

Fight Club Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Tyler and the narrator are standing on top of the one hundred and the ninety story Parker-Morris building on the edge of total destruction. Tyler is holding a gun in the narrator's mouth and pressing the barrel against the back of his throat.

This is the end of a story that starts two years before. The narrator is an average run-of-the-mill worker, who lives his life on repeat. He has a great condo and participates avidly in the consumer culture of society. He is suffering from severe insomnia and can't figure out why. The narrator finds a remedy for his insomnia by going to support groups and crying with the real injured people. It is there he meets Marla Singer, who completely throws his regular support-group meeting schedule out of alignment. He despises her for intruding in his territory.

During the course of a normal work business trip, the narrator happens to meet a man named Tyler Durden while hanging out on the beach. The narrator gets Tyler's phone number. When the narrator arrives home from the business trip, he finds that his condo exploded and all his possessions are destroyed. With nowhere to turn, he calls upon Tyler Durden for help. Tyler meets with him, and they end up fighting in the parking lot. This is the beginning of fight club.

The narrator moves in with Tyler in his Paper Street house. Time goes by, and more and more people join fight club. Fight club expands to incorporate new locations and more members. The desire to fight and the feeling that it brings to the participants is spreading across the male population.

Back at the Paper Street house, Tyler and a woman named Marla met and are now having sex. This leaves the narrator feeling jealous, and all he can think about is them humping non-stop. It is even invading his dreams.

Tyler starts rendering fat to make soap, and it turns into a lucrative business. Eventually, Tyler and the narrator decide to blackmail their bosses. It turns out they know too many secrets and have nothing to lose. The narrator starts to notice that he is becoming more like Tyler as the days go by. His face is beat up like Tyler's, and Tyler's words start flowing out of his mouth.

Tyler decides to turn his small acts of civil disobedience into an entire project. He calls it Project Mayhem. Project Mayhem contains several small committees that meet for various assignments during the week. The narrator soon finds himself sucked into the project and on assignment like the rest of the Project Mayhem members.

The narrator is going about his business and traveling like normal when he realizes that he is being treated with an unusual level of respect by guys with bashed-in faces. After some investigation, the narrator discovers that it is his face that people recognize as that of Tyler Durden. The narrator is Tyler Durden. While the narrator sleeps, his split



personality Tyler takes over his body and carries out his destructive manifesto. The narrator feels Tyler becoming more dominant, and he is getting out of control.

Shortly after the narrator realizes that he is Tyler, one of the Project Mayhem space monkeys, Bob, gets killed. At this point, the narrator knows that things have gone too far. He attempts to put a stop to Project Mayhem and cancel fight club. He is unsuccessful, and the whole thing is out of his control. He knows the only way to stop all of it is to get rid of Tyler.

The narrator arrives at work to find that the building is blown up, and his boss is dead. He remembers that the last time he left the office he smelled gasoline on his hands. As he tries to flee to avoid getting questioned by the police, he gets on a bus full of space monkeys who insist they have orders from him, but really Tyler, to castrate him for trying to stop fight club and Project Mayhem. The narrator passes out from this traumatizing event and wakes up on the floor of his burned condo.

He realizes that if the space monkeys have orders to harm him, Tyler may have given orders to harm Marla too. He meets Marla. She slaps him and tells him that he killed someone. The narrator is not shocked by this as he knows that he killed his boss. That is not it, however. Marla followed Tyler, and he went to a murder-mystery dinner where he proceeded to kill the mayor's special envoy on recycling. As Marla has witnessed first hand the crimes that Tyler is committing, the narrator fears that Tyler will neutralize anyone who dares get in the way of Project Mayhem.

The memories of the murder of the mayor's special envoy come flooding back to the narrator's brain. He wants to be dead. The narrator finds a fight club meeting and signs up to fight all the men in the room. He is beaten to a pulp, and surprised that his body has such an amazing will to live despite the fact that he wants to be dead. He wakes up in his room in the Paper Street house, and Tyler is there. The whole place is empty. Tyler drags him onto the roof of the Parker-Morris Building. They are back in the place where the story begins. The clock is ticking down, and the narrator is waiting for the building to explode.

The time comes and goes with no explosion. Apparently, Tyler mixed the chemicals wrong. The narrator feels he has no choice but to shoot himself. He has to make Tyler disappear. The narrator survives the shooting and gets put into a mental institution. In the institution, he is cared for by members of fight club. They assure him that everything is going as planned and that they are looking forward to his return.



Chapter 1 and 2

Chapter 1 and 2 Summary

Tyler Durden and the narrator are standing on top of the one hundred and ninety story Parker-Morris building on the edge of total destruction. Tyler is holding a gun in the narrator's mouth and pressing the barrel against the back of his throat.

Meanwhile, on the floors below them, members of the Mischief Committee of Project Mayhem are dismantling the corporate offices and throwing office furniture out the windows. The narrator recites all the ways to make explosives, and counts down the minutes until the building goes down in flames. In those last minutes, the narrator listens to Tyler recount how they will be part of history and that they will be famous.

As the minutes tick by, the narrator explains the anarchy, the gun, and the explosion are really about Marla Singer. Marla Singer is part of a triangle, and the other two members are Tyler and the narrator. The narrator has been there from the beginning, and he remembers how it all began.

The story flashes back to a time some months earlier. The narrator finds himself in a self-help group meeting for men with testicular cancer. The group is called Remaining Men Together. The narrator is being embraced by Bob, who tells him it is okay to cry. Bob is bonding with the narrator as he thinks the narrator has had his testicles removed, as well. Bob is crying, and the narrator thinks that he would cry too if he had "bitch tits" like Bob, and his life was meaningless like Bob's. The narrator is suffering from severe insomnia and only seems to get relief from attending support-group meetings. He is in the process of remedying his insomnia when he notices a woman at the meeting. The narrator detests her for being a giant faker. He knows she doesn't have or has never had testicles. He has also spotted her at all the other support groups he attends. The narrator realizes he only gets relief when he cries, and he cannot cry when there is another faker in the room.

The narrator explains that he went to his first support group two years ago, after his doctor told him that insomnia was a symptom of something larger and that he should learn what it means to be in real pain. Even since then, Bob has made him cry, and he has been sleeping like a baby. The appearance of Marla Singer is ruining all that. The narrator imagines confronting her at the end of the support-group meeting, calling her a tourist and telling her to get out as he needs this.

Chapter 1 and 2 Analysis

The narrator recalls that in those minutes on top of the building, he is just a small part of what has become an unstoppable movement of destruction. At this point he finds himself battling against Tyler over Marla and what she represents in society. Tyler declares that this is their world now - a man's world. The narrator is ready to give in to



Tyler's suicide mission, and it is now very clear to him how he came to be standing on top on the Parker-Morris Building.

At his support group meetings, the narrator understands what it means to be truly free. He notes that "On a long enough time line, the survival rate for everyone will drop to zero." The narrator realizes that the people who have nothing left to lose are free. He needs to feel that as bad as his life is, someone else's life is worse than his. He takes comfort in that. Marla Singer knows the narrator is a faker. He can't get what he needs from the meetings when he is confronted by her "tourism." The narrator relates her need to be at these meetings to that of a tourist as Marla Singer likes to watch and rejoice at the horrible lives these people lead.



