

Ferdydurke Study Guide

Ferdydurke by Witold Gombrowicz

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Plot Summary

Ferdydurke follows the story of Joey, a thirty-year-old writer who is struggling with his own immaturity. Professor Pimko turns Joey into a seventeen-year-old by "belittling" him and sends him off to a school. Joey struggles to regain his adulthood, extricating himself from a crush on a schoolgirl only to be drawn into his friend Kneadus's search for an ideal farmhand. Joey is drawn into a class struggle on his uncle's estate, where Kneadus finds his farmhand, and only finally escapes into a faked love with Zosia, his distant aunt's daughter.

As the novel begins, Joey is thirty years old and still struggling to gain maturity. Joey begins writing a novel to express himself when Professor Pimko comes in and snatches it to look at. Through belittling Joey, Pimko turns him into a seventeen-year-old and takes him away to a boy's school. At the school, Joey befriends Kneadus, a violent youth who hates idealism and being categorized as innocent. Kneadus longs for a simple farmhand, and he attacks and destroys the innocence of the idealist Syphon, another schoolboy.

The novel is interrupted by the story of Filidor, a professor of synthesis who battles his nemesis anti-Filidor the analyst. The analyst breaks apart Filidor's wife, sending her to the hospital. Filidor then synthesizes anti-Filidor's lover, and the two agree to duel. In the duel, the two men shoot apart each other's loves, leaving both men childishly insane.

Joey goes to live with the Youngbloods and their schoolgirl daughter. Pimko places him in the house so that Joey will fall in love with the schoolgirl and want to remain a youth. Joey does fall for the schoolgirl, and seems trapped. To escape, he degrades the schoolgirl by tricking a modern boy and Pimko to show up at her window in the middle of the night at the same time. The girl's parents discover both the old man and the young boy hiding in their daughter's room, and the result is a brawl. Joey leaves, but he is waylaid by Kneadus, who leads Joey off to find a farmhand.

The novel is interrupted again by the story of Filibert, a marquis who, after a bizarre turn of events resulting in all the men at a tennis match jumping on the women and riding them, challenges anyone who will insult his wife. It ends in his wife's miscarriage, and the marquis's embarrassment at his own childishness.

Joey and Kneadus find that all the villagers have turned themselves into dogs to drive off outsiders. They end up going to Joey's aunt and uncle's estate. There, Kneadus finds his farmhand, the valet. Kneadus makes a fool of himself befriending the servant. The uncle is horrified and plans to fire the valet and kick out Kneadus. Kneadus plans to run away with the valet in the night, but the uncle interrupts the plan. A brawl ensues, involving the uncle and aunt, the valet, Kneadus, and all the local peasants. Joey escapes, running into his aunt's daughter Zosia. Unable to face the truth of what happened, Joey convinces her that he's in love with her and has kidnapped her. They run off together.



Chapter 1, Abduction

Chapter 1, Abduction Summary

Ferdurdurke follows the story of Joey, a thirty-year-old writer who is struggling with his own immaturity. Professor Pimko turns Joey into a seventeen-year-old by "belittling" him and sends him off to a school. Joey struggles to regain his adulthood, extricating himself from a crush on a schoolgirl only to be drawn into his friend Kneadus's search for an ideal farmhand. Joey is drawn into a class struggle on his uncle's estate, where Kneadus finds his farmhand, and only finally escapes into a faked love with Zosia, his distant aunt's daughter.

The narrator, Joey, wakes up, feeling like he has to catch a train, but then realizes there's nowhere for him to go. He is overcome with fear. He dreamed of seeing himself as an adolescent boy, and the present and past "hims" ridiculed each other and therefore themselves. Though the narrator is thirty, he still feels immature. He has no focus in life, and his numerous aunts beg him to settle down and become a man. Joey wrote a book to try to find his place in society, but his book was immature. Therefore, Joey remained immature. He cannot simply dismiss the immaturity that lives in him.

Joey ruminates on the writers who always write about things outside themselves, like beekeepers, and not on their inner truths. He disagrees with the writers who condescend toward the opinions of the ignorant masses. The narrator is surrounded and defined by the opinions of others: aunts, gentry, schoolgirls, office clerks, female cousins, and an endless list of others, who all categorize him and his book. Joey finds himself drawn into immaturity.

Joey is still lying in bed, considering his life, when he perceives his immature self standing in the corner, as in his dream. The apparition waves its hand at Joey, and Joey can't stop himself from slapping it in the face. The apparition vanishes. Joey, feeling the need to express himself begins to write the first pages of a novel.

Professor T. Pimko comes in to visit, expressing sympathy for the long-ago death of one of Joey's aunts, in a pretentious manner. Joey tries to hide his writing but Pimko sees it and grabs it and begins reading. He belittles Joey, calling him a "little chickie." As the professor reads, Joey feels himself diminished and shrinking. Joey tries to tell Pimko that the writing expresses his spirit, but Pimko begins quizzing him on King Ladislas, Hellenic civilization, and an obscure sixteenth century writer. Pimko quizzes him on grammar, gives Joey a bad grade, and transforms him into a schoolboy. Joey tries to escape, but seems rooted in place by his bottom, or pupa. The professor takes Joey away to enroll him in Principal Piórkowski's school.



Chapter 1, Abduction Analysis

The opening of the novel sets up all the issues that will be explored throughout the plot. Joey is struggling with becoming mature. He doesn't feel that he can deny the child inside himself, and yet everyone looks down their noses at immaturity. All of the critics, who hold literary art above all else, deny and reject the childish. Joey can't deny his own childishness because it's part of himself. Yet, he finds himself being defined by others' opinions.

Joey's thoughts become literal as the chapter progresses. Joey sits down to write and reveal his soul. He is trying to express something true about himself. Pimko is from the intelligencia, the critics who define and tear down art until it loses meaning. He immediately snatches Joey's work, snatching Joey's soul along with it. When he demeans and belittles Joey, he literally makes Joey small, into a boy. The translator keeps the Polish word "pupa," meaning bottom or butt. It carries with it a connotation of being belittled and young, in a derogatory way. The word "pupa" calls to mind the English word "pupil," with its connotation of youth and ignorance. Joey's "pupa" represents the part of him that is young and immature.



Chapter 2, Imprisonment and Further Belittlement

Chapter 2, Imprisonment and Further Belittlement Summary

Pimko deposits Joey in the school during lunch hour, explaining to one of the teachers that Joey is enrolling in sixth grade. The teacher complains that the students are not immature enough, and Pimko explains that he can get the students to be immature by telling them that he thinks they're immature and naïve. The students, seeing Joey, descend on the new kid and tease him. The students then become aware of Pimko, watching them from behind a tree and taking notes. They think he's a school inspector. Pimko lets one of his notes blow away, as if by accident, and the students read that Pimko thinks they are innocent.

The students begin laughing, but their laughter is uncomfortable. They begin reacting to the note, vigorously swearing and drawing graffiti. The rebellion against innocence seems naïve. Joey tells Pimko that the students have written a swear word on one of the trees, but Pimko refuses to look at it. He tells the students that their profanity doesn't shake his belief in their innocence. Kneadus, one of the leaders of the swearing children, swears and protests after Pimko leaves. Syphon, another student, protests that innocence is a virtue. The students split into two camps, the innocent "lads" who follow Syphon, and the rebellious, swearing "guys" who follow Kneadus. Syphon touts the beauty of the ideal, while Kneadus maintains that the gritty reality of peasants and handymen is better. Few students, like the cool and collected Kopyrda, ignore the argument and refuse to take sides.

The two camps come to blows, and when it looks like Syphon's men are retreating, he rallies them with a marching song. Kneadus's followers break up, defeated. Kneadus talks to his two friends, Hopek and Mizdral, saying that they need to capture Syphon, tie him up, and destroy his innocence, through his ears. Meanwhile, Pimko calls Joey in to meet the principal of the school. The principal knows that Joey is an adult and praises Pimko's ability to belittle adults, for the good of the school. They look in on the sad-looking teaching staff, chosen for their annoyance and lack of independent thought.

Pimko sends Joey off to class, and one of the sad-sack instructors takes the podium. Syphon is the only one prepared. Everyone else pleads to go to the bathroom, and claims headaches, rashes, and other ailments that prevented them from doing homework. The teacher asks Syphon to recite, but Syphon declines on principle, an argument that the teacher accepts. The instructor then begins lecturing that Slowacki, a poet, is beloved by all because of his greatness. One of the students breaks down, stating that he does not love or admire Slowacki's poetry. The teacher insists he does admire it, and finally asks Syphon to recite a poem to show the class how much they admire great poetry. After fifteen minutes, the student gives in, begging the teacher to



stop the reading. Joey wants to run away, but he is paralyzed by his toe, wiggling inside his shoe. He realizes that he would have to be running from his immature self. Joey suddenly sees Kopyrda and wonders if here, at least, is one normal, ordinary boy amid the freakishness of immaturity.

Chapter 2, Imprisonment and Further Belittlement Analysis

At the school, the goal of the educators is to hold the students in a state of immaturity. The students are defined by the teachers, who impose on the students an idea of what they should be, know, and believe. The students can't break free of the teachers. Pimko tells the students they're innocent in order to make them more immature, and this works. Even though the students deny "innocence," they show their immaturity in their response. The rebellion and swearing of the students is innocent, in its way, and immature. Helpless to resist, they are defined by Pimko.

In the same way, the teachers in the class try to define the students in a blatant way. The teacher known as "Ashface" says that the students admire Slowacki's poetry. He states this as a fact that he's teaching the students. They don't have any real admiration for the poetry. Instead, the admiration is imposed from the outside. Throughout the novel, the writer points out that some of our admiration for classical works is taught and learned, not a native admiration. Slowacki is great because an unknown elite force has determined that he should be considered great. The novel pokes fun at this side of intelligencia and tradition.

