hopes to pass on her realization so that her daughter learns the same message, the central message of the novel.

Clara also gets some closure in her final chapters. Clara was able to finally let Edward go. The neighbor's reaction to Edward's fiancée showed that sometimes love can be deceitful, and there is even a hint that Edward said he had met someone in those final weeks of his life. Rather than reading into this, whether or not it could be her, Clara lets it go and moves on. When she goes to his grave and says "Thank you," Clara is thanking Edward for the lessons he taught her, namely that loving someone and being honest with them is incredibly important.

Clara gradually becomes aware that Ethan is in love with her. What's more, she realizes that he fell in love with her over a span of three weeks. This proved to her that people can fall in love in a short amount of time, just as she believed. She tells him that she needs time to fall in love again, therefore recognizing that she needs to do so carefully rather than jumping into it right away. The reader knows by the end of the novel that Clara did fall in love with Ethan. From Clara's letter that Taryn reads in the final chapter it's clear that Clara returned to New York in November 1911 to be with Ethan. Clara has moved on and is ready to start loving someone fully and honestly.



Discussion Question 1

How does Taryn's question to Mick—"Do you think everything happens for a reason?"—fit into the novel's theme of Destiny? What evidence in the novel points to the author's conclusion on this subject? What do you yourself believe and why?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Clara say "Thank you" to Edward Brim? Do you think she has any reason to thank him, and if so, for what?

Discussion Question 3

Explain the significance of Kent's final text message telling Taryn to "Be happy." How has Taryn begin to be happy in the final pages of the novel? How has Clara learned to be happy, or at least content?

Vocabulary

maelstrom, trepidation, cadence, profound, anguish



Characters

Taryn

Taryn Michaels is a middle-aged woman who works in the Heirloom Yard Shop as a textile restorer in 2011. She has a degree in textile restoration and is respected for her work by her boss and best friend, Celine, the customers of the shop, and the press, who have featured the shop before. Although Taryn is very good at matching fabrics, there is one fabric that haunts her, a scarf with a pattern of marigolds and the name “Lily” stitched inside. Taryn has one daughter, Kendal, who she thinks looks like her husband.

Taryn saw this fabric only once before, the morning of September 11, 2001. Taryn’s husband died in the terrorist attacks because he was waiting to meet her in a restaurant on top of one of the Twin Towers. It is presumed that Kent died by jumping out of the windows with restaurant staff and fellow customers. Taryn feels extremely guilty about this because she told her husband to meet her there that day because she had good news for him. Ultimately, she wanted to share her news that she was pregnant, something she had held back about sharing with him. They had been trying for a child for some time. Taryn feels responsible for Kent’s death, a guilt that echoes Clara’s guilt for Edward Brim’s death in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.

“A Fall of Marigolds” is split between two narrators, Clara and Taryn. The mysterious marigold scarf unites them. Part of Taryn’s narrative takes place on September 11, 2001 and follows her that morning as she searched for her husband in Lower Manhattan, where she had already been meeting a client and received the marigolds scarf to restore. On the morning of the attacks Taryn and a florist, Mick Demetrou, endured the chaos of the day and stuck together.

In 2011 a photograph of Taryn and Mick on the day of the attacks is published in People Magazine. This sparks Taryn’s flashbacks and unsettles her. Mick contacts her and tells her that he has the scarf, that he had looked for her but could never find her because he thought she was named “Karen.” In the latter part of the novel Taryn finds closure from the trauma and loss of the attacks. She sparks up a friendship with Mick, who shows her a final text message from Kent sent to Mick’s cell phone. The message says “Tell her, ‘Be Happy.’” Ultimately, the customer who was the original owner of the scarf tells Taryn to keep it. Thus, in 2011 Taryn is able to find closure from the events of September 11, 2001, by tying up loose ends and finding peace with what happened.

Clara Wood

Clara Wood is the second narrator in *A Fall of Marigolds* and the second main character. Her story takes place in 1911. At the beginning of the novel Clara, a nurse, has been living on Ellis Island for many months working in the infirmary at the customs and immigration office. She took the job on the island to escape the lingering trauma she



feels from having witnessed a lethal fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in Lower Manhattan just a few weeks after she had moved there from Pennsylvania. Clara holds herself responsible for the death of Edward Brim, a young man whom she had met and who she felt a special connection to, in fact a romantic attraction and an expectation that that would blossom into a loving relationship. Edward had been friendly and nice to her and perhaps flirted with her, which she interpreted as being an invitation for romance. Ultimately, Edward died the night he invited her to tour the shirt factory, and Clara blames herself.

Clara has a tendency to be unlucky in love and implies that she is prone to misinterpreting the intentions of her male acquaintances and friends. Clara has been disappointed before, yet she still talks about Edward as if he was “meant to love” her. She forms an attachment to Andrew Gwynn early on and is clearly attracted to him. She becomes overly invested in his situation to the point where it becomes unprofessional.

At the same time, Clara’s demonstrated compassion for Andrew impresses the new doctor on staff, Ethan Randall. Ethan takes a liking to her and in fact develops feelings for her. Although initially resistant, Clara eases up and lets Ethan into her life. He helps her in pivotal ways, and she is able to return to Manhattan. When Clara learns that Edward Brim was actually engaged at the time of his death, she feels embarrassed and bitterly hurt, especially since her friend Dolly and Ethan both knew.