Chapter 3 and 4

Chapter 3 and 4 Summary

The narrator travels a lot for his job. He is constantly waking up in a different city. He is living what he calls a disposable, single-serving life. The narrator often dreams of the different ways he could die and prays for death. He makes his living as a recall campaign coordinator. Using a simple formula, he decides whether to recall a faulty vehicle, or pay the damages for each individual claim. This job provides plenty of information about shady business practices and gives the narrator a lot of job security as a result. On one of his trips, he is at the beach and meets a man named Tyler Durden.

By chance one day, the narrator wakes up on the beach to see Tyler crafting a hand in the sand out of driftwood. As the sun beats down on the sculpture to create a perfect shadow, Tyler comments that moment of perfection was worth the effort and that "a moment was the most you could ever expect from perfection." Tyler then gave the narrator his phone number.

The narrator attends his usual brain parasites support group. He discovers that one of the regular members, Chloe, has finally passed from her illness. He would be able to delight in the idea that one day you are living, and then next day you are worm food, but there stood Marla Singer. She is ruining yet another of the narrator's support-group meetings. He tries to participate in the guided meditation. However, when he closes his eyes, he only pictures Marla there smoking a cigarette. Toward the end of the session, the group does therapeutic physical contact. The narrator jumps at the chance to make contact with Marla Singer. This is how the narrator meets Marla.

Chapter 3 and 4 Analysis

The narrator is bored with his average life. He is living the same day, over and over. He is so bored that he prays for relief through death. The narrator makes a contrast between himself as a day person, and Tyler as the type of person who can only function at night. His new friend Tyler works at night as a movie projectionist for a union. Tyler also works as a banquet waiter. As a projectionist, Tyler is in the habit of splicing a single frame of pornography into family films so that audience members will see it, but not realize what they are seeing as it goes by so quickly. This is how Tyler begins to perform small acts of societal disobedience.

The narrator finally gets to confront Marla Singer and call her out for the tourist that she is. Marla is quick to point out that the narrator isn't dying either. The narrator reacts by telling her to stay away from his meetings. Marla explains that she has never seen a dead person before, and being around all these near-death people made her feel more alive than ever before. When Marla refuses to stop coming to the groups, the narrator

begins bargaining with her so that they may split up the groups and both get the fix that they need.



Chapter 5 and 6

Chapter 5 and 6 Summary

The narrator is flying back from another business trip. His bags are delayed, because one of them is vibrating. Security for the airline holds the bag and does a private search. It turns out it was his electric razor vibrating.

After the mess with his baggage, he arrives at his condo to find that it has mysteriously exploded, leaving his name-brand belongings and IKEA furniture outside on the ground, 15 floors below. The police are asking many questions. They suspect the explosion was caused by a gas leak that ignited, or maybe even foul play. The narrator calls Tyler in the hope that he can help him with his homelessness problem. Tyler answers the phone and agrees to meet for beers. Tyler says that the narrator can come live with him, but he must do him a favor. Tyler requests that the narrator hit him as hard as he can. A bloody fight ensues.

The next morning, the narrator is preparing for a presentation at work. His face is so bloody and stitched up from fighting that his boss will not let him give the presentation. The narrator's mind drifts to a new kind of males-only club that Tyler talked of the previous night. It's called fight club. The rules of the club are simple. The first rule is that members do not talk about fight club. The second rule of fight club is the same as the first — that members do not talk about fight club. As the weeks go by and fight club becomes a nightly reality for Tyler and the narrator, someone somebody does break the rules. As a result, fight club grows and starts expanding to new locations. The narrator realizes that as he travels, he sees beat up faces in regular jobs staring back at him.

Chapter 5 and 6 Analysis

When he comes home to find his condo exploded, the narrator evaluates his life in terms of his possessions. The possessions are his life. He recalls the hours he spent deciding on the right designer couch, the perfect set of dishes, and his comfortable sheets, among other items that define who he is as a human being. They are now all destroyed by the blast. In one instant, the narrator is relieved of his identity as a consumer. Later on, when his suitcase finally arrives, it only contains the bare minimum. Now, the narrator has nothing in this world except what is in that suitcase.

It is interesting that the narrator comments that the men you see at fight club are a generation of men raised by women. This is a clear reference to one of the themes in the book. Men in the society have been raised by women and emasculated. They come to fight club to break themselves down to the point of total destruction. They come to hit rock bottom and abandon all the rules society has put upon them. For Tyler, the only way these men can reclaim their rightful place in society is to reclaim their basic

animalistic selves through the primal urge of fighting. The members come to fight club to learn to trust themselves and know that they can get through anything.



Chapter 7 and 8

Chapter 7 and 8 Summary

The narrator wakes up to find a condom in the toilet. He realizes that Tyler has met Marla and that they are having sex in the Paper Street house. The narrator tries not to focus on that fact and instead reads from the stacks of magazines at the house. He stumbles upon an article where organs in the human body talk about themselves in the first person. The narrator says that he is Joe's prostate. As Tyler comes into the room and describes meeting Marla and tells him how they just had sex, the narrator responds with "I am totally Joe's gallbladder." The narrator contacted Marla the night before to see whether she was going to the melanoma meeting. Marla tells him he can go, because she is doing the whole death thing tonight if he wants to watch. The narrator passes on that and attends the meeting only to come home to sleep and dream of humping Marla Singer all night. Tyler explains that after he came home from his banquet shift, Marla called again to say she was dying. Tyler went over to the Regent Hotel to save her. Marla and Tyler make the great escape as the paramedics were coming to rescue her from death's door. Marla told Tyler he would have to keep her up all night because, if she falls asleep, she will die.

The narrator decides to fax little haikus around to everyone in the office. He resents the fact that he has become a totally Zen person, and nobody around the office noticed. They were all distracted by the dried blood on his pants and the huge hole in his cheek that never seems to heal. As the boss sends him home to get changes, the narrator wonders if Tyler and Marla are the same person. He decides that they can't be as they are always humping in Tyler's room. He notes that he never sees Tyler and Marla in the same room. Marla keeps hanging around the house more and more as the days go on, and sure enough, when Marla leaves the room, Tyler appears asking if the narrator has gotten rid of her yet. Then Tyler begins to plot ways to take revenge on the narrator's oppressive boss. The narrator insists that he is above it and doesn't need revenge. Tyler says that sticking feathers up your butt does not make you a chicken. During this conversation, Tyler pulls sandwich bags from the freezer and starts boiling the contents. This turns out to be fat that Tyler is boiling to skim off the tallow that rises to the top.

Marla again appears and interrupts. Tyler disappears. The narrator gets very angry at her and tells her to go away. Marla pleads with the narrator to please call her as they really need to talk. The narrator agrees to appease her. When she leaves, Tyler appears again and asks the narrator to do him a favor. Tyler asks the narrator never to talk to Marla about him, and threatens to disappear for good if the narrator ever speaks of him. The narrator agrees, and Tyler proceeds to give him a chemical burn in the shape of a kiss on the back of his hand.