The two camps of students are an example of the interplay of opposites that's found throughout the novel. The students divide themselves into "guys" and "lads," and they fall into conflict. The lads represent the ideal, while the guys represent the real. In a way, though, each is dependent on the other. When Kneadus holds up the farmhand as his example, he is holding up an ideal. In the same way, the ideal cannot exist without a base of reality.



Chapter 3, Caught with His Pants Down and Further Kneading

Chapter 3, Caught with His Pants Down and Further Kneading Summary

The whole class and the teacher wait restlessly for the bell to ring, and the teacher leaves in mid-sentence. Then, the class erupts into the lads-versus-guys argument, full of ill-stated opinions and regurgitated propaganda. Kneadus is planning his attack on Syphon, and Joey wants to stop it. He approaches Kopyrda for help, but instead of responding, Kopyrda jumps out the window and runs away. Joey tries to convince Kneadus not to attack Syphon, and when Kneadus won't budge, he suggests they run away to find the farmhand that Kneadus yearns for. The desire for a simple farmhand awakes in Kneadus, and he begins dreaming of his real and down-to-earth farmhand. Syhon sees him and begins making fun of Kneadus's face and his sentimentality. Kneadus challenges Syphon to a duel of putting on faces. He takes Mizdral and Hopek as his seconds and declares Joey as umpire.

The bell rings and a new teacher comes in, and again Syphon is the only one prepared. The teacher begins calling on students to translate Latin, and he is continually disappointed. He gives a row of F's. He suddenly comes upon a puzzle that he thinks is great for the class: conjugating the Latin verb colleo. No one has an answer, as he looks hopefully around the classroom. In wonderment, he asks the class how they can not appreciate the learning of Latin and how it develops their minds. One of the students jumps up and claims that Latin does not enrich him. The teacher replies that it does, even if the student doesn't know he's being enriched. In desperation, the teacher calls on Syphon to read from Caesar. The bell rings again, and the teacher leaves. The class reverts back to the guy versus lad controversy.

Syphon is confident he can win the duel because of his convictions. Kneadus is shaken but committed to the duel. He kicks out everybody but the contestants, their seconds, and Joey, the umpire. Syphon begins the duel, rolling his eyes and looking upward as if to heaven. Kneadus makes a mocking counter-face which ends in him eating a fly. Syphon responds with anguished sobbing, which Kneadus again mocks, snot running out of his nose. Syphon is unnerved, but he catches himself in time and again looks to heaven, putting up his finger. Kneadus attempts to mock him grotesquely, but Syphon cannot be stirred or distracted. Syphon seems to have won, but Kneadus and his seconds attack and tie Syphon up. Kneadus proceeds to fill Syphon's ears with vile knowledge to destroy his innocence, until they are interrupted by Pimko walking into the room.



Chapter 3, Caught with His Pants Down and Further Kneading Analysis

Kopyrda stands outside the immature debates among the students. He is, among all the boys, the only one not reacting to all the influences pushing and pulling them to develop in specific ways. The narrator notes that the different camps have absorbed different political propaganda. They regurgitate what they've been told and taught, much as the professors regurgitate what they've been taught about what constitutes "great art." Society imposes beliefs on the boys. Kopyrda is one of the few who seems immune to this outside influence. When Joey tries to draw Kopyrda into the struggle, Kopyrda flees.

Body parts are an important motif throughout the novel. Kopyrda uses his legs to flee. Legs are associated with modernity, athleticism, and naturalness, and later they will be clearly associated with the schoolgirl. The "pupa," or butt, is associated with childishness, grossness, and immaturity. The "mug," or face, is associated with ideas and the intelligencia.

The duel of the mugs is a duel of different ideas. The faces that Syphon makes reflect his ideas and his ideals. He mimics a higher purpose and outer glory beyond the crassness of everyday life. The faces that Kneadus makes similarly reflect his own ideas. Kneadus tries to bring down Syphon's high ideals to reality, mocking every face that Syphon makes. Syphon creates something higher, while Kneadus makes it into something low.



Chapter 4, Preface to The Child Runs Deep in Filidor

Chapter 4, Preface to The Child Runs Deep in Filidor Summary

The narrator interrupts the novel to insert a short story, introduced by a preface. He is interrupting the true story of anguished youth and the formation of maturity to tell the story of another duel, between Professor G.L. Filidor and Professor Momsen, known as anti-Filidor. The narrator addresses critics who will dislike the interruption, comparing the parts of his novel to the body parts. The distinct parts come together in a whole. He extols repetition as the way to create mythology and uniform style and says that a novel is always read in parts, because the reading of the novel is interrupted, by a doorbell, a phone call, or any kind of trivia of life. The reader only takes away a part of the whole. He ridicules the literary critics who espouse iron-clad rules of construction and form.

Ultimately, a novel is only a part of a whole, in any case, since it is cut down into its form. The narrator mentions a writer who wrote a heroic book, because the first words happened to come out heroic, and the book formed around those words. Now, the writer is confined into a heroic mold, the reflection of his book. The narrator says everyone is made of parts and pieces.

The narrator says that the art community is the stupidest of all, full of pretension of the greatness of art and lofty goals. Doves of undeveloped artists want to produce something great, and so they follow along the stipulations of what is supposed to be great art without ever developing themselves. In the end, they produce mediocre imitations. The writer then endures constant ridicule from all sides. The narrator interrupts himself to ask the reader's opinion of pears. He expresses sympathy for the second-rate writers of the world.

The narrator recommends that writers stop trying to create Art, with a capital A, with all the pretension that involves. He suggests that audiences appreciate Chopin in part because they believe they ought to, knowing that it's considered great art. Instead of focusing on what art should be, the narrator recommends that writers try to express themselves and not be afraid to write something stupid, since it is part of the process of their own growth. He points out that every writer is dependent on the reader. No one should look down upon the immature masses or cut themselves off from youth, which is part of everyone's self. The narrator asks again about pears, and then says he respects the reader as part of humanity. He is overcome with the idea of parts, everything being a part of something else, and he ends this part of the book, which introduces the next part.



Chapter 4, Preface to The Child Runs Deep in Filidor Analysis

Gombrowitz's novel addresses how the parts of a person come together to make a whole person. Every person has a pupa, a childish and immature side. Every person has a mug, an intellectual and even idealistic side. Every person has legs, a physical and natural side. In a similar way, in this preface in the middle of the novel, the narrator says that the novel is made up of many different parts, and somehow they must combine into a whole. Then, they are broken apart again in the reading of them. The interplay of the part and the whole is endless. The novel itself is only a reflection of a small part of life.

Gombrowitz thumbs his nose at traditional form and structure by adding a preface and short story in the middle of his novel, but he's also showing how a whole is constructed of disparate parts. He acknowledges the nature of the novel as a collection of realistic parts as well as some idealistic whole. He applies this to people as well. The heroic novelist writes about one part of the world and his experience, but he is in turn defined by the one thing he happens to write about. Instead of people seeing the whole person, they see only a part of the person and define him by it. Similarly, people define Joey by what they see of him. Pimko defines Joey, through what he's written, as childish.

All people are in some sense defined by others. The example of the audience appreciating Chopin merely because they ought to shows that the audience members are defined by others. This is the same dynamic that occurs among the schoolboys at Joey's school. They are defined by their teachers, and they are defined by the other boys.



Chapter 5, The Child Runs Deep in Filidor

Chapter 5, The Child Runs Deep in Filidor Summary

Professor Filidor is a respected professor of synthesis, the combining of things into a whole. His arch-rival is Professor Momsen, a professor of analysis, the breaking down of things into their parts. He takes people apart into pieces, especially by filliping their noses. Momsen is known as anti-Filidor. After chasing each other down throughout the world, the two men meet in Warsaw. Professor Filidor is with his wife and his assistants, Teofil Poklewski, Teodor Roklewski, and the narrator. Momsen is with his lover, Flora Gente.

The two professors begin a war of words, with Momsen arguing "noodles," while Filidor argues "Noodle," an ideal form. Then, Momsen attacks Filidor's wife, pointing out her parts: the ear, the nose and its nostrils, and her fingers. The final blow is an analysis of her urine. Mrs. Filidor is taken sick and begins falling to pieces in the hospital. Filidor decides that the only solution is to find Momsen and strike him on the cheek. It's the only way he can think of to save his wife and pull her together again.

Filidor tracks Momsen and his lover Flora down to a bar, but Momsen is flush with drink. His cheek is no longer a cheek, colored with red and turned into a rose. Filidor has nothing to strike, and Momsen laughs at him. He says that Filidor can attack his parts, but he can't attack him. Momsen leaves, but Flora remains in the bar. Filidor then decides that, to cure his wife, he will get Momsen to strike his cheek. It does not matter whose cheek is struck, as long as a cheek is struck. Filidor tries to synthesize Flora Gente. She agrees to listen to him for cash, but she is not moved by his mention of the soul, or of "I," or of unity. Finally, after reading her two novels and spending a lot of cash, Filidor gives up, but only for the moment.

The professor talks with his assistants, and finally he comes up with a plan. The only thing that Flora seems to care about is money, and Filidor thinks he can reach her with cold, hard cash. She will be synthesized by such a large amount of money that she can't break it down into parts and pieces. He sells all his possessions and gets 850,000 zlotys in one-zloty notes. Then, he sits down across from Flora and Momsen. He begins by putting down a single zloty. As the pile of money grows to 100,000 and more, Flora begins to lose her ability to count the individual bills. She is synthesized into a higher self. The anti-Filidor slaps Filidor in the face, challenging him to a duel. Mrs. Filidor begins to recover in the hospital.