By the end of the novel, Clara’s decides to take a position as a private nurse for an American family touring England. In the final chapter the reader sees Clara’s letter where she revealed she was leaving the position early and heading home to someone who loved her and whom she loved, presumably Ethan. That Clara is able to give the scarf to a chambermaid and wish her good luck speaks to Clara’s growth as a character. She is finally able to recognize true, reciprocated love and move on.

Andrew Gwynn

Andrew Gwynn is a Welsh man who arrives at Ellis Island in Clara’s first chapter. Andrew is immediately taken into the sick wing because his wife, Lily, and other people on his ship had scarlet fever and died of it. Clara takes Andrew under his wing and saves some of his wife’s belongings. Clara accidentally reads a marriage annulment and a letter from Lily to Andrew in which she revealed her true intentions, that she only wanted to marry him to escape an intimidating man whom she was doomed to marry otherwise.

Andrew is quiet and reserved. He does not have a great deal of familiarity with English at first, though his language skills get better with time. Barring one exception when he was feverish and spoke to Clara as if she were Lily, Andrew does not pursue Clara’s attentions beyond standard nurse-patient relations. He encourages her relationship with Ethan, however, and helps her understand the John Keats poem, “Ode on a Grecian Urn.”



Andrew is quite observant and thoughtful, picking up on Clara's emotions and moods. At the end of the story he has recovered from scarlet fever and is back on the mainland, having left the book and the scarf to Clara. When Clara pursues him in Manhattan, she never gets a chance to speak with him and only observes him through a carriage window.

Dr. Ethan Randall

Dr. Ethan Randall is a physician fresh out of medical school when he comes to Ellis Island. He is young, close to Clara's age, and he takes an instant liking to her once he sees how compassionate and capable she is with the patients on the sick ward, especially Andrew Gwynn. Ethan is friendly and tries to get to know Clara, engaging her in conversation and inviting her to discuss the poetry of John Keats with him after hours. Clara is both suspicious of his motives and entirely ignorant of them; she does not seem to acknowledge that Ethan has feelings for her even when Dolly suspects he does and even when he comes close to revealing his romantic feelings for her. Only towards the end of the novel is it revealed that their relationship might be taken to the next level, from friendship to love, as Clara hints in her letter, read in the final chapter, to the chambermaid.

Ethan does not approve of Clara's friendship with Andrew Gwynn and believes she is overstepping the boundaries between patient and caregiver. This causes some friction in their relationship, but it is overcome by the end of the novel once it is clear that Clara has sorted through her feelings and moves on after Andrew is discharged.

Ethan is incredibly patient with Clara and helps her overcome her grief and trauma in the wake of the factory fire. Even though he knows from Dolly that Edward Brim was engaged, he does not tell Clara outright and instead gently guides her towards the truth by encouraging her to seek out Edward's obituary. Ethan accompanies Clara to the main island, Manhattan, and supports her through her anxiety and panic attack on the ferry. He acts as both a chaperone and friend.

Dolly McLeod

Dolly McLeod is Clara's best friend and roommate on Ellis Island. Both young women are nurses. Dolly is very encouraging of Clara and wants her to return to living her life fully instead of being doomed to live on Ellis Island in self-exile. Dolly always invites Clara to outings on Manhattan with the other girls, and she knows when to hold her tongue and not push Clara too hard. Dolly is supportive of Clara's relationship with Ethan and encourages her to spend time with him. She also helps Clara spruce up and look nice for her time with Ethan.

Dolly is honest and confident and speaks her mind. Her reactions to Clara's feelings towards Edward Brim and Andrew Gwynn demonstrate that she is more skeptical and, in fact, worried that Clara's imagination can get carried away, especially with men. This is perhaps why Dolly and Ethan work together to get Clara to go to Manhattan with



Ethan where she learns the truth, that Edward Brim was engaged. Dolly is a good friend for Clara because she helps her grow but still recognizes Clara's limits most of the time.

Kent

Kent is Taryn's husband. He died in the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001. Kent and Taryn had been trying to have a baby for a while, and finally Taryn became pregnant with Kendal. Taryn was going to tell Kent that she was pregnant by meeting him in a restaurant at the top of the World Trade Center. Ultimately Taryn did not get to meet him though, as he perished in the attacks, presumably by jumping out of the windows of the building.

Only later does Taryn get any kind of closure from that day when she discovers that Kent had indeed replied to her text messages she sent using Mick's phone. Taryn had been feeling guilty for years since she believed that not only she had been responsible for Kent's death—the restaurant was at the top of one of the Twin Towers, making it impossible for Kent to escape—but also that she had not died with him. His message to her, "Be Happy," sent via Mick's phone and learned about by Taryn in 2011, gives her some closure from the incident. Taryn also notes how Kendal is beginning to look like Kent and has some of his mannerisms.

Lily Broadman Ravenhouse Gwynn

Lily Broadman Ravenhouse Gwynn was Andrew Gwynn's wife who died from scarlet fever in their passage overseas to America. Lily was trying to escape a bad situation having been married to a man named Angus Ravenhouse to save her family from ruin. Angus was a "monster" as Lily described him (43). Lily's sole intent in marrying Andrew was to leave England and take another last name so she could take passage to go to America. Thus, she only married him to escape from Angus and was planning on giving Andrew a certificate of annulment and abandoning him to flee for the West once she got to America. All of this she explained to Andrew in a letter that Clara uncovered and kept secret from Andrew.