Chapter 7 and 8 Analysis

The narrator shows his jealousy in this chapter. As Tyler elaborates on his sexual experiences with Marla, the narrator describes how he is becoming a more enraged part of Joe's anatomy. He is not jealous that Tyler is having sex with Marla. The jealousy comes from the fact that Tyler is his friend, and Marla is taking that away from him. To think that a woman might come between him and Tyler is repulsive to him, yet he can't help but be drawn to Marla.

The haikus that the narrator writes suggest that he is struggling with his place in society. The most significant development is that the narrator notices that Tyler and Marla are never in the same room together. He just thinks it is because Tyler really can't stand her, but can't resist having sex with her. Later on, Tyler makes sure the narrator will never speak of him, thereby concealing Tyler's existence.



Chapter 9 and 10

Chapter 9 and 10 Summary

As the lye on the back of the narrator's hand sears his skin, Tyler taunts and urges him to feel the pain. The narrator tries desperately to fall into his guided meditation to take his mind off the pain, but Tyler keeps pulling him back to reality. Tyler reminds him that the pain is human sacrifice and that someday the narrator will die. Tyler says the narrator is no good to him until he realizes his mortality. Tyler tells the narrator that by realizing that he too will die, he is one step closer to hitting rock bottom.

Tyler and the narrator are on a stopped elevator. Tyler unzips his pants and proceeds to urinate in the soup they are about to serve to some dignitaries. The narrator delights in the fact that they have turned into guerrilla terrorists of the service industry. They are dinner party saboteurs, as the narrator calls them. The narrator recalls Tyler's first experience as a minimum-wage despoiler. Tyler was working a banquet where he pees in the hostess' favorite perfume. He leaves her an anonymous note saying he did so, but does not indicate which one of the many bottles had been contaminated. The hostess goes completely nuts and destroys all the bottles, blaming her husband for the terrible act. The hostess cries and asks who would hate her so much as to do this humiliating thing to her. Tyler's mission was accomplished.

Chapter 9 and 10 Analysis

When Tyler burns the narrator, he is teaching him about sacrifice and feeling what it means to be in pain. Tyler relates the narrator to the people and animals of the past who have been sacrificed in the name of progress. If it weren't for them, and the narrator, no progress would be made. The kiss scar is like a brand. Tyler brands the narrator's hand in an attempt to indoctrinate him into the cause of societal destruction.

The ritual of contaminating high-class guests' food is an act of class warfare. They are committing subtle jabs at the guests' ways of life. Tyler and the narrator are doing it so often that it becomes part of the job. In fact, it helps them get through the days at work. They begin running out of things to do. Unfortunately, this kind of "mild" civil disobedience is not quenching their thirst like it used to.



Chapter 11 and 12

Chapter 11 and 12 Summary

Tyler is suddenly making some real money selling the soap from his kitchen concoctions. The local department store put in a large order with Tyler for the holiday season.

Tyler and the narrator are sitting in a car at a used car lot going back and forth about what Tyler did to Marla's mother. The narrator recalls the events of the evening for Tyler. First, Tyler forged Marla's signature on a telegram to her mother. The telegram said "Hideously wrinkled. Please help me!" Then, for no reason, Tyler sent Marla's mother a 15 lb. box of chocolates. The narrator has no idea why Tyler has done this until Marla pops by and asks to store some fat in the freezer that her mother harvested and gave to Marla for plastic surgery. It is then that the narrator realizes that Tyler has been skimming the fat shipments and using Marla's mother's fat ass to make the soap to fill his orders. Marla looks in the freezer and sees that it is full of fat. The narrator explains to Marla that they are boiling the fat to make soap out of it. Marla goes crazy and chases the narrator out of the house. He runs and runs until he finally finds Tyler and fills him in on the situation.

The narrator is sitting at work processing a recall letter for an automobile when his boss comes in and starts reading from a piece of paper. The narrator just stares at his boss noticing that it must be Tuesday as he's wearing his gray tie.

It seems that the narrator forgot to remove the original from the copy machine. The boss is reading the rules of fight club. The narrator's boss then gets in his face and waves the paper around asking if he is messing around on company time. The boss asks what is going on with him. The narrator responds by saying that if the boss is smart, he would be careful who he talked about this with. Obviously, says the narrator with a smile, there is a diseased psycho in the office. He should use caution.

The insomnia is back, and the narrator attends a Remaining Men Together meeting to get some relief. Big Bob comes up and greets him. The meeting room is empty. Bob explains that the group has been disbanded, but the good news is that there is a new group. The first rule of the new group is that you aren't supposed to talk about the new group. As Bob is reciting the rules of fight club, the narrator is going through his mind reciting Tyler's schedule. He wonders when he would have time to hold other fight club meetings. Then Bob tells the narrator that the rules were made up by the inventor, Tyler, but nobody that Bob knows has ever seen him.

Chapter 11 and 12 Analysis

Tyler is brilliant in his plan to play on the rich women's vanity by selling their discarded fat back to them in the form of soap. This is another way of acting out against the

segment of the public who Tyler feels contribute to the emasculation of men. Tyler gets so involved in his soap business and in making money to fund Project Mayhem that he cons Marla's mother into sending Tyler her discarded fat.

Later, as the narrator yells at his boss about the paper, it occurs to him that they are Tyler's words coming out of his mouth. The narrator doesn't hesitate to use psychological pressure and an indirect threat of harm to quiet his boss. The narrator is becoming more like Tyler as the days go on. The readers can also see a clear transitioning as Tyler becomes more dominant. The narrator comments that he can tell what day of the week it is by the color of tie his boss is wearing. This alludes to the fact that people in society are in a rut and mindlessly follow the same route.



Chapter 13 and 14

Chapter 13 and 14 Summary

The narrator gets an urgent call from Marla. She requests that he come to the Regent Hotel and do her a favor. Marla asks the narrator to feel her breasts as she thinks she has cancer. Indeed, she had a lump. The narrator tells her funny stories to cheer her up, but Marla isn't laughing. Marla glances at Tyler's kiss mark on the narrator's hand. The narrator notices that Marla also has one on her hand.

Marla started going to support groups after she found her first lump. This is now her second lump. After she found the first lump, she went to the public clinic. It was a sad and pathetic scene, and she decided that if she was dying, she didn't want to know about it. Marla said that she would often answer the phone and there would be no one there. She said that was the people beyond trying to reach out to her. This happened more often than one might think.

A detective started calling the Paper Street house asking questions about the condominium explosion. Tyler sits next to the narrator feeding him answers to the detective's questions. The narrator is trying desperately to persuade the detective that he had nothing to do with the explosion. All the while, Tyler is whispering about abandoning worldly possessions and being truly free from consumer culture. The detective tells the narrator not to leave town.

Chapter 13 and 14 Analysis

The narrator tries to tell Marla stories of his experience with cancer, or at least when he thought he had cancer. This moment was important to him. He got all the attention from the doctors when they thought he had a rare cancer. He felt special. It turned out it was just a birthmark, but he keeps the picture to remind himself that for 10 minutes, he had the worst kind of cancer. It is this kind of attention that is given at support groups. The narrator loves support groups because, when people think you are dying, they give you their full attention. He notes that people really listen to you when you are dying, instead of just waiting for their turn to speak.