At the duel, Filidor is confident. Even if he falls, there will be synthesis, since death is of the whole and not the part. Filidor shoots and misses. Then, anti-Filidor shoots, and shoots off one of Mrs. Filidor's fingers. Filidor responds, shooting off one of Flora's fingers. The duel degrades into constant pops of pistol-shots, shooting each piece and



part of the women. Afterwards, the duel no longer seems to matter. The two men wander off, throwing clods of dirt and rocks at things. They wander the world, aiming at whatever enters their sights.

Chapter 5, The Child Runs Deep in Filidor Analysis

The short story "The Child Runs Deep in Filidor" pits two opposites against each other. Synthesis, the bringing together of things, is pitted against analysis, the breaking apart of things. Filidor is in many ways analogous to Syphon, seeking a higher meaning and a higher self. Meanwhile, anti-Filidor is analogous to Kneadus, breaking things down into their component parts and concentrating on the base reality. Filidor's "Noodle" is a philosophic Form, and ideal, perfect idea of a noodle. Meanwhile, anti-Filidor's very real noodles can be broken down into flour, eggs, water.

Breaking a person down is simpler than building a person up, but even Flora is able to be "synthesized." She, like Kneadus, has an ideal. Kneadus has already shown his latent idealism, as he fawned over the idea of a farmhand. The farmhand in Kneadus's mind is not a real farmhand, but an ideal one. Similarly, Flora, who is immune to talk of the soul and of love, can be synthesized over her own ideal, money. She has a higher self, even if that higher self is somewhat base.

The duel between Filidor and anti-Filidor begins with Filidor shooting at anti-Filidor's heart and missing. Instead of shooting at the center, or trying to counter the whole of Filidor, anti-Filidor "wins" the duel by again attacking parts. He hacks apart Mrs. Filidor to pieces, one shot at a time, and Filidor cannot help but create a symmetry by following suit. The duel is one of analysis, of taking apart. In the end, analysis is the ultimate destroyer, perhaps a warning to those who would analyze this book.



Chapter 6, Seduction and Further Driving Me into Youth

Chapter 6, Seduction and Further Driving Me into Youth Summary

The story returns to the school, where Kneadus is attacking Syphon. Pimko has just interrupted, and instead of acknowledging the situation, he says that the boys are playing ball. He tells Joey that he's taking him to live at Mrs. Youngblood's while he's in school. The family consists of an engineer, his wife, and their daughter Zuta, a modern schoolgirl. Joey realizes that Pimko wants him to fall in love with the schoolgirl and be imprisoned in youth, although on the way to the house Pimko seems afraid of facing the schoolgirl.

When the prof and Joey reach the house, the schoolgirl answers the door. She is young, athletic, and powerful in her youth, reminding Joey of Kopyrda. In the presence of her youth, the prof seems old. Zuta's mother isn't home, so they go in to wait. Zuta is distant, peeling her sunburned skin carelessly. They sit in silence, uncomfortably. Pimko begins to hum, and in Pimko's discomfort Joey feels himself returning to his normal age. Pimko warns him against being influenced by the schoolgirl's modern ways. Joey realizes that Pimko is pushing him to categorize himself with the schoolgirl and even fall in love with her, so that he will not abandon his youth. Pimko begins harping on modern youth's athletic legs and calves.

Mrs. Youngblood comes in, and Joey is still looking older. She questions his age, and Pimko says that he's seventeen, but postures to make himself seem older. Mrs. Youngblood disapproves of posing or posturing in youth, and she cautions Joey to be straightforward and modern like her daughter. In the accusations of posturing, Joey is caught up again in the role of the youth. Zuta kicks Joey, and Mrs. Youngblood laughs it off. Pimko is shocked at her behavior, and even more shocked when she doesn't know who Norwid is. Joey has turned cross and sullen, and the adults tell him to cheer up and not brood. Pimko leaves, with Joey established in his new home, living in the next room from a schoolgirl.

Chapter 6, Seduction and Further Driving Me into Youth Analysis

Pimko, instead of acknowledging and reacting to reality, controls the reality by defining it however he wants to define it. When Pimko interrupts the boys, he tells them that they're playing "ballie." He diminishes them at the same time as dispersing the situation, imposing his own "reality" on them. Reality is fluid, and through language, it can be controlled. Placing Joey with the Youngbloods is another way Pimko exerts control.



Pimko is afraid of the schoolgirl because she is natural and honest. She is associated with legs, and the association is not only sexual. Legs are physical, used for running and walking around. They reflect the concrete and actual bodily side of a person. The schoolgirl is not caught up in emotional games. She holds herself apart from the influence of society. She doesn't care about Pimko, and since she is unaffected, she cannot be manipulated by him. Pimko seems to find this an attractive challenge, as well as something to fear.

Joey, on the other hand, is affected by everything. Pimko easily manipulates Joey by telling Joey what he is and placing Joey in situations that will influence him. Mrs. Youngblood's disapproval of Joey putting on airs reinforces the idea that Joey is a young person trying to act older. Her opinion of him forms him, just as Pimko's opinion forms him. Joey is trapped by others' opinions and his own inability to have an identity in and of himself.



Chapter 7, Love

Chapter 7, Love Summary

Joey sits in his room, and instead of putting his things away, he thinks that he must try to explain himself and escape. Still, he doesn't want to admit to the schoolgirl that he's thirty. Instead, he'd rather seem modern, like her. The phone rings, and Joey hears the schoolgirl go downstairs and take the call. Joey primps himself and walks downstairs, standing in the doorway and chewing on a toothpick while she talks on the phone. The schoolgirl asks him if he wants to make a call, and he just shakes his head. The girl finishes her call and goes back to her room, ignoring him.

Joey goes back to his room, and he hears the schoolgirl moving around. He feels that he must go confront her again and somehow complete their encounter. He walks into her room and sees her polishing her shoe. He simply stands there, looking at her. She asks whether he has some business with her, and he says no. He insists that he is not posing, either. She sits down, and Joey feels like he's accomplished something. He expects her to talk to him, as she talked to her friend on the phone. Instead, she suddenly asks what she can do for him. Joey turns and walks away, and the schoolgirl calls him a clown.

Joey goes to his room and begins to unpack. He gets restless, and feels he must go back to her room and play the clown, to cover his discomfort. When he enters, he is blinded by the lamp. The girl tells Joey not to come in without knocking first, and he says he's her servant, at her service. He walks into the room, hoping to make her mad and therefore less beautiful. He wants to cure himself of her. She tries to leave, and he blocks her. She begins to look worried, as he crowds her mockingly, herding her across the room.

The schoolgirl is cornered by the wall, but Joey finds that she doesn't lose her beauty, even when she's afraid. Joey continues to push toward her, feeling that the moment must come to a climax, when he's interrupted by a scream. Kneadus, who has come to visit Joey, is attacking the housemaid in the downstairs hall. His face has been marred by his duel with Syphon, and he's grown even more coarse and brutal.

Joey confesses to Kneadus that he's in love. Kneadus has brought alcohol, and the two head to Joey's room. Joey tells Kneadus he wants to be free of the schoolgirl and that he's thirty, but Kneadus doesn't believe him. Kneadus says that Kopyrda is after the schoolgirl, too. He's modern, like her, and moderns are only attracted to moderns. Kneadus begins pining for his farmhand. Finally, Kneadus gets up to leave, saying that he'll check on the housemaid. Perhaps her brother is a farmhand.



Chapter 7, Love Analysis

Joey is anything but straightforward. He cannot express himself, and that's one of the reasons why he finds himself trapped as a schoolboy. He is unable to object to others and interject his own opinions and thoughts. When he goes to talk to the schoolgirl, he cannot bluntly tell her what he wants, whether it's telling her that he's thirty or telling her that he loves her. In actuality, when he's alone in the house with the schoolgirl, Joey could simply leave and go back to his own apartment. However, he is caught up in the situation and needs to react to and interact with those around him, who define him.

Joey's attempt at communication is ultimately to communicate nothing. He only stands in a doorway. He doesn't breach the distance between himself and the schoolgirl, and she does not respond to his prompts and cues anymore than she responded to Pimko's. The schoolgirl is not interested in the base, childish games of the pupa or the intellectual idea of the mug. She will respond to legs: actions and actuality. Joey has no legs, no ability to run.

Meanwhile, Kneadus is trapped in his own ideal. He has destroyed Syphon, but he cannot destroy the idealism that is inherent in him. Kneadus loves the ideal of a farmhand, and he becomes more and more obsessed with this ideal. The housemaid is just a substitute for a farmhand, the closest that he's able to come to one. Kneadus can deny idealism, but he cannot help but suffer from it. Kneadus's face being stuck in a grimace, a "mug," reflects his obsession with this ideal.



Chapter 8, Fruit Compote

Chapter 8, Fruit Compote Summary

The next day, school is the same boring, frustrating routine, except now Joey is lost in daydreams of his love. Time goes on, and Joey is trapped, no longer wishing to escape life as a schoolboy. Syphon kills himself, unable to recover from Kneadus's initiation, and Kneadus's face remains stuck in horrible grimaces. He is still after the housemaid, who does have a farmhand for her brother, but she won't accept him.

Mrs. Youngblood realizes that Joey is attracted to her daughter, and she takes pleasure in Joey's admiration. The family holds intellectual conversations at meals, and they tease Joey for his lack of modernity. Pimko comes to visit, and when he does he seems overly old and old-fashioned. Joey is jealous of the schoolgirl's relationship with Pimko. The opposites seem to fulfill each other. Because Joey's love is not returned, he derides the schoolgirl in his mind. Joey is trapped by his feelings for her.