Lily was clearly acting out of desperation, and there is some hint that Andrew knew that something was slightly off about the way Lily attached herself to him in a sort of instant love. Still he seemed to have feelings for her. From what the reader sees in Lily's letter, she truly did regret that Andrew had to be tied up in the mess and she only wished the best for him. Lily and Andrew's marriage served to teach Clara an important point about love at first sight or the belief that you love someone and someone loves you at first sight. With the Gwynns, Lily had an ulterior motive and her love for Andrew is artificial. Things were not what they appeared, which parallels Edward Brim's dark reality--that he was engaged--which he kept from Clara and led her on.



Mick Demetrou

Mick Demetrou is the florist who Taryn first met on the morning of September 11, 2001. Mick had his flower truck in the street near Taryn, and the two of them joined forces for moral support that morning as they attempted to survive the tragedy. Mick was very kind to Taryn and let her use his cell phone to send text messages to her husband since she had left hers behind at home. Mick helped Taryn get medical care and let the medical team know that she was pregnant. That morning Taryn unknowingly left the marigolds scarf in Mick's van.

Taryn and Mick are not reunited for another nine years when a photograph of them from the morning of the 9/11 attacks is published in People magazine. Mick tracks Taryn down and tells her he has her scarf. They meet up and find that they were similarly shaken from the events. In fact, the mystery of who Taryn was and how he could not find her—he misheard her name as “Karen”—drove a wedge in his marriage, and he and his wife separated.

For Mick, reuniting with Taryn in 2011 provided the closure he needed so that he could process the trauma of the attacks and move on. He felt burdened with Taryn's scarf and also with the text messages that her husband sent as a reply but that Mick never got to show her until now. Mick is clearly a compassionate man with a great deal of empathy for strangers. At the novel's conclusion there are hints that Taryn and Mick forged a friendship that goes beyond the horrible event they have in common and instead speaks to new beginnings and starting over.

Edward Brim

Edward Brim is the young man whom Clara Wood becomes smitten with before his untimely death in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in Lower Manhattan. Edward was very friendly to Clara and seemed to encourage her attention. Unknowingly, his outgoing demeanor and polite interactions with Clara were interpreted by her as evidence that he had romantic feelings for her.

In reality, Edward was engaged at the time of his death, which Clara later discovers. When it is revealed that he was engaged, Clara chooses not to blame him for inappropriate advances but to blame herself for being foolish and naive.

Edward died in the factory fire when he jumped out of a window with a woman who was also there. Other people in the building on the higher floor, the management, escaped on the roof and were unharmed. Later they become the subject of an investigation. Edward is thus portrayed as somewhat of a folk hero. There is also a clear parallel drawn between Edward Brim and Kent Michaels, who presumably jumped out of a World Trade Center building during the attacks.



Kendal

Kendal is Taryn Michaels' nine year-old daughter. Taryn was pregnant with Kendal at the time of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and had waited to tell her husband, Kent. She sent a message to him through Mick the florist's phone trying to tell him the good news, and she did not learn his reply for ten years until she was reunited with Mick.

Kendal is spunky and lively. Taryn notes how much she resembles Kent in both mannerisms and appearance. Kendal did not know that her mother was near the World Trade Center the day of the attacks until a picture of her mom appeared in People magazine.



Symbols and Symbolism

Lily's Scarf

Lily's scarf serves as a bridge between Clara's era and Taryn's and is a representation of the greater theme of Foils and Parallelism. For both of these characters, the scarf represents grief, and letting go of it was necessary to heal.

In Clara's time, in 1911, Clara finds Lily's scarf when Andrew Gwynn wears it around his neck upon arrival on Ellis Island. Clara saves Lily's scarf from the incinerator and keeps it for herself.

Back in 2011, Taryn is haunted by the scarf, which she glimpsed only for a few hours the day of September 11, 2001. Taryn had received the scarf from a wealthy patron of the yarn store that morning but lost it in the chaos of the day. The scarf's brilliant pattern of fiery marigolds had never left her mind, and she was unable to find the scarf again until Mick the florist returned it to her towards the end of the novel.

Taryn reunited the scarf with its owner, who revealed that the scarf was given to her ancestor from a nurse. The nurse was Clara, and her parting with it was symbolic of letting go of something propping you up as a crutch.

Photograph

The photograph of Taryn on the morning of the 9/11 attacks symbolizes the inability to forget the past completely. The photo brings the day's events vividly to the front of Taryn's mind. Taryn feels the lingering shock from ten years ago and the horrors of that day.

The photograph is also the way that Taryn's daughter, Kendall, learns that her mother was there in Lower Manhattan that day. The photograph also serves to reunite Mick and Taryn since Mick recognized her in the picture. He had always tried to find her but thought her name was "Karen."

Jumping from buildings

Jumping from buildings is a symbol of a last ditch effort for survival - the lesser of two evils - and appears in both Clara and Taryn's stories. This recurring symbol is also another component of the novel's theme of Foils and Parallelism.

Clara saw people jumping from buildings in the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire. One of these people was believed to be the man Clara was infatuated with, Edward Brim. The people who jumped from the building did so because they were trapped and saw no way out.



Their action was both desperate and suicidal, hoping that by some chance they would survive the fall.

Similarly, some people in the World Trade Centers jumped from the top floors, including from the restaurant at the top of one of the towers where Taryn's husband Ken was waiting to meet her. Taryn never knew if Ken jumped from the towers or if he died when the building collapsed.

Fire

Fire symbolizes destruction, loss, and massive change for both Clara and Taryn's lives.