When the detective calls, he tells the narrator that certain explosives and other materials were used at the scene of his condo disaster. These materials are very familiar to the narrator as Tyler has them around the Paper Street house. The detective is suspicious and knows exactly what is going on, but the narrator is still in denial.



Chapter 15 and 16

Chapter 15 and 16 Summary

The president of the film projectionist union brings Tyler into his office to lay him off. Tyler basically tells him that is fine as long as they keep sending him his paycheck. The boss is baffled by this, but Tyler had the knowledge that hundreds of films had single-frame flashes of pornography in them. Tyler has nothing to lose by blackmailing the boss.

Tyler advises the narrator on what to say to his other boss at the hotel. The narrator goes to confront the manager. The manager gives him three minutes of his time. However, in the first 30 seconds, the narrator manages to tell him all of the vile things done to the food they served their important guests. Again, the narrator feels Tyler's words coming out of his mouth as he threatens to give a heart-felt confession to the local newspapers. The manager tells the narrator that he doesn't want him working there anymore anyway, considering the way his face looked. All of a sudden, the narrator pounds himself in the face. He then punches himself again and again. He starts laughing as blood splatters on the carpet. He pleads with the manager not to hit him again. The manager struggles to get away from the narrator, but the security guards walk in just in time to see the manager with his hands on the narrator.

The narrator recalls acts of public mischief reported in the paper. More and more acts are reported every week. The narrator wonders whether these are homework assignments for the members of Tyler's new project, Project Mayhem. The goal of the project is to teach each man involved that he had the power to control history. The project has various committees within and each committee is in charge of creating a different kind of chaos in society.

Chapter 15 and 16 Analysis

The narrator makes another reference to disintegration. He says nothing is static and knows this, because Tyler knows these things. The references to the narrator and Tyler having the same knowledge set the stage for the true identity of the narrator. Tyler and the narrator start to resemble each other more and more, almost as if they are becoming the same person.

The goal of Project Mayhem was to break down civilization, so they could make something better out of it. Tyler's vision for civilization wasn't complete anarchy, but more a state of nature, where men could be hunter-gatherer types. In Tyler's new world vision, consumer goods would hold no value. It would be a classless society.



Chapter 17 and 18

Chapter 17 and 18 Summary

Again, the narrator is confronted by his boss who sets a piece of paper on his desk. This time, the paperwork that Tyler wanted him to copy is a list with instructions on what items to bring to the Paper Street house. Tyler wants the narrator to make a ton of copies of this page, and then Tyler transforms the basement into a barracks-type environment. Soon after, a young man shows up on the front porch of the house. Tyler denies him entry and demeans him, telling him he is too young. The man stays and the next day, Tyler is demeaning to him again. Finally, on the third day, Tyler says to grab his stuff and come inside. This is the process that Tyler says will take place with all the applicants.

One Friday night, the narrator falls asleep at his desk. His boss is on vacation but asked him via e-mail to prepare for his formal review. He is Joe's complete lack of surprise. Tyler is on the phone and tells the narrator that the guys are waiting for him in the parking lot. The narrator smells gasoline on his hands. In the parking lot, the fight club mechanic is waiting for him with a Cadillac. Three space monkeys are also in the car. The narrator asks where Tyler is, and the space monkeys respond that the last rule of Project Mayhem is that you don't ask questions. The narrator begins questioning the mechanic about who makes up the rules. The mechanic replies that the narrator knows who makes up the rules. The mechanic proceeds to play chicken with oncoming traffic. He asks the narrator what he wishes he would have done before he died. His job, the narrator says. He wishes he would have quit his job. He wishes he were dead. The mechanic swerves to hit another car, but the bumpers only clip. They crash.

Chapter 17 and 18 Analysis

Tyler builds his army for Project Mayhem. Tyler ensures that each member does his part of the assignment, never knowing the tasks of the other members involved in the assignment. That way, things cannot be derailed. The assignments always move forward as planned. Tyler is working to break down all the members of Project Mayhem. They feel insignificant and helpless, and Tyler works to show them that the world thinks they are trash. Tyler wants them to rise up and show the world that they have power. The narrator refers to them as space monkeys, because they just mindlessly perform their little jobs. It is somewhat of a contradiction to the author's position that men should break out of their place in society, since the space monkeys are playing exactly that disconnected role. Tyler turns them into what he aims to destroy in society. At this point, the narrator feels like he has hit rock bottom. He wishes he were dead and knows he is nothing in this world compared to Tyler. He feels Tyler's power expanding and taking over his personality.



Chapter 19 and 20

Chapter 19 and 20 Summary

After they get back on the road, the narrator asks if that was part of a homework assignment. The mechanic answers yes, it was part of it. His assignment is to make four human sacrifices that evening and then pick up a load of fat. The mechanic asks the narrator if what he said about his job is true. The narrator replied that it is true.

Next, they go to the medical waste dump in search of liposuctioned fat. The plan was to steal the fat people spent a ton of money to have sucked out and then use it to make soap to sell back to the people who paid to have it taken out.

All of a sudden, the narrator finds himself standing with a gun pressed to Raymond Hessel's temple. The narrator had done everything the mechanic said to do including buying a gun. The narrator's assignment was to make 12 human sacrifices, and Raymond Hessel was one of them. The narrator waits for him to get off work at his minimum-wage job at the convenience store. Then the narrator describes how he holds Raymond up and asks for his wallet. At this point, he starts digging through Raymond's life, wondering if he has anything to live for. Raymond has a student card from a college in his wallet. The narrator questions him about why he isn't in school. He proceeds to ask Raymond what he wants to be when he grows up. Just as Raymond feels he is on the brink of death, he stammers that he wants to be a veterinarian. The narrator tells Raymond that he has his license and knows where he lives. The narrator explains that he intends to check back with Raymond and if Raymond is not on his way to becoming a veterinarian, then the narrator will kill him. The narrator then says he would rather kill Raymond than see him work another day in a crappy job making just enough money to eat cheese and watch television.

Chapter 19 and 20 Analysis

The mechanic's assignment was to make four human sacrifices. This meant that he had to take four people, including the narrator, and drive them to the point of death. These four people would then snap out of their haze and realize that they wished they would have accomplished something before they died. That same accomplishment is what they are supposed to do after being spared death.

As the narrator is performing his assigned human sacrifice, he feels Tyler's words coming out of his mouth. He is doing and saying exactly what Tyler wants him to do. He is becoming a part of Project Mayhem.



Chapter 21 and 22

Chapter 21 and 22 Summary

The narrator goes about his business. He travels and performs his little job as a recall campaign coordinator. The narrator hasn't seen Tyler in a while, but as he travels from city to city, he sees people with bashed in faces and asks them all whether they have seen Tyler. The narrator is puzzled as no one says they have seen Tyler. However, they all call him sir and give him a wink. The narrator finds himself in Seattle. He walks into a bar only to be greeted by the bartender with a "welcome back sir." The narrator is sure that he has never been to this bar before. When he asks the bartender whether he knows Tyler Durden, the bartender asks if this is a test. The bartender then calls him Mr. Durden and tells him that he was in the bar last week. The bartender holds up his hand. The narrator can see a kiss mark is seared into the back of it. The bartender tells the narrator that he was in there last week asking about whether the Seattle police were about to shut down fight club.