One day, the Youngbloods and Joey are at dinner. Mrs. Youngblood passes the salt to her husband and comments that capital punishment is obsolete. Mr. Youngblood, the engineer, comments on the poor distribution of salt in the world. Then, Mrs. Youngblood asks her daughter about a boy she saw Zuta with, being sure to stress that she's not prying. Zuta says she doesn't know who the boy is. Mr. Youngblood seems surprised that the boy accosted Zuta, and Mrs. Youngblood chides him for any appearance of fatherly concern. She says that Zuta is free to go off for the day or the weekend with the young stranger, if she pleases. Mr. Youngblood picks up the theme, saying that it's fine if his daughter has an illegitimate child.

The discussion keeps cropping up, but Joey imagines the realities of childbirth and motherhood, so antithetical to the modern schoolgirl. Joey whispers mockingly, under his breath, "Mommy." Mr. Youngblood giggles. Joey repeats his joke. He's finally gotten under their skin. Mr. Youngblood tries to deny that he's laughing at Joey's joke, and Mrs. Youngblood gets angry. Zuta remains unperturbed, but Joey has at least made an entryway. Feeling empowered and at the same time careless, Joey begins adding anything and everything to the fruit compote on his plate, making an awful mess, with salt, pepper, bread, and even toothpicks in it. Then, he eats every bite. Mr. Youngblood giggles again, and Mrs. Youngblood is disconcerted. The family flees the table.

Chapter 8, Fruit Compote Analysis

Throughout the novel, the more someone cares about something and wants to be that thing, the farther they are from their goal. The more a writer wants to create great art, the harder it is to overcome the strictures of society and break out of the mold of what art "ought to be." The more Kneadus loves the ideal of the farmhand, the further he is from the natural, unaffected farmhand. The more the schoolboys want to be mature, the



more immature they are. Similarly, the more Joey wants and loves the schoolgirl, the further he is away from her.

When Joey opens his mouth to say "mommy" to the schoolgirl, he is too tired to care. His carelessness is what allows him to get the upper hand in his battle with the schoolgirl (even if that battle is only one sided and mostly in his head). Joey's use of the term "mommy" balances his ideal of the schoolgirl, who he has put up on a pedestal, with a reality of labor, childbirth, and child rearing. The idea of mommy breaks down Joey's ideal into a reality.

Joey's fruit compote, with all its extraneous bits, breaks the conventions of society. He is crossing lines of etiquette and showing that he doesn't care. Lack of caring is his triumph because it frees him from the opinions of others. Freedom is found in separating one's self from others' opinions. In turn, Joey is held back by his opinion of others. Because he thinks the schoolgirl is beautiful and perfect, he is held by her. Because he on some level respects Pimko and Mrs. Youngblood, he is affected by their opinion. He needs to break free of his own opinion of others to break free of others' opinions of him.



Chapter 9, Peeping and Further Incursion into Modernity

Chapter 9, Peeping and Further Incursion into Modernity Summary

Joey goes to his room. He devises a plan. He must tear down the schoolgirl, through tasteless situations and associations, so that he can free himself of her. He decides to peep at her, to try to catch her unaware in an ugly position or action. As he goes toward the keyhole, he looks out the window and sees a beggar across the street. Joey goes out and pays the beggar to hold a branch between his teeth. Then Joey begins spying on the schoolgirl, but he sees no sign of discomfiture.

Around six o'clock, Mrs. Youngblood comes to her daughter's room and is relieved to see Zuta working on her German. Joey sees that she was worried about Zuta's reaction to what happened at dinner, but Zuta seems unaffected. After Mrs. Youngblood leaves, Joey realizes his peeping isn't helping. He's simply falling more in love with Zuta. He clears his throat loudly, so that Zuta will hear and know he's there. She shudders but doesn't look at him. After a while, Zuta snuffles, and Joey copies her snuffle. The girl is disconcerted, and after that, she can't seem to stop sniffing. Finally, Zuta boldly wipes her nose with a wide gesture, again taking the upper hand.

Joey jumps away from the keyhole barely in time to avoid being caught by Mrs. Youngblood, who comes into his room. She asks Joey what he's doing and looks through the window, surprised to see the beggar with the branch in his mouth. Joey denies knowing why he's holding it but admits he talked to the beggar. Joey hears Zuta leaving her room, escaping the house, and Mrs. Youngblood also leaves for a committee meeting.

Joey, left alone in the house, decides to search the family's rooms. Mr. and Mrs. Youngblood's room is clean, sunny, and simple. At first, Joey can find no fault with it. Then he realizes that the room is a utopia, in denial of the mundane degrading humanity of people. Mrs. Youngblood's fatness has no place in a utopia. He dances around the room, soiling it with his secret dancing. Then, he heads to Zuta's room.

Joey finds Zuta's room difficult to criticize. She sleeps informally in the hallway. He sees a tennis shoe with a carnation tossed into it, a perfect touch. He wants to counter this combination of athletics and love, and he catches a fly, tears off its legs and wings, and puts it on the flower. Next, Joey opens a locked drawer and finds a stash of love letters and poems from school boys, college boys, and even grown men to Zuta. None, to Joey's surprise, are overtly sexual. At the bottom of the drawer, Joey finds a letter from Pimko, commanding Zuta to come to his office to be tutored on Norwid, and one from Kopyrda, simply stating that he wants her, if she wants him. Joey writes notes to each, in the schoolgirl's handwriting, to come to her window at midnight on Thursday.



Chapter 9, Peeping and Further Incursion into Modernity Analysis

Joey gives a branch to the beggar across the street. The branch is referred to as "greenery." From the green forest the narrator describes being trapped in at the beginning of the novel, the idea of green and greenery is associated with youth. To be "green" is to be young, untested, and immature. The branch that Joey defiles by having the beggar hold it in his mouth represents youth. Joey is disrespecting and defiling youth, trying to tear down what he loves about the schoolgirl. Joey's fight is against his own mind. If the schoolgirl can be belittled in Joey's mind, then Joey can stop caring about her and break free of her.

Joey's "defiling" of the Youngbloods' bedroom all takes place in his mind. He stands in the room, and he must find something about the room that he can hate and hold in contempt. He needs to convince himself that the Youngbloods are unworthy of his respect, more than he needs to hurt the Youngbloods themselves. Joey dances in the room to show his disdain, and his dance is for his own benefit. Joey sees the Youngbloods' room as an ideal, a synthesis, a higher place, and he counters it with the harsh bits and pieces of reality: beards growing in each day, fat arms and legs.

Similarly, Joey placing the mutilated fly on Zuta's flower is a private defilement. The flower symbolizes love and youth, and the tennis shoe symbolizes the real and physical nature of life. Together, they paint a picture of what's attractive about Zuta. She can be physical and grounded in reality without being crass and dirty. Joey spoils this with suffering and dirt. The association is one for his own mind, not necessarily for Zuta.



Chapter 10, Legs on the Loose and New Entrapment

Chapter 10, Legs on the Loose and New Entrapment Summary

The next morning, Joey hides in the bathroom to spy on the Youngbloods. Mrs. Youngblood comes in first. Somehow going to the toilet seems to rejuvenate her, while it demoralizes Mr. Youngblood. Mrs. Youngblood takes her bath, exposing her fat, white calves, and then does exercises. The schoolgirl comes in, and Joey expects her to expose her human weakness. Instead, she jumps into a cold shower. Feeling defeated by the beauty of her actions, Joey sneaks away. On the way out, he writes the Latin "vini, vidi, vici" on the bathroom wall to let the Youngbloods know he's seen them.

Joey goes to school, but he's obsessed with his battle with the Youngbloods. At the house, Mrs. Youngblood is tense. The schoolgirl stays out of range of Joey's keyhole, so he cannot peep at her. Joey widens the keyhole to see better that night. The schoolgirl goes to bed at eleven and starts to read a novel. Meanwhile, her parents begin fighting in the other room. Mr. Youngblood has become childish, and Mrs. Youngblood tries to pull him back into intelligent conversation. He ends up slapping her. Meanwhile, the schoolgirl has turned out her light, and Joey hears her groan in the darkness. Suddenly, the girl jumps up out of bed and starts moving about the room. She picks up a belt and whips her own back. Joey is again overcome by her beauty.

At midnight, Kopyrda arrives, and the schoolgirl lets him in. She begins to kiss him. Joey is suddenly afraid that she might be a virgin. He anxiously hopes for Pimko to arrive, as the two youths embrace on the couch. Then, another knock comes at the window. It's Pimko, spouting trite words in his infatuation and making advances to the schoolgirl. As Pimko stops, realizing that there is someone else in the room, Joey suddenly screams that thieves are in the house. Pimko ducks into one of the schoolgirl's closets, and Kopyrda ducks into the other. Joey runs into the room, and the Youngbloods run in behind him.

The schoolgirl is lying innocently on her bed, but Joey finds Kopyrda's suspenders discarded on the floor. He opens the closet door to reveal Kopyrda. Zuta ducks under the covers, but her parents only laugh. Then, Joey opens the other closet to reveal Pimko, and the parents are overcome. Pimko begins sputtering lame explanations, and Mr. Youngblood challenges him bluntly. Then, in the midst of the scene, the beggar carrying the branch pokes his head in; Joey has forgotten to pay him.

Kopyrda and Pimko try to leave, but Mr. Youngblood rushes after them. The girl starts to cry under the covers, and Joey suggests calling the police. Then, Joey claims that Pimko just happened to pass by, stopping to relieve himself, and Zuta let him in. Pimko rushes to agree. The engineer suddenly giggles, and then, angry with himself, he slaps



Pimko. Pimko turns to leave, and so does Kopyrda. Mr. Youngblood stops him, and soon Mr. Youngblood and Kopyrda are on the floor, brawling. Mrs. Youngblood joins in. Pimko falls to the ground. Zuta, trying to stop the brawl, is accidentally pulled in, while Pimko gravitates into the battle. Joey grabs his things and begins to walk out of the house, but just as he makes his escape, he is stopped by Kneadus, who has raped the housemaid. Kneadus compels Joey to come run off with him to find a farmhand.