For Clara, fire is most prevalent in the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire which she witnessed. Fire consumed the building where the factory was located, trapping all but the bosses and executives at the top floor. It even took the man she fell in love with, Edward Brim, as he perished in the fire. There is also the incinerator on Ellis Island, which burns the belongings of sick patients. Thus for Clara, fire represents a force of destruction.

For Taryn, too, fire is a destructive force. Fire destroys the World Trade Center buildings on the morning of 9/11 and with them her husband, Ken. For both of the main characters fire has a hand in killing the men they love.

The book of poetry by Keats

The book of poetry by Keats symbolizes Clara's willingness to begin opening herself up again to new experiences and interpretations.

Finding Lily's book of poetry by John Keats put the poet's name in Clara's head, so when Dr. Ethan Randall asks her if she would like to discuss poetry with him one night she has an author in mind. Clara has only read one poem, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," and feels out of her element, but Andrew's interpretation and Ethan's prompting her helped her understand the poem better. Clara also finds the letter that Lily intended to give to Andrew when she would have left him behind to go to the West. Andrew ultimately tells Clara to keep the book.

Lily's letter to Andrew

Lily's letter to Andrew symbolizes the theme that things - and people - are not always as they seem.

Clara found Lily's letter to Andrew in the Keats book. In the letter, Lily gave her reasoning for marrying Andrew in haste and said that she only needed to get away from her husband and take another name so that he would not find her. She apologized for tricking him. Clara decided not to give the letter to Andrew to spare him the humiliation and grief Clara imagined it would cause.



Lily's letter proves that things are not always what they seem to be, an idea which is later echoed when Clara discovers that Edward Brim was engaged to be married when he left her. He had been leading her on. Likewise, the letter reflects greater themes in the novel about meeting people and falling in love at first sight. Andrew was duped just like Clara was by the end of the novel when she realizes that Edward was not the man she thought he was.

The Ellis Island Ferry

The Ellis Island Ferry symbolizes, for Clara, a way to move on with her life - something is not initially ready for.

If it were not for the Ellis Island Ferry, Clara would not have a way to get to the main island, Manhattan. It is common for many of the Ellis employees to take the ferry to Manhattan for fun and recreation when not on shift, or on the weekends. Clara avoids the ferry because she does not want to go to the mainland, and she instead barricades herself on Ellis to avoid confronting her fears and trauma.

Ethan convinces Clara to go to the mainland to find out more about Edward Brim and also as an excuse to get off the island and begin to move on from the events of the fire. Ethan accompanies Clara and guides her through a panic attack. Through his encouragement and techniques to help her relax, Clara is able to ride the ferry again later in the novel and get over the anxiety that had been helping to keep her on the island.

Disease/Illness

Clara's approach to disease and illness symbolizes a bravery in her that is not seen for most of the novel in any other type of situation.

Clara often personifies disease and illness in her descriptions of her work on the nursing wards. Clara never shies away from the more intense (e.g. bloody and visceral) parts of her job. When she personifies disease and illness, Clara shows an understanding of the dangers of life-threatening conditions. Yet at the same time, she is able to envision diseases and illnesses as obstacles that can be defeated.

Edward Brim's obituary

Edward Brim's obituary symbolizes the turning point in Clara's life, where she starts moving forward and opening herself up to new experiences - including love - again after the fire.

In Edward Brim's obituary it is revealed that he was engaged to a woman at the time of the fire. Dolly and Ethan were aware of Edward Brim's dishonest actions toward Clara, but Clara remained adamant that he loved her until she reads the obituary in a



newspaper's offices in Manhattan. Reading that he was engaged is a wake-up call for Clara. Not only does she feel humiliated that she did not see through his flirtations, but she also feels a mourning for the loss of a love that truly had no foundation in reality. This deception proves the point that people are not always what they appear upon initial conversations. The revelation is hurtful for Clara, but ultimately it is one way that she is able to move on with her life, by putting the part of her that loved him to rest.

Flowers

The vibrant shades of yellow, gold, and red marigolds can be connected with the symbolism of fire in both Clara and Taryn's lives. The flowers can also be associated with grief, which ties into the novel's themes of grief and grieving.

Flowers also make an appearance in Taryn's story in the character of Mick the florist. Taryn met Mick the morning of 9/11 and spent time hiding out from the chaos of Lower Manhattan by taking refuge in his floral van. Mick remained a florist in the years after the terrorist attack. Flowers are sometimes thought to represent rebirth and the new growth of spring after a hard winter. When Taryn reunites with Mick, he offers a way to heal from the trauma of losing her husband on 9/11. Their budding friendship marks a new era in Taryn's life.



Settings

Manhattan

The island of Manhattan is the main island for New York City. Manhattan holds special significance for both Clara and Taryn, separated by more than 90 years. Clara witnessed a horrible factory fire that left more than 100 casualties, including the man she felt she was destined to love, Edward Brim. The fire took place in the Lower East Side. Ever since the fire happened Clara does not want to have anything to do with Manhattan and resists setting foot on there for the majority of the novel. Eventually, a kind physician in residence, Ethan Randall, is able to loosen Clara's fear of Manhattan and gets her to take the ferry there and carry out important business like meeting her father and learning more about Edward. Thus, for Clara Manhattan represents an obstacle towards overcoming her guilt, facing her grief, and working through the lingering trauma.

Manhattan is Taryn's home. Her shop, the Heirloom Yard Shop, is located on the Upper West Side, where she lives with her daughter, Kendal, above the shop. Taryn also experienced a traumatic event in the lower part of the island; on September 11, 2001, she was a witness to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Taryn feels a lingering dread for the lower part of the island. Thus, both characters feel responsible for the loss of someone close to them in tragedies in lower Manhattan.