The narrator rushes to call Marla. He asks how things are going at the Paper Street house. She tells him that the space monkeys are all shaving their heads. He asks her whether they have slept together. Marla is disgusted, accuses him of ignoring her, tells him that he saved her life, and that he boiled her mother. The narrator asks Marla what his name is, and she replies Tyler Durden. She then proceeds to give his address on Paper Street. He then asks how she got the scar on the back of her hand. She replies that he kissed it.

In bed at his hotel in Seattle, the narrator's insomnia was kicking in again. He was not sure if he had slept at all or if he was sleeping then. Tyler is standing next to his bed telling him that the police problem had been taken care of. The narrator asks if Tyler has been following him. Tyler said he wants to know the same thing and then chastises him for breaking his promise and talking about him to other people. Tyler tells the narrator that every time he falls asleep, Tyler runs amuck. Tyler started fight clubs all over the country and has chapters of Project Mayhem in all the major cities. Tyler did this all while the narrator slept. The narrator asked why the police wouldn't be cracking down on fight club in Seattle anymore. Tyler replied that the Assault Committee of Project Mayhem had taken care of the problem. The committee hunted down the police commissioner and threatened to castrate him. Tyler says in no uncertain terms that he is living inside the narrator's body.

Chapter 21 and 22 Analysis

The narrator discovers that he is Tyler Durden. He discovers that all actions he thought were done by Tyler were really done by him. He was the one having a sexual relationship with Marla, he was the one peeing in people's soup and burning their

hands. He was the one in control of Project Mayhem, only he couldn't remember any of it. He didn't know whether he was awake or asleep.

This is an important chapter as the narrator realizes that there is a battle going on inside of him. When he falls asleep, Tyler takes over and terrorizes people to accomplish his political goals. The narrator can feel Tyler getting stronger, and his power is getting out of control. The narrator is not sure who he is at this point. Is he really Tyler with an alternative personality, or is Tyler the disassociative personality?



Chapter 23 and 24

Chapter 23 and 24 Summary

The narrator makes it back to the Paper Street house and to Marla. Everything is falling into total chaos. The narrator is afraid to look in the fridge as he suspects he may find the remains of Tyler's castration threats. The narrator tried to talk to Marla about what is going on for she only recognizes his as Tyler. The narrator notices that the space monkeys are keeping a close watch on him. The narrator takes Marla to a restaurant to show her his driver's license and explain that he is not Tyler Durden. She is confused as to why some people call him Tyler and others know him by his real name. The narrator tells Marla that Tyler is a split personality his mind created and now he is threatening to take over his life. Each night he goes to bed a little earlier is more time that he lives as Tyler. The narrator asks that Marla keep him awake so Tyler can't take control. In the event that he falls asleep, the narrator instructs Marla to follow him and take note of all of his actions.

Big Bob, or Robert Paulson, was on a typical chill-and-drill assignment. This was the same method of freezing locks and shattering them that Tyler used to get into the narrator's condominium before he blew it up. Bob was using a cordless electric drill to complete the assignment when the police mistook it for a gun and shot and killed him. Nothing could tie Bob to Project Mayhem. All members knew it is far better to be shot and killed then get arrested. If you're arrested, you're thrown out of Project Mayhem. The crowd at fight club chants Bob's name in remembrance of their hero. The narrator steps in and attempts to put perspective on Bob's death. He attempts to make it real for the members and tells them that fight club has served its purpose and that Project Mayhem should be canceled. The members carry on despite the narrator's declaration to halt activities. The narrator is evicted from the club and realizes that fight clubs go on all over the country with or without Tyler Durden.

Chapter 23 and 24 Analysis

The narrator realizes that Tyler is becoming more powerful as the nights go by. The narrator's worst nightmare would be to go to sleep and never wake up again as himself. Tyler is gaining so much strength that he could become the dominant personality and take over forever. Bob's death puts things in perspective for the narrator. He realizes that things with Project Mayhem have gone too far. He commands the group to stop, but the project is now out of his control. Tyler has set up the system so that each person functions independently and is unstoppable.



Chapter 25 and 26

Chapter 25 and 26 Summary

The narrator and Marla hide out in Room 8G at the Regent Hotel. The narrator struggles to stay awake and fight off Tyler. He pops some pills. Then, they decide to go bowling to pass the time and keep him occupied. As they leave the hotel, the desk clerk says, "good evening, sir." The narrator knows the members of Project Mayhem are keeping track of him.

The narrator arrives to work to find police barricades surrounding the building. The police are asking questions. The narrator sees a smoldering desk hanging out of one of the blown out office windows. He knows his boss is dead. He knows this, because Tyler knows this. The narrator confesses to knowing Tyler was going to kill his boss.

The narrator knows that the police will be looking for him. He was the last person in the building and when he woke up at his desk, Tyler was telling him that the mechanic was waiting for him in the parking lot. He smelled gasoline on his hands when he left the office. In addition, when he said he wished he would have quit his job, he basically gave Tyler the go ahead to kill his boss. The problem is that the narrator actually liked his boss.

The narrator boards a bus to avoid being confronted by the police. Then, he notices that between him and the driver are about 20 guys all with shaved heads. The bus driver turns around and says to the narrator, "Mr. Durden, I really admire what you are doing. You have to forgive me for this. The committee says this is your own idea sir."

The men with the shaved heads turn toward the narrator. They are holding ether-soaked rags. The mechanic is holding a knife. The mechanic says, "You know the drill, Mr. Durden. You said it yourself. You said, if anyone tries to shut down the club, even you, then we have to get him by the nuts."

As police sirens near, the narrator struggles to free himself from an inevitable castration by the space monkeys. The police arrive. The narrator is relieved, because he thinks he is spared. Instead, the cops are in on the whole thing. They say to make it quick as there is a warrant out for the narrator's arrest.

One of the space monkeys sets his stop watch to take note of the time it takes to perform the act. They have the time perfected. It is quick as a flash. The narrator struggles to get out one of the bus windows as the space monkeys attempt to pull him back in and yank his pants down at the same time. The narrator tries some guided meditation to take his mind away from this horrible act. Instead, he just passes out.



Chapter 25 and 26 Analysis

The narrator knows that he can't go on living like this. He is half awake and half dead. He has to do something to get rid of Tyler. Tyler had prepared the space monkeys to take care of the narrator's want to end fight club. This is the beginning of the two character's quest to destroy one another. It is interesting that the narrator has aligned himself with Tyler and his mission to become more of the man Tyler wants him to be. Then Tyler sends people to remove one of his testicles, making him somewhat less of a man again.



Chapter 27 and 28

Chapter 27 and 28 Summary

The narrator wakes up on the concrete sub-floor of his exploded condominium. He has his clothes on and attempts to feel around to see if he is still intact. He is relieved to find that he still has all of his body parts. As the narrator stares out from the 15th floor of his burned condo, he assesses his life. He is overdrawn at the bank, has no home or job, his boss is dead, and the world is going crazy. He could end it all by stepping over the edge, but then, he thinks of Marla. Marla loves him, or she loves Tyler. The narrator has to make sure she knows there is a difference between the two of them.