Chapter 10, Legs on the Loose and New Entrapment Analysis

Joey hides in the bathroom to see the crass and dirty side of the Youngbloods. He is spying on their pupas. Still, the schoolgirl, with her cold, brisk shower, remains natural and somehow in tune with her body. There is no crassness to her physicality, unlike her parents. The phrase "vini, vidi, vici" means "I came, I saw, I conquered," and Joey uses it to show his conquest of the Youngbloods. He wants to destroy them in his own mind, but the more uncomfortable he can make them, the easier it is to disrespect them.

The plan to bring Kopyrda and Pimko to the schoolgirl's room in the middle of the night is unformed. Joey does not know what the results will be. He is simply trying to disrupt the schoolgirl as much as possible. So far, he has made her parents upset and uncomfortable, but he has not affected her. When Kopyrda comes to the window, the schoolgirl acts with complete comfort in her physical body and complete lack of care for the social strictures of the world. In tune with her modern nature, she invites Kopyrda into her bedroom.

Pimko, however, is the destructive tool that Joey has been hoping for. Kopyrda and Zuta are in tune and natural. Pimko, however, is unnatural, full of both the crass childishness of the pupa and the hopeless idealism of the mug. Pimko flutters and blusters when he comes to see Zuta. He is torn between all the worst human instincts, the complete opposite of the schoolgirl. Zuta's parents don't bat an eye when they find Kopyrda in her room, but Pimko is a different story. All the opinions and ideas and constraints of the Youngbloods break down into a brawl, and finally, Joey is free, at least for a moment.



Chapter 11, Preface to The Child Runs Deep in Filibert

Chapter 11, Preface to The Child Runs Deep in Filibert Summary

The novel is interrupted again, for another preface and another story. The narrator states that symmetry requires it. Filidor must be balanced by Filibert, and the narrator must reveal the core truth of the novel. He says that the worst torment is bad form. Then, he lists a series of torments, including greenery, not-quite-development, being formed by others, psychological bias and wrenching, betrayal, analogy, symmetry, synthesis, analysis, infantilism, illusion, aspiring, poetry, being intelligent and non-intelligent, ugliness, beauty, toothache, and earache. There are torments and tortures for every part, and which is the primary one?

The narrator then relates his work to its origins, perhaps in regard to schoolboys and teachers, half-wits, advanced beings, literary critics, schoolgirls, dandies, the experienced, aunts, urban or country citizens, doctors, engineers, civil servants, lawyers, aristocrats, or the rabble. He also supposes his work might be a direct attack on someone he dislikes. Perhaps, he supposes, it is an imitation of greatness, or a lack of normalcy in himself, or a reflection of dreams or complexes or memories. Perhaps it comes from parts, or from nothing. Then again, his work could be defined by what type of work it is or what it contains. He says that the answer to all questions about the inner meaning of the work is found hidden in the following story.

Chapter 11, Preface to The Child Runs Deep in Filibert Analysis

The second interruption to the novel is briefer than the first. The preface to Filibert makes fun of critics who will look for deeper meaning in the novel. The narrator makes long lists of often opposing torments, meanings, aspects, and origins of his work. Each one can be considered one small piece of the whole, but in none can be found the totality of the whole. The writer is essentially breaking down his work into an ad hoc analysis, one that in the end comes up humorously meaningless. When the narrator says that the following story contains the deepest meaning of the work, he is making fun of the search for meaning itself. The story on its own is just a part, a small part, and any meaning eked out of it is just a piece of the story, a piece of a small part of the whole novel.



Chapter 12, The Child Runs Deep in Filibert

Chapter 12, The Child Runs Deep in Filibert Summary

The great-great grandchild of a Parisian peasant plays a tennis match in Paris. It's a world championship match, and a colonel who is sitting in the crowd becomes jealous of the tennis players. He fires his pistol at the tennis ball, leaving the tennis players swatting at nothing. The two players fall into a brawl. Meanwhile, the colonel's bullet has hit a ship owner sitting on the other side of the court, and he is bleeding profusely from the neck. The ship owner's wife is so upset that she slaps the person next to her, causing the man to have an epileptic seizure.

A man sitting nearby panics and jumps on the lady in front of him, who starts running with him on his back. The crowd applauds riotously. Another man, who has dreamed of jumping on someone's head, follows suit. No one wants the visiting delegates from other countries to think something's wrong, so the sophisticated audience members clap, while the less sophisticated jump on women's heads. This leads the whole audience to do the same. The Marquis de Filiberthe jumps into the crowd and dares any man to insult his wife. There is silence, and thirty-six gentlemen ride their women up to the marquis. Out of fear, the marquis's wife miscarries. The marquise suddenly realizes his childishness, becomes embarrassed, and goes home. The spectators applaud.

Chapter 12, The Child Runs Deep in Filibert Analysis

The story "The Child Runs Deep in Filibert" is a comedy of errors. One inadvertent mistake leads to another, and each person reacts to the others around him. No person creates his or her own destiny but instead is created in response to the rest of the world. The man who fires the pistol at the tennis ball is reacting to the tennis match. His firing of the pistol is a desire to show off, and to make himself better than the tennis player. Without the tennis players, there is no pistol shot. The woman who slaps the man, similarly, is forced into her action by the man firing the pistol. Without the man (and the tennis players), the woman would not slap her neighbor.

Each person responds to those around him and therefore is created by those around him. The spectators and their cheering throughout the story reinforces this. They spectators represent society as a whole. They are moved as a whole by what goes on around them. Ultimately, the result of comic mayhem is tragedy, and the marquise realizes that he is childish. He is not the only childish one, however. The whole of society is childish.



Chapter 13, The Farmhand, or Captive Again

Chapter 13, The Farmhand, or Captive Again Summary

The novel resumes. Kneadus and Joey are off in search of the farmhand. Kneadus says they should head to the outskirts of the city, where they're sure to find a farmhand. They run across janitor's sons, but they're just not the same as a farmhand. They pass nursemaids and office workers, a municipal building, and students, while Kneadus criticizes them all. On the outskirts of the city, they find the rundown houses filled with peasants, but they are all being lectured by imitation Pimkos. There are only ex-farmhands and ex-farm girls. Kneadus rejects one potential farmhand who spouts Marx, another who wears a bowler hat, and a third who uses the word "whereas."

Finally, the boys reach the edge of the city, where there are no more buildings, but open land. Joey is afraid to go forward and leave the comfort of humanity's crowds, but Kneadus urges him on to find the farmhand. As they walk down the road, they pass small villages, but the houses are all boarded up. Finally, they begin knocking on the doors in one of the villages, but they are only answered by barking. Then, they see a peasant hiding nearby. As they try to find him, they are accosted by more dogs. They discover the peasants, who are starving and in hiding. They all act like dogs, barking to keep the boys away. The boys say that they have good intentions and want the peasants' good, but this only enrages the peasants, who don't want any "yentions" and don't want to give up their good.

All the peasants of the town come out, growling and snarling, to attack the boys. The danger is averted when a car drives up. It's Joey's Aunt Hurlecka, and she stops the car to pick up Joey and his friend. The peasants all begin to laugh, seeing that the visitors are only boys with aunts. Aunt Hurlecka begins babbling about Joey's life and childhood, remembering his mother and other family events, as the three drive off. She mentions that Joey is thirty, and Kneadus is startled to find out his friend's real age. The aunt offers Joey candy, just like when he was a small boy. She remembers things about his childhood, and seems to only know a strange, childish Joey that he doesn't even remember.

Aunt Hurlecka, Joey, and Kneadus drive to the aunt's house, where Joey was born and lived until he was ten, and they greet Uncle Konstanty, auntie's daughter Zosia, and her son Zygmunt. They all talk of their health since there's nothing else to talk about, and it's impolite to let conversation lag. Joey regrets asking about their health, but there's nothing else socially acceptable he could have done. Joey's Uncle Konstanty begins to yawn. Finally, dinner is announced, and they go into the dining room to eat ham. Suddenly, Kneadus stops eating. He has spotted his farmhand: the valet serving the meal. After dinner, they smoke and have desert. Finally, the boys go up to bed.



Kneadus immediately tells Joey to call the valet. Kneadus wants to be the farmhand's friend. However, when the farmhand comes, Kneadus can only order him around to do menial tasks. Joey asks the valet some questions and finds out his name is Valek, then Joey sends him for hot water. When the valet returns, Kneadus is able to ask him questions, too. He is amazed that the valet doesn't know his own age. The boys ask questions and give commands, but the valet shows no signs of being a friend. Suddenly, Joey asks if his uncle ever slaps the valet, and the valet brightens. Joey slaps him in the face and orders him out. Kneadus is annoyed, and Joey doesn't know why he's done it. Zygmunt, who has heard the noise, tells Joey that a slap in the mug is the only way a servant like Valet will respect him. Zygmunt is suddenly friendly with Joey, while Kneadus disappears to the bathroom, only returning at one in the morning.

Kneadus has ordered the farmhand to hit him in the face, to equalize Joey's smack, and had gotten a good smacking. The farmhand, thinking Kneadus crazy, had made fun of him, the closest Kneadus could get to friendship. A servant girl joined them, and soon they were making fun of the master, until the butler came and broke up the gathering. Joey is horrified of his aunt and uncle finding out.

Chapter 13, The Farmhand, or Captive Again Analysis

Chapter 13 begins the third portion of the novel. Joey has left the school behind him, but he cannot resume his normal life. Kneadus must go off on his quest for the ideal, but an ideal translated into reality. Kneadus wants a literal, actual farmhand, not simply an ideal of a farmhand in his head, yet Kneadus is not looking for an actual farmhand. He still idealizes the farmhand, even when he has a farmhand in front of him. Kneadus's farmhand will always exist as an ideal in his mind more than as an actual farmhand, working on the farm.