Ellis Island

Ellis Island is where Clara Wood works as a nurse in the infirmary of the immigrations and customs offices in 1911. Clara took the position on Ellis Island in the wake of the fire she witnessed in Lower Manhattan when she was new to the city. She felt that Ellis Island would isolate her from the trauma she felt on Manhattan and would also be an "in-between place."

On Ellis Island Clara makes friends with other nurses, like Dolly, and eventually strikes up a friendship with the physician Ethan Randall. Clara also meets the Welsh immigrant Andrew Gwynn, whom she becomes preoccupied with preventing from hearing about his wife's intention to annul their marriage.

For Clara, Ellis Island is a barrier to her moving on from the shock of the fire and loss of the man she felt was destined to love her. Dolly and Ethan make a pointed effort to get her to leave the island, process her grief, and begin living her life fully again.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania is where Clara grew up with her parents, her mother a nurse and her father a doctor. In the aftermath of a string of unsuccessful crushes on men Clara



decides she wants to move to New York City. For Clara, Pennsylvania represents romantic failure and claustrophobia because she realizes she will never grow if she does not leave her hometown. At the end of the novel Clara goes to her family to see them before she leaves the country for Scotland as part of a private nursing opportunity.

Heirloom Yard Shop

The Heirloom Yard Shop is owned by Taryn's friend and boss, Celine. Its motto, displayed throughout the site, is, "Everything beautiful has a story it wants to tell." This is especially significant in this novel where a scarf with a pattern of marigolds on it unites the stories of two women set 90 years apart. The Heirloom Yard is respected and well established and was the subject of a magazine feature a few years ago, an article that still brings in customers. Taryn lives above the shop with her daughter, Kendal.

Ellis Island Ferry

The Ellis Island Ferry takes people from Ellis Island to Manhattan and back. The ferry is an obstacle to Clara's processing her grief and once again setting foot on Manhattan after the trauma of the fire. Eventually, Ethan is able to convince Clara to go back once her dad requests that she meet him for lunch. Thus, the ferry both hinders Clara initially and ends up serving as the vehicle through which she is able to come back to the mainland and move on from the trauma.



Themes and Motifs

Closure

In *A Fall of the Marigolds*, both main characters learn that one cannot continue forward with life until they have properly dealt with - found closure with - the past.

Taryn experiences issues with closure when her husband, Kent, died in the World Trade Center Attacks. Taryn not only lost the marigolds scarf that day in the chaotic aftermath, but she also never got to say goodbye to her husband. Taryn has felt both apprehension and eagerness to find the scarf again because she feels conflicted about it. Finding the scarf would resolve one of the central mysteries of that day.

Towards the end of the novel, Mick Demetrou is able to locate Taryn and tell her that he has the scarf. Seeing Mick offers some closure for Taryn. She is also reunited with the scarf and is ultimately given it by the wealthy customer who originally owned it. Last, Mick shows her a text message that was meant for her from Kent. Taryn had been using Mick's cell phone to text Kent that day since she had left her phone at home. The message asked Mick to tell her to be happy. This allows Taryn to feel closure because she completed the conversation with her husband.

Clara Wood also suffers from a lack of closure in the aftermath of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. She went there to meet Edward Brim, a man who worked in the offices and who had taken a shine to her. Edward said he would meet her there after work to show her the factory. Clara sees Edward fall to his death as he jumps from the windows to escape the fire with a female employee. By moving to Ellis Island Clara avoids Manhattan and avoids guilt.

Moreover, there was unresolved romantic tension between her and Edward, as she believed he was interested in her. When Ethan takes her to the mainland and they go to a newspaper office, they read Edward's obituary, and Clara learns that Edward was in fact engaged at the time of his death. This is a shock to Clara, though Ethan and Dolly knew. At the end of the novel Clara goes to Edward Brim's house and leaves a letter explaining her acquaintance and saying she is sorry for their loss. This gives her some closure, as does going to his gravestone and bidding goodbye.

Destiny

Destiny is a theme that comes up often in "*A Fall of Marigolds*."

Through the journey of both protagonists, the author shows readers that life is not determined by destiny; rather, we all have the power of choice to determine our own happiness and progress.



Taryn often wonders about how her life was spared from the September 11, 2001, attacks because she went to pick up the marigolds scarf from a customer. Because the customer delayed her by chatting about the task, Taryn was late in going to meet her husband, Kent, at a restaurant on top of one of the towers. Her husband died in the attacks and may have jumped out of the window with fellow customers and the restaurant chef. Taryn also wonders if she would have been able to communicate with her husband and find out where he was if she had not left her cell phone at home that morning. She did not get to say goodbye and, therefore, did not get closure until Mick told her ten years later that Kent had replied to the messages, which were on Mick's phone. Initially Taryn sees everything in terms of destiny, such as hearing from Mick again only because of the magazine photograph that showed them on the morning of the attacks. But by the final chapter of the novel, Taryn says that, "I have made my peace with destiny," but that she felt that ultimately it was her choice to decide whom to love and what to do with her life.

Destiny is also a theme for Clara in 1911. Clara believes that falling in love with Edward Brim was her destiny: "We were destined to fall in love," she thinks (19). Clara tells Andrew Gwynn the same thing when he asks her if Edward loved her: "He was destined to love me," she says (133). Whereas Clara sees destiny as a much more assured thing at first, but eventually she comes to realize that she has a choice against predetermined actions and circumstances. Finding Edward Brim's obituary and learning that he was engaged at the time of his death dislodges some of this certainty.