The narrator contacts Marla and says they have to meet to talk as he thinks she may be in danger. Marla meets him at the place where they first met - bowel cancer night. When the meeting is coming to a close, Marla walks across the room and slaps the narrator in the face. She screams that she saw him kill someone today. The narrator assumes she is talking about his boss, and he agrees. Then, Marla says, "I saw you shoot a man tonight." The narrator has no idea what she is talking about. Marla says that she followed the narrator to the Pressman Hotel, and he was a waiter at a murder-mystery theater party. When the murder scene was to take place, the narrator shot the mayor's special envoy on recycling.

Frustrated, the narrator shouts that he is trying to save Marla's life. She can't understand why she needs saving. The narrator explains that since she has been following Tyler and has seen the horrible things he has done, he has reason to harm her and anyone else who threatens Project Mayhem. Tyler may have given the space monkeys orders to kidnap her. Marla inquires as to why he cares what happens to her. The narrator responds that he thinks he likes her. The narrator gets in a hurry to leave and says that he has to take care of Tyler.

Patrick Madden was the narrator's victim. It turns out that Patrick was working for the mayor and compiling a list of fight club meeting locations. The narrator feels horrible about his death, so he finds a fight club meeting to attend. He registers to fight every guy in the place that night for a total of 50 fights in all. As the first fighter pounds his head into the ground and holds him in a full nelson, memories of Patrick Madden lying dead on the floor come back to him. Patrick's wife thought the whole scene was part of the murder-mystery dinner. She didn't realize he was really shot until she tasted some of his blood in her mouth. The narrator fights fight number two and then fight number three. Fighter number three pounds and pounds until the narrator's teeth slice part of his tongue off. It falls onto the floor. The narrator keeps fighting, wanting to be dead.



Chapter 27 and 28 Analysis

As the narrator takes account of what his life has become, he realizes that destruction is really destruction, and that he is responsible for the breakdown of his life and the chaos in society. Only he can take back control over his life and to do it, he has to finally take care of Tyler Durden. The problem is that he doesn't have his own life anymore. People think of him in his physical form as Tyler Durden. That is who he is.

The narrator recalls the details of a murder he had no control over. He feels helpless. The only thing in his life he has control over is whether to fight and whether he lives or dies. He attempts to end his life, but is unsuccessful. The narrator can't even do that right. He has hit rock bottom.



Chapter 29 and 30

Chapter 29 and 30 Summary

The narrator is a bloody mess on the floor of the Paper Street house. Tyler tells him to get up. Everything in the room is gone. The space monkeys are all gone. Tyler says that it is time to do his whole martyrdom death thing he has been waiting for. The narrator pleads for Tyler to just put him out of his misery right there. However, Tyler has bigger plans for his death.

The narrator and Tyler are back on top of the Parker-Morris building. Tyler is holding a gun in the narrator's mouth. To onlookers, it looks as if the narrator is holding a gun in his own mouth. Marla followed him and brought the people from the support groups to try to talk the narrator out of committing suicide. The narrator yells for them all to get out of the building as it is going to blow. The narrator tells them that he is not killing himself, he is killing Tyler. "It's not love or anything," Marla shouts, "but I think I like you, too." Marla says she knows the difference between the narrator and Tyler, and it is the narrator she likes.

Just as the narrator is expecting an explosion, he realizes that Tyler must have mixed the nitro with paraffin. Paraffin never works. Instead of experiencing an explosion, the narrator pulls the gun's trigger. The gun shot tears out the narrator's cheek, leaving him with a crooked smile.

Now, the narrator convalesces at a mental institution. He refers to his psychiatrist as God. The narrator says that God speaks to him from across his long walnut desk and asks him why he caused so much pain. Didn't the narrator know that each person is sacred? The narrator responds, "We are not special. We are not crap or trash either. We just are. We just are and what happens just happens." God replies that he is wrong. Yeah whatever, the narrator thinks, you can't teach God anything.

Once in a while, someone with a black eye or a stitched forehead brings the narrator his lunch tray and medication. In a whisper voice, the narrator hears, "We miss you Mr. Durden. Everything is going according to the plan. We're going to break up civilization so we can make something better out of the world. We look forward to getting you back." Apparently, fight club lives on.

Chapter 29 and 30 Analysis

The narrator wakes up to Tyler bullying him into committing suicide in a big production on top of a building. The narrator would rather just die a simple death. Tyler and the narrator find themselves back on top of the Parker-Morris Building at the time when the story begins. As Tyler and the narrator prepare to blow up with the building, Tyler tells him they won't really die. The first interpretation of this sentence is that fight club has made them heroes and that people will know their names forever. In essence, they



won't really die. Later, the narrator realizes that Tyler mixed the explosives with a substance that the narrator has never gotten to work. Tyler was right, they weren't going to die. In a desperate attempt to end the whole thing, the narrator shoots himself.

The narrator has been institutionalized for his heinous crimes. He refers to his psychiatrist as God. Apparently, fight club still goes on without him, but they are awaiting his return to the mayhem.



Characters

The Narrator (alias Joe)

The narrator, or Joe as he refers to himself on occasion, is an average guy. On a sociological level, he has spent his entire life being a member of a brain-dead consumer culture. He has the perfect condominium, packed full with designer goods he picked out himself. He believes these items define who he is as a person. His china says something about him. His coffee table speaks to his character and place in this world. He goes to work every day as a recall campaign coordinator, where he plays the odds with people's lives to make profits. He plays into the hand of corporate America. He is emasculated every day by society. He lives a single-serving life alongside other men who have only possessions to account for who they are as humans. As a man, he is no longer a productive member of society. Instead, he is a consumer.

On a psychological level, he is a man void of ambition, living each day the same as the one before it. He is suffering from horrible insomnia. The only solace he gets is in the arms of people at support groups, where he feels a sense of belonging and relief that people are worse off than he is.

In a political construct, the narrator represents the every man in society. He is just a little worker bee trying to buy the things culture suggests he should have. It is a symbiotic relationship of sorts as corporate America profits from his existence and in return, he gets to know some of their dirty little secrets.

Tyler Durden

On a sociological level, Tyler Durden is the complete opposite of the narrator. He is a projectionist, part-time waiter, a soap maker and salesman. He lives most of his life during the hours at night when society is sleeping. Tyler performs rebellious acts like urinating in soup to be served to high-class people and splicing pornographic clips into movies. Tyler represents man's will to reclaim his rightful place in society. That place is of a provider and not simply a useless consumer. He is the father of fight club. He understands that men want to feel like men again. They want to rediscover the primal urges society has repressed. He forms an underground society to carry out his mission of complete societal breakdown.

On a psychological level, Tyler is everything that the narrator could not be. He is the narrator's split personality created to do what the narrator wishes he could do but never had the guts to. As time goes by, the narrator becomes more Tyler's personality than his own. It is up to the narrator to decide who stays and who goes.

On a political level, Tyler works to make the world go around and without his service the higher ups could not function. The higher ups exist on the backs of this service class.