On the boys' journey, they find that the peasants have turned themselves into dogs in order to avoid people from the city, coming to interrupt their lives with ideas. The writer plays on language when the peasants rebel at the idea of being given "intentions." They've had enough "good intentions" from people from the city, full of ideals that they're trying to impose on the peasants. The peasants don't want to be formed by outsiders. They're fighting against exactly what Kneadus has complained about, the ex-peasants who have been turned into "mugs" and intellectualized.

The end of the novel brings Joey back to the beginning. Joey has complained about his criticizing, twittering, endless aunts who define him. In this chapter, he again meets up with one of those aunts. Aunt Hurlecka is not an immediate aunt, but a relative several cousins removed. She formulates Joey through her opinion of him and breaks him up into parts and pieces. To her, each of Joey's features is from one of his relatives. He has someone's nose and someone's eyes, and someone's ears. He is not just Joey but a conglomeration of parts of others. Similarly, Joey points out that her image of him is one of her memories of him as a child. She imagines him asking her for candy and writing letters on a foggy window with his finger. Joey remembers none of this, and it seems



like an alien vision of him. Still, his aunt continues to babblingly define him, belittling him into a child who wants candy.

In the same way as Joey is define by his aunt's opinion, he sees the servants' criticisms of his uncle and aunt as a definition of them. He sees that the valet's criticisms will create and define his uncle, and that's why he fears word of the event coming to his uncle's ears. By befriending the servant, Kneadus is interrupting a social order, the same social order that earlier forced all the characters into an uncomfortable conversation about multiple illnesses. The social order controls everyone's opinions and perceptions, and in turn those opinions and perceptions control what people are and become. Therefore, disrupting the social order disrupts what people are.



Chapter14, Mug on the Loose and New Entrapment

Chapter14, Mug on the Loose and New Entrapment Summary

The next morning, Joey's aunt complains about Kneadus making friends with the servants, but she doesn't seem to have heard about the servants making fun of her. Joey laughs it off. That day, they play cards. Kneadus is embarrassed at dinner and pines over the farmhand who is serving them. Joey's uncle calls for wine and coffee and cigars, and he tells stories about the old days. After dinner, he takes Joey aside and tells Joey that Kneadus is "after" the valet, sexually. Joey tells his uncle that Kneadus wants to be friends with the servant, and his uncle doesn't know what to make of it. Is it a perversion or a political stunt? His wife thinks perhaps it's religious. Joey denies it's any of that.

Uncle Konstanty goes to hit Valek but finds that he can't and orders him out of the room. Then, Francis the butler comes in and tells Konstanty that the servants have been making fun of him. Konstanty dismisses him, telling his wife she's too lax with the servants. Pretending that nothing is wrong and that they're doing other things, the family all quietly looks for Kneadus, but he's nowhere to be found. They go through the barnyard, and the auntie is doted on by the peasants. Finally, on the other side, they find Kneadus.

Kneadus comes out of the forest with the valet. Kneadus is full of love for the farmhand, and the farmhand condescends to Kneadus, even slapping him in the face before heading back into the forest. Konstanty tells Kneadus to come into the forest for a confrontation. Kneadus admits to fraternizing with Valek and tells Konstanty one of the stories he's heard, that Konstanty was afraid of a boar and climbed up on the gamekeeper. Konstanty promises to fire Valek. Kneadus yells at Konstanty and begins to run through the forest. Zosia is taking a walk, and Joey, afraid for her, tells her to run. Kneadus runs after her.

Joey catches Kneadus and tells him to come home. Kneadus complains that Joey's a "lo'dship," sniveling all the way back to the house. Konstanty has made arrangements for Valek to be fired and Kneadus and Joey to go back to Warsaw by train. Zigmunt wants to slap Kneadus's face, but Konstanty says he's just a brat and it's better to spank him. One of the peasants comes and throws a stone at the window; the whole story's come out. Konstanty is ready to go out with his pistol, but the auntie comes in and belittles everyone, dispersing the situation. Upstairs, Kneadus is in tears. He won't leave without Valek and wants to live with him in the village. Meanwhile, Konstanty fires a rifle shot into the darkness. Joey, afraid, agrees to leave with Kneadus and Valek in the night.



Joey feels silly going to get the farmhand in the night, and he is drawn to kidnap Zosia instead, or perhaps axe his aunt as he did once in anger as a child. Instead, he goes to Valek, but can only convince him to come by ordering him and slapping him in the face, using a dishrag to prevent the noise. As they go through the dining room, Konstanty interrupts them and they hide. Konstanty stops in the darkness, asking if anyone is there, and he becomes frozen. Then Zygmunt comes in, also asking if anyone is there. No one answers. Everyone stops, frozen in fear. Joey is able to break free and hide in the curtains, but before he can get the farmhand, Francis comes with a light.

After an awkward moment, Francis suggests that the valet is there to steal the silver, and the lords grasp this reasonable explanation with glee. Konstanty starts hitting Valek in the face for thievery, letting out all his anger. The auntie passes by but pretends not to see. After they're done striking the farmhand, they order him around, to get vodka and glasses any anything else they can think of. Kneadus runs in to save the valet, and Konstanty tries to spank him. Kneadus hides behind Valek, who smashes Konstanty in the face. The peasants, who have been outside the window, smash the window and attack the lords. Joey goes to get his aunt and throws her into the fray, then escapes out of the house.

Zosia finds Joey, and he says they should run away together. He can't tell her what's happened. Unable to face the true situation, Joey tells Zosia that he's kidnapped her and kisses her. She begins to believe it. They walk off, each pretending to love the other. Zosia opens up to him, as she hasn't been able to talk to anyone else in her life. Joey replies with all the right phrases, but suffering under his pretensions. Zosia leads him out into the fields, alone under the hot sun, a giant pupa. Joey tries to force himself to be unkind and hopes hopelessly for a third person to come upon them. He has no escape, and when she kisses his mug, he must kiss hers back.

Chapter14, Mug on the Loose and New Entrapment Analysis

Joey's uncle is willing to believe that Kneadus is gay and wants to sleep with the valet because it fits into his world view. He is perfectly willing to believe that Kneadus is a Bolshevik activist who has come to disrupt his servants and create social upheaval. He will believe that Kneadus is suffering some sort of perversion or wants to spread religious brotherly love to the servants. However, he cannot accept or tolerate that Kneadus simply wants to be a boy, having a normal, boyish friendship with another boy, not if that boy is a peasant. The idea is ludicrous and unacceptable. This shows the ultimate constraints of societal bonds.

The final confrontation between Kneadus and Joey's uncle takes place in a forest. This is reminiscent of the forest that the narrator feels trapped in during the first chapter, the green forest that represents immaturity. Kneadus goes into the forest with the farmhand, and in a way, he is born anew there. Like Joey trying to attain the schoolgirl, Kneadus is awkward and separated from his ideal by his differences. However, Kneadus does manage to change himself to become more like his farmhand. He takes on the



farmhand's manners of speech and accent. Kneadus falls completely into the world of his ideal, not caring about anything else, even what the farmhand really thinks of him.

When Francis suggests that Valek has been trying to steal the silver, it puts an acceptable face on an intolerable situation. The reality of the situation is beyond Konstanty's understanding of the world. In the world defined by society, boys don't run off with farmhands for no good reason. The false but socially acceptable explanation is embraced wholeheartedly because it's much more palatable than a true but socially unacceptable explanation. Konstanty can't even acknowledge anything outside of his idea of what things ought to be.

The entire situation ends in upheaval, as the peasants and the lords fall together in battle, each in their way defining the other. The lords are defined by the opinions of the peasants, and the peasants are defined by the opinions of the lords. Joey escapes, but he finds himself trapped again, by the constricting rules and needs of society. Like his uncle, Joey can't break free of what society will or won't accept. When the truth is outside the realm of the socially acceptable, Joey takes a cue from Pimko and imposes his own definition on what is happening.

In the end of the novel, Joey is trapped by his own ideas of what ought to be. Instead of Pimko imposing a reality on him, Joey has imposed a reality on himself. Throughout the last section of the novel, the sun is referred to as a "pupa," a big butt in the sky, shining down hotly on everything beneath it. The whole world is childish, and the butt of its own tragic joke.



Characters

Joey Kowalski

Joey Kowalski is a thirty-year-old writer, but he finds himself trapped in immaturity. He has had no success, and he has no wife. He has no real career. His numerous aunts tell him that he needs to grow up and find some focus for his life. The literary community scoffs at his writing and his use of the word "immaturity" in the title of his first book. Joey can't escape from his own immaturity, but at the same time, he doesn't want to. Joey sees his immaturity as part of himself.

Constantly defined by others, Joey finds himself criticized and belittled by Professor Pimko, and this criticism makes Joey literally "belittled" into a seventeen-year-old boy. He cannot break free of others' opinions of him and let them know that he is not a schoolboy. He becomes trapped further by his love for a schoolgirl, and in desperation, he turns to breaking others down to free himself. He morally destroys the schoolgirl's family to make his escape. However, Joey is again entrapped by his friend Kneadus, who takes Joey along on a quest to find his dream of the ideal, a simple farmhand.

Joey travels back to the estate where he grew up, from birth to the age of ten. There, Joey must confront the strictures of society. While Kneadus blindly chases a dream of the ideal, Joey finds himself drawn into society's ideas of what should and should not be. In the end, Joey creates his own trap for himself, by not being able to face what is socially unacceptable.

Professor T. Pimko

Pimko represents the intelligencia, who make up rules about what ought to be and what is admirable and right. Pimko is manipulative and takes advantage of social norms to impose his own ideas and opinions on others. Pimko turns Joey into a seventeen-year-old boy by treating Joey as a child. His goal seems to be to break Joey down so that he can reform Joey in the image that he wants. Pimko brings Joey to a school, where the schoolteacher proceeds to push the children into immaturity by telling them that they're innocent.