Trauma

Through the experiences of Taryn and Clara, the author demonstrates that trauma can take many forms and affects people differently, but it must be addressed head on if the individual suffering from it wishes to move forward in peace.

Both characters suffer from trauma following the tragic events they witnessed. For Taryn, life after the 9/11 terrorists attacks means one filled with guilt because she believes she inadvertently killed her husband. Even her vivid memories of the day cause her to act a certain way, such as when she insists on walking her nine year-old daughter home because "Lots of bad things happen in broad daylight" (8). When Celine shows her the photograph of her and Mick in the magazine, Taryn starts to flashback to that day and has to steady herself. In general, Taryn's trauma is at the distance of nearly ten years from the time of the attacks, so she has had some time to sort through her memories. Yet, she still lingers on some of the trauma of the day in her views on destiny vs. free will. It is not until the final pages that she makes peace with this question. Having the ability to make her own fate through the power of her own decision-making releases some of her guilt she carries for her perceived cause of her husband's death that day.

Clara experiences trauma in a much more immediate way than Taryn given that the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire was less than a year before the events of the novel take place in September 1911. At the time of the novel's opening, Clara is dealing with her



shock. The biggest way this is exhibited is her self-imposed exile from Manhattan, the main island of New York City and where the fire took place. Clara limits herself because she is struck with grief from the loss of the man she felt destined to love, Edward Brim, and her guilt from causing his death, as she believes herself to be responsible.

Thus, Clara's trauma shows up in a psychological way, not only in her thoughts but also by panic attacks and nightmares she experiences. Her roommate and best friend, Dolly, notes how she tosses and turns and has nightmares sometimes and sometimes cries out and says Edward Brim's name. She also has a very physical manifestation of her trauma when she is on the ferry to Manhattan with Ethan. It is her first time going to the mainland since her move to Ellis Island. Clara has shortness of breath and weakness in her legs. Ethan helps her throughout by guiding her in breathing steadily and listening to his voice. Once she is on Manhattan and she goes to visit the factory, Clara again is overcome with emotions and nearly has another panic attack.

Taryn, 100 years later, has more time to process the tragic events that took her husband. Her trauma is exhibited in a more subtle way, mainly through her thoughts and how the trauma has shaped her worldview. Clara, on the other hand, has had the distance of only a few months from the accident that took her friend's life. Thus her trauma is experienced in a more dramatic way both physically and psychologically.

Color

Throughout *The Fall of the Marigolds*, it is demonstrated that Clara and Taryn believe that colors have the ability to signify life.

For Taryn, colors are associated with her line of work as a fabric restorer. Right from the first page of the novel, the reader encounters vivid descriptions of fabric that are bursting with details related to colors. For example, in the first paragraph Taryn describes a fabric as: "Its once white background had mellowed to a sleepy ivory and the blooms of bright magenta and violet now whispered vermilion and lavender, faint reminders of their former greatness" (1). This beautifully descriptive writing is quite typical of the Taryn chapters.

Taryn also refers to how she loves color. For Taryn, colors represent beauty and history, since many of the fabrics she works with need to be restored to their original, bright color palate. The author no doubt makes a connection between restoring the colors to their original vividness and Clara and Taryn's restoration from a faded ghost of their former selves into being revived back into a life bursting with energy and peace.

Clara also admits an affinity for color. She says, "I have always been drawn to color. Always. The more vibrant or intense or deep or unique, the better" (22). For Clara, color is often associated with illness, which does not unnerve her, not even the color of blood: "The color of blood mesmerized me, even if the pain of the patient kept me from admiring outright. Henrietta [her sister] said blood was the color of death. I told her it was the color of life" (22). Indeed, Clara often describes illness, disease, and symptoms



in terms of color. It is no mistake that the author chose to have Clara work closely with patients in a ward for sufferers of scarlet fever. Thus both Clara and Taryn believe that colors have the ability to signify life, life that must be restored from sickness to health.

Foils and Parallels

The author has made the two protagonists foils of one another in order to, ironically, highlight their similarities and demonstrate that things such as trauma, fate vs. free will, and love affect everyone, no matter how different they are.

“A Fall of Marigolds” deals with literary foils, or characters that work parallel to each other in similar functions for the story. The most obvious of these foils are the parallel lives of Clara Wood and Taryn Michaels, who are separated by 100 years in the primary narrative, from 1911 (Clara) to 2011 (Taryn), 90 years when Taryn recounts the day of September 11, 2001.

Throughout the novel’s parallel narratives these women have similar situations and characters in their lives. They are formally united by the scarf with the pattern of marigolds. The scarf originally belonged to Andrew Gwynn’s wife, Lily, and was given to Clara in 1911. The scarf reaches Clara after she experiences a traumatic event, a fire wherein she lost a man she believed she was destined to fall in love with, Edward Brim. Edward jumped out of the windows of the factory to escape the fire and fell to his death.

The scarf appears in Taryn’s life first in 2001 when a wealthy customer of the Heirloom Yard shop, Mrs. Stauer, gives her the scarf the day of the attacks. Taryn went right from their business meeting where Mrs. Stauer gave her some background of the scarf, which she wanted to be restored, to Lower Manhattan where chaos reigned in the streets after the terrorist attacks. That day she lost the scarf in Mick Demetrou’s van. Taryn always felt conflicted about the scarf because it truly did save her life in a way since it delayed her meeting her husband in a restaurant in the upper floor of one of the Twin Towers. There is a clear parallel between Clara and Taryn’s life with having lost someone close to them who jumped out of the window during a tragedy from which there was no escape.