Tyler's goal is one of revolution and anarchy. He wants to dismantle the system and level the playing field for the players.

Marla Singer

Marla Singer is a self-help group tourist. She goes to meetings to watch people's lives fall apart and reflects back to the narrator that he is a tourist and faker, as well. The narrator resents her presence in his life and in Tyler's life. She takes Tyler's attention away from the narrator, and the narrator despises her for it. She represents feminism in a culture where men have been emasculated and made to be empty. She is what is wrong with society, and she is the root of all problems between Tyler and the narrator. She is in love with the narrator, or Tyler Durden as she knows him to be. She is ultimately his savior.

Robert Paulson

Robert Paulson, or Bob as he is called much of the time, is a member of Remaining Men Together, a support group for men with testicular cancer. Bob is a large man who used to be a professional body builder. A once buff and masculine man, he used steroids to cement his place as a virile man. When he is introduced in the story, he had just had his testicles, and consequently his figurative manhood, removed due to cancer. He has what the narrator refers to as "bitch tits" because of a testosterone and estrogen imbalance. Bob serves as a symbol of what the author portrays men to be in this consumerist modern society - feminine and degraded.

Project Mayhem Space Monkeys

The space monkeys are Tyler's army for Project Mayhem. They are well-trained workers, performing one task to perfection. Each space monkey plays a role, unaware of the other roles, and unaffected by circumstances beyond their role/task.

The Police Commissioner

The police commissioner represents the rule of law. Tyler takes away his power and discards the rule of law by threatening to castrate him. Tyler plays up the fact that the Project Mayhem members have nothing to lose, and the police commissioner has everything to lose. Tyler does not have to play within the system. He makes it clear to the police commissioner that he works by his own set of rules.

The Mechanic

The mechanic appears as one of the stronger members of Project Mayhem. In his job as a mechanic, he is looked down upon by white collar members of society. This makes



him the ideal type to embrace Tyler's goals of leveling the societal construct as they know it and creating fair distribution of wealth. He trusts Tyler unconditionally and acts out many of Tyler's wishes, despite the narrator arguing against them.

Chloe

Chloe is a woman dying at one of the support groups that the narrator attends. Chloe is a skeleton of a woman. She is proof that we are all dying one second at a time. She is looking for peace and contentment before she dies.

Mayor's Special Envoy on Recycling

Patrick Madden, the mayor's special envoy on recycling, is compiling a list of bars that hold fight club meetings so he can shut them down.

President of the Local Chapter of the United Projectionist U

This is Tyler's union rep. He represents another form of societal oppression. While unions ideally stand up for the worker, it is just a structure in place to keep workers satisfied and doing their little jobs instead of rising up.



Objects/Places

Parker-Morris Building

The Parker-Morris Building is the starting and ending setting in the book. As Tyler holds a gun to the inside of the narrator's mouth, the Mischief Committee of Project Mayhem is busy destroying the inside and preparing for its destruction.

The Paper Street house

The dilapidated house on Paper Street is Tyler Durden's house. The narrator moves into the house after his condo is destroyed by an explosion. The house is practically condemned. The only neighbors are a closed machine shop and a block-long warehouse. A past tenant collected magazines, so there are stacks piled high in the basement and almost every room. The house becomes the headquarters and training ground for Project Mayhem members.

The Support Groups

Noted support groups in the story include Remaining Men Together (the testicular cancer group), Free and Clear (the blood parasites group), Above and Beyond (brain parasites group), Firm Believers (the leukemia group), tuberculosis support group, and melanoma round table.

The Regent Hotel, Room 8G

Marla Singer stays in Room 8G of the Regent Hotel. It is basically a pile of bricks held together by sleaze.

The Medical Waste Dump

The narrator goes to the medical waste dump to get liposuctioned fat to make soap

Tyler's Chemical Burn

Everyone who comes into contact with Tyler has a chemical burn. It is a kiss mark seared into the back of people's hands. Tyler uses lye to burn the skin.



Airports

The narrator spends most of the book going back and forth between the country's many airports. They represent another part of his single-serving life.

Castration

Castration is a prominent idea throughout the book. Removal of a man's testicles is to diminish his manhood. Bob is emasculated when he gets testicular cancer. The members of Project Mayhem also attempt to punish people who reveal information about fight club by castrating them.

Liposuctioned Fat

Tyler uses fat left over from cosmetic procedures to make soap. He even goes as far as to trick Marla's mother into sending her own fat. This idea is significant as it is Tyler's way of playing on people's vanity. He uses fat they discarded and then turns it into a luxurious soap that they buy right back.

Homework Assignments

Through Project Mayhem, Tyler assigns various homework assignments for the space monkeys to perform. These range from picking a fight with someone random, to blowing up buildings and people.



Themes

Anti-Consumerism

The basis for the entire book relies on rejecting material goods. The narrator talks about how he personally picked out his sofa, his china and his coffee table. These things served as a comfort to him. Once he made decisions about those, they became permanent parts of his life. It is a keeping up with the Joneses mentality that fuels consumerism. This idea that people must have certain possessions keeps them going and distracted by what is really going on. People in the lower ranks of society think that if they work hard, they can buy all these things as if the things define who they are.

A major point in the book is that your things do not define who they are, instead they distract from who you really are. Tyler's idea is to free yourself from your possessions and then look at who you are when you have nothing. What are you made of then? The narrator discovers that he looked at himself as one with his things, and he had only those possessions along with a single-serving life. Tyler blows up his apartment to rid him of these material ties. The narrator wasn't happy with his life, his insomnia was horrible, and he was living with tiny soaps and single-serving friends. Tyler releases him from this lifestyle, and shows him that society has a disease called consumerism.

Reclaiming Masculinity

One of the themes in the book is reclaiming masculinity. The narrator observes that what you see at fight club is a generation of men raised by women. This is a stab at the single-mother household. This suggests that with no father figure around, boys grow up to be these feminine males. They are no longer the leaders of the nation, and they don't wear the "pants" in the family. In society, they no longer play the role of producers. They don't make anything or hunt anything, they are just consumers. Tyler starts fight club, and men come there to find themselves. Tyler has this idea that at fight club, men are stripped away of their possessions and their jobs. There, they are just men in their basic, most animalistic state.

A big part of this theme is the always underlying threat of castration in the book. Big Bob loses one of his testicles to cancer, yet struggles to remain in the image of a man. The space monkeys threaten to castrate people if they expose fight club. Castration to them symbolizes a stripping of manhood, a worst possible fate.

Societal Order vs. Breakdown

As the book progresses, a new theme appears. With the advent of Project Mayhem, Tyler desires to break down the social order. This is perhaps the theme that ties the other themes together with the book. Starting with the idea that possessions define who you are, workers in society go about their business in pitiful jobs where they are under



appreciated and underpaid. They work these jobs because of the American dream idea that is feed to them. They honestly believe that if they work hard enough, they can buy these fabulous goods and become rich as if that is all there is to life. It is because of this dream that they stay in these crappy jobs. This is societal oppression, and the world goes around on the back of these workers. Without them, the social order would crumble. Tyler uses fight club to bring back men to their natural state so they no longer feel that they need possessions or their jobs to define who they are. In fact, it is noted in the book that the man you see behind the desk at work is not the same man who appears at fight club.