Pimko places Joey with the Youngbloods. Pimko is again manipulating Joey, planning that Joey's feelings for the Youngbloods' daughter will make him want to stay in his youthful trap. However, Pimko is also falling into a trap himself. Pimko is the schoolgirl's opposite. She is a strong force, who doesn't care about his manipulative nature. She seems immune to any strictures of society and does not react to Pimko's lecturing ways.

In the end, Pimko is destroyed by the schoolgirl. When Joey writes Pimko a note purporting to be from the Youngbloods' daughter, Pimko can't help but give in to his lascivious nature. Pimko goes to the Youngbloods' house at midnight, hoping to have sex with the young schoolgirl. He is made a fool of and discovered in a compromising



position. Pimko is himself immature, trying to be something that he's not. He wants the schoolgirl, and it shows the worst parts of his nature. The scene devolves into a brawl, and Pimko loses all of his power.

Kneadus

Kneadalski, known as Kneadus, is one of the boys at Joey's school. He is the leader of the faction known as "guys" who revel in gritty reality and spout the worst swear words. Kneadus destroys his rival Syphon by holding him down and speaking horrors of reality into his ears. However much Kneadus believes in gritty reality, he also harbors an ideal that he loves. Kneadus loves the idea of a simple farmhand, and he drags Joey with him to find the farmhand. Once Kneadus finds the farmhand, he forgets everything else. All he wants is to be the farmhand's friend, even though it destroys the social order of Joey's uncle's estate.

Principal Piórkowski

Piórkowski runs the school where Professor Pimko places Joey.

Syphon Pylaszczkiewicz

Syphon is an idealist and a believer in the higher self. He believes there's nothing wrong with innocence and doesn't want to give it up. He is the only boy in the school who always has his lessons prepared. Syphon wins the duel of pulling faces with Kneadus, but Kneadus attacks Syphon and destroys him by filling his ears with obscenities and destroying his innocence. Syphon hangs himself because of it.

Kopyrda

Kopyrda is a modern boy at Joey's school. He is unaffected by the rivalries between the other boys. He wants Zuta, the schoolgirl, and he accosts her one day, and then writes her a note giving her his address. When Joey writes Kopyrda a fake note from Zuta, Kopyrda comes to her window at night. The two teens are made of the same modern cloth, and they begin to make love. They are interrupted by the arrival of Pimko and fall into the brawl that engulfs the whole family.

Professor G.L. Filidor

Filidor is a professor of synthesis, and he pulls disparate parts together into greater wholes. Filidor enters into a duel with his rival, Professor Momsen, which ultimately drives him insane.



Professor Momsen

Momsen is known as anti-Filidor, and his is a renowned professor of analysis, breaking things down into their individual parts. He uses his analysis to break down Filidor's wife and send her to a hospital, and he wins the duel with Filidor by shooting Filidor's wife into parts and pieces. However, the duel ultimately drives both men insane.

Mrs. Youngblood

Mrs. Youngblood is the fat, socially active engineer's wife who Joey goes to stay with. Joey is able to get under her skin, beginning by jokingly referring to her daughter as "mommy."

Mr. Victor Youngblood

Mr. Youngblood is an engineer, and the father of the house where Joey goes to stay. Mr. Youngblood is responsible for the first crack in the schoolgirl's defenses, when he can't help but giggle at Joey calling his daughter "mommy." After that, Mr. Youngblood becomes more and more childish.

Zuta Youngblood

Zuta Youngblood is the modern schoolgirl that Joey falls in love with. She lives in perfect balance with her body and her youth, and she has nothing of the "pupa" or the "mug" about her. Joey cannot break her down and make her ugly or undesirable, and ultimately, Joey cannot free himself from her until he involves her in a socially unacceptable situation.

The Housemaid

The Youngbloods have a peasant housemaid that Kneadus tries to seduce and later rapes.

The Beggar

Joey gives a beggar on the street money to whole a green branch in his mouth, to disconcert the Youngbloods.

Marquise Phillipe Hertal de Filiberthe

Filibert challenges any man who would insult his wife, and through his challenge, he causes his wife to miscarry. Afterwards, he realizes his immaturity and childishness.



Aunt Hurlecka

Aunt Hurlecka is a distant relative of Joey's, who is one of his numerous "aunties." She always has candy and sweets, which she gives away. The auntie remembers Joey as a young child and seems to always treat him as a child.

Uncle Konstanty

Joey's Uncle Konstanty is the head of an estate. He cannot stand the idea of Kneadus becoming friends with a peasant, and he decides to fire the peasant and kick Kneadus out of his house.

Zosia

Zosia is Joey's auntie's daughter. In the end of the novel, Joey tells Zosia that he loves her and has kidnapped her to run away together, since he can't face the truth of what's happened.

Zygmunt

Zygmunt is Joey's auntie's son.

Valek

Valek is Joey's aunt and uncle's valet, and he is the farmhand that Kneadus has been searching for. Kneadus gets Valek fired because he can't leave the valet alone.

Francis

Francis is Joey's aunt and uncle's butler.



Objects/Places

The Forest

Joey mentions being trapped in a green forest at the beginning of the novel, and in the end of the novel, Joey's uncle confronts Kneadus in a forest. The green of the forest represents youth and immaturity.

The School

Pimko brings Joey to a boys' school, where the faculty is made up of bores who try to convince the students that they admire classical literature.

The Engineer's House

Pimko places Joey at the Youngbloods' house to stay while he's at school. While he is staying there, Joey falls in love with the daughter of the Youngbloods, a modern schoolgirl.

Legs

In the novel, legs symbolize modernity, comfortableness with one's body, athleticism, and sexuality.

Mugs

In the novel, the "mug," or face, symbolizes intellectual idealism.

Pupas

In the novel, the "pupa," or butt, symbolizes childishness and immaturity.

The Branch

Joey gives a green branch to a beggar out in the street to hold between his lips, hoping to disconcert the Youngbloods.

The Keyhole

Joey peeps at Zuta through the keyhole of the door between their rooms.



The Fruit Compote

Joey gains an upper hand against the Youngbloods when he offends their sensibilities by adding salt, pepper, toothpicks, bread, and anything else he can think of to his fruit compote and then carelessly eating it.

The Tennis Shoe with the Carnation in It

In the schoolgirl's room, Joey finds a sweaty tennis shoe with a carnation in it. He sees this as an ultimate expression of the schoolgirl, combining love and athleticism.

The Notes to Kopyrda and Pimko

Joey writes notes to Kopyrda and Pimko, asking them to visit the schoolgirl's bedroom in the middle of the night. Once he lures the two there, he calls in the schoolgirl's parents to cause a scene.

The Villages

Joey and Kneadus pass through several villages, where the peasants are hiding from idealists who want to come in and disrupt their worlds. The peasants are turning into dogs in self-defense.

The Estate

Joey's aunt and uncle have a country estate, where Kneadus finds his farmhand and proceeds to create social upheaval between the peasants and lords.



Themes

Immaturity

The novel explores the idea of immaturity. Joey is thirty years old, but he cannot somehow gain maturity. He cannot leave behind the little brat that lives inside himself, and he cannot deny it as a part of himself. Pimko plays on this self-acknowledged immaturity, which makes Joey easy to manipulate. Joey lacks confidence, and he can't stand up to Pimko's manipulations. Joey, who already is in part a child, is easily turned into a child. He fits in well at the boys' school.

The teachers at the school all prey on immaturity. They use their authority to make the boys remain childish. When the boys rebel against maturity, they make themselves even more immature. Kneadus, in his swearing, his attack on Syphon, and even in his search for the farmhand, is stuck in immaturity. The least immature characters seem to be the schoolgirl and Kopyrda. Both these modern youths stand apart from the rest of society and are independent, comfortable in their own minds and bodies.

The adults are no less immature. The teachers trying to lord themselves over the schoolchildren are immature, trying to enhance their own positions. They are full of pretentiousness. The same is true for Joey's uncle and his dependence on the peasants to uphold his position. He purports to be a great aristocrat and lord of the manner, but in the end, he is dependent on the peasants' view of him. He is also dependent on society to tell him what's acceptable and what isn't. He has no real maturity, and inside, like all the characters, he is a green child.

The Struggle of Opposites

Opposites in the novel face each other off and battle, but they are also dependent on each other to define themselves. Syphon represents the ideal, and Kneadus represents the real. The two struggle against each other, but each one is also defined by the other. Without any reality for perspective, there can be no ideals. Without an ideal, Kneadus can have no sense of reality. He lives for his ideal farmhand.

Filidor and anti-Filidor are similar opposites. One is an analyst, breaking things down into parts. The other is a synthesist, building things up into a greater whole. The synthesis is analogous to the ideal. The whole person is the ideal, the self, and the soul. Analysis is analogous to the real. The real is made up of its individual, gritty parts. Synthesis and analysis is analogous to the ideal and the real, and also to the whole and the parts. All of these pairs of opposites battle and pull against each other.

Maturity and immaturity, ignorance and learning, peasants and lords, youth and age are all dueling opposites in the novel. Each one is defined by its opposite as it struggles against it. Pimko is defined by the schoolgirl, and the schoolgirl is defined by Pimko. The teachers are defined by the students, and the students are defined by the teachers.



When the opposites fight, no one wins. When Filidor and anti-Filidor battle, both go insane. When Kneadus wins against Syphon, he still falls victim to his own ideal. Neither can exist without the other, so opposites live on in interdependence.

Being Defined by Others

Joey struggles with being defined by others. He is first defined by Pimko, who changes him into a schoolboy and puts him in the Youngbloods' house. There, he is defined by the Youngbloods, and particularly by the schoolgirl he falls in love with. Joey must destroy her in his mind to free himself of her. He cannot stop himself from being defined by others' opinions, unless he can destroy the others and stop their opinions from mattering.