At the end of the novel the reader also learns the scarf’s fate with Clara; Clara gave the scarf away to a woman who was a chambermaid while she was travelling abroad. Clara gave her the scarf to teach her a lesson about heartbreak being a powerful feeling that can be overcome. Clara mentioned she was going home to love someone who loved her and who she loved, presumably Ethan. While the scarf ties Clara and Taryn’s stories together in a concrete way, the recurring themes of trauma and guilt unite their storylines in a more abstract way.

There are also other parallels in their stories, most notably in the figure of a male companion. For Clara this is Ethan Randall, a doctor who works on Ellis Island. Ethan pushes her to move past her grief for Edward Brim. He eventually falls in love with her, and she with him. Taryn lived the morning of September 11, 2001, with Mick Demetrou,



a florist who happened to be at the scene of the attacks just as she was. Ten years later they were reunited and he helped her find closure so she could move on from her feelings of guilt. They became friends in the process. Therefore, Clara and Taryn both received help in processing their grief and accepting their loss from a male friend, Ethan and Mick respectfully.



Styles

Point of View

A Fall of Marigolds is told from two different first person points of view. The first narrator is Taryn, a middle-aged woman living in Manhattan in 2011. The second narrator is Clara, a young woman living in New York City on Ellis Island in 1911. Clara's story takes up the bulk of the novel. Clara is experiencing trauma at the time of the novel. She is grieving the loss of someone she fell in love with, Edward Brim, in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. The astute reader figures out pretty early on that Clara was carried away with her flirtation with this man to an irrational way. She loves him and feels he loved her even though they had only known each other a few weeks, and so her infatuation blinds her to what those around her could see: his flirtations were not to be taken too seriously. Thus Clara's mental state casts some doubt over the reality of her narration until the end of the novel when she learns the truth about Edward, that he was engaged. Otherwise Clara is a very thoughtful narrator and has a mature voice that speaks to her years of experience as a nurse. Clara is also reflective about the men she loved as a teen and young woman before she moved to New York.

Taryn's narration frames the story with chapters bookending Clara's narrative and also scattered in between. The reader can tell that Taryn is still grieving her husband's death by the way she mentioned her pain in passing until it confronts her again after the photograph is published. Toward the end of one of the earliest chapters Taryn experiences a panic attack. The novel then flashes back in her later chapters to narrate the events of September 11, 2001, as Taryn experienced them before bringing the story back to present. Even though Taryn experienced the loss of her husband and shows some signs of lingering anxiety, her narration does not prove to be as shaken as Clara's, most likely because Taryn recalls the events from the distance of ten years while Clara has the distance of only a few months. Taryn's point of view, therefore, offers wisdom from having processed the trauma from a decade ago.

Language and Meaning

Both Taryn and Clara are descriptive narrators who relish using lavish language to describe the world as they see it. Clara is particularly fond of using metaphors and personification when describing things like illness. Meanwhile, Taryn uses vivid language to describe colors and fabric as well as the events of September 11, 2001, a day that has stuck out clearly in her mind. The author uses advanced vocabulary that is appropriate for the story, which is geared towards an adult audience.

Structure

The novel is comprised of 38 chapters. Taryn's story is told in five chapters, including some scattered throughout the novel as well as the opening and closing chapters.

Clara's story makes up the remaining 33 chapters. A frequent theme in the novel is Foils and Parallelism and it can be seen in the structure of the novel. Often something that happens in Taryn's chapters will parallel Clara's chapters and vice versa. The author clearly hopes to make a point about how large themes like Loss, Love, and Trauma are universal to people everywhere even across the distance of a century.

Quotes

Everything beautiful has a story it wants to tell. But not every story is beautiful.
-- Narrator (Taryn) (chapter 1)

Importance: Taryn is referencing the scarf with the marigolds on it which she got to see and hold for only one day—September 11, 2001—before it was lost in the chaos of the tragedy. The scarf has lingered in her mind as something of great beauty, but also mystery and trauma since it is associated with the day she lost her husband in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Furthermore, this quote can be seen as the author's reference to the novel itself since the novel is about how the marigolds scarf affected two different women a century apart in two different ways. The scarf truly has a history and a story to tell.

I was not afraid of fire. I was in dreadful awe of how everything you were sure of could be swept away in a moment.
-- Narrator (Clara) (chapter 2)

Importance: For Clara, this quote references how death strikes suddenly with tragic occurrences like the fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company in Lower Manhattan. Clara is dealing with the lingering effects of trauma from this incident and from her guilt she feels because she thinks she is responsible for Edward Brim's death in the fire. To Clara he represented a certain romantic future. This quote is also relevant to Taryn's storyline in the new millennium. Like Clara, Taryn witnessed a tragedy—the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks—which killed her husband.

Which was worse? Mourning the loss of something without knowing you never actually had it? Or mourning the loss of what you thought you had and never had at all?"
-- Narrator (Clara) (chapter 6)

Importance: Clara makes this observation to herself ostensibly about Andrew Gwynn and Lily Gwynn's relationship but it is in fact about her own life. Here she talks about how the loss of something you never had is sometimes worse than losing something you definitely did have. When Andrew lost Lily he was unaware that she was only marrying him to get passage and escape a life of fear in Wales. Thus, Andrew thought Lily loved him and that he had her, but ultimately he did not. Similarly, Clara thought she had found true love with Edward Brim, but in fact she never had any kind of formal acknowledgement of a relationship, and when he perished in the fire Clara never got a resolution to the flirtatious ambiguity in their brief friendship.