Tyler's jobs in the service industry are an example of how men no longer produce anything. They just serve others and take the pay they are given. Tyler starts little acts of protest by contaminating the food and degrading family films. This turns into Project Mayhem and the idea that if the workers band together, they can dismantle the stratification of society. Tyler believes that they can level the playing field for all the players. One way Tyler aims to achieve his goal is to get the men to rise up. He does this through fight club, but he also uses Project Mayhem homework assignments called human sacrifices. The human sacrifices serve to jump start people into a better life through the threat of death. It is based on the idea of if you died right now, what would you wish you had done with your life? Whatever you wish you would have done, you must do to lift yourself out of your complacent oppressive position in society.

Style

Point of View

Palahniuk's *Fight Club* is told from the first-person view of the narrator. All conversations and events are told through his eyes from his recollection of events. This is a fractured narrative, however, and the narrator is unreliable, as he is secretly both himself and Tyler Durden. The clash between the narrator and Tyler's personalities bleeds over into the story, making it difficult to entangle which of the narrator's thoughts are truly his own. This eventually comes to a head when the narrator finally confronts the Tyler personality at the end of the book.

Setting

The story takes place during modern times. The main setting is in a major metropolitan city, and other events take place in airports and cities around the United States. The city contains two sets of people - those who go about their meaningless lives unaware of what society has done to them, and those who reclaim their manhood through fight club.

Language and Meaning

Palahniuk writes in a choppy, disjointed manner to portray the idea that two personalities live inside the narrator's body. The author writes in short sentences, and the flow of language is uneven. Within each chapter, the time line can move backward or forward. With each line, the reader is left feeling uncertain where the next line will take the story. It borders on stream of conscious writing. The author's choice of language is rather grotesque and over the top. The language is intended to shock the reader and pull you into the underworld that is fight club.

Structure

Fight Club is broken up into 30 short chapters. The chapters do not flow from one to the next as each chapter describes a different time, place and event than the one before. The first chapter recalls the end of the story and then the second chapter flashes back in time to the beginning and all the chapters after tell of events leading back up to the first chapter.

Quotes

"It's so quiet this high up, the feeling you get is that you're one of those space monkeys. You do the little job you're trained to do. Pull a lever. Push a button. You don't understand any of it, and then you just die." Chapter 1, pg. 12

"The charm of traveling is everywhere I go, tiny life. I go to the hotel, tiny soap, tiny shampoos, single-serving butter, tiny mouthwash and a single-use toothbrush. Fold into the standard airplane seat. You're a giant. The problem is your shoulders are too big. Your Alice in Wonderland legs are all of a sudden miles so long they touch the feet of the person in front of you. Dinner arrives, a miniature do-it-yourself Chicken Cordon Bleu hobby kit, sort of a put-it-together project to keep you busy." Chapter 3, pg. 28

"For two years, Chloe's been crying in my arms during hug time, and now she's dead, dead in the ground, dead in an urn, mausoleum, columbarium. Oh, the proof that one day you're thinking and hauling around, and the next, you're cold fertilizer, worm buffet. This is the amazing miracle of death, and it should be so sweet if it weren't for, oh, that one. Marla." Chapter 4, pg. 35

"'If you don't know what you want,' the doorman said, 'you end up with a lot you don't.' May I never be complete. May I never be content. May I never be perfect. Deliver me, Tyler, from being perfect and complete." Chapter 5, pg. 46

"It used to be enough that when I came home angry and knowing that my life wasn't toeing my five-year plan, I could clean my condominium or detail my car. Someday I'd be dead without a scar and there would be a really nice condo and car. Really, really nice, until the dust settled or the next owner. Nothing is static. Even the Mona Lisa is falling apart. Since fight club, I can wiggle half the teeth in my jaw. Maybe self-improvement isn't the answer." Chapter 6, pg 49

"'It is only after you have lost everything,' Tyler says, 'that you are free to do anything.'" Chapter 8, pg. 70

"Marla's heart looked the way my face was. The crap and the trash of the world. Post-consumer human butt wipe that one would ever go to the trouble to recycle." Chapter 13, pg. 109

"The night of the Hein Tower assignment, you can picture a team of law clerks and bookkeepers or messengers sneaking into offices where they sat, every day, Maybe they were a little drunk even if it's against the rules in Project Mayhem, and they used passkeys where they could and used spray canisters of Freon to shatter lock cylinders so they could dangle, rappelling against the tower's brick façade, dropping, trusting each other to hold the ropes, swinging, risking quick death in offices where every day they felt their lives end one hour at a time." Chapter16, pg. 121



"You have a class of young strong men and women, and they want to give their lives to something. Advertising has these people chasing cars and clothes they don't need. Generations have been working in jobs they hate, just so they can buy what they don't really need. We don't have a great war in our generation, or a great depression, but we do, we have a great war of the spirit. We have a great revolution against the culture. The great depression is our lives. We have a spiritual depression. We have to show these men and women freedom by enslaving them, and show them courage by frightening them." Chapter 19, pg. 149

"'No,' Tyler says, still holding my hand, 'I wouldn't be here in the first place if you didn't want me. I'll still live my life while you're asleep, but if you fuck with me, if you chain yourself to the bed at night or take big doses of sleeping pills, then we'll be enemies. And I'll get you for it.'" Chapter 22, pg. 168

"I love everything about Tyler Durden, his courage and his smarts. His nerve. Tyler is funny and charming and forceful and independent, and men look up to him and expect him to change their world. Tyler is capable and free, and I am not. I'm not Tyler Durden." Chapter 23, pg. 174

"You know that old saying, about how you always kill the thing you love, well, it works both ways. And it does work both ways." Chapter 26, pg. 184

"And the fight goes on and on because I want to be dead. Because only in death do we have names. Only in death are we no longer part of Project Mayhem." Chapter 28 pg. 201

"You aren't alive anywhere like you're alive at fight club. When it's you and one other guy under that one light in the middle of all those watching. Fight club isn't about winning or losing fights. Fight club isn't about words. You see a guy come to fight club for the first time and his ass is a loaf of white bread. You see this same guy here six months later, and he looks carved out of wood. This guy trusts himself to handle anything. There's grunting and noise at fight club like at the gym, but fight club isn't about looking good. There's hysterical shouting in tongues like at church, and when you wake up Sunday afternoon you feel saved." Chapter 6, pg. 51



Topics for Discussion

What does Bob's character represent?

In the triangle relationship of Marla, Tyler and the narrator, why is Marla thought of as the source of all the problems?

Compare and contrast the lives and personalities of Tyler and the narrator.

Why does the narrator go to support groups? What does he get from letting out his emotions? What social commentary was the author trying to make by having the men cry at support groups?

In a society of men raised by women, men have forgotten how to be men. How does Tyler plan to help men reclaim their rightful place in the world?

Why does accepting death play such a big part in Tyler's plan to change the world?

Tyler's means of achieving his political goals are completely outside of the system. What do you think the author is trying to say about democracy as a system of government?

What is the purpose of the human sacrifice assignments?