Joey's writing causes him to be defined by the opinions of his readers. Critics define authors through their criticisms of their books. The teachers at the school define the students, through their opinions, and the students define the teachers, as well. Joey's uncle is defined by the opinions of the peasants. When the peasants think Joey's uncle is a fool, he loses his power. When the peasants respect him, he gains his power.

The narrator gives the example of a concert by Chopin. The audience may not truly like Chopin, but their action in reaction to the concert is defined by the idea of Chopin as a master composer. People in the society become self-defined through what they perceive as society's norms and rules. Joey's uncle is defined by his perception of what is allowable in society, and so is Joey. In the end, Joey creates his own trap, because he allows what is and is not acceptable to society to define him and to force his actions.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the first person point of view, from the main character's perspective. The novel begins inside Joey's head, as he wakes from a dream and considers his situation. The narrative will stick with the themes that begin inside Joey's head. Immaturity, being defined by others, the push and pull of parts and the whole, and the nature of art will crop up over and over.

The narrative is unrealistic, since Joey is literally manipulated into becoming a seventeen-year-old boy. This story is a metaphor for Joey being belittled and formed by the society around him. Throughout the novel, the figurative becomes literal. Idealistic feelings are translated into actual "mugs" of face. Joey's dance to degrade the Youngbloods' room becomes something actually degrading to them. The mind, in the novel, is a powerful thing, because thought creates reality. Joey's impressions and ideas are what keeps him imprisoned, and the narrative point of view gives those impressions and ideas central focus.

The novel is interrupted by two short stories and their prefaces. In the prefaces, the unnamed narrator is still Joey, but the narrator is not telling a biographical story. Instead, the narrator explores the thematic ideas behind the rest of the novel. In the first short story, the narrator is an assistant of Professor Filidor, who can be interpreted as a fictionalized version of Joey. The second short story is told from a third person perspective, without a narrator. Both these short stories take place outside of the novel, while being thematically relevant to it.

Setting

The novel moves through several settings. It begins in a dream, perhaps the most important setting of the novel. Ultimately, the novel is about Joey's personal experience, and so the world of his mind is more important than the exterior world. However, the exterior world that Joey faces also reflects the world of the mind. Joey travels to a boys' school, which reflects the immaturity that he sees in himself. The boys' school is a macrocosm of society, where factions battle with each other. Idealism and realism battle, while an upper class imposes itself on a hapless lower class.

The Youngbloods' house immerses Joey in modernity. He is embroiled in a world of the intelligencia, where intellectual ideas are supposed to rule. However, in this world where ideas of all types are contemplated, social norms still reign supreme. Joey can destroy this world by challenging acceptable social behavior. He does this by putting junk in his fruit compote, by peeping through a keyhole, and by giving a beggar a stick to hold in his mouth.



The setting of the uncle's estate takes the microcosm of the school and reformulates it. Instead of teachers and schoolboy, the estate has lords and peasants. The lords rule over the peasants and form their identities. In return, the peasants form the lords' identities. The estate is also a reversion to childhood, since it is the place where Joey grew up. The forest that surrounds the estate is reminiscent of the forest from Joey's mind in the first chapter, the green forest, which represents youth and immaturity.

Language and Meaning

The novel uses wordplay to convey meaning throughout. The author equates characteristics of personality to parts of the body. Legs indicate sexuality and comfort with the physical form, as well as athleticism and modernity. The "pupa," meaning butt, indicates childishness and immaturity. The "mug," or face, represents idealism and a world of ideas. Using the parts of a body to indicate the parts of a personality is a metaphor in itself. The parts of the body become metaphors for parts of a person. They exist independently, but combined become parts of a whole. This in turn is also a metaphor for a work of literature, which exists in parts and pieces as well as as a whole.

The author makes figurative things literal throughout the novel. "Belittling" someone metaphorically makes them literally smaller. Joey becomes a seventeen-year-old boy because he is belittled by a professor. The peasants, who are defending themselves against outside idealists, literally become dogs, barking and growling and attacking Joey and Kneadus. In a world where words create reality, they take on immense power. When the peasants begin to think and talk poorly of Joey's uncle, the lord loses his power.

The title of the novel is a nonsense word. It is never mentioned in the novel, and ultimately it is meaningless. Its meaninglessness is more wordplay. The author dares the reader to find meaning in his trivial, immature work. Breaking down the book by analysis to find the meaning will yield nothing, because the meaning of the work is only in the book as a whole experience of reading.

Structure

The novel is broken up into three parts, and the parts are separated by two short stories, each with its own preface. The first part of the novel begins Joey's journey. He wakes up from a dream of himself as a youth, thinking about his own immaturity, and soon he finds himself thrust into the world of youth, placed into a boys' school as a teenager. The novel is interrupted just as the two factions of youths, lads and guys, are at each other's throats for a duel that reflects, in learned and grown-up professors, the same clash that brings the students to fists.

The second part of the novel thrusts Joey in his own battle. He is manipulated by Pimko to fall in love with a schoolgirl. Joey wages a mental war against the schoolgirl and her parents so that he can free himself from self-imposed bonds. Joey finds himself defined by others' opinions and in turn by his own opinion of others. He turns to violent means,



destroying others to free himself. This second part is concluded by the second short story, just at the moment of Joey's escape. The second story points out the calamity of childishness in all people and how actions are dictated by society.

The third and final part of the novel is the story of Joey and Kneadus's journey into the country to find Kneadus's ideal farmhand. The importance of the dictates of society is laid bare in this section, as Kneadus's simple desire to befriend a farmhand wreaks havoc with the social order. Clearly, the lords are defined by the peasants as much as the peasants are defined by the lords. Joey has internalized the definitions and opinions of society, and in the end he is trapped by his own mental boundaries.



Quotes

"Do you know what it feels like to be diminished within someone else? Oh, to be diminished within an aunt is unseemly enough, but to be diminished within a huge, commonplace prof is the peak of unseemly diminishment." —Chapter 1, Abduction, page 16

"'That's the pupa, the pupa,' said Pimko, 'I can see I'm placing my Joey in good hands. Because there is nothing worse than teachers who are personable, especially if they happen to have opinions of their own. Only a truly irksome pedagogue can inculcate the pupils with that adorable immaturity, that engaging helplessness and clumsiness, that lack of savoir vivre that should be the hallmark of our youth so they'll provide a target for us, the earnest and inspired pedagogues that we are.'" —Chapter 2, Imprisonment and Further Belittlement, page 37

"Gentlemen, it's not within your power to transform yourselves, well, let's say from Tuesday to Wednesday, into mature masters, but you could save your dignity to some degree by distancing yourselves from Art, which sticks it to you with that disconcerting pupa." -Chapter 4, Preface to "The Child Runs Deep in Filidor," page 77

"'You heap of things!' replied the Analyst with a dreadful, analytical disdain. 'I too am a heap. If you wish—kick me in the abdomen. You won't be kicking me in the abdomen, you'll be kicking my abdomen—nothing more. You wanted to attack my cheeks by slapping them, didn't you? You can attack my cheek but not me. There is no me. No me at all. No me!'" —Chapter 5, The Child Runs Deep in Filidor, page 92

"Instead of protesting I sat down again, I just sat on the sofa, riveted. The stupidity of this insinuation precluded any explanation." —Chapter 6, Seduction and Further Driving Me into Youth, page 111

"Remembering the old maxim that anger detracts from beauty, I made up my mind to make her mad. I hoped she'd get exasperated while I, maintaining composure behind a clown's mask, would then have the upper hand." —Chapter 7, Love, page 126

"The fruit compote made it all clear to me. Just as I had messed up the compote by changing it into a dissolute pap, so I could destroy the schoolgirl's modernity by introducing into it foreign and heterogeneous elements, scrambling everything up for all it was worth." —Chapter 8, Fruit Compote, pages 145-146

"Unbelievable! These letters made me finally realize the extent of the schoolgirl's power. Where wasn't it present? Inside whose head were the calves of her legs not stuck?" —Chapter 9, Peeping and Further Incursion into Modernity, page 162

"But the Youngbloods were dumbfounded. Two men, one in each closet! What's more, in one of them—an old man. If there were two young ones! Or, for that matter, two old



ones. But no, one young and one old. An old man, and Pimko to boot." —Chapter 10, Legs on the Loose and New Entrapment, page 183

"Because Filibert, positioned conclusively and in analogy with Filidor, conceals within its strange unity the final, secret meaning of this work." —Chapter 11, Preface to "The Child Runs Deep in Filibert," page 198

"Kneadus stared, he drank with his eyes that uncontorted peasant's mug, meadow and dumb, he imbibed it as if it were the one and only drink in the whole world." —Chapter 12, The Farmhand, or Captive Again, page 219

"However, Konstanty wouldn't even entertain the thought that Kneadus was anything but a brat, Konstanty, who at dinnertime drank to Kneadus like a fellow traveler on homoerotic terrain, was now denying all commonality with him, and treated him like a green youth, a brat, and used his age to trivialize him!" —Chapter 14, Mug on the Loose and New Entrapment, page 253



Topics for Discussion

Why can't Joey simply leave the school where Pimko puts him?

Why does Joey need to tear down others in order to free his own mind?

What causes Pimko to come to the schoolgirl's room?

What does the farmhand represent to Kneadus?

Why does Kneadus feel the need to destroy Syphon?

What is the meaning of the stories of Filidor and Filibert that are inserted into the novel?

In what way are the young characters childish and immature, and in what ways are they childlike and youthful, in a positive way? What creates this distinction?

What is the significance of the words "mug" to describe the face and "pupa" to describe the butt in the novel?