You're in love with a dream, Clara. Sooner or later you're going to wake up from it and you'll be glad I didn't coddle you while you slept.
-- Dolly (chapter 16)

Importance: Dolly is helping Clara get ready to spend the evening with Ethan Randall. Dolly gently suggests that Clara needs to be broken out of this dream where she



believes that her true love was Edward Brim. As Dolly suggests, she is being honest with Clara and trying to chip away at her friend's naive beliefs about Edward Brim. Dolly respects Clara and so she tells her the truth, however harsh it may be.

Sometimes fear of a thing is worse than the thing itself.
-- Ethan Randall (chapter 18)

Importance: Dr. Ethan Randall says this to Clara when he is trying to help her move on and leave Ellis to travel to the mainland. Ethan is trying to explain to Clara that anticipating a painful event is sometimes worse than the actual experience is. He is convinced that Clara is psyching herself out and not allowing herself to go on the mainland because she is afraid. His approach is to get her to confront her fears and get off the island.

The person who completes your life is not so much the person who shares all the years of your existence, but rather the person who made your life worth living, no matter how long or short a time you were given to spend with them."
-- Alistair Gwynn (chapter 23)

Importance: This quote appears in an inscription in a pattern book that Alistair Gwynn gives to his son, Andrew and Nigel. Clara reads this one day. The words speak to her because she felt profoundly moved by her interactions with Edward Brim even though she had not known him very long. By the end of the novel, she has also not spent a lot of time with Andrew yet he impacted her life as well and taught her truths that helped her love again. Similarly, Taryn's life is impacted by her husband, Kent, even though she did not really know him that long before he died.

Who of us knows what we would have done had the circumstances changed and we had the chance to make different choices?' I said. 'I honestly don't know, Ethan.'
-- Clara (chapter 29)

Importance: Clara says this to Ethan when Ethan is worried that Clara never would have taken the job as a traveling nurse had he not accompanied her to Manhattan where she went to the newspaper offices and read Edward's obituary. At this point in the novel, Clara has begun to process her grief for Edward and make peace with her decisions that day. This quote shows that she is starting to recognize that she cannot hold herself to guilty feelings because what happened, happened. This ties into the novel's theme of Destiny as this quote indicates Clara's deliberation about free will, the ability to make our own choices vs. destiny or a divine plan to make things happen a certain way. This is echoed in Taryn's wonderings about free will vs. destiny and also in the novel's message of choosing to love someone is a gift.

Thank you.
-- Clara (chapter 36)

Importance: Clara whispers this to Edward's grave. Edward taught her much about love, namely the importance of honesty in loving another person. Because Edward was



actually engaged at the time of their flirtation, Clara learned that honesty is important in love. One of the reasons why she realizes that she could never love Andrew Gwynn is she never felt like she could be honest with him. She realized that she had deceived him just as Lily had deceived him and just as Edward had deceived her. When Clara arrives at the ferry and meets Ethan at the end of the novel, she is honest with him that she could love someone again but that she needs time.

That was the beauty and terror of choice."

-- Taryn (chapter 35)

Importance: When Taryn sees a woman deciding on a fabric in the story, Taryn realizes that the choices she made on the morning of September 11 were empowering because they recognized her ability to choose. Essentially, Taryn is recognizing her ability to make decisions that affect her fate, not the other way around. She has the ability to decide her life, however terrifying that may be. She is an agent of free will, she realizes, not a victim of destiny. Sometimes the choices we make lead to great things and sometimes to traumatic and horrible outcomes, but the ability to choose is a gift.

Tell her, 'Be happy.

-- Kent (chapter 35)

Importance: When Taryn meets up with Mick again, Taryn learns that Kent did send a message to her in the final moments of his life. Taryn had used Mick's phone to tell him that she was pregnant, and in this quote we learn that Kent learned this news and told Mick to tell her to be happy. Mick had been trying to track down Taryn for ten years but could not do it because he thought her name was Karen. When the photograph of them is published, he is finally able to find her and show her that her husband did know that Taryn was pregnant. This final message from Kent impacts Taryn so that she was overjoyed her husband learned her news that day. Also, Taryn is excited that she can tell her daughter that her father knew of her, something she had never been able to say for certain. Finally, the phrase "Be happy" is echoed in Clara's letter to Eleanor, Mrs. Stauer's aunt and the owner of the marigold scarf.

Do not choose to abandon love because you are afraid that it will crush you. Love is the only true constant in a fragile world."

-- Clara (chapter 38)

Importance: In this quote, Clara writes to the housemaid Eleanor and counsels her on heartbreak. She tells her not to become bitter but to instead be open to loving again. This quote also touches on an idea that runs throughout the novel, that of choosing to love or the choice to love. Here, Clara indicates that love can cause great pain and terror, but the choice to love someone is important because love is the only constant in a world of fragility.

I had made my peace with destiny. Kendal, on the other hand, was just beginning to understand that the freedom to love and be loved, though it shook you to the core, made life exquisite."



-- Taryn (chapter 38)

Importance: Here Taryn reflects on the words of Clara Wood in the letter she wrote, the idea that choosing to love was worth the price it paid sometimes with trauma and loss. Taryn makes her peace with destiny by recognizing the power of free will. This ability to choose is known as free will, and Taryn recognizes the risks that come with it but the freedom and independence of this worldview.